

# **MR. LINCOLN'S ORATION.**

AN

# ORATION,

PRONOUNCED AT WORCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS,

JULY 4th, 1816,

IN COMMEMORATION OF

AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE.

BEFORE AN ASSEMBLY OF YOUTH.

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BY MASTER WILLIAM LINCOLN.

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1816.

# ORATION.



IN the presence of Youth and Beauty, it is with diffidence that the speaker, so early in life, publicly addresses himself to your attention. Conscious of his inability, he relies on your indulgence to pardon his incorrectness and defects. Cheerfully does he contribute his requested mite, to increase the festivities of the natal day of his country. But the path thro' which he is to tread, has already been adorned with its gayest decorations. His superiors have already culled and strewed it with the fairest flowers. The field indeed is as extensive, as rich, abounding with an useful variety of unreapt delights. But the youthful gleaner may follow only at a distance with his diminished handfuls, to where the experienced reaper has banded up his heavy abundance.

FOREVER sacred be the anniversary of the day that emancipated us from slavery, that proclaimed us free. We celebrate not the birth of a reputed saint, or an ambitious despot, but the day that gave political existence to a nation ; where freedom, banished from

the other quarters of the globe, has erected her shrine. Let us this day sacrifice party feelings to the good of our common country. Party spirit paralyzes the noblest emotions of the human mind ; in its perspective, the fair form of Truth assumes the distorted aspect of Falsehood. It usurps the throne of Reason, of Pity, of Benevolence, and of Sentiment. Republics have fallen beneath its baneful influence. It has destroyed the brightest prospects of human happiness. Its altar has been encrimsoned with the best blood of Rome. Party spirit girded on the sword of Julius in the Pharsalian field ; and clothed Augustus with the imperial purple.

LOVE of country, is indigenious to no clime. It cheers the inhabitant of the pole, amid his stormy seas. The native of the torrid zone, fainting beneath the noontide rays of his blazing sun, feels its benign influence. And shall not we rejoice, possessed of a land where the breath of pestilence is unknown ; where no Upas loads the gale with its poisons ; no tiger prowls around the dwelling of labour ; no bayonet or inquisitorial terrors awe the will of a people, free as the air they breathe ? Separated from Europe by the waves of the vast Atlantic ; commerce brings us acquainted with its arts and improvements, without approaching us to the vortex of its corruption. Nature is here arrayed in ~~the~~ <sup>her</sup> sublimest garb. She presides o'er the Cataract of Niagara, and lifts the Andes from the tempests that howl at their base. We wish not the Peruvian mine to curse our soil, or our rivers to roll the golden sands of Africa. Will the diamond that sparkles on the crest of a Sultan restore the ruddy current of life to the victims of its acquisition ? The Nile of our

country scatters fertility along its course ; its billows shall be burdened with the product of industry, and waft subsistence to other lands.

CONTRAST our present situation with that of our pilgrim ancestors. Far on the bosom of the pathless ocean, they sought an asylum from oppression. Where they then beheld the wilderness frown around them ; now blooms the cultivated garden. The gloomy recesses that echoed to the howl of the wild Beast, or the more terrific yell of the Savage, now resound with the cheerful voice of labour. Where the arrow of the Indian has pierced the flying Deer, the spires of the city now point to the Heavens. Each day the forests of the West recede from the genius of cultivation. The Cerean gifts have usurped the place of the uprooted oak, that had bid defiance to the rage of the tornado. But it was not enough to have 'scaped the horrors of the deep. British persecution followed our ancestors to the land of their choice. The feelings of no one will be wounded, by animadverting on the conduct of a foreign nation. The appropriate subjects of this day's contemplation, necessarily associate them with the events that have passed ; with the history of our colonial dependence, deprivations, and sufferings. To the American citizen it now matters little, whether an aspiring Corsican, or ~~stupid~~ King, rule the destinies of the European continent. Humanity deploras its distresses. The Philanthropist mourns the torrents of blood, Ambition and Fanaticism, have made to flow in every age. We have been connected with Britain, and in the course of that connection, how many acts of cruelty, of insult, and of insufferable oppression, have our fathers experienced from her hands ? How many are recorded in our history, to be transmitted for the

execration of posterity ? How many have we learnt, even from our school-books, and the interesting tales of our parents, who experienced them ? But British tyranny has severed the bands that endeared her to her colonies. Arbitrary taxes, abrogation of charters, harrassing our legislatures, suspension of their functions, the blocking up of our harbours, the terror, bloodshed and carnage, occasioned by a lawless soldiery, stationed in our capital ; with an arrangement to transport our patriots to the halters and gibbets of their mother country, are among the outrages that led to our independence. From these evils, and a thousand others, the foresight, the patience, and the courage of that day, freed the children of this most happy period. Independence was the work of a creation. It was more ; it unmade the American and made him anew : It transformed the slave into a Freeman. Can we realize the contrast without shedding tears of joy ? Can we recollect with composure, the impression which was made on the arrival of the war-ships of England on our coast ; when youths like ourselves were liable, by surprise from one of their press-gangs, to be severed from their mates, from their friends, from their country, to become the companions of such slaves, and the slaves of such masters ? How often did the young man of that day, skulk along the shore, from one port to another, to avoid being kidnapped like an African ? How often did he conceal himself on land, and on water, as if a felon, to avoid the pursuit and fangs of the prowling barges of British ships. Can we mention the manly defence of the American whaleman by his harpoon ; and his second defence, by the eloquence of an *Adams*, for killing the leader of such a gang, without the ming-

led emotions of hatred, gratitude, and love? We have seen only in Britain the enemy of our prosperity and happiness. The footsteps of her armies on our soil, have been marked by the smoking ruins of our villages. The red blaze of conflagration has been their harbinger: Devastation has led on their van; Desolation in their rear. The Library and the Arsenal, the sculptured column, and the instrument of death, have been undistinguished. With a barbarity more shocking than that of Omar, they have carried the torch and the sword to the repositories of learning, and the sciences. Her humanity we have experienced, where the Jersey once floated, or where her flag now waves, o'er the prisons of Dartmoor.

THE tear of sorrow shall not now drop on the tombs of our departed heroes, who have fallen on the blood-stained field; for they have fallen in the arms of victory. But they live, and shall forever live, in the memory of their grateful country; and their names be transmitted on the brightest pages of her annals, for the imitation of an admiring posterity. Their holy cause was not to revenge the wrongs of a Helen, but to redress those of a nation. America has given birth to a constellation of genius; her *Washington* has twined the laurel of victory with the leaves of the civic Oak. Her *Franklin* has snatched the thunder from the cloud, and directed the bolt of Heaven. Her *Ramsay* has enrolled his name with the *Smollets* and *Humes* of England. Her *Barlow* has tuned the harp of Apollo to perpetuate the memory of Columbus.

SHALL we for a moment advert to the achievements of the late war, under the auspices of its illustrious chief? Shall we for a moment let loose our

imaginations, to survey in silence, in rapid succession, the matchless exploits of our army, and our navy, in our late conflict with the *world's last hope*? Shall we in the progress of this survey, suffer our hearts to throb, with astonishment and gratitude, as the authors of immortal deeds present themselves to our view? Shall we, in this delightful career, yield a triple pulsation at Lake Erie, in honour of the youthful hero, who performed a wonder, in meeting, and *subduing*, an *invincible* enemy? In the hurry of our reflections, shall we pause at New-Orleans to name a *Jackson*, whose skill and bravery in its defence was unequalled, but by the wisdom and patriotism displayed in its acquisition? May History and Poetry vie with each other, in their efforts to do justice to the authors of these interesting transactions. But why forbear in an assembly of mixed politics, to pronounce the name of *Jefferson*? Why suffer the prejudices of seniors, of past times, to interdict the homage due from youth, to worth, genius, talents, and learning? Why not eager to honour, whom the proudest philosophers, and greatest scholars in Europe, claim as a member of their societies, and a brother; whom science herself has made an associate, and preceptor, in the most exalted departments of her school; and one with whom patriotism will forever hereafter be delighted, as with her darling child? Surely, truth and patriotism, talents and learning, must be dear to all parties, and the appropriate objects of juvenile pursuits. Remote as we have been by our youth, from those conflicts, and turmoils, that have generated a party spirit, and pledged it to futurity; let us not take it as an inheritance; nor its errors, and its follies, as the trustees for our successors. Let us preserve our minds free from taint, open to embrace,



all truths, and the honest, of every party ; as is the vast ocean to receive the waters, which may have reached it, although they may have passed through serpentine and obstructed courses. Let us, regardless of age or nation, party or state, revere talents and worth, however displayed, and place, on the same page, with equal complacency, the names of a *Dexter* and an *Ames*, of a *Hamilton* and a *Gallatin*, of a *Burke* and an *Emmett*, and of a *Calvin* and a *Luther*. If we must have predilections, if we must have prejudices, let them be our own ; in favour of our own rulers, our country, and the benefactors of mankind ; of those who have instructed, enlightened, moralized, and improved their fellow creatures. Let us peruse their works, copy their virtues, and imitate their examples. Aided by their labours, as independent sources of instruction within our reach ; but for our own negligence we may attain that learning, “ whose merchandise is better than silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold ” ; that learning, which as the orator has beautifully said, “ will employ us in youth, and amuse us in old age, in prosperity grace and adorn, in adversity shelter and support, delight us at home, and be easy abroad ; soften slumber, shorten fatigue, and enliven retirement.”

#### MY YOUTHFUL COMPANIONS,

We are of the rising generation, and borne on the rapid wings of time, must soon succeed to those, “ whose places will soon know them no more forever ; ” to their farms, to their workshops, to their commerce, to their various stations, in publick and private life. To the rising generation must soon be committed the destinies of their country ; the solemn duties of improving and preserving what their fathers have acquired. The prospect is wide and inviting, but sol-

emn and imposing ; it calls for ardour ; it urges for diligence, and preparation ; it selects as objects for pursuit and love the whole circle of the arts and sciences. May we not be remiss in cherishing a love for the useful ; may we accommodate our taste and our studies to our country's wants ; may the bleating of the merino, the lowing of the ox, the sound of the loom and of the hammer, even if blended with the necessary roar of the cannon, be made so to accord and harmonize, as to form music to our ears, and a solace to our souls. Instead of the fathers, may there be the sons, who will be the advocates for liberty, patrons of learning, defenders of their country's rights, and blessings to the world.