

AN

ORATION,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

NEW-YORK TYPOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY,

ON THE FIFTH OF JULY, 1813,

IN CELEBRATION OF THE

THIRTY-SEVENTH ANNIVERSARY OF AMERICAN
INDEPENDENCE,

AND FOURTH OF THE SOCIETY.

BY EBENEZER MACK,
A MEMBER.

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ORATION.

BRETHREN, FRIENDS, AND FELLOW-CITIZENS!

AGAIN are we assembled beneath the wide-spread branches of the tree of liberty.

We are assembled to celebrate a day, glorious in the annals of history, and sacred to the remembrance of every American. Participating with millions of freemen, let us rejoice with a fulness of heart, in a spirit of gratitude—for it is an occasion, high and exalted. It is the anniversary of our independence—the birth-day of a great and powerful republic. Its sublimity is without a parallel—The progress of time steals not a tittle from its importance. Though often sung, and often celebrated—though the poet and the orator have exerted their genius and their eloquence—the subject is undiminished. Every annual return of this day, animates anew the soul, and gives inspiration to the powers of language. For the fire of freedom burns unquenched, and the stream of gratitude flows exhaustless!

What a pleasing scene this day presents, through out united America! From Maine to Orleans—from the shores of the Atlantic to the wild borders of Erie—amid lowly vales and lofty mountains—alike in the humble cottage of labor as in the luxurious mansion of wealth and leisure—in hamlets and in cities—all is one scene of purest festivity. The commingling voices of millions rend the air with rejoicing, and ascend, like grateful incense from the altar, to heaven. They do not perpetuate, with heavy and dissembling hearts, the natal day of a tyrant—the coronation of a despot—nor sing *Te Deums* for guilty victories, over murdered myriads, the sacrifice of human rights. No! far different is the excitement. It is the triumph of Freedom over Oppression—A triumph—the remembrance, the perpetuity of which, calls forth the noblest emotions of the bosom, the sincerest gratulations of the heart.

But, my brethren, it is not on this magnanimous occasion alone, that we are convened: With the birth-day of our national independence, we celebrate our anniversary as a Society. Glorious coincidence! And shall we hail it as a happy omen? Though this were now, and, indeed, will ever remain a *secondary* object—who shall limit its significance? who prescribe bounds to its future importance? Increased, united, and strengthened by numbers; established upon a firm basis, an enlarged system—a system which shall embrace both interest and improvement—the NEW-YORK TYPOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY may yet become, not only useful, but ornamental, to the profession of which we are members.

BRETHREN!

Although as an association, we have nothing to do with political concerns; yet, as American citizens, do we not, in common with others, feel an interest in every event which affects our country? And as men—as philanthropists—can we remain unmoved amidst the agitations of the civilized world?

To review the past, contemplate the present, and anticipate the future, is ever pleasing, ever instructive. Happy is it for mankind, that the ART OF PRINTING furnishes us records of times which are no

more! Shall we not, then, improve the privilege? It is a proper moment. Let us cast our eyes, in grateful remembrance, to the days of danger, the hours of trial. Let us pay to the heroes of our revolution—the fathers of that freedom we now enjoy—the just tribute of recalling this day to our memories, their patriotism, their perils, their sufferings, and their achievements. And let their deeds and their motives, animate us, at least, to *think* of glory! Nay—shall we not extend farther back our retrospective views? Time, indeed, will not permit an historical particularization of events—yet, cannot the quick conception of your minds comprehend at one glance, more than the confined powers of limited oratory could convey?

How changed, indeed, is the vast American continent from the time of its first discovery—when Columbus and his followers first kissed the sod of St. Salvador—when Americus Vesputius, following the path of that hero, in quest of gain, stole a bright wreath from the laurels of his brow, by giving his own name to the land which Columbus discovered. Then—all was desolate and dreary. Now, we behold a happy contrast.

What has contributed to a change so unexampled, and so important? LIBERTY—Liberty—which has ever been the guardian goddess of Columbia. Animated by a love of liberty, our fathers left the lands of oppression, and sought an asylum in the western wilds. How dark, how gloomy, were the prospects before them! Surrounded on every side by a savage foe—few in number, feeble, worn down with toil, often emaciated by hunger—what were their hopes, and what should save them from threatening destruction? Yet, their guardian angel did not forsake them. She enlivened their prospects—inspired them with perseverance. Before the brightness of her countenance, mountains of difficulties melted away—by the strength of her arm, she overthrew powerful obstacles. She promised her followers the noblest reward in life, and smiled upon them in the agonies of death!

Long, indeed, were their struggles with adversity—many were their toils and discouragements. How can we conceive, how shall we describe them? Could the transitory life of man realize the reward of so much labor? No! they toiled for posterity. Theirs was the satisfaction to behold a budding wilderness, which should soon “blossom like the rose”—to plant a vineyard, which their sons should reap. They beheld, beneath their hands, dreary deserts transformed to cultured fields—towns and hamlets arising, which were to prove the foundations of opulent cities. These were their rewards—these the consolments of their declining days. Blessing the inheritance to their children, they sunk beneath the soil; and the stone themselves had laid—the corner-stone of a mighty temple, covered their mouldering ashes!

To them succeeded a race, nowise inferior to their fathers. The same vigor braced their limbs; the same perseverance marked their labors, and the same spirit animated their bosoms.

Invited by their success, many of the oppressed of Europe sought a sanctuary among them, to enjoy the glorious privileges of conscience—of political and religious freedom. Growing in strength, increasing in numbers, they enlarged their views—extending themselves into the interior, and along the coast, to the east, to the south, and forming those colonies, which are now component parts of the great American republic.

These infant colonies were separated from Europe by a wide ocean. Nevertheless, there was still a (perhaps necessary) con-

nexion. Ere the marrow of their bones were full—ere the sinews of their joints were knit together—they sought, or submitted to, the protection of a foreign power. Great Britain, (like all corrupt governments) ever ready to succor the weak, when it tends to advance *her* power, and subserve *her* interest, adopted them as her children, and became *their mother*.

But the iron chain hung yet loose about their necks—the fetters were unriveted, which bound them in slavery.

Too poor for plunder—too weak for oppression—the colonies were suffered to enjoy partial privileges, and grew daily in strength, commerce, and opulence. They built ships, and wasted their products to every clime; and “their fame spread abroad among the nations.” Their maritime skill, their persevering success in agriculture and in trade, bade fair to outrival the boasted splendor of the mother country.

Could Britain behold their rising power without an eye of jealousy? Could she not foresee their rapid approach to independence? And, if left to gain a prospect of that heavenly summit, that the connexion which bound them to her control, would be broken forever? Britain saw—she felt—she feared all this. Should she reject, then, the allurements of *Interest*, even when *Justice* plead against her? It was not in her nature—not her policy! The young lion must be slain in his slumbers—the infant Hercules smothered in his cradle—the EAGLE must be caught unfledged!

FELLOW-CITIZENS!

We will recal, though we pass but slightly over this eventful period.

Now was America doomed to be the victim of ambition—the scourge of tyranny. The burden was increased—the oppressive chain was drawn with an iron hand, and stronger fetters were forged to be riveted upon her.

At first, the colonies resorted to remonstrance. Through numerous embassies and petitions, they exercised the privilege of *complaint*. And of what did they complain? Indeed, the recital of their wrongs would prove too tedious—the catalogue of oppressions were too extensive. But are they not written in the book? Yes! and the flood of ages will not wash them out! Denied the right of representation—commercial restrictions—oppressive taxes—partial administration, and corrupt government—these were among the most prominent acts of *motherly chastisement*!

Were these wrongs to be borne by men inured to perils, and inspired from their birth with a love of liberty? No! When all remonstrance had proved vain—when the faintest hope of obtaining justice had fled, they arose in their might, burst the chains which bound them, and declared themselves “FREE, SOVEREIGN, and INDEPENDENT.”

What a sublime moment—what a daring measure, was this! A few petty colonies, of scattered population, the acknowledged dependencies of a powerful kingdom, whose thousand ships covered the ocean, and whose numerous disciplined armies carried triumph in their progress, and terror in their name! How dare these colonies to forswear their allegiance, and how could they maintain a declaration so perilous? But, our fathers chose to be branded as rebels, rather than as cowards; to die free, rather than live in slavery. Though few—though undisciplined, they were brave—Though wanting in arms and ammunitions—they trusted in the God of Justice, and made powerful

use of those in their possession. They were indeed few, compared with their oppressors—Their resources were small, compared with those of England. No organized government—no disciplined army—no confidential leaders! Yet Liberty—their guardian Liberty—inspired both their inventive and their executive faculties. At her animating voice, warriors and statesmen arose, whose deeds—whose measures, would not disgrace the proudest heroes of boasted antiquity. They found a WASHINGTON to direct their armies; and in the cabinet, a FRANKLIN, a HANCOCK, an ADAMS, and numerous others, whose names need no recital to bear them in remembrance.

And while we pay a tribute to these worthies—while the names of Washington, Warren, Greene, Montgomery, and Gates, are echoed in plaudits at our festivals—shall we forget their more humble followers, who shared in their toils; who assisted them in all their plans of wisdom and bravery?

Though high in honor, yet of humble birth,
Their names may perish with them from the earth;
But Time's rude progress Memory shall defy—
Their glorious deeds shall never—never die!

Yes—we will record them in our bosoms, and cherish them with the warmest gratitude.

The scenes of our revolution—are they not familiar to us all? Not too sufficiently so. Then, to refresh our memories, shall we point to the field of *Lexington*, where the first link was broken? to *Bunker's Hill*, which stands, a proud monument of American bravery? Follow MONTGOMERY to the walls of *Quebec*—behold that hero expiring in the arms of Liberty, his faintest breath whispering wishes for his country, and his ardent prayers for her safety ascending with his sainted spirit to Heaven? Shall we review the field of *Bennington*—where the brave STARK reaped immortal honors? And the plains of *Saratoga*, where the proud forces of *Burgoyne* yielded to those of the gallant GATES?

Rugged, indeed, was the road our fathers trod to independence. It was a path of danger, and a path of death—but it was a path of glory! Whether we follow them, with SULLIVAN and WAYNE, through the western wilderness, to chastise the murderous savage—where their deeds are rung amidst the wilds of Ohio and Susquehanna—or trace them by the blood of their feet over frozen ground from White Marsh to Valley-Forge—we must every where admire their valor, their fortitude, and their constancy.

It was not to this, nor to that quarter, that their trials were confined. We behold them in the cold regions of Canada, and the sultry Carolinas. At Charleston—at Camden—in the Jerseys—at Princeton—at Monmouth—often amidst ill-success, when victory was against them, and their cause seemed dark and gloomy. We do not take a pleasure-excursion to Harlem, nor to admire the green fields of Long-Island, but we behold the sacred spots where heroes' bones have mouldered—the verdant soil, once stained with patriots' gore! Even, perhaps, the spot of earth over which we are now assembled, has been drenched with the blood of our fathers!

O! Liberty! Heaven-born Liberty! how great is the power of thy inspiration! Thou didst animate the heroes of Greece and of Rome, to deeds of never-dying glory. It is thou that dost inspire the Brutuses, the Kosciuskoes, and the Tells of every country, and of every age. Thou didst rule in the breast of the immortal DE KALB; who nobly fell at the battle of Camden, fighting in a stranger's land, in

thy cause, covered with eleven wounds, amidst a mountain of thy foes! Yes, Liberty! whether on the banks of the Ganges or of the Hudson—amid the wilds of Kamtskatka, or the fair regions of Columbia—in the abodes of the great, or the dwellings of the humble—thou dost soften every toil, and sweeten every enjoyment!

It was this spirit, fellow-citizens, that upheld the heroes of our revolution—that sustained them amidst the weight of their sufferings. She washed their wounds with healing balm; soothed the doubts that hung around them; watched over their scattered repose—smiled upon them amidst the broken visions of night, and guided them through the devious contests of the day. When poverty and want darkened around them, she chased away the fiend Despair; and pointed forward, with an exalted hope, to that bright hour, when they should sit beneath their own vines and their own fig-trees, “with none to make them afraid.”

Even the fair daughters of Columbia, catching the hallowed fire, bowed before her shrine as to the temple of Vesta, and became the angelic attendants of celestial Liberty. While still retaining all their natural delicacy, the native tenderness of their hearts—their soft hands were often subjected to the most rugged toils. Their fervent wishes were with their brave defenders in the field of battle, and they even joined their assisting efforts in the field of daily labor. Instancing thus, the sympathy of beauty and bravery—the unison of Liberty and Love.

Yet who, my fellow-citizens, who shall describe the sufferings and the trials amidst which our revolutionary contest progressed? Often may we conceive, what we cannot express. Where the faculties of the faltering tongue would fail, the heart may render justice. Inch by inch were our rights contested, till the deciding battle of York-Town put an end to the struggle, and CONFIRMED the DECLARATION of our INDEPENDENCE. Then we arose as a nation. By the united efforts of wisdom and bravery, Columbia was placed upon a rock—her constitution, the rock of Freedom—so firm, that the tempest of Tyranny may rave, and the billows of Time may beat around—yet, while her sons remember the deeds, and cherish the spirit of their fathers, she shall never—never be overwhelmed.

But, the heroes of our revolution—where are they? Look around! Alas! many of them have passed away. They have followed their leader WASHINGTON, to realms of glorious immortality! Few—very few, remain behind. Their hoary heads are fast blossoming for the grave! they are ripening for eternity! Soon will it be said of them, as of the patriarchs of old, “they slept with their fathers, and their sons ruled in their stead.”

Let not their sons, then, tarnish their glory! We have enjoyed the blessings of peace and commerce. We have become rich in resources, and strengthened by numbers. We know the price, the value of Liberty. America once more is involved in a contest with the very power from whose chains she has been emancipated. Is this contest right—is it just on our part? Is it not a contest to MAINTAIN those rights, that liberty, which our forefathers ACQUIRED? Far be it from me on this occasion to pursue the inquiry. I will not prolong the subject, which has presented itself in the course of events, nor enter into an examination of its merits—lest some of you should whisper me the old proverb, “Let thine own business engage thy attention—leave the affairs of the state to the governors thereof!” Have we, then, no interest in these important concerns? As freemen, we have the happy privilege of enjoying our private opinions. As patriots, too, we may this day rejoice in those victories and those

successes which tend to promote the honor and prosperity of our country. We may also regret whatever we conceive has a contrary effect. It were wise, indeed, for every American, at this crisis—a crisis which involves the dearest interests of our country—to dispel the spirit of party, which, under different names, and in different shapes, blinds the eyes of its followers. It were wise to make the reason of our hearts the standard of our principles. Thinking and acting thus, from honorable motives, conscience would direct to pursue our country's good; and we should then remain worthy of the blood-bought privileges we enjoy.

Shall we forget the deeds of DECATUR, of HULL, of JONES, and of BAINBRIDGE? Shall we forget the death of LAWRENCE, of LUDLOW, and of PIKE? Surely, the cause in which such men fought—the cause in which such men fell—is worthy to inspire a spirit in the bosom of every freeman!

In justice to the living brave, shall the voice of praise resound—In remembrance of those heroes fallen—shall a manly tear moisten the eye, and the heart beat with emulous, with extatic gratitude.

There is not in human nature a character more exalted than that of the PATRIOT—the man who, disregarding his own immediate individual interest, labors for that of his country. When foes—when dangers surround—he does not so much inquire, “Are they self-provoked, or *unmerited*?” as, “how shall we meet them? how shall they be repelled?” Is he high in society—his merits shall sweeten, adorn, and dignify his station. Is he poor and humble—the attributes of his character shall raise him far above the proudest eminence of ambitious fortune. Through life, he is honored and respected, and the blessings of a whole community attend him to the grave.

Whatever may have produced the present war, is not a speedy and an honorable peace desired by every patriotic American? And should every American unite, in sentiments and efforts, to attain that grand object, would it not soon be ensured?

“From chains to save his country—to repel
Her ruthless foes, and save a threatened state—
A glorious spirit stimulates the brave,
Whose lofty purpose is the pledge of triumph!”

Would we learn to estimate the favors with which, under Divine Providence, our country has been blessed? Turn our eyes to Europe—the happiest spot of devoted Europe! There hell-born DESPOTISM reigns in iron sway! Ambition, with giant tread, stalks o'er the fields, spreading desolation around, and drenching the earth in blood. LIBERTY has fled—she has no spot for a foot-stool. Religion, civilization and science, are about to follow. Her subjects are degraded to the condition of beasts—her rulers, *exalted* to the sublime pre-eminence of *Destroying Demons*! To what may we ascribe this state of things? To corrupt systems of government—where one or a few individuals bear sway, seeking personal power and aggrandizement, disregarding of the general welfare! O, Europe! Humanity weeps for thee! she weeps for thy crimes, thy follies and thy sufferings; but turns with disgust from the scenes of thy degradation! She directs her eyes (with mingled pleasure and anxiety) to Columbia! Here, her hopes are centred—Here shall they flourish, sacred to Freedom, to science, and to virtue.

Who, grown prophetic from a knowledge of past ages, by the examples of Greece and of Rome, shall predict a subversion of American liberties? What similitude do they discover in the origin,

the local condition, or the governments of ancient republics and our own, which warrants such a prediction? We are not sprung from “a race of outlaws, begotten of ravished Sabines”—We cannot look back to the time when our fathers were a horde of uncivilized barbarians! We have arisen amidst the light of civilization. Ours, from the beginning, has been the liberty of reason, unalloyed by licentiousness. We have no privileged orders—no constitutional division-line between the rich and the poor—no plebeians—no patricians. Though great was the glory of Greece and of Rome, which lives through the remembrance of their heroes and sages—yet were not their civil institutions far from being perfect? Were they established upon just principles of equity? Indeed, the then rude, ignorant, and contentious state of general society, rendered the formation of such governments impossible. Though a dazzling fame is left behind—their existence—their splendor, has passed away like a rushlight. America has not built upon their systems—and so long as she maintains her original purity of government, can have no fear of their fate. Yet a cautious watchfulness is at all times necessary. From the experience of ages past, we may learn the mutability of all human institutions. Guarding, then, our union, our rights and liberties, with a jealous eye, from outward or internal innovations—neither growing giddy upon the eminence of success, nor despairingly blind amidst threatening dangers—American glory shall never fade, but brighten through the most distant period of revolving time.

When we contemplate—my indulgent friends! when we contemplate the rise and progress of the Art of Printing, we find, that it has every where assisted Religion, Civilization, and Science, and been promotive—nay, essential to the existence, of civil Liberty.

What was the condition of man, in the first stages of society? Blest with rational faculties—with the powers of language—he could, indeed, communicate his thoughts and sentiments orally to his fellow. But they could not be perpetuated—they would not extend beyond the time and place in which they were uttered. With distant friends he had no communication, and remained ignorant of most transactions, except in his immediate presence. Wandering alone, and in the fields—when he beheld the scenes of nature which surrounded him—his mind was filled with the sublimest contemplations. But they came, and passed away—they glided over his memory, like the transitory rays of a falling star. As the first essay of his invention, he resorted to imitative figures, carved upon tables of stone or wood, representing in shape the object of his ideas. Here commenced the era of symbolic writing, practised to this day among many eastern nations. Behold the first sages, the astronomers of Egypt, roaming the banks of the Nile and the Niger, gazing in silent wonder at the heavenly system—and tracing, in rude figures, their signs and their circles upon the sands of the shore, etching them upon the rocks of the desert, or upon the rough and unpolished skins of animals.

But soon, amidst progressive genius, arose a nobler art—the invention of letters. We will not stop to inquire, to whom belongs the honor of this invention—whether to *Thaut the Egyptian*, or *Thaut the Phœnician*—or whether it was of Divine origin.

The art of writing was indeed slow in progressing—irregular in its system.

Even at its greatest perfection among the antients, how dull was the advancement of SCIENCE. The little splendor which it emitted, was owing to the general darkness by which it was surrounded.

Time would not allow us to trace the progress of Science, in all its different vicissitudes, through the intricacies of obscure ages—even if the speaker were competent to the task. Often have we beheld it bursting forth with brightness, like a meteor of night; and like a nightly meteor, sinking in darkness, leaving behind no traces of its splendor. When Liberty and Science flourished together in Greece and in Rome, a general ignorance nevertheless prevailed. Her sages and philosophers were considered as more than mortal; and even their absurdities were recorded as oracles. But their names and their works have descended, even to enlighten modern ages—many, indeed, which would sink into obscurity, had they not the airy merits of *antiquity* to buoy them up.

The difficulty of obtaining education in those periods, put it entirely beyond the reach of the common people. Few—very few, could claim the privilege of becoming learned, and learning was shackled by ostentation and bigotry. Books were seldom seen except in the libraries of the wealthy. If an author committed his productions to writing, it was for the use of himself or his friends. A single transcript would have cost more than the printing of a whole edition, perhaps, at the present day. It was the custom for great men to deliver their effusions orally, often extempore, in public. To this we may, in some degree, ascribe the perfection of oratory among the Greeks and Romans. In the time of Henry the 2d, of England, the manner of publishing the works of authors, was to have them read over for three days successively, by order of the universities, or judges appointed by the public; and if they met with approbation, copies of them were then permitted to be taken.

Instead of printers, scribes were in those periods employed. All could not then recur to a *newspaper*, and obtain a correct history of every passing event. They could not apply to a book-store, and receive the most celebrated and valuable work for a mere trifle. What would be thought now, were a Concordance to cost five hundred dollars? or were two hundred dollars to be given for a common octavo volume? Yet such, we are told, was the rate at which books were sold previous to the discovery of Printing. They were also transferred from one to another, by bond or deed, as we now convey real or landed estate.

Amidst this state of things, how was it possible that science should extensively flourish? What was Greece, in its brightest moments, and Rome, in its Augustan splendor, but dark lanterns, beaming brightly within, yet spreading no radiance around them? Far distant ages were to reap the benefit of their researches; and when they themselves were sunk in darkness, to walk in the reflection of their glory!

With means of diffusion so confined, how could infant science withstand the clouds of superstition and ignorance, when ambition and tyranny united against her? When Liberty—amidst those revolutions which history has recorded—again took her flight, Science accompanied her from the earth. And for many centuries we behold her, in different regions, like an electric flash, emit, at intervals, a lurid ray—and like an electric flash, as suddenly disappear!

But the Art of Printing arose as a sun, which should dispel the clouds of Ignorance and Superstition, and shine with a steady lustre, enlightening ages, till it should set with the world, in the night of eternity!

We are told that printing, by characters carved on blocks of wood, had been for ages practised among the Chinese. This invention has never, perhaps, been traced to its origin; and should be called *stamp- ing*, rather than printing. Had their knowledge of the

enlighten the Chinese? What advantages have they reaped from it? Even at the present day, they experience no salutary effects from that divine art, which has tended (where left free to the course of its nature) to enlighten other parts of the world. And how is it possible that they should, when we consider, that they are superstitiously bigotted against every innovation upon ancient custom, and that their alphabet is composed of eighty thousand different characters!

It was the genius of FAUST, which in the fifteenth century unfolded the Art of Printing as at present practised. Justly was it ranked as the greatest of human inventions. By the ignorant of that age, its source was considered supernatural. When Faust printed his first edition of the Bible, and exposed it for sale in the streets of Paris, he was imprisoned as a necromancer. They were offered as written transcripts. The cheapness at which he sold them, and the fairness—the regularity of the characters—determined at once that he dealt with the devil. And he would have suffered the punishment, inflicted by the pious priestcraft in such cases, had he not divulged the art, which he before had endeavored to conceal.

From that period it began gradually to spread—through different parts of the continent—to England—diffusing beams of light, and chasing before it the clouds of bigotry and ignorance. Genius and Wisdom welcomed its appearance, and hailed it as the star of Jacob—the *Art Divine*. Religion, Literature, and Science, soon owned its resuscitating power. TRUTH arose, with renovated vigor—wielding the PRESS—a powerful engine. At its approach, Superstition trembled, in her dark palace of cruelty and crimes! She could not withstand its force—and Error shrank from the rays of its searching radiance. Here commenced a new era. Learning would no longer be monopolised by a few bigotted, superstitious, designing monks. The effusions of former ages—the discoveries and improvements in the Arts and the Sciences—the moral and metaphysical works of ancient philosophers, were brought forth from the grave of obscurity. Their musty parchments and mouldering inscriptions—dim from the rust of ages, and dark in their signification—were explained in simple terms; stamped in fair and legible characters, and diffused to enlighten a world of inquirers.

But what elucidations are now necessary to convince mankind of the transcendent usefulness of this *art*? Compare the past with the present. I cannot attempt to pass upon it a merited eulogium; nor will the occasion allow minutely to trace its progress and effects.

What was England, previous to the introduction of printing into that kingdom? Comparatively speaking, a horde of barbarians. It was there cultivated, however, with greater assiduity than in the country from which it emanated—which is produced as one instance, among many, that genius is seldom rewarded—seldom flourishes, in its native soil. By the wise and the powerful was it patronised; and men of genius, education and wealth, were proud to become its professors. The PRESS was introduced into universities—established by literary associations, and every where held in the highest veneration. Soon did they perceive the benefit of its encouragement. The means of obtaining knowledge being rendered easy, and brought within the reach of all, the majority became gradually more enlightened. The shackles which bound the mind, and the veil which blinded the eyes of mankind, were rent asunder. They were led to behold the errors which surrounded science—the arts, the bigotry and superstitions which veiled Religion, which perverted that pure fountain into a

deadly pool, more pestiferous than the Lake of Sodom; changed the mild breath of peace into the wasting winds which sweep the plains of Java! It was then that designing priestcraft exclaimed, "We must root out printing, or printing will root out us." But printing was too firmly established. We must, then, said they, "set up learning against learning." This they did, perhaps with more, but with limited success—for their opponents were armed with Truth and Reason.

Thus too, amidst progressive inquiry, the original rights of man are unfolded. He learns his own strength—his attributes—the power of his faculties. He perceives the injustice, and despises the oppression of despotism. He catches the spirit of Liberty, and longs for personal—for rational freedom.

Although the old world has beheld the dawns of many revolutions, tyranny still maintains its ascendancy. By tyranny, the light has been withheld—it has not been suffered to become general. The generous few have yielded, with the ignorant many, to the chains and darkness of designing despots. Their efforts, though they must still await the happy period of a general emancipation—may nevertheless boast of glorious ameliorations. Instance England—Not only as regards literary and scientific acquirements—also, her reformation of government. Not but that her constitutional government is imperfect—not but that it is often grossly perverted in its administration. Yet consider its purity, as compared with former eras. In promoting these, the Art of Printing stands conspicuous. Her historians acknowledge it, and the world bears witness.

But is it not the interest of tyrants to destroy the press? Has it not ever been their policy? FRANCE affords a conspicuous example. There printing has been practised in much perfection. For a while, as relates to science, she had experienced its happy effects. From the same source, Liberty was about to crown her with a glorious blessing. Yet now, we behold a gloomy reverse. The despot who rules her destinies—did he not know that where the PRESS was left free to enlighten the mind, personal thralldom would not long be submitted to? Yes! And for his decree alone—setting aside his other characteristics, which the speaker would neither depreciate nor overvalue—for his decree alone which destroys the liberty of the PRESS, he deserves the execration of every virtuous man.

Tyranny, we must ever abhor. It is still tyranny—whether reigning in adverse darkness, or amidst delusive and guilty splendor. And shall we not feel for France, as for the rest of enslaved Europe? How long shall it be thus? Is there not still a spark of that Divine fire, which shall never be extinguished? Soon may it burst forth, and spread its light through every darkened nation! Thus will we hope, as we ardently desire. We would wish them—not a change of oppressors; but a thorough emancipation from every kind of oppression.

Turn once more to America. To the Art of Printing it is, that she in a measure owes her present exalted condition. Perhaps, too, it was the effects of this art, which taught Columbus, that the broad-beaming sun, which seemed to quench its splendor in the western ocean, descended but to light another land.

Our honest forefathers—ever revered be their memories! did they not for a time inherit a portion of ignorance? Did they not sometimes *burn a witch*, and sometimes *suspend a quaker*? And shall we not ascribe this to ignorance rather than to wickedness? With few opportunities to discover—with confined means to disseminate it, they still indicated a disposition to encourage truth. Welcome were the

first rays of reviving knowledge which shone upon them from the antient world. Now and then a wandering spark from the fire of Science, in the character of eminent exiles, descended among them. These kindled up a flame, which, at no distant period, was to illumine a mighty realm, eminent for genius and learning.

Printing, on its early introduction into this country, met with every encouragement which could have been expected. The Press was considered as an oracle, more famous than that of antient Delphi. But far different were its attributes and effects from those of that oracle. It was the province of the Press—not to mislead ignorance and confirm folly—but to subserve the cause of truth, to remove error and superstition, to enlighten the mind by every species of knowledge which should exalt it from the dust—from the darkness in which it was buried.

In the records of our Revolution, the Press stands pre-eminent for promoting the cause of INDEPENDENCE. From this fountain flowed the pure effusions—the doctrines of freedom, of our heroes and sages. These inspired the American people with a sense of their original rights and privileges as men. These opened the pores of the soul to the infusion of that ardent spirit of Liberty, which was to urge them to the contest, and animate them through the glorious struggle, till it should end in success.

It is not, then, at the power of arms alone that tyranny has to tremble. No! It is the enlightened mind, which knows and feels the dignity of human nature—which scorns to bow beneath the yoke of oppression. Knowing that liberty—rational liberty, is the bequest of God—and that "in his wrath," as a curse only, did he first place a king upon earth—the man thus enlightened, thus dignified with a sense of feeling and understanding, would sooner yield to death, than submit to the galling chains of slavery.

SCIENCE is the sister of LIBERTY; and PRINTING, though of later birth, is the guardian of both: They are co-existent and co-essential: They are inseparable companions, and can prosper but together. LIBERTY must preside o'er the PRESS, and the PRESS be the watch-tower of LIBERTY. By SCIENCE must the PRESS be illuminated, and the PRESS shall disseminate the rays of SCIENCE.

Where is the country—where the people, blest with this glorious combination? Let them cherish it, as the core of their heart—for it shall preserve them through every revolution of destroying time. It shall preserve them unmoved, amidst falling kingdoms and dissolving empires; and exalt them to the proudest eminence of happiness and glory! Where, then, shall we turn our eyes? To Europe?—They thence revolt, with indignant disappointment; nor will again recross the ocean. But here—here in our own Columbia, we behold that favorite of heaven. Here, the PRESS has flourished free, advancing Liberty and Science. And here may it ever—ever remain unshackled!

In America, we enjoy the FREEDOM OF THE PRESS in its greatest purity. Who would contract its limits, or rob it of a privilege? But, does it not at times border upon licentiousness? Shall it be left free, then, to pervert truth, and subserve the cause of falsehood—to disseminate false doctrines in religion and politics?—What! would we, that the sun were extinguished from the firmament, because the serpent basks as freely in its beams as the swallow?—because it warms alike to vegetation the noxious weed as the nutritious plant? Would we, that the dews of heaven should cease to fall, because

they moisten alike the Bohon Upas, as the fragrant bosom of the rose?—No! with the antidote before us, why should we fear the poison? A free privilege of inquiry, and unbiassed judgment—where the mind is thus enlightened, Truth will ever, in the end, prevail. The constituted laws of our country define and punish libellous and treasonable publications: With all other discussions, they have no right to interfere. And the first blow which is aimed at the Freedom of the American Press, would be the step by which a tyrant would attempt an ascent to power. But it would prove a stumbling block, which would for ever prostrate him in the dust.

Look round upon our country. We behold learning every where encouraged. Not only the wealthy, but the poor partake of its blessings. Although young in existence, America transcends in general knowledge, if not in classical literature and useful science, every other nation upon the face of the earth. If America can boast of few literary productions—if her writers, her poets, her philosophers, her artists, have not arisen to superior eminence, it has not been from a poverty of genius. It may be ascribed to other causes. Having a wide field open before them, they do not confine themselves, (as did antient researches) to a particular branch of the arts or sciences. Probably, too, in a nation so young, where an equality prevails, and a *general improvement* is the prominent object, emulation does not so much exist. Shining talents are more seldom brought forward, and perhaps too little encouraged. But, who shall say that America is without native genius? We will produce RITTENHOUSE, and the whole celestial system shall bear witness. We will mention WEST, and *Nature* herself shall appear in his behalf. We will point out ERANKLIN, and the lightning of heaven shall descend to convince them! A *Paine*, a *Barlow*, and a *Rush*, have lately sought the tomb, whose worth—whose works shall stand recorded to ages. We have, also, many living instances of native genius. We will not name them. They speak for themselves, and to the honor of their country.

The encouragement given to common schools, and to periodical publications, does honor to the American people. It tends to hasten them, by a dignified advancement, to a glorious pre-eminence—a pre-eminence to which they may justly aspire. In every village—in every country town—and often amidst the dark wilderness, where culture has scarce lopped the branches of the pine to admit the light of heaven—we behold temples arising, dedicated to KNOWLEDGE. In more populous places, and in cities, are charitable institutions, for instructing the poor and the orphan. Seminaries, also, for the higher branches of education, the eminence of which would not disgrace the proudest countries of the old world, where the arts and the sciences have flourished for ages.

Throughout almost every part of the United States, where population will insure patronage, newspapers are established, whose columns “blend amusement with instruction”—which convey occasional literary morceaus, with political and miscellaneous information.

We have also numerous periodical publications, devoted exclusively to literature, science, and the arts. Many of these possess a spirit and purity, which does honor to the abilities of their conductors and to the genius and literary character of the nation. But, do these meet with merited encouragement? We might venture to affirm, that they are no where too extensively patronized—not too well rewarded.

These, my friends, are the blessings of Freedom—purified by science, diffused through the Divine medium of the Press.

It will not be supposed that America can yet boast extensive practical or mechanical improvement in the Art of Printing. She is, indeed, making rapid advancements. American materials will be found, perhaps, inferior to none in elegance, if not in durability. The type-foundries of New-York and Philadelphia have produced specimens, both plain and fancy letter, which will long remain unrivalled. Amidst the disk of inexperience which has shrouded our firmament, we have beheld bright *Stars** appearing. Like day-stars, they forebode increasing light, a meridian splendor to American typographic-mechanical genius. Many works have lately issued from the *American Press*, unsurpassed in neatness and correctness of execution. And the sons of FAUST, of FRANKLIN and of FREEDOM, may look forward with pride to a no distant period, when that PRESS shall be as distinguished for the mechanical elegance, as for the truth and chasteness of its emanations. For Science and the Arts have declared, that “where Liberty dwells, there is our Country.”

RESPECTED BRETHREN!

Thus has the speaker essayed to discharge the duty assigned him. To sum up the substance or intent of his discourse, you have but to repeat this motto: “Printing, the source of Knowledge.” We may then add, “The Press, the cradle of Science, the nurse of Genius, and the shield of Liberty.” Considering, then, ourselves as a profession, we have one prominent duty to perform: That is, to emulate, as far as we are able, the examples of our great prototype, our American father, FRANKLIN. Next to love and to serve our country, his first maxim was, “Honor thy profession.” Unlike many who presume to advise, he ever practised the duties he inculcated. Often has he exemplified the words of the good Plutarch, who was once a street scavenger in his native village: “It is not the station which dignifies the man; but the man which dignifies a station.”

As a SOCIETY, therefore, let our pride be, to preserve our existence. Let us endeavor by all honorable means to extend our influence, and to promote the objects for which we are united. Associations, when originating in laudable motives, are ever commendable. Such an origin this Society may boast. We would not estimate its merits by the miser’s standard, the weight of its treasury-box: In this balance, it would not be “found wanting.” Perhaps it may not be altogether perfect in its nature. It might more extensively embrace literary and other improvements, and promote various interests of our profession. It may be capable of much improvement. To whom shall it look, then, but to those who are already its members, and to those whose duty it is to unite their efforts? Brethren of the art—you whose names are not found upon the records of this Society—by what incitement shall I address you? Having no private motives, my words shall be few, yet spoken in sincerity. The warm hand of fellowship is tendered. Do you want arguments to convince your reason—invitations and appeals to prompt your decision? Have we not all one common interest? And by our united zeal, cannot that interest be successfully promoted, extended and ennobled?

An aged sire, who was fast approaching to dissolution, called his seven sons around him. He gave them a bundle of rods, which he desired them to break. They took them—tried in succession—but

* Alluding to Messrs. Starrs, type-founders, of this city.

none could effect it. "Give them to me," said the father. Separating the rods, he took them singly, and soon accomplished the object. "Thus, (said the venerable sage) while you remain united in the bonds of brotherly love, you may defy the frowns of fortune, and the power of your enemies. But by division, by contending passions and adverse interests, you invite misfortune, are exposed to the malice of the world, and incur destruction."

This is an antient allegory. Apply it as we will—either to our own little professional community, or to the more-high and important relations of the republic.

Here will I leave each portion of the subject. May our own dictates—the emotions of our bosoms, inspire to worthy conduct, and ensure happiness and prosperity.

MY FRIENDS!

The speaker will now render his acknowledgments for your indulgence. To this occasion he has not done justice. He feels—he knows it. But, he has not addressed you from motives of personal fame—not for popular applause—but to subserve an immediate duty of the day. Youth—inexperience—want of health, genius, or abilities—or whatever has tended to retard that fire and that eloquence which should distinguish an orator—he offers no excuse in extenuation. He were even satisfied with meriting your *charity*. It is the first time he has spoken in public—It will be the last time, perhaps, he shall have the honor of addressing any of this assembly. But often, he hopes, we may meet to perpetuate this anniversary, under prospects more auspicious to all individually, and to our country. And when we shall pass away—when posterity shall walk, if not weep, over our graves—may the liberties we inherit be transmitted bright and unimpaired to our descendants, till the sun shall cease to shine, and the world itself shall dissolve.

Soon, brethren, are we to assemble in the hall of festivity. There, while the wine sparkles in the glass, and the song and the toast resound—may gay good humor preside o'er the scene, and brighten every countenance. May we remember, that it is not for ourselves alone that we rejoice. May the sentiments of our hearts unite, and the affections of our bosoms expand—rejoicing, with harmony, as becomes friends—with reason, as becomes men—with freedom, as becomes Americans!

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