

AN
ORATION

PREPARED FOR DELIVERY BEFORE THE CORPS
OF
CADETS,

AT
WEST-POINT,

ON THE
FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY
OF
AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE.

BY CADET WM. MAYNADIER,
OF THE
SECOND CLASS.

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ORATION.

FROM North to South is heard, on this day, but one sentiment ; from East to West but one voice ; the spirit of Party is forgotten, and all join in the general shout of joy : 'tis the voice of a free people hailing with rapture the recurrence of that day which first saw the sunset on them as Freemen : 'tis the voice of Freemen raising the loud anthem to Liberty in her own holy temple : the voice of her votaries sounding forth her praise, who have come up this day to her altar to renew the vow made by their Forefathers to live in freedom, or to die. 'Tis to recal to your minds their deeds, their sufferings in the cause of Freedom, and their glorious triumphs, that this day is dedicated : and though the tale has been often told in more animating language, and painted in more glowing colours, than *you* can expect, or than is in *my* power to express it, yet I shall not on that account fear to address you ; even from the place where you have been accustomed to hear the prayer offered up to heaven, and the Holy Word of God explained with all the eloquence which true religion can inspire, I shall not fear to weary.

This is a subject which can never be exhausted, a subject which can never be to you uninteresting. No! it never can, 'till the sons of Heroes shall forget their Fathers' fame ; 'till this fairer portion of the globe rescued by them from Tyranny and Oppression shall be again reduced to that state ; 'till History shall be extinct—gratitude forgotten : 'till the name of Liberty shall cease to excite in

the breasts of Freemen that sacred veneration which they feel for all that belongs to it; that fondness with which they cherish the memories of Martyrs in its cause, and that firm resolution by which they bind themselves to imitate their example. "Age cannot stale nor custom wither it."

Shall it be asked by posterity what causes induced the minds of our forefathers to rebellion? what greivances could have justified a breach of allegiance to their sovereign? was there no other method of redress? none by which the calamities of civil war and open rebellion could have been avoided? There was none. The revolution of these colonies was not a thing lightly undertaken; this Declaration of Independence was not adopted in a moment of enthusiasm or without free discussion of the consequences to which it might lead. It contains in itself a catalogue of grievances which can only be endured by those whose law is a tyrant's will. The spirit which induced our Forefathers to tear themselves from their homes, from their country, and from all the social ties that bound them to their countrymen, to seek an asylum in a remote and uncivilized land; the spirit which supported them in the wilderness, when deprived of all the comforts of life, and when no succour was nigh; that spirit was but ill suited to brook grievances less tolerable than those for which they had before sacrificed all but liberty. But their courage was equalled, and, if possible, surpassed, by their prudence. They did not at once break out into that open opposition to the mother country, which the wrongs they had already received, and were daily receiving, might well have justified: on the contrary they petitioned, humbly petitioned, 'till new petitions be-

getting new grievances, submission would have been cowardice; rebellion was courage, and this Declaration of Independence was only a declaration of the political state to which Great Britain had reduced us. The consent of the governed constitutes the power of the governor, and when that consent is withdrawn, farther exercise of his power is usurpation. The allegiance of a subject is a monarch's right so long as it is returned by his protection: that once refused absolves him from it—aye, commands him to obey no longer. These were the reasons which influenced that band of Patriots which, half a century ago, was seen pondering, with deep concern and anxious solicitude painted in each countenance, over a proclamation they were about to make to the world "that America was free," that the colonies which had long borne the insults and oppressions of the mother country—which had made her enemies their own—her friends their's—that a people in the New World, known only by their connexion with Great Britain, were about to disclaim all allegiance to her, to establish a new form of government whose basis should be founded on Liberty and Equal Rights, and to assume among nations that rank to which, as a free people and distinct nation, they were entitled. What a subject for consideration! Such as had never before occupied the attention of a legislative body. The consequences: either an open war with the proud Mistress of the World, without adequate resources—with but a bare possibility of success; when failure must bring down upon themselves certain disgrace and ruin—or a tame submission—a renunciation of all those fond hopes of liberty which they were anxious to bequeath to their posterity, pure and unsulli-

ed as their motives in declaring it their right. Solemn and serious was the deliberation, noble and bold the determination.

Liberty, who had long been seeking a habitation among men—who had seen her altars profaned and broken—the last ray of her light extinguished, and the darkness of slavery and despotism descend on those whose proudest boast once was that she deigned to smile on them as her own, her chosen people, wearied with the obstinacy, and perverseness of mortals in refusing the blessings which she brings, was about to leave man forever, and return to her own ethereal mansions in the skies, when the voice of Jefferson proclaiming “all men free,” strikes like sweet music on her ear, and bids her return; she pauses: And is there yet, she cries, among the vast multitude, so tame, so submissive to the rod stretched over them—Is there one people, that dares to shake it off? One that yet acknowledges my sway, among whom I may see an altar rise in every heart, and the High Priest, ready to offer up in sacrifice the warmest blood that flows therein? They shall be my people. I will lead them on to victory. And did she not? Ask the few who are yet spared to behold the blessings they have brought on their country—on the world; who stand among us as beings of a superior order; whose silvery hair scattered in scanty locks about their temples, tells of times gone by—of times of high deeds and chivalric actions; who are left as links connecting the present generation with the past, and warning us never to forget those who for us braved danger in the battle's front. Ask them what nerved their arm, and animated their souls in the day of danger? Who led them to victory? 'Twas Wash-

ington; in name, but the Spirit of Liberty was with them. 'Twas She who took his form to be our guide, our counsellor, our chief.

Defenders of your country's rights, why have so many of you left us? Why were you not spared to remain with us as examples to which the patriot might point when devoting himself for his country? But though many of you are mingled with the soil which your courage has liberated, still are you amongst us. Your courage, your perseverance, your sacrifices in the cause of freedom, are still fresh in our memories; and it is on occasions like this, that they are revived with increased vigour; that you appear to our imaginations as once in reality you were, glowing with all the ardour of patriotism. It is on occasions like this, that all your contests, all your glorious struggles in the cause of liberty, are present to our minds, and that we are, in imagination, in the presence of those heroes before whom tyrants trembled—at the mention of whose names Despotism grew pale, whilst Liberty in triumph exclaimed, “these are my sons;”—that we are in imagination spectators of those glorious contests which we had before only heard from tradition, or learned from History's page; of those contests for liberty where every drop of Patriot blood spilt in the sacred cause seemed to render the oppressors more odious, the oppressed more resolute, more firmly united. Among so many scenes alike honourable, alike glorious—among so many Heroes which our country has produced, to which shall I call your attention? Of which one shall I speak, rather than of another? I will mention Bunker Hill—at the name of which every true son of America feels his heart expand with triumphant exultation, while the tear of gratitude will steal down his cheek at the remembrance of the gallant, the patriotic Warren:

of Warren the first Martyr in the Sacred Cause. Oh! that he could have survived that bloody day—that he could have lived to see his country, the land for which he so bravely exposed, so nobly laid down, his life, raised to her present state of political greatness—that he could have lived to see her, as she now is, a beacon to guide Nations, who have long been tossed on the tempestuous Ocean of Revolution, to the Haven of Liberty.

I will mention Quebec, and that band of heroes who, to reach it, traversed the cold and dreary wilderness without food, without clothes, with nought to support them or cheer their spirits, nought to keep off despondency, but the love of their country. They, whom Russia's arms could not check—whose triumphant march not all her sons could impede—yielded to her snows. But these, not all the rigours of the severest cold, or pressing famine, could intimidate. 'Twas Arnold who led them on, who, "whilst he gnawed his moccasins for subsistence, cried onward my brave fellows, this is the way to Quebec." Oh! Arnold, hadst thou then perished, had the cold hand of death then struck thee, thy country would now honour as a hero, him whom she must ever despise as a traitor. Had the fate of the noble Montgomery been thine, thy name had now been among the highest on the temple of fame, instead of being stamped with the foul blot of treason.

Were it necessary, my Companions, I could remind you of a thousand other contests, of fatiguing marches, performed in the depths of winter, every step of which left traces of blood on the frozen ground; of the blood of freemen on the soil for which that blood was spilt; of the blood of our fathers, poured out for that liberty, the blessings of which we their sons now enjoy. I

could tell you of the names of a thousand heroes—it would be but enumerating every citizen; but these things are fresh in your memories; they were implanted at the first dawning of intellect; and have grown with its growth, and strengthened as its strength increased.

But why should I dwell on these things? The very ground on which you stand is rendered holy by having been trodden by the heroes of your country. Cast your eyes around you, and on one side you behold in all the awful reverence of age, the battlements of yonder Fortress* once the sole remaining hope of our country, o'ergrown with weeds, and fast falling to decay. Each stone that drops from its mouldering walls reminds us of the rapid and devastating flight of time, to which all must yield. Must all then yield? All be destroyed and forgotten? No! The lapse of ages can never erase from our memories the recollection of those who once stood upon its battlements, resolved rather to find a grave in its ruins than yield it to the foe. On the other, the place to which the Polish warrior oft retired† to muse on the unhappy fate of his country, and to lament her cruel, her untimely fall; the monumental pile shall rise to perpetuate his name, but it will live in the memories of two nations, of two continents, and patriotism will ever glow and freedom smile at the mention of Kosciusko's name.

But while our own happy country is enjoying all the blessings of liberty and equal rights, can its citizens forget the many favours received in her struggle from foreign hands? Can she think of the many foreigners, who left their homes, their native shores, to devote their lives and fortunes to her cause? who came in the

*Fort Putnam.

†Kosciusko's Garden.

hour of danger, and when all things bore the face of uncertainty, exclaiming, "where liberty is, there is my country?" Can she think of this and look with indifference on nations striving to be free; whom the clarion of freedom sounded by herself has aroused from their lethargy? No! The name alone of Greece, of the once land of the wise, the valiant, the eloquent, and the FREE, is sufficient to awaken in the breasts of freemen those generous sentiments, which are ever prompting them to engage in the cause of the oppressed; but when to that name is joined that of an oppressed people, long bowed down under the iron yoke of despotism, struggling for the rights to which the "laws of nature and of nature's God" entitle them, who can resist the appeal? Is he a Philanthropist? There are thousands of his fellow creatures sunk in the most degraded state of servility, to which Eastern despotism and Mahomedan superstition can reduce them. Is he a Patriot? They are the sons of those who fell at Thermopylæ, who conquered at Marathon, who bled at Leuctra; of those who first kindled on the altar of Liberty that sacred flame, which shone before us in times of doubt and peril; that flame which, though its splendor may be for a time diminished, never will, never can be extinguished—the true Grecian fire. 'Twas a spark of that fire, which first kindled in the breasts of Americans the flame, whose effulgence has since shed its light o'er the world, whose genial warmth has been felt from the snow-invested north, to the regions where "constant verdure smiles." Nations by its light have seen their degradation, and thrown off the chains that bound them.

The hand of the tyrant is no longer felt on our Continent; but the feet of the Ottoman is still trampling on the grave of Leoni-

das; the hand of the infidel pollutes the holy temple of Zion, and Greece is left to avenge her wrongs, to strike for her liberty, unassuccoured and alone. But she will avenge them; the Ottoman will be driven from her classic groves; the spirits of her departed heroes will look down with rapture from their Elysian abodes and smile on their children. The lyre of another will be struck to the fame of another Achilles, and should a Philip appear, another Demosthenes will appear to thunder forth his philippics,

“For Freedom’s battle once begun,
Bequeathed by bleeding sire to son,
Though baffled oft is ever won.”

The tide of her fame has ebbed to its lowest; it must rise, and its surge will wash the foul stain of slavery from her name forever.

To the brave who have since stood up in the cause of their country, we owe our gratitude, our thanks; and while the heroes who first planted the standard of liberty, and declared our rights, are remembered, surely they who have since boldly stepped forth in defence of them should not be forgotten. No! When after a period of forty years had elapsed, the sons of America were again called forth from their peaceful employments, to encounter the dangers of war, and face the same foes their fathers had driven from the land, were they found degenerate? Let the bloody field of Niagara testify; let the spirits of those answer, who on that field poured out their lives; let the voice of those reply, who on that day, stood firm when the bullet, bearing death on its wings, fell like hail on the battle-field; when the bright bayonet was red with blood that had warmed hearts as fearless, as bold, as their own; when the sound of Niagara’s cataract was drowned by the

loud roar of artillery, whose bright flash served but to show another friend, another countryman, sunk down on the field to rise no more. Were they degenerate? Ask the conquerors of Europe—of Europe's mighty conqueror—the invincibles of Britain, why deserted they the "booty and beauty" they had so exultingly promised themselves? Did they thus turn their backs on the foe, on the red field of Waterloo? No! The overwhelming, the devastating march of the Corsican was by them opposed, by them checked; they to whom he yielded, yielded to Americans, not urged to the field by the call of ambition, not by the hope of plunder, but to defend the rights that had descended to them, the legacies of their fathers. Excited by these feelings they went forth to battle, led on by Jackson, they went forth and drove the Invaders from their shores. Here we might awhile pause, to dwell on the firmness, bravery, and magnanimity, which constitute the principal features of his character, who at New-Orleans revived the remembrance of "seventy-six," and taught the proud lion of Britain, that the eagle's flight was still as lofty as when first she waved her pinions in Freedom's air, and rose to meet the first sun that shed his enlivening rays on free America. But 'tis engraven on the hearts of his countrymen, in characters, which time itself cannot efface; their voice has already declared him "first in the hearts of his countrymen."

The Jubilee has come, and found us—how? Does it find us as we were, when the glad tidings of Independence first went forth through the land, strong in nought but our own just cause; acknowledged as a nation by no government? No! What fifty years

have ever witnessed greater improvements in science, literature, and politics? Our country has advanced, and is advancing with rapid strides in power, wealth, and respectability. Her institutions have attracted the attention, and elicited the applause of the learned of all countries. Her commerce is extended to all parts of the known world; there is no water which has not borne on its surface her adventurous barks; no country, that has not seen their white canvass swell in the breeze that wafted her productions to their shores; no nation that has not beheld the bright stars of the new constellation wave proudly o'er their seas, and none has ever seen them strike to equal force. Her fame is spread to the remotest regions of the globe. In every land, the name of a citizen of the United States is respected, and the hospitable Arab, when he sits down in his tent to repose, will speak of a free, a happy people beyond the sea, and tell of the deeds of Washington. Her example has taught nations that to be free is to be happy. Guided by it they have assumed the right denied them by sovereigns, and consecrated their land a temple of liberty.

The holy alliance of freedom is forming in the south. Who can tell where its influence will end? Who can say what will be the limits of its blessings to man? 'Tis pleasing to look through the long vista of ages, and see the cheering prospect that strikes the view, still brightening as we advance, still alluring farther by its increasing beauties; to behold the yet unborn Washingtons of other climes leading on to victory; to watch the first dawning of the morn of universal liberty, and gaze on it in rapture till it reach its noon-day splendour. These are something more than

mere speculations, more than the visions of a deluded imagination. The time will come when the world shall behold the blissful reality. The bright star, that appeared first in our own horizon, is shining on with increasing effulgence, and fast approaching its meridian altitude. Let it still shine on 'till its radiant brightness shall enlighten the universe; 'till nations shall be governed by themselves, and the name of monarch be known only from history.

FINIS.