

AN

ADDRESS,

DELIVERED AT THE REQUEST OF THE

Republican Committee of Arrangements,

AT

PITTSFIELD,

ON THE ANNIVERSARY OF

American Independence,

JULY 4, 1822.

•••••
BY SAMUEL M. M'KAY.
•••••

PITTSFIELD :
PRINTED BY PHINEAS ALLEN.

.....
1822.

Pittsfield, July 4th, 1822.

TO SAMUEL M. MCKAY, Esq.

SIR,

The subscribers have been deputed by the Committee of Arrangements, for the Celebration of the 4th of July, 1822, to present the thanks of that Committee to you, for the ingenuous, able, and patriotic Address delivered on this Anniversary of our National Independence, and to request of you a copy for publication.

Permit us, individually, to take this opportunity of expressing to you the assurance of our personal respect and regard.

**H. H. CHILDS,
WILLIAM C. JARVIS,
OREN GOODRICH.**



Pittsfield, July 5th, 1822.

GENTLEMEN,

I have received your polite note of the 4th inst. communicating the request of the Committee of Arrangements for a copy of my Address, delivered on the 4th of July, 1822.

I cheerfully comply with their wishes, and take this opportunity to express my acknowledgements to them and to you, for the approbation of my humble efforts on that occasion, which you have been pleased to signify.

Permit me to reciprocate to you, individually, the assurance of my personal respect and regard.

SAMUEL M. MCKAY.

*To Doct. HENRY H. CHILDS, WILLIAM C. JARVIS, and OREN
GOODRICH, Esquires.*

ADDRESS.



THIS DAY, my fellow-citizens, is sacred. It is not only hallowed by *us* as the natal day of our Independence, but it is consecrated to unborn generations, and to the future nations of the earth, as the birth-day of their civil and religious liberties. On this day, forty-six years since, not merely was a nation emancipated, but in her emancipation was laid the corner stone of the great fabric of man's natural equality, whose base already comprises nearly one half, and whose future base *will be* the whole rational world. This day is sacred. It is our political Sabbath, and hallowed and consecrated let it ever be! I would that the humble talent of him, whom you have selected to minister for this day's service, were equal to the great theme which it imposes on him. I would that he could induce you to its contemplation, with those emotions of gratitude, which the greatest temporal blessing ever bestowed by a beneficent Creator, should awake in the hearts of his dependent creatures. I would that he could draw you with feelings of solemn apprehension to a sense of the moral obligation incurred, in this divine blessing of equal rights, equal laws, and equal religious liberty. That he could hold up, as of sacred authority from our national annals, to each citizen, patriot or statesman, who is or may be hereafter conspicuous among us, a corrective or emulative example of candour, forbearance, firmness, political integrity and unostentatious, practical piety, in the lives and opinions of that long list of venerable worthies,

at the head of which, and in whom was concentered the virtues of all, stands the immortal name of WASHINGTON. I would that he could re-embodiy the departed spirits of America's first Patriots, re-organize their ranks, and at a single view exhibit them to you, in the varied scenes, during a seven years struggle, of their privations and sufferings ; of their discomfitures and successes ; of their despondencies and revived hopes. That he could lift up the cloud of battle and discover them to you, flushed and buoyant in the shout of victory, or pale and depressed in the rising confusion of defeat. That he could, amid the cannon's roar, render audible the firm and steady voice of the undaunted, or the tremulous faltering of the alarmed ; the final gasp of an unconquered soul as it sped itself in a cheer of encouragement ; or the unrestrained groans of a broken spirit in his last dying pang.—Appalling and interesting, depressing and animating, admirable but agonizing as would be this *living* picture of *other men* and *other times*, yet, my countrymen, it would be a sacred representation ! And however feeble and insufficient must be the power of language to revive these scenes and realities of the revolutionary struggle, which were paid a price for this anniversary, if I were equal to this great theme, I should rely more upon its moral impression and patriotic influence, than on the most able discussion I could give of the demoralizing tendencies of national festivities—the excesses that attend them ; or the ferocious tendency of a parading soldiery ; of drum beating or cannon firing ; although it should be enforced by the solemn attestations of those, whose opinions we have been accustomed to receive with religious awe and veneration. *This day is sacred !* A gracious God has blessed it with temporal consequences, which have exalted the character,

enobled the condition, invigorated the powers, and advanced the intellectual grade of man! and who shall say, that its celebration is not hallowed and sanctified in the sight of Heaven?—*

The power of associating our “thoughts and sympathies with what is distant in time or space,” would seem in the divine dispensation of nature’s laws, as one of the principal means by which the march of mind is infinitely progressing. By “this noble faculty” we live, and feel, and act the ages of antiquity. This anniversary is associated with the feelings and circumstances, which in their immediate or more remote influences, produced the consummation of our Forefather’s proudest hopes and of our own happiness and national prosperity. This day these feelings and circumstances are revived and renewed in the bosoms of millions of our countrymen, and however familiar they may be, so long “as the moral causes of attachment and affection operate upon the heart”—so long as that mixed and strong sentiment which we call love of country, is predicated on domestic, social, civil and religious ties, so long will these feelings and circumstances continue to be revived and renewed on this Anniversary, with emotions of the deepest interest; and as with our *past* they have been, so with our *future* destinies they will ever be, most importantly blended.

* Under existing circumstances, I feel there is a propriety in stating, that I have very recently had the honor of an interview with the respectable Clergyman whose desk I now occupy;—And in justice to the opinions and sentiments which he expressed on the propriety of this day’s celebration, I am happy in the opportunity to state, that they strictly accord with those of this numerous audience and my own. But as there are some who differ from us on this subject, I thought proper, in reference to them, and not to the Reverend Gentleman, to assume that ground, which I trust we may assume, and have assumed, honestly, patriotically, and I will add not irreligiously.

The circumstances and their consequences that terminated in a form of government which, we may say, without ostentation, *is the first on Earth*, are so distinct and perfect, that the mind traces them with a rapidity, which is incompatible with the cumbrance of language, or the detail of description. Nor is it essential on this occasion, that we should attempt a minute examination of each particular link in this great chain of events. It is in their *combined power* and influence that we *feel* our destinies. The first incidents of our Forefather's history, in England, in Holland, in America; their religious persecutions, their pilgrimage, their voluntary exile to an almost unknown world; incidents which *were* and only *could* have been supported "by the clearest sense of natural right, and the highest conviction of religious duty," or the peculiar character of those laws and civil institutions which, under the influence of *unshackled* and *pure* christianity, gradually assumed the *true basis* of man's natural equality, and eventually established his natural rights on the fixed principles of eternal justice, were no less important in their effect upon *our* habits, *our* morals, *our* republican institutions, in a word *our destinies*, than were the proud events of our brightest triumph, when our independence was complete, our constitution adopted, and our *Washington* *the greatest*. It is in the combined power and influence of this mighty chain, that we *feel our destinies*; and let us remember this day, that the political principles we establish, the integrity we maintain, the opinions we inculcate, the practical christianity of the religious faith we promulgate, are imperceptibly forming continued links in the chain of being which commenced with the origin of man, and which will terminate, in the end of all things, at the Throne of Omnipotence.

MY FELLOW-CITIZENS,

As we value our natural rights, our Republican institutions, our religious freedom, and above all, as we estimate the moral responsibilities that flow from them, let us on this occasion, in reverting to past political events, which are inseparably connected in a train of cause and effect with the public measures that are now passing the great ordeal of public approbation, let us put off the bias and influence, which is naturally elicited by our peculiar circumstances, our private interest, our former political relations, or our unhallowed desires for honorable distinctions, lucrative employment, or party aggrandizement. And here let me disclaim the most distant intention to wound or ruffle those feelings of unanimity, which at this time have united individuals, whose passions were, at no distant period, deeply immersed in a system of inveterate opposition, and who now, without any previous arrangement, any stipulations of compromise or specified articles of "holy alliance," have cordially joined in this day's festivity. Permit me, my countrymen, to greet you in the language of our *now* distinguished fellow-citizen and late chief magistrate of the nation; who in the evening of his usefulness, like a setting sun, still lights up in the hearts of his countrymen, the warm glow of love and respect; but who, like Washington, in the shade of retirement, is not secluded from the foul breath of calumny. "We are all Federalists, we are all Republicans," was the language of this venerable man, and let me add, **WE ARE ALL AMERICANS.**

The time is past when the policy of the two great parties in our country involved the political legitimacy of man's naturally equal rights, or the practicability of that form of government which should guarantee to every

citizen, the free and equal enjoyment of them. The time is past when the arbitrary doctrines and absurd opinions of ancient political science, which were comprized in a course of studies for learned statesmen and politicians, and which were taught and received in the schools, as of authority founded on the experience of ages, still held, by the force of early prejudice, in the minds of our most distinguished, and at that period, with a few splendid exceptions, most powerful men, an influence that was incompatible with confidence in the energy and efficiency of our free and equal institutions. Institutions which a course of thirty-nine years successful experiment has tested to the satisfaction and astonishment of an admiring world. When one party from a want of confidence in our form of government, in our national resources and energies for war, were induced to a course of measures which, *although they originated honestly*, in the almost irresistible influence of early embibed and long established opinions, they eventually *degenerated* to a system of indiscriminate opposition, which if successful would have been fatal to the Republic, as well as to the Administration against which it was levelled. The time is past, when the moral influences that are elicited in the sacred relation that subsists between the citizen and his country, between the subject and his fellow countrymen, influences which comprize all *national feeling*, were merged in the violence and fury of party spirit: when the sufferings or comforts, the defeats or victories of Americans, no longer excited the pulsations of sympathy, in the hearts of some of their fellow Americans.

Such, at a very recent period, *was* the state of party feeling in this now prosperous country. And, my fellow-citizens, it is not here alluded to that it may be revived,

In your hearts, but that it may be preserved in your memories ; not that it should control your sentiments of attachment or respect towards any fellow-citizen whose conduct is now *truly American*, but that it *must* stand in our political experience, a conspicuous beacon to denote the dangerous tendencies of factious excitement and indiscriminate party opposition.

There is, perhaps, no subject connected with our form of government, which is more difficult to be comprehended, and at the same time more essential, than that comprizing those primary principles of party organization, which are inseparably blended with the very existence of a republic. It matters not in what form *unlimited* power may be disguised. The moment it is unlimited, that moment its encroachments will commence. It matters not whether a Demagogue coerce us under false pretences, or a Monarch coerce us by unjust principles of government and physical force ; or a legitimated Clergy coerce us by the ample power of inordinate superstition, or the constituted authorities of a Republic coerce us, by confidence in, or the popularity of an unopposed administration. The moment there is no countervailing influence, no check and balance to the natural tendency of power, that moment its encroachments will commence.

So long as there is a right and wrong course of national policy, so long as difference of opinions *must* subsist and *may honestly* subsist, so long as the exercise of power is necessary to constitute an efficient government, and the limitation of power is necessary to constitute a free government, so long will the existence of parties, organized on principles of truth, justice and good faith, be vitally important to the preservation of the republic.

By our free and equal institutions, public opinion is rendered the sole arbiter as well as only source of public measures. Every citizen is constituted his own Legislator, and made responsible to his God and to his country for the purity of his motive and the propriety of his vote. The powers of the majority and the rights of the minority are solely definable upon the immutable principles of natural justice, natural equality and social liberty ; and the only practical limitation of the powers of the majority, will be found in the regular organization and co-operation of a minority.

It is in vain to say, that public opinion, elicited without the facilities of a regular organization, without the aid of those lights and exposures, which none but the opposition of an organized minority will diffuse and make, would be sufficient to check the encroaching tendency of Administrative power. The Administration are always organized and identified with the majority who create them, and nothing but the organization of the minority upon primary principles, can counterbalance their influence. Although this is a self-evident proposition, there is an extreme difficulty in its practical application. The history of our country during the lapse of the last thirty years, has shewn us the almost irresistible tendency of party organization to a state of destructive faction. The first two great political parties were no doubt formed on prominent, primary principles, which were clearly defined and *honestly* espoused. The different policies pursued, the opposite measures advocated, were originally predicated on a sincere wish for the country's weal ; but by the fury and madness of *party spirit*, they were debased to a system of blind opposition, which was alike regardless of country or fundamental principle. And it is owing to the dis-

gusting effect which the recollection of this *debased party spirit* has produced in the minds of many candid men, that the very name of party has become odious.

It is not uncommon that opposite extremes produce similar consequences, and it remains to be determined whether the apathy which has succeeded these political violences, is not of an equally dangerous tendency.

An indiscriminate opposition to obnoxious men and the measures they advocate, without considering their merits or demerits ; or on the other hand, an unqualified support of popular men and their measures, would involve the country in equally dangerous consequences. In either case, principle would be sacrificed to interest or violent affections, and we should become the mere creatures of passion and feeling rather than free, intelligent and *morally responsible* Republicans. If we adopt indiscriminate opposition to the men we hate, rather than exclusively to the measures we disapprove, we acknowledge to our own bad passions and feelings, a vassalage, whose exactions are not limited by the fixed principles of natural justice and natural right. If on the other hand, we proclaim a political millennium, and declare there are no parties, we in effect adopt the British creed, that the King or our ruling Administration can do no wrong ; and virtually profess the debasing doctrine of passive obedience. In either case we reserve no check upon the encroaching tendency of Administrative power.

The various incidents of the last war, and the honorable terms of peace which succeeded it, have so revolutionized public sentiment, that it may with truth be said, *the old grounds of party opposition no longer subsist*. That war raised us from an almost degraded, to a pre-eminent

standing among the nations. Instead of diffidence, to say the least, in our resources and martial efficiency, that war inspired us with a degree of confidence and assurance which has elevated us to a conscious level of the highest national character—inspired us in a word, with a *national feeling*, that is an infallible pledge of the permanency and future glory of the republic. As national feeling predominates, the spirit of faction is annihilated—for *they cannot co-exist*.

Even since national feelings *have been predominant*, questions have arisen and will continue to arise, concerning which honest men may and will differ in opinion.—As these become numerous and important, if principle resume her empire, men of similar opinions will be found in the same political ranks, without regarding ancient prejudices or partialities, private feelings or personal attachments, or limited local interests, and these questions will then be decided by a fair and intelligent expression of the sense of the majority.

But if political indifference and apathy are to be of long duration, instead of two great political parties, which are to check and balance each other, and give to public measures, by their mutual influence, a tone and character of consistency and permanency, we shall have as many parties as there may be prominent men, whose ambitious views or personal interests may happen to clash—and who may be able to identify themselves with the various interests of the different departments of society and industry. Electors will no longer be controlled by the primary principles they have adopted, or the political faith they profess, as involved in any proposed question of national policy, but by private prejudices, local excitement, personal par-

tialities, and perhaps sordid motives of factious aggrandizement. Combinations will be formed and broken, compromises made and abandoned, ambitious leaders will coalesce and quarrel, in short, the destinies of our country will be wielded by the vascillating measures of numerous factions, and the condition of the now free, intelligent, and let me emphatically add, *morally responsible* republican, will be debased to a grade of aristocratical dependence upon ambitious leaders and unprincipled factions. "Good government never sprung but from good principles," and in these alone, will it be preserved. It is not in "abstract maxims of policy or government," as beautifully displayed in a bill of rights, or on a paper constitution, that we have our security; but it is in the habits, feelings and opinions of the people, of which our constitution and our laws are but a faithful record. It is in the moral responsibility, the integrity, the intelligence of the great body of the people, and in their anxious solicitude and solemn apprehension for the faithful discharge of their duties to their country, as free, intelligent, and true republicans, that we *feel* our safety. When the people, who are the sole source of all power, become corrupt, or uninformed, or *indifferent*, where shall we look for a counter influence to check the baneful effects of their deficiency in good principles, in political knowledge, or in that deep interest for their country's weal, with which is indissolubly connected their own, and the liberties and dearest rights of posterity.

But, my fellow-citizens, there is one other point connected with this subject of equal importance in its practical tendency. I can most briefly introduce it in the shape of a simple interrogatory. In the amalgamation of old parties and the organization of new ones, how is the relation

that subsists between old friends of old parties to be effected? This question too, must be solved on good principles, and I will premise, that duty to country is paramount to every other duty. This discharged, and the duties of individual relation, of private friendship, stand next on the list. If when new questions arise, our old friends think with us, then the duties of patriotism and friendship will be identified. But if we cannot conscientiously arrive at the same opinion which they adopt, I repeat, *that duty to country is paramount to every other duty.* As like causes produce like effects, and as similar premises commonly produce similar inferences, it is not probable that very frequently duties to country and to old friends, will be incompatible; for if they generally have thought in the same channel with us, they probably will continue to do so.

I am sensible, my fellow-citizens, that in this feeble attempt to discuss those primary principles of party organization, which are inseparably blended with the very existence of a republic, I have hazarded, (although it was my wish scrupulously to avoid) the temporary excitement of emotions, which may be somewhat tinged with the virulence of ancient political rancour and party animosity. But it is peculiarly incumbent on us this day, to investigate the principles of our institutions, and to analyze those springs of human action, which when well regulated and adjusted, give life and harmony to the complicated machinery of government.

I trust I have a sufficient apology for attempting to discuss this subject in the importance which attaches to it in my own mind, although, perhaps, it may pass in yours as the mere effect of an overwrought imagination. I know

that in these times, the word party has a sort of talismanic influence, to revive ancient feelings of party rancour. If there had been any^o other term I could have used, I should have preferred it ; but let it be understood that I use it in its *primitive sense*, for when I name the organization of future parties, or principles of patriotism and conscientious rectitude, I mean any thing but that state of party feeling, which subsisted during and about the close of the last war.

I have asserted that questions of political policy and governmental principle will arise, and have already arisen, concerning which honest men will and now do differ in opinion. Among these is one of such prominence and importance, that I should but illy discharge the responsibility I have this day assumed, although I have already trespassed too long upon your patience, did I suffer it to pass unnoticed. I allude to the extraordinary influence of wealth in the Senatorial representation.

Wealth is a part, an element in the general aggregate of power, and wherever it be found, it will have its influence. If it be found in the hands of a few privileged nobles, as is the case in those feudal systems which more or less prevail to this day, in every government on earth, *but ours*, it is by its own intrinsic power, that these few are enabled to keep their retainers, their standing armies, or that physical force by which they guard it. If it be found in the hands of the many, or generally distributed, as is the case in this country, it is still power ; and its influence is felt in equal laws and institutions, which render the rights of the many who possess it, equally secure.— Permit me in the language of that venerable document, which has just been read, and I trust will ever be read and

listened to with the warmest glow of national feeling, permit me to name the first principle of a free government: "All men are created equal," and have equal rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. In the pursuit of happiness, those principles which establish equal rights in the acquirement of property, and the control of it when acquired, are of primary importance.

Equal rights to acquire and control and dispose of property when acquired, involve an *unequal* distribution of it; for in the various operations of trade and barter, some grow rich, and others poor. If it be true that *wealth is power*, and that the equal distribution of power on principles of natural justice and equality, is vitally essential to the existence of a republic, it would seem that equal rights to acquire and control property involve a destructive tendency, for in the equality of these rights, originates an *unequal* distribution of wealth, or power.

But there is another tendency, which also originates in equal rights to acquire and to control the wealth we have acquired, which, with the aid of our equal laws for the tenure, the descent and transmission of property, perfectly checks and counterbalances this destructive principle; namely, a tendency to the constant fluctuation and diffusion of wealth. For it is true that some poor men are constantly getting rich; and that some rich men are constantly becoming poor. So prominent is this fact, that it is almost proverbial with us, that the same estate seldom remains in the same family for two generations. It is the constant fluctuation of wealth, which gives security to the republic; and hence it has been said with truth, that "a republican form of government rests not more on its po-

litical constitution, than on those laws which regulate the descent and transmission of property."

From these premises—and I believe they are strictly those of the most distinguished champion on the other side, to whose transcendent talent, and I will add, political integrity, I am ever ready to pay a public, as well as private tribute of respect—inferences are drawn which widely differ.

It is contended on the one hand, that as property has its natural influence, it must be represented; else the poor would coalesce against the rich, and by unequal laws oppress them. And hence, in one branch of a popular government, there must be a little spice of aristocracy, to check and temper the pungency of the purely republican flavour, which it is feared may be unsavory in the other.

But how does the necessity exist? It is evident from these premises, in which we all accord, that the only dangerous natural tendency of equal rights to acquire and dispose of property is towards aristocracy, or the unequal distribution of power; and if this were not checked and counterbalanced by the constant fluctuation of wealth, and its consequent diffusion among all classes of the people, in the various operations of barter and speculation, there would be a necessity rather for curtailing its natural influence, than for giving it extraordinary power.

From the influence of wealth, when generally distributed, a republic has nothing to fear. If the people, says Harrington, "hold three parts in four of the territory, it is plain that there can neither be a single person nor a nobility able to dispute the government with them. In this case therefore, except force be interposed, they govern

themselves." Ours, my fellow-citizens, is emphatically a government of the people ; and so long as talent, and wealth and education, which are the elements of political power, are generally distributed, so long will our natural equality of rights in representation, and in the acquirement of property, be perfectly compatible with the permanency and prosperity of the republic.

But it is said, if property has a natural influence, this should be recognized in the organization of some branch of our government ; else the rights of property, if I may use the fiction of legal language, will be abused. We ask, is it not represented, and its influence felt in the constitution of the house, the senate, the council, the executive, and even in the election of the lowest town officer ?

But it is objected, that as some Senatorial Districts have more wealth than others, if they are not allowed more Senators than other Districts of the same population and less wealth, the influence of their surplus wealth will not be felt. Nor need it be, for it is sufficiently guarded, in the common interest which is felt in the rights of property throughout the State. It is notorious, that he who has but a small property, is as susceptible of any violence that might be offered to his rights of enjoyment and the control of that property, by unequal laws, as the man would be, who possessed much. " The true principle of popular government, is so to construct it, as to give to all an interest in its preservation ; to found it, as other things are founded, on mens interest." With us the people emphatically possess the political power ; for among them is diffused the talent, the wealth and the education. While this is the case, they will never contravene their own in-

terest, by the enactment of unequal laws for the control of their property. Where then, I ask again, is the necessity for the violation of the first principle of republican government, by a feature in the basis of the senate, that destroys man's *natural equality*—his natural right to equal representation ?

There is still preserved in our bill of rights, a principle of religious intolerance, which, although in the late convention for the revision of the constitution, it was a subject of more interest and debate than any other, yet, of late, little is said about it. This may be accounted for by the fact, that this principle has been, and was practically disavowed, by the statutes which were passed, anterior to the convention, to curtail its pernicious consequences. Statutes which the people's sense of natural equity, elicited, even in the face of the constitution. By the 5d article in our bill of rights, a Legislature would be authorized, if one could be found so lost to every sentiment of justice, to enact laws, which would coerce the citizen to attend worship and support denominations or sects, where his conscience might forbid. I am sensible that this subject, so much talked of, and so much debated, and concerning which so many efforts were made to *forestall* public opinion, has of late become a most unfashionable topic. But, my fellow-citizens, I should fall short of that ground of independence, which I have endeavoured to assume on this occasion, were I not to express my sentiments freely and boldly. And I know of no good reason why this subject is not *now* as interesting to every citizen, who would cherish a good, or endeavour to amend a bad constitution, as it was eighteen months since.

Our institutions are flexible. At the peace of '83, they

were not as perfect as they now are, nor are they now as perfect as they will be. Powerful, irresistible, natural causes are at work, which will establish the principle of *universal toleration*. This principle, says Mr. Webster, "to which the world has come so slowly, is at once the most just and the most wise of all principles. Even when religious feeling takes a character of extravagance and enthusiasm, and seems to threaten the order of society, and shake the columns of the social edifice, its principal danger is in its restraint; if it be allowed indulgence and expansion, like the elemental fires, it only agitates and *perhaps* purifies the atmosphere, while its efforts to throw off restraint, would burst the world asunder."

It has been our boast, my fellow-citizens, "that we have yet no venerable prejudices to encounter; that we are not fettered by a system of laws, whose antiquity has given them an authority over reason." While our senate is based on property and not *exclusively on population*, and while a principle of religious intolerance is suffered still to impart a *dark* expression of *bigotry* to the other *fair* features of our constitution, we can hardly make this boast. It is exclusively to the force, which ancient opinions and prejudices *still* possess, that we must attribute the preservation of this rotten principle of senatorial representation, and this impolitic, unjust and *unchristian* principle of intolerance in our constitution.