

# ORATION

DELIVERED

BEFORE THE ARTILLERY COMPANY OF WILMINGTON,

COMMANDED BY

CAPTAIN RODNEY,

ON THE 5TH OF JULY, A. D. 1813.

BY LOUIS M'LANE, ESQ'R.

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Wednesday, July 7, 1813.

AT A MEETING OF THE WILMINGTON ARTILLERY COMPANY :—

*Resolved unanimously,* That a committee of three be appointed to request of LOUIS M'LANE, Esq. a member of this Company, a copy of his patriotic and excellent Oration, delivered on the 5th Instant, in commemoration of the Anniversary of American Liberty and Independence, in order to publish the same in pamphlets, for the benefit of ourselves and our fellow citizens.—

Whereupon, Captain C. A. RODNEY and Lieutenants HAMILTON and THOMSON were appointed the committee for the above purpose.

*FELLOW-SOLDIERS & FELLOW-CITIZENS!*

THE ANNIVERSARY, upon the occasion of which we are now assembled, perpetuates the proudest epoch in American story! It must inspire in every American bosom, sentiments which enoble his character, and do honour to his heart; for it consecrates the remembrance of the gallant achievements of his Countrymen, and the loftiest daring of human nature! It is the anniversary of his Nation's birth....of his Country's Independence! It leads us back through the avenue of time, to the era the most flattering to our patriotism and pride; to the time when our gallant ancestors first proclaimed the voice of Independence through this land, which echoing from the proud summits of our mountains, spread itself on the bosom of the atlantick; and each wave proud of its burthen, while it lashed the shores of Europe with its surge, bore its treasure to the ears of the Throne! It also hails the hour when the rude storm of war had spent its fury and was lulled to peace, and the mild blessings of Liberty and Independence beamed on our country in all their fullness!....Ever memorable be the hour! and perpetual the blessings!

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It is but meet my Countrymen, that in each succeeding year of our Nation's progress, we should indulge ourselves in the luxury of feeling and gratitude, which the remembrance of the events we now celebrate gives rise to ; for it is no more the duty of freemen to guard their liberties with the vigilance due to the sacred fire, than it is their privilege to celebrate the deeds which atchieved them. Distinguished men and illustrious events are entitled to the notice and veneration of the world, and we fail in gratitude not to yield them our homage. The applause of posterity is the reward of great deeds, and in doing justice to their claims, we become ambitious of deserving them ourselves. Rome had her "*Ides of March,*" and her *Saturnalia* :.... Greece her *Panathenæan* and *Eleusian* festivals, and her celebrations at *Delos* and *Argos* : Every nation of modern times has her jubilee for some illustrious event, or distinguished Prince. The American people have their *Fourth of July* ! *Their* jubilee celebrates no Heathen Idol, nor Monarchical Nativity, nor princely greatness, but the era of a Nation's birth, the establishment of a Nation's Liberty and Glory !

The reasons why this anniversary should ever be observed, are of so much magnitude to the American people, and especially at this crisis, that I

must solicit your permission to make them the subject of the address which it is now my duty to deliver to you.

To pay the tribute of our homage to the memory of the illustrious men of the days of *Seventy-Six*, and to contemplate their virtues and their actions ;....to mark the splendid rise, and eventful progress of the empire of the Western World from the cottage in the wilderness, to the temples and cities of a great and civilized people ;....to cherish and perpetuate the deeds of that day which led to our Independence ;....to exalt our National feeling and pride of character, by the exhibition of the virtues and magnanimity of our revolutionary heroes ;.... to excite an emulation to equal their elevation of soul, and in the consideration of this glorious struggle to derive an example for the preservation of our habits and our principles, of our liberties and our rights, are the great objects of the celebration of this anniversary.

Who, my countrymen, can contemplate the characters and deeds of that day, and preserve his fire and enthusiasm of soul within the bounds of common gratitude and feeling? We are apt to be captivated with a single act of magnanimity, performed by a single man ; and the triumphant issue of a single battle inspires a high ebullition of National

feeling ; but here a constellation of illustrious actions and noble achievements strike our admiration ! Yon son swells at the remembrance of the deeds of his sire ; that hoary officer beats high at the recollection of the day, when he planted the standard of his Country's Independence upon the head of his enemy....he recalls the moment when filled with youthful ardour, he followed his beloved Washington to the field of victory and fame : this whole audience glows at the memory of American valour, and a Nation's triumph !

The exploits of our heroes are almost as numerous as the hills of our country, and eclipse all the victories of Greece and of Rome ! Cast your eyes over the extent of your territory, and proudly dwell on the splendour of your National feats ! *Bunker's Hill* and the *Heights of Harlam* ; *Saratoga* and *Trenton*, *Princeton* and *Monmouth*, *Stony Point* and *York-Town*, are the proud monuments of your heroes' deeds, and your country's glory. ... At the mention of *York-Town*, who does not swell to the full measure of his soul ? At *York-Town* was struck the blow which rivetted your Nation's Independence, here the banners of your country's liberties were triumphantly erected : On this height the Eagle of American glory perched, and flapping his wings in triumph, hallowed the Western World !

With equal pride the American dwells upon the heroes who fought the battles, and the sages who directed the Councils of the Revolutionary struggle. A list of such men cannot ennoble the roll of any country's fame, as they whose mighty souls this soil of freedom nourished. It would appear as though nature had sown in this western region, secluded from the world's baleful heat, a race of heroes for the special purpose of doing honour to her workmanship, and the American Revolution reap the harvest of her labours. Can the valour of Rome and the wisdom of Greece compare with our Greens, our Warrens, and our Mercers, with our Gates, our Laurens or Leas; with a Hancock, a Hamilton, a Jefferson, a Jay, an Adams or a Franklin? or an hundred others whose names are familiar to us all? But you wonder at the chasm which is observable in this list....I beseech your pardon, for it is no omission....The name of Washington is too transcendantly glorious to be named in common even with American heroes. *His* splendour, like the light of the universe, defies all comparison. And alas! my Countrymen, with our veneration for his virtues, we must mingle our sorrows for his loss: and the pride of a Patriot must ever be moistened by his tears, when he looks round for this wonder of his nation! Panegyrick has been ex-

hausted, without effect, to do justice to the greatness of this illustrious hero and statesman, and we can best satisfy his claims by our silent veneration for his memory ! Let us then invoke his spirit to look upon our country in this hour of peril and disaster ; may it ride in every breeze, and direct the course of war to a favourable issue !

The greatness and dignity of a nation is ever in proportion to the exalted and proud notions it entertains of itself ; the remark is indubitable with regard to individuals, and cannot be less so in its application to nations. Real pride of character will be found the surest pledge for the observance of the sound rules of honourable conduct, and the equal distribution of justice and the laws ; and the elevation of our attainments will ever be limited by the height we aspire to. The swallow, if it delighted not to play with the surface, might court the clouds, and the dove, if it soared, would perch upon the summit of the Eagle's flight. The exaltation of a Nation's views is always the best evidence of its good faith and integrity, and the safest guardian of its liberties and its rights. History is crowded with instances, where the best materials of National greatness have been perverted to the basest purposes through the want of a proper pride of character ; and where, from the loss of it, the purest

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virtues have been stained with the blackest crimes. The degeneration of Lacedæmon and all the Grecian States, and above all, the lamentable decline of the Roman Empire renders the remark an apothegm in Politicks. But an American can require no better theme to awaken his pride, than the history of his own nation, than a faithful consideration of the deeds of his ancestors ! He can ask no better lessons than those which the times and the events celebrated by this anniversary furnish. Even this very thought is full of pride, and cannot fail to exalt his character ! He seeks of no foreign nation to form his views, to instruct him in the duties of a freeman, or to improve his mind ; he goes not back to the days of ancient history to find models for imitation, or receive a favourable opinion of human genius ! But in the bosom of his own country, he is schooled by the soundest and noblest maxims.... in the virtues of his forefathers, he finds the models for his emulation, and in their exploits, and the majesty of his land, he derives the most exalted opinion of his nature. The lofty summits of his hills, and the majestic flow of his rivers, teach him an elevation of soul more exalted than themselves !

The safe conduct and preservation of this nation has been equally glorious, if not providential. We have sailed down the stream of time in an age doom-

ed to witness events unparalleled in the history of the world! In our progress, we have seen new nations rise, and old ones decline; we have seen governments changing, and empires wasting away. We have seen a single battle seal the fate of an whole people, wipe out a dynasty of an hundred years, and seat the victor securely on the throne of the conquered. In short, throughout the political and natural world, one universal scene of confusion and distraction has prevailed, and amid all this disorder, our beloved country has preserved her liberty, and remained in the possession of her laws and her freedom. But we are almost the solitary tree of the forest, that has been able to brave the fury of the storm....the only promontory upon which the liberties of the world can find a refuge during this night of tempest and darkness. Cast your eyes round and look for the nations and governments which flourished in splendour when we claimed our rank in the world! It is like inquiring for the ruins of Balbec and Palmyra, of Jerusalem, or the towering greatness of the Roman empire! Scarcely a vestige of their former character remain...“ here once flourished an opulent city....here was the seat of a powerful empire;” but they have all been desolated and over-run!

It is true, our neutrality which has hitherto been

the anchor of our safety, is at length broken, and we are involved in war, yet we still hope to stand,

——“ Strong as the rock of the ocean that stems  
A thousand wild waves on the shore.”

We are afloat in this sea of blood, but the spirit of Washington will guide our little bark safely through the peril....it will protect the soil of his birth, and not suffer the rude foot of an invader to disturb the depository of his ashes: the genius of Liberty will fight for us, for her last refuge is assailed; our own arms, my Countrymen, under the protection of Heaven, shall save us, for as yet we are warmed with the spirit of our ancestors!....Hear it then ye proud invader, be ye who ye may, that 'ere you humble the freedom of this country, you shall seek it in the heart of every citizen of the soil....you shall find our land desolate, as when our ancestors peopled it, and enjoy your conquests in its dens and caverns, amid the growling of our tigers whom our spirits shall stimulate to vengeance!

All things which are to encounter the rude shocks of time, should be encased in a high estimation of their value, which is derived, as well from the consideration of their immediate effects upon their sharers, as also from the price at which they were obtained, and the difficulty of replacing their loss: The multiplicity of individual concerns, apart from

general employment, gives the application of this remark to governments its highest force. National Liberty is oftener “undermined by slow decay,” than carried by storm, and open attack ; and it is the slow, but incessant lashing of the surge, that washes the foundation of our rights from under us, and not the raging of the ocean fretted by the tempest, for that would admonish us of our danger, and drive us to caution. The uninterrupted enjoyment of health, renders us unmindful of its value, and we contract habits of carelessness which pollute its purity, and end in our wretchedness : so the luxuries of a people are the most vitally dangerous to the liberties of a nation, because they render them insensible to their importance and preservation : but the American finds in the virtues of his ancestors, and in the struggle for his independence, a sure safeguard against the evil. Let us then look for a moment at our liberties and the conflict which purchased them....It is the highest point of wonder in human history, and claims the admiration of the world ! An infant people, thinly dispersed over a vast extent of country, and scarcely united by any tie of interest which usually produces a community of views among neighbouring states, and makes their injuries a common cause ; that thunder....listen....that noise ! ’tis the thunder

without skill, without experience,....and almost destitute of the materials of warfare; unencouraged by the example or countenance of a single nation on the globe, but impugning the policy of all, we rose as by a common impulse, and hurled defiance in the face of the strongest power of the old world! It is a matter of no less astonishment, to observe the course of the events of this struggle....the vicissitudes which marked it, and the perpetual trial of every thing like fortitude and perseverance! All philosophy was baffled, and human wisdom laughed to scorn! Things, which according to ordinary notions, would be supposed to have discouraged our forefathers and crushed their projects in the cradle, only served to stimulate them to higher daring and bolder exploits! Famine produced zeal....thirst begat vigour....sickness braced the soldier's arm, and defeat led to victory! The deepest gloom which overspread their labours and dismayed the hopes of our sires, opened upon the brightest glare of light, and diffused abroad the vivid rays of their glory! They conquered as much by their perseverance and patience in toil and calamity, as by their valour in fight; and disaster seemed ever the precursor of success! Mark that body of wretched looking men, ....overcome with fatigue, worn down with suffering and toil, perishing with famine, half naked, and

without shoes to resist the bitings of the frost ! Scared with the wounds of many battles, and disheartened with defeat, they are prostrate on the ground, as if they had laid themselves down to end at once their sorrows and their days ! 'tis the brave remnant of the American army, the gallant little band on whom rested the liberties of your country ! Mark that majestick figure rolled in his mantle, slow moving by the light of the camp fires, agitated with thought, and brooding over death and the grave ! 'tis your *Washington*, filled with the difficulties of this gloomy moment, trembling with anxiety for the fate of his beloved country, and invoking the God of Heaven in her cause ! Look once more upon this little group ! do you think they were able to contend against the hardy well fed soldiers of the British general, then panting for battle, and confident of victory ? Do you think they could fight in the morning, if they lived till its dawn ? But hark ....that thunder....listen....that noise ! tis the thunder of the American cannon overwhelming the British forces....'tis their shouts of victory over their foes ....'tis the rocky hill of Princeton echoing with the acclamations of this worn out band, who ere the rising sun had tipped the hills with light, crushed the hopes of the enemy, and changed the fate of their country ! It was by such exertions as these,

your Independence was obtained, and which you are now assembled to commemorate !

But the most conspicuous of all the causes which call for the celebration of this anniversary, is the brilliant and illustrious example which it offers to us as citizens of a free government ;....as the sharers of the distinguished inheritance which our sires have transmitted to us, and as *soldiers* to whose valour and fidelity the destinies of our country are confided. Do you want to acquire a keen sense of wrong and usurpation ? turn over the page of *Seventy-Six*, and read an example from the American people of that day. Do you want to contract a pure and disinterested love of liberty and country ? Look back to the patriotism of the American Revolution. Do you want to learn true wisdom and firmness in Council ? Inquire of the sages of the American Convention. Do you wish to be distinguished for true greatness and intrepidity of soul ? Learn at the same source. Do you seek to know the duty of soldiers ? Read the battles of the American war, and pattern after the heroes who conducted it.... their daring souls braving all dangers....their prudence to be ever on their guard....their military skill never to be entrapped....their perseverance in toil, their fortitude under misfortune, their patriotism which buoyed them above all littleness, and

their integrity, which defied all corruption ! In vain may such an assemblage of great virtues, challenge the world for a parallel !

### FELLOW-SOLDIERS !

AT no period of our nation's history, since the establishment of our Independence, has it been so necessary to contemplate the example of the Revolutionary heroes, as at the present moment. For once again, the ravages of war are threatening to desolate our land ! again, the pruning knife is to be exchanged for the sword, and now has it devolved upon us to defend what our sires obtained ! And we will invoke their spirits to aid us in the conflict !

It is not for *Us*, as *Soldiers*, to make our conduct dependent upon our investigation into the policy of this war, or the causes which the government had to embark in it. We will refer that to the mild moments of peace, and to our men in council ; to the grave Senators of the nation, whose prerogative it is to discuss her questions of policy, and her disputes about right and wrong. *We are soldiers and not politicians....As such* we contend, not for the administration, but for the nation. Our exertions are not to be used upon an election ground to promote the rise of party, but in the field of battle to avert the downfall of our country. *Our duty is a*



proud and responsible one ;....to guard our country's liberties, and give success to her arms....to shield our wives, our matrons and sisters from the rapacity of an invader,....to save our hearths and our altars from pollution, and the soil of our forefathers from devastation ! Hallowed and ever sacred be the charge ! May the God of Heaven nerve our arm in the day of battle, and lead us to victory and fame ! Our country is at war then fellow-soldiers, and the smoking ruins of Havre de Grace, George-Town and Frederick-Town, and the recent affair at Hampton, admonish us that it is no empty tale....in the abridgement of his power alone, we are to seek the mercy of our enemy !—

By this war every thing dear to us is hazarded ! ....Our liberty, our independence, and the union of the States are all in jeopardy !....And in proportion to the magnitude of the stake must be our exertions to redeem it....Shall this liberty which we have seen, cost so much, be wrested from us by the same foe from whom we obtained it ? Shall this majestic oak which promised to shelter under its branches the oppressed of all nations, now be blighted ? Shall this free country descend to the tomb in the flower of its days, by a premature decay ? Shall this flourishing little village, which nursed the fortunes of our fathers and friends, be laid in ashes, and its

streets made desolate? Shall the rude hand of a foreign foe break upon the sanctity of the social circle, and disperse the objects of your hopes and affections as mourners through the land? Shall that flag now unfurled from the standard around which we rally, and proudly displaying the taste and patriotism of our generous fair, be furled in ignominious defeat, and heighten the splendour of an enemy's trophies? \* Shall any bold invader wrap in flames, the dome which now encircles us, consecrated to the religion of our God, and tread with impious steps upon the tombs of our ancestors? † Shall this be done while there is a voice to raise the alarm, or an arm to wield a sword? No my Countrymen! .. that little spot ‡ behind us, which we are called to garrison, shall be the theatre of our deeds...we will make that the Thermopylæ of our village, and the invader shall march to our town over the slain of its defenders!

But the *Union* of these U. S. is in danger...that *Palladium* of our liberties is hazarded...the *Enemy* is at the door of the temple, and snatching at the statue! The magnitude of this Union cannot be

\* The flag of the Fort was presented to the Company by the Ladies of Wilmington.

Mr. M'Lane delivered this oration in the Episcopal church....

‡ Union Fort in which the Artillery Company is stationed for the defence of Wilmington, by order of Brigadier General Stockton, is situate a very short distance behind the church.

too well understood, or too much regarded by the American people....their empire is formed by it, and the moment it is dissolved, our power, our glory and our happiness crumble to pieces !....The true patriot should look to the dissolution of the Union as cotemporaneous only with that of the world....he should cling to it as the plank in the storm....as the sacred mount on which the ark of his liberty may rest, when every thing else is deluged. It would be next to treachery to link its fate with party schemes....Our rulers may err in policy, or even in some degree oppress the citizens....but shall governments change their forms as individuals do their coats, because in all parts they may not exactly fit ....shall all our rights and liberties be set afloat on the sea of anarchy from their fast moorings by equal laws and a solemn union, because of some one defect or some partial evil ?....it would be like throwing overboard the compass in the storm, because the captain had steered amiss !

But if we have so much to lose, we have as much to gain !....for to rescue what is in jeopardy, is to gain it anew. Cherish that thought, my Countrymen, it opens to you a wide field of glory. We too are to reap the laurels of the brave. We too are to tread the paths of victory !...Our ancestors toiled to rear, and we shall toil to preserve our In-

dependence ! But we have more to gain !....being in war, we have to gain a character for valour, and for virtue...for patience and magnanimity : We have to gain success and victory.... We have to triumph over our foes ! Where is the man who does not pant for this ? Who does not wish his country's banners to wave triumphant in every conflict ? And who can doubt the valour and virtue of an American soldier ? Who does not know he is terrible in battle ; and that though he may be overpowered, he cannot be vanquished ? The distressing gloom which at present overshadows our arms in the North, is not to be received as absolutely an evil presage. The night of the second of January, seventeen hundred and seventy-seven, was a night of more horrid aspect than we have ever seen, and yet the morning of the *third* dawned gloriously upon the American triumphs ! These temporary disasters may give pain, but cannot carry dismay to the bosom of the Patriot. He may weep at the loss of his gallant countrymen....and true magnanimity will ever weep at the fall of the brave....he may mingle his tears with the waters of the lakes for the loss of his *Pike*, and with those of the ocean, for the melancholy slaughter of his *Laurence*, but he despairs not at all this ; for the valour of his Countrymen is the best pledge for the

redemption of the disaster :....he may mourn a defeat which the fortune of war may occasion, but he thinks not of subjugation.

The American army but half filled and inexperienced, have yet only had the opportunity of *dying* for their country....they have had no chance for victory. But who does not discern the bright halo of glory which surrounds his country, when he contemplates her victories on the ocean!....these alone have exalted her to the highest rank among the nation's of the globe ! We have acquired a naval reputation which nothing can tarnish ! And distant as may be the thought, the Monarch of the ocean has more to dread from the future naval power of this country, than from all the world beside ! His fleets may swarm the seas and out-number his foes....his men of war may vaunt their prowess, and terrify the boats of traffick which creep along our shores, but the day will come, when the oaks which now cover our hills, shall check his power and humble his pride. This nation is formed for a naval Power, because the bold enterprize of her sons, makes them nautical from their birth....and the billows of the deep, with the cannon of our ships would render us invulnerable to the world in arms!....The true policy of the government would direct the resources of the nation to the advancement of her

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naval power. It is invited by every consideration which ought to influence their deliberations;.... the necessity of a maritime defence...the possession of ample materials, and the undaunted valour of our present gallant little fleet, which has already maintained a triumphant competition with the Naval Sampson of the world. Our enemy has had five proofs that he is not invincible, and one, that he is dependant upon a signal fortune of war for a dear bought victory ! Let the fate of the Chesapeake tell him the terms on which he can overcome the American people....In this instance we were overpowered, but not subdued, accident baffled our skill, and slaughtered our officers, and at the moment when victory was almost within our grasp, an act of foul play by a desperate foe, aided by an extraordinary complement of men, overpowered the brave remnant of our countrymen. But he will scarcely hang this flag in the hall of his trophies....he should rather enroll it in the galling list of portentous deeds which announce to him in unerring prophecy, the rising of a successful competitor of his naval power.

Before I close this address, permit me my countrymen, to pay a tribute of gratitude and respect to one of the bravest men the annals of our country record....one of the champions of your naval glory....one of the heroes of Tripoli, the conquer-

or of the Peacock, and a martyr in the cause of his country !.... To the latest posterity the name of *Lawrence* shall exalt the pride, and excite the emulation of his countrymen. This soil has reared no hero of whom it has more cause to be proud than he, or whose deeds shine more conspicuously than his ; and when the future bards of our country shall sing the deeds of her heroes, and of “ the mighty in battle,” those of *Lawrence* shall swell their proudest numbers. He fell fighting in the cause of his country, and sealed by his death, the imperishable and unfading reputation which the gallant achievements of his life had procured for him. Proud indeed, may be the land which contains within its bosom, a treasure so precious as his ashes, from the seeds of which, in another soil than Halifax, a race of heroes might spring !....but seeing that he is laid far from us in a foreign land, let us entomb him in our hearts, and in consecrating his memory, learn to emulate his virtues !

Fellow-soldiers, in this day of peril, we cannot have a better example for imitation than that of *Lawrence*.... We need not look for a braver or more gallant soldier, and if we fall, we fall like him in the service of our country.... TO BE IMMORTAL !

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