

They have become already matter of history, of poetry, of eloquence:

"The love, where death has set his seal,
Nor age can chill, nor rival steal,
Nor falsehood disavow."

Divisions may spring up, ill blood arise, parties be formed, and interests may seem to clash; but the great bonds of the nation are linked to what is passed. The deeds of the great men to whom this country owes its origin and growth are a patrimony, I know, of which its children will never deprive themselves. As long as the Mississippi and the Missouri shall flow those men and those deeds will be remembered on their banks. The sceptre of government may go where it will; but that of patriotic feeling can never depart from Judah. In all that mighty region which is drained by the Missouri and its tributary streams—the valley coextensive with the temperate zone—will there be, as long as the name of America shall last, a father that will not take his children on his knee and recount to them the events of the twentieth of December, the nineteenth of April, the seventeenth of June, and the fourth of July?

This then is the theatre on which the intellect of America is to appear, and such the motives to its exertion; such the mass to be influenced by its energies, such the crowd to witness its efforts, such the glory to crown its success. If I err in this happy vision of my country's fortunes I thank God for an error so animating. If this be false may I never know the truth. Never may you, my friends, be under any other feeling, than that a great, a growing, an immeasurably expanding country is calling upon you for your best services. The name and character of your Alma Mater have already been carried by some of our brethren thousands of miles from her venerable walls; and thousands of miles still farther west-

ward the communities of kindred men are fast gathering, whose minds and hearts will act in sympathy with yours.

The most powerful motives call on us as scholars for those efforts which our common country demands of all her children. Most of us are of that class who owe whatever of knowledge has shone into our minds to the free and popular institutions of our native land. There are few of us who may not be permitted to boast that we have been reared in an honest poverty or a frugal competence and owe everything to those means of education which are equally open to all. We are summoned to new energy and zeal by the high nature of the experiment we are appointed in Providence to make, and the grandeur of the theatre on which it is to be performed.

When the old world afforded no longer any hope it pleased heaven to open this last refuge of humanity. The attempt has begun, and is going on, far from foreign corruption, on the broadest scale and under the most benignant auspices; and it certainly rests with us to solve the great problem in human society, to settle, and that forever, the momentous question—whether mankind can be trusted with a purely popular system?

One might almost think, without extravagance, that the departed wise and good of all places and times are looking down from their happy seats to witness what shall now be done by us; that they who lavished their treasures and their blood of old, who labored and suffered, who spake and wrote, who fought and perished in the one great cause of freedom and truth, are now hanging from their orbs on high over the last solemn experiment of humanity.

As I have wandered over the spots, once the scene of their labors, and mused among the prostrate columns of their

senate houses and forums, I have seemed almost to hear a voice from the tombs of departed ages; from the sepulchres of the nations, which died before the sight. They exhort us, they adjure us to be faithful to our trust. They implore us by the long trials of struggling humanity, by the blessed memory of the departed, by the dear faith which has been plighted by pure hands to the holy cause of truth and man; by the awful secrets of the prison houses where the sons of freedom have been immured, by the noble heads which have been brought to the block, by the wrecks of time, by the eloquent ruins of nations, they conjure us not to quench the light which is rising on the world.

Greece cries to us by the convulsed lips of her poisoned, dying Demosthenes; and Rome pleads with us in the mute persuasion of her mangled Tully. They address us each and all in the glorious language of Milton, to one who might have canonized his memory in the hearts of the friends of liberty, but who did most shamefully betray the cause:

“Reverere tantam de te expectationem, spem patriæ de te unicam. Reverere vultus et vulnera tot fortium virorum, quotquot pro libertate tam strenue decertarunt, manes etiam eorum qui in ipso certamine occubuerunt. Reverere exterarum quoque civitatum existimationem de te atque sermones; quantas res de libertate nostra tam fortiter parta, de nostra republica tam gloriose exorta sibi polliceantur; quæ si tam cito quasi aborta evanuerit, profecto nihil æque dedecorosum huic genti atque periculosum fuerit.”¹

Yes, my friends, such is the exhortation which calls on us to exert our powers, to employ our time, and consecrate our labors in the cause of our native land. When we engage in that solemn study, the history of our race; when we survey the progress of man, from his cradle in the East to these last

¹Milton's "Defensio Secunda."

limits of his wandering; when we behold him forever flying westward from civil and religious thralldom, bearing his household gods over mountains and seas, seeking rest and finding none, but still pursuing the flying bow of promise to the glittering hills which it spans in Hesperian climes, we cannot but exclaim with Bishop Berkeley, the generous prelate of England who bestowed his benefactions as well as blessings on our country,

“ Westward the star of Empire takes its way;
The four first acts already past,
The fifth shall close the drama with the day;
Time's noblest offspring is the last.”

In that high romance, if romance it be, in which the great minds of antiquity sketched the fortunes of the ages to come, they pictured to themselves a favored region beyond the ocean, a land of equal laws and happy men. The primitive poets beheld it in the islands of the blest; the Doric bards surveyed it in the Hyperborean regions; the sage of the academy placed it in the lost Atlantis; and even the sterner spirit of Seneca could discern a fairer abode of humanity in distant regions then unknown. We look back upon these uninspired predictions and almost recoil from the obligation they imply. By us must these fair visions be realized, by us must be fulfilled these high promises which burst in trying hours from the longing hearts of the champions of truth. There are no more continents or worlds to be revealed; Atlantis hath arisen from the ocean, the farthest Thule is reached, there are no more retreats beyond the sea, no more discoveries, no more hopes. Here then a mighty work is to be fulfilled, or never by the race of mortals. The man who looks with tenderness on the sufferings of good men in other times, the descendant of the pilgrims who cherishes the memory of his fathers, the patriot who feels an honest glow at the majesty of the system

of which he is a member, the scholar who beholds with rapture the long sealed book of unprejudiced truth expanded to all to read, these are they by whom these auspices are to be accomplished. Yes, brethren, it is by the intellect of the country that the mighty mass is to be inspired, that its parts are to communicate and sympathize, its bright progress to be adorned with becoming refinements, its strong sense uttered, its character reflected, its feelings interpreted to its own children, to other regions, and to after ages.

Meantime the years are rapidly passing away and gathering importance in their course. With the present year will be completed the half century from that most important era in human history, the commencement of our revolutionary war. The jubilee of our national existence is at hand. The space of time that has elapsed from that momentous date has laid down in the dust, which the blood of many of them had already hallowed, most of the great men to whom under Providence we owe our national existence and privileges. A few still survive among us to reap the rich fruits of their labors and sufferings; and one¹ has yielded himself to the united voice of a people and returned in his age to receive the gratitude of the nation to whom he devoted his youth. It is recorded on the pages of American history that when this friend of our country applied to our commissioners at Paris, in 1776, for a passage in the first ship they should despatch to America they were obliged to answer him (so low and abject was then our dear native land), that they possessed not the means nor the credit sufficient for providing a single vessel in all the ports of France. Then, exclaimed the youthful hero, "I will provide my own;" and it is a literal fact that

¹Major-General La Fayette, who was present at the delivery of this oration.

when all America was too poor to offer him so much as a passage to our shores, he left, in his tender youth, the bosom of home, of happiness, of wealth, of rank, to plunge in the dust and blood of our inauspicious struggle.

Welcome, friend of our fathers, to our shores! Happy are our eyes that behold those venerable features. Enjoy a triumph such as never conqueror or monarch enjoyed, the assurance, that throughout America, there is not a bosom which does not beat with joy and gratitude at the sound of your name. You have already met and saluted, or will soon meet, the few that remain of the ardent patriots, prudent counselors, and brave warriors with whom you were associated in achieving our liberty. But you have looked round in vain for the faces of many who would have lived years of pleasure on a day like this with their old companion in arms and brother in peril. Lincoln, and Greene, and Knox, and Hamilton, are gone; the heroes of Saratoga and Yorktown have fallen before the only foe they could not meet. Above all, the first of heroes and of men, the friend of your youth, the more than friend of his country, rests in the bosom of the soil he redeemed. On the banks of his Potomac he lies in glory and peace. You will revisit the hospitable shades of Mount Vernon, but him whom you venerated as we did you will not meet at its door. His voice of consolation, which reached you in the Austrian dungeons, cannot now break its silence to bid you welcome to his own roof. But the grateful children of America will bid you welcome, in his name. Welcome, thrice welcome to our shores; and whithersoever throughout the limits of the continent your course shall take you, the ear that hears you shall bless you, the eye that sees you shall bear witness to you, and every tongue exclaim, with heartfelt joy, welcome, welcome La Fayette!

PATRIOTIC ORATION •

DELIVERED AT CAMBRIDGE ON THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE
INDEPENDENCE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

FELLOW CITIZENS,—It belongs to us with strong propriety to celebrate this day. The town of Cambridge and the county of Middlesex are filled with the vestiges of the revolution; whithersoever we turn our eyes we behold some memento of its glorious scenes. Within the walls in which we are now assembled was convened the first provincial Congress after its adjournment at Concord. The rural magazine at Medford reminds us of one of the earliest acts of British aggression.

The march of both divisions of the royal army on the memorable 19th of April was through the limits of Cambridge; in the neighboring towns of Lexington and Concord the first blood of the revolution was shed; in West Cambridge the royal convoy of provisions was, the same day, gallantly surprised by the aged citizens who stayed to protect their homes while their sons pursued the foe.

Here the first American army was formed; from this place, on the 17th of June, was detached the Spartan band that immortalized the heights of Charlestown and consecrated that day with blood and fire to the cause of American liberty. Beneath the venerable elm which still shades the southwestern corner of the common General Washington first unsheathed his sword at the head of an American army, and to that seat was wont every Sunday to repair to join in the supplications which were made for the welfare of his country.

How changed is now the scene! The foe is gone! The din and the desolation of war are passed; science has long resumed her station in the shades of our venerable university, no longer glittering with arms; the anxious war council is no longer in session, to offer a reward for the discovery of the best mode of making saltpetre—an unpromising stage of hostilities when an army of twenty thousand men is in the field in front of the foe; the tall grass now waves in the trampled sallyport of some of the rural redoubts that form a part of the simple lines of circumvallation within which a half-armed American militia held the flower of the British army blockaded; the plough has done what the English batteries could not do—has levelled others of them with the earth; and the men, the great and good men, their warfare is over and they have gone quietly down to the dust they redeemed from oppression.

At the close of a half century since the declaration of our independence we are assembled to commemorate that great and happy event. We come together, not because it needs, but because it deserves these acts of celebration. We do not meet each other and exchange our felicitations because we should otherwise fall into forgetfulness of this auspicious era, but because we owe it to our fathers and to our children to mark its return with grateful festivities.

The major part of this assembly is composed of those who had not yet engaged in the active scenes of life when the revolution commenced. We come not to applaud our own work but to pay a filial tribute to the deeds of our fathers. It was for their children that the heroes and sages of the revolution labored and bled. They were too wise not to know that it was not personally their own cause in which they were embarked; they felt that they were engaging in

an enterprise which an entire generation must be too short to bring to its mature and perfect issue.

The most they could promise themselves was, that, having cast forth the seed of liberty, having shielded its tender germ from the stern blasts that beat upon it, having watered it with the tears of waiting eyes and the blood of brave hearts, their children might gather the fruit of its branches, while those who planted it should molder in peace beneath its shade.

Nor was it only in this that we discern their disinterestedness, their heroic forgetfulness of self. Not only was the independence for which they struggled a great and arduous adventure, of which they were to encounter the risk and others to enjoy the benefits, but the oppressions which roused them had assumed in their day no worse form than that of a pernicious principle. No intolerable acts of oppression had ground them to the dust. They were not slaves rising in desperation from beneath the agonies of the lash, but free men, snuffing from afar "the tainted gale of tyranny."

The worst encroachments on which the British ministry had ventured might have been borne consistently with the practical enjoyment of many of the advantages resulting from good government. On the score of calculation alone that generation had much better have paid the duties on glass, painter's colors, stamped paper, and tea, than have plunged into the expenses of the revolutionary war.

But they thought not of shuffling off upon posterity the burden of resistance. They well understood the part which Providence had assigned to them. They perceived that they were called to discharge a high and perilous office to the cause of freedom; that their hands were elected to strike the blow for which near two centuries of preparation—never remitted though often unconscious—had been making on one side or

the other of the Atlantic. They felt that the colonies had now reached that stage in their growth when the difficult problem of colonial government must be solved; difficult I call it, for such it is to the statesman whose mind is not sufficiently enlarged for the idea that a wise colonial government must naturally and rightfully end in independence; that even a mild and prudent sway on the part of the mother country furnishes no reason for not severing the bands of the colonial subjection; and that when the rising state has passed the period of adolescence the only alternative which remains is that of a peaceable separation or a convulsive rupture.

The British ministry, at that time weaker than it had ever been since the infatuated reign of James II, had no knowledge of political science but that which they derived from the text of official records. They drew their maxims, as it was happily said of one of them that he did his measures, from the file. They heard that a distant province had resisted the execution of an act of Parliament. Indeed, and what is the specific in cases of resistance?—a military force; and two more regiments are ordered to Boston. Again they hear that the general court of Massachusetts Bay has taken counsels subversive of the allegiance due to the crown. A case of a refractory corporation; what is to be done? First try a mandamus, and if that fails seize the franchises into his Majesty's hands.

They never asked the great questions, whether nations, like men, have not their principles of growth; whether Providence has assigned no laws to regulate the changes in the condition of that most astonishing of human things, a nation of kindred men. They did not inquire, I will not say whether it were rightful and expedient, but whether it were practicable, to give law across the Atlantic to a people who possessed within

themselves every imaginable element of self-government—a people rocked in the cradle of liberty, brought up to hardship, inheriting nothing but their rights on earth and their hopes in heaven.

But though the rulers of Britain appear not to have caught a glimpse of the great principles involved in these questions, our fathers had asked and answered them. They perceived with the rapidity of intuition that the hour of separation had come; because a principle was assumed by the British government which put an instantaneous check to the further growth of liberty. Either the race of civilized man happily planted on our shores, at first slowly and painfully reared, but at length auspiciously multiplying in America, is destined never to constitute a free and independent state; or these measures must be resisted which go to bind it in a mild but abject colonial vassalage.

Either the hope must be forever abandoned, the hope that had been brightening and kindling toward assurance like the glowing skies of the morning—the hope that a new centre of civilization was to be planted on the new continent at which the social and political institutions of the world may be brought to the standard of reason and truth after thousands of years of degeneracy—either this hope must be abandoned, and forever, or the battle was now to be fought, first in the political assemblies and then, if need be, in the field.

In the halls of legislation scarcely can it be said that the battle was fought. A spectacle indeed seemed to be promised to the civilized world of breathless interest and uncalculated consequence. “You are placed,” said the provincial Congress of Massachusetts in their address to the inhabitants, of December 4, 1774, an address promulgated at the close of a session held in this very house where we are now convened,

“You are placed by Providence in a post of honor because it is a post of danger, and while struggling for the noblest objects, the liberties of our country, the happiness of posterity, and the rights of human nature, the eyes, not only of North America and the whole British empire, but of all Europe are upon you.”

A mighty question of political right was at issue between the two hemispheres. Europe and America in the face of mankind are going to plead the great cause on which the fate of popular government forever is suspended. One circumstance, and one alone, exists to diminish the interest of the contention—the perilous inequality of the parties—an inequality far exceeding that which gives animation to a contest, and so great as to destroy the hope of an ably waged encounter.

On the one side were arrayed the two houses of the British Parliament, the modern school of political eloquence, the arena where great minds had for a century and a half strenuously wrestled themselves into strength and power, and in better days the common and upright chancery of an empire on which the sun never set.

Upon the other side rose up the colonial assemblies of Massachusetts and Virginia, and the Continental Congress of Philadelphia, composed of men whose training had been within a small provincial circuit, who had never before felt the inspiration which the consciousness of a station before the world imparts; who brought no power into the contest but that which they drew from their cause and their bosoms.

It is by champions like these that the great principles of representative government, of chartered rights and constitutional liberty are to be discussed; and surely never in the annals of national controversy was exhibited a triumph so