

*with the respect of
the author.*

AN

ORATION,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

CITY COUNCIL AND CITIZENS OF BOSTON,

IN

FANEUIL HALL,

ON THE

SIXTY-SEVENTH ANNIVERSARY

OF THE

DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE,

JULY 4, 1843.

BY CHARLES FRANCIS ADAMS.

BOSTON:

JOHN H. EASTBURN, CITY PRINTER.

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CITY OF BOSTON.

In the Board of Aldermen, July 5, 1843.

RESOLVED, by unanimous vote, that the thanks of this Board be presented in behalf of the City Council, to **CHARLES FRANCIS ADAMS, Esq.**, for the able and eloquent Oration delivered by him, before the Municipal Authorities of the City, at the recent Celebration of the Anniversary of the Independence of the United States;—and that he be requested to furnish a copy of the same for the press.

A true copy of record.

Attest,

S. F. McCLEARY, City Clerk.

HON. MARTIN BRIMMER, Mayor of the City of Boston.

QUINCY, JULY 7, 1843.

DEAR SIR,

Your kind letter, enclosing the vote of the Board of Aldermen, respecting my Oration, was received yesterday. In submitting with great diffidence a copy of it for the press, agreeably to your and their request, I beg leave to express to you my warmest thanks for the very indulgent reception it met with on the part of the City Authorities as well as the audience generally.

I am, sir, very truly

Your obedient servant,

CHARLES FRANCIS ADAMS.

ORATION.

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FELLOW CITIZENS AND FRIENDS,

UPON an occasion like this, an Anniversary which has now returned so many times, it is not my purpose to attempt, I hope it is not your disposition to expect much that is new or extraordinary. Sixty-seven years have elapsed since the occurrence of the great event which we meet to commemorate, the Declaration of our National Independence, a period of time embracing according to the common mode of computation at least two entire generations of mankind. That which fought the battles to establish the independence which it declared has for the most part passed away. And the next which reared to maturity the National Institutions which it also aided to create is rapidly retiring from the scene. Of these two generations, most of the individuals who distinguished themselves by qualities that mark the Statesman, the Orator and the Patriot lavished their powers in the celebration of this day. It would then appear not a little presumptuous in one of a succeeding age to nurse a hope that he could open views that had escaped the observation of those who have gone before him, or even that he could vie with them in the developement of old ones. The moment seems to have come, when the ambition of

figuring as an Orator upon this Anniversary must cease. The field has been cropped of its bright flowers. The mine has yielded all of its glittering ore. Nothing is left to the pride of authorship—nothing to the vanity of declamation. To the juvenile aspirant for distinction, the opportunity is of little value because it presents more chances of failure than success and by the elder members of society it has become perhaps too generally associated with the unmeaning ceremonies of ordinary festive days.

We may be permitted to regret this result even though we cannot hope to resist it. This celebration is a feeble homage of a prosperous people to the virtue of those who made them what they are. It is one link of a chain which makes us yet susceptible of emotions which animated them. It is a medium through which a ray of light may be shot into our own bosoms to ascertain how we compare with them. My friends, what do *we* know through any trials which as a nation we have had to encounter, of the sacrifices of the revolution? The men of that day were formed just as we are, they had the same passions to contend with, the same selfishness to subdue and they loved peace and their ease as well as we do. The payment of a few pence per pound on tea was a trifle in comparison with the cost of an effort to resist it. What was it then which tempted them to choose the difficult and dangerous road rather than to dally in the lap of pleasure? It was *devotion to a principle*. It was the devotion to that something beautiful and good, the pursuit of which has produced all that does honor to human nature in the annals of mankind, which cannot be found in

worldly possessions, which the treasures of India cannot buy and which the power of the most despotic sovereign on earth cannot command. Do we at this day realize the extent of the effort which they made to secure it? With us devotion to the cause of the people is for the most part the mere performance of lip-service which they know best how to practice who are the least capable of a real sacrifice to sustain it. It is the submission of one's self to do what costs nothing, what it is often very agreeable to do, and what one is well paid in honor and official distinction for doing. It was not so when the armed enemy was at the gate, and when the utterance of an abstract truth was to be forthwith maintained by the pledge of property and of blood. The hour when each cannon shot that sounded in the ears might be the knell of a patriot, and when every ball sent from the neighboring heights was like a voluntary offering of one's dwelling to the cause of the country was indeed an hour which needed the support of some soul exalting sentiment to make it pass without agony. There are none such now. "Jeshurun hath waxed fat." Our contentions are with each other. We war with the dangers of our prosperity and are apt to forget that any others ever existed. Now is the accepted time and this is the fitting place too, for us to profit by the remembrance of them. Here let the living wells be found from which we and our posterity may drink and be refreshed, whenever we may be called to make similar sacrifices, and undergo similar labors. Here let the memory of good bear unmingled sway. Give to selfish contention whatever else you please. Let the spirit of party raise the surge of the political

ocean until it sweep mountain high over the land at every other time, but in *this* spot, on *this* day, keep, O keep the sky sunny and serene.

Yet, my fellow citizens, let it not be supposed that in pleading for this, I would advocate the formation on this occasion of a sickly, artificial temperature, fit only to promote the growth of feeble or exotic plants. It is the wind-tossed tree that will most stiffly resist the tempest. The Anniversary of our National Independence is not a suitable day to sing praises to those who do little to deserve them, or to flatter the citizens of to-day because their ancestors made them what they are. A people has no more right to boast of hereditary claims to honor than an individual. In the one case as in the other, it is *desert* alone which should win the meed of praise. There are duties incumbent upon every race of men although it may well happen that the precise character of them will not always be the same. We are not called upon to fight for our families and fire-sides, nor yet to build up a new system of polity in the room of one that had been shaken to the ground. But we *are* called upon to do what experience has shown in other countries to be quite as difficult as either, and that is to govern ourselves. How this may best be done, what are the dangers most to be apprehended, and what the advantages that will flow from complete success might indeed furnish an ample theme worthy of the occasion and of the strongest mind you could summon to the discussion of it. The task does not however belong to me. It implies a right to teach which I cannot claim, a right to be earned only by wisdom and experience. Well tried must that vision be which shall discern amid

the various appearances of our political horizon each object in its exact dimensions, and which will not be liable on the one hand to take a mere wind-cloud for that which brings a thunderbolt, or on the other, to fancy a fertile and vine clad eminence, the ground which is swelling with the pent up fires of Vesuvius.

But, though I cannot hope to reach the position of a teacher or a prophet, it may perhaps be allowed to me to take a view of the position we assumed as a people at the era of our independence and contrast it with that which we now occupy. I have already noticed the fact that two entire generations of men have passed from active life since the date of our national freedom. The hands that cradled that infant, and those which taught the boy the way he should go are no longer here. They have vanished and their nursling has grown up to be a giant who is in his turn cradling and educating swarms of his own. And upon the result of *his* instruction far more than upon all which has yet been done depends the realization of the fairest hopes that were ever formed for the improvement of mankind. For it should be distinctly borne in mind, that those generations of which I have spoken, constitute only the state of transition in America from one political system to another. The men who effected the independence of this people and who made them republicans were not themselves the offspring of the schools of theoretical democracy, howmuchsoever they may have passed their lives in the exercise of practical equality. Their judgment had been to a considerable extent affected by the existence of distinctions recognised by the law which made the



source of their social system and the basis of their political education. A King, Lords and Commons, an established Church, a system of entails and family settlements designed to overturn the equal distribution of property in families, that corner stone of social equality, though little felt in the primitive condition of affairs on this side of the water and wherever felt, not relished, were nevertheless parts of a settled order of things to which for its other compensating merits respect was generally inculcated from the earliest infancy, and with reference to which as a model the opinions of persons of all ages were formed. Allegiance to a sovereign, whether Queen Anne or King George was acknowledged to be due here not less than in Great Britain. The rewards of public conduct were all associated with the system of ranks prevailing in the mother country. To go to it was to go "*home*" and to receive from it the details of domestic and foreign events, of peace or war with the other nations of Europe and most particularly with France was to receive intelligence deeply affecting their own happiness and safety. Their habits of daily life, their love of order, their obedience to lawful authority were all parts of their English inheritance, and however admirably these may have adapted themselves to the maintenance of the democratic institutions which their favorite theory led them to establish, they must be admitted to trace an earlier origin. These qualities did wonders in the safe organization of the new system of government and in carrying it unharmed through the dangers incident to social revolution, but it is only *now*, at this comparatively remote period of time that we may begin to claim credit to

that system itself for the fact that we continue to possess them. *Now* it is, that the first generations born and bred under a republican government in the United States assume the undivided control of it. But a single Chief Magistrate of the Union has yet been elected whose birth dates since the year 1776. They must probably all do so for the future. *Now* then does the true developement of our social system formed after the democratic theory, become apparent in practice. Every day is adding increased weight to the great experiment upon which our happiness as a people depends. The government is now entirely in the hands of the children of the fourth of July, 1776. The country has gone through in safety its first great change. And although it must be conceded that heretofore it has been the men of a former time who created and sustained our free Institutions, it may now on the contrary be claimed, that by a reacting process for the first time become distinctly visible, it is the free Institutions which make the men.

An interesting question must immediately present itself to our minds. In this transfer of the country from the hands of one generation to that of another, is there any marked change in the character of the people? If there were it would be difficult for any one of us to discern it. We know that the boy changes from his condition of obedience to parental authority, to that of manhood when he relies upon his own judgment, is often impetuous and generally wilful, hoping much and fearing little, and then again he passes into age when experience has inspired the consciousness of human infirmity, and exhausted nature in dread of change seeks in the recol-

lection of the past a compensation for the uncertainty of the future. Yet striking as all this ought to be, who is there who watches the change as it goes on around him day after day? To us the face of a friend appears the same now that it was yesterday. We do not observe that one hair has become gray, or that one wrinkle is more deeply set in the interval. And if we cannot judge of the alteration in his outer lineaments, how much less able are we to decide upon the change that is going on equally fast in the mind and in the heart. Just so, fellow citizens, must it be on a larger scale with States. Who does not see that the Monarchy of Victoria is not in every respect the same with that of the sailor king, still less does it resemble that of the first or second of the Brunswick line, and least of all that of William of Orange. Yet in the century and a half that has intervened between the earliest and latest of these reigns what British citizen could have pointed out wherein the state of his country differed in one month from that of the preceding. It is easy to contrast distant periods, but it is not so easy to trace the finer threads as they run which connect the changes which we can observe to have happened. And if this remark be true of older countries, with how much more force will it apply to the more rapidly moving United States. The people in 1843 present an aspect very different from that of 1776. They do not exactly resemble the people of 1789, or 1803 or 1816 or even of 1829. Yet it would be very difficult to define the precise points in which the difference consists or the causes of that difference. The infant Hercules strangled serpents in his cradle, and yet he was after all at that time but a strong child need-

ing guidance and direction from age and experience. The moral elements of his character were yet to be combined. Neither did he even by time gain them as fast as his physical powers increased. The poisoned shirt of Nessus and the funeral pyre on the summit of Mount Oeta were but a legitimate consequence of his failure to acquire the mastery of his own passions. And so it may yet be with our own country. We snapped the bonds in youth which a misguided foster-parent strove to impose upon us, but the moral discipline which follows as a necessary consequence of our growth and freedom from external restraint is a perpetual lesson which the progress of time makes more difficult to be learnt in the same ratio that the necessity of learning it becomes more and more absolute.

Let me now recur for a moment to the Declaration of Independence itself. It was once called by a celebrated Virginian,\* "a fanfaronade of abstractions." Taken as a composition, and without reference to the action which made it a great historical fact, it is a well written exposition of the principles which justify a people in overturning a government. But there have been such both before and since which have lived their hour and been forgotten. What is the reason why this one bids fair to be immortal? It is because it embodies the *action* of a people. It is because it constitutes the standing testimony to their devotion to a principle. The distinction to be drawn between this and other acts of a similar kind lies in the fact that it was not the offspring of a momentary popular impulse, but of long reflection and mature decision. Of the Congress

\* John Randolph of Roanoke.

which met in 1774, there were probably not more than four or five members who on coming together suspected the probability of such a result, and even they viewed it as rather a possible consequence of a conflict of opposite principles than as a certain termination to their labors. The people of the various Colonies were at that time by no means united in sentiment as to the course which it would be proper to pursue. Massachusetts and Virginia were far in advance of New York and Pennsylvania, but none of them were prepared for action. It is one of the standing proofs of the wisdom of the Delegates in Congress that they did not attempt to forestall it, but rather directed their efforts to the great object of securing united opinion. The separate organization of the Colonies was one of the most serious difficulties with which they had to contend. The people were not homogeneous. They were of different national origin, of opposite modes of religious belief, not all speaking the same language, and living under thirteen distinct forms of government administered by persons not all of them by any means equally odious. Nothing could have overcome the obstacles thus presented to the adoption of a common Declaration of Independence but mature deliberation. It was like bringing thirteen clocks to strike at noon exactly together, a more difficult task, if we may credit the anecdote respecting one who had tried both, than governing a kingdom, and it was done at last by reliance upon the intrinsic power of one abstract principle. The annunciation of self-evident truths with which the Declaration begins, that "all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these

are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. *That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed*" would have been a mere flourish of trumpets, had not the people of the country prepared themselves forthwith to maintain by an example the principle which they approved. They undertook to show to the world what had never been seen before, that a government could be instituted among men securing to them their unalienable rights and yet deriving its just powers from the *consent* of the governed. Their success in this attempt thus far makes the glory of the revolution, because it shows the hand of a reflecting people. It was not the throwing off the shackles of Great Britain that gave dignity to the struggle of the patriots of 1776, but it was the greater act of performing the high duties devolving on them as representatives of a governing people. They felt themselves creators. They saw that the substitution of a new system would constitute the only true justification for the demolition of an old one. And difficult as was the task of at once carrying on the war which threatened their personal safety, and remoulding the Institutions which were crumbling under the contest, it is the desire to execute it in all of its broad extent which marks the Congress of 1776, as composed of men worthy to rank not only among the patriots but the statesmen and legislators of history.

It was the opinion of Brutus and his fellow conspirators that if they could murder Cæsar, the republican government of Rome would again go on of itself. They succeeded in their attempt but the only

consequence was war, anarchy, proscriptions and the ultimate resort for safety to a despotic government. The secret of the failure lay in the fact that the scheme was a hasty idea of a few disconnected from a systematic movement to be sustained by the final approbation of the people. How different was the action of 1776. It was on Monday the 10th day of June that the Congress in Committee of the whole agreed to the following resolution.

*“Resolved, That the United States are and of right ought to be free and independent States; that they are absolved from all allegiance to the British crown and that all political connexion between them and the State of Great Britain is and ought to be totally dissolved.”*

A Committee was ordered to prepare a Declaration to the same effect, and the names of those who reported the celebrated paper were placed upon the Journal of the next day, Tuesday.

Thus far went the dissolving and destroying process which was a tribute to the principles of Liberty.

But immediately after the entry of those names there follows the following significant resolve.

*“Resolved, That a Committee be appointed to prepare and digest the form of a confederation to be entered into between the Colonies.*

*“That a Committee be appointed to prepare a plan of treaties to be proposed to foreign powers.”*

This resolve was subsidiary to one which had been adopted exactly one month previous, recommending to the several Colonies to organize the powers of government under the authority of the people themselves, and it was intended to perfect the system. At the same time, another resolve was adopted creating a board of war and arming it with full executive and war-making powers.

Here, fellow citizens, were the outlines of a great

plan which showed that those who assumed the sovereignty were capable of executing the powers it conferred. Here lay the pledge that the Declaration of Independence was not a mere voice. It had "become necessary for *one* people to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and of nature's God entitled them." But the immediate corollary from this position was that the people thus assuming its proper station, should by some act of its own, secure the rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness which rights had been so far endangered by the action of Great Britain as to justify the renunciation of her authority. This could only be done by adopting a form of government "deriving its just powers from the consent of the governed."

Here commenced the preserving process which was a tribute to the principles of Law.

It is not very easy for us in looking back a period of sixty or seventy years to form an exact idea of the difficulty of executing at the same moment this two-fold process. Neither can it surprise us that the effort was not in all its parts attended with equal success. A keen foresight taught the signers of the Declaration the necessity of proceeding even in war to the adoption of measures which should secure the rights for which they were contending after the return of peace. Domestic anarchy or a dissolution of the Union which would have prevented the beneficial developement of the people's energy would have made the support of a "fanfaronade of abstractions" by a war a very costly and wasteful sacrifice. Yet how were these evils to be avoided excepting through a common form of government? A common form



of government had been however up to this time a somewhat novel idea to many if not all of the inhabitants of the thirteen separate Colonies. They were jealous of restraint which they felt obliged to impose upon themselves at home where they could watch and immediately correct any abuse of their authority, by agents of their own appointment. How were they to become reconciled to the admission of an external power in regulating which they were to have but a proportionate control? Not without reason was it then that the Congress of 1776 lost not a moment in applying itself to this great duty. A Declaration of Independence cost little beyond a few strokes of a rhetorical pen, a war might be carried on with the aid of the popular courage, but the conservative principle which was to make both the Declaration and the War conduce to the benefit of millions yet unborn remained to be developed in the voluntary establishment of a free and yet a vigorous government.

It can give little cause of surprise that the first effort to attain this object was not successful. The Declaration of Independence had announced the assumption of a separate station among the nations of the earth of *one* people. The first form of compact that was agreed upon under the name of the Confederation resolved it into thirteen. It granted powers without providing the authority to execute them. It organized a system and destroyed the organs which could give it vitality. It was exactly described by the homely figure applied to it in its own day. "Thirteen staves and ne'er a hoop will not make a barrel." The jealous spirit of liberty animating the people of the several States had well

nigh emasculated the law. The consequences in poverty, discontent and the impatience of any wholesome restraint soon began to make themselves perceived. But at that very moment, when the monarchists of Europe thought themselves sure of a triumph, when they were ready to point to the American people as a signal instance of the vanity of all the republican doctrines, at that very moment did the people most remarkably disappoint their expectations. The confederation only furnished evidence that they could repair an error. Instead of confessing incapacity they set themselves to the work of conferring greater powers on the Law. It was thirteen years after the issue of the paper which called them "*one people*" before the world, about "to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and of nature's God assigned them," that the Constitution of the United States was adopted, predicated as it was upon the consent of that people itself. This was the great act which made the other something more than word. This was the great seal set to that instrument of our National Liberties. Then and not until then did it cease to be a "fanfaronade of abstractions," as the Virginian chose to denominate it. Then and not until then was the great pledge which its signers gave of their lives, their fortunes and their sacred honor really redeemed to their own country and to the world. The great experiment of a government deriving its just powers from the consent of the governed, that problem of the union of Liberty and Law which had filled the imagination of patriots of all ages, which they had sought for but never found, was now fairly solved.

Americans had devised the scheme. Americans had put it into operation. And now, my fellow citizens, after more than half a century has passed away, I may add, that upon the *will* of Americans alone does it depend for a period to its full success.

It is one of the most remarkable peculiarities attending the form of government thus adopted, that it has accommodated itself to the most rapid and wonderful growth of a people that was ever known in history. The number of States which compose the Union is now twenty-six, or exactly double that which declared our Independence. The population has probably increased six-fold, and the wealth and resources of the country in a still greater proportion. Yet notwithstanding this enormous enlargement of the machine, the consequence in some degree of its favorable movement, its operations are still carried on with even less difficulty than when it was new and small. The people become more rather than less homogeneous notwithstanding that they spread over a wider surface, and their attachment to the common bond of government appears to increase instead of diminishing. In this respect there has been a steady adherence to the same sentiment during the entire period since it was adopted. Fond as Americans are considered of change, fickle as they may be in their attachment to men, and addicted as they are to every species of novelty in political and in private life, they have never swerved from their faith in the Federal Constitution. And now the very extension of the country has become a barrier to the probability even of useful amendment. For the interests which operate upon the people have become so diversified, that it would be diffi-

cult to propose an alteration which would be likely to secure the concurrence of a sufficient number of States to obtain its adoption.

Yet, my fellow citizens, although upon looking back during fifty years we can see that the movement of the country continues the same, and the form of government has not been visibly altered, it is not the less certain that a very considerable change has actually taken place both in the disposition of the people and the character of the government. It is the remark of a profound writer\* that "a republican form must change its character in proportion as the country extends its limits." The historian when reviewing the period will mark the acquisition of Louisiana as the era of change in our system. This change the consequences of which have as yet barely begun to show themselves, was effected without the adoption of any amendment to the Constitution, through the agency of a Chief Magistrate and the treaty making power. That very Chief Magistrate, Mr. Jefferson, had earned for himself a high reputation with the people of his own day for the rigid manner in which he confined the powers granted to the National Government, and yet by an inconsistency to which all public men are liable, his acquisition of Louisiana by a simple executive act will mark him forever as having done more to change the nature of the general government than all the other acts of all the other Presidents put together. Neither is this so simply because the treaty introduced into the Union without any consent of their own, a people of a different origin subject to a different law. It did much more—

\* Montesquieu.

it introduced a territory of indefinite extent susceptible of profitable cultivation by an unfortunate race whose presence on the American soil had up to that hour been regarded as an evil by no means beyond the hope of remedy. It opened a region of extraordinary fertility for the creation of new States with some interests adverse to those of the elder members of the Union, and with power enough to change the balance as it has heretofore existed. It created a proximity to other States which may yet subject the whole country to hazards either of foreign war or of domestic discord in comparison with which all the trials of the last half century sink into insignificance.

Such is the nature of the first great departure from the principles laid down in the Declaration of Independence. That paper had announced it as an axiom that the right of altering or abolishing any form of government which had become destructive of the great ends for the preservation of which it was instituted, lay in the people themselves. But the people of Louisiana were never for a moment consulted in the rapid transfer which was made of them first from the authority of Spain to that of Napoleon Bonaparte, and then from his to that of the United States. The only source of Napoleon's power was in truth the right of conquest, which had been exercised in Italy to such an extent as to compel from Spain her assent to any surrender of her other possessions which it was the fancy of the great military chieftain to dictate. The United States derived their right from the purchase of this conquest, and from nothing else. This is the sole title of a nation which professed to derive the just powers of

government from the consent of the governed. Whatever might have been the feelings of the citizens of that territory on the occasion of this most important transfer of themselves to a new and strange jurisdiction, and whatever their natural rights, no opportunity was allowed to give them scope or expression. On the 16th of January 1804, Mr. Jefferson, the very person who had drafted the immortal paper which declared our own independence, sent a message to both branches of the National Legislature announcing that the Commissioners of the United States had taken possession of Louisiana. "To be prepared for anything *unexpected* which might arise out of the transaction," these are his own words, "a respectable body of militia was ordered to be in readiness in the States of Ohio, Kentucky and Tennessee, and a part of those of Tennessee was moved on to the Natches. No occasion, however, arose for their services." The people had suffered themselves to be transferred like cattle, first by a formal surrender from Spain to France, and then by an equally formal surrender of France to the Commissioners of the United States. But had their disposition been otherwise, had any thing *unexpected* occurred, to use the phrase of Mr. Jefferson for resistance, we are left to infer from the presence of a respectable body of militia from Ohio, Kentucky and Tennessee what the result would have been, and just how far the *consent* of the governed would have been asked to the mode thus adopted of securing to them their unalienable rights.

Yet in saying thus much of the extraordinary manner in which our country departed from its own doctrines laid down in the Declaration of Independ-

once, in the instance of Louisiana let me not be misunderstood. I desire to make no personal charge against Mr. Jefferson. There is reason to believe that he was well aware of the inconsistency to which circumstances of stronger force than he could resist were impelling him. The control of the Mississippi and the possession of New Orleans as well as the territory attached were objects of intense desire to the people of the Western States. Mr. Jefferson probably foresaw that a treaty was the only way to escape the danger of war and that a title by purchase would be more creditable than a title by the right of the strongest. There might have been and probably was much in the peculiar circumstances attending residence on the borders of a great river affording the only easy outlet of produce to the Atlantic to justify the demands of the Western people. But after all, we must come back to the fact that in this instance the doctrines of expediency overcame the attachment to a fundamental principle. The distrust of the disposition of the people to restrain themselves within the bounds of the law and the Constitution prompted the government to a stretch of its legitimate powers. The end may have been greatly beneficial to the Union notwithstanding the questionable nature of the means by which it was procured. But whether it was or not, the fact of the acquisition in the manner here described still remains to make an era in the history of the American Union.

A new generation has come upon the scene since this great event. A stream of population has been constantly from that time flowing through the valley of the Mississippi, which is filling the waste places

even to the furthest limits of the acquired territory. Again are we arriving at the borders which separate us from a coterminous people. My fellow citizens, are the same arguments which have once availed to stretch our territory at the expence of our principles, likely to be pressed again? I say not that they will be, but in looking at our present condition and comparing it with that of 1776, I see that our physical power has enormously increased. Has our spirit of self-restraint grown strong in proportion? If it has, then is one danger to be apprehended removed. If on the other hand, it has not, then will the solemn principles adopted in the Declaration of Independence be regarded as "a fanfaronade of abstractions" when compared with the plunder to be obtained from following in the footsteps of the Spanish conqueror of Mexico.

It was a beautiful feature of the Roman Mythology, the respect which they manifested to the deity they called, Terminus, or the god of boundaries. They owed the idea to Numa the only one of their early statesmen who seems to have built a system on the principle of peace. This deity was supposed never to concede his place, not even to Jupiter himself,\* and the rights that were paid to him were not to be defiled by sacrifices of blood. Had Rome adhered to the pacific policy thus pointed out, she might not indeed have become the mistress of the

\* *Quid, nova cùm fierent Capitolia? nempe Deorum  
Cuncta Jovi cessit turba, locumque dedit.  
Terminus (ut veteres memorant) conventus in æde  
Restitit; et magno cum Jove templa tenet.*

Book 2d of the *Fasti* of Ovid, 667-70. Those who take pleasure in the Classics will be gratified by reading the whole passage which is too long to quote. It further shows that the inhibition of blood was not adhered to any longer than the pacific policy which it suggested.



world, but neither would she have become a proverb on account of her rapacity, or have ended by nursing military chieftains to whom her liberty would fall a prey. Her fate may well serve as a warning example to all future republics not to set the disposition to acquire above the law. The United States are not wholly exempt from danger in this respect. The pioneer population of the west is almost necessarily both martial and predatory. And the character of the existing generations throughout the Union so far as it can be developed in a long period of profound peace is warlike. In no particular does this show itself more strikingly than in the devotion paid to military reputation which sometimes transcends the respect paid to the law itself. To regulate this feeling and keep it within legitimate bounds is among the most imperative duties of the patriot spirits of the Union.

I may, indeed, be told that the great remedy is universal education. Only provide the school and you will obtain the intelligent voter conscious of the blessings he enjoys and always ready to act in a manner that shall best preserve them. Now, it is by no means my disposition to undervalue the advantages that unquestionably follow from instruction generally diffused. I see and admit that it must form one of the pillars of our republican system of government. But it is only one and that not the most essential. What is there, I would ask, in the mere advancement of the intellectual powers of men which will lead to effective resistance against the dazzling qualities of a successful warrior? Did Napoleon Bonaparte have no servile flatterers among the literary men of France? Have not poets, and

historians and orators of all ages united in extolling military success above every other kind of success? Do the annals of mankind award the proper degree of censure to the crimes of great conquerors from Alexander the Great down to Cortez and Pizarro? Fellow citizens, our fathers manifested their patriotism by *devotion to a principle*. It was in defence of that principle that they took up arms. They manifested no aggressive spirit, no disposition merely to acquire. The same temper will be maintained among us only by developing the high *moral* attributes of our nature through the agency of a mild and catholic religious faith. This is the true sheet anchor of our free Institutions, and this can never be secured by mere instruction of the mind. Our highest duty as a people is self-restraint. The cry has gone out among us, educate, educate, as if the schoolmaster were the sovereign remedy against the ills which unregulated passions occasion. But I would ask whether education has contributed nothing heretofore to the nursing of immoderate ambition? Has it never furnished fuel for unjustifiable popular excitement? Does it supply no means to confuse instead of clearing the sense of right and wrong? Does it never pander to power whether residing in the many or in one man? Was not Julius Cæsar one of the most educated men of antiquity, and yet how did this promote his patriotism? And almost within our own day do we not know that the most cultivated minds of France combined in an attempt to overthrow at once its religion and its social system? Yes, the fertile fields of that magnificent country were drenched with the blood of multitudes of its best citizens because the arrogant intellect of

its educated men chose to substitute an idolworship of philosophy for faith in the true God and respect for the moral ties which bind man in society with his fellow man.

I have spoken of the spirit of aggrandizement as of a danger to which the American people is now exposed, because it leads to war and ultimately to military domination. There is another danger to be dwelt upon of a wholly different kind, a danger of domestic discord leading to the destruction of all authority by the violence of party spirit among us. But you will not imagine, fellow citizens, that I am going into a commonplace invective against parties. In a popular government like ours where numbers have the ultimate control of the public policy it is impossible for men to get along without associating in the support of an opinion. If principles are ever to be carried into action, the only way to do so is for those who agree in holding them to unite. It may often happen in this process that individuals find themselves compelled to sacrifice something of their own sense of propriety and become subject to well founded charges of personal inconsistency. The theory of our government rests so little upon individual power and so much upon the control of the masses that each man who takes an active part in public affairs is liable to be called upon to sacrifice something of the abstract beauty of character which might otherwise belong to him to a desire to aid in some practicable way a greater end. Against this necessity, it is not worth while to attempt to remonstrate. Much as it weakens the moral power which great minds might exercise over the public, the evil must be borne cheerfully so long as it is con-

finer strictly within the limits that an honest judgment would prescribe. When great principles are at stake much sacrifice of less important objects may be tolerated, but as soon as these no longer appear, and merely personal motives take their place then is there great danger that by persevering in similar sacrifices both party and public sentiment will become demoralized.

Unhesitating devotion to the dictate of the majority is the indispensable condition of party confidence. If that dictate be known to apply to something really based in principle, then it is justifiable in a conscientious man to obey it. But when it ceases to regard any precise line, when the public questions which are agitated are no longer resting upon any basis except expediency, the case is somewhat changed. The endeavor to insist upon devotion to the party after the party has ceased to hold any common principle, becomes an endeavor to make party organization instrumental to the promotion of certain individuals at the expense of others. It is obvious that under this condition, the persons who are least scrupulous in abandoning every thing that makes a man's character in private life respected, those who are prepared most fully to sacrifice their honesty and their independence to the fluctuating fancy of the many will have a great advantage over the more upright and scrupulous and conscientious of the community. When the true questions respecting the public good which may naturally divide public opinion have been disposed of, there will be an inclination to create new ones not so much for the sake of principle as with the intent to preserve party distinctions. And in these new questions there

will always be an effort to establish some test so ultra in its character as to secure to the most violent and least worthy an advantage over the moderate which if all were equally left to be estimated only by the weight of their personal character, they could not enjoy.

Yet after all is done that can be done in this way, there is in times of profound peace a counteracting tendency towards the rapid settlement of questions of policy which destroys the most cunningly formed plans of division. The effort to keep a party together upon some common basis of doctrine then gives place to the endeavor to make the name alone a rallying point for the support of men, who by virtue of the party recommendation are to be forthwith inducted into office, without any examination of their merits. A majority which has sufficiently consolidated itself to need no other means of concentration than a word may divest itself of moral discrimination and proceed to assign the responsible posts of government to its members on the ground of rotation. Considering all individuals as implicitly bound to obey the expressed will of the party, and consequently as mere machines to execute that which shall be prescribed to them, it becomes a very secondary point whether the best or the worst men of the community be selected. It can scarcely be denied that the theory of democracy somewhat justifies this undistinguishing enumeration of citizens with little regard to the moral qualities which make some men so much more worthy of confidence than others. But whether it does or not, the doctrine should be steadily resisted wherever it is uttered. The effect of it will be to lower the standard of our

public men—to take from the ambitious individual the hope of reward for conduct that is upright and noble, and substitute a love of low and selfish intrigue—to give to helpless and ignorant and vicious mediocrity the station which so far as the public good is concerned ought to be filled only by moral and intellectual excellence. These difficulties are the offspring of a high state of prosperity, I admit. They will never be met with when the State is in real danger and calls aloud for help from her best and ablest citizens. But they are nevertheless difficulties which in time sap the foundation of human authority. Parties without principles soon become factions. And factions soon forget the public good in the desire to establish their power against opposite factions. Respect to individuals in authority ceases, and anarchy begins. “The corruption of every government, says Montesquieu, commences by the corruption of the principle upon which it rests. That of democracy is corrupt when the people cease to respect their Magistrates, and insist upon dictating to them every thing they shall do.” Virtue being according to that author the foundation of democracy, it must crumble when the people no longer honor it in the persons of those whom they set to rule over them.

Fellow citizens, you must perceive that I do not intend to confine myself to describe evils pressing immediately upon us. I am looking at the Declaration of Independence as the great exposition of our national faith. I there see announced as self-evident truths, “that all men are created equal—that they are endowed, by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness—That to secure these

rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed," and I am naturally led not merely to the comparison of our present position with these doctrines, but also to a view of the duties incumbent upon the men of this day to guard them against future dangers. The two dangers I have described are, on the one side, the spirit of aggrandizement—on the other, the spirit of faction. But you may be led to ask of me, admitting the possibility of such dangers, what is my *remedy*. I answer the only remedy is to keep in mind the example of the patriots of 1776 in their *devotion to a principle* and not to a party or to a name. Remember that "this government was instituted to secure our rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." It cannot conduce to that happiness to hazard foreign wars for the acquisition of more territory, neither can it promote it to cherish domestic contentions about men. Let us remember then, whilst retaining all proper attachment to the party which sustains principles, to avoid unqualified subjection to that which disputes only about men. Whenever parties degenerate into factions, let us leave them. Whenever parties propose unworthy men, let us refuse to vote for them. I estimate not the bonds of party half so much as I do the safe administration of the public affairs, and I would rather trust a quiet citizen who gives me evidence of his character by his steady and successful attention to his own affairs than a wrangling demagogue who spends so much time upon the public business as to make the public purse necessary for his support. In this connexion, I remember an anecdote told by an ancient historian of a people living in Miletus, a territory of ancient

Ionia. He says that during the two ages preceding that of which he was writing, Miletus had been greatly distressed by internal factions, and to heal the disorders thus occasioned the Milesians applied for assistance to the people of a neighboring island, Paros. "The Parians sent over a deputation of their most distinguished citizens, who perceiving on their arrival, that the whole State was in extreme confusion, asked leave to examine the condition of their territories. Wherever in their progress through the desolate country, they observed any land well cultivated, they wrote down the name of the owner. In the whole district however, they found but few estates so circumstanced. Returning to Miletus, they called an assembly of the people, and they placed the direction of affairs in the hands of those who had best cultivated their lands; for they concluded that they would be watchful of the public interest who had taken care of their own." This had its effect of restoring the general tranquility and of ultimately creating a degree of prosperity which made Miletus the pride of Ionia.\*

The government of the United States has now passed into the hands of the children of the 4th of July, 1776. During the half century that has elapsed since an effective government was established, one portion of it has been spent in the settlement of disputes with foreign countries growing out of an almost constant and very general state of war in the world. The foreign policy was then the predominant subject upon which the two parties in the United States divided. But although each of the two in its turn obtained the possession of the government, the gen-

\*Herodotus, Book 5th, Chapter 28, 29,—Beloe's Translation.



eral principles upon which it was administered remained substantially the same. The wisdom which guided our own revolution steered us in safety through the dangers of a revolutionary period. Peace with all nations, entangling alliances with none, was the doctrine which then saved us from the confusion into which the nations of Europe fell. A general peace followed the fall of Napoleon. And during the period which has since elapsed the questions agitated among us have been of a wholly domestic character. Sharply as these have been disputed between the contending parties they have not been of a vital nature to the happiness of the people or touched any but their pecuniary interest. Whether well or ill-settled, the country has still gone forward, sometimes embarrassed by the folly of parties but never entirely checked. The recuperative energy to be found in its own bosom has supplied a more than sufficient counterpoise to the ill effects of human error. When the only topic of dispute is the extent to which the prosperity of a nation shall be developed, and the way in which it shall be done, the people very naturally will differ without mixing much asperity in their contests. It is the tendency of such matters to subside under the influence of repeated decisions made at the popular elections. Most of the dividing questions of the last thirty years are becoming obsolete by exhaustion, and if it be desirable to preserve the lines of distinction between our citizens from running together in default of a distinctive principle, it will before long be necessary to look for it somewhat deeper than in the doctrines which they now publicly profess.

Fellow citizens, it is not in the nature of the pub-

lic mind in America to remain torpid a great length of time. A new era must take place and questions of magnitude must again arise, the settlement of which may call into play all your patriotism. Whether those questions be of foreign or domestic policy or more probably both together, they will be likely to test the principles of those in whom the people trust, as well as their own fidelity to the doctrines of the revolution. The great lesson to be learnt is self-restraint. No entangling alliances, no standing armies and no wars. The age is full of gigantic systems, the country is full of exaggerated sympathies. Within as well as without the elements of commotion are working to produce fearful agitation, the direction of which whether to the principles at the foundation of the social system at home or to the spread of our own system over the territories of neighboring nations it is impossible to foresee as it might be dangerous to conjecture. Well hath said an ancient poet.

“ They, whose minds  
 Delight in glory, wars enlarge on wars,  
 Spurning at justice, and the wasted state  
 Unpeopling: one the pride of martial sway  
 Allures; the insolent pow’r of doing wrong  
 Inflames another; and the sordid gain  
 Hath charms for some; each of the people’s toils  
 Reckless, or what they suffer. In each state  
 Are mark’d three classes: of the public good  
 The rich are listless, all their thoughts to more  
 Aspiring: they that struggle with their wants  
 Short of the means of life, are clamorous, rude,  
 To envy much addicted, ’gainst the rich  
 Aiming their bitter shafts, and led away  
 By the false glosses of their wily leaders:  
 Twixt these extremes there are who save the state,  
 Guardians of order, and their country’s laws.”

\* Euripides. The Suppliants translated by Potter. The two last lines are rather a paraphrase than a translation.

It is our good fortune, fellow citizens, that with us the second of these three classes infinitely predominates in number over the other two. Upon that devolves the great responsibility of preserving the Institutions which their fathers have left them. Equality of social condition, moral qualities founded upon religious faith, and devotion to the public interest—these are the three great pillars of our political system, which must support it against the shocks of enemies abroad and factions at home. Let us hope that we enjoy the advantages resulting from them all. Yet I see no reason why in appreciating the blessings we have, we should ever depart from that spirit of humility which becomes a people not less than it does an individual. It is the prerogative of conscious strength to dispense with boasting. If we continue to be just and prosperous and contented then will our example in itself carry with it an overwhelming power over the Institutions of other nations. But it is not for us to assume a superiority over them which they will never acknowledge, and which irritates them and does us no good. Have we no faults? Have our Institutions no blemishes? Have our people no sins to answer for which may yet bring down upon us a severe retribution for indulging an arrogant spirit? I cannot look upon the red man or the black and answer no. Blind indeed must they be who do not see sores in the body politic that will not even bear a probe. Fellow citizens, on this day, I will not name them—but neither will I contrast our nation too confidently with others, nor claim the merit of virtues of inheritance which may yet be lost by our own wilful conduct. Let us rather go on in the narrow path of our duty, rigidly adher-

ing to the right and trusting that the same God who looked with favor upon the honest exertions of our forefathers to benefit their country, posterity, and mankind, will not withdraw the light of his countenance from us whilst laboring to continue worthy to be called their sons.

But, fellow citizens, you are probably weary of this somewhat unusual discourse on the fourth of July. I might indeed have said to you more flattering things. I might have enlarged upon the state of perfection to which we in the United States have arrived, socially and politically, but if I had so done, I should have said that which I do not myself believe to be true. And it is only the part of a parasite to earn his welcome by such means. No—perfection is a condition denied to man upon earth, nor will the people of America make an exception to the rule. But virtue is attainable by them as by the rest of their kind—that virtue which is the result of a victory of the good over the bad principle of our nature—that virtue which is manifested in conduct by attachment to all that is noble and pure and exalted, as well as by avoidance of what is low and grovelling and base. I need no evidence of this truth out of the limit of these walls. When I remember what lips have spoken here, and the idea of a people crowding to testify by its action the most unhesitating *devotion to a principle* rises up in association with this scene, I cannot help believing that Patriotism is not a dream, that Liberty and Law constitute a blessing which mankind, if they only will it, may every where secure. This great boon gained for us by the heroism of a past generation it is our lighter task to transmit to another that

is to come. But though it has little brilliancy, it is not the less a task to which we should devote ourselves. The happiness of those\* who this day learn new incentives to duty in being called here to hymn the glory of the great anniversary we celebrate depends upon our fidelity to the trust committed to us.

Let us then leave this sacred temple deeply impressed with the spirit which breathes in its halls. That spirit shall animate us to contend against the selfishness of ordinary life—it shall repress in us the fires of unholy ambition, it shall incite us to follow the right at whatever cost—it shall prepare us to meet any greater trials which adversity may have in store for our country. That country shall be to us the object of an honest pride as well as of a jealous affection. In her service let us cheerfully do all that she ought to require of devoted children. But above all, let us try that she knowingly do no wrong—no, not for the mines of the Indies—not for the sovereignty of the world. Have we not before our eyes the images† of those who were among the first to establish a new principle, the securing of the unalienable rights of man through a government drawing its powers from the consent of the governed? How would they seem to us if we should ever abandon it! How would they even from the silent canvass cry shame upon us for whose sake they hazarded their lives, if we should blast their hopes of the improvement of mankind! No! I am confident

\*The musical performance was by a select choir of pupils from the public schools of the city.

†Among the pictures in Faneuil Hall are those of George Washington, John Hancock and Samuel Adams, who signed the Declaration of Independence and who took an active part in the adoption of the Federal Constitution.

**this shame shall never be ours. I know by the spirit that animates you even while I speak, that the Cradle of Liberty will never by any fault of yours become equally known as having proved her grave. I see that you will transmit as pure as you received it the great principle of America**

**LIBERTY AND LAW, ONE AND INSEPARABLE.**