

THE PURIFICATION AND RECONSTRUCTION OF
THE AMERICAN UNION.



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ORATION

DELIVERED AT

VALLEJO, JULY IV, 1867.

BY

FRANKLIN ELIOT FELTON.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

SAN FRANCISCO:

EDWARD BOSQUI & COMPANY, BOOK AND JOB PRINTERS.

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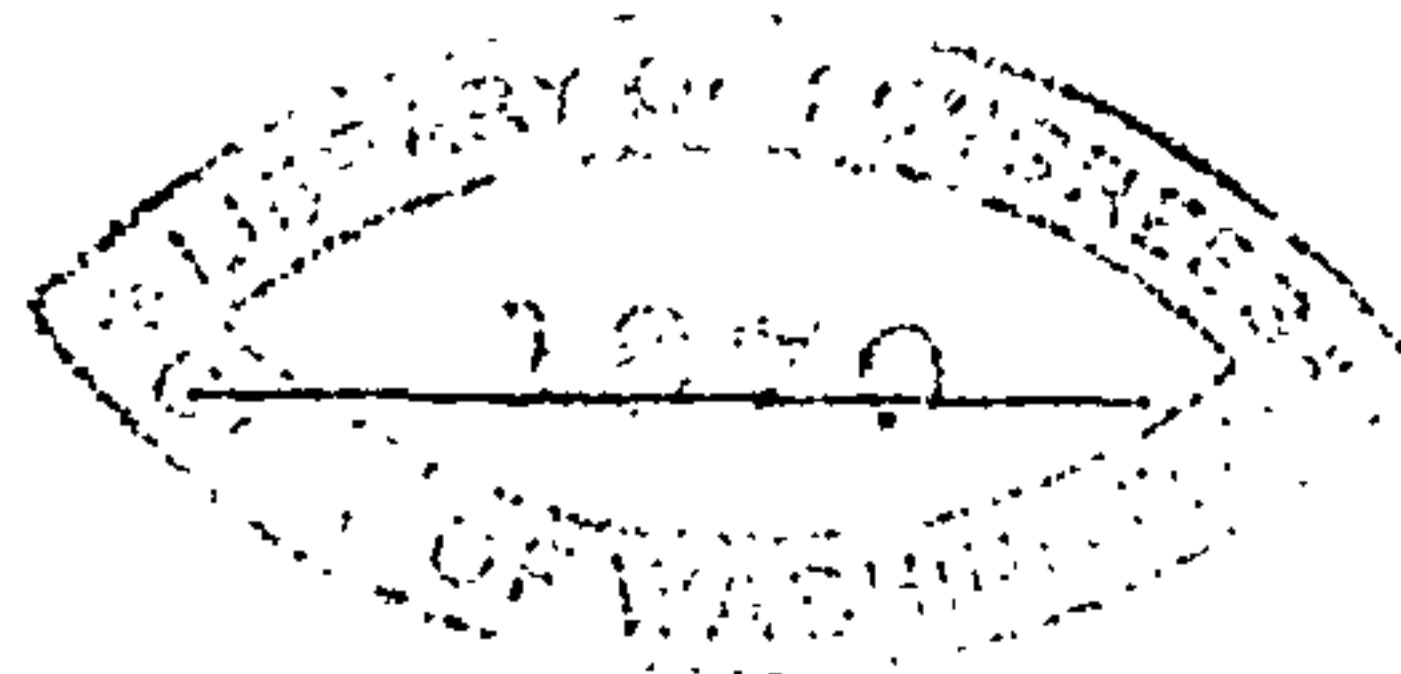
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ORATION.

ON the placid bosom of San Francisco Bay gently rocks at anchor a plague-stricken ship, whose cabin and decks have lately witnessed scenes of anguish, tribulation, and death, that appall the stoutest heart, and blanch the manliest cheek. As the frigate Jamestown, on her mission of mercy, reposed on the sunny waters of Panama, Grim Pestilence invaded her dark hull, and, without authority of a commission, assumed supreme command, issuing imperious orders with more than martial rigor.

Descending to the orlop deck he grappled bluff sailors and marines, and straightway the shriek of agony, the ravings of delirium and the rattle of death resounded through the fated vessel. Stalwart men, impotent to cope with their merciless adversary, succumbed beneath his ponderous strokes, and were reverently borne by sorrowing comrades to lonely graves by the shore of the resonant sea. Gloating on the havoc and

craving more illustrious victims, the flushed conqueror, turning from the humble deck, strode through the cabin door and knocked with icy hand at the state-room of the scarred veteran and the rosy-cheeked ensign.

Though environed by peril and menaced with destruction, the gallant officers and crew neither shrank from duty nor deserted their posts. Staring fate in the face, they soothed their afflicted shipmates, and awaited with fortitude their impending doom.

Ordered to duty on the infected vessel, officers hastened aboard without falter, although conscious of entering their living sepulcher. With pious tenderness comrades closed the eyelids of the dying, and performed the last sad rites over loved companions.

At last the welcome order sounded to remove the charnel-ship to some salubrious clime, and the emaciated crew, summoning their wasted strength, and with eager alacrity manned the capstan and weighed anchor, joyous to escape from the loathsome bay and its attendant gloom. Long, weary days the ship, becalmed, lay motionless on the waters; the sails flapped listlessly around the masts, yet the Angel of Death remorselessly claimed his victims.

At length propitious breezes wafted the vessel

to the colder North, whose salutary blasts stiffened the limbs and congealed the blood of the Tropical Fiend. During the mournful voyage a voracious shark followed the wake of the pestilent vessel until the last sufferer was consigned to the cavernous sea, and the monster was deprived of his prey.

As the straining eye of the lookout discerned the distant land, an ecstatic shout of relief burst forth spontaneously from every throat. Spare sails were spread on mast and yard; raven-like the frigate skimmed through the Golden Gate and anchored in the hospitable bay, where health, sympathy, and repose, greeted the hapless wanderers.

Purified and repaired, the same frigate shall hereafter sail to foreign lands, and proudly bear the starry flag to earth's remotest bounds, but the ravages of the pestilence will never be effaced. Loving hearts shall wither beneath its corroding blight, and happy homesteads mourn the devastating scourge.

The recent history of the United States discloses a marked similitude between the ill-fated Jamestown and the American Nation.

Six years ago that staunch Ship of State, the Union, was stricken with pestilence during a prosperous voyage, favored with propitious winds,

unclouded skies, and tranquil seas. The virulence of infection deranged the intellect of its victims, and convulsed them with delirium. In paroxysms of frenzy they assailed their shipmates, and strove to sink the vessel itself, and were themselves decimated in bloody strife.

Conciliation and kindness failed to calm their rage, but rather intensified their furious animosity. The epidemic assailed, with fatal malignancy, officers of the highest rank, who disseminated contagion to the crew. Contaminated with disease and racked with dissension, the gallant ship tossed helplessly on the seething billows of popular commotion. The whirlpool of passion yawned to engulf her in its dark abyss; the rocks of discord pierced her sides, and the simoon of carnage whirled her onward toward the reefs and quicksands of National dissolution, while mercenary wreckers, England and France, gazed with rapture on her peril, and gloated in anticipation over the coveted spoils from the wreck of the stately ship. In the wake of the infected vessel followed a ravenous shark, to prey on the victims and batten on misfortune. This leviathan, named *Brittania*, spawned the *Florida* and *Alabama*, *Twin Monsters of the deep*.

But the noble Union was not doomed to wreck. The pure winds from the North swept over her

with healing power, and scattered the seeds of death as with a besom. Health returned to the pallid cheek, and vigor to the wasted frame. Loving hearts and willing hands rescued the vessel from her perilous surroundings, and guided her safely into the haven of Peace.

On this consecrated day be ours the duty to purify, repair, and refit the Ship of State, and launch anew the glorious Union for a more prosperous voyage on the broad ocean of Time.

“O, then, sail on, thou Ship of State!
 Sail on, O, Union, strong and great!
 Humanity with all its fears,
 With all the hopes of future years,
 Is hanging breathless on thy fate!
 Fear not each sudden sound and shock—
 'Tis of the wave, and not the rock;
 'Tis but the flapping of the sail,
 And not a rent made by the gale!
 In spite of rock and tempest's roar,
 In spite of false lights on the shore,
 Sail on! nor fear to breast the sea—
 Our hearts, our hopes are all with thee!
 Our hearts, our hopes, our prayers, our tears,
 Our faith, triumphant o'er our fears,
 Are all with thee—are all with thee!”

The allegory of the infected ship suggests the theme of the hour—the Purification and Reconstruction of the American Union.

In the task of National Reconstruction, the American people must be actuated by a spirit of magnanimity and mercy toward their late antagonists. The fervent benevolence of California is never invoked in vain in the sacred cause of mercy and humanity. Vividly do I recall the thrill of delight that electrified the loyal States at the lavish bounty of California to the Sanitary Commission during the dark days of war. Her timely benefaction infused vitality into a holy enterprise, which was then languishing and ready to perish. Her lofty spirit of patriotic beneficence spread from the Pacific to the Atlantic, and kindled the glow of charity in the hearts of the Northern people. Emulating California's bright example, State vied with State in largess to sick and wounded soldiers. Eminent men forsook their avocations, and devoted themselves to the relief of suffering humanity, binding up the wounds and assuaging the pangs alike of friend and foe. Gentle women, foregoing the luxuries of home and the blandishments of refined society, followed the army to the sanguinary fields of battle, and with delicate hands performed kindly offices for the mutilated heroes, or in tender accents whispered words of consolation in the ear of the dying.

The youth of the country shared the patriotic

enthusiasm. Deft fingers of girlhood wrought articles of necessity or comfort for their brave defenders; and ingenuous boys, renouncing their customary sports and amusements, cheerfully donated their mite to deeds of Heaven-born charity.

History presents no nobler spectacle than the catholic beneficence, the lavish generosity, and the magnanimous clemency of the American people in mitigating the horrors of civil war, and as a Californian I am justly proud that my adopted State vitalized and expanded the grandest philanthropy of the Ages.

The same pure spirit of mercy has lately been evoked by the piteous appeals of our late antagonists, and the golden affluence of California benevolence has clothed the naked, fed the hungry, and nursed the sick in the devastated South.

The merciful spirit of California craves not the confiscated property of misguided brothers, nor seeks to immure deluded relatives in gloomy dungeons, or immolate them on the scaffold, but, like the Divine Master, it raises them up that are cast down, and says to the erring: "Thy sins are forgiven thee; go and sin no more."

Forgiveness and conciliation will restore harmony to our lacerated country, and draw the vail of oblivion over ancient feuds and fierce contention. More precious than remittances of gold for

the needy and afflicted would be the infusion of the true California spirit into wrangling States, to heal suicidal wounds, and restore vitality and vigor to the shattered Union.

The Roman conquerors were wont to chain their captives to their chariot wheels and drag them in triumph through the streets of the Imperial City, and afterwards treat them as slaves and menials. Civilization and Christianity recoil from such brutality, and the Law of Nations, based on the refined sentiment of the Age, requires the conqueror to treat his captives with courtesy, respect, and humanity. All Christendom was shocked at the bestial spirit that starved American citizens in Southern prisons during the Civil War, and civilized nations throughout the world are now tingling with odium against the barbarous Mexicans, who, in cold blood, shot a prisoner of war—Maximilian—who, although an invader and usurper, was nevertheless a gallant gentleman and the victim of base treachery.

The conquest of our brothers should be celebrated by displays of fraternal affection, remission of sins, and magnanimous clemency. We cannot drag our own kindred in triumphal procession along crowded thoroughfares, chained as captives to the conqueror's car; we cannot send them under the humiliating yoke, nor degrade

them to the condition of slaves and menials ; but to win their hearts by generosity and forbearance will redound to our glory more than the laurels of Cæsar or the victories of Alexander.

In reconstructing the Union sectional animosity must be eradicated, root and branch, and mutual respect and good-fellowship be universally cultivated by the denizens of the different sections of our common country.

In by-gone times, sectional antagonism dis-severed the country North and South, and local jealousies, and acrimonious feuds, culminated in mutual aversion and estrangement, germinating Civil War. Northmen lampooned the men of the South as a spurious chivalry, contemned their impulsiveness of action and impassioned speech as bluster and gasconade, and sneered at their valor as bravado. The Southrons retorted by stigmatizing the Northmen as craven Yankees ; sordid worshipers of the almighty dollar, with no aspirations beyond mere trade and lucre ; devoid of lofty sentiments of honor ; cringing sycophants, incapable of resenting an affront, or defending their rights.

Mutual crimination and recrimination ensued, and each party was deceived by a false estimate of the other's character. This fatal misconception has been washed out in brothers' blood, and

history now records that high daring, patriotic endurance, and true manhood, are universal, and not sectional among Americans, and that the combined valor of the united country renders the American Republic invincible.

When we are in our graves, and the passions and prejudices of the present shall have perished, the impartial historian will delineate the American conflict.

In graphic phrase will he portray that illustrious commander, Grant, and exhibit to the world that comprehensive sagacity which formed combinations ramifying over a Continent, and yet so minute as to grasp scattered squads of the enemy in its constricting folds. He will dilate on Grant's tenacity of will, his earnestness and purity of purpose, and his inflexible determination to conquer, which spurned intervening obstacles, laughed at defeat, and eventuated in ultimate triumph.

He will eulogise that self-reliance which conceived and perfected the plans of vigorous campaigns, and the reticence which locked them up in his own bosom, and kept his own counsel, until they ripened into action.

He will extol the modesty of the hero who listened with serene composure to the shouts of victory, and the plaudits of admiring multitudes.

The same historian will likewise describe Grant's antagonist, General Lee.

He will enumerate the high qualities Lee displayed as a Commander: his wonderful resources in waging protracted warfare with limited men and scanty means; his marvelous skill exhibited in the impregnable fortifications surrounding Richmond; the daring spirit which led him to cross the Potomac, invade Pennsylvania, and confront the Union army at Gettysburg, and the consummate ability with which he withdrew his shattered forces, with a victorious army in his rear.

He will picture Lee's incursion into Maryland, and his march on Washington, and relate that the opportune arrival of an Army Corps from the Peninsula alone saved the Federal Capital from capture by the Confederate forces.

He will depict Lee's surrender and calm submission to fate, his retirement to literary pursuits, and his wise counsel to his comrades to return to their allegiance.

The historian will describe Sherman's Grand March to the sea, and Farragut's naval exploits, eclipsing in splendor the triumphs of Collingwood and Nelson.

In gorgeous colors he will portray gallant Phil. Sheridan spurring on his foaming charger to

Winchester; rallying his discomfited men; impetuously charging at their head, and whirling the routed enemy down the Shenandoah Valley.

Yet the self-same pen will delineate Stonewall Jackson—the religious fanatic—who prayed earnestly, and fought vehemently against his country.

The historian will comment on that celerity of movement which gained for Jackson's infantry the appellation of Foot Cavalry, and relate how suddenly he swooped down on the right wing of the Federal Army, then on the left, next on the center, and afterwards assailed some isolated corps. He will dilate on Jackson's fiery zeal; his purity of life; his fanatical devotion to human servitude; his magnetic influence over his soldiers; his restless energy, and his profound conviction of the righteousness of his unholy cause, all of which traits combined to render him a Thunderbolt of War.

These men of the South, though perverse, were still our Countrymen, and we should dispassionately anticipate the judgment of posterity, and claim for the American people the brilliant generalship, the skillful strategy, the impetuous valor, the endurance of suffering, and the tenacious will, displayed alike by Northmen and Southrons in their unnatural conflict. The prowess of both armies dispelled the illusion that Southrons are

braggarts, or that Northmen lack courage. The ordeal of battle impressed the belligerents with mutual respect for their antagonists, and if the same sentiment were universally disseminated among the people, sectional discord would never again rear its horrid front and germinate Civil War.

The Ship of State is unfortunately polluted by a political Jonah, called the Demagogue, and happy were it for the Country, if, like his prototype, he were cast into the sea. So long as this pest be tolerated by the people, the purification of the body politic will be incomplete.

The malign influence of the Demagogue has already fixed a stigma on Republican institutions, and raised a doubt whether the Government of the people for the people and by the people is not a delusion and a sham. Political machination and artifice have installed corrupt and incompetent men in office, caused the enactment of unjust laws, and waste of public money.

The roll of our Presidents is searched in vain for the name of Webster or Clay, of Douglas or Preston, of Choate or Everett, those intellectual giants, whose eloquence, patriotism, and statesmanship, are the rich heritage of the country.

In place of our foremost men appear the names of accidental heroes and political schemers.

Senatorial dignity has even descended to the illiterate adventurer, the brazen trickster, and the pliant tool of faction. In the Representative Hall, at Washington, we blush to see the graduates of the bar-room, the faro-bank, and the prize-ring.

Men of bad repute, sullied character, and feeble intellect, are inaugurated Governors; State Legislators reek with venality, ignorance, and dishonor; municipal governments are controlled by adroit sharpers, who form "rings" to plunder the exchequer, and burden the community with onerous taxes.

Primary elections, which, in fact, determine the candidates for public offices, are manipulated by crafty aspirants, aided by the dregs of society, who perform their nefarious bidding, and overawe or outvote men of culture, probity, and merit.

Even the judicial ermine is draggled through the foul pool of politics, and briefless barristers are elevated to the judicial bench, and debase justice and law by crude decisions, indecorous deportment, and vulgar habits.

Candidates, nominated by chicanery, flatter and cajole the people, and piteously whine for their votes. Pending the election, they become all things to all men, profess the noblest patriotism and purest motives, and prate loudly of their

loyalty, although during the war they neither shouldered a musket nor contributed a farthing to the wounded soldiers.

These sycophants and parasites pretend affection for the black man, whom, forsooth, they would elevate and enfranchise, yet in the self-same breath they vilify and persecute the saffron-hued Chinaman, and, not content to disfranchise the Mongolian, they urge his expulsion from the country, and the erection of a Chinese wall to exclude the Asiatic race from our limits.

The ascendancy of demagogues in public affairs saps the vitality of Republican Government, and the perpetuity of the Union is menaced when bad men are deputed to execute the laws which bad men enact.

In the present crisis it becomes the sacred and imperative duty of every good citizen to extirpate this growing evil, and hence every American should actively participate in the nomination and election of the best men to offices of trust and honor. When unfit candidates are nominated, each voter should have sufficient independence and manliness to oppose their election, disregarding party ties and selfish considerations, and mindful only of the general welfare.

Intriguing politicians and corrupt partisans should be spurned as unclean lepers, and the

rough element of the community should no longer be suffered to dictate our rulers.

Then would return the pristine days of the Republic, when eloquence, dignity, and learning graced the Senate House—when men like the classic Everett were Governors of States, and Marshall and Story adorned the judicial bench.

God grant that the reign of small men and corrupt influences may speedily terminate throughout the land.

With the Union, purified of internal dissension and political corruption, and re-established on the basis of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity, the imagination struggles in vain to picture the glorious destiny that awaits the American Republic. War's desolation in the South shall be effaced by the bountiful yield of her staple products, augmented by the employment of free labor and the application of mechanical ingenuity to improved modes of culture. Telegraphs and Railroads, potent Colonizers, Missionaries, and Peace-makers, shall traverse the vast expanse of virgin territory, and link together, in perpetual amity and community of interests, widely-separated States. The mineral treasures of the mountains will attract hither foreign capital, give employment to countless multitudes, and supply the world with precious metals. Fertile valleys will teem with

abundant harvests, luxuriant plains and rolling prairies shall pasture innumerable herds of cattle; cities, towns, and villages shall spring into existence, as if summoned by Prospero's wand; American commerce shall whiten every sea and visit every port; Oriental seclusion shall be dissolved, and the teeming population of China and Japan shall cultivate friendly relations with their neighbors, and pour into our coffers the lucrative profits of trade and traffic.

Aerial Navigation may introduce speedier modes of intercommunication than railroads and steamships, and winged Avitors—realizing the fable of Icarus and Daedalus—may soar through the realms of air, bearing precious freights of life and treasure to every quarter of the habitable Globe.

Inventive Genius shall find ample scope for its enterprise, and magnificent rewards for its merits. Education shall be diffused through the masses as universally as light and air.

Music and Painting, Sculpture and Architecture shall be encouraged by the refined taste and generous patronage of the people. Native genius shall establish a National literature, and American Poets and Orators, Historians and Novelists, shall be honored wherever the English language is spoken.

The National boundaries shall expand, and bleak Canada on the North, and convulsive Mexico on the South, shall knock for admission into the happy household. Cuba and Panama, Nicaragua and the Sandwich Islands shall be absorbed in our progressive empire, and myriad emigrants, escaping from the thralldom of tyranny and the shackles of poverty in the old world, shall find asylum, affluence, and security in this land of promise.

The Continental Republic will diffuse a benign influence on mankind, and vindicate the superiority of Democratic Government. Oppressed Nationalities shall be impelled by its beneficent example to rise in their Majesty, discard the yoke of Despotism and Servitude, prostrate Thrones and Dynasties, abolish Aristocratic Distinctions, introduce the Ballot and Popular Education, and acknowledge allegiance to the Will of the People and God alone. The fruition of these Beatitudes, and countless other Blessings, shall crown the American Republic if American citizens be true to themselves, improve their opportunities and advantages, and cherish a fervid spirit of Nationality.

Men of California:—Your lines have fallen in pleasant places. You possess a territory manyfold larger than Greece or Rome; nor were these mighty Empires endowed with a tithe of your

material greatness or resources. The genial climate of this favored land invigorates the body, stimulates the intellect, and develops the human system. The fruits of the Tropics, and the products of the Temperate Zone commingle in your soil; the mountains abound in gold and silver, copper and cinnabar, coal, and other minerals. Capacious Harbors allure Trade and Commerce to your shores; majestic rivers irrigate the broad expanse, and bear on their heaving bosoms the yield of the uplands to the sea; primeval forests are studded with umbrageous trees that tower to an altitude bewildering to the senses, and dwarf to merest twigs the tallest oak or pine of other lands; the crests of the Sierras are crowned with chaplets of snow, yet at their base and on their sides luxuriant vegetation flourishes, and wild flowers exhale a sweet perfume; the picturesque scenery of the Yosemite surpasses in sublimity the mighty Alps; mineral springs, bubbling up from the earth, furnish from nature's laboratory medicated draughts for human ills; the air is vocal with feathered songsters; the streams teem with choicest fish; the woods abound with noble game; prolific vineyards are prodigal of generous wine to please the taste and warm the heart; throughout the year herds of cattle and sheep browse on rich herbage, and supply food and raiment; your citizens are

cosmopolitan in tone, taste, and habits; exempt from local prejudice and angularities of character, full of enterprise, and profuse of hospitality. The magnetic glitter of gold has attracted to the State large-minded men from every section of the Union; from England and France; from Ireland and Germany; from Scotland and Italy; from Switzerland and Spain; while the Orient contributes the Asiatic Race, as hewers of wood and drawers of water, for the convenience, comfort, and prosperity of the inhabitants. Inasmuch as unto you, Californians, much has been given, from you much shall be required.

In peril and disaster a distracted Country appealed to you for succor, and nobly you responded with your men and treasure. Again she invokes your filial affection to bind up her gaping wounds, and invigorate her shattered energies—nor shall she appeal to you in vain.

With Vital Nationality animating the Golden-Hued Daughter of the Pacific, and diffusing a Spirit of Unity, Peace, and Concord among her Elder Sisters of the Atlantic, the American Republic, in the luminous Future, shall become the Focal Center of Liberty, Enlightenment, and Empire.