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With the respects of
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ORATION,
DELIVERED AT CHERRY VALLEY,

JULY 4, 1880.

BY WELLS S. HAMMOND.

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DELIVERED AT CHERRY VALLEY,

ON THE FOURTH DAY OF JULY, 1839.

BY WELLS S. HAMMOND.

PUBLISHED BY AND AT THE REQUEST OF THE COMMITTEE OF ARRANGEMENTS,
FOR CELEBRATING AT CHERRY VALLEY THE 63D ANNIVERSARY
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ORATION.



Nations, like individuals, have their days of destiny and doom—the events of which, like pole-stars, guide and cheer them in their course on the ocean of time—or, like eclipses, obscure their horizon and chill their atmosphere. Ever as their anniversaries recur, their lights and shadows gleaming or darkening through gathering years, cast joy or gloom upon the heart's best feelings. The occasion that assembles us attests this truth. History in her mighty volume offers no page on which is recorded an event of more thrilling interest than that we now commemorate. She indeed discloses struggling nations who have dethroned one tyrant only to submit to another; who have burst asunder despotic chains only to forge others that in time acquire the same heavy clank and oppressive weight. But she no where else exhibits an infant people rising in the moral strength of their apparent weakness, confiding in their cause rather than in their arms, and perilling their existence on a mere matter of right.

In the ever-living light of that day, which first dawned on American Independence, was revealed to the world the truth, that a nation's strength is centered rather in its mind than in its arms. Men and their

rights had successively yielded to the Macedonian phalanx, to the Roman legion, to the moving mass of the Hun, the Goth and the Vandal, to the Mohammedan scimitar, to the feudal array of the middle ages, and to the standing army of more modern times. These had been the instruments of power—the engines of oppression—the arbiters of national destinies. The energies of an entire people—the peerless force of moral power—the unconquerable strength of a nation's will, had never formed items in the estimate of forces. Yet these were the forces destined to govern the affairs of men. A new world was required for their original display. A people glowing in the freshness of early being was necessary for their first development. The great truth, signally exemplified in the history of our own land, applies equally to other lands. Knowledge is the sun in the firmament, that quickens these forces with life. Enthralled nations may appropriately prefer the supplication of the Grecian combatant, when enveloped by supernal powers in unnatural darkness.

“Dispel this cloud, the light of heaven restore,
Give me to SEE, and Ajax asks no more.”

The success of the revolutionary struggle was the triumph of moral power over physical force; of a people over a standing army—the subject's fear, the sovereign's life-guard. To minds deeply versed in human nature, the result of the conflict could never have been dubious. When Patrick Henry, in the Virginia Convention of Delegates, on the 20th March, 1775, gave utterance to the bold and emphatic words, “GIVE ME LIBERTY OR GIVE ME DEATH,” he told the secret of the

Revolution. That was not alone the language of Patrick Henry. It was the language of the young and rising world. It was the language that burst from every hill top; that echoed from every valley; that sounded from every glen. It was that which was heard in the roar of battle at Lexington and on Bunker's Hill, and in the louder thunder at Saratoga and at Yorktown. It was that which diffused over the sparse population of a continent, kindling and kindred energies, which centralized effort and united all into one heart, "vital in every part which could not but by annihilating die." Against the irrepressible energies of a spirit thus inspired, what could avail the military prowess of mere mercenary legions. The glittering march of armies could not intimidate—the horrors of a desolating war could not subdue. The monarch of the British empire found the hand of Nature's God as manifest in the vindication of the moral laws which he had indelibly written with his own finger upon the human heart, as the Assyrian Sennacherib found manifest the hand of Israel's Jehovah, in the protection of his chosen people.

"The Assyrian came down like a wolf on the fold,
And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold;
And the sheen of their spears were like stars on the sea,
Where the blue wave rolls nightly on deep Galilee.

"Like the leaves of the forest when summer is green,
That host with their banners at sunset were seen;
Like the leaves of the forest when autumn hath flown,
That host on the morrow lay withered and strown."

"They melted like snow in the glance of the Lord!"

The spirit that could breathe the language of Henry, that could originate the Declaration of Independence, that could inspire the bold thought and the kindling feeling with which our early halls of consultation and debate were familiar, could not but triumph when carried into action.

But the revolutionary struggle was not the most exalted effort of the fathers of our country. Civil liberty is always more easily achieved than maintained. The deep fountains of national power were broken up. Certain geologists, in ascribing the general deluge to natural agencies, have advanced the theory, perhaps more fanciful than philosophical, that the arches of primitive rock which supported the antediluvian continents yielded to their superincumbent weight, or to some internal convulsion, and that the ocean and the land in consequence, each assumed the place of the other. Thus, when the keystone of the arch of British empire in the western hemisphere was withdrawn, the entire arch sank, a mass of shapeless ruins. The land of freedom arose in its stead. The articles of confederation was the ark, ordained to bear in safety the liberties, the hopes and glorious destinies of an enfranchised race, over the heaving flood of Revolution. When it landed the tempest-driven voyagers on the Ararat of the new world, and the olive leaf was received from the messenger of peace, it had fulfilled the great ends for which it was designed in the economy of the Supreme Ruler of nations.

A better organized government was now imperatively demanded. To form one sufficiently national, yet federative in its features—that could reach the

person of the citizen, and yet reserve the sovereignty of the state—that could protect without oppressing, and benefit without burdening—and, that could possess the efficiency and energy necessary to its own preservation, and yet guaranty to the state and the citizen all the freedom consistent with the safety of each—were political problems that history had not solved. The actors of the revolution were there, and its spirit had retired from the field only to appear in the cabinet. Under its auspices was originated a frame of government destined to span with its extended arch the breadth of a continent, and to embrace within the sphere of its action the mightiest aggregate of human energies ever yet included under any one form of civil polity. The Constitution of the United States considered in itself and relatively with those of the several states, is the highest effort of human reason presented in the annals of time. The perfection of its system of checks and ballances is unapproached in every other political constitution. Like the planetary system, it is self-sustained by the antagonist tendencies of its inherent motive forces; the co-ordinate elements of power, executive, legislative, and judicial, are reciprocally restrained each in its appropriate sphere. All thus revolve around a common centre—the common good. Beautiful in theory and successful in practice, as is this mechanism of government, the constitution has far higher claims to excellence and permanence. The fountain of constitutional vitality is the will of the people flowing through the channel of their intelligence and virtue. Popular education is the bow of promise indicated. The school houses that thickly dot

our land, are at once its monuments and fortresses. With regard to the past, they proudly commemorate the wisdom of those fathers who based civil liberty on popular intelligence and virtue. The inscription, "*esto perpetua*," a mockery of their futility upon the monumental brass, the crumbling column and the ruined fane, upon them, are not mere words of vanity. With regard to the future, we behold in them the fortresses of freedom—the only fortresses impregnable to the assaults of time.

How amazing, how morally sublime, has been the onward progress of a people under a government of their own institution—under laws of their own creation. How immeasurable the advance of arts—how curious and useful the devices of ingenuity—how stupendous the achievements of industry. The lake has been wedded to the river, and the car has overcome the mountain obstacle. The forest homes have disappeared, and the vast solitudes of the new world have welcomed the smiling village, petty metropolis of a township; the commercial mart, enriched with the treasures of every clime; the magnificent city, embellished with the creations of every art. On the waters the steamboat rides, on the land the locomotive speeds. The curious and useful discoveries and inventions of our citizens, it is believed, exceed in number all those of other countries. Many of these are of little importance, while some have had no small influence in modifying our social condition. Philosophy on the theatre of its highest moral and political triumphs, has achieved its proudest victories over the elements of nature. The genius of Franklin subjugated the wild electric

fires that had rent the heavens like the vengeful bolts of Deity in arms!

——— “and Ether’s walks all fearless trod,
And bound in clankless chains the lightning of his God !”

The invention of Fulton almost annihilated distance; and the progressive discoveries in electro-magnetism and improvements in the application of its principles promise to the world the development of an element in the arts, that will as far transcend steam in its magical energies, as that element has transcended the forces for which it has been substituted.

It would be indeed more than human allotment, if the numerous and rich blessings conferred by our free form of government, were unalloyed with evil. We can scarce expect the sun without its cloud, the calm without its storm, the joy without its sorrow. The mixed condition of all that pertains to humanity precludes the hope of unmingled good.

The evils we experience arise in general from the love of power and the love of wealth. The first is chiefly developed in the evolution and action of party; the last in the undue extension of credit and overweening speculation. Each possesses its own benefits and evils. They both variegate the scene of life with ceaseless activity.

Party is inseparable from free government. Without it the body politic might have stillness and quiet. But it would be the stillness of the charnel house—the quiet of its mouldering inmates. While aught remained of its lifeless frame, it would not serve the spirit that had animated it, but would fatten the vile

worms, to whose mastery death had consigned it a victim. Without it, the leaden slumber of despotism would rest on the activities of life, and man, in the great scale of being, would sink to comparative insignificance. When Nicholas, the Russian autocrat, had slaked his burning thirst in the best blood of Poland, and the sword of the invader, the axe of the executioner, and the still more cruel Siberian exilement, had rendered cold and desolate the hearth-stone of nearly every dwelling in that ill-fated land; and the tyrant's power was felt like the curse upon prophet-denounced Idumea, in the memorable manifesto he thus promulged to an outraged world: "**ORDER reigns in Warsaw.**" It was the order that reigns in Edom's lost capital, Petra, the "doomed city of the mountains." Party may indeed engender rancor and acrimony. But its utmost rage stops short of threatening the destruction of our free institutions. Let us rather have the rolling river with its roaring rapids, than the standing pool with its stagnant stillness. We would risk the hazard of the one rather than incur the dead safety of the other. The citizen will ever prefer his country to his party. It may be confined and exclusive in the bestowment of place and power. That is a bond of its union, necessary perhaps to its preservation. But party is not the only dispenser of greatness. The highest power on earth which influences the destinies of man, is thought. The homage rendered by mind to mind, is the highest earthly homage. It is that which party can neither give nor take away. The ambition that aspires to that feels in every other an unspeakable poverty. The obscure citizen who

acts well his part, secures an esteem which no place nor office can give. While we would mitigate the evils of party, let us rest assured that the same stroke which destroys its existence, strikes the death-blow of freedom.

The love of wealth is the predominant passion of our country, and of the age. To its acquisition are devoted the energies of thought and the labors of industry. It too exclusively constitutes the dream of youth, the strength of manhood, and the staff of age. It receives the adoration of the young, and animates with unnatural vigor the decayed form, bending under the weight of seventy winters. In its eager pursuit, men forget that they have intellects to cultivate, affections to cherish, or souls to save. It is more active under a free than under a despotic government. There the mass of the people are excluded from the avenues to riches. The passion there finds comparatively little aliment. Neither industry nor enterprize has any assurance of obtaining the golden reward.

Under the influence of this passion, stimulated by the continual and amazing development of the riches and resources of our country, and by other natural and artificial causes, speculation has rioted in madness. The love of wealth, when it degenerates into avarice, is a debasing passion. The game of hazard, which under its delirious excitement men have too generally been induced to play, is corrupting in its tendencies. A poison has thus been instilled into the veins and arteries of the republic. Its deleterious influence on morals and the elevated sentiments of human nature, has been felt by all classes of men. The credit system,

offspring of the union of public and private confidence, while it has bounteously diffused its blessings over our land, has its train of attendant evils. The reciprocal influence of the credit system, and of this intense love of wealth, has materially conduced to wild and excessive tendencies. Legislation in restraint of trade has added a powerful artificial stimulus. At various commercial crises, the pillars of confidence have been shaken, and the entire fabric of individual and corporate credit has tottered, and almost fallen into ruin. The yet quivering ground whereon we stand, reminds us of a recent convulsion which rocked to its centre the monetary and commercial world. The year 1837 will form a memorable era in American political economy. Then did the great, immutable and inflexible laws of trade fearfully vindicate their supremacy.

This love of wealth, excessive in its action as it has been, was perhaps all required by the exigencies of our country. The resources of a new world were to be developed. The end required unparalleled energy of action. The grandeur of the result has filled the world with admiration.

With so much then in which to exult, with so little to lament, well on this day may our wide land be vocal with the joy and gladness of a happy people. Well may the anthem swell in the temples dedicated to God. Whose mind on this occasion will not rise above the petty feelings, passions and prejudices of the hour. If there be any, such an individual is a traitor to human nature. The love of country is one of the most elevated and ennobling sentiments with which a beneficent Deity has endowed the human mind. Every age,

every clime and every land, has witnessed the depth of this feeling, as well in man's ardent affection for the civil institutions, as for the localities and physical characteristics of his native land. He has always evinced an attachment to the institutions of his country, whether they were worthy or unworthy; but his manifestations of power have been chiefly in favor of those from which he derived the greatest benefits. Classic story is replete with heroism exhibited in defence of national institutions. The self-devotion of Leonidas and his three hundred Spartans has in all ages elicited the admiration of mankind. Why has that act ever commanded the homage of human feeling, except by its direct appeal to that love of country so universal in our race? The Athenians abandoned the city of their nativity, and their loved Attica, to the destroying power of the barbarian, choosing rather to enjoy their own free institutions on the empire of Neptune, than to breathe the air of their own native land the slaves of the Persian. The history of Rome, while aught of virtue remained in Rome, is a history of personal sacrifice to national advancement, from the time of the self-immolation of Curtius, until Brutus, urged by stern perhaps mistaken virtue, plunged the dagger in the bosom of his friend, the enemy of his country. Modern history does not less abound in evidence of the love of institutions and heroic deeds in their defence.

The attachment to localities and physical characteristics, pervades as well those regions in which Nature attires herself in her loveliest garb, and smiles upon human industry, as those in which she clothes herself in terrors, and presents a barren soil coupled

with all the rigors of an unmitigated winter. Would the native of Greenland or Spitzbergen leave his dreary northern waste to spend his life in fairer climes? No! Beloved by his heart are its icy mountains, and eternal snows! They have been the home of his nativity, they will furnish a resting-place for his ashes. Nor less attached to his native land is he who has been nurtured beneath a torrid sun, than he who treads upon the polar ices. Wherever nature has cast man's lot, there she has bound him by the strong ties of love. The Caledonian minstrel thus sings of the

“Land of brown heath and shaggy wood,
Land of the mountain and the flood.”

“Land of my sires! what mortal hand
Can e'er untie the filial band
That knits me to thy rugged strand!
Still as I view each well-known scene,
Think what is now, and what hath been,
Seems as, to me, of all bereft,
Sole friends, thy woods and streams were left;
And thus I love them better still,
Even in extremity of ill.
By Yarrow's streams still let me stray,
Though none should guide my feeble way;
Still feel the breeze down Ettrick break
Although it chill my withered cheek;
Still lay my head by Teviot stone,
Though there, forgotten and alone
The bard may draw his parting groan.”

The final cause of the love of country is obvious. The devotion to institutions secures their permanence; thus affording a safeguard against the mad schemes of ambition and the mutability of human caprice. Those institutions will elicit the strongest affection,

and will hence be the most permanent that are the most useful. From the devotion to localities and physical characteristics, results the inference that this whole earth is intended as an human habitation. By means of it Nature's God has continued the life he has planted, as well on the bleak brow of the mountain, as in the bland bosom of the valley. By means of it, the hum of population is sent forth, as well from Lapland's dreary waste as from Italy's fair and classic clime. By means of it, this whole globe, as well its mountains as its valleys—its deserts as its gardens—are replete with human life: extending over its entire surface the blessings of human existence, and furnishing every where subjects for the moral government of God.

If the imperfect institutions of other countries, if the desolate wastes of other climes claim and receive such exalted homage from the human heart, with what feelings may we exult on this anniversary of our nation's natal day! What rich offerings of affection are due to the altar of our country. Our country?—"What," it has been eloquently asked and answered, "what is our country?" "It is not the East, with her hills and her valleys; with her countless sails, and the rocky ramparts of her shores. It is not the North, with her thousand villages; with her harvest-home; with her frontiers of the lake and the ocean. It is not the West, with her forest sea, and her inland isles; with her luxuriant expanses clothed in the verdant corn; with her beautiful Ohio, and her majestic Missouri. Nor is it yet the South, opulent in the mimic snow of the cotton; in the rich plantations of the rustling cane, and in the golden robes of the rice field. *What are these, but sister families of one greater, better, holier family, OUR COUNTRY.*"

Let us then cherish the linked harmony of the sister states. If Liberty or Union were an unavoidable alternative, then union must needs yield to Liberty. But in our political system, they appear framed to co-exist together. Their mutual and reciprocal influences seem almost or quite as necessary to the perpetuity of our institutions, as are those of the heart and brain to the perfect action of the organized system. Let the function of either be suspended, and life unavoidably terminates. Let Liberty or Union cease, and our political system exhibits only a mass of disorganized fragments. Well therefore might a distinguished American Senator exclaim, "While the Union lasts, we have high, exciting, gratifying prospects spread out before us, for us and our children. Beyond that I seek not to penetrate the veil. God grant, that on my vision never may be opened what lies behind. When my eyes shall be turned to behold, for the last time, the sun in heaven, may I not see him shining on the broken and dishonored fragments of a once glorious Union; on states dissevered, discordant, belligerent; on a land rent with civil feuds, or drenched it may be in fraternal blood! Let their last feeble and lingering glance, rather behold the gorgeous ensign of the republic, now known and honored throughout the earth; still full high advanced, its arms and trophies streaming in their original lustre, not a stripe erased or polluted, not a single star obscured — bearing for its motto, no such miserable interrogatory as, *What is all this worth?* Nor those other words of delusion and folly, *Liberty first and Union afterwards* — but every where spread all over in characters of living light, blazing on all its ample folds, as they float over the sea and over the land, and in every wind under the whole heavens, that other sentiment, dear to every true American heart, *Liberty and Union, now and forever, one and inseparable!*"