

# ORATION

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

FOURTH OF JULY ASSOCIATION,

BY

NELSON MITCHELL, ESQ.,

ON

THE FOURTH OF JULY, 1848.

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CHARLESTON:

JAMES S. BURGESS, PRINTER,  
No. 119 EAST-BAY.

1849.

July 5th, 1849.

*Dear Sir :*

Under a Resolution of the Fourth of July Association, assembled on the 4th instant, it has been made our pleasant duty, as a Committee of that body, to renew the request of the last 4th, for a copy of your able and patriotic Oration of that date. In reiterating the earnest wish of the Association to give a wider currency to your discourse, suffer us to add for ourselves the expression of the hope that you will enable us to enrich the treasury of our Society with a contribution so highly prized.

Most respectfully,

Your friends and servants,

GEORGE S. BRYAN,  
HENRY C. KING,  
R. W. BACOT.

To NELSON MITCHELL, Esq.

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To MESSRS. GEORGE S. BRYAN, HENRY C. KING and R. W. BACOT.

*Gentlemen :*

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your note of the 5th instant, requesting, on the part of the Fourth of July Association, a copy of the Oration delivered a year since before that body for publication. However unworthy I may think it of this notice, yet, as such is the pleasure of the Society, I enclose you the MS. Permit me also to express, through you to the Society, my sense of the compliment implied by this request, and to return you individually my sincere thanks for the terms of unmerited commendation in which you have been pleased to express the wishes of the Society.

I am, Gentlemen,

With respect and regard,

Your most obedient servant,

NELSON MITCHELL.

# ORATION.

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AFTER a most eventful year in the annals of the civilized world, when most of the nations of Europe are in the midst of confusion, gloom and uncertainty, it is again permitted us to assemble together, and while party differences are hushed and party bitterness forgotten, under the shadow of our republican institutions to celebrate this day, which has been selected as our great national festival: the anniversary of one of those events which constitute an epoch in the history of mankind, and mark the progress of civilization and political improvement, which, as it were, at once reflect the past and foreshadow the future.

We are accustomed to speak of it, associated as it is with the great national act which we now commemorate, as the commencement of our existence as a people,—the natal day of our political being; but in comparing our national existence with the life of an individual, this day may in many regards be rather likened to another *period*—to that on which we are emancipated from parental control and assume the guidance of our own conduct; when, for weal or for woe, we undertake the steerage of our course, and begin to pilot our bark amid the rocks and shoals of human life.

It was on this day that we severed forever the bonds which connected us with the British Empire, and assumed an independent position among the nations of the earth. But, is it not an error to suppose that our political existence dates from no earlier period? Our national manifesto itself speaks of us as one people about to dissolve their connexion with another. The colonies were in fact, from their earliest settlement, for many of the most important functions of political existence, a distinct people, although unequal, for a time, to the task of protecting their infant institutions from aggression, they were in the hardy school of struggle and self-reliance, preparing themselves for liberty, for that which generally proves much more perilous to the safety and stability of a republic, the just and orderly administration of internal affairs. Republics have, for the most part, been found equal to defending themselves against attacks from without; it is in preserving equal government and protecting their citizens against the tyranny of factions at home, that they encounter the greater difficulty. This it is which demands the exercise of moderation in the use of power, and requires the moral discipline of self-control. These are rarer virtues than courage or intrepidity, and without them every free commonwealth must sooner or later become a prey to internal disorders, or take refuge in the iron rule of a military despotism. This self-control we had been gradually acquiring while in a condition of political pupilage, until in the fulness of time we were to give the world the glorious evidence of our maturity and manhood, in the firmness, temperance and moderation with which we could assert and maintain our entire independence of all foreign supremacy.

The growth and progress of nations and institutions

sometimes present a close analogy to the productions of the material world. The fruit and foliage, which would appear to the unreflecting observer to be the production but of a season, are in truth the result of nature's slow and laborious process. So it is in the phenomena of the moral world—some striking event fixes the attention and marks the character of a nation or an age, and we are sometimes disposed to ascribe it to a fortuitous combination of circumstances; but upon a closer examination we shall find that it is but the natural effect of causes long since in operation, which have, in due season, produced their fruit. This is more especially true of the growth of political institutions and the rise and progress of commonwealths, and our own country presents an instructive illustration of it. From the time of the first settlement of the colonies, as they were called, there was the commencement of a separate people. They had, it is true, an undefined notion of the fealty due to the crown of the parent country, but the inhabitants were no longer, in conviction or feeling, an integral portion of the British Empire. They were, in fact, so many infant republics, distinct from the parent stock in opinion and sentiment, under their own proper forms and institutions, who, as soon as they were sufficient for their own defence, would, as a matter of political necessity, declare their national independence. The separation is frequently ascribed to the harsh and tyrannical measures pursued by the ministry of the day, which may no doubt have accelerated such a result. A spirit of concession and conciliation might perhaps have retarded it for a few years; a rare political forecast, if we can suppose it possible to restrain a nation's instinct for power and dominion, might have accomplished it in a peaceable

form. Indeed, many of our most prominent statesmen expressed extreme reluctance to the separation, and were no doubt honest in their declarations. They seemed to regard it possible for the colonies to retain entire control of their own political organization and internal administration, without severing the connexion or affecting the supremacy of the British crown. There they were content to leave the harness and trappings of power, provided they retained the substance at home. But how long would the shadow have remained after the substance had ceased to exist? How long would they themselves have endured the mockery of monarchical forms after they had proved to be hollow and unreal? No! the time had arrived in the progress of events when it became necessary either to unweave the fabric which it had required centuries to construct, blot out our early history, and, eradicating every conviction and sentiment, become in substance, as we had been in appearance, an integral portion of the parent country, or assume for ourselves an independent position. Although the conduct of our military operations was such as we may well be proud of, yet even there the struggle was rather moral than physical—the war was rather political than military; it presented none of the features of the wars waged on the battle-fields of Europe, for the establishment of national predominance, or to advance the interests of dynasties and family alliances. There were no disciplined thousands, conducted by experienced captains, whose trade was warfare, and who fought only from sordid or selfish motives. A mere handful of undisciplined yeomanry, under the guidance of leaders in many instances without military experience, were to meet the chosen legions of “an old and haughty nation, proud in arms.” It

was a war, the triumphs of which were not confined to the few who were appointed to conduct it, but extended to every hearth and hamlet throughout the land. Wherever struggle or endurance was to be encountered there was opportunity for achievement; wherever self-denial was exhibited there was victory. It was a war in which the gentle maiden and reserved matron bore their part in the burden and heat of the day, as well as the stout hearts and strong arms that met in the shock of battle. It was, in fact, rather a succession of heroic sacrifices than a display of successful military prowess. We did not so much disarm or exhaust our opponents, as convince them that we were so firm in our right and so strong in our powers of endurance, that victory would be unavailing, that ultimate success was impossible. It was that Great Britain was brought reluctantly to the conclusion that we were a distinct people, and that sooner or later she would be compelled to acknowledge it. In taking this view, however, of the progress of our national growth, and regarding our independence as the natural result of the course of events, let us not be misled to underrate the exertions of the great men of the revolution, or desire to remove them from the well-merited eminence to which they have been elevated by the unanimous voice of a grateful people. Away with that heartless and arrogant philosophy which would regard the manful struggles and endurance of the hero and patriot merely as part of the machinery of life. There is, no doubt, a certain connection in the progress of cause and effect, in the moral as in the physical world, but this is by no means sufficient to identify the phenomena of life and moral action with the unconscious results of mechanical forces. Let, then, a full tribute of

homage and veneration be paid to the great actors in our revolutionary struggle. Perhaps, when we consider the true character of the contest and the mighty import of the questions at issue, no higher eulogium can be paid them than that they were found equal to the occasion.

Elevated, as it were, on a stage, and exhibited to the gaze of the civilized world, they yet forgot themselves in their duties, and never for a moment suffered their attention or efforts to be diverted from the great objects before them by any selfish desire for display.

It is impossible, in reviewing the events of that period and reflecting upon the various deliberations by which public affairs were controlled, not to be struck with the gravity and earnestness which pervaded the public assemblies and characterized the prominent actors in the great drama. They seemed to feel themselves as nothing beside the great events which they were guiding, and this forgetfulness of self in the moment of their trial is their best title to be held in grateful recollection by us.

It is a national privilege, the advantage and beneficial consequences of which it is not easy to estimate, that a commonwealth should be able to approve and respect, as well as admire, its founders and early sages. The separation between approbation and admiration has always, to some extent, a pernicious effect. It is difficult, when a nation's gratitude is twined around a distinguished name, to discriminate and separate great failings from great virtues, so that both shall not indifferently receive the stamp of the public approbation. Thus we may be blinded to the evils of a corrupt ambition and a greedy desire for power, from our admiration of the heroic qualities with which it is accom-



panied, and gratitude for the glory conferred upon the State. What Roman, when he contemplated the brilliant exploits of Caesar, and saw how far the horizon of the Roman Empire had receded before his arms, could visit his disorderly ambition with reprobation commensurate with the injuries which it had entailed upon his country? We have, too, in our own day, a striking illustration of this, in one whose genius was only equalled by his appetite for power and self-aggrandizement. Dazzled by his mighty exploits, and the glory which his super-eminence among the monarchs of the earth reflected upon France, how many of his countrymen have been blind to the enormities of his arrogant career, and almost reconciled to despotism itself, because of the pre-eminence and power with which it was associated. But, in contemplating the worthies of our own revolution, *we* have no such painful conflict to encounter: *we* may securely reflect, with ever increasing admiration, on the firmness, purity, sagacity and moderation of those unostentatious and virtuous citizens to whom the destinies of our country were entrusted at that most critical period.

Placed in new and untried circumstances, they yet acted with the dignity and self-reliance which belonged to the important positions to which they had been advanced, and bowed reverently to the dictates of wisdom and the teachings of experience. Thrown into a hostile attitude with one of the most powerful monarchies of Europe, reviled by a haughty and intolerant ministry, and all their approaches and efforts at a peaceable reconciliation spurned by an obsequious Parliament, they were neither daunted by menace nor betrayed into indecorous or unseemly violence by the scorn and contumely with which they were treated.

Called to the command of armies and the exercise of military rule, they never forgot the citizen in the soldier nor ceased to remember that war was only to be pursued for the sake of peace. Calm in the midst of the perils with which they were encompassed, they yet exhibited no vain-glorious spirit when those dangers had been surmounted and the control of a powerful monarchy successfully resisted.

Victory won and the din of arms hushed, they had to turn to the arduous task of constructing a frame of government. They represented communities, having various and apparently hostile interests, divided into a variety of religious sects, and characterized by different sentiments, opinions and traditions, with scarcely any feature alike but a common devotion to civil and religious liberty. There was the hardy and austere Puritan of the North, accustomed to self-reliance and endurance, but too much inclined to set up his own convictions and conduct as the standard for all with whom he might be associated, the ardent but haughty Cavalier of the South, loving liberty as a privilege, but jealous even of the necessary control of government; besides every variety of difference in character between these striking contrasts.

And these apparently discordant elements were to be moulded into one harmonious whole, dependent for its stability upon the consent of all its parts. They triumphed over all the difficulties of the task, and, after calm deliberation, by concession, by firmness, by wisdom, they succeeded in establishing a frame of government for their country, which has proved itself so admirably contrived to secure tranquility and promote prosperity at home, while it protects us from interference or attack from without, and a government

over which the very differences in the elements of our national character have exercised a conservative influence. They had the sagacity to perceive that a constitution, to be permanent, must grow out of the institutions and convictions of a people, and was not like clay in the hands of the potter, to be fashioned according to the choice of the workman. More concerned for the durability of the edifice than the prominence of the architect, they were content to look for their meed of reward to the gratitude of an intelligent posterity, who were to reap the fruit of their well directed exertions, and could best judge of the value of their labors. All this may be said, and said with *truth*, of the great men generally who directed public sentiment at the period of the revolution. But when we cast our eyes on the stately and venerable form of him who occupied the foremost place among these wise and virtuous citizens, we feel that we can pay the full tribute of admiration and reverence, without measure and without stint. Here we can entertain no distrust lest in our zealous admiration of great talents and great virtues we should be insensibly led to approve or excuse failings and errors as great. Every thing about this illustrious citizen was in such harmony, every quality of his mind, every feature of his character, so adapted to his position and so admirably proportioned, that we look in vain for any blemish requiring the cunning of the artist to conceal. The last infirmity of noble minds, "the canker of ambitious thoughts," never disturbed the majestic serenity of that elevated countenance.

We have such faith in the intelligence and patriotism of our ancestors, that we do not believe that any unholy aspirations, even of one who exercised such unlimited sway over the affections of his countrymen,

could have permanently deranged the work then going forward, still this should not diminish our gratitude for the inestimable boon of that noble and spotless character. A great historical character, particularly at so interesting a period as the commencement of a nation's independent existence, exercises an influence over the fortunes and destinies of a country, not easy to limit or appreciate. It is the boast of those skilled in the elegant arts, that they can trace the influence exercised by some excellent master-piece over the school and period to which it belonged: how important, then, in our great national school of public virtue, to have constantly before us a model so perfect in all its parts, at once a pattern for imitation and a standard for comparison.

It may perhaps be that we measure some of these distinguished characters by the shadows which they cast in the evening of their lives, when comparing them with many of the busy politicians of our own days, whose aims and demeanor are so different; but while contemplating their elevated patriotism and disinterestedness, so direct in their purposes and so free from selfish or sordid views, we cannot help thinking that they must have been purified by the influence of the struggle in which they were engaged.

It is proper on this day to recur to the past, so that we may feel and acknowledge the debt we owe to those who formed by their example the national character, and contributed by their labors to the perfection and permanence of our institutions, a debt which we can most appropriately pay by examining our situation and using our best exertions to secure the same benefits for those who are to come after us. We have received the rich inheritance of freedom, secured and protected

by a constitution admirably adapted to our condition. Shall we transmit these inestimable blessings unimpaired to future generations, or shall we suffer this, the fairest political temple that man has ever been permitted to contemplate, to be spoiled and defaced while entrusted to our keeping? We are sometimes accused among nations of being vaunting and presumptuous, and our conviction of superior political advantages *may* either degenerate into vain-glorious conceit, or be rendered the motive to the most elevating and improving efforts. It is the condition of existence that all the advantages of life are coupled with corresponding duties and responsibilities, and this is in no instance more emphatically true than in the possession of wise political institutions. We are responsible not only to ourselves but to others. A glance at the course of events among other nations, since we became an independent people, will satisfy us what a large influence we have exercised over their fortunes. It would, of course, be out of place to enter upon a minute examination of the condition of the nations composing the European circle at the time of our revolutionary war—the forms of their various governments were of course very different, and, for the most part, despotic in their structure. One important and fundamental feature may, however, be said to have characterized them all: the people and the institutions of the various States were controlled and directed by the central administration, and the governments were not the work of the governed. This, to a certain extent, characterized even Great Britain herself, although she enjoyed a much larger share of freedom than any other of the considerable nations of Europe, for, whilst her people exercised an indirect influence over the government,

still her Parliament was in fact the representative rather of the classes and interests of the nation than the people of the country. When the colonies resisted the legislation of the parent country, it did not seem to be generally regarded at first, as leading to any thing more than the dismemberment of an empire, and as the power and ascendancy of Great Britain were then beginning to excite very general apprehension, the movement received the countenance of many powerful European States. It was not foreseen that the action of the colonies was an entire destruction of the old order of things, and would, as it were, lead to the introduction of a new political code.

Liberty was no longer to be a privilege granted by a reluctant government, but the government was itself to be the creature and instrument to the popular will. The American revolution, regarded merely as the division of one country from another was, comparatively, an ordinary occurrence among European nations, but considered as establishing the dogma that governments were to be the work of the popular will, it formed an era in the history of the world. It was perhaps fortunate for the early settlement of our national independence, that the remote consequences of our attitude and principles were not fully conceived by the old governments of Europe. Had it then been clearly perceived that the success of our efforts abroad and at home, involved principles necessarily subversive of the established condition of things there, self-preservation might have dictated the most strenuous co-operation with our opponents, and the suppression of all resistance would have been regarded as the common cause of all the governments of the old world. A few of their more sagacious statesmen no doubt apprehended

some such consequences, but their views were regarded as ingenious speculations, and did not sufficiently prevail to become motives to active interference. The exceptions were in our favor, so that instead of having the European powers excited against us to arrest the establishment of a government on principles so pregnant with danger to their own safety, we received not only countenance but assistance. Having assumed our own position in the great family of nations, it was necessary to adopt some principles regulating our intercourse with them. Their constitutions were not such as to encourage any close alliances; and our revolutionary sages, moved by this, as well as by considerations of wise and far-sighted policy, laid it down as a fundamental maxim for the regulation of our international relations, that while respecting the governments of other countries, and encouraging friendly intercourse with all, we should keep aloof from entangling connections, and remain the arbiters of our own fortunes. To those who might desire to share our lot, and partake of our advantages, we offered an equal participation in all rights civil and political; and conceded to other governments what we claimed for ourselves, the exclusive regulation of their own concerns. This wise and just course at once addressed itself to the good sense of foreign countries, and commanded their respect. We were generally successful by firmness and caution in avoiding collision, and securing all our international rights, without necessity for a recourse to arms: when, however, we were subjected to the alternative of either submitting to unjust and odious demands and sacrificing the rights of our citizens, or appealing to force, it was found that no considerations of interest, or the power of the enemy whom we were

to encounter would restrain us, where the honor and character of the country were concerned. What was the sacrifice of a few men, or the temporary detention of one or two of our vessels, to the immense loss and expenditure which must result from a war with such a formidable naval power as Great Britain? Yet how unavailing proved all such arguments, when urged to withhold us from vindicating our national rights! and let us remember with pride, that foremost among those who, in the spirit of our revolutionary heroes, counted cost as nothing when weighed in the scale against national honor, stood three champions from our own South, who, by their zeal, eloquence and genius, engaged us in this national contest, and impressed their noble sentiments upon the hearts of their countrymen. Their names are all a part of our history, but as one has long since closed his mortal career, we are at liberty to speak with freedom of him and pay a passing tribute to his memory.

Coming upon the stage of public affairs but a little after the sages of the revolution had passed from the scene, he seemed formed after the model of the men of that time. With genius to comprehend the true interest of his country, he had no aspiration but for her happiness and prosperity. Feeling that parties and party differences were the necessary attendants of free institutions, his effort was to make them subservient to patriotic purposes, instead of becoming the instrument of factious combinations. Like a pure and bright effulgence, his approach seemed to dissipate the noxious mists of selfish intrigue and personal prejudice. As long as respect for genius, purity and public virtue shall exist among us, his name will excite the admiration of every American and the honest pride of



every true-hearted son of Carolina: Clarum et venerabile nomen: a contribution to the bright galaxy of historical names of which we may well be proud.

Under this system of firmness, moderation and justice in the direction of our foreign relations, and with a frame of government admirably adapted to our condition at home, our history has been little else than a course of rapid improvement and progress. Sternly suppressing our sympathies when they interfered with the maxims of policy bequeathed to us by the founders of the republic, we have always been among the foremost to cheer and welcome other nations in occupying the same platform with ourselves, and have lived to see this policy, narrow and selfish as it may seem to some, productive of the greatest good, not only in advancing our prosperity but in promoting the permanent growth of free institutions in other countries. For this, our prosperity would have a greater effect than any direct assistance that we could have rendered. Of what avail that we had been successful in our struggle for independence, if we had not proved equal afterwards to securing our own happiness? It was needful to show the rest of the world that liberal institutions were compatible with the happiness of a people, with progress and good order. Our example became, as it were, a mirror, reflecting to others what they were equal to, and what they might attain when they had prepared themselves for the trial. It is ~~this~~ silent moral influence, the effect of which neither argument nor invective could remove, which has done more to advance the growth of liberal institutions than all the sacrifices we could have made. We are now in a condition to see developed the consequences of the early policy of our country and test the wisdom of those who instituted

it. Some seventy odd years have elapsed since our independent position was assumed and declared to the world: during that time we have never engaged in any alliance which would link us to the destinies of any other people, and yet it can scarcely be doubted that few countries have exercised a more powerful influence over the sentiments of others than our own. What mattered it that the most eloquent apology should be written of liberty and a republican polity? it was regarded but as the fanciful reverie of a political dreamer. But while the world had before their eyes the living example of such a commonwealth, where moral and physical improvement pursue their course under the shadow of the orderly administration of public affairs, it was idle to declaim against a free government as necessarily leading to turbulence, disorder and dissolution. Other nations would naturally look on with admiration and a desire to imitate, and the conviction and change of sentiment consequent upon this lead to permanent results. When France, influenced no doubt to some extent by our example, overthrew the obsolete despotism, which was no longer adapted to the temper and convictions of the people, she committed such enormities in the access of her fury, that, but for the illustration of our success, the nations of the earth would have turned from the name of liberty with horror and repugnance. Indignant at the interference attempted by some of the neighboring powers, and flushed with triumph, she undertook to become the reformer of the world; she proclaimed herself the willing ally of nations who might desire to resist their rulers. She made gigantic efforts to furnish the force for this, determined to model all governments after her own views; and although her

military efforts were at first attended with success, yet, after falling herself under the rule of a military despotism, after fertilizing every field in Europe with the blood of her children, and exhausting her treasury almost to bankruptcy, she saw the dynasties of Europe re-established, herself compelled to adopt the monarchical form and recall the exiled family. Whereas, if instead, she had, after repelling foreign interference, succeeded in establishing a stable, enlightened and paternal government within her own borders, how different would have been the result! The influence of her example would noiselessly have revolutionized Europe, without her marching a soldier beyond her borders.

We should acknowledge then the wisdom of that course, which has not only secured our own happiness but enabled us to exercise an imperceptible yet irresistible influence over the opinions of other countries, which must in the end prepare them for the introduction of liberal and constitutional governments, without which preparation any effort to effect the change could only have resulted in the most mortifying and discouraging failure.

We now begin to see the consequences of this silent yet resistless change of public sentiment, in the condition of many of the nations of Europe. But a few months since, and the kingdoms and empires of the old world seemed to rest securely upon the monarchical and even despotic institutions which pervaded the greater part of the European continent. The political arrangements which had been made by the potentates of Europe after the overthrow of the French Empire still subsisted, with but very little alteration; the hopes held out by some of the sovereigns to their subjects, of more liberal and constitutional governments, had

been from time to time deferred to a more convenient season: territorial cupidity had tempted the neighboring powers to efface the last remnant of Polish nationality; France had changed her rulers, but the government continued in substance very much the same. Popular outbreaks would from time to time occur, "with fear of change perplexing monarchs," but it appeared that the governments were generally able to suppress these disturbances, without being thrown off their equilibrium or making any concession to the general desire for more liberal constitutions. They exhibited every outward mark of stability and power, and every thing like a general extension of popular rights seemed postponed to some indefinite period in the future. But how fragile and precarious are all political fabrics which rest merely on the organization of government, when the institutions of a country are the creatures of the executive power, instead of being rooted in the *convictions* and *affections* of its people! When the sky seemed serene, without a cloud to portend the coming storm, there suddenly broke out a succession of the most general and startling political revolutions which had ever astonished mankind. In a moment of profound peace, with no outward force to derange the existing order of things, "in the twinkling of an eye," almost every throne in Europe seemed nodding to its fall. France, foremost in the race of agitation and revolution, had no sooner risen against her rulers and declared her determination to change her form of government, than an electric chain seemed to be touched and the movement communicated to every member of the European confederacy. It was as though the fiat of the Omnipotent had gone forth that the old order of things should pass away, to give

place to a new system, more in accordance with the spirit of the age and the present sentiments and opinions of the civilized world.

Placed, as it were, on an eminence, aloof from the dust and confusion of the crumbling edifices, we may calmly and securely speculate on these portentous occurrences and question of the causes which produced them. Conspicuous among these, we cannot but recognize the influence of our example. From the period of our assertion of political independence, the friends of despotic government had predicted the speedy downfall of our institutions and the inevitable failure of such a wild experiment. For a while these predictions, defended, as they were, by plausible arguments, excited distrust as to our ultimate success; but as time progressed, instead of falling a prey to anarchy and internal dissensions, we made the most rapid strides in the career of intellectual improvement and the development of all our natural resources; we showed that a stable government could exist on the basis of law and the popular will, sufficient for the protection of all the rights of the citizen, as well against internal disorders as foreign violence.

Civilized nations have been, for a long time past, brought too near each other, their communication has been too general and rapid, to suffer them to remain indifferent spectators to each other's fortunes, while we had been so long a mark for sneer and invective that our progress became only the more striking and remarkable. It was vain then to assert the necessity of despotic control,—of the cumbrous scaffoldings and gaudy trappings with which the monarchies of Europe delighted to surround themselves, and to which they

chiefly looked for the maintenance of peace and good order; *we* exhibited the living proof of how safely all this could be dispensed with. There needed no elaborate argument to convince the people of the old world of the stability of free institutions, when, turning their eyes towards the western horizon, across the broad expanse of the Atlantic, they might contemplate the sublime spectacle of a nation of republics, each moving harmoniously in its own sphere, and constituting together one glorious constellation, where power finds its support in the consent of those over whom it is exercised; where there is no monarch but the law; where the oppressed of other lands find a secure asylum, and the patriot and philanthropist receive a confirmation of their highest hopes.

And surely we may feel some pride in the exalted part which has been permitted us in the great drama of the destinies of our race. While other nations are engaged in the trying struggles incident to great political change, having before them a future fraught with danger and uncertainty, we are in the condition of the fortunate mariner, who, securely moored in his destined port, watches with deep interest his tempest-tossed brethren, who are still laboring to reach the same haven.

The subtle and imaginative Italian, full of the inspiring associations of his classic land,—the thoughtful German, no longer content to confine his efforts to the fields of speculation,—the gay and gallant countrymen of our own Lafayette, loving liberty with a blind devotion, have all proclaimed their determination to reform their several governments and enter upon a new course of improvement and progress.

They must all have our profound sympathy in their efforts to regenerate their political institutions and reap the fruits of our example. May their efforts be crowned with success, and may their wishes be accomplished in the permanent establishment of free, just and constitutional governments. When, turning our attention from the disturbed state of other countries, the trials and sacrifices now before them, we contemplate our own condition, our prosperity, our internal quiet, and our peaceful relations with all other nations, we cannot but be stirred with emotions of satisfaction and gratitude.

When we last assembled together in celebration of this day we were engaged in hostilities with a neighboring republic, and although no fear of defeat or failure was ever felt on our part, yet much inconvenience at home, and many pernicious consequences, began to be apprehended from the prolonged continuance of the war. Success in arms, when it inspires an appetite for military aggrandizement, is productive of greater evils to a republic than the loss of battles or the expenditure of treasure. An honorable peace must always be a subject of sincere congratulation to any but a nation greedy of conquest and solely governed by a lust of dominion; and such a peace, after the short but brilliant career of success and distinction which attended our arms during this war, now so happily concluded, must fill the measure of our exultation and render us forever a debtor to those brave men, whose deeds will add such a bright page to the history of their country.

After an uninterrupted peace of more than a quarter of a century, with a military force scarcely adequate to the necessities of a peace establishment, our own

citizens divided in sentiment as to the expediency of our course, we found ourselves suddenly engaged in hostile collision with a neighboring power, indignant at supposed wrong, proud of their historical traditions and resolutely determined never to make any concession to what they regarded as unjust aggression. Under these circumstances, we might well have felt some apprehension lest we should be subjected, at least, to a temporary discomfiture. But from the first gun that resounded on the banks of the Rio Grande, until the American flag streamed over the towers of the Mexican capital, not a single reverse attended the progress of our arms. No sooner was an appeal made to the patriotism of the country, than all difference of opinion was forgotten in the zeal to protect the national standard from dishonor, and thousands sought the privilege of dying in its defence. Opposed sometimes to overwhelming disproportions of numbers, sometimes to fortified heights and frowning battlements, which seemed to defy attack, no difficulties were too great for the conduct and skill of our commanders, no obstacle could arrest the onward career of our soldiers. Each danger only brought forth a new triumph, and the tide of victory never ebbed until a populous country found itself in the possession of a mere handful of men, and its proud capital reluctantly opened its gates to receive our gallant troops. This is not the occasion to attempt any thing like a narration of the exploits of our arms in the fields of Mexico, a country destined to be the theatre of adventurous achievement: the history of our successes there will appear in the pages of some future Prescott, scarcely less romantic than the memorable conquest of the heroic Spaniard; but it would ill become us on this great national festival to pass over



in ungrateful silence the services of those who were most conspicuous in contributing so much to advance the glory of their country. At the first onset of the foe, the American commander, placed in a most critical and difficult position, looked undismayed at the perils which encompassed him and taught his troops to look for safety only in the overthrow of their opponents. The rough wooing of the old warrior won the smiles of victory, and she continued true to the American standard until we had gathered the best fruits of her favors in the accomplishment of an honorable peace. The indomitable resolution, the modest self-reliance, the power of inspiring confidence in those under his command so as to enable the citizen soldier to rival the veteran in steadiness and intrepidity, the purity of purpose which marked him throughout, must secure for the hero of Buena Vista a lasting place in the hearts of his countrymen. Whilst the science, skill and military genius which characterized all our operations, from the surrender of Vera Cruz to the fall of the Mexican capital, the uncompromising discipline by which he preserved the American name free from reproach or opprobrium, and the constant effort to arrest the course of his own glory by an early peace, must forever encircle the name of Scott with the halo of national admiration. In making this proper acknowledgment for the services of the commanders, let us, however, remember that all their military skill and conduct must have proved unavailing had it not received support from the courage and endurance of those whose efforts they were directing. And never was this support found wanting. Not only did the disciplined soldiers of the regular army prove equal to every emergency, but the gallantry of their volunteer brethren, just from the

walks of civil life, was, on the most critical occasions, equally conspicuous, so that now all doubts may be removed as to the efficiency of our citizen soldiery when co-operating with regular troops. But let us be just to all who have claims upon the national gratitude; the gallantry and intrepidity which effected so many brilliant successes generally received an intelligent direction from the military science and experience of those whose education had prepared them to tender such aid, and West Point has, by her sons, triumphantly vindicated herself from the sneers with which she has been, from time to time, assailed.

It is characteristic of a republican polity, that the common glory of the whole country is the possession of every citizen. We think, then, that all the renown acquired by our troops in Mexico belongs to each of us. At the same time, we cannot but feel profound gratification that the sons of our own soil have contributed so large a share. As soon as it was known that their services would be received, from every portion of the State they assembled around their country's flag. From every calling and condition, from the youth just entering on the spring-time of life to him who had reached the "lusty winter" of age, they came, eager for adventure and distinction, and careless of danger where the glory of their country was to be advanced, while our own time-honored city, equally alive to the calls of humanity and patriotism, was not to be excluded from her share in such an offering. We well knew that, finding the character of their beloved State entrusted to their keeping, they would never bring a reproach upon her fair fame, and would be foremost in every field where honor was to be won. They were fortunate in being under the direction of

generous leaders, who could appreciate their high bearing and sympathize with their ardent courage; honor and thanks to those generals who, trusting to their intrepidity, summoned them to the post of danger and relied upon them in the moment of peril! When the courageous Shields, accepting the offer of their heroic Colonel, singled them out for a fatal charge, striplings as they were, they rushed with alacrity through the deadly fire of the enemy and covered themselves and their State with glory. Nobly have they redeemed the bold pledges which we made for them. Carolina, limited in extent and far surpassed in national wealth by many of her sisters of the confederacy, may well feel compensated by her riches in such jewels as her sons of the Palmetto Regiment. She will be proud to fold them to her arms with the delighted affection of a parent who has seen her highest hopes realized in the bright deeds of her offspring. But, alas! there are many whose return shall never be greeted by the acclamations of their countrymen, and who can no more be cheered in the difficult path of honor and duty by the voice of an approving country. But a remnant of our own Palmettoes will ever return to their native State. Of their officers, two have shared the fate of so many of their comrades. The manly form of their dauntless leader was stricken to the ground while cheering on his men to victory, and not a few of his brave followers met the same fate while eagerly responding to the call. On the blood-stained field, with no solace but the battle's din, they found their last resting-place; no shroud but their country's flag, no funeral knell but the cannon's roar. Far removed from all that they most dearly loved, their fading sight resting on a strange sky, with

their last lingering thoughts still yearning after their beloved land, they have met the death of the bold and gallant soldier, that graceful and pleasant death, which, (as has been so beautifully said,) like the setting sun, leaves a bright ray to mark where the expiring luminary has sunk. Who can doubt that the memories of these valiant spirits will long survive enshrined in the hearts of their mourning country!

The devotion of these brave men has at length enabled us to terminate this contest, and by a satisfactory peace re-establish our amicable relations with all the nations of the earth. We can now again turn our undivided strength to the development of our internal resources and the advancement of intellect and improvement; we may now emulate the ardor and perseverance of our troops in the peaceful domains of industry, science and the arts. May nothing occur to interrupt us in these bloodless conquests, and may we long continue to present an example to the world of a people at once free, just, prosperous and happy.

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