

Doc Samuel Wood born his friend  
a humble clerk

the author

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MR. WEBSTER'S  
ANNIVERSARY ADDRESS,  
JULY 4th, 1806.

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AN  
ANNIVERSARY  
**Address,**  
DELIVERED BEFORE THE  
FEDERAL GENTLEMEN  
OF  
CONCORD AND ITS VICINITY,  
JULY 4th, 1806,

  
BY DANIEL WEBSTER.  


FROM THE PRESS OF GEORGE HOUGH,  
CONCORD, N. H.

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1806.



## Anniversary Address.

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**T**HIS Country exhibits an interesting spectacle. She is the last of the little family of Republics. She hath survived all her friends, and now exists, in the midst of an envious world, without the society of one nation, with which she is associated by similarity of Government and character. Whether it be possible to preserve this Republican unit in existence and health, is the great question which perpetually fastens on the mind. This inquiry is paramount to all others. Whether this or that political party shall rise or fall; whether this or that administration possess most talents and experience; whether the sentiments of one or another Chief Magistrate are most favorable to the progress of the nation in population and wealth: these questions, important in many respects, are important, to the last degree, so far, and so far only, as they affect the integrity of the Constitution.

To this point, every good man's heart and hands are turned. It is the object of his most ardent wishes, and his most active exertions. I cannot, on this occasion, seduce my own attention, nor would I wish to divert yours, from the consideration of this great sub-

ject. Is our existing Constitution worth preserving? Is it, as hath been said, the last hope of desponding human nature? Is it the brazen serpent, to which we turn our eyes, when worried by the fiery serpents of false patriotism and false politics? Guard it then, as you would guard the seat of life. Guard it, not only against the blows of open violence, but also against that spirit of change, which, like a deadly mortification, begins at the extremities, and with swift and fatal progress, approaches to the heart. Do you deem it imperishable? Can no crimes destroy, no folly forfeit it? Is it the rock of Gibraltar, against which the waves of faction may beat, for ages, without moving it from its bed? BEWARE! I dare not assert *that*, in this place, sacred as it is to truth, and unaccustomed to all language but that of conviction. Men are subject to men's misfortunes.

IF an Angel should be winged from Heaven, on an errand of mercy to our Country, the first accents which would glow on celestial lips, would be, "Beware! Be cautious! Be wise! You have every thing to lose; you have nothing to gain."

WE live under the only Government, that ever existed, which was formed by the deliberate consultations of the people. Miracles do not cluster. That, which has happened but once in six thousand years, cannot be expected to happen often. Such a Government, once destroyed, would <sup>leave</sup> ~~have~~ a void to be filled, perhaps for centuries, with revolution and tumult, riot and despotism.

WHEN we speak of *preserving the Constitution*, we mean, not the *paper* on which it is written, but the *spirit* which dwells in it. Government *may* lose all its real character, its genius, its temper, without losing its appearance. Republicanism, unless you guard it, will creep out of its case of parchment, like a snake out of its skin. You may have a Despotism, under the name of a Republic. You may look on a Government, and see it possess all the external modes of Freedom, and yet find nothing of the essence, the vitality, of Freedom in it ; just as you may contemplate an embalmed body, where art hath preserved proportion and form, amidst nerves without motion, and veins void of blood.

THERE are two classes of causes, which may affect the safety of our present excellent systems of Government. The most numerous, and the most dangerous, comprise those, which arise among ourselves, from our own passions, and our own vices. But these are not all. Others arise from our foreign relations. It is with nations, as with individuals. Their society has great influence in determining their character. Foreign relations, if pursued into the ten thousand windings and intricacies of commerce, ~~is~~ an endless subject. Let us <sup>all</sup> consider them no farther, than they may be supposed to affect the preservation of essential national rights, and the security and permanence of the Constitution. Their <sup>se</sup> objects are intimately connected. The preservation of important rights, is essential to the existence of a free

Constitution. As Government is instituted for the defence and protection of the citizens, they will reluctantly support it, when they are taught that it is incompetent to effect these ends. The surrender of just claims, under pretence that the Constitution hath not ENERGY enough to defend them with dignity, is calumniating it in the presence of those whose attachment is so necessary to its existence. A Republican system hath no basis but the people's choice. You weaken it, therefore, when you weaken the love of it. When you render it contemptible, you finish it. It is not a labored inference drawn from premises, it is a plain, first principle, that a Government, which cannot protect the rights of the nation, cannot protect itself. Under these views it is, that the foreign relations of the Country assume such an interesting aspect.

Our ancestors, the first settlers of these States, imbibed the idea, that distance and the sea, had forever separated the Western from much connexion with the Eastern Continent. They had no apprehension, (and who then could have?) of that rapid rise to commerce and consequence, which hath since made this Country an important object of consideration to the politicians of Europe, and placed us in the neighborhood of the great States of the earth. America is not now a small, remote star, glimmering on the political concerns of Europe with a faint and cold beam. She is in the near firmament, shining with a brilliance which cannot be hidden, and occupying a portion of the hemisphere

which cannot be disregarded. Commerce is the great magician, which thus annihilates distances and unites Countries which Providence seems to have separated.

THE only nations on the Eastern Continent, which are now in a situation that enables them to annoy this Country, to any considerable degree, are Great-Britain and France. These are the two great levers which move the world. They are the two champions, contending in a last effort for victory; and the smaller nations around them, unsafe to act an independent part "within the wind of such commotion," either retire from the scene, or seek shelter under the power of one of the combatants. In the progress and termination of this conflict, we have, perhaps, more interest than some, and less than others, of our passions would tempt us to believe.

EVERY nation, as well as every man, hath its ruling passion. It hath some darling object, which it pursues in preference to all others. Here is the tender side. Touch this, and you touch a nerve which vibrates directly to the heart.

IN Great-Britain, this ruling passion is commerce. This is the apple of her eye. Her situation indicates this employment for the support of her immense population; and habit hath completely moulded the genius of her people to the exigencies of their situation. She is powerful, beyond rivalship, in her navy, and assiduous,

beyond belief, in circulating her trade through every vein and artery of the commercial system. These national pursuits determine the national character. On the subject of naval rights, she is jealous, haughty, and arrogant. Touch but the hair of her head, and she quarrels with you. As in other cases, the power to do wrong too frequently gives the disposition. While she guards her own immunities with ceaseless vigilance, she is inclined to make such gradual encroachments on the rights of others, as threaten, if unresisted, to vest all right in herself.

WHAT course is it policy to hold with such a nation? Is it wise to resist aggressions? to redress injuries? to resent insult? to assert and maintain national character and national rights? Or is it wise to trim and accommodate? to bend to time and circumstance, with the best grace we can? to turn the unsmitten cheek, and surrender important rights to the disposal of others?

THE sentiments of the heart decide these questions, without any appeal to the understanding; and the understanding, unsolicited, confirms the decision of the heart. Whether we consult character or expediency, spirit or policy, the answer is the same, **DEPEND YOURSELVES.** If we submit to first aggressions, how far is forbearance to extend, and at what point is resistance to begin? Shall we be servile to-day, and fix on to-morrow or the next day as the proper time for honorable resent-



ment? Do we shake poppies on all our senses now, with an expectation of waking from our stupor hereafter with more acute sensibilities? A high wrought affectation of resentment, a petulant propensity to go at fisty-cuffs for every trifle, are the definition of false honor. A firm adherence to rights, which leads to a cool, though unconquerable, determination to defend them at every hazard, is true dignity. Without this, we cannot long have peace, nor good Government. A philosophical endurance of repeated injuries, is the greatest of all maladies that can befall a Government: it is even worse than occasional precipitation.

FEVER is not so dreadful as consumption. Depletion and regimen may cure the former; but when the latter appears, it writes death upon the countenance. Nations generally hold the same grade in the estimation of others, which they hold in their own. While they do not respect themselves, it is in vain that they solicit respect from rivals.

NOTHING seems plainer than this, IF WE WILL HAVE COMMERCE, WE MUST PROTECT IT. So long as we are rich and defenceless, rapacity will prey upon us. The Government ought either to defend the merchant, or to repeal the laws which restrain him from defending himself. It ought to afford him the assistance of armed vessels, or to suffer him to arm his own vessel. It *ought not* to bind him, hand and foot, and surrender him to the mercy of his enemy.

On this subject of the protection of commerce, much has been said, and many opinions entertained. There is a system, which is opposed to every degree of naval preparation. There are men, who would not defend commerce an inch beyond the land. They choose to consider the United States as exclusively agricultural; as a great land animal, whose walks are confined to his native forests, and who has nothing to do with the ocean, but to drink at its shores, or soothe his slumbers by the noise of its waves.\* This system may have some bright parts; but, as a whole, it is impracticable and absurd. Like the sun in eclipse, a few rays of brilliant lustre may decorate its outer edges, but the great body of light is intercepted.

THIS Country is commercial, as well as agricultural. Indissoluble bonds connect him who ploughs the land, with him who ploughs the ocean. Nature hath placed us in a situation favorable to commercial pursuits; and no Government can alter the destination. Habits, confirmed by two centuries, are not to be changed. An immense portion of our property is on the waves. Sixty or eighty thousands of our most useful citizens are there, and are entitled to such protection from the Government as their case requires.

Is it said, we ought never to have differences with other nations, which may render measures of protection necessary? This is as wise as to say, that blasts and

\* *Mr. Randolph.*

mildews ought never to visit our fields. They come upon us, inevitably, and we have nothing to do, but to consider how we may act with most dignity and effect. Or is it said, we will have no navy, because we cannot have one large enough to subdue the British fleet?—Will we then leave our ports and harbors defenceless, because we cannot make conquests in the British channel, or set London on fire with bomb-shells? Shall we shrink from the defence of our own house, because we are not strong enough to pull down the house of our neighbor?—That sentiment be to him, who hath shoulders broad enough to bear the disgrace of it. It is the offspring of false economy, or inordinate avarice: it never sprang from the altar of “Seventy-six.”

THE recent murder of John Peirce, by a British Captain, in the harbor of New-York, is an event well calculated to try the spirit of the times. It is a thermometer, by which may be determined the temperature both of the Government and the people.—In 1770, when the United States were Colonies of the British King, before they had called themselves a Nation, or dreamed of Independence, some British soldiers in Boston, provoked by menaces and pelted with brick-bats, fired among our citizens, killed some, and wounded others. The act roused America! The Continent rose to arms. The cry of blood was abroad in the land—And from that moment we may date the severance of the British Empire.—In 1806, when the fruits of Independence are ripened by the lapse of thirty years,

during which time national honor hath received neither spot nor blemish, a British Captain, unprovoked, without cause, without pretext, without apology, in our own harbor, in the sight of our citizens, wantonly and inhumanly fires on an American vessel, and murders one of her crew! The community is petrified with astonishment, as well as heated with indignation. There is but one voice on the occasion, and that exclaims, with imperious emphasis, *Punish the wretch, who thus violates the laws of hospitality, defies your Government, and sports with the lives of your citizens.*—This act, if it had been committed in the Seine, or the Thames, without instant reparation, had been the cause of a national war. But in America, where things are understood better, it was only the cause of a *Proclamation!* Illustrious remedy for wounded honor! That Instrument, so efficacious for national defence, ought to be written in Telegraphe, and displayed above the tops of our light-houses, that it might be seen and read half way across the Atlantic, and remain a perpetual safe-guard to our shores!

PATRIOTISM hath given place to the more laudable spirit of *economy*. Regard to *national honor*, that remnant of chivalry, and offspring of the dark ages, is absorbed in a thirst for gain, and desire of *saving*—the liberal sentiments of enlightened times!

As a land power, Great-Britain can never be formidable to this Country. Her navy is her weapon; and in the use of that, she will continue to harrass us, until she finds us able and disposed to resist her. A naval

force, sufficient to protect our harbors, and convoy the great branches of our trade, is the natural, necessary, and unavoidable measure of defence. To this, the Government, first or last, must resort, or they must submit to every species of maritime plunder, and shut their eyes and their ears against insult and disgrace. That, which ought to have been done originally from regard to character, must be done, in the end, from the pressure of necessity. National honor is the true gnomon to national interest.

WHEN we turn from Great-Britain to France, we are led to contemplate a nation of very different situation, power, and character. We seem to be carried back to the Roman age. The days of Cesar are come again. Even a greater than Cesar is here. The throne of the Bourbons is filled by a new character, of the most astonishing fortunes. A new Dynasty hath taken place in Europe. A new era hath commenced. An Empire is founded, more populous, more energetic, more warlike, more powerful, than ancient Rome, at any moment of her existence. The base of this mighty fabric covers France, Holland, Spain, Prussia, Italy, and Germany; embracing, perhaps, an eighth part of the population of the globe.

THOUGH this Empire is commercial in some degree, and in some of its parts, its ruling passion is not commerce, but war. Its genius, is conquest; its ambition, is fame. With all the immorality, the licentiousness, the prodigality, the corruption, of declining Rome, it

has the enterprize, the courage, the ferocity, of Rome, in the days of the Consuls. While the French Revolution was acting, it was difficult to speak of France, without exciting the rancor of political party. The cause, in which her leaders professed to be engaged, was too dear to American hearts, to suffer their motives to be questioned, or their excesses censured, with just severity. But the Revolutionary Drama is now closed—the curtain hath fallen on those tremendous scenes, which for fourteen years held the eyes of the universe—that meteor, which “from its fiery hair shook pestilence and war,” hath now passed off into the distant regions of space, and left us to speculate coolly on the causes of its wonderful appearance.

To other nations, however, France stands in the same situation as before. The consequences, which flow to them from her neighborhood, are neither increased, nor diminished, nor in any way altered, by the change of her Government. It is the French character alone, which is the object of regard. This depends no more on the form of the Government, than the strength of Hercules on the fashion of his coat.

THERE is a *spirit of nationality* in the French, which attaches, in equal degree, to no other people. Their leading feature is a wonderful promptitude in devoting themselves to their existing Government, whatever it may be. No personal pique, or dissatisfaction, cools a French citizen in the service of his nation. French

Generals will fight, French Ministers will intrigue, notwithstanding the Government of their country may not be in hands that suit them. France is their sole object; its glory, their sole ambition. It is therefore, that in all the changes which have happened at Paris, the foreign agents of the country have taken no part: they pursue their object, with zeal at all times equally ardent, and assiduity at all times equally unremitted. Though the form of the Government should change, as often as the moon; though new systems should spring, weekly, from the brains of philosophers, vaporous and evanescent as the mists of the ocean; yet it would require centuries to change these traits of national character, which centuries have wrought. To eradicate the emulation, to quench the zeal, to subdue the Jesuitism, and purify the literature of the nation, is the work of ages. It is these permanent causes, not the temporary form of the Government, that shed such an aspect of terror on the nations of the earth. Ambition is the never-dying worm, which feeds and fattens in the bosom of the Gaul. To an eagerness for personal distinction, is also added a thirst for national glory, unheard of since the days of Rome, and unequalled, perhaps, even by the Romans.

THE intellectual world is considered a theatre of contests, not less than the natural. The morals and sentiments of the nations which have been added to the French Empire, have been as completely subdued, as their physical strength. The fire and sword of philosophy have a duty of desolation assigned them, as well as the fire and sword of the army.—We repeat, therefore,

that these causes exist exclusively in the national character; in the religion and literature of the country; and have no connexion with the form of the Government. They would have been powerful, if Louis had occupied his throne till this time, as they now are. They are as powerful now, as at any moment of the Revolution.

It is not to be inferred from these remarks, that France is less our friend, or more our enemy, than Great-Britain. The friendship of nations is no broader than their interest. Each pursues its own object, in different channels, and under different shapes, but with equal disregard of the interest of others.

How much farther the power of France may be extended; what new channels it may hereafter scoop to itself; it is impossible to determine. No friend, however, of the human race, can wish to see it extended farther. It is infatuation to desire one nation to be made absolutely supreme over all others. Yet there are men, who would rejoice to see the Island of Great-Britain a Colony of France; a patrimony to some one of the Bonapartes, or the Beauharnois: there are men, who would exult, if the "iron sceptre of the ocean should pass into his hands who wears the iron crown of the land."\*—Heaven protect this Country, and the civilized world, against such an event! Britain is entitled to no merit for fighting for her own existence: she

\* *Mr. Randolph.*



is contending, not for us, but for herself. Standing, however, as she doth, the sole obstacle to universal power in Europe, it is the part of unutterable folly to desire her fall.

Such, Fellow Citizens, are the principal nations with which fortune hath connected us, in the intercourse of the world. Against the power of either, there is nerve and muscle enough in this Country to defend our Government, if wisdom enlighten our councils, and union give energy to our exertions. States seldom fall till they have deserved their fate. The history of the world hath furnished few instances, and the last hundred years afford none, of any nation's falling beneath the crush of superior power, united, courageous, and patriotic. Armies will be easily repulsed, if you have, in the first place, checked the "torrent flood" of disunion and faction. You will withstand the shock of military hosts, if you have, successfully, withstood the onset of *corrupt opinions*, which, like the locusts of Egypt, "come ~~swarming~~ on the Eastern wind."

*warfare*

THESE first duties depend on our VIRTUE, and our PATRIOTISM. Without these, it is vain to talk of a good Government; and with them, it is not easy to have a bad one. A correct and energetic tone of public morals is the prop, on which free Constitutions rest. After all that can be said, the truth is, that LIBERTY consists more in the morals and habits of the people, than in any thing else. When the public mind becomes thoroughly vitiated and depraved, every attempt to

preserve public Liberty must be vain. Laws are then a nullity, and Constitutions waste-paper. Can you check the wind with a song, or stay the ocean with a bullrush? Then may you think of opposing Constitutions and charters, to the progress of an ambitious usurper, encouraged in his views, and supported in his measures, by a corrupt and profligate community. The Cesars and Catalines have their only check in the public morality. When they rise up to do evil, they must find themselves standing alone. Experience hath certified the truth, till inspiration could not make it clearer, that *foreign power, or domestic violence, will assuredly totter down that edifice of freedom, which is not founded on public virtue.*

BUT virtue hath its essence in religious sentiment. Without that, virtue is a realm of frost. Its influence is colder than the Northern star. The temple and the altar are the best pledges of national happiness, and he that worships there, is the best citizen. It is well to cherish the expectation of future being. Would you have good citizens? Leave to men, then, the consolations of religious hope. The altar of our Freedom, should be placed near to the altar of our Religion. Thus shall the same Almighty Power, who protects his own worship, protect also our Liberties.

FINALLY, let us cherish true Patriotism. Let not the currency of the counterfeit, tempt us to disbelieve the existence of the genuine. There is a sentiment of honest Patriotism; and it is one of the purest and

noblest that inhabit the heart. It is equally salutary to him that possesses it, and to the Country, the object of its regard. It hath a source of consolation, that cheers the heart, in those unhappy times, when good men are rendered odious, and bad men popular; when great men are made little, and little men are made great. A genuine patriot, above the reach of personal considerations, with his eye and his heart on the honor and happiness of his Country, is a character, as easy and satisfactory to himself, as venerable in the eyes of the world. While his Country enjoys Freedom and Peace, he will rejoice and be thankful; and if it be in the counsel of Heaven to send the storm and the tempest, he meets the tumult of the political elements with composure and dignity. *Above fear, above danger, above reproach, he feels that the last end, which can happen to any man, never comes too soon, if he fall in defence of the Law and Liberty of his Country.*

