

The background of the cover is a historical painting depicting the Statue of Liberty on a pedestal, set against a dramatic, cloudy sky. In the foreground, a large crowd of people is gathered on a waterfront, many holding American flags. Several boats are visible in the water, some with flags flying from their masts. The overall scene conveys a sense of national pride and historical significance.

INDEPENDENCE DAY

The American Calendar

Amy A. Kass

| Leon R. Kass

THE MEANING OF INDEPENDENCE DAY

The American Calendar

Amy A. Kass | Leon R. Kass

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1



Independence Day:
An American Holiday

The Origins and Traditions of Independence Day

The actual birthdate of the American Republic was July 2, 1776, when delegates to the Continental Congress, meeting at the Pennsylvania State House in Philadelphia, approved the resolution introduced on June 7, 1776 by Richard Henry Lee of Virginia calling for independence from Great Britain: “That these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States.” Two days later, the body adopted the more well known Declaration of Independence, which justified the deed by “declar[ing] the causes which impel them to the separation.”

Marking the remembrance of Independence Day with speeches, parades, music, and fireworks, colonial Americans began a tradition that largely continues to this day. Congress officially recognized the holiday in its first holiday act on June 28, 1870.¹ Over time, however, the significances and meanings of the day have evolved with the country whose independence we celebrate, and citizens should once again ask—to draw from the question Frederick Douglass posed in 1852—“What to the American is the Fourth of July?”

Revolutionary Celebrations

The day after Congress voted to declare independence, John Adams wrote to his wife, Abigail, declaring that “the Second Day of July 1776, will be the most memorable Epoch, in the History of America”:

I am apt to believe that it will be celebrated, by succeeding Generations, as the great anniversary Festival. It ought to be commemorated, as the Day of Deliverance by solemn Acts of Devotion to God Almighty. It ought to be solemnized with Pomp and Parade, with Shews, Games, Sports, Guns, Bells, Bonfires and Illuminations from one End of this Continent to the other from this Time forward forever more.²

Others present for the debate likewise felt that the second day of July would be the one to go down in history. On the fourth, the vote to adopt the Declaration was taken in the morning, and Thomas Jefferson—the document’s main author—spent the rest of the afternoon shopping for ladies’ gloves and a new thermometer. The next morning, though, Philadelphia printer John Dunlap had copies of the Declaration ready for members to send out, and the *Pennsylvania Evening Post* printed the text of the document on its front page on July 6.

As the words of the Declaration spread throughout the colonies, so too did celebrations of their arrival. On July 8, the Declaration was read to a crowd gathered at

¹ For a history of American holiday legislation, see Stephen W. Stathis, “Federal Holidays: Evolution and Application,” Congressional Research Service, February 8, 1999, www.senate.gov/reference/resources/pdf/Federal_Holidays.pdf.

² John Adams, Letter to Abigail Adams, July 3, 1776. See below.

the Pennsylvania State House Yard and was met by drums, bonfires, celebratory cannon, and parades. The next day, General George Washington had the document read to his fledgling army assembled in New York. In New York City, Americans pulled down the equestrian statue of King George III, chopping it into pieces and—according to tradition—fashioning bullets out of the metal. Celebrants in Savannah, Georgia, receiving the news in August, staged four public readings of the Declaration of Independence and then concluded their day-long celebration with a mock burial of George III.

As historian David Waldstreicher has pointed out, these initial celebrations “were at once spontaneous and at the same time—and in a strikingly modern sense—media events.”³ Drawing from the English tradition of publicly celebrating—and, at times, protesting—the monarch’s birthday, Americans used the customs of older celebrations (e.g., ringing bells and lighting bonfires) and adapted them to mark the breaking of ties with the monarch, instead of celebrating his birth. The message to the British could not have been clearer.

These celebrations continued and expanded on each subsequent Fourth of July during the Revolution. In 1777, Philadelphia hosted an elaborate “demonstration of joy and festivity,” complete with armed and decorated warships and performances by the Hessian band captured by the American army at the Battle of Trenton the previous December. As one newspaper recorded, “[t]he evening was closed with the ringing of bells, and at night there was a grand exhibition of fireworks, which began and concluded with thirteen rockets on the commons . . . Every thing was conducted with the greatest order and decorum, and the face of joy and gladness was universal. Thus may the 4th of July, that glorious and ever memorable day, be celebrated through America, by the sons of freedom, from age to age till time shall be no more. Amen, and amen.”⁴

The following year, 1778, marked the first Independence Day oration—given by historian and patriot David Ramsay in Charleston, South Carolina—and in 1781 Massachusetts became the first state to officially host state-sponsored celebrations. Two years later, Boston became the first city to designate, by a public vote, July 4 as the official day of commemoration.

These July 4 celebrations did more than boost morale or signal to King George the colonists’ displeasure and newly-declared independence. As Waldstreicher explains, they also served as a dialogue between Americans about what, exactly, it meant to be American:

The need of the revolutionary movement to simultaneously practice politics and create national unity only raised the stakes of celebrating national holidays. The trend in the early republic would be for July Fourth, and other celebrations modeled on the Fourth, to spread nationalism and at the same time, to provide

³ David Waldstreicher, “The Invention of the Fourth of July,” Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, www.gilderlehrman.org/history-by-era/government-and-civics/essays/invention-fourth-july.

⁴ *Virginia Gazette*, July 18, 1777, in James R. Heintze, “Fourth of July Celebrations Database,” www1.american.edu/heintze/fourth.htm.

venues for divisive political expression. In this way, Americans learned to be American and to practice partisanship without any sense of contradiction. Just as they blamed the British while claiming and using British traditions, they used the Fourth of July to praise and criticize their governments and each other, in the process struggling over who, and what, was truly American.⁵

An American Holiday

Following independence—officially won on September 3, 1783, with the signing of the Treaty of Paris—Americans continued to use the national holiday for political discussion. In 1788, political factions in New York sparred over the proposed Constitution (then already ratified by all of the states except New York, North Carolina, and Rhode Island), while in Rhode Island over a thousand citizens, led by Superior Court Judge William Weston, attempted to prevent others from celebrating the proposed Constitution as part of their Fourth of July festivities. In the early 1790s, the nation’s first political parties—the Federalists and the Democratic-Republicans—began to hold separate Independence Day celebrations. (Continuing the political meaning of holidays, the Federalists also made a point to celebrate George Washington’s birthday, while the Democratic-Republicans celebrated important dates in the French Revolution or the anniversary of Thomas Jefferson’s election to the presidency.)

The first half of the 19th century was filled with “firsts” and the establishment of Independence Day celebrations that we continue today. The year 1801 marked the first public Fourth of July reception at the White House. In Hawaii, the day was first celebrated in 1814. In 1826, on the holiday’s 50th anniversary, communities heard from some of the remaining patriots of ’76, many of whom read the Declaration of Independence and offered their thoughts on the current state of affairs. (That July Fourth also marked the deaths of two signers of the Declaration, John Adams and Thomas Jefferson.) And on July 4, 1848, President James K. Polk helped to lay the cornerstone of the Washington Monument in the nation’s capital.

In the lead up to the Civil War, Americans’ Independence Day celebrations became increasingly divided. Abolitionists used the day to criticize slavery and the political institutions that enabled it, with Frederick Douglass presenting his famous speech “What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?” on July 4, 1852. Two years later, William Lloyd Garrison celebrated the holiday by publicly burning printings of the Constitution, which he labeled “a covenant with death, and an agreement with hell.” (“And let all the people say, Amen!” he declared when he was finished.)⁶ On July 4, 1859, Robert Barnwell Rhett, a Southern politician and in many ways Garrison’s opposite, gave a speech in Grahamville, South Carolina advocating for secession.

⁵ David Waldstreicher, “The Invention of the Fourth of July,” Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, www.gilderlehrman.org/history-by-era/government-and-civics/essays/invention-fourth-july.

⁶ James Williford, “The Agitator,” *Humanities* 34, no. 1 (January/February 2013), www.neh.gov/humanities/2013/januaryfebruary/feature/the-agitator.

Following the Civil War, many whites in the South refused to celebrate the holiday (it wasn't until 1901 that whites in Jackson, Mississippi, for example, reclaimed their tradition of reading the Declaration of Independence on the Fourth), while newly-freed blacks celebrated the day with gusto. On July 4, 1865, Freedmen celebrations occurred in Raleigh, North Carolina and Warren, Ohio, and the Colored People's Educational Monument Association hosted the first national celebration by African Americans in Washington, DC. Many communities also added a reading of the Emancipation Proclamation to their Fourth of July celebrations. In 1870, the United States Congress made Independence Day an unpaid holiday for federal workers. (Only in 1938 would Congress make it a paid holiday.)

In the early 20th century, many cities used the day to focus on what it means to become an American: Kansas City, Missouri hosted an "Americanization Day" in 1915, at which 220 new citizens sang patriotic songs. Three years later, shortly before the conclusion of World War I, cities such as Philadelphia, New York City, and Washington, DC held "melting-pot" celebrations, showcasing hundreds of thousands of foreign-born Americans and their traditions in an assortment of parades and celebrations.

By the 150th anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration of Independence in 1926, Americans' Independence Day traditions had largely been set—and continue to this day.⁷ Military bases offer an afternoon "Salute to the Union," ceremonially firing off a cannon or gun for each state of the Union, a tradition officially begun by the War Department in 1810. New states to the Union are also added as stars on the American flag on the Fourth of July following their admittance. And on a smaller scale, Americans today continue to join their ancestors by celebrating the day with parades, patriotic songs, speeches, American flags, and, of course, fireworks.

⁷ For a detailed exploration of American celebrations of the Fourth of July, see James R. Heintze, "Fourth of July Celebrations Database," www1.american.edu/heintze/fourth.htm.

The Meaning of Liberty

WOODROW WILSON

At different times in our nation's history, our national leaders have used the occasion of Independence Day to revisit the Declaration of Independence and to comment on its significance, often attempting to interpret its meaning in the light of contemporary circumstances. This Independence Day speech by President Woodrow Wilson (1856–1924), delivered at Philadelphia's Independence Hall on July 4, 1914 (six days after the assassination of Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the trigger for World War I), is a particularly striking example of this practice. A former political science professor, ex-president of Princeton University, and leader of the Progressive movement, Wilson lectured the assembled on the need to make the Declaration of Independence relevant to the practical problems of the nation.

Why does Wilson say that there is nothing in the Declaration for us “unless we can translate it into the terms of our own conditions and of our own lives”? Do you agree with him? The “bill of particulars” of the original Declaration was a list of grievances against the King of England, whose point was to demonstrate that the King sought to establish an “absolute Tyranny” that it was perfectly proper to rebel against. What kind of bill of particulars, written against whom and to what purpose, could Wilson have in mind for early 20th-century America? What is Wilson's understanding of “patriotism”? What is his dream for America and the world? What is his understanding of the meaning of the American flag? Is he being true to the spirit of 1776 or is he transforming it into something else?

Mr. Chairman and Fellow-Citizens:

We are assembled to celebrate the one hundred and thirty-eighth anniversary of the birth of the United States. I suppose that we can more vividly realize the circumstances of that birth standing on this historic spot than it would be possible to realize them anywhere else. The Declaration of Independence was written in Philadelphia; it was adopted in this historic building by which we stand. I have just had the privilege of sitting in the chair of the great man who presided over the deliberations of those who gave the declaration to the world. My hand rests at this moment upon the table upon which the declaration was signed. We can feel that we are almost in the visible and tangible presence of a great historic transaction.

Have you ever read the Declaration of Independence or attended with close comprehension to the real character of it when you have heard it read? If you have, you will know that it is not a Fourth of July oration. The Declaration of Independence was a document preliminary to war. It was a vital piece of practical business, not a piece of rhetoric; and if you will pass beyond those preliminary passages which we are accustomed to quote about the rights of men and read into the heart of the document you will see that it is very express and detailed, that it consists of a series of definite

specifications concerning actual public business of the day. Not the business of our day, for the matter with which it deals is past, but the business of that first revolution by which the Nation was set up, the business of 1776. Its general statements, its general declarations cannot mean anything to us unless we append to it a similar specific body of particulars as to what we consider the essential business of our own day.

Liberty does not consist, my fellow-citizens, in mere general declarations of the rights of man. It consists in the translation of those declarations into definite action. Therefore, standing here where the declaration was adopted, reading its businesslike sentences, we ought to ask ourselves what there is in it for us. There is nothing in it for us unless we can translate it into the terms of our own conditions and of our own lives. We must reduce it to what the lawyers call a bill of particulars. It contains a bill of particulars, but the bill of particulars of 1776. If we would keep it alive, we must fill it with a bill of particulars of the year 1914.

The task to which we have constantly to readdress ourselves is the task of proving that we are worthy of the men who drew this great declaration and know what they would have done in our circumstances. Patriotism consists in some very practical things—practical in that they belong to the life of every day, that they wear no extraordinary distinction about them, that they are connected with commonplace duty. The way to be patriotic in America is not only to love America but to love the duty that lies nearest to our hand and know that in performing it we are serving our country. There are some gentlemen in Washington, for example, at this very moment who are showing themselves very patriotic in a way which does not attract wide attention but seems to belong to mere everyday obligations. The Members of the House and Senate who stay in hot Washington to maintain a quorum of the Houses and transact the all-important business of the Nation are doing an act of patriotism. I honor them for it, and I am glad to stay there and stick by them until the work is done.

It is patriotic, also, to learn what the facts of our national life are and to face them with candor. I have heard a great many facts stated about the present business condition of this country, for example—a great many allegations of fact, at any rate, but the allegations do not tally with one another. And yet I know that truth always matches with truth and when I find some insisting that everything is going wrong and others insisting that everything is going right, and when I know from a wide observation of the general circumstances of the country taken as a whole that things are going extremely well, I wonder what those who are crying out that things are wrong are trying to do. Are they trying to serve the country, or are they trying to serve something smaller than the country? Are they trying to put hope into the hearts of the men who work and toil every day, or are they trying to plant discouragement and despair in those hearts? And why do they cry that everything is wrong and yet do nothing to set it right? If they love America and anything is wrong amongst us, it is their business to put their hand with ours to the task of setting it right. When the facts are known and acknowledged, the duty of all patriotic men is to accept them in candor and to address themselves hopefully and confidently to the common counsel which is necessary to act upon them wisely and in universal concert. . . .

In one sense the Declaration of Independence has lost its significance. It has lost its significance as a declaration of national independence. Nobody outside of America believed when it was uttered that we could make good our independence; now nobody anywhere would dare to doubt that we are independent and can maintain our independence. As a declaration of independence, therefore, it is a mere historic document. Our independence is a fact so stupendous that it can be measured only by the size and energy and variety and wealth and power of one of the greatest nations in the world. But it is one thing to be independent and it is another thing to know what to do with your independence. It is one thing to come to your majority and another thing to know what you are going to do with your life and your energies; and one of the most serious questions for sober-minded men to address themselves to in the United States is this: What are we going to do with the influence and power of this great Nation? Are we going to play the old role of using that power for our aggrandizement and material benefit only? You know what that may mean. It may upon occasion mean that we shall use it to make the peoples of other nations suffer in the way in which we said it was intolerable to suffer when we uttered our Declaration of Independence.

The Department of State at Washington is constantly called upon to back up the commercial enterprises and the industrial enterprises of the United States in foreign countries, and it at one time went so far in that direction that all its diplomacy came to be designated as “dollar diplomacy.” It was called upon to support every man who wanted to earn anything anywhere if he was an American. But there ought to be a limit to that. There is no man who is more interested than I am in carrying the enterprise of American business men to every quarter of the globe. I was interested in it long before I was suspected of being a politician. I have been preaching it year after year as the great thing that lay in the future for the United States, to show her wit and skill and enterprise and influence in every country in the world. But observe the limit to all that which is laid upon us perhaps more than upon any other nation in the world. We set this Nation up, at any rate we professed to set it up, to vindicate the rights of men. We did not name any differences between one race and another. We did not set up any barriers against any particular people. We opened our gates to all the world and said, “Let all men who wish to be free come to us and they will be welcome.” We said, “This independence of ours is not a selfish thing for our own exclusive private use. It is for everybody to whom we can find the means of extending it.” We cannot with that oath taken in our youth, we cannot with that great ideal set before us when we were a young people and numbered only a scant 3,000,000, take upon ourselves, now that we are 100,000,000 strong, any other conception of duty than we then entertained. If American enterprise in foreign countries, particularly in those foreign countries which are not strong enough to resist us, takes the shape of imposing upon and exploiting the mass of the people of that country it ought to be checked and not encouraged. I am willing to get anything for an American that money and enterprise can obtain except the suppression of the rights of other men. I will not help any man buy a power which he ought not to exercise over his fellow-beings. . . .

A patriotic American is a man who is not niggardly⁸ and selfish in the things that he enjoys that make for human liberty and the rights of man. He wants to share them with

⁸ *Miserly or stingy.*

the whole world, and he is never so proud of the great flag under which he lives as when it comes to mean to other people as well as to himself a symbol of hope and liberty. I would be ashamed of this flag if it ever did anything outside America that we would not permit it to do inside of America.

The world is becoming more complicated every day, my fellow-citizens. No man ought to be foolish enough to think that he understands it all. And, therefore, I am glad that there are some simple things in the world. One of the simple things is principle. Honesty is a perfectly simple thing. It is hard for me to believe that in most circumstances when a man has a choice of ways he does not know which is the right way and which is the wrong way. No man who has chosen the wrong way ought even to come into Independence Square; it is holy ground which he ought not to tread upon. He ought not to come where immortal voices have uttered the great sentences of such a document as this Declaration of Independence upon which rests the liberty of a whole nation.

And so I say that it is patriotic sometimes to prefer the honor of the country to its material interest. Would you rather be deemed by all the nations of the world incapable of keeping your treaty obligations in order that you might have free tolls for American ships? The treaty under which we gave up that right may have been a mistaken treaty, but there was no mistake about its meaning.

When I have made a promise as a man I try to keep it, and I know of no other rule permissible to a nation. The most distinguished nation in the world is the nation that can and will keep its promises even to its own hurt. And I want to say parenthetically that I do not think anybody was hurt. I cannot be enthusiastic for subsidies to a monopoly, but let those who are enthusiastic for subsidies ask themselves whether they prefer subsidies to unsullied honor.

The most patriotic man, ladies and gentlemen, is sometimes the man who goes in the direction that he thinks right even when he sees half the world against him. It is the dictate of patriotism to sacrifice yourself if you think that that is the path of honor and of duty. Do not blame others if they do not agree with you. Do not die with bitterness in your heart because you did not convince the rest of the world, but die happy because you believe that you tried to serve your country by not selling your soul. Those were grim days, the days of 1776. Those gentlemen did not attach their names to the Declaration of Independence on this table expecting a holiday on the next day, and that 4th of July was not itself a holiday. They attached their signatures to that significant document knowing that if they failed it was certain that every one of them would hang for the failure. They were committing treason in the interest of the liberty of 3,000,000 people in America. All the rest of the world was against them and smiled with cynical incredulity at the audacious undertaking. Do you think that if they could see this great Nation now they would regret anything that they then did to draw the gaze of a hostile world upon them? Every idea must be started by somebody, and it is a lonely thing to start anything. Yet if it is in you, you must start it if you have a man's blood in you and if you love the country that you profess to be working for. . . .

It is very inspiring, my friends, to come to this that may be called the original fountain of independence and liberty in America and here drink draughts of patriotic feeling which seem to renew the very blood in one's veins. Down in Washington sometimes when the days are hot and the business presses intolerably and there are so many things to do that it does not seem possible to do anything in the way it ought to be done, it is always possible to lift one's thought above the task of the moment and, as it were, to realize that great thing of which we are all parts, the great body of American feeling and American principle. No man could do the work that has to be done in Washington if he allowed himself to be separated from that body of principle. He must make himself feel that he is a part of the people of the United States, that he is trying to think not only for them, but with them, and then he cannot feel lonely. He not only cannot feel lonely but he cannot feel afraid of anything.

My dream is that as the years go on and the world knows more and more of America it will also drink at these fountains of youth and renewal; that it also will turn to America for those moral inspirations which lie at the basis of all freedom; that the world will never fear America unless it feels that it is engaged in some enterprise which is inconsistent with the rights of humanity; and that America will come into the full light of the day when all shall know that she puts human rights above all other rights and that her flag is the flag not only of America but of humanity.

What other great people has devoted itself to this exalted ideal? To what other nation in the world can all eyes look for an instant sympathy that thrills the whole body politic when men anywhere are fighting for their rights? I do not know that there will ever be a declaration of independence and of grievances for mankind, but I believe that if any such document is ever drawn it will be drawn in the spirit of the American Declaration of Independence, and that America has lifted high the light which will shine unto all generations and guide the feet of mankind to the goal of justice and liberty and peace.

Speech on the Occasion of the 150th Anniversary of the Declaration of Independence

CALVIN COOLIDGE

The Fourth of July, the date of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, is annually celebrated as the birthday of the United States of America, marked for us with parades, marching bands, and fireworks. In earlier times, the day was also marked by specially prepared orations that commemorated our founding principles. A wonderful example of this at once celebratory and reflective genre can be found in the present selection, a speech that President Calvin Coolidge (1872–1933) delivered in 1926 in honor of the Declaration’s sesquicentennial.

Unlike President Wilson (see previous selection) who progressively sought to bring the Declaration up to date, President Coolidge affirms the enduring veracity of human equality, inalienable rights, and the consent of the governed—“those old theories and principles which time and the unerring logic of events have demonstrated to be sound.” By locating our abstract creed in its historical, cultural, and religious contexts, he argues against the idea that the American Republic was founded on thought alone, and insists on the continuing importance of our religious heritage. What specifically are his arguments, and what is his evidence? Do you find them convincing? Do they affect your understanding of the Fourth of July and the ways it should be celebrated?

We meet to celebrate the birthday of America. The coming of a new life always excites our interest. Although we know in the case of the individual that it has been an infinite repetition reaching back beyond our vision, that only makes it the more wonderful. But how our interest and wonder increase when we behold the miracle of the birth of a new nation. It is to pay our tribute of reverence and respect to those who participated in such a mighty event that we annually observe the fourth day of July. Whatever may have been the impression created by the news which went out from this city on that summer day in 1776, there can be no doubt as to the estimate which is now placed upon it. At the end of 150 years the four corners of the earth unite in coming to Philadelphia as to a holy shrine in grateful acknowledgement of a service so great, which a few inspired men here rendered to humanity, that it is still the preeminent support of free government throughout the world.

Although a century and a half measured in comparison with the length of human experience is but a short time, yet measured in the life of governments and nations it ranks as a very respectable period. Certainly enough time has elapsed to demonstrate with a great deal of thoroughness the value of our institutions and their dependability as rules for the regulation of human conduct and the advancement of civilization. They have been in existence long enough to become very well seasoned. They have met, and met successfully, the test of experience.

It is not so much then for the purpose of undertaking to proclaim new theories and principles that this annual celebration is maintained, but rather to reaffirm and reestablish those old theories and principles which time and the unerring logic of events have demonstrated to be sound. Amid all the clash of conflicting interests, amid all the welter of partisan politics, every American can turn for solace and consolation to the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States with the assurance and confidence that those two great charters of freedom and justice remain firm and unshaken. Whatever perils appear, whatever dangers threaten, the Nation remains secure in the knowledge that the ultimate application of the law of the land will provide an adequate defense and protection.

It is little wonder that people at home and abroad consider Independence Hall as hallowed ground and revere the Liberty Bell as a sacred relic. That pile of bricks and mortar, that mass of metal, might appear to the uninstructed as only the outgrown meeting place and the shattered bell of a former time, useless now because of more modern conveniences, but to those who know they have become consecrated by the use which men have made of them. They have long been identified with a great cause. They are the framework of a spiritual event. The world looks upon them, because of their associations of one hundred and fifty years ago, as it looks upon the Holy Land because of what took place there nineteen hundred years ago. Through use for a righteous purpose they have become sanctified.

It is not here necessary to examine in detail the causes which led to the American Revolution. In their immediate occasion they were largely economic. The colonists objected to the navigation laws which interfered with their trade, they denied the power of Parliament to impose taxes which they were obliged to pay, and they therefore resisted the royal governors and the royal forces which were sent to secure obedience to these laws. But the conviction is inescapable that a new civilization had come, a new spirit had arisen on this side of the Atlantic more advanced and more developed in its regard for the rights of the individual than that which characterized the Old World. Life in a new and open country had aspirations which could not be realized in any subordinate position. A separate establishment was ultimately inevitable. It had been decreed by the very laws of human nature. Man everywhere has an unconquerable desire to be the master of his own destiny.

We are obliged to conclude that the Declaration of Independence represented the movement of a people. It was not, of course, a movement from the top. Revolutions do not come from that direction. It was not without the support of many of the most respectable people in the Colonies, who were entitled to all the consideration that is given to breeding, education, and possessions. It had the support of another element of great significance and importance to which I shall later refer. But the preponderance of all those who occupied a position which took on the aspect of aristocracy did not approve of the Revolution and held toward it an attitude either of neutrality or open hostility. It was in no sense a rising of the oppressed and downtrodden. It brought no scum to the surface, for the reason that colonial society had developed no scum. The great body of the people were accustomed to privations, but they were free from depravity. If they had poverty, it

was not of the hopeless kind that afflicts great cities, but the inspiring kind that marks the spirit of the pioneer. The American Revolution represented the informed and mature convictions of a great mass of independent, liberty-loving, God-fearing people who knew their rights, and possessed the courage to dare to maintain them.

The Continental Congress was not only composed of great men, but it represented a great people. While its members did not fail to exercise a remarkable leadership, they were equally observant of their representative capacity. They were industrious in encouraging their constituents to instruct them to support independence. But until such instructions were given they were inclined to withhold action.

While North Carolina has the honor of first authorizing its delegates to concur with other Colonies in declaring independence, it was quickly followed by South Carolina and Georgia, which also gave general instructions broad enough to include such action. But the first instructions which unconditionally directed its delegates to declare for independence came from the great Commonwealth of Virginia. These were immediately followed by Rhode Island and Massachusetts, while the other Colonies, with the exception of New York, soon adopted a like course.

This obedience of the delegates to the wishes of their constituents, which in some cases caused them to modify their previous positions, is a matter of great significance. It reveals an orderly process of government in the first place; but more than that, it demonstrates that the Declaration of Independence was the result of the seasoned and deliberate thought of the dominant portion of the people of the Colonies. Adopted after long discussion and as the result of the duly authorized expression of the preponderance of public opinion, it did not partake of dark intrigue or hidden conspiracy. It was well advised. It had about it nothing of the lawless and disordered nature of a riotous insurrection. It was maintained on a plane which rises above the ordinary conception of rebellion. It was in no sense a radical movement but took on the dignity of a resistance to illegal usurpations. It was conservative and represented the action of the colonists to maintain their constitutional rights which from time immemorial had been guaranteed to them under the law of the land.

When we come to examine the action of the Continental Congress in adopting the Declaration of Independence in the light of what was set out in that great document and in the light of succeeding events, we can not escape the conclusion that it had a much broader and deeper significance than a mere secession of territory and the establishment of a new nation. Events of that nature have been taking place since the dawn of history. One empire after another has arisen, only to crumble away as its constituent parts separated from each other and set up independent governments of their own. Such actions long ago became commonplace. They have occurred too often to hold the attention of the world and command the admiration and reverence of humanity. There is something beyond the establishment of a new nation, great as that event would be, in the Declaration of Independence which has ever since caused it to be regarded as one of the great charters that not only was to liberate America but was everywhere to ennoble humanity.

It was not because it was proposed to establish a new nation, but because it was proposed to establish a nation on new principles, that July 4, 1776, has come to be regarded as one of the greatest days in history. Great ideas do not burst upon the world unannounced. They are reached by a gradual development over a length of time usually proportionate to their importance. This is especially true of the principles laid down in the Declaration of Independence. Three very definite propositions were set out in its preamble regarding the nature of mankind and therefore of government. These were the doctrine that all men are created equal, that they are endowed with certain inalienable rights, and that therefore the source of the just powers of government must be derived from the consent of the governed.

If no one is to be accounted as born into a superior station, if there is to be no ruling class, and if all possess rights which can neither be bartered away nor taken from them by any earthly power, it follows as a matter of course that the practical authority of the Government has to rest on the consent of the governed. While these principles were not altogether new in political action, and were very far from new in political speculation, they had never been assembled before and declared in such a combination. But remarkable as this may be, it is not the chief distinction of the Declaration of Independence. The importance of political speculation is not to be under-estimated, as I shall presently disclose. Until the idea is developed and the plan made there can be no action.

It was the fact that our Declaration of Independence containing these immortal truths was the political action of a duly authorized and constituted representative public body in its sovereign capacity, supported by the force of general opinion and by the armies of Washington already in the field, which makes it the most important civil document in the world. It was not only the principles declared, but the fact that therewith a new nation was born which was to be founded upon those principles and which from that time forth in its development has actually maintained those principles, that makes this pronouncement an incomparable event in the history of government. It was an assertion that a people had arisen determined to make every necessary sacrifice for the support of these truths and by their practical application bring the War of Independence to a successful conclusion and adopt the Constitution of the United States with all that it has meant to civilization.

The idea that the people have a right to choose their own rulers was not new in political history. It was the foundation of every popular attempt to depose an undesirable king. This right was set out with a good deal of detail by the Dutch when as early as July 26, 1581, they declared their independence of Philip of Spain. In their long struggle with the Stuarts the British people asserted the same principles, which finally culminated in the Bill of Rights deposing the last of that house and placing William and Mary on the throne. In each of these cases sovereignty through divine right was displaced by sovereignty through the consent of the people. Running through the same documents, though expressed in different terms, is the clear inference of inalienable rights. But we should search these charters in vain for an assertion of the doctrine of equality. This

principle had not before appeared as an official political declaration of any nation. It was profoundly revolutionary. It is one of the corner stones of American institutions.

But if these truths to which the declaration refers have not before been adopted in their combined entirety by national authority, it is a fact that they had been long pondered and often expressed in political speculation. It is generally assumed that French thought had some effect upon our public mind during Revolutionary days. This may have been true. But the principles of our declaration had been under discussion in the Colonies for nearly two generations before the advent of the French political philosophy that characterized the middle of the eighteenth century. In fact, they come from an earlier date. A very positive echo of what the Dutch had done in 1581, and what the English were preparing to do, appears in the assertion of the Rev. Thomas Hooker of Connecticut as early as 1638, when he said in a sermon before the General Court that—

“The foundation of authority is laid in the free consent of the people.”

“The choice of public magistrates belongs unto the people by God’s own allowance.”

This doctrine found wide acceptance among the nonconformist clergy who later made up the Congregational Church. The great apostle of this movement was the Rev. John Wise, of Massachusetts. He was one of the leaders of the revolt against the royal governor Andros in 1687, for which he suffered imprisonment. He was a liberal in ecclesiastical controversies. He appears to have been familiar with the writings of the political scientist, Samuel Pufendorf,⁹ who was born in Saxony in 1632. Wise published a treatise, entitled “The Church’s Quarrel Espoused,” in 1710, which was amplified in another publication in 1717. In it he dealt with the principles of civil government. His works were reprinted in 1772 and have been declared to have been nothing less than a textbook of liberty for our Revolutionary fathers.

While the written word was the foundation, it is apparent that the spoken word was the vehicle for convincing the people. This came with great force and wide range from the successors of Hooker and Wise. It was carried on with a missionary spirit which did not fail to reach the Scotch-Irish of North Carolina, showing its influence by significantly making that Colony the first to give instructions to its delegates looking to independence. This preaching reached the neighborhood of Thomas Jefferson, who acknowledged that his “best ideas of democracy” had been secured at church meetings.

That these ideas were prevalent in Virginia is further revealed by the Declaration of Rights, which was prepared by George Mason and presented to the general assembly on May 27, 1776. This document asserted popular sovereignty and inherent natural rights, but confined the doctrine of equality to the assertion that “All men are created equally free and independent.” It can scarcely be imagined that Jefferson was unacquainted with what had been done in his own Commonwealth of Virginia when he took up the task of drafting the Declaration of Independence. But these thoughts can very largely be traced

⁹ *A German political philosopher (1632 – 94) known for his writings on natural law.*

back to what John Wise was writing in 1710. He said, “Every man must be acknowledged equal to every man.” Again, “The end of all good government is to cultivate humanity and promote the happiness of all and the good of every man in all his rights, his life, liberty, estate, honor, and so forth. . . .” And again, “For as they have a power every man in his natural state, so upon combination they can and do bequeath this power to others and settle it according as their united discretion shall determine.” And still again, “Democracy is Christ’s government in church and state.” Here was the doctrine of equality, popular sovereignty, and the substance of the theory of inalienable rights clearly asserted by Wise at the opening of the eighteenth century, just as we have the principle of the consent of the governed stated by Hooker as early as 1638.

When we take all these circumstances into consideration, it is but natural that the first paragraph of the Declaration of Independence should open with a reference to Nature’s God and should close in the final paragraphs with an appeal to the Supreme Judge of the world and an assertion of a firm reliance on Divine Providence. Coming from these sources, having as it did this background, it is no wonder that Samuel Adams could say, “The people seem to recognize this resolution as though it were a decree promulgated from heaven.”

No one can examine this record and escape the conclusion that in the great outline of its principles the Declaration was the result of the religious teachings of the preceding period. The profound philosophy which Jonathan Edwards applied to theology, the popular preaching of George Whitefield, had aroused the thought and stirred the people of the Colonies in preparation for this great event.¹⁰ No doubt the speculations which had been going on in England, and especially on the Continent, lent their influence to the general sentiment of the times. Of course, the world is always influenced by all the experience and all the thought of the past. But when we come to a contemplation of the immediate conception of the principles of human relationship which went into the Declaration of Independence we are not required to extend our search beyond our own shores. They are found in the texts, the sermons, and the writings of the early colonial clergy who were earnestly undertaking to instruct their congregations in the great mystery of how to live. They preached equality because they believed in the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. They justified freedom by the text that we are all created in the divine image, all partakers of the divine spirit.

Placing every man on a plane where he acknowledged no superiors, where no one possessed any right to rule over him, he must inevitably choose his own rulers through a system of self-government. This was their theory of democracy. In those days such doctrines would scarcely have been permitted to flourish and spread in any other country. This was the purpose which the fathers cherished. In order that they might have freedom to express these thoughts and opportunity to put them into action, whole congregations with their pastors had migrated to the colonies. These great truths were in the air that our

¹⁰ *Jonathan Edwards (1703–58), a Christian preacher and theologian who played a critical role in shaping the First Great Awakening, and oversaw some of the first revivals in 1733–35 at his church in Northampton, Massachusetts. George Whitefield (1714–70), an English Anglican preacher who helped spread the Great Awakening in Britain, and especially in the British North American colonies.*

people breathed. Whatever else we may say of it, the Declaration of Independence was profoundly American.

If this apprehension of the facts be correct, and the documentary evidence would appear to verify it, then certain conclusions are bound to follow. A spring will cease to flow if its source be dried up; a tree will wither if its roots be destroyed. In its main features the Declaration of Independence is a great spiritual document. It is a declaration not of material but of spiritual conceptions. Equality, liberty, popular sovereignty, the rights of man—these are not elements which we can see and touch. They are ideals. They have their source and their roots in the religious convictions. They belong to the unseen world. Unless the faith of the American people in these religious convictions is to endure, the principles of our Declaration will perish. We can not continue to enjoy the result if we neglect and abandon the cause.

We are too prone to overlook another conclusion. Governments do not make ideals, but ideals make governments. This is both historically and logically true. Of course the government can help to sustain ideals and can create institutions through which they can be the better observed, but their source by their very nature is in the people. The people have to bear their own responsibilities. There is no method by which that burden can be shifted to the government. It is not the enactment, but the observance of laws, that creates the character of a nation.

About the Declaration there is a finality that is exceedingly restful. It is often asserted that the world has made a great deal of progress since 1776, that we have had new thoughts and new experiences which have given us a great advance over the people of that day, and that we may therefore very well discard their conclusions for something more modern. But that reasoning can not be applied to this great charter. If all men are created equal, that is final. If they are endowed with inalienable rights, that is final. If governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed, that is final. No advance, no progress can be made beyond these propositions. If anyone wishes to deny their truth or their soundness, the only direction in which he can proceed historically is not forward, but backward toward the time when there was no equality, no rights of the individual, no rule of the people. Those who wish to proceed in that direction can not lay claim to progress. They are reactionary. Their ideas are not more modern, but more ancient, than those of the Revolutionary fathers.

In the development of its institutions America can fairly claim that it has remained true to the principles which were declared 150 years ago. In all the essentials we have achieved an equality which was never possessed by any other people. Even in the less important matter of material possessions we have secured a wider and wider distribution of wealth. The rights of the individual are held sacred and protected by constitutional guaranties, which even the Government itself is bound not to violate. If there is any one thing among us that is established beyond question, it is self-government—the right of the people to rule. If there is any failure in respect to any of these principles, it is because there is a failure on the part of individuals to observe them. We hold that the duly authorized expression of the will of the people has a divine sanction. But even in that we

come back to the theory of John Wise that “Democracy is Christ’s government.” The ultimate sanction of law rests on the righteous authority of the Almighty.

On an occasion like this a great temptation exists to present evidence of the practical success of our form of democratic republic at home and the ever-broadening acceptance it is securing abroad. Although these things are well known, their frequent consideration is an encouragement and an inspiration. But it is not results and effects so much as sources and causes that I believe it is even more necessary constantly to contemplate. Ours is a government of the people. It represents their will. Its officers may sometimes go astray, but that is not a reason for criticizing the principles of our institutions. The real heart of the American Government depends upon the heart of the people. It is from that source that we must look for all genuine reform. It is to that cause that we must ascribe all our results.

It was in the contemplation of these truths that the fathers made their declaration and adopted their Constitution. It was to establish a free government, which must not be permitted to degenerate into the unrestrained authority of a mere majority or the unbridled weight of a mere influential few. They undertook to balance these interests against each other and provide the three separate independent branches, the executive, the legislative, and the judicial departments of the Government, with checks against each other in order that neither one might encroach upon the other. These are our guaranties of liberty. As a result of these methods enterprise has been duly protected from confiscation, the people have been free from oppression, and there has been an ever-broadening and deepening of the humanities of life.

Under a system of popular government there will always be those who will seek for political preferment by clamoring for reform. While there is very little of this which is not sincere, there is a large portion that is not well informed. In my opinion very little of just criticism can attach to the theories and principles of our institutions. There is far more danger of harm than there is hope of good in any radical changes. We do need a better understanding and comprehension of them and a better knowledge of the foundations of government in general. Our forefathers came to certain conclusions and decided upon certain courses of action which have been a great blessing to the world. Before we can understand their conclusions we must go back and review the course which they followed. We must think the thoughts which they thought. Their intellectual life centered around the meeting-house. They were intent upon religious worship. While there were always among them men of deep learning, and later those who had comparatively large possessions, the mind of the people was not so much engrossed in how much they knew, or how much they had, as in how they were going to live. While scantily provided with other literature, there was a wide acquaintance with the Scriptures. Over a period as great as that which measures the existence of our independence they were subject to this discipline not only in their religious life and educational training, but also in their political thought. They were a people who came under the influence of a great spiritual development and acquired a great moral power.

No other theory is adequate to explain or comprehend the Declaration of Independence. It is the product of the spiritual insight of the people. We live in an age of science and of abounding accumulation of material things. These did not create our Declaration. Our Declaration created them. The things of the spirit come first. Unless we cling to that, all our material prosperity, overwhelming though it may appear, will turn to a barren sceptre in our grasp. If we are to maintain the great heritage which has been bequeathed to us, we must be like-minded as the fathers who created it. We must not sink into a pagan materialism. We must cultivate the reverence which they had for the things that are holy. We must follow the spiritual and moral leadership which they showed. We must keep replenished, that they may glow with a more compelling flame, the altar fires before which they worshiped.

Address to the Nation, July 4, 1942

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

In the dark days of World War II, with the outcome very much in doubt, Independence Day was observed not by fireworks—as nighttime blackouts were observed in all cities and towns—but by extra dedication to the war effort. In this radio address to the nation on July 4, 1942, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt (1882–1945) set the tone.

How does Roosevelt understand the meaning of World War II? How does he understand the traditional meaning of the Fourth of July, and what new significance does it have in the present crisis? How successfully—and by what means—can the message of Independence Day be spread to “all peoples and races and groups and nations, everywhere in the world”? Should it be?

For 166 years this Fourth Day of July has been a symbol to the people of our country of the democratic freedom which our citizens claim as their precious birthright. On this grim anniversary its meaning has spread over the entire globe—focusing the attention of the world upon the modern freedoms for which all the United Nations are now engaged in deadly war.

On the desert sands of Africa, along the thousands of miles of battle lines in Russia, in New Zealand and Australia, and the islands of the Pacific, in war-torn China and all over the seven seas, free men are fighting desperately—and dying—to preserve the liberties and the decencies of modern civilization. And in the overrun and occupied nations of the world, this day is filled with added significance, coming at a time when freedom and religion have been attacked and trampled upon by tyrannies unequalled in human history.

Never since it first was created in Philadelphia, has this anniversary come in times so dangerous to everything for which it stands. We celebrate it this year, not in the fireworks of make-believe but in the death-dealing reality of tanks and planes and guns and ships. We celebrate it also by running without interruption the assembly lines which turn out these weapons to be shipped to all the embattled points of the globe. Not to waste one hour, not to stop one shot, not to hold back one blow—that is the way to mark our great national holiday in this year of 1942.

To the weary, hungry, unequipped Army of the American Revolution, the Fourth of July was a tonic of hope and inspiration. So is it now. The tough, grim men who fight for freedom in this dark hour take heart in its message—the assurance of the right to liberty under God—for all peoples and races and groups and nations, everywhere in the world.

What July Fourth Means to Me

RONALD REAGAN

In 1981, during his first year in office, Parade magazine asked President Ronald Reagan (1911–2004) to write something for them about what Independence Day meant to him. This submission was written by Reagan himself, and in his own hand. It exhibits both his special ability to locate himself emotionally amongst the people and his habit of speaking without irony about high principle and without embarrassment about human greatness.

Is there any connection between Reagan's boyhood enjoyment of fireworks and his subsequent appreciation of the meaning of the day? What is the point of telling the legend of the unknown speaker¹¹ who swayed the delegates to the Continental Congress to sign the Declaration of Independence, or of the subsequent misfortunes of many of the signers? What, in the end, is the meaning of the Fourth of July to President Reagan? Why do you celebrate it?

For one who was born and grew up in the small towns of the Midwest, there is a special kind of nostalgia about the Fourth of July.

I remember it as a day almost as long-anticipated as Christmas. This was helped along by the appearance in store windows of all kinds of fireworks and colorful posters advertising them with vivid pictures.

No later than the third of July—sometimes earlier—Dad would bring home what he felt he could afford to see go up in smoke and flame. We'd count and recount the number of firecrackers, display pieces and other things and go to bed determined to be up with the sun so as to offer the first, thunderous notice of the Fourth of July.

I'm afraid we didn't give too much thought to the meaning of the day. And, yes, there were tragic accidents to mar it, resulting from careless handling of the fireworks. I'm sure we're better off today with fireworks largely handled by professionals. Yet there was a thrill never to be forgotten in seeing a tin can blown 30 feet in the air by a giant "cracker"—giant meaning it was about 4 inches long.

But enough of nostalgia. Somewhere in our growing up we began to be aware of the meaning of the day, and with that awareness came the birth of patriotism. July Fourth is the birthday of our nation. I believed as a boy, and believe even more today, that it is the birthday of the greatest nation on earth.

There is a legend about the day of our nation's birth in the little hall in Philadelphia, a day on which debate had raged for hours. The men gathered there were honorable men hard-pressed by a king who had flouted the very laws they were willing to obey. Even so, to sign the Declaration of Independence was such an irretrievable act that the walls

¹¹ For a more extensive account of the speech, see www.reversespins.com/signthatdocument.html.

resounded with the words “treason, the gallows, the headsman’s ax,” and the issue remained in doubt.

The legend says that at that point a man rose and spoke. He is described as not a young man, but one who had to summon all his energy for an impassioned plea. He cited the grievances that had brought them to this moment and finally, his voice falling, he said, “They may turn every tree into a gallows, every hole into a grave, and yet the words of that parchment can never die. To the mechanic in the workshop, they will speak hope; to the slave in the mines, freedom. Sign that parchment. Sign if the next moment the noose is around your neck, for that parchment will be the textbook of freedom, the Bible of the rights of man forever.”

He fell back exhausted. The 56 delegates, swept up by his eloquence, rushed forward and signed that document destined to be as immortal as a work of man can be. When they turned to thank him for his timely oratory, he was not to be found, nor could any be found who knew who he was or how he had come in or gone out through the locked and guarded doors.

Well, that is the legend—but we do know for certain that 56 men, a little band so unique we have never seen their like since, had pledged their lives, their fortunes and their sacred honor.

What manner of men were they? Twenty-four were lawyers and jurists, 11 were merchants and tradesmen, and nine were farmers. They were soft-spoken men of means and education; they were not an unwashed rabble. They had achieved security but valued freedom more. Their stories have not been told nearly enough.

John Hart was driven from the side of his desperately ill wife. For more than a year, he lived in the forest and in caves before he returned to find his wife dead, his children vanished, his property destroyed. He died of exhaustion and a broken heart.

Carter Braxton of Virginia lost all his ships, sold his home to pay his debts, and died in rags. And so it was with Ellery, Clymer, Hall, Walton, Gwinnett, Rutledge, Morris, Livingston, and Middleton.¹²

Nelson personally urged Washington to fire on his home and destroy it when it became the headquarters for General Cornwallis. Nelson died bankrupt.

¹² *William Ellery (1727–1820), a judge of the Supreme Court of Rhode Island; George Clymer (1739–1813), a Pennsylvanian who signed both the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution; Lyman Hall (1724–1790), a physician and clergyman from Georgia; George Walton (1749–1804), future Governor of Georgia; Button Gwinnett (1735–1777), the second signer of the Declaration of Independence, wrote the original draft of Georgia’s first State Constitution; Edward Rutledge (1749–1800), the youngest signer of the Declaration of Independence at age 26, later served as Governor of South Carolina; Robert Morris Jr. (1734–1806), one of the few men to sign the Declaration of Independence, the Articles of Confederation, and the Constitution; Robert R. Livingston (1746–1813), the first US Secretary for Foreign Affairs and the first Chancellor of New York; Arthur Middleton (1742–1787), fought during the Revolutionary in the defense of Charleston.*

But they sired a nation that grew from sea to shining sea. Five million farms, quiet villages, cities that never sleep, 3 million square miles of forest, field, mountain and desert, 227 million people with a pedigree that includes the bloodlines of all the world.

In recent years, however, I've come to think of that day as more than just the birthday of a nation. It also commemorates the only true philosophical revolution in all history.

Oh, there have been revolutions before and since ours. But those revolutions simply exchanged one set of rules for another. Ours was a revolution that changed the very concept of government.

Let the Fourth of July always be a reminder that here in this land, for the first time, it was decided that man is born with certain God-given rights; that government is only a convenience created and managed by the people, with no powers of its own except those voluntarily granted to it by the people.

We sometimes forget that great truth, and we never should.

Happy Fourth of July.

2



Declaring, Securing, and Maintaining Independence



Independence Declared



A Brief History of Independence

“But what do we mean by the American Revolution? Do we mean the American war? The Revolution was effected before the war commenced. The Revolution was in the minds and hearts of the people.”

—John Adams, 1818¹³

Though the Continental Congress declared independence from Great Britain on July 2, 1776, the road to American sovereignty neither began nor ended there. Years of protest, negotiation, and even military battles preceded Congress’ declaration; years more of hard-fought war would be waged before that declaration became a political reality. To understand Independence Day in America, one must necessarily understand the historical context in which independence arose and was won.

Early Unrest

At the very beginning of October 1765, the Lords Commissioners for Trade and Plantations (commonly known as the Board of Trade) wrote to King George III, warning him of what “appears to us to be the first instance of a general congress, appointed by the assemblies of the [American] colonies without authority of the crown.” This gathering, the Lords continued, was a “dangerous tendency in itself,” and “more especially so, when taken for the purposes expressed”: to “induce, the rest of your Majesty’s colonies in America, to join in a general congress . . . independent of the other branches of the legislature, and without any previous application to your Majesty, to consider and deliberate upon the acts of the parliament of this kingdom.”¹⁴ And that, in a nutshell, is exactly what the Stamp Act Congress did.

Meeting in New York City, the Stamp Act Congress, with representatives from nine of the 13 British colonies in America,¹⁵ did indeed discuss acts of the British Parliament—in particular, the Stamp Act of 1765, a direct tax levied on the American colonies in an effort to raise revenue following the conclusion of the French and Indian War. In the resulting Declaration of Rights and Grievances, the Congress declared “that it is inseparably essential to the freedom of a people, and the undoubted rights of Englishmen, that no taxes should be imposed on them, but with their own consent, given personally, or by their representatives.” For the American colonists, such local

¹³ John Adams, Letter to H. Niles, February 13, 1818. See below.

¹⁴ Representation of the Lords Commissions for Trade and Plantations, Letter to King George III, October 1, 1765, in *The Parliamentary History of England, From the Earliest Period to the Year 1803*, Vol. XVI, 1765–71 (London: T. C. Hansard, 1813), 121–22.

¹⁵ Virginia and Georgia were unable to send delegates because their colonial governors prevented the state assemblies from meeting; New Hampshire was handling a financial crisis, and was later prevented by the governor from calling their legislative body into session; and efforts in North Carolina to choose representation were unsuccessful after the legislative session was suspended by the lieutenant governor.

representation could only take place in the colonies—not in Great Britain—and therefore only taxes passed by colonial legislatures would be considered legitimate.¹⁶

Writers such as John Adams, then a young lawyer in Boston, also took to the pages of local newspapers, encouraging Americans to “dare to read, think, speak and write . . . [and] let it be known that British liberties are not the grants of princes or parliaments.”¹⁷ John Dickinson, a future Continental Congressman and delegate to the Constitutional Convention, urged his compatriots to boycott British stamped goods: “Think, oh! Think of the endless Miseries you *must* entail upon yourselves, and your Country, by touching the pestilential Cargoes that have been sent to you. . . . To receive them is Death—is worse than Death—it is *slavery!*”¹⁸

Although the British Parliament did not officially accept or recognize the Stamp Act Congress’s petition—or the body that created it—it did repeal the Stamp Act in March 1766, primarily because the colonial boycotts of British goods were so damaging to British trade. The same day it repealed the law, however, Parliament passed the Declaratory Act, formally declaring that the colonies were subordinate to the British government and that “parliament assembled, had, hath, and of right ought to have, full power and authority to make laws and statutes of sufficient force and validity to bind the colonies and peoples of America . . . in all cases whatsoever.”¹⁹

The following year, Parliament passed the Townshend Acts, a group of laws creating another set of taxes on the colonists. They also established new means of implementing the taxes, such as the use of jury-less admiralty courts to prosecute smugglers and an American Customs Board, located in Boston, to enforce the laws. British troops were sent to keep order in Boston, where much of the enforcement efforts were targeted.

Tensions between the colonists and the British mounted during this period, and Patriot groups such as the Sons of Liberty sprung up in towns across the colonies, especially in New England. Protesters took to the streets of cities, hanging in effigy government officials or tax collectors and, in some cases, destroying their homes and offices and threatening them with acts of violence.²⁰ On March 5, 1770, a group of eight British soldiers fired into a hostile crowd at the Boston Custom House, killing five men. The “Bloody Massacre,” as a famous engraving by Paul Revere called the event, became

¹⁶ Declaration of Rights and Grievances, October 19, 1765, available at

<http://tah.ashbrook.org/library/document/resolutions-of-the-stamp-act-congress/>.

¹⁷ John Adams, “A Dissertation on the Canon and Feudal Law,” *Boston Gazette*, August 12, 1765, available at <http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/index.asp?document=43>.

¹⁸ John Dickinson, “Address on the Stamp Act,” November 1765, reprinted in the *New York Gazette*, December 5, 1765, available in *The Writings of John Dickinson*, Vol. 1, ed. Paul Leicester Ford (Philadelphia: Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1895), 204.

¹⁹ The Declaratory Act of 1766, available at http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/declaratory_act_1766.asp.

²⁰ On August 26, 1765, for example, a mob of angry protestors destroyed the house of Massachusetts Lieutenant Governor Thomas Hutchinson.

a rallying cry for colonists increasingly frustrated with what they deemed a tyrannical British government.²¹

Three years after the Boston Massacre, another event on the road to independence occurred in the same city: the Boston Tea Party. Earlier that year Parliament had passed the Tea Act, changing the regulations for how British tea was imported and sold in North America. By making the tea cheaper, British lawmakers hoped that the colonists would purchase the legal tea (instead of the cheaper, smuggled version that was more popular) and, in so doing, assent to the taxes on the tea still in effect from the Townshend Acts—and thus to Parliament’s power to tax the colonists.

Still sounding the refrain of “no taxation without representation,” the colonists continued their boycott on British tea, in some cases sending the East India Company ships full of tea right back across the Atlantic. On the evening of December 16, 1773, members of the Sons of Liberty, some dressed as American Indians, boarded the three tea ships in the Boston harbor and dumped all 342 chests of tea in the water. The British reaction was swift: Parliament passed what became known in America as the Intolerable Acts or the Coercive Acts, a group of laws that closed the Boston port until the city paid for all the destroyed tea, brought much of the Massachusetts government under direct British control, limited the number of town meetings in the state to one per year, allowed British officials to be tried in Britain for crimes they were accused of committing in the colonies, and gave more authority to colonial governors to quarter British troops in the colonies.

The First Continental Congress

Even though the worst of the Coercive Acts was aimed only at Boston and Massachusetts, they still drew the ire of leaders throughout the colonies who, in the words of a resolution passed by former members of the (dissolved) Virginia House of Burgesses, viewed “an attack, made on one of our sister colonies . . . [as] an attack made on all British America.”²² In June 1774, a town meeting in Philadelphia issued a similar decree, declaring that they considered “our brethren at Boston as suffering the common cause of America” and called for a congress with representatives from each of the colonies to convene and discuss the matter further.²³ Similar shows of support were passed in other colonies.²⁴

On September 5, 1774, 56 delegates from 12 American colonies met together in Philadelphia at Carpenters’ Hall to discuss a united reaction to the British policies.

²¹ See “The Fruits of Arbitrary Power, or the Bloody Massacre,” a print by Paul Revere, based on a design by Henry Pelham, published March 28, 1770, www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2008661777/.

²² Virginia resolution, signed by 89 former members of the Virginia House of Burgesses (which the governor had dissolved) on May 27, 1774, available in Jesse Ames Spencer, *History of the United States of America*, Vol. 1 (Albany: James B. Lyon, 1896), 397.

²³ Proceedings of the Inhabitants of Philadelphia, June 18, 1774, available at http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/proc_in_pa_1774.asp.

²⁴ See, for example, the Proceedings of Farmington, Connecticut, on the Boston Port Act, May 19, 1774, available at http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/proc_farm_ct_1774.asp.

(Georgia did not send representatives.) Among the delegates were John and Samuel Adams from Massachusetts; John Jay and Philip Livingston from New York; John Dickinson and Joseph Galloway from Pennsylvania; Patrick Henry, Richard Henry Lee, George Washington, and Peyton Randolph (who was chosen president of the gathering) from Virginia; and Edward and John Rutledge from South Carolina. John Adams described the gathering as “a school of political prophets” and “a nursery of American statesmen”,²⁵ and noted that “[h]ere are Fortunes, Abilities, Learning, Eloquence, Acuteness equal to any I ever met with [in] my Life. Here is a Diversity of Religions[,] Educations, Manners, Interests, Such as it would Seem almost impossible to unite in any one Plan of Conduct.”²⁶

For the most part, though, unite they did. Even though the First Continental Congress was, as Adams later recorded, “about one third Tories, one third timid, and one third true Blue [or Patriot],”²⁷ the majority of the participants were able to agree on a list of declarations and resolves that a) reaffirmed the colonists’ rights as Englishmen—including the protection of life, liberty, and property and the right to representation; b) listed specific acts of Parliament that were “violations of the rights of the colonists” and called for their repeal; and c) created an agreement among most of the colonies to boycott British goods until the Coercive Acts were repealed.²⁸ The Congress also arranged for a second continental congress to meet the following May if the relationship with Britain had not improved.

The Second Continental Congress

By May 1775, circumstances had certainly not improved. The British Parliament had not been receptive to the complaints of the First Continental Congress, and in April open hostilities had erupted near the towns of Lexington and Concord, Massachusetts, when groups of Patriot militiamen engaged British regulars who had been sent to search for and seize colonial supplies.²⁹ This battle, and the ensuing American siege of British-controlled Boston, in effect began the Revolutionary War.

When members of the Second Continental Congress came to Philadelphia in the spring, they were greeted by three regiments of Continental soldiers that had already formed and were using the city’s common areas to drill. Many of the members from the first congress returned for the second iteration, but some new members were also present—notably among them Benjamin Franklin of Pennsylvania and John Hancock of Massachusetts, the latter of whom took Peyton Randolph’s place as president of the convention when Randolph was called back to the Virginia House of Burgesses. A young

²⁵ John Adams, Letter to James Warren, June 25, 1774, in *Papers of John Adams*, Vol. 2, eds. Robert J. Taylor, Mary Jo-Kline, Gregg L. Lint, et al. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977), available at www.masshist.org/publications/apde/browseVol.php?series=pja&vol=2.

²⁶ John Adams, Letter to William Tudor, September 29, 1774, in *Papers of John Adams*.

²⁷ John Adams, Letter to Benjamin Rush, March 19, 1812, in *Old Family Letters*, ed. Alexander Biddle (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1892), 373.

²⁸ Read The Declaration and Resolves of the First Continental Congress, passed on October 14, 1774. See below.

²⁹ See Ralph Waldo Emerson’s “Concord Hymn,” below.

Virginian—then age 32—by the name of Thomas Jefferson was sent to replace Randolph.

Congress' first order of business was to provide direction and coordination to the war effort, which heretofore had been conducted by disparate militias in the different colonies. In June, Congress officially created the Continental Army, appointed George Washington as its commander in chief, and sent the new general to meet his army, which was conducting the Siege of Boston.³⁰

Next, the congressmen turned their attention to their relationship with Britain. While some—Adams' "true blue"—saw independence as inevitable, others held out hope that Britain and her colonies might still reconcile. At the urging of John Dickinson, Congress adopted the Olive Branch Petition, declaring that the congressmen would "use all the means in [their] power . . . for stopping the further effusion of blood, and for averting the impending calamities that threaten the British Empire" and asking King George III to do the same.³¹ At the same time that Congress was seeking reconciliation with Great Britain, though, it also passed the Declaration of the Causes and Necessity of Taking Up Arms, providing a defense of its war preparations, noting that "we shall lay [our arms] down again when hostilities shall cease on the part of the aggressors."³² The message to Britain was clear: however much the American colonists wished to be reunited with Britain, they would only do so if Britain changed her ways and viewed them as the full British subjects they considered themselves.

The Road to Independence

On August 23, 1775—ten days after William Penn arrived in England carrying the Olive Branch Petition, which the king refused to accept—King George III issued a proclamation declaring that the colonists in North America were in a state of open rebellion and calling on all British subjects "to disclose and make known all traitorous conspiracies and attempts" against the British crown.³³ The following February, Congress learned that Parliament had passed a bill prohibiting trade with the colonies and declaring as traitors—punishable by death by hanging—all Americans who did not submit unconditionally to British rule. To make matters worse, there were also rumors—later found to be true—that an army of hired German mercenaries were on their way, accompanied by an armada of the British Navy, to North America. It was, to say the least, not the response Dickinson and his comrades were hoping for.

Throughout the spring of 1776, Congress took action that brought them ever closer to a permanent break with Britain, even as members continued to hold out hope that declaring independence would not be necessary. In February and March, Congress halted

³⁰ Learn more about George Washington's generalship of the war at www.whatsoproudlywehail.org/curriculum/the-american-calendar/celebrating-george-washington.

³¹ Read the Olive Branch Petition, adopted on July 8, 1775, here: http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/contcong_07-08-75.asp.

³² The Declaration of the Causes and Necessity of Taking Up Arms, adopted on July 6, 1775. See below.

³³ King George III, A Proclamation, by The King, for Suppressing Rebellion and Sedition, August 23, 1775. See below.

all exports to Britain and dispatched Connecticut delegate Silas Deane to appraise the “disposition” of France as a potential ally; Benjamin Franklin was sent to Montreal to convince the Canadians to join the American cause. On March 23, a week after voting to disarm all Tories in the colonies, Congress permitted the outfitting of privateers to prey on British ships. In April, shortly after the Continental Army had forced the British to vacate Boston by placing cannon on the overlooking Dorchester Heights, Congress opened American ports to trade with any nation but Britain.

By May, the clamor of war was brought home for the congressmen meeting in Philadelphia, when the sounds of cannon fire from two British ships trying to run American blockades on the Delaware River echoed through the city. Soon after, Congress passed a resolution recommending that each colony establish its own government and no longer be reliant on that of Great Britain. Along with the resolution was passed a preamble, written primarily by John Adams, which declared that since “the whole force of [Great Britain], aided by foreign mercenaries, is to be exerted for the destruction of the good people of these colonies . . . it is necessary that the exercise of every kind of authority under the said crown should be totally suppressed” in America.³⁴ This act, Delaware’s Caesar Rodney wrote, even “the cool considerate men think . . . amounts to a declaration of independence.”³⁵

Finally, on June 7, just a few weeks after the Virginia convention in Williamsburg had voted to instruct their delegates in Congress to vote for independence, Richard Henry Lee rose to speak and put forward a motion for independence:

Resolved, That these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States, that they are absolved from all allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain is, and ought to be, totally dissolved.

That it is expedient forthwith to take the most effectual measures for forming foreign Alliances.

That a plan of confederation be prepared and transmitted to the respective Colonies for their consideration and approbation.³⁶

John Adams seconded the motion, and debate began the following day. John Dickinson (Pennsylvania), James Wilson (Pennsylvania), Robert Livingston (New York), and Edward Rutledge (South Carolina) spoke against the motion, concerned that their constituents were still not ready for the declaration. On June 10, the voting on the motion was delayed for 20 days to allow delegates to send for instructions from their colonies. In the meantime, a committee was appointed to draft a declaration of independence.

³⁴ Resolves and Recommendations of Congress, passed May 10, 1776, available at <http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/index.asp?documentprint=2419>.

³⁵ David McCullough, *John Adams* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001), 109.

³⁶ Read Lee’s Resolutions at http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/lee.asp.

Declaring Independence

Serving on the Committee of Five to draft the declaration were John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, Roger Sherman, Robert Livingston, and Benjamin Franklin. Jefferson was chosen to pen the first draft. (John Adams would later recall that he had suggested this arrangement, providing the following reasons to Jefferson: “Reason first: you are a Virginian and a Virginian ought to appear at the head of this business. Reason second: I am obnoxious, suspected and unpopular. You are very much otherwise. Reason third: You can write ten times better than I can.” Jefferson recalled no such exchange.³⁷)

Jefferson was, as it turned out, the right man for the job. Born into the Virginia aristocracy, he owned over 10,000 acres of land and had, at the age of 25, already begun his lifelong project of perfecting his home Monticello (“little mountain”), which he designed in the style of the 16th-century Italian architect Andrea Palladio. Tall, lanky, and extremely well-educated (a polymath learned in the classics and law, as well as in mathematics, sciences, horticulture, architecture, and half a dozen languages), Jefferson was known for his quiet and gracious demeanor, as well as his skills as both a fine horseman and violinist. He also, John Adams recorded, carried “the reputation of a masterly pen” for his *Summary View of the Rights of British America*, a tract he had written in 1774.³⁸

Working alone in his room, Jefferson drew on his previous work, as well as the long line of American writing by leaders such as George Mason, whose declaration of rights for Virginia had recently been published in Philadelphia, and James Wilson, who had declared in 1774 that “all men are, by nature, equal and free.”³⁹ These works, of course, drew on even older ones by British natural rights thinkers such as John Locke and Thomas Hobbes, Francis Hutcheson and David Hume, and Henry St. John Bolingbroke, among many others. Jefferson would later write that his draft was “neither aiming at originality of principle or sentiment . . . [but] was intended to be an expression of the American mind.”⁴⁰

The Committee of Five approved of Jefferson’s framework, made some alterations to the language (replacing, for instance, the “sacred and undeniable” truths with “self-evident” ones), and then presented the declaration to Congress on June 28. For the next two days, Congress debated the declaration, then tabled the draft and returned to debate Lee’s original motion for independence on July 1.

³⁷ John Adams, Letter to Timothy Pickering, August 6, 1822, available at <http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/index.asp?document=2081>.

³⁸ John Adams, *Autobiography*, available at www.masshist.org/digitaladams/aea/cfm/doc.cfm?id=A1_24. Read Jefferson’s *Summary Rights* at http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/jeffsumm.asp.

³⁹ James Wilson, “Considerations on the Nature and Extent of the Legislative Authority of the British Parliament,” 1774, in *Collected Works of James Wilson*, eds. Kermit L. Hall and Mark David Hall (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2007), available at <http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/2072/156335>. Read Mason’s Virginia Declaration of Rights at <http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/index.asp?document=26>.

⁴⁰ Thomas Jefferson, Letter to Henry Lee, May 8, 1825, available at <http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/index.asp?document=3>.

John Dickinson made one last plea against declaring independence, encouraging Congress to at least finalize the Articles of Confederation—which he and 12 others on the committee had been preparing—and secure foreign allies before breaking all ties with Britain. John Adams responded with what historian David McCullough would deem “the most powerful and important speech heard in the Congress since it first convened,” urging Congress to recognize that the country was, as he had recently written to a friend, “in the very midst of revolution, the most complete, unexpected, and remarkable of any in the history of the world.”⁴¹ The war for independence, he related, was already at hand. In all, debate lasted nine hours, and then a vote was taken in which Pennsylvania and South Carolina voted “no,” New York, lacking instructions from home, abstained, and Delaware was divided. At the request of South Carolina’s Edward Rutledge, the final vote was delayed until the following day. That night, word was received that a hundred new British ships had just arrived off the coast of New York.

On the morning of July 2, the atmosphere in some of the delegations had changed. John Dickinson and Robert Morris were voluntarily absent, allowing Pennsylvania to change its vote in favor of independence. Caesar Rodney had ridden 80 miles through the night to attend the vote, providing the crucial tie-breaking vote in favor of independence in his Delaware contingent. And South Carolina, recognizing the need for a unanimous vote, changed sides to also vote “yes.” The lone holdout was New York, which continued to abstain. Lee’s motion passed 12-0-1. America had declared independence.

For the rest of the afternoon and the following morning, the congressmen turned their attention to Jefferson’s proposed declaration. In all, they made more than 80 changes to the draft—most of them minor changes of word choice, but some, like the excision of Jefferson’s paragraph on the slave trade, more substantial. Despite Adams’ defense of the original language (the drafter would later write that “[Adams] supported the declaration with zeal & ability, fighting fearlessly for every word of it”⁴²), about a quarter of the declaration was expunged, including Jefferson’s concluding indictment against the British people themselves, who had betrayed the “common blood” cause of the colonists and by so doing “given the last stab to agonizing affection.”⁴³

On July 4, debate on the declaration was closed shortly before noon and the vote was taken. As with the vote two days previous, 12 colonies voted in favor of the motion, and one—New York—abstained. John Hancock, the president of the congress, and Charles Thomson, the secretary, affixed their signatures to the document, and then it was sent off for printing. It wouldn’t be until August that most of the other congressmen would sign the document by which they mutually pledged to each other their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor. Writing in his biography of John Adams, David McCullough captures the spirit of the day:

⁴¹ McCullough, *John Adams*, 127.

⁴² Thomas Jefferson, Letter to James Madison, August 30, 1823, available at <http://rotunda.upress.virginia.edu/founders/default.xqy?keys=FOEA-print-02-02-02-0027>.

⁴³ Draft of the Declaration of Independence, available at <http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/index.asp?document=4>.

Whether Benjamin Franklin quipped “We must all hang together, or most assuredly we shall hang separately” is impossible to know, just as there is no way to confirm the much-repeated story that the diminutive John Hancock wrote his name large so that the King might read it without his spectacles. But the stories endured because they were in character, like the remark attributed to Stephen Hopkins of Rhode Island. Hopkins, who suffered from palsy, is said to have observed, on completing his spidery signature, “My hand trembles, but my heart does not.”⁴⁴

Securing Independence

As the signers of the Declaration knew, declaring independence from Great Britain was a far cry from actually securing it. To do that, the American states would have to win a war against one of the most powerful militaries in the world—and then create a system of self-governance that would safeguard them against homegrown versions of the very tyranny they were wishing to escape.

By the fall of 1776, more than 32,000 British and Hessian soldiers were ashore on Staten Island, and they were supported by a fleet, under the command of Admiral Richard Howe, that rivaled any in the world. Certainly this expedition—the largest and most expensive overseas deployment in British history—more than matched the Continental military, consisting of (at most) 20,000 poorly trained and underequipped troops and not a single ship of war. Unsurprisingly, Washington and his men lost city after city in New York and in New Jersey to the advancing British. By the time the Continentals set up camp that winter, Washington’s force had dwindled to about 7,600 men—and many of those planned on leaving at the end of the year when their enlistments were up. These truly were, as Thomas Paine wrote that year, “the times that try men’s souls.”⁴⁵ It was only due to Washington’s (successful) gamble of crossing the Delaware River and surprising the Hessian army on Christmas night that his army, rejuvenated by their victory, lived to fight another day.

The situation in Congress was no less dire. Congressmen, worn out by the stress and long hours required of running a war and creating a new government, regularly got sick and had to leave Philadelphia. In the summer of 1776, for instance, John Adams wrote that his mind had turned “weak as water” and that he had “already tempted [his constitution] beyond prudence and safety.”⁴⁶

Still, all was not lost. In October 1777, Continental Generals Horatio Gates and Benedict Arnold won an important victory at the Battle of Saratoga. British General John Burgoyne surrendered his army, giving the French hope enough in the American cause that they entered the war and openly allied with the Americans. The next month, the Continental Congress—now meeting in York, Pennsylvania, having been forced to flee Philadelphia—passed the Articles of Confederation and sent them to the states for

⁴⁴ McCullough, *John Adams*, 138.

⁴⁵ Thomas Paine, *The Crisis* No. 1, December 23, 1776. See below.

⁴⁶ McCullough, *John Adams*, 144.

ratification. Virginia ratified the Articles in December of that year, while Maryland would wait until the spring of 1781 to do so.

With France now actively involved in the war, the British presence in the Americas was split since they also had to defend their colonies in the Indies and elsewhere. In 1781, accompanied by the French General the Comte de Rochambeau and a young Marquis de Lafayette, the Continental Army once more pursued the British in New York, setting out on what would become known as the Yorktown campaign. Aided also by the Comte de Grasse and his fleet of French warships near the Chesapeake Bay, Washington set siege to the British encampment at Yorktown. On October 17, the British, under the command of Lord Cornwallis, surrendered. Though no one knew it at the time, the battle marked the end of open hostilities.

Two years later, in September 1783, the Treaty of Paris was signed, officially bringing the war to an end. The American colonies were at last the free and independent states they had declared themselves to be that fateful July day in 1776.

A Pretty Story

FRANCIS HOPKINSON

This allegory was written by the lawyer, statesman, and signer of the Declaration of Independence Francis Hopkinson (1737–91) under the pseudonym Peter Grievous and published in Williamsburg, Virginia in 1774, a year before the outbreak of fighting. It presents, by means of a homey, personal, and familial tale, an accessible—and perhaps unthreatening—account of the grievances that the colonists had with the English king and Parliament, growing from small beginnings and nourished by ordinary human desires and failings. It is also a useful introduction to the following selections in this section, which deal with the events that led up to the American Revolution.

Start by reading the story in its own terms, not yet as an allegory. How and why does disorder creep into this family? Who is responsible for the troubles? Trace the stages of displeasure, resistance, and rebellion among the children? Now consider the story as allegory. Identify each of the characters: the Nobleman, his wife, steward, children, neighbors, Jack, the Padlock, and the Overseer to Jack. What is gained, and what is lost, in presenting the great political struggle as a family quarrel? How apt is the allegorical tale? Why, according to the story, are the children (colonists) so patient and long-suffering? Why is the story incomplete? What is the meaning of its title?

Once upon a Time, a great While ago, there lived a certain Nobleman, who had long possessed a very valuable Farm, and had a great Number of Children and Grandchildren.

Besides the annual Profits of his Land, which were very considerable, he kept a large Shop of Goods; and being very successful in Trade, he became, in Process of Time, exceedingly rich and powerful; insomuch that all his Neighbours feared and respected him.

With Respect to the Management of his Family, it was thought he had adopted the most perfect Mode that could be devised, for he had been at the Pains to examine the Economy of all his Neighbours, and had selected from their Plans all such Parts as appeared to be equitable and beneficial, and omitted those which from Experience were found to be inconvenient. Or rather, by blending their several Constitutions together he had so ingeniously counterbalanced the Evils of one Mode of Government with the Benefits of another, that the Advantages were richly enjoyed, and the Inconveniencies scarcely felt. In short, his Family was thought to be the best ordered of any in his Neighbourhood.

He never exercised any undue Authority over his Children or Servants; neither indeed could he oppress them if he was so disposed; for it was particularly covenanted in his Marriage Articles that he should not at any Time impose any Tasks or Hardships whatever upon his Children without the free Consent of his Wife.

Now the Custom in his Family was this, that at the End of every seven Years his Marriage became of Course null and void; at which Time his Children and Grandchildren met together and chose another Wife for him, whom the old Gentleman was obliged to marry under the same Articles and Restrictions as before. If his late Wife had conducted herself, during her seven Year's Marriage, with Mildness, Discretion and Integrity, she was re-elected; if otherwise, deposed: By which Means the Children had always a great Interest in their Mother in Law;⁴⁷ and through her, a reasonable Check upon their Father's Temper. For besides that he could do nothing material respecting his Children without her Approbation, she was sole Mistress of the Purse Strings; and gave him out, from Time to Time, such Sums of Money as she thought necessary for the Expences of his Family.

Being one Day in a very extraordinary good Humour, he gave his Children a Writing under his Hand and Seal, by which he released them from many Badges of Dependence, and confirmed to them several very important Privileges. The chief were the two following, viz. that none of his Children should be punished for any Offence, or supposed Offence, until his brethren had first declared him worthy of such Punishment; and secondly, he gave fresh Assurances that he would impose no Hardships upon them without the Consent of their Mother in Law.

This Writing, on account of its singular Importance, was called THE GREAT PAPER.⁴⁸ After it was executed with the utmost solemnity, he caused his Chaplain to publish a dire *Anathema* against all who should attempt to violate the Articles of the *Great Paper*, in the Words following.

"In the Name of the *Father, Son and Holy Ghost*, AMEN! Whereas our Lord and Master, to the Honour of God and for the common Profit of this Farm hath granted, for him and his Heirs forever, these Articles above written: I, his Chaplain and spiritual Pastor of all this Farm, do admonish the People of the Farm *Once, Twice, and Thrice*: Because that Shortness will not suffer so much Delay as to give Knowledge to the People of these Presents in Writing; I therefore enjoyn all Persons, of what Estate soever they be, that they and every of them, as much as in them is, shall uphold and maintain these Articles granted by our Lord and Master in all Points. And all those that in any Point do resist, or break, or in any Manner hereafter procure, counsel or any Ways assent to resist or break these Ordinances, or go about it by Word or Deed, openly or privately, by any Manner of Pretence or Colour: I the aforesaid Chaplain, by my Authority, do *excommunicate* and *accuse*, and from the Body of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, and from all the *Company of Heaven*, and from all the *Sacraments* of holy Church do *sequester* and *exclude*."

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⁴⁷ Hopkinson uses the term *mother-in-law*, which in English of the period also meant *stepmother*.

⁴⁸ That is, the *Magna Carta* (1215). Learn more about the *Magna Carta* at www.archives.gov/exhibits/featured_documents/magna_carta/.

Now it came to pass that this Nobleman had, by some Means or other, obtained a Right to an immense Tract of wild uncultivated Country at a vast Distance from his Mansion House. But he set little Store by this Acquisition, as it yielded him no Profit; nor was it likely to do so, being not only difficult of Access on Account of the Distance, but was also overrun with innumerable wild Beasts very fierce and savage; so that it would be extremely dangerous to attempt taking Possession of it.

In Process of Time, however, some of his Children, more stout and enterprising than the rest, requested Leave of their Father to go and settle on this distant Tract of Land. Leave was readily obtained; but before they set out certain Agreements were stipulated between them—the principal were—The old Gentleman, on his Part, engaged to protect and defend the Adventurers in their new Settlements; to assist them in cha[s]ing away the wild Beasts, and to extend to them all the Benefits of the Government under which they were born: Assuring them that although they should be removed so far from his Presence they should nevertheless be considered as the Children of his Family, and treated accordingly. At the same Time he gave each of them a Bond for the faithful performance of these Promises; in which, among other Things, it was covenanted that they should, each of them in their several Families, have a Liberty of making such Rules and Regulations for their own good Government as they should find convenient; provided these Rules and Regulations should not contradict or be inconsistent with the general standing Orders established in his Farm.

In Return for these Favours he insisted that they, on their Parts, should at all Times acknowledge him to be their Father; that they should not deal with their Neighbours without his Leave, but send to his Shop only for such Merchandize as they should want. But in Order to enable them to pay for such Goods as they should purchase, they were permitted to sell the Produce of their Lands to certain of his Neighbours.

These Preliminaries being duly adjusted, our Adventurers bid Adieu to the Comforts and Conveniencies of their Father's House, and set off on their Journey—Many and great were the Difficulties they encountered on their Way: but many more and much greater had they to combat on their Arrival in the new Country. Here they found Nothing but wild Nature. Mountains over-grown with inaccessible Foliage, and Plains steeped in stagnated Waters. Their Ears are no longer attentive to the repeated Strokes of industrious Labour and the busy Hum of Men; instead of these, the roaring Tempest and incessant Howlings of Beasts of Prey fill their minds with Horror and Dismay. The needful Comforts of Life are no longer in their Power—no friendly Roof to shelter them from inclement Skies; no Fortress to protect them from surrounding Dangers. Unaccustomed as they were to Hardships like these, some were cut off by Sickness and Disease, and others snatched away by the Hands of Barbarity. They began however, with great Perseverance, to clear the Land of encumbering Rubbish, and the Woods resound with the Strokes of Labour; they drain the Waters from the sledged Morass, and pour the Sun Beams on the reeking Soil; they are forced to exercise all the powers of Industry and Economy for bare Subsistence, and like their first Parent, when driven from Paradise, to earn their Bread with the Sweat of their Brows. In this Work they were frequently

interrupted by the Incursions of the wild Beasts, against whom they defended themselves with heroic Prowess and Magnanimity.

After some Time, however, by Dint of indefatigable Perseverance, they found themselves comfortably settled in this new Farm; and had the delightful Prospect of vast Tracts of Land waving with luxuriant Harvests, and perfuming the Air with delicious Fruits, which before had been a dreary Wilderness, unfit for the Habitation of Men.

In the mean Time they kept up a constant Correspondence with their Father's Family, and at a great Expence provided Waggons, Horses and Drivers to bring from his Shop such Goods and Merchandize as they wanted, for which they paid out of the Produce of their Lands.

CHAP. III.

Now the new Settlers had adopted a Mode of Government in their several Families similar to that their Father had established in the old Farm; in taking a new Wife at the End of certain Periods of Time; which Wife was chosen for them by their Children, and without whose Consent they could do nothing material in the Conduct of their Affairs. Under these Circumstances they thrived exceedingly, and became very numerous; living in great Harmony amongst themselves, and in constitutional Obedience to their Father and his Wife.

Notwithstanding their successful Progress, however, they were frequently annoyed by the wild Beasts, which were not yet expelled from the Country; and were moreover troubled by some of their Neighbours, who wanted to drive them off the Land, and take Possession of it themselves.⁴⁹

To assist them in these Difficulties, and protect them from Danger, the old Nobleman sent over several of his Servants, who with the Help of the new Settlers drove away their Enemies. But then he required that they should reimburse him for the Expence and Trouble he was at in their Behalf; this they did with great Cheerfulness, by applying from Time to Time to their respective Wives, who always commanded their Cash.

Thus did Matters go on for a considerable Time, to their mutual Happiness and Benefit. But now the Nobleman's Wife began to cast an avaricious Eye upon the new Settlers; saying to herself, if by the natural Consequence of their Intercourse with us my Wealth and Power are so much increased, how much more would they accumulate if I can persuade them that all they have belonged to us, and therefore I may at any Time demand from them such Part of their Earnings as I please. At the same Time she was fully sensible of the Promises and agreements her Husband had made when they left the old Farm, and of the Tenor and Purport of the *Great Paper*. She therefore thought it necessary to proceed with great Caution and Art, and endeavoured to gain her Point by imperceptible Steps.

⁴⁹ A reference to the Intercolonial Wars, especially the French and Indian War, 1754–63.

In Order to [do] this, she first issued an Edict setting forth, That whereas the Tailors of her Family were greatly injured by the People of the new Farm, inasmuch as they presumed to make their own Clothes whereby the said Tailors were deprived of the Benefit of their Custom; it was therefore ordained that for the future the new Settlers should not be permitted to have amongst them any Shears or Sciss[o]rs larger than a certain fixed size. In Consequence of this, our Adventurers were compelled to have their Clothes made by their Father's Tailors: But out of Regard to the old Gentleman, they patiently submitted to this Grievance.⁵⁰

Encouraged by this Success, she proceeded in her Plan. Observing that the new Settlers were very fond of a particular Kind of Cyder which they purchased of a Neighbour, who was in Friendship with their Father (the Apples proper for making this Cyder not growing on their own Farm) she published another Edict, obliging them to pay her a certain Stipend for every Barrel of Cyder used in their Families! To this likewise they submitted: Not yet seeing the Scope of her Designs against them.⁵¹

After this Manner she proceeded, imposing Taxes upon them on various Pretences, and receiving the Fruits of their Industry with both Hands. Moreover she persuaded her Husband to send amongst them from Time to Time a Number of the most lazy and useless of his Servants, under the specious Pretext of defending them in their Settlements, and of assisting to destroy the wild Beasts; but in Fact to rid his own House of their Company, not having Employment for them; and at the same Time to be a Watch and a Check upon the People of the new Farm.

It was likewise ordered that these Protectors, as they were called, should be supplied with Bread and Butter cut in a particular Form: But the Head of one of the Families refused to comply with this Order. He engaged to give the Guests thus forced upon him, Bread and Butter sufficient; but insisted that his Wife should have the liberty of cutting it in what shape she pleased.⁵²

This put the old Nobleman into a violent Passion, [insomuch] that he had his Son's Wife put into Gaol for presuming to cut her Loaf otherwise than as had been directed.

CHAP. IV.

⁵⁰ *In order to raise money for its war debts, the British Parliament passed a number of laws forcing Americans in the colonies to buy British-made goods and imposing prohibitive duties on imports. The Wool Act of 1699 prohibited the American colonists from exporting wool, wool yarn, or wool cloth to markets outside the individual colony in which it was produced, and also restricted the import of woolens and linens created in other areas of the British Empire. The Hat Act of 1732 placed limits on the manufacture, sale, and exportation of American-made hats. The Iron Act of 1750 restricted manufacturing activities in British colonies, particularly in North America.*

⁵¹ *The Molasses Act of 1733 imposed a tax on molasses, sugar, and rum imported from non-British foreign colonies into the North American colonies.*

⁵² *The Quartering Acts of 1765 and 1774 ordered local governments of the American colonies to provide the British soldiers with any needed accommodations. It also required citizens to provide food for any British soldiers in the area.*

As the old Gentleman advanced in Years he began to neglect the Affairs of his Family, leaving them chiefly to the Management of his Steward. Now the Steward had debauched his Wife, and by that Means gained an entire Ascendency over her. She no longer deliberated what would most benefit either the old Farm or the new; but said and did whatever the Steward pleased. Nay so much was she influenced by him that she could neither utter *Ay* or *No* but as he directed. For he had cunningly persuaded her that it was very fashionable for Women to wear Padlocks on their Lips, and that he was sure they would become her exceedingly. He therefore fastened a Padlock to each Corner of her Mouth; when the one was open, she could only say *Ay*; and when the other was loosed, could only cry *No*. He took Care to keep the Keys of these Locks himself; so that her Will became entirely subject to his Power.

Now the old Lady and the Steward had set themselves against the People of the new Farm; and began to devise Ways and Means to impoverish and distress them.

They prevailed on the Nobleman to sign an Edict against the new Settlers, in which it was declared that it was their Duty as Children to pay something towards the supplying their Father's Table with Provisions, and to the supporting the Dignity of his Family; for that Purpose it was ordained that all their Spoons, Knives and Forks, Plates and Porringers, should be marked with a certain Mark, by Officers appointed for that End; for which marking they were to pay a certain Stipend: And that they should not, under severe Penalties, presume to make use of any Spoon, Knife or Fork, Plate or Porringer, before it had been so marked, and the said Stipend paid to the Officer.⁵³

The Inhabitants of the new Farm began to see that their Father's Affections were alienated from them; and that their Mother was but a base Mother in Law debauched by their Enemy the Steward. They were thrown into great Confusion and Distress. They wrote the most supplicating Letters to the old Gentleman, in which they acknowledged him to be their Father in Terms of the greatest Respect and Affection—they recounted to him the Hardships and Difficulties they had suffered in settling his new Farm; and pointed out the great Addition of Wealth and Power his Family had acquired by the Improvement of that Wilderness; and showed him that all the Fruits of their Labours must in the natural Course of Things unite, in the long Run, in his Money Box. They also, in humble Terms, reminded him of his Promises and Engagements on their leaving Home, and of the Bonds he had given them; of the Solemnity and Importance of the *Great Paper* with the Curse annexed. They acknowledged that he ought to be reimbursed the Expences he was at on their Account, and that it was their Duty to assist in supporting the Dignity of his Family. All this they declared they were ready and willing to do; but requested that they might do it agreeable to the Purport of the *Great Paper*, by applying to their several Wives for the Keys of their Money Boxes and furnishing him from thence; and not be subject to the Tyranny and Caprice of an avaricious Mother in Law, whom they had never chosen, and of a Steward who was their declared Enemy.

⁵³ A reference to the Stamp Act of 1765 which imposed a direct tax on the American colonies, and required that many printed materials in the colonies be produced on stamped paper produced in London, carrying an embossed revenue stamp.

Some of these Letters were intercepted by the Steward; others were delivered to the old Gentleman, who was at the same Time persuaded to take no Notice of them; but, on the Contrary, to insist the more strenuously upon the Right his Wife claimed of marking their Spoons, Knives and Forks, Plates and Porringers.

The new Settlers, observing how Matters were conducted in their Father's Family became exceedingly distressed and mortified. They met together and agreed one and all that they would no longer submit to the arbitrary Impositions of their Mother in Law, and their Enemy the Steward. They determined to pay no Manner of Regard to the new Decree, considering it as a Violation of the *Great Paper*. But to go on and eat their Broth and Pudding as usual. The Cooks also and Butlers served up their Spoons, Knives and Forks, Plates and Porringers, without having them marked by the new Officers.

The Nobleman at length thought fit to reverse the Order which had been made respecting the Spoons, Knives and Forks, Plates and Porringers of the new Settlers. But he did this with a very ill Grace: For he, at the same Time avowed and declared that he and his Wife had a Right to mark all their Furniture, if they pleased, from the Silver Tankard down to the very Chamber Pots: That as he was their Father he had an absolute Controul over them, and that their Liberties, Lives and Properties were at the entire Disposal of him and his Wife: That it was not fit that he who was allowed to be *Omnipresent, Immortal, and incapable of Error*, should be confined by the Shackles of the *Great Paper*; or obliged to fulfil the Bonds he had given them, which he averred he had a Right to cancel whenever he pleased.⁵⁴

His Wife also became intoxicated with Vanity. The Steward had told her that she was an *omnipotent* Goddess, and ought to be worshipped as such: That it was the Height of Impudence and Disobedience in the new Settlers to dispute her Authority, which, with Respect to them, was unlimited: That as they had removed from their Father's Family, they had forfeited all Pretensions to be considered as his Children, and lost the Privileges of the *Great Paper*: That, therefore, she might look on them only as Tenants at Will upon her Husband's Farm, and exact from them what Rent she pleased.

All this was perfectly agreeable to Madam, who admitted this new Doctrine in its full Sense.

The People of the new Farm however took little Notice of these pompous Declarations. They were glad the marking Decree was reversed, and were in Hopes that Things would gradually settle into their former Channel.

CHAP. V.

In the mean Time the new Settlers increased exceedingly, and as they increased, their Dealings at their Father's Shop were proportionably enlarged.

⁵⁴ The *Stamp Act Repeal* was repealed on March 18, 1766 in response to boycotts of British goods by American colonists. The *Declaratory Act of 1766* accompanied the repeal of the *Stamp Act*, and reasserted Parliament's authority to pass laws that were binding on the American colonies.

It is true they suffered some Inconveniencies from the Protectors that had been sent amongst them, who became very troublesome in their Houses: They seduced their Daughters; introduced Riot and Intemperance into their Families, and derided and insulted the Orders and Regulations they had made for their own good Government.

Moreover the old Nobleman had sent amongst them a great Number of Thieves, Ravishers and Murderers, who did a great deal of Mischief by practising those Crimes for which they had been banished [from] the old Farm. But they bore these Grievances with as much Patience as could be expected; not choosing to trouble their aged Father with Complaints, unless in Cases of important Necessity.

Now the Steward continued to hate the new Settlers with exceeding great Hatred, and determined to renew his Attack upon their Peace and Happiness. He artfully insinuated to the old Gentleman and his foolish Wife, that it was very mean and unbecoming in them to receive the Contributions of the People of the new Farm, towards supporting the Dignity of his Family, through the Hands of their respective Wives: That upon this Footing it would be in their Power to refuse his Requisitions whenever they should be thought to be unreasonable, of which they would pretend to be Judges themselves; and that it was high Time they should be compelled to acknowledge his arbitrary Power, and his Wife's *Omnipotence*.

For this Purpose, another Decree was prepared and published, ordering that the new Settlers should pay a certain Stipend upon particular Goods, which they were not allowed to purchase any where but at their Father's Shop; and that this Stipend should not be deemed an Advance upon the original Price of the Goods, but be paid on their arrival at the new Farm, for the express Purpose of supporting the Dignity of the old Gentleman's Family, and of defraying the Expences he affected to afford them.⁵⁵

This new Decree gave our Adventurers the utmost Uneasiness. They saw that the Steward and their Mother in Law were determined to oppress and enslave them. They again met together and wrote to their Father, as before, the most humble and persuasive Letters; but to little Purpose: A deaf Ear was turned to all their Remonstrances; and their dutiful Requests treated with Contempt.

Finding this moderate and decent Conduct brought them no Relief, they had Recourse to another Expedient. They bound themselves in a solemn Engagement not to deal any more at their Father's Shop until this unconstitutional Decree should be reversed; which they declared to be a Violation of the *Great Paper*.

This Agreement was so strictly adhered to, that in a few Months the Clerks and Apprentices in the old Gentleman's Shop began to make a sad Outcry. They declared that their Master's Trade was declining exceedingly, and that his Wife and Steward would, by

⁵⁵ *The Revenue Act of 1767 was one of the Townshend Acts, named after Charles Townshend, the British Chancellor of the Exchequer, who proposed the program. The purpose of the Townshend Acts was to raise revenue in the colonies to pay the salaries of governors and judges so that they would be independent of colonial rule.*

their mischievous Machinations, ruin the whole Farm: They forthwith sharpened their Pens and attacked the Steward, and even the old Lady herself with great Severity. Insomuch that it was thought proper to withdraw this Attempt likewise upon the Rights and Liberties of the new Settlers. One Part only of the new Decree remained unreversed—viz. the Tax upon *Water Gruel*.⁵⁶

Now there were certain Men on the old Farm, who had obtained from the Nobleman an exclusive Right of selling *Water Gruel*. Vast Quantities of this *Gruel* were vended amongst the new Settlers; for it became very fashionable for them to use it in their Families in great Abundance. They did not however trouble themselves much about the Tax on *Water Gruel*: They were well pleased with the Reversal of the other Parts of the Decree, and considering *Gruel* as not absolutely necessary to the Comfort of Life, they were determined to endeavour to do without it, and by that Means avoid the remaining effects of the new Decree.

The Steward found his Designs once more frustrated; but was not discouraged by this Disappointment. He formed another Scheme so artfully contrived that he thought himself sure of Success. He sent for the Persons who had the sole Right of vending *Water Gruel*, and after reminding them of the Obligations they were under to the Nobleman and his Wife for their exclusive Privilege, he desired that they would send sundry Waggon Loads of *Gruel* to the new Farm, promising that the accustomed Duty which they paid for their exclusive Right should be taken off from all the *Gruel* they should send amongst the new Settlers: And that in Case their Cargoes should come to any Damage, he would take Care that the Loss should be repaired out of the old Gentleman's Coffers.

The *Gruel* Merchants readily consented to this Proposal, knowing that if their Cargoes were sold, they would reap considerable Profits; and if they failed, the Steward was to make good the Damage. On the other hand the Steward concluded that the new Settlers could not resist purchasing the *Gruel* to which they had been so long accustomed; and if they did purchase it when subject to the Tax aforesaid, this would be an avowed Acknowledgment on their Parts that their Father and his Wife had a Right to break through the Tenor of the *Great Paper*, and to lay on them what Impositions they pleased, without the Consent of their respective Wives.

But the new Settlers were well aware of this Decoy. They saw clearly that the *Gruel* was not sent to accommodate, but to enslave them; and that if they suffered any Part of it to be sold amongst them, it would be deemed a Submission to the assumed *Omnipotence* of the *Great Madam*.

CHAP. VI.

On the Arrival of the *Water Gruel*, the People of the new Farm were again thrown into great Alarms and Confusions. Some of them would not suffer the Waggon to be unloaded at all, but sent them immediately back to the *Gruel* Merchants: Others permitted

⁵⁶ *The Townshend Acts met with fierce resistance from colonists, ultimately leading to the Boston Massacre of 1770. In response, Parliament repealed most of the new taxes, but the tax on tea was retained.*

the Waggon to unload, but would not touch the hateful Commodity; so that it lay neglected about their Roads and Highways until it grew sour and spoiled. But one of the new Settlers, whose Name was *Jack*, either from a keener Sense of the Injuries attempted against him, or from the Necessity of his Situation, which was such that he could not send back the *Gruel* because of a Number of Mercenaries whom his Father had stationed before his House to watch and be a Check upon his Conduct: He, I say, being almost driven to Despair, fell to Work, and with great Zeal stove to Pieces the Casks of *Gruel*, which had been sent him, and utterly demolished the whole Cargoe.

These Proceedings were soon known at the old Farm. Great and terrible was the Uproar there. The old Gentleman fell into great Wrath, declaring that his absent Children meant to throw off all Dependence upon him, and to become altogether disobedient. His Wife also tore the Padlocks from her Lips, and raved and stormed like a Billingsgate.⁵⁷ The Steward lost all Patience and Moderation, swearing most prophanely [sic] that he would leave no Stone unturned 'till he had *humbled the Settlers of the new Farm at his Feet*,⁵⁸ and caused their Father to trample on their necks. Moreover the *Gruel* Merchants roared and bellowed for the Loss of their *Gruel*; and the Clerks and Apprentices were in the utmost Consternation lest the People of the new Farm should again agree to have no Dealings with their Father's Shop—Vengeance was immediately set on Foot, particularly against *Jack*. With him they determined to begin; hoping that by making an Example of him they should so terrify the other Families of the new Settlers, that they would all submit to the Designs of the Steward, and the *Omnipotence* of the old Lady.

A very large *Padlock* was, accordingly, prepared to be fastened upon *Jack's* great gate; the Key of which was to be given to the old Gentleman; who was not to open it again until he had paid for the *Gruel* he had spilt, and resigned all Claim to the Privileges of the *Great Paper*: Nor then neither unless he thought fit. Secondly, a Decree was made to new model the Regulations and (Economy of *Jack's* Family in such Manner that they might for the Future be more subject to the Will of the Steward. And, thirdly, a large Gallows was erected before the Mansion House in the old Farm, and an Order made that if any of *Jack's* Children or Servants should be suspected of Misbehaviour, they should not be convicted or acquitted by the Consent of their Brethren, agreeable to the Purport of the *Great Paper*, but be tied Neck and Heels and dragged to the Gallows at the Mansion House and there be hanged without Mercy.⁵⁹

No sooner did tidings of this undue Severity reach the new Farm, but the People were almost ready to despair. They were altogether at a Loss how to act, or by what Means they should avert the Vengeance to which they were doomed: But the old Lady and Steward soon determined the Matter; for the *Padlock* was sent over, and without Ceremony fastened upon *Jack's* great Gate. They did not wait to know whether he would

⁵⁷ London fish market known for the loud boisterous calls of the fishmongers.

⁵⁸ Lord Frederick North (1732–1792), Britain's Prime Minister, stated that he would not withdraw the tax on tea because "a total repeal cannot be thought of, till America is prostrate at our feet."

⁵⁹ The Boston Port Act of 1774 was one of the Intolerable Acts (also known as the Punitive Acts, or the Coercive Acts), passed in response to the Boston Tea Party. Parliament closed the port of Boston until the East India Company had been repaid for the destroyed tea and until the king was satisfied that order had been restored.

pay for the *Gruel* or not, or make the required Acknowledgments; nor give him the least Opportunity to make his Defence—The great Gate was locked, and the Key given to the old Nobleman, as had been determined.

Poor *Jack* found himself in a most deplorable Condition. The great Inlet to his Farm was entirely blocked up, so that he could neither carry out the Produce of his Land for Sale, nor receive from abroad the Necessaries for his Family.

But this was not all—His Father, along with the *Padlock* aforesaid, had sent an Overseer to hector and domineer over him and his Family; and to endeavour to break his Spirit by exercising every possible Severity: For which Purpose he was attended by a great number of Mercenaries, and armed with more than common Authorities.

On his first arrival in *Jack's* Family he was received with considerable Respect, because he was the Delegate of their aged Father: For, notwithstanding all that had past, the People of the new Settlements loved and revered the old Gentleman with a truly filial Attachment; attributing his unkindness entirely to the Intrigues of their Enemy the Steward. But this fair Weather did not last long. The new Overseer took the first Opportunity of showing that he had no Intentions of living in Harmony and Friendship with the Family. Some of *Jack's* Domesticks had put on their Sunday Clothes, and attended the Overseer in the great Parlour, in Order to pay him their Compliments on his Arrival, and to request his Assistance in reconciling them to their Father: But he rudely stopped them short, in the Midst of their Speech; called them a Parcel of disobedient Scoundrels, and bid them go about their Business. So saying, he turned upon his Heel, and with great Contempt left the Room.

CHAP. VII.

Now *Jack* and his Family finding themselves oppressed, insulted and tyrannised over in the most cruel and arbitrary Manner, advised with their Brethren what Measures should be adopted to relieve them from their intolerable Grievances. Their Brethren, one and all, united in sympathising with their Afflictions; they advised them to bear their Sufferings with Fortitude for a Time, assuring them that they looked on the Punishments and Insults laid upon them with the same Indignation as if they had been inflicted on themselves, and that they would stand by and support them to the last. But, above all, earnestly recommended it to them to be firm and steady in the Cause of Liberty and Justice, and never acknowledge the *Omnipotence* of their Mother in Law; nor yield to the Machinations of their Enemy the Steward.

In the mean Time, lest *Jack's* Family should suffer for Want of Necessaries, their great Gate being fast locked, liberal and very generous Contributions were raised among the several Families of the new Settlements, for their present Relief. This seasonable Bounty was handed to *Jack* over the Garden Wall—All Access to the Front of his House being shut up.

Now the Overseer observed that the Children and Domesticks of *Jack's* Family had frequent Meetings and Consultations together: Sometimes in the Garret, and sometimes in the Stable: Understanding, likewise, that an Agreement not to deal in their Father's Shop, until their Grievances should be redressed, was much talked of amongst them, he wrote a thundering Prohibition, much like a Pope's Bull,⁶⁰ which he caused to be pasted up in every Room in the House: In which he declared and protested that these Meetings were treasonable, traitorous and rebellious; contrary to the Dignity of their Father, and inconsistent with the *Omnipotence* of their Mother in Law: Denouncing also terrible Punishments against any two of the Family who should from thenceforth be seen whispering together, and strictly forbidding the Domesticks to hold any more Meetings in the Garret or Stable.

These harsh and unconstitutional Proceedings irritated *Jack* and the other inhabitants of the new Farm to such a Degree that *****

*Caetera desunt.*⁶¹

⁶⁰ Official document issued by the Pope of the Roman Catholic Church. To Protestant colonists, calling a governor's declaration a papal bull would be deeming it tyrannical and arbitrary.

⁶¹ Latin: "The rest is missing."

Declaration and Resolves of the First Continental Congress

A decisive step in the march toward American independence was the convening of the First Continental Congress in Philadelphia in September 1774. Parliament, earlier in 1774, in reaction to the Boston Tea Party (December 1773), had passed a series of tough laws—known in America as the Intolerable Acts or the Coercive Acts—aimed at punishing the people of Boston and Massachusetts, and at strengthening Parliament’s rule over all the colonies. Recognizing that this threat to one colony was in fact a threat to all, 56 representatives from 12 of the American colonies convened to produce a collective response. Some of the delegates already inclined toward independence, others strongly favored reconciliation but with redress of grievances. Despite large differences within the group, this statement, with its declaration of rights and specific resolutions, was adopted by the Congress on October 14, 1774.

What are the particular complaints or grievances expressed by the Congress? What is the tone of the Declaration, and what seems to be its desired effect and outcome? Do you regard it as a revolutionary document? If you were a delegate to the First Continental Congress, would you have signed it? Why or why not? If you were King George or a member of the British Parliament, how would you have received this Declaration and these Resolves, and what action would you have taken or recommended? How might the issuing of this Declaration have contributed to uniting the colonists?

Whereas, since the close of the last war, the British parliament, claiming a power, of right, to bind the people of America by statutes in all cases whatsoever, hath, in some acts, expressly imposed taxes on them, and in others, under various pretences, but in fact for the purpose of raising a revenue, hath imposed rates and duties payable in these colonies, established a board of commissioners, with unconstitutional powers, and extended the jurisdiction of courts of admiralty, not only for collecting the said duties, but for the trial of causes merely arising within the body of a county:

And whereas, in consequence of other statutes, judges, who before held only estates at will in their offices, have been made dependant on the crown alone for their salaries, and standing armies kept in times of peace: And whereas it has lately been resolved in parliament, that by force of a statute, made in the thirty-fifth year of the reign of King Henry the Eighth, colonists may be transported to England, and tried there upon accusations for treasons and misprisions, or concealments of treasons committed in the colonies, and by a late statute, such trials have been directed in cases therein mentioned:

And whereas, in the last session of parliament, three statutes were made; one entitled, “An act to discontinue, in such manner and for such time as are therein mentioned, the landing and discharging, lading,⁶² or shipping of goods, wares and merchandise, at the town, and within the harbour of Boston, in the province of Massachusetts-Bay in New

⁶² *The act of loading cargo.*

England;” another entitled, “An act for the better regulating the government of the province of Massachusetts-Bay in New England;” and another entitled, “An act for the impartial administration of justice, in the cases of persons questioned for any act done by them in the execution of the law, or for the suppression of riots and tumults, in the province of the Massachusetts-Bay in New England;” and another statute was then made, “for making more effectual provision for the government of the province of Quebec, etc.” All which statutes are impolitic, unjust, and cruel, as well as unconstitutional, and most dangerous and destructive of American rights:

And whereas, assemblies have been frequently dissolved, contrary to the rights of the people, when they attempted to deliberate on grievances; and their dutiful, humble, loyal, and reasonable petitions to the crown for redress, have been repeatedly treated with contempt, by his Majesty’s ministers of state:

The good people of the several colonies of New-Hampshire, Massachusetts-Bay, Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, Connecticut, New-York, New-Jersey, Pennsylvania, Newcastle, Kent, and Sussex on Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North-Carolina and South-Carolina, justly alarmed at these arbitrary proceedings of parliament and administration, have severally elected, constituted, and appointed deputies to meet, and sit in general Congress, in the city of Philadelphia, in order to obtain such establishment, as that their religion, laws, and liberties, may not be subverted: Whereupon the deputies so appointed being now assembled, in a full and free representation of these colonies, taking into their most serious consideration, the best means of attaining the ends aforesaid, do, in the first place, as Englishmen, their ancestors in like cases have usually done, for asserting and vindicating their rights and liberties, DECLARE,

That the inhabitants of the English colonies in North-America, by the immutable laws of nature, the principles of the English constitution, and the several charters or compacts, have the following RIGHTS:

Resolved, N.C.D.⁶³ 1. That they are entitled to life, liberty and property: and they have never ceded to any foreign power whatever, a right to dispose of either without their consent.

Resolved, N.C.D. 2. That our ancestors, who first settled these colonies, were at the time of their emigration from the mother country, entitled to all the rights, liberties, and immunities of free and natural-born subjects, within the realm of England.

Resolved, N.C.D. 3. That by such emigration they by no means forfeited, surrendered, or lost any of those rights, but that they were, and their descendants now are, entitled to the exercise and enjoyment of all such of them, as their local and other circumstances enable them to exercise and enjoy.

⁶³ *Nemine contradicente (Latin): without a dissenting vote or unanimously.*

Resolved, 4. That the foundation of English liberty, and of all free government, is a right in the people to participate in their legislative council: and as the English colonists are not represented, and from their local and other circumstances, cannot properly be represented in the British parliament, they are entitled to a free and exclusive power of legislation in their several provincial legislatures, where their right of representation can alone be preserved, in all cases of taxation and internal polity, subject only to the negative of their sovereign, in such manner as has been heretofore used and accustomed: But, from the necessity of the case, and a regard to the mutual interest of both countries, we cheerfully consent to the operation of such acts of the British parliament, as are bonfide, restrained to the regulation of our external commerce, for the purpose of securing the commercial advantages of the whole empire to the mother country, and the commercial benefits of its respective members; excluding every idea of taxation internal or external, for raising a revenue on the subjects, in America, without their consent.

Resolved, N.C.D. 5. That the respective colonies are entitled to the common law of England, and more especially to the great and inestimable privilege of being tried by their peers of the vicinage, according to the course of that law.

Resolved, N.C.D. 6. That they are entitled to the benefit of such of the English statutes, as existed at the time of their colonization; and which they have, by experience, respectively found to be applicable to their several local and other circumstances.

Resolved, N.C.D. 7. That these, his Majesty's colonies, are likewise entitled to all the immunities and privileges granted and confirmed to them by royal charters, or secured by their several codes of provincial laws.

Resolved, N.C.D. 8. That they have a right peaceably to assemble, consider of their grievances, and petition the king; and that all prosecutions, prohibitory proclamations, and commitments for the same, are illegal.

Resolved, N.C.D. 9. That the keeping a standing army in these colonies, in times of peace, without the consent of the legislature of that colony, in which such army is kept, is against law.

Resolved, N.C.D. 10. It is indispensably necessary to good government, and rendered essential by the English constitution, that the constituent branches of the legislature be independent of each other; that, therefore, the exercise of legislative power in several colonies, by a council appointed, during pleasure, by the crown, is unconstitutional, dangerous and destructive to the freedom of American legislation.

All and each of which the aforesaid deputies, in behalf of themselves, and their constituents, do claim, demand, and insist on, as their indubitable rights and liberties, which cannot be legally taken from them, altered or abridged by any power whatever, without their own consent, by their representatives in their several provincial legislature.

In the course of our inquiry, we find many infringements and violations of the foregoing rights, which, from an ardent desire, that harmony and mutual intercourse of affection and interest may be restored, we pass over for the present, and proceed to state such acts and measures as have been adopted since the last war, which demonstrate a system formed to enslave America.

Resolved, N.C.D. That the following acts of parliament are infringements and violations of the rights of the colonists; and that the repeal of them is essentially necessary, in order to restore harmony between Great Britain and the American colonies, viz.

The several acts of Geo. III. ch. 15, and ch. 34.-5 Geo. III. ch.25.-6 Geo. ch. 52.-7 Geo. III. ch. 41 and ch. 46.-8 Geo. III. ch. 22. which impose duties for the purpose of raising a revenue in America, extend the power of the admiralty courts beyond their ancient limits, deprive the American subject of trial by jury, authorize the judges certificate to indemnify the prosecutor from damages, that he might otherwise be liable to, requiring oppressive security from a claimant of ships and goods seized, before he shall be allowed to defend his property, and are subversive of American rights.

Also 12 Geo. III. ch. 24, intituled,⁶⁴ “An act for the better securing his majesty’s dockyards, magazines, ships, ammunition, and stores,” which declares a new offence in America, and deprives the American subject of a constitutional trial by jury of the vicinage,⁶⁵ by authorizing the trial of any person, charged with the committing any offence described in the said act, out of the realm, to be indicted and tried for the same in any shire or county within the realm.

Also the three acts passed in the last session of parliament, for stopping the port and blocking up the harbour of Boston, for altering the charter and government of Massachusetts-Bay, and that which is entitled, “An act for the better administration of justice, etc.”

Also the act passed in the same session for establishing the Roman Catholic religion, in the province of Quebec, abolishing the equitable system of English laws, and erecting a tyranny there, to the great danger (from so total a dissimilarity of religion, law and government) of the neighboring British colonies, by the assistance of whose blood and treasure the said country was conquered from France.

Also the act passed in the same session, for the better providing suitable quarters for officers and soldiers in his majesty’s service, in North-America.

Also, that the keeping a standing army in several of these colonies, in time of peace, without the consent of the legislature of that colony, in which such army is kept, is against law.

⁶⁴ To give a designation or title to (a legislative act, for example).

⁶⁵ A limited region around a particular area; a vicinity.

To these grievous acts and measures, Americans cannot submit, but in hopes their fellow subjects in Great Britain will, on a revision of them, restore us to that state, in which both countries found happiness and prosperity, we have for the present, only resolved to pursue the following peaceable measures: 1. To enter into a non-importation, non-consumption, and non-exportation agreement or association. 2. To prepare an address to the people of Great-Britain, and a memorial to the inhabitants of British America: and 3. To prepare a loyal address to his majesty, agreeable to resolutions already entered into.

Paul Revere's Ride

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW

On April 18, 1775, on the day before what would become the Battles of Lexington and Concord, Paul Revere, a Boston silversmith, was asked by Joseph Warren to ride to Lexington, Massachusetts to warn Samuel Adams and John Hancock that the British troops were marching to arrest them. After crossing the Charles River by rowboat, Revere rode to Lexington, alerting patriots along the way. Revere got word to Adams and Hancock, but was captured by a British Army patrol on his way to Concord. Revere was soon freed, and continued to aid the American cause.

“Paul Revere’s Ride” (1860), one of the best known poems by the celebrated American poet, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807–82), was published just days before the start of the Civil War, years after the event that it commemorates. In fact, the poem takes a largely forgotten Revolutionary War figure and turns him into a national hero. Although historians debate the extent to which Longfellow’s poem accurately depicts Paul Revere’s role in the Revolution, both the poem and its subject continue to be widely celebrated today.

Why does Longfellow address his poem to “my children”? Why should they remember Revere and his midnight ride in particular, given that there were other riders that night? Compare Longfellow’s account with the true story of the ride.⁶⁶ Why might Longfellow have changed certain details or events? Consider the repeated imagery of rest, death, and awakening throughout the poem. Who or what is being awakened in each instance? Note the shift from past tense in the earlier stanzas to the future tense (shall echo, will waken) in the final stanza. Who is Longfellow now addressing? What is the “word that shall echo forevermore!”? What is the “midnight message of Paul Revere”? What is the relation between the “message” and the “messenger”? Why might Longfellow’s poem have been so successful in 1860? Why does it continue to move people today?

Listen, my children, and you shall hear
Of the midnight ride of Paul Revere,
On the eighteenth of April, in Seventy-five;
Hardly a man is now alive
Who remembers that famous day and year.

He said to his friend, “If the British march
By land or sea from the town to-night,
Hang a lantern aloft in the belfry arch
Of the North Church tower as a signal light,—
One if by land, and two if by sea;
And I on the opposite shore will be,

⁶⁶Read Revere’s own account at www.paulreverehouse.org/ride/words.html.

Ready to ride and spread the alarm
Through every Middlesex village and farm,
For the country folk to be up and to arm.”

Then he said “Good night!” and with muffled oar
Silently rowed to the Charlestown shore,
Just as the moon rose over the bay,
Where swinging wide at her moorings lay
The Somerset, British man-of-war;
A phantom ship, with each mast and spar
Across the moon like a prison bar,
And a huge black hulk, that was magnified
By its own reflection in the tide.

Meanwhile, his friend through alley and street,
Wanders and watches, with eager ears,
Till in the silence around him he hears
The muster of men at the barrack door,
The sound of arms, and the tramp of feet,
And the measured tread of the grenadiers,
Marching down to their boats on the shore.

Then he climbed the tower of the Old North Church,
By the wooden stairs, with stealthy tread,
To the belfry-chamber overhead,
And startled the pigeons from their perch
On the sombre rafters, that round him made
Masses and moving shapes of shade,—
By the trembling ladder, steep and tall,
To the highest window in the wall,
Where he paused to listen and look down
A moment on the roofs of the town
And the moonlight flowing over all.

Beneath, in the churchyard, lay the dead,
In their night-encampment on the hill,
Wrapped in silence so deep and still
That he could hear, like a sentinel’s tread,
The watchful night-wind, as it went
Creeping along from tent to tent,
And seeming to whisper, “All is well!”
A moment only he feels the spell
Of the place and the hour, and the secret dread
Of the lonely belfry and the dead;
For suddenly all his thoughts are bent
On a shadowy something far away,

Where the river widens to meet the bay,—
A line of black that bends and floats
On the rising tide like a bridge of boats.

Meanwhile, impatient to mount and ride,
Booted and spurred, with a heavy stride
On the opposite shore walked Paul Revere.
Now he patted his horse's side,
Now he gazed at the landscape far and near,
Then, impetuous, stamped the earth,
And turned and tightened his saddle-girth;
But mostly he watched with eager search
The belfry-tower of the Old North Church,
As it rose above the graves on the hill,
Lonely and spectral and sombre and still.
And lo! as he looks, on the belfry's height
A glimmer, and then a gleam of light!
He springs to the saddle, the bridle he turns,
But lingers and gazes, till full on his sight
A second lamp in the belfry burns!

A hurry of hoofs in a village street,
A shape in the moonlight, a bulk in the dark,
And beneath, from the pebbles, in passing, a spark
Struck out by a steed flying fearless and fleet;
That was all! And yet, through the gloom and the light,
The fate of a nation was riding that night;
And the spark struck out by that steed, in his flight,
Kindled the land into flame with its heat.

He has left the village and mounted the steep,
And beneath him, tranquil and broad and deep,
Is the Mystic, meeting the ocean tides;
And under the alders that skirt its edge,
Now soft on the sand, now loud on the ledge,
Is heard the tramp of his steed as he rides.

It was twelve by the village clock
When he crossed the bridge into Medford town.
He heard the crowing of the cock,
And the barking of the farmer's dog,
And felt the damp of the river fog,
That rises after the sun goes down.

It was one by the village clock,
When he galloped into Lexington.

He saw the gilded weathercock
Swim in the moonlight as he passed,
And the meeting-house windows, black and bare,
Gaze at him with a spectral glare,
As if they already stood aghast
At the bloody work they would look upon.

It was two by the village clock,
When he came to the bridge in Concord town.
He heard the bleating of the flock,
And the twitter of birds among the trees,
And felt the breath of the morning breeze
Blowing over the meadow brown.
And one was safe and asleep in his bed
Who at the bridge would be first to fall,
Who that day would be lying dead,
Pierced by a British musket ball.

You know the rest. In the books you have read,
How the British Regulars fired and fled,—
How the farmers gave them ball for ball,
From behind each fence and farm-yard wall,
Chasing the red-coats down the lane,
Then crossing the fields to emerge again
Under the trees at the turn of the road,
And only pausing to fire and load.

So through the night rode Paul Revere;
And so through the night went his cry of alarm
To every Middlesex village and farm,—
A cry of defiance and not of fear,
A voice in the darkness, a knock at the door,
And a word that shall echo forevermore!
For, borne on the night-wind of the Past,
Through all our history, to the last,
In the hour of darkness and peril and need,
The people will waken and listen to hear
The hurrying hoof-beats of that steed,
And the midnight message of Paul Revere.

Give Me Liberty, or Give Me Death

PATRICK HENRY

At about the same time that events were moving in Massachusetts toward the start of the war for American Independence, other colonies were also gearing up for independence. After the Royal Governor Lord Dunmore dissolved the Virginia House of Burgesses in 1774, colonial leaders in Virginia organized the Virginia Convention, at the second meeting of which, on March 23, 1775, lawyer and fiery orator Patrick Henry (1736–99) delivered this famous speech in support of his proposal to arm the Virginia militia. On May 15 of the following year, seven weeks before the Declaration of Independence was signed in Philadelphia, the Virginia Convention declared Virginia’s independence from Britain, and Patrick Henry served as the state’s first postcolonial governor. This version of Henry’s speech comes from William Wirt’s Life and Character of Patrick Henry (1815); Wirt compiled the speech by corresponding with members of the convention who had been present.

What does Henry mean by saying that the question under discussion is “one of awful moment to the country”? How, and why, is awe related to the content of Henry’s speech? How does he defend his assertion that the choice is between freedom and slavery? Why does Henry say, regarding the imminent battle, “We have no election”? Why does he then say, of the coming war, “Let it come”? Are the colonists, on this account, passive victims of events or actors who shape them? How do you respond to Henry’s famous closing line, “I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty, or give me death!”? Do you think you would have been willing to follow his course?

No man thinks more highly than I do of the patriotism, as well as abilities, of the very worthy gentlemen who have just addressed the House. But different men often see the same subject in different lights; and, therefore, I hope it will not be thought disrespectful to those gentlemen if, entertaining, as I do, opinions of a character very opposite to theirs, I shall speak forth my sentiments freely and without reserve. This is no time for ceremony. The question before the House is one of awful moment to this country. For my own part, I consider it as nothing less than a question of freedom or slavery; and in proportion to the magnitude of the subject ought to be the freedom of the debate. It is only in this way that we can hope to arrive at truth, and fulfill the great responsibility which we hold to God and our country. Should I keep back my opinions at such a time, through fear of giving offense, I should consider myself as guilty of treason towards my country, and of an act of disloyalty toward the Majesty of Heaven, which I revere above all earthly kings.

Mr. President, it is natural to man to indulge in the illusions of hope. We are apt to shut our eyes against a painful truth, and listen to the song of that siren till she transforms us into beasts. Is this the part of wise men, engaged in a great and arduous struggle for liberty? Are we disposed to be of the number of those who, having eyes, see not, and, having ears, hear not, the things which so nearly concern their temporal salvation? For

my part, whatever anguish of spirit it may cost, I am willing to know the whole truth; to know the worst, and to provide for it.

I have but one lamp by which my feet are guided, and that is the lamp of experience. I know of no way of judging of the future but by the past. And judging by the past, I wish to know what there has been in the conduct of the British ministry for the last ten years to justify those hopes with which gentlemen have been pleased to solace themselves and the House. Is it that insidious smile with which our petition has been lately received? Trust it not, sir; it will prove a snare to your feet. Suffer not yourselves to be betrayed with a kiss. Ask yourselves how this gracious reception of our petition comports with those warlike preparations which cover our waters and darken our land. Are fleets and armies necessary to a work of love and reconciliation? Have we shown ourselves so unwilling to be reconciled that force must be called in to win back our love? Let us not deceive ourselves, sir. These are the implements of war and subjugation; the last arguments to which kings resort. I ask gentlemen, sir, what means this martial array, if its purpose be not to force us to submission? Can gentlemen assign any other possible motive for it? Has Great Britain any enemy, in this quarter of the world, to call for all this accumulation of navies and armies? No, sir, she has none. They are meant for us: they can be meant for no other. They are sent over to bind and rivet upon us those chains which the British ministry have been so long forging. And what have we to oppose to them? Shall we try argument? Sir, we have been trying that for the last ten years. Have we anything new to offer upon the subject? Nothing. We have held the subject up in every light of which it is capable; but it has been all in vain. Shall we resort to entreaty and humble supplication? What terms shall we find which have not been already exhausted? Let us not, I beseech you, sir, deceive ourselves. Sir, we have done everything that could be done to avert the storm which is now coming on. We have petitioned; we have remonstrated; we have supplicated; we have prostrated ourselves before the throne, and have implored its interposition to arrest the tyrannical hands of the ministry and Parliament. Our petitions have been slighted; our remonstrances have produced additional violence and insult; our supplications have been disregarded; and we have been spurned, with contempt, from the foot of the throne! In vain, after these things, may we indulge the fond hope of peace and reconciliation. There is no longer any room for hope. If we wish to be free—if we mean to preserve inviolate those inestimable privileges for which we have been so long contending—if we mean not basely to abandon the noble struggle in which we have been so long engaged, and which we have pledged ourselves never to abandon until the glorious object of our contest shall be obtained—we must fight! I repeat it, sir, we must fight! An appeal to arms and to the God of hosts is all that is left us!

They tell us, sir, that we are weak; unable to cope with so formidable an adversary. But when shall we be stronger? Will it be the next week, or the next year? Will it be when we are totally disarmed, and when a British guard shall be stationed in every house? Shall we gather strength by irresolution and inaction? Shall we acquire the means of effectual resistance by lying supinely on our backs and hugging the delusive phantom of hope, until our enemies shall have bound us hand and foot? Sir, we are not weak if we make a proper use of those means which the God of nature hath placed in our power. The millions of people, armed in the holy cause of liberty, and in such a country as that which

we possess, are invincible by any force which our enemy can send against us. Besides, sir, we shall not fight our battles alone. There is a just God who presides over the destinies of nations, and who will raise up friends to fight our battles for us. The battle, sir, is not to the strong alone; it is to the vigilant, the active, the brave. Besides, sir, we have no election. If we were base enough to desire it, it is now too late to retire from the contest. There is no retreat, but in submission and slavery! Our chains are forged! Their clanking may be heard on the plains of Boston! The war is inevitable—and let it come! I repeat it, sir, let it come!

It is in vain, sir, to extenuate the matter. Gentlemen may cry, Peace, Peace—but there is no peace! The war is actually begun! The next gale that sweeps from the north will bring to our ears the clash of resounding arms! Our brethren are already in the field! Why stand we here idle! What is it that gentlemen wish? What would they have? Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty, or give me death!

Declaration of the Causes and Necessity of Taking up Arms

The Second Continental Congress was convened in May 1775, as relations with Britain were deteriorating and war was looming. The Congress merged the several continental militias into the Continental Army and appointed George Washington its commanding general. Yielding to those delegates who still hoped to avoid full-scale war and further bloodshed, the Congress approved the Olive Branch Petition which was forwarded to the king. At the same time, however, on July 6, 1775 the Congress also approved this Declaration of the Causes and Necessity of Taking up Arms, which outlines the colonists' increasing frustration with acts by the British Parliament that the colonists thought to be unconstitutional. Earlier drafts of the declaration were written by John Rutledge (South Carolina; 1739–1800) and Thomas Jefferson (Virginia; 1743–1826); the final act was presented by John Dickinson (Pennsylvania and Delaware; 1732–1808).

Why, according to this Declaration, are the colonists taking up arms? What are “the causes,” and what is “the necessity” of their doing so? Have they offered a compelling justification? What, according to this Declaration, is the goal of the colonists? In the name of what, and for what purpose, are they resisting? Would you have signed this Declaration? Would you also have signed the Olive Branch Petition? Can one, in good conscience, prepare for war even as one petitions for peace? Can one, in good conscience, not prepare for war under these circumstances?

If it was possible for men, who exercise their reason, to believe, that the divine Author of our existence intended a part of the human race to hold an absolute property in, and an unbounded power over others, marked out by his infinite goodness and wisdom, as the objects of a legal domination never rightfully resistible, however severe and oppressive, the Inhabitants of these Colonies might at least require from the Parliament of Great Britain some evidence, that this dreadful authority over them has been granted to that body. But a reverence for our great Creator, principles of humanity, and the dictates of common sense, must convince all those who reflect upon the subject, that Government was instituted to promote the welfare of mankind, and ought to be administered for the attainment of that end. The legislature of Great Britain, however, stimulated by an inordinate passion for a power, not only unjustifiable, but which they know to be peculiarly reprobated by the very Constitution of that kingdom, and desperate of success in any mode of contest where regard should be had to truth, law, or right, have at length, deserting those, attempted to effect their cruel and impolitic purpose of enslaving these Colonies by violence, and have thereby rendered it necessary for us to close with their last appeal from Reason to Arms. Yet, however blinded that Assembly may be, by their intemperate rage for unlimited domination, so to slight justice and the opinion of mankind, we esteem ourselves bound, by obligations of respect to the rest of the world, to make known the justice of our cause.

Our forefathers, inhabitants of the Island of Great Britain, left their native land, to seek on these shores a residence for civil and religious freedom. At the expense of their

blood, at the hazard of their fortunes, without the least charge to the Country from which they removed, by unceasing labor, and an unconquerable spirit, they effected settlements in the distant and inhospitable wilds of America, then filled with numerous and warlike nations of barbarians. Societies or Governments, vested with perfect Legislatures, were formed under Charters from the Crown, and a harmonious intercourse was established between the Colonies and the Kingdom from which they derived their origin. The mutual benefits of this union became in a short time so extraordinary, as to excite astonishment. It is universally confessed, that the amazing increase of the wealth, strength, and navigation of the Realm, arose from this source; and the Minister who so wisely and successfully directed the measures of Great Britain in the late war, publicly declared, that these Colonies enabled her to triumph over her enemies. Towards the conclusion of that war, it pleased our Sovereign to make a change in his Councils. From that fatal moment, the affairs of the British Empire began to fall into confusion, and gradually sliding from the summit of glorious prosperity, to which they had been advanced by the virtues and abilities of one man, are at length distracted by the convulsions that now shake it to its deepest foundations. The new Ministry finding the brave foes of Britain, though frequently defeated, yet still contending, took up the unfortunate idea of granting them a hasty peace, and of then subduing her faithful friends.

These devoted Colonies were judged to be in such a state as to present victories without bloodshed, and all the easy emoluments of statutable plunder. The uninterrupted tenor of their peaceable and respectful behavior, from the beginning of colonization; their dutiful, zealous, and useful services during the war, though so recently and amply acknowledged in the most honorable manner by His Majesty, by the late King, and by Parliament, could not save them from the meditated innovations. Parliament was influenced to adopt the pernicious project; and assuming a new power over them, have, in the course of eleven years, given such decisive specimens of the spirit and consequences attending this power, as to leave no doubt concerning the effects of acquiescence under it. They have undertaken to give and grant our money without our consent, though we have ever exercised an exclusive right to dispose of our own property; statutes have been passed for extending the jurisdiction of Courts of Admiralty and Vice-Admiralty beyond their ancient limits; for depriving us of the accustomed and inestimable privilege of Trial by Jury, in cases affecting both life and property; for suspending the Legislature of one of the Colonies; for interdicting all commerce to the capital of another; and for altering fundamentally the form of Government established by Charter, and secured by acts of its own Legislature, solemnly confirmed by the Crown; for exempting the “murderers” of Colonists from legal trial, and, in effect, from punishment; for erecting in a neighboring Province, acquired by the joint arms of Great Britain and America, a despotism dangerous to our very existence; and for quartering soldiers upon the Colonists in time of profound peace. It has also been resolved in Parliament, that Colonists charged with committing certain offences, shall be transported to England to be tried.

But why should we enumerate our injuries in detail? By one statute it is declared that Parliament can “of right make laws to bind us in all cases whatsoever.” What is to defend us against so enormous, so unlimited a power? Not a single man of those who assume it is chosen by us, or is subject to our control or influence; but, on the contrary, they are all

of them exempt from the operation of such laws, and an American revenue, if not diverted from the ostensible purposes for which it is raised, would actually lighten their own burdens, in proportion as they increase ours. We saw the misery to which such despotism would reduce us. We, for ten years, incessantly and ineffectually besieged the Throne as supplicants; we reasoned, we remonstrated with Parliament, in the most mild and decent language. But Administration, sensible that we should regard these oppressive measures as freemen ought to do, sent over fleets and armies to enforce them. The indignation of the Americans was roused, it is true; but it was the indignation of a virtuous, loyal, and affectionate people. A Congress of Delegates from the United Colonies was assembled at Philadelphia, on the fifth day of last September. We resolved again to offer an humble and dutiful petition to the King, and also addressed our fellow-subjects of Great Britain. We have pursued every temperate, every respectful measure; we have even proceeded to break off our commercial intercourse with our fellow-subjects, as the last peaceable admonition, that our attachment to no Nation upon earth should supplant our attachment to liberty. This, we flattered ourselves, was the ultimate step of the controversy: But subsequent events have shown how vain was this hope of finding moderation in our enemies.

Several threatening expressions against the Colonies were inserted in His Majesty's Speech; our Petition, though we were told it was a decent one, and that His Majesty had been pleased to receive it graciously, and to promise laying it before his Parliament, was huddled into both Houses among a bundle of American papers, and there neglected. The Lords and Commons, in their Address, in the month of February, said, that "a rebellion at that time actually existed within the Province of Massachusetts-Bay; and that those concerned in it had been countenanced and encouraged by unlawful combinations and engagements entered into by His Majesty's subjects in several of the other Colonies; and, therefore, they besought His Majesty, that he would take the most effectual measures to enforce due obedience to the laws and authority of the supreme Legislature." Soon after, the commercial intercourse of whole Colonies with foreign countries, and with each other, was cut off by an act of Parliament; by another, several of them were entirely prohibited from the Fisheries in the seas near their coasts, on which they always depended for their sustenance; and large re-enforcements of ships and troops were immediately sent over to General Gage.

Fruitless were all the entreaties, arguments, and eloquence of an illustrious band of the most distinguished Peers and Commoners, who nobly and strenuously asserted the justice of our cause, to stay, or even to mitigate the heedless fury with which these accumulated and unexampled outrages were hurried on. Equally fruitless was the interference of the City of London, of Bristol, and many other respectable Towns, in our favor. Parliament adopted an insidious maneuver, calculated to divide us, to establish a perpetual auction of taxations, where Colony should bid against Colony, all of them uninformed what ransom would redeem their lives; and thus to extort from us, at the point of the bayonet, the unknown sums that should be sufficient to gratify, if possible to gratify, Ministerial rapacity, with the miserable indulgence left to us of raising, in our own mode, the prescribed tribute. What terms more rigid and humiliating could have

been dictated by remorseless victors to conquered enemies? In our circumstances to accept them, would be to deserve them.

Soon after intelligence of these proceedings arrived on this Continent, General Gage, who, in the course of the last year had taken possession of the Town of Boston, in the Province of Massachusetts-Bay, and still occupied it as a garrison, on the 19th day of April sent out from that place a large detachment of his army, who made an unprovoked assault on the inhabitants of the said Province, at the Town of Lexington, as appears by the affidavits of a great number of persons, some of whom were officers and soldiers of that detachment, murdered eight of the inhabitants, and wounded many others. From thence the troops proceeded in warlike array to the Town of Concord, where they set upon another party of the inhabitants of the same Province, killing several and wounding more, until compelled to retreat by the country people suddenly assembled to repel this cruel aggression. Hostilities, thus commenced by the British Troops, have been since prosecuted by them without regard to faith or reputation. The inhabitants of Boston, being confined within that Town by the General, their Governor, and having, in order to procure their dismissal,⁶⁷ entered into a treaty with him, it was stipulated that the said inhabitants, having deposited their arms with their own Magistrates, should have liberty to depart, taking with them their other effects. They accordingly delivered up their arms; but in open violation of honor, in defiance of the obligation of treaties, which even savage nations esteemed sacred, the Governor ordered the arms deposited as aforesaid, that they might be preserved for their owners, to be seized by a body of soldiers; detained the greatest part of the inhabitants in the Town, and compelled the few who were permitted to retire, to leave their most valuable effects behind.

By this perfidy wives are separated from their husbands, children from their parents, the aged and the sick from their relations and friends, who wish to attend and comfort them; and those who have been used to live in plenty, and even elegance, are reduced to deplorable distress.

The General, further emulating his Ministerial masters, by a Proclamation, bearing date on the 12th day of June, after venting the grossest falsehoods and calumnies against the good people of these Colonies, proceeds to “declare them all, either by name or description, to be rebels and traitors; to supersede the course of the common law, and instead thereof to publish and order the use and exercise of the law martial.” His troops have butchered our countrymen; have wantonly burnt Charlestown, besides a considerable number of houses in other places; our ships and vessels are seized; the necessary supplies of provisions are intercepted, and he is exerting his utmost power to spread destruction and devastation around him.

We have received certain intelligence, that General Carleton, the Governor of Canada, is instigating the people of that Province, and the Indians, to fall upon us; and we have but too much reason to apprehend, that schemes have been formed to excite domestic enemies against us. In brief, a part of these Colonies now feel, and all of them are sure of feeling, as far as the vengeance of Administration can inflict them, the

⁶⁷ *To direct or allow to leave.*

complicated calamities of fire, sword, and famine. We are reduced to the alternative of choosing an unconditional submission to the tyranny of irritated Ministers, or resistance by force. The latter is our choice. We have counted the cost of this contest, and find nothing so dreadful as voluntary slavery. Honor, justice, and humanity, forbid us tamely to surrender that freedom which we received from our gallant ancestors, and which our innocent posterity have a right to receive from us. We cannot endure the infamy and guilt of resigning succeeding generations to that wretchedness which inevitably awaits them, if we basely entail hereditary bondage upon them.

Our cause is just. Our union is perfect. Our internal resources are great, and, if necessary, foreign assistance is undoubtedly attainable. We gratefully acknowledge, as signal instances of the Divine favor towards us, that His providence would not permit us to be called into this severe controversy until we were grown up to our present strength, had been previously exercised in warlike operations, and possessed of the means of defending ourselves. With hearts fortified with these animating reflections, we most solemnly, before God and the world, declare, that, exerting the utmost energy of those powers which our beneficent Creator hath graciously bestowed upon us, the arms we have been compelled by our enemies to assume, we will, in defiance of every hazard, with unabating firmness and perseverance, employ for the preservation of our liberties; being, with one mind, resolved to die Freemen rather than live Slaves.

Lest this declaration should disquiet the minds of our friends and fellow-subjects in any part of the Empire, we assure them that we mean not to dissolve that union which has so long and so happily subsisted between us, and which we sincerely wish to see restored. Necessity has not yet driven us into that desperate measure, or induced us to excite any other nation to war against them. We have not raised armies with ambitious designs of separating from Great Britain, and establishing independent states. We fight not for glory or for conquest. We exhibit to mankind the remarkable spectacle of a people attacked by unprovoked enemies, without any imputation or even suspicion of offence. They boast of their privileges and civilization, and yet proffer no milder conditions than servitude or death.

In our own native land, in defense of the freedom that is our birth-right, and which we ever enjoyed till the late violation of it; for the protection of our property, acquired solely by the honest industry of our forefathers and ourselves, against violence actually offered, we have taken up arms. We shall lay them down when hostilities shall cease on the part of the aggressors, and all danger of their being renewed shall be removed, and not before.

With an humble confidence in the mercies of the supreme and impartial Judge and Ruler of the Universe, we most devoutly implore his divine goodness to protect us happily through this great conflict, to dispose our adversaries to reconciliation on reasonable terms, and thereby to relieve the Empire from the calamities of civil war.

A Proclamation for Suppressing Rebellion and Sedition

GEORGE III

King George III (1738–1820) refused to receive the Olive Branch Petition adopted by the Second Continental Congress in July 1775 and sent to the king in the hope that war might yet be avoided. Instead, on August 23, 1775 he responded to the hostilities that had already erupted in the American colonies with this Proclamation, declaring that the colonists “have at length proceeded to open and avowed rebellion” and calling on all “subjects of this Realm” to aid and assist in the suppression of the rebellion. This proclamation effectively ended many colonists’ hope that a useful and peaceable agreement could be reached between the American colonists and Great Britain.

Forget for a while that you are friendly to the cause of the colonists. Can you make the case for the king? Why does he insist that the colonists are rebels and traitors? Years later, Abraham Lincoln would insist that the Southern states that attempted to secede from the Union were in fact rebels against the Union, guilty of treasonous conduct, who must be militarily crushed. Can you distinguish the two cases, and if so, how?

Whereas many of our subjects in divers parts of our Colonies and Plantations in North-America, misled by dangerous and ill designing men, and forgetting the allegiance which they owe to the power that has protected and supported them; after various disorderly acts committed in disturbance of the public peace, to the obstruction of lawful commerce, and to the oppression of our loyal subjects carrying on the same; have at length proceeded to open and avowed rebellion, by arraying themselves in a hostile manner, to withstand the execution of the law, and traitorously preparing, ordering and levying war against us: And whereas, there is reason to apprehend that such rebellion hath been much promoted and encouraged by the traitorous correspondence, counsels and comfort of divers wicked and desperate persons within this Realm: To the end therefore, that none of our subjects may neglect or violate their duty through ignorance thereof, or through any doubt of the protection which the law will afford to their loyalty and zeal, we have thought fit, by and with the advice of our Privy Council, to issue our this Royal Proclamation, hereby declaring, that not only all our Officers, civil and military, are obliged to exert their utmost endeavours to suppress such rebellion, and to bring the traitors to justice, but that all our subjects of this Realm, and the dominions thereunto belonging, are bound by law to be aiding and assisting in the suppression of such rebellion, and to disclose and make known all traitorous conspiracies and attempts against us, our crown and dignity; and we do accordingly strictly charge and command all our Officers, as well civil as military, and all others our obedient and loyal subjects, to use their utmost endeavours to withstand and suppress such rebellion, and to disclose and make known all treasons and traitorous conspiracies which they shall know to be against us, our crown and dignity; and for that purpose, that they transmit to one of our principal Secretaries of State, or other proper officer, due and full information of all persons who shall be found carrying on correspondence with, or in any manner or degree aiding or abetting the persons now in

open arms and rebellion against our Government, within any of our Colonies and Plantations in North-America, in order to bring to condign⁶⁸ punishment the authors, perpetrators, and abettors of such traitorous designs.

Given at our Court at St. James's the twenty-third day of August, one thousand seven hundred and seventy-five, in the fifteenth year of our reign.

GOD save the KING.

⁶⁸ *Appropriate to the crime or wrongdoing; fitting and deserved.*

Account of the Vote for Independence from *The Works of John Adams*

JOHN ADAMS

The true formal declaration of American independence came not on July 4, 1776 but two days earlier, when the Continental Congress voted to approve the following resolution, introduced by Richard Henry Lee of Virginia: "Resolved, That these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States, that they are absolved from all allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain is, and ought to be, totally dissolved. That it is expedient forthwith to take the most effectual measures for forming foreign Alliances. That a plan of confederation be prepared and transmitted to the respective Colonies for their consideration and approbation." The decision for independence was not a foregone conclusion, and arguments raged with strong support on both sides.

Voting on the Lee resolution, originally proposed on June 7, 1776, was postponed for three weeks, while delegates worked to build support for the measure and sought direction from their home legislatures. This personal account of the final deliberation and vote, written 29 years afterwards by John Adams (1735–1826), makes clear the human drama attending the decision and the role of specific persons in its success, including Adams' own impassioned pleas for independence.

As latter-day beneficiaries of American independence from Great Britain, we tend to take for granted the wisdom of the decision. Why was the decision so difficult? Can you develop the arguments against independence? Why does Adams say that he regarded the question to be "so simple"? How important was oratory in the result? Is Adams exaggerating when he says that none of the ancient orators of Greece and Rome ever faced a question "of more importance to his country and to the world"? Why, and how, might the question of American independence be important to the world?

Friday, June 28. A new delegation appeared from New Jersey. Mr. William Livingston and all others, who had hitherto resisted independence, were left out. Richard Stockton, Francis Hopkinson, and Dr. John Witherspoon, were new members.

Monday, July 1. A resolution of the Convention of Maryland, passed the 28th of June, was laid before Congress, and read, as follows:

That the instructions given to their deputies in December last, be recalled, and the restrictions therein contained removed; and that their deputies be authorized and empowered to concur with the other United Colonies, or a majority of them, in declaring the United Colonies free and independent States; in forming a compact between them, and in making foreign alliances, &c. . . .

I am not able to recollect whether it was on this or some preceding day, that the greatest and most solemn debate was had on the question of independence. The subject had been in contemplation for more than a year, and frequent discussions had been had concerning it. At one time and another all the arguments for it and against it had been exhausted, and were become familiar. I expected no more would be said in public, but that the question would be put and decided. Mr. Dickinson, however, was determined to bear his testimony against it with more formality. He had prepared himself apparently with great labor and ardent zeal, and in a speech of great length, and with all his eloquence, he combined together all that had before been written in pamphlets and newspapers, and all that had from time to time been said in Congress by himself and others. He conducted the debate not only with great ingenuity and eloquence, but with equal politeness and candor, and was answered in the same spirit.

No member rose to answer him, and after waiting some time, in hopes that some one less obnoxious than myself, who had been all along for a year before, and still was, represented and believed to be the author of all the mischief, would move, I determined to speak.

It has been said, by some of our historians, that I began by an invocation to the god of eloquence. This is a misrepresentation. Nothing so puerile as this fell from me. I began, by saying that this was the first time of my life that I had ever wished for the talents and eloquence of the ancient orators of Greece and Rome, for I was very sure that none of them ever had before him a question of more importance to his country and to the world. They would probably, upon less occasions than this, have begun by solemn invocations to their divinities for assistance; but the question before me appeared so simple, that I had confidence enough in the plain understanding and common sense that had been given me, to believe that I could answer, to the satisfaction of the House, all the arguments which had been produced, notwithstanding the abilities which had been displayed, and the eloquence with which they had been enforced. Mr. Dickinson, some years afterwards, published his speech.⁶⁹ I had made no preparation beforehand, and never committed any minutes of mine to writing. But if I had a copy of Mr. Dickinson's before me, I would now, after nine and twenty years have elapsed, endeavor to recollect mine.

Before the final question was put, the new delegates from New Jersey came in, and Mr. Stockton, Dr. Witherspoon, and Mr. Hopkinson, very respectable characters, expressed a great desire to hear the arguments. All was silence; no one would speak; all eyes were turned upon me. Mr. Edward Rutledge came to me and said, laughing, "Nobody will speak but you upon this subject. You have all the topics so ready, that you must satisfy the gentlemen from New Jersey." I answered him, laughing, that it had so much the air of exhibiting like an actor or gladiator, for the entertainment of the audience, that I was ashamed to repeat what I had said twenty times before, and I thought nothing new could be advanced by me. The New Jersey gentlemen, however, still insisting on hearing at least a recapitulation of the arguments, and no other gentleman being willing to speak, I summed up the reasons, objections, and answers, in as concise a manner as I

⁶⁹ Read Dickinson's speech at <http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/arguments-against-the-independence-of-these-colonies/>.

could, till at length the Jersey gentlemen said they were fully satisfied and ready for the question, which was then put, and determined in the affirmative.

Declaration of Independence

On July 4, 1776, two days after it adopted the Lee Resolution that declared the united colonies' independence from Great Britain, the Continental Congress approved the Declaration of Independence, drafted by Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826), which explains that decision by “declar[ing] the causes which impel them to the separation.” These causes are laid out in the bill of particular charges against the king, the listing of which constitutes the bulk of the Declaration. But in addition, the opening paragraphs of the Declaration provide the first and most authoritative statement of what we might call “the American creed.” For in separating from Great Britain, the united colonies ground their claim to political independence in a teaching about individual human rights—to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness—to which rightful freedoms all human beings are said to be equally entitled.

In articulating the four self-evident truths (natural equality, inalienable individual rights, government founded on the consent of the governed, and the people's right of revolution) and compiling the list of the king's abuses, Jefferson claims to have done nothing more than “place before mankind the common sense of the subject.” “It was,” he explained years later, “intended to be an expression of the American mind.”⁷⁰ Even so, this birth announcement of the American Republic reveals that it is the first nation anywhere to be founded not on ties of blood, soil, or lineage but on a set of philosophical principles for which the document—and the nation—are justly celebrated.

Careful study of the text will attend to both the universal principles and the particular grievances, as well as to the question of the relation between them. What, according to the Declaration, makes the American colonists a distinct “people,” entitled to a

⁷⁰ *In a letter to Henry Lee, dated May 8, 1825, Jefferson reflected on the sources of the Declaration of Independence:*

That George Mason was the author of the bill of rights, and the constitution founded on it, the evidence of the day established fully in my mind. Of the paper you mention, purporting to be instructions to the Virginia delegation in Congress, I have no recollection. If it were anything more than a project of some private hand, that is to say, had any such instructions been ever given by the convention, they would appear in the journals, which we possess entire. But with respect to our rights, and the acts of the British government contravening those rights, there was but one opinion on this side of the water. All American whigs thought alike on these subjects. When forced, therefore, to resort to arms for redress, an appeal to the tribunal of the world was deemed proper for our justification. This was the object of the Declaration of Independence. Not to find out new principles, or new arguments, never before thought of, not merely to say things which had never been said before; but to place before mankind the common sense of the subject, in terms so plain and firm as to command their assent, and to justify ourselves in the independent stand we are compelled to take. Neither aiming at originality of principle or sentiment, nor yet copied from any particular and previous writing, it was intended to be an expression of the American mind, and to give to that expression the proper tone and spirit called for by the occasion. All its authority rests then on the harmonizing sentiments of the day, whether expressed in conversation, in letters, printed essays, or in the elementary books of public right, as Aristotle, Cicero, Locke, Sidney, &c. The historical documents which you mention as in your possession, ought all to be found, and I am persuaded you will find, to be corroborative of the facts and principles advanced in that Declaration. Be pleased to accept assurances of my great esteem and respect.

Declaration of Independence

“separate and equal station” among the peoples of the world? What is meant by the Laws of Nature and Nature’s God, and how are these related to our “peoplehood”? What is a “right,” and where do individual rights come from? What is a “self-evident” truth, and in what self-evidently true sense can we say that “all men are created equal”? How does the Declaration understand the relation between the individual and the collective? Between our rights and our responsibilities (or duties)? Do we Americans today still hold these truths (or any truths) to be self-evident?

Review carefully the list of grievances. Which ones strike you as most egregious? To what do they all add up? Why does the document emphasize the deeds of the king, downplaying the complicit role of Parliament? What is the relation between these grievances and the philosophical principles stated earlier? Are you persuaded that revolution was in fact justified? Imagining yourself in Philadelphia in July 1776, would you have pledged your Life, Fortune, and sacred Honor to support this Declaration? Would you—and in the name of what?—make such a pledge today to support the American Republic, should comparable support be needed?

IN CONGRESS, JULY 4, 1776

The Unanimous Declaration of the Thirteen United States of America

When in the Course of human Events, it becomes necessary for one People to dissolve the Political Bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal Station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature’s God entitle them, a decent Respect to the Opinions of Mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness—That to secure these Rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just Powers from the Consent of the Governed,—That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these Ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its Foundation on such Principles, and organizing its Powers in such Form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient Causes; and accordingly all Experience hath shewn that Mankind are more disposed to suffer, while Evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the Forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long Train of Abuses and Usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object, evinces a Design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their Right, it is their Duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security.—Such has been the patient Sufferance of these Colonies; and such is now the Necessity which constrains them to alter their former Systems of Government. The History of the present King of Great-Britain is a History of repeated Injuries and Usurpations, all having in direct Object the Establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States. To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a candid World.

He has refused his Assent to Laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public Good.

He has forbidden his Governors to pass Laws of immediate and pressing Importance, unless suspended in their Operation till his Assent should be obtained; and when so suspended, he has utterly neglected to attend to them.

He has refused to pass other Laws for the Accommodation of large Districts of People, unless those People would relinquish the Right of Representation in the Legislature, a right inestimable to them, and formidable to Tyrants only.

He has called together Legislative Bodies at Places unusual, uncomfortable, and distant from the Depository of their Public Records, for the sole Purpose of fatiguing them into Compliance with his Measures.

He has dissolved Representative Houses repeatedly, for opposing with manly Firmness his Invasions on the Rights of the People.

He has refused for a long Time, after such Dissolutions, to cause others to be elected; whereby the Legislative Powers, incapable of Annihilation, have returned to the People at large for their exercise; the State remaining in the mean time exposed to all the Dangers of Invasion from without, and Convulsions within.

He has endeavoured to prevent the Population of these States; for that Purpose obstructing the Laws for Naturalization of Foreigners; refusing to pass others to encourage their Migrations hither, and raising the Conditions of new Appropriations of Lands.

He has obstructed the Administration of Justice, by refusing his Assent to Laws for establishing Judiciary Powers.

He has made Judges dependent on his Will alone, for the tenure of their Offices, and the Amount and Payment of their Salaries.

He has erected a Multitude of new Offices, and sent hither Swarms of Officers to harass our People and eat out their Substance.

He has kept among us, in Times of Peace, Standing Armies without the consent of our Legislatures.

He has affected to render the Military independent of and superior to the Civil Power.

He has combined with others to subject us to a Jurisdiction foreign to our Constitution, and unacknowledged by our Laws; giving his Assent to their Acts of pretended Legislation:

Declaration of Independence

For quartering large Bodies of Armed Troops among us:

For protecting them, by a mock Trial, from Punishment for any Murders which they should commit on the Inhabitants of these States:

For cutting off our Trade with all parts of the World:

For imposing Taxes on us without our Consent:

For depriving us, in many Cases, of the Benefits of Trial by Jury:

For transporting us beyond Seas to be tried for pretended Offences:

For abolishing the free System of English Laws in a neighbouring Province, establishing therein an arbitrary Government, and enlarging its Boundaries, so as to render it at once an Example and fit Instrument for introducing the same absolute Rule into these Colonies:

For taking away our Charters, abolishing our most valuable Laws, and altering fundamentally the Forms of our Governments:

For suspending our own Legislatures, and declaring themselves invested with Power to legislate for us in all Cases whatsoever.

He has abdicated Government here, by declaring us out of his Protection and waging War against us.

He has plundered our Seas, ravaged our Coasts, burnt our Towns, and destroyed the Lives of our People.

He is, at this Time transporting large Armies of foreign Mercenaries to compleat the Works of Death, Desolation, and Tyranny, already begun with circumstances of Cruelty and Perfidy, scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous Ages, and totally unworthy the Head of a civilized Nation.

He has constrained our fellow Citizens taken Captive on the high Seas to bear Arms against their Country, to become the Executioners of their Friends and Brethren, or to fall themselves by their Hands.

He has excited domestic Insurrections amongst us, and has endeavoured to bring on the Inhabitants of our Frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages, whose known Rule of Warfare, is an undistinguished Destruction of all Ages, Sexes and Conditions.

In every stage of these Oppressions we have Petitioned for Redress in the most humble Terms: Our repeated Petitions have been answered only by repeated Injury. A

Prince, whose Character is thus marked by every act which may define a Tyrant, is unfit to be the Ruler of a free People.

Nor have we been wanting in Attentions to our British Brethren. We have warned them from Time to Time of Attempts by their Legislature to extend an unwarrantable Jurisdiction over us. We have reminded them of the Circumstances of our Emigration and Settlement here. We have appealed to their native Justice and Magnanimity, and we have conjured them by the Ties of our common Kindred to disavow these Usurpations, which, would inevitably interrupt our Connections and Correspondence. They too have been deaf to the Voice of Justice and of Consanguinity. We must, therefore, acquiesce in the Necessity, which denounces our Separation, and hold them, as we hold the rest of Mankind, Enemies in War, in Peace, Friends.

We, therefore, the Representatives of the united States of America, in General Congress, Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the World for the Rectitude of our Intentions, do, in the Name, and by Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly Publish and Declare, That these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be, Free and Independent States; that they are absolved from all Allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political Connection between them and the State of Great-Britain, is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as Free and Independent States, they have full Power to levy War, conclude Peace, contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and Things which Independent States may of right do.—And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm Reliance on the Protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor.

John Hancock
 Samuel Chase
 Wm. Paca
 Thos. Stone
 Charles Carroll of Carrollton
 George Wythe
 Richard Henry Lee
 Th. Jefferson
 Benj. Harrison
 Thos. Nelson Jr.
 Francis Lightfoot Lee
 Carter Braxton
 Robt. Morris
 Benjamin Rush
 Benj. Franklin
 John Morton
 Geo. Clymer
 Jas. Smith
 Geo. Taylor
 James Wilson
 Geo. Ross

Caesar Rodney
 Geo. Read
 Thom. Kean
 Wm. Floyd
 Phil. Livingston
 Arthur Middleton
 Button Gwinnett
 Fran. Lewis
 Lewis Morris
 Rich. Stockton
 Jn. Witherspoon
 Fra. Hopkinson
 John Hart
 Abra. Clark
 Josiah Bartlett
 Wm. Whipple
 Saml. Adams
 John Adams
 Robt. Treat Paine
 Elbridge Gerry
 Step. Hopkins

Declaration of Independence

William Ellery
Roger Sherman
Saml. Huntington
Wm. Williams
Oliver Wolcott
Matthew Thornton
Wm. Hooper

Joseph Hewes
John Penn
Edward Rutledge
Thos. Heyward Jun.
Thomas Lynch Jun.
Lyman Hall
Geo. Walton

No Alternative than Independence

SAMUEL ADAMS

Samuel Adams (1722–1803) was one of the most ardent proponents of American independence. He was a pillar of the Boston Town Meeting, a delegate to both the First and Second Continental Congresses, and a signer of the Declaration of Independence; later he would help draft the Articles of Confederation. This selection is excerpted from a speech on the goal of independence that Adams gave on August 1, 1776, before the Continental Congress in the State House in Philadelphia.

Why does Adams believe that the American colonists have no alternative but independence? What does he mean by suggesting that Providence is with us and that the hand of Heaven has made us the “instruments and means in the great providential dispensation”? How does this claim contribute to the persuasive power of his speech? What is the meaning of his reference to the Roman decemviri⁷¹ and of his appeal, “Be yourselves the authors of those laws on which your happiness depends”? Why does Adams believe that the Americans will succeed?

We are now on this continent, to the astonishment of the world, three millions of souls united in one cause. We have large armies, well disciplined and appointed, with commanders inferior to none in military skill, and superior in activity and zeal. We are furnished with arsenals and stores beyond our most sanguine expectations, and foreign nations are waiting to crown our success by their alliances. There are instances of, I would say, an almost astonishing Providence in our favor; our success has staggered our enemies, and almost given faith to infidels; so we may truly say it is not our own arm which has saved us.

The hand of Heaven appears to have led us on to be, perhaps, humble instruments and means in the great Providential dispensation, which is completing. We have fled from the political Sodom; let us not look back, lest we perish and become a monument of infamy and derision to the world. For can we ever expect more unanimity and a better preparation for defense; more infatuation of counsel among our enemies, and more valor and zeal among ourselves? The same force and resistance, which are sufficient to procure us our liberties will secure us a glorious independence and support us in the dignity of free, imperial states. We cannot suppose that our opposition has made a corrupt and dissipated nation more friendly to America, or created in them a greater respect for the rights of mankind. We can therefore expect a restoration and establishment of our privileges, and a compensation for the injuries we have received, from their want of power, from their fears, and not from their virtues. The unanimity and valor, which will

⁷¹ (Latin: “ten men”), in ancient Rome, any official commission of 10. The designation is most often used in reference to decemviri legibus scribundis, a temporary legislative commission that replaced the regular magistracy from 451 to 449 BC. It was directed to construct a code of laws that would resolve the power struggle between the patricians and the plebeians. The first board of decemvirs ruled with moderation, but the second board became tyrannical and was forced to abdicate.

effect an honorable peace, can render a future contest for our liberties unnecessary. He who has strength to chain down the wolf is a madman if he let him loose without drawing his teeth and paring his nails. . . .

We have no other alternative than independence, or the most ignominious and galling servitude. The legions of our enemies thicken on our plains; desolation and death mark their bloody career; whilst the mangled corpses of our countrymen seem to cry out to us as a voice from Heaven. . . .

Our union is now complete; our constitution composed, established, and approved. You are now the guardians of your own liberties. We may justly address you, as the *decemviri* did the Romans, and say: "Nothing that we propose can pass into a law without your consent. Be yourselves, O Americans, the authors of those laws on which your happiness depends."

You have now in the field armies sufficient to repel the whole force of your enemies and their base and mercenary auxiliaries. The hearts of your soldiers beat high with the spirit of freedom; they are animated with the justice of their cause, and while they grasp their swords can look up to Heaven for assistance. Your adversaries are composed of wretches who laugh at the rights of humanity, who turn religion into derision, and would, for higher wages, direct their swords against their leaders or their country. Go on, then, in your generous enterprise, with gratitude to Heaven for past success, and confidence of it in the future. For my own part, I ask no greater blessing than to share with you the common danger and common glory. If I have a wish dearer to my soul than that my ashes may be mingled with those of a Warren and Montgomery,⁷² it is that these American States may never cease to be free and independent.

⁷² Major General Joseph Warren (1741–75), an American doctor who played a leading role in American Patriot organizations in Boston during the American Revolution, eventually serving as president of the Massachusetts Provincial Congress. Major General Richard Montgomery (1738–75), an Irish-born soldier who served in the Continental Army, most famous for leading the failed 1775 invasion of Canada.

Letters to Abigail Adams, 1776

JOHN ADAMS

John Adams (1735–1826) carried on an extensive and rich correspondence with his wife, Abigail Smith Adams (1744–1818), exchanging over 1,100 letters, beginning during their courtship in 1762 and continuing throughout John Adams' political career in 1801. These extracts from letters written to Abigail Adams from Philadelphia after the formal declaration of independence on July 2, 1776 reveal Adams' fresh reflections on the significance of what had just transpired.

In the first letter, Adams expresses some concerns about what is to come. What is he worried about, and why? Why is he nonetheless hopeful? How, in the second letter, does he assess the harms and benefits of having delayed declaring independence to this time? Why does Adams believe that July 2 is the day that will be perpetually celebrated? Why, then, do we celebrate the anniversary of independence on the 4th and not the 2nd of July? How, at the end of his letter, does he assess the future consequences of independence, both for him and his contemporaries and for posterity? Do his letters to his wife reveal anything about the American idea of human equality?

Philadelphia July 3d. 1776

Yesterday the greatest Question was decided, which ever was debated in America, and a greater, perhaps, never was or will be decided among Men. A Resolution was passed without one dissenting Colony “that these united Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States, and as such, they have, and of right ought to have, full power to make War, conclude Peace, establish Commerce, and to do all the other Acts and Things which other States may rightfully do.” You will see in a few days a Declaration setting forth the Causes which have impelled us to this mighty Revolution and the Reasons which will justify it in the sight of God and Man. A Plan of Confederation will be taken up in a few Days.

When I look back to the year of 1761 and recollect the Argument concerning Writs of Assistance in the Superior Court, which I have hitherto considered as the Commencement of the Controversy, between Great Britain and America, and run through the whole Period from that Time to this, and recollect the series of political Events, the Chain of Causes and Effects, I am surprised at the Suddenness, as well as Greatness of this Revolution. Britain has been fill'd with Folly, and America with Wisdom, at least this is my Judgment.—Time must determine. It is the Will of Heaven that the two Countries should be sundered forever. It may be the Will of Heaven that America shall suffer Calamities still more wasting and Distresses yet more dreadful. If this is to be the Case, it will have this good Effect, at least: it will inspire us with many Virtues, which We have not, and correct many Errors, Follies, and Vices, which threaten to disturb, dishonor, and destroy us.—The Furnace of Affliction produces Refinement, in States as well as Individuals. And the new Governments we are assuming, in every Part, will require a

Purification from our Vices and an Augmentation of our Virtues or they will be no Blessings. The People will have unbounded Power. And the People are extremely addicted to Corruption and Venality, as well as the Great.—I am not without Apprehensions from this Quarter. But I must submit all my Hopes and Fears to an overruling Providence, in which, unfashionable as the Faith may be, I firmly believe.

Philadelphia July 3d. 1776

Had a Declaration of Independency been made seven Months ago, it would have been attended with many great and glorious Effects. . . . We might before this Hour, have formed Alliances with foreign States.—We should have mastered Quebec and been in Possession of Canada. . . . You will perhaps wonder, how such a Declaration would have influenced our Affairs, in Canada, but if I could write with Freedom I could easily convince you, that it would, and explain to you the manner how.—Many Gentlemen in high Stations and of great Influence have been duped, by the ministerial Bubble of Commissioners to treat. . . . And in real, sincere Expectation of this Event, which they so fondly wished, they have been slow and languid, in promoting Measures for the Reduction of that Province. Others there are in the Colonies who really wished that our Enterprise in Canada would be defeated, that the Colonies might be brought into Danger and Distress between two Fires, and be thus induced to submit. Others really wished to defeat the Expedition to Canada, lest the Conquest of it should elevate the Minds of the People too much to hearken to those Terms of Reconciliation which they believed would be offered Us. These jarring Views, Wishes and Designs, occasioned an opposition to many salutary Measures, which were proposed for the Support of that Expedition, and caused Obstructions, Embarrassments and studied Delays, which have finally, lost Us the Province.

All these Causes however in Conjunction would not have disappointed Us, if it had not been for a Misfortune, which could not be foreseen, and perhaps could not have been prevented, I mean the Prevalence of the small Pox among our Troops. . . . This fatal Pestilence completed our Destruction.—It is a Frown of Providence upon Us, which We ought to lay to heart.

But on the other Hand, the Delay of this Declaration to this Time, has many great Advantages attending it.—The Hopes of Reconciliation, which were fondly entertained by Multitudes of honest and well meaning tho weak and mistaken People, have been gradually and at last totally extinguished.—Time has been given for the whole People, maturely to consider the great Question of Independence and to ripen their Judgments, dissipate their Fears, and allure their Hopes, by discussing it in News Papers and Pamphletts, by debating it, in Assemblies, Conventions, Committees of Safety and Inspection, in Town and County Meetings, as well as in private Conversations, so that the whole People in every Colony of the 13, have now adopted it, as their own Act.—This will cement the Union, and avoid those Heats and perhaps Convulsions which might have been occasioned, by such a Declaration Six Months ago.

But the Day is past. The Second Day of July 1776, will be the most memorable Epoch, in the History of America.—I am apt to believe that it will be celebrated, by succeeding Generations, as the great anniversary Festival. It ought to be commemorated, as the Day of Deliverance by solemn Acts of Devotion to God Almighty. It ought to be solemnized with Pomp and Parade, with Shews, Games, Sports, Guns, Bells, Bonfires and Illuminations from one End of this Continent to the other from this Time forward forever more.

You will think me transported with Enthusiasm but I am not.—I am well aware of the Toil and Blood and Treasure, that it will cost Us to maintain this Declaration, and support and defend these States.—Yet through all the Gloom I can see the Rays of ravishing Light and Glory. I can see that the End is more than worth all the Means. And that Posterity will triumph in that Days Transaction, even altho We should rue it, which I trust in God We shall not.



Songs of the Revolution



Yankee Doodle

The song “Yankee Doodle” is thought to have originated during the French and Indian War (1754–63), but it became particularly popular during the American Revolutionary War. It was first sung by British officers as a way of mocking the colonial “Yankees,” a name commonly used for all Americans. “Doodle,” from the German dudel or dödel, means “fool” or “simpleton;” the “cap”—called “macaroni”—referred to the wig, fashionable among the Yankees in the 1770s but regarded as foppish or effeminate by the British. However, after turning the British back at the Battles of Lexington and Concord, where they were vastly outnumbered, the Americans adopted the song as a source of pride. And so it has remained.

The lyrics have been attributed to Doctor Richard Shuckbergh, a British Army surgeon, who penned them to describe the to-him-foolish appearance of the Colonial troops under Colonel Thomas Fitch V, son of the then-Connecticut governor. The tune is thought to come from a nursery rhyme.

Describe the tone of both the tune and the lyrics of the song. Can you explain why it has so long been associated with the martial spirit? Do you understand why it has been—and continues to be—regarded as patriotic? For a musical rendition, view this video performance of the song: www.youtube.com/watch?v=AwHvyqNDUvE.

Yankee Doodle went to town
A-riding on a pony,
Stuck a feather in his cap
And called it macaroni.

(Chorus)

Yankee Doodle keep it up,
Yankee Doodle dandy,
Mind the music and the step,
And with the girls be handy.

Father and I went down to camp
Along with Captain Gooding,
And there we saw the men and boys
As thick as hasty pudding.

(Chorus)

And there we see a thousand men
As rich as 'Squire David,
And what they wasted every day,
I wish it could be saved.

(Chorus)

The lasses they eat it every day,
Would keep a house a winter;
They have so much that I'll be bound,
They eat it when they're a mind to.

(Chorus)

And there we see a swamping gun
Big as a log of maple,
Upon a deuced little cart,
A load for Father's cattle.

(Chorus)

And every time they shoot it off,
It takes a horn of powder,
And makes a noise like Father's gun,
Only a nation louder.

(Chorus)

I went as nigh to one myself
As 'Siah's inderpinning;
And Father went as nigh again—
I thought the deuce was in him.

(Chorus)

Cousin Simon grew so bold
I thought he would have cocked it;
It scared me so I shrunked it off
And hung by Father's pocket.

(Chorus)

And Captain Davis had a gun,
He kind of clapt his hand on't,
And stuck a crooked stabbing iron
Upon the little end on't

(Chorus)

And there I see a pumpkin shell
As big as Mother's bas[i]n,
And every time they touched it off
They scampered like the nation.

(Chorus)

I see a little barrel too,
The heads were made of leather;
They knocked upon 't with little clubs,
And called the folks together.

(Chorus)

And there was Captain Washington,
And gentle folks about him.
They say he's grown so 'tarnal proud
He will not ride without 'em.

(Chorus)

He got him on his meeting clothes,
Upon a slapping stallion.
He sat the world along in rows,
In hundreds and in millions.

(Chorus)

The flaming ribbons in his hat,
They looked so tearing fine ah,
I wanted dreadfully to get
To give to my Jemima.

(Chorus)

I see another snarl of men
A-digging graves, they told me,
So 'tarnal long, so 'tarnal deep,
They 'tended they should hold me—

(Chorus)

It scared me so I hooked it off,
Nor stopt, as I remember,
Nor turned about till I got home,
Locked up in Mother's chamber.

(Chorus)

The Liberty Song

JOHN DICKINSON

John Dickinson (1732–1808), known as the “Penman of the Revolution” for his Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania, was, at various times, a militia officer in the Revolutionary War, a member of the First and Second Continental Congresses, a primary drafter of the Articles of Confederation, a delegate to the Constitutional Convention of 1787, and the state president of Delaware (1781) and Pennsylvania (1782).

His pre-Revolutionary song, “The Liberty Song,” is set to the tune of “Heart of Oak,” the anthem of the Royal Navy of the United Kingdom. Dickinson sent the words he composed for the song to his Massachusetts friend James Otis, saying, “I enclose you a song for American freedom. I have long since renounced poetry, but as indifferent songs are very powerful on certain occasions, I venture to invoke the deserted muses.” The song was soon thereafter published in the Boston Gazette, in July 1768; the words that appear here are from its updated 1770 version. Dickinson’s sixth verse marks the first appearance of the patriotic slogan, “united we stand, divided we fall.”

What is the meaning of the “liberty” or “freedom” of which this song speaks? Was John Dickinson right to think that this “indifferent song” could make a “very powerful” difference? Why? Dickinson, as we noted above in “A Brief History of Independence,” later looked for reconciliation with Britain and, at the Continental Congress in 1776, argued (and voted) against declaring independence. What condition of liberty, then, is called for in this song? The final stanza toasts King George’s health and Britannia’s glory and wealth, if somewhat conditionally. Is the song, then, pointing toward a restoration of British liberty or the triumph of a new and separate form of American liberty?

*For a musical rendition, view this performance by Adam Eisenstein:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=RGPUcyghEww.*

Come, join, Hand in Hand, brave Americans all,
And rouse your bold Hearts at fair Liberty’s call,
No tyrannous Acts shall suppress your just Claim,
Or stain with dishonor America’s Name.

(Chorus)

In Freedom we’re born, and in Freedom we’ll live.
Our purses are ready. Steady, friends, steady,
Not as Slaves, but as Freemen our money we’ll give.

Our worthy Forefathers—let’s give them a cheer—
To Climates unknown did courageously steer;
Thro’ Oceans to Deserts for Freedom they came,

And dying bequeath'd us their Freedom and Fame.

(Chorus)

Their generous Bosoms all Dangers despis'd,
So highly, so wisely, their Birthrights they priz'd;
We'll keep what they gave—we will piously keep,
Nor frustrate their Toils on the Land and the Deep.

(Chorus)

The Tree, their own Hands had to Liberty rear'd;
They liv'd to behold growing strong and rever'd;
With Transport they cried, "Now our wishes we gain,
For our Children shall gather the Fruits of our Pain."

(Chorus)

Swarms of placemen and pensioners soon will appear
Like locusts deforming the charms of the year;
Suns vainly will rise, showers vainly descend,
If we are to drudge for what others shall defend.

(Chorus)

Then join Hand in Hand brave Americans all,
By uniting we stand, by dividing we fall;
In so righteous a Cause let us hope to succeed,
For Heaven approves of each generous Deed.

(Chorus)

All Ages shall speak with amaze and applause,
Of the courage we'll shew in support of our laws;
To die we can bear—but to serve we disdain—
For Shame is to Freedom more dreadful than Pain.

(Chorus)

This bumper⁷³ I crown for our Sovereign's health,
And this for Britannia's Glory and Wealth;
That Wealth and that Glory immortal may be,
If She is but Just—and if we are but Free.

(Chorus)

⁷³ A brimming cup or glass.

Liberty Tree

THOMAS PAINE

Thomas Paine (1737–1809), English-born American author, political theorist, and revolutionary, is still best known for his 1776 pamphlet, Common Sense, which made the case for declaring independence from Britain. In this ballad, written in 1775, Paine memorializes a famous 130-year-old elm tree that stood near Boston Common, under whose canopy defiant colonists rallied to discuss and demonstrate their discontent, and which was cut down by the British that same year. Thanks in no small part to Paine, the liberty tree lives on, figuratively and literally. “Liberty trees” were subsequently planted in hundreds of towns in every colony, liberty poles were erected that flew flags bearing images of the liberty tree, and the tree itself became (and remains) an international symbol of freedom.

What, according to Paine, is the source and origin of the Liberty Tree? Who, or what, is the “Goddess of Liberty”? What, does the song suggest, is the relation between freedom and peace or brotherhood? What kind of “religion” regards the Liberty Tree as its temple? What, according to the song, are the many gifts of the Liberty Tree? What makes a tree such an apt symbol of liberty?

For a recording, see: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gAbNFF39MLw>.

In a chariot of light, from the regions of the day,
The Goddess of Liberty came,
Ten thousand celestials directed her way,
And hither conducted the dame.
A fair budding branch from the gardens above,
Where millions with millions agree,
She brought in her hand as a pledge of her love,
And the plant she named Liberty Tree.

The celestial exotic stuck deep in the ground,
Like a native it flourished and bore;
The fame of its fruit drew the nations around,
To seek out this peaceable shore.
Unmindful of names or distinctions they came,
For freemen like brothers agree;
With one spirit endued, they one friendship pursued,
And their temple was Liberty Tree.

Beneath this fair tree, like the patriarchs of old,
Their bread in contentment they ate,
Unvexed with the troubles of silver or gold,
The cares of the grand and the great.

With timber and tar they Old England supplied,
And supported her power on the sea;
Her battles they fought, without getting a groat,
For the honor of Liberty Tree.

But hear, O ye swains ('tis a tale most profane),
How all the tyrannical powers,
Kings, Commons and Lords, are uniting amain
To cut down this guardian of ours.
From the East to the West blow the trumpet to arms,
Thro' the land let the sound of it flee;
Let the far and the near all unite with a cheer,
In defense of our Liberty Tree.

The American Hero: A Sapphick Ode

NATHANIEL NILES

This somber 15-stanza ode, also known as “Bunker Hill,” was widely sung during the Revolution. Written by Nathaniel Niles (1741–1828), a lawyer, congressman, inventor, and occasional preacher, it was inspired by the Battle of Bunker Hill and the burning of Charlestown (1775). Some attribute the melody to Sylvanus Ripley of New England (1749–87), others to Andrew Law of Connecticut (1749–1821). It dwells both on the inevitability of death in general, and particularly on death in battle.

How do you understand the opening question of the Ode? How does the Ode finally answer the question it raises? There are many references to God, as well as to the King of Terrors (death) and Mars (Roman god of war). What, according to the Ode, is the connection between divinity and the impending war? What, according to the Ode, is an American hero: What makes him American, and what makes him heroic? What do you think of the statements, made in the last stanza of the Ode, about life and death?

For a partial recording, see: www.youtube.com/watch?v=mVjIr7OrSZs.

Why should vain mortals tremble at the sight of
Death and destruction in the field of battle,
Where blood and carnage clothe the ground in crimson,
 Sounding with death-groans?

Death will invade us by the means appointed,
And we must all bow to the King of Terrors;
Nor am I anxious, if I am preparéd,
 What shape he comes in.

Infinite goodness teaches us submission;
Bids us be quiet under all his dealings:
Never repining, but forever praising
 God our Creator.

Well may we praise Him, all his ways are perfect;
Though a resplendence infinitely glowing
Dazzles in glory on the sight of mortals,
 Struck blind by lustre!

Good is Jehovah in bestowing sunshine,
Nor less His goodness in the storm and thunder:
Mercies and judgments both proceed from kindness—
 Infinite kindness.

O then exult that God forever reigneth.
Clouds, which around Him hinder our perception,
Bind us the stronger to exalt His name, and
 Shout louder praises!

Then to the wisdom of my Lord and Master,
I will commit all that I have or wish for:
Sweetly as babes sleep will I give my life up
 When called to yield it.

Now, Mars, I dare thee, clad in smoky pillars,
Bursting from bomb-shells, roaring from the cannon,
Rattling in grape shot, like a storm of hailstones,
 Torturing Aether!

Up the bleak heavens, let the spreading flames rise,
Breaking like Aetna⁷⁴ thro' the smoky columns.
Low'ring like Egypt o'er the falling city,
 Wantonly burnt down.

While all their hearts quick palpitate for havock,
Let slip your blood hounds, nam'd the British lyons,
Dauntless as Death stares, nimble as the whirlwind,
 Dreadful as daemons!

Let Oceans waft on all your floating castles,
Fraught with destruction, horrible to nature:
Then with your sails filled by a storm of vengeance,
 Bear down to battle!

From the dire caverns made by ghostly miners,
Let the explosion, dreadful as volcanoes,
Heave the broad town, with all its wealth and people,
 Quick to destruction!

Still shall the banner of the King of Heaven
Never advance where I'm afraid to follow:
While that precedes me, with an open bosom,
 War, I defy thee!

Fame and dear freedom lure me on to battle,
While a fell despot, grimmer than a death's-head,
Stings me with serpents, fiercer than Medusa's,
 To the encounter.

⁷⁴ *Mount Etna (Latin: Aetna).*

Life, for my country and the cause of freedom,
Is but a trifle for a worm to part with;—
And if preservéd in so great a contest,
Life is redoubled.

Chester

WILLIAM BILLINGS

*William Billings (1746–1800), Boston-born composer and lyricist, was one of the foremost representatives of early American music. A tanner by trade, he was a close friend of renowned patriots, like Paul Revere and Samuel Adams. “Chester,” one of his most famous hymns, rivaled only “Yankee Doodle” in popularity; as with “Yankee Doodle,” “Chester” was often regarded as the anthem of the revolutionary era, or our first national anthem. Unlike our current national anthem, whose tune its author Francis Scott Key took from an English drinking song,⁷⁵ both the words and tune of “Chester” are American and far more sober. The first version of the song appeared in 1770 in Billings’ *The New England Psalm Singer*, the first published book of American music; it was revised in 1778 for inclusion in *The Singing Master’s Assistant*. It is this second, better-known version we present here.*

What is the mood and subject of the hymn? What is the relation between God in whom “we trust” (or the Lord to whom we bring “grateful offering”) and “New England’s God” who “forever reigns”? Do not the British also worship God? What is the connection between the hymn’s many appeals to God and its patriotic ardor? Although the persons named in the second stanza are all famous British generals, there is no evidence that the hymn’s name, “Chester” (from Old English and Latin, meaning, “camp of soldiers”), refers to a particular place, person, or battle.⁷⁶ Does this add or detract from the force or meaning of the hymn?

For a musical rendition, view these performances by Charlie Zahm www.youtube.com/watch?v=8aquq60qY0A and by the District Chorus Concert, Fairfax High School: www.youtube.com/watch?v=E_St8bsx31A.

Let tyrants shake their iron rod,
And Slav’ry clank her galling chains;
We fear them not, we trust in God—
New England’s God forever reigns.

Howe and Burgoyne, and Clinton, too,
With Prescott and Cornwallis join’d;⁷⁷
Together plot our overthrow,

⁷⁵ For discussion of “The Star Spangled Banner,” see www.whatsoproudlywehail.org/curriculum/songs-for-free-men-and-women/the-star-spangled-banner-2.

⁷⁶ At the time, it was common practice to title tunes with place names (whether relevant or not). Performers could then choose different lyrics to sing along without creating confusion.

⁷⁷ William Howe (1729–1814), commander in chief of the British Army in North America; John Burgoyne (1722–92), surrendered his army of 5,000 to American troops after the Battle of Saratoga; Henry Clinton (1730–95), commander in chief of the British Army in North America after Howe; Charles Cornwallis (1738–1805), surrendered to American forces at Yorktown in 1781, effectively ending the Revolutionary War; Richard Prescott (1725–88), surrendered to American troops when attempting to descend to Quebec.

In one infernal league combined.

When God inspired us for the fight,
Their ranks were broke, their lines were forced,
Their ships were shattered in our sight,
Or swiftly driven from our coast.

The foe comes on with haughty stride;
Our troops advance with martial noise,
Their veterans flee before our youth,
And generals yield to beardless boys.

What grateful offering shall we bring?
What shall we render to the Lord?
Loud halleluiahs let us sing,
And praise his name on every chord.

The Volunteer Boys

HENRY ARCHER

Many of the songs sung during the Revolutionary War were originally drinking songs or toasts. This is true of this song (1780) attributed to Henry Archer (dates unknown), a Scotsman who came to America in 1778 and volunteered in the Continental Army, and of the next, a drinking song favored by Tories and British military men called "The Rebels." As we do not have the music or a recording to teach us the melody, you will have to capture its rousing punch by declaiming it, preferably in a large voice.

What is a toast, and what is the purpose of a drinking song? What is the contrast drawn, especially in the first stanza, between the toasts of lovers and fighters? Why are the latter regarded as superior? Why the emphasis throughout on volunteers? What does that emphasis tell you about the Revolution and those who fought it? The volunteers appear to come from every walk of life and even every class. What does that say about the character of the Revolution and those who fought it?

Hence with the lover who sighs o'er his wine,
Chloes and Phillises toasting,
Hence with the slave who will whimper and whine,
Of ardor and constancy boasting.
Hence with love's joys,
Follies and noise,
The toast that I give is the Volunteer Boys.

Nobles and beauties and such common toasts,
Those who admire may drink, sir;
Fill up the glass to the volunteer hosts,
Who never from danger will shrink, sir.
Let mirth appear,
Every heart cheer,
The toast that I give is the brave volunteer.

Here's to the squire who goes to parade,
Here's to the citizen soldier;
Here's to the merchant who fights for his trade,
Whom danger increasing makes bolder.
Let mirth appear,
Union is here,
The toast that I give is the brave volunteer.

Here's to the lawyer, who leaving the bar,
Hastens where honor doth lead, sir,
Changing the gown for the ensigns of war,

The cause of his country to plead, sir.
Freedom appears,
Every heart cheers,
And calls for the health of the law volunteers.

Here's to the soldier, though battered in wars,
And safe to his farm-house retired;
When called by his country, ne'er thinks of his scars,
With ardor to join us inspired.
Bright fame appears,
Trophies uprear,
To veteran chiefs who became volunteers.

Here's to the farmer who dares to advance
To harvests of honor with pleasure;
Who with a slave the most skilful in France,
A sword for his country would measure.
Hence with cold fear,
Heroes rise here;
The ploughman is changed to the stout volunteer.

Here's to the peer, first in senate and field
Whose actions to titles add grace, sir;
Whose spirit undaunted would never yet yield
To a foe, to a pension or place, sir.
Gratitude here,
Toasts to the peer,
Who adds to his titles, "the brave volunteer."

Thus the bold bands for old Jersey's defense,
The muse hath with rapture reviewed, sir;
With our volunteer boys, as our verses commence,
With our volunteer boys they conclude, sir.
Discord or noise
Ne'er damp our joys,
But health and success to the volunteer boys.

The Rebels

This drinking song of unknown origin proclaims the opposition of Tory loyalists to their fellow colonials who were in rebellion against the crown. Of what do the singers accuse “the Rebels”? In what tone and mood should one read the song’s recurring refrain, “with their hunting-shirts, and rifle-guns”? In general, what is the attitude of the song toward the colonials? How effective is the appeal to loyalty and law-abidingness, and the attack on rebellion? Could a similar song, in a similar spirit, have been written years later to mock and condemn the rebels in the Civil War?

Ye brave, honest subjects, who dare to be loyal
And have stood the brunt of every trial
Of hunting-shirts and rifle-guns:
Come listen awhile, and I’ll sing you a song;
I’ll show you, those Yankees are all in the wrong,
Who, with blustering look and most awkward gait,
’Gainst their lawful sovereign dare for to prate,
With their hunting-shirts and rifle-guns.

The arch-rebels, barefooted tatterdemalions,⁷⁸
In baseness exceed all other rebellions,
With their hunting-shirts and rifle-guns.
To rend the empire, the most infamous lies,
Their mock-patriot Congress do always devise;
Independence, like the first of rebels, they claim,
But their plots will be damned in the annals of fame,
With their hunting-shirts and rifle-guns.

Forgetting the mercies of Great Britain’s king,
Who saved their forefathers’ necks from the string;
With their hunting-shirts and rifle-guns.
They renounce allegiance and take up their arms,
Assemble together like hornets in swarms,
So dirty their backs and so wretched their show
That carrion-crow follows wherever they go,
With their hunting-shirts and rifle-guns.

With loud peals of laughter, your sides, sirs, would crack,
To see General Convict and Colonel Shoe-black,
With their hunting-shirts and rifle-guns.
See cobblers and quacks, rebel priests and the like,
Pettifoggers and barbers, with sword and with pike,
All strutting, the standard of Satan beside,

⁷⁸ A person wearing ragged or tattered clothing; a ragamuffin.

And honest names using, their black deeds to hide.
With their hunting-shirts and rifle-guns.

This perjured banditti now ruin this land,
And o'er its poor people claim lawless command,
With their hunting-shirts and rifle-guns.
Their pasteboard dollars prove a common curse;
They don't chink like silver and gold in our purse.
With nothing their leaders have paid their debts off,
Their honor's dishonor, and justice they scoff,
With their hunting-shirts and rifle-guns.

For one lawful ruler, many tyrants we've got,
Who force young and old to their wars, to be shot,
With their hunting-shirts and rifle-guns.
Our good king, God speed him! never used men so,
We then could speak, act, and like freemen could go;
But committees enslave us, our Liberty's gone,
Our trade and church murdered; our country's undone,
With their hunting-shirts and rifle-guns.

Come take up your glasses, each true loyal heart,
And may every rebel meet his due desert,
With their hunting-shirts and rifle-guns.
May Congress, Conventions, those damn'd inquisitions,
Be fed with hot sulphur, from Lucifer's kitchens,
May commerce and peace again be restored,
And Americans own their true sovereign lord!
Then oblivion to shirts and rifle-guns.
God save the King!



The War for Independence



Letter to Congress

GEORGE WASHINGTON

We celebrate the birth of the nation on the Fourth of July, the anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. In doing so, we risk forgetting that the nation would have been stillborn had we not won the lengthy war of independence that lasted until 1781 and whose outcome was anything but assured. In June 1775, after the April skirmishes at Lexington and Concord, the British won the Battle of Boston's Bunker Hill, albeit with heavy casualties, and the war was truly on. King George III declared that the American colonists were rebels. The Continental Congress appointed George Washington commander in chief of the Continental Army, but the army he commanded was hardly equal to the task. In this letter from his headquarters outside Boston on September 21, 1775, General Washington (1732–99) outlines some of the challenges he and the fledgling army faced on the ground. The letter also gives evidence of Washington's capacities of leadership.

Review the challenges Washington faces in trying to maintain a functioning army in the field. How is he attempting to meet these challenges? What is his proposed approach to the attachment and morale of the troops? What is his rhetorical approach in addressing the Congress, and why must he adopt it? What is the significance of his report about the Canadian campaign? Were you a member of the Congress, how would you respond to his appeal? What orders, and what promises of support, would you—could you—give him?

Camp at Cambridge, 21 September 1775

Sir,

I have been in daily expectation of being favored with the commands of the honorable Congress on the subject of my two last letters. The season now advances so fast, that I cannot any longer defer laying before them such further measures as require their immediate attention, and in which I wait their direction.

The mode in which the present army has been collected has occasioned some difficulty, in procuring the subscription of both officers and soldiers to the Continental articles of war. Their principal objection has been, that it might subject them to a longer service, than that for which they engaged under their several provincial establishments. It is in vain to attempt to reason away the prejudices of a whole army, often instilled, and in this instance at least encouraged, by their officers from private and narrow views. I have therefore forbore pressing them, as I did not experience any such inconvenience from their adherence to their former rules, as would warrant the risk of entering into a contest upon it; more especially as the restraints, necessary for the establishment of essential discipline and subordination, indisposed their minds to every change, and made it both

duty and policy to introduce as little novelty as possible. With the present army, I fear, such a subscription is impracticable; but the difficulty will cease with this army.

The Connecticut and Rhode Island troops stand engaged to the 1st of December only; and none longer than the 1st of January. A dissolution of the present army therefore will take place, unless some early provision is made against such an event. Most of the general officers are of opinion, that the greater part of them may be reenlisted for the winter, or another campaign, with the indulgence of a furlough to visit their friends, which may be regulated so as not to endanger the service. How far it may be proper to form the new army entirely out of the old, for another campaign, rather than from the contingents of the several provinces, is a question which involves in it too many considerations of policy and prudence, for me to undertake to decide. It appears to be impossible to draw it from any other source than the old army, for this winter; and, as the pay is ample, I hope a sufficient number will engage in the service for that time at least. But there are various opinions of the temper of the men on the subject; and there may be great hazard in deferring the trial too long.

In the Continental establishment no provision has been made for the pay of artificers,⁷⁹ distinct from that of the common soldiers; whereas, under the provincial such as found their own tools were allowed one shilling *per diem* advance, and particular artisans more. The pay of the artillery, also, now differs from that of the province; the men have less, the officers more; and, for some ranks, no provision is made, as the Congress will please to observe by this list, which I have the honor to enclose. These particulars, though seemingly inconsiderable, are the source of much complaint and dissatisfaction, which I endeavor to compose in the best manner I am able.

By the returns of the rifle companies, and that battalion, they appear to exceed their establishment very considerably. I doubt my authority to pay these extra men without the direction of the Congress; but it would be deemed a great hardship wholly to refuse them, as they have been encouraged to come.

The necessities of the troops having required pay, I directed that those of the Massachusetts should receive for one month, upon their being mustered, and returning a proper roll; but a claim was immediately made for pay by lunar months; and several regiments have declined taking up their warrants on this account. As this practice was entirely new to me, though said to be warranted by former usage here, the matter now waits the determination of the honorable Congress. I find, in Connecticut and Rhode Island, this point was settled by calendar months; in Massachusetts, though mentioned in the Congress, it was left undetermined, which is also the case of New Hampshire.

The enclosure No. 2 is a petition from the subalterns,⁸⁰ respecting their pay. Where there are only two of these in a company, I have considered one as an ensign, and ordered him pay as such, as in the Connecticut forces. I must beg leave to recommend this petition to the favor of the Congress, as I am of opinion the allowance is inadequate to

⁷⁹ A skilled worker.

⁸⁰ A junior officer.

their rank and service, and is one great source of that familiarity between the officers and men, which is so incompatible with subordination and discipline. Many valuable officers of those ranks, finding themselves unable to support the character and appearance of officers, I am informed, will retire as soon as the term of service is expired, if there is no alteration.

For the better regulation of duty, I found it necessary to settle the rank of the officers, and to number the regiments; and, as I had not received the commands of the Congress on the subject, and the exigence of the service forbade any further delay, the general officers were considered as having no regiments; an alteration, which, I understand, is not pleasing to some of them, but appeared to me and others to be proper, when it was considered, that, by this means, the whole army is put upon one footing, and all particular attachments are dissolved.

Among many other considerations which the approach of winter will demand, that of clothing appears to be one of the most important. So far as regards the preservation of the army from cold, they may be deemed in a state of nakedness. Many of the men have been without blankets the whole campaign, and those which have been in use during the summer are so much worn as to be of little service. In order to make a suitable provision in these articles, and at the same time to guard the public against imposition and expense, it seems necessary to determine the mode of continuing the army; for should these troops be clothed under their present engagement, and at the expiration of the term of service decline renewing it, a set of unprovided men may be sent to supply their places.

I cannot suppose it to be unknown to the honorable Congress, that in all armies it is an established practise to make an allowance to officers of provisions and forage proportionate to their rank. As such an allowance formed no part of the continental establishment, I have hitherto forbore to issue the orders for that purpose: but as it is a received opinion of such members of the Congress, as I have had an opportunity of consulting, as well as throughout the army, that it must be deemed a matter of course, and implied in the establishment of the army, I have directed the following proportion of rations, being the same allowance in the American armies last war:—

Major General: 15
Brigadier General: 12
Colonel: 6
Lieut. Colonel: 5
Major: 4
Captain: 3
Subaltern: 2
Staff: 2

If these should not be approved by the honorable Congress, they will please to signify their pleasure as to the alterations they would have made, in the whole or in part.

I am now to inform the honorable Congress, that, encouraged by the repeated declarations of the Canadians and Indians, and urged by their requests, I have detached Colonel Arnold with a thousand men, to penetrate into Canada by way of Kennebec River, and, if possible, to make himself master of Quebec. By this manœuvre, I proposed either to divert Carleton from St. John's, which would leave a free passage to General Schuyler; or, if this did not take effect, Quebec, in its present defenceless state, must fall into his hands an easy prey. I made all possible inquiry, as to the distance, the safety of the route, and the danger of the season being too far advanced; but found nothing in either to deter me from proceeding, more especially as it met with very general approbation from all whom I consulted upon it. But, that nothing might be omitted, to enable me to judge of its propriety and probable consequences, I communicated it by express to General Schuyler, who approved of it in such terms, that I resolved to put it in immediate execution. They have now left this place seven days; and, if favored with a good wind, I hope soon to hear of their being safe in Kennebec River. For the satisfaction of the Congress, I here enclose a copy of the proposed route. I also do myself the honor of enclosing a manifesto, which I caused to be printed here, and of which Colonel Arnold has taken a suitable number with him. I have also forwarded a copy of his instructions. From all which, I hope the Congress will have a clear view of the motives, plan, and intended execution of this enterprise, and that I shall be so happy as to meet with their approbation in it.

I was the more induced to make this detachment, as it is my clear opinion, from a careful observation of the movements of the enemy, corroborated by all the intelligence we receive by deserters and others of the former of whom we have some every day, that the enemy have no intention to come out, until they are reinforced. They have been wholly employed for some time past in procuring materials for barracks, fuel, and making other preparations for winter. These circumstances, with the constant additions to their works, which are apparently defensive, have led to the above conclusion, and enabled me to spare this body of men where I hope they will be usefully and successfully employed.

The state of inactivity, in which this army has lain for some time, by no means corresponds with my wishes by some decisive stroke, to relieve my country, from the heavy expense its subsistence must create. After frequently reconnoitring the situation of the enemy in the town of Boston, collecting all possible intelligence, and digesting the whole, a surprise did not appear to me wholly impracticable, though hazardous. I communicated it to the general officers some days before I called them to a council, that they might be prepared with their opinions. The result I have the honor of sending in the inclosure No 6. I cannot say that I have wholly laid it aside; but new events may occasion new measures. Of this I hope the honorable Congress can need no assurance, that there is not a man in America, who more earnestly wishes such a termination of the campaign, as to make the army no longer necessary.

The season advances so fast, that I have given orders to prepare barracks and other accommodations for the winter. The great scarcity of tow cloth in this country, I fear, will totally disappoint us in our expectations of procuring hunting shirts. Gov. Cooke informs

me, few or none are to be had in Rhode Island, and Gov. Trumbull gives me little encouragement to expect many from Connecticut.

I have filled up the office of quartermaster-general, which the Congress was pleased to leave to me, by the appointment of Major Mifflin, which I hope and believe will be universally acceptable.

It gives me great pain to be obliged to solicit the attention of the honorable Congress to the state of this army, in terms which imply the slightest apprehension of being neglected. But my situation is inexpressibly distressing, to see the winter fast approaching upon a naked army, the time of their service within a few weeks of expiring, and no provision yet made for such important events. Added to these, the military chest is totally exhausted; the paymaster has not a single dollar in hand; the commissary-general assures me he has strained his credit, for the subsistence of the army, to the utmost. The quartermaster-general is precisely in the same situation; and the greater part of the troops are in a state not far from mutiny, upon the deduction from their stated allowance. I know not to whom I am to impute this failure; but I am of opinion, if the evil is not immediately remedied, and more punctually observed in future, the army must absolutely break up. I hoped I had expressed myself so fully on this subject, both by letter, and to those members of the Congress, who honored the camp with a visit, that no disappointment could possibly happen. I therefore hourly expected advice from the paymaster, that he had received a fresh supply, in addition to the hundred and seventy-two thousand dollars delivered him in August; and thought myself warranted to assure the public creditors, that in a few days they should be satisfied. But the delay has brought matters to such a crisis, as admits of no farther uncertain expectations. I have therefore sent off this express with orders to make all possible despatch. It is my most earnest request, that he may be returned with all possible expedition, unless the honorable Congress have already forwarded what is so indispensably necessary. I have the honor to be, &c.

The Crisis, No. 1

THOMAS PAINE

In retrospect, especially looking from the perspective of today, 230 years after the end of the War of Independence, it is easy to forget how uncertain was the revolutionary cause, how perilous the risk of failure, and, especially, how divided were the colonists on the rightness of the revolt and the wisdom of joining what seemed, at first, to be the losing side. Allow, therefore, the fiery words of Thomas Paine (1737–1809) to recreate for you the situation that faced Washington and the revolution as the campaign moved, in late 1776, into the mid-Atlantic states of Pennsylvania and New Jersey. In 1776, Paine, prominent essayist and editor of the Pennsylvania Magazine in Philadelphia, had already written Common Sense, an immensely influential pamphlet that made the case for declaring independence from Britain. His The American Crisis was a series of essays, published between the end of 1776 and 1783, in which Paine addressed the many crises faced by the revolution and the fledgling nation struggling to be born alive. George Washington found this, the first of those essays (published December 23, 1776), with its famous opening lines, so inspiring that he ordered it read aloud to his troops at Valley Forge, just days before the treacherous Christmas Day crossing of the Delaware River and their subsequent morale-boosting triumph in the Battle of Trenton.

Read the essay slowly and carefully, trying to state the point of each paragraph and the overall argument. What is Paine’s purpose in this essay? To which groups is he most trying to appeal, and why might they need to be addressed in the manner he chooses? What, exactly, is “the crisis” of the day? How, and to what end, does Paine use references to God? What is Paine’s case against the Tories? What is his argument and appeal to the neutrals, who just want to be left alone to live in peace? How does Paine justify the revolution? Why does he claim that it will succeed? Were you to have been a peace-loving farmer or shopkeeper or merchant—with spouse, children, and an income that depended in no small part on commerce with the British—do you think that you would have been moved by the essay? Which arguments would have persuaded or inspired you to join the revolutionary cause and fight?

These are the times that try men’s souls. The summer-soldier and the sun-shine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of their country; but he that stands by it *now*, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph. What we obtain too cheaply, we esteem too lightly: it is dearness only that gives every thing its value. Heaven knows how to put a proper price upon its goods; and it would be strange indeed, if so celestial an article as FREEDOM should not be highly rated. Britain, with an army to enforce her tyranny, has declared that she has a right not only to TAX but “to BIND us in ALL CASES WHATSOEVER;” and if being bound in that manner is not slavery, there is no such a thing as slavery upon earth. Even the expression is impious; for so unlimited a power can belong only to God.

Whether the independence of the continent was declared too soon, or delayed too long, I will not now enter into as an argument; my own simple opinion is, that had it been eight months earlier, it would have been much better. We did not make a proper use of last winter, neither could we, while we were in a dependent situation. However, the fault, if it were one, was all our own. But no great deal is lost yet. All that [General Sir William] Howe⁸¹ has been doing for this month past, is rather a ravage than a conquest, which the spirit of the Jerseys, a year ago, would have quickly repulsed, and which time and a little resolution will soon recover.

I have as little superstition in me as any man living; but my secret opinion has ever been, and still is, that God will not give up a people to military destruction, or leave them unsupportedly to perish, who had so earnestly and so repeatedly sought to avoid the calamities of war, by every decent method which wisdom could invent. Neither have I so much of the infidel in me, as to suppose that He has relinquished the government of the world, and given us up to the care of devils; and as I do not, I cannot see on what grounds the King can look up to heaven for help against us: a common murderer or highwayman has as good a pretence as he.

It is surprising to see how rapidly a panic will sometimes run through a country. All Nations and ages have been subject to them. Britain has trembled like an ague⁸² at the report of a French fleet of flat-bottomed boats; and in the fourteenth century, the whole English army, after ravaging the Kingdom of France, was driven back, like men petrified with fear; and this brave exploit was performed by a few broken forces, collected and headed by a woman, Joan of Arc. Would that heaven might inspire some Jersey maid to spirit up her countrymen, and save her fair fellow sufferers from ravage and ravishment! Yet panics, in some cases, have their uses: they produce as much good as hurt. Their duration is always short: the mind soon grows through them, and acquires a firmer habit than before. But their peculiar advantage is, that they are the touchstones of sincerity and hypocrisy, and bring things and men to light, which might otherwise have lain forever undiscovered. In fact, they have the same effect on secret traitors, which an imaginary apparition would have upon a private murderer. They sift out the hidden thoughts of man, and hold them up in public to the world. Many a disguised Tory has lately shown his head, that shall penitentially solemnize with curses the day on which Howe arrived upon the Delaware. . . .

I shall not now attempt to give all the particulars of our retreat to the Delaware. Suffice it, for the present, to say, that both officers and men, though greatly harassed and fatigued, frequently without rest, covering, or provision, the inevitable consequences of a long retreat, bore it with a manly and martial spirit. All their wishes were one; which was, that the country would turn out, and help them to drive the enemy back. Voltaire has remarked that King William never appeared to full advantage, but in difficulties and in action. The same remark may be made on General Washington, for the character fits him. There is a natural firmness in some minds, which cannot be unlocked by trifles, but which, when unlocked, discovers a cabinet of fortitude; and I reckon it among those kind

⁸¹ *Commander in chief of the British forces in North America.*

⁸² *A fever marked by fits of shivering.*

of public blessings which we do not immediately see, that God hath blessed him with uninterrupted health, and given him a mind that can even flourish upon care.

I shall conclude this paper with some miscellaneous remarks on the state of our affairs; and shall begin with asking the following question. Why is it that the enemy hath left the New England provinces, and made these middle ones the seat of war? The answer is easy. New England is not infested with Tories, and we are. I have been tender in raising the cry against these men, and used numberless arguments to show them their danger: but it will not do to sacrifice a world either to their folly or their baseness. The period is now arrived, in which either they or we must change our sentiments, or one or both must fall. And what is a Tory? Good God! what is he? I should not be afraid to go with an hundred Whigs against a thousand Tories, were they to attempt to get into arms. Every Tory is a coward: for servile, slavish, self-interested fear is the foundation of Toryism: and a man under such influence, though he may be cruel, never can be brave.

But, before the line of irrecoverable separation may be drawn between us, let us reason the matter together. Your conduct is an invitation to the enemy; yet not one in a thousand of you has heart enough to join him. Howe is as much deceived by you, as the American cause is injured by you. He expects you will all take up arms, and flock to his standard with muskets on your shoulders. Your opinions are of no use to him, unless you support him personally; for it is soldiers, and not Tories, that he wants.

I once felt all that kind of anger which a man ought to feel against the mean principles that are held by the Tories. A noted one, who kept a tavern at Amboy, was standing at his door, with as pretty a child in his hand, about eight or nine months old, as I ever saw; and after speaking his mind as freely as he thought was prudent, finished with the unfatherly expression, "Well, give me peace in my days." Not a man lives on the continent, but fully believes that separation must some time or other finally take place, and a generous parent would have said, "If there must be trouble, let it be in my days, that my child may have peace;" and this single reflection, well applied, is sufficient to awaken every man to duty. Not a place upon earth might be so happy as America. Her situation is remote from all the wrangling world, and she has nothing to do but to trade with them. A man may easily distinguish in himself between temper and principle, and I am as confident, as I am that God governs the world, that America will never be happy till she gets clear of foreign dominion. Wars, without ceasing, will break out till that period arrives, and the continent must, in the end, be conqueror; for though the flame of liberty may sometimes cease to shine, the coal can never expire.

America did not, nor does not want [lack] force; but she wanted a proper application of that force. Wisdom is not the purchase of a day, and it is no wonder that we should err at first setting off. From an excess of tenderness, we were unwilling to raise an army, and trusted our cause to the temporary defence of a well-meaning militia. A summer's experience has now taught us better; yet with those troops, while they were collected, we were able to set bounds to the progress of the enemy; and, thank God, they are again assembling. I always considered militia as the best troops in the world for a sudden exertion, but they will not do for a long campaign. Howe, it is probable, will make an

attempt on this city [*Philadelphia*]; should he fail on this side of the Delaware, he is ruined; if he succeeds, our cause is not ruined. He stakes all on his side against a part on ours; admitting he succeeds, the consequence will be, that armies from both ends of the continent will march to assist their suffering friends in the middle states; for he cannot go every where: it is impossible. I consider Howe as the greatest enemy the Tories have; he is bringing a war into their country, which, had it not been for him, and partly for themselves, they had been clear of. Should he now be expelled, I wish, with all the devotion of a Christian, that the names of Whig and Tory may never more be mentioned; but should the Tories give him encouragement to come, or assistance if he come, I as sincerely wish that our next year's arms may expel them from the continent, and the Congress appropriate their possessions to the relief of those who have suffered in well-doing. A single successful battle next year will settle the whole. America could carry on a two-years war by the confiscation of the property of disaffected persons, and be made happy by their expulsion. Say not that this is revenge; call it rather the soft resentment of a suffering people, who, having no object in view but the good of all, have staked their own all upon a seemingly doubtful event. Yet it is folly to argue against determined hardness. Eloquence may strike the ear, and the language of sorrow draw forth the tear of compassion, but nothing can reach the heart that is steeled with prejudice.

Quitting this class of men, I turn, with the warm ardor of a friend, to those who have nobly stood, and are yet determined, to stand the matter out: I call not upon a few, but upon all: not on this state or that state, but on every state. Up and help us. Lay your shoulders to the wheel. Better have too much force than too little, when so great an object is at stake. Let it be told to the future world, that in the depth of winter, when nothing but hope and virtue could survive, that the city and the country, alarmed at one common danger, came forth to meet and to repulse it. Say not that thousands are gone: turn out your tens of thousands: throw not the burden of the day upon Providence, but show your faith by your good works, that God may bless you. It matters not where you live, or what rank of life you hold; the evil or the blessing will reach you all. The far and the near, the home counties and the back, the rich and the poor, shall suffer or rejoice alike. The heart that feels not now is dead. The blood of his children will curse his cowardice, who shrinks back at a time when a little might have saved the whole, and made them happy. I love the man that can smile in trouble—that can gather strength from distress, and grow brave by reflection. It is the business of little minds to shrink; but he, whose heart is firm, and whose conscience approves his conduct, will pursue his principles unto death. My own line of reasoning is to myself, as straight and clear as a ray of light. Not all the treasures of the world, so far as I believe, could have induced me to support an offensive war, for I think it murder; but if a thief breaks into my house—burn and destroy my property, and kill, or threaten to kill me and those that are in it, and to “bind me in all cases whatsoever,” to his absolute will, am I to suffer it? What signifies it to me, whether he who does it is a King or a common man; my countryman, or not my countryman; whether it be done by an individual villain, or an army of men? If we reason to the root of things we shall find no difference; neither can any just cause be assigned, why we should punish in the one case, and pardon in the other. Let them call me rebel, and welcome; I feel no concern from it; but I should suffer the misery of devils, were I to make a whore of my soul, by swearing allegiance to one whose character is that of a sottish, stupid,

stubborn, worthless, brutish man. I conceive, likewise, a horrid idea in receiving mercy from a being who, at the last day, shall be shrieking to the rocks and mountains to cover him, and fleeing with terror from the orphan, the widow, and the slain of America.

There are cases which cannot be overdone by language; and this is one. There are persons too, who see not the full extent of the evil which threatens them. They solace themselves with hopes, that the enemy, if they succeed, will be merciful. It is the madness of folly, to expect mercy from those who have refused to do justice; and even mercy, where conquest is the object, is only a trick of war. The cunning of the fox is as murderous as the violence of the wolf, and we ought to guard equally against both. Howe's first object is partly by threats, and partly by promises, to terrify or seduce the people to deliver up their arms, and receive mercy. The Ministry recommended the same plan to Gage, and this is what the Tories call making their peace—"a peace which passeth all understanding" indeed. A peace which would be the immediate forerunner of a worse ruin than any we have yet thought of. Ye men of Pennsylvania, do reason upon these things! Were the back counties to give up their arms, they would fall an easy prey to the Indians, who are all armed. This, perhaps, is what some Tories would not be sorry for. Were the home counties to deliver up their arms, they would be exposed to the resentment of the back counties, who would then have it in their power to chastise their defection at pleasure. And were any one state to give up its arms, that state must be garrisoned by all Howe's army of Britons and Hessians, to preserve it from the anger of the rest. Mutual fear is the principal link in the chain of mutual love, and woe be to that state that breaks the compact. Howe is mercifully inviting you to barbarous destruction, and men must be either rogues or fools that will not see it. I dwell not upon the vapors of imagination; I bring reason to your ears, and, in language as plain as A, B, C, hold up truth to your eyes.

I thank God, that I fear not. I see no real cause for fear. I know our situation well, and can see the way out of it. While our army was collected, Howe dared not risk a battle; and it is no credit to him that he decamped from the White Plains, and waited a mean opportunity to ravage the defenceless Jerseys; but it is great credit to us, that, with a handful of men, we sustained an orderly retreat, for near an hundred miles, brought off our ammunition, all our field pieces, the greatest part of our stores, and had four rivers to pass. None can say, that our retreat was precipitate; for we were near three weeks in performing it, that the country might have time to come in. Twice we marched back to meet the enemy, and remained out till dark. The sign of fear was not seen in our camp; and had not some of the cowardly and disaffected inhabitants spread false alarms through the country, the Jerseys had never been ravaged. Once more, we are again collected and collecting. Our new army, at both ends of the continent, is recruiting fast; and we shall be able to open the next campaign with sixty thousand men, well armed and clothed. This is our situation—and who will, may know it. By perseverance and fortitude we have the prospect of a glorious issue; by cowardice and submission, the sad choice of a variety of evils—a ravaged country—a depopulated city—habitations without safety—and slavery without hope—our homes turned into barracks and bawdyhouses for Hessians—and a future race to provide for, whose fathers we shall doubt of! Look on this picture, and

weep over it! and if there yet remains one thoughtless wretch, who believes it not, let him suffer it unlamented.

Oration on the Advantages of American Independence

DAVID RAMSAY

Even as the war was being waged and with the outcome uncertain, intellectuals and statesmen continued to make the case for the importance of American independence. On July 4, 1778, physician, historian, and South Carolina politician David Ramsay (1749–1815) delivered this speech, the nation’s first Fourth of July oration, in Charleston. In 1780, after the fall of Charleston, Ramsay was imprisoned for a year by the British. Once released, he served as a member of the Continental Congress from 1782–83 and again from 1785–86; and after the Constitution was ratified, he served from 1801–15 in the Senate of South Carolina, of which he was also for several years the president. Ramsay also wrote one of the first histories of the American Revolution and a biography of George Washington.

What, according to Ramsay, are the specific virtues or excellences that will result from American independence and the emergence of a democratic polity? What are the accomplishments in the arts and sciences and in self-government that Ramsay foresees? Imagine yourself hearing this speech in 1778, in the midst of the Revolutionary War. How might you have been moved? How does it move you today, and why? Now, over 230 years after Ramsay’s oration, how do you assess the accuracy of his predictions? Are there excellences—and deficiencies or vices—that Ramsay failed to anticipate?

Friends and fellow citizens,

I’m pressed with the deepest sense of my insufficiency, I rise to address you, with particular diffidence. When I consider the knowledge and eloquence necessary to display the glorious prospects which independence opens to this continent, I am stung with a degree of self-reproach for undertaking the important task. But your known attachment to the cause of America encourages me to hope, that you will receive with indulgence, a well-intended exertion to promote her welfare; and emboldens me to cast myself on that candor, which looks with kindness on the feeblest efforts of an honest mind.

We are now celebrating the anniversary of our emancipation from British tyranny; an event that will constitute an illustrious era in the history of the world, and which promises an extension of all those blessings to our country, for which we would choose to live, or dare to die.

Our present form of government is every way preferable to the royal one we have lately renounced. It is much more favorable to purity of morals, and better calculated to promote all our important interests. Honesty, plain-dealing, and simple manners, were never made patterns of courtly behavior. Artificial manners always prevail in kingly governments; and royal courts are reservoirs, from whence insincerity, hypocrisy, dissimulation, pride, luxury, and extravagance, deluge and overwhelm the body of the

people. On the other hand, republics are favorable to truth, sincerity, frugality, industry, and simplicity of manners. Equality, the life and soul of commonwealths, cuts off all pretensions to preferment, but those which arise from extraordinary merit: Whereas in royal governments, he that can best please his superiors, by the low arts of fawning and adulation, is most likely to obtain favor.

It was the interest of Great Britain to encourage our dissipation and extravagance, for the two-fold purpose of *increasing the sale of her manufactures*, and of *perpetuating our subordination*. In vain we sought to check the growth of luxury, by sumptuary laws; Every wholesome restraint of this kind was sure to meet with the royal negative while the whole force of example was employed to induce us to copy the dissipated manners of the country from which we sprung. If, therefore, we had continued dependant, our frugality, industry, and simplicity of manners, would have been lost in an imitation of British extravagance, idleness, and false refinements.

How much more happy is our present situation, when necessity, co-operating with the love of our country, compels us to adopt both public and private economy? Many are now industriously clothing themselves and their families in sober homespun, who, had we remained dependant, would have been spending their time in idleness, and strutting in the costly robes of British gaiety.

The arts and sciences, which languished under the low prospects of subjection, will now raise their drooping heads, and spread far and wide, till they have reached the remotest parts of this untortured continent. It is the happiness of our present constitution, that all offices lie open to men of merit, of whatever rank or condition; and the reins of state may be held by the son of the poorest man, if possessed of abilities equal to the important station. We are no more to look up for the blessings of government to hungry courtiers, or the needy dependants of British nobility, but must educate our own children for these exalted purposes. When subjects, we had scarce any other share in government, but to obey the arbitrary mandates of a British Parliament: But Honor, with her dazzling pomp, interest with her golden lure, and patriotism with her heartfelt satisfaction, jointly call upon us now to qualify ourselves and prosperity for the bench, the army, the navy, and learned professions, and all the departments of civil government. The independence of our country holds forth such generous encouragement to youth, as cannot fail of making many of them despise the siren calls of luxury and mirth, and pursue heaven-born wisdom with unwearied application. A few years will now produce a much greater number of men of learning and abilities, than we could have expected for ages in our boyish state of minority, guided by the leading-strings of a parent country.

How trifling the objects of deliberation that came before our former legislative assemblies, compared with the great and important matters, on which now they decide! They might then, *with the leave of the King*, his governors and councils, make laws about *yoking hogs, branding cattle, or marking rice*: but they are now called upon to determine on peace and war, treaties and negotiations with foreign states, and other subjects interesting to the peace, liberty, sovereignty, and independence of a wide extended empire. No wonder, that so little attention has been paid to learning; for ignorance was

better than knowledge, while our abject and humiliating condition so effectually tended to crush the exertions of the human mind, and to extinguish a generous ardor for literary pre-eminence.

The times in which we live, and the governments we have lately adopted, all conspire to fan the sparks of genius in every breast, and kindle them into flame. When like children, we were under the guardianship of a foreign power, our limited attention was naturally engrossed by agriculture, or directed to the low pursuit of wealth. In this State, the powers of the soul, benumbed with ease and indolence, sunk us into sloth and effeminacy. Hardships, dangers, and proper opportunities give scope to active virtues, and rouse the mind to such vigorous exertions, as command the admiration of an applauding world. Rome, when she filled the earth with the terror of her arms, sometimes called her generals from the plough. In like manner, the great want of proper persons to fill high stations, has drawn from obscurity many illustrious characters, which will dazzle the world with the splendor of their names. The necessities of our country require the utmost exertions of all our powers; from which vigorous united efforts, much more improvement of the human mind is to be expected, than if we had remained in a torpid state of dependence.

Eloquence is the child of a free state. In this form of government, as public measures are determined by a majority of votes, arguments enforced by the art of persuasion, must evermore be crowned with success. The rising patriot, therefore, who wishes the happiness of his country, will cultivate the art of public speaking. In royal governments, where the will of one or a few has the direction of public measures, the orator may harangue, but most probably will reap prosecution and imprisonment, for the fruit of his labor: Whereas, in our present happy system, the poorest school-boy may prosecute his studies with increasing ardor, from the prospect, that in a few years he may, by his improved abilities, direct the determinations of public bodies, on subjects of the most stupendous consequence.

Thus might I go through the whole circle of arts and sciences, and shew, that while we remained British subjects, cramped and restrained by the limited views of dependence, each one of them would dwindle and decay, compared with the perfection and glory in which they will bloom and flourish, under the enlivening sunshine of Freedom and Independence.

I appeal, to the experience of all, whether they do not feel an elevation of soul growing out of the emancipation of their country, while they recollect that they are no longer subject to lawless will, but possess the powers of self-government, and are called upon to bear an active part in supporting and perpetuating the sovereignty of the United States; and in organizing them in such a manner, as will produce the greatest portion of political happiness to the present and future generations. In this elevation of soul, consists true genius, which is cramped by kingly government, and can only flourish in free states.

The attention of thousands is now called forth from their ordinary employments to subjects connected with the sovereignty and happiness of a great continent. As no one

can tell to what extent, the human mind may be cultivated, so no one can foresee what great events may be brought into existence, by the exertions of so many minds expanded by close attention to subjects of such vast importance.

The royal society was founded immediately after the termination of the civil wars in England. In like manner, may we not hope, as soon as this contest is ended, that the exalted spirits of our politicians and warriors will engage in the enlargement of public happiness, by cultivating the arts of peace, promoting useful knowledge, with an ardor equal to that which first roused them to bleed in the cause of liberty and their country? Their genius sharpened by their present glorious exertions, will naturally seek for a continuance of suitable employment. Having, with well-trying swords and prudent councils, secured liberty and independence for themselves and prosperity, their great souls will stoop to nothing less than concerting wise schemes of civil policy and happiness—instructing the world in useful arts—and extending the empire of science. I foresee societies formed of our heroes and statesmen, released of their present cares; some of which will teach mankind to plough, sow, plant, build, and improve the rough face of nature; while others critically examine the various productions of the animal, vegetable, and mineral kingdoms, and teach their countrymen to “look through nature up to nature’s God.” Little has been hitherto done towards completing the natural history of America, or for the improvement of agriculture, and the peaceful arts of civil life; but who will be surprised at this, who considers, that during the long past night of 150 years, our minds were depressed, and our activity benumbed by the low prospects of subjection? Future diligence will convince the world, that past inattention was the effect of our dependant form of government.

Every circumstance concurs to make it probable, that the arts and sciences will be cultivated, extended, and improved in independent America. They require a fresh soil, and always flourish most in new countries. A large volume of the book of nature, yet unread, is open before us, and invites our attentive perusal. Many useful plants, unknown to the most industrious botanist, waste their virtues in our desert air. Various parts of our country, hitherto untrod by the foot of any chemist, abound with different minerals. We stand on the shoulders of our predecessors, with respect to the arts that depend upon experiment and observation. The face of our country, intersected by rivers, or covered by woods and swamps, give ample scope for the improvement of mechanics, mathematics, and natural philosophy. Our free governments are the proper nurturers of rhetoric, criticism, and the arts which are founded on the philosophy of the human mind. In monarchies, an extreme degree of politeness disguises the simplicity of nature, and “sets the looks at variance and thoughts;” in republics, mankind appear as they really are, without any false coloring. In these governments therefore, attentive observers have an opportunity of knowing all the avenues of the heart, and of thoroughly understanding human nature. The great inferiority of the moderns to the ancients in fine writing, is to be referred to this veil cast over mankind, by the artificial refinements of modern monarchies. From the operation of similar causes it is hoped, that the free governments of America will produce poets, orators, critics, and historians, equal to the most celebrated of the ancient commonwealths of Greece and Italy.

Large empires are less favorable to true philosophy than small independent states. The authority of a great author is apt, in the former case to extinguish a free enquiry, and to give currency to falsehood unexamined. The doctrines of Confucius were believed all over China, and the philosophy of Descartes, in France: But neighboring nations examined them without partiality or prepossession, exploded them both. For the same reason our separate States, jealous of the literary reputation of each other, and uninfluenced by any partial bias, will critically pry into the merit of every new opinion and system, and naught but truth will stand the test and finally prevail.

In monarchies, favor is the source of preferment; but in our new forms of government, no one can command the suffrages of the people, unless by his superior merit and capacity.

The weight of each State in the continental scale, will ever be proportioned to the abilities of its representatives in Congress: Hence, an emulation will take place, each contending with the other, which shall produce the most accomplished statesmen. From the joint influence of all these combined causes, it may strongly be presumed, that literature will flourish in America; and, that our Independence will be an illustrious epoch, remarkable for the spreading and improvement of science.

A zeal for promoting learning, unknown in the days of our subjection, has already begun to overspread these United States. In the last session of our Assembly, three societies were incorporated for the laudable purpose of erecting seminaries of education. Nor is the noble spirit confined to us alone: Even now, amidst the tumults of war, literary institutions are forming all over the continent, which must light up such a blaze of knowledge, as cannot fail to burn, and catch, and spread, until it has finally illuminated, with the rays of science, the most brilliant retreats of ignorance and barbarity. . . .

We are the first people in the world who have had it in their own power to choose their own form of government. Constitutions were forced on other nations, by the will of their conquerors, or they were formed by accident, caprice, or the overbearing influence of prevailing parties or particular persons. But, happily for us, the bands of British government were dissolved at a time when no rank above that of freeman existed among us, and when we were in a capacity to choose for ourselves among the various forms of government, and to adopt that which best suited our country and people. Our deliberations on this occasion, were not directed by the overgrown authority of a conquering general, or the ambition of an aspiring nobility, but by the pole star of public good, inducing us to prefer those forms that would most effectually secure the greatest portion of political happiness to the greatest number of people. We had the example of all ages for our instruction, and many among us were well acquainted with the causes of prosperity and misery in other governments.

In times of public tranquility, the mighty have been too apt to encroach on the rights of many; but it is the great happiness of America, that her independent constitutions were agreed upon by common consent, at a time when her leading men needed the utmost support of the multitude, and therefore could have no other object in view, but the

formation of such constitutions as would best suit the people at large, and unite them most heartily in repelling common dangers.

As the strength of a people consists in their numbers, our separate States, sensible of their weakness, were actually excited by self-interest to form such free governments, as would encourage the greatest influx of inhabitants. In thus manner, an emulation has taken place in all the thirteen States, each contending with the others, who should form the freest constitution. Thus independence has been the fruitful parent of government formed on equal principles, more favorable to the liberty and happiness of the governed, than any that have yet been recorded in the annals of history.

While we were dependant on Britain our freedom was out of the question; for what is a free state but one that is governed by its own will? What shadow of liberty then could we possess, when the single NO of a King, three thousand miles distant, was sufficient to repeal any of our laws, however useful and salutary; and when we were bound in all cases whatsoever by men, in whose election we had no vote, who had an interest opposed to ours, and over whom we had no control? The wit of man could not possibly devise any mode that would unite the freedom of America with Britain's claim of unlimited supremacy. We were therefore reduced to the alternative of liberty and independence, or slavery and union. We wisely chose to cut the Gordian knot, which tied old Britain to the new, and to assume our independent station among the empires of the world. Britain, had she honestly intended it, was incapable of governing us for the great purposes of government. Our distance, and other local circumstances, made it impossible for her to be sufficiently acquainted with our situation and wants: But admitting it was in her power, we had no reason to expect that she would hold the reins of government for any other end but her own advantage. Human nature is too selfish, too ambitious, for us to expect, that one country will govern another, for any but interested purposes. To obtain the salutary ends of government, we must blend the interests of the people and their rulers; or else, the former will infallibly be sacrificed by the latter. Hence, the absurdity of our expecting security, liberty, and safety, while we were subjects of a state a thousand leagues distant. . . .

Our independence will naturally tend to fill our country with inhabitants. Where life, liberty and property, are well secured, and where land is easily and cheaply obtained, the natural increase of people will much exceed all European calculations. Add to this, the inhabitants of the old world becoming acquainted with our excellent forms of government, will emigrate by thousands. In their native lands, the hard-earned fruits of uninterrupted labor are scarcely equal to a scanty supply of their natural wants; and this pittance is held on a very precarious tenure: While our soil may be cheaply purchased, and will abundantly repay the toil of the husbandman, whose property no rapacious landlord dare invade. Happy America! whose extent of territory westward, is sufficient to accommodate with land, thousands and millions of the virtuous peasants, who now groan beneath tyranny and oppression in three quarters of the globe. Who would remain in Europe, a dependant on the will of an imperious landlord, when a few years industry can make an independent American freeholder?

Such will be the fruits of our glorious revolution, that in a little time gay fields, adorned with the yellow robes of ripening harvest, will smile in the remotest depths of our western frontiers, where impassible forests now frown over the uncultivated earth. The face of our interior country will be changed from a barren wilderness, into the hospitable abodes of peace and plenty. Cities too will rise majestic to the view, on those very spots which are now howled over by savage beasts and more savage men. . . .

It is difficult to compute the number of advantages arising from our present glorious struggle; harder still, perhaps impossible, precisely to ascertain their extent. It has attracted the attention of all Europe to the nature of civil liberty, and the rights of the people. Our constitutions, pregnant with the seeds of liberty and happiness, have been translated into a variety of languages, and spread far and wide. Who can tell what great events, now concealed in the womb of time, may be brought into existence by the nations of the old world emulating our successful efforts in the cause of liberty? The thrones of tyranny and despotism will totter, when their subjects shall learn and know, by our example, that the happiness of the people is the end and object of all lawful government. The wondering world has beheld the smiles of Heaven on the numerous sons of America, resolving to die or be free: Perhaps this noble example, like a wide-spreading conflagration may catch from breast to breast, and extend from nation to nation, till tyranny and oppression are utterly extirpated from the face of the earth.

The tyrants and landlords of the old world, who hold a great part of their fellow-men in bondage because of their independence for land, will be obliged to relax of their arbitrary treatment, when they find that America is an asylum for freemen from all quarters of the globe. They will be cautious of adding to the oppressions of their poor subjects and tenants, lest they should force them to abandon their country for the enjoyment of the sweets of American liberty. In this view of the matter, I am confident that the cause of America is the cause of human nature, and that it will extend its influence to thousands who will never see it, and procure them a mitigation of the cruelties and oppressions imposed by their arbitrary task-masters.

If such be the glorious consequences of independence, who can be so lost to every generous sentiment, as to wish to return under royal domination? Who would not rather count it an honor to stand among the foremost, in doing and suffering in a cause so intimately connected with the happiness of human nature? Away with all the peevish complaints of the hardness of the times, and the weight of the taxes. The prize for which we contend, would be cheaply purchased with double the expense of blood, treasure, and difficulty, it will ever cost us.

Our independent constitutions, formed on the justest principles, promise fair to give the most perfect protection to life, liberty, and property, equally to the poor and the rich. As at the conflagration of Corinth, the various melting metals running together, formed a new one, called Corinthian Brass, which was superior to any of its component parts; in like manner, perhaps it is the will of Heaven, that a new empire should be here formed, of the different nations of the old world, which will rise superior to all that have gone before it, and extend human happiness to its utmost possible limits. None can tell to what

perfection the arts of government may be brought. May we not therefore expect great things from the patriots of this generation, jointly co-operating to make the new-born Republic of America as complete as possible? It is not to be hoped, that human nature will here receive her most finished touches? That the arts and sciences will be extended and improved? That religion, learning, and liberty will be diffused over the continent? And in short, that the American editions of the human mind will be more perfect than any that have yet appeared? Great things have been achieved in the infancy of states; and the ardor of a new people rising to empire and renown, with prospects that tend to elevate the human soul, encourages these flattering expectations. . . .

The special interposition of Providence in our behalf, makes it impious to disbelieve the final establishment of our Heaven-protected independence. Can anyone seriously review the beginning, progress, and present state of the war, and not see an indisputable evidence of an overruling influence on the minds of men, preparing the way for this great event?

As all the tops of corn in a waving field are inclined in one direction by a gust of wind; in like manner the Governor of the world has given one and the same universal bent and inclination to the whole body of our people. Is it a work of man, that thirteen States, frequently quarrelling about boundaries, clashing in interests, differing in policy, manners, customs, forms of government, and religion; scattered over an extensive continent, under the influence of a variety of local prejudices, jealousies and aversions, should all harmoniously agree, as if one mighty mind inspired the whole? . . .

It has never yet been fairly tried how far the equal principles of republican government would secure the happiness of the governed. The ancients, unacquainted with the present mode of taking the sense of the people by representatives, were too apt, in their republic meetings to run into disorder and confusion. The distinction of *Patricians* and *Plebeians*, laid the foundation of perpetual discord, in the Roman commonwealth. If the free states of Greece had been under control of a common superintending power, familiar to our Continental Congress, they could have peaceably decided their disputes, and probably would have preserved their freedom and importance to the present day. Happily for us, warned by experience, we have guarded against all these evils. No artificial distinction of ranks has been suffered to take place among us. We can peaceably convene a State in one small assembly of deputies, representing the whole in equal proportion. All disputes between the different States, and all continental concerns, are to be managed by a Congress of representatives from each. What a security for liberty, for union, for every species of political happiness! Small states are weak, and incapable of defense; large ones are unwieldy, greatly abridge natural liberty, and their general laws, from a variety of clashing interests, must frequently bear hard on many individuals: But our confederation will give us the strength and protection of a power equal to that of the greatest; at the same time that, in all our internal concerns, we have the freedom of small independent commonwealths. We are in possessions of constitutions that contain in them the excellencies of all forms of government, free from the inconveniences of each; and in one word, we bid fair to be the happiest and freest people in the world for ages yet to come.

When I anticipate in imagination the future glory of my country, and the illustrious figure it will soon make on the theatre of the world, my heart distends with generous pride for being an American. What a substratum⁸³ for an empire! compared with which, the foundation of the Macedonian, the Roman, and the British, sink into insignificance. Some of our large States have territory superior to the island of Great Britain; whilst the whole together, are little inferior to Europe itself. Our Independence will people this extent of country with freemen, and will stimulate the innumerable inhabitants thereof, by every motive, to perfect the acts of government, and to extend human happiness.

I congratulate you on our glorious prospects. Having for three long years weathered the storms of adversity, we are at length arrived in view of the calm haven of peace and security. We have laid the foundations of a new empire, which promises to enlarge itself to vast dimensions, and to give happiness to a great continent. It is now our turn to figure on the face of the earth, and in the annals of the world. The arts and sciences are planted among us, and, fostered by the auspicious influence of equal governments, are growing up to maturity; while truth and freedom flourish by their sides. Liberty, both civil and religious, in her noontide blaze, shines forth with unclouded luster on all ranks and denominations of men.

Ever since the flood, true religion, literature, arts, empire, and riches, have taken a slow and gradual course from east to west, and are now about fixing their long and favorite abode in this new western world. Our sun of political happiness is already risen, and hath lifted his head over the mountains, illuminating our hemisphere with liberty, light, and polished life. Our independence will redeem one quarter of the globe from tyranny and oppression, and consecrate it the chosen seat of truth, justice, freedom, learning, and religion. We are laying the foundation of happiness for countless millions. Generations yet unborn will bless us for the blood-bought inheritance, we are about to bequeath to them. Oh happy times! Oh glorious days! Oh kind, indulgent, bountiful Providence, that we live in this highly favored period, and have the honor of helping forward these great events, and of suffering in a cause of such infinite importance!

⁸³ *The material of which something is made and from which it derives its special qualities.*

Letter to His Parents

SAMUEL SHAW

The enthusiastic view of the American Revolution expressed in David Ramsay's July 4, 1778 oration (see previous selection) was not universally shared, especially by the war-weary ordinary soldier. In this letter to his parents, Francis and Mary Shaw, dated June 28, 1779, Samuel Shaw (1754–94), a soldier in the Continental Army, reflects on the state of the army and the difficulties of its soldiers. The “ensuing campaign” he mentions was headed by General Benjamin Lincoln and took place in the southern United States—eventually culminating in the Siege of Charleston and his surrender to the British of his 5,000 men.

Of what does Shaw complain, about the army and for himself? Assuming that Shaw speaks truly, how do you account for the transformation of the initial “patriotic ardor which inspired each breast” into the “avarice and every rascally practice which tends to the gratification of that sordid and most disgraceful passion”? Compare the tone and content of Shaw's letter with those of Ramsay's oration at Charleston the previous year. Can both writers be right? Why might seeking the goal of independence by means of war necessarily demoralize and corrupt those who fight?

I wish, seriously, that the ensuing campaign may terminate the war. The people of America seem to have lost sight entirely of the noble principle which animated them at the commencement of it. That patriotic ardor which then inspired each breast,—that glorious, I had almost said godlike, enthusiasm,—has given place to avarice, and every rascally practice which tends to the gratification of that sordid and most disgraceful passion. I don't know as it would be too bold an assertion to say, that its depreciation is equal to that of the currency,—*thirty for one*. You may perhaps charitably think that I strain the matter, but I do not. I speak *feelingly*. By the arts of monopolizers and extortioners, and the little, the very little, attention by authority to counteract them, our currency is reduced to a mere name. Pernicious soever as this is to the community at large, its baneful effect is more immediately experienced by the *poor* soldier. I am myself an instance of it. For my services I receive a nominal sum,—dollars at *eight* shillings, in a country where they pass at the utmost for *fourpence* only. If it did not look too much like self-applause, I might say that I engaged in the cause of my country from the purest motives. However, be this as it may, my continuance in it has brought me to poverty and rags; and, had I fortune of my own, I should glory in persevering, though it should occasion a sacrifice of the last penny. But, when I consider my situation,—my pay inadequate to my support, though within the line of the strictest economy,—no private purse of my own,—and reflect that the best of parents, who, I am persuaded, have the tenderest affection for their son, and wish to support him in character, have not the means of doing it, and may, perhaps, be pressed themselves,—when these considerations occur to my mind, as they frequently do, they make me serious; more so than my natural disposition would lead me to be. The loss of my horse, by any accident whatever (unless he was actually killed in battle, and then I should be entitled only to about one third of his

value), would plunge me in inextricable misfortune; two years' pay and subsistence would not replace him. Yet, the nature of my office renders it indispensable that I should keep a horse. These are some of the emoluments annexed to a military station. I hardly thought there were so many before I began the detail; but I find several more might be added, though I think I have mentioned full enough.

Believe me, my dear and honored parents, that I have not enumerated these matters with a view to render you uneasy. Nothing would give me more pain, should they have that effect; but I think communicating one's difficulties always lessens, and, of course, makes them more tolerable; and I fancy it has already had some influence on me. I feel much easier than when I began to write, and more reconciled to my lot. It is true I shall see many persons grown rich at the end of the war, who at the commencement of it had no more than myself; but I shall not envy them. I must, notwithstanding, repeat my wish that this campaign may put an end to the war, for I much doubt the virtue of the people at large for carrying it on another year. Had the same spirit which glowed in the breast of every true American at the beginning of the controversy been properly cherished, the country, long ere now, had been in full enjoyment of the object of our warfare,—“peace, liberty, and safety.” But, as matters are at present circumstanced, it is to be feared these blessings are yet at a distance. Much remains to be done for the attainment of them. The recommendations of Congress, in their late address to the inhabitants of the States, should be in good earnest attended to. We are not to stand still and wait for salvation, but we must exert ourselves,—be industrious in the use and application of those means with which Heaven has furnished us, and then we may reasonably hope for success.

Account of the Battle of Kings Mountain

JAMES P. COLLINS

The Revolutionary War was not only a war between Great Britain and America. As this selection reminds us, it was also very much a civil war, fought between revolutionary and loyalist (Tory) militias. On October 7, 1780, these militias faced off at the Battle of Kings Mountain, in rural York County, South Carolina. The result was a decisive victory for the Continentals (also known as “Patriots”). In this account from his Autobiography of a Revolutionary Soldier, James P. Collins (1763–1843) describes what the battle was like for the patriot militiamen.

In what spirit does Collins go into battle? (You might compare his attitude with that of Samuel Shaw, in the previous selection.) In what spirit does Collins first taste victory? In what spirit does he describe the aftermath of the battle and the burial of the dead? What is your reaction to his account of the burial? Why is burial universally deemed humanly important, and to whom? What does this short vignette reveal about the War for American Independence?

The enemy was posted on a high, steep and rugged ridge, or spur of the mountain, very difficult of access. . . . The plan was, to surround the mountain and attack them on all sides, if possible. In order to do this, the left had to march under the fire of the enemy to gain the position assigned to them, on the stream on the right of the enemy, while the right was to take possession of the other stream; in doing this they were not exposed, the cliff being so steep as to cover them completely. Each leader made a short speech in his own way to his men, desiring every coward to be off immediately; here I confess I would willingly have been excused, for my feelings were not the most pleasant.—this may be attributed to my youth, not being quite seventeen years of age—but I could not well swallow the appellation of coward. I looked around; every man’s countenance seemed to change; well, thought I, fate is fate, every man’s fate is before him and he has to run it out. . . .

We were soon in motion, every man throwing four or five balls in his mouth to prevent thirst, also to be in readiness to reload quick. The shot of the enemy soon began to pass over us like hail; the first shock was quickly over, and for my own part, I was soon in profuse sweat. My lot happened to be in the center, where the severest part of the battle was fought. We soon attempted to climb the hill, but were fiercely charged upon and forced to fall back to our first position; we tried a second time, but met the same fate; the fight then seemed to become more furious. Their leader, Ferguson, came in full view, within rifle shot as if to encourage his men, who by this time were falling very fast: he soon disappeared. We took to the hill a third time; the enemy gave way; when we had gotten near the top, some of our leaders roared out, “Hurrah, my brave fellows! Advance! They are crying for quarter.”

By this time, the right and left had gained the top of the cliff; the enemy was completely hemmed in on all sides, and no chance of escaping—besides, their leader had fallen. They soon threw down their arms and surrendered. After the fight was over, the situation of the poor Tories appeared to be really pitiable; the dead lay in heaps on all sides, while the groans of the wounded were heard in every direction. I could not help turning away from the scene before me with horror and, though exulting in victory, could not refrain from shedding tears. . . .

On examining the dead body of their great chief, it appeared that almost fifty rifles must have been leveled at him, at the same time; seven rifle balls had passed through his body, both of his arms were broken, and his hat and clothing were literally shot to pieces. Their great elevation above us had proved their ruin; they overshot us altogether, scarce touching a man, except those on horseback, while every rifle from below seemed to have the desired effect. . . .

Next morning, which was Sunday, the scene became really distressing: the wives and children of the poor Tories came in, in great numbers. Their husbands, fathers, and brothers, lay dead in heaps, while others lay wounded or dying; a melancholy sight indeed! While numbers of the survivors were doomed to abide the sentence of a court martial, and several were actually hanged. . . .

We proceeded to bury the dead, but it was badly done; they were thrown into convenient piles, and covered with old logs, the bark of old trees, and rocks; yet not so as to secure them from becoming a prey to the beasts of the forest or the vultures of the air; and the wolves became so plenty that it was dangerous for any one to be out at night, for several miles around; also, the hogs in the neighborhood gathered in to the place to devour the flesh of men, inasmuch as numbers chose to live on little meat rather than eat their hogs, though they were very fat; half of the dogs in the country were said to be mad, and were put to death. I saw, myself, in passing the place, a few weeks after, all parts of the human frame, lying scattered in every direction . . .

Old Esther Dudley

NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE

The previous selections in this section dealt mainly with political and military aspects of the War for American Independence. The present selection focuses on the personal and human meaning of the American Revolution, and especially on attitudes toward time past and future and toward change and tradition. "Old Esther Dudley" is the fourth and final story in the "Tales of the Province-House" series by Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804–64), originally published between May 1838 and January 1839 in The United States Magazine and Democratic Review and later republished in Twice-Told Tales. It focuses on the steadfast ways of a now elderly royalist woman, "who had dwelt almost immemorial years" in the Province House mansion in Boston, the house of the royal governor of the Province of Massachusetts Bay. In addition, it offers a glimpse of the difference between British and American outlooks on life, as they are reflected in the character of the departing British governor of Massachusetts, Sir William Howe, and the newly elected American governor of the state, John Hancock.

Who is "old Esther Dudley," and why does she insist on remaining in the Province House? In what way is she moved—and how are you moved—by Howe's prayer to be killed by the rebels rather than abandon the Province House? What is the role of her blurred mirror and the "company" it enables her to keep? Does she benefit—or harm—the children by drawing them in and telling them stories? Is her steadfast presence a benefit—or a harm—to the townspeople? Why do they regard her as an "object of both pity and fear"? What do you think of Hancock's speech to old Esther Dudley, and especially of his expressed attitude toward the past? How does his attitude compare with that of Howe? With that of David Ramsay in his oration (see selection, above)? What do you think is Hawthorne's judgment of Esther Dudley and her devotion to the past—and of John Hancock and his zeal for the future? Does he—do you?—admire Esther Dudley? Why or why not?

The hour had come—the hour of defeat and humiliation—when Sir William Howe was to pass over the threshold of the province-house and embark, with no such triumphal ceremonies as he once promised himself, on board the British fleet. He bade his servants and military attendants go before him, and lingered a moment in the loneliness of the mansion to quell the fierce emotions that struggled in his bosom as with a death throb. Preferable then would he have deemed his fate had a warrior's death left him a claim to the narrow territory of a grave within the soil which the king had given him to defend. With an ominous perception that as his departing footsteps echoed adown the staircase the sway of Britain was passing forever from New England, he smote his clinched hand on his brow and cursed the destiny that had flung the shame of a dismembered empire upon him.

“Would to God,” cried he, hardly repressing his tears of rage, “that the rebels were even now at the doorstep! A blood-stain upon the floor should then bear testimony that the last British ruler was faithful to his trust.”

The tremulous voice of a woman replied to his exclamation.

“Heaven’s cause and the King’s are one,” it said. “Go forth, Sir William Howe, and trust in Heaven to bring back a royal governor in triumph.”

Subduing at once the passion to which he had yielded only in the faith that it was unwitnessed, Sir William Howe became conscious that an aged woman leaning on a gold-headed staff was standing betwixt him and the door. It was old Esther Dudley, who had dwelt almost immemorial years in this mansion, until her presence seemed as inseparable from it as the recollections of its history. She was the daughter of an ancient and once eminent family which had fallen into poverty and decay and left its last descendant no resource save the bounty of the king, nor any shelter except within the walls of the province-house. An office in the household with merely nominal duties had been assigned to her as a pretext for the payment of a small pension, the greater part of which she expended in adorning herself with an antique magnificence of attire. The claims of Esther Dudley’s gentle blood were acknowledged by all the successive governors, and they treated her with the punctilious courtesy which it was her foible to demand, not always with success, from a neglectful world. The only actual share which she assumed in the business of the mansion was to glide through its passages and public chambers late at night to see that the servants had dropped no fire from their flaring torches nor left embers crackling and blazing on the hearths. Perhaps it was this invariable custom of walking her rounds in the hush of midnight that caused the superstition of the times to invest the old woman with attributes of awe and mystery, fabling that she had entered the portal of the province-house—none knew whence—in the train of the first royal governor, and that it was her fate to dwell there till the last should have departed.

But Sir William Howe, if he ever heard this legend, had forgotten it.

“Mistress Dudley, why are you loitering here?” asked he, with some severity of tone. “It is my pleasure to be the last in this mansion of the king.”

“Not so, if it please your Excellency,” answered the time-stricken woman. “This roof has sheltered me long; I will not pass from it until they bear me to the tomb of my forefathers. What other shelter is there for old Esther Dudley save the province-house or the grave?”

“Now Heaven forgive me!” said Sir William Howe to himself. “I was about to leave this wretched old creature to starve or beg—Take this, good Mistress Dudley,” he added, putting a purse into her hands. “King George’s head on these golden guineas is sterling yet, and will continue so, I warrant you, even should the rebels crown John Hancock their king. That purse will buy a better shelter than the province-house can now afford.”

"While the burden of life remains upon me I will have no other shelter than this roof," persisted Esther Dudley, striking her staff upon the floor with a gesture that expressed immovable resolve. "And when your Excellency returns in triumph, I will totter into the porch to welcome you."

"My poor old friend!" answered the British general and all his manly and martial pride could no longer restrain a gush of bitter tears. "This is an evil hour for you and me. The province which the king intrusted to my charge is lost. I go hence in misfortune—perchance in disgrace—to return no more. And you, whose present being is incorporated with the past who have seen governor after governor in stately pageantry ascend these steps whose whole life has been an observance of majestic ceremonies and a worship of the king,—how will you endure the change? Come with us; bid farewell to a land that has shaken off its allegiance, and live still under a royal government, at Halifax."

"Never, never!" said the pertinacious⁸⁴ old dame. "Here will I abide, and King George shall still have one true subject in his disloyal province."

"Beshrew the old fool!" muttered Sir William Howe, growing impatient of her obstinacy and ashamed of the emotion into which he had been betrayed. "She is the very moral of old-fashioned prejudice, and could exist nowhere but in this musty edifice—Well, then, Mistress Dudley, since you will needs tarry, I give the province-house in charge to you. Take this key, and keep it safe until myself or some other royal governor shall demand it of you." Smiling bitterly at himself and her, he took the heavy key of the province-house, and, delivering it into the old lady's hands, drew his cloak around him for departure.

As the general glanced back at Esther Dudley's antique figure he deemed her well fitted for such a charge, as being so perfect a representative of the decayed past—of an age gone by, with its manners, opinions, faith and feelings, all fallen into oblivion or scorn, of what had once been a reality, but was now merely a vision of faded magnificence. Then Sir William Howe strode forth, smiting his clenched hands together in the fierce anguish of his spirit, and old Esther Dudley was left to keep watch in the lonely province-house, dwelling there with Memory; and if Hope ever seemed to flit around her, still was it Memory in disguise.

The total change of affairs that ensued on the departure of the British troops did not drive the venerable lady from her stronghold. There was not for many years afterward a governor of Massachusetts, and the magistrates who had charge of such matters saw no objection to Esther Dudley's residence in the province-house, especially as they must otherwise have paid a hireling for taking care of the premises, which with her was a labor of love; and so they left her the undisturbed mistress of the old historic edifice. Many and strange were the fables which the gossips whispered about her in all the chimney-corners of the town.

⁸⁴ *Holding firmly to an opinion or a course of action.*

Among the time-worn articles of furniture that had been left in the mansion, there was a tall antique mirror which was well worthy of a tale by itself, and perhaps may hereafter be the theme of one. The gold of its heavily-wrought frame was tarnished, and its surface so blurred that the old woman's figure, whenever she paused before it, looked indistinct and ghostlike. But it was the general belief that Esther could cause the governors of the overthrown dynasty, with the beautiful ladies who had once adorned their festivals, the Indian chiefs who had come up to the province-house to hold council or swear allegiance, the grim provincial warriors, the severe clergymen—in short, all the pageantry of gone days, all the figures that ever swept across the broad-plate of glass in former times,—she could cause the whole to reappear and people the inner world of the mirror with shadows of old life. Such legends as these, together with the singularity of her isolated existence, her age and the infirmity that each added winter flung upon her, made Mistress Dudley the object both of fear and pity, and it was partly the result of either sentiment that, amid all the angry license of the times, neither wrong nor insult ever fell upon her unprotected head. Indeed, there was so much haughtiness in her demeanor towards intruders—among whom she reckoned all persons acting under the new authorities—that it was really an affair of no small nerve to look her in the face. And to do the people justice, stern republicans as they had now become, they were well content that the old gentlewoman, in her hoop-petticoat and faded embroidery, should still haunt the palace of ruined pride and overthrown power, the symbol of a departed system, embodying a history in her person. So Esther Dudley dwelt year after year in the province-house, still reverencing all that others had flung aside, still faithful to her king, who, so long as the venerable dame yet held her post, might be said to retain one true subject in New England and one spot of the empire that had been wrested from him.

And did she dwell there in utter loneliness? Rumor said, "Not so". Whenever her chill and withered heart desired warmth, she was wont to summon a black slave of Governor Shirley's from the blurred mirror, and send him in search of guests who had long ago been familiar in those deserted chambers. Forth went the sable messenger, with the starlight or the moonshine gleaming through him, and did his errand in the burial ground, knocking at the iron doors of tomb, or upon the marble slabs that covered them, and whispering to those within, "My mistress, old Esther Dudley, bids you to the province-house at midnight;" and punctually as the clock of the old South told twelve came the shadows of the Olivers, the Hutchinsons, the Dudleys—all the grandees of a bygone generation, gliding beneath the portal into the well-known mansion, where Esther mingled with them as if she likewise were a shade. Without vouching for the truth of such traditions, it is certain that Mistress Dudley sometimes assembled a few of the stanch though crestfallen old Tories who had lingered in the rebel town during those days of wrath and tribulation. Out of a cobwebbed bottle containing liquor that a royal governor might have smacked his lips over they quaffed healths to the king and babbled treason to the republic, feeling as if the protecting shadow of the throne were still flung around them. But, draining the last drops of their liquor, they stole timorously homeward, and answered not again if the rude mob reviled them in the street.

Yet Esther Dudley's most frequent and favored guests were the children of the town. Towards them she was never stern. A kindly and loving nature hindered elsewhere from

its free course by a thousand rocky prejudices lavished itself upon these little ones. By bribes of gingerbread of her own making, stamped with a royal crown, she tempted their sunny sportiveness beneath the gloomy portal of the province-house, and would often beguile them to spend a whole playday there, sitting in a circle round the verge of her hoop-petticoat, greedily attentive to her stories of a dead world. And when these little boys and girls stole forth again from the dark mysterious mansion, they went bewildered, full of old feelings that graver people had long ago forgotten, rubbing their eyes at the world around them as if they had gone astray into ancient times and become children of the past. At home, when their parents asked where they had loitered such a weary while and with whom they had been at play, the children would talk of all the departed worthies of the province as far back as Governor Belcher and the haughty dame of Sir William Phipps. It would seem as though they had been sitting on the knees of these famous personages, whom the grave had hidden for half a century, and had toyed with the embroidery of their rich waistcoats or roguishly pulled the long curls of their flowing wigs. "But Governor Belcher has been dead this many a year," would the mother say to her little boy. "And did you really see him at the province-house?"—"Oh yes, dear mother! yes!" the half-dreaming child would answer. "But when old Esther had done speaking about him, he faded away out of his chair." Thus, without affrighting her little guests, she led them by the hand into the chambers of her own desolate heart and made childhood's fancy discern the ghosts that haunted there.

Living so continually in her own circle of ideas, and never regulating her mind by a proper reference to present things, Esther Dudley appears to have grown partially crazed. It was found that she had no right sense of the progress and true state of the Revolutionary war, but held a constant faith that the armies of Britain were victorious on every field and destined to be ultimately triumphant. Whenever the town rejoiced for a battle won by Washington or Gates or Morgan or Greene,⁸⁵ the news, in passing through the door of the province-house as through the ivory gate of dreams, became metamorphosed into a strange tale of the prowess of Howe, Clinton or Cornwallis. Sooner or later, it was her invincible belief the colonies would be prostrate at the footstool of the king. Sometimes she seemed to take for granted that such was already the case. On one occasion she startled the townspeople by a brilliant illumination of the province-house with candles at every pane of glass and a transparency of the king's initials and a crown of light in the great balcony-window. The figure of the aged woman in the most gorgeous of her mildewed velvets and brocades was seen passing from casement to casement, until she paused before the balcony and flourished a huge key above her head. Her wrinkled visage actually gleamed with triumph, as if the soul within her were a festal lamp.

"What means this blaze of light? What does old Esther's joy portend?" whispered a spectator. "It is frightful to see her gliding about the chambers and rejoicing there without a soul to bear her company."

"It is as if she were making merry in a tomb," said another.

⁸⁵ *Major General Horatio Gates (1727–1806), Major General Nathanael Greene (1742–86), and Brigadier General Daniel Morgan (1736–1802).*

“Pshaw! It is no such mystery,” observed an old man, after some brief exercise of memory. “Mistress Dudley is keeping jubilee for the King of England’s birthday.”

Then the people laughed aloud, and would have thrown mud against the blazing transparency of the king’s crown and initials, only that they pitied the poor old dame who was so dismally triumphant amid the wreck and ruin of the system to which she appertained.

Oftentimes it was her custom to climb the weary staircase that wound upward to the cupola, and thence strain her dimmed eyesight seaward and countryward, watching for a British fleet or for the march of a grand procession with the king’s banner floating over it. The passengers in the street below would discern her anxious visage and send up a shout: “When the golden Indian on the province-house shall shoot his arrow, and when the cock on the Old South spire shall crow, then look for a royal governor again!” For this had grown a by-word through the town. And at last, after long, long years, old Esther Dudley knew—or perchance she only dreamed—that a royal governor was on the eve of returning to the province-house to receive the heavy key which Sir William Howe had committed to her charge. Now, it was the fact that intelligence bearing some faint analogy to Esther’s version of it was current among the townspeople. She set the mansion in the best order that her means allowed, and, arraying herself in silks and tarnished gold, stood long before the blurred mirror to admire her own magnificence. As she gazed the gray and withered lady moved her ashen lips, murmuring half aloud, talking to shapes that she saw within the mirror, to shadows of her own fantasies, to the household friends of memory, and bidding them rejoice with her and come forth to meet the governor. And while absorbed in this communion, Mistress Dudley heard the tramp of many footsteps in the street, and, looking out at the window, beheld what she construed as the royal governor’s arrival.

“Oh, happy day! Oh, blessed, blessed hour!” she exclaimed. “Let me but bid him welcome within the portal, and my task in the province-house and on earth is done!” Then with tottering feet which age and tremulous joy caused to tread amiss, she hurried down the grand staircase, her silks sweeping and rustling as she went; so that the sound was as if a train of spectral courtiers were thronging from the dim mirror.

And Esther Dudley fancied that as soon as the wide door should be flung open all the pomp and splendor of bygone times would pace majestically into the province-house and the gilded tapestry of the past would be brightened by the sunshine of the present. She turned the key, withdrew it from the lock, unclosed the door and stepped across the threshold. Advancing up the court-yard appeared a person of most dignified mien, with tokens, as Esther interpreted them, of gentle blood, high rank and long-accustomed authority even in his walk and every gesture. He was richly dressed, but wore a gouty shoe, which, however, did not lessen the stateliness of his gait. Around and behind him were people in plain civic dresses and two or three war-worn veterans—evidently officers of rank—arrayed in a uniform of blue and buff. But Esther Dudley, firm in the belief that had fastened its roots about her heart, beheld only the principal personage, and never doubted that this was the long-looked-for governor to whom she was to surrender up her

charge. As he approached she involuntarily sank down on her knees and tremblingly held forth the heavy key.

"Receive my trust! Take it quickly!" cried she, "for methinks Death is striving to snatch away my triumph. But he comes too late. Thank Heaven for this blessed hour! God save King George!"

"That, Madam, is a strange prayer to be offered up at such a moment," replied the unknown guest of the province-house, and, courteously removing his hat, he offered his arm to raise the aged woman. "Yet, in reverence for your gray hairs and long-kept faith, Heaven forbid that any here should say you nay. Over the realms which still acknowledge his sceptre, God save King George!"

Esther Dudley started to her feet, and hastily clutching back the key, gazed with fearful earnestness at the stranger; and dimly and doubtfully, as if suddenly awakened from a dream, her bewildered eyes half recognized his face. Years ago she had known him among the gentry of the province. But the ban of the king had fallen upon him. How, then, came the doomed victim here? Proscribed, excluded from mercy, the monarch's most dreaded and hated foe, this New England merchant had stood triumphantly against a kingdom's strength, and his foot now trod upon humbled royalty as he ascended the steps of the province-house, the people's chosen governor of Massachusetts.

"Wretch, wretch that I am!" muttered the old woman, with such a heartbroken expression that the tears gushed from the stranger's eyes. "Have I bidden a traitor welcome?—Come, Death! Come quickly!"

"Alas, venerable lady," said Governor Hancock, lending her his support with all the reverence that a courtier would have shown to a queen, "your life has been prolonged until the world has changed around you. You have treasured up all that time has rendered worthless—the principles, feelings, manners, modes of being and acting which another generation has flung aside—and you are a symbol of the past. And I and these around me—we represent a new race of men, living no longer in the past, scarcely in the present, but projecting our lives forward into the future. Ceasing to model ourselves on ancestral superstitions, it is our faith and principle to press onward—onward.—Yet," continued he, turning to his attendants, "let us reverence, for the last time, the stately and gorgeous prejudices of the tottering past!"

While the republican governor spoke he had continued to support the helpless form of Esther Dudley; her weight grew heavier against his arm, but at last, with a sudden effort to free herself, the ancient woman sank down beside one of the pillars of the portal. The key of the province-house fell from her grasp and clanked against the stone.

"I have been faithful unto death," murmured she. "God save the king!"

“She hath done her office!” said Hancock solemnly. “We will follow her reverently to the tomb of her ancestors, and then, my fellow-citizens, onward—onward. We are no longer children of the past.”

As the old loyalist concluded his narrative the enthusiasm which had been fitfully flashing within his sunken eyes and quivering across his wrinkled visage faded away, as if all the lingering fire of his soul were extinguished. Just then, too, a lamp upon the mantelpiece threw out a dying gleam, which vanished as speedily as it shot upward, compelling our eyes to grope for one another’s features by the dim glow of the hearth. With such a lingering fire, methought, with such a dying gleam, had the glory of the ancient system vanished from the province-house when the spirit of old Esther Dudley took its flight. And now, again, the clock of the Old South threw its voice of ages on the breeze, knolling the hourly knell of the past, crying out far and wide through the multitudinous city, and filling our ears, as we sat in the dusky chamber, with its reverberating depth of tone. In that same mansion—in that very chamber—what a volume of history had been told off into hours by the same voice that was now trembling in the air! Many a governor had heard those midnight accents and longed to exchange his stately cares for slumber. And, as for mine host and Mr. Bela Tiffany and the old loyalist and me, we had babbled about dreams of the past until we almost fancied that the clock was still striking in a bygone century. Neither of us would have wondered had a hoop-petticoated phantom of Esther Dudley tottered into the chamber, walking her rounds in the hush of midnight as of yore, and motioned us to quench the fading embers of the fire and leave the historic precincts to herself and her kindred shades. But, as no such vision was vouchsafed, I retired unbidden, and would advise Mr. Tiffany to lay hold of another auditor, being resolved not to show my face in the Province House for a good while hence—if ever.

The Siege and Surrender at Yorktown

JAMES THACHER

James Thacher (1754–1844) was a Massachusetts-born surgeon and writer who served with the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War. Many years later (1823), he published his diaries written during the war, from which these excerpts are taken. Present during the siege of Yorktown and at the final surrender of the British, Thacher provides this eyewitness account of the end of the war.

In the first excerpt, about the siege, Thacher speaks about the excitement and satisfaction of military victory, but also about its costs (which, as a surgeon, he sees first hand). How can one assess the relative weights of the gains and the losses? Is victory in war sufficient to justify its costs, or must we wait until we can properly judge the political future to which victory leads? What is your assessment of Cornwallis' refusal to appear at the surrender or to be with his men in defeat? Compare the conduct of Cornwallis to that of Howe and Esther Dudley (see previous selection).

From the 10th to the 15th [of October 1781], a tremendous and incessant firing from the American and French batteries is kept up, and the enemy return the fire, but with little effect. A red hot shell from the French battery set fire to the Charon, a British 44 gun ship, and two or three smaller vessels at anchor in the river, which were consumed in the night. From the bank of the river, I had a fine view of this splendid conflagration. The ships were enwrapped in a torrent of fire, which spreading with vivid brightness among the combustible rigging, and running with amazing rapidity to the tops of the several masts, while all around was thunder and lightning from our numerous cannon and mortars, and in the darkness of night, presented one of the most sublime and magnificent spectacles which can be imagined. Some of our shells, overreaching the town, are seen to fall into the river, and bursting, throw up columns of water like the spouting of the monsters of the deep.

We have now made further approaches to the town, by throwing up a second parallel line, and batteries within about three hundred yards; this was effected in the night, and at daylight the enemy were roused to the greatest exertions, the engines of war have raged with redoubled fury and destruction on both sides, no cessation day or night. The French had two officers wounded, and fifteen men killed or wounded, and among the Americans, two or three were wounded. I assisted in amputating a man's thigh.

The siege is daily becoming more and more formidable and alarming, and his lordship must view his situation as extremely critical, if not desperate. Being in the trenches every other night and day, I have a fine opportunity of witnessing the sublime and stupendous scene which is continually exhibiting. The bomb shells from the besiegers and the besieged are incessantly crossing each others' path in the air. They are clearly visible in the form of a black ball in the day, but in the night, they appear like

fiery meteors with blazing tails, most beautifully brilliant, ascending majestically from the mortar to a certain altitude, and gradually descending to the spot where they are destined to execute their work of destruction.

It is astonishing with what accuracy an experienced gunner will make his calculations, that a shell shall fall within a few feet of a given point, and burst at the precise time, though at a great distance. When a shell falls, it whirls round, burrows, and excavates the earth to a considerable extent, and bursting, makes dreadful havoc around. I have more than once witnessed fragments of the mangled bodies and limbs of the British soldiers thrown into the air by the bursting of our shells, and by one from the enemy, Captain White, of the seventh Massachusetts regiment, and one soldier were killed, and another wounded near where I was standing. About twelve or fourteen men have been killed or wounded within twenty-four hours; I attended at the hospital, amputated a man's arm, and assisted in dressing a number of wounds.

The enemy having two redoubts, about three hundred yards in front of their principal works, which enfiladed⁸⁶ our entrenchment and impeded our approaches, it was resolved to take possession of them both by assault. The one on the left of the British garrison, bordering on the banks of the river, was assigned to our brigade of light infantry, under the command of the Marquis de Lafayette. The advanced corps was led on by the intrepid Colonel Hamilton, who had commanded a regiment of light infantry during the campaign, and assisted by Colonel Gimat.

The assault commenced at eight o'clock in the evening, and the assailants bravely entered the fort with the point of the bayonet without firing a single gun. We suffered the loss of eight men killed, and about thirty wounded, among whom Colonel Gimat received a slight wound in his foot, and Major Gibbs, of his Excellency's guard, and two other officers, were slightly wounded. Major Campbell, who commanded in the fort, was wounded and taken prisoner, with about thirty soldiers, the remainder made their escape. I was desired to visit the wounded in the fort, even before the balls had ceased whistling about my ears, and saw a sergeant and eight men dead in the ditch. A captain of our infantry, belonging to New Hampshire, threatened to take the life of Major Campbell, to avenge the death of his favorite, Colonel Scammel, but Colonel Hamilton interposed, and not a man was killed after he ceased to resist.

During the assault, the British kept up an incessant firing of cannon and musketry from their whole line. His Excellency General Washington, Generals Lincoln and Knox, with their aides, having dismounted, were standing in an exposed situation waiting the result.

Colonel Cobb, one of General Washington's aids, solicitous for his safety, said to his Excellency, "Sir, you are too much exposed here, had you not better step a little back?"

"Colonel Cobb," replied his Excellency, "if you are afraid, you have liberty to step back."

⁸⁶ *Gunfire directed from a flanking position along the length of an enemy battle line.*

The other redoubt on the right of the British lines was assaulted at the same time by a detachment of the French, commanded by the gallant Baron de Viominel. Such was the ardor displayed by the assailants, that all resistance was soon overcome, though at the expense of nearly one hundred men killed and wounded. Of the defenders of the redoubt, eighteen were killed, and one captain and two subaltern officers and forty-two rank and file captured.

Our second parallel line was immediately connected with the two redoubts now taken from the enemy, and some new batteries were thrown up in front of our second parallel line, with a covert way, and angling work approaching to less than three hundred yards of their principal forts. These will soon be mantled with cannon and mortars, and when their horrid thundering commences, it must convince his Lordship, that his post is not invincible, and that submission must soon be his only alternative. Our artillery men, by the exactness of their aim, make every discharge take effect, so that many of the enemy's guns are entirely silenced and their works are almost in ruins. . . .

[October] *19th*.— This is to us a most glorious day, but to the English one of bitter chagrin and disappointment. Preparations are now making to receive as captives, that vindictive, haughty commander, and that victorious army, who by their robberies and murders have so long been a scourge to our brethren of the southern states. Being on horseback, I anticipate a full share of satisfaction in viewing the various movements in the interesting scene.

The stipulated terms of capitulation are similar to those granted to General Lincoln at Charleston the last year. The captive troops are to march out with shouldered arms, colors cased, and drums beating a British or German march, and to ground their arms at a place assigned for the purpose. The officers are allowed their side arms and private property, and the generals and such officers as desire it, are to go on parole to England or New York. The marines and seamen of the king's ships are prisoners of war to the navy of France, and the land forces to the United States. All military and artillery stores to be delivered up unimpaired. The royal prisoners to be sent into the interior of Virginia, Maryland and Pennsylvania in regiments, to have rations allowed them equal to the American soldiers, and to have their officers near them. Lord Cornwallis to man and despatch the *Bonetta* sloop of war with despatches to Sir Henry Clinton at New York without being searched, the vessel to be returned and the hands accounted for.

At about twelve o'clock, the combined army was arranged and drawn up in two lines extending more than a mile in length. The Americans were drawn up in a line on the right side of the road, and the French occupied the left. At the head of the former the great American commander, mounted on his noble courser, took his station, attended by his aides. At the head of the latter was posted the excellent Count Rochambeau and his suite. The French troops, in complete uniform, displayed a martial and noble appearance, their band of music, of which the timbrel formed a part, is a delightful novelty, and produced while marching to the ground, a most enchanting effect. The Americans though not all in uniform nor their dress so neat, yet exhibited an erect soldierly air, and every countenance beamed with satisfaction and joy. The concourse of spectators from the

country was prodigious, in point of numbers probably equal to the military, but universal silence and order prevailed.

It was about two o'clock when the captive army advanced through the line formed for their reception. Every eye was prepared to gaze on Lord Cornwallis, the object of peculiar interest and solicitude; but he disappointed our anxious expectations; pretending indisposition, he made General O'Hara his substitute as the leader of his army. This officer was followed by the conquered troops in a slow and solemn step, with shouldered arms, colors cased and drums beating a British march. Having arrived at the head of the line, General O'Hara, elegantly mounted, advanced to his Excellency the Commander in Chief, taking off his hat, and apologized for the non-appearance of Earl Cornwallis. With his usual dignity and politeness his Excellency pointed to Major-General Lincoln for directions, by whom the British army was conducted into a spacious field where it was intended they should ground their arms.

The royal troops, while marching through the line formed by the allied army, exhibited a decent and neat appearance, as respects arms and clothing, for their commander opened his store and directed every soldier to be furnished with a new suit complete, prior to the capitulation. But in their line of march we remarked a disorderly and unsoldierly conduct, their step was irregular, and their ranks frequently broken.

But it was in the field when they came to the last act of the drama, that the spirit and pride of the British soldier was put to the severest test—here their mortification could not be concealed. Some of the platoon officers appeared to be exceedingly chagrined when giving the word "*ground arms,*" and I am a witness that they performed this duty in a very unofficer-like manner, and that many of the soldiers manifested a sullen temper, throwing their arms on the pile with violence, as if determined to render them useless. This irregularity, however, was checked by the authority of General Lincoln. After having grounded their arms and divested themselves of their accoutrements, the captive troops were conducted back to Yorktown and guarded by our troops till they could be removed to the place of their destination.

The British troops that were stationed at Gloucester surrendered at the same time, and in the same manner to the command of the Duke de Luzerne.

This must be a very interesting and gratifying transaction to General Lincoln, who having himself been obliged to surrender an army to a haughty foe the last year, has now assigned him the pleasing duty of giving laws to a conquered army in return, and of reflecting that the terms which were imposed on him are adopted as a basis of the surrender in the present instance. It is a very gratifying circumstance that every degree of harmony, confidence and friendly intercourse subsisted between the American and French troops during the campaign, no contest except an emulous spirit to excel in exploits and enterprise against the common enemy, and a desire to be celebrated in the annals of history for an ardent love of great and heroic actions.

We are not to be surprized that the pride of the British officers is humbled on this occasion, as they have always entertained an exalted opinion of their own military prowess, and affected to view the Americans as a contemptible, undisciplined rabble. But there is no display of magnanimity when a great commander shrinks from the inevitable misfortunes of war, and when it is considered that Lord Cornwallis has frequently appeared in splendid triumph at the head of his army by which he is almost *adored*, we conceive it incumbent on him cheerfully to participate in their misfortunes and degradations, however humiliating; but it is said he gives himself up entirely to vexation and despair.



A New Republic



Letter to H. Niles

JOHN ADAMS

In this letter to his friend H. Niles (dated February 1818), John Adams (1735–1826) seeks to explain the idea of the American Revolution and how it came about. Early in the letter he asks: “What do we mean by the American Revolution? Do we mean the American war?” And, shortly thereafter he claims: “The Revolution was effected before the war commenced. The Revolution was in the minds and hearts of the people. . . . This radical change in the principles, opinions, sentiments, and affections of the people, was the real American Revolution.” The rest of the letter seeks to justify and explain these claims. We reproduce here the opening part of the letter; the omitted part presents and assesses the deeds and importance of individual Revolutionary figures.⁸⁷

What evidence does Adams supply to support his claim, that the Revolution was effected before the war began? How would you yourself answer Adams’ question: What do you mean by the American Revolution? What light does this letter shed on the new republic?

The American Revolution was not a common event. Its effects and consequences have already been awful over a great part of the globe. And when and where are they to cease?

But what do we mean by the American Revolution? Do we mean the American war? The Revolution was effected before the war commenced. The Revolution was in the minds and hearts of the people; a change in their religious sentiments of their duties and obligations. While the king, and all in authority under him, were believed to govern in justice and mercy, according to the laws and constitution derived to them from the God of nature and transmitted to them by their ancestors, they thought themselves bound to pray for the king and queen and all the royal family, and all in authority under them, as ministers ordained of God for their good; but when they saw those powers renouncing all the principles of authority, and bent upon the destruction of all the securities of their lives, liberties, and properties, they thought it their duty to pray for the continental congress and all the thirteen State congresses, &c.

There might be, and there were others who thought less about religion and conscience, but had certain habitual sentiments of allegiance and loyalty derived from their education; but believing allegiance and protection to be reciprocal, when protection was withdrawn, they thought allegiance was dissolved.

Another alteration was common to all. The people of America had been educated in an habitual affection for England, as their mother country; and while they thought her a kind and tender parent, (erroneously enough, however, for she never was such a mother,) no affection could be more sincere. But when they found her a cruel beldam, willing like

⁸⁷ To read the entire letter, see <http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/john-adams-to-h-niles/>.

Lady Macbeth, to “dash their brains out,” it is no wonder if their filial affections ceased, and were changed into indignation and horror.

This radical change in the principles, opinions, sentiments, and affections of the people, was the real American Revolution.

By what means this great and important alteration in the religious, moral, political, and social character of the people of thirteen colonies, all distinct, unconnected, and independent of each other, was begun, pursued, and accomplished, it is surely interesting to humanity to investigate, and perpetuate to posterity.

To this end, it is greatly to be desired, that young men of letters in all the States, especially in the thirteen original States, would undertake the laborious, but certainly interesting and amusing task, of searching and collecting all the records, pamphlets, newspapers, and even handbills, which in any way contributed to change the temper and views of the people, and compose them into an independent nation.

The colonies had grown up under constitutions of government so different, there was so great a variety of religions, they were composed of so many different nations, their customs, manners, and habits had so little resemblance, and their intercourse had been so rare, and their knowledge of each other so imperfect, that to unite them in the same principles in theory and the same system of action, was certainly a very difficult enterprise. The complete accomplishment of it, in so short a time and by such simple means, was perhaps a singular example in the history of mankind. Thirteen clocks were made to strike together—a perfection of mechanism, which no artist had ever before effected.

In this research, the gloriol⁸⁸ of individual gentlemen, and of separate States, is of little consequence. The *means and the measures* are the proper objects of investigation. These may be of use to posterity, not only in this nation, but in South America and all other countries. They may teach mankind that revolutions are no trifles; that they ought never to be undertaken rashly; nor without deliberate consideration and sober reflection; nor without a solid, immutable, eternal foundation of justice and humanity; nor without a people possessed of intelligence, fortitude, and integrity sufficient to carry them with steadiness, patience, and perseverance, through all the vicissitudes of fortune, the fiery trials and melancholy disasters they may have to encounter.

The town of Boston early instituted an annual oration on the 4th of July, in commemoration of the principles and feelings which contributed to produce the revolution. Many of those orations I have heard, and all that I could obtain, I have read. Much ingenuity and eloquence appears upon every subject, except those principles and feelings. That of my honest and amiable neighbor, Josiah Quincy, appeared to me the most directly to the purpose of the institution. Those principles and feelings ought to be traced back for two hundred years, and sought in the history of the country from the first plantations in America. Nor should the principles and feelings of the English and Scotch

⁸⁸ *Halo or nimbus.*

towards the colonies, through that whole period, ever be forgotten. The perpetual discordance between British principles and feelings and of those of America, the next year after the suppression of the French power in America, came to a crisis, and produced an explosion.

It was not until after the annihilation of the French dominion in America that any British ministry had dared to gratify their own wishes, and the desire of the nation, by projecting a formal plan for raising a national revenue from America, by parliamentary taxation. The first great manifestation of this design was by the order to carry into strict executions those acts of parliament, which were well known by the appellation of the *acts of trade*, which had lain a dead letter, unexecuted for half a century, and some of them, I believe, for nearly a whole one.

This produced, in 1760 and 1761, an awakening and a revival of American principles and feelings, with an enthusiasm which went on increasing till, in 1775, it burst out in open violence, hostility, and fury. . . .

A New Eden

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES SR.

Almost from the start, our fledging republic was viewed by many not only as a new world, full of promise and opportunity, but also as a radically new human beginning, a new Garden of Eden. Such a view of America appears in this poem (1854) by Oliver Wendell Holmes Sr. (1809–94), noted American physician and poet, and father of his namesake, the Supreme Court Justice.

How does the New Eden differ from the biblical original, described in the book of Genesis?⁸⁹ What is “edenic” about Holmes’ New Eden, and what is responsible for its bounty? How does Holmes view our Pilgrim/Puritan forebears? The poem begins and ends with reference to ocean: from “Scarce could the parting ocean close” to “Till Ocean is its only wall.” What is the meaning of these differing references? What, according to the poem, is going to enable us to keep “our second Garden of the Blest”?

Scarce could the parting ocean close,
Seamed by the Mayflower’s cleaving bow,
When o’er the rugged desert rose
The waves that tracked the Pilgrim’s plough.

Then sprang from many a rock-strewn field
The rippling grass, the nodding grain,
Such growths as English meadows yield
To scanty sun and frequent rain.

But when the fiery days were done,
And Autumn brought his purple haze,
Then, kindling in the slanted sun,
The hillsides gleamed with golden maize.

The food was scant, the fruits were few
A red-streak glistening here and there;
Perchance in statelier precincts grew
Some stern old Puritanic pear.

Austere in taste, and tough at core,
Its unrelenting bulk was shed,
To ripen in the Pilgrim’s store
When all the summer sweets were fled.

⁸⁹ *The biblical story begins this way: “No shrub of the field was yet in the earth, and no herb of the field had yet sprung up: for the LORD God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was not a man to till the ground.” (Genesis 2:5).*

Such was his lot, to front the storm
With iron heart and marble brow,
Nor ripen till his earthly form
Was cast from life's autumnal bough.

But ever on the bleakest rock
We bid the brightest beacon glow,
And still upon the thorniest stock
The sweetest roses love to blow.

So on our rude and wintry soil
We feed the kindling flame of art,
And steal the tropic's blushing spoil
To bloom on Nature's ice-clad heart.

See how the softening Mother's breast
Warms to her children's patient wiles,
Her lips by loving Labor pressed
Break in a thousand dimpling smiles,

From when the flushing bud of June
Dawns with its first auroral hue,
Till shines the rounded harvest-moon,
And velvet dahlias drink the dew.

Nor these the only gifts she brings;
Look where the laboring orchard groans,
And yields its beryl-threaded strings
For chestnut burs and hemlock cones.

Dear though the shadowy maple be,
And dearer still the whispering pine,
Dearest yon russet-laden tree
Browned by the heavy rubbing kine!⁹⁰

There childhood flung its rustling stone,
There venturous boyhood learned to climb,—
How well the early graft was known
Whose fruit was ripe ere harvest-time!

Nor be the Fleming's pride forgot,
With swinging drops and drooping bells,
Freckled and splashed with streak and spot,
On the warm-breasted, sloping swells;

⁹⁰ *An archaic plural for cow.*

Nor Persia's painted garden-queen,—
Frail Houri⁹¹ of the trellised wall,—
Her deep-cleft bosom scarfed with green,—
Fairest to see, and first to fall.

When man provoked his mortal doom,
And Eden trembled as he fell,
When blossoms sighed their last perfume,
And branches waved their long farewell,

One sucker crept beneath the gate,
One seed was wafted o'er the wall,
One bough sustained his trembling weight;
These left the garden,—these were all.

And far o'er many a distant zone
These wrecks of Eden still are flung
The fruits that Paradise hath known
Are still in earthly gardens hung.

Yes, by our own unstoried stream
The pink-white apple-blossoms burst
That saw the young Euphrates gleam,—
That Gihon's⁹² circling waters nursed.

For us the ambrosial pear—displays
The wealth its arching branches hold,
Bathed by a hundred summery days
In floods of mingling fire and gold.

And here, where beauty's cheek of flame
With morning's earliest beam is fed,
The sunset-painted peach may claim
To rival its celestial red.

What though in some unmoistened vale
The summer leaf grow brown and sere,
Say, shall our star of promise fail
That circles half the rolling sphere,

From beaches salt with bitter spray,
O'er prairies green with softest rain,
And ridges bright with evening's ray,
To rocks that shade the stormless main?

⁹¹ *One of the beautiful maidens that in Muslim belief live with the blessed in paradise.*

⁹² *The second river mentioned in the second chapter of the biblical Book of Genesis.*

If by our slender-threaded streams
The blade and leaf and blossom die,
If, drained by noontide's parching beams,
The milky veins of Nature dry,

See, with her swelling bosom bare,
Yon wild-eyed Sister in the West,—
The ring of Empire round her hair,
The Indian's wampum on her breast!

We saw the August sun descend,
Day after day, with blood-red stain,
And the blue mountains dimly blend
With smoke-wreaths from the burning plain;

Beneath the hot Sirocco's⁹³ wings
We sat and told the withering hours,
Till Heaven unsealed its hoarded springs,
And bade them leap in flashing showers.

Yet in our Ishmael's thirst we knew
The mercy of the Sovereign hand
Would pour the fountain's quickening dew
To feed some harvest of the land.

No flaming swords of wrath surround
Our second Garden of the Blest;
It spreads beyond its rocky bound,
It climbs Nevada's glittering crest.

God keep the tempter from its gate!
God shield the children, lest they fall
From their stern fathers' free estate,—
Till Ocean is its only wall!

⁹³ *A Mediterranean wind that comes from the Sahara and reaches hurricane speeds in North Africa and Southern Europe.*

My Kinsman, Major Molineux

NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE

Not everyone shared Holmes' edenic view of pre-revolutionary America. Taking his bearings from the pre-revolutionary tensions between the colonists and their mother country, this story (1832) by Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804–64) draws our attention to the dark underbelly of the "new Eden." The story, set in the 1730s, describes the disturbing adventures of a young man, Robin, who has come from the country to the city (probably Boston) in search of his kinsman, Major Molineux, an officer of the British colonial government, who had offered to help him make his mark in life. The story offers a sobering picture of social and political life amidst a people, Hawthorne tells us at the start, who "looked with jealous scrutiny to the exercise of power, which did not emanate from themselves."

The 18-year-old Robin is surely innocent and inexperienced, though he is also said to be "shrewd" (eight times), and he walks through the town armed with a cudgel. Why does Robin encounter the hostility he does? How do you explain his reaction to it? When he finally does encounter Major Molineux—tarred and feathered, and paraded through the streets by a raucously mocking crowd—and his eyes and his kinsman's meet, Robin's "knees shook, and his hair bristled, with a mixture of pity and terror." But, we are told, as "the contagion" spread "among the multitude, it seized upon Robin," who "sent forth a shout of laughter that echoed through the street . . . the loudest" of them all. How do you explain Robin's reaction, as well as his almost immediate subsequent desire to return to his home? Should he follow the advice of the kindly gentleman who urged him to remain in town for at least a few more days, arguing that, because he is a "shrewd youth," he "may rise in the world without the help of [his] kinsman"? What do you think Robin did, and what became of him?

What have Robin's nighttime adventures taught him? What do they tell us about the various tensions—personal, social, and political—that they explicitly and tacitly reveal, for example, between town and country, past and future, church and society, authority and individualism, the rule of law and mob rule, or between youth and age? Do you think that Hawthorne shares the crowd's attitude toward Major Molineux? Does he share the advice of the kindly gentleman, both for Robin and for the republic? What, finally, is Hawthorne saying about the promise and pitfalls of our new republic?

After the kings of Great Britain had assumed the right of appointing the colonial governors, the measures of the latter seldom met with the ready and generous approbation which had been paid to those of their predecessors, under the original charters. The people looked with most jealous scrutiny to the exercise of power which did not emanate from themselves, and they usually rewarded their rulers with slender gratitude for the compliances by which, in softening their instructions from beyond the sea, they had incurred the reprehension of those who gave them. The annals of Massachusetts Bay will inform us, that of six governors in the space of about forty years from the surrender of the

old charter, under James II., two were imprisoned by a popular insurrection; a third, as Hutchinson inclines to believe, was driven from the province by the whizzing of a musket-ball; a fourth, in the opinion of the same historian, was hastened to his grave by continual bickerings with the House of Representatives; and the remaining two, as well as their successors, till the Revolution, were favored with few and brief intervals of peaceful sway. The inferior members of the court party, in times of high political excitement, led scarcely a more desirable life. These remarks may serve as a preface to the following adventures, which chanced upon a summer night, not far from a hundred years ago. The reader, in order to avoid a long and dry detail of colonial affairs, is requested to dispense with an account of the train of circumstances that had caused much temporary inflammation of the popular mind.

It was near nine o'clock of a moonlight evening, when a boat crossed the ferry with a single passenger, who had obtained his conveyance at that unusual hour by the promise of an extra fare. While he stood on the landing-place, searching in either pocket for the means of fulfilling his agreement, the ferryman lifted a lantern, by the aid of which, and the newly risen moon, he took a very accurate survey of the stranger's figure. He was a youth of barely eighteen years, evidently country-bred, and now, as it should seem, upon his first visit to town. He was clad in a coarse gray coat, well worn, but in excellent repair; his under garments were durably constructed of leather, and fitted tight to a pair of serviceable and well-shaped limbs; his stockings of blue yarn were the incontrovertible work of a mother or a sister; and on his head was a three-cornered hat, which in its better days had perhaps sheltered the graver brow of the lad's father. Under his left arm was a heavy cudgel formed of an oak sapling, and retaining a part of the hardened root; and his equipment was completed by a wallet, not so abundantly stocked as to incommode the vigorous shoulders on which it hung. Brown, curly hair, well-shaped features, and bright, cheerful eyes were nature's gifts, and worth all that art could have done for his adornment.

The youth, one of whose names was Robin, finally drew from his pocket the half of a little province bill of five shillings, which, in the depreciation in that sort of currency, did but satisfy the ferryman's demand, with the surplus of a sexangular piece of parchment, valued at three pence. He then walked forward into the town, with as light a step as if his day's journey had not already exceeded thirty miles, and with as eager an eye as if he were entering London city, instead of the little metropolis of a New England colony. Before Robin had proceeded far, however, it occurred to him that he knew not whither to direct his steps; so he paused, and looked up and down the narrow street, scrutinizing the small and mean wooden buildings that were scattered on either side.

"This low hovel cannot be my kinsman's dwelling," thought he, "nor yonder old house, where the moonlight enters at the broken casement; and truly I see none hereabouts that might be worthy of him. It would have been wise to inquire my way of the ferryman, and doubtless he would have gone with me, and earned a shilling from the Major for his pains. But the next man I meet will do as well."

He resumed his walk, and was glad to perceive that the street now became wider, and the houses more respectable in their appearance. He soon discerned a figure moving on moderately in advance, and hastened his steps to overtake it. As Robin drew nigh, he saw that the passenger was a man in years, with a full periwig of gray hair, a wide-skirted coat of dark cloth, and silk stockings rolled above his knees. He carried a long and polished cane, which he struck down perpendicularly before him at every step; and at regular intervals he uttered two successive hems, of a peculiarly solemn and sepulchral intonation. Having made these observations, Robin laid hold of the skirt of the old man's coat just when the light from the open door and windows of a barber's shop fell upon both their figures.

"Good evening to you, honored sir," said he, making a low bow, and still retaining his hold of the skirt. "I pray you tell me whereabouts is the dwelling of my kinsman, Major Molineux."

The youth's question was uttered very loudly; and one of the barbers, whose razor was descending on a well-soaped chin, and another who was dressing a Ramillies wig, left their occupations, and came to the door. The citizen, in the mean time, turned a long-favored countenance upon Robin, and answered him in a tone of excessive anger and annoyance. His two sepulchral hems, however, broke into the very centre of his rebuke, with most singular effect, like a thought of the cold grave obtruding among wrathful passions.

"Let go my garment, fellow! I tell you, I know not the man you speak of. What! I have authority, I have—hem, hem—authority; and if this be the respect you show for your betters, your feet shall be brought acquainted with the stocks by daylight, tomorrow morning!"

Robin released the old man's skirt, and hastened away, pursued by an ill-mannered roar of laughter from the barber's shop. He was at first considerably surprised by the result of his question, but, being a shrewd youth, soon thought himself able to account for the mystery.

"This is some country representative," was his conclusion, "who has never seen the inside of my kinsman's door, and lacks the breeding to answer a stranger civilly. The man is old, or verily—I might be tempted to turn back and smite him on the nose. Ah, Robin, Robin! even the barber's boys laugh at you for choosing such a guide! You will be wiser in time, friend Robin."

He now became entangled in a succession of crooked and narrow streets, which crossed each other, and meandered at no great distance from the water-side. The smell of tar was obvious to his nostrils, the masts of vessels pierced the moonlight above the tops of the buildings, and the numerous signs, which Robin paused to read, informed him that he was near the centre of business. But the streets were empty, the shops were closed, and lights were visible only in the second stories of a few dwelling-houses. At length, on the corner of a narrow lane, through which he was passing, he beheld the broad countenance

of a British hero swinging before the door of an inn, whence proceeded the voices of many guests. The casement of one of the lower windows was thrown back, and a very thin curtain permitted Robin to distinguish a party at supper, round a well-furnished table. The fragrance of the good cheer steamed forth into the outer air, and the youth could not fail to recollect that the last remnant of his travelling stock of provision had yielded to his morning appetite, and that noon had found and left him dinnerless.

"Oh, that a parchment three-penny might give me a right to sit down at yonder table!" said Robin, with a sigh. "But the Major will make me welcome to the best of his victuals; so I will even step boldly in, and inquire my way to his dwelling."

He entered the tavern, and was guided by the murmur of voices and the fumes of tobacco to the public-room. It was a long and low apartment, with oaken walls, grown dark in the continual smoke, and a floor which was thickly sanded, but of no immaculate purity. A number of persons—the larger part of whom appeared to be mariners, or in some way connected with the sea—occupied the wooden benches, or leather-bottomed chairs, conversing on various matters, and occasionally lending their attention to some topic of general interest. Three or four little groups were draining as many bowls of punch, which the West India trade had long since made a familiar drink in the colony. Others, who had the appearance of men who lived by regular and laborious handicraft, preferred the insulated bliss of an unshared potation, and became more taciturn under its influence. Nearly all, in short, evinced a predilection for the Good Creature in some of its various shapes, for this is a vice to which, as Fast Day sermons of a hundred years ago will testify, we have a long hereditary claim. The only guests to whom Robin's sympathies inclined him were two or three sheepish countrymen, who were using the inn somewhat after the fashion of a Turkish caravansary; they had gotten themselves into the darkest corner of the room, and heedless of the Nicotian⁹⁴ atmosphere, were supping on the bread of their own ovens, and the bacon cured in their own chimney-smoke. But though Robin felt a sort of brotherhood with these strangers, his eyes were attracted from them to a person who stood near the door, holding whispered conversation with a group of ill-dressed associates. His features were separately striking almost to grotesqueness, and the whole face left a deep impression on the memory. The forehead bulged out into a double prominence, with a vale between; the nose came boldly forth in an irregular curve, and its bridge was of more than a finger's breadth; the eyebrows were deep and shaggy, and the eyes glowed beneath them like fire in a cave.

While Robin deliberated of whom to inquire respecting his kinsman's dwelling, he was accosted by the innkeeper, a little man in a stained white apron, who had come to pay his professional welcome to the stranger. Being in the second generation from a French Protestant, he seemed to have inherited the courtesy of his parent nation; but no variety of circumstances was ever known to change his voice from the one shrill note in which he now addressed Robin.

"From the country, I presume, sir?" said he, with a profound bow. "Beg leave to congratulate you on your arrival, and trust you intend a long stay with us. Fine town here,

⁹⁴ *Pertaining to, or derived from, tobacco.*

sir, beautiful buildings, and much that may interest a stranger. May I hope for the honor of your commands in respect to supper?"

"The man sees a family likeness! the rogue has guessed that I am related to the Major!" thought Robin, who had hitherto experienced little superfluous civility.

All eyes were now turned on the country lad, standing at the door, in his worn three-cornered hat, gray coat, leather breeches, and blue yarn stockings, leaning on an oaken cudgel, and bearing a wallet on his back.

Robin replied to the courteous innkeeper, with such an assumption of confidence as befitted the Major's relative. "My honest friend," he said, "I shall make it a point to patronize your house on some occasion, when"—here he could not help lowering his voice—"when I may have more than a parchment three-pence in my pocket. My present business," continued he, speaking with lofty confidence, "is merely to inquire my way to the dwelling of my kinsman, Major Molineux."

There was a sudden and general movement in the room, which Robin interpreted as expressing the eagerness of each individual to become his guide. But the innkeeper turned his eyes to a written paper on the wall, which he read, or seemed to read, with occasional recurrences to the young man's figure.

"What have we here?" said he, breaking his speech into little dry fragments. "'Left the house of the subscriber, bounden servant, Hezekiah Mudge,—had on, when he went away, gray coat, leather breeches, master's third-best hat. One pound currency reward to whosoever shall lodge him in any jail of the providence.' Better trudge, boy; better trudge!"

Robin had begun to draw his hand towards the lighter end of the oak cudgel, but a strange hostility in every countenance induced him to relinquish his purpose of breaking the courteous innkeeper's head. As he turned to leave the room, he encountered a sneering glance from the bold-featured personage whom he had before noticed; and no sooner was he beyond the door, than he heard a general laugh, in which the innkeeper's voice might be distinguished, like the dropping of small stones into a kettle.

"Now, is it not strange," thought Robin, with his usual shrewdness,—“is it not strange that the confession of an empty pocket should outweigh the name of my kinsman, Major Molineux? Oh, if I had one of those grinning rascals in the woods, where I and my oak sapling grew up together, I would teach him that my arm is heavy though my purse be light!"

On turning the corner of the narrow lane, Robin found himself in a spacious street, with an unbroken line of lofty houses on each side, and a steepled building at the upper end, whence the ringing of a bell announced the hour of nine. The light of the moon, and the lamps from the numerous shop-windows, discovered people promenading on the pavement, and amongst them Robin had hoped to recognize his hitherto inscrutable

relative. The result of his former inquiries made him unwilling to hazard another, in a scene of such publicity, and he determined to walk slowly and silently up the street, thrusting his face close to that of every elderly gentleman, in search of the Major's lineaments. In his progress, Robin encountered many gay and gallant figures. Embroidered garments of showy colors, enormous periwigs, gold-laced hats, and silver-hilted swords glided past him and dazzled his optics. Travelled youths, imitators of the European fine gentlemen of the period, trod jauntily along, half dancing to the fashionable tunes which they hummed, and making poor Robin ashamed of his quiet and natural gait. At length, after many pauses to examine the gorgeous display of goods in the shop-windows, and after suffering some rebukes for the impertinence of his scrutiny into people's faces, the Major's kinsman found himself near the steepled building, still unsuccessful in his search. As yet, however, he had seen only one side of the thronged street; so Robin crossed, and continued the same sort of inquisition down the opposite pavement, with stronger hopes than the philosopher seeking an honest man, but with no better fortune. He had arrived about midway towards the lower end, from which his course began, when he overheard the approach of some one who struck down a cane on the flag-stones at every step, uttering at regular intervals, two sepulchral hems.

"Mercy on us!" quoth Robin, recognizing the sound.

Turning a corner, which chanced to be close at his right hand, he hastened to pursue his researches in some other part of the town. His patience now was wearing low, and he seemed to feel more fatigue from his rambles since he crossed the ferry, than from his journey of several days on the other side. Hunger also pleaded loudly within him, and Robin began to balance the propriety of demanding, violently, and with lifted cudgel, the necessary guidance from the first solitary passenger whom he should meet. While a resolution to this effect was gaining strength, he entered a street of mean appearance, on either side of which a row of ill-built houses was straggling towards the harbor. The moonlight fell upon no passenger along the whole extent, but in the third domicile which Robin passed there was a half-opened door, and his keen glance detected a woman's garment within.

"My luck may be better here," said he to himself.

Accordingly, he approached the doors and beheld it shut closer as he did so; yet an open space remained, sufficing for the fair occupant to observe the stranger, without a corresponding display on her part. All that Robin could discern was a strip of scarlet petticoat, and the occasional sparkle of an eye, as if the moonbeams were trembling on some bright thing.

"Pretty mistress," for I may call her so with a good conscience thought the shrewd youth, since I know nothing to the contrary,—“my sweet pretty mistress, will you be kind enough to tell me whereabouts I must seek the dwelling of my kinsman, Major Molineux?”

Robin's voice was plaintive and winning, and the female, seeing nothing to be shunned in the handsome country youth, thrust open the door, and came forth into the moonlight. She was a dainty little figure with a white neck, round arms, and a slender waist, at the extremity of which her scarlet petticoat jutted out over a hoop, as if she were standing in a balloon. Moreover, her face was oval and pretty, her hair dark beneath the little cap, and her bright eyes possessed a sly freedom, which triumphed over those of Robin.

"Major Molineux dwells here," said this fair woman.

Now, her voice was the sweetest Robin had heard that night, yet he could not help doubting whether that sweet voice spoke Gospel truth. He looked up and down the mean street, and then surveyed the house before which they stood. It was a small, dark edifice of two stories, the second of which projected over the lower floor, and the front apartment had the aspect of a shop for petty commodities.

"Now, truly, I am in luck," replied Robin, cunningly, "and so indeed is my kinsman, the Major, in having so pretty a housekeeper. But I prithee trouble him to step to the door; I will deliver him a message from his friends in the country, and then go back to my lodgings at the inn."

"Nay, the Major has been abed this hour or more," said the lady of the scarlet petticoat; "and it would be to little purpose to disturb him to-night, seeing his evening draught was of the strongest. But he is a kind-hearted man, and it would be as much as my life's worth to let a kinsman of his turn away from the door. You are the good old gentleman's very picture, and I could swear that was his rainy-weather hat. Also he has garments very much resembling those leather small-clothes. But come in, I pray, for I bid you hearty welcome in his name."

So saying, the fair and hospitable dame took our hero by the hand; and the touch was light, and the force was gentleness, and though Robin read in her eyes what he did not hear in her words, yet the slender-waisted woman in the scarlet petticoat proved stronger than the athletic country youth. She had drawn his half-willing footsteps nearly to the threshold, when the opening of a door in the neighborhood startled the Major's housekeeper, and, leaving the Major's kinsman, she vanished speedily into her own domicile. A heavy yawn preceded the appearance of a man, who, like the Moonshine of Pyramus and Thisbe,⁹⁵ carried a lantern, needlessly aiding his sister luminary in the heavens. As he walked sleepily up the street, he turned his broad, dull face on Robin, and displayed a long staff, spiked at the end.

"Home, vagabond, home!" said the watchman, in accents that seemed to fall asleep as soon as they were uttered. "Home, or we'll set you in the stocks by peep of day!"

⁹⁵ *Two ill-fated lovers of Roman mythology, satirized in William Shakespeare's play A Midsummer's Night Dream.*

"This is the second hint of the kind," thought Robin. "I wish they would end my difficulties, by setting me there to-night."

Nevertheless, the youth felt an instinctive antipathy towards the guardian of midnight order, which at first prevented him from asking his usual question. But just when the man was about to vanish behind the corner, Robin resolved not to lose the opportunity, and shouted lustily after him,—

"I say, friend! will you guide me to the house of my kinsman, Major Molineux?"

The watchman made no reply, but turned the corner and was gone; yet Robin seemed to hear the sound of drowsy laughter stealing along the solitary street. At that moment, also, a pleasant titter saluted him from the open window above his head; he looked up, and caught the sparkle of a saucy eye; a round arm beckoned to him, and next he heard light footsteps descending the staircase within. But Robin, being of the household of a New England clergyman, was a good youth, as well as a shrewd one; so he resisted temptation, and fled away.

He now roamed desperately, and at random, through the town, almost ready to believe that a spell was on him, like that by which a wizard of his country had once kept three pursuers wandering, a whole winter night, within twenty paces of the cottage which they sought. The streets lay before him, strange and desolate, and the lights were extinguished in almost every house. Twice, however, little parties of men, among whom Robin distinguished individuals in outlandish attire, came hurrying along; but, though on both occasions, they paused to address him such intercourse did not at all enlighten his perplexity. They did but utter a few words in some language of which Robin knew nothing, and perceiving his inability to answer, bestowed a curse upon him in plain English and hastened away. Finally, the lad determined to knock at the door of every mansion that might appear worthy to be occupied by his kinsman, trusting that perseverance would overcome the fatality that had hitherto thwarted him. Firm in this resolve, he was passing beneath the walls of a church, which formed the corner of two streets, when, as he turned into the shade of its steeple, he encountered a bulky stranger muffled in a cloak. The man was proceeding with the speed of earnest business, but Robin planted himself full before him, holding the oak cudgel with both hands across his body as a bar to further passage

"Halt, honest man, and answer me a question," said he, very resolutely. "Tell me, this instant, whereabouts is the dwelling of my kinsman, Major Molineux!"

"Keep your tongue between your teeth, fool, and let me pass!" said a deep, gruff voice, which Robin partly remembered. "Let me pass, I say, or I'll strike you to the earth!"

"No, no, neighbor!" cried Robin, flourishing his cudgel, and then thrusting its larger end close to the man's muffled face. "No, no, I'm not the fool you take me for, nor do

you pass till I have an answer to my question. Whereabouts is the dwelling of my kinsman, Major Molineux?"

The stranger, instead of attempting to force his passage, stepped back into the moonlight, unmuffled his face, and stared full into that of Robin.

"Watch here an hour, and Major Molineux will pass by," said he.

Robin gazed with dismay and astonishment on the unprecedented physiognomy of the speaker. The forehead with its double prominence the broad hooked nose, the shaggy eyebrows, and fiery eyes were those which he had noticed at the inn, but the man's complexion had undergone a singular, or, more properly, a twofold change. One side of the face blazed an intense red, while the other was black as midnight, the division line being in the broad bridge of the nose; and a mouth which seemed to extend from ear to ear was black or red, in contrast to the color of the cheek. The effect was as if two individual devils, a fiend of fire and a fiend of darkness, had united themselves to form this infernal visage. The stranger grinned in Robin's face, muffled his party-colored features, and was out of sight in a moment.

"Strange things we travellers see!" ejaculated Robin.

He seated himself, however, upon the steps of the church-door, resolving to wait the appointed time for his kinsman. A few moments were consumed in philosophical speculations upon the species of man who had just left him; but having settled this point shrewdly, rationally, and satisfactorily, he was compelled to look elsewhere for his amusement. And first he threw his eyes along the street. It was of more respectable appearance than most of those into which he had wandered, and the moon, creating, like the imaginative power, a beautiful strangeness in familiar objects, gave something of romance to a scene that might not have possessed it in the light of day. The irregular and often quaint architecture of the houses, some of whose roofs were broken into numerous little peaks, while others ascended, steep and narrow, into a single point, and others again were square; the pure snow-white of some of their complexions, the aged darkness of others, and the thousand sparklings, reflected from bright substances in the walls of many; these matters engaged Robin's attention for a while, and then began to grow wearisome. Next he endeavored to define the forms of distant objects, starting away, with almost ghostly indistinctness, just as his eye appeared to grasp them, and finally he took a minute survey of an edifice which stood on the opposite side of the street, directly in front of the church-door, where he was stationed. It was a large, square mansion, distinguished from its neighbors by a balcony, which rested on tall pillars, and by an elaborate Gothic window, communicating therewith.

"Perhaps this is the very house I have been seeking," thought Robin.

Then he strove to speed away the time, by listening to a murmur which swept continually along the street, yet was scarcely audible, except to an unaccustomed ear like his; it was a low, dull, dreamy sound, compounded of many noises, each of which was at too great a distance to be separately heard. Robin marvelled at this snore of a sleeping

town, and marvelled more whenever its continuity was broken by now and then a distant shout, apparently loud where it originated. But altogether it was a sleep-inspiring sound, and, to shake off its drowsy influence, Robin arose, and climbed a window-frame, that he might view the interior of the church. There the moonbeams came trembling in, and fell down upon the deserted pews, and extended along the quiet aisles. A fainter yet more awful radiance was hovering around the pulpit, and one solitary ray had dared to rest upon the open page of the great Bible. Had nature, in that deep hour, become a worshipper in the house which man had builded? Or was that heavenly light the visible sanctity of the place,—visible because no earthly and impure feet were within the walls? The scene made Robin's heart shiver with a sensation of loneliness stronger than he had ever felt in the remotest depths of his native woods; so he turned away and sat down again before the door. There were graves around the church, and now an uneasy thought obtruded into Robin's breast. What if the object of his search, which had been so often and so strangely thwarted, were all the time mouldering in his shroud? What if his kinsman should glide through yonder gate, and nod and smile to him in dimly passing by?

"Oh that any breathing thing were here with me!" said Robin.

Recalling his thoughts from this uncomfortable track, he sent them over forest, hill, and stream, and attempted to imagine how that evening of ambiguity and weariness had been spent by his father's household. He pictured them assembled at the door, beneath the tree, the great old tree, which had been spared for its huge twisted trunk and venerable shade, when a thousand leafy brethren fell. There, at the going down of the summer sun, it was his father's custom to perform domestic worship that the neighbors might come and join with him like brothers of the family, and that the wayfaring man might pause to drink at that fountain, and keep his heart pure by freshening the memory of home. Robin distinguished the seat of every individual of the little audience; he saw the good man in the midst, holding the Scriptures in the golden light that fell from the western clouds; he beheld him close the book and all rise up to pray. He heard the old thanksgivings for daily mercies, the old supplications for their continuance to which he had so often listened in weariness, but which were now among his dear remembrances. He perceived the slight inequality of his father's voice when he came to speak of the absent one; he noted how his mother turned her face to the broad and knotted trunk; how his elder brother scorned, because the beard was rough upon his upper lip, to permit his features to be moved; how the younger sister drew down a low hanging branch before her eyes; and how the little one of all, whose sports had hitherto broken the decorum of the scene, understood the prayer for her playmate, and burst into clamorous grief. Then he saw them go in at the door; and when Robin would have entered also, the latch tinkled into its place, and he was excluded from his home.

"Am I here, or there?" cried Robin, starting; for all at once, when his thoughts had become visible and audible in a dream, the long, wide, solitary street shone out before him.

He aroused himself, and endeavored to fix his attention steadily upon the large edifice which he had surveyed before. But still his mind kept vibrating between fancy and reality; by turns, the pillars of the balcony lengthened into the tall, bare stems of pines, dwindled down to human figures, settled again into their true shape and size, and then commenced a new succession of changes. For a single moment, when he deemed himself awake, he could have sworn that a visage—one which he seemed to remember, yet could not absolutely name as his kinsman's—was looking towards him from the Gothic window. A deeper sleep wrestled with and nearly overcame him, but fled at the sound of footsteps along the opposite pavement. Robin rubbed his eyes, discerned a man passing at the foot of the balcony, and addressed him in a loud, peevish, and lamentable cry.

“Hallo, friend! must I wait here all night for my kinsman, Major Molineux?”

The sleeping echoes awoke, and answered the voice; and the passenger, barely able to discern a figure sitting in the oblique shade of the steeple, traversed the street to obtain a nearer view. He was himself a gentleman in his prime, of open, intelligent, cheerful, and altogether prepossessing countenance. Perceiving a country youth, apparently homeless and without friends, he accosted him in a tone of real kindness, which had become strange to Robin's ears.

“Well, my good lad, why are you sitting here?” inquired he. “Can I be of service to you in any way?”

“I am afraid not, sir,” replied Robin, despondingly; “yet I shall take it kindly, if you'll answer me a single question. I've been searching, half the night, for one Major Molineux; now, sir, is there really such a person in these parts, or am I dreaming?”

“Major Molineux! The name is not altogether strange to me,” said the gentleman, smiling. “Have you any objection to telling me the nature of your business with him?”

Then Robin briefly related that his father was a clergyman, settled on a small salary, at a long distance back in the country, and that he and Major Molineux were brothers' children. The Major, having inherited riches, and acquired civil and military rank, had visited his cousin, in great pomp, a year or two before; had manifested much interest in Robin and an elder brother, and, being childless himself, had thrown out hints respecting the future establishment of one of them in life. The elder brother was destined to succeed to the farm which his father cultivated in the interval of sacred duties; it was therefore determined that Robin should profit by his kinsman's generous intentions, especially as he seemed to be rather the favorite, and was thought to possess other necessary endowments.

“For I have the name of being a shrewd youth,” observed Robin, in this part of his story.

“I doubt not you deserve it,” replied his new friend, good-naturedly; “but pray proceed.”

"Well, sir, being nearly eighteen years old, and well grown, as you see," continued Robin, drawing himself up to his full height, "I thought it high time to begin in the world. So my mother and sister put me in handsome trim, and my father gave me half the remnant of his last year's salary, and five days ago I started for this place, to pay the Major a visit. But, would you believe it, sir! I crossed the ferry a little after dark, and have yet found nobody that would show me the way to his dwelling; only, an hour or two since, I was told to wait here, and Major Molineux would pass by."

"Can you describe the man who told you this?" inquired the gentleman.

"Oh, he was a very ill-favored fellow, sir," replied Robin, "with two great bumps on his forehead, a hook nose, fiery eyes; and, what struck me as the strangest, his face was of two different colors. Do you happen to know such a man, sir?"

"Not intimately," answered the stranger, "but I chanced to meet him a little time previous to your stopping me. I believe you may trust his word, and that the Major will very shortly pass through this street. In the mean time, as I have a singular curiosity to witness your meeting, I will sit down here upon the steps and bear you company."

He seated himself accordingly, and soon engaged his companion in animated discourse. It was but of brief continuance, however, for a noise of shouting, which had long been remotely audible, drew so much nearer that Robin inquired its cause.

"What may be the meaning of this uproar?" asked he. "Truly, if your town be always as noisy, I shall find little sleep while I am an inhabitant."

"Why, indeed, friend Robin, there do appear to be three or four riotous fellows abroad to-night," replied the gentleman. "You must not expect all the stillness of your native woods here in our streets. But the watch will shortly be at the heels of these lads and"—

"Ay, and set them in the stocks by peep of day," interrupted Robin recollecting his own encounter with the drowsy lantern-bearer. "But, dear sir, if I may trust my ears, an army of watchmen would never make head against such a multitude of rioters. There were at least a thousand voices went up to make that one shout."

"May not a man have several voices, Robin, as well as two complexions?" said his friend.

"Perhaps a man may; but Heaven forbid that a woman should!" responded the shrewd youth, thinking of the seductive tones of the Major's housekeeper.

The sounds of a trumpet in some neighboring street now became so evident and continual, that Robin's curiosity was strongly excited. In addition to the shouts, he heard frequent bursts from many instruments of discord, and a wild and confused laughter filled

up the intervals. Robin rose from the steps, and looked wistfully towards a point whither people seemed to be hastening

“Surely some prodigious merry-making is going on,” exclaimed he. “I have laughed very little since I left home, sir, and should be sorry to lose an opportunity. Shall we step round the corner by that darkish house and take our share of the fun?”

“Sit down again, sit down, good Robin,” replied the gentleman, laying his hand on the skirt of the gray coat. “You forget that we must wait here for your kinsman; and there is reason to believe that he will pass by, in the course of a very few moments.”

The near approach of the uproar had now disturbed the neighborhood; windows flew open on all sides; and many heads, in the attire of the pillow, and confused by sleep suddenly broken, were protruded to the gaze of whoever had leisure to observe them. Eager voices hailed each other from house to house, all demanding the explanation, which not a soul could give. Half-dressed men hurried towards the unknown commotion stumbling as they went over the stone steps that thrust themselves into the narrow foot-walk. The shouts, the laughter, and the tuneless bray, the antipodes of music, came onwards with increasing din, till scattered individuals, and then denser bodies, began to appear round a corner at the distance of a hundred yards.

“Will you recognize your kinsman, if he passes in this crowd?” inquired the gentleman.

“Indeed, I can’t warrant it, sir; but I’ll take my stand here, and keep a bright lookout,” answered Robin, descending to the outer edge of the pavement.

A mighty stream of people now emptied into the street, and came rolling slowly towards the church. A single horseman wheeled the corner in the midst of them, and close behind him came a band of fearful wind-instruments, sending forth a fresher discord now that no intervening buildings kept it from the ear. Then a redder light disturbed the moonbeams, and a dense multitude of torches shone along the street, concealing, by their glare, whatever object they illuminated. The single horseman, clad in a military dress, and bearing a drawn sword, rode onward as the leader, and, by his fierce and variegated countenance, appeared like war personified; the red of one cheek was an emblem of fire and sword; the blackness of the other betokened the mourning that attends them. In his train were wild figures in the Indian dress, and many fantastic shapes without a model, giving the whole march a visionary air, as if a dream had broken forth from some feverish brain, and were sweeping visibly through the midnight streets. A mass of people, inactive, except as applauding spectators, hemmed the procession in; and several women ran along the sidewalk, piercing the confusion of heavier sounds with their shrill voices of mirth or terror.

“The double-faced fellow has his eye upon me,” muttered Robin, with an indefinite but an uncomfortable idea that he was himself to bear a part in the pageantry.

The leader turned himself in the saddle, and fixed his glance full upon the country youth, as the steed went slowly by. When Robin had freed his eyes from those fiery ones, the musicians were passing before him, and the torches were close at hand; but the unsteady brightness of the latter formed a veil which he could not penetrate. The rattling of wheels over the stones sometimes found its way to his ear, and confused traces of a human form appeared at intervals, and then melted into the vivid light. A moment more, and the leader thundered a command to halt: the trumpets vomited a horrid breath, and then held their peace; the shouts and laughter of the people died away, and there remained only a universal hum, allied to silence. Right before Robin's eyes was an uncovered cart. There the torches blazed the brightest, there the moon shone out like day, and there, in tar-and-feathery dignity, sat his kinsman, Major Molineux!

He was an elderly man, of large and majestic person, and strong, square features, betokening a steady soul; but steady as it was, his enemies had found means to shake it. His face was pale as death, and far more ghastly; the broad forehead was contracted in his agony, so that his eyebrows formed one grizzled line; his eyes were red and wild, and the foam hung white upon his quivering lip. His whole frame was agitated by a quick and continual tremor, which his pride strove to quell, even in those circumstances of overwhelming humiliation. But perhaps the bitterest pang of all was when his eyes met those of Robin; for he evidently knew him on the instant, as the youth stood witnessing the foul disgrace of a head grown gray in honor. They stared at each other in silence, and Robin's knees shook, and his hair bristled, with a mixture of pity and terror. Soon, however, a bewildering excitement began to seize upon his mind; the preceding adventures of the night, the unexpected appearance of the crowd, the torches, the confused din and the hush that followed, the spectre of his kinsman reviled by that great multitude,—all this, and, more than all, a perception of tremendous ridicule in the whole scene, affected him with a sort of mental inebriety. At that moment a voice of sluggish merriment saluted Robin's ears; he turned instinctively, and just behind the corner of the church stood the lantern-bearer, rubbing his eyes, and drowsily enjoying the lad's amazement. Then he heard a peal of laughter like the ringing of silvery bells; a woman twitched his arm, a saucy eye met his, and he saw the lady of the scarlet petticoat. A sharp, dry cachinnation⁹⁶ appealed to his memory, and, standing on tiptoe in the crowd, with his white apron over his head, he beheld the courteous little innkeeper. And lastly, there sailed over the heads of the multitude a great, broad laugh, broken in the midst by two sepulchral hems; thus, "Haw, haw, haw,—hem, hem,—haw, haw, haw!"

The sound proceeded from the balcony of the opposite edifice, and thither Robin turned his eyes. In front of the Gothic window stood the old citizen, wrapped in a wide gown, his gray periwig exchanged for a nightcap, which was thrust back from his forehead, and his silk stockings hanging about his legs. He supported himself on his polished cane in a fit of convulsive merriment, which manifested itself on his solemn old features like a funny inscription on a tombstone. Then Robin seemed to hear the voices of the barbers, of the guests of the inn, and of all who had made sport of him that night. The contagion was spreading among the multitude, when all at once, it seized upon Robin, and he sent forth a shout of laughter that echoed through the street,—every man shook his

⁹⁶ *To laugh hard, loudly, or convulsively; guffaw.*

sides, every man emptied his lungs, but Robin's shout was the loudest there. The cloud-spirits peeped from their silvery islands, as the congregated mirth went roaring up the sky! The Man in the Moon heard the far bellow. "Oho," quoth he, "the old earth is frolicsome to-night!"

When there was a momentary calm in that tempestuous sea of sound, the leader gave the sign, the procession resumed its march. On they went, like fiends that throng in mockery around some dead potentate, mighty no more, but majestic still in his agony. On they went, in counterfeited pomp, in senseless uproar, in frenzied merriment, trampling all on an old man's heart. On swept the tumult, and left a silent street behind.

* * *

"Well, Robin, are you dreaming?" inquired the gentleman, laying his hand on the youth's shoulder.

Robin started, and withdrew his arm from the stone post to which he had instinctively clung, as the living stream rolled by him. His cheek was somewhat pale, and his eye not quite as lively as in the earlier part of the evening.

"Will you be kind enough to show me the way to the ferry?" said he, after a moment's pause.

"You have, then, adopted a new subject of inquiry?" observed his companion, with a smile.

"Why, yes, sir," replied Robin, rather dryly. "Thanks to you, and to my other friends, I have at last met my kinsman, and he will scarce desire to see my face again. I begin to grow weary of a town life, sir. Will you show me the way to the ferry?"

"No, my good friend Robin,—not to-night, at least," said the gentleman. "Some few days hence, if you wish it, I will speed you on your journey. Or, if you prefer to remain with us, perhaps, as you are a shrewd youth, you may rise in the world without the help of your kinsman, Major Molineux."

The Republic

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW

In this excerpted poem (1850), Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807–82), popular American poet and educator, uses the extended metaphor of the “ship of state” to describe our still- young republic. What mood and tone does the poem convey? Examine carefully the metaphor of “ship of state.” Does the ship have a destination or a goal? What are “the anchors of thy hope”—and what the hope itself? What are the dangers—rock, tempest, “false lights on the shore”—to the Union’s “voyage”? Why might the poet believe that humanity itself is “hanging breathless on thy [the Union’s] fate?”

Thou, too, sail on, O Ship of State!
Sail on, O UNION, strong and great!
Humanity with all its fears,
With all the hopes of future years,
Is hanging breathless on thy fate!
We know what Master laid thy keel,
What Workmen wrought thy ribs of steel,
Who made each mast, and sail, and rope,
What anvils rang, what hammers beat,
In what a forge and what a heat
Were shaped the anchors of thy hope!
Fear not each sudden sound and shock,
'Tis of the wave and not the rock;
'Tis but the flapping of the sail,
And not a rent made by the gale!
In spite of rock and tempest's roar,
In spite of false lights on the shore,
Sail on, nor fear to breast the sea!
Our hearts, our hopes, are all with thee,
Our hearts, our hopes, our prayers, our tears,
Our faith triumphant o'er our fears,
Are all with thee,—are all with thee!

Concord Hymn

RALPH WALDO EMERSON

American educator and essayist Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–82) wrote this poem on request from the Battle Monument Committee for the 1837 dedication of an obelisk commemorating the Battle of Concord, Massachusetts, fought on April 19, 1775 at the outbreak of the American Revolution. The well-known first stanza is inscribed at the base of the famous Minute Man statue by Daniel Chester French, erected (1875) at Concord's Old North Bridge.⁹⁷ First read at a Concord Independence Day celebration on July 4, 1837, it was later sung as a hymn—hence its title. The hymn is said to have made Emerson's name as a poet and to have transformed the skirmish at Concord into the spirit of the Revolution.

Why does Emerson call the firing of the Concord farmers “the shot heard round the world”? What did that shot signify, and what did it mean for the world to hear it? What is the “Spirit” that Emerson wants us to remember and to embody in our lives? What does he mean by invoking that Spirit to safeguard the shaft (the obelisk) from Time and Nature? Can it do so? How? For how long?

By the rude bridge that arched the flood,
Their flag to April's breeze unfurled,
Here once the embattled farmers stood,
And fired the shot heard round the world.

The foe long since in silence slept;
Alike the conqueror silent sleeps;
And Time the ruined bridge has swept
Down the dark stream which seaward creeps.

On this green bank, by this soft stream,
We set to-day a votive stone;
That memory may their deed redeem,
When, like our sires, our sons are gone.

Spirit, that made those heroes dare
To die, and leave their children free,
Bid Time and Nature gently spare
The shaft we raise to them and Thee.

⁹⁷ View a picture of the obelisk and statue at <http://ctmonuments.net/2010/05/old-north-bridge-concord-mass/>.

Speech at Independence Hall

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

On the anniversary of George Washington's birth, February 22, 1861—after he had been elected President but before he was inaugurated (March 4), and before the Confederate firing on Fort Sumter that began the Civil War (April 12)—Abraham Lincoln (1809–65) delivered this impromptu address at Independence Hall in Philadelphia, site of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. In the speech, Lincoln credits the principles enunciated in the Declaration as the source of “all the political sentiments I entertain,” and for which he was determined to live and govern and, if necessary, to die.

What, in particular, was so important to him? What would it mean, in fact, to live by the principles in the Declaration of Independence? Why would Lincoln not accept saving the country by giving up on those principles? Why does Lincoln regard the American principle of equal liberty and opportunity as a gift of “hope to the world for all future time”?

Mr. Cuyler:

I am filled with deep emotion at finding myself standing here in the place where were collected together the wisdom, the patriotism, the devotion to principle, from which sprang the institutions under which we live. You have kindly suggested to me that in my hands is the task of restoring peace to our distracted country. I can say in return, sir, that all the political sentiments I entertain have been drawn, so far as I have been able to draw them, from the sentiments which originated and were given to the world from this hall. I have never had a feeling politically that did not spring from the sentiments embodied in the Declaration of Independence. I have often pondered over the dangers which were incurred by the men who assembled here and adopted that Declaration of Independence. I have pondered over the toils that were endured by the officers and soldiers of the army who achieved that Independence. I have often inquired of myself what great principle or idea it was that kept this Confederacy so long together. It was not the mere matter of the separation of the Colonies from the mother-land, but that sentiment in the Declaration which gave liberty, not alone to the people of this country, but, I hope, to the world, for all future time. It was that which gave promise that, in due time, the weights should be lifted from the shoulders of all men. This is the sentiment embodied in that Declaration of Independence. Now, my friends, can this country be saved upon that basis? If it can, I will consider myself one of the happiest men in the world if I can help to save it. If it cannot be saved upon that principle, it will be truly awful. But if this country cannot be saved without giving up that principle, I was about to say, *I would rather be assassinated on this spot than to surrender it.*

Now, in my view of the present aspect of affairs, there is no need of bloodshed and war. There is no necessity for it. I am not in favor of such a course, and I may say in advance, there will be no bloodshed unless it be forced upon the Government, and then it

will be compelled to act in self-defense. The Government will not use force unless force is used against it.

My friends, this is wholly an unprepared speech, and I did not expect to be called upon to say a word when I came here. I supposed it was merely to do something towards raising the flag—I may, therefore, have said something indiscreet. I have said nothing but what I am willing to live by, and, if it be in the pleasure of Almighty God, die by.

Fourth of July Oration

HORACE MANN

Not everyone in the new Republic was confident that the Spirit of 1776 and our life of ordered liberty would be safely preserved and perpetuated to posterity. For example, in a remarkable speech on the subject of perpetuating our institutions, the young Abraham Lincoln addressed the dangers of lawlessness and mob rule and urged that reverence of the law and the Constitution become the “political religion” of the nation, to be “breathed by every American mother, to the lisping babe, that prattles on her lap.”⁹⁸ But in a polity in which the people rule, more than law-abidingness and ancestral piety would seem to be needed if the Ship of State is to be steered prudently and honorably.

To provide the proper education for America’s citizen rulers was the lifelong cause of Horace Mann (1796–1859), father of the “Common School [Public School]” movement, promoter of “Normal Schools”[for training of teachers], politician, and president of Antioch College. This (excerpted) Fourth of July oration, delivered in 1842 before the civic leaders of Boston, is guided by a single idea and purpose: to convey the importance of implementing and expanding more and better public education.

Review the stages in Mann’s argument. How and why does he move to the call for public education? How should the new republic regard the speeches and deeds of the Founders? Why, according to Mann, is education especially important in a democratic republic? What dangers does he foresee if the citizens are not enlightened? What kind of civic-minded education does Mann have in mind? Why the emphasis on both intellectual and moral education, on both wisdom and integrity? In your opinion, is Mann right to emphasize widespread public education? Or, might the new republic be better served by educating well what W. E. B. Du Bois later called “the talented tenth,” those potential leaders who will inform and greatly influence our culture and ways?

Fellow Citizens,—It is meet that we should assemble to mingle our congratulations in public, on the recurrence of this Anniversary. The celebration of festival days in honor of illustrious progenitors is a universal fact in human history. It therefore proves the existence of a universal sentiment in human nature, which finds its appropriate utterance in such commemorations. This is a sentiment of gratitude and reverence towards the great and good; and it is honorable both to author and object. Under the impulse of these feelings, the heroes of ancient times were deified by their descendants. To consecrate their memory, sculpture reared statues and shrines. Architecture built monuments and temples. Poetry hymned their praises. Eloquence and its responsive acclamations made the arches of heaven resound with their fame; and even the sober muse of history, dazzled by the brilliancy of their exploits, exaggerated fact into fiction, until the true was lost in the fabulous.

⁹⁸ Read Lincoln’s speech at www.whatsoproudlywehail.org/curriculum/the-meaning-of-america/the-perpetuation-of-our-political-institutions.

In our day, this sentiment is modified but not extinguished. All modern nations celebrate the anniversary of those days, when their annals were illuminated, or their perilled fortunes rescued, by some grand historic achievement.

The universality and unbroken continuity of these observances seem prophetic of their continuance.

But it is especially worthy of remark, that these public and joyous tributes are paid only to propitious events, or magnanimous deeds,—to what is grand in conception, or glorious in achievement. No days are set apart to commemorate national disaster or ignominy for its own sake. The good only is celebrated. The base, the cowardly, whether in motive or in action, is consigned, through silence, to oblivion.

What a lesson is here, were we so teachable as to learn it! How soon will our position be changed from that of posterity to ancestors; and the strict rules by which we honor or despise predecessors, be applied to us by impartial descendants. Whatever of true, generous, or morally heroic, is wrought out by us, shall be gratefully embalmed in the memories of men; and around millions of firesides, many millions of hearts shall leap with joy at its oft-recurring narration. But what is sordid, perfidious,—a perversion of public good to private ends,—shall be scoffed and hissed at; and its happiest fate shall be an early forgetfulness.

It is, indeed, an impressive thought,—one full of the deepest significancy,—that throughout this vast country, over all its degrees of latitude and longitude, and on the seas which bind the globe in their azure and glorious cincture,⁹⁹—soon as the beams of this morning's sun gilded spire or mast-head, the shout of exultation and the peal of artillery arose, and sweeping onward and westward like the tidal wave, they are now circuiting the globe, in honor of those heroes and martyrs who, only sixty-six years ago, pledged "fortune, life, and sacred honor" to establish the Independence of these United States. How many times has this story been rehearsed, and yet to the patriot's ear, it never grows old. How curiously has the history of that great revolutionary epoch been investigated; and even now, if some minute of a council,—whether of war or of state,—held at midnight; some memorandum of an order given at a critical juncture; or some hitherto elusive letter, can be found among the records of our government, or pursued across the ocean and drawn from its lurking-place in British or French archives, it is published, read and reiterated by all, and the original is prized, almost like the relic of a saint among the faithful. And all those doings and achievements were less than seventy years ago,—less than the period allotted by the Psalmist to the life of man. Nay, some of the actors in those scenes are amongst us still; and we have proof of the reality not from their lips merely, but honorable scars are their credentials—the hieroglyphs wherein the sacred history is chronicled. Not only have we the mausoleums of battlefields, but every churchyard in New England is thickly strown with the graves of the heroic dead, whose simple inscriptions,—nobler than armorial bearings,—proclaim that they sought toil as a pleasure and rejoiced in self-sacrifice, that they might do good to us, whom they saw only with the eye of faith.

⁹⁹ *Liturgical vestment, worn encircling the body around or above the waist.*

And yet, let me again say, how obvious it is that we stand in the same relation to posterity that our ancestors do to us. And, as we boldly summon our forefathers to our tribunal for adjudication upon their conduct, so will our conduct be brought into judgment by our successors. Each generation has duties of its own to perform; and our duties, though widely different from theirs, are not less important in their character, or less binding in their obligations. It was their duty to found or establish our institutions, and nobly did they perform it. It is our duty to perfect and perpetuate these institutions; and the most solemn question which can be propounded to this age, is, are we performing it nobly? Shall posterity look back upon our present rulers, as we look back upon Arnold, or as we look back upon Washington? Shall posterity look back upon us, as we look back upon the recreants¹⁰⁰ who sought to make Washington Dictator, and would have turned those arms against their country, which had been put into their hands to save her? or shall posterity look back upon us with the heart-throbbings, the tears and passionate admiration, with which we regard the Saviour-like martyrs who, for our welfare, in lonely dungeons and prison-ships, breathing a noisome atmosphere,—their powerful and robust frames protracting their tortures beyond the common endurance of nature, until they slowly but literally perished by starvation,—and when the minions of power came round, day after day, and offered them life and freedom and a glad return to the upper air, if they would desert their country's cause—refused, and died?

I have said that it is our especial and appropriate duty to perfect and perpetuate the institutions we have received. I am aware that this has been said for the last fifty years, thousands of times every year. I do not reiterate the sentiment, therefore, for its originality; nor even for its importance; but for the sake of inquiring, in what manner this work is to be done? It has long seemed to me that it would be more honorable to our ancestors, to praise them, in words, less; but in deeds, to imitate them more. If from their realms of blessedness, they could address us, would they not say? “Prove the sincerity of your words, by imitating the examples you profess to admire. The inheritance we left you is worthless, unless you have inherited the spirit also by which it was acquired. The boon we would bequeath to the latest posterity, can never reach and bless them, save through your hands. In these spiritual abodes, whence all disturbing passions are excluded, where all illusions are purged from our eyes, we can neither be beguiled nor flattered by lip-service. *Deeds* are the only language we understand; and one act of self-sacrifice for the welfare of mankind is more acceptable to us than if you should make every mountain and hill-top a temple to hallow our names, and gather thither the whole generation as worshippers.”

Such is the spirit in which I believe our sainted fathers would admonish us. But, alas for the holiday patriot! it is so much easier to praise and get up jubilees than it is *to work*;—it is so much pleasanter to encore a song, than to enlist for a campaign with its privations and diseases and death;—this in-door declamation and psalm-singing so much better befit the nice and dainty sentimentalist, than to go forth into the conflict, and year after year, to wrestle with difficulties, as with an angel of God, until Heaven yields to the importunacy of our struggles what it denied to the formality of our prayers!—all this poetic contemplation of duty is so much easier and cheaper than its stern performance,

¹⁰⁰ *Cowards.*

that we are in perpetual danger of degenerating from effort and self-sacrifice into ceremony and cant.

Were a stranger to come amongst us, and to hear our National Songs, our Fourth of July Orations, and Caucus Speeches, he would say, “Verily, there never were such patriots as these since the days of Thermopylæ.” But were he to remain with us, and become familiar with the spirit of ambition and self-seeking that afflicts us, if he thought any more of Thermopylæ, it would be, not of the Spartans, but of Xerxes and his plundering invaders.¹⁰¹

Fellow-Citizens, we have sterner duties to perform than to assemble here annually, to listen to glorifications of our great country and our great people, of our super-Ciceronian and super-Demosthenean orators,¹⁰² and to praise poetry and art and genius that are to be, *at sometime*; and then, after refreshing ourselves with feast and jovial song, to close the day with some garish show, and forthwith to vote ourselves upon the pension list, for the residue of the year, in consideration of such meritorious services. The quiet seat of an honorary member in our community, is not so easily won. Trusts, responsibilities, interests, vaster in amount, more sacred in character, than ever before in the providence of God were committed to any people, have been committed to us. The great experiment of Republicanism,—of the capacity of man for self-government,—is to be tried anew, which wherever it has been tried,—in Greece, in Rome, in Italy,—has failed, through an incapacity in the people to enjoy liberty without abusing it. Another trial is to be made, whether mankind will enjoy more and suffer less, under the ambition and rapacity of an irresponsible parliament, or of irresponsible parties;—under an hereditary sovereign who must, at least, prove his right to destroy, by showing his birth, or under mobs, which are like wild beasts, that prove their right to devour by showing their teeth. A vacant continent is here to be filled up with innumerable millions of human beings, who may be happy through our wisdom, but must be miserable through our folly. Religion,—the ark of God,—which, of old times, was closed that it might not be profaned,—is here thrown open to all, whether Christian, Jew, or Pagan; and yet is to be guarded from desecration and sacrilege, lest we perish with a deeper perdition than ever befell any other people.

These are some of the interests committed to our keeping;—these are some of the duties we have to discharge. These duties, too, are to be discharged by a people, who are liable to alienation from each other by all those natural jealousies which spring from sectional interests, from discordant local institutions, from differences in climate, language, and ancestry. We are exposed to the jealousies which bad men—or which good men, whose knowledge is disproportioned to their zeal,—may engender amongst us. And, on many questions of equal delicacy and magnitude, are we not already armed and marshalled against each other, rather than allied and sworn for common protection?

¹⁰¹ *The Battle of Thermopylae (480 BC) was fought between an alliance of Greek city-states, led by King Leonidas of Sparta, and the Persian Empire of Xerxes I over the course of three days, during the second Persian invasion of Greece.*

¹⁰² *Marcus Tullius Cicero (106 BC–43 BC), a Roman philosopher and statesman, widely considered one of Rome’s greatest orators and prose stylists. Demosthenes (384–322 BC), a prominent Greek statesman and orator of ancient Athens.*

In this exigency, I affirm that we need far more of wisdom and rectitude than we possess. Preparations for our present condition have been so long neglected that we now have a double duty to perform. We have not only to propitiate to our aid a host of good spirits, but we have to exorcise a host of evil ones. Every aspect of our affairs, public and private, demonstrates that we need, for their successful management, a vast accession to the common stock of intelligence and virtue. But intelligence and virtue are the product of cultivation and training. They do not spring up spontaneously. As yet, all Utopias belong to fiction and not to history; and these fictions have so little verisimilitude, that ages have passed since the last one was written. We need, therefore, unexampled alacrity and energy in the application of all those influences and means, which promise the surest and readiest returns of wisdom and probity, both public and private.

This is my subject on the present occasion;—a demonstration that our existing means for the promotion of intelligence and virtue are wholly inadequate to the support of a Republican government. If the facts I have to offer should abate something from our national vain-glory and presumption, I hope they may add as much to national prudence and forethought.

The sovereignty of a great nation is surely one of the most precious of earthly trusts. The happiness or misery which a government dispenses, has dimension in two directions,—depth, as well as superficial extent. It not only reaches widely around, amongst contemporaries; but far downwards amongst posterity. Hence, as the well-being of many generations,—each of these generations consisting of many millions,—depends upon the administration of a government,—there is something sublime and awful in the mere contemplation of the interests committed to rulers; and we see the reasonableness of the requisition that they should rule in righteousness. . . .

It is impiety towards the memory of our fathers to suppose that they contended merely for the transfer of the source of misgovernment from one side of the Atlantic to the other. If we were to be governed forever by ignorance and profligacy, it mattered little whether that ignorance and profligacy should reside in King George, or in King Numbers,—only as the latter king, being much stronger than the former, and subject to the ferocity without the imbecility of madness, is capable of committing far wider havoc upon human welfare than the former. A voter may go to the polls with as light a feeling of responsibility to God and man, or with passions as vindictive, as ever actuated the British ministry when they passed the Stamp-act, or denounced Adams and Hancock as traitors, and gloated, in imagination, over their quartered bodies. No! Our fathers gave their pledge of “fortune, life and sacred honor,” and redeemed it to the letter, that here, on this broad theatre of a continent which spread around them, and with time before them, their descendants might work out that glorious destiny for mankind,—that regeneration, that deliverance from the fetters of iron which had bound the body, and from the fetters of error that had bound the soul,—which the prophets and apostles of liberty, in all ages, had desired to see, but had not seen. . . .

In addition to the multitude of questions for decision, is the mode of deciding them. This, indeed, is the grand distinctive feature of our government. The questions which

arise for decision, are submitted, not to one man, nor to a triumvirate, nor to a Council of Five Hundred, but to millions. The number of votes given at the last presidential election, was nearly two millions and a half. When the appointed day for making the decision arrives, the question must be decided, whether the previous preparation which has been made for it, be much, or little, or none at all. And, what is extraordinary, each voter helps to decide the question as much by not voting as by voting. If the question is so vast or complicated that any one has not time to make up his mind in relation to it; or if any one is too conscientious to act from conjecture, in cases of magnitude, and therefore stays from the polls, another, who has no scruples about acting ignorantly or from caprice or malevolence, votes; and, in the absence of the former, decides the question against the right. . . .

But it is not the legislative branch only of our government, into which the power of the people directly enters. As jurors, they decide almost all questions of fact in the judicial department. As witnesses, they are the medium for furnishing the facts themselves to which the court applies its law; and here the witness may be said to govern the court; for, accordingly as he testifies to one thing or its opposite, one legal principle or its opposite arises in the judge's mind, and is applied to the case. And again, in the absence of a standing army, the people are the only reliance of the executive power for enforcing either an act of the Legislature or a decree of the Court, which meets resistance. . . .

If then every government,—even the simplest,—requires talent and probity for its successful administration; and if it demands these qualities in a higher and higher degree, in proportion to its complexity, and its newness; then does our government require this talent and probity, to an extent indefinitely beyond that of any other which ever existed. And if, in all governments, wisdom and goodness in the ruler, are indispensable to the dignity and happiness of the subject; then, in a government like our own, where all are rulers, all must be wise and good, or we must suffer the alternative of debasement and misery. It is not enough that a bare majority should be intelligent and upright, while a large minority is ignorant and corrupt. Even in such a state, we should be a house divided against itself, which, we are taught, cannot stand. Hence knowledge and virtue must penetrate society, through and through. We need general intelligence and integrity as we need our daily bread. A famine in the latter, would not be more fatal to natural health and life, than a dearth in the former to political health and life.

Two dangers then, equally fatal, impend over us;—the danger of ignorance which does not know its duty, and the danger of vice which, knowing, contemns it. To ensure prosperity, the mass of the people must be both well informed, and upright; but it is obvious that one portion of them may be honest but ignorant, while the residue are educated but fraudulent.

When, therefore, we say that our government must be administered by adequate knowledge, and according to the unchangeable principles of rectitude, we mean that it must be administered by men who have acquired this knowledge, and whose conduct is guided by these principles. The knowledge and virtue we need are not abstractions,

idealities, bodiless conceptions;—they must be incarnated in human form, imbodyed in the living head and heart; they must glow with such fervid vitality as to burst forth spontaneously into action. Instead of our talking so much of these qualities, they must be such a matter of course as not to be talked of.

Such must have been the theory of those who achieved our Independence, and framed the organic law of our government. They did not brave the terrors of that doubtful struggle, to escape from a supposed one-headed monster on the other side of the Atlantic, into the jaws of a myriad-headed monster on this side. No! we should rob the patriots of the Revolution of their purest glory, did we not believe that the means of self-elevation and self-purification, for the whole people, was an infinitely higher object with them, than immunity from pecuniary burdens. Our fathers did not go to the British king, like a town pauper, demanding exemption from taxes; but they went, like high-priests of God, to reclaim the stolen ark of Liberty,—and to bring Dagon¹⁰³ upon his face, again and again, till it should be restored. . . .

But men are not *born* in the full possession of such an ability [*to rule*]. They do not necessarily develop any such ability, as they grow up from infancy to manhood. Competency to fill so high a sphere can be acquired only by the cultivation of natural endowments, and the subjugation of inordinate propensities. We laugh to scorn the idea of a man's being *born* a ruler or lawgiver, whether King or Peer; but men are *born* capable of making laws and being rulers, just as much in the Old World as in the New. With us, every voter is a ruler and a law-maker, and therefore it is no less absurd to say, here, that a man is fit to be a voter by right of nativity or naturalization, than it is, in the language of the British constitution, to say, that a man shall be Sovereign, or Lord, by hereditary descent. Qualification, in both cases, is something superadded to birth or citizenship; and hence, unless we take adequate means to supply this qualification to our voters, the Bishop of London or the Duke of Wellington may sneer at us for believing in the hereditary right *to vote*, with as good a grace as we can at them, for believing in the hereditary right *to rule*.

And here a fundamental question arises,—the most important question ever put in relation to this people,—whether, when our government was changed from the hereditary right to rule, to the hereditary right to vote, any corresponding measures were taken to prevent irresponsible voters from abusing their power, as irresponsible rulers had abused theirs. Government is a stewardship, always held by a comparatively small portion of those whose happiness is dependent upon its acts. Even with us, in States where the right of suffrage is most extensive, far less than a quarter part of the existing population, sway the fortunes of all the rest,—to say nothing of their power over the welfare of posterity. This precious deposit in the hands of the foreign steward had been abused; we reclaimed it from his possession, and divided it amongst thousands; but what guaranty did we obtain from the new depositaries, that our treasure should not be squandered or embezzled, as wantonly or wrongfully as before? It is more difficult to watch the million than the individual. It is a case, too, where the law of bond and suretyship does not apply; because, when the contract is broken, we have none to apply to for redress save the

¹⁰³ A Mesopotamian god.

contractor and surety, who themselves have violated their obligation. There is but one practicable or possible insurance or gage, and that is, the capacity and conscientiousness of the fiduciary.

When the Declaration of Independence was carried into effect, and the Constitution of the United States was adopted, the civil and political relations of the generation then living and of all succeeding ones, were changed. Men were no longer the same men, but were clothed with new rights and responsibilities. Up to that period, so far as government was concerned, they might have been ignorant; indeed, it has generally been held that where a man's only duty is obedience, it is better that he should be ignorant; for why should a beast of burden be endowed with the sensibilities of a man! Up to that period, so far as government was concerned, a man might have been unprincipled and flagitious.¹⁰⁴ He had no access to the statute-book to alter or repeal its provisions, so as to screen his own violations of the moral law from punishment, or to legalize the impoverishment and ruin of his fellow-beings. But with the new institutions, there came new relations, and an immense accession of powers. New trusts of inappreciable value and magnitude were devolved upon the old agents and upon their successors, irrevocably.

Now the rule of common sense applicable to analogous cases, applies emphatically here;—confide your fortunes only to the hands of a faithful and competent agent, or if, through legal limitation or restriction, they must pass into the hands of one at present unqualified to administer them; spend half, spend nine-tenths of the fortune itself, if need be, to qualify the new agent for his duty.

If, at the epoch to which I have referred, there was any class of men who believed that republican institutions contain an inherent and indestructible principle of self-preservation, or self-purification,—who believed that a Republic from the necessity of its nature is infallible and incorruptible, and, like a beautiful goddess, endowed with immortal youth and purity; or, if there is any class of men at the present day holding this faith, let me say it is as fatal an error as was ever harbored by the human mind; because it belongs to that class of errors which blind while they menace,—whose deadly shaft is unseen until it quivers in the heart. A republican government is the visible manifestation of the people's invisible soul. Through the ballot-box, the latent will bursts out into authoritative action. In a republican government the ballot-box is the urn of fate; yet no god shakes the bowl or presides over the lot. If the ballot-box is open to wisdom and patriotism and humanity; it is equally open to ignorance and treachery, to pride and envy, to contempt for the poor or hostility towards the rich. It is the loosest filter ever devised to strain out impurities. It gives equal ingress to whatever comes. No masses of selfishness or fraud, no foul aggregations of cupidity or profligacy, are so ponderous or bulky as to meet obstruction in its capacious gorge. The criteria of a right to vote respect citizenship, age, residence, tax, and, in a few cases, property; but no inquiry can be put whether the applicant is a Cato or a Catiline.¹⁰⁵ To secure fidelity in the discharge of their duties, an oath is imposed on the most unimportant officers,—constables, clerks,

¹⁰⁴ *Criminal; villainous.*

¹⁰⁵ *Lucius Sergius Catilina (108 BC–62 BC), a Roman senator of the 1st century BC infamous for the Catilinarian conspiracy, an attempt to overthrow the Roman Republic.*

surveyors of roads, of lumber, leather, fish,—while the just exercise of this highest function of the citizen, by which law makers, law expounders, and executive officers are alike created, is secured by no civil sanction. In all business transactions, especially where any doubt or distrust attaches to character, we reduce our stipulations to writing; but in conferring the right to vote, we take no promise beforehand that it shall be honestly exercised, nor do we reserve to ourselves any right of subsequent redress, should the privilege be abused. . . .

I have said that schools should have been established for the education of the whole people. These schools should have been of a more perfect character than any which have ever yet existed. In them the principles of morality should have been copiously intermingled with the principles of science. Cases of conscience should have alternated with lessons in the rudiments. The multiplication table should not have been more familiar nor more frequently applied, than the rule, to do to others as we would that they should do unto us. The lives of great and good men should have been held up for admiration and example; and especially the life and character of Jesus Christ, as the sublimest pattern of benevolence, of purity, of self-sacrifice, ever exhibited to mortals. In every course of studies, all the practical and preceptive parts of the Gospel should have been sacredly included; and all dogmatical theology and sectarianism sacredly excluded. In no school should the Bible have been opened to reveal the sword of the polemic, but to unloose the dove of peace.

I have thus endeavored to show, that with universal suffrage, there must be universal elevation of character, intellectual and moral, or there will be universal mismanagement and calamity. . . .

Some have thought that, in a Republic, the good and wise must necessarily maintain an ascendancy over the vicious and ignorant. But whence any such moral necessity? The distinctive characteristic of a Republic is, the greater freedom and power of its members. A Republic is a political contrivance by which the popular voice is collected and uttered, as one articulate and authoritative sound. If then, the people are unrighteous, that utterance will be unrighteous. If the people, or a majority of them withdraw their eyes from wisdom and equity,—those everlasting lights in the firmament of truth; if they abandon themselves to party strife, where the triumph of a faction, rather than the prevalence of the right, is made the object of contest,—it becomes as certain as are the laws of omnipotence, that such a community will express and obey the baser will.

Suppose a people to be honest, but unenlightened either by study or experience; and suppose a series of questions to be submitted to them for decision, more grave and important than were ever before evolved in the history of the race. Suppose further, that many of the leading men among them, and the principal organs which hold communication with them, instead of striving to enlighten and instruct, only inflame and exasperate one portion of them against another portion,—and in this state of mind they proceed to the arbitrament. Would it not be better, like the old Roman soothsayers, to determine the question by the flight of birds, or to learn the oracles of fate by inspecting the entrails of an animal?

When a pecuniary question, however trifling, is to be submitted to a bench of judges, composed of the most learned men in the land, the parties whose interest is at stake, employ eminent counsel, that the whole merits of the case may be developed, and conduce to a just decision. And the court will not suffer its attention to be withdrawn, or its judgment to be disturbed, by vilification of an opponent, or flattery of the tribunal, or the introduction of any other irrelevant matter, but rebukes them as a personal indignity. Now the people have questions to decide infinitely more important than are ever submitted to any court,—they may have the question of the court's existence to decide on,—and should not they, therefore, demand of all their advisers, whether elected or self-constituted, a corresponding truthfulness and gravity?

All philosophers are agreed in regard to all the great truths of astronomy, chemistry, engineering, mechanics, navigation;—if any new point arises, they address themselves most soberly and sedulously to its solution; if new instruments are wanted, they prepare them; if they are deficient in any collateral branch of information, they acquire it. And yet philosophy has no questions more difficult or important than those which are decided with us, by a major vote. Why then should we wonder that on all the great questions which, as yet, have arisen under our government,—the increase or reduction of the army and navy; peace or war; tariff or anti-tariff; internal improvements or no internal improvements; currency, bank or no bank, sub-treasury or no sub-treasury;—why should we wonder, that on all these and other vital questions, we should already have precedents and authorities on both sides, and every thing as yet unsettled;—nay even a wider diversity and a fiercer conflict of opinion, at the present time, than at the foundation of the government? . . .

And what, I again ask, are we doing, to impart soundness and permanency to that which we profess so much to value and admire? We all bear witness that there is but one salvation for the State,—*the knowledge of duty and the will to do it*, among the people. But what measures are we taking, to cause that knowledge to spring up, like a new intellectual creation, in every mind; and to cause that will to be quickened into life, in every breast? We all agree,—the universal experience and history of mankind being our authority,—that, in nineteen cases out of every twenty, if the human mind ever is to be expanded by knowledge and imbued with virtuous principles, it must be done during the susceptible years of childhood and youth. But when we come to the *sine qua non*,—to the *work*,—to the point where volition must issue forth into action, or it is valueless,—when we come to the taxing, to the building, to the books, to the apparatus, to the whole system of preparatory and contemporaneous measures for carrying on, and perfecting the work of education;—where wishes and sympathy and verbal encouragement are nothing without the effective co-operation of those muscles which perform labor and transfer money,—when we come to this point, then excuses teem, and the well-wishers retire from the stage, like actors at the close of a drama. . . .

Remember, then, the child whose voice first lisps, to-day, before that voice shall whisper sedition in secret, or thunder treason at the head of an armed band. Remember the child whose hand, to-day, first lifts its tiny bauble, before that hand shall scatter fire-brands, arrows and death. Remember those sportive groups of youth in whose halcyon

bosoms there sleeps an ocean, as yet scarcely ruffled by the passions, which soon shall heave it as with the tempest's strength. Remember, that whatever station in life you may fill, these mortals,—these immortals, are your care. Devote, expend, consecrate yourselves to the holy work of their improvement, Pour out light and truth, as God pours sunshine and rain. No longer seek knowledge as the luxury of a few, but dispense it amongst all as the bread of life. Learn only how the ignorant may learn; how the innocent may be preserved; the vicious reclaimed. Call down the astronomer from the skies; call up the geologist from his subterranean explorations; summon, if need be, the mightiest intellects from the Council Chamber of the nation; enter cloistered halls, where the scholiast¹⁰⁶ muses over superfluous annotations; dissolve conclave and synod, where subtle polemics are vainly discussing their barren dogmas;—collect whatever of talent, or erudition, or eloquence, or authority, the broad land can supply, *and go forth*, AND TEACH THIS PEOPLE. For, in the name of the living God, it must be proclaimed, that licentiousness shall be the liberty; and violence and chicanery shall be the law; and superstition and craft shall be the religion; and the self-destructive indulgence of all sensual and unhallowed passions, shall be the only happiness of that people who neglect the education of their children.

¹⁰⁶ *One of the ancient commentators who annotated the classical authors.*

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A More Perfect Union

Ode

RALPH WALDO EMERSON

Independence achieved and the Constitution adopted, the United States was launched on the world stage with aspirations and high hopes for a more perfect union, one that would make secure for all its citizens the unalienable rights spoken of in the Declaration of Independence. From the start, reaching that goal has proved to be an unending challenge, to begin with, because the existence of slavery cruelly denied even basic freedom to millions of African Americans. Many writers throughout our history have called attention to the gap between our national ideals and our practices, summoning us to close it. Early among them was Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–82), essayist, poet, lecturer, and leader of the Transcendentalist movement, who was known especially for his celebration of freedom and individuality. Emerson was an opponent of slavery and an abolitionist, lecturing and writing on the subject in the years preceding the Civil War. This poem about freedom, apparently addressed to the United States, was sung in the town hall of Emerson's native Concord, Massachusetts on July 4, 1857.

What is the main theme and concern of the poem? What, according to verses 1 and 10, is the relation between the rising of the sun and the human desire for freedom? According to verses 5, 6, and 7, what is the mission or charge to the United States? How is our national task related to the divine plan, mentioned in verses 3 and 10? What, according to the poem, would make for a more perfect union, then and now?

O tenderly the haughty day
Fills his blue urn with fire;
One morn is in the mighty heaven,
And one in our desire.

The cannon booms from town to town,
Our pulses beat not less,
The joy-bells chime their tidings down,
Which children's voices bless.

For He that flung the broad blue fold
O'er-mantling land and sea,
One third part of the sky unrolled
For the banner of the free.

The men are ripe of Saxon kind
To build an equal state,—
To take the statute from the mind
And make of duty fate.

United States! the ages plead,—
Present and past in under-song,—
Go put your creed into your deed,
Nor speak with double tongue.

For sea and land don't understand,
Nor skies without a frown
See rights for which the one hand fights
By the other cloven down.

Be just at home; then write your scroll
Of honor o'er the sea,
And bid the broad Atlantic roll,
A ferry of the free.

And henceforth there shall be no chain,
Save underneath the sea
The wires shall murmur through the main
Sweet songs of liberty.

The conscious stars accord above,
The waters wild below,
And under, through the cable wove,
Her fiery errands go.

For He that worketh high and wise,
Nor pauses in his plan,
Will take the sun out of the skies
Ere freedom out of man.

What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?

FREDERICK DOUGLASS

As virtually every American today understands, without the need for any argument, the existence of slavery was a stain on the American Republic from its Founding. It also embarrassed our alleged devotion to the principles of human equality and unalienable rights, principles that had been presented in our birth announcement as truths by which we Americans define ourselves in declaring that we hold them to be self-evident. No American in our history has exposed our hypocrisy more powerfully than did Frederick Douglass (circa 1818–1895), a one-time slave who became a great orator, statesman, and abolitionist. Douglass made the case best in his famous Fourth of July oration (here excerpted), delivered on July 5, 1852 before the Ladies Anti-Slavery Society of Rochester, New York. Yet as remarkable as his indictment is his vigorous defense of the Constitution and of the American experiment.

The speech is divided into several parts, with looks at the past, the present, and (briefly) the future. How does Douglass regard the American Revolution, and those responsible for it? What is his attitude toward our Fourth of July celebrations? What is his answer to the question posed in the title of his oration? Review the various parts of his critique of his American present. Which arguments and indictments do you find most compelling and most damning? For what offenses does he condemn American religion and American churches? Why, despite all that he condemns, does he vigorously defend the Constitution of the United States? Do you agree with his defense? Finally, why is he hopeful about the American future? What is the point of William Lloyd Garrison's poem, and why does Douglass use it to conclude his oration? Imagining yourself a middle-of-the-road white member of Douglass' Rochester audience, how would you have reacted to this oration?

Mr. President, Friends and Fellow Citizens: He who could address this audience without a quailing sensation, has stronger nerves than I have. I do not remember ever to have appeared as a speaker before any assembly more shrinkingly, nor with greater distrust of my ability, than I do this day. A feeling has crept over me, quite unfavorable to the exercise of my limited powers of speech. The task before me is one which requires much previous thought and study for its proper performance. I know that apologies of this sort are generally considered flat and unmeaning. I trust, however, that mine will not be so considered. Should I seem at ease, my appearance would much misrepresent me. The little experience I have had in addressing public meetings, in country school houses, avails me nothing on the present occasion.

The papers and placards say, that I am to deliver a 4th [of] July oration. This certainly sounds large, and out of the common way, for it is true that I have often had the privilege to speak in this beautiful Hall, and to address many who now honor me with their presence. But neither their familiar faces, nor the perfect gage I think I have of Corinthian Hall, seems to free me from embarrassment.

The fact is, ladies and gentlemen, the distance between this platform and the slave plantation, from which I escaped, is considerable—and the difficulties to be overcome in getting from the latter to the former, are by no means slight. That I am here to-day, is, to me, a matter of astonishment as well as of gratitude. You will not, therefore, be surprised, if in what I have to say, I evince no elaborate preparation, nor grace my speech with any high sounding exordium.¹⁰⁷ With little experience and with less learning, I have been able to throw my thoughts hastily and imperfectly together; and trusting to your patient and generous indulgence, I will proceed to lay them before you.

This, for the purpose of this celebration, is the 4th of July. It is the birthday of your National Independence, and of your political freedom. This, to you, is what the Passover was to the emancipated people of God. It carries your minds back to the day, and to the act of your great deliverance; and to the signs, and to the wonders, associated with that act, and that day. This celebration also marks the beginning of another year of your national life; and reminds you that the Republic of America is now 76 years old. I am glad, fellow-citizens, that your nation is so young. Seventy-six years, though a good old age for a man, is but a mere speck in the life of a nation. Three score years and ten is the allotted time for individual men; but nations number their years by thousands. According to this fact, you are, even now, only in the beginning of your national career, still lingering in the period of childhood. I repeat, I am glad this is so. There is hope in the thought, and hope is much needed, under the dark clouds which lower above the horizon. The eye of the reformer is met with angry flashes, portending disastrous times; but his heart may well beat lighter at the thought that America is young, and that she is still in the impressible stage of her existence. May he not hope that high lessons of wisdom, of justice and of truth, will yet give direction to her destiny? Were the nation older, the patriot's heart might be sadder, and the reformer's brow heavier. Its future might be shrouded in gloom, and the hope of its prophets go out in sorrow. There is consolation in the thought that America is young. Great streams are not easily turned from channels, worn deep in the course of ages. They may sometimes rise in quiet and stately majesty, and inundate the land, refreshing and fertilizing the earth with their mysterious properties. They may also rise in wrath and fury, and bear away, on their angry waves, the accumulated wealth of years of toil and hardship. They, however, gradually flow back to the same old channel, and flow on as serenely as ever. But, while the river may not be turned aside, it may dry up, and leave nothing behind but the withered branch, and the unsightly rock, to howl in the abyss-sweeping wind, the sad tale of departed glory. As with rivers so with nations.

Fellow-citizens, I shall not presume to dwell at length on the associations that cluster about this day. The simple story of it is that, 76 years ago, the people of this country were British subjects. The style and title of your "sovereign people" (in which you now glory) was not then born. You were under the British Crown. Your fathers esteemed the English Government as the home government; and England as the fatherland. This home government, you know, although a considerable distance from your home, did, in the exercise of its parental prerogatives, impose upon its colonial children, such restraints, burdens and limitations, as, in its mature judgment, it deemed wise, right and proper.

¹⁰⁷ *A beginning or introductory part, especially of a speech or treatise.*

But, your fathers, who had not adopted the fashionable idea of this day, of the infallibility of government, and the absolute character of its acts, presumed to differ from the home government in respect to the wisdom and the justice of some of those burdens and restraints. They went so far in their excitement as to pronounce the measures of government unjust, unreasonable, and oppressive, and altogether such as ought not to be quietly submitted to. I scarcely need say, fellow-citizens, that my opinion of those measures fully accords with that of your fathers. Such a declaration of agreement on my part would not be worth much to anybody. It would, certainly, prove nothing, as to what part I might have taken, had I lived during the great controversy of 1776. To say *now* that America was right, and England wrong, is exceedingly easy. Everybody can say it; the dastard, not less than the noble brave, can flippantly discant on the tyranny of England towards the American Colonies. It is fashionable to do so; but there was a time when to pronounce against England, and in favor of the cause of the colonies, tried men's souls. They who did so were accounted in their day, plotters of mischief, agitators and rebels, dangerous men. To side with the right, against the wrong, with the weak against the strong, and with the oppressed against the oppressor! *here* lies the merit, and the one which, of all others, seems unfashionable in our day. The cause of liberty may be stabbed by the men who glory in the deeds of your fathers. But, to proceed.

Feeling themselves harshly and unjustly treated by the home government, your fathers, like men of honesty, and men of spirit, earnestly sought redress. They petitioned and remonstrated; they did so in a decorous, respectful, and loyal manner. Their conduct was wholly unexceptionable. This, however, did not answer the purpose. They saw themselves treated with sovereign indifference, coldness and scorn. Yet they persevered. They were not the men to look back.

As the sheet anchor takes a firmer hold, when the ship is tossed by the storm, so did the cause of your fathers grow stronger, as it breasted the chilling blasts of kingly displeasure. The greatest and best of British statesmen admitted its justice, and the loftiest eloquence of the British Senate came to its support. But, with that blindness which seems to be the unvarying characteristic of tyrants, since Pharaoh and his hosts were drowned in the Red Sea, the British Government persisted in the exactions complained of.

The madness of this course, we believe, is admitted now, even by England; but we fear the lesson is wholly lost on our present rulers.

Oppression makes a wise man mad. Your fathers were wise men, and if they did not go mad, they became restive under this treatment. They felt themselves the victims of grievous wrongs, wholly incurable in their colonial capacity. With brave men there is always a remedy for oppression. Just here, the idea of a total separation of the colonies from the crown was born! It was a startling idea, much more so, than we, at this distance of time, regard it. The timid and the prudent (as has been intimated) of that day, were, of course, shocked and alarmed by it.

Such people lived then, had lived before, and will, probably, ever have a place on this planet; and their course, in respect to any great change, (no matter how great the good to

be attained, or the wrong to be redressed by it), may be calculated with as much precision as can be the course of the stars. They hate all changes, but silver, gold and copper change! Of this sort of change they are always strongly in favor.

These people were called tories in the days of your fathers; and the appellation, probably, conveyed the same idea that is meant by a more modern, though a somewhat less euphonious term, which we often find in our papers, applied to some of our old politicians.

Their opposition to the then dangerous thought was earnest and powerful; but, amid all their terror and affrighted vociferations against it, the alarming and revolutionary idea moved on, and the country with it.

On the 2d of July, 1776, the old Continental Congress, to the dismay of the lovers of ease, and the worshipers of property, clothed that dreadful idea with all the authority of national sanction. They did so in the form of a resolution; and as we seldom hit upon resolutions, drawn up in our day whose transparency is at all equal to this, it may refresh your minds and help my story if I read it.

Resolved, That these united colonies *are*, and of right ought to be, free and Independent States; that they are absolved from all allegiance to the British Crown; and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain *is*, and ought to be, dissolved.

Citizens, your fathers made good that resolution. They succeeded; and to-day you reap the fruits of their success. The freedom gained is yours; and you, therefore, may properly celebrate this anniversary. The 4th of July is the first great fact in your nation's history—the very ring-bolt in the chain of your yet undeveloped destiny.

Pride and patriotism, not less than gratitude, prompt you to celebrate and to hold it in perpetual remembrance. I have said that the Declaration of Independence is the *ring-bolt* to the chain of your nation's destiny; so, indeed, I regard it. The principles contained in that instrument are saving principles. Stand by those principles, be true to them on all occasions, in all places, against all foes, and at whatever cost.

From the round top of your ship of state, dark and threatening clouds may be seen. Heavy billows, like mountains in the distance, disclose to the leeward huge forms of flinty rocks! That *bolt* drawn, that *chain* broken, and all is lost. *Cling to this day—cling to it*, and to its principles, with the grasp of a storm-tossed mariner to a spar at midnight. . . .

Fellow Citizens, I am not wanting in respect for the fathers of this republic. The signers of the Declaration of Independence were brave men. They were great men too—great enough to give fame to a great age. It does not often happen to a nation to raise, at one time, such a number of truly great men. The point from which I am compelled to view them is not, certainly, the most favorable; and yet I cannot contemplate their great

deeds with less than admiration. They were statesmen, patriots and heroes, and for the good they did, and the principles they contended for, I will unite with you to honor their memory.

They loved their country better than their own private interests; and, though this is not the highest form of human excellence, all will concede that it is a rare virtue, and that when it is exhibited, it ought to command respect. He who will, intelligently, lay down his life for his country, is a man whom it is not in human nature to despise. Your fathers staked their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor, on the cause of their country. In their admiration of liberty, they lost sight of all other interests.

They were peace men; but they preferred revolution to peaceful submission to bondage. They were quiet men; but they did not shrink from agitating against oppression. They showed forbearance; but they knew its limits. They believed in order; but not in the order of tyranny. With them, nothing was "*settled*" that was not right. With them, justice, liberty and humanity were "*final*;" not slavery and oppression. You may well cherish the memory of such men. They were great in their day and generation. Their solid manhood stands out the more as we contrast it with these degenerate times.

How circumspect, exact and proportionate were all their movements! How unlike the politicians of an hour! Their statesmanship looked beyond the passing moment, and stretched away in strength into the distant future. They seized upon eternal principles, and set a glorious example in their defense. Mark them!

Fully appreciating the hardship to be encountered, firmly believing in the right of their cause, honorably inviting the scrutiny of an on-looking world, reverently appealing to heaven to attest their sincerity, soundly comprehending the solemn responsibility they were about to assume, wisely measuring the terrible odds against them, your fathers, the fathers of this republic, did, most deliberately, under the inspiration of a glorious patriotism, and with a sublime faith in the great principles of justice and freedom, lay deep the corner-stone of the national superstructure, which has risen and still rises in grandeur around you.

Of this fundamental work, this day is the anniversary. Our eyes are met with demonstrations of joyous enthusiasm. Banners and pennants wave exultingly on the breeze. The din of business, too, is hushed. Even Mammon¹⁰⁸ seems to have quitted his grasp on this day. The ear-piercing fife and the stirring drum unite their accents with the ascending peal of a thousand church bells. Prayers are made, hymns are sung, and sermons are preached in honor of this day; while the quick martial tramp of a great and multitudinous nation, echoed back by all the hills, valleys and mountains of a vast continent, bespeak the occasion one of thrilling and universal interests—a nation's jubilee.

¹⁰⁸ *Material wealth or greed, most often personified as a deity, and sometimes included in the seven princes of Hell.*

Friends and citizens, I need not enter further into the causes which led to this anniversary. Many of you understand them better than I do. You could instruct me in regard to them. That is a branch of knowledge in which you feel, perhaps, a much deeper interest than your speaker. The causes which led to the separation of the colonies from the British crown have never lacked for a tongue. They have all been taught in your common schools, narrated at your firesides, unfolded from your pulpits, and thundered from your legislative halls, and are as familiar to you as household words. They form the staple of your national poetry and eloquence.

I remember, also, that, as a people, Americans are remarkably familiar with all facts which make in their own favor. This is esteemed by some as a national trait—perhaps a national weakness. It is a fact, that whatever makes for the wealth or for the reputation of Americans, and can be had *cheap!* will be found by Americans. I shall not be charged with slandering Americans, if I say I think the American side of any question may be safely left in American hands.

I leave, therefore, the great deeds of your fathers to other gentlemen whose claim to have been regularly descended will be less likely to be disputed than mine! . . .

THE PRESENT.

. . . . Fellow-citizens, pardon me, allow me to ask, why am I called upon to speak here to-day? What have I, or those I represent, to do with your national independence? Are the great principles of political freedom and of natural justice, embodied in that Declaration of Independence, extended to us? and am I, therefore, called upon to bring our humble offering to the national altar, and to confess the benefits and express devout gratitude for the blessings resulting from your independence to us?

Would to God, both for your sakes and ours, that an affirmative answer could be truthfully returned to these questions! Then would my task be light, and my burden easy and delightful. For *who* is there so cold, that a nation's sympathy could not warm him? Who so obdurate and dead to the claims of gratitude, that would not thankfully acknowledge such priceless benefits? Who so stolid and selfish, that would not give his voice to swell the hallelujahs of a nation's jubilee, when the chains of servitude had been torn from his limbs? I am not that man. In a case like that, the dumb might eloquently speak, and the "lame man leap as an hart."¹⁰⁹

But, such is not the state of the case. I say it with a sad sense of the disparity between us. I am not included within the pale of this glorious anniversary! Your high independence only reveals the immeasurable distance between us. The blessings in which you, this day, rejoice, are not enjoyed in common. The rich inheritance of justice, liberty, prosperity and independence, bequeathed by your fathers, is shared by you, not by me. The sunlight that brought life and healing to you, has brought stripes and death to me. This Fourth [of] July is *yours*, not *mine*. *You* may rejoice, *I* must mourn. To drag a man in fetters into the grand illuminated temple of liberty, and call upon him to join you in

¹⁰⁹ *Isaiah 35:6.*

joyous anthems, were inhuman mockery and sacrilegious irony. Do you mean, citizens, to mock me, by asking me to speak to-day? If so, there is a parallel to your conduct. And let me warn you that it is dangerous to copy the example of a nation whose crimes, lowering up to heaven, were thrown down by the breath of the Almighty, burying that nation in irrecoverable ruin! I can to-day take up the plaintive lament of a peeled and woe-smitten people!

“By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down. Yea! we wept when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. For there, they that carried us away captive, required of us a song; and they who wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. How can we sing the Lord’s song in a strange land? If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth.”¹¹⁰

Fellow-citizens; above your national, tumultuous joy, I hear the mournful wail of millions! whose chains, heavy and grievous yesterday, are, to-day, rendered more intolerable by the jubilee shouts that reach them. If I do forget, if I do not faithfully remember those bleeding children of sorrow this day, “may my right hand forget her cunning, and may my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth!” To forget them, to pass lightly over their wrongs, and to chime in with the popular theme, would be treason most scandalous and shocking, and would make me a reproach before God and the world. My subject, then fellow-citizens, is AMERICAN SLAVERY. I shall see, this day, and its popular characteristics, from the slave’s point of view. Standing, there, identified with the American bondman, making his wrongs mine, I do not hesitate to declare, with all my soul, that the character and conduct of this nation never looked blacker to me than on this 4th of July! Whether we turn to the declarations of the past, or to the professions of the present, the conduct of the nation seems equally hideous and revolting. America is false to the past, false to the present, and solemnly binds herself to be false to the future. Standing with God and the crushed and bleeding slave on this occasion, I will, in the name of humanity which is outraged, in the name of liberty which is fettered, in the name of the constitution and the Bible, which are disregarded and trampled upon, dare to call in question and to denounce, with all the emphasis I can command, everything that serves to perpetuate slavery—the great sin and shame of America! “I will not equivocate; I will not excuse;” I will use the severest language I can command; and yet not one word shall escape me that any man, whose judgment is not blinded by prejudice, or who is not at heart a slaveholder, shall not confess to be right and just.

But I fancy I hear some one of my audience say, it is just in this circumstance that you and your brother abolitionists fail to make a favorable impression on the public mind. Would you argue more, and denounce less, would you persuade more, and rebuke less, your cause would be much more likely to succeed. But, I submit, where all is plain there is nothing to be argued. What point in the anti-slavery creed would you have me argue? On what branch of the subject do the people of this country need light? Must I undertake to prove that the slave is a man? That point is conceded already. Nobody doubts it. The slaveholders themselves acknowledge it in the enactment of laws for their government.

¹¹⁰ *Psalm 137.*

They acknowledge it when they punish disobedience on the part of the slave. There are seventy-two crimes in the State of Virginia, which, if committed by a black man, (no matter how ignorant he be), subject him to the punishment of death; while only two of the same crimes will subject a white man to the like punishment. What is this but the acknowledgement that the slave is a moral, intellectual and responsible being? The manhood of the slave is conceded. It is admitted in the fact that Southern statute books are covered with enactments forbidding, under severe fines and penalties, the teaching of the slave to read or to write—When you can point to any such laws, in reference to the beasts of the field, then I may consent to argue the manhood of the slave. When the dogs in your streets, when the fowls of the air, when the cattle on your hills, when the fish of the sea, and the reptiles that crawl, shall be unable to distinguish the slave from a brute, *then* will I argue with you that the slave is a man!

For the present, it is enough to affirm the equal manhood of the negro race. Is it not astonishing that, while we are ploughing, planting and reaping, using all kinds of mechanical tools, erecting houses, constructing bridges, building ships, working in metals of brass, iron, copper, silver and gold; that, while we are reading, writing and cyphering, acting as clerks, merchants and secretaries, having among us lawyers, doctors, ministers, poets, authors, editors, orators and teachers; that, while we are engaged in all manner of enterprises common to other men, digging gold in California, capturing the whale in the Pacific, feeding sheep and cattle on the hill-side, living, moving, acting, thinking, planning, living in families as husbands, wives and children, and, above all, confessing and worshipping the Christian's God, and looking hopefully for life and immortality beyond the grave, we are called upon to prove that we are men!

Would you have me argue that man is entitled to liberty? that he is the rightful owner of his own body? You have already declared it. Must I argue the wrongfulness of slavery? Is that a question for Republicans? Is it to be settled by the rules of logic and argumentation, as a matter beset with great difficulty, involving a doubtful application of the principle of justice, hard to be understood? How should I look to-day, in the presence of Americans, dividing, and subdividing a discourse, to show that men have a natural right to freedom? speaking of it relatively, and positively, negatively, and affirmatively. To do so, would be to make myself ridiculous, and to offer an insult to your understanding—There is not a man beneath the canopy of heaven, that does not know that slavery is wrong *for him*.

What, am I to argue that it is wrong to make men brutes, to rob them of their liberty, to work them without wages, to keep them ignorant of their relations to their fellow men, to beat them with sticks, to flay their flesh with the lash, to load their limbs with irons, to hunt them with dogs, to sell them at auction, to sunder their families, to knock out their teeth, to burn their flesh, to starve them into obedience and submission to their masters? Must I argue that a system thus marked with blood, and stained with pollution, is *wrong*? No! I will not. I have better employments for my time and strength than such arguments would imply.

What, then, remains to be argued? Is it that slavery is not divine; that God did not establish it; that our doctors of divinity are mistaken? There is blasphemy in the thought. That which is inhuman, cannot be divine! *Who* can reason on such a proposition? They that can, may; I cannot. The time for such argument is past.

At a time like this, scorching irony, not convincing argument, is needed. O! had I the ability, and could I reach the nation's ear, I would, to-day, pour out a fiery stream of biting ridicule, blasting reproach, withering sarcasm, and stern rebuke. For it is not light that is needed, but fire; it is not the gentle shower, but thunder. We need the storm, the whirlwind, and the earthquake. The feeling of the nation must be quickened; the conscience of the nation must be roused; the propriety of the nation must be startled; the hypocrisy of the nation must be exposed; and its crimes against God and man must be proclaimed and denounced.

What, to the American slave, is your 4th of July? I answer; a day that reveals to him, more than all other days in the year, the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the constant victim. To him, your celebration is a sham; your boasted liberty, an unholy license; your national greatness, swelling vanity; your sounds of rejoicing are empty and heartless; your denunciations of tyrants, brass fronted impudence; your shouts of liberty and equality, hollow mockery; your prayers and hymns, your sermons and thanksgivings, with all your religious parade, and solemnity, are, to him, mere bombast, fraud, deception, impiety, and hypocrisy—a thin veil to cover up crimes which would disgrace a nation of savages. There is not a nation on the earth guilty of practices, more shocking and bloody, than are the people of these United States, at this very hour.

Go where you may, search where you will, roam through all the monarchies and despotisms of the old world, travel through South America, search out every abuse, and when you have found the last, lay your facts by the side of the everyday practices of this nation, and you will say with me, that, for revolting barbarity and shameless hypocrisy, America reigns without a rival.

INTERNAL SLAVE TRADE.

Take the American slave-trade, which, we are told by the papers, is especially prosperous just now. Ex-Senator Benton tells us that the price of men was never higher than now. He mentions the fact to show that slavery is in no danger. This trade is one of the peculiarities of American institutions. It is carried on in all the large towns and cities in one-half of this confederacy; and millions are pocketed every year, by dealers in this horrid traffic. In several states, this trade is a chief source of wealth. It is called (in contradistinction to the foreign slave-trade) "*the internal slave trade.*" It is, probably, called so, too, in order to divert from it the horror with which the foreign slave-trade is contemplated. That trade has long since been denounced by this government, as piracy. It has been denounced with burning words, from the high places of the nation, as an execrable traffic. To arrest it, to put an end to it, this nation keeps a squadron, at immense cost, on the coast of Africa. Everywhere, in this country, it is safe to speak of this foreign slave-trade, as a most inhuman traffic, opposed alike to the laws of God and of man. The

duty to extirpate and destroy it, is admitted even by our DOCTORS OF DIVINITY. In order to put an end to it, some of these last have consented that their colored brethren (nominally free) should leave this country, and establish themselves on the western coast of Africa! It is, however, a notable fact that, while so much execration is poured out by Americans upon those engaged in the foreign slave-trade, the men engaged in the slave-trade between the states pass without condemnation, and their business is deemed honorable.

Behold the practical operation of this internal slave-trade, the American slave-trade, sustained by American politics and America religion. Here you will see men and women reared like swine, for the market. You know what is a swine-drover? I will show you a man-drover. They inhabit all our Southern States. They perambulate the country, and crowd the highways of the nation, with droves of human stock. You will see one of these human flesh-jobbers, armed with pistol, whip and bowie-knife, driving a company of a hundred men, women, and children, from the Potomac to the slave market at New Orleans. These wretched people are to be sold singly, or in lots, to suit purchasers. They are food for the cotton-field, and the deadly sugar-mill. Mark the sad procession, as it moves wearily along, and the inhuman wretch who drives them. Hear his savage yells and his blood-chilling oaths, as he hurries on his affrighted captives! There, see the old man, with locks thinned and gray. Cast one glance, if you please, upon that young mother, whose shoulders are bare to the scorching sun, her briny tears falling on the brow of the babe in her arms. See, too, that girl of thirteen, weeping, *yes!* weeping, as she thinks of the mother from whom she has been torn! The drove moves tardily. Heat and sorrow have nearly consumed their strength; suddenly you hear a quick snap, like the discharge of a rifle; the fetters clank, and the chain rattles simultaneously; your ears are saluted with a scream, that seems to have torn its way to the center of your soul! The crack you heard, was the sound of the slave-whip; the scream you heard, was from the woman you saw with the babe. Her speed had faltered under the weight of her child and her chains! that gash on her shoulder tells her to move on. Follow the drove to New Orleans. Attend the auction; see men examined like horses; see the forms of women rudely and brutally exposed to the shocking gaze of American slave-buyers. See this drove sold and separated forever; and never forget the deep, sad sobs that arose from that scattered multitude. Tell me citizens, WHERE, under the sun, you can witness a spectacle more fiendish and shocking. Yet this is but a glance at the American slave-trade, as it exists, at this moment, in the ruling part of the United States.

I was born amid such sights and scenes. To me the American slave-trade is a terrible reality. When a child, my soul was often pierced with a sense of its horrors. I lived on Philpot Street, Fell's Point, Baltimore, and have watched from the wharves, the slave ships in the Basin, anchored from the shore, with their cargoes of human flesh, waiting for favorable winds to waft them down the Chesapeake. There was, at that time, a grand slave mart kept at the head of Pratt Street, by Austin Woldfolk. His agents were sent into every town and county in Maryland, announcing their arrival, through the papers, and on flaming "*hand-bills,*" headed CASH FOR NEGROES. These men were generally well dressed men, and very captivating in their manners. Ever ready to drink, to treat, and to gamble. The fate of many a slave has depended upon the turn of a single card; and many

a child has been snatched from the arms of its mother by bargains arranged in a state of brutal drunkenness.

The flesh-mongers gather up their victims by dozens, and drive them, chained, to the general depot at Baltimore. When a sufficient number have been collected here, a ship is chartered, for the purpose of conveying the forlorn crew to Mobile, or to New Orleans. From the slave prison to the ship, they are usually driven in the darkness of night; for since the anti-slavery agitation, a certain caution is observed.

In the deep still darkness of midnight, I have been often aroused by the dead heavy footsteps, and the piteous cries of the chained gangs that passed our door. The anguish of my boyish heart was intense; and I was often consoled, when speaking to my mistress in the morning, to hear her say that the custom was very wicked; that she hated to hear the rattle of the chains, and the heart-rending cries. I was glad to find one who sympathized with me in my horror.

Fellow-citizens, this murderous traffic is, to-day, in active operation in this boasted republic. In the solitude of my spirit, I see clouds of dust raised on the highways of the South; I see the bleeding footsteps; I hear the doleful wail of fettered humanity, on the way to the slave-markets, where the victims are to be sold like *horses, sheep, and swine*, knocked off to the highest bidder. There I see the tenderest ties ruthlessly broken, to gratify the lust, caprice and rapacity of the buyers and sellers of men. My soul sickens at the sight.

“Is this the land your Fathers loved,
The freedom which they toiled to win?
Is this the earth whereon they moved?
Are these the graves they slumber in?”¹¹¹

But a still more inhuman, disgraceful, and scandalous state of things remains to be presented.

By an act of the American Congress, not yet two years old, slavery has been nationalized in its most horrible and revolting form. By that act,¹¹² Mason & Dixon's line has been obliterated; New York has become as Virginia; and the power to hold, hunt, and sell men, women, and children as slaves remains no longer a mere state institution, but is now an institution of the whole United States. The power is co-extensive with the Star-Spangled Banner and American Christianity. Where these go, may also go the merciless slave-hunter. Where these are, man is not sacred. He is a bird for the sportsman's gun. By that most foul and fiendish of all human decrees, the liberty and person of every man are put in peril. Your broad republican domain is hunting ground for men. *Not* for thieves and robbers, enemies of society, merely, but for men guilty of no crime. Your lawmakers have commanded all good citizens to engage in this hellish sport. Your President, your

¹¹¹ John Greenleaf Whittier, "Stanzas for the Times," www.poemhunter.com/poem/stanzas-for-the-times/.

¹¹² The Fugitive Slave Law was passed by the US Congress on September 18, 1850, as part of the Compromise of 1850. It declared that all runaway slaves were, upon capture, to be returned to their masters.

Secretary of State, your *lords, nobles*, and ecclesiastics, enforce, as a duty you owe to your free and glorious country, and to your God, that you do this accursed thing. Not fewer than forty Americans have, within the past two years, been hunted down and, without a moment's warning, hurried away in chains, and consigned to slavery and excruciating torture. Some of these have had wives and children, dependent on them for bread; but of this, no account was made. The right of the hunter to his prey stands superior to the right of marriage, and to *all* rights in this republic, the rights of God included! For black men there are neither law, justice, humanity, nor religion. The Fugitive Slave *Law* makes MERCY TO THEM, A CRIME; and bribes the judge who tries them. An American JUDGE GETS TEN DOLLARS FOR EVERY VICTIM HE CONSIGNS to slavery, and five, when he fails to do so. The oath of any two villains is sufficient, under this hell-black enactment, to send the most pious and exemplary black man into the remorseless jaws of slavery! His own testimony is nothing. He can bring no witnesses for himself. The minister of American justice is bound by the law to hear but *one* side; and *that* side, is the side of the oppressor. Let this damning fact be perpetually told. Let it be thundered around the world, that, in tyrant-killing, king-hating, people-loving, democratic, Christian America, the seats of justice are filled with judges, who hold their offices under an open and palpable *bribe*, and are bound, in deciding in the case of a man's liberty, *hear only his accusers!*

In glaring violation of justice, in shameless disregard of the forms of administering law, in cunning arrangement to entrap the defenseless, and in diabolical intent, this Fugitive Slave Law stands alone in the annals of tyrannical legislation. I doubt if there be another nation on the globe, having the brass and the baseness to put such a law on the statute-book. If any man in this assembly thinks differently from me in this matter, and feels able to disprove my statements, I will gladly confront him at any suitable time and place he may select.

RELIGIOUS LIBERTY.

I take this law to be one of the grossest infringements of Christian Liberty, and, if the churches and ministers of our country were not stupidly blind, or most wickedly indifferent, they, too, would so regard it.

At the very moment that they are thanking God for the enjoyment of civil and religious liberty, and for the right to worship God according to the dictates of their own consciences, they are utterly silent in respect to a law which robs religion of its chief significance, and makes it utterly worthless to a world lying in wickedness. Did this law concern the "*mint, anise and cummin*"—abridge the right to sing psalms, to partake of the sacrament, or to engage in any of the ceremonies of religion, it would be smitten by the thunder of a thousand pulpits.¹¹³ A general shout would go up from the church, demanding *repeal, repeal, instant repeal!* And it would go hard with that politician who presumed to solicit the votes of the people without inscribing this motto on his banner. Further, if this demand were not complied with, another Scotland would be added to the history of religious liberty, and the stern old Covenanters would be thrown into the shade.

¹¹³ *Matthew 23:23.*

A John Knox would be seen at every church door, and heard from every pulpit, and Fillmore would have no more quarter than was shown by Knox, to the beautiful, but treacherous queen Mary of Scotland—The fact that the church of our country, (with fractional exceptions), does not esteem "the Fugitive Slave Law" as a declaration of war against religious liberty, implies that that church regards religion simply as a form of worship, an empty ceremony, and *not* a vital principle, requiring active benevolence, justice, love and good will towards man. It esteems sacrifice above mercy; psalm-singing above right doing; solemn meetings above practical righteousness. A worship that can be conducted by persons who refuse to give shelter to the houseless, to give bread to the hungry, clothing to the naked, and who enjoin obedience to a law forbidding these acts of mercy, is a curse, not a blessing to mankind. The Bible addresses all such persons as "scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites, who pay tithe of *mint, anise, and cummin*, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and faith."

THE CHURCH RESPONSIBLE.

But the church of this country is not only indifferent to the wrongs of the slave, it actually takes sides with the oppressors. It has made itself the bulwark of American slavery, and the shield of American slave-hunters. Many of its most eloquent Divines, who stand as the very lights of the church, have shamelessly given the sanction of religion and the Bible to the whole slave system—They have taught that man may, properly, be a slave; that the relation of master and slave is ordained of God; that to send back an escaped bondman to his master is clearly the duty of all the followers of the Lord Jesus Christ; and this horrible blasphemy is palmed off upon the world for Christianity.

For my part, I would say, welcome infidelity! welcome atheism! welcome anything! in preference to the gospel, *as preached by those Divines!* They convert the very name of religion into an engine of tyranny, and barbarous cruelty, and serve to confirm more infidels, in this age, than all the infidel writings of Thomas Paine, Voltaire, and Bolingbroke,¹¹⁴ put together, have done! These ministers make religion a cold and flinty-hearted thing, having neither principles of right action, nor bowels of compassion. They strip the love of God of its beauty, and leave the throng of religion a huge, horrible, repulsive form. It is a religion for oppressors, tyrants, man-stealers, and thugs. It is not that "*pure and undefiled religion*" which is from above, and which is "*first pure, then peaceable, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.*" But a religion which favors the rich against the poor; which exalts the proud above the humble; which divides mankind into two classes, tyrants and slaves; which says to the man in chains, *stay there*; and to the oppressor, *oppress on*; it is a religion which may be professed and enjoyed by all the robbers and enslavers of mankind; it makes God a respecter of persons, denies his fatherhood of the race, and tramples in the dust the great truth of the brotherhood of man. All this we affirm to be true of the popular church, and the popular worship of our land and nation—a religion, a church, and a worship which, on the authority of inspired wisdom, we pronounce to be an

¹¹⁴ *François-Marie Arouet (1694–1778), known by his penname Voltaire, a French Enlightenment writer. Henry St John, 1st Viscount Bolingbroke (1678–1751), an English politician, government official and political philosopher.*

abomination in the sight of God. In the language of Isaiah, the American church might be well addressed, “Bring no more vain ablations; incense is an abomination unto me: the new moons and Sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth. They are a trouble to me; I am weary to bear them; and when ye spread forth your hands I will hide mine eyes from you. Yea! when ye make many prayers, I will not hear. YOUR HANDS ARE FULL OF BLOOD; cease to do evil, learn to do well; seek judgment; relieve the oppressed; judge for the fatherless; plead for the widow.”¹¹⁵

The American church is guilty, when viewed in connection with what it is doing to uphold slavery; but it is superlatively guilty when viewed in connection with its ability to abolish slavery. The sin of which it is guilty is one of omission as well as of commission. Albert Barnes but uttered what the common sense of every man at all observant of the actual state of the case will receive as truth, when he declared that “There is no power out of the church that could sustain slavery an hour, if it were not sustained in it.”¹¹⁶

Let the religious press, the pulpit, the Sunday school, the conference meeting, the great ecclesiastical, missionary, Bible and tract associations of the land array their immense powers against slavery and slave-holding; and the whole system of crime and blood would be scattered to the winds; and that they do not do this involves them in the most awful responsibility of which the mind can conceive. . . .

Americans! your republican politics, not less than your republican religion, are flagrantly inconsistent. You boast of your love of liberty, your superior civilization, and your pure Christianity, while the whole political power of the nation (as embodied in the two great political parties), is solemnly pledged to support and perpetuate the enslavement of three millions of your countrymen. You hurl your anathemas at the crowned headed tyrants of Russia and Austria, and pride yourselves on your Democratic institutions, while you yourselves consent to be the mere *tools* and *body-guards* of the tyrants of Virginia and Carolina. You invite to your shores fugitives of oppression from abroad, honor them with banquets, greet them with ovations, cheer them, toast them, salute them, protect them, and pour out your money to them like water; but the fugitives from your own land you advertise, hunt, arrest, shoot and kill. You glory in your refinement, and your universal education; yet you maintain a system as barbarous and dreadful as ever stained the character of a nation—a system begun in avarice, supported in pride, and perpetuated in cruelty. You shed tears over fallen Hungary, and make the sad story of her wrongs the theme of your poets, statesmen and orators, till your gallant sons are ready to fly to arms to vindicate her cause against her oppressors; but, in regard to the ten thousand wrongs of the American slave, you would enforce the strictest silence, and would hail him as an enemy of the nation who dares to make those wrongs the subject of public discourse! You are all on fire at the mention of liberty for France or for Ireland; but are as cold as an iceberg at the thought of liberty for the enslaved of America.—You discourse eloquently on the dignity of labor; yet, you sustain a system which, in its very essence, casts a stigma upon labor. You can bare your bosom to the

¹¹⁵ *Isaiah 1:13.*

¹¹⁶ *Albert Barnes (1798–1870), an American theologian and Presbyterian minister.*

storm of British artillery to throw off a three-penny tax on tea; and yet wring the last hard earned farthing from the grasp of the black laborers of your country. You profess to believe "that, of one blood, God made all nations of men to dwell on the face of all the earth," and hath commanded all men, everywhere to love one another; yet you notoriously hate, (and glory in your hatred), all men whose skins are not colored like your own. You declare, before the world, and are understood by the world to declare, that you "*hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal; and are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; and that, among these are, life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness;*" and yet, you hold securely, in a bondage which, according to your own Thomas Jefferson, "*is worse than ages of that which your fathers rose in rebellion to oppose,*" a seventh part of the inhabitants of your country.

Fellow-citizens! I will not enlarge further on your national inconsistencies. The existence of slavery in this country brands your republicanism as a sham, your humanity as a base pretence, and your Christianity as a lie. It destroys your moral power abroad; it corrupts your politicians at home. It saps the foundation of religion; it makes your name a hissing, and a by-word to a mocking earth. It is the antagonistic force in your government, the only thing that seriously disturbs and endangers your union. It fetters your progress; it is the enemy of improvement, the deadly foe of education; it fosters pride; it breeds insolence; it promotes vice; it shelters crime; it is a curse to the earth that supports it; and yet, you cling to it, as if it were the sheet anchor of all your hopes. Oh! be warned! be warned! a horrible reptile is coiled up in your nation's bosom; the venomous creature is nursing at the tender breast of your youthful republic; *for the love of God, tear away*, and fling from you the hideous monster, and *let the weight of twenty millions crush and destroy it forever!*

THE CONSTITUTION.

But it is answered in reply to all this, that precisely what I have now denounced is, in fact, guaranteed and sanctioned by the Constitution of the United States; that the right to hold and to hunt slaves is a part of that Constitution framed by the illustrious Fathers of this Republic.

Then, I dare to affirm, notwithstanding all I have said before, your fathers stooped, basely stooped

"To palter with us in a double sense:
And keep the word of promise to the ear,
But break it to the heart."¹¹⁷

And instead of being the honest men I have before declared them to be, they were the veriest imposters that ever practiced on mankind. *This* is the inevitable conclusion, and from it there is no escape, but I differ from those who charge this baseness on the framers of the Constitution of the United States. *It is a slander upon their memory*, at least, so I believe. There is not time now to argue the constitutional question at length; nor have I

¹¹⁷ William Shakespeare, Macbeth, Act 5, Scene 8.

the ability to discuss it as it ought to be discussed. The subject has been handled with masterly power by Lysander Spooner, Esq., by William Goodell, by Samuel E. Sewall, Esq., and last, though not least, by Gerritt Smith, Esq. These gentlemen have, as I think, fully and clearly vindicated the Constitution from any design to support slavery for an hour.

Fellow-citizens! there is no matter in respect to which, the people of the North have allowed themselves to be so ruinously imposed upon, as that of the pro-slavery character of the Constitution. In *that* instrument I hold there is neither warrant, license, nor sanction of the hateful thing; but, interpreted as it *ought* to be interpreted, the Constitution is a GLORIOUS LIBERTY DOCUMENT. Read its preamble, consider its purposes. Is slavery among them? Is it at the gateway? or is it in the temple? It is neither. While I do not intend to argue this question on the present occasion, let me ask, if it be not somewhat singular that, if the Constitution were intended to be, by its framers and adopters, a slaveholding instrument, why neither *slavery*, *slaveholding*, nor *slave* can anywhere be found in it. What would be thought of an instrument, drawn up, *legally* drawn up, for the purpose of entitling the city of Rochester to a track of land, in which no mention of land was made? Now, there are certain rules of interpretation, for the proper understanding of all legal instruments. These rules are well established. They are plain, common-sense rules, such as you and I, and all of us, can understand and apply, without having passed years in the study of law. I scout the idea that the question of the constitutionality or unconstitutionality of slavery is not a question for the people. I hold that every American citizen has a right to form an opinion of the constitution, and to propagate that opinion, and to use all honorable means to make his opinion the prevailing one. Without this fight, the liberty of an American citizen would be as insecure as that of a Frenchman. Ex-Vice-President Dallas¹¹⁸ tells us that the constitution is an object to which no American mind can be too attentive, and no American heart too devoted. He further says, the constitution, in its words, is plain and intelligible, and is meant for the home-bred, unsophisticated understandings of our fellow-citizens. Senator Berrien tell us that the Constitution is the fundamental law, that which controls all others. The charter of our liberties, which every citizen has a personal interest in understanding thoroughly. The testimony of Senator Breese, Lewis Cass, and many others that might be named, who are everywhere esteemed as sound lawyers, so regard the constitution. I take it, therefore, that it is not presumption in a private citizen to form an opinion of that instrument.

Now, take the constitution according to its plain reading, and I defy the presentation of a single pro-slavery clause in it. On the other hand it will be found to contain principles and purposes, entirely hostile to the existence of slavery.

I have detained my audience entirely too long already. At some future period I will gladly avail myself of an opportunity to give this subject a full and fair discussion.

Allow me to say, in conclusion, notwithstanding the dark picture I have this day presented of the state of the nation, I do not despair of this country. There are forces in

¹¹⁸ *George Mifflin Dallas (1792–1864), 11th Vice President of the United States (1845–1849), serving under President James K. Polk.*

operation, which must inevitably work the downfall of slavery. "*The arm of the Lord is not shortened,*" and the doom of slavery is certain. I, therefore, leave off where I began, with *hope*. While drawing encouragement from the Declaration of Independence, the great principles it contains, and the genius of American Institutions, my spirit is also cheered by the obvious tendencies of the age. Nations do not now stand in the same relation to each other that they did ages ago. No nation can now shut itself up from the surrounding world, and trot round in the same old path of its fathers without interference. The time *was* when such could be done. Long established customs of hurtful character could formerly fence themselves in, and do their evil work with social impunity. Knowledge was then confined and enjoyed by the privileged few, and the multitude walked on in mental darkness. But a change has now come over the affairs of mankind. Walled cities and empires have become unfashionable. The arm of commerce has borne away the gates of the strong city. Intelligence is penetrating the darkest corners of the globe. It makes its pathway over and under the sea, as well as on the earth. Wind, steam, and lightning are its chartered agents. Oceans no longer divide, but link nations together. From Boston to London is now a holiday excursion. Space is comparatively annihilated—Thoughts expressed on one side of the Atlantic are, distinctly heard on the other.

The far off and almost fabulous Pacific rolls in grandeur at our feet. The Celestial Empire, the mystery of ages, is being solved. The fiat of the Almighty, "*Let there be Light,*" has not yet spent its force. No abuse, no outrage whether in taste, sport or avarice, can now hide itself from the all-pervading light. The iron shoe, and crippled foot of China must be seen, in contrast with nature. *Afric must rise and put on her yet unwoven garment. "Ethiopia shall stretch out her hand unto God."*¹¹⁹ In the fervent aspirations of William Lloyd Garrison, I say, and let every heart join in saying it:¹²⁰

God speed the year of jubilee
The wide world o'er!
When from their galling chains set free,
Th' oppress'd shall vilely bend the knee,
And wear the yoke of tyranny
Like brutes no more.
That year will come, and freedom's reign,
To man his plundered rights again
Restore.

God speed the day when human blood
Shall cease to flow!
In every clime be understood,
The claims of human brotherhood,
And each return for evil, good,
Not blow for blow;
That day will come all feuds to end.

¹¹⁹ *Psalm 68:31.*

¹²⁰ "*God Speed the Year of Jubilee.*"

And change into a faithful friend
Each foe.

God speed the hour, the glorious hour,
When none on earth
Shall exercise a lordly power,
Nor in a tyrant's presence cower;
But all to manhood's stature tower,
By equal birth!
THAT HOUR WILL COME, to each, to all,
And from his prison-house, the thrall
Go forth.

Until that year, day, hour, arrive,
With head, and heart, and hand I'll strive,
To break the rod, and rend the gyre,
The spoiler of his prey deprive—
So witness Heaven!
And never from my chosen post,
Whate'er the peril or the cost,
Be driven.

Freedom's Plow

LANGSTON HUGHES

The Union victory in the Civil War and the Civil War amendments to the Constitution permanently ended slavery in the United States. But the vindication of the idea of human equality and the achievement of civil rights for all Americans remained an unrealized goal for more than the next hundred years. In the face of state-sponsored racial segregation and discrimination, the denial of the franchise, and brutal violence against Negro citizens, especially in the South, it was difficult to preserve hope that the American dream was more than a mirage. This poem (written in 1943) by American poet, playwright, and novelist Langston Hughes (1902–67) speaks directly to this problem.

What is the dream that is “first in the heart,” and later becomes “a community dream . . . our dream”? Why does Hughes emphasize the work of the plow? What, according to the poem, is the connection between labor and freedom? Why does Hughes quote the Declaration of Independence, and refer to the words of Jefferson, Lincoln, and Douglass? Hughes calls for national—or is it universal human?—unity and harmony: “FREEDOM! BROTHERHOOD! DEMOCRACY!” How are these goals—and in particular, BROTHERHOOD—related to the individual rights spoken of in the Declaration of Independence? What would it mean for “all races and all people” to know the shade of the freedom tree? (Is freedom like shade?) What is the meaning of the poem’s title—and what is “freedom’s plow”? Why, and in what spirit, does Hughes invoke the old gospel song, “Keep Your Hand on the Plow! Hold On!”?

When a man starts out with nothing,
When a man starts out with his hands
Empty, but clean,
When a man starts to build a world,
He starts first with himself
And the faith that is in his heart—
The strength there,
The will there to build.

Read the poem at <http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/freedom-s-plow/>.

Gettysburg Address

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

The creed of the American Republic, as enunciated in the Declaration of Independence, begins with the claim, offered as a self-evident truth, that “all men are created equal.” Yet our embrace of the principle was long embarrassed in practice by the existence of chattel slavery, present at the Founding, but greatly increased through the first half of the 19th century. Critics of the Declaration openly called human equality “a self-evident lie,” and the infamous Dred Scott decision (1857) gave voice to a racist and exclusionary interpretation of the Declaration, insisting that its “all men” referred only to “all white men” who were the equals of British subjects living in Britain. No one did more to oppose this (mis)interpretation than our 16th president, Abraham Lincoln, who famously claimed that he had “never had a feeling politically that did not spring from the sentiments embodied in the Declaration of Independence.”¹²¹ Lincoln’s most famous defense of equality appears in the Gettysburg Address, delivered on November 19, 1863, in the midst of a civil war whose deepest cause was the institution of slavery. Here Lincoln revisits the Declaration of Independence, summoning the nation to achieve a “new birth of freedom” through renewed dedication to the founding proposition of human equality.

How does Lincoln understand the key terms of the creed, and in particular, the relation between equality and freedom? What is the difference between “holding” equality as a “self-evident truth” and regarding it as a “proposition” to which we are dedicated? What is the difference between the “new birth of freedom,” coming from the bloody war, and the original birth of the nation, “conceived in liberty”? How, according to Lincoln, can the war lead to a more perfect Union? What do you think is the meaning of equality today, and how is it related to freedom? How fares the idea and practice of “government of the people, by the people, for the people” in the United States today? How can we tell whether the Union today is being perfected or the reverse?

¹²¹ See his “Speech at Independence Hall,” referenced earlier. Throughout his career, Lincoln offered numerous statements about the meaning of the Declaration, calling it “the father of all moral principle” in each subsequent generation of Americans and “the sheet anchor of republicanism.” In his speech on the Dred Scott decision, he sought to vindicate the inclusiveness of the Declaration’s assertion of human equality:

I think the authors of that notable instrument intended to include all men, but they did not intend to declare all men equal in all respects. They did not mean to say all were equal in color, size, intellect, moral developments, or social capacity. They defined with tolerable distinctness, in what respects they did consider all men created equal—equal in “certain inalienable rights, among which are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” This they said, and this they meant. They did not mean to assert the obvious untruth, that all were then actually enjoying that equality, nor yet, that they were about to confer it immediately upon them. In fact they had no power to confer such a boon. They meant simply to declare the right, so that the enforcement of it might follow as fast as circumstances should permit. They meant to set up a standard maxim for free society, which should be familiar to all, and revered by all; constantly looked to, constantly labored for, and even though never perfectly attained, constantly approximated, and thereby constantly spreading and deepening its influence, and augmenting the happiness and value of life to all people of all colors everywhere.

After you have read the Gettysburg Address and pondered these questions, you may want to read the analysis of the speech (“The Gettysburg Address: Abraham Lincoln’s Re-founding of the Nation”) by Leon R. Kass (b. 1939), coeditor of What So Proudly We Hail, in the appendix.

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battle-field of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

But, in a larger sense, we can not dedicate—we can not consecrate—we can not hallow—this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

The American Dream

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

The pursuit of a more perfect Union, with liberty and justice for all its citizens, remains unfinished business. Despite the abolition of slavery after the Civil War, black Americans were systematically denied their civil rights, especially, but not only, in the South, under conditions of racial segregation and discrimination. At the center of the ultimately successful Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s was the charismatic Baptist minister, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (1929–68), whose courageous and inspiring leadership our nation has memorialized by a national holiday in honor of his birthday and a monument on the National Mall.¹²² The present selection is taken from a sermon King gave at his Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta on July 4, 1965, almost two years after he led the March on Washington, which galvanized support for ending legal segregation and passing the Civil Rights Act in 1964. In the sermon, King speaks at length about the Declaration of Independence, whose said-to-be self-evident truths he calls the American dream.

What is the difference between calling human equality or unalienable rights “self-evident truths” and calling them “a [great] dream”? What connection does King make between the Declaration’s idea of human equality and the biblical teachings of love and brotherhood? In the Declaration, the failure of government to secure our natural or God-given rights becomes the basis for (rightful) revolution and the establishment of a new political order. Why does King not follow the Declaration’s conclusion, but instead summons blacks to work “within the system,” to practice nonviolence, and to love their tormentors? Is he right in treating poverty as a violation of the Declaration’s American “dream”? Is King right in suggesting that the dignity of work is not marked by the income that it brings? What does King mean by saying, “God somehow called America to do a special job for mankind and the world”? King looks forward to a day when “we will become one big family of Americans,” not “hyphenated-Americans” but “just Americans”? Are we making progress toward that day? Is it, for you, an attractive dream?

I planned to use for the textual basis for our thinking together that passage from the prologue of the book of Job where Satan is pictured as asking God, “Does Job serve thee for nought?” And I’d like to ask you to allow me to hold that sermon in abeyance and preach it the next time I am in the pulpit in order to share with you some other ideas. This morning I was riding to the airport in Washington, DC, and on the way to the airport the limousine passed by the Jefferson monument, and Reverend Andrew Young, my executive assistant, said to me, “It’s quite coincidental that we would be passing by the Jefferson Monument on Independence Day.” You can get so busy in life that you forget holidays and other days, and it had slipped my mind altogether that today was the Fourth

¹²² Learn more about the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday with our ebook available at www.whatsoproudlywehail.org/curriculum/the-american-calendar/the-meaning-of-martin-luther-king-jr-day.

of July. And I said to him, "It is coincidental and quite significant, and I think when I get to Atlanta and go to my pulpit, I will try to preach a sermon in the spirit of the founding fathers of our nation and in the spirit of the Declaration of Independence." And so this morning I would like to use as a subject from which to preach: "The American Dream."

Read the speech at http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/documentsentry/doc_the_american_dream/.

The Declaration of Sentiments

ELIZABETH CADY STANTON AND LUCRETIA MOTT

Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815–1902) and Lucretia Mott (1793–1880), American activists for the abolition of slavery and early activists for women’s rights, convened the first major conference on women’s issues in Seneca Falls, New York in 1848. The Declaration of Sentiments (also known as the Declaration of Rights and Sentiments), written by Stanton and Mott, was presented at the Seneca Falls convention, where it was signed by 68 women and 32 men. Modeled on the structure and language of the Declaration of Independence, it seeks to prove, from the “history of repeated injuries and usurpations on the part of man toward woman,” that man has “in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over her.” Addressed, like the Declaration of Independence, to a “candid world,” it submits 15 facts to support this conclusion.

Comparing the original Declaration with this one, do you think Stanton and Mott were wise to use the first as their model? What is the difference between a Declaration of Independence and a Declaration of Sentiments, and what difference—if any—should such a difference make? The Declaration of Independence opens by speaking about the political right of a people to “assume among the powers of the earth, the Separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature’s God entitle them.” What is the comparable opening claim in the Declaration of Sentiments? To what exactly are women (as women, not as human beings) entitled by “the Laws of Nature and of Nature’s God”? The paragraph about the self-evident truths of the Declaration of Independence issues in a defense of the right (and duty) of political revolution. What is the conclusion of the comparable paragraph of the Declaration of Sentiments?

The first of the 15 grievances listed against man is the denial of woman’s “inalienable right to the elective franchise.” Why is this mentioned first? How does it inform or ground the other grievances? Is the right to vote an “inalienable right,” on a par with the Creator-endowed rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness? How are the personal, social, and cultural grievances listed related to the religious grievances? Are all of these things necessarily connected? How important is the right to vote to you, and why? What sort of equality between women and men is crucial to the perfecting of our union?

When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one portion of the family of man to assume among the people of the earth a position different from that which they have hitherto occupied, but one to which the laws of nature and of nature’s God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes that impel them to such a course.

We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these rights governments are instituted, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. Whenever any

form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of those who suffer from it to refuse allegiance to it, and to insist upon the institution of a new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shown that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their duty to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security. Such has been the patient sufferance of the women under this government, and such is now the necessity which constrains them to demand the equal station, to which they are entitled.

The history of mankind is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations on the part of man toward woman, having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over her. To prove this, let facts be submitted to a candid world.

He has never permitted her to exercise her inalienable right to the elective franchise.

He has compelled her to submit to laws, in the formation of which she had no voice.

He has withheld from her rights which are given to the most ignorant and degraded men—both natives and foreigners.

Having deprived her of this first right of a citizen, the elective franchise, thereby leaving her without representation in the halls of legislation, he has oppressed her on all sides.

He has made her, if married, in the eye of the law, civilly dead.

He has taken from her all right in property, even to the wages she earns.

He has made her, morally, an irresponsible being, as she can commit many crimes with impunity, provided they be done in the presence of her husband. In the covenant of marriage, she is compelled to promise obedience to her husband, he becoming, to all intents and purposes, her master—the law giving him power to deprive her of her liberty, and to administer chastisement.

He has so framed the laws of divorce, as to what shall be the proper causes, and in case of separation, to whom the guardianship of the children shall be given, as to be wholly regardless of the happiness of women—the law, in all cases, going upon a false supposition of the supremacy of man, and giving all power into his hands.

After depriving her of all rights as a married woman, if single, and the owner of property, he has taxed her to support a government which recognizes her only when her property can be made profitable to it.

He has monopolized nearly all the profitable employments, and from those she is permitted to follow, she receives but a scanty remuneration.

He closes against her all the avenues to wealth and distinction which he considers most honorable to himself. As a teacher of Theology, Medicine, or Law, she is not known.

He has denied her the facilities for obtaining a thorough education—all colleges being closed against her.

He allows her in church as well as State, but a subordinate position, claiming Apostolic authority for her exclusion from the ministry, and with some exceptions, from any public participation in the affairs of the Church.

He has created a false public sentiment, by giving to the world a different code of morals for man and woman, by which moral delinquencies which exclude women from society, are not only tolerated, but deemed of little account in man.

He has usurped the prerogative of Jehovah himself, claiming it as his right to assign for her a sphere of action, when that belongs to her conscience and to her God.

He has endeavored, in every way that he could, to destroy her confidence in her own powers, to lessen her self-respect, and to make her willing to lead a dependent and abject life.

Now, in view of this entire disfranchisement of one-half the people of this country, their social and religious degradation—in view of the unjust laws above mentioned, and because women do feel themselves aggrieved, oppressed, and fraudulently deprived of their most sacred rights, we insist that they have immediate admission to all the rights and privileges which belong to them as citizens of these United States.

In entering upon the great work before us, we anticipate no small amount of misconception, misrepresentation, and ridicule; but we shall use every instrumentality within our power to effect our object. We shall employ agents, circulate tracts, petition the State and national Legislatures, and endeavor to enlist the pulpit and the press in our behalf. We hope this Convention will be followed by a series of Conventions, embracing every part of the country.

Firmly relying upon the final triumph of the Right and the True, we do this day affix our signatures to this declaration.

The Fundamental Principle of a Republic

ANNA HOWARD SHAW

Attaining civil rights for women was a long and arduous struggle. It took more than 70 years from the Declaration of Sentiments to the ratification, in 1920, of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution, which granted all women the right to vote. (Several western states had allowed woman suffrage before the turn of the 20th century.) The English-born but American-reared physician and (the first American female) Methodist minister, Anna Howard Shaw (1847–1919), was a leader in the campaign for woman suffrage. She served for 11 years as president of the National American Woman Suffrage Association, resigning in 1915 only because the organization chose to take a more militant approach than Shaw could support. On June 15, 1915, with a referendum to grant women the vote in New York State on the upcoming November ballot, Shaw gave this speech (excerpted) at a rally in Ogdenburg, New York, at the City Opera House. The 1915 referendum failed, but in 1917, New York became one of the first eastern states to give women the vote.

Shaw's main argument seems to be that denying the vote to women is incompatible with the fundamental idea of a republic. What then, according to Shaw, makes a republic a republic? And why, on this account of a republic, cannot women in a republic be denied the suffrage? How convincing do you find her arguments, on both of these points? Shaw uses God's speech in Genesis (2:18)—"It is not good for the man to be alone" [Shaw says "to stand alone"]—in support of equal suffrage for woman. Does the biblical provision of companionship necessarily imply political equality? (See also Genesis 3:16) Shaw says in several places that her male opponents refuse to consider the issue on its merits, choosing instead to change the subject to other topics about men and women. Is she right in implying that there were no reasonable arguments on the other side? If so, why do you think it took so long before Shaw's ideas were successful?

When I came into your hall tonight, I thought of the last time I was in your city. Twenty-one years ago I came here with Susan B. Anthony, and we came for exactly the same purpose as that for which we are here tonight. Boys have been born since that time and have become voters, and the women are still trying to persuade American men to believe in the fundamental principles of democracy, and I never quite feel as if it was a fair field to argue this question with men, because in doing it you have to assume that a man who professes to believe in a Republican form of government does not believe in a Republican form of government, for the only thing that woman's enfranchisement means at all is that a government which claims to be a Republic should be a Republic, and not an aristocracy.

The difficulty with discussing this question with those who oppose us is that they make any number of arguments but none of them have anything to do with Woman's Suffrage; they always have something to do with something else, therefore the arguments which we have to make rarely ever have anything to do with the subject, because we have

to answer our opponents who always escape the subject as far as possible in order to have any sort of reason in connection with what they say.

Now one of two things is true: either a Republic is a desirable form of government, or else it is not. If it is, then we should have it, if it is not then we ought not to pretend that we have it. We ought at least be true to our ideals, and the men of New York have for the first time in their lives, the rare opportunity on the second day of next November, of making the state truly a part of the Republic. It is the greatest opportunity which has ever come to the men of the state. They have never had so serious a problem to solve before, they will never have a more serious problem to solve in any future of our nation's life, and the thing that disturbs me more than anything else in connection with it is that so few people realize what a profound problem they have to solve on November 2. It is not merely a trifling matter; it is not a little thing that does not concern the state, it is the most vital problem we could have, and any man who goes to the polls on the second day of next November without thoroughly informing himself in regard to this subject is unworthy to be a citizen of this state, and unfit to cast a ballot.

If woman's suffrage is wrong, it is a great wrong; if it is right, it is a profound and fundamental principle, and we all know, if we know what a Republic is, that it is the fundamental principle upon which a Republic must rise. Let us see where we are as a people; how we act here and what we think we are. The difficulty with the men of this country is that they are so consistent in their inconsistency that they are not aware of having been inconsistent; because their consistency has been so continuous and their inconsistency so consecutive that it has never been broken, from the beginning of our Nation's life to the present time.

If we trace our history back we will find that from the very dawn of our existence as a people, men have been imbued with a spirit and a vision more lofty than they have been able to live; they have been led by visions of the sublimest truth, both in regard to religion and in regard to government that ever inspired the souls of men from the time the Puritans left the old world to come to this country, led by the Divine ideal which is the sublimest and the supremest ideal in religious freedom which men have ever known, the theory that a man has a right to worship God according to the dictates of his own conscience, without the intervention of any other man or any other group of men. And it was this theory, this vision of the right of the human soul which led men first to the shores of this country. . . .

Never in the history of the world did it dawn upon the human mind as it dawned upon your ancestors, what it would mean for men to be free. They got the vision of a government in which the people would be the supreme power, and so inspired by this vision men wrote such documents as were sent from the Massachusetts legislature, from the New York legislature and from the Pennsylvania group over to the Parliament of Great Britain, which rang with the profoundest measures of freedom and justice. They did not equivocate in a single word when they wrote the Declaration of Independence; no one can dream that these men had not got the sublimest ideal of democracy which had ever dawned upon the souls of men. But as soon as the war was over and our government

was formed, instead of asking the question, who shall be the governing force in this great new Republic, when they brought those thirteen little territories together, they began to eliminate instead of include the men who should be the great governing forces, and they said, who shall have the voice in this great new Republic, and you would have supposed that such men as fought the Revolutionary War would have been able to answer that every man who has fought, everyone who has given up all he has and all he has been able to accumulate shall be free, it never entered their minds.

These excellent ancestors of yours had not been away from the old world long enough to realize that man is of more value than his purse, so they said every man who has an estate in the government shall have a voice; and they said what shall that estate be? And they answered that a man who had property valued at two hundred and fifty dollars will be able to cast a vote, and so they sang "The land of the free and the home of the brave." And they wrote into their Constitution, "All males who pay taxes on \$250 shall cast a vote," and they called themselves a Republic, and we call ourselves a Republic, and they were not quite so much of a Republic that we should be called a Republic yet. We might call ourselves angels, but that wouldn't make us angels, you have got to be an angel before you are an angel, and you have got to be a Republic before you are a Republic. Now what did we do? Before the word "male" in the local compacts, they wrote the word "Church-members"; and they wrote in the word "taxpayer."

Then there arose a great Democrat, Thomas Jefferson, who looked down into the day when you and I are living and saw that the rapidly accumulated wealth in the hands of a few men would endanger the liberties of the people, and he knew what you and I know, that no power under heaven or among men is known in a Republic by which men can defend their liberties except by the power of the ballot, and so the Democratic party took another step in the evolution of the Republic out of a monarchy and they rubbed out the word "taxpayer" and wrote in the word "white," and then the Democrats thought the millennium had come, and they sang "The land of the free and the home of the brave" as lustily as the Republicans had sung it before them and spoke of the divine right of motherhood with the same thrill in their voices and at the same time they were selling mothers' babies by the pound on the auction block—and mothers apart from their babies.

Another arose who said a man is not a good citizen because he is white, he is a good citizen because he is a man, and the Republican party took out that progressive evolutionary eraser and rubbed out the word "white" from before the word "male" and could not think of another word to put in there—they were all in, black and white, rich and poor, wise and otherwise, drunk and sober; not a man left out to be put in, and so the Republicans could not write anything before the word "male," and they had to let the little word, "male" stay alone by itself.

And God said in the beginning, "It is not good for man to stand alone." That is why we are here tonight, and that is all that woman's suffrage means; just to repeat again and again that first declaration of the Divine, "It is not good for man to stand alone," and so the women of this state are asking that the word "male" shall be stricken out of the Constitution altogether and that the Constitution stand as it ought to have stood in the

beginning and as it must before this state is any part of a Republic. Every citizen possessing the necessary qualifications shall be entitled to cast one vote at every election, and have that vote counted. We are not asking as our Anti-Suffrage friends think we are, for any of awful things that we hear will happen if we are allowed to vote; we are simply asking that that government which professes to be a Republic shall be a Republic and not pretend to be what it is not.

Now what is a Republic? Take your dictionary, encyclopedia lexicon or anything else you like and look up the definition and you will find that a Republic is a form of government in which the laws are enacted by representatives elected by the people. Now when did the people of New York ever elect their own representatives? Never in the world. The men of New York have, and I grant you that men are people, admirable people, as far as they go, but they only go half way. There is still another half of the people who have not elected representatives, and you never read a definition of a Republic in which half of the people elect representatives to govern the whole of the people. That is an aristocracy and that is just what we are. We have been many kinds of aristocracies. We have been a hierarchy of church members, then an oligarchy of sex. . . .

Now I want to make this proposition, and I believe every man will accept it. Of course he will if he is intelligent. Whenever a Republic prescribes the qualifications as applying equally to all the citizens of the Republic, when the Republic says in order to vote, a citizen must be twenty-one years of age, it applies to all alike, there is no discrimination against any race or sex. When the government says that a citizen must be a native-born citizen or a naturalized citizen that applies to all; we are either born or naturalized, somehow or other we are here. Whenever the government says that a citizen, in order to vote, must be a resident of a community a certain length of time, and of the state a certain length of time and of the nation a certain length of time, that applies to all equally. There is no discrimination. . . .

But when the government says not only that you must be twenty-one years of age, a resident of the community and native born or naturalized, those are qualifications, but when it says that an elector must be a male, that is not a qualification for citizenship; that is an insurmountable barrier between one half of the people and the other half of the citizens and their rights as citizens. No such nation can call itself a Republic. It is only an aristocracy. That barrier must be removed before the government can become a Republic, and that is exactly what we are asking right now, that the last step in the evolutionary process be taken on November 2d. and that this great state of New York shall become in fact as it is in theory, a part of a government of the people, by the people, and for the people.

Men know the inconsistencies themselves; they realize it in one way while they do not realize it in another, because you never heard a man make a political speech when he did not speak of this country as a whole as though the thing existed which does not exist and that is that the people were equally free, because you hear them declare over and over again on the Fourth of July "under God the people rule." They know it is not true, but they say it with a great hurrah, and they repeat over and over again that clause from the

Declaration of Independence. "Governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed," and they see how they can prevent half of us from giving our consent to anything, and then they give it to us on the Fourth of July in two languages, so if it is not true in one it will be in the other, "*vox populi, vox Dei.*" "The voice of the people is the voice of God," and the orator forgets that in the people's voice there is a soprano as well as a bass.

If the voice of the people is the voice of God, how are we ever going to know what God's voice is when we are content to listen to a bass solo? Now if it is true that the voice of the people is the voice of God, we will never know what the Deity's voice in government is until the bass and soprano are mingled together, the result of which will be the divine harmony. Take any of the magnificent appeals for freedom, which men make, and rob them of their universal application and you take the very life and soul out of them. . . .

Now men are usually very fair to each other. I think the average man recognizes that he has no more right to anything at the hands of the government than has every other man. He has no right at all to anything to which every other man has not an equal right with himself. He says, "Why have I a right to certain things in the government; why have I a right to life and liberty; why have I a right to this or this?" Does he say, "Because I am a man?" Not at all, because I am human, and being human I have a right to everything which belongs to humanity, and every right which any other human being has, I have. And then he says of his neighbor, and my neighbor he also is human, therefore every right which belongs to me as a human being, belongs to him as a human being, and I have no right to anything under the government to which he is not equally entitled. . . .

We have our theories, our beliefs, but as suffragists we have but one belief, but one principle, but one theory and that is the right of a human being to have a voice in the government, under which he or she lives, on that we agree, if on nothing else. Whether we agree or not on religion or politics we are concerned. . . . We had no concern either as to what we believe as religionists or as to what we believe as women in regard to theories of government, except that one fundamental theory in the right of democracy. We do not believe in this fad or the other, but whenever any question is to be settled in any community, then the people of that community shall settle that question, the women people equally with the men people. That is all there is to it, and yet when it comes to arguing our case they bring up all sorts of arguments, and the beauty of it is they always answer all their own arguments. They never make an argument, but they answer it. . . .

Now what does it matter whether the women will vote as their husbands do or will not vote; whether they have time or have not; or whether they will vote for prohibition or not. What has that to do with the fundamental question of democracy, no one has yet discovered. But they cannot argue on that; they cannot argue on the fundamental basis of our existence so that they have to get off on all of these side tracks to get anything approaching an argument. So they tell you that democracy is a form of government. It is not. It was before governments were; it will prevail when governments cease to be; it is more than a form of government; it is a great spiritual force emanating from the heart of

the Infinite, transforming human character until some day, some day in the distant future, man by the power of the spirit of democracy, will be able to look back into the face of the Infinite and answer, as man can not answer today, "One is our Father, even God, and all we people are the children of one family."

And when democracy has taken possession of human lives no man will ask from him to grant to his neighbor, whether that neighbor be a man or woman; no man will then be willing to allow another man to rise to power on his shoulders, nor will he be willing to rise to power on the shoulders of another prostrate human being. But that has not yet taken possession of us, but some day we will be free, and we are getting nearer and nearer to it all the time; and never in the history of our country had the men and women of this nation a better right to approach it than they have today; never in the history of the nation did it stand out so splendidly as it stands today . . .

Fourth of July Ode

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL

Would the attainment of equal rights for women and minorities, and also the alleviation of poverty and undeserved misfortune, be sufficient to perfect the union and to realize King's "American Dream" of freedom for all? Would the elimination of these and other external evils be sufficient to secure a healthy self-governing republic of ordered liberty, one in which the people rule wisely and well? This "Fourth of July Ode" (1876) by James Russell Lowell (1819–91), Fireside Poet, literary and social critic, Harvard professor, abolitionist, and diplomat, suggests that more would be necessary.

What kind of freedom is Lowell talking about? According to the poem, from what is this freedom liberating? And for what is it desirable? What, if any, is the connection between liberation from tyrannical rule—the liberty "Our fathers fought for"—and the internal freedom from various appetites or fears that, arguably, shackle hearts and minds? How do we get such inner freedom: how do we "ourselves . . . set us free"? Is it possible that our currently secure liberty to pursue happiness as we see fit might actually contribute to our self-enslavement? Is self-restraint and imposed order necessary for true freedom?

I.

Our fathers fought for liberty,
They struggled long and well,
History of their deeds can tell—
But did they leave us free?

II.

Are we free from vanity,
Free from pride, and free from self,
Free from love of power and pelf,
From everything that's beggarly?

III.

Are we free from stubborn will,
From low hate and malice small,
From opinion's tyrant thrall?
Are none of us our own slaves still?

IV.

Are we free to speak our thought,
To be happy, and be poor,
Free to enter Heaven's door,
To live and labor as we ought?

V.

Are we then made free at last
From the fear of what men say,
Free to reverence To-day,
Free from the slavery of the Past?

VI.

Our fathers fought for liberty,
They struggled long and well,
History of their deeds can tell—
But *ourselves* must set us free.

4



The Fourth of July:
A Holiday Celebrated and
a Promise Remembered

The Antiquity of Freedom

WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT

Thinking well about Independence Day requires thinking about freedom—where it comes from and how it is preserved. A moving invitation to such reflection is this 1842 poem by America’s first great poet William Cullen Bryant (1794–1878), lawyer, longtime editor of the New York Evening Post, translator of Homer’s Iliad and Odyssey, and political activist—Bryant was an early supporter of Abraham Lincoln, whom he introduced at New York’s Cooper Union (February 1860) for the speech that would gain Lincoln the presidential nomination. In “The Antiquity of Freedom” Bryant poetically reflects on the history of Freedom and its struggles against its inveterate enemies, Power and Tyranny.

Why does spending time in the woods, with its peaceful shades “immeasurably old,” lead Bryant to think of “the earliest days of liberty”? What was liberty like in its earliest days? What does he mean by saying (third stanza) that freedom was “not given by human hands,” but was “twin-born with man”? Why, in the second stanza, does he present Freedom as an armed warrior, rather than, say, as lady liberty? What is the relationship between Freedom and Power, and how is Freedom able to escape the chains and imprisonment by Power? What gives rise to Tyranny? What (fourth stanza) are the new forms and subtler snares of Tyranny, and why must Freedom remain forever vigilant? The final verses return to the “old and friendly solitudes” of the woods, offered as respite from “tumult and the frauds of men.” What has this natural liberty to do with the freedom celebrated on Independence Day? Is it possible, even if only in thought, to return to the glorious childhood of the human race? Was the glory of humanity’s childhood greater than that of our maturity? Is the ancient and original liberty of nature better than the hard-earned political freedom of self-government?

Here are old trees, tall oaks, and gnarled pines,
That stream with gray-green mosses; here the ground
Was never trenched by spade, and flowers spring up
Unsown, and die ungathered. It is sweet
To linger here, among the flitting birds
And leaping squirrels, wandering brooks, and winds
That shake the leaves, and scatter, as they pass,
A fragrance from the cedars, thickly set
With pale-blue berries. In these peaceful shades—
Peaceful, unpruned, immeasurably old—
My thoughts go up the long dim path of years,
Back to the earliest days of liberty.

O Freedom! thou art not, as poets dream,
A fair young girl with light and delicate limbs,
And wavy tresses gushing from the cap
With which the Roman master crowned his slave

When he took off the gyves. A bearded man,
Armed to the teeth, art thou; one mailéd hand
Grasps the broad shield, and one the sword; thy brow,
Glorious in beauty though it be, is scarred
With tokens of old wars; thy massive limbs
Are strong with struggling. Power at thee has launched
His bolts, and with his lightnings smitten thee;
They could not quench the life thou hast from heaven;
Merciless Power has dug thy dungeon deep,
And his swart armorers, by a thousand fires,
Have forged thy chain; yet, while he deems thee bound,
The links are shivered, and the prison-walls
Fall outward; terribly thou springest forth,
As springs the flame above a burning pile,
And shoutest to the nations, who return
Thy shoutings, while the pale oppressor flies.

Thy birthright was not given by human hands:
Thou wert twin-born with man. In pleasant fields,
While yet our race was few, thou sat'st with him,
To tend the quiet flock and watch the stars,
And teach the reed to utter simple airs.
Thou by his side, amid the tangled wood,
Didst war upon the panther and the wolf,
His only foes; and thou with him didst draw
The earliest furrow on the mountain-side,
Soft with the deluge. Tyranny himself,
Thy enemy, although of reverend look,
Hoary with many years, and far obeyed,
Is later born than thou; and as he meets
The grave defiance of thine elder eye,
The usurper trembles in his fastnesses.

Thou shalt wax stronger with the lapse of years,
But he shall fade into a feebler age—
Feebler, yet subtler. He shall weave his snares,
And spring them on thy careless steps, and clap
His withered hands, and from their ambush call
His hordes to fall upon thee. He shall send
Quaint maskers, wearing fair and gallant forms
To catch thy gaze, and uttering graceful words
To charm thy ear; while his sly imps, by stealth,
Twine round thee threads of steel, light thread on thread,
That grow to fetters; or bind down thy arms
With chains concealed in chaplets. Oh! not yet
Mayst thou unbrace thy corslet, nor lay by

Thy sword; nor yet, O Freedom! close thy lids
In slumber; for thine enemy never sleeps,
And thou must watch and combat till the day
Of the new earth and heaven. But wouldst thou rest
Awhile from tumult and the frauds of men,
These old and friendly solitudes invite
Thy visit. They, while yet the forest-trees
Were young upon the unviolated earth,
And yet the moss-stains on the rock were new,
Beheld thy glorious childhood, and rejoiced.

America

WALT WHITMAN

Many of our poets have celebrated America's ideals of freedom, equality, and democracy, but none have done so with greater zeal and effusiveness than Walt Whitman (1819–92). This short but dense tribute was first published in 1888 in the New York Herald, and reprinted later that year in Sands at Seventy, the annex to Whitman's Leaves of Grass.

What image does the poem use to represent America? What does Whitman mean by “centre of equal daughters, equal sons”? Who is being described—and what is meant—by “Perennial with the Earth, with Freedom, Law and Love”? Why is America called “A grand, sane, towering, seated Mother”? What is added to the portrait and meaning of America by the phrase, “Chair'd in the adamant of Time”? What does this poem celebrate about America? What aspect of America do you think we should most celebrate on its birthday?

Centre of equal daughters, equal sons,
All, all alike endear'd, grown, ungrown, young or old,
Strong, ample, fair, enduring, capable, rich,
Perennial with the Earth, with Freedom, Law and Love,
A grand, sane, towering, seated Mother,
Chair'd in the adamant of Time.

Eulogy for Adams and Jefferson

DANIEL WEBSTER

July 4, 1826, the 50th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, saw the deaths of both Thomas Jefferson—the Declaration’s chief author—and John Adams—its most effective advocate in the Continental Congress. On August 2 that year, Daniel Webster (1782–1852), the great orator, statesman, and senator from Massachusetts delivered this moving eulogy (greatly excerpted¹²³) at Faneuil Hall in Boston, a famous meeting house where Samuel Adams and others had once given speeches in favor of American independence. Webster, born just after the Revolutionary War and having living contact with many of the Founders, was able to give eloquent testimony to the hazards and uncertainties of the war and to the remarkable deeds and sacrifices of the men who gave birth to the nation.

Is Webster right in suggesting that the tears shed and the honors paid when the Founders die “give hope that the republic itself may be immortal”? Why does Webster speak of the twin deaths of Adams and Jefferson, on this special date, as a “consummation” of their illustrious lives”? What do you think of his suggestion that their “happy termination” is a gift of Providence, evidence that America itself is the object of divine care? Although, as he says, the Congress of the Revolution sat behind closed doors, Webster conjures the debate over the Declaration of Independence, emphasizing John Adams’ colossal role, ascribing to him “true eloquence.” What, according to Webster, made Adams’ eloquence “true” and compelling? Why can we trust Webster’s own oratory to be “true eloquence”? How can one distinguish the true orator from the demagogue? Who today speaks like Webster?

Toward the end of his eulogy, Webster speaks about the duties that devolve upon the living, pointing out that we can never “pay the debt which is upon us.” What, according to Webster, are our obligations to “generations past and generations to come”? Later, Webster claims that, “with America, and in America, a new era commences in human affairs.” What does he mean, and was he right? Finally, Webster concludes with the image of the American Constellation in the sky, with Adams and Jefferson joining the star that is Washington. What does—and what can—this image contribute to our national memory and national sense of purpose?

This is an unaccustomed spectacle. For the first time, fellow-citizens, badges of mourning shroud the columns and overhang the arches of this hall. These walls, which were consecrated, so long ago, to the cause of American liberty, which witnessed her infant struggles and rung with the shouts of her earliest victories, proclaim, now, that distinguished friends and champions of that great cause have fallen. It is right that it should be thus. The tears which flow, and the honors that are paid, when the Founders of the Republic die, give hope that the Republic itself may be immortal. It is fit that, by

¹²³ For the full text, see <http://captainjamesdavis.wordpress.com/2013/04/05/eulogy-of-thomas-jefferson-and-john-adams-by-daniel-webster/>.

public assembly and solemn observance, by anthem and by eulogy, we commemorate the services of national benefactors, extol their virtues, and render thanks to God for eminent blessings, early given and long continued, through their agency, to our favored country.

ADAMS and JEFFERSON are no more; and we are assembled, fellow-citizens, the aged, the middle-aged, and the young, by the spontaneous impulse of all, under the authority of the municipal government, with the presence of the chief magistrate of the Commonwealth, and others its official representatives, the University, and the learned societies, to bear our part in these manifestations of respect and gratitude which pervade the whole land. ADAMS and JEFFERSON are no more. On our fiftieth anniversary, the great day of National Jubilee, in the very hour of public rejoicing, in the midst of echoing and reechoing voices of thanksgiving, while their own names were on all tongues, they took their flight together to the world of spirits.

If it be true that no one can safely be pronounced happy while he lives, if that event which terminates life can alone crown its honors and its glory, what felicity is here! The great epic of their lives, how happily concluded! Poetry itself has hardly terminated illustrious lives, and finished the career of earthly renown, by such a consummation. If we had the power, we could not wish to reverse this dispensation of the Divine Providence. The great objects of life were accomplished, the drama was ready to be closed. It has closed; our patriots have fallen; but so fallen, at such age, with such coincidence, on such a day, that we cannot rationally lament that the end has come, which we knew could not be long deferred.

Neither of these great men, fellow-citizens, could have died, at any time, without leaving an immense void in our American society. They have been so intimately, and of so long a time, blended with the history of the country, and especially so united, in our thoughts and recollections, with the events of the Revolution, that the death of either of them would have touched the chords of public sympathy. We should have felt that one great link, connecting us with former times, was broken; that we had lost something more, as it were, of the presence of the Revolution itself, and of the act of independence, and were driven on, by another great remove from the days of our country's early distinction, to meet posterity and to mix with the future. Like the mariner, whom the currents of the ocean and the winds carry along until he sees the stars which have directed his course and lighted his pathless way descend one by one, beneath the rising horizon, we should have felt that the stream of time had borne us onward till another great luminary, whose light had cheered us and whose guidance we had followed, had sunk away from our sight.

But the concurrence of their death on the anniversary of Independence has naturally awakened stronger emotions. Both had been President, both had lived to great age, both were early patriots, and both were distinguished and ever honored by their immediate agency in the act of independence. It cannot but seem striking and extraordinary, that these two should live to see the fiftieth year from the date of that act that they should complete that year and that then, on the day which had fast linked forever their own fame with their country's glory, the heavens should open to receive them both at once. As their

lives themselves were the gifts of Providence, who is not willing to recognize in their happy termination, as well as in their long continuance, proofs that our country and its benefactors are objects of His care?

ADAMS and JEFFERSON, I have said, are no more. As human beings, indeed, they are no more. They are no more, as in 1776, bold and fearless advocates of independence; no more, as at subsequent periods, the head of the government; nor more, as we have recently seen them, aged and venerable objects of admiration and regard. They are no more. They are dead. But how little is there of the great and good which can die! To their country they yet live, and live forever. They live in all that perpetuates the remembrance of men on earth; in the recorded proofs of their own great actions, in the offspring of their intellect, in the deep-engraved lines of public gratitude, and in the respect and homage of mankind. They live in their example; and they live, emphatically, and will live, in the influence which their lives and efforts, their principles and opinions, now exercise, and will continue to exercise, on the affairs of men, not only in their own country but throughout the civilized world. A superior and commanding human intellect, a truly great man, when Heaven vouchsafes so rare a gift, is not a temporary flame, burning brightly for a while, and then giving place to returning darkness. It is rather a spark of fervent heat, as well as radiant light, with power to enkindle the common mass of human kind; so that when it glimmers in its own decay, and finally goes out in death, no night follows, but it leaves the world all light, all on fire from the potent contact of its own spirit. [Francis] Bacon died; but the human understanding, roused by the touch of his miraculous wand to a perception of the true philosophy and the just mode of inquiring after truth, has kept on its course successfully and gloriously. [Isaac] Newton died; yet the courses of the spheres are still known, and they yet move on by the laws which he discovered, and in the orbits which he saw, and described for them, in the infinity of space.

No two men now live, fellow-citizens, perhaps it may be doubted whether any two men have ever lived in one age, who, more than those we now commemorate, have impressed on mankind their own opinions more deeply into the opinions of others, or given a more lasting direction to the current of human thought. Their work doth not perish with them. The tree which they assisted to plant will flourish, although they water it and protect it no longer; for it has struck its roots deep, it has sent them to the very center; no storm, not of force to burst the orb, can overturn it; its branches spread wide; they stretch their protecting arms broader and broader, and its top is destined to reach the heavens. We are not deceived. There is no delusion here. No age will come in which the American Revolution will appear less than it is, one of the greatest events in human history. No age will come in which it shall cease to be seen and felt, on either continent, that a mighty step, a great advance, not only in American affairs, but in human affairs, was made on the 4th of July, 1776. And no age will come, we trust, so ignorant or so unjust as not to see and acknowledge the efficient agency of those we now honor in producing that momentous event.

We are not assembled, therefore, fellow-citizens, as men overwhelmed with calamity by the sudden disruption of the ties of friendship or affection, or as in despair for the

republic by the untimely blighting of its hopes. Death has not surprised us by an unseasonable blow. We have, indeed, seen the tomb close, but it has closed only over mature years, over long-protracted public service, over the weakness of age, and over life itself only when the ends of living had been fulfilled. These suns, as they rose slowly and steadily, amidst clouds and storms, in their ascendant, so they have not rushed from the meridian to sink suddenly in the west. Like the mildness, the serenity, the continuing benignity of a summer's day, they have gone down with slow-descending, grateful long-lingering light; and now that they are beyond the visible margin of the world, good omens cheer us from "the bright track of their fiery car!"

There were many points of similarity in the lives and fortunes of these great men. They belonged to the same profession, and had pursued its studies and its practice for unequal lengths of time indeed, but with diligence and effect. Both were learned and able lawyers. They were natives and inhabitants, respectively of those two of the Colonies which at the Revolution were the largest and most powerful and which naturally had a lead in the political affairs of the times. When the Colonies became in some degree united by the assembling of a general Congress, they were brought to act together in its deliberations, not indeed at the same time but both at early periods. Each had already manifested his attachment to the cause of the country, as well as his ability to maintain it, by printed addresses, public speeches, extensive correspondence, and whatever other mode could be adopted for the purpose of exposing the encroachments of the British Parliament, and animating the people to a manly resistance. Both were not only decided, but early, friends of Independence. While others yet doubted, they were resolved; where others hesitated they pressed forward. They were both members of the committee for preparing the Declaration of Independence, and they constituted the sub-committee appointed by the other members to make the draft. They left their seats in Congress, being called to other public employments at periods not remote from each other, although one of them returned to it afterwards for a short time. Neither of them was of the assembly of great men which formed the present Constitution, and neither was at any time a member of Congress under its provisions. Both have been public ministers abroad, both vice presidents and both presidents. These coincidences are now singularly crowned and completed. They have died together; and they did on the anniversary of liberty. . . .

And now, fellow-citizens, without pursuing the biography of these illustrious men further, for the present let us turn our attention to the most prominent act of their lives, their participation in the DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE. . . .

It has sometimes been said, as if it were a derogation from the merits of this paper, that it contains nothing new; that it only states grounds of proceeding and presses topics of argument, which had often been stated and pressed before. But it was not the object of the Declaration to produce anything new. It was not to invent reasons for independence, but to state those which governed the Congress. For great and sufficient causes, it was proposed to declare independence; and the proper business of the paper to be drawn was to set forth those causes, and justify the authors of the measure, in any event of fortune, to the country and to posterity. The cause of American independence, moreover, was now to be presented to the world in such manner, if it might so be, as to engage its sympathy, to

command its respect, to attract its admiration; and in an assembly of most able and distinguished men, THOMAS JEFFERSON had the high honor of being the selected advocate of this cause. To say that he performed his great work well, would be doing him an injustice. To say that he did excellently well, admirably well, would be inadequate and halting praise. Let us rather say, that he so discharged the duty assigned him, that all Americans may well rejoice that the work of drawing the titled deed of their liberties devolved on his hands. . . .

The Congress of the Revolution, fellow-citizens, sat with closed doors, and no report of its debates was ever made. The discussion, therefore, which accompanied this great measure, has never been preserved, except in memory and by tradition. But it is, I believe, doing no injustice to others to say, that the general opinion was, and uniformly has been, that in debate, on the side of independence, JOHN ADAMS had no equal. The great author of the Declaration himself has expressed that opinion uniformly and strongly. JOHN ADAMS, said he, in the hearing of him who has now the honor to address you, "JOHN ADAMS was our colossus on the floor. Not graceful, not elegant, not always fluent, in his public addresses, he yet came out with a power both of thought and of expression, which moved us from our seats. . . ."

The eloquence of Mr. Adams resembled his general character, and formed, indeed, a part of it. It was bold, manly, and energetic; and such the crisis required. When public bodies are to be addressed on passions excited, nothing is valuable in speech farther than as it is connected with high intellectual and moral endowments. Clearness, force, and earnestness are the qualities which produce conviction. True eloquence, indeed, does not consist in speech. It cannot be brought from far. Labor and learning may toil for it, but they will toil in vain. It must exist in the man, in the subject, and in the occasion. Affected passion, intense expression, the pomp of declamation, all may aspire to it; they cannot reach it. It comes, if it comes at all, like the outbursting of a fountain from the earth, or the bursting forth of volcanic fires, with spontaneous, original, native force. The graces taught in the schools, the costly ornaments and studied contrivances of speech, shock and disgust men, when their own lives and the fate of their wives, their children, and their country hang on the decision of the hour. Then words have lost their power, rhetoric is vain, and all elaborate oratory contemptible. Even genius itself then feels rebuked and subdued, as in the presence of higher qualities. Then patriotism is eloquent; then self-devotion is eloquent. The clear conception, outrunning the deductions of logic, the high purpose, the firm resolve, the dauntless spirit, speaking on the tongue, beaming from the eye, informing every feature, and urging the whole man onward, right onward to his object this, this is eloquence; or rather it is something greater and higher than all eloquence, it is action, noble, sublime godlike action. . . .

Let us, then, bring before us the assembly, which was about to decide a question thus big with the fate of empire. Let us open their doors and look upon their deliberations. Let us survey the anxious and care-worn countenances, let us hear the firm-toned voices, of this band of patriots.

HANCOCK presides over the solemn sitting; and one of those not yet prepared to pronounce for absolute independence is on the floor, and is urging his reasons for dissenting from the declaration.

“Let us pause! This step, once taken, cannot be retracted. This resolution, once passed, will cut off all hope of reconciliation. If success attend the arms of England, we shall then be no longer Colonies, with charters and with privileges; these will all be forfeited by this act; and we shall be in the condition of other conquered people, at the mercy of the conquerors. For ourselves, we may be ready to run the hazard; but are we ready to carry the country to that length? Is success so probable as to justify it? Where is the military, where the naval power, by which we are to resist the whole strength of the arm of England, for she will exert that strength to the utmost? Can we rely on constancy and perseverance of the people?—or will they not act as the people of other countries have acted and, wearied with a long war, submit, in the end, to a worse oppression? While we stand on our old ground, and insist on redress of grievances, we know we are right, and are not answerable for consequences. Nothing, then, can be imputed to us. But if we now change our object, carry our pretensions farther, and set up for absolute independence, we shall lose the sympathy of mankind. We shall no longer be defending what we possess, but struggling for something which we never did possess, and which we have solemnly and uniformly disclaimed all intention of pursuing, from the very outset of the troubles. Abandoning thus our old ground, of resistance only to arbitrary acts of oppression, the nations will believe the whole to have been mere pretense, and they will look on us, not as injured, but as ambitious subjects. I shudder before this responsibility. It will be on us, if, relinquishing the ground on which we have stood so long, and stood so safely, we now proclaim independence, and carry on the war for that object, while these cities burn, these pleasant fields whiten and bleach with the bones of their owners, and these streams run blood. It will be upon us, it will be upon us, if, failing to maintain this unseasonable and ill-judged declaration, a sterner despotism, maintained by military power, shall be exhausted, a harassed, a misled people, shall have expiated our rashness and atoned for our presumption on the scaffold.”

It was for Mr. Adams to reply to arguments like these. We know his opinions, and we know his character. He would commence with his accustomed directness and earnestness.

“Sink or swim, live or die, survive or perish, I give my hand and my heart to this vote. It is true, indeed, that in the beginning we aimed not at independence. But there’s a Divinity which shapes our ends. The injustice of England has driven us to arms; and blinded to her own interest for our good, she has obstinately persisted, till independence is now within our grasp. We have but to reach forth to it, and it is ours. Why, then, should we defer the Declaration? Is any man so weak as now to hope for a reconciliation with England, which shall leave either safety to the country and its liberties, or safety to his own life and his own honor? Are not you, Sir, who sit in that chair, is not he, our venerable colleague near you, are you not both already the proscribed and predestined objects of punishment and of vengeance? Cut off from all hope of royal clemency, what are you, what can you be, while the power of England remains, but outlaws? If we postpone independence, do we mean to carry on, or to give up, the war? Do we mean to

submit to the measures of Parliament, Boston Port Bill and all? Do we mean to submit, and consent that we ourselves shall be ground to powder, and our country and its rights trodden down in the dust? I know we do not mean to submit. We shall never submit. Do we intend to violate that most solemn obligation ever entered into by men, that plighting, before God, of our sacred honor to Washington, when, putting forth to incur the dangers of war, as well as the political hazards of our times, we promised to adhere to him, in every extremity, with our fortunes and our lives? I know there is not a man here, who would not rather see a general conflagration sweep over the land, or an earthquake sink it, than one jot or tittle of that plighted faith fall to the ground. For myself, having, twelve months ago, in this place, moved you, that George Washington be appointed commander of the forces raised, or to be raised, for defense of American liberty, may my right hand forget her cunning, and my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I hesitate or waver in the support I give him. . . .”

And now, fellow-citizens, let us not retire from this occasion without a deep and solemn conviction of the duties which have devolved upon us. This lovely land, this glorious liberty, these benign institutions, the dear purchase of our fathers, are ours; ours to enjoy, ours to preserve, ours to transmit. Generations past and generations to come hold us responsible for this sacred trust. Our fathers, from behind, admonish us, with their anxious paternal voices; posterity calls out to us, from the bosom of the future; the world turns hither its solicitous eyes; all, conjure us to act wisely, and faithfully, in the relation which we sustain. We can never, indeed, pay the debt which is upon us; but by virtue, by morality, by religion, by the cultivation of every good principle and every good habit, we may hope to enjoy the blessing, through our day, and to leave it unimpaired to our children. Let us feel deeply how much of what we are and of what we possess we owe to this liberty, and to these institutions of government. Nature has, indeed, given us a soil which yields bounteously to the hand of industry, the mighty and fruitful ocean is before us, and the skies over our heads shed health and vigor. But what are lands, and seas, and skies, to civilized man, without society, without knowledge, without morals, without religious culture; and how can these be enjoyed, in all their extent and all their excellence, but under the protection of wise institutions and a free government? Fellow-citizens, there is not one of us, there is not one of us here present, who does not, at this moment, and at every moment, experience, in his own condition, and in the condition of those most near and dear to him, the influence and the benefits, of this liberty and these institutions. Let us then acknowledge the blessing, let us feel it deeply and powerfully, let us cherish a strong affection for it, and resolve to maintain and perpetuate it. The blood of our fathers, let it not have been shed in vain; the great hope of posterity, let it not be blasted.

The striking attitude, too, in which we stand to the world around us, a topic to which, I fear, I advert too often, and dwell on too long, cannot be altogether omitted here. Neither individuals nor nations can perform their part well, until they understand and feel its importance, and comprehend and justly appreciate all the duties belonging to it. It is not to inflate national vanity, nor to swell a light and empty feeling of self-importance, but it is that we may judge justly of our situation, and of our own duties, that I earnestly urge you upon this consideration of our position and our character among the nations of

the earth. It cannot be denied, but by those who would dispute against the sun, that with America, and in America, a new era commences in human affairs. This era is distinguished by free representative governments, by entire religious liberty, by improved systems of national intercourse, by a newly awakened and unconquerable spirit of free inquiry, and by a diffusion of knowledge through the community, such as has been before altogether unknown and unheard of. America, America, our country, fellow-citizens, our own dear and native land, is inseparably connected, fast bound up, in fortune and by fate, with these great interests. If they fall, we fall with them; if they stand, it will be because we have maintained them. Let us contemplate, then, this connection, which binds the prosperity of others to our own; and let us manfully discharge all the duties which it imposes. If we cherish the virtues and the principles of our fathers, Heaven will assist us to carry on the work of human liberty and human happiness. Auspicious omens cheer us. Great examples are before us. Our own firmament now shines brightly upon our path. WASHINGTON is in the clear, upper sky. These other stars have now joined the American Constellation; they circle round their center, and the heavens beam with new light. Beneath this illumination let us walk the course of life, and at its close devoutly commend our beloved country, the common parent of us all, to the Divine Benignity.

The Centenarian's Story

WALT WHITMAN

Appreciating well the Revolutionary War means remembering not only our famous Founders and heroes, but also the nameless men who fought and died for our independence. It also means attending to the enduring need to preserve the freedom for which the war was fought. In this poem by Walt Whitman (1819–92), an aged veteran recalls for a Civil War volunteer—and for us—General George Washington's Brooklyn campaign (and defeat) in the Revolutionary War. It was published in Drum-Taps (1865).

The poem consists of three parts. In the first, a young Civil War Union volunteer, leading the Centenarian to a hilltop in Brooklyn, reports on the drill and parade that are taking place below. In the central second part, the Centenarian conveys his memories of the rout of the Continental Army—at “this hilltop, this same ground”—during the Battle of Brooklyn Heights, August 1776. In part three (“Terminus”), the narrator of the poem, speaking for the volunteer but now “as connector, as chansonnier of a great future.”—draws out the meaning he derives from the Centenarian's story.

What is the mood and attitude of the young volunteer in part one? How does he regard the Centenarian and the sights seen below? How is the Centenarian affected by the volunteer's report and questions? In what way is the Centenarian's story responsive to the volunteer—or is it? What did he see and learn from General Washington's deeds and manner, in the face of defeat? Having heard the interchange between Centenarian and the young volunteer—“the past and the present”—why does the narrator describe the role he now takes “as connector, as chansonnier of a great future”? What has he learned—and what does he want us to learn—from the interchange and (especially) from the Centenarian's story? What might the poem suggest about the relation between the Civil War, newly raging, and the War of Independence? How do you personally—and how should we, all as citizens—regard the many hills and fields of battles long past, especially those on which the War for Independence were fought? Can we feel there the mysterious presence of past deeds and the ghosts of our long-dead benefactors? Or do we need stories such as this to make these deeds and ghosts live for us?

Volunteer of 1861–2, at Washington Park, Brooklyn, assisting the Centenarian.

Give me your hand, old Revolutionary;
The hill-top is nigh—but a few steps, (make room, gentlemen;)
Up the path you have follow'd me well, spite of your hundred and extra years;
You can walk, old man, though your eyes are almost done;
Your faculties serve you, and presently I must have them serve me.

Rest, while I tell what the crowd around us means;
On the plain below recruits are drilling and exercising;
There is the camp—one regiment departs to-morrow;

Do you hear the officers giving their orders?
Do you hear the clank of the muskets?

Why what comes over you now, old man?
Why do you tremble, and clutch my hand so convulsively?
The troops are but drilling—they are yet surrounded with smiles;
Around them at hand the well-drest friends and the women;
While splendid and warm the afternoon sun shines down;
Green the midsummer verdure, and fresh blows the dallying breeze,
O'er proud and peaceful cities and arm of the sea between.
But drill and parade are over—they march back to quarters;
Only hear that approval of hands! hear what a clapping!

As wending the crowds now part and disperse—but we, old man,
Not for nothing have I brought you hither—we must remain;
You to speak in your turn, and I to listen and tell.

The Centenarian

When I clutch'd your hand, it was not with terror;
But suddenly, pouring about me here on every side,
And below there where the boys were drilling, and up the slopes they ran,
And where tents are pitch'd, and wherever you see, south, and southeast and southwest,
Over hills, across lowlands, and in the skirts of woods,
And along the shores, in mire, (now fill'd over) came again, and suddenly raged,
As eighty-five years ago no mere parade receiv'd with applause of friends,
But a battle, which I took part in myself—ay, long ago as it is, I took part in it,
Walking then this hill-top, this same ground.

Ay, this is the ground;
My blind eyes, even as I speak, behold it re-peopled from graves:
The years recede, pavements and stately houses disappear:
Rude forts appear again, the old hoop'd guns are mounted;
I see the lines of rais'd earth stretching from river to bay;
I mark the vista of waters, I mark the uplands and slopes:
Here we lay encamp'd—it was this time in summer also.

As I talk I remember all—I remember the Declaration,
It was read here—the whole army paraded—it was read to us here;
By his staff surrounded, the General stood in the middle—he held up his unsheath'd
sword,
It glitter'd in the sun in full sight of the army.

'Twas a bold act then;
The English war-ships had just arrived—the king had sent them from over the sea;
We could watch down the lower bay where they lay at anchor,

And the transports, swarming with soldiers.

A few days more, and they landed—and then the battle.

Twenty thousand were brought against us,
A veteran force, furnish'd with good artillery.

I tell not now the whole of the battle;
But one brigade early in the forenoon order'd forward to engage the red-coats,
Of that brigade I tell, and how steadily it march'd,
And how long and well it stood, confronting death.

Who do you think that was marching steadily, sternly confronting death?
It was the brigade of the youngest men, two thousand strong,
Rais'd in Virginia and Maryland, and most of them known personally to the General.

Jauntily forward they went with quick step toward Gowanus' waters,
Till of a sudden, unlook'd for by defiles through the woods, gain'd at night,
The British advancing, wedging in from the east, fiercely playing their guns,
That brigade of the youngest was cut off, and at the enemy's mercy.

The General watch'd them from this hill;
They made repeated desperate attempts to burst their environment;
Then drew close together, very compact, their flag flying in the middle;
But O from the hills how the cannon were thinning and thinning them!

It sickens me yet, that slaughter!
I saw the moisture gather in drops on the face of the General;
I saw how he wrung his hands in anguish.

Meanwhile the British manoeuvr'd to draw us out for a pitch'd battle;
But we dared not trust the chances of a pitch'd battle.

We fought the fight in detachments;
Sallying forth we fought at several points—but in each the luck was against us;
Our foe advancing, steadily getting the best of it, push'd us back to the works on this hill;
Till we turn'd menacing, here, and then he left us.

That was the going out of the brigade of the youngest men, two thousand strong,
Few return'd—nearly all remain in Brooklyn.
That, and here, my General's first battle;
No women looking on, nor sunshine to bask in—it did not conclude with applause,
Nobody clapp'd hands here then.

But in darkness, in mist on the ground, under a chill rain,
Wearied that night we lay foil'd and sullen;

While scornfully laugh'd many an arrogant lord, off against us encamp'd,
Quite within hearing, feasting, clinking wine-glasses together over their victory.

So dull and damp and another day;
But the night of that, mist lifting, rain ceasing,
Silent as a ghost, while they thought they were sure of him, my General retreated.

I saw him at the river-side,
Down by the ferry, lit by torches, hastening the embarkation;
My General waited till the soldiers and wounded were all pass'd over;
And then, (it was just ere sunrise,) these eyes rested on him for the last time.

Every one else seem'd fill'd with gloom;
Many no doubt thought of capitulation.

But when my General pass'd me,
As he stood in his boat and look'd toward the coming sun,
I saw something different from capitulation.

Terminus

Enough—the Centenarian's story ends;
The two, the past and present, have interchanged;
I myself as connector, as chansonnier¹²⁴ of a great future, am now speaking.

And is this the ground Washington trod?
And these waters I listlessly daily cross, are these the waters he cross'd,
As resolute in defeat, as other generals in their proudest triumphs?

It is well—a lesson like that, always comes good;
I must copy the story, and send it eastward and westward;
I must preserve that look, as it beam'd on you, rivers of Brooklyn.

See! as the annual round returns the phantoms return;
It is the 27th of August, and the British have landed;
The battle begins, and goes against us—behold! through the smoke Washington's face;
The brigade of Virginia and Maryland have march'd forth to intercept the enemy;
They are cut off—murderous artillery from the hills plays upon them;
Rank after rank falls, while over them silently droops the flag,
Baptized that day in many a young man's bloody wounds.
In death, defeat, and sisters', mothers' tears.

Ah, hills and slopes of Brooklyn! I perceive you are more valuable than your owners
supposed;

¹²⁴ A writer or singer of chansons; especially, a cabaret singer.

Ah, river! Henceforth you will be illumin'd to me at sunrise with something besides the sun.

Encampments new! in the midst of you stands an encampment very old;
Stands forever the camp of that dead brigade.

The Soldier of the Revolution

SARAH JOSEPHA HALE

While many remembrances of war emphasize events of the battlefield, it is important to keep in mind the costs of war to loved ones left behind, as well as the sacrifices soldiers make in leaving them. These costs and sacrifices are poignantly presented in this story by Sarah Josepha Hale (1788–1879), first published in her Sketches of American Character (1829). The New Hampshire-born Hale was a well-known writer and editor, champion of education for women and a common national culture for the United States, and a dogged—and finally successful—campaigner for establishing a national day of Thanksgiving.¹²⁵ In this story, Captain Blake, an aged veteran of the Revolutionary War, tells his granddaughter and her young suitor of the personal circumstances and sacrifices of his going to war.

Why, according to Captain Blake, did the soldiers of the Revolution go to war? How did their motives compare with those (cited by Hale) of the “hero of Agincourt” [Shakespeare’s Henry V]? What, according to Blake, is the soldier’s biggest fear and greatest test of courage? What does he mean by “that warfare of the mind which every soldier must undergo” when he first goes forth to fight? Describe the attitude of Blake’s father and mother to his enlistment. Could Whig and Tory have been friends? Must partisan political differences, then or now, necessarily impair possibilities for love and friendship? Do you think Blake would have loved Mary Saunders, had she shared the Tory views of her father? How does Blake describe his father’s attitude and parting blessing? How does he characterize the attitudes and conduct of American women during the Revolutionary War? How should those who come later—yourself included—regard the trials of old soldiers? Is there sufficient evidence in the story to make us confident that Blake speaks for his author, Sarah Josepha Hale?

‘Old men forget; yet all shall not be forgot,
But they’ll remember with advantages,
The feats they did that day.’¹²⁶

Almost every man, who is advanced in years, has, in his past life, some particular period which is remembered with peculiar interest. The circumstances connected with that period are treasured in the memory, often repeated, and but few topics of conversation can be introduced without furnishing an opportunity of referring, at least, if not expatiating on the important affair. It is deserving of notice that what is, in fact, the engrossing pursuit of the multitude, namely, the acquisition of *wealth*, is not, even by the most devoted worldling, accounted matter of such glorious triumph as those deeds which shame the propensity he is indulging. You rarely hear such an one boast of the cunning

¹²⁵ For more about the Thanksgiving holiday and Hale’s role in it, see [The Meaning of Thanksgiving at www.whatsoproudlywehail.org/curriculum/the-american-calendar/the-meaning-of-thanksgiving-day](http://www.whatsoproudlywehail.org/curriculum/the-american-calendar/the-meaning-of-thanksgiving-day).

¹²⁶ William Shakespeare, Henry V, Act 4, Scene 3.

bargain which laid the foundation of his fortune, or the plodding thrift by which he accumulated his thousands.

Avarice is a deep rooted passion in the human breast, and its gratification ministers to vanity, yet none are vain of being thought avaricious. There is a feeling of degradation in the mind, if known to place its sole affections on the paltry, perishable things of earth, which should admonish even the most stupid, of that more noble destiny which man was formed capable of enjoying. But feats of personal strength and activity, and 'hair breadth 'scapes' from danger, are recounted with a satisfaction commensurate to the labors performed, and the perils encountered; because there is a pride of personal desert in such achievements and escapes. But above all, the glory gained in the tented field, is the theme which those who have any claim to the title of soldier, are the most ambitious to display. They all appear to feel somewhat of that yearning for martial fame which agitated the princely hero of Agincourt when he exclaimed—

'By Jove I am not covetous for gold;
 Nor care I who doth feed upon my cost;
 It yearns me not if men my garments wear;
 Such outward things dwell not in my desires;
 But if it be a sin to covet honor,
 I am the most offending soul alive.'¹²⁷

Yet whoever has heard, or read the narratives of the veterans of our revolutionary war, must have remarked that they dwell not so much on the detail of the battles and skirmishes in which they were engaged, as on the effect those actions had in deciding the contest in favor of liberty and independence. The causes which roused the Americans to take up arms, were most favorable to the development of the virtuous energies of men, and consequently that recklessness of moral character and abandonment of pious principles, which too often fatally distinguishes the mass of that profession, when composed of hired mercenaries, never attached to the soldiers of our armies. It was doubtless matter of astonishment to the governments of Europe, that no disturbance followed the disbanding of the American troops; those foreigners did not know that our *soldiers*, when assuming that name, never abandoned the one of *citizens*. In fact the latter was the most gratifying to those who fought the battles of freedom,—and when the necessity for farther resistance ceased, they gladly relinquished their weapons and returned to the firesides their valor had preserved from insult and spoliation. It was their boast to have fought for their country, and to their country they cheerfully resigned the laurels they had won. This generous devotedness of the American soldiery to the principles of liberty and equal rights, and their prompt obedience to civil government, have no parallel in history. They have never been adequately rewarded, but let them be gratefully remembered. They deserve to have their deeds the theme of story, and of song; and a sketch of one of those veterans will not surely be considered inappropriate in a work like this, especially by those who consider how much the ladies of America are indebted to the free institutions established by the war of the Revolution, for their

¹²⁷ William Shakespeare, Henry V, Act 4, Scene 3.

inestimable privileges of education, and that elevation of character and sentiment they now possess.

'This walk has quite tired me,' said old Captain Blake, seating himself in his capacious armed chair, and placing one foot on the low stool his granddaughter Maria arranged for his accommodation. 'A little matter overcomes me now, I find. Maria, my love, bring me a tumbler of beer. Well, Mr. Freeman, you look as if nothing could fatigue you; and I have seen the time when I thought no more of walking a dozen miles, than I do now of creeping as many rods. I remember when I marched with General Starke to Bennington—that was the first time I went as a soldier. I was then just twenty, and I carried my gun and ammunition, and a huge knapsack, containing clothing and provisions, for my kind mother was very much afraid I should suffer with hunger; and I marched with all that load about forty miles in one day, and never thought of complaining.'

'You had then a glorious object in view to animate your spirit,' said Horace Freeman.

'Yes, and we obtained it,' replied the old gentleman, briskly, sitting upright in his chair; 'and the country is now enjoying the reward of our labors and sufferings. Those were dark days,' he continued, with the air of one who is endeavouring to recall ideas of scenes and feelings long past, and almost forgotten. 'Dark days and perilous times for America, Mr. Freeman;—and the events of that period cannot be too often related to the rising generation.'

He paused, and seemed gathering strength and breath for a long harangue, and the young people expected the history of his three campaigns. Horace Freeman had heard the whole just six times over, and Maria at least sixty—but she was never tired of listening to her grandfather, and Horace, if he might but look on her, could listen very patiently.

It is probable the old gentleman noticed the glances interchanged by the lovers, and that they recalled forcibly to his mind some passages in his early life—at least it might have been so inferred, as the circumstances he proceeded to narrate he had never before been heard to mention.

Captain Blake resumed—'It is easy for you young men to imagine the deeds of valor you should have performed, had you lived in the days that tried men's souls—but it is not in the battle that the heart or courage is most severely tested. Indeed there are but few men who feel any fear to fight when once the engagement has begun; 'tis the anticipation of the combat that makes cowards, and sometimes brave men tremble. But the most painful moment of a soldier's life, at least of those who have a dear home and kind friends, is when they part from them. I said the expedition under General Starke was the first I joined. When the news of the Lexington battle arrived, I was eager to be a soldier—but my father objected. 'No, my son,' he said, 'you are not yet arrived at your full strength, and the country requires the assistance of men. I will go.' And he went, and fought at Bunker Hill—and in the retreat across Charlestown neck he was wounded by a cannon ball from the British man of war. The ball shattered his right knee, and

amputation was found necessary. It was some time before he could be brought home, and he never recovered his former health. My father was a poor, but a very respectable man; for in those days the display of wealth was not necessary to make a man respected. Good sense, industry, economy and piety were passports to the best society among the descendants of the pilgrims. My father possessed all these requisites; and, moreover, his reputation for personal courage and tried patriotism was firmly established,—for who could doubt either, when his harangues, justifying the proceedings of Congress and condemning the British ministry, were always followed by a vivid description of the Bunker Hill battle, and the pain he endured from his wound; the whole closed by the solemn declaration, that his greatest anxiety and distress, during the whole operation on his limb, arose from the conviction that he was for the future incapacitated from taking an active part in defending the liberty of his country. My father had one enemy and opponent. This was a man by the name of Saunders, our nearest neighbour. They moved into the wilderness together, and it might have been expected that mutual hardships would have made them mutual friends. But, in the first place, there was no similarity of mind or temper between them—and in the second place, Saunders married a rich wife; giving him an advantage in point of property, which he was very fond of displaying. My father, though various untoward accidents kept him poor, was nevertheless proud, and knew his own abilities were far superior to those of his neighbour; and so, the more ostentatiously Saunders displayed his wealth, the more contemptuously my father treated his opinions. There was scarcely a point on which they agreed; and when the troubles between Great Britain and the Colonies commenced, they immediately took different sides; my father was a flaming whig, and it was perhaps as much to avoid being termed a follower of his, for my father always took the lead in town meetings,—as from principle, that Saunders declared himself for the government.

It would be a curious inquiry to trace the operation of the causes that have contributed to establish those principles, which men often boast of having adopted solely from a conviction of their truth and usefulness. How much of personal convenience, of private pique, of selfishness, envy, anger or ambition, would be found to mingle in the motives of the patriot and the politician! But this we will not now discuss. My father was a firm friend of his country, and a fervent christian; but he had, like other good men, his infirmities; and among them, perhaps none was more conspicuous than a persevering habit of advancing his own sentiments on almost every occasion, and a dogmatical obstinacy in defending them. And he availed himself to the utmost of the advantage which the popularity of his own opinions gave him over his adversary. Though I embraced with enthusiasm my father's political sentiments, yet one reason made me regret, very much, the animosity that seemed every day more bitter, between him and Mr. Saunders. There was a fair girl in the case, and I was just at the age when the affections of the heart are most warm and romantic. Mary Saunders was not an extraordinary beauty: I have seen fairer girls than she; but I never saw one whose expression of countenance was more indicative of purity of mind and sweetness of temper. But you can judge for yourself, Mr. Freeman, for Maria here is her very image—all but the eyes. Mary Saunders' had black eyes; and black is, in my opinion, much the handsomest color for the eye, and generally the most expressive. Maria's eyes, you see, are blue—do, my love, look up—but their expression is very much like her grandmother's eyes.'

Horace Freeman was doubtless very glad of an opportunity of examining, and that too by the permission of her guardian, the eyes of the girl he adored; but her confusion and blushes admonished him that the indulgence of his passion was fraught with pain to the object of his affection, and he endeavoured to change the conversation to the subject of the battle of Bennington.

‘You observed, you accompanied General Starke,’ said he to the old man; ‘were you present when the tories under Baum were defeated?’

‘Was I?’ returned the old gentleman, his eyes flashing with the keenness of youthful ardor—‘I guess I was, and I believe I have told you the whole story; nevertheless I will detail it again, some time, as I find you like to hear such accounts, as indeed all sensible young men do; but now I was intending more particularly to tell my own feelings and views when I first left home. Accounts of battles are quite common, but we seldom read or hear a description of that warfare of mind which every soldier must undergo when he, for the first time, girds himself and goes forth to fight. I said I loved Mary Saunders, and she returned my affection; but the difficulties, every day increasing, between our families, threatened to prevent our intercourse. Mr. Saunders was the first to object, and he intimated that my father encouraged the match, notwithstanding his pretended aversion to tories, because he thought it advantageous. This accusation kindled my father’s anger to a high degree, for nothing roused his spirit like a charge of meanness—and so he absolutely prohibited me from seeing or speaking to Mary, or corresponding with her in any manner. How absurdly our passions are often allowed to control our reason and judgment, and even our inclination. At the time when Mary and I were thus positively forbidden to meet had our fathers spoken their real sentiments, I am persuaded they would both of them have approved our affection for each other. I was always a favorite with Mr. Saunders, and as Mary was an only child, and had no companion at home, she had passed much of her time with my sisters, and my parents had seemed equally fond of her as of their own daughters. But now all intercourse between the families was annihilated, and for us to have met, would have been considered a great crime.

Party spirit was then, and always will be, wherever indulged, the bane of society and good neighbourhood. But the peculiar circumstances in which the whigs were placed justified, in some measure, the asperity they cherished against all denominated tories. There are some nowadays that write histories of that war, and pretend to describe the feelings and spirit that then pervaded America, but this cannot be done. There was at that time agitation in the minds of men which words can never describe. The uncertainty that hung over the destiny of our country, the exertions and sacrifices that all good patriots felt must be made before success could be hoped for—the possibility of a failure, and a dread of the consequences that must ensue, all these thoughts pressed on the soul, filling it with an indescribable anxiety and gloom. But though there was, sometimes, in the mind of the firmest and most determined patriot, doubt, there was seldom dismay. He considered the principles for which he contended so important and the prize so glorious, that even though assured that he could not have succeeded, he would not have yielded. ‘Give me liberty or give me death!’ was not the motto of Patrick Henry only,—thousands

of our citizens subscribed to the same sentiment. I remember when the news of the approach of Burgoyne's army, and the retreat of the Americans from Ticonderoga, reached us. We were at dinner when a messenger, sent by General St. Clair, to rouse the inhabitants of New Hampshire to come to the assistance of the retreating army, entered our house abruptly, without even the ceremony of rapping at the door. The dress of the man showed him to be a soldier, and his countenance displayed such deep concern, that my father seemed instantly to guess his errand. He dropped his knife and fork, and turning his chair so as to face the messenger, demanded his news. I was always something of a physiognomist,¹²⁸ and while the man related the disasters that had befallen our troops, and described the numbers and appearance of the British army, I watched my father's features, and never did I see such an expression as his then displayed. During the first part of the recital there was an eagerness an agitation, a quivering of the lips and eyelids, that showed the deep, even painful sympathy he felt for the embarrassments of the American general—but when the royal commander was named, his brow instantly contracted, his eye dilated, every muscle of his face grew rigid as with determined resolve, and the stern expression of his features seemed bidding defiance to the whole British army. At length, while the man was proceeding to describe the proud array of the invading foe, and the number of the Indian allies, my father suddenly struck his clenched hand on the table, with a force and clatter that made all the children instantly start from their seats, while he exclaimed—'O! if it had only been God's will that I should have kept my leg, I would soon be on the ground and show them red coats the metal of a Yankee.' I caught his eye as he ceased, and there was an instant change in his countenance. I presume he noticed the eagerness of my look, for there was nothing on earth, except to see Mary, that I then longed so much to do as to become a soldier. This my father had never appeared to permit. He could face danger without shrinking, but he trembled for me. I urged my wishes to go. He appeared for a few moments irresolute—drew his hand twice across his forehead, and then calmly said—'My son, you may go. The crisis demands the sacrifice of all selfish and private feelings on the part of Americans—You shall go.'

To know the whole merit of the sacrifice my father then made, it will be necessary to state that I was the eldest of eleven children, all girls, excepting myself and the youngest babe. My father was not able to do any labor—it was in the month of July, when the farmer has, necessarily, so much business on his hands, and yet I am persuaded there was not one self-interested motive, excepting his fears of the danger to which I would be exposed, that caused his hesitation.

It is impossible, in these days of peace and plenty, to estimate truly the generous, devoted, self-denying spirit that was exhibited during the revolution. The thirst for private gain, that is now so engrossing, was then a feeble passion, compared with the ardor to promote the public good; and the final success of our arms is mainly to be attributed to the virtue and patriotism of the people. We had, to be sure, a commander worthy of our cause and country, one undoubtedly designed and prepared by Heaven for the task he performed—but then, his powers and those of the Congress were so limited, he never would have succeeded, but for the zealous and spontaneous co-operation of our citizens.

¹²⁸ *One who professes to judge human character from facial features.*

But I am wandering from the subject of my own feelings,' he continued, smiling, 'as indeed I am very apt to do whenever I begin to think, or speak of, the public excitement. But to comprehend rightly an old man's story, you must allow him to tell it in his own way. Often when he appears to wander the most widely from his purpose, it is not that he forgets it, but because so many circumstances, which he thinks important, connected with the event he would relate, press on his mind, that he fears you will not get a right understanding of his subject, unless he relates all those circumstances. It is not so often from loss of memory that the aged are garrulous, as from remembering too much.

It was settled I should depart next morning, and all was bustle to prepare me for the expedition.

My father would himself inspect and arrange my military equipments. I had an excellent rifle, and a sufficient quantity of powder, but no bullets—but that deficiency was soon supplied. My mother tendered her pewter basons [*sic*; = basins], and we manufactured a sufficient quantity of shot to kill a whole regiment. My mother also packed among my clothes a huge roll of linen, for bandages, remarking as she did so, that she hoped I would not need it, but I might perhaps have it in my power to bind up the wounds of some poor creature. At that time the soldier had often to carry about him his hospital, as well as magazine. During all this my parents neither shed a tear nor uttered a desponding word; they even reproved my sisters for weeping, saying, that tears should be reserved for the dead—that they ought to rejoice they had a brother capable and willing to defend his country and family from the ruthless savages; and that God would not suffer the injustice of their oppressors long to triumph, if every American did his duty. In the mean time, my own mind was suffering a severe conflict. I did not fear the battle—I longed to engage in the fight; but there was something in this preparation for wounds and death, that could not but be somewhat appalling to one who had always lived in the security and shelter of home. I reflected on the possibility that I might never see that home again. All the kindness and affection of my parents and sisters, came fresh to my mind. The happy circle we had always formed around the fireside would be broken, and I knew there would be mourning for me. But there was one who I thought would weep bitter tears. I had not seen Mary, excepting at church, for more than six months; but I gathered from the expression of her countenance, that her regard for me was unaltered. She had doubtless suffered more from the separation than I. Women are more constant in their attachments than men, and they have fewer employments and resources to vary the current of their thoughts, and a disappointment of the heart is to them a constantly corroding sorrow. Mary had grown very pale and thin, and when I gazed on her as she joined in singing the praises of God, I had often felt as if she must soon be transferred to a happier world. And I had sometimes taxed my father with cruelty and injustice, in separating us, though, at the same time, I respected the high minded integrity that dictated the command; but I had never thought of disobeying him. He had in his look and manner, that kind of authority which seems to be delegated from Heaven, and which will not brook to be disregarded; such as we may imagine distinguished the patriarchs. Our pilgrim ancestors possessed this domestic authority in an eminent degree; and their descendants for several generations inherited it, though less dignified—but it now seems to be nearly extinct. Whether it was on the whole, more favorable to human improvement

in virtue and happiness, than the present *reasoning* manner of family government, is a question I have never seen decided. I wish some one qualified for the task would give us their opinion on the subject. But to return to Mary, from whom my thoughts then seldom wandered. I could not endure the idea of leaving home without seeing her. I went to my father—I trembled in every joint, and the sweat started in large drops on my forehead, but nevertheless I retained sufficient firmness to tell him I must and would see Mary; that I wished for his consent to visit her, and that perhaps it was the last request I should ever make him; and then I added, that if I lived to return, I would still be as obedient to his commands as I had hitherto been. How I summoned sufficient courage to tell him so much, was afterwards to me a matter of astonishment; it might be that I felt rather more boldness from knowing I was soon to be a soldier.

I believe my father's first impulse was to rebuke and refuse me, for he assumed one of his stern looks that always quelled all opposition—but luckily for us both, he looked in my face, and I suspect he became sensible I was not in a state to bear rebuke or disappointment. His first words were, 'Do you wish to be friends with the enemies of your country, with traitors?'

I said, No—but that Mary was not an enemy of her country.

'But her father is,' he replied, 'and children do adopt, indeed they ought to adopt, the opinions of their parents.'

'Not if they think that opinion wrong,' said I. 'And I have told you before that Mary does not approve her father's sentiments, and that she ought not to be judged and condemned on his account.'

'I know,' he replied, 'that you think favorably of her. At your age this is not strange, but remember, that though I do not forbid your seeing her, if you insist upon it, I warn you of the consequences. The path of duty is now plain before you; it is to fight manfully for liberty and independence. You seem to have such strength and courage given you, as we may hope will bear you up; but if you join hands with those who are wishing to riot in the blood of their country, you will probably be forsaken by Him who is the God of battles.'

There was in my father's manner a solemnity that awed me, but still his prophetic warning had no effect to deter me from my purpose of seeing Mary. I knew, what my father would not credit, that she was an enthusiast in the cause of her country, though the mildness and modesty of her disposition, and respect for her parent, restrained her from openly expressing her sentiments. Indeed, it is worthy of notice that during the whole war, the American women were almost universally patriots; and they encountered their full share of privation and suffering, and that too with a cheerfulness and fortitude that often infused courage and vigor into the hearts of the almost desponding soldiery. And they not only submitted to separations from their friends without murmuring, but they exerted themselves to provide for their families at home, by performing much of the labor and business that usually devolves on the men. A volume of anecdotes might be collected

of the heroism and devotion to freedom, manifested by the ladies during that period. There were wives, and mothers, and sisters, who encouraged and assisted to prepare for the battle, those they held dearest on earth. And there were maidens who animated their betrothed lovers for the fight. I was confident Mary was not deficient in this generous self-denying spirit, and I had no fear she would exert her power over me by endeavouring to dissuade me from going into the army. I did not then hesitate a moment on my own account; but I had to procure the consent of her father, as well as mine, for the meeting. I wrote to Mr. Saunders, and very respectfully requested permission to visit his daughter, stating my reasons, and that my father had consented. I afterwards learned it was that which made Mr. Saunders object. He would agree to nothing that my father approved. He wrote me a very cool and provoking answer, in which he took care to repeat all the account of Burgoyne's success, and warn me against joining in a sinking cause; and he concluded by declaring he would not allow one who was intending to fight against his sovereign to visit at his house, and that his daughter entirely agreed with him in opinion. I was never so disappointed in my life, and I do not remember that I was ever more angry. The more so perhaps, because my father seemed to enjoy my chagrin. I did not believe Mary was thus indifferent about seeing me; but still a young man scarce twenty, and a lover beside, is not usually the most reasonable being under the sun. I thought of a thousand things, and imagined a thousand improbable events. These were some of my fancies. If the enemy should succeed, Saunders would doubtless join the victorious army, at least, he would wish to pay his compliments to Burgoyne; and he might take Mary with him; and I was too deeply in love to imagine any person could see her with indifference. And then I thought it probable some English officer would admire her, and succeed in gaining her hand—and then I felt as if I could annihilate the whole British host.

While I was indulging in one of these paroxysms of feeling, a boy who lived with Mr. Saunders appeared at the end of the lane leading to our house. I knew him in a moment, although it was nearly dark, and hastened to meet him. He brought me a letter from Mary. I know you expect I treasured that letter in my mind, and remember it now—and though it may sound rather silly to hear an old man like me, saying over his love-letters, I will repeat it. It had been begun with 'Dear Samuel,'—but those words had been scratched out, though not so entirely but I could trace them. The next beginning was—'Worthy Friend, I have just seen a letter you sent my father, and from what he has told me, I fear you will think I am ungrateful and have forgotten you. But this I never shall do. I think of you almost constantly, and pray that you may be directed in the path of duty. I believe you are now pursuing it. I feel that our country needs aid, and wish I could render it. But that is out of my power; but if prayers and tears could avail to save you from harm, I would offer them daily. I do not say this to discourage you, but to show you that I approve your determination to be a soldier. May God shield you.—Mary Saunders

'P. S. I hope you will not forget me.'

'Such was the letter, word for word,' continued the old man. 'I remember it well, for I carried it three years in a little pocket book, and read it pretty often, as you doubtless guess. It was at the time a precious treasure, for it assured me of Mary's affection, and

that she approved my being a soldier, and perhaps I departed with a lighter heart than I should have done had we actually met.

Early the next morning every thing was prepared, and the family all attended while my father made a most fervent and impressive prayer. I observed that he dwelt more earnestly on the salvation of his country, and prayed more heartily that the men who were going forth might have strength and resolution given them to conquer their proud and cruel enemies, than he did that they might be saved from danger and returned in safety. When he concluded, he took my hand; the pride of a soldier was in his eye as he glanced over my military equipments, but I observed a moisture there; and when he spoke, it was in a sharp, quick tone, as if he feared to trust the expression of his feelings, and even felt angry with himself for indulging them. ‘Sam,’ said he, wringing my hand as he spoke. ‘Sam, remember your duty. Your country now requires your services; and next to your duty to God, your country’s claims are sacred. Go, and fight manfully for liberty. Remember it is better to die free than live a slave. Go, and God bless you.’

‘Samuel,’ said my mother, taking my hand in both of hers, and pressing it tenderly, while the tears gushed from her eyes—I had not seen her weep before. ‘Samuel, your father has told you what is your duty, and I know you will do it. I shall pray for you, and if you are hurt, remember the bandages and salve. I have put some salve into your pack, that is very excellent for wounds. Heaven keep you—farewell.’

I do not particularly remember what my sisters said, nor indeed distinctly anything else that passed, till I found myself on the brow of a hill that overlooked the farm of my father, and part of that belonging to Mr. Saunders. I paused there, and looked back on the scene I had left. The sun had not risen, but the eastern sky, as if preparing for his coming, was kindled up with those beautiful hues that the light of noonday never imparts. I saw the green woods stretching away on every side till they blended with the blue of the distant mountains. In those woods I had hunted many a time. I heard the birds singing their morning songs; all spoke of peace except the shrill cry of the jay, and that sounded in my ear like a call to battle. Beneath me lay the fields I had traversed so often—the windings of the little brook, the boundary that divided the estate of my father from that of his tory neighbor, were easily to be traced by the mist that hung over it; and I could distinctly see the favorite fishing place where I had passed many happy hours. And then there was the home in which I was born, and the trees in whose shade I had so often played with my sisters—and, in the small meadow, a seat beneath an old elm, where Mary and I had often met.

I saw all these, and the recollections they awakened, and the thought that, in all probability, I should never see that spot, and those objects, and my dear family, and Mary, again, came so painfully on my heart that my fortitude was overcome, and I wept and even sobbed aloud. I was in the battle at Bennington—I fought at Saratoga—I was one of the twenty under the command of Lieutenant Knox at the capture of Stony Point—I have been wounded, and a prisoner. I have heard bullets whistle as they fell like hail, and seen men dropping around me like leaves in autumn, and I have been in want of

a crust of bread, but I never felt that fear, that utter despondency, that misgiving of spirit, which I endured when taking my leave of home.'

'But you did return, my dear grandfather,' said Maria, wiping her eyes. 'You did see that home again?'

'Yes,' he replied, 'I returned to dwell there, and I married Mary; but, it was after my constitution was broken by fatigue and hardship, and my arm rendered, as you see, nearly useless by a fracture in the elbow. Nor had Mary been exempt from sorrow and suffering. The chagrin her father endured in being, as he was, confined to his farm, and knowing himself the object of suspicion, hatred, and contempt of his neighbours, and the disappointment he felt at the failure of the British army, whose triumph he had so confidently predicted, all these things troubled him, and finally undermined his health. He fell into a consumption; but before he died, he renounced his tory principles, and my father and he became reconciled, and he consented I should marry Mary. And so when I returned from my last campaign, where I was disabled, by this wound in my arm, from further service, Mary was the first to welcome me. But O! how pale and thin she looked. You young people have no experience, and can hardly form an idea of the trials we had endured. But we had the satisfaction of thinking our country would be free and independent; and it is so: and yet few, in these days of peace and prosperity, seem to remember that their freedom and privileges were purchased by the sweat, and toils, and blood, of the old soldier.'

The Last of the Sacred Army

WALT WHITMAN

This story by the celebrated poet and essayist, Walt Whitman (1819–92), continues our exploration of the theme of remembrance. Written in 1842, at a time when the longest-living veterans of the War for Independence were fast disappearing, it supports its call for a duty to remember by presenting the narrator’s dream, experienced on one July 4th, of meeting—some 30 years into the future—“the last of the sacred army” of the Revolution. The dream also includes a conversation between the narrator and “a learned philosopher” about the value of honoring and memorializing our national heroes.

Why is the Continental Army called the “Sacred Army,” and why is the old soldier called the “Last of His Witnesses”? Of what, and for whom, is the old soldier a witness? Is it, as the narrator asks the philosopher, healthy for a self-respecting and self-governing democratic people to revere a fellow human being—rather than God? What is the philosopher’s answer? Do you agree with him that one personal model is more important than philosophical treatises in forming good character? How might memory function to preserve freedom and prevent enslavement? What is the connection between dreams and memories of heroes—including stories of dreams and memories of heroes—and human self-understanding or democratic self-rule? What does this imply about the best ways of educating for citizenship?

The memory of the Warriors of our Freedom!—let us guard it with holy care. Let the mighty pulse which throbs responsive in a nation’s heart at utterance of that nation’s names of glory, never lie languid when their deeds are told or their example cited. To him of the Calm Gray Eye,¹²⁹ selected by the Leader of the Ranks of Heaven as the instrument for a people’s redemption;—to him, the bright and brave, who fell in the attack at Breed’s;¹³⁰—to him, the nimble-footed soldier of the swamps of Santee;¹³¹—to the young stranger from the luxuries of his native France;¹³²—to all who fought in that long weary fight for disenthralment from arbitrary rule—may our star fade, and our good angel smile upon us no more, if we fail to chamber them in our hearts or forget the method of their dear-won honor!

For the fame of these is not as the fame of common heroes. The mere gaining of battles—the chasing away of an opposing force—wielding the great energies of bodies of military—rising proudly amid the smoke and din of the fight—and marching the haughty march of a conqueror,—all this, spirit-stirring as it may be to the world, would fail to

¹²⁹ George Washington.

¹³⁰ Major General Joseph Warren (1741–75), an American doctor who played a leading role in American Patriot organizations in Boston during the American Revolution, eventually serving as president of the Massachusetts Provincial Congress. He was killed in combat when British troops stormed the redoubt atop Breed’s Hill during the Battle of Bunker Hill.

¹³¹ Francis Marion (1732–95), a South Carolina military officer, known as the Swamp Fox, who served in the American Revolutionary War.

¹³² The Marquis de Lafayette (1757–1834), a French aristocrat and general in the Revolutionary War.

command the applause of the just and discriminating. But such is not the base whereon American warriors found their title to renown. *Our* storied names are those of the Soldiers of Liberty; hardy souls, incased in hardy bodies—untainted with the effeminacy of voluptuous cities, patient, enduring much for principle's sake, and wending on through *blood, disease*, destitution, and prospects of gloom, to attain the Great Treasure.

Years have passed; the sword-clash and the thundering of the guns have died away and all personal knowledge of those events—of the fierce incentives to hate, and the wounds, and scorn, and the curses from the injured, and the wailings from the prisons—lives now but in the memory of a few score gray-haired men; whose number is, season after season, made thinner and thinner by death. Haply, long, long will be the period ere our beloved country shall witness the presence of such or similar scenes again. Haply, too, the time is arriving when War, with all its train of sanguinary horrors, will be a discarded custom among the nations of earth. A newer and better philosophy—teaching how evil it is to hew down and slay ranks of fellow-men, because of some disagreement between their respective rulers—is melting away old prejudices upon this subject, as warmth in spring melts the frigid ground.

The lover of his race—did he not, looking abroad in the world, see millions whose swelling hearts are all crushed into the dust beneath the iron heel of oppression; did he not behold how kingcraft and priestcraft stalk abroad over fair portions of the globe, and forge the chain, and rivet the yoke; and did he not feel that it were better to live in one flaming atmosphere of carnage than slavishly thus—would offer up nightly prayers that this new philosophy might prevail to the utmost, and the reign of peace never more be disturbed among mankind.

On one of the anniversaries of our national independence, I was staying at the house of an old farmer, about a mile from a thriving country town, whose inhabitants were keeping up the spirit of the occasion with great fervor. The old man himself was a thumping patriot. Early in the morning, my slumbers had been broken by the sharp crack of his ancient musket, (I looked upon that musket with reverence, for it had seen service in *the war*), firing salutes in honor of the day. I am free to confess, my military propensities were far from strong enough (appropriate as they might have been considered at such a time) to suppress certain peevish exclamations toward the disturber of my sweet repose. In the course of the forenoon, I attended the ceremonials observed in the village; sat, during the usual patriotic address, on the same bench with a time-worn veteran that had fought in the contest now commemorated; witnessed the evolutions of the uniform company; and returned home with a most excellent appetite for my dinner.

The afternoon was warm and drowsy. I ensconced myself in my easy-chair, near an open window; feeling in that most blissful state of semi-somnolency, which it is now and then, though rarely, given to mortals to enjoy. I was alone, the family of my host having gone on some visit to a neighbor. The bees hummed in the garden, and among the flowers that clustered over the window frame; a sleepy influence seemed to imbue everything around; occasionally the faint sound of some random gunfire from the village would float

along, or the just perceptible music of the band, or the tra-a-a-ra of a locust. But these were far from being jars to the quiet spirit I have mentioned.

Insensibly, my consciousness became less and less distinct; my head leaned back; my eyes closed; and my senses relaxed from their waking vigilance. I slept.

. . . How strange a chaos is sometimes the outset to a dream!—There was the pulpit of the rude church, the scene of the oration—and in it a grotesque form whom I had noticed as the drummer in the band, beating away as though calling scattered forces to the rescue. Then the speaker of the day pitched coppers with some unshorn hostler¹³³ boys; and the grave personage who had opened the services with prayer was half stripped and running a foot-race with a tavern loafer. The places and the persons familiar to my morning excursion about the country town appeared as in life, but in situations all fantastic and out of the way.

After a while, what I beheld began to reduce itself to more method. With the singular characteristic of dreams, I knew—I could not tell how—that thirty years elapsed from the then time, and I was among a new generation. Beings by me never seen before, and some with shrivelled forms, bearing an odd resemblance to men whom I had known in the bloom of manhood, met my eyes.

Methought I stood in a splendid city. It seemed a good day. Crowds of people were swiftly wending along the streets and walks, as if to behold some great spectacle or famous leader.

“Whither do the people go?” said I to a Shape who passed me, hurrying on with the rest.

“Know you not,” answered he, “that the Last of the Sacred Army may be seen to-day.”

And he hastened forward, apparently fearful lest he might be late.

Among the dense ranks I noticed many women, some of them with infants in their arms. Then there were boys, beautiful creatures, struggling on, with a more intense desire even than the men. And as I looked up, I saw at some distance, coming toward the place wherein I stood, a troop of young females, the foremost one bearing a wreath of fresh flowers. The crowd pulled and pushed so violently that this party of girls were sundered from one another, and she who carried the wreath being jostled, her flowers were trampled to the ground.

“O, hapless me!” cried the child; and she began to weep.

At that moment, her companions came up; and they looked frowningly when they saw the wreath torn.

¹³³ *Groom or stableman.*

"Do not grieve, gentle one," said I to the weeping child. "And you," turning to the others, "blame her not. There bloom more flowers, as fair and fragrant as those which lie rent beneath your feet."

"No," said one of the little troop, "it is now too late."

"What mean you?" I asked.

The children looked at me in wonder.

"For whom did you intend the wreath?" continued I.

"Heard you not," rejoined one of them, "that to-day may be seen the Last of His Witnesses? We were on our way to present this lovely wreath—and she who should give it was to say, that fresh and sweet, like it, would ever be His memory in the souls of us, and of our countrymen."

And the children walked on.

Yielding myself passively to the sway of the current, which yet continued to flow in one huge human stream, I was carried through street after street, and along many a stately passage, the sides of which were lined by palace-like houses. After a time, we came to a large open square, which seemed to be the destination—for there the people stopped. At the further end of this square stood a magnificent building, evidently intended for public purposes; and in front of it a wide marble elevation, half platform and half porch. Upon this elevation were a great many persons, all of them in standing postures, except one, an aged, very aged man, seated in a throne-like chair. His figure and face showed him to be of a length of years seldom vouchsafed to his kind; and his head was thinly covered with hair of a silvery whiteness.

Now, near me stood one whom I knew to be a learned philosopher; and to him I addressed myself for an explanation of these wonderful things.

"Tell me," said I, "who is the ancient being seated on yonder platform?"

The person to whom I spoke stared in my face surprisedly.

"Are you of this land," said he, "and have not heard of him—the Last of the Sacred Army?"

"I am ignorant," answered I, "of whom you speak, or of what Army."

The philosopher stared a second time; but soon, when I assured him I was not jesting, he began telling me of former times, and how it came to be that this white-haired remnant of a past age was the object of so much honor. Nor was the story new to me—as may it never be to any son of America.

We edged our way close to the platform. Immediately around the seat of the ancient soldier stood many noble-looking gentlemen, evidently of dignified character and exalted station. As I came near, I heard them mention *a name*—that name which is dearest to our memories as patriots.

“And you saw the Chief with your own eyes?” said one of the gentlemen.

“I did,” answered the old warrior.

And the crowd were hushed, and bent reverently, as if in a holy presence.

“I would,” said another gentleman, “I would you had some relic which might be as a chain leading from our hearts to his.”

“I have such a relic,” replied the aged creature; and with trembling fingers he took from his bosom a rude medal, suspended round his neck by a string. “This the Chief gave me,” continued he, “to mark his good-will for some slight service I did the Cause.”

“And has it been in *his* hands?” asked the crowd, eagerly.

“Himself hung it around my neck,” said the veteran.

Then the mighty mass was hushed again, and there was no noise—but a straining of fixed eyes, and a throbbing of hearts, and cheeks pale with excitement—such excitement as might be caused in a man’s soul by some sacred memorial of one he honored and loved deeply.

Upon the medal were the letters “G. W.”

“Speak to us of him, and of his time,” said the crowd.

A few words the old man uttered; but few and rambling as they were, the people listened as to the accents of an oracle.

Then it was time for him to stay there no longer. So he rose, assisted by such of the bystanders whose rank and reputation gave them a right to the honor, and slowly descended. The mass divided, to form a passage for him and his escort, and they passed forward. And as he passed, the young boys struggled to him, that they might take his hand, or touch his garments. The women, too, brought their infants, to be placed for a moment in his arms; and every head was uncovered.

I noticed that there was little shouting, or clapping of hands—but a deep-felt sentiment of veneration seemed to pervade them, far more honorable to its object than the loudest acclamations.

In a short time, as the white-haired ancient was out of sight, the square was cleared, and I stood in it with no companion but the philosopher.

"Is it well," said I, "that such reverence be bestowed by a great people on a creature like themselves? The self-respect each one has for his own nature might run the risk of effacement were such things often seen. Besides, it is not allowed that man pay worship to his fellow."

"Fear not," answered the philosopher; "the occurrences you have just witnessed spring from the fairest and manliest traits in the soul. Nothing more becomes a nation than paying its choicest honors to the memory of those who have fought for it, or labored for its good. By thus often bringing up their examples before the eyes of the living, others are incited to follow in the same glorious path. Do not suppose, young man, that it is by sermons and oft-repeated precepts we form a disposition great or good. The model of one pure, upright character, living as a beacon in history, does more benefit than the lumbering tomes of a thousand theorists.

"No: it is well that the benefactors of a state be so kept alive in memory and in song, when their bodies are moldering. Then will it be impossible for a people to become enslaved; for though the strong arm of their old defender come not as formerly to the battle, his spirit is there, through the power of remembrance, and wields a better sway even than if it were of fleshly substance."

. . . The words of the philosopher sounded indistinctly to my ears—and his features faded, as in a mist. I awoke and looking through the window, saw that the sun had just sunk in the west—two hours having passed away since the commencement of my afternoon slumber.

Speech on the Fourth of July, 1872

MARK TWAIN

Mark Twain (born Samuel Clemens; 1835–1910), author and humorist, largely took an ironic view of the world around him, rarely missing an opportunity to poke fun at ceremony, solemnity, and moral self-satisfaction. Our sacred holidays were not immune to his wit. Here, for example, from Pudd'nhead Wilson's Calendar, is Twain's entry for July 4th: "Statistics show that we lose more fools on this day than in all the other days of the year put together. This proves, by the number left in stock, that one Fourth of July per year is now inadequate, the country has grown so." In this satirical jab at Fourth of July orations, Twain prepares his own Independence Day address, for a gathering of Americans in London, July 4, 1872.

What, if anything, can be said for this mocking speech and its content? Do we as Americans have a tendency for self-congratulation that deserves to be exposed and corrected, or even ridiculed? If so, is this the best way and the right occasion for pointing out the nation's faults? Should we regret that Twain arranges it so that he was "not able" to give the speech? Does that count as appropriate self-censorship? Whose Fourth of July speech do you prefer, Twain's or Daniel Webster's (see above)? Why? Is there a role for self-mocking humor in our national calendar and in cultivating civic self-awareness and attachment? If so, what is it, and how can it best be accomplished?

Mr. Chairman and Ladies and Gentlemen,—

I thank you for the compliment which has just been tendered me, and to show my appreciation of it I will not afflict you with many words. It is pleasant to celebrate in this peaceful way, upon this old mother soil, the anniversary of an experiment which was born of war with this same land so long ago, and wrought out to a successful issue by the devotion of our ancestors. It has taken nearly a hundred years to bring the English and Americans into kindly and mutually appreciative relations, but I believe it has been accomplished at last. It was a great step when the two last misunderstandings were settled by arbitration instead of cannon. It is another great step when England adopts our sewing-machines without claiming the invention—as usual. It was another when they imported one of our sleeping-cars the other day. And it warmed my heart more than, I can tell, yesterday, when I witnessed the spectacle of an Englishman, ordering an American sherry cobbler of his own free will and accord—and not only that but with a great brain and a level head reminding the barkeeper not to forget the strawberries. With a common origin, a common language, a common literature, a common religion, and—common drinks, what is longer needful to the cementing of the two nations together in a permanent bond of brotherhood?

This is an age of progress, and ours is a progressive land. A great and glorious land, too—a land which has developed a Washington, a Franklin, a Wm. M. Tweed, a Longfellow, a Motley, a Jay Gould, a Samuel C. Pomeroy, a recent Congress which has never had its equal (in some respects), and a United States Army which conquered sixty

Indians in eight months by tiring them out which is much better than uncivilized slaughter, God knows. We have a criminal jury system which is superior to any in the world; and its efficiency is only marred by the difficulty of finding twelve men every day who don't know anything and can't read. And I may observe that we have an insanity plea that would have saved Cain. I think I can say, and say with pride, that we have some legislatures that bring higher prices than any in the world.

I refer with effusion to our railway system, which consents to let us live, though it might do the opposite, being our owners. It only destroyed three thousand and seventy lives last year by collisions, and twenty-seven thousand two hundred and sixty by running over heedless and unnecessary people at crossings. The companies seriously regretted the killing of these thirty thousand people, and went so far as to pay for some of them—voluntarily, of course, for the meanest of us would not claim that we possess a court treacherous enough to enforce a law against a railway company. But, thank Heaven, the railway companies are generally disposed to do the right and kindly thing without—compulsion. I know of an instance which greatly touched me at the time. After an accident the company sent home the remains of a dear distant old relative of mine in a basket, with the remark, “Please state what figure you hold him at—and return the basket.” Now there couldn't be anything friendlier than that.

But I must not stand here and brag all night. However, you won't mind a body bragging a little about his country on the Fourth of July. It is a fair and legitimate time to fly the eagle. I will say only one more word of brag—and a hopeful one. It is this. We have a form of government which gives each man a fair chance and no favor. With us no individual is born with a right to look down upon his neighbor and hold him in contempt. Let such of us as are not dukes find our consolation in that. And we may find hope for the future in the fact that as unhappy as is the condition of our political morality to-day, England has risen up out of a far fouler since the days when Charles I ennobled courtesans and all political place was a matter of bargain and sale. There is hope for us yet.*

** At least the above is the speech which I was going to make, but our minister, General Schenck, presided, and after the blessing, got up and made a great, long, inconceivably dull harangue, and wound up by saying that inasmuch as speech-making did not seem to exhilarate the guests much, all further oratory would be dispensed with during the evening, and we could just sit and talk privately to our elbow-neighbors and have a good, sociable time. It is known that in consequence of that remark forty-four perfected speeches died in the womb. The depression, the gloom, the solemnity that reigned over the banquet from that time forth will be a lasting memory with many that were there. By that one thoughtless remark General Schenck lost forty-four of the best friends he had in England. More than one said that night: “And this is the sort of person that is sent to represent us in a great sister empire!”*

The Fourth in Salvador

O. HENRY

Like Mark Twain, the popular American short story writer O. Henry (William Sydney Porter, 1862–1910) often took a humorous, not to say irreverent, approach to subjects generally not treated lightly.¹³⁴ This story describes a celebration of the Fourth of July by a small group of Americans living in Salvador. It includes O. Henry's trademark: a surprise ending.

What kind of characters are these Americans living abroad? What is Billy Casparis' attitude toward patriotism? Toward the Fourth of July? Is he a credit to the United States? What effect does being or living abroad have on his—and, more importantly, on our—feelings for our homeland? Although the Americans are unaware of the fact that they are participating in another country's revolution, is there any way in which their rambunctious celebration of the Fourth contributed to—or could be credited with—bringing freedom also to Salvador? Is the spirit of liberty contagious? Do Americans abroad spread it, wittingly or not? Do our celebrations of the Fourth of July help spread it? Is it clear that the revolution in Salvador will lead to a better life for the people? Are all revolutions undertaken in the name of liberty necessarily good for the people?

On a summer's day, while the city was rocking with the din and red uproar of patriotism, Billy Casparis told me this story.

In his way, Billy is Ulysses, Jr.¹³⁵ Like Satan, he comes from going to and fro upon the earth and walking up and down in it. To-morrow morning while you are cracking your breakfast egg he may be off with his little alligator grip to boom a town site in the middle of Lake Okeechobee or to trade horses with the Patagonians.

We sat at a little, round table, and between us were glasses holding big lumps of ice, and above us leaned an artificial palm. And because our scene was set with the properties of the one they recalled to his mind, Billy was stirred to narrative.

“It reminds me,” said he, “of a Fourth I helped to celebrate down in Salvador. ’Twas while I was running an ice factory down there, after I unloaded that silver mine I had in Colorado. I had what they called a ‘conditional concession.’ They made me put up a thousand dollars cash forfeit that I would make ice continuously for six months. If I did that I could draw down my ante. If I failed to do so the government took the pot. So the inspectors kept dropping in, trying to catch me without the goods.

¹³⁴ See, for example, his “Two Thanksgiving Day Gentlemen,” which we have anthologized in our volume on The Meaning of Thanksgiving: www.whatsoproudlywehail.org/curriculum/the-american-calendar/guide-for-two-thanksgiving-day-gentlemen.

¹³⁵ *Odysseus, also known by the Roman name Ulysses, was a legendary Greek king of Ithaca and a hero of Homer's epic poem the Odyssey, which tells the story of the ten eventful years he took to return home after the Trojan War.*

"One day when the thermometer was at 110, the clock at half-past one, and the calendar at July third, two of the little, brown, oily nosers in red trousers slid in to make an inspection. Now, the factory hadn't turned out a pound of ice in three weeks, for a couple of reasons. The Salvador heathen wouldn't buy it; they said it made things cold they put it in. And I couldn't make any more, because I was broke. All I was holding on for was to get down my thousand so I could leave the country. The six months would be up on the sixth of July.

"Well, I showed 'em all the ice I had. I raised the lid of a darkish vat, and there was an elegant 100-pound block of ice, beautiful and convincing to the eye. I was about to close down the lid again when one of those brunette sleuths flops down on his red knees and lays a slanderous and violent hand on my guarantee of good faith. And in two minutes more they had dragged out on the floor that fine chunk of molded glass that had cost me fifty dollars to have shipped down from Frisco.

"'Ice-y?' says the fellow that played me the dishonourable trick; 'verree warm ice-y. Yes. The day is that hot, *señor*. Yes. Maybeso it is of desirableness to leave him out to get the cool. Yes.'

"'Yes,' says I, 'yes,' for I knew they had me. 'Touching's believing, ain't it, boys? Yes. Now there's some might say the seats of your trousers are sky blue, but 'tis my opinion they are red. Let's apply the tests of the laying on of hands and feet.' And so I hoisted both those inspectors out the door on the toe of my shoe, and sat down to cool off on my block of disreputable glass.

"And, as I live without oats, while I sat there, homesick for money and without a cent to my ambition, there came on the breeze the most beautiful smell my nose had entered for a year. God knows where it came from in that backyard of a country—it was a bouquet of soaked lemon peel, cigar stumps, and stale beer—exactly the smell of Goldbrick Charley's place on Fourteenth Street where I used to play pinochle of afternoons with the third-rate actors. And that smell drove my troubles through me and clinched 'em at the back. I began to long for my country and feel sentiments about it; and I said words about Salvador that you wouldn't think could come legitimate out of an ice factory.

"And while I was sitting there, down through the blazing sunshine in his clean, white clothes comes Maximilian Jones, an American interested in rubber and rosewood.

"'Great carrambos!' says I, when he stepped in, for I was in a bad temper, 'didn't I have catastrophes enough? I know what you want. You want to tell me that story again about Johnny Ammiger and the widow on the train. You've told it nine times already this month.'

"'It must be the heat,' says Jones, stopping in at the door, amazed. 'Poor Billy. He's got bugs. Sitting on ice, and calling his best friends pseudonyms. Hi!—*muchacho!*' Jones

called my force of employees, who was sitting in the sun, playing with his toes, and told him to put on his trousers and run for the doctor.

“‘Come back,’ says I. ‘Sit down, Maxy, and forget it. ’Tis not ice you see, nor a lunatic upon it. ’Tis only an exile full of homesickness sitting on a lump of glass that’s just cost him a thousand dollars. Now, what was it Johnny said to the widow first? I’d like to hear it again, Maxy—honest. Don’t mind what I said.’

“Maximilian Jones and I sat down and talked. He was about as sick of the country as I was, for the grafters were squeezing him for half the profits of his rosewood and rubber. Down in the bottom of a tank of water I had a dozen bottles of sticky Frisco beer; and I fished these up, and we fell to talking about home and the flag and Hail Columbia and home-fried potatoes; and the drivel we contributed would have sickened any man enjoying those blessings. But at that time we were out of ’em. You can’t appreciate home till you’ve left it, money till it’s spent, your wife till she’s joined a woman’s club, nor Old Glory till you see it hanging on a broomstick on the shanty of a consul in a foreign town.

“And sitting there me and Maximilian Jones, scratching at our prickly heat and kicking at the lizards on the floor, became afflicted with a dose of patriotism and affection for our country. There was me, Billy Casparis, reduced from a capitalist to a pauper by over-addiction to my glass (in the lump), declares my troubles off for the present and myself to be an uncrowned sovereign of the greatest country on earth. And Maximilian Jones pours out whole drug stores of his wrath on oligarchies and potentates in red trousers and calico shoes. And we issues a declaration of interference in which we guarantee that the fourth day of July shall be celebrated in Salvador with all the kinds of salutes, explosions, honours of war, oratory, and liquids known to tradition. Yes, neither me nor Jones breathed with soul so dead. There shall be rucuses in Salvador, we say, and the monkeys had better climb the tallest cocoanut trees and the fire department get out its red sashes and two tin buckets.

“About this time into the factory steps a native man incriminated by the name of General Mary Esperanza Dingo. He was some pumpkin both in politics and colour, and the friend of me and Jones. He was full of politeness and a kind of intelligence, having picked up the latter and managed to preserve the former during a two years’ residence in Philadelphia studying medicine. For a Salvadorian he was not such a calamitous little man, though he always would play jack, queen, king, ace, deuce for a straight.

“General Mary sits with us and has a bottle. While he was in the States he had acquired a synopsis of the English language and the art of admiring our institutions. By and by the General gets up and tiptoes to the doors and windows and other stage entrances, remarking ‘Hist!’ at each one. They all do that in Salvador before they ask for a drink of water or the time of day, being conspirators from the cradle and matinee idols by proclamation.

"Hist!" says General Dingo again, and then he lays his chest on the table quite like Gaspard the Miser.¹³⁶ 'Good friends, *señores*, to-morrow will be the great day of Liberty and Independence. The hearts of Americans and Salvadorians should beat together. Of your history and your great Washington I know. Is it not so?'

"Now, me and Jones thought that nice of the General to remember when the Fourth came. It made us feel good. He must have heard the news going round in Philadelphia about that disturbance we had with England.

"Yes,' says me and Maxy together, 'we knew it. We were talking about it when you came in. And you can bet your bottom concession that there'll be fuss and feathers in the air to-morrow. We are few in numbers, but the welkin may as well reach out to push the button, for it's got to ring.'

"I, too, shall assist,' says the General, thumping his collar-bone. 'I, too, am on the side of Liberty. Noble Americans, we will make the day one to be never forgotten.'

"For us American whisky,' says Jones—'none of your Scotch smoke or anisada or Three Star Hennessey to-morrow. We'll borrow the consul's flag; old man Billfinger shall make orations, and we'll have a barbecue on the plaza.'

"Fireworks,' says I, 'will be scarce; but we'll have all the cartridges in the shops for our guns. I've got two navy sixes I brought from Denver.'

"There is one cannon,' said the General; 'one big cannon that will go "BOOM!" And three hundred men with rifles to shoot.'

"Oh, say!' says Jones, '*Generalissimo*, you're the real silk elastic. We'll make it a joint international celebration. Please, General, get a white horse and a blue sash and be grand marshal.'

"With my sword,' says the General, rolling his eyes. 'I shall ride at the head of the brave men who gather in the name of Liberty.'

"And you might,' we suggest 'see the *commandante* and advise him that we are going to prize things up a bit. We Americans, you know, are accustomed to using municipal regulations for gun wadding when we line up to help the eagle scream. He might suspend the rules for one day. We don't want to get in the calaboose for spanking his soldiers if they get in our way, do you see?'

"Hist!" says General Mary. 'The commandant is with us, heart and soul. He will aid us. He is one of us.'

¹³⁶ A character from the 1876 operetta, *The Chimes of Normandy*, composed by Robert Planquette to a French libretto by Louis Clairville and Charles Gabet.

“We made all the arrangements that afternoon. There was a buck coon from Georgia in Salvador who had drifted down there from a busted-up coloured colony that had been started on some possumless land in Mexico. As soon as he heard us say ‘barbecue’ he wept for joy and groveled on the ground. He dug his trench on the plaza, and got half a beef on the coals for an all-night roast. Me and Maxy went to see the rest of the Americans in the town and they all sizzled like a seidlitz¹³⁷ with joy at the idea of solemnizing an old-time Fourth.

“There were six of us all together—Martin Dillard, a coffee planter; Henry Barnes, a railroad man; old man Billfinger, an educated tintype taker; me and Jonesy, and Jerry, the boss of the barbecue. There was also an Englishman in town named Sterrett, who was there to write a book on Domestic Architecture of the Insect World. We felt some bashfulness about inviting a Britisher to help crow over his own country, but we decided to risk it, out of our personal regard for him.

“We found Sterrett in pajamas working at his manuscript with a bottle of brandy for a paper weight.

“‘Englishman,’ says Jones, ‘let us interrupt your disquisition on bug houses for a moment. To-morrow is the Fourth of July. We don’t want to hurt your feelings, but we’re going to commemorate the day when we licked you by a little refined debauchery and nonsense—something that can be heard above five miles off. If you are broad-gauged enough to taste whisky at your own wake, we’d be pleased to have you join us.’

“‘Do you know,’ says Sterrett, setting his glasses on his nose, ‘I like your cheek in asking me if I’ll join you; blast me if I don’t. You might have known I would, without asking. Not as a traitor to my own country, but for the intrinsic joy of a blooming row.’

“On the morning of the Fourth I woke up in that old shanty of an ice factory feeling sore. I looked around at the wreck of all I possessed, and my heart was full of bile. From where I lay on my cot I could look through the window and see the consul’s old ragged Stars and Stripes hanging over his shack. ‘You’re all kinds of a fool, Billy Casparis,’ I said to myself; ‘and of all your crimes against sense it does look like this idea of celebrating the Fourth should receive the award of demerit. Your business is busted up, your thousand dollars is gone into the kitty of this corrupt country on that last bluff you made, you’ve got just fifteen Chili dollars left, worth forty-six cents each at bedtime last night and steadily going down. To-day you’ll blow in your last cent hurrahing for that flag, and to-morrow you’ll be living on bananas from the stalk and screwing your drinks out of your friends. What’s the flag done for you? While you were under it you worked for what you got. You wore your finger nails down skinning suckers, and salting mines, and driving bears and alligators off your town lot additions. How much does patriotism count for on deposit when the little man with the green eye-shade in the savings-bank adds up your book? Suppose you were to get pinched over here in this irreligious country for some little crime or other, and appealed to your country for protection—what would it do for you? Turn your appeal over to a committee of one railroad man, an army officer, a

¹³⁷ *Effervescing salts.*

member of each labour union, and a coloured man to investigate whether any of your ancestors were ever related to a cousin of Mark Hanna,¹³⁸ and then file the papers in the Smithsonian Institution until after the next election. That's the kind of a sidetrack the Stars and Stripes would switch you onto.'

"You can see that I was feeling like an indigo plant; but after I washed my face in some cool water, and got out my navys and ammunition, and started up to the Saloon of the Immaculate Saints where we were to meet, I felt better. And when I saw those other American boys come swaggering into the trysting place—cool, easy, conspicuous fellows, ready to risk any kind of a one-card draw, or to fight grizzlies, fire, or extradition, I began to feel glad I was one of 'em. So, I says to myself again: 'Billy, you've got fifteen dollars and a country left this morning—blow in the dollars and blow up the town as an American gentleman should on Independence Day.'

"It is my recollection that we began the day along conventional lines. The six of us—for Sterrett was along—made progress among the cantinas, divesting the bars as we went of all strong drink bearing American labels. We kept informing the atmosphere as to the glory and preeminence of the United States and its ability to subdue, outjump, and eradicate the other nations of the earth. And, as the findings of American labels grew more plentiful, we became more contaminated with patriotism. Maximilian Jones hopes that our late foe, Mr. Sterrett, will not take offense at our enthusiasm. He sets down his bottle and shakes Sterrett's hand. 'As white man to white man,' says he, 'denude our uproar of the slightest taint of personality. Excuse us for Bunker Hill, Patrick Henry, and Waldorf Astor,¹³⁹ and such grievances as might lie between us as nations.'

"'Fellow hoodlums,' says Sterrett, 'on behalf of the Queen I ask you to cheese it. It is an honour to be a guest at disturbing the peace under the American flag. Let us chant the passionate strains of "Yankee Doodle" while the *señor* behind the bar mitigates the occasion with another round of cochineal and aqua fortis.'

"Old Man Billfinger, being charged with a kind of rhetoric, makes speeches every time we stop. We explained to such citizens as we happened to step on that we were celebrating the dawn of our own private brand of liberty, and to please enter such inhumanities as we might commit on the list of unavoidable casualties.

"About eleven o'clock our bulletins read: 'A considerable rise in temperature, accompanied by thirst and other alarming symptoms.' We hooked arms and stretched our line across the narrow streets, all of us armed with Winchesters and navys for purposes of noise and without malice. We stopped on a street corner and fired a dozen or so rounds, and began a serial assortment of United States whoops and yells, probably the first ever heard in that town.

¹³⁸ *Mark Hanna (1837–1904), a Republican US Senator from Ohio and political manager of President William McKinley. Hanna made millions as a businessman, and used his money and influence to successfully manage McKinley's presidential campaigns in 1896 and 1900.*

¹³⁹ *Waldorf Astor, 2nd Viscount Astor (1879–1952), son of the American-born William Waldorf Astor, an English politician, and newspaper proprietor.*

“When we made that noise things began to liven up. We heard a pattering up a side street, and here came General Mary Esperanza Dingo on a white horse with a couple of hundred brown boys following him in red undershirts and bare feet, dragging guns ten feet long. Jones and me had forgot all about General Mary and his promise to help us celebrate. We fired another salute and gave another yell, while the General shook hands with us and waved his sword.

“‘Oh, General,’ shouts Jones, ‘this is great. This will be a real pleasure to the eagle. Get down and have a drink.’

“‘Drink?’ says the general. ‘No. There is no time to drink. *Vive la Libertad!*’

“‘Don’t forget *E Pluribus Unum!*’ says Henry Barnes

“‘*Viva* it good and strong,’ says I. ‘Likewise, *viva* George Washington. God save the Union, and,’ I says, bowing to Sterrett, ‘don’t discard the Queen.’

“‘Thanks,’ says Sterrett. ‘The next round’s mine. All in to the bar. Army, too.’

“But we were deprived of Sterrett’s treat by a lot of gunshots several square sway, which General Dingo seemed to think he ought to look after. He spurred his old white plug up that way, and the soldiers scuttled along after him.

“‘Mary is a real tropical bird,’ says Jones. ‘He’s turned out the infantry to help us to honour to the Fourth. We’ll get that cannon he spoke of after a while and fire some window-breakers with it. But just now I want some of that barbecued beef. Let us on to the plaza.’

“There we found the meat gloriously done, and Jerry waiting, anxious. We sat around on the grass, and got hunks of it on our tin plates. Maximilian Jones, always made tender-hearted by drink, cried some because George Washington couldn’t be there to enjoy the day. ‘There was a man I love, Billy,’ he says, weeping on my shoulder. ‘Poor George! To think he’s gone, and missed the fireworks. A little more salt, please, Jerry.’

“From what we could hear, General Dingo seemed to be kindly contributing some noise while we feasted. There were guns going off around town, and pretty soon we heard that cannon go ‘BOOM!’ just as he said it would. And then men began to skim along the edge of the plaza, dodging in among the orange trees and houses. We certainly had things stirred up in Salvador. We felt proud of the occasion and grateful to General Dingo. Sterrett was about to take a bite off a juicy piece of rib when a bullet took it away from his mouth.

“‘Somebody’s celebrating with ball cartridges,’ says he, reaching for another piece. ‘Little over-zealous for a non-resident patriot, isn’t it?’

"Don't mind it," I says to him. "'Twas an accident. They happen, you know, on the Fourth. After one reading of the Declaration of Independence in New York I've known the S. R. O. [*Standing Room Only*] sign to be hung out at all the hospitals and police stations.'

"But then Jerry gives a howl and jumps up with one hand clapped to the back of his leg where another bullet has acted over-zealous. And then comes a quantity of yells, and round a corner and across the plaza gallops General Mary Esperanza Dingo embracing the neck of his horse, with his men running behind him, mostly dropping their guns by way of discharging ballast. And chasing 'em all is a company of feverish little warriors wearing blue trousers and caps.

"Assistance, *amigos*,' the General shouts, trying to stop his horse. 'Assistance, in the name of Liberty!'

"That's the *Campania Azul*, the President's bodyguard,' says Jones. 'What a shame! They've jumped on poor old Mary just because he was helping us to celebrate. Come on, boys, it's our Fourth;—do we let that little squad of A. D. T.'s break it up?'

"I vote No,' says Martin Dillard, gathering his Winchester. 'It's the privilege of an American citizen to drink, drill, dress up, and be dreadful on the Fourth of July, no matter whose country he's in.'

"Fellow citizens!' says old man Billfinger, 'In the darkest hour of Freedom's birth, when our brave forefathers promulgated the principles of undying liberty, they never expected that a bunch of blue jays like that should be allowed to bust up an anniversary. Let us preserve and protect the Constitution.'

"We made it unanimous, and then we gathered our guns and assaulted the blue troops in force. We fired over their heads, and then charged 'em with a yell, and they broke and ran. We were irritated at having our barbecue disturbed, and we chased 'em a quarter of a mile. Some of 'em we caught and kicked hard. The General rallied his troops and joined in the chase. Finally they scattered in a thick banana grove, and we couldn't flush a single one. So we sat down and rested.

"If I were to be put, severe, through the third degree, I wouldn't be able to tell much about the rest of the day. I mind that we pervaded the town considerable, calling upon the people to bring out more armies for us to destroy. I remember seeing a crowd somewhere, and a tall man that wasn't Billfinger making a Fourth of July speech from a balcony. And that was about all.

"Somebody must have hauled the old ice factory up to where I was, and put it around me, for there's where I was when I woke up the next morning. As soon as I could recollect by name and address I got up and held an inquest. My last cent was gone. I was all in.

“And then a neat black carriage drives to the door, and out steps General Dingo and a bay man in a silk hat and tan shoes.

“‘Yes,’ says I to myself, ‘I see it now. You’re the Chief de Políceos and High Lord Chamberlain of the Calaboosum; and you want Billy Casparis for excess of patriotism and assault with intent. All right. Might as well be in jail, anyhow.’

“‘But it seems that General Mary is smiling, and the bay man shakes my hand, and speaks in the American dialect.

“‘General Dingo has informed me, *Señor* Casparis, of your gallant service in our cause. I desire to thank you with my person. The bravery of you and the other *señores Americanos* turned the struggle for liberty in our favour. Our party triumphed. The terrible battle will live forever in history.

“‘Battle?’ says I; ‘what battle?’ and I ran my mind back along history, trying to think.

“‘*Señor* Casparis is modest,’ says General Dingo. ‘He led his brave *compadres* into the thickest of the fearful conflict. Yes. Without their aid the revolution would have failed.’

“‘Why, now,’ says I, ‘don’t tell me there was a revolution yesterday. That was only a Fourth of—’

“‘But right there I abbreviated. It seemed to me it might be best.

“‘After the terrible struggle,’ says the bay man, ‘President Bolano was forced to fly. To-day Caballo is President by proclamation. Ah, yes. Beneath the new administration I am the head of the Department of Mercantile Concessions. On my file I find one report, *Señor* Casparis, that you have not made ice in accord with your contract.’ And here the bay man smiles at me, ‘cute.

“‘Oh, well,’ says I, ‘I guess the report’s straight. I know they caught me. That’s all there is to it.’

“‘Do not say so,’ says the bay man. He pulls off a glove and goes over and lays his hand on that chunk of glass.

“‘Ice,’ says he, nodding his head, solemn.

“‘General Dingo also steps over and feels of it.

“‘Ice,’ says the General; ‘I’ll swear to it.’

“If *Señor Casparis*,’ says the bay man, ‘will present himself to the treasury on the sixth day of this month he will receive back the thousand dollars he did deposit as a forfeit. *Adios, señor.*’

“The General and the bay man bowed themselves out, and I bowed as often as they did.

“And when the carriage rolls away through the sand I bows once more, deeper than ever, till my hat touches the ground. But this time ’twas not intended for them. For, over their heads, I saw the old flag fluttering in the breeze above the consul’s roof; and ’twas to it I made my profoundest salute.”

My Country, 'Tis of Thee

WORDS BY SAMUEL F. SMITH

Until it was officially replaced by “The Star Spangled-Banner” in 1931, “My Country, 'Tis of Thee” served as our de facto national anthem. It was written in 1831 by Samuel Francis Smith (1808–1895), Baptist minister, journalist, and author. Though it is set to the music of Britain’s national anthem, Smith came to it by way of a German song. Also known as “America,” this song was first performed in public on July 4, 1831, at a children’s Independence Day celebration at Park Street Church in Boston.

What is it about “My Country” that the song primarily celebrates? Several verses explicitly refer to the Divine: for what reasons and for what purposes? Several verses speak about education and school: what role do they play in the nation’s story? What, according to the song, do we owe to our ancestors? To what—ancestors, or schools, or God, or something else—are we indebted for “Sweet Freedom”? Does singing the song help preserve it?

For a musical rendition, view a performance by Marian Anderson at the Lincoln Memorial at www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=mAONYTMf2pk.

My country, 'tis of thee,
Sweet Land of Liberty
Of thee I sing;
Land where my fathers died,
Land of the pilgrims' pride,
From every mountain side
Let Freedom ring!

My native country, thee,
Land of the noble free,
Thy name I love;
I love thy rocks and rills,
Thy woods and templed hills;
My heart with rapture thrills,
Like that above.

Let music swell the breeze,
And ring from all the trees
Sweet Freedom's song;
Let mortal tongues awake;
Let all that breathe partake;
Let rocks their silence break,
The sound prolong.

Our fathers' God, to Thee,¹⁴⁰
Author of Liberty,
To Thee we sing.
Long may our land be bright
With Freedom's holy light;
Protect us by Thy might
Great God, our King.

We love thine inland seas,
Thy groves and giant trees,
Thy rolling plains;
Thy rivers' mighty sweep,
Thy mystic canyons deep,
Thy mountains wild and steep,—
All thy domains.

My country, 'tis of thee,¹⁴¹
Stronghold of slavery, of thee I sing;
Land where my fathers died,
Where men man's rights deride,
From every mountainside thy deeds shall ring!

My native country, thee,
Where all men are born free, if white's their skin;
I love thy hills and dales,
Thy mounts and pleasant vales;
But hate thy negro sales, as foulest sin.

Let wailing swell the breeze,
And ring from all the trees the black man's wrong;
Let every tongue awake;
Let bond and free partake;
Let rocks their silence break, the sound prolong.

Our father's God! to thee,
Author of Liberty, to thee we sing;
Soon may our land be bright,
With holy freedom's right,
Protect us by thy might, Great God, our King.

It comes, the joyful day,
When tyranny's proud sway, stern as the grave,
Shall to the ground be hurl'd,
And freedom's flag, unfurl'd,

¹⁴⁰ *These verses were later added by the American educator and clergyman Henry van Dyke.*

¹⁴¹ *These verses were added in 1843 by the abolitionist A. G. Duncan.*

Shall wave throughout the world, O'er every slave.

Trump of glad jubilee!
Echo o'er land and sea freedom for all.
Let the glad tidings fly,
And every tribe reply,
"Glory to God on high," at Slavery's fall.

A Village Patriot

SARAH ORNE JEWETT

In this story from 1897, Maine novelist and short story writer Sarah Orne Jewett (1849–1909) explores different attitudes toward the Fourth of July among members of a group of workmen who, on July 3rd, are shingling the roof of a new country house outside Boston. Most of the men hail from Boston, to which they are eager to return. The old-timer in the group, Abel Thorndike, lives nearby in the local village, and differs from the others also in his way of celebrating the Fourth.

How does Thorndike’s celebration of the Fourth differ from that of the others? What do you think accounts for the difference? According to the title, he is a village patriot, rather than the village patriot: Does this perhaps suggest that patriotism is influenced by place, and that patriotism in villages differs from—and might be deeper than—patriotism in cities? Consider the “bookends” of the story, the beginning and the end, which take place with the men at work. What is the relation between work and the Fourth of July and between work and patriotism? What is the difference between a day off and a holiday? Which is the Fourth of July for you? What do you regard as the best way to celebrate it?

Six men were going home from work together. They had been shingling the south gable-end of a new country house, and the owner, a Boston man, had just telephoned down that everybody might knock off work at three o’clock so that those who wished could take the four o’clock train to town. Most of the gang did wish this before the Fourth of July and they were nearly all Boston men who had been sent down by the building contractor. The six shinglers came down their ladder and walked away together. Jim Fisher had his bicycle, but he trundled it along by hand and walked with his mates. They could still hear hammers knocking in the great house where some of the boys were lingering to end off part of the standing finish in one of the lower rooms. Work was being rushed and they had set themselves a stint, and loyally stood by to close the thing just right.

“I never saw a house put together so quick,” said a sober-looking fellow named Allison to Jim Fisher, who turned to look back. “Quick’s a room’s parted off, on go the laths, and before the lathers get out the plasterers step in. Wonder the paperers don’t chase them right round the four wet walls.”

“Takes some folks a good while to find out that it’s just as cheap to pay twenty men one day as ’tis to pay one man twenty days,” said Jim Fisher.

“There ain’t many bosses can handle a large crew to good advantage,” said a wise round-shouldered old man who wore spectacles at his work and liked a good political argument at noon over his dinner pail. He was the only one of the six who lived in the town, and Charley Burrill had boarded with him all the spring. Charley Burrill was a brisk-looking Boston fellow who did a first-rate week’s work and dressed himself with noticeable smartness on Sunday.

“You’re right there!” said this young man; “trouble’s apt to be with the boss. Last job I was on, we were standin’ round most of our time waitin’ an’ tumblin’ right over one ’nother. Men come down from the city with all their solder furnaces an’ riggin’ to do a piece o’ the roofing before the roof was boarded. There was one of ’em used to practice ‘Anne Laurie’ on a cornet under the stone shed, an’ miss the same note every time, till one day a fellow went down out o’ the third story to break the old toot horn over his head.”

“Wish I was a boss,” said Jim Fisher, cheerfully.

“No, you don’t; not that kind,” said old Thorndike. “Tell you I’m older’n you boys be, and I’ve noticed ever since I was a boy myself that folks always done well that done their fair day’s work, an’ all died poor that had a spell o’ thinkin’ they were goin’ to get rich out o’ shirkin’. Nothin’ for nothin’s a pretty safe rule.”

“Goin’ to preach this comin’ Sunday, elder?” inquired Jim Fisher, with polite interest.

“No, I ain’t, sir,” answered Abel, good-naturedly. “My ambitions all run toward practicin’. I’m goin’ to celebrate the Fourth o’ July, though; perhaps you ain’t aware it comes to-morrow, or do you have a special one o’ your own up to Boston?”

“What are you going to do, elder?” demanded Jim Fisher. The six men had fallen into single file along the narrow footpath, but Fisher stopped and let the rest go by.

“What be I goin’ to do?” repeated the old man, a little confused and glancing at Charley Burrill. “Well, sir, my folks can celebrate as well as anybody round here, but ’twould seem plain to Boston folks.”

“Don’t let Charley spoil his nice new clothes with snapcrackers,” said Jim, and Charley Burrill blushed as was expected. He had said early in the day that he was not going home for the Fourth, and they all knew the reason. They had come to a turn in the road and Jim Fisher sprang on his wheel and whirled away, leaving everybody to plod behind.

“Be careful, Charley!” he shouted, and young Burrill shouted gayly back as he went down the lane with Abel Thorndike. Thorndike’s house was on the river bank, and there were some apple-trees by it and a little flower-garden in front. As the two men came to the gate a pretty girl looked out of the window and threw her sewing on the table and came out to meet them.

Abel Thorndike sat on his doorstep after supper, reading the “Life of Washington.” The younger members of his household were leaning over the gate talking and looking at the river.

"My pity sakes!" exclaimed Mr. Thorndike, with enthusiasm. "Just see what a man Washington was! Here it is in his great address: 'Watch your majorities as carefully as if they were kings,' says he: why, General Washington was a prophet!"

The young lovers turned a little embarrassed at being interrupted, while the old carpenter took off his spectacles and laid down the big book with an impressive air. Charley began to think that they had better walk down the lane.

"Here 'tis Fourth o' July again, and how few folks thinks what it all means," said Abel. "I don't want to waste as good a day as there is in the year. I always feel as if I ought to go to meetin' part o' the day, and sit and think about my country and them that give it to me."

"We're sober enough Decoration Day," said Phebe. "Why, father, we ought to be gay's we can Fourth o' July; there's a time to rejoice, ain't there? I've got your flags all ready to put right out in the morning anyway."

"Don't you be scared, Phebe!" said the old man. "I'm goin' to rejoice. What have you two young creatures got in mind to do? I don't expect you'll want me to go along anyway," and he smiled at them with open recognition of a happy fact of which they fancied him quite unconscious. They were not used to the happiness of being lovers, and his face just then seemed the kindest face in the world.

"I've spoken for a team," said Abel, innocently. "I knew Charley'd want one and you have to speak a long while beforehand to get the best, such days. I'm goin' to give ye both a first-rate ride in the afternoon an' in the evenin' I shall want Charley to help me with my fireworks. I've done so well working all the spring on this good job that I've got plenty o' money to fool round a little. There's some boy left in me yet, old's I be. Some years in the past I ain't been able to have anything but a good bonfire, but I've always had that."

"Good for you, sir!" said Charley Burrill.

"It ain't a bit o' harm to have a little pleasin'; a good deal of a man's life has to be kind of dull," reflected Abel Thorndike, as he stood at the gate and watched the young couple drive away. They had called to him in distress when they found the one pleasure carriage which he allowed himself the summer through was a single-seated buggy. Charley Burrill shouted for the stable boy who was running up the lane. "You've made a mistake!" he said.

"No, no, 'twas just as I ordered; you can go by yourselves to-day," and the father looked from one face to the other. "I was young myself once, and I ain't ready either," he added, by way of final excuse.

Phebe put her arm round her father's neck and kissed him; she looked more like her mother than usual that day. And Abel Thorndike felt a sudden pang of loneliness.

“There, there! you go off and find some nice roads up country; I don’t expect to see you till supper time an’ we’ll make a light supper anyway after our good dinner o’ lamb an’ green peas, ’tis my great treat,” he said. “An’ after dark we’ll touch the fireworks off. I shall be glad to set an’ rest an’ read my ‘Life o’ Washington’ an’ I may get a nap!”

Burrill ventured to laugh, but he had a new understanding of the happiness of holiday making, and started off gayly to make the most of his afternoon.

Early that evening they watched an eager crowd assembling on the opposite river bank.

“You see they always expect something from me,” said old Abel, apologetically. “This year I’m goin’ to surprise ’em. Some say it’s foolish to burn up money so, but folks about here don’t have the interests they do in Boston, an’ ’tis one way to enjoy themselves. I used to think when I was a boy and my folks were pinched an’ poor, some day I’d get ahead an’ then nobody should forget the Fourth where I was. ’Tain’t no common day, an’ I ain’t goin’ to behave as if I thought so. Phebe says you’ve given her an elegant time this afternoon, an’ she’s come home happy’s a queen. I feel grateful to see her so happy, and now we’ll fetch those boxes out o’ the shop an’ touch things off an’ celebrate extra this year. Folks say my fireworks always looks so pretty, all double an’ shinin’ in the river.”

Next day the shingling gang was at work again, and all the hammers going inside and outside the great house.

“What did you do yesterday?” somebody asked Jim Fisher.

“Oh, nothing particular. I didn’t spend a cent an’ ’twas too hot to go off anywhere on my wheel,” said Jim, despondently. “’Tain’t much of a day after you’ve got past snap crackers.”

“You ought to have seen the way they celebrate down here,” announced Charley Burrill, proudly. “Best Fourth I ever had!” and he and Abel Thorndike did not look at each other, but their hearts seemed to touch.

“I always read a good long chapter in my ‘Life o’ Washington,’” said old Abel, as he reached for more nails. “Trouble is, you young fellows don’t half know what a country you’ve got behind you.”

The Fourth of July

JOHN UPDIKE

In this selection, first published in New England Monthly in the late 1980s and reprinted in his book Odd Jobs: Essays and Criticism (1991), the prolific 20th-century novelist, poet, and literary critic John Updike (1932–2009) offers reflections on the place of the Fourth of July in the rhythm of our summer holidays and on the ways in which we celebrate it.¹⁴² He comments on the following topics, among others, all of which merit conversation: the summer heat in Philadelphia, 1776; the clothing of summertime and freedom—the “freedom felt in the body itself”; the “sadness” of fireworks; the uniquely delayed climax of this holiday; bonfires, and their association with independence; the varying, yet simultaneous, ways of celebrating the Fourth across the country; the “long day’s dry American silence.”

In his discussion of bonfires, what does Updike mean by suggesting that “conflagrations and constitutions keep close company,” or that “established statehood rests upon triumphant violence”? What, according to Updike, is the virtue of this holiday? What does he mean by calling it “the unmoving pivot” of the American year? Why does he say, “the Fourth of July makes us a little wary, a touch cranky”? Do you agree with his judgments and claims? Is there something missing in Updike’s account of how we celebrate the Fourth? If so, what should be added? How do you celebrate the Fourth? Can you do something to make it more meaningful?

It is a human providence that scatters the holidays around so conveniently on the calendar. The American summer has three days to mark its phases—Memorial Day to signal its beginning, the Fourth of July to mark the start of high summer, and Labor Day to bring it to a gentle close. Of these three, the first and third were invented and bestowed upon the year by government fiat, and even the Fourth is somewhat arbitrary. The Continental Congress actually declared that “these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be Free and Independent States” on July 2, 1776, and on the fourth merely voted to adopt the Declaration of Independence, which was publicly read in the yard of the Pennsylvania statehouse in Philadelphia on July 8. It was not copied onto parchment and signed by the delegates in attendance until August 2, and the last of the fifty-six signatories, Thomas McKean of Delaware, did not affix his name before 1777.

Read the essay on page 79 at

http://books.google.com/books?id=ys51j6KtJBwC&printsec=frontcover&dq=editions:NmI2TZI-3FwC&hl=en&sa=X&ei=F67EUYKTAZTr0QGp_4CYAw&ved=0CDUQ6AEwAQ#v=onepage&q&f=false.

¹⁴² Updike’s account may be usefully compared with Ronald Reagan’s reminiscences of the Fourth of July celebrations of his youth (see above).

Independence Day

WENDELL BERRY

Not everyone celebrates Independence Day with parades, barbecues, and fireworks, or with a reading of the Declaration of Independence. In this poem, the prolific author, cultural critic, and farmer Wendell Berry (b. 1934) celebrates the holiday in the woods.

What does he mean by suggesting that, “As America from England, [so] the woods stands free from politics and anthems”? The poet claims that it is “in the woods [where] I stand free, knowing my land.” What does he mean? Is America the land? Are the woods America? Is our freedom at bottom not at all civic or political? (Compare Berry on this with William Cullen Bryant’s presentation of our original natural liberty in “The Antiquity of Freedom,” the poem with which we began this chapter.)

What is Berry suggesting by transforming “My country, ’tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing” into “My country, tis of the drying pools along Camp Branch I sing”? What, according to the poem, are the songs of God? Does this way of celebrating Independence Day represent a fulfillment of the American idea of freedom—which includes a secure right to pursue happiness, as each of us sees fit—or is it a distortion of it? To what extent does our freedom to enjoy private life—and the world of nature—rest on our political institutions and on the attachment of our fellow citizens to the well being of the republic—that is, on politics and anthems?

Between painting a roof yesterday and the hay
harvest tomorrow, a holiday in the woods
under the grooved trunks and branches, the roof
of leaves lighted and shadowed by the sky.

Read the complete poem at

<http://books.google.com/books?id=P7CkOmkkZZMC&lpg=PA46&dq=wendell%20berry%20independence%20day%20between%20%20painting&pg=PA46#v=onepage&q=wendell%20berry%20independence%20day%20between%20%20painting&f=false>.

Appendix

The Gettysburg Address: Abraham Lincoln's Re-founding of the Nation

LEON R. KASS

“In this temple, as in the hearts of the people for whom he saved the Union, the memory of Abraham Lincoln is enshrined forever.” This, I trust everyone knows, is the inscription on the back wall of the Lincoln Memorial, visible above the awe-inspiring statue of our greatest president, greeting us and inducing reverence as we enter what is, in my opinion, the finest public building anywhere. On facing walls, to left and right, are carved in stone Lincoln's two greatest speeches, the Gettysburg Address and the Second Inaugural, Lincoln's personal contributions to his enduring memory. The world may little note nor long remember what exactly happened at Gettysburg, but it will never forget what Lincoln said there and on the second appearing to take the oath of the presidential office.

The Gettysburg Address has been memorized, recited, and admired. Countless scholars have discussed its rhetorical devices, literary merit, and political reception. But few have attended to the *thought* of Lincoln's speech and the deeper purposes that it serves. People do recognize that this funeral oration, honoring Union dead in the battle that marked a turning point in the war against Southern rebellion, was even more clearly a summons to the living to prosecute to victorious conclusion a war that, despite the victory at Gettysburg, was not going well enough: “the great task remaining before us” is, first and foremost, the winning of the war. But few people see that the speech offers Lincoln's reinterpretation of the American Founding, his understanding of the war as a *test* of that founding, and his own characterization of this nation now being reborn through passing that bloody test. Central to Lincoln's declaration of America reborn is his own new, as-it-were baptismal, teaching on the relation between liberty and equality, crucial to our new birth of freedom. In this talk, I would like to offer some evidence for these large claims.

The express rhetorical purpose of the speech is clearly evident on the surface. The occasion is the dedication of a Union cemetery at Gettysburg for the burial of the nearly 5,300 Union fallen (killed in 2 days; another 17,000 Union soldiers were wounded; 27,000 Confederate soldiers were killed or wounded). Lincoln acknowledges that, “it is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.” But he is much less interested in dedicating a patch of earth to honor the dead than he is in inspiring his listeners, “us the living,” who are—despite dispiriting loss and grief—“to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced,” to “the great task remaining before us,” namely, victory in the war and the restoration of the Union, now on a more solid foundation. But it is the outer frame of the speech, and especially its beginning and its end, that bespeaks Lincoln's larger purpose: to create for future generations an interpretation of the war, and especially the war's relation to both the once “*new* nation,” brought forth by “our fathers” and “conceived in liberty,” and “*this* nation,” which, through the sacrifice of war and our dedication, “shall have a new

birth of freedom.” Before turning to those passages at the beginning and the end, I need to say something about the relation of this speech to a concern that had preoccupied Lincoln for at least 25 years.

In January 1838, in a remarkable speech to the Young Men’s Lyceum in Springfield, Illinois, Lincoln (age 28) worried about the perpetuation of our institutions, now that the Founding generation had gone to rest and those who had known them were also dying out. It is an astonishing speech, informed by profound reflections on themes such as law and lawlessness, soaring political ambition (including his own), and the vulnerability of free institutions in democratic times to both mob rule and tyranny. It is in this speech that Lincoln asserts that perpetuating our political institutions requires the development of a “political religion,” comprising reverence for the laws and, more generally, sober sentiments “hewn from the solid quarry of sober reason”—among them, the founding principles. As Lincoln put it:

. . . Passion has helped us; but can do so no more. It will in future be our enemy. Reason, cold, calculating, unimpassioned reason, must furnish all the materials for our future support and defense.—Let those materials be moulded into *general intelligence; sound morality;* and, in particular, *a reverence for the constitution and laws.*

It is my contention that Lincoln was, throughout his life, obsessed with the problem of attaching his fellow citizens to the American regime, and that he self-consciously crafted his best public utterances with a view to their becoming canonical texts of the much needed political religion.

The Gettysburg Address is, in both form and substance, a perfect text for the bible of American political religion. It is short enough to be memorized: 3 paragraphs of progressively increasing length, 10 sentences, 272 words (only 130 different words), 74 percent of which are monosyllables. The polysyllabic words stand out against the little words, and only a few pregnant longer words appear more than once: among the disyllabic words, only *conceived, living, rather, people* (three times in the last clause), and especially *nation* (5 times: “*new nation*” in paragraph 1; “that nation,” “any nation,” and “that nation” in paragraph 2; but “*this nation*” in the last sentence of paragraph 3, this nation that shall be reborn into freedom). Among still longer words, Lincoln uses more than once only *devotion* (twice), *consecrate* or *consecrated* (twice), and—the most important word in the speech—*dedicate* or *dedicated* (6 times). Noteworthy also is the echoing use of the word “here”—heard 8 times—the importance of which will be clear by the end.

The three paragraphs of progressively increasing length refer to time periods and actors of progressively increasing rhetorical importance: (paragraph 1) the *past* (“Four-score and seven years ago”; “our fathers”; 30 words); (paragraph 2) the *very immediate present* (“Now”; *we* who are engaged in a great civil war, but mainly a much smaller *we* who are, right *here* and right *now*, met on a great battlefield of that war and who, fittingly and properly, have come to dedicate a portion of that field; 73 words); and (paragraph 3)

our *future* in relation to our present and our past (contrasting "the brave men" who fought and died, with "us the living"; and moving from (a) our inability through speech to dedicate ground better consecrated by the deeds of the brave men, to (b) "us the living" dedicating *ourselves* to the great task remaining before us, (c) to "*we* here highly resolv[ing]" to win the war, so that (d) certain great things will follow, both for this nation ("a new birth") and also for people everywhere (169 words, nearly half of them in the last sentence about our dedication). The speech, in its spatial references, has an hour-glass structure, widest below: it opens "on this continent," narrows in its center to "a great battle-field" and, even narrower, to "a portion of that field," but finishes by suggesting that our dedication "here" can ensure that popular government will never perish from the whole *earth*.

But these are but smaller formal details, important to be sure for the rhetorical effect, but hardly by themselves enough to give the speech canonical standing. That comes from its content, and especially from its beginning and its end. Let us examine them.

Four score and seven years ago, our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in Liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Four score and seven years ago. Why does Lincoln begin with this expression? Scholars note that the language is biblical, and that it echoes the 90th Psalm:

The days of our years are three score and ten,
Or even by reason of strength four score years.

But few notice that, by this biblical reference, Lincoln is making a crucial substantive point: the deed he is about to recount, he intimates, happened not in living memory; four score *and seven* years ago none alive today (in 1863) had yet been born. Lincoln's beginning reflects and highlights his long-standing concern about perpetuation in a fully post-revolutionary age.

The theme and imagery of the first paragraph, and indeed of the frame of the speech as a whole, is *birth*: the birth (and, at the end, the *re*-birth) of the nation. Four score and seven, or 87, years identifies the birth year as 1776, the year of the Declaration of Independence, not 1787, the year of the Constitution. Lincoln gives no hint of the bloody war of American separation and secession that secured in deed the Declaration's verbal assertion of our independence from Great Britain. Instead, Lincoln gives us an image of quiet generative congress. According to Lincoln, *our fathers*—after pointing out that we could not have known them, Lincoln calls the founders *our fathers*, rather than our *grandfathers*, bringing us close to them in spirit and inviting pious gratitude for our patrimony—brought forth or sired upon this continent (as mother) a *new* nation. It is new not only in historical fact; it is new also in principle. Lincoln tells us precisely how it was distinctively novel: it was "conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal." Several points deserve emphasis, especially when we compare

Lincoln's description of the founding birth with the birth certificate language of the Declaration of Independence itself.

In the Declaration the signers declare: "We *hold* these *truths* to be *self-evident*: that all men are created equal." In Lincoln's version, three important changes are made. First, Lincoln changes a "self-evident truth" to a "proposition." Both terms come from geometry (Lincoln had studied Euclid): a self-evident truth is an *axiom*, which neither admits of proof nor requires proof, for it contains its evidence in itself. According to the Declaration, human equality is held to be an axiom, evident in itself: if one understands the meaning of "men," one must immediately see that *all* men are *equally human*. A proposition, on the other hand, is like a geometric *theorem*: its truth *must* be proved; yet it may turn out to be either unprovable or even false. According to Lincoln, human equality was less a self-evident *premise* of the American founding, more a proposition in need of *future* demonstration.

The significance of the shift from axiom to proposition is revealed by Lincoln's second big change: according to Lincoln "our fathers" treated "all men are created equal" not, as the Declaration states, as a *truth* that "we *hold*," but as something to which they were *dedicated*. Lincoln shifts the picture from theory to practice: the proposition is more than an intellectual matter that one holds as a belief and proves in speech; it is a practical goal to which one must devote oneself in action. The truth of the proposition of human equality cannot be shown by Euclidean reasoning; it must be demonstrated through deed and devotion.

Third, and most subtly, Lincoln does not ask us to think of the proposition only as a universal truth that we too can try to prove in practice; he wraps that truth in the pious drapery of the dedication of *our fathers*. We should take an interest in this proposition, he implies, not only because it might be true, but as a matter of honoring the memory of our remarkable fathers. In short, Lincoln has transformed a merely intellectual truth, held as self-evident and accessible to universal human reason (the Declaration's formulation), into a truth requiring *practical* demonstration by *particular* people—our fathers—who dedicated themselves to doing so. In this way, Lincoln summons our ancestral piety and attaches it to an emerging political religion, whose creed he is here redefining. Yet, as we shall see, ancestral piety alone cannot sustain us, and a new birth is necessary, in large part because our fathers did not get it exactly right.

Why does Lincoln change the Declaration? In order to address and correct a deep difficulty in our founding regarding the relation between equality and liberty. A clue is provided in the other big idea in the first sentence, "conceived in liberty." We know the fathers, we know the mother continent, and we know the child nation and to what it is dedicated. But what is meant by "conceived *in* liberty," and how does this figure in Lincoln's revision of the story of America's birth?

The oddity of the "in" in the phrase, "conceived in Liberty," has confused me for some time. One astute reader suggested that, just as a natural child is "conceived in love," so the American national child was "conceived in love of Liberty." I myself have instead

toyed with "conceived *freely*, conceived by *choice*," not by necessity or nature or in passion, or, alternatively, "conceived in an act of independence and liberation, from the rule of Britain." But an illuminating interpretation was recently given me by my friend, Harvey Flaumenhaft, of St. John's College, Annapolis. "In Liberty," he suggests, refers to the political matrix that characterizes both "the before" and "the after" of the "bringing forth" of the new nation, and that matrix is British liberty, the context also of the American colonies. Britain, like the new republic, was a liberal polity, but British liberty was mixed with a hereditary principle—not only the monarchy, but especially a hereditary nobility of dukes and barons who lorded it over the commons. The true American innovation is the replacement of the hereditary principle with the principle of equality and equal rights: governments, the Founders declared, exist to secure the rights not only of the highborn of hereditary privilege but of *all* men, who are equally endowed with unalienable rights.

We today take for granted the compatibility of political liberty and political equality. But this novel addition of the principle of equality to the principle of liberty was then an unprecedented experiment. Not unreasonably, it gave rise to two big questions: Can a nation "so conceived and so dedicated long endure"? Can political equality be obtained without the *surrender* of liberty? Taking the second question first, Lincoln had been personally attacked as a tyrant who was destroying liberty in his pursuit of equality: "Maryland, My Maryland," the state song written in 1861, begins "The despot's heel is on thy shore, Maryland! His torch is at thy temple door, Maryland!" and the alleged despot is none other than Lincoln! His later suspension of the writ of habeas corpus would eventually be ruled unconstitutional. Yet Lincoln teaches in this speech that commitment to equality is not only compatible with liberty, but is in fact freedom's only true foundation.

Regarding the first point, the war, Lincoln says, is a test: a test of the durability of a nation committed to equality as well as to liberty.¹⁴³ And although he does not say so here, as he does in the Second Inaugural, the war is a test that is now upon the nation because of an offensive defect in the founding. The defect is not mentioned by name in the Gettysburg Address, but its name is slavery. (Lincoln, by the way, also does not mention either the North or the South—or the Union—nor does he here assign blame for the war; in the Second Inaugural he explicitly suggests that the offense of slavery lies with the nation as a whole.)

The Declaration of Independence was a liberal document, not a republican one. It did not by itself specify any particular form of government; any government is legitimate so long as it secures the rights of all who live under its rule. Yet despite adding the egalitarian principle to the British liberal principle, and despite the fact that, in Lincoln's reformulation of the nation's birth, equality as the *goal* was to come out of liberty by way of dedication, the new nation was flawed and stained from the start by the institution of slavery.

¹⁴³ Moreover, because of the unprecedented character and great good fortune of America's founding, Lincoln insisted that the civil war was a test also for durability of any nation so conceived and so dedicated.

Contrary to current opinion, many of the Founders understood that America's practice fell short of its founding principles, and they devised instrumentalities that they hoped would place slavery in the course of its ultimate extinction. But by Lincoln's time the situation had deteriorated. Not only was the regime in contradiction with itself, falling short of its stated ideals; worse, the South in rebelling had given effect to the view that the principle of equality was not merely too lofty but, in fact, as a proposition simply false. Lincoln knew that this denial of human equality was the true cause of the war; and Lincoln understood that the bloody struggle over slavery was the true test of the nation. Now that the self-evident truth of equality had been turned into a proposition needing proof, and now that the rebels had repudiated the proposition calling it a self-evident lie, passing the test meant winning the war, in part because winning the war meant a repudiation of the repudiation, a vindication of the proposition of equality.

So what then is at issue in this war, and why must "we *here* highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain"? The goal for which victory is indispensable is two-fold, both transcending the mere restoration of the now dissolved Union: first, "that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom"; and second, "that government of the people, by the people, and for the people shall not perish from the earth."

The new birth of freedom—for which Lincoln is here offering the baptismal blessing and explanation—is a birth through blood, not through generative congress of ancestral patriarchs and mother continent. More important, this new freedom will differ from the British liberty in which the nation was first conceived. Here equality will not come out of liberty. Rather, *freedom will be born out of equality*, because the inegalitarian principle and the practice of slavery will be repudiated and defeated as the necessary condition of rebirth. Masters as well as slaves will share in this new birth of freedom, having shed the mutual degradation that enslavement brings to them both. Liberty, says Lincoln, has not only not been destroyed, as the rebels claimed; it will for the first time be put on a truly secure foundation: the radical equality of all human beings, now thrice called "the people," who will govern and be governed for their own well-being. We the people, we the living rededicating ourselves here on the graves of the fallen, become, under God, the nation's new patriarchs and founders.

The nation conceived in liberty got a new birth of freedom, thanks to the self-sacrificing deeds of "the brave men . . . who struggled here" and thanks to the dedication of the living, under Lincoln's leadership, to "the cause for which they gave their last full measure of devotion." But taking the long view, the nation became better able to attach the hearts and minds of its citizens thanks to the words fitly spoken at Gettysburg by Father Abraham, who presided over its re-founding in speech no less than in deed and whose words have inspired all who came afterwards to dedicate themselves to preserve, protect, and perfect our political freedom and equality. Today and tomorrow, our attachment to the republic is greatly enhanced whenever we reanimate Lincoln's words and, under their still living instruction, remain dedicated to his vision of our national purpose.

About the Cover



Edward Moran
Unveiling the Statue of Liberty, 1886

Born in Bolton, Lancashire, England to a humble family of hand-loom weavers, Edward Moran (1829–1901) eventually became a successful painter, especially well known for his paintings of marine subjects. His younger brothers Peter and Thomas, his sons Edward Percy and Leon, and his nephew Jean Leon Gerome Ferris all, too, became prominent American artists.

Even as a child, Moran was interested in drawing, at times getting in trouble for sketching instead of helping his parents with the loom. At age 15, he and his family immigrated to the United States, where they settled in Maryland. Moran continued in the family business, finding employment at a textile factory. His supervisor at the factory, after discovering Moran drawing at work, encouraged him to pursue his interests and introduced him to Paul Weber, a German landscape artist then

living in Philadelphia.

Moran moved to New York in 1872, becoming an associate of the National Academy of Design in 1874. There he began to experiment with luminism, a style of landscape painting in which light and hazy brushstrokes are used to lend emotion to the subject. In early 1876, Moran met French sculptor Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi, who told Moran of his plan to create a monumental statue in the New York Harbor titled *Liberty Enlightening the World*—more commonly known as the Statue of Liberty. Inspired by Bartholdi's idea, Moran painted *The Commerce of Nations Paying Homage to Liberty* (1876), which was then displayed at fundraising events for the building of the statue.

In 1877, he moved to France, where he encountered the work of various impressionist and Barbizon school artists who painted *en plein air* (in the open air); two years later, he

returned to New York, focused on the maritime scenes for which he would become famous. Much of his career would be spent working on a series of 13 canvases representing the maritime history of the United States from the landing of Leif Ericson to the Spanish-American War.

In the 1880s, while Moran was continuing to develop as a painter, Bartholdi was working to bring his vision for *Liberty Enlightening the World* to life. With the support of fundraisers in the United States and France and the help of other sculptors, the statue was completed in France in 1884 and arrived in New York Harbor in June 1885, broken down into 350 pieces and packed into 214 shipping crates.

On October 28, 1886 thousands of spectators—including Moran—gathered for the dedication of the statue. Moran's *Unveiling the Statue of Liberty* (1886) depicts the moment when the assembled warships fired a 21-gun salute to welcome President Grover Cleveland onto Bedloe's Island for the dedication ceremony. In the painting, ships flying French and American flags fill the harbor as smoke from the salute rolls across the island; above, Liberty stands clear, torch raised to the sky. In her other hand, she holds the tablet of the law, upon which is inscribed the date of the adoption of the Declaration of Independence: July 4, 1776.

What mood does Moran's painting convey to you, and how does it do so? For the millions of immigrants who have reached the United States through New York Harbor, the Statue of Liberty has been the first glimpse of their new land. Does the appearance of Lady Liberty, so well captured in Moran's painting, strike you as especially welcoming? In the painting, the smoke from the guns fills the harbor but seamlessly merges with the background sky. Why might this be a fitting background against which to view the statue? Is there anything in the picture to suggest that the Statue of Liberty is a universal, and not just an American, symbol? What is the connection between the statue's torch of liberty and its tablet of law? What does that connection imply about the relation between freedom and the rule of law?

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