

# RALEIGH REGISTER

## AND NORTH-CAROLINA GAZETTE.

"Ours are the plans of fair delightful peace, unwar'd by party rage, to live like brothers."

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### ORATION.

Delivered by Col. D. M. BARRINGER, in Concord, N. C. on the 4th of July, 1837.

FELLOW-CITIZENS: The occasion upon which we have met, is full of interest to all who are concerned for the fame of our common country, or desire the continued success of our system of Government. This day is the most sacred and revered in our national calendar. From its proper and rational observance, there may well be derived an exalted pleasure, and much useful information; joy in the contemplation of the events by which the day has become illustrious, and wisdom from the lessons which those events have transmitted to our time.

Here, we can all meet on the common ground of our country's welfare. Let us then lay aside all political animosity; let us banish all corroding cares; and drive away every thing which may interrupt our friendly intercourse. Let us dedicate the day to the spirit of patriotism. Let our desires be hallowed to the single wish of our country's good; and our conduct be unstained by any act which may be unworthy of ourselves, or of this day, the festival anniversary of American Independence. In the celebration of this festival of freedom, we are, first under the highest obligations to render homage and gratitude to him, who is peculiarly the patriot's God—who holdeth in his hands the destinies of nations—who is the author of all our blessings, political, social and religious—who was the pillar of fire, that guided our ancestors through the wilderness of the Revolution to the political Canaan which we enjoy, and upon whose superintending providence alone we can safely rely for a continuance of these inestimable privileges. Let then, the spirit of piety, and the spirit of patriotism be united, while we this day indulge in a grateful recollection of the deeds which have given immortality to our ancestors, and on this day renew our vows to imitate the virtues of those to whose memory a whole nation is doing honor, and to perpetuate, as far as in us lies, the principles of public life by which their names have been eternalized, and our happiness can only be secured.

Presuming that every American citizen is acquainted with the details of our contest for freedom (if he is not, he should be,) I shall not attempt to address you on the events of our Revolutionary history in any strict or methodical manner; but I hope to be indulged in that train of reflections, & in giving utterance to those emotions, which are naturally excited in every American breast upon the annual recurrence of this memorable day.

We should remember, my countrymen, that the controversy, which resulted in the Declaration of our independence on the 4th of July 1776, was one of principle. It was no miserable party question of a day, which might divide the opinions of men for a time, and then be forgotten forever. It concerned the fundamental principles of society. It was not so much the consequence of a practically oppressive despotism, as it was of tyrannical claims under which that despotism was attempted to be enforced, and which, if allowed, would have consigned our forefathers and their descendants to the eternal subjection of arbitrary rule. It is true, the Colonies were at different intervals, born down with almost every species of oppression. The most unrighteous exactions were levied on the fruits of their labor. Their laws were trampled under foot, and often entirely dispensed with at the will of a capricious Prince—their legislative assemblies, elected by the only rightful source, were crippled, and sometimes wholly frustrated in the exercise of their just powers. The judiciary was prostrated before the footstool of royal authority; their judges were appointed by and subservient to the will of the King; the fountains of a pure administration of justice, so essential to liberty were corrupted; the people were subjected to foreign jurisdictions without their consent. The laws which they enacted for their benefit, were often retained by the King, without being returned to the on-

ly tribunals who had the undoubted right to judge of their adoption or rejection. New Officers were created expressly for the favored and hiring minions of the sovereign, and the only original and legitimate object of their institution as trusts for the people, was perverted by the office holders, by using them as securities for the benefit of themselves, and as engines of oppression, by which they preyed on the body politic, and destroyed its substance. A hired soldiery was quartered o'er the land to keep the people in awe of their rulers; and in some instances the blood of the inhabitants was innocently shed to propitiate the favor and answer the unholy purposes of the Crown. These and other acts of tyranny, enumerated in the catalogue of crimes and abuses of that ever-memorable instrument which proclaimed their emancipation, were perpetrated on the unoffending Colonies.

But still, all this, sufficient as it was, to justify resistance, although it gave the first impulse, was not the main-spring which kept the ball in motion, and finally brought into existence the proclamation of our inalienable rights. Many of the odious acts of the British parliament were repealed. The rigors of Colonial suffering were often mitigated. America had able friends, though in a minority, in the Council of Britain, who pleaded with truth and eloquence the cause of the Colonies. The genius and intrepid boldness of a Chatham, a Camden and a Richmond, the splendid abilities of a Burke, a Fox, and other illustrious names, armed with the weapons of truth and justice, often gained important concessions to the complaints of the Colonies, & carried terror and dismay into the ranks of despotism.

On the other hand, the Colonies were bound by the most endearing attachments to England as their common mother. They spoke the same language, and cherished the same institutions. They looked to her for succor and protection. They knew her strength and inexhaustible resources—their own weakness and poverty. They acknowledged too, the wisdom of the maxim that "Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes." But there were principles involved in the dispute about which there could be no compromise. The people of the Colonies claimed all the rights of British subjects, nay, more. While they had no liberty, as they understood it, they had no country. They demanded the rights of self-government, the right by nature to pass their own laws. They declared that when protection was withdrawn, no allegiance was due; that the power to protect should not be a pretext to enslave them; that they would not be taxed without their consent; no taxation without representation. The right to tax was the great question of dispute—of assertion on one side and denial on the other. These great principles, which lay at the foundation of social order, made a wide gulf between the contending parties, impassable but by mutual concession, and a total abandonment of the ground occupied by each. Power would not release its grasp.—Truth and justice could not desert their standard, upon which was engraved "Liberty—equal rights—equal representation." The answer which that great statesman and philosopher Doctor Franklin, who was the honor of his country and benefactor of the world, gave to the British Parliament in his examination on the state of America, spoke the prevailing feelings of his countrymen.—He was asked if the taxes on tea were repealed and certain other grievances redressed, if America would then submit? His courageous and emphatic reply was, No—never, until you relinquish all right or pretence to tax and govern the Colonies without their consent, they never will be reconciled.

No, fellow-citizens, they never would have submitted. What was the pitiful oppression of three pence a pound on tea, compared to the great and eternal principles which would have been sacrificed in their submission? For the preservation of similar principles, even Britons themselves had brought the head of the first Charles to the block! What, then, could have been expected from this struggle between power and right, however long it might continue, but a final separation of the two countries? To this complexion it must come at last? What was in the origin of the contest, scarcely dreamed of but by a few, was now become the popular will. The distinguished statesmen, who guided, enlightened and expressed the public sentiment of that day, who had anticipated and desired this end to the controversy, now girded on their intellectual armor, unfolded the great book of nature, and insisted on behalf of their countrymen, upon the inalienable rights of man. Men thought and spoke and wrote on the great principles of human government and civil liberty. The spirit of inquiry was abroad. The foundations of the great deep were broken up; the flood-gates of light and knowledge were raised, and the deluge swept over the land. The people now gazed to fury by the blood of civil war, knew their rights and prepared to defend them. The genius of eloquence kindled

the fire of enthusiasm. And when that bold champion of freedom, the eloquent representative of the ancient colony of Massachusetts, moved in the Congress of Philadelphia, that the Colonies ought to be 'free and independent,' amenable to no power but God, and no government but their own, he but proclaimed the ardent wish of all America. The glorious day had arrived; fatal to the honor and interests of Great Britain, and full of hopes to the friends of freedom. The brightest jewel was now struck from the diadem of the British Crown—and America stood redeemed, regenerated and disenthralled—assuming among the powers of the earth—the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and of nature's God entitled her.

In reflecting upon this period of the dispute with the mother country, from the first passage of the stamp act to the final separation—from the first sense of injury to petition—remonstrance and ultimate defiance, what reasons do we find to admire the wisdom and high moral courage of our forefathers! With what tenacity of purpose did they cling to their principles? What firmness, moderation and prudence guided their councils! While the British Cabinet was weakened and distracted by its folly, impolicy and dissensions, they stood firm and undismayed! No insolence or intimidation of powers could drive—no partial concession of right could reduce them from singleness of purpose, through which, with more than Roman virtue, they sought only their country's freedom and welfare! Patriotism was the nerve of their argument—the polar star of their actions.

But, now, the argument was exhausted. There was no appeal but to the sword. The sword was drawn and the scabbard thrown away. The peaceful husbandman becomes the citizen soldier—the statesman becomes the warrior—the voice of the patriot orator is changed for the clarion of the battle field—the bloody conflict of arms is begun.

The world knows the sequel of that sanguinary contest. For seven long years "doubtfully it stood." Amid every hardship and privation—every peril and disaster—and under every aspect of an ever-varying fortune, hope still gleamed through the darkness. Without means—without credit—without encouragement, save the unthought sympathy of the friends of liberty for her own sake, we still maintained the unequal fight throughout the gloomiest periods of the Revolution, with the most formidable rival the modern world has ever known. Confiding in the God of battles, and the justice of our cause, our Revolutionary army never despaired. They had an abiding conviction of their triumph. They felt that,

"Tho' foul are the drops that oft distill,  
On the field of warfare, blood like this,  
For Liberty shed, so holy is,  
It would not stain the purest hill  
That sparkles among the bowers of bliss."

The plains of Brandywine, Trenton, Monmouth, Guilford, Yorktown and many another well fought field, and dreadful charge, attested their bravery. Many a bitter campaign witnessed their endurance. Victory at last perched upon their banners. The goal of labors and trials was reached. Their country was free.

What, then, my countrymen, must have been the feelings of that haughty and misguided nation, who had taunted our infant country with her reproaches—who had threatened to ride, booted and spurred, over the honest yeomanry of the land, and some of whose officers had boasted that with a single regiment of infantry they could drive all the unnatural rebels off the continent of America? She was now forced to recognize as an equal among the powers of the Earth, that very nation whose name she had stigmatized, and whose interests she had spurned at the very foot of the throne.

But, on this side the Atlantic, my friends, a still sublimer spectacle was exhibited to the world. We see a whole army, fresh from victory, conscious of having achieved by their valor their country's Independence, for which they had bled at every pore, and suffered every tribulation and calamity. We see this same army turned away without reward, from an impoverished treasury. We see this same army unpaid—unfed—unclothed and discontented as it was, with every means to reap its own recompense, and every motive, but their own and their country's glory, to seize the moment of their power. We see such an army yield cheerfully to the precept and the example of their illustrious chief, who had been the light and the life of the Revolution, silently disband themselves and retire without murmuring, to seek their reward from the occupations of private life—from the blessings of peace and liberty. They had unsheathed their weapons only in defence of their country, they laid them down doubly conquerors of their enemies and themselves.

Peace was restored. But a very short experience of its repose, under the new order of government, was sufficient to prove that the great objects of the recent struggle were not established on the best and surest foundation; and that, without a reformation both in the form and cha-

acter of our institutions, (the Revolution would have been in vain. By the declaration of Independence, our forefathers had launched the little bark of their country's hope upon the sea, which seemed at the time, almost without shore. Proudly and gallantly she had borne herself amid the horrors of the storm. The tempest had ceased, the land was descried; but towards the harbor were seen imminent dangers of shipwreck, from the rocks and quicksands of weakness and disunion. These were unavoidable, but from a change in the course, and a thorough repair in the vessel. As United Colonies we had gained our liberties, as United States they must be perpetuated. The revolutionary sages and heroes, with the father of his country at their head again came to the rescue, and the Constitution of the United States, that immortal monument of human wisdom, was the result of the deliberations of the Convention of 1787. The adoption of this Federal Compact, by Conventions of the respective States, and the selection of the best and greatest men of the nation as its rulers, put our government into successful operation.

In the contemplation of these great events, my countrymen, our hearts are irresistibly urged to do reverence to that great and good man, whom the unanimous verdict of his country pronounced to be "first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen." We would render every praise and gratitude to all, without reference to the grade of their merits, of the patriots of our land, and especially to that glorious band who proved themselves true in the times of our greatest trial, only a little remnant of whom is still lingering among us. But Washington stands "alone in his glory." Look at his life, look at his absolute surrender of all authority, more than once, under peculiar circumstances of difficulty and embarrassment; and then, what a picture, beside the ambition of a Bonaparte, a Cromwell, a Caesar!

No, my friends, there has been but one Washington. Whatever, in any age or country, may have been the grossness of political idolatry, whatever the splendor of military glory, whatever the base sycophancy of the parasites of power, a faithful history will declare that there has been no "second" Washington. He is first and alone on the lists of fame.—The streams of his renown, spring from the pure fountains of private integrity and public virtue. They will continue to flow on, widening and deepening, down the channels of time, till the whole earth shall be covered with the ocean of his glory!

But to return. By our attempt at a new experiment of self-government, a new sun had arisen in the political firmament. I would not attempt, on the present occasion, if I had the ability, to describe the influence it has had on the destinies of mankind. Its beams have been scattered to the most distant lands. Our principles have floated on the wings of the wind, and the most ancient institutions have tottered beneath their force. At one time they would seem to prevail; again, they are crushed by the strong arm of despotism. At one place, they burst forth in the fitful blazes of a false democracy, and again, they are extinguished by the tyranny of an inglorious ambition. If the people of the old world be true to themselves, and we do not prove unworthy of our own great example, the ultimate fate of these principles, is as sure and reforming as their truth is eternal. The volcano may burn within for a time, but its final eruption is as inevitable, as it will be overwhelming.

But, my friends it is in our own land, that we have presented the best evidence of the practical benefits of a free government; and illustrated by our example, the cardinal maxim of "the greatest good to the greatest number." In the retrospect of the last half century, (a short era in a nation's existence,) what a splendid view for the mind of the patriot! It is true, clouds sometimes darken our horizon—occasional misrule may have paralyzed our prosperity and invaded our constitution, but the native energies of our countrymen and the all-pervading influence of our principles, have, and will again triumph over every impediment to our national happiness. Our population has increased seven fold; our States have doubled in number; our commerce has extended to every clime and nation; we have been victorious in war and happy in peace; our language and religion have spread far and wide; our agriculture and manufactures, and our science and arts, where they existed before, have improved; where they were not, the wide wilderness has bowed before them.

And what, my countrymen, is to be the final destiny of this our country? Shall time soon inscribe his epitaph o'er the grave of our liberty? Is there any thing in the long vista of the future to cast gloom and apprehension around the heart of the patriot? Does the same fate await us, that befell the ancient republics, and all the free nations that have lived before us?

"They were, but they are not.  
Gone, glimmering through the things that were,  
A school-boy's tale—the wonder of an hour."

And what caused their ruin? These are the anxious inquiries that crowd the mind of the reflecting lover of his country on a day like this.—What solemn responsibility does this republic owe to itself and to all future ages. If this great experiment of self-government, under all the advantages of success which we enjoy, shall fail, when and where again shall the sun of freedom rise, and its vestal fires burn with such virgin brightness? Let the people be loyal to themselves, let them lay aside the besetting sins, and take warning from the recorded misfortunes of republics. We must know our dangers and be ready to avert them. To preserve the blessings of liberty, we must practice the great lessons of our own revolution; let principle alone be the rule of public action, as it is the only standard of private morals. This is the only beacon light that can guide us in safety. No exploits however brilliant, no public services however great, should mislead us into the support of measures which destroy the landmark of liberty, the sacred rights of person and property, or invade in the smallest degree, the forms and securities of constitutional government. It is not sufficient that a man shall have been a great benefactor, or shall have even ventured his life in the defence of his country, to entitle him to an indefinite and unwatchful confidence. The most despotic usurpers have thus served their country. The coffers of Rome were filled by her Caesars, and the world with the splendor of his achievements. Yet Caesar passed the rubicon and Rome kneeled to her master. Even England embraced the usurpation of a tyrant under the Republican name of "Protector of the Commonwealth," and France, his beloved France, was dragged a bleeding victim at the heels of her Emperor, while he bestrude Europe like a Colossus, and kingdoms vanished at his touch. The very fields of France proclaimed the desolation of his tyranny. The history of her woes is written in blood. Yet Napoleon was the idol of Frenchmen, the glorified benefactor of his country.

But why multiply examples? Power will intoxicate; men will be ambitious. Perhaps they should be so; but it should be the ambition faithfully to serve, not to enslave their country. The virtuous ambition of a Washington, not the vaulting desire of the imperial conqueror. A generous confidence towards their rulers, is the attribute of a free people. When surrounded with a cautious wisdom it is a noble virtue. Without this defence it is an instrument of destruction, ready for the use of the first slave to a false ambition, or an over-weening vanity, pampered by the grovelling parasites of power, for their own aggrandizement; who boast of their servility to their chief, and crawl through their own slime, to the footstool of authority for office.

Let the people then be distrustful of those in authority, holding them at all times in strict accountability to themselves, as the only rightful source of power, and to the laws which they have imposed on their servants for their own security. By their fruits shall ye know them. If they be evil, let the axe be laid to the root without reluctance—without commiseration. Neither, my friends, can liberty be destroyed by a first and single blow. It must be assailed by secret and gradual innovations. The fruit must be ripe before it is plucked. The attacks of despotism are often unobserved and sometimes connived at. Like the silent filterings of the water, through the embankment of a mighty river, which confines its terrors; at first, they are disregarded for their insignificance, till at last, the wide break is cleared, and the land is overspread with a ruinous inundation which no human effort can arrest. Oppose, then, the very first and smallest advances of the invader of constitutional freedom. "Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty," whether it be assailed by the bare arm of open usurpation, or by the still more dangerous enemy of false pretences, under the forms of the laws and the constitution. Wicked ambition has a thousand disguises. Sometimes it rides on the chariot wheels of the laurel-decked warrior—sometimes it assumes the garb of a fanatical sanctity of morals and religion, as detestable in the State as it is concealed in treacherous professions of regard for the laws and constitution, and of unbounded devotion to the people.

"Cloth'd in the fair colors of the public good,  
And to effect its ends, pretends the State,  
As if the State, by its affection stood."

It must be firmly met and overcome on its first approach and in its every shape. Delay is dangerous. Habitual submission is more than "second nature" in governments; for the precedent of to-day, becomes the law to-morrow. Private indolence is disgrace, public apathy is death. Private enterprise is wealth, public spirit is safety.

In politics, as in religion, there are signs of omission as well as commission. My friends, that we would have all in our country, to be professed and hackneyed politicians. Heaven deliver us from such a trading herd—fit only for the shambles of the market-place—offer-

ing themselves in self degradation to the highest bidder—and hungering for office with the vile proverb of the mendicant, that "beggars must not be choosers"—such a vile crew would be more exhausting to your treasury than the bought legions of Rome—more voracious of your substance than the locusts of Egypt—and more poisonous to the life-blood of Republican liberty than the Simoon of the desert. But we would have every citizen of a free republic to be acquainted with the fundamental principles of his Government—to know his rights—and dare to maintain them—to cherish a disinterested public spirit—to perform all his public duties with promptness and alacrity—and especially, never to slight by omission that great public privilege, which is the corner stone of the building—the right of suffrage—untrammelled and intelligent exercise of which is so essential to the preservation of liberty. Sometimes in our country, it is mortifying to hear, otherwise good men, express the utmost indifference about public affairs. "It was not worth their time or trouble to vote, or perform other public duties: it was of no moment to them who filled this station or that—if others could live and prosper under any kind of laws, they could too." Such sentiments are as dangerous as they are humiliating and unworthy a freeman. Of what avail, is it, my friends, to toil and labor if we shall not reap? To accumulate during a life-time—and hand up for our offspring, a wealth that may be swept away, the very next generation, by a ruthless tyranny, the deeds of which were sown in our own day—grew up under our own negligence—and were certain of maturity, unless blighted in the germ by those who alone had the power and the motives to destroy them? Do we owe nothing to the memory of our ancestors? It was not so with them, else we should not have been free. Do we owe nothing to ourselves—to our posterity—to mankind—to the cause of liberty herself? If we would fulfil these obligations, we must "keep our loins girded and lights burning." Freedom must not be sacrificed at the altar of avarice. It is by her preservation alone, that we can continue to enjoy the rewards of an honest industry. We must beware too of the day of prosperity; when the thief cometh as in the night-time, then will corruption that base of republics, be most ready to undermine our institutions by depraving public virtue—and introducing "luxury's contagion weak and vile." These will penetrate where the sword cannot divide asunder. Greece, noble Greece was already humbled by her corruption for the yoke of the Macedonian. Rome in her meridian pride was a traitor to herself—and with her own treasure the price of her own corruption, built the throne of the Caesars on the ruins of public liberty. Yes, my friends, liberty may be sold—and the people pay the tribute money. What cannot be effected by violence and audacity, will be assayed through fraud—intrigue and corruption. The very representatives of the people may be employed to mislead them. Those whom they have placed as sentinels on the watch-towers of freedom, may either sleep upon their posts, or be bribed and seduced to utter the false cry of "Alls well," and "Peace," when there is no peace; bribed by reward or the hope thereof—and seduced by the base fear of losing the emoluments of a station, of which they never were worthy. These are the men who seek popularity by the low arts of hypocrisy—not as the result of an honest and efficient performance of public duty; the men who are without credit to themselves—honour to their place—or benefit to the public.

Yes, my friends, demagogues may infect us with the breath of their hollow and unprincipled professions of devotion to our interests. With all the colors of the rainbow—and all the devices of the hypocrite, they often succeed, for a time, in leading even an honest and virtuous people from the paths of truth. We are caught with the illusion, until the bubble bursts—and we are amazed in the midst of our ruin, at our own credulity. Whatever may be the fluctuations of public opinion, the demagogue is sure to be in the majority. His province is not to guide, inform, and be himself governed by a well-enlightened public mind; but to float upon the stream—and the more the waters are troubled, the better are his chances for the surface. Sometimes indeed, the flood retires and leaves him to rot and decay—the despised victim of his own artifice and rashness.—Sometimes they are punished with scorn, sometimes drowned in the torrents of public indignation. Defeat does not discourage. If opportunity presents, the political wolf will again appear in sheep's clothing—pandering to the prejudices of the ignorant—prostituting the fair names of the "people's man"—and the "poor man's friend"—and arraying one class of the community against another, as if the interests of all in a free country, were not indissolubly linked together. If he be secure in the object of his infamous deception, he will "laugh at our calamity, and mock when our fear cometh"—contemptible as such men are, they often prove dangerous. A