

BLOOMSBURG,

SATURDAY, JULY, 21, 1838.

The Privileges and Responsibilities of the AMERICAN PEOPLE,

AN ORATION,
Delivered at the Presbyterian Church,
Bloomsburg, Pa. July 4, 1838,
By THE REV. WILLIAM TOBEY.

Friends and fellow citizens.

It has ever been customary in all countries to celebrate very important events in their history, by annual festivals. The American people, in compliance with this ancient and universal usage, devote to joy and gratitude the day on which, by the voice of their representatives assembled in the capital of this state, they renounced the dominion of Britain, and claimed a place among the nations of the earth. An event of greater moment in the annals of this continent, it would perhaps be impossible to designate. On that day a great empire sprang into being, and a vast territory became the enfranchised home of uncounted millions. The consequences of that event, even during the sixty-two years which are now elapsed, have been immensely great, not only to the United States, but to all this western hemisphere, to Europe, to the whole world. How vast may be its consequences through the long train of future ages, thought becomes wearied and lost in its efforts to contemplate. As the fruits of the declaration of Independence made in Philadelphia, the 4th of July, 1776, and the noble exertions by which it was sustained, the people of these States, for more than half a century, have been enjoying the blessings of civil and religious liberty in a greater degree than any other people upon the earth—have been dwelling in the midst of peace and plenty—have had full scope for commercial agricultural and mechanical enterprise, by which they have been filling every sea with their ships, converting the wilderness on every side into fruitful fields and populous cities. As the fruits of this declaration seminaries of learning have been arising, literature and science have been spreading, churches and religious institutions have been multiplying and every thing which tends to adorn and elevate a nation has had unchecked freedom to flourish. Americans have therefore cause to commemorate this event. It is good, fellow citizens, on this day, turning aside from our ordinary avocations, to assemble for the purpose of contemplating the history of our country, its present state and future prospects, and especially, for the purpose of acknowledging the goodness of the Almighty, whose providence by a train of wonderful events, has made these lands, but a few years since, one mighty forest, a rich and flourishing country, the abode of freedom, the asylum of the oppressed and unfortunate of all nations, and the home of fifteen millions of people.

During the period, since the United States cast off the dominion of the fartherland, most of the nations of the earth have been groaning under oppression, their energies stifled, their intellects fettered, and the fruits of their industry plundered by rigorous laws and arbitrary power. The inhabitants of Asia and Africa have, for the most part, been dragging out a servile and wretched existence under their despotic kings, their Sultans, their Pachas, and their Rajahs.—The monarchies, aristocracies, and hierarchies of Europe, have been keeping the great mass of its population in a state of abject depression. The countries of South America have, until recently, been the subjects of every species of tyranny and injustice, and even now, that they have shaken off a foreign yoke, are republics but in name, since they continue still more or less under the sway of military dictatorship and papal superstition, exaction and intolerance.—How different has been the condition of the people of this Union! Independent of all foreign control—living under a representative form of government, the equity of whose laws all must acknowledge, and the power of whose administrators emanates from our own choice, and can be removed even on the suspicion of its abuse, by our united fiat—our consciences enthralled by no ecclesiastical establishment, what greater degree of civil and religious liberty can we desire? Our form of government, and free institutions, cannot be charged with oppression and injustice. If they exist among us, their elements must be traced to the abuse of our freedom, and to the evil passions of the human heart. If we are not a happy people, it is not for the want of national privileges. It may be safely affirmed, that no country under heaven, has equal privileges, and consequently, none has equal responsibilities. While most other nations have had a heathen origin, and their early history has been stained with the dark and bloody rites of idolatry, we can say that a christian ancestry commenced the settlement of these lands, and laid the foundation of our great republic. We can trace our nation's beginnings to the puritans of England, Scotland and Ireland, the Huguenots of France, and to the protestant churches of Holland and Germany. We can indulge the pleasing reflection, that the plantation of these colonies, which have now grown into large and flourishing States, was undertaken amidst the prayers of the righteous and watered by the tears of their penitence and gratitude. In an eminent degree may it be said, that this State has had a christian origin. A century and a half have not yet passed away, since the bark of William

Penn was seen gliding along the ducky wooded shores of the beautiful Delaware. The son of an English High Admiral, born the heir of a great estate, qualified by birth, education and talents, for the highest earthly honors and distinctions, he preferred to his opening splendid worldly prospects, the humble discipleship of his Redeemer, and cast in his lot with a despised religious sect. Persecuted for the singularity of his religious opinions and customs, disgusted with the pride and ostentation which had so extensively usurped the name of religion in his native land, he turned his attention to the Trans-Atlantic wilderness, and resolved to seek in its depths, an asylum for himself and his brethren. Having obtained a grant from his monarch, of an extensive tract of land in North America, as a commutation for a sum of money due for the services of his father, he undertook the establishment of a new colony. Landing on the shores of the Delaware, in the vicinity of some Indian villages which then occupied the spot where Philadelphia now rears its temples and spreads its wealth and magnificence, he was met by the red natives of the soil. And how did he treat them? Did he attack them with artillery and musketry, with sword and bayonet? Did he overreach them by superior cunning to the despoiling them of their possessions, or circumvent them for their destruction by deep laid stratagems? Far otherwise. He met them with the exercise of the genuine principles of that religion which he professed. He treated them as human beings, as members of the same great family, with that benevolence and justice from which man has no right to swerve in his intercourse with his fellow man. He purchased of them lands which they were willing to sell, by fair and honorable barter. He respected their rights, and took no undue advantage of their ignorance and weakness. The consequence was they became his devoted friends. The power of kindness and justice melted and subdued the souls of the Susquehannocks, the Delawares and the Raritanians, recently burning with vengeance against the white man on account of aggressions committed upon them by some of the settlers of neighboring colonies. No midnight war whoop disturbed the infant settlement of Penn. No cries of the wounded & dying were heard in their peaceful dwellings. No bloody massacre stained the foundations of the rising city. The Indians dwelt among them as brothers, furnishing them with abundant provisions, the fruits of their hunting and fishing. Amidst this delightful harmony, the forests began to disappear, and the horrors of the desert gradually to change into cultivated fields and gardens and flourishing towns. The echoes of the wilderness, the howlings of wild beasts, and the battle cry of the savage, gave place to the voice of prayer and praise. It is refreshing to turn from a review of the fraud and treachery, the oppression and cruelty, which it must be acknowledged, has, with but few exceptions, characterized the Europeans toward the Aborigines, in the colonization of this new world, to the contemplation of such a scene as this. What a contrast does the first settlement of Pennsylvania furnish to the settlement of Mexico, Guatemala, and Peru by the Spaniards, and the circumvention and butchery of millions of their confident natives, by the fiendish avarice and ambition of Cortes, Alvarade and Pizarro, who traversed waves, the unknown world explored, The cross their standard, but their faith the sword!

What a contrast to the settlement of the West India Islands! when,
"Dreadful as hurricanes, stewart the main,
Rushed the fell legions of invading Spain,
With fraud and force, with false and fatal breath,
(Submission bondage, and resistance death.)
They swept the isles. In vain the simple race
Kneel'd to the iron sceptre of their race;
Or with weak arms their fiery vengeance braved;
They came, they saw, they conquer'd, they enslave'd,
And they destroy'd; the generous heart they broke
They crush'd the timid neck beneath the yoke.
Where'er to battle march'd their fell array
The sword of conquest plow'd resistless way;
Where'er from cruel toil they sought repose
Around the fires of devotion rose.
The Indian as he turned his head in flight,
Beheld his cottage flaming through the night,
And midst the screams of murder on the wind,
Heard the mute blood-hound's death-step close behind."

What a contrast, I may also add, does the conduct of William Penn toward the Indians furnish to those almost numberless encroachments, violation of treaties, deeds of fraud and violence, by which the accurate and true historian must record, that most of the native tribes have been driven from the lands between the Atlantic and the Mississippi; spoils of avarice and unrighteous exertions of superior power upon the feeble, for which the warmest patriot will find it difficult to apologize, and which every friend of justice and human ty must unhesitatingly and unreservedly condemn! Even now the poor Cherokees, forced away from their well cultivated farms, their workshops, their schools and churches, and all the monuments of their rapidly advancing civilization, look with gushing eyes, for the last time, upon their native soil, their beloved homes, the graves of their fathers, and pursue their reluctant way under an armed force, to the far distant wilds of the setting sun.

It must be a source of gratification to Pennsylvanians, to remember that such a scene of uprightness as has been described, destined forever to be the admiration of the christian world, has marked the commencement of their commonwealth; that its foundations were laid in benevolence, honesty and peace. Pennsylvania has cause to honor the name of her founder. The voice of

the enlightened and the virtuous throughout the civilized world, has long since pronounced him a great and a good man. To the enjoyment of luxury and ease, he preferred the endurance of persecution for righteousness' sake, and all the inconveniences and privations of a wilderness beyond the ocean. His treatment of the Indians, showed how deeply rooted in his heart were the principles which he professed, and made a completely successful experiment of the efficacy of those principles to protect the rights of men, and to impart to them peace and happiness. The equitable and salutary laws which he formed for his infant colony, manifested the greatness of his intelligence and wisdom. His generous invitations to those of other christian denominations to settle in his territory, proved him to be a man of a large and liberal heart, and forever redeemed his character from the charge of a bigoted and narrow sectarianism. The example of a pious ancestry ought to have an influence upon their posterity, and there can be no doubt that the responsibilities of this nation are greatly increased by the fact, that it has had a religious origin. And not only has this nation had a favorable origin, but its lot has been cast in a most advantageous part of the world. The goodness of Providence has been manifested toward the American people in placing them neither amidst the snows of the frigid, nor the sultry plains of the torrid zone, but in a temperate climate, such a one as is most favorable to the exertion of both the physical and the mental powers. It has been manifested in extending them over so wide a territory, embracing such a variety of vegetable, animal and mineral productions, affording such facilities for internal navigation and internal commerce. This nation has been located not amidst the worn out soil of the old world, but in the virgin mould of the new, amidst lands fertilized by the decayed vegetation of numerous centuries; lands abounding in all that is necessary for human sustenance and comfort. It has been located along the shores of two oceans, along the shores of gulphs and bays, and the largest lakes in the world, and along extensive rivers, some of which are among the mightiest in existence. The position which it occupies on the globe, affords it probably, greater advantages for universal commerce, than any other people can boast of. Its situation, its climate, the character of the race, mark it out for high pre-eminence over all the nations of this western hemisphere, and for exerting a mighty influence upon the destinies of the whole earth. And the God of nature has bestowed upon this State advantages for acting a very conspicuous part in that career of improvement which this nation has begun. Its territory has been fashioned for great and important ends in the advancement of the progress of human society. Occupying the middle ground between the northern and the southern states, the states on the Atlantic and the Mississippi, it well deserves the name of the Keystone of the Union. The everlasting mountains which stretch over almost its whole extent, while they mark it as the home of health and freedom and vigorous industry, inclose inexhaustible mineral treasures, not indeed of silver and gold, but what is far more conducive to the true prosperity of a nation, iron without which, no people yet ever attained to any great degree of civilization, and coal sufficient to furnish light and heat to many generations. Its romantic and pteuous streams have been evidently channelled out for internal navigation, and the extensive operation of the mechanical and manufacturing arts. Its beautiful valleys, covered with a fertile mould, afford abundant advantages to the agriculturist, presenting even now, some of the finest specimens of farming in the Union, and destined, probably, to experience the highest degree of cultivation. It has also every facility for being a great commercial state, having water communications on every side; the lakes on the north, the Delaware on the east, the Chesapeake Bay on the south, and the Ohio opening into immense regions on the west. The numerous canals and railroads which have been constructed during a few years past, and which are continuing to multiply, prove that the citizens of this state are not insensible to their commercial advantages, and do not intend to slumber over the blessings which a bountiful Providence has bestowed.

As a further evidence of the distinguishing privileges with which this nation is favored, it is worthy of remark, that it has commenced its career in a most favorable period of time. According to the most accurate chronologists, nearly 6000 years have elapsed since the creation. The American people, beginning their empire at this late age of the world, have for their instruction, the example of the many nations which have preceded them, and whose course history records. They have access to the literature and science of 4000 years, the treasured knowledge of the enlightened and ancient kingdoms from which they sprang, recorded in their own language.—They can enrich themselves with the intellectual spoils of one hundred centuries.—Above all, they have the whole canon of divine revelation with the evidences of its truth which eighteen centuries have accumulated. It is an age moreover, when the arts and sciences have advanced to a pitch they never reached before, and have the prospect of advancing to a height which transcend the highest efforts of the imagination to contemplate, an age when the invention of the art of printing, the discovery of the mariner's compass, and the application of

the power of steam, have given a new impulse to the energies of the human mind, & are awakening the great mass of the population of the civilized world to exertions unparalleled in the history of our race. This nation has every facility for sailing directly onward in this tide of improvement, and the inventive and enterprising genius, by which many of its citizens have signalized themselves, prove that it is qualified for advancing on its foremost wave. And this is not only an age of increasing light but it is an age of benevolent action. The growing zeal of the protestant christianendom for the universal propagation of the gospel, and the astonishing success which, in many instances has attended christian missions among the heathen, mark this as an age preparatory to the moral renovation of the earth. New and wonderful scenes are evidently about to open. What facilities have the American people for acting a glorious part in that greatest of all enterprises the christianization of the world! Who can tell but that an all wise Providence has nourished up colonies in the wilds of this continent, conducted them to national independence, defended and sustained them, after becoming sovereign states, through every trying crisis of their history, and furnished them with such vast resources that they may exert a mighty instrumentality in the moral improvement of the whole human family? So far as we can gather from prophecy the concluding scenes of time are hastening to their development. America has commenced her career at a period when, after doing much to usher them in, she may bathe herself in the noonday splendors of millennial glory.

"Hope waits the morning of celestial light,
Time plumes his wings for everlasting flight,
Unchanging seasons have their march begun,
Millennial years are hastening to the sun.
Seen thro' thick clouds by faith's transpiring eyes,
The New Creation shines in purer skies."

Nor should the position which the American people occupy before other nations be overlooked in estimating their privileges and responsibilities. We have cast off the incumbrance of a monarchical government, and all their burdensome appendages, have adopted the representative and republican form and have undertaken to govern ourselves. And this is regarded by all the world as a very doubtful experiment, as it is well known that the republics of ancient time, while they were subject to frequent and great popular commotions, were of but short duration, while those of modern times have either soon reverted into monarchies or degenerated into aristocracies. America has, therefore, the eyes of many nations fixed upon her, with the deepest intensity. Ever since the commencement of her political existence, she has been the subject of the maledictions of princes and lords and hierarchs. The advocates of despotism have been exulting over every appearance of her instability and have been loud in proclaiming every token of her failure, and foreboding her downfall. On the other hand the oppressed and the struggling, of all lands, have looked to her as their polar star, by whose light they hoped to be guided to the haven of freedom and happiness. Nations casting off the yoke of despotic power, have been cheered by her example, and taken her institutions for their pattern, in the formation of their own. She has been honoured with the appellation of the model republic. France in her finally unsuccessful, but not altogether useless attempt to abolish her feudal institutions was incited by her example. The States of Central and South America, in their recent exertions for independence have been animated and emboldened by her success, and copied her political organization. It is evident, therefore, that she has in her power to exert a mighty influence upon the political and social state of the world, and can lead the way in the enfranchisement and reformation of the nations. Should she steadfastly abide by the principles she professes, and the constitution and laws she has adopted, should she, while she maintains herself inviolate from tyranny on the one hand, stand aloof from insubordination and anarchy on the other, and in her magnificent Union of many States, pursue her glorious career for a century to come, who can measure the effects of her example in doing away those rigorous and oppressive systems of government, and those despotic and iniquitous institutions which, all over the earth, have so long bowed down into the dust the soul of man? Ere the close of this period, her influence will have shaken down the entire ancient and gigantic structures of European feudalism, it will have riven the massive chains of Asiatic bondage; it will have hurled every African tyrant from his throne of gold and ivory, and renovated the remotest islands of the sea.

But should her experiment of self-government fail, should her powerful and happy union be rent into fragments, should her constitution and her laws be trampled under foot by popular violence and frenzy, should her vast regions become the prey of discord and anarchy, the hopes of struggling patriots & the friends of freedom & justice, thro' out the world will be wrecked, & a triumphant jubilee will be held thro' all the realms of tyranny. Even now do the supporters of despotism point at the disgraceful riots which for a few years past have every now and then broken out in our cities and principal towns. They triumph in those popular excitements which set at nought the restraints of law, and madly sacrifice the rights and property and even lives of our citizens, and assert that our boasted liberty is but

another name for licentiousness, and that our enlorged republic is but a mobocracy. It becomes every citizen to exert his utmost influence to defeat the malignant wishes of these enemies of the rights of man, to uphold the supremacy of our laws and to show to the world that a nation can exist that social order can be maintained without the coercion of arbitrary power. The constitution of the United States, our State, constitution and our statutes embody the noblest principles of order, justice and true liberty, and are calculated to furnish the most ample scope for individual and social enterprise, while they protect the rights of all. Let them have the strict adherence of all the inhabitants of these states and with the divine blessing, they will secure the prosperity and happiness of this nation, and set it on high above all the nations of the earth. They are our safe guards against wrong, our barriers against violence and injustice. Let them be trampled under foot and even a despotic government would be a blessing to that dreadful abyss of misrule and anarchy into which we are plunged. The government of a mob is the worst of all governments, since breaking away from all law and reason, and impelled by the fierce malignant and yet jarring passions of an excited multitude, it drives right onward in a career of devastation, disregarding all principles of justice, and all cries for mercy, and when it has wreaked its treasured fury on the head of its victims, it commences the work of self-destruction. Such were its tremendous operations in the streets of Paris, and through all the cities of France during the reign of terror. No combination of individuals has any right to take into its own hands the offices of judge and executioner. We have laws and magistrates fully adequate to this task, and it becomes every citizen of the United States, as he values his own true interests, to take a decided stand against all mobs and Lynch laws. This mobbing and lynching is an omen which bodes great evil to our country, and threatens us with such terrible scenes as deluged the French Republic with blood, and compelled it to seek refuge from the tumultuous passions of its own citizens, in the rigorous chains of a military despotism.—We live in an age of excitement and conflicting opinion, and sometimes a fierce radicalism stalks abroad, treating with contempt the established customs and order of society, and a bold and reckless fanaticism breathes the harsh and malignant epithets of denunciation. But the opposition of mobs is calculated to increase rather than repress the evil. And this tendency to licentiousness is not the only thing with which the advocates of despotic governments have it in their power to upbraid us. They can charge at least one very considerable portion of our Union, with the inconsistency of maintaining over, between two and three millions of their fellow men, a system of oppression, while at the same time, liberty and independence are their proudest boast. And how can the charge be answered? What friend of humanity will say it is right for those who declaim so loudly in favour of freedom, and who would resist with their hearts blood any attempt at their own subjugation, to exercise a despotic and almost unbounded dominion over beings whom the God of nature has created their brethren? The very thought that this christian republic incloses within its bosom "more than 2,500,000 bondsmen, is an element of bitterness in the happiness which the return of this day is calculated to inspire. It is unquestionably one of the greatest evils in our land. Slavery is a huge and black cloud in our horizon, which, threatens us with wide spread devastation. It is a foul stigma upon our national honour. It is an evil whose speedy removal the voice of justice and humanity, the example of other nations, and the true interests of the American people loudly demand. But it is an evil deeply rooted and widely spread, and involving great political questions. Violent and harsh invective, bitter and indiscriminate denunciation, the passionate declamation of boy and female lecturers while they have the direct effect of infusing into society the bitterness of party spirit, are not the proper means of its removal. It requires the wisdom of our most experienced and sagacious statesmen. That our nation may speedily be delivered from this great inconsistency should be the earnest prayer and endeavor, of every good citizen.

How long my country shall thy bondsmen's cries
With thy exulting shouts of freedom rise!
When shall thy money sever from thy name,
Oppression's wrongs and slavery's burning shame.

Let us not however, fellow citizens although many things appear adverse to the future prosperity of our beloved Union indulge desponding fears, but still cherish the hope that the same beneficent Providence, which has brought it into existence, which has so greatly increased it from such small beginnings, which has borne it safely through so many seasons of peril, will continue to defend and maintain it—that whatever evils exist among us will be speedily done away—that whatever clouds in our horizon portend, disastrous tempests will ere long be scattered from before the sun. Let us hope that our laws will re-assume their supremacy, that our magistrates will be sustained in the fearless discharge of their duty, and that the time is at hand when the clanking of the fetters of slavery, shall no longer mingle their discordance with the shouts and songs of freedom.

Let us hope that this great and growing republic will continue to increase in population, in enterprise, in intelligence, and in virtue.