

COLUMBIA DEMOCRAT.



"That Government is the best which governs least."

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY LEVI L. TATE.

BLOOMSBURG, COLUMBIA CO., SATURDAY, JULY 14, 1849.

OLD SERIES—VOL. TWELVE VOL. 3, NUMBER 17.

ORIGINAL.

EULOGIUM

UPON EX-PRESIDENT POLK:
DELIVERED AT THE COURT-HOUSE, BLOOMSBURG,
JULY FOURTH, 1849.

By Charles R. Buckatew.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

A question of the highest importance to the people of this Union, is this: How shall civil liberty be perpetuated? Other governments have become corrupt; have been tyrannical; and amid the execrations of mankind have sunk into ignoble sloth or rushed into a career of crime the precursor of decay or subjugation. How shall we escape their fate? Undoubtedly by avoiding the errors that misled, and the vices that corrupted them. But this answer does not indicate the path to be pursued with sufficient clearness for the wants of the multitude. Instruction must go further than to denounce the evil to be avoided; it must inculcate the good to be pursued. Hence those alone are true teachers who point out to us directly the objects to be pursued and the means of attaining them. The wisest of all teachers did not simply denounce the abounding vices and follies of man, but taught also a positive system of the most benignant and sublime character to enlist the belief and obedience of the world.—The inquirer after truth is not to be told merely that tyranny is odious, and that falsehood, violence, selfishness, ambition, pride and lust, have filled the earth with sorrow and wrong. After error is exposed, he is to be instructed in truth. He is to be informed what thoughtful and wise men have demonstrated to be truth, and is to be invoked to act accordingly.

How then is liberty to be perpetuated?—We have the direct and instructive reply to this question in the Pennsylvania Constitution of 1776, framed by a Convention over which Benjamin Franklin presided:—"A frequent recurrence to fundamental principles, and a firm adherence to justice, moderation, temperance, industry and frugality, and absolutely necessary to preserve the blessings of liberty, and keep a government free."

It is manifest that the masses of a State must be intelligent and virtuous, in a high degree, to insure it against a loss of freedom, prosperity and power. The moral world, like the natural, is under law, and dissolution is every where the fate of bodies that become corrupt. An intelligent, reflecting and virtuous people, are alone capacitated for free government. The mere possession of free institutions, is no sufficient guaranty against degeneracy and decay. Forms of government, and measures of legislation, are of secondary importance to the character and spirit of the people. Establish ignorance, stupidity and vice generally in society, and constitutions are not worth talking about. The period of the English Commonwealth was one of honor for England; but a people too mean-spirited and vicious to exist without a scourge, voluntarily invited kingship back to the realm, with its train of courtiers, rakes, nobles, prelates and buffoons!

The inculcation of this truth,—the absolute necessity of popular intelligence, integrity and spirit,—is of incalculable consequence to America and the world. The external form, the organization, the institutions, and the municipal laws of society, are nothing to its inward life—the moral and intellectual character of its members.

But, how shall we induce men to attain, and live up to, the standard of merit required? A mode of effecting this, is to present examples of true greatness and virtue to the people for their instruction and imitation.—From considering a particular instance we may ascend to the general rule. From the characteristics of one good man, we may form a standard of character for all.

The recent demise of the eleventh President of the United States, invites a review of his life. We may now, with propriety, examine his character, and the causes and justness of the high distinction he attained. And, I believe, we may reap instruction from this inquiry, and hold up the subject of it as an example of virtue worthy of imitation and praise.

Mr. Polk died on the 15th of the last month, at the age of fifty-three, and but four months after the close of his term as Chief Magistrate of the Union. The evening of his life, the period of expected repose after stirring and eventful years of action, is abruptly and unexpectedly shortened. I shall not attempt to lengthen or labored eulogium upon the deceased. By other hands that duty will be faithfully and fully performed. But a short and feeble tribute to his worth and memory, may be ventured even from this humble quarter, without censure, as it is without presumption.

Let no one bestow upon the late President indiscriminate praise, but let justice be done to his conduct and his virtues. He had failings, but they were neither numerous nor striking. He committed errors, but they were not of wantonness or intention. He had enemies, but they were evoked by partisan conflicts, and illustrate but the usual penalty paid for public distinction. Most will concede to him, honesty of purpose, resoluteness of action, or consistency of opinion. Subjected to partisan analysis, the measures he supported may be objected to vehemently, while the integrity of the statesman is not seriously questioned. We stand yet too close to the events in which he was a prominent actor, to judge with that impartiality which is indispensable to just history, or intelligent praise. The men of another generation will sketch with fidelity what is now left unfinished, or is discolored either by overweening friendship or unjust opposition. But we may judge at once of his character and intellectual qualities, and claim for them their just position in the public estimation.

A prominent trait in the character of Mr. Polk was integrity. He was immovably honest. The temptations to which a long public career subjected him, did not, upon any known occasion, seduce him into a dishonest or disreputable action. Allied to this trait was another—firmness. When interest apparently called him to yield a just position, he stood by it, regardless of personal results. He was no worshipper of policy at the expense of right. He was a man of principle, and not of expediency. He was content to fight for truth, even under obloquy and misrepresentation, convinced that in the long run his vindication was sure. It was natural that such a man should be consistent, and he was. He was unchanging. By friend and foe his position was always distinctly known, and could be depended upon as permanent. But behind these features of character, and of a rarer excellence, was an abiding faith in the capacity of our race for improvement. He was no scoffer at humanity. He was sensible of its corruptions, but he did not believe that they were ineradicable. Improvement, progress, amelioration; these were, in his view, the watchwords of hope for our race. And is it not one of the truest subjects of praise in a public character, that with enlarged experience and in full view of all-bounding evils, he does not permit himself to doubt the destiny of man? To attain this point we are called to pass through a fiery ordeal, and to resist the promptings of all the evil and desponding elements of our nature. True, in the spring of life we look forward with unbounded hope. We are sanguine of achieving an honorable position for ourselves, and are full of confidence in the advancement of our race in virtue, intelligence and happiness. But few clouds darken our sky, and they cast but a transient shadow. We see all things through a poetical medium.—We have a conviction that all mankind are prompted, like ourselves, by aspirations after the beautiful and the good. Our hearts go out toward all men, and we are ready to submit to great sacrifices and to go through arduous labors to advance their welfare.—Selfishness has not yet paralyzed our sympathies, nor distrust poisoned our minds. We desire to break down all fetters upon individual right; and anticipate a time when all corroding errors in society are to be swept away and all abuses utterly destroyed. A time of peace, of right, of freedom, of unbounded and buoyant happiness, is soon to dawn upon the earth! This is the spirit with which we stand on the threshold of life, and prepare to act our part in its eventful scenes.

But, as we advance, a thousand discouragements encounter us. Vice, selfishness, ignorance, passion, folly and violence, render the world an apparent theatre of error, tumult and wrong. And those who attempt to reform society are loaded with abuse or derided as visionaries. This is the crisis in our intellectual life: Happy he who shall escape its perils unscathed! Too many utterly abandon, at this point, what they term "the dreams of youth," and are ever after scoffers at "unattainable perfection." They make shipwreck of all that is noblest and purest within them, and are numbered with the children of selfishness and guile.—See them! pursuing the dollar through all the avenues of thrift with a zeal that knows neither turning or pause. See them! climbing with incredible industry up all the tortuous paths of selfish and heartless ambition to places of trust and power. See them! groping through all the dens of sensuality for pleasures wherein guilt and disappointment are everlastingly mingled! Nor is this all.—Corrupted themselves, they corrupt others.—They are apostles of evil, sapping alike the vitals of public liberty and individual virtue.

Mr. Polk was not of these. He passed from youth to manhood, and thence to age, with a fresh and free and hopeful spirit. He was not smitten with despondency, nor stained with guilt. Regretting and avoiding the vices and evils about him, he looked forward to a time for their repression and banishment. All reforms received from him a willing audience, and if approved, countenance and support. And his spirit did not flag to the last. Beneath the whitened hair of age dwelt the same faith that had fired his zeal in boyhood by the banks of the Cumberland. Ripened, sobered, enlightened and yet strengthened, it had survived contests, contumely and time. He carried to his last retirement an unshaken confidence in Goodness, Truth, and Humanity. What is higher praise for a public man than this? It was the same lofty, unobtainable and hopeful spirit, with which Milton, old, and blind and poor, within hearing of a ribald court and surrounded by a degenerate people, sang the advent of truth, justice and brotherhood among men.

Mr. Polk's opinions upon public questions, (as has been well said of a distinguished historian,) "were philosophical and therefore uncompromising." They were of the school of Progress, and few will question that they were honestly entertained. We here approach ground where sentiment is permanently divided, and where it is vain to expect agreement or compromise. War, unending and unyielding, has ever been waged between Conservatism and Innovation: we are only left to choose sides in the struggle. This much may however be asserted in the ear of all; that the golden mean between anarchy and tyranny is to be attained by practically rational and just reforms, and a sentiment therefore against progression is indefensible and injurious. The blind, unreasoning fear of change and liberalism is not even promotive of order and contentment, but exactly the opposite. Justly considered, liberty is the ally of order, or as my author better words it, "honest liberty is the greatest foe to dishonest license." Of all the prominent governments of the world, that one is at this moment the most secure which is the most free. All Europe is rocked with commotion;—war, rebellion and apprehension, everywhere abound. In the United States, where there is less restraint upon the citizen than in any other civilized country upon the globe, absolute peace and quietude prevail. The lesson is being learned that a free people are the most orderly. The country where radical reforms are frequent, and where government itself is but a creature of the popular will, is secure and peaceful amid world-wide commotions. Let the fact be noted as a justification of liberal opinions and an innovating policy, and let no one hereafter imagine that the smiling down of abuses will be productive of anarchy and disorder.

In the public record of Mr. Polk's life, we have abundant evidence of his possession of popular confidence and respect. He was the architect of his own fortunes, without extraordinary advantages by birth or connections; in short, with his character, industry, talents and opinions only to recommend him; yet they were sufficient to lift him into public station, and continue him there, until the close of life. He was in public station, by repeated elections, and almost unintermittently, for twenty-two years—two in the Legislature and two as Governor of Tennessee; fourteen in Congress, and four as President of the Union.

His Presidential administration was truly an eventful one. A large circle of domestic questions, many of them of a highly exciting character, were acted upon and adjusted. A foreign war, exhibiting the patriotism and prowess of our citizen soldiery in a most creditable aspect, was conducted to a successful conclusion. Starving thousands in the old world were fed by contributions from the new. Territory westward south, larger than all Europe, was added to the Union, and a highway to Asia opened by the Pacific, to develop the enterprise and extend the power of the Republic through the centuries looming up from the future! History only, in view of results hereafter appearing, can properly estimate the importance of the events crowded in to the past four years.

In private life Mr. Polk was distinguished for amenity of disposition, a gentlemanly deportment, and a strict regard for the rights of others. His reputation was absolutely without stain or suspicion. Although childless, his domestic relations were most fortunate. His wife, who survives him, was calculated to grace any station; she was attached to her husband by a real affection, and will receive the heartfelt sympathy of the American people in her great and irreparable bereavement.

This imperfect sketch is now concluded. We have the deceased before us in the purity of his character and the sincerity of his opinions, as an example for imitation and a subject for praise. If such men are taken as models of character by the mass, we need not fear degeneracy or national ruin. It is when we cast aside sober and sincere men as rulers, and repose to honor and imitate their virtues, that we may expect chastisement. May such a time be long deferred from our beloved country, and may we continue advancing permanently in liberty, intelligence, virtue, prosperity and power!

Unfettered by antiquated heresies in religion and government, the adventurous emigrants had been thrown into circumstances of privation and peril which forced them to rely upon their own energies, and to govern themselves. They were here untrammelled by the moth-eaten customs and laws of a barbarous feudalism; and blind Conservatism had not yet reared its altars nor banded its idols for their superstitious reverence. All aided here in forming a government, and its free institutions were hence of character to protect all who were industrious, frugal and virtuous. The necessities of the emigrants made legislators of them, while the oppression they had escaped and to which their little communities felt, taught them the true principles upon which to base their laws. It is invariably true that the emigrants to a new country, it left free to act, will establish better laws than those which have escaped. Even in our own republic see this exemplified in the improved constitutions of our western States, so far superior to those mouldering relics of the past to which the conservatism of our older States so tenaciously clings. Thus, Texas and Wisconsin have perhaps the best state constitutions in the Union.

The emigrants to America were those, who, amid the gloom of despotism, stood highest upon the mount of Progress, and caught the first rays of the bright sunlight of Reform. The first of that age was for freedom of thought and speech. Despotism's point, as superstition before it in religion had implanted into Time the seed of its own ethical Reformation, and the American Revolution brought forth the first fruit of the tree, as a fit offering upon the altar of Freedom. From that day until this, progress has battled with Conservatism, and, faltering and untailing, has won its way by men into every nook of the habitability. The death-knell of the antiquated aristocracies in government has been rung in ear of the despot, and is now echoed from nation to nation.

The land of eloquence and song, looks to glister day, when her patriotic tribunes shall shake the Roman forum with the thunders of their eloquence. The Pope has protracted to the cause of the people, until an exile from the Vatican. Germany and must be again one nation.—As will be astute of Hungary, of France or Germany. The indomitable Magyars are determined to map out Europe anew; and we do not expect that on that day a large spirit the new map shall be marked "Poland." Perhaps, even now as we are met here tramping of the war steed may resound the citadel of Warsaw to fright the despot from his lair. Even Ireland smiles again, while her children, after days of suffering, shall find their brains, and they shall then take their haem from the willows and anoint them to a soil fastivity and joy.

Political reformations may cost life and treasure; and the loss will be minutely and oft told by tyranny. But who counts the victims of despotism? Who tells the agonies of those whose lives have been blasted away by the oppressions and pangs of tyranny, as the successive drops can waste away a rock? Who counts the cost of monarchy to the world? Votes its terrors and its wrongs! Let the flag of India rise in judgment against the rapacity of monarchy, and let the debts of its kingly wars be its curse. Heap up the bones of the famished of Ireland, as its monument of inland then let it inscribe on this mausoleum its Bartholomew massacres, and the is of its high-priest Windishgratz for taph! Vengeance is the Lords, but the instruments of heaven, and out-humaniety cannot and will not always.

The day of retribution is coming, when the clear sunlight and pure air of freedom will follow the tempest of despotism.

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ORATION;

DELIVERED AT THE COURT-HOUSE, BLOOMSBURG, JULY FOURTH, 1849,
By Reuben W. Weaver.

CITIZENS:

This day it is just seventy-three years ago a new nation sprang into free existence upon a seemingly barren strip of sea-coast in the untitled wilderness of America. We are here to commemorate the returning anniversary of that day.

Unfettered by antiquated heresies in religion and government, the adventurous emigrants had been thrown into circumstances of privation and peril which forced them to rely upon their own energies, and to govern themselves. They were here untrammelled by the moth-eaten customs and laws of a barbarous feudalism; and blind Conservatism had not yet reared its altars nor banded its idols for their superstitious reverence. All aided here in forming a government, and its free institutions were hence of character to protect all who were industrious, frugal and virtuous. The necessities of the emigrants made legislators of them, while the oppression they had escaped and to which their little communities felt, taught them the true principles upon which to base their laws. It is invariably true that the emigrants to a new country, it left free to act, will establish better laws than those which have escaped. Even in our own republic see this exemplified in the improved constitutions of our western States, so far superior to those mouldering relics of the past to which the conservatism of our older States so tenaciously clings. Thus, Texas and Wisconsin have perhaps the best state constitutions in the Union.

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The day of retribution is coming, when the clear sunlight and pure air of freedom will follow the tempest of despotism.

In our own country we have passed through the ordeal, but in being the first among modern republics, we have acquired a weighty Freedom throughout the world and for all time demands that we retain unimpaired the blessings which heaven has beneficently conferred upon our country and our age.—The benighted pilgrim of freedom in the old world looks here for cheer and sympathy in his struggles. From all nations rings hither the Macedonian cry o'er the broad Atlantic—"Come over and help us." The kinsmen of Kosciusko, of De Kalb, and Fayette are battling for freedom in Europe, and stretch out their arms to us imploring aid. And tho' the strong arm of our government may be bound and stayed by the inexorable precedents of a despotic age, which we have taken to be a law to us, yet the true hearts of our generous people know but the law of free Nature's God, and beat in responsive sympathy to every throeb of freedom throughout the world. A loud cry of cheer goes up from our land for the struggling republicans of all earth. It echoes over ocean, and thrills and nerves and fires the children of Liberty. Kings tremble and flee in dismay. Thrones totter, and crowns crumble away. The American citizen is embraced as a brother by the free of all nations.

Our origin and history as a nation is an ennobling incentive to others. A band of three millions of discontented colonists by valor and virtue carved out for themselves a name as a free people. This day seven-thirty years ago they pledged "their lives, their fortunes and their sacred honor" to the cause of American Independence; and now in less than three quarters of a century, that people numbers twenty-five millions of happy, prosperous and independent citizens. Thirteen states have grown to thirty, and instead of a narrow strip of sea coast, we have a populous country extending from ocean to ocean, blessed with a genial climate and a fertile soil. The products of American ingenuity vie with those of the oldest nations, our agricultural wealth can feed the furnishing of all the world, and our manufactures, which furnish us with the sinews of war and the ornaments of peace, win the admiration and envy of the age. On the Atlantic and on the Pacific, our harbors entice the boundless commerce of every nation, and all the wide expanse of the land is redolent with active life and buoyant industry. The war whoop of the savage is changed for the din of the looms, or the ringing of the anvil. The light canoe has given way to the huge leviathan of the waters that roars like a monster and walks our rivers and bays like a thing of life. The deer is frightened from off our mountains by the encroachments of civilization, but a steed of iron nerve and sinews, breathing fire, now speeds over mountain and plain, and drags along his ponderous train of heavy freighted cars. The lightning is tamed, and made the harmless vehicle of intelligence. How much of all this has been done toward the perfection of the arts and sciences by Americans, the lives of Franklin, Rittenhouse, Fulton, Whitney and Morse must tell.

In our day, men stem the stormiest ocean without sails. They rise and fly thro' mid-air. They plough without horses, spin without hauds, and calculate by machines. They have found metals that swim on the water, and others that burn under it. They have founded new empires on the earth, and discovered new planets in the heavens. They read the rocks like a scroll, and decipher in them the history of races long since passed away. They dig tunnels under the sea, and build bridges over it. They travel with the speed of the wind, and send news by the lightning.

Truly our progress as a nation has been rapidly and richly blessed. But while we contemplate it, let us remember that all this has been won by the stout hearts and strong hands of hardy toil. Industry has enriched the land with smiling plenty, and decorated it with the mansions where contentment and ease enjoy life. A virtuous people were they who founded our nation, and their frugality, temperance and integrity crown their labors with success. They reared their families by the precepts of religious honesty and economy, and sustained their wise laws and free institutions by the eternal vigilance of good and faithful citizens. Let us remember what made them a prosperous and respected nation when we would emulate their high example; and let the nations of Europe remember what characters those were which heaven blessed with success and liberty.

Aye, citizens, the past has bright spots. It has hallowed associations that upon a day like this make their pilgrimage to the innermost penetralia of the heart's temple. We may long for the time

"When none was for a party,
When all were for the state;
When the great man helped the poor,
And the poor man loved the great."

But it must not be in a spirit of repining.—We may study the by-gone age to learn, but the time-coming is for us to improve. The past is eloquent with admonition and instruction if we heed its teachings. But so too is generous bright and glorious to a just and noblest praise. "Ours the lot to win it." And meanwhile, may the in the attainment and enjoyment of temporal, rational, and religious freedom, until, onward and upward, man ever true and just to the cause of Liberty, we shall attain to that glorious era when all earth shall be one nation, and all mankind one kindred brotherhood of freemen.

The Sabbath Convention.

NORTHUMBERLAND, June 20, 1849.

In pursuance of a notice previously given in the several papers of this region, the friends of the Sabbath met in General Convention at 10 o'clock A. M., in the Presbyterian church [old school] of this place.

On motion Mr. Goston was elected Chairman and J. J. A. Morgan, Secretary. The Convention being organized was then opened with prayer by Rev. George Foote.

On motion, it was resolved, that each person in a attendance whether delegate or not be invited to take part in the Convention.

On motion a committee of six, consisting of Rev. Foote, Rittenhouse, Crawford and Messrs. Durham, Shannon and Welrick were appointed to prepare business for the Convention.

After some adjulatory discussion the Convention adjourned for recess until 3 o'clock P. M.

2 o'clock P. M.
Convention met and proceeded to business. The com. appointed to prepare business for Convention reported the following memorial.

To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in Legislature assembled.

The subscribers, citizens of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, would respectfully represent that they regard the right of petition as sacred and inviolate in every free government; and that while it is the duty of the governed to preserve a due respect for the constituted authorities in the matter and manner of their petitions, they may claim it as a sacred right, growing out of their inviolable right of petition, that their petitions should be heard, and acted upon as their importance demands. It is not enough that their petitions be read and referred, or laid on the table. The right of petition implies a corresponding right to expect that their wrongs should be redressed, in all matters affecting their persons, their interests, and their consciences. The reception of petitions, and giving them a respectful hearing merely, while no appropriate action is had on the matter of these petitions, is an admission of the inviolability of the right of petition in theory but a denial of it in practice. It was one of the grounds of complaint of the colonies against the king of Great Britain, and one of the reasons why they took up arms to free themselves from despotic power, that he had refused to pass laws of immediate and pressing importance, wholesome and necessary to the public good. That is of a free government in which the reasonable remonstrance of the people, however small may be their number, is not acted upon, and their wrongs speedily redressed.

Your Petitioners would represent that they are aggrieved by those regulations of the government under which they live, which allow the public works to be used on the Lord's day: That they have a right to regard this regulation as a grievance, is evident from the fact, that while men who are engaged in the ordinary avocations of the farm and of the shop on the Sabbath-day, are liable to prosecution and fine, other men employed on the public works are required by the agents of the Commonwealth to perform their ordinary avocations on said day under penalty of dismissal from the public employment. We are professedly a people, claiming, and entitled to enjoy equal rights. This claim is inherent in the structure of a free govern-