

our innumerable spheres of deliberative discussion, has ever been, and will probably ever continue, the standard to regulate the forms of proceeding—often, on critical emergencies, so vital to the public safety, and freedom of legislation.

From this hurried sketch of what preceded Jefferson's rise to the Chief Magistracy, you can only derive a faint impression of the basis on which his fame reposes. Certainly one of the lofty intelligences of our Revolution received its earliest impulse—certainly one who impressed upon its action, its machinery and its result, the broad and regenerating principles of his own mind—certainly one who had exercised a vast and controlling influence in preventing the new political organization from assuming a character of vague, undefined, unrestricted and absorbing consolidation—he was, as certainly, at the beginning of the present century, and indeed had been for several years before, the acknowledged head of American Democracy.

It is not my wish to tell you how even his adversaries, during the memorable era termed the Reign of Terror, seemed instinctively conscious of his enviable eminence, and of his approaching triumph. Nor will I recall their daring experiments to defeat an elevation which seemed to owe to extinction the small, lingering ember of British and monarchical ambition, and to give to all ambitious republicans across our borders, as it were, a last secret. As he took the helm of State, a powerful revolution dawned on domestic policy, scarcely less momentous than the warlike one which he had opened with the people—now, the very people of these States—were now to see realized in the operations of their government, the sanguine, glowing, though long deferred hopes, inspired by a mighty reformer, whose promises and pledges had ever been held sacred.

You will doubtless have perceived that there are two lights in which Thomas Jefferson should be regarded, in order to be correctly appreciated: one which exhibits him in relation to humanity at large; and another, which exhibits him in relation to his fellow countrymen alone.

As a member of the great human family, he is eminently entitled to be regarded as a practical philanthropist and universal benefactor. No one more vigorously, more earnestly, or more effectively asserted and enforced the natural, equal and unalienable rights and powers of his fellow men, and disdained the trappings of pride, the pretensions of birth, the exclusiveness of classes, or the arrogance of inveterate forms. To him, Providence, religion, philosophy and common sense, spoke in vindication of the mass of mankind—a language at once unambiguous and unequivocal—he echoed that language faithfully. He demanded their exemption from all government but that of their own choosing, and from all influence but that of their own conscience.

He claimed freedom as the inseparable tribute of each—freedom to act—freedom to speak—freedom to assemble—Confounding the systems and abuses of ages, he became the champion of the present and the future, against the entailed servitude and miseries of the past. The unchecked dignity of earth's nobil creatures; their emancipation from thraldom of every despotism; their enjoyment of the blessings of life, of reason, and of liberty; these were the aims and incantations of his justice and benevolence. He edified aware, office, or rank, or privilege, he ridiculed as prep stercus, and condemned as pernicious. In a word, he stood up for his race, in every land, against every form of tyranny, and in scorn and defiance of every encroachment upon what he esteemed the invaluable and unalienable gifts of a beneficent Creator.

Such principles, though founded in unchangeable truth, like those of Christianity—to which, indeed, they bear a strong affinity—could expect no toleration at the hands of the oligarchs, whose centuries of delusion and of crime had, on almost every inhabitable spot of the globe, habituated to the indulgence of selfishness and power. Although the world was even then too far advanced to permit their refusal, against every form of tyranny, and in scorn and defiance of every encroachment upon what he esteemed the invaluable and unalienable gifts of a beneficent Creator.

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The petty divisions, which rapidly sprung up during the contest and after the adoption of our existing Constitution, may, I think, be traced to what (speaking in the general) strongly indicated a design on the part of eminent men to let drop or evade the thoroughly popular doctrines on which they led, and on which only they could have achieved, independence—to get rid, as it were, of friends that had outlived their liking, and to glide back, in substance, if not in form, to the British model. Such a design, or the bare suspicion of its being harbored, would naturally rouse, at a crisis so interesting, the utmost vigilance and activity of Jefferson. He perceived at once that the work of revolution was in reality unaccomplished; that the guarantee against a retrograde movement was yet wanting; and that, unless his fellow citizens, made aware of their danger, could be induced to face their domestic opponents with the same promptitude and energy as they had faced their foreign ones, the means of safety would depart, with the final adjournment of the Continental Congress, and might never be regained. The interval was perilous. Peace had in a measure promoted a relapse into former habits—the prejudices of early education—old feelings, always the warmer after a renewal of an interrupted intercourse—the leaven of still but simulating torpor, and the influence of the only literature then circulating—all combined with a keen appetite for the long- withheld gains of a commerce with the mother country, to jeopard the only fruits worth reaping or reaping by the sacrifice and tolls of a rebellion.

It would involve too serious a draft upon your time, on this occasion to develop the manner in which the disadvantages and embarrassments of their position were counteracted by the Patriarch of our party, and his affiliated Republicans in each of the States. It was amidst the ensuing collisions of party spirit and of intellect, prolonged through the memorable era of '98, that the Constitution was happily moulded as it now is, and that the creed of Democracy, as contradistinguished from Federalism, was matured. How distinctly this creed followed out the bent maxim and motives of the Declaration of Independence. How effectually it foreclosed all backward tendencies or impulses, and how truly worthy it is of undiminished regard and implicit conformity, may be seen by merely and briefly recurring, without a comment, to some of its principal features.

1. The essential legal equality of human beings.

2. The people the only source of legitimate power.

3. The absolute and lasting severance of church and State.

4. The freedom of government, and independence of the respective States.

5. The Union a confederacy, or compact; neither a consolidation nor a centralization.

6. The Constitution of the Union a special compact, written grant of power, limited and definite.

And again:

1. No hereditary office, nor order, nor title.

2. No taxation beyond the public wants.

3. No national debt, if possible.

4. No costly splendor of administration.

5. No prerogative of opinion, nor of public discussion.

6. No unnecessary interference with individual conduct, property, or speech.

7. The civil paramount to the military power.

And again:

1. The representative to obey the instructions of his constituents.

2. No favored classes, and no monopolies.

3. Elections free, and suffrage universal.

4. No public moneys expended, except by warrant of specific appropriation.

5. No mystery in Government inaccessible to the public eye.

6. Public compensation for public services, moderate salaries, and pervading economy and accountability.

The election of Jefferson to the Presidency, by the people of the United States, constituted their first authentic and emphatic ratification of the entire Democratic creed. He was unquestionably both its chief author and representative. His administration throughout illustrated and carried its propositions with all their resulting and subsidiary deductions and doctrines; and what was the consequence? Why, such was the extraordinary impulse given to prosperity and progress—such the enlargement of our means and population, our contentment, and our confidence, that, in the short period of twelve years, this infant Republic was firm enough, and strong enough, and rich enough, and bold enough, single handed and successfully to cope with the mightiest of veteran nations. May I ask, fellow citizens, whether it is presumptuous to say that the wonderful achievements and refulgent close of the war of 1812—abandoned, resisted, denounced, and defied, and that was what was by the antagonists of his system, should be gratefully accepted as an attested sanction of Providence on his labors and his purposes? And whether there was not something akin to revelation, which should awe the incredulous, in the manner in which, at the age of 33, he accompanied, as it were, hand in hand, his early competitor, and final proselyte, to join our ranks, even more glorious than either, at the bar of eternity, on the fiftieth anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, and within the very hour on which he had affixed his immortal name to that immortal instrument?

Thus far, I am disposed, fellow citizens, to consider the tribute of renown accorded to him upon the morrow of his death, as an immensurable and justly exceeding (Washington apart) that of any other man. His triumph as the ameliorating reformer of the principles and practices of Government, was, while he yet lived, signal and assured; it has since widened and deepened; and it is still hourly advancing, expanding, and strengthening. The sheet that he planted at "The Raleigh Tavern" in 1769, found a genial soil, and has luxuriated, with occasional frosts, but with constant sunshine, until now its roots have pierced into and grappled the granite mass, and its fallage blossoms and glitters in all directions. Every material change of law—and we know how incessantly throughout the twenty six States such changes occur—and every modification of organic structure and theory, (not infrequently either are prompted and adopted; more or less, to effectuate his plans, and bear constantly renewing homage to the presence and power of his genius. No administration, general or local, political or municipal, deems itself started without a formal profession of the whole or greater part of his rules of action; nor has any one disregarded his injunctions, without loss of character, entanglement, and repentance. In fine, the senseless and delusive, though loud and fierce, outcries which originally denounced him as a Jacobin, leveller, or destructive, have given place, even on the lips of erstwhile pliant adversaries, to honeyed avowals of Jeffersonian Democracy!

They who enjoy benefits and blessings achieved by illustrious men, are under a sacred obligation to cherish their fame.—This is the adequate and appropriate reward of virtuous toil; it is the only one which real magnanimity of soul contemplates, beyond the charm of success, as the fruit of patriotic exertion. The possession of office, the distributive power of patronage, the bustle and pagantry of public exaltation, or the opportunities of mercenary gain, are the aims of a tainted ambition; not truly great and pure mind ever valued them. In this country according to the stern spirit of our institutions, we can repay the labors of statesmen or the exploits of gallantry in but one way, by remembrance and gratitude. In England, or in France, or in Russia, immensurable and boundless treasure are transferred as enduring testimonials of national regard; but with us, Jefferson, the pioneer, who bade the political wilderness blossom as the rose, impoverished by the ceaseless pursuit of our liberties, and of a policy which added almost an empire to our territory, was thought to merit, in being able to relieve his personal wants by selling to Congress, and for half their worth, the very instruments he had so nobly employed. For a Wellington, a Southey, a Paskovitch, millions are lavished; but for their American equal—equal to all that constitutes the victorious defender of one's native land—the restoration of a paltry fine of a thousand dollars, extorted by an angry judge as the penalty for undiscriminating and absorbing partiality, is unattainable. If we must not quarrel with this peculiarity of our republicanism—we ought never to recognize in money as a suitable representative of our veneration and love—let us at least give to these sentiments that forevering care and that signal manifestation which can only make them, what they were thought to be by their inspirers—an ample substitute for every thing else.

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