

Taken from the DEMOCRAT AND SENTINEL,
EBENSBURG, JULY 7, 1826

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4TH OF JULY ORATION

ORATION DELIVERED BY MOSES CANAN,
at Ebensburg, on the 4th day of July, 1826

FELLOW-CITIZENS:--Fifty years have passed--half a century has rolled away since the sages of America proclaimed to the world that these United States should be free and independent. That which our statesmen dared to proclaim, our soldiers ventured to support. They fought--they bled--they conquered. A new era arose. The genius of man, which had long been shackled by the thralldom of tyranny, expanded into power; and Freedom then shone forth in all its brightness of beauty.

The favor of my fellow-citizens has conferred upon me the pleasing duty of proclaiming, on this day of jubilee, from the heights of the Alleghanies, that America is yet free; that after the lapse of fifty years, our wise institutions have been found efficient to distribute happiness and prosperity to this widely extended community; that our Constitution, founded in wisdom and supported by virtue, is sufficiently energetic without the aid of kingly power or hereditary grandeur; that a representative Republican government, where the rights of all are equally protected, and where every person has his due proportionate weight is sufficient to regulate millions of freemen.

My pleasure on the present occasion is much increased when I look around me and observe the kind of audience I address. Not only native Americans, but emigrants from England, from Ireland, from Wales, from Scotland, from Germany, are listening to my voice. We have met together as friends and fellow-citizens ought--divested of all party rancour and national enmity--to celebrate one of the greatest events in the history of man--the birth-day of a free nation. I hope we all come deeply impressed with gratitude to the Great Disposer of all events, who has cast our lot in a land of religious and civil liberty, where all are equally protected in their conscience, in their life, their liberty, their character, and their property.

It also gives me much pleasure to see this little band of hoary veterans, (six old men who had been soldiers of the Revolution were sitting near the speaker.) whose exertions in early life were devoted to the cause of their country, and who have survived the wreck of time long enough to see the perfection of those free institutions for which they contended.

Defenders of your country! companions of the brave in arms! how exquisite must be your pleasure, and that of your few surviving compatriots, who are now convened in various parts of the United States, to celebrate this anniversary of Independence, when you reflect that you contributed a part, in procuring freedom for your country; you have now seen the experience of half a century successfully tried on the genius, the virtue and disposition of the people of the United States; you have found that liberty is congenial to them, and that they prosper under its auspices, you are now but a small remnant of that heroic band who shielded the rights of your country, and opposed their as a bulwark against tyranny. Your country owes you a vast debt of gratitude. It has, it is true, permitted many of its defenders to descend to the grave in poverty, I hope that better feelings will dictate a better course, and that the declining years of those few soldiers of the revolution who remain, may be made comfortable by that wealth which their exertions, their blood, their sacrifices gained to their country.

Those men who gained our Independence, who fought out the fight of liberty, deserve the greatest praise. They acted nobly under the most discouraging circumstances. They were exposed to every hardship. They were badly fed, badly clothed, and badly paid. Frequently they had not raiment sufficient to defend them from the winter storm. They often marked their steps with blood upon the frozen soil. But under all those difficulties, they struggled on, and gained their country's freedom-the great object of their pursuit.

It is not my intention to enter into a detailed account of the early situation of the affairs of America, of the rise and progress of those many causes which led to the revolution, and of the many battles, difficulties and hardships which attended the arduous struggle that finally terminated in the freedom of our country. Although the subject would be one in which your feelings would be deeply interested, yet I could not expect your indulgence long enough to describe it. The extended length of the day, at this season of the year, would be too short for the purpose. The sun would descend below yonder horizon before the tale could half be told.

From the earliest settlement of the colonists in America, they had many dangers and difficulties to encounter. Driven by oppression from their native land, they entered upon the state of cultivation, and of either conciliating the Aborigines of the country, or of resisting their attacks. Removed a great distance from the rest of civilized man, and navigation being then in an imperfect state, they enjoyed but little opportunity of foreign aid or support. Some few whom the same causes had forced to brave the same dangers occasionally joined the first emigrants.

In process of time, from the unremitting industry of our hardy ancestors, the wilderness became checkered with cultivated fields; and cities and towns arose upon the margins of our bays and rivers. "The busy hum of Commerce" commenced; and happiness and prosperity began to dawn in our land. This state of prosperity aroused the jealousy of the mother country. The British ministry, either willing to fill those coffers, which had been drained by the long wars in which the nations had been engaged, or dreading the increase of power, and resolving to humble and depress in infamy that strength, which afterwards made their lion to crouch and tremble in his den, imposed upon the colonists the taxations and burden, and inflicted the indignities, which are so feelingly complained of, and so well described in the Declaration of our Independence, which has been read to you.

The cupidity of the British ministry was frustrated by the firmness of the American people--by the self-denial of those luxuries to which they had been for awhile accustomed, and which they had begun to consider as necessary for their comfort. A due sense of the injuries they were suffering, and of the illegality of the impositions to which they had been subjected, aroused their apprehension, and awakened their pride. A fixed resolution to resist the march of tyranny, dictated the non-intercourse and non-importation acts. A firm and general resolve not to use or to buy the merchandise of England pervaded almost every breast. Even ladies who had been used to all the finery of luxurious extravagance, cheerfully submitted to the scanty and rude supply, which the then infant state of our manufactures afforded.

After having endured sufferings and indignities beyond measure--after the cup of humiliation had been drained to the very dregs--after every appeal to the feelings and the justice of the mother country, had been in vain made the resort to arms was made.

The God of Hosts was invoked, and the energies of the country were brought into action, in defence of invaded rights. "Our fathers of bondage". The struggle was long and arduous, but patriotism inspired the breasts--love of Liberty nerved the arms--and Washington, under the auspices of a benign Deity, directed the destinies of our country.

When we consider the comparative strength of Great Britain and America at the commencement of the Revolution, we are filled with astonishment at the boldness of that travesty which dared to resist in what appeared almost a hopeless struggle, almost the effect of unthinking desperation. Great Britain was then one of the most powerful nations on earth. Her navies were riding triumphant on every ocean. Her armies were marching to sure victory wherever the safety of the country or the ambition of the Ministry directed them. Proud of the talents and bravery of her naval and military officers, strong in the number and discipline of her armies, and, although immensely in debt, yet powerful in resources, she considered our opposition as a mere Pygmean resistance, one that she looked upon with contempt, as easily to be put down by the mere frowns of her gigantic power. The Americans were destitute of a navy and an army. They were almost destitute of officers experienced in the arts of war, and they were destitute of the necessary funds for carrying it on. An undisciplined militia had to oppose the prowess of veteran troops unused to defeat. But the recollection of their wrongs, and their certain misery if defeated, inspired the Americans with the irresistible bravery and Herculean strength. Although the times were fearful and gloomy, yet few deserted the cause of their country. We had but one Arnold--Heaven averted the consequences of his treachery; and the contempt of the world has followed him.

At first but few dared to hope for Independence. The opposition was considered by many as only the means of procuring redress of the grievances under which they labored. Such men as Patrick Henry only looked forward with a prophet's eye to the future destinies of their country; and by the minds of the people for the pang of political separation from the mother country.

When Independence was proclaimed, an almost universal burst of approbation followed. The spirit of resistance spread over the whole country. The People knew that the Rubicon had been passed, that there was no safe retreat, that they must support the Declaration, or sink into an abject state of subjection. If our Revolution had failed, miserable would have been the fate of at least the leaders of that time. They would have suffered all the punishment annexed to the crime of treason in the sanguinary penal code of England. Like the illustrious Emmet, the youthful Hero of Ireland, our beloved Washington would have been dragged to an ignominious death, for having dared to defend the rights of his country. But Heaven directed otherwise -- Washington lived to see his country free--to enjoy the blessings of his countrymen, and the highest honors they could confer; and died in a good old age, lamented by their tears, leaving a character as a soldier, a statesman and a man, unequalled by any in any age.

But my fellow citizens, although our heroes were clothed with honor in the war of the Revolution, yet it is from their conduct in the day of peace, and from the result of their glorious struggle that they are entitled to the greatest praise.

After having achieved the freedom of the country--after its Independence was acknowledged by the King of England, they, with their beloved and almost idolized Chief, retired to the shades of private life to enjoy that peace and liberty which their valor had gained. It is no little praise to them that after having so long endured so many privations, they retired without compensation and without murmuring. Our leaders were men, unambitious, and with their soldiers firmly devoted to the best interests of their country. We had no daring Caesar--no ambitious Cromwell--no aspiring Bonaparte, who under pretence of giving freedom to their country, made us of the confidence and devotion of their soldiers, to throw around it the chains of their own tyranny.

After peace was obtained, the people of the different states adopted a regular system of Government, Constitutions were formed by which their internal concerns were regulated; whilst the whole were harmoniously united by the Constitution of the General Government--the work of the sages of our land--one of the greatest efforts of the human mind--an instrument calculated to perpetuate the blessings of free Government--one sufficiently powerful to protect the interests of the country, and sufficiently guarded to prevent an infraction of the rights of the citizens.

This Constitution contains within itself a provision for amendment, when the experience of time or the exigency of the country demand it. This provision requires such deliberate examination of the evil and of the remedy, as will at all times secure the country from the rash decision of political excitement.

Under this Constitution, our country has prospered and flourished. Our commerce has been extended to every part of the globe. Our ships float upon every sea. Our national character has been established on a high standing among the nations of the earth, and our flag is respected by all.

The wise policy which has lately been pursued, of placing our country in a proper state of defence, will, it is to be hoped prevent any future insults to our national dignity--The disasters which attend the commencement of the war of 1812, were the result of our want of preparation. We had been lulled by a long peace into a fancied security, and when we should have been ready to act with effect, we had only begun to prepare. But when proper arrangements had been effected, and the power of the country brought into operation, our national character was retrieved, and feats of valor were performed, worthy of the successors of the heroes of the Revolution.

Peace is the best situation for a republic; and the best way to procure peace is to be prepared for war. And the surest mode of preventing an insult in the exhibition of the power, to resist it. The numerous fortresses which have been erected--the education which is now given to youths at our military academies--and the spirit which animates the volunteers of the country, will render us at all times impregnable to foreign force, without incurring the expense and the danger of an extensive standing army. Let proper encouragement be given to volunteer corps--let them be enabled to meet frequently for exercise and improvement, and an effective force of citizen soldiers will be always at the command of the Government, sufficient "to execute the laws of the Union, suppress insurrection, and repel invasions."

Among the blessings which have arisen from the freedom of our government, may be reckoned the spring and encouragement which have been given to industry and to every kind of improvement. The people knowing that their rights will be protected, that whatever property or wealth they acquire will not be wrested from them by the grasping hand of tyranny, proceed with animation and confidence in all their undertakings.

When the storm of the Revolution had blown over, and the calm of peace had returned, a system of improvement commenced, which has been gradually increasing. "Within that comparatively short period, great changes have been made on the face of the country; the wilderness has been made to 'blossom as the rose;' cities, towns and cultivated fields are spread over the whole United States. Immense territories have been acquired from the Indians and from foreign powers; not by conquest and the effusion of blood, but by purchase by a fair and adequate price. Those territories have rapidly increased in population, and some of them are now formed into States, enjoying equal rights and privileges with the original States. Within fifty years the number of States united under the same Constitution has increased from thirteen to twenty-four.

I hail with pleasing anticipation the time when our whole country will be intersected by Canals, Railways, and Turnpike-roads, as the surest means of binding together the whole American People, by the indissoluble ties of commercial intercourse and reciprocal interest. That such will be the result of the spirit of improvement which has lately arisen among us, there is little reason to doubt. The object to be gained is great, and the means of accomplishing it are ample. But a few years will pass before every practicable improvement of this kind will be attempted; and there is no impiety in venturing the assertion that the ingenuity and power of free man is sufficient to remove every obstruction and to break down every barrier which nature has interposed between the different sections of our country.

Among the blessings of a free government that of an untrammelled Press is not the least. "The Press is the freeman's guard--the tyrant's foe." I hold it to be a sound opinion that the laws are best administered when the conduct and actions of those who administer them are open to public examination and public scrutiny. Our rulers hold their stations not by hereditary right, but by the free choice of the people; and as by the frequency of election they are often brought to the bar of public opinion, it is essential that that opinion should be formed from full and correct information. This information a free Press best can give. In proportion to the necessity of correct public information ought to be the punishment and disgrace of those who abuse the freedom of the Press by inculcating slanders and unfounded reports infurious to the character of individuals in either a public or private capacity.

The encouragement given to the incubation of useful knowledge, has increased the number of daily and weekly newspapers in the United States, beyond all example in any other country. It is little more than a century since the first Printing Press was established in America. At the commencement of the Revolution there were very few Newspapers; and they were confined in their circulation principally to our commercial cities. Now, in addition to numerous literary journals, daily and weekly Newspapers are issued from almost every country, town and principal village in the Union-- thus widely diffusing knowledge and useful information of every kind. A newspaper gives to us "the passing tidings of the times." It is a valuable and cheap book for our children. It amuses and instructs and perhaps more than anything else, gives to them a taste for reading, and for seeking after useful information.--Nothing but absolute poverty should prevent any father of a family from taking at least one Newspaper, conducted with a view to rational amusement and general instruction.

In a free government, education is encouraged, and many inducements are offered for the promotion of learning. In the governments of the old world where hereditary right prevails, "any titled blockhead may wear a crown," but here it generally

requires education and talent to give promotion, and good conduct to insure its continuance.

The Hypercritics of England have affected to condemn the talent of Americans, and have asserted with all the pomp of pride, that that ethereal spirit which constitutes true genius becomes stagnant under the influence of the American climate; that that on our soil "fancy sickens and genius dies." Their self-important and fastidious travelers give to our customs and manners a false coloring and a wilfully perverted description. They despise those simple habits which the genius of our government requires, and which we would not exchange for all the gorgeous drapery of European fashion. It is true that prior to the war of the Revolution, there were few instances of extensive education, and few memorials of learning remain. The people of America were then engaged in those pursuits which were necessary for the support of life, and are incident to the settlement of a new country. Their necessities confined them to a close pursuit of agriculture, of commerce and the mechanical arts, except when called upon to defend their lives and their property from the cruelly provoked but ruthless savage; or when called to aid the mother country in her wars with France. These wars however bloody and disastrous their events, ought to be considered as real blessings to the country. It was here that the first rudiments of war were acquired by the hardy yeomanry of America, which afterwards enabled them to withstand the numbers and the discipline of the British armies. In this school Washington was taught. It was here that Putnam and some few of the early defenders of our country, acquired their military knowledge.

Are Americans destitute of genius? Are they deficient in the talents, which adorn peace or are necessary for war? Let the people of England answer these questions. Their palaces are defended from the artillery of Heaven by the rods of Franklin, and adorned by the pencil of West. They have been taught the true idiom and construction of their language by Lindley Murray. The notes of their Mammoth bank have been engraved by Perkins. Their waters are covered with steam vessels, the invention of Fulton, and Irvin and Cooper are now rivalling their "great unknown" in works of genius and fancy.

The Congress of the United States, in talents and in eloquence, need not shrink from a comparison with the boasted British Parliament. Our pulpits and our courts exhibit much talent; and medical science has been raised among us to an exalted station.

The battles of Erie and Champlain, in proportion to the forces engaged, might challenge a competition with the boasted victories of Lord Nelson; and in what page of history will you find the record of achievements greater than those performed by the Americans during the Revolution, and the war which commenced in 1812.

Sympathising with the distresses of our fellow men, and anxious that all may obtain the freedom which we enjoy, we must consider the example which our Declaration of Independence has given to other nations, as among the greatest of its results. The new freemen of the Republics on the southern part of our continent will cheerfully unite with us in the celebration of this day. It is to our example they owe their freedom. On this day the arms of the Greeks will be nerved with increased power. Amidst the horrors of war, and the roaring of the desolating artillery, they will rejoice at the blessings of America, and will unite their prayers with us for the freedom of the world. The Declaration of the 4th of July, 1776, taught to the world a lesson never to be forgotten--gave an example which will in due time be followed by every nation on earth. The supreme

God who rules the destinies of the world never intended that man should remain subjects to the sway of tyrants and despots-- never gave to any particular family the right of continuing their arbitrary rule from generation to generation. Man must and will be free. The sins of the people may for a while keep them subject to Kings, Emperors and hereditary rulers; but finally the whole human race will be emancipated. All will enjoy the government of their choice. All will be ruled by persons of their own selection, subject to be removed whenever they violate their trust or lose the confidence of the people.

What may be the fate of our beloved country, it is impossible to predict. But let us sincerely hope that history will not record of her, as of many other nations--"she rose--she flourished--she fell" Let us hope that she will continue to be, as she has been for the last fifty years, the polar star of liberty--the beacon light by which the benighted world will be led to emancipation.

We have every reason to expect this. The same spirit which animated our Fathers, still pervades the country. Liberty is a blessing bestowed by Heaven, consecrated by the blood of our patriots, and endeared to us by the felicity which it has imparted. Our dispositions must be strangely altered; ignorance must make vast inroads upon us, before we can submit to lose the inestimable gift. We cannot lose it. The knowledge of ourright, and the fear of losing them, will create a zeal like that which now animates the regenerated Greeks. We will yield our liberty only with our lives.

TAKEN FROM THE DEMOCRAT AND SENTINEL
EBENSBURG, JULY 7, 1858

THE CELEBRATION of the Anniversary of our National Independence day last Saturday, as we anticipated, passed off very pleasantly. The attendance was large, and all present, we are confident, returned to their homes feeling that they had devoted at least one day of their lives, to innocent mirth and pleasant relaxation, from the business and cares of life. The arrangements for the celebration were complete, and reflected not a little credit on the skill, judgment and good taste of the Committee having the matter in charge.--The beautiful arbor erected near the refreshment tables, was peculiarly acceptable as a shelter from the scorching rays of the sun. Underneath its cool and inviting shade a number of "fair women and brave men," amused themselves at intervals during the day, by tripping it on the 'light fantastic toe,' to the sweet music of the violin. Dinner was served up at one and a half o'clock, and furnished a convincing proof that good living is not among the least of the many recommendations of which the topmost heights of the Alleghenies can boast. The abundant supply of luxuries and substantial, received ample justice at the hands of all the ticket holders in attendance. Refreshments of all kinds, such as ice cream, 'ice cold lemonade,' pound cake, &c, were to be procured at the refreshment tables during the day. This department was under the special and exclusive superintendence of the ladies, and their sweet looks and winning smiles, we have no doubt, induced many a tender hearted swain to invest, who didn't care a fig for either ice cream, pound cake, or 'ice cold lemonade.'

Immediately after dinner, the Declaration of Independence was read, in a clear and distinct manner, by Thomas P. Fenlon, Esq. Hon. John S. Rhey then delivered an oration, which Clay or Webster might have been proud to claim in their palmiest days. L. H. Campbell, Esq. came out best in the foot race; carrying off the prize--a beautiful gold breast pin. The music of the Carrolltown brass band, assisted by the Loretto, Jefferson and Ebensburg bands, was excellent, and excited universal commendation. Large delegations were in attendance from Jefferson, Portage, Summittville, Loretto and Carrolltown.

We direct the attention of our readers to the very eloquent oration, on our first page, delivered at Ebensburg, July 4th, 1862, by Hon. Moses Canan. It was handed us by M. D. Magehan, Esq., accompanied by the following note:

C. D. Murray, Esq.--Will you be good enough to republish the accompanying oration, delivered by the Hon. Moses Canan, at this place, on the semi-centennial celebration of Independence.

If the pure patriotism, beautiful diction and sublime teachings it contains, will be as raptuously received by the present generation, as it was at that day, then I will rejoice that I have been an humble instrument in again drawing the attention of the sons of the Mountain to the talented, learned and gifted patriarch of the Bar of Western Pennsylvania.

June 28, 1858.

M. D. Magehan.
