

Malcolm B. Stone

NEWLY DISCOVERED

FOURTH OF JULY

ORATION

BY THE ILLUSTRIOUS ORATOR AND STATESMAN,

DANIEL WEBSTER;

— DELIVERED AT —

FRYEBURG, ME., IN THE YEAR 1802,

AND NOW FOR THE FIRST TIME GIVEN TO THE PUBLIC.

BOSTON, MASS. :  
A. WILLIAMS & Co.

FRYEBURG, ME. :  
A. F. & C. W. LEWIS.  
1882.

# THE ILLUSTRATED FRYEBURG WEBSTER MEMORIAL

contains, besides the newly discovered oration, an engraving of Webster in early manhood, the old Academy in which he taught at Fryeburg, the old Church in which the Oration was delivered, the present Academy building, Webster's Fryeburg Home (the Oxford House), and a fine heliotype view of the whole Village from Prospect Highlands (by J. R. Osgood & Company). The Memorial will contain several letters written by Webster while at Fryeburg, some of which the public will now see for the first time; poems written by him while in college and at Fryeburg; a recently discovered poem by Longfellow on "Lovewell's Fight," now for the first time brought to light, after the lapse of nearly sixty years (it being the first poem which Longfellow gave to the public with his name attached, and which the poet himself long sought for in vain); a poetic gem descriptive of Fryeburg's grand mountain scenery, by John G. Whittier; a pen-picture of Fryeburg by W. D. Howells; and numerous other selections and poems descriptive of Fryeburg's history and scenery, several of the latter having been specially written for the Memorial.

The Oration, together with the three first-mentioned of the above illustrations, is also given to the public in a cheaper form, termed the plain edition.

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ENTERED ACCORDING TO ACT OF CONGRESS, IN THE YEAR 1882, BY

C. W. LEWIS,

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The Original Manuscript of the Oration is now in charge of A. F. Lewis of Fryeburg.

# PREFACE.

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WE HEREWITH present to the public a newly discovered Fourth of July oration by DANIEL WEBSTER; and we esteem it a happy coincidence, that we are able to give this oration to the world at a time when the commemoration, throughout the country, of this the centennial year of Webster's birth has caused such a renewal of interest in all that pertains to the renowned orator and statesman. In his Autobiography Webster speaks of his Fryeburg oration as unpublished, and, as it had slept in oblivion for eighty years, no one supposed until lately that it had survived the wreck of time. A detailed account of the accidental discovery of the original manuscript of the oration, in the handwriting of its illustrious author, would savor much of the mystery and fascination of romance, but such a narrative would require more space than the limits of a preface would allow. Suffice it to say, that a large mass of Webster's private papers, including the manuscript in question, found its way into an old junk-shop at 252 Federal Street, Boston, and was there rescued from destruction by the proprietor, John Shea, whose keen eye fortunately happened to catch the name of Webster on one of the papers. From Mr. Shea the manuscript passed into the hands of a well-known Boston lawyer, and from the latter came into the possession of its present owner.

It will be remembered, that, at the time of the delivery of this oration, Webster was teaching school at Fryeburg, being principal of the old and famous academy at that place. He was then but twenty years of age, and yet, so profound was the impression which this oration produced upon the minds of the hearers, that the sentiments enunciated were remembered and repeated after the lapse of more than fifty years.\* The late

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\* See letter of Dr. Thomas P. Hill in Webster's Private Correspondence.

Rev. Dr. Samuel Osgood of Springfield, Mass., with whose father Webster boarded while at Fryeburg, and who heard the oration, said that "it had great merit and was a finished production;" and we doubt not that the reader will coincide with the opinion thus expressed, and that he will find in this early effort the promise of those gigantic intellectual powers which shed such a lustre of renown upon Webster's subsequent career. Indeed, so remarkable a production was the oration regarded at the time by those who heard it, that one enthusiastic farmer ventured the bold remark that Daniel might some day even attain the lofty position of *Governor of New Hampshire!*

Exalted as were the estimates placed upon this effort by Webster's contemporaries, yet the reality far surpasses anything which these estimates would lead us to expect. It is almost incredible that such a production could have emanated from a young man of only twenty years, and it may safely be asserted, that, for beauty of style, profound thought, logical reasoning, and statesmanlike wisdom, the early history of the world's greatest orators may be challenged to produce anything which will bear comparison with this Fryeburg effort. Being a production of the transcendent merit it is, this oration will constitute a substantial addition to the legacy which the colossal intellect of Webster bequeathed to posterity, and his countrymen will gladly give it a place by the side of the efforts of his later years, to be read and studied as long as the American heart shall feel the inspiration of that love of the Constitution and the Union which he did so much to inculcate. In this oration the speaker will be seen to have thus early shown himself a proficient in the treatment of subjects connected with the science of government, and to have already commenced that profound study of the Constitution of his country which afterwards gave him the proud title of its Great Expounder and Defender.

It is a remarkable fact that the last speech made by Webster in the Senate of the United States, July 17, 1850, concluded with the same peroration with which he closed this Fryeburg oration forty-eight years before.

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WEBSTER  
IN EARLY MANHOOD.

## ORATION.

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FELLOW-CITIZENS,—It is at the season when nature hath assumed her loveliest apparel that the American people assemble in their several temples to celebrate the birthday of their nation. Arrayed in all the beauties of the year, the Fourth of July once more visits us. Green fields and a ripening harvest proclaim it, a bright sun cheers it, and the hearts of freemen bid it welcome. Illustrious spectacle! Six millions of people this day surround their altars, and unite in an address to Heaven for the preservation of their rights. Every rank and every age imbibes the general spirit. From the lisping inhabitant of the cradle to the aged warrior whose gray hairs are fast sinking in the western horizon of life, every voice is, this day, tuned to the accents of LIBERTY! WASHINGTON! MY COUNTRY!

Festivals established by the world have been numerous. The coronation of a king, the birth of a prince, the marriage of a princess, have often called wondering crowds together. Cities and nations agree to celebrate the event which raises one mortal man above their heads, and beings called men stand astonished and aghast while the pageantry of a monarch or the jewelled grandeur of a queen poses before them. Such a festival, however, as the Fourth of July is to America, is not found in history; a festival designed for solemn reflection on

the great events that have happened to us; a festival in which freedom receives a nation's homage, and Heaven is greeted with incense from ten thousand hearts.

In the present situation of our country, it is, my respected fellow-citizens, matter of high joy and congratulation that there is one day in the year on which men of different principles and different opinions can associate together. The Fourth of July is not an occasion to compass sea and land to make proselytes. The good sense and the good nature which yet remain among us will, we trust, prevail on this day, and be sufficient to chain, at least for a season, that untamed monster, Party Spirit—and would to God that it might be chained forever, that, as we have but one interest, we might have but one heart and one mind!

You have hitherto, fellow-citizens, on occasions of this kind, been entertained with the discussion of national questions; with inquiries into the true principles of government; with recapitulations of the War; with speculations on the causes of our Revolution, and on its consequences to ourselves and to the world. Leaving these subjects, it shall be the ambition of the speaker of this day to present such a view of your Constitution and your Union as shall convince you that you have nothing to hope from a change.

This age has been correctly denominated an age of experiments. Innovation is the idol of the times. The human mind seems to have burst its ancient limits, and to be travelling over the face of the material and intellectual creation in search of improvement. The world hath become like a fickle lover, in whom every new face inspires a new passion. In this rage for novelty many things are made better, and many things are made worse. Old errors are discarded, and new errors are embraced. Governments feel the same effects from this spirit as every-



thing else. Some, like our own, grow into beauty and excellence, while others sink still deeper into deformity and wretchedness. The experience of all ages will bear us out in saying, that alterations of political systems are always attended with a greater or less degree of danger. They ought, therefore, never to be undertaken, unless the evil complained of be really felt and the prospect of a remedy clearly seen. The politician that undertakes to improve a Constitution with as little thought as a farmer sets about mending his plow, is no master of his trade. If that Constitution be a systematic one, if it be a free one, its parts are so necessarily connected that an alteration in one will work an alteration in all; and this cobbler, however pure and honest his intentions, will, in the end, find that what came to his hands a fair and lovely fabric goes from them a miserable piece of patchwork.

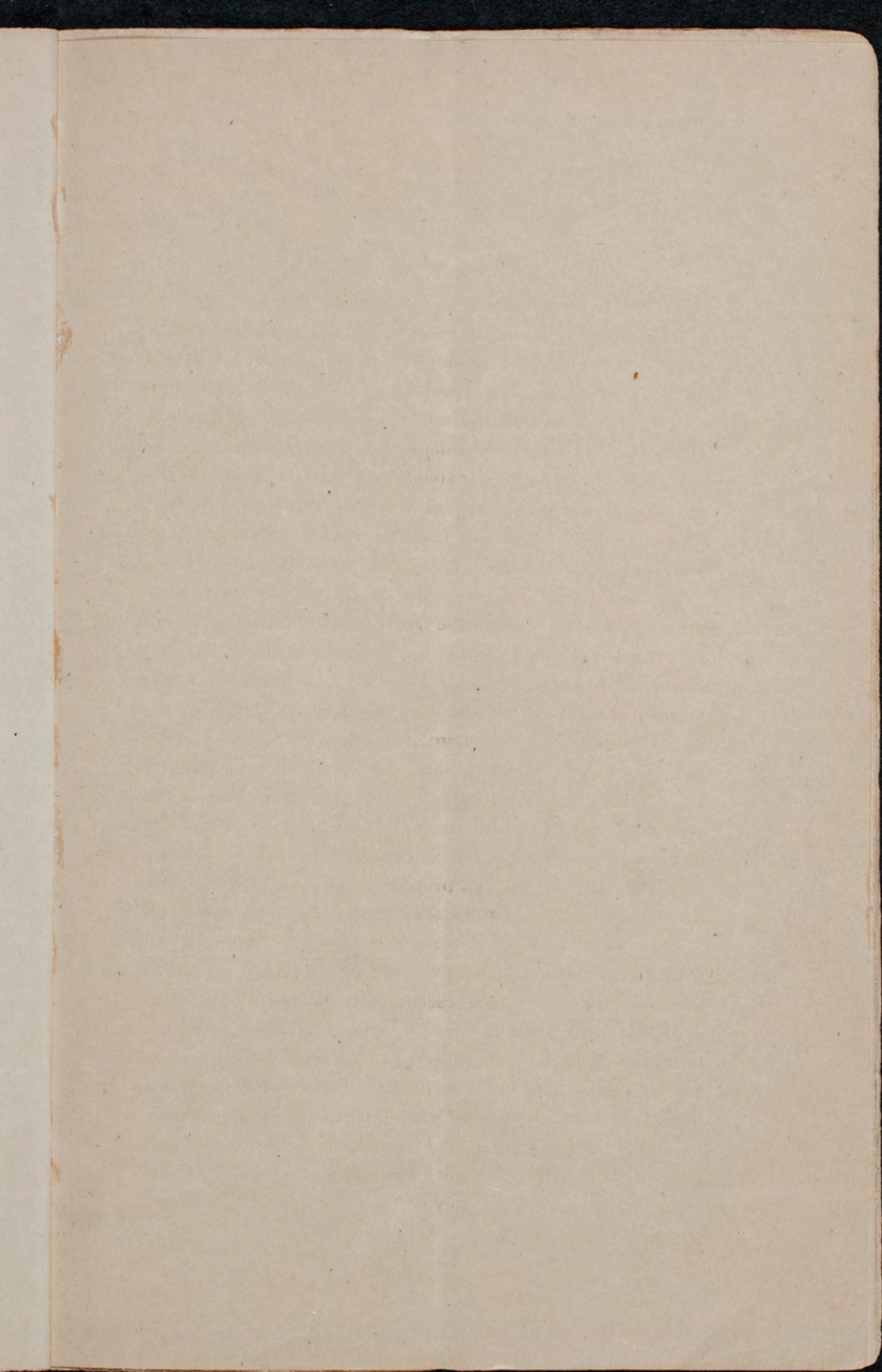
Nor are great and striking alterations alone to be shunned. A succession of small changes, a perpetual tampering with minute parts, steal away the breath though they leave the body; for it is true that a government may lose all its real character, its genius and its temper, without losing its appearance. You may have a despotism under the name of a republic. You may look on a government and see it possess all the external essential modes of freedom, and yet see nothing of the essence, the vitality, of freedom in it: just as you may behold Washington or Franklin in wax-work; the form is perfect, but the spirit, the life, is not there.

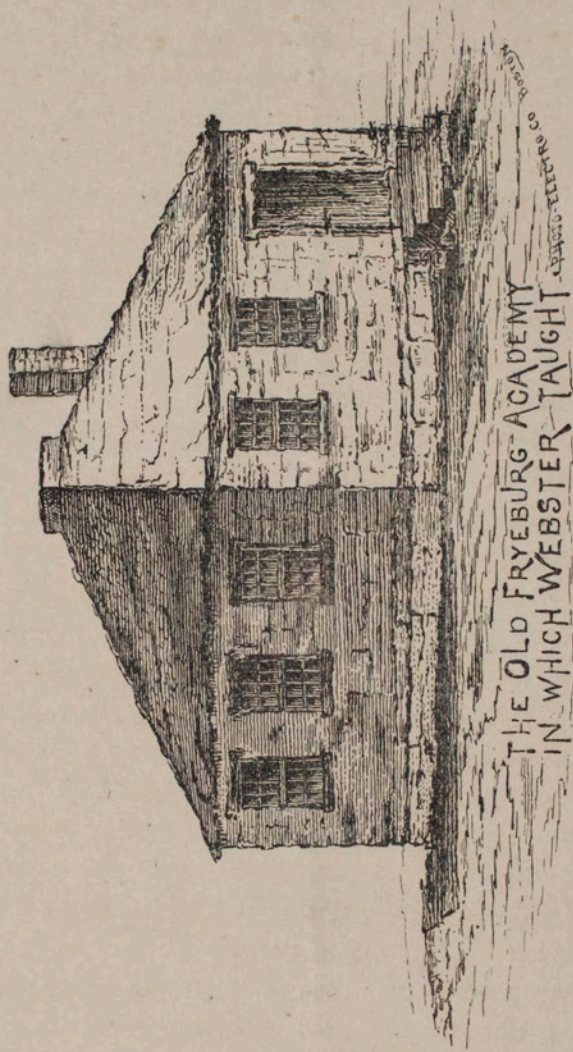
The first thing to be said in favor of our system of government is that it is truly and genuinely *free*, and the man has a base and slavish heart that will call any government good that is *not free*. If there be, at this day, any advocate for arbitrary power, we wish him the happiness of living under a government of his choice. If he is in love with chains, we would not

deny him the gratification of his passion. Despotism is the point where everything bad centres, and from which everything good departs. As far as a government is distant from this point, so far it is good; in proportion as it approaches towards this, in the same proportion it is detestable. In all other forms there is something tolerable to be found; in despotism there is nothing. Other systems have some amiable features, some right principles, mingled with their errors; despotism is all error. It is a dark and cheerless void, over which the eye wanders in vain in search of anything lovely or attractive.

The true definition of despotism is government without law. It may exist, therefore, in the hands of many as well as of one. Rebellions are despotisms; factions are despotisms; loose democracies are despotisms. These are a thousand times more dreadful than the concentration of all power in the hands of a single tyrant. The despotism of one man is like the thunderbolt, which falls here and there, scorching and consuming the individual on whom it lights; but popular commotion, the despotism of a mob, is an earthquake, which in one moment swallows up everything. It is the excellence of our government that it is placed in a proper medium between these two extremes, that it is equally distant from mobs and from thrones.

In the next place our government is good because it is *practical*. It is not the sick offspring of closet philosophy. It did not rise, vaporous and evanescent, from the brains of Rousseau and Godwin, like a mist from the ocean. It is the production of men of business, of experience, and of wisdom. It is suited to what man is, and what it is in the power of good laws to make him. Its object—the just object of all governments—is to secure and protect the weak against the strong, to unite the force of the whole community against the violence of oppressors. Its power is the power of the nation; its will is the will





THE OLD FRYEBURG ACADEMY  
IN WHICH WEBSTER TAUGHT

W. H. B. 1850

of the people. It is not an awkward, unshapely machine which the people cannot use when they have made it, nor is it so dark and complicated that it is the labor of one's life to investigate and understand it. All are capable of comprehending its principles and its operations. It admits, too, of a change of men and of measures. At the will of a majority, we have seen the government of the nation pass from the hands of one description of men into those of another. Of the comparative merits of those different men, of their honesty, their talents, their patriotism, we have here nothing to say. That subject we leave to be decided before the impartial tribunal of posterity. The fact of a change of rulers, however, proves that the government is manageable, that it can in all cases be made to comply with the public will. It is, too, an *equal* government. It rejects principalities and powers. It demolishes all the artificial distinctions which pride and ambition create. It is encumbered with no lazy load of hereditary aristocracy. It clothes no one with the attributes of God; it sinks no one to a level with brutes: yet it admits those distinctions in society which are natural and necessary. The correct expression of our Bill of Rights is that men are *born* equal. It then rests with themselves to maintain their equality by their worth. The illustrious framers of our system, in all the sternness of republicanism, rejected all *nobility* but the nobility of talents, all *majority* but the majority of virtue.

Lastly, the government is one of our choice; not dictated to us by an imperious Chief Consul, like the governments of Holland and Switzerland; not taught us by the philosophers, nor graciously brought to us on the bayonets of our magnanimous sister republic on the other side the ocean. It was framed by our fathers for themselves and for their children. Far the greater portion of mankind submit to usurped authority, and

pay humble obedience to self-created law-givers; not that obedience of the heart which a good citizen will yield to good laws, but the obedience which a harnessed horse pays his driver, an obedience begotten by correction and stripes.

The American Constitution is the purchase of American valor. It is the rich prize that rewards the toil of eight years of war and of blood: and what is all the pomp of military glory, what are victories, what are armies subdued, fleets captured, colors taken, unless they end in the establishment of wise laws and national happiness? Our Revolution is not more renowned for the brilliancy of its scenes than for the benefit of its consequences. The Constitution is the great memorial of the deeds of our ancestors. On the pillars and on the arches of that dome their names are written and their achievements recorded. While that lasts, while a single page or a single article can be found, it will carry down the record to future ages. It will teach mankind that glory, empty, tinkling glory, was not the object for which Americans fought. Great Britain had carried the fame of her arms far and wide. She had humbled France and Spain; she had reached her arm across the Eastern Continent, and given laws on the banks of the Ganges. A few scattered colonists did not rise up to contend with such a nation for mere renown. They had a nobler object, and in pursuit of that object they manifested a courage, constancy, and union, that deserve to be celebrated by poets and historians while language lasts.

The valor of America was not a transient, glimmering ray shot forth from the impulse of momentary resentment. Against unjust and arbitrary laws she rose with determined, unalterable spirit. Like the rising sun, clouds and mists hung around her, but her course, like his, brightened as she proceeded. Valor, however, displayed in combat, is a less remarkable trait in the

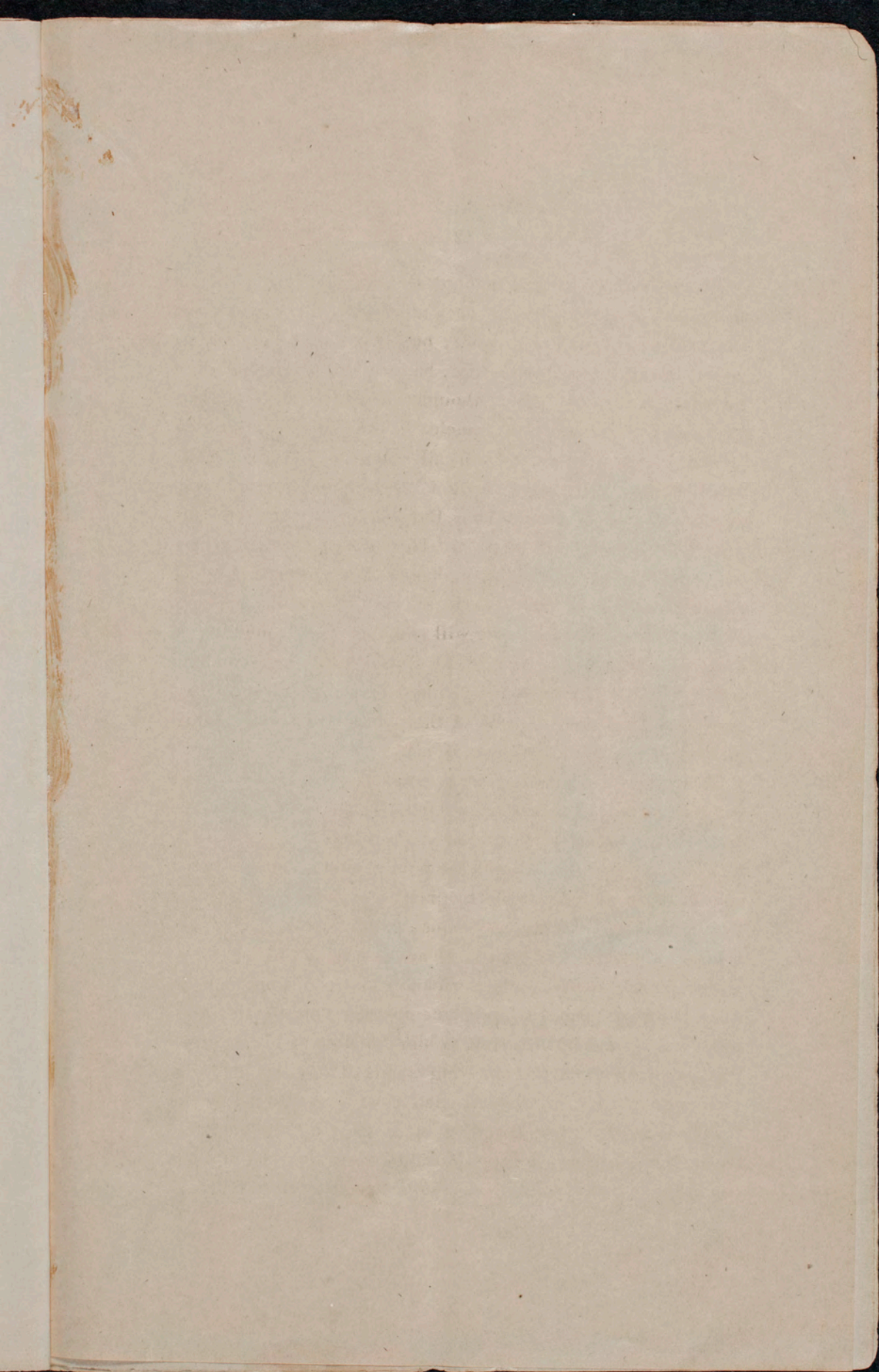
character of our countrymen than the wisdom manifested when the combat was over. All countries and all ages produce warriors, but rare are the instances in which men sit down coolly at the close of their labors to enjoy the fruits of them. Having destroyed one despotism, nations generally create another; having rejected the dominion of one tyrant, they make another for themselves. England beheaded her Charles, but crowned her Cromwell. France guillotined her Louises, but obeys her Bonapartes. Thanks to God, neither foreign nor domestic usurpation flourishes on our soil!

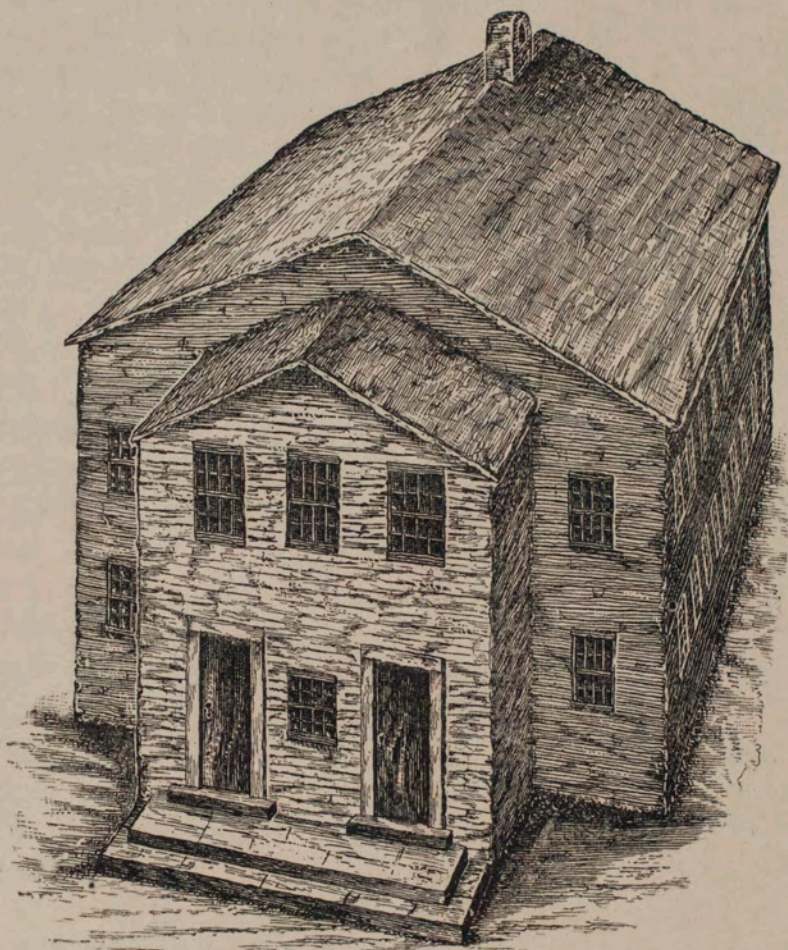
Having thus, fellow-citizens, surveyed the principal features of our excellent Constitution and paid an inadequate tribute to the wisdom which produced it, let us consider seriously the means of its preservation. To perpetuate the government we must cherish the love of it. One chief pillar in the republican fabric is the spirit of patriotism. But patriotism hath, in these days, become a good deal questionable. It hath been so often counterfeited that even the genuine coin doth not pass without suspicion. If one proclaims himself a patriot, this uncharitable, misjudging world is pretty likely to set him down for a knave, and it is pretty likely to be right in this opinion. The rage for being patriots hath really so much of the ridiculous in it that it is difficult to treat it seriously. The preaching of politics hath become a trade, and there are many who leave all other trades to follow it. Benevolent, disinterested men! With Scriptural devotion they forsake houses and lands, father and mother, wife and children, and wander up and down the community to teach mankind that their rulers oppress them! About the time when it was fashionable in France to cut off men's heads, as we lop away superfluous sprouts from our apple-trees, the public attention was excited by a certain monkey, that had been taught to act the part of a patriot to

great perfection. If you pointed at him, says the historian, and called him an aristocrat or a monarchist, he would fly at you with great rage and violence; but, if you would do him the justice to call him a good patriot, he manifested every mark of joy and satisfaction. But, though the whole French nation gazed at this animal as a miracle, he was, after all, no very strange sight. There are, in all countries, a great many monkeys who wish to be thought patriots, and a great many others who believe them such. But, because we are often deceived by appearances, let us not believe that the reality does not exist. If our faith is ever shaken, if the crowd of hypocritical demagogues lead us to doubt, we will remember Washington and be convinced; we will cast our eyes around us, on those who have toiled and fought and bled for their country, and we will be persuaded that there is such a thing as real patriotism, and that it is one of the purest and noblest sentiments that can warm the heart of man.

To preserve the government we must also preserve a correct and energetic tone of morals. After all that can be said, the truth is that liberty consists more in the habits of the people than in anything else. When the public mind becomes vitiated and depraved, every attempt to preserve it is vain. Laws are then a nullity, and Constitutions waste paper. There are always men wicked enough to go any length in the pursuit of power, if they can find others wicked enough to support them. They regard not paper and parchment. Can you stop the progress of a usurper by opposing to him the laws of his country? then you may check the careering winds or stay the lightning with a song. No. Ambitious men must be restrained by the public morality: when they rise up to do evil, they must find themselves standing alone. Morality rests on religion. If you destroy the foundation, the superstructure must fall. In







**THE OLD CHURCH IN WHICH THE  
ORATION WAS DELIVERED.**  
*"Standing in this place, sacred to truth."*

a world of error, of temptation, of seduction; in a world where crimes often triumph, and virtue is scourged with scorpions,—in such a world, certainly, the hope of an hereafter is necessary to cheer and to animate. Leave us, then, the consolations of religion. Leave to man, to frail and feeble man, the comfort of knowing, that, when he gratifies his immortal soul with deeds of justice, of kindness, and of mercy, he is rescuing his happiness from final dissolution and laying it up in Heaven.

Our duty as citizens is not a solitary one. It is connected with all the duties that belong to us as men. The civil, the social, the Christian virtues are requisite to render us worthy the continuation of that government which is the freest on earth. Yes, though the world should hear me, though I could fancy myself standing in the congregation of all nations, I would say: Americans, you are the most privileged people that the sun shines on. The salutary influences of your climate are inferior to the salutary influences of your laws. Your soil, rich to a proverb, is less rich than your Constitution. Your rivers, large as the oceans of the old world, are less copious than the streams of social happiness which flow around you. Your air is not purer than your civil liberty, and your hills, though high as heaven and deep as the foundations of the earth, are less exalted and less firmly founded than that benign and everlasting religion which blesses you and shall bless your offspring. Amidst these profuse blessings of nature and of Providence, BEWARE! Standing in this place, sacred to truth, I dare not undertake to assure you that your liberties and your happiness may not be lost. Men are subject to men's misfortunes. If an angel should be winged from Heaven, on an errand of mercy to our country, the first accents that would glow on his lips would be, Beware! be cautious! you have

everything to lose ; you have nothing to gain. We live under the only government that ever existed which was framed by the unrestrained and deliberate consultations of the people. Miracles do not cluster. That which has happened but once in six thousand years cannot be expected to happen often. Such a government, once gone, might leave a void, to be filled, for ages, with revolution and tumult, riot and despotism. The history of the world is before us. It rises like an immense column, on which we may see inscribed the soundest maxims of political experience. These maxims should be treasured in our memories and written on our hearts. Man, in all countries, resembles man. Wherever you find him, you find human nature in him and human frailties about him. He is, therefore, a proper pupil for the school of experience. He should draw wisdom from the example of others,—encouragement from their success, caution from their misfortunes. Nations should diligently keep their eye on the nations that have gone before them. They should mark and avoid their errors, not travel on heedlessly in the path of danger and of death while the bones of their perished predecessors whiten around them. Our own times afford us lessons that admonish us both of our duty and our danger. We have seen mighty nations, miserable in their chains, more miserable when they attempted to shake them off. Tortured and distracted beneath the lash of servitude, we have seen them rise up in indignation to assert the rights of human nature; but, deceived by hypocrites, cajoled by demagogues, ruined by false patriots, overpowered by a resistless mixed multitude of knaves and fools, we have wept at the wretched end of all their labors. Tossed for ten years in the crazy dreams of revolutionary liberty, we have seen them at last awake, and, like the slave who slumbers on his oar and dreams of the happiness of his own blessed home, they awake to find

themselves still in bondage. Let it not be thought that we advert to other nations to triumph in their sufferings or mock at their calamities. Would to God the whole earth enjoyed pure and rational liberty, that every realm that the human eye surveys or the human foot treads, were free! Wherever men soberly and prudently engage in the pursuit of this object, our prayers in their behalf shall ascend unto the Heavens and unto the ear of Him who filleth them. Be they powerful or be they weak, in such a cause they deserve success. Yes, "The poorest being that crawls on earth, contending to save itself from injustice and oppression, is an object respectable in the eyes of God and man." Our purpose is only to draw lessons of prudence from the imprudence of others, to argue the necessity of virtue from the consequences of their vices.

Unhappy Europe! the judgment of God rests hard upon thee. Thy sufferings would deserve an angel's pity, if an angel's tears could wash away thy crimes! The Eastern Continent seems trembling on the brink of some great catastrophe. Convulsions shake and terrors alarm it. Ancient systems are falling; works reared by ages are crumbling into atoms. Let us humbly implore Heaven that the wide-spreading desolation may never reach the shores of our native land, but let us devoutly make up our minds to do our duty in events that may happen to us. Let us cherish genuine patriotism. In that, there is a sort of inspiration that gives strength and energy almost more than human. When the mind is attached to a great object, it grows to the magnitude of its undertaking. A true patriot, with his eye and his heart on the honor and happiness of his country, hath an elevation of soul that lifts him above the rank of ordinary men. To common occurrences he is indifferent. Personal considerations dwindle into nothing, in comparison with his high sense of public duty. In all the

vicissitudes of fortune, he leans with pleasure on the protection of Providence and on the dignity and composure of his own mind. While his country enjoys peace, he rejoices and is thankful; and, if it be in the counsel of Heaven to send the storm and the tempest, his bosom proudly swells against the rage that assaults it. Above fear, above danger, he feels that *the last end which can happen to any man never comes too soon, if he falls in defence of the laws and liberties of his country.*

