

**Erza C. Hatton's 4<sup>th</sup> of July Oration<sup>1</sup>**  
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**Fourth of July Oration**  
[Correspondence]

FARMINGTON, July 4, 1861.

[Dr. E. C. Hatten. – *Sir* – The committee of arrangements requests me, as its chairman, to solicit a copy of the address delivered by you to-day, for publication. I hope you will comply with this request.

Yours truly,  
S. P. LYON, Chairman

FARMINGTON, July 5<sup>th</sup>.  
SERVIS P. LYON, Esq., Ch'n. &c.

Your note of last evening has been received. The address was hastily prepared, and not intended for publication: if, however, the committee consider it worthy, the copy is at your service.

I am, &c.

**Fourth of July Oration**

*Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen:* - As my eye passes over this assemblage of intelligence, and discovers these men of age, men whose heads are silvered by the snows of sixty winters; and who in their various relations to society, have borne their banners to victory on many a well-fought field; I almost shrink from the impossibility of the task which your generous partiality has called me to perform – but when I remember that we are in the midst of hallow and hallowing associations – that the guardian genius of a by-gone age is now hovering around, and a spirit from the sleeping ashes of our fallen sages and heroes, is now stirring into newness of life all the patriotism that dwells among us, it nerves us to the task.

Aside from the extraordinary and fearful crisis through which our nation is passing, one having no parallel in its past history; the sacred memories of the day, and the vast concourse of citizens present, are of themselves sufficient to excite ennobling aspirations and patriotic emotions: - those instruments, too, attuned to music's melting fall, and make

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<sup>1</sup> It is unclear exactly where this oration was delivered, whether in the village of Farmington or in Pontiac. The text is transcribed from original newspaper clippings. The transcription is verbatim as published with original spelling and punctuation. Some text was missing or illegible. Quotations in the oration have been cited, when known.

the pulse beat in quicker time, and remind us that this is Freedom's anniversary jubilee – the political Sabbath of the American nation.

There is magnanimity, a moral sublimity which attach to the observance of this day, under circumstance less extraordinary than the present. It is the commencement of no dynasty – the birth-day of no military chieftain, riding in his triumphal car into power over the rights of prostrate subjects – nor of no crowned despot, erecting his throne on the peace of families destroyed, on disenfranchised rights, or discovered communities – it is [text missing/illegible]. Unlike the return of those epochs and events which characterize other times and other nations, whose remembrance is handed down only by the stern exactions of law, or by force of unwrought bigotry - we, requiring no Draconium code of law, no monarch's manifesto, but in the dignity of unfettered men – in the sublime majority of untrammelled minds, we hail with rapturous delight the approach and celebrate with becoming feelings and appropriate devices, the birth-day of a mighty nation.

Let us rejoice, then, fellow citizens, that this is no unmeaning ceremony – let us make it worthy the proud event it is intended to commemorate. Let us rejoice, that the American people are equal to their sublime trust and exacted responsibilities – that they work out the great problem of their destiny that man *is* “capable of self-government.” Let them rise superior to annulled constitutions and broken compacts – baptized anew in the holy faith of a sublime mission – foreclaiming to an admiring world, the triumph of their god-given principles, a government born of, and belonging to the people. Let us hasten the time when we can inscribe our banners that we have re-planted the tree of Liberty – that sectional distinctions are obliterated forever – when all from the Lakes to the Gulf – from the Orient to the Occident – from him who greets the sun in his coming off the Atlantic's wave, to him who snuffs the mountain breeze, or breathes the balmy air of the broad Pacific, shall keep step to the music of a re-established American Union.

To this desirable consummation, a few well-defined propositions are necessary, which I shall make the subject of a portion of my remarks, [text illegible] this national and interesting occasion:

*And 1<sup>st</sup>*, There let us proclaim this great fact – in language too plain and emphatic to be misunderstood, that this nation must forever remain, the great controlling power of this Continent.

*2<sup>nd</sup>*, That we will enforce at all hazards, and at whatever cost, as a primary condition of our being, that European powers shall under no pretense, interfere with the political affairs of this nation.

*3d*, That the doctrine of secession, under whatever guise or phase, shall be put under the iron heel of an indignant people - and that the political and territorial integrity of this nation, must and shall be maintained forever.

4<sup>th</sup>, That the malign influence which has inaugurated the present stupendous rebellion against the government, must, by Constitutional provision, or otherwise, be placed beyond the power of doing further mischief.

And 5<sup>th</sup>, That no terms shall be with rebel states, which do not recognize and embody the principle laid down in these propositions.

That glorious Declaration, which has been so eloquently read in your hearing to-day, embodies, in general terms, the principles of these propositions – providing as it does the basis of a more extended sphere of political action – and by placing the relations of men to each other, on a new and broader platform – and that instrument is so essentially national, and held in such dear remembrance by all classes of our citizens that he is not yet born, who would presume to criticize its wisdom, or find fault with its terms. Did I say it embodied the pith of these propositions? It does, by recognizing at once, *the right to do, and the right to prevent* – having the question of *ability to perform* with us who acknowledges the correctness of its positions. It does, too, by acknowledging all the great principles among men which flow from a Christian standard of morals – and teaches man that *the duty of obedience to the government* is founded upon a covenant of mutual respect for each individual of our race.

It was the pride and glory [illegible] states, that in the instrument of their first association, they solemnly proclaimed these truths to be self-evident, and announced them as the first principles of their Union and Independence. Something, indeed, approximating toward these conditions was shadowed forth in the ancient Grecian republics; but that such *were* inextinguishable rights of all mankind, had never been proclaimed as the only rightful foundations of human association and government, until that Declaration laid it down as the corner stone of the North American Union. It was the finding of the philosophers stone in paving the way to man's political redemption – a discovery in the combined science of morals and politics – an electric spark emitted as it were from the great fountain of eternal light, seen only at the instant of its emission, but to be felt through all coming time.

That Declaration, has performed its work and performed it well, and it is now the common property of the world; we must look to it for a solution of our own natural misfortunes, the oppressed nations discover in it the beacon-light of their own deliverance, and if the glorious principles it inculcates now fail, the popular power, and the right of self-government will take its flight to an eternal world, only to be known no more, only in Grecian and Roman story.

The hope which must light the pathway of success to a practical and permanent realization of these self-evident elementary principles, must find lodgment in our own bosoms. Our nation is passing a fearsome ordeal; shall the virtue and firmness of the people prove as “the refiners fire,” in asserting its majesty and re-establishing its order? Does every heart present to-day, throb to the music of our beloved Union? Do all our home influences tend in the right direction? – for remember! every community, in its own local identity, must depend more upon a standard of morals and patriotism of its own

creation dully answering the ends of its own existence, for the proper regulation of its own internal peace and safety, than upon the prestige of a glittering soldier, the awards of courts, the feats of legislative bodies, or the proclamations of executive chiefs; strongly inculcating in its own sacred breast, the eternal and conservative principles of truth, right, and justice; which alone can give respectability and stability to its existence, and permanence safety and grandeur to the State.

These are necessary conditions, and the mode of their tangible enforcement, if we would secure to ourselves and our posterity the blessing intended for our use, by our revolutionary sires. They left us, without respect to locality or section, the fruits of their immortal toil, a great bond-woven of identical associations, which we must make eternal. Let our national compact yet be made to meet these modal ends, that the nation may *become a partnership of heart* that shall never be silent, *a bond of brotherhood* of eternal force; glorying in the possession of a common past, and hopeful of the fruits of a common future.

Let us at this critical juncture of our Nation's history, remember that our own *State* has high and responsible duties to perform. Her association in the galaxy of States, must not interpreted merely for own benefit, but as a means of exalting civil liberty high above anarchy and despotism. Will she perform the mission to this high calling worthy her exacted ability? Success in the struggle in which we are engaged is not for the present alone, it will cast its blessings into the lap of the future. "It will give the world the benefit of institutions and laws extending their restraints and protection overall, yet so kindly like air we breathe, their presence does not shackle or their weight oppress."<sup>2</sup>

I offer you these thoughts, fellow citizens, in support of these propositions. If there is a single utterance embraced in them that does not meet the entire approbation of my friends to-day, I must plead that the fault lies in the illogical political teaching of our heretofore considered sublime Declaration, and that after all, Thomas Jefferson was but a mere dreamer, and that hid much boasted declaration of the rights of man, is but a flimsy cheat. But, right or wrong, we tear the veil from the mysterious future, and open to your view the great fact, that we hold within our mighty grasp the majestic wand of physical superiority, and that we foresees the will to dare and the power to do; in dictating the terms of our own destiny.

Let us look for a moment at this fraternal strife – this conflict of ideas – this war of moral antagonisms – its like is not to be found in the entire history of the civilized world. A brutal and corrupt Jewish populace clamored for the blood of the pure Redeemer, which the Roman government would have gladly spared, is the only parallel in enormity with this unnatural crime. The destruction of this government for so slight and trivial a cause, is a climax in cruelty which no language is adequate to express, no stretch o imagination to measure, no condition of mind to comprehend. Shall this stupendous crime succeed? Will you allow the destruction of your inheritance? You have a government the most congenial to man and his prosperity of any ever devised by human wisdom, - a country, too, blooming as a thing of life – suitable for the abode of arts, of science and of liberty –

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<sup>2</sup> Origin of quotation unknown.

and worthy only of a people who hold the foremost rank in the march of civilization, and the rights of man. This splendid heritage [illegible] shall be stricken from that banner; *our Union must and shall remain, one and indivisible*. We claim Washington as the father of our common country – Jefferson as the author, and Adams as the expounder of our declaration. Our fathers fought on the same field, toiled in the same cabinet, wrought one glorious revolution, and bequeathed to us one common legacy, and that *legacy was the Union*. We are one in our history, one in our statesmen, one in our language, and one in all the underlying monuments of our greatness.

Amid the dazzling splendors of this festive scene, these festoons of flowers and display of taste, this beautiful bower, too, built by Almighty hands, -

These clustering maples in whose shade  
Bright beings their fairy revels hold –  
*The day has touched*, with yielding hand,  
And tinged their leafy tops with gold,<sup>3</sup>

adding to the fullness of our enjoyment, let us not be mindful of those who have gone from our midst to the fields of strife. They have left the endearments of home, and the society of loved ones, to roll back the dark tide which threatens to engulf us. Let us built to them, to-day, *a temple in our own affections*, and continue to worship at the holy shrine till, from their efforts, Liberty and Order sit enthroned on the restored fragments of a once more unbroken Union.

Let me remind you, too, fellow citizens, of the importance of proper attention to the education of our youth – those to whose hands will soon be resigned the destinies of this nation. *Knowledge is power – virtue is action*. Virtue and intelligence, like the dews of heaven, must distill upon all their genial influences, or corruption, like a blighting mildew, will breathe its contagion through the length and breadth of our State. And to my fair hearers I would say, *you have an important duty to perform*. With you is lodged the safety of the *moral and political man* – “As the twig is bent, the tree’s inclined”<sup>4</sup> – impressions made by you on the youthful mind, will be the substance of society’s quality, when this day and its brilliant gayeties shall be thrown into the dusty receptacle of the past. You hold in your hands, for the use of the future, that gift of heaven committed to your charge. Will you perform faithfully the duties attendant upon this high trust?

“The world was sad – the garden was a wild.  
And man the hermit sighed ‘till woman smiled,”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Origin of quotation unknown.

<sup>4</sup> “Tis education forms the common mind; just as the twig is bent the tree's inclined,” - Alexander Pope (1688-1744), *Moral Essays*, Epistle 1.

<sup>5</sup> “The world was sad, the garden was a wild,  
And man the hermit sigh’d—till woman smiled.” - Thomas Campbell (1777-1844), *Pleasures of Hope*, Part ii, Line 37.

Let me address *a few words of hope* to our adopted fellow-citizens, many of whom I see present to-day. You have a work to do in the present extraordinary conflict. You belong to that toiling million who are deeply interested in the success of free institutions. *Then buckle on your armor and stand for the right*, until accursed treason no longer pollutes the sainted air once breathed by a Washington, who performed so immortal a part *in preparing for you this goodly heritage*. You are freemen from your own voluntary choice, revolutionizers of your own political conditions; self emancipated from the unjust and unequal laws of the old world, place yourselves in the front ranks of freedom in the new. You are to all intents citizens of this great republic; to become so, you have expended your substance, you have obeyed constitutional requirements; freedom belongs to you from your own efforts, and the boon which its privileges confer is of your own creation. No matter what land may have given you birth; no matter in what disastrous battle your liberties may have been stricken down; no matter what solemnity despotism may have claimed you as its own; the moment you touched the consecrated soil of these States, the altar and the God sink together in the dust; you stand forth in the fullness of mankind, redeemed, regenerated and disenthralled.

Let us then, adopted fellow-citizens, from this day forward renew our attachments to everything bearing the honored name of America; gathering new strength for the glorious service of the country, let us defend, with ceaseless vigilance; that *national edifice whose base is the Union* – whose pillars are the Constitution and the laws, and around whose summit play in sunlight’s liberty the rights of universal man.

But, have we no other griefs to offer up today, on the altar of endangered liberty? See that dark spot on the western horizon. National calamities, like private misfortunes, seldom visit their friends alone. A star of the first magnitude has been stricken from the political firmament. A patriot, an orator, a statesman, transcendent in ability and devotion to his country, at this dark hour of our Nation’s peril, has been gathered to his father. “Death loves a shining mark.”<sup>6</sup> The spirit of the great Douglas has taken its flight to the land of rest; the nation mourns, and liberty, on her throne of clouds, has put on her habiliments of woe. How inscrutable are the ways of Providence? – his mission is ended – his work is done – *but his noble example lives*. Though the nation has lost a great link in the chain of its strength, he has gone to a better world; and though we weep in our darkness, we’ll weep not for him.

“Not for him, who departing leaves millions in tears;  
Not for him, who has died full of honors and years;  
Not for him, who ascended fame’s ladder so high;  
From the round at the top, he has stepped to the sky.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> “Death loves a shining mark, a signal blow.” - Edward Young (1683-1765), *Night Thoughts, Night V*, 1, Line 1011.

<sup>7</sup> “He was ‘lover and friend’ to his country, as well!  
For the stars on our banner, grown suddenly dim,  
Let us weep, in our darkness – but weep not for him!  
Not for him – who, departing, leaves millions in tears!  
Not for him – who has died full of honors and years!  
Not for him – who ascended Fame’s ladder so high

Let us, in conclusion, in behalf of our stricken nation, invoke the aid of Him who holds the destinies of nations in His hand; let it be our prayer that the old ship of State may weather the impending storm, and that *the Stars on our Banner*<sup>8</sup> be as sure a prelude to success as the star of Bethlehem was to the salvation of the world.

Fellow citizens, I have done. If a sentiment has been uttered to-day, not in keeping with those great conservative principles on which our government is founded – or a thought expressed, not consistent with those high-toned sentiments of Christian faith which actuated its founders - attribute it, if you will, to the weakness of the head, rather than the perverseness of the heart.

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From the round at the top he stepp'd to the sky!" - Nathaniel Parker Willis (1806-1867), *The Death of Harrison*. Willis was a close friend of Edgar Allan Poe and editor of the *Evening Mirror* that first published Poe's *The Raven*, January 29, 1845.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.