

# The Keystone of the Republic

ADDRESS DELIVERED BY HON. HOWARD S. TAYLOR OF CHICAGO AT THE FOURTH OF JULY CELEBRATION HELD AT FAIRVIEW UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE FAIRVIEW JEFFERSON CLUB.

Fellow Citizens: On the second day of July, 1776, the Continental Congress passed the first informal declaration of independence. On the following day John Adams said in a letter to his wife:

"The second day of July, 1776, will be a memorable epoch in the history of America. I am apt to believe that it will be celebrated by succeeding generations, as the great Anniversary Festival. It ought to be commemorated as the day of deliverance by solemn acts of devotion to God Almighty. It ought to be solemnized with pomp, shows, games, sports, guns, bells, bonfires and illuminations from one end of the continent to the other, from this time forward forever."

Adams missed his prediction by only two days! The fourth of July, the day that witnessed the more formal utterance of independence, for the past century and a quarter has been celebrated by all the solemn and joyous exercises which the old patriot suggested.

From time to time new accessions of territory and population, and new achievements of our nation, in war and peace, have invited increased enthusiasm in the celebration of this anniversary until the day has become a sort of Mt. Pelee in the midst of the year. Doubtless a great deal of this is the mere effervescence of a holiday spirit—firecrackers and fustian glad to escape into open air. But to serious persons the occasion has always been serious and there are some reasons why this present Fourth of July should command a more thoughtful attention than any preceding one for many years; because not only have new and portentous problems in industry, commerce and government arisen in our midst, but because from many respectable and influential quarters, from universities, colleges, pulpits and the printing presses of a wide constituency a spirit of tory skepticism has, with increasing daring and dexterity, attacked the Declaration of Independence, itself. I do not mean to say that they question that part of the Declaration which schedules King George's sins—for King George is dead and is no longer able to confer a title, grant a concession or admit an American tourist to a royal reception—and he is altogether so inert that no American born Briton can find any interest in him—either compound or simple!

Neither do they complain of independence, itself, though, doubtless, there are hundreds of wise men in our coal oil colleges who could wish that "the two great branches of the Anglo-Saxon race" were reunited and the capital established at London!

No! The incurable contention that a hundred years ago separated Hamilton from Jefferson, the old-new issue, when reduced to its lowest terms was simply Hamiltonian repugnance to the Jeffersonian doctrine that "all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, that to secure these rights governments are instituted among men deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed." That was the doctrine rejected by Hamilton a hundred years ago, and that is the political postulate which reviving Hamiltonianism rejects today. They do not believe that all men are created with equal rights to life, liberty and happiness, and, therefore, they do not believe that all men have a right to self-government. The Tories of today are re-employing the shibboleth used by the Tories a hundred and thirty years ago. They talk with increasing boldness about superior and inferior races and of the duty of the former to take care of the latter. They have discovered a new qualification for citizenship—"social efficiency!" Men, they say, should have power according to their "social efficiency!" They speak easily of classes and confidently measure their relative worth with a palpable preference for the "upper classes," "the intelligent classes," "the moneyed classes," etc. All around the circle our new Tories, with a vanity hungry from long fasting, are cultivating the spirit and imitating the genuflections of the European aristocracy—sometimes even going to the length of expatriating themselves in order to cross the sea and crawl gratefully into the soothing shades of a throne! Most offensive of all

are their snobbish excuses for rejecting the wisdom of the fathers. They tell us that the fathers, Washington, Franklin, Jefferson, Adams, and the rest, were good men and even wise men in a narrow, provincial manner; but that, in the primitive conditions in which they were placed, they could have no experience which would entitle them to advise the America of today; and that, upon the whole, their political ideas and expressions were merely glittering generalities, flung out in the hysterical excitement of a great conflict, and were not intended to be taken too exactly. That they were mere war rhetoric and cannot be made to square with the scientific, practical knowledge of today!

Ah, my friends, with what patience must we hear these tinkling cadets of modern commercialism making estimates of the fathers of the republic! Lord Chatham, himself one of the greatest minds of his century, long ago gave an estimate of the fathers worthy of attention. He said:

"The congress is the most honorable assembly of statesmen since those of the ancient Greeks and Romans in the most virtuous times. They were most of them profound scholars and studied the history of mankind that they might know men. They were so familiar with the lives and thoughts of the wisest and best minds of the past that a classic aroma hangs about their writings and speeches; and they were profoundly convinced of what statesmen know and mere politicians never perceive—that ideas are the life of a people—that the conscience, not the pocket, is the real citadel of a nation."

There is not one word of exaggerated eulogy in these words of the great Pitt. Read again if you please the literature of the revolutionary times, the letters, speeches and state papers of the fathers, and you will say with me that they are still the masterpieces of American political thought. The fathers were wise men; and so far from being narrow and provincial they knew human history and its lessons in a way that the corporation lawyers who have sat in our recent congresses never dreamed of. They knew all about wars of conquest from Cain and Abel's time down! They knew about the cunning of unshackled greed ever since Esau and Jacob set an example. They knew all about the villainies of ambition, the struggles for freedom, the corruptions of wealth, the rise of republics and the instruments of their destruction; and, with all this wide erudition in hand, after long reflection and debate, at the peril of their lives, and calling upon God to witness the purity of their intentions they put into the great charter of our liberties, as its chief apothegm, the solemn declaration that all men are created equal with the inalienable rights of life, liberty and happiness; and, in eight long years of struggle in cabinet and field, that doctrine was made the keystone of the republic and the chief significance of Independence Day!

They did not affirm, and they did not mean to affirm, the self-evident error that all men are created equal in personal powers and characteristics. Abraham Lincoln, himself a Jeffersonian democrat (temporarily dislocated) gives us a brief but conclusive exposition of this American doctrine in equality. In his speech at Alton in 1858, he said of the Declaration of Independence:

"I think the authors of that notable instrument intended to include all men; but they did not mean to declare all men equal in all respects. They did not mean to say that all men were equal in color, size, intellect, moral development or social capacity. They defined with tolerable distinctness in what they did consider all men created equal—equal in certain inalienable rights among which are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. This they said and this they meant."

But to obtain the most lucid and satisfactory definition of American equality we should go to the author of the Declaration himself, Thomas Jefferson, confident not only that he knew his own mind, but that he, more than any other man of his times, knew the minds of all the fathers. In a letter to Washington in 1784, speaking of our several constitutions of government, he said:

"The foundation on which all are built is the natural equality of man, the denial of every pre-eminence but that annexed to legal office, and particularly the denial of a pre-eminence by birth."

In a letter to George Hay, he said:

"An equal application of law to every condition of man is fundamental."

In a reply to an address, made in 1801, he said:

"To unequal privileges among members of the same society the spirit of our nation is with one accord adverse."

And in his letter to George Flower, in 1817, he said:

"To special legislation we are generally averse lest a principle of favoritism should creep in and pervert that of equal rights."

There, then, is the doctrine of American equality expounded by that great statesman and patriot who penned it into the Declaration of Independence one hundred and twenty-seven years ago! The repudiation of all special legislation, special privileges, and special eminence, except that of legal office; and the impartial application of law to all classes and conditions of men—that is the doctrine—as clear, salutary and fruitful as sunlight!

It would seem that a principle so reasonable, so equitable and so self-evident, ought to receive instant and universal acceptance; but, my fellow citizens, the most casual inquiry into the conditions of today will inform us that we have already drifted far from the ancient standard; and the progress of our departure daily grows swifter and more reckless. To make this more apparent allow me to point out some of the legitimate extensions of the doctrine and suggest some of the particulars in which we have declined from the ancient faith.

The fathers declared the equal eminence and dignity of all men under the law.

They would have no magnates of any kind, either by heredity, wealth, or force. The momentary honors of public officials were balanced by short periods of election at which public servants doffed their dignities and laid them down at the feet of the people who were the real masters! At every point the fathers sought to safeguard the republic from the foolish and ruinous infection of European aristocracy. Said Jefferson:

"In America no other distinction between man and man has ever been known but that of persons in office exercising powers by authority of the laws, and private individuals. Among these last, the poorest laborer stood on equal ground with the wealthiest millionaire, and generally, on a more favored one whenever their rights seemed to jar."

The fathers, indeed, believed in a natural aristocracy founded on virtue and intellect and differing radically from the artificial aristocracy of wealth and birth; and they believed that the only efficient way of finding out these real aristocrats, men worthy to rule, was to throw open the schools, throw open the avenues of all business and political preferment, and to give every child of Adam an equal chance with his neighbor to develop and display all that is in him. The fathers had before them some striking examples of the artificial aristocracy of the "divine right" rulers of men. Writing to Governor Langdon, in 1810, Jefferson said:

"While in Europe I often amused myself with contemplating the characters of the then reigning sovereigns of Europe. Louis XVI. was a fool, of my own knowledge, and in despite of the answers made for him at his trial. The king of Spain was a fool, and of Naples the same. They passed their lives hunting, and dispatched two couriers a week, one thousand miles, to let each other know what game they had killed the preceding days. The king of Cardinia was a fool. The queen of Portugal, a Braganza, was an idiot by nature, and so was the king of Denmark, their sons, as regents, exercising the powers of government.

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