



"Let our Just Censures"

Attend the True Event."

BY JULIAN A. SELBY.

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### Gen. Preston's Address.

By special request, we publish the following extracts from the "address" of Gen. John S. Preston before the alumni of the University of Virginia:

The whole brood of nurselings—the offspring of fifty years' annual parturition of the foremost school of letters, science and philosophy, in this new world—have called me, one of the first-born but humblest of the flock, to stand here by our nursery cradle and speak to them and you. It is a very notable honor, the most notable of my life, and I undertake it with a tremulous reverence for the high responsibility it imposes. My foster-brothers are the learned, the wise, the heroic, elders and teachers of the land; the intellectual and social "conscript fathers," the "Socratici viri." Coming out from the obscurity of age and a lost country, what theme can I assume to celebrate in the presence of the alumni of the University of Virginia? The literature, the science, the philosophy, together with the embodied thought of these fifty years, have spread before us a world full of themes so various, that your speaker may well be more troubled in selection than in treatment. Were I to take any of a thousand, appropriate to this day and occasion, I might succeed in winning your sympathies and awakening your interest. Standing here, as it were, on the portico of our own academy, where for fifty years wisdom has talked with her sons, we can see the great book and volume of nature unfolding like a scroll to draw our wondering, upturned gaze, or we can wander to and fro in shaded avenues amid the graceful forms of art.

"And see how Apollo, fair-haired god, Draws in and bends his golden bow, While on the left fair Dian waves her torch."

And there let the sweet allurements of fancy woo our hearts and minds to float along in the bright enchantment of her flowery pathways. Or better, higher, nobler still, gaze upon that picture—"Athens, the eye of Greece, mother of arts And eloquence." With her "Schools of ancient sages. His who bred Great Alexander to subdue the world."

"Blind Mæcigenes, thence Homer called, Whose poem Phæbus challenged for his own. Thence what the lofty, grave tragedians taught In chorus or iambic, teachers best Of moral prudence, with delight received, In brief, sententious precepts, while they treat Of fate, and chance, and change in human life; High actions and high passions best describing. Thence to the famous orators repair, Those ancients whose resistless eloquence Wielded at will that fierce democratic, Shook the arsenal, and fulminated over Greece To Macedon, and Artaxerxes throne."

Or, coming back from the school where wisdom taught her Athenian sons, to the day and the hour, I might with nimble fingers unweave our thread of fifty years from the warp and woof of the world's history, and hang our joys on its golden tissues, like rich jewels, or our griefs and woes on its torn and jagged shreds. But, my young friends, these themes are for your sympathies; they are the fond words of lullaby—"loquela blanda atque infracta"—sung here at our mother's cradle to soothe and charm those who still cling to her breast. They are for the coming world—the after-to-day. Science and philosophy own no past. When Galileo died, Newton was born, and the soul of the Italian impregnated the spirit of the Englishman. They gather up the past, carry it forward and with prophetic calculation toss it into the future, to mould new laws and new forms. Year by year they gather here at the store-houses oil for their lamps, or faggots for their torches, or snatch Promethean fire, only to guide their footsteps onward to an undefined and boundless future, to which they are beckoning and wooing your young devotion. But with us grey beards, "standing on the silent, solemn shore of that vast ocean we must sail so soon," who see the harvest sickle glittering near, in the unlifted hand of the reaper, to whom time is calling every hour to another birth, the stern present and the rigid, immutable past now prevail. For us I must seek for other themes, sterner than the dictates of scholastic science, broader than that which spans the earth, stronger than that which binds the ocean, higher than that which measures the stars of heaven. It is that theme which burdens every soul, which worships eternal truth and right, to which philosophy, science, art poetry—all you are taught in this glorious school, with its men of mighty thought and learning—are but humble hand-maidens and servitors. It is the theme whose purport is to measure the deep relations of right and wrong, of justice and liberty, and I will talk of it here to-day before these altars and under this sky, though cautious philosophy may be offended, and timid policy may tremble to approve. I cannot stand in the shadow of Monticello with my heart overflowing with sacred memories and

not ease it by utterance. God does not grant me the mercy of blind oblivion to forget the past, and the duty of filial piety will not let me be silent concerning the present. I tremble to lose your esteem and approval. Be charitable to these grey hairs, and to one who offered his life, and gave all the rest, that you might be free, and lost all, save this woeful remnant of that life. I must ease my heart. From my speech I must drop the fond records, the forms and pressure my youth and observation gathered here, and dare speak to you of that which, bursting wide from the womb of time, rules the hour in which we live here to-day, and wraps in lurid gloom the veiled mystery of its future. I propose to speak to you of the very hour in which we are here to-day, face to face with it—"latus cum latere"—in all its movements and demands, and thus to try to tell of its relation to the past, and with deep humility and earnest prayer to prophesy of its connection with the future. My brothers here, who have passed the "improvida ætas puerorum"—the unsuspecting age of boyhood—will happily join me if I praise the past, and weep with me if I recite the woes of the present; and if, when you have your fifty years, and ours are a hundred, any of you be here and remember this day, you will not curse my memory for the lesson and the prayer I have dared to offer you. You are here to gather the fruits of the past, to feed upon them, that in the future you may have strength to regain the waste and loss we have made: to add to the treasure, to increase its power and carry it onward to your own redemption, and for a pledge of security, and for the perpetual advantage of those who come after you.

Two or three years after the close of that war which, in the language of that great lawyer, wise statesman and brave gentleman, Charles O'Connor, of New York, destroyed constitutional liberty in America—that heroic and mortal struggle for truth and right—I was invited by the trustees, faculty and students of a Methodist College in South Carolina to make the commencement address. The college, like this, is in the beautiful Piedmont region, not far from Cowpens and King's Mountain, the turning points, as Bancroft tells us, of the first struggle for American liberty and independence, determined by the joint and knightly gallantry of Carolina and Virginia. The professors were men of eminent piety and ripe culture—scholars, gentlemen, patriots and Christians. The students, a fine, manly band of youths, some with one arm, some with one leg, some with one eye only—for most of these boys had been soldiers in that mortal struggle for truth and liberty. Around me were grouped the bishops, elders and many clergymen, grave, good, brave men, worthy successors of that sublime evangelist of the eighteenth century, John Wesley, who conquered men's consciences by the blood of the Lamb of God, and not by the sacrifice of human victims. These, his disciples and ministers, had been ministers and servants of the meek and lowly Jesus in the armies of the Confederate States. In my address to this mutilated remnant of those armies—after urging them to keep in mind the seemingly fruitless struggle for liberty, and thereby be prepared for another which, in the just providence of God, must surely come—I asked them, "Will not a God of truth forbid that your liberties shall be judged forever by other men's consciences?" As I uttered this question, or affirmation, or you may call it petition, I was startled by hearing from the bishops, the elders and clergymen, a loud, devout, solemn "amen." It embarrassed me for a moment, conjecturing why this heart-full response should be made by these servants of the meek and lowly Jesus. I soon remembered that I had, unconsciously repeated, almost literally, the recorded words of a chief apostle, sent by the Son of God to tell His ways to the world, and these His ministers of to-day recognized their divine power, and on this devout aspiration wasted to His throne the prayer—that our liberties may not be judged by other men's consciences. I will not dare to encroach on the functions of those holy men in my form of speech. I shrink from the shadow of blasphemy, if it be one; but I know I do not offend the pure majesty of a God of truth, if, in addressing the offspring of that university which the commonwealth of Virginia has devoted to the nurture and preservation of her truth, her honor and her liberty, I use meekly, for my argument, the words of that apostle sent by the Son of God to tell His ways to the struggling people of the earth: "For why is my liberty judged of another man's conscience?"

The people of that portion of North America which contributed the American republic to the history of modern civilization, derived their profoundest sentiment and principle of civil liberty from the precepts of that blessed religion which thus proclaimed all men free and equal before the tribunals of eternal justice, and gave the fullest sanctions of their Christian revelations to the regulations of this liberty. It was the impetuous and devoted zeal of the Christian which moved our English ancestry to sacrifice all mere human attributes to the attainment of the freedom of conscience, regarding that as the criterion

of all human truth, as well as the fecundating power of the "Kultur thorn," the pure rightness of action in this life, and thus confirming it for all time as the royalty and sovereign prerogative of mankind. By a short and purely natural process, they made the attributes of freedom of person, the protection of property, and the pursuits of happiness, of vital import in maintaining that freedom of conscience. Thus the souls of men, their divine faculty imbibed, and sanctified the resistless and indomitable desire for civil liberty, and the essential part of divine aspiration and immortal hope, based on the Christian faith, became the chief purpose and motive of patriotic duty, and men were divinely taught the solid rules of civil government in their purest and most majestic forms. This indeed was the basis and the essence of their order of governmental economy. It was just when this essential spirit was brooding, immature, over the institutions of Christendom, that its disciples came to America to attempt the political realization of its hopeful promises. And here when, after many generations, it ripened to its fullness, the people of the English colonial provinces rose in its might, asserted its high behests and prerogative, and by a sacrifice of blood, instituted the conjoined principles of religious and civil freedom of conscience. It was a tempestuous era of the world's history, but our forefathers, under the impulse and guidance of the mighty principle, weathered the storm, baffling the fatal blasts of despotism and shunning the quicksands of Democracy and the lurid and delusive glare of fanaticism. They converted dependent colonies into sovereign States, which, by their inherent sacred and inalienable sovereignty guaranteed the principle on which they were based, the freedom of religious and civil conscience. On that guarantee, broad as the widest scope of human want on earth, by a consequent system of natural logic grew up the incidents of self-government, and the right of representation, in the exercise of law-making powers. The piety, the wisdom and the valor displayed in achieving this empire and effecting this organism, marked the culmination of that order of civilization to which we have been allotted by the providence of God. It has been bequeathed to us, and His commandment is that we shall keep this charge of His pure and undefiled before the world and in His service, according to the dictate of His word and of our own service. Under this dread responsibility, have we done our best to keep this command? Have we done this piously, wisely and valiantly, in full measure of its magnitude and appreciation of its transcendent value? "Have we done all these things, we were commanded to do? Have we done that which was our duty to do?"

Let us see. We are celebrating to-day the fifty years life of this University, which began this life fifty years after our forefathers went forth to the sacrifice of blood under that dread command. In that warfare they acquired a continent and a perfect liberty, and transmitted them to us. For the first ten years they were panting for breath after the struggle, under the majestic sway of Washington, and were thus brought to the beginning of a new century, apparently set apart and dedicated to their exaltation—something over three-score and ten years ago. Three-score and ten years! What of this allotment of time to the natural span of human life, in its relation to the life of liberty, under the nurture of our own fathers, and of our duty and devotion to its sacred behests? Three-fourths of the nineteenth century of grace have gone into the boundless abyss of the past, and already time is casting its records and traditions into the waste of oblivion, dimming his ghastly and swift-moving phantoms, leaving to us their dark trail, only to warn or to mislead us. It has been an strangely commingling good and evil to the human family; especially that portion assigned to the American continent, and most notably to the people who derived their political existences from the English colonies. In Europe, the first decade was signalized and emblazoned by the over-mastering genius of Napoleon subverting the systems and ruling over the continent, and the mighty intellect of Pitt defying that rule, and hurling it back from England. In America, Washington was dead. His robes of unsmeared purple, misfitted for a time, were again worthily on the shoulders of Jefferson; and here white-handed hope waved her sceptre of faith, and liberty sat smiling beneath the bright enchantment, or serenely and grandly seemed to move onward to the anointing and the coronation.

Tenderer and more devoted, stronger and purer, higher and holier, than aught on earth save a mother's love for her child, is the almost divine sentiment which makes us love and live for the land of our birth. But above this, above all of earth—more heavenward still—is that feeling which makes us reverence with worship, and cherish by devotion, the truth which is transmitted to us by our fathers; for that is the filial obedience shining in the same sphere with immortal love. This holy sentiment, in all its most heroic forms, developed into action all the virtuous energies of the men who had won the liberties of America, and with wise, ar-

dent and valorous devotion, they went on building up a grand and glorious structure on that foundation, strengthening and adorning it with the pillars and ornaments of the right of self-government and the mighty prerogative of the freedom of conscience. They were grandly inspired architects, those master-builders, who came out of the first war for civil independence in this new world, and in fifty years they completed an edifice dedicated to civil freedom and free conscience, whose foundation was a continent, whose boundaries were boundless seas, and whose turrets aspired to heaven to catch the light and blessing from a God of Truth. This was the temple which was to become the pride of history, the joy of a great and happy people—"the joy, the pride, the glory of mankind"—in which no man's liberty was to be judged by another man's conscience. For this sacred purpose the covenants were placed upon the altar, the gates were opened to the people, and they went in and prayed, with thanksgivings and hymns of praise, and renewed the covenants, and the world began to know them and call them blessed:

"In one loud, applauding sound, The nations shout to her around, How supremely art thou blessed."

How awful the holy purity, how wonderful the grandeur of this temple, dedicated to truth, to liberty, and to free conscience—a temple fitted for the crowned truth to dwell in forever.

Brothers, it was the design, the structure, the offering of our very fathers—our fathers who drank the waters of the Chesapeake and the South Atlantic, and built the University of Virginia. The men who begat us were the royal priesthood, who sanctified themselves to bear the ark with its covenants, and place it securely as they prayed on their Zion; and they were those who called on the earth to rejoice, and on the nations to say that liberty again dwelleth on the earth, and on us, their sons, in humble faith to cry "Amen!" And what is our answer? It was in this supreme hour that there sprung from the god-like brain of the high-priest of that hierarchy this our saintly and benignant nurse-mother, whose generous breasts have nurtured this generation, who have renewed all that covenant by sprinkling that altar with their blood—with our blood, young men. We are that generation—we are the men who have hazarded our lives for that covenant. Here they are, to-day, at their mother's knees, their palm branches covered with cypress; but they are the sons of the master-builders of the temple of liberty, who drank the waters of the Chesapeake and the South Atlantic—the very sons of those sires who, three-score and ten years ago, standing at Jamestown, by the waters of the Chesapeake, with the voice of God's own patriot-priest, offered this prayer to Almighty God. [Bishop Madison, 1800.]

"Hallowed be this place where Thou didst manifest Thy goodness to our forefathers, and where Thy heavenly plan for spreading Thy blessings—the blessings of social right—first beamed forth. It was here, oh God! it was here, on this chosen ground, that Thou didst first lay the sure foundations of civil happiness. Here didst Thou say to our forefathers, who, under Thy guidance, had defied the perils of an untried ocean, 'Here fix your abode forever. Here shall the great work of political salvation begin. Here I will strike deep the roots of an everlasting empire, where justice, and liberty, and peace shall flourish in immortal vigor, to the glory of My name and the happiness of man.' Here ye shall sleep—but your sons and your daughters shall possess the land which stretcheth wide before you. They shall convert the wilderness and the solitary places into fields smiling with plenty. They shall, in ages to come, exceed the sands of the sea-shore in number. They shall, when 200 years have gone, here resort, here recall to mind your sufferings and your valor; and here, in a lively sense of the blessings vouchsafed to them, they shall exult and adore My name, and acknowledge that the mightiness of My arm, and the overshadowing of My spirit, hath done these great and excellent things for them and for their children forever."

Such was the prayer, and such the promise made by the immutable God to those from whose loins we sprung, as they worshipped on the shores of the Chesapeake, those shores now "obedient to the stranger and the slave."

An age illustrated by travail of patriotism, truth and justice, ever bears in its womb a generation ready to defend and maintain these attributes, with all the valor it has inherited; and history records this day two of her grandest proofs in view of the shores of the Chesapeake—proofs of equal blazonry—under the auspices of George Washington and Robert Lee. Oh, immutable God! will not the mightiness of Thy arm, and the overshadowing of Thy Spirit, again do these great and excellent things for our children and their children's children forever? Brothers, I have recited in brief the schedule of our inheritance, and our divine title and indenture to the franchise, that our liberty should not be judged by other men's consciences. It is not all the story of this three-score and ten years and of to-day. With bated breath

I will present the converse of this tale of grandeur.

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