

1836

An Appeal to American Patriots: A Poem

Benjamin F. Tefft

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AN APPEAL TO AMERICAN PATRIOTS.

S. Ketchum.

POEM,

PRONOUNCED BEFORE THE

CALLIOPEAN SOCIETY,

OF THE

MAINE WESLEYAN SEMINARY,

AT ITS

LATE ANNIVERSARY,

OCTOBER 13TH, 1835.

BY BENJAMIN F. TEFFT, A. B.
TEACHER IN THE MAINE WESLEYAN SEMINARY.

HALLOWELL:
GLAZIER, MASTERS & SMITH.
1836.

MAINE WESLEYAN SEMINARY, Nov. 6, 1835.

DEAR SIR.—THE Calliopean Society of the Maine Wesleyan Seminary, being highly interested in the Poem which you pronounced at their late Anniversary, and anxiously wishing to obtain and preserve the same for future use and perusal, have chosen us a committee to request of you a copy of it for publication.

We are most respectfully yours,

PARKER TUCK,
HENRY M. WOODS, } Committee.
GEORGE PARSONS, }

BENJAMIN F. TEFFT, A. B.

MAINE WESLEYAN SEMINARY, Nov. 10, 1835.

GENTLEMEN.—I herewith transmit to you a copy of the Poem to which you allude in your note of the 6th inst. You are aware under what pressure of other duties the Poem was thrown together; at intervals, too, when the mind is least *poetical*. It was designed, moreover, merely for delivery. In presenting you with this copy, I feel urged to accompany it with these remarks, hoping that you will consider it as an offering to you, rather than to the public.

With sentiments of respect, I am most obediently yours,

B. F. TEFFT.

PARKER TUCK,
H. M. WOODS, } Committee.
GEORGE PARSONS, }

RECEIVED
OCT 14 1835
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POEM.

I.

HARP of the North! to thee do I address
My prayer;—I, the lowliest of that throng
Who've anon sought thy favor, and caressed
A smile to cheer the dulness of their song,—
Listen.—Long have I loved thee; as long
Forbore to touch a strain of thine, or sound
One note of thee, so often raised in song
To dress some grovelling tale or sensual round:
Come, strike one note for freedom on freedom's chosen ground.

II.

When darkness round the earth had spread her shroud
A thousand years, and intellectual night
Had kept her chilling reign, and men had bowed
And worshiped long—they knew not what—and sight
Or glimpse of reason none, save the little light
That flickered o'er the schoolman's mazy lore,
And Truth, that angel pure, ethereal, so bright
In olden times, had spread her plumes for flight,
Fair morn began once more to dawn on earth's drear shore.

III.

And Rome was first to wake;—fair Rome! the first
To see the dawning day. Rome!—hallowed name!
The home of heroes, liberty;—the worst
Foe to despots;—Tyrant to tyrants! where Fame
Once spread her greenest laurels, and the game
Which Fortune plays with man and man's estate
Was played most variedly.—Dread Rome! whence came
Science, dear to all, 'twas thy blest fate
To see her shine again where darkness long had sat.

IV.

The sound of war had long been hushed ; — longwhile
 Her sons had slept oblivion's sleep ; — old Time
 Had flapped his wings free o'er the funeral pile
 Of Rome's departed greatness ; drearily chime
 Her burial notes with the alexandrian rhyme
 Of measured durance ; — Freedom's fires burn
 Alas ! no more, on shores of happiest clime ;
 Her grandeur fallen and her glory stern,
 A torch alone she wants to fit her for the urn.

V.

But see ! the resurrection morn has risen !
 Rome's sons arouse them from their slumber ; —
 Science wakes ; — religion rushes from her prison
 Of metaphysic lore ; — and the whole number
 Of priests, popes, saints, cardinals, monks and friars,
 Hermits, abbots, bishops, jesuits and nuns,
 Are now, alas ! revealed ! truth lights her fires,
 And night, meanwhile, before so many suns,
 Revolving back her clouds sublimely slow retires.

VI.

Amid this rising splendor, where, oh ! where
 Is Greece ! lovely land ! nourisher of men !
 At once the cradle and grave of science, — for there
 Was taught what men shall never know again, —
 Oh ! Greece ! how sweet and lovely is the strain
 That sings of thee and thine ! From thy blest soil
 First sprang the shoot of liberty, and when
 It grew a noble tree, and covered all
 Thy coast, its own fruit-bent branches doomed its fall.

VII.

But deep its roots had sunk ;—and many a storm
 Passed o'er them buried low in earth's deep mold.
 The frozen world but served to keep them warm
 And free from harm external, while the cold
 Bleak winter of a thousand years was told—
 The dragon's reign — on the checkered score
 Of earth's drear history. And now behold !
 The spring returns with vigorous warmth once more,
 Its scions shoot o'er all the world on every shore.

VIII.

If e'er a roaming spirit sieze my soul,
 I'll visit thee, fair Greece, with quickest speed ;
 My barque along thy dinted coast shall stroll,
 Where heroes lived and died, and won their meed
 Of time-enduring fame. And if, indeed,
 The fates forbid me not, I'll visit thee,
 Athena. — Socrates, did he not bleed
 In thee ? And Sophocles there sing ? But see
 My Plato there ! Locke, Hume, Bossuet, what were ye

IX.

To this deep reservoir of Mind ! I deem,
 A reservoir but seldom fathomed, yet
 That seemeth shallow, since the limpid stream
 Which issues forth refracts the rays of light
 That penetrate the fount, and lifts to sight
 The latent surface, far, far concealed
 From unassisted vision. — Black that night
 Must be that covers all thy streams ! Ah ! yield
 Me e'er thy meed ; — I'll drink till all my veins are filled.

X.

But, Greece, thy day is past ; thy glory's o'er !
 Thy suns and stars have sunk to rise no more ! —
 All Europe now breaks forth in brilliant light,
 And rolls her clouds on thee ; — a horrid night ! —
 How dark thy lot ! — and darker yet thy fate
 Must ever be, if e'er to renovate
 Thy former fortune, thou shouldst vainly strive
 To break thy servile chains. — Thy lords now drive
 Thy sons. A slave thou art ; a slave thou e'er must live.

XI.

Spain next revives, the land of chivalrous deeds ;
 And where a thousand years the chilling breath
 Of desolating winter around had spread
 Its with'ring course, and intellectual death
 Preyed wide, the spring brings back o'er vale and heath,
 Its smiling groves and whimpering streams. Thy sons,
 Old Spain, once more are seen to tread the path
 Which leads to wealth and greatness. Now returns
 Thy long lost fame ; — and brighter yet thy glory burns !

XII.

The fates divide their providence twixt thee
 And Italy. 'Twas thine, Italia, thine
 To mother th' adventurer ; — but he
 Alas ! could find no friend in thee, divine
 In all things else. — And though thy glory shine
 Brighter than the stars which sparkle round
 Thy deep-blue firmament, yet is it shorn
 Of half its beams — thy pride must bite the ground
 When such cold apathy in hearts so large is found.

XIII.

But Spain shows forth her ancient chivalry ;—
 The bold adventurer forsakes the land
 That gave him birth, and finds a heart in thee,
 Blest Spain ! congenial with his own. Ferdinand
 Immortalized thy name, when from the strand
 Of Palos he dismissed the favorite
 Of Isabelle. — And thou didst understand
 Thy traffic well, fair queen, when thou couldst set
Thy trinkets off to buy a world !— and yet thy fate !

XIV.

The fearless seaman spreads his swelling sails ;
 The cordage creaks ; the streamers flirt the air ;
 The three tight ships embosom all the gales ;
 The sailors ring their cheer ; the faithful prayer
 The weeping mother lifts to heaven's high care ;
 The safe return of all he has, a son,
 The sighing father asks ; — and here and there
 The well-tried friend, the feeling citizen,
 And dearer ones, commend to the winds and heaven these men.

XV.

The city with its spires, the woody port,
 Are lessening fast, while the busy crew
 Crowd up the decks, forget their wonted sport,
 In silence now to take one lingering view
 Of all that Spain, fast-flying Spain, can shew.
 The pleasant fields recede, and the evening bell
 Now rings the well-known sound ; — the waters grow
 Before each booming prow ; — and now — some tell —
 They shout their native land a loud and long farewell.

XVI.

Full seventy glad'ning suns had risen and set ;
 As many nights had brooded o'er the main ;
 And many a sigh was heard ; the tear had wet
 The iron-hearted seaman's cheeks ; — in vain
 The sturdy threat of flying back to Spain
 T' avenge them there on th' adventurous hand
 Which led them from their homes, had set a stain
 That fades not, when, at dead of night, they stand
 On deck, — “ a light ! a light ! ” — the morning showed the land.

XVII.

The years roll on — persecution rages wide ;
 In thick'ning crowds men rush from every clime !
 Men swarm the valleys ; climb the mountain's side ;
 The forests fall — proud cities rise — and time
 Spreads out the furrowed fields ; — the evening chime
 Of bells, and voices sweet — where nought before
 But savage yells were heard — and measured rhyme
 Poetic, soft and free, arise. — The roar
 Of wolves is now the din of men from shore to shore.

XVIII.

The lapse of centuries is gone ; — when lo !
 The British lion lays his vengeful claw
 On freedom's bird ! — afar the notes of woe
 Peal loud and strong. The sons of freedom saw
 The insult, nor idly do they stand, but draw
 Their fearful blades to meet th' abetting foe
 Which thickens round the scene. — The lion's maw
 Opes wide its horrid portals. — Freemen, oh !
 Go save your bird ! arise ! to death or victory go !

XIX.

Bright ranks of men accede on either side :
 On that, — Cornwallis, Tarleton, Clinton, Howe,
 Burgoyne, Rawdon, Stewart, — Britain's pride —
 On this are Lincoln, Morgan, Putnam, Lee,
 The valiant Gates, firm Reed, Montgomery,
 Th' intrepid Marion, and Sullivan,
 Thomas, Scuyler, Thompson, Sterling, Moultrie,
 Magaw and Greene, — Great names ! but what to thine,
 Revered Fayette ! — or thine, unequalled Washington !

XX.

The struggle long endures, — the clouds of war
 Hang low'ring thick and dark o'er all our sky ;
 Day falls — midnight rises on morn — afar
 The shaking thunders roll ! — the war dog's cry
 Is heard ; — the rocks, and hills, and woods reply ; —
 Ahah ! strike ! warriors, strike ! Ah ! can ye see
 Your ~~bird~~ prey to British tyranny ! — *beddy*
 The blow is given, — the soaring eagle's free, —
 She mounts her native skies and all is liberty.

XXI.

Long years of peace smile o'er a happy land ;
 The harvest now repays the cheerless toil
 Which planted deep the seeds, and thankless hand
 That propped the shoot, of Liberty. Thy soil,
 America, abundant teems with all
 The fruits alternate showers and sun-lit skies
 Can germinate ; — the arts of war intrall
 Thy sons no more, — religion burns, — truth spies
 Her goal, — plenty crowns the land, — and merit takes the prize.

XXII.

Once more the clouds of war arise ; — thy day,
 America, thy prosperous day recedes ; —
 A haughty nation o'er the seas display
 Their hostile banners ; — Britain 'gain invades
 Thy blood-bought rights ! — a price too dear of deeds
 And heroes' souls to sacrifice or forego
 Thine elder sons have paid ; — professions, creeds,
 Names, titles, as niceties, are all let go ; —
 Men rush to clear the field and scatter back the foe !

XXIII.

The foe is gone. — Now shines our sun with beams
 Without a cloud between ; — so bright his rays
 Break forth o'er all thy lands thy morning seems
 To mock the noon of other climes ! — Long days
 Of splendor rise ; — so fierce the glories blaze
 Of each succeeding, that the latter's shade
 Serves it as night ! How fresh the laurel bays
 Which wreath thy temples, science ! — Earth is made
 A golden paradise without a serpent's head !

XXIV.

Now industry goes forth to sure reward ;
 The woodman's axe resounds the forest through
 With well paid strokes ; — the ploughman turns the sward
 Which longs to countervail his toil ; — the few
 Who turn their thoughts on science, soon review
 Their alphabet of honors. — Temples rise
 As 'neath enchantment's wand, and shun the view
 Or tread of none ! — Their columns prop the skies !
 Their architraves in clouds forsake our longing eyes !

XXV.

Free commerce spreads afar her lateen shrouds
 And whitens all the seas with swelling sails;
 Columbia's hardy sons in lusty crowds,
 Bestud the strands of every clime; — the gales
 Of heaven waft them o'er every sea; — th' avails
 Of trade th' exchequer fills: — and if a foe
 But dare invade our coast, he quickly quails,
 Or finds a watery home. — British seamen know
 What freemen are at sea! — Come? — ask *them*, — they'll tell
 you, No. — *To Live —*

XXVI.

On high our floating banner waves; — afar
 Its stripes are seen to flap the rustling breeze;
 A constellation studs its folds; — each star
 Has cost the blood of many! — My veins freeze
 And boil alternate, as reflection sees
 Afresh the fields of blood which swam with gore
 Of those who purchased thus our liberties! —
 Full many a bone lies bleaching on some shore
 While mothers weep at home, and sisters' hearts deplore,

XXVII.

Their sons and brothers slain! — Each deafening peal
 That rends the air and echoes far around
 O'er hills and vales, in lasting anguish seals
 Up many a parent's heart! — See! here are found
 In Mars' red field, unburied o'er the ground,
 The blasted hopes of widows, orphans, sires!
 In heaps of slain they lie, or 'neath the mound
 Their friends throw o'er them. — While at home the fires
 Burn bright, the wife waits, infants call, — the sire expires!

XXVIII.

Such! freemen, such the price of Liberty! —
 'Twas bought with fathers' blood and mothers' tears! —
 And heaven has blessed the purchase: — *Ye are free!*
 A sunny peace o'er all the land! — No fears
 From invading foes disturb your joys; — and years
 Roll onward; heaven yet smiles around. — But can
 Ye see a reckless band whom fury rears
 To fight her battles, untaught by law, insane
 With vengeance, freely violate the rights of man? —

XXIX.

The rights of freemen! — rights which heaven bestows
 And sanctions! — this — is this philanthropy?
 May my blood freeze whene'er its current flows
 In such a channel! — Spirit of Liberty!
 Are rights so dearly purchased, *can* they be
 Thus bounded by a narrow stream which rolls
 Its peaceful waves 'twixt sister States? — In thee,
 America! on thy blest soil, now tolls
 The knell of Liberty! “STOP THERE, OR LOSE YOUR SOULS!”

XXX.

Sons of Washington! Go, sheathe your blades,
 And brandish them no more. — The cause is one,
 But *each* must have its sphere. — The eye invades
 The ear because it does not see! — Be done
 With war. — SPEECH IS, AND MUST BE, FREE. —
 The sun
 Of Liberty sends forth its sacred beams
 O'er all who breathe the air which Jefferson
 And Franklin breathed; — from North to South it seems
 To teach as well as shine, “LET THERE BE LIGHT!” — It gleams

XXXI.

Triumphant radiance through the world ! It strikes
 A terror to the heart of despots ; — melts
 The chains of tyranny ; — burns out the spikes
 And bolts of dungeons ; — softens the rough insults
 Of aristocracy which rasp the poor ; —
 Unnerves th' oppressor's grasp, who e'er exults
 In wringing out misfortunes at the door
 Of imbecility ; — and tyrants skulk
 Before its blaze, as George once did in days of yore.

XXXII.

Glorious Constitution ! Thou central sun
 Of twice twelve orbs which circulate around
 Thy brilliant throne ! — how wide thy glories burn !
 O'er earth and sea ! — o'er arch and tower and mound ; —
 O'er chiseled grandeur ; — cloud-girt spires, where sound
 Th' eternal tread and din of men ! — o'er hills
 And cragged mountains ! — where the liquid ground
 Bubbled up when earth crusted — thy light fills
 All these ! this New World is full of thee ! Earth distils

XXXIII.

Her sweetest nectar here for man. Her lap
 Teems with luxuries ; — boundless her store ; —
 Her periods roll in successive springs. The map
 Which spreads from the northern cataract's roar
 To the southern gulf ; — from the bluff shore
 Of Atlas' booming waters, to the broad
 Pacific, where th' Almighty's presence, more
 Serene than infant's sleep, seems spread abroad
 Over the deep, is full of life, of thee, of God !

XXXIV.

American Constitution ! — blood-bought chart
 Of freedom ! — talisman of human bliss ! —
 Thou signet to universal freedom ! — heart
 Of liberty's full tide, whose choked pulse is
 Beating, throbbing in the world's arteries ! —
 Abyss of thought, deep, unfathomed ! — great
 Colossal monument of prudence ! — This
 Thou art and more to man, incarnate spirit
 Of liberty ! Offspring of Heaven's great Architect !

XXXV.

Charter of Liberty ! How wast thou coolly signed
 By a whole nation, with pens dipped in gore
 Of brothers, fathers, infants, mothers, destined
 To bleed for man ! — Thousands pledged before
 A gazing universe, and stern-eyed Justice hoar,
 To seal the union which thou fain wouldst make
 With their hearts' blood ; — and thus 'twas sealed of yore.
 Shall we not seal it ? — Can hell's thunders shake
 Our minds to blend Liberty with Law ! Freemen, awake ! —

XXXVI.

Of creeds I speak not ; — let each man settle these
 'Twixt him and Heaven. — I speak of Law, of Rights,
 Of Freedom dear to all. — May Heaven, who sees
 And counsels, aid us ; — quell the jarring thoughts
 Which shake thy columns, Freedom ! — And ye lights
 Which shine in bliss above, who gave us peace ;
 Oh ! pity and forgive ; — and from those heights
 Which Mercy gives you, turn your eyes on Greece,
 And then on us ! — Speak, from heaven, speak your land release.

NOTE.

The author wishes to say to the members of the Calliopean Society and his other friends who have expressed a desire that the Poem might be extended, according to the original design, so as to embrace some of the leading topics of discussion now in agitation in the United States, that he has delayed its publication for some months with the design of complying with their desire, but has been prevented by the precarious state of his health. He relinquishes the design, however, with much less regret than he otherwise could, from the consideration that the subject of Human Rights, upon which the author wishes to introduce a few stanzas, has since received able advocacy from another source; from one whose *poetry* is the *everlasting reason* of the human mind. The author could do his friends no better service, were it not for the merited celebrity of the work, than to recommend to them the perusal and reperusal of Dr. Channing's work on Slavery. Indeed, he is free to say farther, until this is done, we have not discharged our duty as christians, patriots and philanthropists, to God, our country, and the human family.

The poem has a few passages of some strength & beauty - The writer was evidently a novice, and his muse doth not trip it with surpassing grace in her Spenserian stanzas - The introduction - as a whole - is about mediocre, his idea is fair, better than the expression -