# EASTON GAZETTE.

WHERE THE PRESS IS FREE—"Literature well or ill-conducted, is the Great Engine by which all Popular States must ultimately be supported or overthrown RELIGION purifies the Heart and teaches us our Duty—Morality refines the Manners—Agriculture makes us Rich, and Politics provides for the enjoyment of all.

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The following address, together with the 'Ode to the American Flag,' which appeared in the Gazette of the 8th inst. were prepared by the writer without giving his friends any intimation of his intention, to be read and delivered unexpectedly & of course with more effect at a public dinner, which he supposed would have been given in Easton on the 4th to celebrate that day. But as it unfortunately happened there was no dinner given in honor of that occasion, and no other opportunity presenting itself, he was altogether disappointed in his anticipations. At the urgent request, however, of several of his friends, to whom they were afterwards read, he has been induced to lay them before the public.

## AN ADDRESS

FOR THE 4th OF JULY, 1837.

BY R. S SKINNER.

*Fellow Citizens*

If we wish to rekindle within our bosoms, the slumbering fire of patriotism we should often recur to that period of our revolutionary history, which has made the fourth of July, seventy six, a famous epoch in history & the names of the heroes and sages who declared & asserted our independence immortal. That *history* is fraught with spirit stirring scenes and heart thrilling events. A retrospective view of those scenes those events, & the trials through which our fathers had to pass, ere they achieved our independence, is well calculated to inspire our hearts, with profound reverence for their memory and unfeigned gratitude to Heaven, for its manifest interposition and overruling providence in the cause of freedom.

It is becoming too, that we should annually make some public exibition of our feeling, and pour out the grateful offerings of our hearts; and in doing so, we follow the example of all preceeding times. The Greeks and the Romans, were wont to celebrate great national epochs in their histories, and to pay divine honors to their heroes and public benefactors. The Jews too, had their days of rejoicing, which were held in sacred remembrance. There is nothing in the religion of our fathers, which prohibits a becoming expression of our gratitude; revelation rather enjoins it christianity enforces it as a duty.

Had the most enlightened statesmen of Europe, two centuries ago, surveying with the eye of philosophy the spirit of improvement and active enterprize that marked the age, declared it to have been their opinion, or had they been gifted with the spirit of prophecy, and foretold that ere those centuries had completed their revolving years, that the Genius of emigration, bearing in her train the arts & the sciences of the old world together with a band of chosen followers, would pass to this western hemisphere, and that here, where nature still asserting her rude empire bloomed in all her primeval freshness and sublimity; a commonwealth would spring up under her auspices, that would equal the proudest dominions of Europe, in power and extensive rescources, their opinion would have been rediculed as the offspring of an enthusiastic fancy, while the prophecy, itself, would have been regarded as visionary and romantic—indeed, to the inhabitants of Europe, at that period, the accomplishment of an enterprise so mighty and stupendous, so unparalleld in the annals of history, might well seem almost to have required, the intervention of supernatural power: to their imagination, as sketched by the mariner, America, seemed one boundless wilderness; then, upon those spots where now our loftiest cities stand, adorned with stately edifices, nought was to be seen but wide extended forests, with here, & there, the blue smoke curling upward from the peaceful wigwam of the Indian, and the Fox and the Panther, prowling their way around them.

It was then, as if really inspired by the Genius of emigration, or perhaps I might more appropriately say, that overruling Providence which mysteriously directs all human affairs; a voluntary band of brother exiles, fleeing from unrelenting persecution sought an asylum in this western world. The ships that wafted our pilgrim fathers to these western shores, were shielded by some charmed power from the perils of the deep; the storms of heaven burst with impotent fury over their white sails and the formed capped billows dashed harmlessly against their onward prows, for they bore men, who were to be the fathers of future heroes together with the budding fortunes of a mighty Empire, destined soon to spring into existence from the womb of time. From the rock of Plymouth and from amidst the wilderness, *their* prayers ascended to Heaven, they had to contend with unheard of difficulties, they were surrounded by savage beasts and men still more savage, but their privations compared with those they had experienced at home were but as dust in the balance. Soon their villages rapidly increased and the hum of industry was heard in their busy streets. Their farms scattered along the country, seemed like so many Oases blooming amidst the desert: but the repose of their trans-atlantic asylum, their Eden of the wilderness, was destined soon to be disturbed by the startling war-whoop of the indian. Long the forest re-echoed with the loud war-fare of the white man & the savage.—But the minds of men inured to difficulties, expand with fortitude equal to every emergency. Years rolled on their course; the Aborigines had either been conquered or driven back to their fastnesses; an hundred other settlements had been scattered along the shores of the Atlantic, and millions of whitemen claimed the soil where, once the Indian held undisputed sway.

The colonies of North America, now began to assume an aspect of importance in the eyes of the mother country, but it was observed even at that early period, that, the policy of the ministry of England, towards them, instead of being protective and conciliatory in its nature, was rather oppressive; instead of extending to our fathers, the rights of Englishmen, as guarantied by the *great charter* they seemed to regard them in the light of tributaries, from whom they could make unqualified and exorbitant exactions. I shall not here, follow every step that led to our revolution; suffice it to say, that the passage of the *stamp act*, first kindled into a flame, those fires of indignation which had already slumbered too long. This was the commencement of those difficulties, which daily increased, until the battle of Lexington unsheathed the sword of vengance and filled the continent of North America for seven long years with the loud tocsin and shrill clangor of relentless *war*. How blind and misguided must have been the ministry of England at that period! The lessons of the past, seem to have been lost upon them! the principle for which our fathers contended, was in part, the same for which Hamden and the great reformers of England had struggled under the reign of the first Charles in their *Famous petition of right*. Infatuated men! Did they for a moment suppose, that the spirit of liberty wild and free, inspiring the hearts of men as free and untameable, could ever be checked in its onward course, or stifled in the expression of its feeling & trumpet-tongued appeal for the redress of wrong? As well might they have striven to stay, the torrent of Niagara rushing from its rocky precipice, or the out breaking of volcanic fires when the elements are heaving the earth below with giant strength.

Would that I were able to discribe the interesting scenes and wants attending our revolutionary struggle. Would that I were able to portray such as they were the master spirits who directed that storm, the description of those scenes, the portraiture, of those characters, would form a story of the most splendid achievements, the most faithful devotion to the cause of freedom, on the part of men, who, were indeed disinterested Patriots and native heroes. That struggle of our fathers, was a *crisis* not only in the fortunes of the colonies of North America, but, in the cause of freedom throughout the world. It required for its guidance and direction, a Patriot and hero, such as had never lived before on earth. WASHINGTON was that hero, destined by Heaven to 'strike a blow, which should resound throughout the Universe.' Follow the steps of that great man from the commencement to the termination of the war of '76, we shall find that he was equal *if not superior* to every emergency: and at that most disastrous period of our affairs, when during the memorable month of November '76, he was compelled to retreat before a superior force of the enemy through the Jerseys, while his soldiers were deserting him by companies, and darkness and dismay hung over the future, still his fortitude and courage never for a moment deserted him. For, it was in that hour of trial he firmly resolved, that, if driven to retreat to Virginia, he would fly to the inaccessible peaks of the Alleganies, and as the Swiss before had done from their Alpine heights, and the Highlanders of Scotland, the last relic of chivalry, from their mountain crags, entrench himself behind a rampart of adamant. But Heaven had destined that a far different fate should await him, and decreed that a youth of innocence and virtue, a manhood of heroism and valor, should be crowned with an age of glory and renown. And his *subsequent* and famous repassage of the Delaware, together with his victories at Trenton and Princeton, have twined around the brow of the *marble statue* that perpetuates his memory, the imperishable wreath of immortality.

Take the North American Revolution from its origin, to the period of its termination, it has no parallel in the history of the past. It drew into action more noble and disinterested spirits, it caused the developement of more exalted qualities of the head and heart, it displayed in the field more splendid and renowned achievements than had ever before graced any stage upon the theatre of life. We see a Washington, standing high in the confidence of England for services against the French arms, with offers held out to tempt his youthful ambition, sacrificing all at the shrine of *freedom* and devoting himself exclusively to the advancement of his country. We see a Lafayette, nursed in the cradle of luxury, the descendant of a line of noble ancestors, leaving the gayest court on earth and the hopes of political advancement with his King, engaging heart and hand in our struggle. We see a Kosciusco, a Pulaski, a DeKalb, exiled from their own tyrant trodden shores, pouring out their blood in the cause of freedom the *common cause* of mankind.

I sometimes fancy, while, dwelling on the historic page that records their achievements, that I am reading some romance of the by-gone days of chivalry, the creation of some mighty genius, where men are painted with all the glowing fancy of a Scott and a Bulwer, as Patriots *should be*, not as they *have been* with few exceptions in all preceeding times. Yes! that struggle of our fathers and the master spirits who guided the bark that was freighted with the fortunes of our infant republic, safe, to the haven of freedom and independence, was the sublimest pageant that ever floated on the descending stream of time, and exhibited, its fair proportions and beautiful features to the vision of an admiring world.

After our ancestors had achieved their independence, their situation appeared peculiarly interesting, unparalleled in the annals of history—and well calculated to call forth the attention and jealous observation of the monarchies of Europe. The spectacle was then for the first time presented to the world, of three millions of enlightened individuals the undisputed masters of a wide extended continent, after successfully resisting the encroachments of tyranny, quietly selecting for their representatives the most intelligent and patriotic citizens of their number, who, after solemn deliberation might devise a constitution, having for its basis, the broad principles of civil and religious liberty, which, might perpetuate to the latest posterity, the freedom they had already acquired by their valor. No wonder, the distinguished statesmen, who composed that assembly, though skilled in the science of government and thoroughly acquainted with the history of the past, should have felt somewhat embarrassed & acknowledged the high and responsible nature of their office. That history, to which they look back for information to guide them in the discharge of their high and sacred duty, presented no era, no revolution like the important one of '76.

The republics of GREECE AND ROME, in their origin and commencement bore no analogy to it, as little did the revolutions of more modern times, which too frequently ending in anarchy and confusion, instead of presenting happy models for the imitation of posterity, seemed rather calculated to excite apprehensions of any permanent success, ever attending a form of government based on purely popular principles. It is true, that the men who composed that Assembly, were well calculated to originate new schemes in government and to strike out new paths in political science: yet, still some clouds and darkness hung over their future course It is true, that in point of enlargement of mind and patriotic feeling, they were a century in advance of the world, and it was from this proud eminence, to which their genius had elevated them, that they saw, as MOSES beheld of yore from Pisgah's top, the dim out-line of the promised land; the dawning radiance of that star of a WESTERN EMPIRE, which was destined soon to rise above and rapidly ascend the political horizon. Cheered by this vision of the future glory that awaited their posterity, they boldly proceeded to the task of framing a republican form of government; and firmly resolving that none but the most pure and patriotic principles should govern and direct their councils, they produced our present *Constitution*, in all its perfect proportions. That Constitution was adopted, tried, & found to be well calculated with the assistance of every American, to preserve and perpetuate the *Union* of the States, the desired object.

Let the inquisitive, stranger who in some foreign Country has questioned the wisdom of that Constitution, and doubted the prosperity and happiness which have attended our country under its faithful administration, visit our happy land, and glancing over our history for one brief moment: on a day like this, when the prayers of assembled millions are ascending unto HEAVEN in fervent gratitude, let him take his stand upon the Alleghanies loftiest summit; let him survey as far as the eye can see, and when perception fails, let his imagination wing its wearied flight over our wide extended domain, our fertile and populous Territories, with the communities that divide them: he will behold the STAR-SPANGLED BANNER, waving in proud triumph alike over the snow clad regions of the North, the fragrant bowers of the South, and the magnificent wilderness of the West. He will behold the inhabitants who compose these different communities, still mindful of the glory of their fathers acquired in struggling for independence, uniting together and forming a republic the most powerful ever known. A republic, embracing within itself almost every variety of climate, soil, and production. The wisdom of whose institutions and laws, is exemplified in the amazing rapidity with which she has advanced to greatness and empire; in the astonishing increase of her population, which would almost seem to verify the prediction of Bishop Berkley, who exclaimed upon seeing the tide of emigration flowing to this Western hemisphere, 'Westward the star of empire takes its way.' That tide of emigration which then called forth the prophetic remark, has been, and is, still flowing to America with redoubled vigor. Each year wafts its thousands to our shores. The Frenchman forgets the smiling vineyards of France, the Scot the thistle and the mountain crag of his once loved Caledonia, and the warm-hearted Irishman, though in dreams he re-visits, the shores of Erin, remembers that America is the home of his children, and his heart is with them in this land of his adoption. They are all ready to exclaim with Franklin 'where liberty is, there is my country.'

Let us here contrast the present happy condition of AMERICA, with that of the nations of Europe It is true, that our Country is at present somewhat embarrassed in her financial and commercial relations, but as the strong man bowed down by transient sickness, she will soon recover with a bound, to march forward to that greatness and empire which still await her: while the Kingdoms of Europe, oppressed by tyrannical restrictions will take centuries to free themselves from their shackles. Look at Spain, once renowned for her romantic achievements and heroism in war, with her population degraded and oppressed, under the administration of her imbecile monarchs and factious Senate. Look at Italy, the soil once trod by *Cæsar* and a Lion hearted race of men, with one third of her population consisting of beggars and assassins. Look at France, with her pretended citizen King, still suffering from the usurpations and oppressive restrictions of one of the Bourbon family. Look at Poland, the land of Kosciusco, once the redeeming portion of Europe, now, like the prey of the Lion & the Tiger literally dismembered by the Austrian and the Russian What is Russia herself but a horde of slaves ready to do the bidding of a tyrant, while Turkey sinking in the scale of empire by the force and operation of her own vicious institutions, seems like some ancient edifice from the rottenness of its foundation crumbling to the dust?

But let us go back further, and compare the happiness which our country has experienced from her origin under our free Constitution, with the misery that the nations of Europe have suffered for ten centuries under their absolute monarchies. Looking back on the history of that Continent, where gleams of freedom breaking through the dark clouds of ignorance, which gathered over the multitude, shed their auspicious, but momentary ray to gladden the desponding serf, then passed like 'single sunbeams over the hopeless fortunes of the storm beaten Mariner,' one might be tempted to believe that liberty was but an empty name—a phantom that lived only in the enthusiasm of poetry or the vision of philosophy. We see there on every page, arbitrary power struggling to conceal her usurpations and absurd pretensions to legitimacy or *Divine right*, by stopping every avenue to free enquiry and paralyzing every effort of genius, while her hereditory bondsmen seem to have been so long trained, to breathe the contaminated atmosphere of palaces, to bow down and reverence their rulers, that they were ready to believe those demi-Gods of clay were in reality the vicegerants of that being who maketh 'darkness his pavilion.' We see there, papal supremacy using her superstitious terrors to sway the multitude, making opinion a 'veil that mantled the whole continent with its darkness,' and with her spells more potent than the fabled charms of *Circe*, discoloring to the jaundiced eyes of the many, all the face of nature, and tinging with livid hues even the flowers of Paradise, the attributes of the Deity, and the glories of the Eternal Throne. That the same redeeming spirit, that freed our country from the thraldom of tyranny and the rod of the oppressor, may at no distant period arise in Europe, pervade that mighty continent and shake to their bases her already tottering monarchies, unfurl the banner of liberty and whisper in despots ears the startling sounds that once appalled the Assyrian's 'thy days O tyranny are numbered,' must be the fervent desire of every American. May the day yet come, when there shall arise on that continent, like

"Samuel's shade, to Sauls monarchic eyes,
The prophets of young freedom, summoned far,
From these the climes of Washington and Bolivar,
Henry, the forest born Demosthenes,
Whose thunder, shook the Philip of the seas,
And stoic Franklin's energetic shade,
Robed in the lightnings which his hand allayed,
And Washington, the tyrant tamer wake,
To bid them blush for those old chains of bleak.'

And we may add in the spirit of supplication, may the day come, when, knowledge and the true spirit of religion, spreading their benign influence throughout that hemisphere, dispelling the mists of ignorance and superstition, with all the sophistry of the past, like the spear of the Angel Ithuriel, by whose celestial power, the fiend, who, could assume an Angel's form, was metamorphosed back into his proper shape, gifted with equal power from on high shall withdraw that veil, which has hitherto concealed the misshapen features of monarchy, display her in all the foul deformity of the former, but liberty arrayed, in all the bright transcendant glory of the latter. How different a prospect! how beautiful a spectacle when contrasted with the one we have just portrayed of modern Europe, has America presented from her origin and still continues to present! The policy, pursued by the first framers of her Constitution, the unwavering policy, respected and pursued by almost every succeeding administration, was, to define as near as possible, what are the equal rights of man, to grant to each, a free participation in every civil and religious immunity, to hold out the most liberal encouragement to the arts and sciences, proceeding upon the principle, supported by all history, that nothing tends more eminently, to give permanency to empire than a general diffusion of knowledge.

Our efforts for political advancement have not been in vain. The apparently complicated machinery, of our general and State governments, has with little exception from the time of its projection, been concordant in its movements, harmonious in its action. Our efforts for intellectual advancement in the world of science, have also not been unsuccessful. Has not the philosophic mind of Franklin allayed the lightnings of Heaven? and by his talismanic rod tipped with its silver spire disarmed the *bolt* of its terror, and made every father of a family, lie down at night with the assurance, that the repose of his children, will not be disturbed by death, when the thunder storm is bursting in fury above? Has not the genius of Fulton ennabled man to propel the steam bark, against *opposing tides* and *adverse winds*? Have we not had in the field of oratory, an Aymes, a Henry and a Clay? In the Cabinet, a Jefferson, a Madison, a Hamilton and a Webster? In jurisprudence a Marshall, a Pinkney and a Story? Have not our ships, been regarded as such models of strength and beauty, that they have been imitated by the MONARCHS of Europe? Have not our artizans, been employed to construct cannon for the Sultan of Turkey? But as yet we have only entered on the career of glory that awaits us. *We have opened the portals of the temple of fame, and are now, rapidly ascending the lofty steps that lead to its pinnacle of glory.* O! if we could but read the book of futurity, if it were permitted us to see, as our first parent, the secrets and mysteries of time to come, if things that are to be, could come thronging up in shadowy pomp before our eyes, what visions of glory yet to dawn upon our country, may we not hope would rise to cheer the patriot and philanthrophist in the discharge of their duty.

But *Heaven* in its wisdom has decreed that darkness should rest alike over the steps of man, and the destinies of Empire; that our hope, patience and fortitude should be strengthened & exercised. But judging the future by the past, we have every reason to believe, that with such early & glorious developements of genius & of art, with a constitution, based upon such sound and rational principles America will eventually surpass, all the Empires of other days in grandeur and power. Unless, forgetful of the superior blessings, they have already enjoyed, her citizens, should give way to party animosities, which may end in civil war and a seperation of our happy Union. But surely that day, if malignant fate should ere decree, that such shall be our doom must be buried in far distant futurity, when the different states, that compose our happy republic, shall be so lost to every principle of patriotism and glory acquired in the fiery ordeal of our revolution, as to think for a moment of disunion! Ere they do this, let them turn to history that 'bright mirror,' which 'reflects in such faithful colours, the transactions of the past, and she will tell them a story, that should be written in deep and indelible traces on every Americans heart. She will tell them, what they know full well by their own experience, that the citizens of republics, are the most powerful and happy, but she will tell them at the same time, that party spirit and civil dissension have formed the rock on which, have been eventually wrecked, their political prosperity and glory

She will tell them in the language of a distinguished senator,* that there once existed a confederacy of *independent states*, united as ours are, fair cities, adorned with stately edifices, governed by wise magistrates, defended by intrepid warriors, that poured fourth their inhabitants, at stated seasons to assist at public games, where poets, sages and historians read their instructive pages to admiring crouds, where the young contended for the prize, of agility and strength, and the old recounted their former exploits, where, the wisdom and the valor, the talent and the beauty of each state, formed the boast and the pride of the whole.

What followed? Civil dissension breathed its poisenous influence over them, and they met once more to contend, not for the peaceful prize of agility and strength, but in the deadly strife of civil war. Where now their lofty cities? their magnificent theatres, their statues of Gods and Heroes? They have vanished, they have been swept with the besom of destruction, the plough-share of devastation, has been driven over their walls, and their mighty ruins, remain as monumental warnings to free states, of the danger of falling into the excess of party rage. With such melancholy examples before them, of the madness of giving way to party rage, shall such notwithstanding ever be the fate of America shall the citizens of these United States, where it has been fondly hoped, would be realized all those visions of equality and equal rights, which have hitherto had their existence only in the immagination of Poets, philosophers and patriots, ever forget, that Union alone constitutes the bulwark of our liberties, the ark of our safety: like the ark of the Lord in the camp of Iserael, and in consequence of such forgetfulness, our country be visited at some future period with all the accumulated horrors of civil war? While the chivalrous conduct of our fore-fathers, shall live only in song and a few scattered records fragments of our once glorious Constitution, only be preserved in the dim twilight of tradition' We trust that such will never be our fate but that it has been reserved for America, to establish a form of government which shall exist commensurate with time itself. Unparalleled in the boldness of her origin, our infant republic, from her birth, day up to the present period, has displayed traits of character high and magnanimous; such as have commanded the veneration and exited forth the admiration of the world, and demonstrated that we are not merely the professed but the real and ardent lovers of liberty, the champions of justice, the cultivators of all those generous and noble feelings, which give elevation and dignity to human character.

In conclusion fellow citizens, permit us to say, that we live in an age fraught with deep and abiding interest to every patriot, philanthropist, and lover of freedom. We have for the last half century, been making an experiment in the science of political government, to prove, that the *great body of the people* when properly enlightened, are capable of legislating for themselves. Safe, successful has crowned our efforts, and we have every reason to believe, that if true to ourselves, if true to the great and distinctive principles of civil and religious liberty, which have been so clearly defined and established by our fathers in the *Constitution* and *charter of rights* they have bequeathed to us, their certain success will ultimately attend the action, of the Government of the United States, for a thousand ages to come. Yes, we repeat it, that if *true to ourselves* our liberties may be perpetuated throughout all coming time. Our destiny hangs on the alternative; we stand or fall by our own virtue or degeneracy.

The institutions of America, though superior to all those of times past, are far from being perfect, they still bear the impress of human frailty. There are latent causes of evil inherent in our very nature, that are secretly exerting their baneful influence and sapping the springs of public virtue and morality, which alone form the columnar pillars of Empire. Let it be remembered that temperance, virtue, fortitude and valor, have invariably established Empires; but their opposite vices have undermined, and caused their overthrow more than the hosts of opposing armies. The Liberties of Greece, were subverted more by the degeneracy of her sons, than by the arms of Phillip of Macedon; and that degeneracy was produced by luxury and effeminacy. Historians have dated the decline and fall of the Roman Empire, from the introduction of Asiatic luxury. The liberties of America require unceasing vigilance on the part of her sons, a devotion, fervent and faithful as that of the Persian fire worshippers watching over the sacred flame, kindled by the orb of day, the God of their idolatry. The eyes of the Monarchs of Europe are fixed intently upon us, longing to behold the extinguishment of that light, whose reflecting radiance has already laid open to view the darkness of their policy. Shall we gratify their anticipations? Shall we extinguish the last hope of freemen? Shall the fair heritage of our liberty, that was purchased by the blood of our fathers, ever be surrendered up through our own self abandonment, and self abasement, to some pretended friend of liberty, to some aspiring dictator, some Sylla or some Cæsar? or if possible still worse than this, shall some Russian Czar, crossing to our Western frontier, with his legionary swarm from their northern horde sweep over our smiling vallies, and fertile plains, and succeed in polluting the soil of freedom, by erecting forever the standard of despotism? Ere this be done the green earth shall be stained with the blood of a million of freemen, and the breach that leads to our overthrow piled up with the mangled corses of a thousand heroes.

*Livingston.

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