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EVERETT SANDERS,
Secretary to the President

ADDRESS

OF

PRESIDENT COOLIDGE,

AT THE

*Calvin,
Pres. U.S., 1872-1933.*

150TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BATTLES OF
TRENTON AND PRINCETON

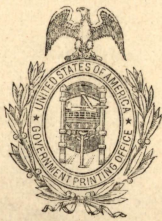
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ADDRESS

At Trenton, N. J., December 29, at 8 p. m., celebrating the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the Battles of Trenton and Princeton, President Coolidge spoke as follows:

FELLOW COUNTRYMEN:

The season is now well advanced in the celebrations of the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the opening events of the American Revolution. The year of 1925 marked the passage of a century and a half of time from the days of Lexington, Concord, and Bunker Hill, and the assumption by Washington of the post of Commander in Chief of the Continental Army at Cambridge. During the following March of 1776 in forcing the British to evacuate Boston he secured his first military success. In the following July the Declaration of Independence was adopted by the Continental Congress at Philadelphia. The early summer saw nearly 30,000 British, under the command of Sir William Howe, landed at Staten Island. Coming in contact with some of these forces on Long Island and again at White Plains, the Americans fought without success. But General Washington was entitled to great credit for extricating his Army, which was then forced for nearly two months to retreat through New Jersey, and crossing the Delaware at Trenton reached the Pennsylvania shore December 8 barely in time to escape from Cornwallis.

Although the Americans were safe for the moment, as they had possession of all the boats up and down the river for 70 miles, their situation was so desperate that Washington thought it might be necessary to retreat into Virginia, or even go beyond the Alleghenies. All hope of taking Canada was gone. New York had been lost. The British had advanced into New Jersey. Even the Congress had fled from Philadelphia to Baltimore. Intrenched behind the Delaware with a ragged, starving army, poorly equipped, broken in morale, dwindling through the expiration of enlistments and daily desertions, while the patriotic cause was at its lowest ebb, on December 18 Washington wrote to his brother:

You can form no idea of the perplexity of my situation. No man, I believe, ever had a greater choice of difficulties and less means to extricate himself from them. However, under a full persuasion of the justice of our cause I can not entertain an idea that it will finally sink, though it may remain for some time under a cloud.

There you have the full measure of the Father of his Country. He faced the facts. He recognized the full import of their seriousness. But he was firm in the faith that the right would prevail. To faith he proposed to add works. If ever a great cause depended for its success on one man, if ever a mighty destiny was identified with one person in these dark and despondent hours, that figure was Washington.

Such was the prelude to the historic events which, notwithstanding their discouraging beginning, were soon to culminate in the brilliant victories of the patriotic armies in the Battles of Trenton and Princeton, the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of which the people of New Jersey are now so appropriately celebrating. After a series of engagements and retreats which can only be characterized as defeats, running from April to late December, Washington now decided to take the offensive. While some of his generals supported this proposal, others were doubtful. Colonel Stark, who was to be heard from at the Battle of Bennington in the following August, is reported to have advised the commander in chief as follows:

Your men have too long been accustomed to place their dependence for safety upon spades and pickaxes. If you ever expect to establish the independence of these States, you must teach them to place dependence upon their firearms and courage.

It was finally decided to attempt the crossing of the Delaware from Pennsylvania into New Jersey on Christmas night, 1776, for the purpose of a surprise attack on the Hessians who occupied Trenton. Orders were issued to Colonel Cadwalader, commanding three Philadelphia battalions, to cross at Bristol, and to General Ewing, of the Pennsylvania Militia, to cross at Trenton Ferry. Washington planned to take his army over at McKonkeys Ferry. The crossing has ever since been well-known history. The cold, the sleet, the wind, the great cakes of floating ice made the effort well-nigh impossible. But for the skill of a regiment of fishermen from Marblehead, Massachusetts, under the command of Colonel Glover, the effort would have failed. The commands of Cadwalader and Ewing were unable to reach the New Jersey shore. Tradition relates that Washington said to General Knox: "The fate of an empire depends upon this night." It was not until 4 o'clock in the morning that the little army of 2,500 men began their march on Trenton. The password was "Victory or death." The storm of sleet was freezing as it fell, the mud was deep, the night was dark. Being told the muskets were too wet to use, Washington continued the advance and ordered that where gunpowder failed the bayonets be used.

About 8 o'clock the Americans emerging through the storm surprised the Hessians at Trenton, then a village of about 800 inhabitants, killed their commander, Colonel Rall, and captured between 1,000 and 1,500 men. It is said that Washington personally directed the artillery fire. Alexander Hamilton commanded a battery. Being unsupported and outnumbered three to one, Washington recrossed the Delaware and again took up his position on the Pennsylvania shore.

It can not be said that this ranks as a great battle, but it was the turning point in the Revolutionary War at which defense and defeat became offense and victory. From that hour the spirit of the patriot cause rose. The inhabitants of this region began to remove their loyalist flags and to manifest their open adherence to the American cause. Early on New Year morning Robert Morris was busy waking people in Philadelphia making appeals for money to support the army. He secured \$50,000, which went largely to pay the soldiers, encouraging them to remain after their enlistments had expired.

Meanwhile Cadwalader had crossed the Delaware. Learning of his movements, on the 30th Washington again occupied Trenton and drew his lines on the south side of Assunpink Creek with about 5,000 men. Skirmishers which he sent toward Princeton were driven back by the British commanded by Cornwallis, who encamped on the north banks of the creek, expecting with his superior numbers to overwhelm the Americans on the following day. Realizing that he could not recross the Delaware for lack of boats and that his army was too weak to advance, Washington held a midnight council at which it was decided to leave their camp fires burning and their sentinels posted while the army moved off to the right and marched rapidly around behind the British position. Just after daybreak Cornwallis heard the roar of Washington's guns from Princeton, a dozen miles away, where a sharp engagement took place. When the battalions of Mercer and Cadwalader were thrown into disorder Washington rode to the front, rallied his men, and brought victory out of defeat. Having routed the British, he continued north toward Brunswick, but finding his men too exhausted to attack the British depot turned his army north toward Morristown, where he arrived on January 7.

By this brilliant action he had broken through the lines of General Howe and held a position where he could recruit his army and continue the war. "Earlier successes," says John Fiske, "had been local. This was continental. Seldom has so much been done with such slender means." On hearing what Washington had accomplished, Sir Horace Walpole wrote, "His march through our lines is allowed

to have been a prodigy of generalship. In one word, I look upon a great part of America as lost to this country." After this display of valor and success, Congress hastened to vote more troops and supplies. Recruits began to arrive. The crisis was passed. The way was open to arouse the spirit of the Colonies to such point that they were able in the following October to surround and defeat Burgoyne at Saratoga. That victory brought the open support of France and led on to Yorktown and independence.

It is the relationship of events which makes them important. The capture of a small outpost in a little village by the Revolutionary force of scarcely 2,500 men is not in itself impressive. The night march from the south side of Assunpink, the surprise attack on Princeton, the escape of the patriot army through the British lines, hold a rather trifling place if considered merely as a military achievement. The colonists had demonstrated that they could fight at Bunker Hill. But that was more than a year and a half ago, and it was not a victory. Washington had demonstrated his military capacity by the successful and almost bloodless siege of Boston. He had shown his strategy in the retreat from Long Island. But here at last he had led an attack of great boldness, had one or two actions in the field, and finally reached his objective. This was successful offensive victory. He had demonstrated his genius for command. His cause was far from won. He was yet to pass that terrible winter at Valley Forge and meet the shock of Arnold's treachery on the Hudson. But hereafter he stood out as a general that commanded the pride of his countrymen and the respect of their foes. Thereafter everyone knew that the Colonies had an army in the field that would fight and could win victories. It was that knowledge and that army which were the entire support of the Revolutionary movement.

We can not, however, put the main emphasis of these important events on their immediate results. It was not that they enthused the patriots with a new spirit which enabled them to win important victories in the coming campaigns of 1777. The war could have been lost many times in the following years. It was not even the more distant day of independence. A straggling, dissevered, unrelated aggregation of Colonies, each a prey alike to its own domestic jealousies and foreign intrigue, riotous, impotent, bankrupt, would scarcely have been worth the blood and treasure expended for a nominal and fleeting independence. The American Revolution was not an accomplished fact until the adoption of our Federal Constitution and the establishment under its provisions of an efficiently functioning government. Unless the engagements at Trenton and Princeton had led in this direction, they would have been all in vain and we should

not be here assembled to do our reverence to them and their heroic figures.

Washington and his generals are gone. The bloody tracks which their barefoot armies often left on the frozen ground have long since been washed away. The smoke of the conflict in which they engaged has cleared. The civil strife and disorder which followed have been dissipated. But the institutions which they founded, the Government which they established, have not only remained, but have grown in strength and importance and extended their influence throughout the earth. We can never go to their assistance with supplies and reinforcements. We can never lend our counsel to their political deliberations. But we can support the Government and institutions which are their chief titles to the esteem and reverence in which they are held by the common consent of all humanity.

Our country has traveled far since these soul-inspiring days. Our progress has been great. Our prosperity has been the wonder of the world. Our present-day existence has its difficulties, requiring courage and resourcefulness. The political and economic life of the Nation offers abundant opportunity for developing the character and increasing the moral power of the people. I believe it to be a grave error to assert that the spiritual force of the men and women of the Revolutionary period was superior to that which exists in the America of the present. But they did set for us an example which no nation can ignore and long exist. No doubt their desire was as great as ours, if their chance to gratify it was more limited, for an opportunity to reap a profit from following their own business and living in security and peace. But this was not their supreme choice. They were willing to accord to those rights which they set out in the Declaration of Independence something more than lip service. When they had pledged to the support of those principles their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor, they demonstrated by their actions that they stood ready to redeem that pledge. In order that their ideals might be maintained, they did not hesitate to sacrifice all that they had and were.

The Colonies of those days had little in the way of accumulated wealth, but by hard work the people on the whole maintained themselves in comfort. Those conditions, as every one knows, have been radically changed. Through the development of our natural resources, our inventive genius, and mechanical skill this Nation has become possessed of very large wealth. Such a situation has its dangers. In past history it has usually led first to luxury and ease and later to decline and decay. We do not yet appear to be tending in that direction. While we have a considerable extent of what might be called luxury, it is not of that destructive nature which has in the

past afflicted other people. In a wide measure it is for use rather than display. It makes its appeal to the soul rather than to the senses. With whatever else we may be charged, our sharpest critics do not claim that this is a nation given over to ease. The fact is that idleness is no longer fashionable. The American of large possessions has not been afflicted with indolence. Rather, he has been a victim of overstrain and overwork. The class of idle rich in this country has dwindled to such small proportions that it is no longer worth noticing. No doubt it can be said that we have permitted certain types of extravagance, as in the use of our natural resources and in the waste that attends the conduct of much of our daily life, but as a nation it does not appear that we are suffering any impairment through a spread of luxury and ease.

The main effort of our Revolutionary period, it seems to me, was to bestow upon the individual a larger freedom guaranteed by the authority of law. When the battles were over and the Federal Constitution with its Bill of Rights had been adopted, when the Federal courts had been appointed and the jurisdiction of the national laws was thoroughly established, the people of this country found themselves in the possession of greater liberties than were enjoyed by any other nation. While our political ideals were in many respects an inheritance, and our political capacity the result of generations of experience, our theory and form of a representative system of self-government based on the broad doctrine of equality, recognizing that the individual had rights upon which not even the Government itself could encroach, was something altogether new in the world. It completely obliterated the old system of class and caste and opened wide the door of opportunity to every talent. What had heretofore been the privilege of the few immediately became the right of the many. Under the great intellectual and spiritual awakening which this new conception of human relationship brought about the Nation began that rapid development and expansion which has been so continuous and increasing through the whole length of our history. Our fears in the end have proved to be delusions, while it has been our hopes that have proved to be realities.

We have wondered whether a people left entirely to themselves with no restraints except those which were self-imposed through their own political action would be able to exercise sufficient self-control to remain economically sound. We have wondered whether there would be enough security for property against confiscatory action, so that there could be sufficient accumulations of capital to finance the needs of a rapidly expanding nation with its many requirements for tremendous investments, to provide it with the necessary methods of production and distribution. We have seen that under a republic, with the great inspiration that it gives to private initiative, our ac-

complishments in this direction have surpassed those of any other country. We have wondered whether, if the individual were left unrestricted, the more intelligent, more resourceful, and more unscrupulous would not gather unto themselves so large a proportion of the wealth of the country that they would dominate the great mass of the people by the mere weight and power of money. But some way people of that stamp do not prosper, do not gain real power. We have seen many great fortunes accumulated. But they do not dominate the people. Rather the people dominate them. Their whole tendency has been toward investment for the benefit of the public. Some of those which stood out as the largest scarcely 25 years ago have been practically all bestowed upon charity, while men at that time obscure and unknown have risen to the highest rank in the wealth of our country. Who can doubt that these results are even now in the process of repetition? As a general rule with us great wealth has meant great public service.

We have only to look about us to see that under our institutions these conditions, instead of affording a means of burdening and oppressing the great mass of the people, have rather afforded them means for a higher standard of living and a greater degree of prosperity than ever before existed. Under our system, the wealth of the country instead of tending to concentration tends to distribution. If all the large fortunes in the country were combined, their amount in comparison with our entire wealth would not be large. The fact is that the great mass of the property of the country is owned by the people of the country. This is the great outstanding fact in the economic life of America. It can not be too often stated or too strongly emphasized. Instead of retarding, our political institutions have advanced and strengthened our economic condition.

We are placing a great deal of emphasis on prosperity. Our people ought to desire to be prosperous, but it ought not to be their main desire. There are other things that they ought to want more. Prosperity is not a cause; it is a result. It is not based on indolence and ease, on avarice and greed, or on selfishness and self-indulgence. It is the result of industry, fair dealing, self-denial and generosity. It is all summed up in a single word. It is character. If the country will put its emphasis on this process and remember to practice these virtues its prosperity will become greater and greater, and the greater it becomes the more worthy it will be of our admiration. A more efficient service, one to another, will be the foundation of a greater prosperity and of a stronger national character.

It is never possible to discuss the political institutions which resulted from the American Revolution without realizing that their fundamental conception is reliance on the individual. The whole system of a self-supporting, self-governing people breaks down

both in theory and in practice unless the individual is of a character capable of rising to the great dignity of that position. The whole record of American success is traceable to the excellence of American citizenship. To such a people institutions, of course, are important. Our political organization with its representative system and its local self-government, its strong executive authority and independent courts, harmonizes our historical background with sound social principles. Yet this elaborate and well wrought out system would be of little avail unless the people supply sufficient energy and intelligence to make it work. Unless that be done, there is no system of government that can supply a nation with political salvation. Under our theory, the citizen is sovereign. Whenever he abdicates, some pretender assumes the throne. In large centers of population this has often taken the form of what we term a political boss. The voters cease to function in their sovereign capacity and turn their power over to some individual who rules in their stead. They cease thinking and acting for themselves and permit some one to think and act for them. They are not willing to make the sacrifice and perform the service which is necessary to support self-government.

When this condition exists there may be many palliatives but there is only one fundamental remedy. Methods can be devised under which it may be more difficult for the political dictator to remain in power and more easy for the great body of the voters to direct their own destiny. But under our institutions the only way to perfect our Government is to perfect the individual citizen. It is necessary to reach the mind and the soul of the individual. It is not merely a change of environment but a change of heart that is needed. The power of the law may help, but only the power of righteousness can be completely sufficient. I know of no way that this can be done save through the influences of religion and education. By religion I do not mean either fanaticism or bigotry; by education I do not mean the cant of the schools; but a broad and tolerant faith, loving thy neighbor as thyself, and a training and experience that enables the human mind to see into the heart of things. This has been a long, slow, and laborious process, accompanied by many failures and many disappointments. No doubt there will be many more in the future. But those who have faith in the power of the individual to work toward moral perfection are willing to intrust their destiny to that method of reform. It is that faith which justifies the American conception of popular sovereignty. There is no other theory by which we could explain the making of the American Nation and no other theory on which we can hope for its continuity. It was in this faith that Washington crossed the Delaware.

It is true that the world is coming to comprehend the spirit of service better than it ever did before. We ought to rejoice in that conception. But that theory does not run counter to the theory of independence. The Colonies had been called on to fight the European wars on this side of the Atlantic. They had been required to pay tribute to liquidate European debts and support the European military establishment. They had been forced to submit to the regulation and control of their trade for the benefit of European commerce. They determined to resist these unjust impositions and establish their complete independence. They did not then and do not now fail to recognize that they are a part of the civilized world, and that they owe not only to themselves but to others great obligations. But they were determined then and are determined now to be the masters of their own destiny and the judges of their own conduct. They knew, and we ought to know, that unless we can be American we can not be anything. Unless we look after ourselves we can not look after anybody else. The obligations of civilization are reciprocal. The same consideration that we owe to others they owe to us.

Washington and the patriots of his day wanted peace. We want peace. They found it was necessary to make great sacrifices in order to secure it. We can not escape the corresponding sacrifices, sometimes for the purpose of providing adequate national defense, sometimes through international covenants by limiting the scope of our military forces. I do not believe we can advance the policy of peace by a return to the policy of competitive armaments. While I favor an adequate army and navy, I am opposed to any effort to militarize this Nation. When that method has been worked out to its logical consequences the result has always been a complete failure. We can render no better service to humanity than to put forth all our influence to prevent the world from slipping back into the grasp of that ravaging system. Truth and faith and justice have a power of their own in which we are justified in placing a very large reliance. Washington could carry on the war because, as he wrote to his brother, he had "a full persuasion of the justice of our cause." It was the final conviction on the part of the British that their cause was not just that led them to abandon their attempt to subdue the Colonies.

In nations, individuals have their counterpart. As we can expect some help from domestic laws, so we can expect some help from international covenants. While each represents the best that humanity can do at this time, neither in themselves are sufficient. As it is necessary to change the heart of the individual, so it is necessary to change the heart of nations. This has often been referred to as

moral disarmament. The mistake that is being made in its application lies in the fact that it does not come first. If the world had complete change of heart, complete moral disarmament, complete mutual understanding, complete sympathy, we would have little need of armaments and no need at all for international treaties limiting their use and size. It is because all nations are in danger from this source that we ought to provide such artificial barriers as are possible for the protection of the peace and welfare of humanity. It is because the spirit of avarice, of jealousy, of hate and of revenge are not yet eliminated from the hearts of the nations that it is well for them to take counsel together that they may devise means for protecting themselves from these evil counselors, that they may deliver themselves from their control and come more completely under the dominion of benevolence, kindness, charitableness, and good will. Altogether too much of international relationship is based on fear. Nations rejoice in the fact that they have the courage to fight each other. When will the time come that they have the courage to trust each other?

The world has been striving to advance in this direction, to discard the old theory of relying entirely on force and to adopt the method of relying more on reason. We are in danger of slipping back into the old formula. The habit and tradition of ages call us in that direction. We can not establish the new principle unless we are willing to make some sacrifices, unless we are willing to put some courage into our convictions. We have met to celebrate some of the events which secured our independence. I believe we are strong enough and brave enough to resist another domination of the world by the military spirit through our own independent action. This is the holy season. All humanity has laid aside the burdens of the day that they might rejoice in the glad tidings of "Peace on earth, good will toward men." Remembering the sacrifices that Washington and his patriot army endured for us, we ought not to shrink from sacrifice to make that inspired vision a practical reality.

