

**ORATION DELIVERED AT THE  
CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION  
OF THE EVACUATION OF  
FORT DUQUESNE**

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Oration delivered at the centennial celebration of the evacuation of Fort Duquesne by A. W. Loomis

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**A. W. LOOMIS**

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CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION

OF THE

Evacuation of Fort Duquesne.

BY

HON. A. W. LOOMIS.

Pittsburgh, November 25, 1858.

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wife of

Hon. George S. Willard  
of Boston

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## O R A T I O N .

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WE have assembled to celebrate a remote event in our local history. We have selected as the appropriate theatre of that celebration, the precise position of its occurrence. The presence of unnumbered thousands denotes the deep, pervading and universal interest of the occasion. In its presence, conflict of opinion and collision of interest are forgotten. Discarding all considerations that could alienate our sympathies or sever our efforts, with one heart and one mind, with kindred feelings and identical views, we cordially and sincerely unite in honor of an event deeply affecting our common destiny.

Although that event occurred in a wilderness of the Western Hemisphere, it vibrated through the heart of a transatlantic empire. It was the precursor of defeat to cherished hopes and gigantic schemes of extended dominion. It was conspicuous in a series of causes involving in clouds and darkness the cheering visions of anticipated conquest, and arresting by impassable and permanent barriers, the previously successful march of triumphant encroachment. It was a medium through which the intelligent statesman and sagacious warrior

of the Old World, could readily discern the ultimate fate of his country's fortunes in the New.

The mingled influence of the sceptre and the cross, had with ceaseless industry and persevering effort, amid privation and sufferings, diffused the power and dominion of France over the regions of the North, and along the vales and streams of the South, to the waters of the Gulf. She had established a cordon of posts and military lodgments extending from the St. Lawrence to the Mississippi, excluding the authority, and defying the power of England. She had seized and fortified this interesting spot, previously selected by a youthful and sagacious eye, and designated by an accurate and almost unerring judgment, as an eligible position for the protection of his country's interests. In this fortress, France held the key which opened the way to the fertile regions of the West, and devised and concentrated the means of annoyance and destruction to approaching settlements from the East. By her appliances, enlisted and cherished here, she added to the terrors of civilized warfare the horrors of savage ferocity and cruelty. Her rude fortification upon the banks of the Ohio, seemed as inaccessible as the walls of Troy. Its repellent forces arrested every hostile approach. Defeated and disgraced, her enemies were repeatedly compelled to trace with reluctant steps their path across the solitary mountains. The disgraceful surrender of Grant had dishonored a beautiful elevation, now crowned by the lofty temples of justice and religion. An inglorious defeat had rendered the blood



of Braddock a fruitless sacrifice, on the banks of the Monongahela. No monument has been reared to mark the spot or perpetuate the memory of the event. The traveler, borne upon the fleeting train with a momentum causing the ashes of the slain to tremble in their repose, passes, without recognition, the memorable field. A brilliant victory on the Plains of Abraham, consecrated the blood of Wolfe, and rendered his name immortal. As the stranger approaches the lofty citadel of Quebec, his eyes rest upon a beautiful monument, erected to perpetuate the memory of Wolfe and Montcalm. Having passed the walls of the city, when approaching the Plains of Abraham, he beholds in the distance a slender column, marking the spot where the illustrious warrior expired. Having reached the interesting object, his eager eye is fixed upon the sublime and appropriate inscription, still legible, though corroded by time, and obscured by depredation, "Here he died, Wolfe, victorious." Such are the results of success and failure, of triumph and defeat.

The reputation of England had been dishonored by the fate of her enterprises and the defeat of her purposes. Her arms had ingloriously yielded to French strategy and Indian atrocity. Her settlements had been ravaged, her subjects plundered and slaughtered; misfortune and dishonor rested upon her projects, her efforts and her fame. Neither safety nor security dwelt under the protection of her civil or military administration; the objects of government had failed; the results of toil, subordination and suffering, had proved fruitless

and unavailing. Even lofty mountains and trackless wastes had proved no protection against hostile encroachment. The torch, the scalping-knife and the blaze of conflagration, were familiar objects of sight and terror, east of the Alleghenies. To the English colonist, Fort Duquesne appeared to be the fruitful source of unnumbered woes and direful misfortunes. A long series of calamities, alike unexpected and deplored, had humbled his pride, and saddened his heart. No cheering ray illumined his path or animated his hopes. The objects around him were shrouded in the dark shades of anticipated suffering; his thoughts and feelings were tinged with the melancholy hue of expected calamity.

But from the disastrous field of Braddock, moistened by the blood of unfortunate heroes, sprang a fame and renown, shedding a lustre over the sombre scenes and disastrous events of our early history. A youthful warrior appeared, whose daring deeds, determined courage and conspicuous wisdom, justly awakened lofty and universal admiration. A man of God, with prophetic tongue and fervent hope, by prediction alike happy and truthful, designated him as the elect of Providence, protected and preserved through the clustering perils of the deadly conflict, to be the future saviour of his country.

The long series of calamities and misfortunes, sickening to hope, and paralyzing to effort, had reached its termination. Brighter days and fairer prospects were about to dawn upon these then desolate and cheerless

valleys. The light of new events, and the fruition of more propitious hopes, were soon to cheer the heart of the soldier and the pioneer. The pride of England was awakened; her energies and those of her colonies were effectually aroused. Her military forces were organized and approaching. They were sufficient in numbers and adequate in courage to the accomplishment of her determined purpose. Victory or death, was the theme of every tongue, and the resolve of every heart. The fixed design of dislodging at once and forever, from this formidable and favorite entrenchment, the capacities of French and Indian annoyance, nerved the arm and controlled the will of every soldier. The advance of the army was regarded by the mother country with trembling anxiety, and by the colonies with fearful interest. The resolute commander had been borne from the Delaware to the Monongahela upon a litter; he was prostrated by suffering, but resolved to execute the purposes and meet the expectations of his country. When advised to retrace his steps, giving vent to the invincible impulse of his heroic spirit, he profanely but solemnly declared, that "on the following night he would sleep in the fort or in hell!" His troops were reposing on the banks of a neighboring stream, preparatory to a final assault on the morrow; when, on the eventful night preceding the day whose anniversary we celebrate, the reverberations of a terrific explosion awoke them from their slumbers. The enemy had departed; and on the 25th of November, one hundred years ago, the cross of St. George floated for the first time over the deserted ramparts and desolate