

**AN ORATION ON THE LIFE AND
CHARACTER OF JOHN QUINCY ADAMS.
DELIVERED AT CINCINNATI, 25 MARCH,
1848, BEFORE THE BAR OF HAMILTON
COUNTY, AT THEIR REQUEST**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649198535

An oration on the life and character of John Quincy Adams. Delivered at Cincinnati, 25 March, 1848, before the bar of Hamilton County, at their request by William Greene

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

WILLIAM GREENE

**AN ORATION ON THE LIFE AND
CHARACTER OF JOHN QUINCY ADAMS.
DELIVERED AT CINCINNATI, 25 MARCH,
1848, BEFORE THE BAR OF HAMILTON
COUNTY, AT THEIR REQUEST**

AN ORATION
ON THE
LIFE AND CHARACTER
OF
JOHN QUINCY ADAMS.

DELIVERED AT CINCINNATI,

25 MARCH, 1848,

BEFORE THE BAR OF HAMILTON COUNTY,

AT THEIR REQUEST.

BY WILLIAM GREENE.

CINCINNATI:
1848.

W. G.

CINCINNATI, April 5, 1848.

WILLIAM GREENE, Esq:

Dear Sir:—On behalf of the Committee of the Bar of Hamilton County, appointed to conduct the proceedings which it was thought just and proper to take in honor of the memory of John Quincy Adams, and upon the earnest suggestion of many Members of the Bar, who had the gratification of hearing your discourse, commemorative of the public life and services of that distinguished man, I beg you to urnish a copy of the Discourse for publication.

Allow me also to express, in behalf of the Committee, and of your brethren of the Bar generally, our acknowledgments to you for the promptness with which you undertook the duty which was, by common consent, assigned to you; and for the discrimination, judgment, truth and eloquence with which you discharged it.

I am, very respectfully,

Yours, &c.,

CHARLES L. TELFORD.

CINCINNATI, April 8, 1848.

CHARLES L. TELFORD, Esq.

Dear Sir:—I have been this morning favoured with your valued letter of the 5th inst., communicating the wish of the Committee, and many members of the Bar of Hamilton County, that I would furnish them, for publication, a copy of the Discourse delivered by me at their instance, on the 25th ult., commemorative of the life and services of John Quincy Adams. With unfeigned diffidence, I comply with the request, and beg to express my acknowledgments for the kind terms in which you have communicated it.

With great respect,

Your friend and servant,

W. GREENE.

ORATION.

THE spontaneous uprising of a whole people, to render homage to a single man, is a rare occurrence in the history of nations. On the occasion that has brought us here, it is a proof that a great and good man has departed from among us. The voice of mourning has come forth from all quarters and classes of our country, with the earnest, heart-felt inquiry, what shall best be done, that due honor may be paid, to the statesman, the jurist, the scholar, and the man, whom the world has lost. And thus the highest eulogy has already been pronounced—the most distinguishing honor has already been paid, to the memory and character of the illustrious dead. The highest eulogy is a universal acknowledgment of virtuous desert—the most distinguishing honor, the homage which that acknowledgment spontaneously suggests and universally accords.

By the flattering invitation of my brethren of the Bar of this county, I am to speak of the life and character of JOHN QUINCY ADAMS. I come to the work under a solemn sense of the responsibility of the undertaking, and with a deep and humbling consciousness of my inability to do it justice. It is a work from which the very ablest minds might shrink. Indeed, I should regard that man, however able, as least fit to venture upon it, whose knowledge of his subject was so imperfect, as not to have taught him, that to treat it properly, is beyond the reach of any human strength.

I am to speak of a man, whose active connection with our national affairs, comprises a period of nearly sixty years: whose comprehensive mind, through all that time, has largely contributed to unfold and apply the great principles of our government; and whose lofty independence and uncompromi-

sing virtue have done more than those of almost any other one man, to breathe into our system that high moral tone, which has kept its vital purity untouched and uncorrupted, in spite of all the tendencies of political changes to weaken or undermine it. I am to speak of a man, whose services to his generation have been as various as they have been unintermitted: whose performance of them has always been complete, in proportion to the occasions which demanded them; and whose long life, it may almost literally be said, has reached its limit, without leaving a duty unperformed, even to the last day of consciousness. In speaking of such a life, all mere verbal panegyric becomes insignificant and feeble before the eulogy which itself pronounces.

The town of Braintree (now Quincy) in the State of Massachusetts, on the 11th of July, 1767, had the honour of the birth of John Quincy Adams. Some six or seven years after the event from which his father dated the birth of American Independence—the celebrated and never to be forgotten speech of James Otis against writs of assistance—and some seven or eight years before the first gun was fired at Lexington, which insured that Independence a triumphant establishment—almost at the exact middle point between the earliest suggestion of the idea of our nation's freedom, and the final consummation of it—the now deceased Patriot first breathed the breath of life. Bright, indeed, and auspicious, was the commencement of the earthly pilgrimage of the man, whose first sunlight was hallowed by the struggles it witnessed, of human liberty, and whose destiny was, in never ceasing labours through a long life of eighty years, to help to perpetuate the glories which those struggles so successfully achieved!

During the first eleven years of his life, the fostering care of a rarely gifted mother laid the foundation of that extraordinary character, which, in all its varieties of development and use, has shed so much honour on our country and our age. Thanks to the maternal care and culture, to whose early trainings in the ways of virtue, integrity and truth, the world owes so large a debt, in the examples and lessons of the life whose end we now mourn!

At the age of eleven years, the mother's peculiar care ceased; not, however, to the disadvantage of a mind and character which she had so completely fitted for the advanced training of a larger sphere of study. The city of Paris, under his gifted father's guidance, was now the place of an eighteen months' residence and culture. At the end of that period, he accompanied his father home. In three months they returned again to Europe, where the son remained at school in Paris, Amsterdam and Leyden, until in 1781, at the age of fourteen years, he accompanied Francis Dana, our first Minister to Russia, in the capacity of Private Secretary. After a year's residence at St. Petersburg, he rejoined his Father in Holland, from which country they went to Paris in 1783, during which year the treaty with England was negotiated which finally settled the question of independence between America and the mother country. The son continued with the father in Europe until 1785. In that year, returning to America, he entered the Junior Class of Harvard University, and graduating in due course in 1787, he, at once, at the age of twenty, commenced the study of the Law with the celebrated Theophilus Parsons of Newburyport. At the termination of his legal studies, he commenced the practice of the Law in Boston, in which he remained for four years; during which period, he manifested such remarkable and statesmanlike abilities by his political writings, as to attract the particular attention of the national government with Washington at its head; who conferred upon him in May, 1794, the office of Minister Resident to the Netherlands. In May, 1796, he was commissioned by Washington to a full mission at the court of Lisbon, and in May, 1797, by his father, at the court of Berlin. During his residence there, he was specially commissioned to negotiate a treaty of amity and commerce with the king of Sweden; and in 1801, on the retirement of his father from the Presidency, under the influence of a delicacy which the strongly expressed wishes of Mr. Jefferson were unable to overcome, he solicited and received his re-call; and in September of the last mentioned year, returned a private citizen to his native land. During the following year, he was elected to the Senate of Massachusetts, and by the Legislature of that State to the

Senate of the United States for the term of six years from the 4th of March, 1803. During this period he was appointed Professor of Rhetoric and Oratory at Harvard, and delivered regular courses of Lectures during the recesses of Congress. In 1803, in consequence of the disapprobation of his constituents of his vote on the Embargo question, he resigned his seat in the Senate, and became again a private citizen. In 1809, he was appointed by Mr. Madison, Minister to Russia. While there, he received a commission as Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States which he declined. He remained in Russia, until his appointment to the commission which, at Ghent, negotiated the Treaty that terminated the war with England, of 1812. He was then appointed Minister to England, where he continued until 1817, when he was called to the State Department by President Monroe. In this office he remained until his election to the Presidency in 1825. At the close of his Presidential term in 1829, he became again a private citizen, and so continued till his election in 1830 to the House of Representatives of the United States from his native District, in which office he remained, without intermission for seventeen years, until his death.

Thus, from the period of 1794 to the present year 1848, with but three short intervals, Mr. Adams was in the public service. Thus, for fifty-four years, his name has been identified with the domestic and foreign relations of our country; filling stations of the highest responsibility; performing duties of the most momentous trust; and so performing them, as that now, in that long retrospect, a whole nation, without distinction of party, class, sex or age, pronounces a verdict of confidence, reverence and honour, such as has been awarded to but few men in the world's whole history, and such as must secure to his name and character the highest eulogy, in our own country's annals, through all coming time.

The consequence of a public man is often estimated, more by the offices he has held, than by the manner in which he has performed the duties of them. Success in a career of public confidence is regarded, and properly regarded, as proof of merit in the subject of it. Unfortunately, however, in the experi-

ence of elective forms of government, as of others, the reality does not always correspond with the indication; and the ignorant and unworthy are often found filling the places, from which the wise and virtuous have been excluded. The laws of party association under the elective system, which too often point to men to do a party work, instead of a useful service to their country, are frequently too strong for the virtue which would reject a candidate because he was unqualified. Hence demagogues are often found in the highest trusts of power, and are continued there in spite of their unworthiness, because their identity with the party system to which they owe their elevation, renders them indispensable to its support.

Not of the category here presented, was the man John Quincy Adams. His eulogy is, not in the offices he held for more than fifty years, but in the works which those offices gave him the opportunity to do. His success was not in reaching the highest honours which the world could give him, but in the good he performed to make those honours appropriately his. His glory is, not that he was President of the United States, but that the deeds he did outshone in splendor the station which enabled him to do them.

It is to the character of Mr. Adams, illustrated by the life whose summary I have briefly given, that I would invite particular attention in the further progress of this discourse. I shall speak of him, as a Statesman, as a Jurist, as a Scholar, and as a Man; and first as a Statesman.

The circumstances of Mr. Adams' early life, were eminently fitted to form his character and tastes for a career of politics. The courts of Europe were the schools of his boyhood; the good or evil experience of which he would learn wisely to improve, under the guidance and advice of the first statesmen of the age. The science of Government and the policy of Administration, thus entered largely into the growth and formation of his early mind — impressing it with an intelligence and imbuing it with a spirit which could not fail to prepare him for the future high vocation to which his destiny directed him. But in addition to these advantages of intellectual culture in the great business of politics, his constant association with the