

**ADDRESS ON THE LIFE AND
DEMOCRACY OF JOHN HATCH
GEORGE, DELIVERED AT
MANCHESTER, N.H., BEFORE THE
GRANITE STATE CLUB**

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Address on the Life and Democracy of John Hatch George, delivered at Manchester, N.H.,
Before the Granite State Club by Harry Bingham

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HARRY BINGHAM

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ON THE

LIFE AND DEMOCRACY

OF

JOHN HATCH GEORGE

DELIVERED AT MANCHESTER, N. H., BEFORE THE

Granite State Club,

BY

HON. HARRY BINGHAM,

JUNE 27, 1888.



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MR. PRESIDENT, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN :

I speak to-night in memory of a distinguished citizen of the State, with whom, in his lifetime, most of us were associated, and whose name is familiar to all—Col. John H. George.

There is danger on all such occasions that speech may not be bounded by its proper limitations. On the one hand the very generally accepted rule, "*Nihil de mortuis nisi bonum*" may tempt the speaker to indulge in extravagant, indiscriminate, and consequently unmeaning praise. On the other hand, by closely analyzing and justly reviewing the character and work of a pronounced, positive man, slumbering animosities and forgotten prejudices may be revived. I do not fear falling into the language of unmeaning eulogy, but I do apprehend that the duty which I have undertaken requires me to be specific, to discuss Col. George as we knew him, to consider his political and professional, services and the times in which and the circumstances under which those services were rendered. At his death he had been for many years a trusted leader of the democracy. In their service he was prompt, fear-

less, able and untiring. He is now in his grave. His last blow is struck, and his voice is silenced forever. Everybody, friend and foe alike, stands to-day ready to honor his memory and to accord to him singleness of purpose, sincerity of heart, and that steadfast earnestness which can come only of honest convictions. But we are not here at this time *merely* to honor his memory. We are here to study his character, to review his life-work and to be instructed by his example, and especially to review his political teachings and example. Such a review as the one last named necessarily involves the consideration of political parties, of their principles, of their attitude towards each other and towards the country during his life-time. In the discussion of these matters I shall speak from the democratic standpoint, but, as I believe, in accordance with impartial history as hereafter it must be written. The shadows of coming events seem to indicate that the government of this vast country is about to be more fully than now confided to the democracy. The hopes of humanity everywhere are for the perpetuity of our great Republic. Within its wide borders freedom exists and the masses of men have attained a higher and better life than was ever enjoyed here or elsewhere by any people in any age. The promises for the future are boundless; prosperity without limit, growth incalculable and an increase of all the materials necessary for the enjoyment and happiness of countless millions. Nothing but our own folly and wickedness can prevent the fulfillment of these promises. In view of the more than probability that the responsibility of guiding the ship of state is about to rest permanently upon the shoulders of the democracy, it behooves each individual member of that

party to consider his position and to get a realizing sense of the share of the work which he ought to perform.

Our government was created for the people, by the people. The people are the sovereigns. Office-holders are the servants of the people, and are made and unmade by the breath of the people. So long as the people are intelligent, vigilant and incorruptible, their servants in official stations will be faithful; but when the people relax their vigilance, ignore their power and barter their franchises, their representatives will be false, their liberties be lost and the country ruined.

No citizen can afford to be ignorant of his position or to fail in the performance of his share of the work necessary for the well-being of the republic. These duties he owes to himself, to the State, to posterity, and to his God. We are not honest party men if we are party men for the purpose of getting the spoils of office and fattening at the public crib. When partizanship sinks to that plane it becomes one of the most unmitigated of curses, and fit language of malediction for it cannot be found. We *are* democratic because we believe that the ideas, theories and principles of the democracy are adapted to our institutions and to the wants of the people, and when honestly applied in the practical administration of the government, will be sure to work out the greatest good to the greatest number.

Political parties have no legitimate existence except for the welfare of the country, and the political party that guards most safely the monuments of liberty, that vindicates with the greatest firmness the national honor, that gives the largest encouragement to the development of the resources of the country, that opens up the broadest

fields for industrial and commercial activity, and that most steadfastly seeks to increase the enjoyment and happiness of all men by elevating them to a higher and better level, is the party to which the people ought to entrust the administration of the government, and it is the party to which they will entrust its administration, if not at the first opportunity, most certainly when the sober second thought has been taken.

A review of the political teachings and example of Col. George will be a review of the grand old doctrines of the democracy as expounded and illustrated by the fathers, by such men as Jefferson, Madison and Jackson. Those doctrines guided the government for more than fifty years, and during that time made peace and good will to exist throughout our borders, and under the constitution protected liberty and secured the perfect enjoyment thereof. And to-day the political clouds that have darkened the public mind are fast disappearing, and we can see that those doctrines still live in the hearts of the people and will soon resume their ancient sway.

We are not compelled to study Col. George as a politician in order to understand his character. His character was written all over him and illustrated by every breath he drew and every word he uttered. We want his example as a politician for instruction; we like to hold up to view a politician who had a faith, who believed what he taught. His sincerity and earnestness were made manifest in whatever he did. He hated all shams, lashed those who assumed virtues which they did not possess and rebuked canting hypocrites of every sort. The men who dealt in *isms*, schemes and cranks got no quarter from him. He never "crooked the pliant hinges of the knee"

to anybody that "thrift might follow fawning." He could stand alone, and, if necessary, fight his own battles.

His identity could never be mistaken. Wherever he was, whether in the court-house or on the stump, whether in school-meeting or before an agricultural society, he was always the same man. The mental forces he possessed were always at command and could be brought to bear at any time upon the matter in hand. He appeared to handle any subject that he attempted to elucidate with as much ease and familiarity as he would if he had made its study a specialty. He would deliver essays on agriculture and talk to farmers about the rotation of crops, the difference in soils, the breaking of colts, and all matters pertaining to good or bad husbandry to their satisfaction, and apparently with the same accurate comprehension of what he was talking about, that he would exhibit in the argument of a legal question in a court of law.

Col. George, ever ready to respond when speech was invited, got no credit for possessing intellectual power in the way some men do who "are reputed wise for saying nothing." Open as the day, with nothing behind the door, brave, and with characteristics clean cut and marked, he lived a life of which his friends may be proud and which his enemies must respect.

He was born on the 24th day of November, 1824, at the paternal mansion in Concord, N. H., where he resided through life, and died on the 5th day of February, 1888. His parents belonged to that good old New England stock which has been so prolific in the production of strong and leading men in every department of life, and which has done so much all over the country in subduing the wilderness and planting civilization. His father, John