

**AN ADDRESS, DELIVERED  
AT LEXINGTON, ON THE  
19TH (20TH) APRIL, 1835**

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An Address, Delivered at Lexington, on the 19th (20th) April, 1835 by Edward Everett

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1835.

## ADDRESS.

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### FELLOW CITIZENS,

AT the close of sixty years, we are assembled to commemorate the eventful scenes of the opening revolution. We have come together, to celebrate the affecting incidents, which have placed the name of this beautiful village, on the first page of the History of our Independence. The citizens of a free, prosperous, and powerful Republic, we come to pay the last honors to the memory of those, who offered themselves up, on this spot, the first costly sacrifice in the cause of American Liberty. In the day of our peace and safety, in the enjoyment of the richest abundance of public and private blessings, we have met together to summon up in grateful recollection the images of that night of trial,—of fearful anticipation, of high and stern resolve,—and of that morning of blood, which, to the end of time, will render the name of Lexington sacred to the heart of the American Freeman.

Sixty years have passed away :—two full returns of the period, assigned by the common consent of mankind, to one of our transitory generations. I behold around me a few,—alas! how few,—of those, who heard the dismal voice of the alarm bell, on the 19th of April, 1775, and the sharp angry hiss of the death volleys from the British lines. Venerable men! We gaze upon you with respectful emotion. You

have reached an age allotted to the smallest portion of our race, and your grey hairs, under any circumstances, would be entitled to our homage. As the survivors of the militia of Lexington, who, on the 19th of April, 1775, were enrolled in defence of the rights of America, and obeyed the alarm, which called you to defend them, we regard you as objects at once of admiration and gratitude. But when we reflect that you, a small and venerable remnant of those, who first took the field in the dawn of that Revolution which wrought out the liberty of the country, have been spared, not merely to see that revolution brought to a triumphant close, but to witness the growth of that country to its present palmy height of prosperity and power, we feel that you are marked out by a Peculiar Providence, above all the rest of your fellow citizens. But where, oh, where are your brave associates? Seven of them, who, full of life, and vigor, and patriotic daring, stood side by side with you, sixty years ago, on this ever memorable spot, are gathered,—what is mortal of them,—in that mournful receptacle.—Others laid down their lives for their country in the hard fought and honorable fields of the revolutionary war. The greater part have stolen away, one by one and in silence, and lie beneath the scattered hillocks of yonder grave-yard. Eleven only survive,—ten alone are present,—to unite with us in the touching rites of this honored anniversary. May the happy contrast in your own existence on the great day we commemorate, and on this its sixtieth return, and in the position and fortunes of our beloved and common country, prove an ample compensation for your anxieties and perils, and fill the close of your days with peace and joy!\*

\* See in note A the roll of Capt. Parker's company of Lexington Militia, with the names of the survivors indicated.

Fellow citizens of Lexington, you are discharging your duty;—a filial, pious duty. The blood which wet these sods on the day you celebrate, must not sink uncommemorated into the soil. It is your birth-right; your heritage; the proudest you possess. Its sacred memory must be transmitted by your citizens, from father to son, to the end of time. We come to join you, in this solemn act of commemoration. Partakers of the blessings, for which your fathers laid down their lives, we come to join you in these last affecting obsequies. And when all now present shall be passing—passed—from the stage; when sixty years hence, we, who have reached the meridian of life, shall have been gathered to our fathers, and a few only of these little children, shall survive, changed into what we now behold in the grey heads and venerable forms before us, let us hope that it may at least be said of us, that we felt the value of the principles, to which the day is consecrated, and the cost at which they were maintained.

We perform a duty, which is sanctioned by reason and justice. It is the spontaneous impulse of the heart, to award the tribute of praise and admiration to those who have put everything to risk and sacrificed everything, in a great public cause,—who have submitted to the last dread test of patriotism, and laid down their lives for their country. In the present case, it is doubly warranted by the best feelings of our nature. We do not come to weave fresh laurels for the hero's wreath, to flatter canonized pride, to extol the renowned, or to add new incense to the adulation, which is ever offered up at the shrine of the conqueror:—But to give the humble man his due,—to rescue modest and untitled valor from oblivion;—to record the names of those, whom



neither the ambition of power, the hope of promotion, nor the temptation of gain,—but a plain, instinctive sense of patriotic duty,—called to the field.

Nor is it our purpose to rekindle the angry passions, although we would fain revive the generous enthusiasm of the day we celebrate. The boiling veins—the burning nerves—the almost maddened brain which alone could have encountered the terrors of that day, have withered into dust, as still and cold, as that with which they have mingled. There is no hostile feeling in that sacred depository. No cry for revenge bursts from its peaceful enclosure. Sacred relics! Ye have not come up, from your resting place in yonder grave-yard, on an errand of wrath or hatred. Ye have but come a little nearer to the field of your glory;—to plead that your final resting place may be on the spot where you fell;—to claim the protection of the sods, which you once moistened with your blood. It is a reasonable request. There is not an American who hears me, I am sure, that would profane the touching harmony of the scene, by an unfriendly feeling;—and if there is an Englishman present, who carries an Anglo-Saxon heart in his bosom, he will be among the last to grudge to these poor remains of gallant foes, the honors we this day pay to their memory. Though they fell in this remote transatlantic village, they stood on the solid rock of the old liberties of Englishmen, and struck for Freedom in both hemispheres.

Fellow Citizens! The history of the Revolution is familiar to you. You are acquainted with it, in the general and in its details. You know it as a comprehensive whole, embracing, within its grand outline, the settlement and the colonization of the

country;—the developement, maturity, and rupture of the relations between Great Britain and America. You know it, in the controversy carried on for nearly a hundred and fifty years, between the representatives of the people and the officers of the crown. You know it in the characters of the great men, who signalized themselves, as the enlightened and fearless leaders of the righteous and patriotic cause. You know it in the thrilling incidents of the crisis, when the appeal was made to arms. You know it, —you have studied it,—you revere it, as a mighty epoch in human affairs; a great era in that order of Providence, which, from the strange conflict of human passions and interests, and the various and wonderfully complicated agency of the institutions of men in society,—of individual character,—of exploits,—discoveries,—commercial adventure,—the discourses and writings of wise and eloquent men,—educates the progressive civilization of the race. Under these circumstances, it is scarcely possible to approach the subject, in any direction, with a well grounded hope of presenting it, in new lights, or saying any thing in which this intelligent and patriotic audience will not run before me, and anticipate the words before they drop from my lips. But it is a theme, that can never tire nor wear out. God grant that the time may never come, when those who, at periods however distant, shall address you on the 19th of April, shall have any thing wholly new, to impart. Let the tale be repeated, from father to son, till all its thrilling incidents are as familiar as household words; and till the names of the brave men, who reaped the bloody honors of the 19th of April, 1775, are as well known to us, as the names of those, who form the circle at our fire-sides.

The events of the day we commemorate, of course, derive their interest from their connection with that struggle for constitutional liberty, which dates from the settlement of the country; and which is beyond question the most important topic, in the history of free government. It presents to us a spectacle worthy of the deepest meditation,—full of solemn warning, and of instruction not yet exhausted. We are, at times, almost perplexed, with the phenomena which pass before us. We see our ancestors;—a people of singular gravity of character, not turbulent nor impracticable, imbued with an hereditary love of order and law, and of a temper signally loyal; engaged in a course of almost uninterrupted opposition to the authority of a government, which they professed themselves at all times bound to obey. On the other hand, we see the British government, under all administrations,—whether animated by liberal principles or the reverse,—adopting measures and pursuing a policy toward the North American colonies, which excited discontent and resistance. It is not till after careful scrutiny, that we find the solution of the problem, in a truth, which,—though our fathers, some of them, at least, unquestionably felt its reality,—was never professed in any stage of the contest, till the Declaration of Independence, and then not as a general axiom, but as a proposition true in the then present case, viz: the inherent incongruity of colonial government with the principles of constitutional liberty. Such a government,—involving as it almost of necessity does, the distance of the seat of power from the colony,—a *veto* on the colonial legislation,—an appeal from the colonial justice,—a diversion of the colonial resources to objects not necessarily connected with the welfare of the people,—