

NATION'S BIRTHDAY.

DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE AS
A BIRTH CERTIFICATE.

OUTGROWTH OF THE MOMENT.

"Startling Culmination of Manly Intolerance of Injustice," say Rev. Dr. Talma in his sermon prior to the Coming Fourth of July—Quotes President Roosevelt on the Quality of Liberty.

Entered according to Act of Parliament of Canada, in the year 1903, by William Bailey, of Toronto, as the Proprietor, at Ottawa.

Chicago, June 28.—In this sermon the preacher chooses a patriotic theme. The text is Psalm cvi, 5, "That I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation."

When a child is born the attending physician makes out a birth certificate. This important document is sent to the fireproof building where are preserved the county records. The omission of this certificate or the improper filing of the same might cause inestimable damage. Years hence the lack of it might disinherit the child of large property interests and involve many would be heirs in interminable legal strife.

But though the birth certificate of an individual may be vigilantly guarded it is not so carefully preserved as is the birth certificate of a nation. Then the sentimental as well as the intrinsic value places it above the price of silver and gold. If possible it is carefully housed within the sacred hall wherein the nation was born. The paper upon which is written the Declaration of Independence is the American nation's birth certificate. Other nations came to recognition by the slow processes of evolution, but the United States of America sprang into existence in a day, and this Declaration announced in an astonished world on July 4, 1776, the birth of a new member of the family of nations. As the young King Alfonso XIII. of Spain, having been born after the death of his father, has the unique distinction among sovereigns of being born a king, so the American Goddess of Liberty at her first appearance took her place in the world as a sovereign. The document in which she declared her sovereignty and her rights constituted the old Independence hall of Philadelphia the most sacred building in American history, since within its walls is that sacred birth chamber in which was first rocked the cradle of this new-born national infant. It publishes to the world that the men who signed their names at the foot of that immortal document, penned by Thomas Jefferson in the little three story red brick house still standing at the corner of Seventh and Market streets Philadelphia, were the attending witnesses whose testimony gave validity to that national birth certificate.

The Declaration of Independence was the startling culmination of manly intolerance of injustice. The document was not, as some people suppose, the result of a long and carefully planned conspiracy extending over many years. It seemed rather to have been the outgrowth of the moment. It was the crystallization of sentiments the results of which but few men could foresee. The British ministry had not anticipated it, neither had the American people. When the First Continental congress assembled in Philadelphia, on Sept. 5, 1774, there was probably not one prominent leader in all America who wished for national independence with the exception possibly of Samuel Adams of Boston. "Before the 17th April, 1775," wrote Thomas Jefferson, "I had never heard a whisper of a disposition to separate from the mother country." When I first took command of the army, July 3, 1775, I abhorred the idea of independence," wrote George Washington in one of his letters, "but I am now convinced that nothing else will save us." All that the American colony wished from England was not separation, but justice.

The two countries in every essential part of their make up were one. They spoke the same language. Many families had brothers and sisters and other relatives in both countries. The children of prominent Americans were for the most part educated in English schools, where they were taught to reverence the British king. When Richard Henry Lee arose on the memorable 7th of June, 1776, and read the following resolution: "Resolved, That these united colonies are

and of a right ought to be free and independent states and that they are absolved from all allegiance to the British crown," his own boy was at that time attending an English school. This American youth, some weeks later, was standing beside one of his teachers when a visitor asked, "Who is that boy?" "He is the son of Richard Henry Lee," was the teacher's answer. Then the visitor placed his hand upon the lad's shoulder and said, "Boy, we shall yet see your father's head upon Tower hill!" To this the son replied, "Yes, you may have it when you get it!" If Richard Henry Lee for years had been conspiring for American independence, he would never have sent his son across the sea to be educated under the domination and influence of the English throne. The Declaration of American Independence was written and signed as a last resort and because the British Ministry would not listen to American petitions. It was written because King George with the fatuity of royal and imperial natures imagined that he had the right to enforce his will on a people as resolute as himself. He believed that it was for him to command and for them to obey and that their protest against taxation without representation was wicked rebellion against divinely constituted authority. It was written because our forefathers believed that in a struggle for right and justice God would be on their side, though they had to contend with a foe more powerful than themselves.

Standing here, in this year of grace 1903, with our hands upon this venerable and sacred scroll, we may learn the mighty lesson that the really true, the great, the omnipotent and enduring Government is not that which rules by force of arms, but by the all conquering power of justice, and of justice alone. This is the historical teaching of England's mistake in 1776. We have now a great nation, stretching from the Atlantic to the Pacific and from the Gulf of Mexico to the great lakes—a nation of over 70,000,000 souls. But our people will remain a great nation only so long as they are an honorable and an honored people. Beware of the legislation that would make one law for the rich man and another for the poor man. Beware of the law that would send an ignorant criminal to prison and yet permit a brutally selfish coal baron to traffic in child labor. Beware of a social condition which makes it possible for capital to starve and grind down labor while labor, with an honest heart, is ready to give capital a full day's work for a fair day's wage. Our laws should tolerate neither tyranny of capital nor tyranny of labor, but should afford equal protection to both and facilitate mutuality of interests and friendly relations between them. It is only when a Government honestly tries to administer equal justice and afford equal protection to all its subjects that it gathers the robes of immortality about its loins. When a Government by unwieldy laws and administrative neglect makes possible the enslavement or oppression of its seemingly helpless ones such a Government is paying the way for its own disintegration. Had King George III. been a wise ruler and had Britain tried to be as just to the thirteen colonies in 1776 as she is honestly trying to be to her colonies at the present time our country might have remained the brightest jewel in the British crown. Would that our own land, profiting by this great lesson, so closely interwoven with our national birth and childhood, might always be just to the helpless, the weak and the poor as well as to the rich, the influential and the strong.

The strength of our present Government is due to the fact that it tries to be just to all its people, irrespective of class. "Ours is a Government," said Theodore Roosevelt in a recent speech, "of liberty through and under the law. No man is above it, and no man is below it. The crime of the cunning, the crime of the base, the crime of violence—all are equally crimes, and against them all alike the law must set its face. This is not and never shall be a Government of the plutocracy or of the mob. It is, as it has been and as it will be, a Government of the people, including alike the people of great wealth, of moderate wealth, the people who employ others, the people who are employed—including them all, protecting each and every one if he acts decently and squarely and discriminating against anyone if he does not act squarely and fairly. While all people are foolish if they violate the law or rebel against it—wicked as well as foolish, but all foolish—yet the most foolish man in this republic is the man of wealth who complains because the law is

administered with impartial justice." May God always continue to give to us for the office of chief executive men who are Presidents of the whole people, who will see that the Government is not a Wall street hiring or a gigantic monopolizing trust's employ, who will protect the rich as well as poor, black as well as white, Jew as well as gentile, woman's virtue as well as man's honor; who will not cringe to a class, but who will protect and guide all honest people alike!

In olden times the Scottish youths were inspired to deeds of valor by the knowledge that they were members of the clan MacGregor or Campbell or Stuart or McEwen. They were inspired by the determination never to disgrace the family name. It is recorded that in one of the northern battles the MacGregors were being driven back. Their chief rallied his followers and led them forth to a victorious charge with the cry: "My men, come on! Come on! Fight the brave men! Your ancestors are to-day watching you!" So let us be brave and true to America's best interests, not only for our own sakes, but also for the sake of those illustrious ancestors who are watching us. Let this national anniversary be to us a day of consecration to the cause of right and freedom. As the mother of Hannibal led her son to the grave of Hamilcar, his sire, and there made him swear unceasing war against the enemies of his country, so may we, remembering the graves of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, pledge ourselves anew to the struggle against the evils which menace the greatness and righteousness of the nation that they established.

I repeat, in the great crisis of national affairs God, if we only trust him, will give us the right men for the right places. Did he not give the right man for the right place when he gave Thomas Jefferson as the writer of this immortal document? Did he not give the right man for the right place when George Washington became the head of the American armies? Did not God give the right man for the right place when, at the breaking out of the civil war, Abraham Lincoln became president of the United States? Did not God give us the right man for the right place when William McKinley sat in the White House and calmly and bravely guided the affairs of state during the Spanish-American trouble? And shall not God raise up and inspire our future leaders if the American people are a Godly nation and unflinchingly look to him for divine guidance?

But while the members of the Continental congress of 1776 were brave men, they were also, as a class, praying men. True courage and consecration are brothers. They were men who believed in God. They were men who, down upon their knees, reverently and earnestly and intensely sought divine light. In the famous historical picture the members of the Second Continental congress are shown on their knees in prayer. To the Christian American student that picture ought to be the most impressive historical painting ever hung in legislative hall or in foreign or domestic art gallery. I have seen the noted war pictures of Berlin and Dresden. I have seen the form of Emperor William I. in many scenes, flanked by Von Moltke and the nation builder, Prince Bismarck. In Paris I have seen the Napoleonic pictures and in London the war pictures of Waterloo, where the pale-faced Wellington immovably sits his horse, watching the destruction of the French grenadiers. But in all the art galleries of the world there is no historical picture that, to my mind, is so impressive, so significant, so full of inspiration as that historic picture of the Continental congress in prayer.

Most of the members of that congress came from praying Christian homes. They assembled in the spring and summer of 1776 to take the most momentous step which the citizens of any country can take. It was no light or trivial act to renounce allegiance to King George and to defy the power of the British Government. These men well knew the consequences involved in such a step and realized the necessity of having divine guidance. One of the members arose and moved that a prominent Episcopalian minister of Philadelphia should be sent for and asked to lead the members in prayer to God. Samuel Adams, I think it was, seconded that motion. He said in substance: "I am not an Episcopalian, but I am not a bigot. I feel that God's hand must lead us in this national crisis. I second the motion." The motion was carried. The next day this Episcopalian minister came to the legislative hall. He came in full canonical robes. All the members knelt. I can well believe that all must have joined in the prayer that the God of the armies of Moses and of Joshua would lead and guide them. How on any other assumption can we explain their dauntless courage? It would have been sheer temerity for those men to sign that Declaration unless they had believed that God would be with them in the struggle that must ensue. And their faith was justified by the result. The God who heard the pleading of the Israelites in the wilderness heard the prayers of that Continental congress. In his providence England was not left free to use her strength in crushing the infant nation. The life and death struggle in which she had to engage nearer home curtailed her power, and to that fact, due to the overruling mercy of God, our forefathers owed their success. Oh, my fellow countrymen, let us on this anniversary exercise the faith that our fathers had in the God of nations. May we continue to pray as our ancestors prayed in 1776 and in 1812 and in 1861. May we feel as a nation that our God is a prayer answering God, and that he will listen to our petitions, whether lifted in church pulpit or in the legislative hall.

Thus on this glorious national holiday I want you to take the Declaration of Independence, which is our birth certificate, and place it between the leaves of your Bible. There

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