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For the Commencement, 1842

National Ingratitude
By

Thos. F. Patterson - Cambridge, M. D.

Natural Ingratitude.

Scarcely is there a country whose annals have not been stained by gross injustices, towards some of her best and ablest citizens. Scarcely can we turn over the pages of history without finding here and there scattered upon its surface marks of natural ingratitude - of favours and gifts unequally distributed to and of the wise and good unhonoured. We have seen those ^{who} public and private crimes - whose whole lives entitled them to a place high upon the gibbet or low in the depths of a dungeon: raised to power, honour and affluence, not because they deserved them, but because intrigue and deception placed them there. How often is it, that those who are the slaves of inordinate ambition - who pine for pre-eminence, have but little regard to principle or to the manner by which they may accomplish their ends, or to the road in which they tread and toil to reach the goal of their ambition. In such men there is not the smallest particle of patriotism their sole aim being the advancement of self. their only end the accomplishment of schemes and plans beneficial only to those who make them.

But view the other side of the picture, and what do we find? men whose long catalogues of great and glorious and splendid services in the cause of their country - whose great inventions and discoveries and whose toils for freedom and man, entitled them while living to a high place in the affections of their countrymen, and after death to a proud repose

mausoleum in their hearts and memories; refused the gifts and honours granted to others far less deserving. But these men have not only been refused what they actually deserved but have been by their own country thrown into prisons, loaded with chains and sentenced to end their days by drinking the poisonous hemlock. Oft has humanity recoiled at the horrible examples of public and private oppression, oft has the dark and silent dungeon - the earth that drank their noble blood, called aloud to heaven for vengeance. These men spring not up in every soil, and when they disappear leave no trace of their existence. They are not as the red meteor which blazes forth in the still dark sky and ^{in an instant} is gone; but like stars of the first magnitude which throw their steady light upon the entire world, an honour to the nation and a name to the age which gave them birth. These are the men who have deserved the esteem, the admiration and the gratitude of their own country and the whole civilized world. They lived not for themselves, but for their country, and their country's welfare. Have they received the rewards they deserved? Turn to the records of the past, and see what flagrant instances of injustice to such men have man its pages.

The great Athenian, the father of eloquence is an example. He whose voice was a terror to his enemies, moving the people as with

such power as the tornado bearing the bosom of the mighty ocean;

and — "whose resistless eloquence
wielded at will the fiercer democracy,
Shook at will tharsenal and fulminated over Greece,

To Macedon and Artaxerxes' thrones"

"His Country was his idol to it he sacrificed every selfish - every endearing sentiment. But how was he rewarded? When his virtues and talents rightly appreciated? Did he meet with that respect due to services rendered to his Country? No. that Country, to avert from herself the stroke of her Conqueror, was ready to deliver him up, and forced him to escape the ignominy of Macedonian vengeance by a voluntary death.

Who has not been touched with the simple story of Courtesy. How he served his Country? — How he

———— "made the coward

Turn terror into Sport" —————

Who does not remember the nobleness and magnanimity of his soul — the wisdom of his counsel — the firmness of his purposes, and the dignity and elevation of his virtues? But alas he who was foremost in battle and ready to sacrifice himself for his Country; was at last hurled from his proud eminence — torn from his friends and banished from his Country.

But nearer our own day, we have a bright example in the
discoverer of the American continent, a deed which will transmit his name
to the most distant futurity as a monument of what minds can accomplish.
There have doubtless been in all ages, men whose discoveries and inventions
in the world of matter or mind; have opened new avenues to the dominion of
man over the material creation, have increased his means or his faculties of
enjoyment; have raised him in means of approximation, to that higher and
happier condition, the object of his desire, and aspiring, in his present state
of his existence. Columbus discovered no new principle in politics or mor-
als; but he made that discovery which in its kind surpasses all others,
and which is sufficient to give him a place which but few have ever at-
tained. He deserves all and more than princes or kings could bestow.
He deserves a nation a nation. Yet how was he rewarded. His life was
but one continued succession of troubles and disappointments, and he was
at last compelled to end his days in poverty, lonely and unlamented.

But the history of our own country - "the land of the free and
the asylum of the oppressed" - is not free from such stains and blemishes. Patrick
Henry, the great champion of liberty, has not received from the nation what his
^{and talents!} services demanded. During the whole struggle for independence, he remained
unshaken, undaunted, untamed.
His loyalty he kept; his love his zeal.

Truer this lives in our memory, he yet has a place in the affections of his countrymen
and wishes as long as time itself shall last. But what marks have we of a nation's re-
neration? What have we to tell the passing strangers that we still remember the name of Henry. No scul-
ptured marble marks the place where rest his ashes. No "monumental Column" upon which to inscribe
his deeds and his virtues.

Commencement Oration of John Richard Pattison, Class of 1842
Transcribed by Tristan Deveney, May 2008
Edited by Sarah-Hazel Jennings, June 2008

National Ingratitude

Scarcely is there a country whose annals have not been stained by gross injustice towards some of her best and ablest citizens. Scarcely can we turn over the pages of history without finding here and there scattered upon its surface marks of a national ingratitude – of favours and gifts unequally distributed and of the wise and good unhonored. We have seen those whose public and private crimes – whose whole lives entitled them to a place high upon the gibbet or low in depths of a dungeon: raised to power; honour and affluence not because they deserved them, but because intrigue and deception placed them there. How often is it that those who are the slaves of inordinate ambition—who pine for pre-eminence, have but little regard to principle or to the manner by which they may accomplish their ends, or to the road in which they mad and wit to reach the goal of their ambition. In such men then is not the smallest particle of patriotism their sole aim being the advancement of self. their only end the accomplishment of schemes and plans beneficial only to those who make them.

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