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National Days

Every country has its heroic age. It is the period whose noble deeds gave birth to the nation. A nation's memory is filled with recollections of this heroic age, which throw a hallowed influence over all its after life and will ever shed a lustre around its fading names.

The heroic age is the one upon which a people delights to dwell, as upon the brightest of their history; when patriotism was glory and every man a patriot; when actions stamped the "impress of a man" upon each brow and every action tended to his country's greatness. This is the period upon which the historian loves to dwell; it is the fountain ^{from} in which the poet dips his pen and draws inspiration for his holiest themes. Here the philosopher may delve into the human character, and here, the prophet may ^{see} reveal into the seeming mystery of events and foretell the country's future. This is the age from which a nation's festival days are drawn; those annual days of rejoicing when a

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people's heart grows warm with patriotism,
and swells with the recollection of early
greatness.

Every nation must have its festive
days. Days, at whose periodic return,
its people may mingle in one universal
celebration in honor of the land age that
gave them birth ^{maximally} - when a glorious past
is brought forward into the present and
sheds a pleasing influence ^{commemorative} over the land
which it made noble. Days, when the
silken cord of memory makes us feel as
if the spirits of our Country's dead were
hovering around and looking with deep
interest upon the homes where once they
lived. ^{Prophetic} Days, when,

"Each fainter trace that memory holds,
So sweetly of departed years,
In one broad glance the soul beholds,
And all that once was at once appears."
The recurrence of these festivals awakens
all the charms of association. Then the
memory calls up the scenes of other
days, and there they stand as if they
were the deeds of yesterday. The past
is acted over again and, as it were, the ^{some} soul
spirit beholds the fields upon which
its fathers fought. It sees the glistening

of their swords and the red-flashing of their guns. It hears the drums as it beats the stirring charge, and the bugle notes that proclaim them victors.

The French turn to the dunes when Napoleon's star was touching its meridian, and thence they draw their festival days.

Napoleon's memory is the dearest idol the French possess, and as the anniversary of some mighty battle dawns upon them, by associations mystic chain, they behold their chieftain as in the days of his glory.

And he still storms some bristling castle; now, with Ney and Murat, he throws his fortunes into one impulsive charge; here comes the stumbling of his firm Imperial Guard; there lie the plains of Friedland, and here loom up the heights of Jabin.

Turn to the intrepid Swiss, wherever he may be found on the day of his country's rejoicings, his heart is still resting on his mountain cliffs, and his bosom swells with memories of Tell and Liberty. And Ireland, on her festival day, strives to drown her sorrows and wear a cheerful look. Whether upon his native shore, or in a stranger land, the Son of Erin rejoices at the

dawn of St. Patrick's, And, though he heaves
one sigh for his Country's present fate, he
still feels a pride in the memory of what
it has been. He remembers when Ireland
was smiling with joy, he sees it now weep-
ing with woes, and then he feels as if he
only wished to live to strike one blow for
his fallen land, while Emmet whispers in
his "there still is hope".

England's brightest anniversary is that of
the day on which Napoleon yielded to her
throne. Then she beholds again the awful
field of Waterloo and then she shouts to
the welkin then favourite air —

"Rule Britannia".

And America has National days. High
is her war for Independence stood one, to
whom his "Country's Call was as the Call of God:

By whom his Country's troops were led
to victory though Napoleon's Conqueror was
his foe. That one was — Washington; whose
"every end he aimed at, was his Country's, God's
and Truth's". Americans will forever honor
the day that gave him birth.

There is one other day that A-
mericans hold sacred. The one that was

at once, the birth-day of America and the
resurrection of Liberty. When the Declara-
tion of Independence was announced and the
American Sabbath created. At the recollec-
tions of this day, even the veteran soldier,
trampling with age, will grow warm with
enthusiasm, and as he recounts the history
of his battles,

"Will shoulder his crutch and show how fields
are won".

On this day we should honor the memory
of our Fathers. We should look upon the
Land they left us ~~and~~; admire the stability
of its Institutions, and rejoice at its happiness.

Such are national Days, Jubilees, Days,
which, by their recurrence, give strength and
durability to a government; whose influence
is wholesome, virtuous and noble. It is
at these festivals that a people's love of
Country and filial constancy is increased.
Here reigns no sectarian spirit. On these
Days the Demon of discord is chained; the
strife of party is forgotten; and the mass,
as one man, comes forward to their Coun-
try's feet; there offer up the fresh out-
pourings of a grateful heart, and there swear
new allegiance.

To long as a people remembers their

heric age and celebrates its anniversaries
with becoming zeal, so long is their country's
future encouraging. Dark clouds may hang
upon our national horizon, but a pilgrimage
to the Mecca of America will dispel them.

And, hence, we feel that while Amer-
icans remember that Washington was born,
that the Star of Liberty ascended, or that
Lacrosse fought, so long is America safe

Albert Ritchie Jr

July 4th 1853

1853

Commencement Oration of Albert Ritchie, Class of 1853

Transcribed by Tristan Deveney, June 2008

Edited by Sarah-Hazel Jennings, June 2008

National Days

Every country has its heroic age. It is the period whole noble deeds gave birth to the nation. A nation's memory is filled with recollections of this heroic age, which throw a hallowed influence over all its after life and will even shed a lustre around its fading name.

The heroic age is the one upon which a people delights to dwell, as upon the brightest of their history; when patriotism was glory and every man a patriot; when actions stamped the "impress of a man" upon each brow and "every action tended to his country's greatness. This is the period upon which the historian loves to dwell: it is the fountain in which the poet dips his pen and draws inspiration for his holiest themes. Here the philosopher may delve into the human character, and here, the prophet may revel in the deeming mystery of events and foretell the country's future. This is the age from which a nation's festal days are drawn; those annual days of rejoicing when a

people's heart grows warm with patriotism and swells with the recollection of early greatness.

Every nation must have its festive days. Days, at whose periodic return its people may mingle in one universal celebration in honor of the ~~land~~ age that gave them nationality birth – when a glorious past is brought forward into the present and sheds a pleasing influence over the land which it made noble. Commemorative Days, when the silken cord of memory makes us feel as if the spirits of our Country's dead were hovering around and looking with deep interest upon the homes where once they lived. Prophetic days, when,

“Each fainted trace that memory holds,
Lo sweetly of departed years,
In one broad glance the soul beholds
And all that ~~once~~ was at once appears”.

The recurrence of these festivals awaken all the charms of association. Then the memory calls up the scenes of other days, and there they stand as if they were the deeds of yesterday. The past is acted over again and, as it were, the ~~spirit~~ soul beholds the fields upon which its fathers fought. It sees the glistening

of their swords the red flashing of their guns. It hears the drum as it beats the shining charge, and the bugle notes that proclaim them victors.

The French turn to the [one word illegible] when Napoleon's star was touching its meridian, and thence they draw their festal days. Napoleon's memory is the dearest idol the French possess, and as the anniversary of some mighty battles dawns upon them, by association's mystic chain, they behold their chieftain as in the days of his glory, find he still storms some bristling castle; now, with Ney and Murat, he throws his fortunes into

one impulsive charge; here come the rumbling of his fine Imperial Guard; there lie the plains of [Linden?], and here loom up the heights of Labin.

Turn to the intrepid Swiss, wherever he may be found on the day of his country's rejoicings. his heart is this resting on ~~[one word illegible]~~ mountain cliffs, and his bosom swells with memories of Lell and Liberty. And Ireland, on her festal day, strives to drown her sorrows and wear a cheerful look. Whether upon his native shore, or in a stranger land, the son of [Eire?] rejoices as the

dawn of St. Patrick, And though he heaves one sigh for his country's present fate, he still feels a pride in the memory of what it has been. He remembers when Ireland was smiling with joy, he sees it now weeping with woes, and then he feels as if he really wished to live to strike one blow for his fallen land, while Emmett whispers ~~in his~~ "there still is hope".

England's brightest anniversary is that of the Day on which Napoleon yielded to her throne. Then she beholds again the awful field of Waterloo and then she shouts to the ~~[one word illegible]~~ her favorite air – "Rule Britannia".

And America has national days. Nigh in her ~~[one word illegible]~~ for Independence stood one, to whom his "country's call was as the call of God."

By whom his country's troops were led to victory though Napoleon's Conqueror was his foe. That one was Washington; whose "every end he aimed at, was his country's, God's and Truth's". Americans will forever honor the day that gave him birth.

There is one other day that Americans hold sacred. The one that was

at once, the birth-day of America and the resurrection of Liberty. When the Declaration of Independence was announced and the American Sabbath created. At the recollections of this day, even the veteran soldiers, mumbling with age, will grow warm with enthusiasm, and as he recounts the history of his battles, "Will shoulder his crutch and show how fields are won"

On this day we should honor the memory of our fathers. We should look upon the land they left us ~~and~~; admire the stability of its Institutions, and rejoice at its happiness.

Such are national ~~Days~~ Jubilees. Days, which by their recurrence, give strength and durability to a government; whose influence is wholesome, virtuous and noble. It is at these festivals that a people's love of country and filial constancy is increased. Here reigns no sectarian spirit. In these Days the Demon of Discord is chained; the strife of party is forgotten; and the mass, as one man, comes forward to their country's feet: these offers up the fresh outpourings of a grateful hearts. and these swears new allegiance.

So long as a people remembers their

heroic age and celebrates its anniversaries with becoming zeal, so long is their country's future encouraging. Dark clouds may hang upon our national horizon, but a pilgrimage to the Mecca of America will dispel them.

And, hence, we feel that while Americans remember that Washington was [one word illegible], that the star of Liberty ascended, or that Jackson fought, so long is America safe.

Albert Ritchie Jr.

July 8 1853