

# Patriotism in the Public Schools.

A PAPER READ BY PROF. SAMUEL B. BROWN  
BEFORE THE SOCIETY OF THE SONS OF THE  
REVOLUTION IN THE STATE OF WEST  
VIRGINIA, APRIL 5th, 1897.







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# PATRIOTISM IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

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PROF. S. B. BROWN,

AT A MEETING OF THE

## SONS OF THE REVOLUTION,

WHEELING, W. VA., APRIL 5TH, 1897.

In the older governments of the earth those classes that are born to govern are carefully educated for their duties. They are instructed in the civil and military achievements of their people, in the history of their national church, and particularly in the parts of their country's history that have been performed by the members of their own families. Family history indeed is a large part of their education. They are then educated in the knowledge that is common to civilization, the pure sciences and the language and literature of their neighbors.

After this, young noblemen and future rulers are instructed most carefully in what are the natural resources and possibilities of their own countries. These governments are defended by saying that they are conducted by their wisest and best educated men.

The people of most of the governments of the earth are homogeneous in race, tradition and education. In them all pride of race and love of country come with their mother's milk, and are afterwards strengthened and enforced by State education. If the government be good it is one of the glories of their system of State education to teach patriotism by teaching the history of their heroes and their great achievements; if the government be bad then is there all the greater need of teaching patriotism in the public schools that its defects may be hidden and forgotten.

Let us glance a moment at our population at the close of a century after the administration of George Washington.



It is apparent to all that great changes are going on in American character and citizenship. Since 1820 over seventeen millions of foreigners have landed on our shores and have become a part of our population. In fifteen of the States of our country in 1890 over one half of the population was of foreign born people or of people born of foreign parents. The proportion then amounted to one third of the whole population and was increasing. In 1890 two thirds of all the migration from all countries was to the United States; the other one third being distributed to South America, Africa, and Australia. In 1897, it is now safe to say that twenty-five millions of the people of our Republic are either of foreign birth or born of foreign parents who have landed here since the war of 1812.

That is a number equal to one half the population of all Europe at the discovery of America. No such movement of peoples has occurred within historic times as the transfer of twenty millions of human beings from one country to another within the life time of a single individual. No such condition has ever confronted any people as that which confronts us today.

Shall the old American stock be overwhelmed and its achievements forgotten by these raw populations that are crowding upon us, even too rapidly to learn our language, much less our history?

Certainly no greater privilege, and perhaps no greater task, could fall to the lot of any people than that which thus comes to us of instructing the diverse peoples of the earth in the right use of liberty and in the appreciation of the great achievements and the magnificent virtues of the heroes whom we celebrate to-night.

Patriotism or love of country may come either from a knowledge of the cost of life and treasure expended in building and defending a nation or it may come from a knowledge of the great resources and possibilities that a country may hold for the future. But in either case it will come only after instruction at the fireside or at the school. For instruction in the schools, I assume that the historical teaching should come first. And as it is impossible even to teach American history very thoroughly in our public schools it is necessary to emphasize particular features of it.

To begin with, I would place an American flag in every school house in the land. And I would place in its bookcase the lives of at least five of the nation builders whose story would be an inspiration to every child whether rich or poor. Their recurring natal days should each year be celebrated by the pupils of the schools in declamation and essay and song upon the lives and work of these the first five heroes of the Great Republic,



I have selected these five names partly because the celebration days would fall within the terms of all the schools; but more because they typify better than any others all the great elements of our old American life.

The first of these days that I would appoint in the school term would be Jackson day, the anniversary of the battle of New Orleans.

It has been the habit even of many Americans to discount the importance of this battle, and to regret its occurrence after the treaty of peace as a misfortune. To my mind no greater mistake could be made. The purpose of the British government was to seize the mouth of the Mississippi River, and hold it. They were striking the United States at what was then believed to be its weakest point. To have gained that battle would have given them a permanent foothold in the South west and in all probability would have led to their occupation of Texas at once.

The battle of New Orleans settled that. Never in all history was a more decisive battle fought, and never so complete a defeat for the British arms. Jackson himself was fearful. His soldiers had never before seen an army of white men, nor the discipline of a civilized army. Pakenham with 12000 of the seasoned soldiers of Britain who had passed through the fierce fighting of the Peninsular war made a direct assault upon Jackson's 6000 hunters of Kentucky and Tennessee. The battle lasted but half an hour; but no battle since Marathon has ended with such results. It has been the wonder of military writers from that day to this. The loss of the British army including their General was 2600 in killed and wounded; the loss of Jackson's men was eight killed and thirteen wounded. No battle that has ever been fought between men of the white race is comparable to this, and as it marks our last military contest with the British power for that reason alone should it be celebrated as is the battle of Lexington. The life of General Jackson will appeal to the youth of our country in a way that no other character in American history will and I would celebrate the day of his victory.

The next character that I would recommend to the youth of our country is that of Benjamin Franklin. His birthday occurs upon the 17th, day of January, the same day of the year on which the battle of Cowpens was fought and both events could be celebrated together. Even in this industrial age the life of Franklin in his rise through the stages of life of printer, writer, inventor, philosopher, diplomatist, statesman, offers as much to the humblest boy as the life of any man in any country can. Mirabeau characterized him as the man, whom the History of Empires and the



History of Science alike contend for, the genius which gave freedom to America and rayed forth torrents of light upon Europe." "Antiquity," said he, "would have erected altars to this great and powerful genius, who to promote the welfare of mankind, comprehending both the heavens and the earth in the range of his thought could at once snatch the bolt from the cloud and the scepter from tyrants."

The next character I would offer for the consideration of the youth of our country is that of Abraham Lincoln. His career as boatman, soldier, lawyer, orator, statesman, president, and which ended with that convulsion which was the second birth of the Republic fills half a century crowded with events that were as powerful in shaping the destinies of three races of mankind as any since man began to record his own history. In this century the wild indian, and his subsistence the buffalo, have practically disappeared from the face of the earth. In this century the negro the servant of the white man since the building of the pyramids, and we don't know how long before, has been set upon his feet, and has been told to take care of himself. And the white man who has perhaps received more immediate benefit from the freedom of the negro than the negro himself, has substituted for human labor and animal power the stores of fossil fuel of the earth, the coal, the oil, the gas, and has bidden steam and electricity hence forth to do his work. Nor is that all.

This spirit of universal freedom and the recognition of the dignity of labor which belongs to the times of Abraham Lincoln has infected the most stolid nations of the earth and has bidden the groundling to look up and to ask of what clay is his master made?

The fourth day that I would recommend to be celebrated in all the schools is the birthday of George Washington. Lord Brougham, an Englishman, said of him: It will be the duty of the historian and the sage in all ages, to let no occasion pass of commemorating this illustrious man; and until time shall be no more will a test of the progress which our race has made in wisdom and in virtue be derived from the veneration paid to the immortal name of Washington! In his farewell address, Washington said: "Promote, then, as an object of *primary* importance institutions for the diffusion of knowledge. In proportion as the structure of a government gives force to public opinion, it is essential that public opinion should be enlightened." But, said General Marion, "what signifies even this government, divine as it is, if it be not known and prized as it deserves? This is best done by free schools. Men will always fight for their government



according to their sense of its value. To value it aright they must understand it. This they cannot do without education." Every glorious fact in the Nations history should be emphasized and lovingly dwelt upon and patriotism should be one of the positive lessons taught in every school. Hence no school should pass a year without giving one day at least to exercises, in which the smallest child might take a part in learning and reciting the wonderful history of George Washington.

The last name that I would offer as being practicable for celebration in the schools is that of Thomas Jefferson, the writer of the Declaration of Independence, the author of the first law ever passed by any government securing for its people perfect religious freedom, and the author of the first bill for establishing free schools in Virginia. Jefferson's bill for establishing free schools in 1779 provided not only for the popular foundation of common schools; but for the free training of all children, male and female, for three years in reading, writing, and arithmetic. The proposed admission of girls was a step in advance of the times for it was not until ten years later that Boston allowed her female children to attend her public schools. Jefferson in speaking of the very subject we are considering to-night said that "in the common schools where most children receive their whole education it should be chiefly historical, for history by apprising them of the past will enable them to judge of the future, it will avail them of the experience of other times and other nations; it will qualify them to act as judges of the actions and designs of men."

And again at the age of seventy-five, after a long life of marvellous achievements he said, "A system of general instruction which shall reach every description of our citizens, from the richest to the poorest, as it was the earliest so will it be the latest of all the public concerns in which I shall permit myself to take an interest." He was the author of the bill abolishing primogeniture in land, of the bill establishing our present decimal system of money, of the diplomacy by which was secured the purchase of Louisiana Territory and was the father of the University of Virginia. And yet he was not an orator; But he was a scholar, a writer, a diplomatist, a statesman, a naturalist, a believer in the capacity of the people when educated to govern themselves.

We hold therefore that at least once a year should the Declaration of our Independence be read within the hearing of all the children, and that the name of Thomas Jefferson the great advocate of popular education in the United States should be honored in the house which he established.



But there are other and material reasons why we should teach patriotism in the public schools. This country of ours is now marching at the head of the civilizations of the earth.

Neither in agriculture, nor in manufacturing, nor in mining, nor in its internal commerce does any other nation approach it. We are now producing one half more iron and steel than any other nation on earth; we produce more gold and silver and copper than any other people. The coal bed, more than any other of the mineral products of the earth, has come to be the source of military and political power. We are now producing more coal than any other nation, and in this substance no other nation approaches us in the extent and quality of its resources.

It is only in the fine arts that our people are yet following the people of older culture. In all the grosser qualities that make up a great civilization, we are in less than a century and a quarter, under a free government, leading the nations of the earth in progress and in power. And if it shall prove that we are able to inoculate these new populations that are crowding upon us with the spirit of the fathers, and to teach them that patriotism and virtue are the best safe guards of their adopted country, that great standing armies are a menace to liberty, then indeed,

Shall this our lofty scene be acted o'er

In states unborn and accents yet unknown.

And in the work of this holy mission, I believe that no organization has ever been instituted with a purer and nobler purpose than has this our beloved society, The Sons of the Revolution.







