

ratification of the colonies; and the result was a matter of grave uncertainty. But the revolution was successful, the colonies were destined to become free States, the Constitution was framed and ratified, and finally the day came for the launching of the ship of State. That day was the 30th of April, one century ago.

The first Wednesday in March had been named as the occasion for the inauguration, but the hour for Congress to assemble came and there was not a quorum present.

The electoral vote was not counted until the sixth day of April, upon which day George Washington was declared elected President and John Adams Vice-President of the United States.

Messengers were immediately dispatched to Mount Vernon, Va., and to Braintree, Mass., to notify these statesmen of their election.

Washington set out for New York, the temporary Capital, immediately upon receipt of the notification. His journey was a triumphal march; his way was strewn with flowers. He was eight days on the journey; the distance may now be accomplished in as many hours. The building on the balcony of which the distinguished patriot took the oath of office has now disappeared. Upon its site on Wall Street, opposite the head of Broad Street, is now situated the United States sub-treasury, and the exact spot of the solemn ceremony, as nearly as can be, is marked by a heroic statue of the general in the attitude of raising his hand from the scriptures after the administration of the oath. The April number of one of the leading magazines gives an illustration of the page which Washington kissed upon taking the oath. It is the page that relates the blessings of Jacob upon his sons, and which refers to Joseph, the fruitful bough by a well, whose branches run over the wall; to him who was separate from his brethren, and whose blessings reached to the utmost bounds of the everlasting hills—a most fitting page to mark one of the grandest events in this history of this land of Joseph, and in the history of the world. The government of the United States was then inaugurated—today it has finished its first century.

The momentous character of the day we have met to commemorate is not to be judged alone by events subsequent to it; to sense it truly we must gaze back into the dark ages that preceded it. We must contrast the sweets of liberty with the bitterness of despotism to appreciate the glorious mission of the Constitution. For us, among whom the blessings of life, liberty and property are manifest—whose form of government is based upon that principle of divine origin that all men are created equal before the law—it is difficult to conjure up the demons of oppression and tyranny that have held sway over mankind almost continuously from the inception of the species. The world was in bondage; nations were ruled by monarchs who owed their position to the accident of birth. The right

of the people to a voice in their own government was scarcely asserted. Men were largely treated as chattels; their property, their freedom, and even their lives were sacrificed at the bidding of the tyrant. Their religious views were bent into conformity. Despotism asserted empire over body and soul. There was little or no law save the caprice of monarchy. It is impossible for citizens of this republic to picture the miseries of such days. Think of it; that a nation of human beings became, body and soul, the property of a single man, a tyrant, a usurper, sacrilegiously claiming to rule by divine right. There could be no progression as there could be no happiness under such circumstances.

Luther broke the chains of religious despotism; the Anglo-Saxons made great inroads upon the prerogatives of royalty; men's minds were unshackled, and having once sipped of liberty they thirsted for a deeper draught. England, though the freest of nations, had not yet progressed to perfection, and sought to burden the colonies without the right under the principles of government. The chief cause of the American revolution was the right of arbitrary government, asserted by the mother country and disputed by the colonies; so long as the colonists were let alone they were good subjects. But by non-interference they learned the lessons that afterwards prompted them to rebellion. They learned to regulate their own affairs; they loved independence in religion and would not brook enforced conformity to the established church; they refused to recognize the divine right of the British king to rule, and were especially incensed at George III and his ministry. The people of the colonies claimed the full rights of Englishmen. They resented as unconstitutional the efforts of the British Parliament to tax them without representation. Despite their protest, with blind fatuity, the ministry insisted upon measure after measure in derogation of the claims of the colonies. Parliament taxed importations, forbade the erection of iron works and the manufacture of steel in America; placed an interdiction upon the felling of pine trees; authorized search warrants; and passed confiscation laws. No step of the British ministry excited as much indignation as the stamp act, providing that no contract should be of binding force unless written on paper bearing the royal stamp. The muffled bells of several large cities tolled funeral peals. Flags were hung at half-mast. Turbulent crowds assembled. The eloquent and fearless Patrick Henry exclaimed "Tarquín and Cæsar had each his Brutus; Charles I had his Cromwell, and George III—may profit by their example," he concluded upon being interrupted with the cry of "Treason!" With a rare patriotism, with a homely devotion to principle, the colonists entered into a solemn compact to import no goods from Great Britain until the stamp act was repealed, but Parliament added to the repeal a resolu-

tion that it had a right to bind the colonies in all cases whatever. Other taxes followed, and the spirit of resistance became stronger. Conflicts between the British soldiery and the populace occurred in New York and Boston. The Boston "tea party" and resistance to the port bill were followed by annulment of the Massachusetts charter.

Bad led to worse, until finally the smothered flames of rebellion burst violently forth upon the common at Lexington. The occasion demanded men. Fortunately they were at hand. A group of great men, educated in the school of patriotism, were at hand to control the popular efforts. Greatest in this resplendent galaxy of stars was the immortal hero whose first inauguration we come to commemorate. This is the man of whom Lowell says, in his inspiring apostrophe to Virginia:

"Mother of States and undiminished men,
Thou gavest us a country, giving him.

Nor is the praise too high. Washington was a man whose worth and talents did not lie upon the surface. He was modest in demeanor, and he accepted no office or trust without an earnest and sincere expression of unworthiness. Not characterized by brilliance, without the showy attributes which have raised far less able men to prominence; by soundness of judgment and persistence of purpose he showed himself to be one of the most successful of generals, and one of the most sagacious statesmen of any age. Called unexpectedly to the command of the continental forces, he accepted reluctantly, with a sense of his unfitness for the responsibilities of the office. But having accepted, he refused all compensation for his services, and entered into the cause of the colonies with a fixed determination, characteristic of the man, not to abandon the cause while hope remained. From the moment he assumed command at Cambridge, in the summer of 1775, until the surrender of Cornwallis at Yorktown in 1781, his experiences were of a character to have thrice discouraged a less earnest patriot and a less patient and persevering man.

It was with the greatest difficulty that he procured men and supplies. His troops were often without adequate food or clothing; his regiments were so reduced in numbers at times that but a mere handful followed him in the contest. He has been criticised for his reverses and retreats. It is said, with truth, that he won but few victories, and comparisons are, upon these grounds alone, sought to be made between Washington and Napoleon, or others of the great captains of the world. That his victories were less numerous must be conceded, but such comparisons are wrong. We must look into the surrounding circumstances. No general has ever labored under greater difficulties than Washington. With raw, ragged and ill-fed troops, few in numbers, often denied the support of Congress, which at best was weak and enforced its requisitions with difficulty criticised by his compatriots for his seeming inactivity; often throw