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A History of Sanbornton NH Volume I
By Moses T Runnels

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COLUMBIA :

A CENTENNIAL POEM.

BY E. W. LANE.

THE "Fourth of July" is the song that I sing ;
 And though not a poet desirous of fame,
 I tell of our nation, and publicly bring
 This tribute, — a simple centennial claim.

I come with a word of our forefathers' day,
 And how, in the battles so bravely once fought,
 Those noble old heroes long since passed away,
 Immortal by deeds that shall ne'er be forgot.

Now, poets, you know, on much similar themes
 Have writ, till one thinks there were little to write ;
 Historical lab'rincths are endless, it seems,
 So I have concluded the same to indite.

With this introduction, at once I'll proceed ;
 And while a few moments we wander away
 Over the past, with imaginable speed,
 Let all criticisms be silenced, I pray.

Then back through long years we in fancy will roam,
 Before to this country our forefathers came ;
 Old England, we find, was their earlier home,
 And many long years had they dwelt in the same.

'T was there that oppression held absolute sway,
 And cursed their existence ; though, sad to relate,
 For Liberty's voice it would never make way,
 But ruled every act by a rigorous fate.

The lives of our ancestors thus did begin ;
 But, like the volcano upheaving the earth,
 Fierce and wild elements were burning within, —
 All quenchless, and threatening Liberty's birth.

Then came the eruption, — they strove to be free ;
 All England was wrapped in the powerful flame,
 For there was discovered beyond the broad sea
 A country, — Columbia, that country's name.

Regardless of suffering, danger, or death,
Those lovers of freedom, the strong and the brave,
Inspired by inhaling pure Liberty's breath,
Embarked and crossed over the turbulent wave.

And though 't was on Columbian soil they stood,
Not a haven of peace here welcomed them then,
For they found but a wild and unexplored wood,
Where roamed the wild beasts, and were hostile the men.

But little they heeded such perils as these ;
The work they had started could not be undone ;
They had not a thought of recrossing the seas,
But civilization was quickly begun.

And then came an era of carnage and fear ;
A long, bloody strife through the nation did reign,
That deluged the country for many a year
With the innocent blood of tortured and slain.

The red man thus fought for his right of the land,
To drive the new-comers away from his shore ;
But the white man contesting, firmly did stand,
Determined to never abandon it more.

Ah, fearful, indeed, were the following days !
Men, women, and children, while pleading for life,
Were tortured in the most infernal of ways
The foe could devise as he raged in the strife.

And thus passed the time in our country's first day ;
Those martyrs of liberty never had tired,
But they toiled and they fought, and time wore away,
For freedom to worship, their souls had inspired.

You've all doubtless read of those old Indian wars,
How slowly but surely the red man did yield,
And triumphant proved the American cause, —
The white man had won and commanded the field.

They nobly had fought, and a home did obtain ;
Columbia won by the white man at last ;
And the axe and the ploughshare sped o'er the plain, —
The joys of the present had cancelled the past.

Alas, for the hopes of those patriot braves !
A cloud was arising, nor rose it in vain ;
Oppression had followed them over the waves,
And sought by its forces to crush them again.

Yes ; England, old England, the land of their birth,
Had long watched their fortunes this side of the sea,
And saw them becoming a people on earth,
Which promised a powerful nation to be.

What though they acknowledged, respected their king,
 Were loyal as subjects, and fought in his name,
 And promised much wealth to that nation to bring,
 And had never opposed a reasonable claim, —

Yet England then saw, and she learned it with dread,
 That desire to be free, which planted them here,
 Died not, but was ever increasing instead;
 And for the result, she was trembling in fear.

And then she began, with maliciousness bent,
 To rule them with many tyrannical laws;
 And carried her power to such an extent,
 That a result most fearful followed that cause.

But you have heard all this historical fact, —
 How unjust taxation was sent to the free;
 How well they resisted that cruel Stamp Act,
 And how Boston Harbor they flooded with tea.

For those sons of liberty, strong in the land,
 Resolved that their rights they would ever maintain;
 And e'en against England in war they would stand,
 Before they would yield to oppression again.

Then, enraged at his oft-unheeded command,
 The king, when all threats were but issued for naught,
 Determined by arms he would conquer the land;
 So war, bitter war, was the crisis he brought.

For now on our shores did the British appear, —
 This the beginning of that long, bloody strife,
 That was destined to plague and trouble them here,
 Filled deep with the woes of destruction to life.

But it's useless, indeed, for me here to-day
 This national theme to attempt to narrate;
 Great authors and poets but illy portray
 The sorrows of all of these scenes they relate.

We may only consider, the best we can,
 How hard must the struggle for freedom have been,
 When this single motto inspired every man,
 "To die in the battle, or victory win."

Turn over our history's page, if you please,
 And dwell on its past as you read it to-day,
 And see how we've sailed through the bloodiest seas,
 In centennial years that have passed away.

We see in the battles our fathers of fame,
 Fighting for their country and liberty's right,
 That we, their children, might inherit the same,
 When freed from oppression's tyrannical might.

Among those first conflicts, — memorials still,
 And prominent in the historical past, —
 Are Lexington, Concord, and old Bunker Hill,
 Whose names will be sacred while histories last.

But now, please attend; for a glorious day
 O'er Columbia dawned in the midst of strife,
 That gave the patriots a powerful sway,
 And their destiny changed for all after life.

Oppressed by old England, they loved her no more;
 'Neath British dominion no longer would be;
 They met and cast off every prestige they wore,
 And thence and forever declared themselves free.

I refer to that time, — that glorious time, —
 To gain independence and tyrants deny,
 They made themselves free, and the nation did chime,
 In seventy-six, on the Fourth of July.

Ah! great was the joy in the colonies then,
 And wild the scenes of that memorable day,
 That shall live in the annals of those brave men,
 Till annals and men shall have both passed away.

From old Philadelphia rang the first bell,
 And quickly the others caught up the glad strain,
 And echoed o'er all of the nation, to tell
 That here independence forever should reign.

The tyrant should rule Columbia no more:
 Republican government now should have birth;
 A nation should be, as was never before,
 Since man had found wisdom to reign on the earth.

They fought for liberty, and long would they fight,
 And no more would they yield to slavery's rod;
 For their cause it was just, and justice was right,
 And the justice they sought was worship of God.

“Then away, harsh tyranny; back to the East;
 We're a nation ourselves, and know thee no more;
 Henceforth our connection with England has ceased,
 The ties that have bound us forever are o'er.

“Then loud and long accents peal forth from the bell;
 Let it tell as it rings over all the earth,
 Though of old slavery it sounds the death-knell,
 'T is also the herald of liberty's birth.”

This was the spirit that in perfect control
 Governed our fathers that illustrious day;
 And a radiant hope illumined each soul,
 And swept the last vestige of slavery away.

They hoped; but how fearfully long were the years
 Destined to follow ere that hope was fulfilled!
 Time fraught with the horrors of war and its fears,
 With which all the land was now deeply instilled.

But why longer dwell on those old earnest wars?
 I could not describe them, not e'en if I would;
 On history's page you may read of this cause,
 And how the invasion was firmly withstood.

Suffice it to say, though the struggle was long,
 Yet the contest thus fought had not been in vain;
 For a glorious right then triumphed o'er wrong,
 And Columbia rejoiced in freedom again.

O'er her last hope defeated, England has wept;
 And conquered, has wisely sought long to atone
 For this forced conclusion, which since she has kept,
 'T were better, by far, to have let us alone.

And thus, independence asserted at last,
 Prosperity over the nation did dawn;
 And the blessings of peace succeeded the past,
 And the old ship of state sailed quietly on.

So the words of the prophets came to be true,
 While peace and prosperity governed the day;
 And a morning resplendent broke into view,
 Which scattered the national darkness away.

Art, science, and ethics progressively bound
 All parts of the nation, bountifully stored, —
 In short, thus Columbia soon was renowned,
 For all of the blessings that life could afford.

And now, if this poem could here have its close,
 If the muse were content no more to unfold,
 'T would save me from telling still further of woes;
 But the fates have decreed that more should be told.

And again it is war, and a direr war
 Than ever was caused by foreign oppression, —
 When people get reckless of national law,
 As in the times of the Southern secession.

How grievous, indeed, are the wrongs that were done!
 Columbia's children! — for shame be it said,
 That in all their numbers could be found e'en one
 Who could perjure the blood his fathers had shed!

Though nurtured, protected by national care,
 Yet long in concealment those rebels did band,
 And thus a rebellion they then did prepare,
 And the demon of terror stalked through the land.

Thus fiercely assailed by rash internal foes,
 The Union in safety no longer could rest;
 So her loyal defenders promptly arose,
 When rebels had fired on the "Star of the West."

Ah! that was the key-note that sounded alarm,
 And called for the loyal to honor their claim;
 From city and village, and workshop and farm,
 All armed for the battle, by thousands they came.

They saw the great danger dissensions had wrought,
 And if unresisted how fatal the blow,
 And determined to fight as their fathers fought,
 Ere union in ruin should shamefully go.

'T were the spirits of seventy-six, they say,
 Inspiring the patriots of sixty-one,
 Aroused from their rest by the dangers that lay
 Thick over their graves, — and through perfidy done.

Methinks it were enough to trouble those braves —
 If troubles can go to the homes of the dead —
 To see how that discord could trample their graves,
 Dishonoring the cause for which they had bled.

But — spare the digression, whatever it means,
 For now, as before, I desire not to dwell —
 It beggars description to tell of the scenes
 That follow a nation whose people rebel.

Alas! that the pen of the writer should ever
 Be required to linger on every detail
 Of that civil war — secession's own lever —
 That for four long years did so fiercely prevail.

But see in the homes of those broken-hearted, —
 If you would learn more of the woes of the land, —
 Tears for the loved ones from whom they have parted,
 Who, dying, complied with their country's demand.

But it's needless to dwell; for well you have heard
 The crash of the armies that met on the plain,
 Till all of the nation with fever was stirred,
 Till rivers ran red with the blood of the slain.

But that fierce rebellion must needs have a close;
 And so it occurred in eighteen sixty-five
 That peace was declared, — we no more should be foes, —
 Again was the nation permitted to thrive.

The armies disbanded, the conflict was o'er,
 And the reign of those awful fratricides past;
 The God of our battles has blessed us once more
 With peace that returns to the nation at last.

Yes, to-day with laurels the Union is crowned;
 Its triumph reflected is bright on the sky;
 Again in our midst is sweet Liberty found,
 As here we assemble this Fourth of July.

The centennial Fourth has gathered us here, —
 And this meeting 's for celebration, they say, —
 And we ever should meet thus once in the year,
 To rightly observe a memorable day.

Here, parenthetically, I will remark,
 'T is meet that old Sanbornton loudly rejoice;
 Her sons, too, have struggled 'neath skies that were dark,
 And they, too, have uttered a powerful voice.

And 't is well for us all, this hundredth year day,
 To turn from the present, and wandering back,
 Observe how our country has travelled its way,
 And note the dissensions that checker its track.

By continual strife this country was won,
 And fearful the number of lives that were lost;
 Though washed deep in the blood of many a son,
 We prize her more as we learn of the cost.

And though the long struggles have not been in vain,
 And though we rejoice for the spirits so brave,
 We still drop a tear for the thousands of slain,
 As we bend o'er Lincoln's or Washington's grave.

And yet, all immortal, — oh, say! are they still
 Eternally reigning in some realm of peace,
 Which the din of the battle never can fill,
 And where their reward shall forever increase?

While the mortal decays and mingles with earth,
 Beneath the cold monument marking the slain,
 Does spirit, immortal by heavenly birth,
 Proclaim, though departed, it liveth again?

Their deeds have emblazoned the national scroll,
 And there in their brightness shall never decay,
 As on through the future the nation shall roll,
 With many centennials passing away.

And friends, please accept this refrain of my song,
 As now, in conclusion, I bid you adieu:
 May we, like our forefathers, ever be strong,
 And the love for our country ever be true.

Remember how great is the cause of our fame,
 And while a grand nation is left to our trust,
 We'll prove ourselves true to so noble a claim;
 Its laws shall be sacred, protect it we must.

And cursed be the fate of that traitor who'd scar
Our ensign of liberty, trampling it down;
Better he were banished forever, by far,
Than meet the disgrace of Columbia's frown.

And cursed, thrice accursed, be the foe that shall dare
To risk an invasion again on our shore;
We'll ever abide by our oaths, and we swear,
The past be their warning to trespass no more.

The star-spangled banner shall long float away,
From the North to the South, the East to the West;
While o'er it the zephyrs of freedom shall play,
Or lingering awhile shall lull it to rest.

Not a star shall be less, nor a stripe be gone;
Its color, untarnished, shall ever be bright;
And the nation itself, depicted thereon,
Shall shine, as it were, with a glorious light.

The American eagle, noble and strong,
In triumph and freedom pursuing his flight,
Shall whistle the clear notes of liberty's song,
Which thrilleth the soul with its magical might;

Or encircling the national dome around,
Shall arouse the nation to arms by his shriek;
Or shall calmly repose, while tranquil his sound,
And forever a faithful vigil shall keep.

Then a parting desire sincerely I lend,
That thus with our country it ever shall be;
And together, hereafter, our thanks shall blend,
That we are at last independent and free.

Then country, freedom, independence, and all!
Nor tyrants nor wars this Union shall sever;
But these shall continue till kingdoms shall fall;
E pluribus unum! COLUMBIA FOREVER!!