Your Excellency, Governor Pollard, Ladies and Gentlemen:

At such a time, on this the anniversary of the birth of the United States, and on this spot where our great Nation came into being, I trust that we may, without the semblance of provincial pride, discuss the contribution of Virginia to Yorktown. Nor am I unmindful of the essential part played by other Colonies, without which the victory at Yorktown could never have been achieved. The time allotted to me is inadequate to pay even a formal tribute to the services of Maryland and her troops, which were the only ones found in every campaign of the Revolution; or to recount the valor of the Blue Hen's chickens of Delaware. The aid of Robert Morris, of Pennsylvania, was of inestimable benefit to the cause of the Colonists, and the two Continental Congresses met in Philadelphia.

New York, like the Southern Colonies, was the scene of many military operations and seethed with activity in 1765 over the Stamp Act.

New Jersey was the field for over one hundred battles, among them Trenton, Princeton, Monmouth. And here John Woolman's Abolition Doctrine was promulgated.

As the unwilling but unyielding site of operations, the Colonies of the far South made essential contributions to Yorktown. Though Georgia had no grievances of her own, because of her sympathy for the other Colonies, she joined the Revolutionists, and, in 1775, Colonel Habersham seized thirteen thousand pounds of powder, which were sent to the Continental Army.
To the Carolinas belongs special distinction. The harrassing
warfare of Marion, Pickens and Sumter against Cornwallis
greatly aided Washington by delaying the union of the northern
and southern bodies of British troops, and prepared the way for
the capitulation. One hundred and thirty-seven battles were
fought in South Carolina, and that State contributed $1,205,978
above her quota to Continental expenses, only a few thousand
less than Massachusetts.

North Carolina, with the Regulator War as opposition to the
Stamp Act in 1765, the Mecklenburg Declaration in 1775, and the
crushing defeat of Cornwallis at King's Mountain in 1780, has
a glorious record.

But we cannot detail it all, for we are propounding a theory
and not compiling a catalogue.

The first and the unique contribution of this Commonwealth
was that it furnished not only a congenial soil, but in very truth
a forcing house for the seed of English liberty. This of itself
is title to inextinguishable fame and the undying gratitude of
mankind. We would, however, mistake the spirit and purpose
of this occasion were we to assume that this great concourse had
assembled to pay homage to a geographic spot. But even had
such been our object Virginia could not have escaped this tribute,
for from the time when the courtier tongue of Sir Walter Raleigh
coined that designation in honor of Queen Elizabeth, there was
no other place in the new world where Englishmen might go,
for, as a contemporary book, "A Mirror for Saints and Sinners"
puts it:

"Virginia is bounded on the South by new
Spain, on the North by new France, on the East
by the Atlantic, and her Western borders are
unknown."

And, as the Hon. Robert C. Winthrop, of Massachusetts, said
in his address on this very spot fifty years ago:

"We were all Virginians once, and when
the Pilgrim fathers signed their little compact
in the cabin of the 'Mayflower' they spoke of
Plymouth and Massachusetts as 'these North-
ern parts of Virginia.'"

It is not with the geography of mountain, plain and estuary
of a sort that can be mapped and measured that we are con-
cerned today; it is with the far larger and elusive geography
of the soul of man. What Virginia added to that spirit; where,
if at all, she furthered its activities; when and how she directed
its purposes and fortified its resolution, these are the contribu-
tions that we seek to ascertain today.

The first manifestations of that spirit lie beyond the begin-
nings of all recorded history of our race. And this I say because
the first records of our Anglo-Saxon forefathers show already
active and developed the very principles that created Yorktown.

Two hundred years before 1781 Sir Walter Raleigh's ill-fated
colony at Roanoke Island had been formed, only to perish, and
in pershing to leave no trace. But the urge in England welled
up like a springing fountain to seek new fields for growth and
development and above all to find new outposts against her
ancient enemy, Spain, new outlets for world trade, and new lands where English speech and the Protestant religion might increase and flourish without fear of the Inquisition. It was the search for freedom, freedom to trade, freedom to think, that vitalized and rendered indestructible this movement in Virginia.

Sir Edwin Sandys was the motive force behind this undertaking. He it was who held to this vast project and who awakened the cupidity and stimulated the vanity of King James

"To the noble action for the planting of Virginia with Christian Religion and the English people."

Let us pause here to note once more that the purpose of this adventure was not Virginia, nor New England, but a mystical paradise for the planting of the English people. And so the Charter of the Virginia Company was granted under the broad seal of His Majesty.

At that period it was touch and go between England and Spain as to which should control America. Gondomar, the Spanish Ambassador at London, solemnly warned the English King that this Colony in Virginia would infallibly set up a "seminary of sedition." But Sandys was more persuasive than Gondomar, though at the time the eyes of the Inquisition saw further than the eyes of cupidity.

So these strange partners, James, the cowardly King, and Sandys, the courageous commoner, together called into being that little band of adventurers who on December 20-30, 1606, sailed from Blackwall, London, to Virginia. And we must do the

King this credit, that the Charter of the Virginia Company seemed to him to offer no hospitable soil for revolution, for four years after the Charter had been granted King James I., blandly observed:

"The state of Monarchy is the supremest thing on earth, for Kings are not only God's lieutenants upon earth, but even by God himself they are called gods."

The Governor and Council in the Colony of Virginia had power of life and death. The Colonists had no more real freedom in theory than members of the Soviet Republic have today. And all the constitutional freedom of earth would not have served to protect those first settlers from unforeseen and unescapable death by malaria, yellow fever, dysentery and the tomahawk.

And indeed, those obstacles would have destroyed the Colony as they destroyed the first settlers on Roanoke Island had it not been for the spirit of The Virginia Company in London. These backers and supporters were unterrified and unshakable; they saw their money lost and their friends perish; they heard much of death and disease and nothing of gold and the passage to the Pacific; they saw the dreams for speedy riches vanish, and witnessed such a change in popular feeling that when two highwaymen at this time were sentenced by the Judge to be transported to Virginia,

"They fell upon their knees and humbly prayed his Lordship that they might be hanged instead."
And yet, supported by some inner conviction that no untoward event could deflect or extinguish, this noble fellowship of freedom endured to the end.

Here is the master link in that long chain of impulse and endeavor that led from the depths of Scandinavian and British forests to the consummation we celebrate today.

I pause to ask one question, and the answer is not to be given, for that answer would solve the riddle of existence. But nevertheless, what is it that causes some individuals and some races irresistibly to go forward, while others, under the same apparent conditions, either stagnate or retrogress?

In the Valley of the Nile today the fields are tilled and the water wheels turned by the same race of apathetic and hopeless slaves that toiled there thousands of years before Joseph ruled for Pharaoh. And yet even then there was slowly emerging in an under-sized, dark, restless race along the shores of the Mediterranean, and in a red-haired, blue-eyed, large and vigorous people in central Russia a divine spark that has with increasing brightness flamed on the altars of human liberty. It was the blending of these European races that gave the English stock. It was hardihood and seamanship that made the men of that “little island in a silver sea” masters of the Atlantic. And as early as 1600 there were already over ten thousand English men and boys engaged in fishing off the Grand Banks.

Here are joined two essential prerequisites—a restless, seafaring race to whose activities the ocean set no bar, and also a politically-minded race that grasped intuitively but unbreakably the fundamentals of representative government. Given these conditions as England gave them, nothing but a treacherous combination between England, Spain and France could have prevented the very winds themselves from carrying the seed of freedom to the new world. Here again Virginia contributed to Yorktown, for it was to these shores that the seed of freedom came, took root, and grew.

“A mighty tree that has risen and cleft the soil and grown a mass of spanless bulk, and lays on every side a thousand arms, and rushes to the sun.”

There was a strange and tingling tolerance for liberty in Virginia, for the Colony, which was almost a penal settlement condemned to death in 1607, twelve years later had firm assurance that it would be imperishable and had added this contribution to human life across the seas; that it had set up a representative government.

Now, this was June, 1619, one year before the hardy Pilgrims of Leyden sailed from Plymouth for “the Northern parts of Virginia,” for another Plymouth which had already been so named by Capt. John Smith, “sometime Governour of Virginia, and Admirall of New England.” From that first trial of self-government on the Continent flowed this vast organization for the common good that we today call the United States. Not for self laudation, but as a simple record we must say that having brought forth the concept for free government in a new world, Virginia next furnished the soil for the cultivation of that ideal, and then gave
to the world at Jamestown the demonstration that the demand for self-government in England needed only a bare chance to become a visible and vital reality in Virginia.

In looking back with the perspective that time alone can truly give, it is now clear that that meeting of Burgesses was already pregnant with the very gains that Yorktown assured. For Jamestown presaged and promised Yorktown. The process of development was often retarded, and the way was hard, but the goal was inevitable. When once these sons of England had breathed the large air of liberty in the new land of Virginia an equal liberty was assured for their brothers in England, whether under the blind and selfish Stuarts, or the gross and gluttonous Georges.

So vigorous was this plant of liberty that in 1636, only sixteen years after that epochal gathering, the House of Burgesses forcibly expelled Sir John Harvey, Governor of Virginia, “because it resented his efforts to enlarge his powers.”

So it comes about that the resistance of Nathaniel Bacon to an arbitrary government here in Virginia in 1676 was on a par with the courage of Hampden in withstanding the illegal but nonetheless deadly powers of the King of England. Every blow for liberty weakens despotism, and every trumpet call to freemen heartens the hosts of patriots, for there is a community of spirit that transcends both time and space and makes fellow-soldiers of all “Champions of the rights of men.” The Gracchi in Rome, the Maccabees in Jerusalem, the Covenanters in the Highlands, and the Patriot Planters in Virginia all marched under the same banner and drew inspiration from the inexhaustible depths of the soul of man. Yet when the royal head of Charles fell with his pretensions Virginia remained loyal to the crown and continued to be the only spot on earth where “God Save the King” could still be sung. Nor did these Virginians exhaust their patriotism in empty sound. When the Commonwealth sent troops and warships, the Virginians resisted, and only laid down their arms upon the agreement, among other things, that

“Virginians shall be free from all taxes, customs and impositions whatsoever, and none to be imposed on them without the consent of the General Assembly, and see that neither efforts, nor castles bee erected, or garrisons maintained without their consent.”

This was the first treaty negotiated on this Continent as between two high contracting powers, to use the terminology of today. One of these parties was the Commonwealth of England and the other the Commonwealth of Virginia. Here was another contribution made by Virginia to the spirit which burst forth in full power at Yorktown.

And now the drama moves swiftly to its conclusion. In England the abortive attempt to restore the Stuarts had failed. William and Mary and Anne had given way to the German Georges. All the while Virginia was increasing in wealth and the sense of power that comes inevitably to men in command of spreading properties and many dependents. This habit of responsibility for others bred a sense of respect for themselves. As it is said:
"George Washington was the gift of the slave."

There is nothing magical about the name Virginia, but it is a biologic fact that given the soil and climate, given the tobacco growing of the period of slave labor, given the pioneer spirit that conquered the immense northwest territory, given the wealth, leisure and unquenchable desire to master the principles of government, such, for example, as the studies of George Mason, Thomas Jefferson or Richard Bland, it could not have been otherwise than that Virginia would have furnished the intelligence to apprehend and state the rights of the Colonies and then the leaders of men to enforce those rights.

I have no quarrel with John Adams, who said of the speech of James Otis against the writs of Assistance in Boston in February, 1761:

"American independence was then and there born; the seeds of patriots were then and there sown."

But Mr. Adams certainly leaves out of account the deep and irrepressible feelings in Virginia, and the compelling power of the men who translated those feelings into thought and action.

Eight years before the speech of Otis, in 1753, Richard Bland had resisted the action of Governor Dinwiddie in levying a fee of a pistole for signing each patent to vacant land. Today many hold that the Governor was justified in levying that fee, seeing that the title to all the vacant land was vested in the King. But the feelings of the Virginians were not at all in tune with technical legal rights where new taxes were concerned, and the Burgess declared, through Bland, with a singular provision of a constitutional principle adopted by the Union that was to be, and developed under the decisions of the Supreme Court,

"That a subject cannot be deprived of the least part of his property except by his own consent."

It was Bland's act in 1758 for payment of the clergy in money instead of tobacco that brought on the celebrated Parsons case, and first made heard the tocsin tones of Patrick Henry. Out of this controversy came Bland's acute and powerful analysis in 1764 of the relations between the Colonies and Great Britain.

"It is," says Dr. Lyon G. Tyler, "the great initial paper of the American Revolution."

In this pamphlet, "The Colonel Dismounted," Bland clearly distinguishes between the laws for internal and those for external government. In the latter he admitted the subjection of the Colonies to the British Parliament, but he emphatically declared that in problems of local administration the Colony was and ought to be free from interference by Parliament. In elaboration of these opinions, the Virginia Assembly drew up in 1764:

"An Address to the King."
"A Memorial to the House of Lords."
"A Remonstrance to the House of Commons."

Judging by the similarity of language in Bland's "Inquiry" in 1766, it seems highly probable that he wrote all three of these
documents. This Inquiry was the armory from which the arguments of the Virginia Revolutionists were drawn, and in fact, as Dr. Moses Coit Tyler says, this pamphlet was

“A prodigious innovation, but still a working theory for the preservation of the Union with Great Britain.”

We have not the time to trace the argument which supported Bland’s theory that the Colonies were bound to England through their common nexus in the crown.

“This theory,” said Dr. Lyon G. Tyler, “may have looked like a prodigious innovation to New England, but it can be proved that it was an opinion held by many people in Virginia prior to 1759, and it was the first explicit and elaborate exposition of the doctrine to appear before the public.”

Like Burke, Bland saw that the eternal principle of government was

“Not whether you have a right to render your people miserable, but whether it is not to your interest to make them happy.”

And he wholly agreed with Burke’s creed of government:

“Such is steadfastly my opinion of the absolute necessity of keeping up the concord of this empire by a unity of spirit, though in a diversity of operations, that if I were sure the Colonists had, at their leaving this country, sealed a regular compact of servitude; that they solemnly abjured all the rights of citizens; that they had made a vow to renounce all ideas of liberty for them and their posterity to all generations, yet I should hold myself obliged to conform to the temper I found universally prevalent in my own day, and to govern two millions of men impatient of servitude, on the principles of freedom. I am not determining a point of law; I am restoring tranquility, and the general character and situation of a people must determine what sort of government is fitted for them.”

I will not detail the arguments of Bland, but it is significant that in 1766—ten years before Thomas Jefferson electrified the world with his Declaration of Independence—Bland had introduced into the political arguments of that day the sanction of happiness. He declared that no members of society are obliged to submit to a state when they find that it no longer conduces to their happiness, which he adds:

“They have a natural right to promote.”

It is true that Bland could not wholly divest himself of the idea of the supremacy of Parliament, but he both perceived and knew that power was not the sole requisite, and that, as he put it,

“Power abstracted of right cannot give a just title to dominion.”

It was Richard Bland’s contribution that “he impregnated the political atmosphere with ethical ingredients.” No longer could thoughtful men discuss the question of taxation and navigation laws in terms of power, be it granted or inherited. Not
even the reckoned balances of trade were conclusive. Something
deeper and more all-embracing was at issue, something impalpa-
table to counting house methods, something transcending the com-
mon and statute law of England; that issue was the rights of men,
even though they were Colonists, to happiness, order, property.
The mechanical had been superseded, how shall we characterize
it, by the spiritual.

Nor was Bland by any means the sole contributor from Vir-
ginia. His logic dug out the ore of Colonial resistance, but it
took the consuming passion of Patrick Henry to fuse that ore into
the unbreakable sword of victory. This work was the cumulative
effect of the joint effort of many great-souled patriots.

For Yorktown was implicit in Jamestown, as Whitehall, the
one and only royal scaffold in England, was implicit in Runni-
mede. The scaffold and the surrender alike, were crises in the
long struggle of the English race to realize self-government. And
as the executioner’s axe at Whitehall symbolized the death of
unconstitutional monarchy, so did the tendered sword of Corn-
wallis at Yorktown typify the surrender of unconstitutional Par-
liamentary power. That is why Yorktown was hailed at the time
and has been acclaimed since by large-visioned patriots every-
where as a victory of world significance for liberalism. And
there was this peculiar and enduring distinction for Yorktown—
that it established its contentions forever. What the Barons be-
gan with King John, the Roundheads continued with Charles I,
but the principles of self-government, free from autocracy and
despotic individualism, were not yet completely vindicated. Eng-
land had still to deal with the licentious Charles II, and his shifty
brother, James, whose changeful course and broken promise
tended steadily to absolute monarchy. Even the great Rev-
olution of 1688 had not, as the reign of the Georges proved, re-
moved the menace of national subjugation.

"Though the English can only read constitu-
tional principles by the light of burning
fagots," as Emerson said,

there was political intuition enough in that Island to understand
completely the object and the effect of George III's reign. Here
was a king, foreign in blood and tradition, the first of his name
who could even speak English, who yet, as Thackeray commented,

"Gloried in the name of Briton, and having
been born in the country proposed to rule it."

Imagine this King, who was fifteen-sixteenths German, un-
dertaking to interpret freedom to a Bland, a Randolph, a Henry,
a Jefferson, or a Washington! The very air in 1760 was vital
with freedom. English liberalism was once more on the march,
and the concern of the future was not whether a vexatious tax
should be laid on absent Colonists, but whether a King could flout
the constitution with the aid of a venal Parliament. His Majes-
ty's method for gaining his ends was not by the stark force of
royal soldiery, but rather by the peaceful infiltration of royal
scullions. To gain his ends, the King brought to bear the power
of the Privy purse, royal favor in the form of lucrative sinecures,
and political preferment—from the kitchen, where the King car-
ried a member of Parliament on his pay roll as a cook, to the Church, where subservience was blessed by benefices.

The semblance of constitutional right was there, but behind those "solemn plausibilities" lay the foul morass of rotten boroughs and royal patronage of which the taxation of the Colonies was only a phase. Around this point the battle raged. The Colonists were not popular.

"Almost every group was opposed to their claims," says Guedalla. "Greenville had taxed, the Whigs had repealed the tax, but with unhappy pedantry had asserted the right. Mr. Townshend had taxed again. Nine years of tangled politics had created a permanent majority for American taxation, and Lord North could not defy it." (Guedalla's "Fathers of the Revolution," 90-2.)

But his Lordship's heart was never in the only means that he could take to enforce taxation. "I hate my position," he wrote, and even before the news of the crushing defeat at Saratoga he had declared that he was half inclined

"To take advantage of the flourishing state of our affairs and get out of this damned war."

That earnest wish—though Lord North little suspected it—was to be granted him five years later here on this very spot, through the aid of our French Allies and under the leadership of Virginia's greatest son, George Washington.

We would utterly fail to grasp the point at issue if we regarded Yorktown as a final victory in a war against England.

For, in fact, Yorktown was only an epochal blow in a conflict between principles. It is true that official England was ranged on the one side and the Colonists on the other, but both actors were of the same blood and speech, both had the same inheritance, and, except for the professional soldiers on the British side, both looked at the same ideal of freedom. It was more than a coincidence; it was the outworking of a principle already centuries old that brought the final act in the great drama of human freedom back to the shores of Virginia. For seven years the course of struggle had flowed from Lexington to Boston, through the dripping forests of Saratoga, up and down Long Island, at Trenton and Princeton, and in the cruel vigil of Valley Forge, from the pestilent Savannahs to the foothills of North Carolina. And now, with the inexorable climax of a Greek tragedy, England, in the person of Lord Cornwallis, had been brought once more to Virginia, the site of the birth of English civilization in North America, that a new and necessary impulse might be given to mankind.

Thus came Yorktown, and to that coming Virginia had, as we have seen, contributed the scene of action and the actors themselves, from the doughty Captain John Smith, who first saw Yorktown in 1607, to George Washington, who, one hundred and seventy-four years later, stood on the very plantation of his great-great-great grandfather, Nicholas Marteau, and took back this actual spot, and the whole Commonwealth besides, into the sovereign keeping of Virginia.

But it was not Washington's sword alone that Virginia contributed. Out of the active, fertile minds of her sons came the
Continental Association, and next the Committees of Correspondence. Into this skeleton that creative genius of Henry and his familiars breathed the breath of life. And that miracle was heralded to the world by Thomas Jefferson in the Declaration of Independence.

"The Knights are dust,
Their good swords rust,
Their souls are with the saints,
We trust."

Yet this gathering here today gives unanswerable proof that the works of these captains of citizenship live on.

What gave these names imperishable luminence? It was the unflagging genius with which they explored the bases of human rights and the undaunted courage with which they maintained their conclusions. It was this alliance with something greater than themselves, something beyond the purview of money or even fame, that touched their labors with the long radiance of eternity; for

"That which gave a peculiar grace and glory to all they did was that they did it for pure love of God and country."

Nor are we strangers to that impulse and that aim. To us, as to them, may come at any time, as the necessary outworking of eternal principles, the choice between liberty and death. The lesson of this day will be only an empty phantom unless it quickens and strengthens in us, and in our sons and daughters, the will to be ready and able in our day and need to make new contributions to our testing Yorktown.