

Philip Freneau: A Warning to America (1792)

Removed from Europe's feuds, a hateful scene
 (Thank heaven, such wastes of ocean roll between)
 Where tyrant kings in bloody schemes combine,
 And each forbodes in tears, *Man is no longer mine!*
 Glad we recall the Day that bade us first
 Spurn at their power, and shun their wars accurst;
 Pitted and gaffed no more for England's glory
 Nor made the tag-rag-bobtail of their story.

Something still wrong in every system lurks.
 Something imperfect haunts all human works—
 Wars must be hatched, unthinking men to fleece,
 Or we, *this day*, had been in perfect peace,
 With double bolts our Janus' temple shut,
 Nor terror reigned through each backwoodsman's hut,
 No rattling drums assailed the peasant's ear
 Nor Indian yells disturbed our sad frontier,
 Nor *gallant chiefs*, 'gainst Indian hosts combined
 Scaped from the trap—to *leave their tails behind*.

Peace to all feuds!—and come the happier day
 When Reason's sun shall light us on our way;
 When erring man shall all his Rights retrieve,
 No despots rule him, and no priests deceive,
 'Till then, Columbia!—watch each stretch of power,
 Nor sleep too soundly at the midnight hour,
 By flattery won, and lulled by soothing strains,
Silenus took his nap—and waked in chains—
 In a soft dream of smooth delusion led
 Unthinking Gallia bowed her drooping head
 To tyrants' yokes—and met such bruises there,
 As now must take three ages to repair;

Then keep the paths of dear-bought freedom clear,
 Nor slavish systems grant admittance here.