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DISCOURSE

PRONOUNCED AT THE REQUEST

OF

THE ESSEX HISTORICAL SOCIETY,

ON THE 18TH OF SEPTEMBER, 1823,

IN COMMEMORATION

OF THE FIRST SETTLEMENT OF SALEM,

IN THE

STATE OF MASSACHUSETTS.

BY

JOSEPH STORY.

PUBLISHED AT THE REQUEST OF THE SOCIETY.

BOSTON:

HILLIARD, GRAY, LITTLE, AND WILKINS.

1828.

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DISTRICT OF MASSACHUSETTS, *to wit* :

DISTRICT CLERK'S OFFICE.

BE IT REMEMBERED, that on the twenty-sixth day of September, A. D. 1828, and in the fifty-third year of the independence of the United States of America, Hilliard, Gray, Little, & Wilkins, of said district, have deposited in this office the title of a book, the right whereof they claim as proprietors, in the words following, *to wit* :—"A Discourse pronounced at the Request of the Essex Historical Society, on the 18th of September, 1828, in Commemoration of the first Settlement of Salem, in the State of Massachusetts. By Joseph Story."—In conformity to the act of the Congress of the United States, entitled "An act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts, and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies during the times therein mentioned:" and also to an act, entitled "An act supplementary to an act, entitled 'An act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts, and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies during the times therein mentioned,' and extending the benefits thereof to the arts of designing, engraving, and etching historical and other prints."

JNO. W. DAVIS,

Clerk of the District of Massachusetts.

CAMBRIDGE :

HILLIARD, METCALF, AND COMPANY,
Printers to the University.

DISCOURSE.

THERE are certain epochs in the history of nations, which always attract to themselves a lasting interest. They constitute steps in the progress or decline of empire, at which we involuntarily pause to look back upon the past, or to spell out the fortunes of the future. They become associated with our inmost feelings and profoundest reflections. Our imaginations embody the time, the place, and the circumstances. We drop the intermediate distances of space and years, which divide us from them. We breathe the very air and spirit of the age itself. We gather up the fragments of broken facts, as history or tradition has scattered them around us. We arrange them with a fond solicitude; and having dressed them out in all the pride and pomp of fair array, our hearts kindle at the contemplation; and we exult or mourn, glow with confidence, or bow with humiliation, as they pass before us, and we realize their connexion with ourselves, the glory of our country, or the fate of the world.

Of memorable events, few awaken a more lively curiosity than the origin of nations. Whence we sprung, at what period, from what race, by what causes, under what circumstances, for what objects, are inquiries so natural, that they rise almost spontaneously in our minds ; and scarcely less so in the humblest, than in the most exalted of society. They are intimately connected with our pride, our character, our hopes, and our destiny. He, who may look back upon a long line of illustrious ancestors, cannot forget, that the blood, stirring in his own veins, is drawn from a common source ; and that the light, reflected by their virtues, casts upon his own path a cheering, even though it may be a distant, radiance. And he, who may not claim kindred with the mighty dead, feels, that they are the common inheritance of his country, and that he has a right to share in their fame, and triumph in their achievements.

Nor let it be supposed, that this strong propensity of our nature is attributable to the indulgence of mere personal or national vanity. It has a higher and better origin. It is closely interwoven with that reverence and affection, with which we regard our parents, and the patriarchs of our own times ; with that gratitude, with which we follow the benefactors of our race ; with that piety, which reads in every event the superintendence of a wise and benevolent Providence ; with that charity, which binds up our interests in those of mankind at large ; with that sympathy, which links our fate with that of all past and future generations ; and with that sense of duty, which the consciousness of trusts of unmeasured

extent never fails to elevate and strengthen. Above all, we are thus enabled to extract from remote events that instruction, which the vicissitudes of human life should press home to our own business and bosoms. The toils and misfortunes incident to infant settlements ; the slow progress even of successful effort ; the patience, fortitude, and sagacity, by which evils are overcome or diminished ; the fundamental causes, which quicken or retard their growth ; these all furnish lessons, which improve the wise, correct the rash, and alarm the improvident.

Two hundred years have just elapsed, since our forefathers landed on these shores for the permanent plantation of New-England. I say emphatically, for the permanent plantation of New-England. There had been before that period various adventurers, who from curiosity, or necessity, or hope of gain, explored the coast ; but their purposes were transient, or their stay short. There had been here and there little establishments for fishery, or trade, successively taken up and abandoned, from the rigors of the climate, the unprofitableness of the employment, or the disappointments naturally following upon such novel enterprises. Few persons (comparatively speaking) had turned their thoughts to this, as a land favorable for the cultivation of the soil, or the arts of social life. It promised little to the European, who should leave his native country with a fancy warmed with descriptions of the luxuriance of this western world, and hoping to pass the residue of his life, as ‘one long summer day of indolence’ and ease. It offered no mines glittering with gold

and silver to tempt the avarice of the selfish, or to stimulate the hopes of the ambitious. It presented an irregular and rocky front, lashed by the waves of a stormy ocean, and frowning with dark forests and bleak promontories. Its rough and stubborn soil yielded with reluctance to the labors of the husbandman; and the severities of a northern winter for almost half the year stripped the earth of its vegetation by its bitter blasts, or drifting snows. It required stout hands and stouter hearts to encounter such discouragements; to subdue the ruggedness of nature, and to wait the slow returns, which perseverance and industry alone could reasonably hope to obtain. Men must have strong motives to lead them, under such circumstances, to such a choice. It was not an enterprise, which, being conceived in a moment of rashness, might by its quick success plead its own justification. It had none of the allurements of power, or the indulgences of pleasure, or the offerings of fame, to give it attractions. Higher motives, and deeper thoughts, such as engross the passions and the souls of men, and sink into comparative insignificance the comforts of social life, are alone adequate to produce such results. One might well say, as Tacitus did of the Germany of his own times,* ‘*Quis porro, præter periculum horridi et ignoti maris, Asiâ aut Africâ aut Italiâ relictâ, Germaniam peteret, informem terris, asperam cœlo, tristem cultu aspectuque, nisi si patria sit?*’ Who, independently of the perils of a

* Hutchinson, in his History (vol. i. p. 2) cites the passage. It is from Tacitus *de Moribus Germaniæ*, c. 2.

terrific and unknown sea, would leave the soft climates of Asia, Africa, or Europe, and fix his abode in a land rough and uncultivated, with an inclement sky and a dreary aspect, unless indeed it were his mother country?

It should excite no surprise, therefore, that a century had passed away after the Cabots discovered the southern part of this continent, and yet the Aborigines remained there in undisturbed security. Even the neighbouring colony of Plymouth, where the renowned Pilgrims, under Carver, Bradford, and Winslow, had already raised the standard of liberty and the cross, was encountering the severest trials, and struggling almost for existence. There were not a few friends, who began to entertain fears, that unless succours came in from other quarters, this noble band of worthies, worn down by hardships and discouragements, might be destined, at no distant period, to follow the fate of other adventurers, or be reduced to a narrow factory.* Their original scheme of colonization involved in it some fatal defects, which were afterwards corrected by their own wisdom and experience. The notion of a community of property and profits was utterly incompatible with the growth of a state. It cut off at a blow every excitement to individual enterprise; and by its unequal distribution of burthens and benefits sowed far and wide the elements of discord. The followers of the excellent Robinson might, indeed, comfort themselves with the present possession of

* 2 Hutch. Hist. 468, 469, 470, 472, 476; Prince's Annals, 268; Robertson's America, book 10; 3 Hist. Collect. 417.

a refuge from religious oppression ; but the possibility of a dissolution of their connexion at any period, however remote, must, whenever it was suggested, have filled their hearts with sorrow, and, even when least indulged, sometimes have disturbed their peace. Their own language in defence of their settlement at Hartford affords a striking picture of their situation. ‘ They lived upon a barren place, where they were by necessity cast ; and neither they, nor theirs could long continue upon the same ; and why should they be deprived of that, which they had provided, and intended to remove to, as soon as they were able ? * At the distance of ten years from their first landing, the colony could scarcely number three hundred inhabitants ; † a proof, at once, of the magnitude of their difficulties, and of the heroic zeal and perseverance, which met them without shrinking or dismay.

By the blessing of God, however, our Fathers also came hither, and, in connexion with the good ‘ Old Colony,’ fixed henceforth, and, as we fondly trust, for ever, the settlement and destiny of New-England. And we are met, on the very spot first trodden by their footsteps, on the very day first welcoming their arrival, to celebrate this memorable event. It is fit, that we should so do. What occasion could occur more worthy of our homage ? What recollections could rise up, better adapted to awaken our gratitude, cheer our hearts, and elevate

* 2 Hutch. Hist. 469, &c.

† Robertson’s America, book x. p. 267 ; Chalmers’s Annals, p. 97. See also the Commissioners’ Report in 1665 (3 Hutch. Collect. 417.)

our thoughts ? Who is he that can survey this goodly land, and not feel a present sense of its various blessings ? Let him cast his eyes over our mountains, or our vallies, our deep forests, or our cultivated plains. Let him visit our villages, and hamlets, and towns, thickening on every side, and listen to the sounds of busy, contented, thrifty industry. Let him view the green meadows, and the waving fields, and the rich orchards, rising under his eyes in alternate order, yielding their products in profusion, and quickened into fertility by the labors of man. Let him hold communion with the inhabitants of these peaceful abodes, with the mountaineers, and peasants, and yeomen, the lords of the soil, the reapers of their own harvests, who look proudly down upon their own inheritance. Let him learn from them the resolute spirit, the manly virtues, the intelligence and piety, which pervade New-England. Let him glance at the neighbouring metropolis ; its splendid spires glittering in the sun ; its noble hospitals and public charities ; its crowded and well-built streets ; its beautiful harbour, floating on its bosom the commerce of the world, and reflecting on its surface islands, and islets, and shores of ever varying magnificence ; its amphitheatre of hills, whose gentle slopes whiten with neat mansions, or soften into shade, under the joint ministry of nature and art ; its lofty halls, where eloquence has burst forth in strains of patriotism, which have made captive the souls of thousands ; its visible industry, and enterprise, and public spirit, gathering into the lap of a common mother the products of all climates, and

spreading out a generous hospitality. Let him catch in 'the distant reach the walls of our venerable University, cemented by the solid strength of centuries, where learning and religion obtained their early glory, and will, we trust, receive their latest praise ;—let ^hhim, I say, contemplate these scenes, and survey this goodly heritage, and who is he, even though a stranger to us and ours, whose voice shall not eagerly ask our lineage, our ancestry, our age ? Who is he, that here inhales his natal air, and embraces his mother earth, and does not rejoice, that he was born for this day, and is privileged to pour out his thanks, and offer up his prayers at the home of his forefathers ?

To us, indeed, who own the local genius, and feel the inspirations of the place, the day may well be presumed to be crowded with thick-coming fancies and joyance. We may not turn our eyes on any side without meeting objects to revive the images of the primitive times. We can still realize the fidelity of the description of the voyager of 1629, who said, ' We passed the curious and difficult entrance into the large, spacious harbour of Naimkeake ; and as we passed along, it was wonderful to behold so many islands replenished with thick wood, and high trees, and many fair green pastures.' The woods have disappeared ; but the islands and the fair green pastures remain with more than native beauty ; and the rivers still meander in their early channels. This ' city of peace,' so called by our fathers, as significant of their enjoyment of civil and religious freedom, still boasts its ancient name ; still

justifies the original allusion to the scriptures, ‘In Salem also is *God’s* tabernacle, and his dwelling-place in Zion.’* The thin and scattered settlements can no longer be traced. But in their stead are found spacious streets, and neat dwellings, and lively schools, and numerous churches, and busy marts, and all the fair accompaniments of opulence and knowledge, simplicity of life and manners, unobtrusive refinement, and social kindness. Yet in the midst of these blessed changes, we can point out the very spot, where the first flock was gathered, and the first church consecrated to the service of the living God; where the meek and learned Higginson (alas, how soon to perish!) first raised his voice in prayer, and with trembling lips, and pale cheeks, where sorrow and sickness had worn many an early furrow, discoursed most eloquently of life, and death, and immortality, the triumphs of faith, and the rewards of obedience. Yes, it is still devoted to the same holy purpose. There, the voice of praise, and thanksgiving, and prayer still ascends from pious hearts; there, the doctrines of salvation are still preached with enlightened zeal and charity; there, the humble, the contrite, and the pure still assemble in sweet communion, and worship God in spirit and in truth.† The sepulchres of our forefathers are also among us. We can trace them through all their various labors to their last appointed home; ‘*sedes ubi fata quietas ostendunt.*’ Time

* 1 Historical Collections, 117; Psalm lxxvi.

† See the excellent dedication sermon of the Rev. Mr Upham, one of the Pastors of this church, in November, 1826.

has not yet levelled the incumbent sod, nor the moss overgrown the frail memorials erected to their worth. But their noblest monument is around us, and before us. Their deeds speak their eulogy in a manner, which it requires no aid of language to heighten. They live in their works, not indeed in the perishable structures of human skill, in marble domes or triumphal arches, in temples or in palaces, the wonders of art; but in the enduring institutions, which they created, in the principles, which they taught, and by which they sought to live, and for which they were ready to die. On these they laid the solid foundations of our strength and glory; and on these, if on any thing human, may be written the words of immortality. Our graveyards offer no better epitaph for them, than that, Here lie the Founders of New-England; and brief though it be, and of simple phrase, it has a pregnant meaning, the extent of which no human mind has yet grasped. It can be unfolded only with the destiny of our latest posterity.

May I venture on some allusions not unbecoming this occasion, and yet of a nature somewhat personal, though not, I trust, obtrusive. I speak in the presence of the descendants of these men. Their names sound with familiar welcome in our streets, and greet us on every side, as we pass along. They seem to live again in their offspring. Their images grace our processions, and throng our churches, and enliven our festivals. We feel almost as in their conscious presence, and listen to the voices of other days. When in the enthusiasm of poetry we are

asked, 'And the pilgrims, where are they?' Where are Winthrop, and Endicott, and Higginson, and Dudley, and Saltonstall, and Bradstreet, and Pickering, and Sprague, and Pynchon, and Hathorne, and Conant, and Woodbury, and Palfrey, and Balch, and the other worthies? We are ready to exclaim,—They are here. This is their home. These are their children.

There is yet among us One, who brings their revered forms before us with peculiar dignity, and is at once the representative of their age and our own. Generation after generation has passed away, and yet he survives, the model, and the monument of a century. His early youth almost clasped the knees of the pilgrims. He was familiar with their sons, and listened to their story from the lips of those, who painted with the vividness of contemporaries, and with the feelings of Puritans. Standing upon the very verge of the first century, he seems the living herald of the first settlers, breathing into our souls their very words and sentiments, as one, who speaks not for the dead, but for those, who yet sojourn on the earth. Time in his favor has relaxed his wonted course, and touched even the faded graces of the past with a kind and mellowing charm. If one were to task his imagination to portray a patriarch of primitive simplicity, warmed with the refinements of these latter days, he could scarcely clothe the being of his own creation with other qualities than we have seen. He could not fail to point out to us a form, venerable for wisdom, learning, and modesty, in which the spirit of philosophy and

benevolence was sustained by meekness and piety ; in which blamelessness of life, cheerfulness of heart, and gratitude for past blessings, imparted solid lustre to a faith, and hope, and joy, resting upon immortality. Well may it be asked of such a being in the tender language of Scripture, ‘ And the old man, of whom ye spake, is he yet alive ? ’ Your own hearts have already answered the question. We have seen this centennial patriarch ; and we count it among the triumphs of this day, that he yet lives, the delight of his friends, the crown of his profession, and the ornament of human nature.

Such are some of the circumstances and associations, belonging to the festival, which has assembled us together. I am but too sensible, how utterly inadequate my own powers are to meet the exigencies of such a day. I have not been unconscious of the difficulties of the task ; and I now stand here with sincere self-distrust, having yielded to a sense of duty, what I should gladly have declined, if left to my own choice. After all, however, the occasion carries along with it its own means of gratification, in the thoughts of home, and kindred, and ancestry, and country, which rise in every heart, and hang on every tongue. If I falter in the course, I may well share this consolation, since a common sympathy must disarm the severity of criticism.

Many topics, appropriate to this celebration, have already been discussed by others in a manner, which does not require, even if it should admit of farther illustration. The genius of New England has employed some of its best efforts to add dignity to

the scene. History and tradition have been laid under contribution to adorn the narrative; and philosophy itself, while studying the events, has unfolded speculations, as profound and engrossing, as any, which can engage the human mind. I profess not the rashness to follow in the high course thus marked out; content to walk in the ancient paths, and to gather, as I may, the gleanings of a harvest, which has so amply rewarded the labors of my predecessors.

My object is to furnish you with a brief sketch of the origin of the colony; of the motives, which led to the enterprise; of the characters of the men, who conducted it; of the principles, upon which it was established; and of the grand results, which it has hitherto developed. I shall also adventure upon some topics, where the conduct of our ancestors has been severely put to question; and without attempting to disguise their mistakes, I trust, that something may be said to rescue their memories from unmerited reproaches.

If the origin of nations be, as it confessedly is, a source of deep interest, there are circumstances connected with the first settlement of New-England peculiarly to gratify a national pride. We do not trace ourselves back to times of traditionary darkness, where truth and fiction are blended at every step, and what remains, after the closest investigation, is but conjecture, or shadowy fact. We do not rely upon the arts of the poet to give dignity to the narrative, and invest it with the colorings of his imagination. Greece might delight to trace her

origin up to the high renown and antiquity of Egypt; and Rome soothe herself with her rise from the smouldering ruins of Troy. We have no legends, which genius may fashion into its own forms, and crowd with imaginary personages. Such as it is, our history lies far within the reach of the authentic annals of mankind. It has been written by contemporaries with a simplicity, which admits of no embellishment, and a fidelity, which invites scrutiny. The records are before us, sketched by the first adventurers; and there we may learn all their wanderings and cares, and sufferings and hopes, their secret thoughts and their absorbing motives. We can ask of the world no credit for modern statements of old events. We can conceal nothing; and our true glory is, that there is nothing, which we wish to conceal. And yet, I think, whoever shall read these annals in their minute details; whoever shall bring home to his thoughts the causes and consequences of these events; whoever shall watch the struggles of conscience against the seductions of affection, and the pressure of dangers; will feel his soul touched with a moral sublimity, which poetry itself could not surpass. So mighty is truth; so irresistible is the voice of nature.

24 Take but a single passage in their lives, the opening scene of that drama, on which we seem but just to have entered. Go back, and meet the first detachment, the little band, which, under the guidance of the worthy, intelligent, and intrepid Endicott, landed on the neighbouring shore. It was then, as it is now, the early advance of autumn. What can

be more beautiful or more attractive, than this season in New-England? The sultry heat of summer has passed away; and a delicious coolness at evening succeeds the genial warmth of the day. The labors of the husbandman approach their natural termination; and he gladdens with the near prospect of his promised reward. The earth swells with the increase of vegetation. The fields wave with their yellow and luxuriant harvests. The trees put forth their darkest foliage, half shading and half revealing their ripened fruits, to tempt the appetite of man, and proclaim the goodness of his Creator. Even in scenes of another sort, where nature reigns alone in her own majesty, there is much to awaken religious enthusiasm. As yet the forests stand clothed in their dress of undecayed magnificence. The winds, that rustle through their tops, scarcely disturb the silence of the shades below. The mountains and the vallies glow in warm green, or lively russet. The rivulets flow on with a noiseless current, reflecting back the images of many a glossy insect, that dips his wings in their cooling waters. The mornings and evenings are still vocal with the notes of a thousand warblers, who plume their wings for a later flight. Above all, the clear blue sky, the long and sunny calms, the scarcely whispering breezes, the brilliant sunsets, lit up with all the wondrous magnificence of light and shade and color, and slowly settling down into a pure and transparent twilight;—These, these are days and scenes, which even the cold cannot behold without emotion; but on which the meditative and pious gaze with profound admiration; for they breathe of holier and happier regions beyond the grave.

But lovely as is this autumn, so finely characterized as the Indian Summer of New-England, and so favorably contrasting itself with the chills and moisture of the British Isles, let us not imagine, that it appeared to these Pilgrims, as it does to us, clothed in smiles. Their first steps on this continent were doubtless with that buoyancy of spirit, which relief from the tediousness and dangers of a sea voyage naturally excites. But, think you, that their first hasty glances around them did not bring some anxieties for the future, and some regrets for the past? They were in the midst of a wilderness, untrodden by civilized man. The native forests spread around them, with only here and there a detached glade, which the Indian tomahawk had levelled, or the fisherman cleared for his temporary hut. There were no houses inviting to repose; no fields ripening with corn; no cheerful hearths; no welcoming friends; no common altars. The heavens, indeed, shone fair over their heads; and the earth beneath was rich in its beauties. But where was their home? Where were those comforts and endearments, which that little word crowds into our hearts in the midst of the keenest sufferings? Where were the objects, to which they might cling to relieve their thoughts from the sense of present desolation? If there were some, who could say with an exile of the succeeding year, 'We rested that night with glad and thankful hearts, that God had put an end to our long and tedious journey through the greatest sea in the world;'^{*} there were many, whose pillows were wet

^{*} 3 Hutch. Collect. 44.

with bitter, though not repentant, tears. Many a father offered his evening prayer with trembling accents; many a mother clasped her children to her bosom in speechless agony. The morrow came; but it brought no abatement of anxiety. It was rather a renewal of cares, of sad reminiscences, of fearful forebodings.

This is no idle picture of the fancy, tricked out for effect, to move our sympathies, or blind us to the real facts. How could their situation be otherwise? They were not fugitives from justice, seeking to bury themselves and their crimes in some remote corner of the earth. They were not prodigals, endeavouring to retrieve their wrecked fortunes in distant adventures. They were not idle and luxurious wanderers, weary of society, and panting for unexplored novelties. They had left a country full of the refinements of social life, and dear to them by every human tie. There were the tombs of their ancestors; there the abodes of their friends; of mothers, who kissed their pale cheeks on the seashore; of sisters, who wrung their hands in sharp distress; of children, who dropped upon their knees, and asked a blessing at parting, ay, at parting for ever. There was the last, lingering embrace; there the last sight of the white cliffs of England, which had faded from their straining gaze, for time, and for eternity. There for the last time were uttered from their broken voices, 'Farewell, dear England; farewell, the church of God in England; farewell, all Christian friends there.'*

* Eliot's Dictionary, Art. *Higginson*, 252.

They were now landed on other shores. The excitements of the voyage were gone. Three thousand miles of ocean rolled between them and the country they had left; and every illusion of hope had vanished before the sober realities of a wilderness. They had now full leisure for reflection,

. . . . 'while busy, meddling memory,
In barbarous succession mustered up
The past endearments of their softer hours,
Tenacious of its theme.'

There is nothing so depressing in exile, as that sickness of the heart, which comes over us with the thoughts of a lost, distant home. There is nothing, which softens the harsh features of nature, like the feeling, that this is our country. The exiles of New-England saw not before them either a home, or a country. Both were to be created.

If the past could bring few consolations, the future was not without its embarrassments. The season was passed, in which any addition could be made to their scanty stock of provisions from the produce of the soil. No succours could reach them until the ensuing spring; and even then, they were subject to many contingencies. The winter must soon approach with its bleak winds, and desolating storms. The wild beasts were in the woods; and the scarcely less savage Indians lurked in the ravines, or accosted them with questionable friendship. Trees were to be felled, and houses built, and fortifications arranged, as well for shelter as for safety; and brief was the space, and feeble the means to accomplish these necessary defences. Beyond these

were the unknown dangers of change of climate, and new habits of life, and scanty food ; of the pestilence, that walketh in darkness, and the famine, that wasteth at noonday. These were discouragements, which might well appal the timid, and subdue the rash. It is not, then, too much to affirm again, that it required stout hands and stouter hearts to overcome such difficulties. But

‘ If misfortune comes, she brings along
The bravest virtues.’

The men, who landed here, were no ordinary men ; the motive for their emigration was no ordinary motive ; and the glory of their achievement has few parallels in the history of the world. Their perseverance in the midst of hardships, their firmness in the midst of dangers, their patience in the midst of sufferings, their courage in the midst of disasters, their unconquerable spirit, their unbending adherence to their principles, their steady resistance of all encroachments, surprise us even more than the wisdom of their plans, and the success of their operations.

If we trace on the colony during the two or three next succeeding years, in which it received an accession of almost two thousand persons, we shall find abundant reason to distrust those early descriptions, of which the just complaint was, that ‘ honest men, out of a desire to draw over others to them, wrote somewhat hyperbolically of many things here,’ and ‘ by their too large commendations of the country, and the commodities thereof, so strongly invited *others*

to go on;’* and to express our astonishment, that the enterprise was not instantly abandoned. Many of those, who accompanied Endicott, died in the ensuing winter by disease from exposure, and want of food, and suitable medical assistance. They were reinforced in the next summer by new colonists with fresh supplies; and again in the succeeding year, when the Corporation itself was also removed under the auspices of Winthrop, Dudley, Johnson, Saltonstall, and others. What was then the state of the Colony? We are told by a friend and eye-witness †—‘We found the Colony,’ says he, ‘in a sad and unexpected condition; above eighty of them’ (that is, more than one quarter of the whole number) ‘being dead the winter before; and many of those alive weak and sick; all the corn and bread amongst them all hardly sufficient to feed them a fortnight.’ He adds, ‘If any come hither to plant for worldly ends, that can live well at home, he commits an error, of which he will soon repent him.’—‘In a word, we have little to be envied; but endure much to be pitied in the sickness and mortality of our people.’ And then in the conclusion of this memorable letter he breaks out with the unconquerable spirit of Puritanism—‘We are left a people poor, and contemptible; yet such as trust in God; and are contented with our own condition, being well assured, that he will not fail us, nor forsake us.’ Men, who were thus prepared to encounter such distresses, were prepared for every thing. The

* Governor Dudley’s Letter, 3 Hist. Coll. 36, 38, 43.

† Id. *Ibid.* p. 38.

stake had no terrors for them ; and earth had no rewards, which could for a moment withdraw them from the dictates of conscience and duty.

This year was, indeed, still more disastrous than the preceding, and robbed them of some of their brightest ornaments. Before December the grave had closed upon two hundred of their number ; and among these were some of the most accomplished of both sexes. It is impossible, even at this distance of time, to contemplate their character and fate, without the deepest sympathy. Higginson, the revered and beloved teacher of the first flock, fell an early victim, in the forty-third year of his age, and the first of his ministry. Let me pause for a moment to pay a passing tribute to his worth. He received his education at Emanuel College in Cambridge, where he was so much distinguished by his talents, acquirements, and scholarship, that he gained an early introduction into a benefice of the church. The arguments of Hildersham and Hooker, however, soon infused scruples into his mind respecting the doctrines and discipline of the establishment, and he was ejected for nonconformity. He then taught a few pupils for the maintenance of his family ; and having received an invitation to remove to New-England, in the hope of restoring his health, and animated by the glorious prospect of a free enjoyment (as he expresses it) ‘ of the true religion and holy ordinances of Almighty God,’ he embarked with his family in the Talbot in 1629. In the course of the voyage he had the misfortune to lose one of his daughters, of whose death he gives us an account in

his journal, drawn up with a simplicity beautifully illustrative of his own character. ‘And so,’ says he, ‘it was God’s will the child died about five o’clock at night, being the first in our ship, that was buried in the bowels of the great Atlantic sea; which, as it was a great grief to us, her parents, and a terror to all the rest, as being the beginning of a contagious disease and mortality, so in the same judgment it pleased God to remember mercy in the child, in forcing it from a world of misery, wherein she had lived all her days.’ And, after an allusion to her personal infirmities, he concludes, ‘So that in respect of her we had cause to take her death as a blessing from the Lord to shorten her misery.’* Alas! he was destined too soon to follow her. Not many months elapsed before a consumption settled on his cheeks, and by its hectic flushes betrayed an irretrievable decline. He died with the composure, resignation, and christian confidence of a saint, leaving behind him a character, in which learning, benignity of manners, purity of life, fervent piety, and unaffected charity, were blended with most attractive grace; and his name is enrolled among the earliest and truest benefactors of New-England.

A death scarcely less regretted, and which followed with a fearful rapidity, was that of a lady of noble birth, elegant accomplishments, and exemplary virtues. I speak of the Lady Arabella Johnson,† a daughter of the Earl of Lincoln, who accompanied

* 3 Hutch. Collect. 32, 36.

† Her name is commonly spelt in the records of that day, possibly as an abbreviation, ‘Arbelka.’

her husband in the embarkation under Winthrop, and in honor of whom, the admiral ship on that occasion was called by her name. She died in a very short time after her arrival; and lies buried near the neighbouring shore. No stone or other memorial indicates the exact place; but tradition has preserved it with a holy reverence. The remembrance of her excellence is yet fresh in all our thoughts; and many a heart still kindles with admiration of her virtues; and many a bosom heaves with sighs at her untimely end. What, indeed, could be more touching than the fate of such a woman? What example more striking than hers, of uncompromising affection and piety? Born in the lap of ease, and surrounded by affluence; with every prospect which could make hope gay, and fortune desirable; accustomed to the splendors of a court, and the scarcely less splendid hospitalities of her ancestral home; she was yet content to quit, what has, not inaptly, been termed 'this paradise of plenty and pleasure,' for 'a wilderness of wants,' and with a fortitude superior to the delicacies of her rank and sex, to trust herself to an unknown ocean and a distant climate, that she might partake, with her husband, the pure and spiritual worship of God. To the honor, to the eternal honor of her sex, be it said, that in the path of duty no sacrifice is with them too high, or too dear. Nothing is with them impossible, but to shrink from what love, honor, innocence, religion, requires. The voice of pleasure or of power may pass by unheeded; but the voice of affliction never. The chamber of the sick, the pillow of the dying, the vigils of the

dead, the altars of religion, never missed the presence or the sympathies of woman. Timid though she be, and so delicate, that the winds of heaven may not too roughly visit her; on such occasions she loses all sense of danger, and assumes a preternatural courage, which knows not, and fears not consequences. Then she displays that undaunted spirit, which neither courts difficulties, nor evades them; that resignation, which utters neither murmur nor regret; and that patience in suffering, which seems victorious even over death itself.

The Lady Arabella perished in this noble undertaking, of which she seemed the ministering angel; and her death spread universal gloom throughout the colony. Her husband was overwhelmed with grief at the unexpected event, and survived her but a single month. Governor Winthrop has pronounced his eulogy in one short sentence. 'He was a holy man, and wise, and died in sweet peace.' He was truly the idol of the people; and the spot selected by himself for his own sepulture became consecrated in their eyes; so that many left it as a dying request, that they might be buried by his side. Their request prevailed; and the Chapel Burying-ground in Boston, which contains his remains, became from that time appropriated to the repose of the dead.* Perhaps the best tribute to this excellent pair is, that time, which, with so unsparing a hand, consigns statesmen and heroes, and even sages to oblivion,

* 1 Hutch. Hist. 16; 1 Winthrop's Journal, 34; Eliot's Dictionary, Art. *Johnson*.

has embalmed the memory of their worth, and preserved it among the choicest of New-England relics. It can scarcely be forgotten, but with the annals of our country.

I have dwelt with some particularity, perhaps with undue solicitude, upon some of the circumstances attending the emigration of our forefathers. They are necessary to a full comprehension of the difficulties of the enterprise, and of the sufferings, which they bore, I will not say with fortitude merely, but with cheerful, unrepining resolution. It is not by a few set phrases, or a few strong touches, that we can paint their sorrows, or their struggles, their calmness, when their friends were falling around them, and themselves were placed at the

. 'dreadful post
Of observation, darker every hour ;'

or their courage at the approach of dangers of another sort. Many of them went down to an early grave without the consolation even in vision of an ultimate triumph ; and many, who lived to partake it, grappled with hardships, the plain recital of which would appal more than the most studied exaggerations of rhetoric. But (let me repeat it) thanks be to God, their efforts were successful. They laid the foundations of empire in these northern regions with slow and thoughtful labor. Our reverence for their services should rest, not upon the fictions of fancy, but upon a close survey of their means and their ends, their motives and their lives, their characters and their actions. And I am much mistaken, if that close survey does not invigorate our

patriotism, confirm our principles, and deepen and widen the channels of our gratitude.

The history of colonies, both in ancient and modern times, may be generally traced back to the ambition of princes, the love of adventure or gain, the pressure of poverty, or the necessity of a refuge from political oppressions. The ancient nations, for the most part, transplanted colonies to distant regions, to extend the boundaries of their power, and consolidate their strength. They were sometimes outposts of the empire, to hold in check a conquered province, and sometimes military stations to overawe and watch a formidable rival. The beautiful regions of Asia Minor were peopled with Grecian tribes, by the attractions of a fertile soil and delicious climate, by the passion for conquest, by the temptations of eastern luxury, and by the ostracisms of successive factions. Rome gathered them within the folds of her ample domain, as the booty of her arms; and pushed her own colonies only where tribute was to be exacted, or distant conquests secured. The whole line of her colonies in Gaul, Germany, and the North, were but a chain of military communications to intercept the inroads of the barbarians, and furnish employment for leaders and legions too restless and too ambitious for civil life. They were at once the sources of her power, and her weakness. To them Rome was every thing; and the colonies they occupied, nothing, except as resources and depots to command the republic, or dictate the succession to the imperial purple. The Capitol was but too often obedient to the will of a provincial commander, and a licentious soldiery.

The colonies of modern nations owe their origin almost exclusively to the spirit of commerce. If power has mixed itself among the objects of their governments, it has rather been, as a consequence of commerce, than an independent motive. Ships, commerce, and colonies were so long associated in the minds of European statesmen, that they seemed inseparable accompaniments. Hence arose that system of monopoly, which narrowed down all trade to the mother country, and stunted the growth and crippled the resources of the colonies to the measure of the wants of the former. All Europe, as if by a general conspiracy, acted up to the very letter of this system for centuries. The general practice was, like that attributed to the Dutch in respect to the Spice Islands, to destroy all the surplus, beyond that which would yield the established rate of profits. The South American colonies of France, Spain, and Portugal were hermetically sealed against the approach of foreign ships, until the mighty revolutions of our day crumbled the whole system into dust, and opened, almost like an earthquake, a pathway through their interior. Even England relaxed her grasp with a slow and reluctant caution, yielding little, except to necessity, indifferent to the colonial interests, and solicitous only that the home market should gather up and distribute all the profits and products of the Indies. Her famous navigation acts, the boast of her statesmen from the times of Cromwell down to ours, are an undisguised appropriation of the means of the colonies to the policy of the mother country. She generally left the plantations

to the private enterprise of her subjects, until their trade was worthy of her interference ; and she then assumed the government and regulation of them for her own and not for their benefit. Protection became a duty only at the time when it seemed no longer a burthen. Her vast empire in the East, the wonder of our day, whose fate furnishes a problem, not to be solved by any former experience, is but the ill-managed contrivance of a private corporation for trade. It affords a curious example of the spirit of conquest engrafted on the spirit of commerce ; of a government founded on calculations of profit ; of a legislation acting on the industry of sixty millions of subjects, wholly without representation ; of a judicial establishment seeking to administer justice by appeals to an unknown code, with entire good faith, but wholly inadequate means ; of a political superintendence, which guards against external violence, but which sits down contented, while provinces are plundered, and thrones are overturned, in wars brought on by the encroachments of commerce.

The colonies planted on the continent of North America, were in a great measure the offspring of private adventure and enterprise, and, with a single exception, of the spirit of commerce. That exception is New-England ; and it is an exception as extraordinary as it is honorable. We owe our existence to the love of religion ; and, I may say, exclusively to the love of religion. I am aware, that the council of Plymouth had profitable objects in view, and that capital was first embarked, and a charter obtained to accomplish these ends. But the

scheme had little chance of success, and was in fact suspended, if not entirely abandoned. The first settlement at Plymouth was made solely from motives of religion without any charter, and even without any title to the land. And it was not until the charter of 1628 was obtained, by men whose whole hearts were devoted to religion, that the same impulse effected the colonization of Massachusetts. This is not left to tradition; but is the sober truth of history, unquestioned, because unquestionable. It has the highest record evidence in its support. It has, if possible, even weightier proofs, in the public acts of the colony; in our past and existing institutions; in the very errors, as well as the virtues of our forefathers. They were Christians; they were Puritans; they were Christians persecuted by Christians; they were Puritans driven into exile by the priesthood.

The influence of religion upon the human character, is one of the most interesting studies in the history of our race. But the influence of Christianity, whether viewed in respect to the extent of its reach, or the nature of its operations, is the most instructive of all speculations, which can employ the intellect of man. Paganism was indulgent in its general policy, for it taught little of duty, and claimed no exclusive possession of the oracles, or even of the favor of its divinities. In truth, it floated round the mind with a loose and indeterminate credit, and easily admitted into its temples the worship of strange gods; sometimes because their favor might be propitiated, or their vengeance averted; sometimes,

perhaps, because the relative power, superiority, and office of each might not be well adjusted in their mythology. Quarrels and divisions about faith and doctrines, were of very rare occurrence in the Heathen world; for their religion dealt more in rites and ceremonies, than in fixed belief.* There would be little inclination for public struggles, where rewards and punishments were supposed to be administered, not according to desert, but according to the favor, to the passions, and even to the animosities of their divinities. There could be little responsibility cherished, where acts, offensive to some, might on that very account be grateful to others, of their gods. Gibbon's splendid description of the Roman religion is true of nearly the whole ancient world. 'The various modes of worship, which prevailed in the Roman world, were all considered by the people, as equally true; by the philosopher, as equally false; and by the magistrate, as equally useful. And thus toleration produced, not only mutual indulgence, but even religious concord.' †

Far different is the case with Christianity. It propounds no equivocal doctrines. It recognises no false or foreign gods. It allows no idolatrous worship. It presents to all men, one Supreme Being the only proper object of worship, unchangeable, infinite, omniscient, all-wise, all-good, all-powerful, all-merciful, the God of all, and the Father of all. It develops one complete system of duties, fit for all times, and all stations; for the monarch on his

* Bacon's Essays; 2 Bacon's Works, 257.

† 1 Gibbon's Hist. ch. 2, p. 46; Montesquieu's Spirit of Laws, b. 25, ch. 15.

throne, and the peasant in his cottage. It brings all men to the same level, and measures all by the same standard. It humbles in the dust the proud and the arrogant; it gives no heed to the glory of princes, or conquerors, or nobles. It exalts the lowly virtues, the love of peace, charity, humility, forgiveness, resignation, patience, purity, holiness. It teaches a moral and final accountability for every action. It proposes sanctions for its precepts of no earthly reach; but such as are infinite, unchangeable, and eternal. Its rewards are the promises of immortal bliss; its punishments a fearful and overwhelming retribution. It excuses no compromises of principle and no paltering with sin. It acknowledges no sacrifices, but of a broken and contrite spirit; no pardon, but by repentance of heart and reformation of life. In its view, this life is but the entrance upon existence; a transitory state of probation and trial; and the grave is the portal to that better world, 'where God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, nor shall there be any more pain.'

To minds engrossed by such thoughts, and fixed in such belief, what could there be seducing or satisfying in the things of this world? It would be impossible for them for a moment to put in competition the affairs of time, with the dazzling splendors and awful judgments of eternity. We need not wonder, therefore, that Christianity has had, in all ages, and in all sects, its devotees and martyrs, men who would endure every evil rather than renounce

it, whether it were exile, or forfeiture, or torture, or death; that persecution should have been at no loss for victims, whenever she had lighted her fires; and that in the very moment of her imagined triumph, while her hands were yet reeking with blood, she should have felt her own doom sealed, and her own power withered.

The Reformation was the natural result of causes, which had been silently working their way from the first dawn of the revival of letters. Learning stimulated inquiry; inquiry created doubt; and doubt brought on a feverish restlessness for knowledge, which must sooner or later have corrected abuses and errors, even if political causes had not hastened the event. Fortunately for England, fortunately for the cause of religion in its most catholic sense, the passions of a sanguinary and sensual monarch effected at a single blow, what perhaps it would otherwise have required ages to accomplish. The controversy of Henry the Eighth with the Papal see arrested the attention of all Europe, and produced in England a deep conviction of the necessity of some reformation in the church. It was of course, that parties should, upon such an occasion, rally under different banners. Many of the dignitaries, both of the church and state, resisted every innovation, as fraught with evil, not merely from a blind reverence for antiquity, but also from that sympathetic dread of change, which belongs to the habits of mankind in all ages. Many were ardently devoted to the cause of reform; but wished to touch gross abuses only, and thus to pave the way for

gradual, but solid improvements. Many of deeper thought, and warmer zeal, and bolder purposes, deemed it matter of conscience to root out every error, and to bring back Christianity at once to what they esteemed the simplicity of the Gospel. To this last class belonged the body of the Puritans, a class as distinguished for learning, talents, probity, and disinterestedness, as any which adorned their own times. It is a mistake commonly enough entertained, that they were, in the modern sense, Dissenters; that they were hostile to episcopacy in every shape; and that they pushed their aims to the overthrow of all church government. The truth was far otherwise. Many of the most distinguished among them were reared in the bosom of the church, and sincerely loved its venerable forms. Their object was to reform such of its rites and ceremonies only, as they deemed inconsistent with the Scriptures. If in the course of events they arrived at different conclusions, it was because prerogative pressed on them with a heavy hand; because prelacy became the instrument of persecution; because the laws respecting uniformity under the famous High Commission Court trampled upon their rights and consciences, and drove them to examine into the scriptural foundations of the hierarchy. In all their struggles, from the reign of Henry the Eighth to that of James the First, the Puritans clung to the establishment with a sincerity of affection, which, considering their sufferings from papacy and prelacy, is marvellous. In the farewell address of our forefathers at the very moment of their departure for America, it breaks out

into expressions of warm and filial attachment. We 'esteem it our honor,' say they, 'to call the church of England, from whence we rise, our dear mother; and cannot part from our native country, where she specially resideth, without much sadness of heart, and many tears in our eyes, ever acknowledging, that such hope and part as we have obtained in the common salvation, we have received in her bosom, and sucked it from her breasts. We leave it not, therefore, as loathing that milk, wherewith we were nourished there; but blessing God for the parentage and education, as members of the same body, shall always rejoice in her good, and unfeignedly grieve for any sorrow, that shall ever betide her; and while we have breath, sincerely desire and endeavour the continuance and abundance of her welfare, with the enlargement of her bounds in the kingdom of Christ Jesus.'*

The Puritans have been divided by an accomplished historian into three parties; the political Puritans, who maintained the highest principles of civil liberty; the Puritans in discipline, who were averse to the ceremonies and episcopal government of the church; and the doctrinal Puritans, who rigidly defended the speculative opinions of the first reformers.† The remark, such as it is, is applicable to a later period; for at the emigration of our ancestors, scarcely any divisions in doctrine existed among the Protestants of England. The great controversies touched the rites and ceremonies, and the fasts and

* 1 Hutch. Hist. Appendix, 487, 488.

† 6 Hume's Hist. ch. li, p. 272.

feasts of the church, the vestments of the priesthood, kneeling at the altar, the sign of the cross, and the manner of celebrating the ordinances. The usages of the church in some of these respects were deemed by the Puritans unscriptural, the remnants of popery, and gross corruptions of religion. In the sincerity of their hearts, they could not practise them; in the scruples of their consciences, they felt bound to reject them. For this sincerity, for these scruples, they were expelled from their benefices; they were subjected to spiritual censures; they were loaded with temporal punishments. They were even compelled, by penalties, to attend upon a public worship, which they abhorred, from the time of Elizabeth down to the Revolution of 1688.* The language of the haughty James to them was, 'I will have but one doctrine, and one discipline, one religion in substance and in ceremony.' † And he denounced them as 'a sect unable to be suffered in any well governed commonwealth.' ‡ As if to ensnare their consciences or to deride their scruples, Archbishop Laud enjoined the introduction of sports on Sunday, a day, which, he knew, they held consecrated solely to the solemn services of religion. For nonconformity to these and other canonical injunctions of a like nature, four hundred clergymen were ejected, suspended, or silenced in one single year of this reign.§ With an ill-omened perseverance in the same bigoted system, Charles the Second, soon after his restora-

* 6 Hume's Hist. 163; 7 Hume's Hist. 41, 516.

† Prince's Annals, 105.

‡ Ibid. 107.

§ Ibid. 111.

tion, compelled two thousand clergymen in a single day to relinquish their cures, presenting to a licentious court the noble spectacle of men, who resigned all earthly preferments to their religious tenets.* Yet Mr Hume, in his eager apologies for royalty, could survey such scenes with philosophical indifference, and intimate a doubt, whether they deserved the appellation of persecution, because the victims were Puritans.†

After all, it is not in the power of the scoffer, or the skeptic; of the parasite, who fawns on courts, or the proselyte, who doats on the infallibility of his own sect, to obscure the real dignity of the character of the Puritans. We may lament their errors; we may regret their prejudices; we may pity their infirmities; we may smile at the stress laid by them on petty observances, and trifling forms. We may believe, that their piety was mixed up with too much gloom and severity; that it was sometimes darkened by superstition, and sometimes degraded by fanaticism; that it shut out too much the innocent pleasures of life, and enforced too strictly a discipline, irksome, cheerless, and oppressive; that it was sometimes over rigid, when it might have been indulgent; stern, when it might have been affectionate; pertinacious, when concession would have been just, as well as graceful; and flashing with fiery zeal, when charity demanded moderation, and ensured peace. All this, and much more, may be admitted, for they were but men, frail, fallible men, and yet

* 6 Hume's Hist. 164.

† 7 Hume's Hist. 384.

leave behind solid claims upon the reverence and admiration of mankind. Of them it may be said with as much truth, as of any men, that have ever lived, that they acted up to their principles, and followed them out with an unfaltering firmness. They displayed at all times a downright honesty of heart and purpose. In simplicity of life, in godly sincerity, in temperance, in humility, and in patience as well as in zeal, they seemed to belong to the apostolical age. Their wisdom, while it looked on this world, reached far beyond it in its aim and objects. They valued earthly pursuits no farther than they were consistent with religion. Amidst the temptations of human grandeur they stood unmoved, unshaken, unseduced. Their scruples of conscience, if they sometimes betrayed them into difficulty, never betrayed them into voluntary sin. They possessed a moral courage, which looked present dangers in the face, as though they were distant or doubtful, seeking no escape, and indulging no terror. When in defence of their faith, of what they deemed pure and undefiled religion, we see them resign their property, their preferments, their friends, and their homes; when we see them submitting to banishment, and ignominy, and even to death; when we see them in foreign lands, on inhospitable shores, in the midst of sickness and famine, in desolation and disaster, still true to themselves, still confident in God's providence, still submissive to his chastisements, still thankful for his blessings, still ready to exclaim in the language of Scripture—'We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed,

but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;’ when we see such things, where is the man, whose soul does not melt within him at the sight? Where shall examples be sought or found more full to point out what Christianity is, and what it ought to accomplish?

What better origin could we desire, than from men of characters like these? Men, to whom conscience was every thing, and worldly prosperity nothing. Men, whose thoughts belonged to eternity rather than to time. Men, who in the near prospect of their sacrifices, could say, as our forefathers did say, ‘When we are in our graves, it will be all one, whether we have lived in plenty or in penury; whether we have died in a bed of down, or locks of straw. Only this is the advantage of the mean condition, THAT IT IS A MORE FREEDOM TO DIE. And the less comfort any have in the things of this world, the more liberty they have to lay up treasure in heaven.’* Men, who in answer to the objection, urged by the anxiety of friendship, that they might perish by the way, or by hunger or the sword, could answer, as our forefathers did, ‘We may trust God’s providence for these things. Either he will keep these evils from us; or will dispose them for our good, and enable us to bear them.’† Men, who in still later days, in their appeal for protection to the throne, could say with pathetic truth and simplicity, as our forefathers did, ‘that we might enjoy divine worship without human mixtures, without offence to

* 3 Hutch. Collect. p. 29.

† Ibid. 29, 30.

God, man, our own consciences, with leave, *but not without tears*, we departed from our country, kindred, and fathers' houses into this Patmos; in relation whereunto we do not say, our garments are become old by reason of the very long journey, but that ourselves, who came away in our strength, are, by reason of long absence, many of us become grey-headed, and some of us stooping for age.*

If these be not the sentiments of lofty virtue; if they breathe not the genuine spirit of Christianity; if they speak not high approaches towards moral perfection; if they possess not an enduring sublimity;—then, indeed, have I ill read the human heart; then, indeed, have I strangely mistaken the inspirations of religion. If men, like these, can be passed by with indifference, because they wore not the princely robes, or the sacred lawn, because they shone not in courts, or feasted in fashionable circles, then, indeed, is Christian glory a vain shadow, and human virtue a dream, about which we disquiet ourselves in vain.

But it is not so—it is not so. There are those around me, whose hearts beat high, and whose lips grow eloquent, when the remembrance of such ancestors comes over their thoughts; when they read in their deeds not the empty forms, but the essence of holy living and holy dying. Time was, when the exploits of war, the heroes of many battles, the conquerors of millions, the men, who waded through slaughter to thrones, the kings, whose footsteps were

* 3 Hutch. Collect. 328.

darkened with blood, and the sceptred oppressors of the earth, were alone deemed worthy themes for the poet and the orator, for the song of the minstrel, and the hosannas of the multitude. Time was, when feats of arms, and tournaments, and crusades, and the high array of chivalry, and the pride of royal banners waving for victory, engrossed all minds. Time was, when the ministers of the altar sat down by the side of the tyrant, and numbered his victims, and stimulated his persecutions, and screened the instruments of his crimes—and there was praise and glory and revelry for these things. Murder, and rapine, burning cities, and desolated plains, if so be they were at the bidding of royal or baronial feuds, led on by the courtier or the clan, were matters of public boast, the delight of courts, and the treasured pleasure of the fireside tales. But these times have passed away. Christianity has resumed her meek and holy reign. The Puritans have not lived in vain. The simple piety of the Pilgrims of New-England casts into shade this false glitter, which dazzled and betrayed men into the worship of their destroyers.

It has been said in the wantonness of folly, or the presumptuousness of ignorance, that America was peopled much in the same way, as Botany Bay, with outcasts and convicts. So far as respects New-England, there could not be a more flagrant violation of the truth of history. The poor, the friendless, and the oppressed came indeed hither. But their sole crime was, that they loved God more than they feared man. They came, too, under the guidance of men elevated by their rank, their fortune, and their

learning in their own country. Some of them were allied to noble families, whose graceful honors have descended to our days. Many of them were gentry of the realm, and possessed public respect from their known virtues and opulence. Many were distinguished for high attainments in literature and science, and could trace back their matriculations to the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge. Many of them were ripe for public honors at home, if they had chosen to remain there. Many of them were the friends and compeers of Cromwell, and Pym, and Hampden, and Milton, and other illustrious men, who, in the midst of all the changes of party, and all the studied disparagements of royalty, still continue to attract the reverence of mankind. Need I name Winthrop, Dudley, Endicott, Humphrey, Saltonstall, Johnson, Nowel, Bradstreet, and Pynchon? Or among the clergy, Higginson, Skelton, Cotton, Eliot, Davenport, Williams, Wilson, Norton, Rogers, and Hooker, to many of whom we may, with the honest enthusiasm of Mather, apply the praise of Salmasius, 'Vir nunquam satis laudatus, nec temere sine laude nominandus.'*

But to us it would not be matter of regret, much less of reproach, if the case were far otherwise; if we could count among our ancestors only the humble, the poor, and the forlorn. Rank, station, talents, and learning did indeed add lustre to their acts; and impart a more striking dignity to their sufferings by giving them a bolder relief. But it was the purity of

* See Eliot's Biog. Dictionary, Art. *Davenport*; 2 Hist. Collect. (2d series) p. 260.

their principles, their integrity, and devout piety, which constituted the solid fabric of their fame. It was Christianity, which cast over their character its warm and glorious light, and gave it an everlasting freshness. It was their faith in God, which shed such beauty over their lives, and clothed this mortal, with the form of immortality. In comparison with these, the distinctions of this world, however high or various they may be, are but evanescent points, a drop to the ocean, an instant to eternity, a ray of light to the innumerable fires, which blaze on unconsumed in the skies. This is not the poor estimate of man, the being of a day; it is the voice of that Revelation, which has spoken to our hopes and fears with an authority, which rebukes, while it convinces, our reason.

Let us rejoice, then, at our origin with an honest joy. Let us exultingly hail this day as one of glorious memory. Let us proudly survey this land, the land of our fathers. It is our precious inheritance. It was watered by their tears; it was subdued by their hands; it was defended by their valor; it was consecrated by their virtues. Where is the empire, which has been won with so much innocence? Where is the empire, which has been maintained with so much moderation?

I pass to other topics, where the task of vindication or apology becomes a duty of the day; a task, which, I trust, may be performed with due reverence to our forefathers, and with a still greater reverence for truth.

It has been said, that our forefathers were bigoted, intolerant, and persecuting; that while they demanded religious freedom for themselves, they denied it to all others; that in their eyes even error in ceremony or mode of worship was equally reprehensible with error in doctrine; and, if persisted in, deserved the temporal punishments denounced upon heresy. Mr Hume* has dwelt with no small complacency upon the fact, that the Puritans ‘maintained that they themselves were the only pure church; that their principles and practices ought to be established by law; and that no others ought to be tolerated.’

I am not disposed to deny the truth of the charge, or to conceal, or to extenuate the facts. I stand not up here the apologist for persecution, whether it be by Catholic or Protestant, by Puritan or Prelate, by Congregationalist or Covenanter, by Church or State, by the Monarch or the People. Wherever, and by whomsoever, it is promulgated or supported, under whatever disguises, for whatever purposes, at all times, and under all circumstances, it is a gross violation of the rights of conscience, and utterly inconsistent with the spirit of Christianity. I care not, whether it goes to life, or property, or office, or reputation, or mere private comfort, it is equally an outrage upon religion and the unalienable rights of man. If there is any right, sacred beyond all others, because it imports everlasting consequences, it is the right to worship God according to the dictates of our own consciences. Whoever attempts to nar-

* 6 Hume's Hist. 164.

row it down in any degree, to limit it by the creed of any sect, to bound the exercise of private judgment, or free inquiry, by the standard of his own faith, be he priest or layman, ruler or subject, dishonors so far the profession of Christianity, and wounds it in its vital virtues. The doctrine, on which such attempts are founded, goes to the destruction of all free institutions of government. There is not a truth to be gathered from history more certain, or more momentous, than this, that civil liberty cannot long be separated from religious liberty without danger, and ultimately without destruction to both. Wherever religious liberty exists, it will, first or last, bring in, and establish political liberty. Wherever it is suppressed, the church establishment will, first or last, become the engine of despotism, and overthrow, unless it be itself overthrown, every vestige of political right. How it is possible to imagine, that a religion breathing the spirit of mercy and benevolence, teaching the forgiveness of injuries, the exercise of charity, and the return of good for evil; how it is possible, I say, for such a religion to be so perverted, as to breathe the spirit of slaughter and persecution, of discord and vengeance for differences of opinion, is a most unaccountable and extraordinary moral phenomenon. Still more extraordinary, that it should be the doctrine, not of base and wicked men merely, seeking to cover up their own misdeeds; but of good men, seeking the way of salvation with uprightness of heart and purpose. It affords a melancholy proof of the infirmity of human judgment, and teaches a lesson

of humility, from which spiritual pride may learn meekness, and spiritual zeal a moderating wisdom.

Let us not, then, in examining the deeds of our fathers, shrink from our proper duty to ourselves. Let us not be untrue to the lights of our own days, to the religious privileges, which we enjoy, to those constitutions of government, which proclaim Christian equality to all sects, and deny the power of persecution to all. Our fathers had not arrived at the great truth, that *action*, not *opinion*, is the proper object of human legislation; that religious freedom is the birthright of man; that governments have no authority to inflict punishment for conscientious differences of opinion; and that to worship God according to our own belief is not only our privilege, but is our duty, our absolute duty, from which no human tribunal can absolve us. We should be unworthy of our fathers, if we should persist in error, when it is known to us. Their precept, like their example, speaking as it were from their sepulchres, is, to follow truth, not as they saw it, but as we see it, fearlessly and faithfully.

Let us meet the charge against them of bigotry, intolerance, and persecution, and gather from it instruction and admonition for our own conduct. Were our forefathers singular in this respect? Does the reproach, if reproach it be, that men do not live up to truths, which they do not comprehend, rest upon them alone? So far from this being true, there was not at that time in all Christendom a single spot, however remote, in which the freedom

of religious opinion was supported by prince or people. Throughout all Europe, if we except Holland, the practice of burning heretics still prevailed, not only in Catholic but in Protestant countries. And even in Holland, banishment was not an uncommon punishment for those, who obstinately persisted in heresies of doctrine.* What is it, then, that is required of our forefathers? That they should have possessed a wisdom and liberality far superior to their own age;—that they should have acted upon truths as clear and settled, of which faint glimmerings only, or at least a brief and dubious twilight, had then shot up in unsteady streams to direct their course;—that learned as they were, and wide as were their researches, and painful as was their diligence, they should have outstripped all others in the race, and surmounted the prejudices and prescriptions of twelve centuries. It would be dealing out a hard measure of justice to require perfect conformity under all circumstances to our own sense of duty. It would be dealing out still harder measure to press upon one poor, persecuted sect the sins of all Christendom; to make them alone responsible for opinions, which had become sacred by their antiquity, as well as their supposed coincidence with Scripture. Uniformity of faith and intolerance of error had been so long the favorite dogmas of all schools of theology and government, that they had ceased to be examined. They were deemed texts for the preacher, and not inquiries for the critic.

* 6 Hume's Hist. 57, 163; 7 Hume's Hist. 20, 41, 515.

I am aware, that in the writings of some of the early reformers, there may be found here and there passages, which recognise the principles of religious liberty. But we must remember, that they were uttered in the heat of controversy, to beat down the authority of the Romish church; and so little were they sustained by public opinion, that they were lamentably forgotten in the first moments of Protestant victory. They were mere outworks in the system of theological opinions, which might form a defence against Catholic attacks; and were treated with contempt or indifference, when heresies sprung up in the bosom of the new faith. My Lord Bacon, in his discourse upon the unity of religion, written with a moderation becoming his great mind, and with a spirit of indulgence far beyond the age, has nevertheless contended strenuously for the unity of faith, and declared, that ‘heresies and schisms are of all others the greatest scandals.’ At the same time he boldly warns us not ‘to propagate religion by wars, or by sanguinary persecutions to force consciences.’* At the distance of a century, the enlightened author of the ‘Spirit of Laws’ avowed the doctrine, that it is sound policy, when the state is already satisfied with the established religion, not to suffer the establishment of another. And while he declares that penal laws, in respect to religion, ought to be avoided, he paradoxically maintains the doctrine, as a fundamental principle, that when the state is at liberty to receive or reject a new religion, it ought

* 2 Bacon’s Works, 259.

to be rejected; when it is received, it ought to be tolerated.* So slowly does truth make its way even among the most gifted minds, in opposition to preconceived opinions and prejudices.

Nay, we need not go back to other times for illustrative examples. Is it even now true, that the doctrine of religious liberty is received with entire approbation in Christendom? Where it is received with most favor, is it not recognised more as matter of toleration and policy, than of right? suffered rather than supported? connived at from fear, rather than vindicated upon principle? Even in England, free and enlightened as she is, how slow and reluctant has been the progress towards a generous toleration. It is scarcely twelve years since it ceased to be a crime punishable with fine and imprisonment, to deny the doctrine of the Trinity. The universities of Oxford and Cambridge are still by their statutes closed against the admission of Dissenters from the established church. For more than a century and a half, Protestant Dissenters of every description were excluded by law from the possession of offices of trust or profit in the kingdom. The repeal of the odious corporation and test acts, by which this exclusion was guarded, was, after much resistance, accomplished only at the last session of Parliament; and the celebrations of this event, of this emancipation from religious thralldom of *one third* of her whole population, are just reaching our ears from the other side of the Atlantic. The Catholic yet

* Montesquieu's Spirit of Laws, book 25, ch. 10, 12.

groans under the weight of disabilities imposed upon him by the unrelenting arm of power, and sickens at the annual visitation of that hope of relief, which mocks him at every approach, and recedes at the very moment, when it seems within his grasp. Even in our own country, can we lay our hands upon our hearts, and say with sincerity, that this universal freedom of religion is watched by none with jealousy and discontent? that there are none, who would employ the civil arm to suppress heresy, or to crush the weaker sects?

With what justice, then, shall we require from the Puritans of James's reign, lessons of Christian liberality, which, even in the nineteenth century, are rejected by statesmen and patriots, by laity and clergy, in regions adorned with all the refinements of letters, and the lights of science? If they had continued in the mother country, it is more than probable, that persecution would have taught them, what reason and revelation had failed to teach them. They would have reached the point, at which the Independents arrived in the next reign, whose true glory it is, that 'of all Christian sects, this was the first which, during its prosperity as well as its adversity, always adopted the principle of toleration.'*

But our forefathers acted far otherwise. The truth of history compels us to admit, that from the first settlement down to the charter of William and Mary in 1692, in proportion as they gathered internal power, they were less and less disposed to share

* 7 Hume's Hist. 20.

it, with any other Christian sect. That charter contained an express provision, that there should be 'a liberty of conscience allowed in the worship of God, to all Christians, *except Papists.*' Objectionable as this clause would have been under other circumstances, the recent attempts of James the Second, to introduce Popery; and the dread which they entertained of being themselves the subjects of political, as well as religious persecution, reconciled them to it, and they hailed it almost as another *magna charta* of liberty.* So true it is, that accident or interest frequently forces men to the adoption of correct principles, when a sense of justice has totally failed to effect it. In the intermediate period, the Quakers and Anabaptists, and in short all other Dissenters from their creed, had been unrelentingly persecuted by fine, imprisonment, banishment, and sometimes even by death itself. Episcopalians, too, fell under their special displeasure; and notwithstanding every effort of the Crown, by threats and remonstrance, they studiously excluded them from every office, and even from the right of suffrage. No person but a freeman was permitted to vote in any public affairs, or to hold any office; and no person could become a freeman but by being a member of their own church, and recommended by their own clergy.† In truth the clergy possessed a power and influence in the state, as great as ever was exercised under any church establishment whatsoever. There was not, until after the repeal of the first charter in 1676, a single Episcopal soci-

* 1 Hutch. Hist. 75, and note.

† 3 Hutch. Collect. 478, 484, 520, note.

ety in the whole colony ;* and even the celebration of Christmas was punished as a public offence. † In this exclusive policy our ancestors obstinately persevered, against every remonstrance at home and abroad. When Sir Richard Saltonstall wrote to them his admirable letter, which pleads with such a catholic enthusiasm for toleration, the harsh and brief reply was, ‘ God forbid our love for the truth should be grown so cold, that we should tolerate errors.’ ‡ And Cotton himself, ‘ whose praise is in all our churches,’ the man, who could with a noble independence address himself to the bishop of Lincoln, in language like this ; ‘ However much I do highly prize, and much prefer other men’s judgment, and learning, and wisdom, and piety ; yet in things pertaining to God, and his worship, *still I must (as I ought) live by my own faith, not theirs ;*’ such a man, I say, could meanly stoop in the defence of persecution to arguments not unworthy of the worst ages of bigotry. § They went farther, imitating in this respect the famous act of uniformity of Elizabeth, and compelled an attendance upon their own mode of worship under a penalty. Yes, the very men did this, who thought paying one shilling for not coming to prayers in England, was an unsupportable tyranny. || Yes, the very men who asked from Charles the Second, after his restoration, liberty of conscience and worship for themselves, were deaf, and dumb,

* 3 Hutch. Hist. 430, 431.

† 3 Hutch. Collect. 419, 482 ; Colony and Province Laws, edit. 1814, p. 119, ch. 50.

‡ 3 Hutch. Collect. 401, 402.

§ 3 Hutch. Collect. 403.

|| 3 Hutch. Collect. 418, 419, 422 ; 1 Hutch. Hist. 75.

and blind, when it was demanded by his commissioners for Episcopalians and others. They silently evaded the claim, or resolutely refused it, as the temper of the times enabled them to act.*

The very efforts made in the colony to establish this uniformity of faith, afford striking proofs of the utter hopelessness, as well as injustice of such attempts. Within ten years after their first landing, the whole colony was thrown into confusion by religious dissensions, by controversies about faith and about forms of church government; about the covenant of grace, and the covenant of works; about liberty of conscience, and exclusiveness of worship; about doctrines so mysterious and subtle, as seem past all human comprehension, and customs so trifling and vain, as seem beyond the reach of ecclesiastical censure. Who could imagine, that the reveries of Mrs Hutchinson, and the question, whether ladies should wear veils, and the legality of bearing the cross in a military standard, should have shaken the colony to its foundations? So thickly sown were the seeds of spiritual discord, that more than *four-score* opinions were pronounced heresies by an ecclesiastical Synod convened in 1637. Yet were the difficulties far from being removed, although fines and imprisonment and banishment followed in the train of the excommunications of the church. The struggle for toleration was still maintained; the dis-

* 3 Hutch. Collect. 188, 191, 192, 193, 194, 418, 419, 422; 8 Hist. Collect. (second series) p. 76, 78; 1 Hutch. Hist. Appendix, 537; 3 Hutch. Collect. 478, 482, 484, 519, 520.

† 1 Hutch. Hist. 37, 55, 67, 73, 75, 430.

content with the laws, which confined political privileges to church members, constantly increased; and diversities of faith at last grew up, so numerous and so formidable, that persecution became less frequent because it was less safe. The single fact, that under this exclusive system, not more than one sixth of the qualified inhabitants were freemen in 1676, affords an ample commentary upon its injustice and folly. Five sixths of the colony were disfranchised by the influence of the ecclesiastical power.*

The fundamental error of our ancestors, an error which began with the very settlement of the colony, was a doctrine, which has since been happily exploded, I mean the necessity of a union between church and state. To this they clung, as the ark of their safety. They thought it the only sure way of founding a Christian commonwealth. They maintained, that 'church government and civil government may very well stand together, it being the duty of the magistrate to take care of matters of religion, and to *improve* his civil authority for observing the duties commanded by it.' † They not only tolerated the civil power in the suppression of heresy, but they demanded and enjoined it. They preached it in the pulpit and the synod. It was in their closet prayers, and in their public legislation. The arm of the civil government was constantly employed in support of the denunciations of the church; and without its forms, the Inquisition existed in substance, with a full share of its terrors and its violence. There was,

* 3 Hutch. Collect. 484.

† 1 Hutch. Hist. 434.

intleed, far more caution in shedding human blood ; but there was scarcely less indulgence for human error. For such proceedings there was not the poor apology, which has been sometimes suggested, that every religion, which is persecuted, becomes itself persecuting, because it attacks the religion which persecuted it, not as a *religion*, but as a *tyranny*.* Our ancestors could not frame such an apology for themselves ; for no ecclesiastical tyranny attempted to usurp authority over them within the colony. It had a deeper origin, in that wretched doctrine of the union of church and state, by which Christianity has been made the minister of almost every wrong in the catalogue of crimes. It has been said with as much truth as force, by one of the most eloquent of modern divines, ‘that the boasted alliance between church and state, on which so many encomiums have been lavished, seems to have been but little more than a compact between the priest and the magistrate to betray the liberties of mankind, both civil and religious.’ †

To the honor of New-England be it said, that if here persecution obtained an early triumph, here also for the first time since the Reformation was simultaneously proclaimed the doctrine of liberty of conscience,—a doctrine, which, I trust, will, by the blessing of God, be maintained by us and our posterity at all hazards, and against all encroachments. Here, on this very spot, in Naumkeag, in this ‘bosom

* Montesquieu’s *Spirit of Laws*, book 25, ch. 9.

† Robert Hall. Pamphlet published in 1791.

of consolation,* it was proclaimed by Roger Williams in 1635; and for this among other grave offences, he was sentenced to banishment. He fled to Rhode-Island; and there in the code of laws for the colony planted by his energy and sagacity, we read for the first time, since Christianity ascended the throne of the Cæsars, the declaration, that ‘conscience should be free, and men should not be punished for worshipping God in the way they were persuaded he required,’—a declaration, which, to the honor of Rhode-Island, she has never departed from,—a declaration, which puts to shame many a realm of wider domains and loftier pretensions. It still shines among her laws with an argument in its support in the shape of a preamble, which has rarely been surpassed in power of thought or felicity of expression.† Massachusetts may blush, that the Catholic colony of Lord Baltimore, and the Quaker, the blameless Quaker colony of Penn, were originally founded on the same generous principles of Christian right, long before she felt or acknowledged them.‡

While, then, we joyfully celebrate this anniversary, let us remember, that our forefathers had their faults, as well as virtues; that their example is not always a safe pattern for our imitation; but some-

* In the ‘Planter’s Plea,’ published in London in 1630, the writer says that Nahum Keike is perfect Hebrew, and by interpretation means ‘The bosom of consolation.’

† It is almost *in totidem verbis* with the act of Virginia of 1785, which has been attributed to Mr. Madison. To which state the merit of the original draft belongs, I am unable to say, as I have not the means of tracing it in Rhode-Island acts earlier than in the Digest of 1793.

‡ 1 Pitkin’s Hist. 56, 67; 2 Proud’s Hist. Append.

times a beacon of solemn warning. Let us do, not what they did, but what with our lights and advantages they would have done, must have done, from the love of country, and the love of truth. Is there any one, who would now for a moment justify the exclusion of every person from political rights and privileges, who is not a Congregationalist of the strictest sect in doctrine and discipline? Is there any one, who would exclude the Episcopalian, the Baptist, the Methodist, the Quaker, or the Universalist, not merely from power and Christian fellowship, but from breathing the same air, and enjoying the same sunshine, and reaping the same harvest, because he walks not in the same faith, and kneels not at the same altar, with himself? Is there any one, who would bring back the by-gone penalties, and goad on tender consciences to hypocrisy or self-destruction? Is there any one, that would light the faggot to burn the innocent? that would stain the temples of God with the blood of martyrdom? that would cut off all the charities of human life, and in a religious warfare, arm the father against the son, the mother against the daughter, the wife against the husband? that would bind all posterity in the fetters of his own creed, and shipwreck their consciences? If any such there be, whatever badge they may wear, they are enemies to us and our institutions. They would sap the foundations of our civil as well as religious liberties. They would betray us into worse than Egyptian bondage. Of the doctrines of such men, if any such there be, I would say with the earnestness of the apostolical

exhortation, 'Touch not, taste not, handle not.' If ever there could be a case, in which intolerance would rise almost into the dignity of a virtue, it would be, when its object was to put down intolerance. No—let us cling with a holy zeal to the Bible, and the Bible only, as the religion of Protestants. Let us proclaim with Milton, that 'neither traditions, nor councils, nor canons of any visible church, much less edicts of any civil magistrate, or civil session, but the Scripture only, can be the final judge or rule in matters of religion, and *that only in the conscience of every Christian to himself.*' Let us inscribe on the walls of our dwellinghouses, in our temples, in our halls of legislation, in our courts of justice, the admirable declaration of Queen Mary (the consort of William the Third), than which a nobler precept of wisdom never fell from uninspired lips—'It is not in the power of men to believe what they please; and therefore, they should not be forced in matters of religion contrary to their persuasions and their consciences.'*

I pass with unmixed pleasure to other and more grateful topics, where approbation need not be slow, or praise parsimonious. If, in laying the foundations of this Christian commonwealth, our forefathers were governed in respect to religion by a spirit unworthy of Protestantism, it was far otherwise in respect to their civil institutions. Here, a wise forecast and sound policy directed all their operations; so wise and so sound, that the lapse of two hundred years

* 9 Hist. Collect. 251.

has left unchanged the body of their legislation, and in a general sense added little to their securities for public or private rights. There is no reason to suppose, that they were opposed to monarchy as a suitable form of government for the mother country, or that opposition to the civil establishments mingled in the slightest degree with the motives of their emigration.* There is just as little reason to suppose, that they desired or would have acquiesced in the establishment of a colonial monarchy or aristocracy. On the contrary we know, that they refused to confer the magistracy for life; and that they repelled every notion of an hereditary nobility in their celebrated answer to the propositions of Lord Say and Seale.† This attachment to the form of government of the mother country was not only sincere, but continued down to the Revolution. Their descendants took many opportunities to evince it; and some of the most powerful appeals made by the patriots of the Revolution to the British Crown are filled with eloquent professions of loyalty. The formation of a Republic was the necessary result of the final separation from England. The controversy was then narrowed down to the consideration of what form of government they might properly adopt. All their habits, principles, and institutions prohibited the existence of a real or titular peerage. They had no materials for a king. They were, as they had been from the beginning, essentially republicans. They followed the lead of their existing institutions; and

* 3 Hutch. Collect. 326.

† 1 Hutch. Hist. 490, 493, 494.

the most striking change introduced by them was the choice of a governor by themselves, as a substitute for the like choice by the Crown.

Their connexion with and dependence upon the mother country grew up from their national allegiance, and was confirmed by the sense of their own weakness and the desire of protection. In return for this protection they were ready to admit a sovereign right in Parliament to regulate to some, though an undefined extent, their foreign intercourse, and in the Crown to supervise their colonial legislation. But they never did admit the right of Parliament or the Crown to legislate generally for them, or to interfere with their domestic polity. On the contrary, from the first they resisted it, as an encroachment upon their liberties. This was more emphatically true of Massachusetts, than of any other of the Colonies. The commissioners of Charles the Second in 1665 reported, that ‘she was the last and hardliest persuaded to use his majesty’s name in the forms of justice;’—that her inhabitants ‘proclaimed by sound of trumpet, that the General Court was the supremest judicatory in all that province;’ ‘that the commissioners pretending to hear appeals was a breach of their privileges;’ ‘and that they should not permit it.’* In short, the commissioners well described ‘their way of government, as *commonwealth like.*’† Even in relation to foreign commerce their strong sense of independence was illustrated by the complaint, that ‘no notice was taken of the act of navi-

* 3 Hutch. Collect. 417, 418.

† Id. p. 422.

gation, plantation, or any other laws made in England for the regulation of trade; all nations having free liberty to come into their ports and vend their commodities without any restraint.’* These acts of navigation and trade were never recognised as in force in the colony, until their own legislature required their observance.† So strenuous were our ancestors even at this early period in maintaining the doctrine, that Parliament could not bind them, because they were not represented there. So jealous were they to guard against every usurpation of the Crown. He, indeed, must have read our annals with a very careless eye, who does not perceive at every turn, a constant struggle for substantial independence.

The basis of their institutions was from the first settlement republican. The people were the admitted source of all power. They chose the magistrates and executive. They established a representative government; they created a colonial legislature, whose power to enact laws was, until the overthrow of the first charter, deemed for most purposes absolute and supreme. Their earliest legislation recognised the great rights secured by the Magna Charta of England; the trial by jury; the free administration of justice; the equality of freemen; the abolition of all slavish and feudal tenures; and above all the distribution of intestate estates among all the descendants of the deceased.

* Randolph's Letter in 1676; 3 Hutch. Collect. 496.

† 1 Hutch. Hist. 322; 3 Hutch. Collect. 521.

This was indeed a signal triumph over the prejudices in favor of primogeniture. It constituted a fundamental principle in their policy; and by its silent but irresistible influence, prevented the undue accumulation of estates in a few hands, so that the introduction of a colonial nobility became absolutely impracticable. Henceforth the partible nature of estates was so fixed in public opinion, that it broke down every attempt to perpetuate entails; and left the mass of our landed interests, as we now find them, in the possession of the yeomanry in fee simple. While this great law of descents exists, it will for ever prevent the establishment of any arbitrary power. The government, that once admits it into its code, may remain in form a monarchy, or an aristocracy; but it will follow the impulses of public opinion, and find its surest protection in the advancement of popular principles.

Thus broad, thus elevated, was the early legislation of our forefathers. If we except from it that portion, which was tinged by the bigotry and superstition of the times, we shall find it singular for its wisdom, humanity, and public spirit; and admirably adapted to the wants of a free, simple, and intelligent people.

Among the most striking acts of their legislation are those, which respect the cause of learning and education. Within ten short years after their first settlement they founded the University at Cambridge, and endowed it with the sum of four hundred pounds, a sum, which, considering their means and their wants, was a most generous benefaction. Perhaps no lan-

guage could more significantly express the dignity of their design, than their own words. ‘After God had carried us safe to New-England,’ say they, ‘and we had builded our houses, provided necessaries for our livelihood, reared convenient places for God’s worship, and settled the civil government; one of the next things we longed for, and looked after, was *to advance learning and perpetuate [it to posterity,* dreading to leave an illiterate ministry to the churches, when our present ministers shall lie in the dust.’* They were not disappointed in their hopes. By the blessing of Providence this little College, planted by their hands, and nursed by their care, has flourished. Already she counts nearly six thousand in her matriculations. She still stands erect, in the midst of her offspring, clothed with her ancient glory, and matron dignity, and lovelier by her age. Our hearts still yearn towards her; our thoughts still kindle at her praise; our prayers still rise for her prosperity. We may smile at the early charge made by the royal commissioners, that ‘it may be feared this College may afford us many schismatics to the church.’† But we proudly proclaim their reluctant confession, that by her means there was ‘a scholar to their minister in every town or village’ of Massachusetts.‡

But the truest glory of our forefathers is in that system of public instruction, which they instituted by law, and to which New-England owes more of its character, its distinction, and its prosperity, than

* 1 Hist. Collect. 240.

† 3 Hutch. Collect. 421.

‡ Id. 413.

to all other causes. If this system be not altogether without example in the history of other nations (as I suspect in its structure and extent it is), it is, considering the age and means of the projectors, an extraordinary instance of wise legislation, and worthy of the most profound statesmen of any times. At the distance of centuries it stands alone and unrivalled. Europe has not ventured as yet to copy its outlines; nor could they be copied in a despotism without undermining its foundations. England herself, where letters and learning have so long held the highest rank, is but just beginning to think seriously of a system of national instruction; and her statesmen are now gathering admiration at home for schemes of public education, far, very far short of what her own poor, feeble, neglected colony established at the starting point of its political existence. Yes—it was in this system of public instruction, that our fathers laid the foundation for the perpetuity of our institutions, and for that growth of sound morals, industry, and public spirit, which has never yet been wanting in New-England, and, we may fondly hope, will for ever remain her appropriate praise. Yes—in the year 1647 they ordered every township of fifty householders to maintain a public school at public expense; and every township of one hundred householders to maintain in like manner a grammar school, to instruct youth and fit them for the University; ‘to the end,’ say they, in this memorable law, ‘to the end, that learning may not be buried in the graves of our forefathers, in church and commonwealth.’ And this was done by them, when they had just made

their first lodgment in the wilderness ; when they had scarcely found leisure to build, I do not say, fair dwellings, but humble cottages for their own shelter and safety. When they were poor and unprotected, persecuted and in peril—they could then look forward with a noble disregard of present enjoyments, and forgetting themselves, provide the bread of life for their posterity. This system has never been broken in upon ; it still stands in its substance on the pages of our statute book, an enduring record of wisdom and patriotism. Under its blessed influence our youth have grown up. They have received early instruction in their rights and liberties, and (as the law itself requires) ‘ not only in sound literature, but in sound doctrine.’ It is here, that industry has learned the value of its own labors ; that genius has triumphed over the discouragements of poverty ; that skill has given polish as well as strength to talent ; that a lofty spirit of independence has been nourished and sustained ; that the first great lesson of human improvement has been taught, that knowledge is power ; and the last great lesson of human experience felt, that without virtue there is neither happiness nor safety.

I know not what more munificent donation any government can bestow, than by providing instruction at the public expense, not as a scheme of charity, but of municipal policy. If a private person deserves the applause of all good men, who founds a single hospital or college, how much more are they entitled to the appellation of public benefactors, who by the side of every church in every village plant a school

of letters. Other monuments of the art and genius of man may perish ; but these from their very nature seem, as far as human foresight can go, absolutely immortal. The triumphal arches of other days have fallen ; the sculptured columns have crumbled into dust ; the temples of taste and religion have sunk into decay ; the pyramids themselves seem but mighty sepulchres hastening to the same oblivion, to which the dead they cover have long since passed. But here, every successive generation becomes a living memorial of our public schools, and a living example of their excellence. Never, never may this glorious institution be abandoned or betrayed by the weakness of its friends, or the power of its adversaries. It can scarcely be abandoned or betrayed, while New-England remains free, and her representatives are true to their trust. It must for ever count in its defence a majority of all those, who ought to influence public affairs by their virtues or their talents ; for it must be, that here they first felt the divinity of knowledge stir within them. What consolation can be higher, what reflection prouder, than the thought, that in weal and in woe our children are under the public guardianship, and may here gather the fruits of that learning, which ripens for eternity.

There is another topic connected with the settlement of this country, which may not be passed over upon this occasion. At the very threshold of the enterprise, a nice question, both in morals and public law, must have presented itself to the consideration of conscientious minds. How far was it lawful to

people this western world, and deprive the Indians from that exclusive sovereignty over the soil, which they had exercised for ages beyond the reach of human tradition? Men of deep reflection, and especially men who felt a serious religious accountability for their conduct, could not be presumed to pass over such a subject without weighing it with scrupulous delicacy. It did not escape the attention of our forefathers. They met it, and discussed it with a manly freedom; they sought neither to disguise their own opinions, nor to conceal the real difficulties of the inquiry.

In ascending to the great principles, upon which all human society rests, it must be admitted, that there are some, which are of eternal obligation, and arise from our relations to each other, and our common dependence upon our Creator. Among these are the duty to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly before God. There are others again, which are merely founded in general convenience, and presuppose some regulations of society, or conventional law. The rights belonging to this latter class are coëxtensive only with the nations, which recognise them; and in a general sense cannot be deemed obligatory upon the rest of the world. The plain reason is, that no portion of mankind has any authority delegated to it by the Creator to legislate for, or bind, all the rest. The very equality of original rights, which every argument presupposes, excludes the notion of any authority to control those rights, unless it is derived by grant or surrender, so as to bind others in conscience and abstract justice.

We are told in the Scriptures, that in the beginning God gave man dominion over the earth, and commanded him to replenish and subdue it; and this has been justly said to be the true and solid foundation of man's dominion over it.* But this principle does not lead to the conclusion, that any particular person may acquire to himself a permanent and exclusive interest in the soil; much less, that any single nation may appropriate to itself as much of the surface as it shall choose, and thus narrow down the common inheritance, and exclude all others from any participation in its products for the supply of their own wants. If any right can be deduced from this general grant of dominion to man, it is of a far more limited nature; the right to occupy what we possess during the time of possession, the right of mere present enjoyment; which seems to flow as much from the consideration, that no one can show a better right to displace us, as from the consideration, that it affords the only means of any enjoyment. But where shall we find, independently of maxims derived from society, the right of any nation to exclude others from cultivating the soil, which it does not itself choose to cultivate, but which may be indispensable to supply the necessities of others? Where is the principle, which withdraws from the common inheritance, and gives to a few, what the bounty of God has provided for all? The truth is (though it is a truth rarely brought into discussion among civilized nations), that exclusive sove-

* 2 Bl. Com. 2.

réignty and ownership of the soil, is a derivative right, resting upon municipal regulations and the public law of society, and obtaining its whole validity from the recognitions of the communities, which it binds, and the arm of power, which encircles and protects it. It is a right founded upon the soundest policy, and has conduced, more than almost any human achievement, to create the virtues which strengthen, and the refinements which grace civilized life. But if general consent should abolish it tomorrow, it would be difficult to say, that a return to the patriarchal or pastoral state of nations, and the community of property, would be any departure from natural right.

When this continent was first discovered, it became an object of cupidity to the ambition of many of the nations of Europe. Each eagerly sought to appropriate it to itself. But it was obvious, that in the mutual struggle for power, contests of the most sanguinary nature would soon intervene, if some general principle were not adopted by the consent of all for the government of all. The most flexible and convenient principle, which occurred, was, that the first discovery should confer upon the nation of the discoverer an exclusive right to the soil, for the purposes of sovereignty and settlement. This principle was accordingly adopted, and became a fundamental doctrine in the code of legal ethics, by which the European governments regulated their acquisitions. No European subject was permitted to interfere with it, and the possession acquired under it was deemed absolute and unquestionable. In respect to

desert places, the principle, as one of peace and equality of benefits, is not perhaps obnoxious to censure. But in respect to countries already inhabited, neither its general justice, nor its conformity to public law, entitles it to commendation. If, abstractedly considered, mere discovery could confer any title, the natives already possessed it by such prior discovery. If this were put aside, and mere possession could confer sovereignty, they had that possession, and were entitled to the sovereignty. In short, it is clear, that upon the principles generally recognised by European nations, as between themselves, the natives could not be rightfully displaced. And if they were not entitled to the benefit of those principles, they might still stand upon the eternal laws of natural justice, and maintain their right to share in the common inheritance. Such a conclusion could not escape the sagacity of the statesmen and princes of the old world ; but it was quite too refined to satisfy their ambition and lust of dominion. It was easy to found an argument for the expulsion of the natives upon their infidelity and barbarism, which allowed them to be treated as the enemies of God. It was still more plausible to hold out the prospect of converting them to the Christian faith, and thus to secure a new triumph to civilization and the cross. If their territory was invaded, and their governments were overthrown, if they were compelled to yield to the superior genius and power of Europe, they would still receive an ample compensation in their admission into the bosom of European society with its privileges and improvements. Such

were some of the suggestions, by which royal ambition sought to disguise its real objects, and to reconcile to religion itself the spirit of conquest. It is but justice, however, to add, that there was no public avowal, that the natives possessed no right whatsoever. On the contrary it was conceded, that they possessed a present right of occupancy, temporary, indeed, and limited, which might be surrendered to the discovering nation, and in the mean time was entitled to respect.

Our forefathers did not attempt to justify their own emigration and settlement, upon the European doctrine of the right of discovery. Their patent from the Crown contained a grant of this right; but they felt that there was a more general question behind. ‘What warrant have we to take that land, which is, and hath been of long time possessed by others, the sons of Adam?’ Their answer is memorable for its clearness, strength, and bold assertion of principles. That which is common to all (said they) is proper to none. This savage people ruleth over many lands without title or property. Why may not Christians have liberty to go and dwell amongst them in their waste lands? God hath given to the sons of men a two-fold right to the earth. There is a natural right and a civil right. The first right was natural, when men held the earth in common. When afterwards they appropriated some parcels of ground, by enclosing and peculiar manurance, this in time got them a civil right. There is more than enough land for us and them. God hath consumed them with a miraculous plague, whereby the greater

part of the country is left void of inhabitants. Besides, we shall come in with the good leave of the natives.* Such arguments were certainly not unworthy of men of scrupulous virtue. They were aided by higher considerations, by the desire to propagate Christianity among the Indians; a desire, which is breathed forth in their confidential papers, in their domestic letters, in their private prayers, and in their public devotions. In this object they were not only sincere, but constant. So sincere and so constant, that one of the grave accusations against them has been, that in their religious zeal, they compelled the Indians, by penalties, to attend public worship, and allured them, by presents, to abandon their infidelity. † In truth, the propagation of Christianity was a leading motive with many of the early promoters of the settlement; and we need no better proof of it, than the establishment of an Indian school at Harvard College to teach them the rudiments of Christian faith.

Whatever, then, may have been the case in other parts of the continent, it is a fact, and it should not be forgotten, that our forefathers never attempted to displace the nations by force, upon any pretence of European right. They occupied and cultivated what was obtained by grant, or was found vacant. They constantly respected the Indians in their settlements and claims of soil. They protected them from their enemies, when they sought refuge among them. They stimulated no wars for their extermi-

* 3 Hutch. Collect. 30, 31.

† 3 Hutch. Collect. 23, 32, 420, 490.

nation. During the space of fifty years, but a single case of serious warfare occurred; and though we cannot but lament the cruelties then perpetrated, there is no pretence, that they were the aggressors in the contest. Whatever complaints, therefore, may be justly urged by philosophy, or humanity, or religion, in our day, respecting the wrongs and injuries of the Indians, they scarcely touch the Pilgrims of New-England. Their hands were not imbrued in innocent blood. Their hearts were not heavy with crimes and oppressions engendered by avarice. If they were not wholly without blame, they were not deep in guilt. They might mistake the time, or the mode of christianizing and civilizing the Indians; but they did not seek pretences to extirpate them. Private hostilities and butcheries there might be; but they were not encouraged or justified by the government. It is not, then, a just reproach, sometimes cast on their memories, that their religion narrowed down its charities to Christians only; and forgot, and despised, and oppressed these forlorn children of the forest.

There is, indeed, in the fate of these unfortunate beings, much to awaken our sympathy, and much to disturb the sobriety of our judgment; much which may be urged to excuse their own atrocities; much in their characters, which betrays us into an involuntary admiration. What can be more melancholy than their history? By a law of their nature, they seem destined to a slow, but sure extinction. Every where at the approach of the white man they fade away. We hear the rustling of their footsteps, like

that of the withered leaves of autumn, and they are gone for ever. They pass mournfully by us, and they return no more. Two centuries ago, the smoke of their wigwams and the fires of their councils rose in every valley from Hudson's Bay to the farthest Florida, from the ocean to the Mississippi and the lakes. The shouts of victory and the war-dance rung through the mountains and the glades. The thick arrows and the deadly tomahawk whistled through the forests; and the hunter's trace, and the dark encampment startled the wild beasts in their lairs. The warriors stood forth in their glory. The young listened to the songs of other days. The mothers played with their infants, and gazed on the scene with warm hopes of the future. The aged sat down; but they wept not. They should soon be at rest in fairer regions, where the Great Spirit dwelt, in a home prepared for the brave beyond the western skies. Braver men never lived; truer men never drew the bow. They had courage, and fortitude, and sagacity, and perseverance, beyond most of the human race. They shrunk from no dangers, and they feared no hardships.

If they had the vices of savage life, they had the virtues also. They were true to their country, their friends, and their homes. If they forgave not injury, neither did they forget kindness. If their vengeance was terrible, their fidelity and generosity were unconquerable also. Their love, like their hate, stopped not on this side of the grave. But where are they? Where are the villages, and warriors, and youth? The sachems and the tribes? The hunt-

ers and their families? They have perished. They are consumed. The wasting pestilence has not alone done the mighty work. No,—nor famine, nor war. There has been a mightier power, a moral canker, which hath eaten into their heart-cores—a plague which the touch of the white man communicated—a poison, which betrayed them into a lingering ruin. The winds of the Atlantic fan not a single region, which they may now call their own. Already the last feeble remnants of the race are preparing for their journey beyond the Mississippi. I see them leave their miserable homes, the aged, the helpless, the women, and the warriors, ‘few and faint, yet fearless still.’ The ashes are cold on their native hearths. The smoke no longer curls round their lowly cabins. They move on with a slow, unsteady step. The white man is upon their heels, for terror or despatch; but they heed him not. They turn to take a last look of their deserted villages. They cast a last glance upon the graves of their fathers. They shed no tears; they utter no cries; they heave no groans. There is something in their hearts, which passes speech. There is something in their looks, not of vengeance or submission; but of hard necessity, which stifles both; which choaks all utterance; which has no aim or method. It is courage absorbed in despair. They linger but for a moment. Their look is onward. They have passed the fatal stream. It shall never be repassed by them,—no, never. Yet there lies not between us and them, an impassable gulf. They know, and feel, that there is for them still one remove farther, not distant, nor

unseen. It is to the general burial-ground of their race.

Reason as we may, it is impossible not to read in such a fate, much, that we know not how to interpret; much of provocation to cruel deeds and deep resentments; much of apology for wrong and perfidy; much of pity mingling with indignation; much of doubt and misgiving as to the past; much of painful recollections; much of dark foreboding.

Philosophy may tell us, that conquest in other cases has adopted the conquered into its own bosom; and thus at no distant period given them the common privileges of subjects;—but that the red men are incapable of such an assimilation. By their very nature and character they can neither unite themselves with civil institutions, nor with safety be allowed to remain as distinct communities. Policy may suggest, that their ferocious passions, their independent spirit, and their wandering life disdain the restraints of society; that they will submit to superior force only, while it chains them to the earth by its pressure. A wilderness is essential to their habits and pursuits. They can neither be tamed nor overawed. They subsist by war or hunting; and the game of the forest is relinquished only for the nobler game of man. The question, therefore, is necessarily reduced to the consideration, whether the country itself shall be abandoned by civilized man, or maintained by his sword as the right of the strongest.

It may be so; perhaps, in the wisdom of Providence, it must be so. I pretend not to comprehend,

or solve, such weighty difficulties. But neither philosophy nor policy can shut out the feelings of nature. Humanity must continue to sigh at the constant sacrifices of this bold, but wasting race. And Religion, if she may not blush at the deed, must, as she sees the successive victims depart, cling to the altar with a drooping heart, and mourn over a destiny without hope and without example.

Let our consolation be, that our forefathers did not precipitate the evil days. Their aim was peace; their object was the propagation of Christianity.

There is one other circumstance in the history of the Colony, which deserves attention, because it has afforded a theme for bitter sarcasm and harsh reproach; and as the principal scenes of the tragedy took place on this very spot, this seems a fit occasion to rescue the character of our forefathers from the wanton attacks of the scoffer and the satirist. I allude to the memorable trials for witchcraft in this town in 1692, which terminated in the death of many innocent persons, partly from blind credulity and partly from overwhelming fraud. The whole of these proceedings exhibit melancholy proofs of the effect of superstition in darkening the mind, and steeling the heart against the dictates of humanity. Indeed, nothing has ever been found more vindictive and cruel than fanaticism, acting under the influence of preternatural terror, and assuming to punish offences created by its own gloomy reveries. Under such circumstances it becomes itself the very demon, whose agency it seeks to destroy. It loses sight of all the common principles of reason and evidence.

It sees nothing around it but victims for sacrifice. It hears nothing but the voice of its own vengeance. It believes nothing but what is monstrous and incredible. It conjures up every phantom of superstition, and shapes it to the living form of its own passions and frenzies. In short, insanity could hardly devise more refinements in barbarity, or profligacy execute them with more malignant coolness. In the wretched butcheries of these times (for so they in fact were), in which law and reason were equally set at defiance, we have shocking instances of unnatural conduct. We find parents accusing their children, children their parents, and wives their husbands, of a crime, which must bring them to the scaffold. We find innocent persons, misled by the hope of pardon, or wrought up to frenzy by the pretended sufferings of others, freely accusing themselves of the same crime. We find gross perjury practised to procure condemnations, sometimes for self-protection, and sometimes from utter recklessness of consequences. We find even religion itself made an instrument of vengeance. We find ministers of the gospel and judges of the land stimulating the work of persecution, until at last in its progress its desolations reached their own fire-sides.*

And yet, dark and sad as is this picture, it furnishes no just reproach upon this ancient town, beyond what belongs to it in common with all New-England, and, indeed, with all Christendom. Thirty years before this period there had been executions for

* 2 Hutch. Hist. 16 to 60, &c.

witchcraft in this and other colonies, in Charlestown, Boston, Springfield, and Hartford. It has been justly observed by an intelligent historian,* that the importance given to the New-England trials proceeded more from the general panic, than from the number executed, 'more having been put to death in a single county in England, in a short space of time, than have suffered in all New-England from the first settlement to the present time.'

Our forefathers were sincere believers in the reality of witchcraft; and the same opinion then prevailed throughout all Europe. The possibility, nay, the actual existence of a commerce with evil spirits, has had in its support the belief of many enlightened nations of the world. Mr. Justice Blackstone has not scrupled to declare, that to deny it 'is at once flatly to contradict the revealed word of God in various passages both of the Old and New Testament.' † I meddle not with this matter of controversial divinity. But it is certain, that from the earliest times it has been punished as a crime in all Christian countries, and generally, as a mark of peculiar horror and detestation, with death. Such was its punishment in England at the time of the emigration of our ancestors; and such it continued to be until the reign of George the Second. Surely, when we read of convictions before so mild and enlightened a judge, as Sir Matthew Hale, it should excite no surprise, that our own judges were not superior to the delusion; that they possessed not a wisdom beyond the law,

* 2 Hutch. Hist. 15, 16.

† 4 Bl. Com. 60; 3 Inst. 43.

nor a power to resist the general credulity. My Lord Coke, in the simplicity of his own belief, loads witches with the most opprobrious epithets, as ‘horrible, devilish, and wicked offenders;’* and the Parliament of king James the First has enumerated, in studied detail, divers modes of conjuration and enchantment, upon which it has inflicted the punishment of death.† Lord Bacon has lent the credit of his own great name to preserve some of the wonders and ointments of witchcraft, with sundry wholesome restrictions upon our belief of their efficacy.‡ And we have high authority for saying, that ‘it became a science, every where much studied and cultivated, to distinguish a true witch by proper trials and symptoms.’§

We may lament, then, the errors of the times, which led to these persecutions. But surely our ancestors had no special reasons for shame in a belief, which had the universal sanction of their own and all former ages; which counted in its train philosophers, as well as enthusiasts; which was graced by the learning of prelates, as well as the countenance of kings; which the law supported by its mandates, and the purest judges felt no compunctions in enforcing. Let Witch Hill remain for ever memorable by this sad catastrophe, not to perpetuate our dishonor, but as an affecting, enduring proof of human infirmity; a proof, that perfect justice belongs to one Judgment-seat only, that which is linked to the Throne of God.

* 3 Inst. 44.

† Ibid. 44, 45.

‡ 2 Bacon’s Works, 27, 45, 69.

§ 7 Hume’s Hist. 136.

Time would fail me to go at large into the history of New-England, and my own strength, as well as your patience, is far spent. Yet it should not be concealed, that we have a proud consciousness of the spirit and principles of our fathers throughout every period of their colonial existence. At no time were they the advocates of passive obedience and non-resistance to rulers at home or abroad. At all times they insisted, that the right of taxation and the right of representation were inseparable in a free government; and that on that account the power of taxation was vested exclusively in their own colonial legislature. At all times they connected themselves, with a generous fidelity, to the fortunes of the mother country, and shared the common burthens, and bore the common hardships with cheerfulness. The sons of New-England were found in her ranks in battle, foremost in danger; but, as is not unusual in colonial service, latest in the rewards of victory. An ante-revolutionary historian of unquestionable accuracy has said, that ‘in the course of sixty years the Province of Massachusetts hath been at a greater expense, and hath lost more of its inhabitants, than all the other colonies upon the continent taken together.’ In the Indian wars, in the successive attacks upon the French colonies, and in the capture of Quebec and the Canadas, they bore an honorable and important part. Even when their first charter was vacated, their resistance to the arbitrary measures of Sir Edmund Andros was but a prelude to the principles and practice of the Revolution.

Of the memorable events of a later period ; of the resistance to British oppression ; of the glorious war of Independence ; of the subsequent establishment of the national government, I need not speak. They are familiar to all of us ; but though repeated for the thousandth time, they still possess an animating freshness. In the struggle for independence, in which all the colonies embarked in a common cause, and all exhibited examples of heroism and public spirit, in which all seemed to forget themselves and remember only their country, it would be invidious to draw comparisons of relative merit, since the true glory of each is in the aggregate achievements of all. Throughout the contest, the citizens of various states fought side by side, and shared the common toils. Their sufferings and their fame were blended at every step, in the hour of peril, and in the hour of triumph. Let not those be separated in death, who in life were not divided.

But I may say, that New-England was not behind the other states in zeal, in public sacrifices, in contributions of men and money, in firmness of resolve, or in promptitude of action. The blood of her children was freely poured not only on her own soil, but in every field, where armies met in hostile array. It flowed not on the land alone ; the ocean received it into its swelling bosom. Wherever the battle raged, they were found ; and many a gallant spirit breathed his last breath on the deck, with his thoughts still warm with the love of his native New-England. Let a single fact concerning Massachusetts suffice to establish no mean claim to respect. Upon the final

adjustment of the accounts of the revolutionary war, although her own soil had been but for a short period occupied by the enemy, she had expended eighteen millions of dollars, and the balance then due to her exceeded one million. One state only in the Union surpassed her in expenditures, and none in the balance in her favor.* But this would give a very inadequate view of her real efforts. Her voluntary bounties upon enlistments, her town and county contributions, are almost incredible, when we consider the general poverty and distress. But I forbear. Much might be urged in her favor, much in favor of her New-England sisters, which has been sometimes remembered, only to be forgotten. Much might be said of the long array of statesmen and divines and lawyers and physicians, of the literature and science, which have adorned our annals. Let it pass—let it pass. Their works shall praise them. They cannot be concealed, whenever the deeds of our country are recited. The writer of the declaration of Independence is not ours; but the author of the act itself reposes among us. He, who was ‘first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen,’ sleeps in his native soil by the side of the beautiful Potomac. But the Colony of Roger Williams, of narrow territory, but of ample enterprise, may boast of one, second in excellence only to Washington.

But while we review our past history, and recollect what we have been, and are, the duties of this day were but ill performed, if we stopped here; if turning

* 2 Pitkin's Hist. of United States, p. 538.

from the past, and entering on the third century of our political existence, we gave no heed to the voice of experience, and dwelt not with thoughts of earnest, busy solicitude upon the future. What is to be the destiny of this Republic? In proposing this question, I drop all thought of New-England. She has bound herself to the fate of the Union. May she be true to it, now, and for ever; true to it, because true to herself, true to her own principles, true to the cause of religion and liberty throughout the world. I speak then of our common country, of that blessed mother, that has nursed us in her lap, and led us up to manhood. What is her destiny? Whither does the finger of fate point? Is the career, on which we have entered to be bright with ages of onward and upward glory? Or is our doom already recorded in the past history of the earth, in the past lessons of the decline and fall of other republics? If we are to flourish with a vigorous growth, it must be (I think) by cherishing principles, institutions, pursuits, and morals, such as planted, and have hitherto supported New-England. If we are to fall, may she still possess the melancholy consolation of the Trojan patriot;

‘Sat patriæ Priamoque datum ; si Pergama dextrâ
Defendi possent, etiam hæc defensa fuissent.’

I would not willingly cloud the pleasures of such a day, even with a transient shade. I would not, that a single care should flit across the polished brow of hope, if considerations of the highest moment did not demand our thoughts, and give us counsel of our duties. Who, indeed, can look around

him upon the attractions of this scene, upon the faces of the happy and the free, the smiles of youthful beauty, the graces of matron virtue, the strong intellect of manhood, and the dignity of age, and hail these as the accompaniments of peace and independence ;— who can look around him and not at the same time feel, that change is written on all the works of man ; that the breath of a tyrant, or the fury of a corrupt populace, may destroy in one hour, what centuries have slowly consolidated. It is the privilege of great minds, that to them ‘ coming events cast their shadows before.’ We may not possess this privilege ; but it is true wisdom, not to blind ourselves to dangers, which are in full view ; and true prudence, to guard against those, of which experience has already admonished us.

When we reflect on what has been, and is, how is it possible not to feel a profound sense of the responsibility of this Republic to all future ages. What vast motives press upon us for lofty efforts. What brilliant prospects invite our enthusiasm. What solemn warnings at once demand our vigilance, and moderate our confidence.

The old world has already revealed to us in its unsealed books the beginning and end of all its own marvellous struggles in the cause of liberty. Greece, lovely Greece, ‘ the land of scholars and the nurse of arms,’ where sister republics in fair processions chanted the praises of liberty and the gods ; where, and what is she ? For two thousand years the oppressor has bound her to the earth. Her arts are no more. The last sad relics of her temples are but

the barracks of a ruthless soldiery ; the fragments of her columns and her palaces are in the dust, yet beautiful in ruin. She fell not, when the mighty were upon her. Her sons were united at Thermopylæ and Marathon ; and the tide of her triumph rolled back upon the Hellespont. She was conquered by her own factions. She fell by the hands of her own people. The Man of Macedonia did not the work of destruction. It was already done by her own corruptions, banishments, and dissensions. Rome, republican Rome, whose eagles glanced in the rising and setting sun, where, and what is she ? The eternal city yet remains, proud even in her desolation, noble in her decline, venerable in the majesty of religion, and calm as in the composure of death. The *malaria* has but travelled in the paths worn by her destroyers. More than eighteen centuries have mourned over the loss of her empire. A mortal disease was upon her vitals before Cæsar had crossed the Rubicon ; and Brutus did not restore her health by the deep probings of the senate chamber. The Goths and Vandals and Huns, the swarms of the North, completed only what was already begun at home. Romans betrayed Rome. The legions were bought and sold ; but the people offered the tribute money.

And where are the republics of modern times, which clustered round immortal Italy ? Venice and Genoa exist but in name. The Alps, indeed, look down upon the brave and peaceful Swiss in their native fastnesses ; but the guaranty of their freedom is in their weakness, and not in their strength. The

mountains are not easily crossed, and the vallies are not easily retained. When the invader comes, he moves like an avalanche, carrying destruction in his path. The peasantry sinks before him. The country is too poor for plunder ; and too rough for valuable conquest. Nature presents her eternal barriers on every side to check the wantonness of ambition ; and Switzerland remains with her simple institutions, a military road to fairer climates, scarcely worth a permanent possession, and protected by the jealousy of her neighbours.

We stand the latest, and, if we fail, probably the last experiment of self-government by the people. We have begun it under circumstances of the most auspicious nature. We are in the vigor of youth. Our growth has never been checked by the oppressions of tyranny. Our constitutions have never been enfeebled by the vices or luxuries of the old world. Such as we are, we have been from the beginning ; simple, hardy, intelligent, accustomed to self-government and self-respect. The Atlantic rolls between us and any formidable foe. Within our own territory, stretching through many degrees of latitude and longitude, we have the choice of many products, and many means of independence. The government is mild. The press is free. Religion is free. Knowledge reaches, or may reach, every home. What fairer prospect of success could be presented ? What means more adequate to accomplish the sublime end ? What more is necessary, than for the people to preserve what they themselves have created ?

Already has the age caught the spirit of our institutions. It has already ascended the Andes, and snuffed the breezes of both oceans. It has infused itself into the life-blood of Europe, and warmed the sunny plains of France, and the low lands of Holland. It has touched the philosophy of Germany and the North, and, moving onward to the South, has opened to Greece the lessons of her better days.

Can it be, that America under such circumstances can betray herself? That she is to be added to the catalogue of republics, the inscription upon whose ruins is, 'They were, but they are not.' Forbid it, my countrymen; forbid it, Heaven.

I call upon you, fathers, by the shades of your ancestors, by the dear ashes which repose in this precious soil, by all you are, and all you hope to be; resist every project of disunion, resist every encroachment upon your liberties, resist every attempt to fetter your consciences, or smother your public schools, or extinguish your system of public instruction.

I call upon you, mothers, by that which never fails in woman, the love of your offspring; teach them, as they climb your knees, or learn on your bosoms, the blessings of liberty. Swear them at the altar, as with their baptismal vows, to be true to their country, and never to forget or forsake her.

I call upon you, young men, to remember whose sons you are; whose inheritance you possess. Life can never be too short, which brings nothing but disgrace and oppression. Death never comes too

soon, if necessary in defence of the liberties of your country.

I call upon you, old men, for your counsels, and your prayers, and your benedictions. May not your grey hairs go down in sorrow to the grave with the recollection, that you have lived in vain. May not your last sun sink in the west upon a nation of slaves.

No—I read in the destiny of my country far better hopes, far brighter visions. We, who are now assembled here, must soon be gathered to the congregation of other days. The time of our departure is at hand, to make way for our children upon the theatre of life. May God speed them and theirs. May he, who at the distance of another century shall stand here to celebrate this day, still look round upon a free, happy, and virtuous people. May he have reason to exult as we do. May he, with all the enthusiasm of truth as well as of poetry, exclaim, that here is still his country,

‘Zealous, yet modest ; innocent, though free ;
Patient of toil ; serene amidst alarms ;
Inflexible in faith ; invincible in arms.’





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