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Address Delivered by Hon. Rufus Choate

Rufus Choate

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ADDRESS

DELIVERED BY

HON. RUFUS CHOATE

UPON THE CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION OF THE
SETTLEMENT OF IPSWICH, MASSACHUSETTS.

16 AUGUST 1834

Rufus Choate was born at Ipswich, Essex County, Mass^a.,
1 October 1799

On 22 July, 1859, before a crowded audience in Faneuil Hall, Boston, assembled to do honor to Rufus Choate, that Great American Advocate who had recently died on 13 July of that year, Edward Everett said, "If ever there was a truly disinterested Patriot, Rufus Choate was that man. . . . He reaped little but fame, when he ought to have reaped both fame and fortune."

This Address is now re-printed, believing that it should prove an added inspiration to all citizens, delivered, as it was, by one of the purest of American Patriots; and at this time when we, of New England, are striving to do our best to help make the Tercentennial Celebration in 1930 a great, and far-reaching, success.

Will those who receive it do me the honor to accept it with my regards, and read it carefully.

FRANCIS HENRY APPLETON

BOSTON 17, MASSACHUSETTS, U. S. A.,
March, 1928.

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THE COLONIAL AGE OF NEW ENGLAND:

AN ADDRESS DELIVERED AT THE CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION OF THE SETTLEMENT
OF THE TOWN OF IPSWICH, MASS., AUGUST 16, 1834

By Rufus Choate

IT is a fact which a native of this old, fertile, and beautiful town may learn with pleasure, but without surprise, that it was always the most fertile or among the most fertile and most beautiful portions of the coast of New England. John Smith, who in 1614 explored that coast from Penobscot to Cape Cod, admires and praises "the many rising hills of Agawam," whose tops and descents are grown over with numerous corn-fields and delightful groves, the island to the east, with its "fair high woods of mulberry trees," and the luxuriant growth of oaks, pines, and walnuts, "which make the place," he says, "an excellent habitation"; while the Pilgrim Fathers in December, 1620, when deliberating on the choice of a spot for their settlement, some of them "urged greatly to Anguam or Angoam, a place twenty leagues off to the northward, which they heard to be an excellent harbor for ships, better ground, and better fishing." As early as January, 1632, the first governor of Massachusetts, John Winthrop, declared Agawam to be "the best place for tillage and cattle *in the land*;" others described its great meadows, marshes, and plain ploughing grounds; and that the government of the infant colony, Massachusetts, at the time resolved that it should be occupied forthwith by a sort of garrison, in advance and in anticipation of its more formal and numerous settlement, for the express purpose of keeping so choice a spot out of the hands of the French. In March, 1633, accordingly, there was sent hither a company of thirteen men to acquire and to preserve rather for the future than the present uses of the Colony, as much as they might of that fair variety of hill, plain, wood, meadow, marsh, and sea-shore, whose fame had spread so widely. The leader of the little band was John Winthrop, the son of the Governor.

They arrived in that month—the dreariest of the New England year—on the banks of the river which washes in his sweet and cheerful course the foot of the hill on which we are assembled. They proceeded to purchase of Masconomo, the Sagamore of Agawam, by a deed to him, Winthrop, a portion of the territory which composes the present corporation of Ipswich; and there remained without, I imagine, any considerable addition to their number, without any regularly organized church, or stated preaching, or municipal character, until May, 1634. At that time the Rev. Thomas Parker, the pupil of the learned Archbishop Usher of Dublin, and about one hundred more, men, women, and children, came over from “the Bay” and took up their abode on the spot thus made ready for them. In August, 1634, the first church was organized; and on this day two hundred years ago the town was incorporated. With that deep filial love of England and the English, which neither persecution, nor exile, nor distance, nor the choice of another and dearer home, nor the contemplation of the rapidly revealing and proud destinies of the New World, ever entirely plucked from the hearts of all the Colonists down to the War of Independence, they took the name of Ipswich from the Ipswich of the east coast of England, the capital of the county of Suffolk, and the birthplace of Cardinal Wolsey.

And thus and by these was begun the civil and ecclesiastical establishment and history of Ipswich. You have done well in this way to commemorate an event of so much interest to you. It is well thus filially, thus piously, to wipe away the dust, if you may, which two hundred years have gathered upon the tombs of the fathers. It is well that you have gathered yourselves together on this height; that as you stand here and look abroad upon as various and inspiring a view as the sun shines upon; as you see fields of grain bending before the light summer wind,—one harvest just now ready for the sickle, and another and a richer preparing; as you see your own flocks upon the tops and descents of the many rising hills; mowing-lands shaven by the scythe; the slow river winding between still meadows, ministering in his way to the processes of nature and of art,—losing himself at last under your eye in the sea, as life, busy or quiet, glides into immortality; as you hear peace and plenty proclaiming with

a thousand voices the reign of freedom, law, order, morality, and religion; as you look upon these charities of God, these schools of useful learning and graceful accomplishment, these great workshops of your manufacturers, in which are witnessed—performed every day—achievements of art and science to which the whole genius of the ancient world presents nothing equal; as you dwell on all this various, touching, inspiring picture in miniature of a busy, prosperous, free, happy, thrice and four times happy, and blessed people,—it is well that standing here you should look backwards as well as around you and forward,—that you should call to mind, to whom under God you owe all these things; whose weakness has grown into this strength; whose sorrows have brought this exceeding great joy; whose tears and blood, as they scattered the seed of that cold, late, ungenial, and uncertain spring, have fertilized this natural and moral harvest which is rolled out at your feet as one unbounded flood.

The more particular history of Ipswich from its settlement to this day, and of the towns of Hamilton and Essex—shoots successively from the parent stock—has been written so minutely and with such general accuracy, by a learned clergyman of this country, that I may be spared the repetition of details with which he has made you familiar. This occasion, too, I think, prescribes topics somewhat more general. That long line of learned ministers, upright magistrates, and valiant men of whom we are justly proud—our municipal fathers—were something more and other than the mere founders of Ipswich; and we must remember their entire character and all their relations to their own times and to ours, or we cannot do them adequate honor. It is a boast of our local annals that they do not flow in a separate and solitary stream, but blend themselves with that broader and deeper current of events, the universal ante-revolutionary history of North America. It is the foundation of an empire, and not merely the purchase and plantation of Agawam, which we commemorate,—whether we will or not; and I do not fear that we shall enlarge our contemplations too far, or elevate them too high, for the service to which we have devoted this day.

The history of the Colonies which were planted one after another along our coast in the seventeenth century, and

which grew up in the fulness of time into thirteen and at last into twenty-four States, from their respective beginnings to the War of Independence, is full of interest and instruction, for whatever purpose or in whatever way you choose to read it. But there is one point of view in which, if you will look at the events which furnished the matter of that colonial history, I think you will agree with me that they assume a character of peculiar interest, and entitle themselves to distinct and profound consideration. I regard those events altogether as forming a vast and various series of influences, —a long, austere, effective course of discipline and instruction,—by which the settlers and their children were slowly and painfully trained to achieve their independence, to form their constitutions of State governments and of federal government, and to act usefully and greatly their part as a separate political community on the high places of the world.

The Colonial period, as I regard it, was the charmed, eventful infancy and youth of our national life. The revolutionary and constitutional age, from 1775 to 1789, was the beginning of its manhood. The Declaration of Independence, the succeeding conduct of the War of Independence, the establishment of our local and general governments, and the splendid national career since run,—these are only effects, fruits, outward manifestations! The seed was sown, the salient living spring of great action sunk deep in that long, remote, less brilliant, less regarded season,—the heroic age of America that preceded. The Revolution was the meeting of the rivers at the mountain. You may look there, to see them rend it asunder, tear it down from its summit to its base, and pass off to the sea.

But the Colonial period is the country above, where the rivers were created. You must explore that region if you would find the secret fountains where they began their course, the contributory streams by which they grew, the high lands covered with woods, which, attracting the vapors as they floated about them, poured down rain and melted snow to swell their currents, and helped onward the momentum by which they broke through the walls of nature and shook the earth itself to its centre! One of our most accomplished scholars and distinguished public men speaks somewhere of the "Miracle of the Revolution." I would say rather that

the *true* miracle was the character of the people who *made* the Revolution; and I have thought that an attempt to unfold some of the great traits of that character, and to point out the manner in which the events of the preceding Colonial Age contributed to form and impress those traits, imperfect as it must be, would be entirely applicable to this occasion.

The leading feature, then, in the character of the American people in the age of the Revolution was what Burke called in Parliament their "fierce spirit of liberty." "It is stronger in them," said he, "than in any other people on the earth." "I am convinced," said our youthful and glorious Warren,—in a letter to Quincy, little more than six months before he fell on the heights of Charlestown,—"I am convinced that the true spirit of liberty was never so universally diffused through all ranks and orders of men on the face of the earth, as it now is through all North America. It is the united voice of America to preserve their freedom or lose their lives in defence of it." Whoever overlooks, whoever underestimates this trait in the character of that generation of our fathers,—whoever has not carefully followed it upwards to its remote and deep springs, may wonder at, but never can comprehend, the "Miracle of the Revolution." Whence, then, did they derive it? Let us return to the history of the Colonists before they came, and after they came, for the answer; and for distinctness and brevity let us confine ourselves to the Northern Colonists, our immediate ancestors.

The people of New England, at the beginning of the Revolutionary War, to describe them in a word, were the Puritans of Old England as they existed in that country in the first half of the seventeenth century; but changed,—somewhat improved, let me say,—by the various influences which acted upon them here for a hundred and fifty years after they came over.

The original stock was the Puritan character of the age of Elizabeth, of James I., and of Charles I. It was transplanted to another soil; another sun shone on it; other winds fanned and shook it; the seasons of another heaven for a century and a half circled round it; and there it stood at length, the joint product of the old and the new, deep-

rooted, healthful, its trunk massive, compact, and of rough and gnarled exterior, but bearing to the sky the glory of the wood.

Turn first now, for a moment, to the Old English Puritans, the fathers of our fathers, of whom came, of whom were, planters of Ipswich, of Massachusetts, of New England,—of whom came, of whom were, our own Ward, Parker, and Saltonstall, and Wise, Norton, and Rogers, and Appleton, and Cobbet, and Winthrop,—and see whether they were likely to be the founders of a race of freemen or slaves. Remember, then, the true, noblest, the least questioned, least questionable, praise of these men is this: that for a hundred years they were the sole depositaries of the sacred fire of liberty in England, after it had gone out in every other bosom,—that they saved at its last gasp the English constitution, which the Tudors and the first two Stuarts were rapidly changing into just such a gloomy despotism as they saw in France and Spain, and wrought into it every particle of freedom which it now possesses,—that when they first took their seats in the House of Commons, in the early part of the reign of Elizabeth, they found it the cringing and ready tool of the throne, and that they reanimated it, remodelled it, reasserted its privileges, restored it to its constitutional rank, drew back to it the old power of making laws, redressing wrongs, and imposing taxes, and thus again rebuilt and opened what an Englishman called “the chosen temple of liberty,” and English House of Commons,—that they abridged the tremendous power of the crown and defined it,—and when at last Charles Stuart resorted to arms to restore the despotism they had partially overthrown, that they met him on a hundred fields of battle, and buried, after a sharp and long struggle, crown and mitre and the headless trunk of the king himself beneath the foundations of a civil and religious commonwealth. This praise all the historians of England—Whig and Tory, Protestant and Catholic, Hume, Hallam, Lingard, and all—award to the Puritans. By what causes this spirit of liberty had been breathed into the masculine, enthusiastic, austere, resolute character of this extraordinary body of men, in such intensity as to mark them off from all the rest of the people of England, I cannot here and now particularly consider. It is a thrilling and awful

history of the Puritans in England, from their first emerging above the general level of Protestants, in the time of Henry VIII. and Edward VI., until they were driven by hundreds and thousands to these shores; but I must pass it over. It was just when the nobler and grander traits—the enthusiasm and piety and hardihood and energy—of Puritanism had attained the highest point of exaltation to which, in England, it ever mounted up, and the love of liberty had grown to be the great master-passion that fired and guided all the rest,—it was just then that our portion of its disciples, filled with the undiluted spirit, glowing with the intensest fervors of Protestantism and republicanism together, came hither, and in that elevated and holy and resolved frame, began to build the civil and religious structures which you see around you.

Trace, now, their story a little farther onward through the Colonial period to the War of Independence, to admire with me the providential arrangement of circumstances by which that spirit of liberty, which brought them hither, was strengthened and reinforced, until at length, instructed by wisdom, tempered by virtue, and influenced by injuries, by anger and grief and conscious worth and the sense of violated right, it burst forth here and wrought the wonders of the Revolution. I have thought that if one had the power to place a youthful and forming people, like the northern colonists, in whom the love of freedom was already vehement and healthful, in a situation the most propitious for the growth and perfection of that sacred sentiment, he could hardly select a fairer field for so interesting an experiment than the actual condition of our fathers for the hundred and fifty years after their arrival, to the War of the Revolution.

They had freedom enough to teach them its value, and to refresh and elevate their spirits, wearied, not despondent, from the contentions and trials of England. They were just so far short of perfect freedom, that, instead of reposing for a moment in the mere fruition of what they had, they were kept emulous and eager for more, looking all the while up and aspiring to rise to a loftier height, to breathe a purer air, and bask in a brighter beam. Compared with the condition of England down to 1688,—compared with that of the larger part of the continent of Europe down to our Revolution,—theirs was a privileged and liberal condition. The necessities

of freedom, if I may say so,—its plainer food and homelier garments and humbler habitations,—were theirs. Its luxuries and refinements, its festivals, its lettered and social glory, its loftier port and prouder look and richer graces, were the growth of a later day; these came in with independence. Here was liberty enough to make them love it for itself, and to fill them with those lofty and kindred sentiments which are at once its fruit and its nutriment and safeguard in the soul of man. But their liberty was still incomplete, and it was constantly in danger from England; and these two circumstances had a powerful effect in increasing that love and confirming those sentiments. It was a condition precisely adapted to keep liberty, as a subject of thought and feeling and desire, every moment in mind. Every moment they were comparing what they had possessed with what they wanted and had a right to; they calculated by the rule of three, if a fractional part of freedom came to so much, what would express the power and value of the whole number! They were restive and impatient and ill at ease; a galling wakefulness possessed their faculties like a spell. Had they been wholly slaves, they had lain still and slept. Had they been wholly free, that eager hope, that fond desire, that longing after a great, distant, yet practicable good, would have given way to the placidity and luxury and carelessness of complete enjoyment; and that energy and wholesome agitation of mind would have gone down like an ebb-tide. As it was, the whole vast body of waters all over its surface, down to its sunless, utmost depths, was heaved and shaken and purified by a spirit that moved above it and through it, and gave it no rest, though the moon waned and the winds were in their caves; they were like the disciples of the old and bitter philosophy of Paganism, who had been initiated into one stage of the greater mysteries, and who had come to the door, closed, and written over with strange characters, which led up to another. They had tasted of truth, and they burned for a fuller draught; a partial revelation of that which shall be hereafter, had dawned; and their hearts throbbed eager, yet not without apprehension, to look upon the glories of the perfect day. Some of the mystery of God, of Nature, of Man, of the Universe, had been unfolded; might they, by prayer, by abstinence, by virtue, by retire-

ment, by contemplation, entitle themselves to read another page in the clasped and awful volume?

Sparing and inadequate as their supply of liberty was, it was all the while in danger from the Crown and Parliament of England, and the whole ante-revolutionary period was one unintermitted struggle to preserve it, and to wrest it away. You sometimes hear the Stamp Act spoken of as the first invasion of the rights of the colonists by the mother-country. In truth, it was about the last; the most flagrant, perhaps, the most dreadful and startling to an Englishman's idea of liberty, but not the first,—no, by a hundred and fifty years not the first. From the day that the Pilgrims on board *The Mayflower* at Plymouth, before they landed, drew up that simple, but pregnant and comprehensive, form of democracy, and subscribed their names, and came out a colony of republicans, to the battle of Lexington, there were not ten years together,—I hardly exempt the Protectorate of Cromwell,—in which some right—some great and sacred right, as the colonists regarded it—was not assailed or menaced by the government of England, in one form or another. From the first, the mother-country complained that we had brought from England, or had found here, *too much liberty*,—liberty inconsistent with prerogatives of the Crown, inconsistent with supremacy of Parliament, inconsistent with the immemorial relations of all colonies to the country they sprang from,—and she set herself to abridge it. We answered with great submission that we did not honestly think that we had brought or had found much more than half liberty enough; and we braced ourselves to keep what we had, and obtain more when we could;—and so, with one kind of weapon or another, on one field or another, on one class of questions or another, a struggle was kept up from the landing at Plymouth to the surrender at Yorktown. It was all one single struggle from beginning to end; the parties, the objects, the principles, are the same;—one sharp, long, glorious, triumphant struggle for liberty. The topics, the heads of dispute, various from reign to reign; but though the subjects were various, the question was *one*;—shall the colonists be free, or shall they be slaves?

And that question was pronounced by everybody, understood by everybody, debated by everybody,—in the colonial

assemblies; by the clergy on the days of thanksgiving, on fast-days, and quarterly fast-days; and by the agents of the colonies in England; and at last, and more and more, through the press. I say nothing here of the effect of such a controversy so long continued, in sharpening the faculties of the colonies, in making them acute, prompt, ingenious, full of resource, familiar with the grounds of their liberties, their history, revolutions, extent, nature, and the best methods of defending them argumentatively. These were important effects; but I rather choose to ask you to consider how the *love* of liberty would be inflamed; how ardent, jealous, irresistible it would be made; with what new and what exaggerated value even, it would learn to invest its object, by being thus obliged to struggle so unceasingly to preserve it; and by coming so many times so near to lose it; and by being thus obliged to bear it away like another Palladium, at the hazard of blindness, from the flames of its temple which would have consumed it,—across seas gaping wide to swallow it up,—through serried ranks of armed men who had marked it for a prey.

There was one time during this long contest when it might have seemed to any race of men less resolved than our fathers, that liberty had at last returned from earth to the heavens from which she descended. A few years before 1688—the year of the glorious revolution in England—the British king succeeded, after a struggle of more than half a century, in wresting from Massachusetts her first charter. From that time, or rather from December, 1685, to April, 1689, the government of all New England was an undisguised and intolerable despotism. A governor, Sir Edmund Andros,—not chosen by the people as every former governor had been, but appointed by James II.,—worthy to serve such a master,—and a few members, less than the majority, of the council, also appointed by the king, and very fit to advise such a governor, grasped and held the whole civil power. And they exercised it in the very spirit of the worst of the Stuarts. The old, known body of colonial laws and customs which had been adopted by the people, was silently and totally abolished. New laws were made; taxes assessed; an administration all new and all vexatious was introduced, not by the people in general court, but by the governor and

a small, low faction of his council, in whose election they had no vote; over whose proceedings they had no control; to whom their rights and interests and lives were all as nothing compared with the lightest wish of the Papist and tyrant James whom they served. A majority of the council, although appointed by the king, were yet true hearts of New England in their bosoms, and resisted with all their might the tyranny which the government was riveting upon her. One of these, Major Samuel Appleton, was an inhabitant of Ipswich, a son of one of the earliest settlers of the town, the ancestor of a long line of learned, energetic, and most respectable descendants. He had the high honor to be arrested in October, 1689, by Andros and his faction in the council, as being a factious member of the board and disaffected to the government, and was obliged to give bonds in the sum of £1000 to be of good political behavior. But the efforts of this gentleman, and of such as he in the council, could avail nothing; and the arbitrary tyranny of the creatures of the Stuarts became the only government of Massachusetts.

In this the darkest day that New England ever saw, it is grateful to pause and commemorate an act of this town of Ipswich which deserves, I think, an honorable place in the universal history of liberty. Sir Edmund Andros and his faction had, without the intention of the colonial legislature, or any representatives of the people, made a decree imposing a State tax on the people, against that fundamental principle of liberty, that the people alone can tax themselves. They had assessed in several towns quotas of it, and had commanded them to choose each a commissioner, who, with the boards of the selectmen, should assess the quota of the town on its inhabitants and estates respectively. A meeting of the inhabitants of Ipswich was warned to be holden on the 23d August, 1687, to choose a commissioner to aid the selectmen in assessing the tax. The evening before the meeting the Rev. John Wise, the minister of the parish now Essex, a learned, able, resolute, and honest man,—worthy to preach to the children of Puritans,—Robert Kinsman, William Goodhue, Jr., and several other principal inhabitants of Ipswich, held a preparatory caucus at the house of John Appleton, brother of Major Samuel Appleton, which stood, or stands, on the road to Topsfield, and there “discoursed,

and concluded that it was not the town's duty *any way* to assist that *ill method* of raising money without a general assembly." The next day they attended the town-meeting, and Mr. Wise made a speech, enforcing this opinion of his friends, and said, "We have a good God, and a good king, and should do well to stand on our privileges." And by their privileges they concluded to stand. I cannot read the simple, manly, and noble vote of Ipswich on that day without a thrill of pride,—that then, when the hearts of the pious and brave children in Massachusetts seemed almost sunk within them,—our charter gone, James Stuart the Second on the throne, (I suspect it was irony or policy of Mr. Wise to call him a good king)—just when the long-cherished, long-dreaded design of the English Crown to reduce the colonies into immediate dependence on itself, and to give them, unconcealed, slavery for substantial freedom, seemed about to be consummated,—that we here and then, with full knowledge of the power and temper of Andros and his council, dared to assert and to spread out upon our humble record the great principle of English liberty and of the American Revolution. The record declares "that considering the said act" (referring to the order of the governor and council imposing the tax) "doth infringe *their liberty as free-born English subjects* of His Majesty, and by interfering with the statute laws of the land by which it was enacted that no taxes should be levied upon the subjects *without the consent of an assembly chosen by the free men for assessing the same*,—they do, therefore, vote that they are not willing to choose a commissioner for such an end without such a privilege;—and they, moreover, consent not that the selectmen do proceed to levy any such rate, until it be appointed by a general assembly, concurring with the Governor and Council."

For the share they had taken in the proceedings of that memorable day, Mr. Wise and five others, probably those who met with him, and Mr. Appleton himself, were arrested, by order of the Governor, as for a contempt and misdemeanor, and carried beyond the limits of the county, imprisoned in jail at Boston, denied the writ of habeas corpus, tried by a packed jury—principally strangers and foreigners, I rejoice to read—and a subservient court, and of course found guilty. They were all fined more or less heavily, from £15 to £50,

compelled to enter into bonds of from £500 to £1000 each to keep the peace, and Mr. Wise was suspended from the ministerial function, and the others disqualified to bear office.

The whole expense of time and money to which they were subjected was estimated to exceed £400,—a sum, equivalent to perhaps \$5000 of our money,—enough to build the Ipswich part of Warner's Bridge more than three times over; which the town shortly after nobly and justly, yet gratuitously, refunded to the sufferers.

These men, says Pitkin, who is not remarkable for enthusiasm, may justly claim a distinguished rank among the patriots of America. You, their townsmen—their children—may well be proud of them; prouder still, but more grateful than proud, that a full town-meeting of the freemen of Ipswich adopted unanimously that declaration of right, and refused to collect or pay the tax which would have made them slaves. The principle of that vote was precisely the same on which Hampden resisted an imposition of Charles I., and on which Samuel Adams and Hancock and Warren resisted the Stamp Act,—the principle that if any power but the people can tax the people, there is an end of liberty.

The later and more showy spectacles and brighter glories and visible results of the age of the Revolution, have elsewhere cast into the shade and almost covered with oblivion the actors on that interesting day, and the act itself,—its hazards, its intrepidity, its merits, its singularity and consequences. But you will remember them, and teach them to your children. The graves of those plain, venerable, and sturdy men of the old, old time, who thus set their lives on the hazard of a die for the perishing liberties of Massachusetts; the site of the house where they assembled—they, the fathers of the town—the day before the meeting, to consider what advice they should give to their children in that great crisis, so full of responsibility and danger; the spot on which that building stood where the meeting was holden and the declaration recorded,—these are among you yet; your honor, your treasure, the memorials and incentives of virtue and patriotism and courage, which feared God and knew no other fear! Go sometimes to those graves, and give an hour of the summer evening to the brave and pious dead. Go there, and

thank God for pouring out upon them the spirit of liberty, and humbly ask Him to transmit it, as it breathed in them, their children, and their children's children, to the thousandth generation!

I have said part of what I intended of one trait in the character of our fathers of the revolutionary age,—their spirit of liberty. But something more than the love of liberty is needful to fit a people for the enjoyment of it. Other men, other nations, have loved liberty as well as our fathers. The sentiment is innate, and it is indestructible, and immortal. Yet of the wide-spread families of the earth, in the long procession of the generations, that stretches backward to the birth of the world, how few have been free at all; how few have been long free; how imperfect was their liberty while they possessed it; how speedily it flitted away; how hard to woo it to return! In all Asia and Africa—continents whose population is more than four sevenths of the human race on earth, whose history begins ages before a ray of the original civilization of the East had reached to Europe—there was never a free nation. And how has it been in Europe, that proud seat of power, art, civilization, enterprise, and mind? Alas for the destiny of social man! Here and there in ancient and in later times, in Greece, in Rome, in Venice, in France, men have called on the Goddess of Liberty in a passionate and ignorant idolatry; they have embodied her angelical brightness and unclouded serenity in marble; they have performed dazzling actions, they have committed great crimes in her name; they have built for her the altars where she best loves to be worshipped,—republican forms of government; they have found energy, genius, the love of glory, the mad dream of power and pride in her inspiration. But they were not wise enough, they were not virtuous enough for diffused, steady, lasting freedom. Their heads were not strong enough to bear a draught so stimulating. They perished of raging fever, kindled by drinking of the very waters of social life! These stars one after another burned out, and fell from their throne on high!

England guarded by the sea; Holland behind her dikes; a dozen Swiss Cantons breathing the difficult air of the iced mountain tops,—these, in spite of revolutions, all were free governments. And in the whole of the Old World there was

not another. The love of liberty there was; but a government founded in liberty there was not one besides. Some things other than the love of freedom are needful to form a great and free nation. Let us go farther then, and observe the wisdom and prudence by which, after a long and painful process, our fathers were prepared, in mind and heart, for the permanent possession, tempered enjoyment, and true use of that freedom, the love of which was rooted in their souls; the process by which, in the words of Milton, they were made into a "right pious, right honest, right holy nation," as well as a nation loving liberty. In running over that process, I am inclined to attach the most importance to the fact that they who planted New England, and all the generations of successors, to the War of Independence, were engaged in a succession of the severest and gravest trials and labors and difficulties which ever tasked the spirit of a man or a nation.

It has been said that there was never a great character,—never a truly strong, masculine, commanding character,—which was not made so by successive struggles with great difficulties. Such is the general rule of the moral world, undoubtedly. All history, all biography verify and illustrate it, and none more remarkably than our own.

It has seemed to me probable that if the Puritans, on their arrival here, had found a home like that they left, and a social system made ready for them,—if they had found the forest felled, roads constructed, rivers bridged, fields sown, houses built, a rich soil, a bright sun, and a balmy air,—if they had come into a country which for a hundred and fifty years was never to hear the war-whoop of a savage, or the tap of a French drum,—if they had found a commonwealth civil and religious, a jurisprudence, a system of police, administration, and policy, all to their hands, churches scattered, districts, parishes, towns, and counties, widening one around the other,—if England had covered over their infancy with her mighty wing, spared charters, widened trade, and knit child to mother by parental policy,—it is probable that that impulse of high mind, and that unconquerable constancy of the first emigrants, might have subsided before the epoch of the drama of the Revolution. Their children might have grown light, luxurious, vain, and the sacred fire of liberty, cherished by the fathers in the times of the Tudors and Stuarts, might have died away in the hearts of a feeble posterity.

Ours was a different destiny. I do not mean to say that the whole Colonial Age was a scene of universal and constant suffering and labor, and that there was no repose; of peril pressing at every turn, and every moment, on everybody. But in its general course it was a time of suffering and of privation, of poverty or mediocrity of fortune, of sleepless nights, grave duties, serious aims; and I say it was a trial better fitted to train up a nation "in true wisdom, virtue, magnanimity, and the likeness of God,"—better fitted to form temperate habits, strong character, resolute spirits, and all the radiant train of public and private virtues which stand before the stars of the throne of liberty,—than any similar period in the history of any nation, or of any but one, that ever existed.

Some seasons there were of sufferings so sharp and strange, that they might seem designed to test the energy of Puritan principles. Such was the summer and winter after Governor Winthrop's arrival in New England, 1670-1671. Such the winter and spring after the arrival of the Puritans at Plymouth, 1620-1621. They wasted away—young and old of the little flock—of consumption and fever of lungs; the living scarcely able to bury the dead; the well not enough to tend the sick; men who landed a few weeks before in full strength, their bones moistened with marrow, were seen to stagger and fall from faintness for want of food. In a country abounding in secret springs, they perished for want of a draught of good water. Childhood drooped and died away, like a field-flower turned up by the ploughshare. Old age was glad to gather himself to his last sleep. Some sank down, broken-hearted, by the graves of beloved wives and sons. Of the whole one hundred and one who landed at Plymouth, there were once only seven able to render assistance to the dying and the sick.

A brilliant English writer, speaking of the Jews, exclaims, with surprise and indignation, that even a desert did not make them wise. Our fathers, let me say, not vaingloriously, were readier learned of wisdom. Their sufferings chastened, purified, and elevated them; and led them to repose their weary and stricken spirits upon the strength which upholds the world. Thus to be afflicted, thus to profit by affliction, is good for a nation as it is good for a man. To neither is it

joyous, but grievous; to both it is all made up over and over again by a more exceeding weight of glory.

Look now, passing from the sufferings, to the gigantic labors of our Colonial Age, and calculate their influence on those who performed them.

The first great work of the earlier generations of New England was to reclaim the country, to fit it for the sustentation of life from day to day, from season to season, and thus to become the abode of an intellectual and social civilization advancing indefinitely. This is the first great work of all nations, who begin their existence in a country not before the residence of cultivated man. The nature of this work,—the ease and difficulty of performing it depending of course on the great natural characteristics of the region,—its fertility, its even or uneven surface, the quality, as well as the abundance or scarcity of its products, the brightness and dryness, or gloom and moisture of its skies, its cold or hot temperature, and the like,—the nature of this first and severest of the herculean labors of nations, perhaps quite as much as any other cause, perhaps as much as all other causes, affects the moral and mental character and habits of the people which have it to do. It has been maintained, and with great ingenuity, that the whole subsequent career of a nation has taken impulse and direction, from the circumstances of physical condition in which it came first into life. The children of the luxurious East opened their eyes on plains, whose fertility a thousand harvests could not exhaust, renewing itself perpetually from the bounty of a prodigal nature, beneath bright suns, in a warm, balmy air, which floated around them like music and perfumes from revels on the banks of rivers by moonlight. “Every blast shook spices from the leaves, and every month dropped fruits upon the ground.” “The blessings of nature were collected, and its evils extracted and excluded.” Hence the immemorial character of a part of the tribes of Asia. They became indolent, effeminate, and timorous. Steeped in sensual enjoyments, the mind slept with the body; or if it awoke, unlike the reasoning, speculative, curious, and energetic intellect of Europe, it reposed in reverie; it diffused itself in long contemplation, musing rather than thinking, reading human destiny in the stars, but

making no effort to comprehend the system of the world. Life itself there, is but a fine dream; and death is only a scattering of the garlands, a hushing of the music, a putting out of the lights of a midsummer night's feast. You would not look there for freedom, for morality, for true religion, for serious reflections.

The destiny of the most of Europe was different. Vast forests covering half a continent, rapid and broad rivers, cold winds, long winters, large tracts unsusceptible of cultivation, snow-clad mountains on whose tops the lightning plays impassive,—this was the world that fell to their lot. And hence partly, that race is active, laborious, curious, intellectual, full of energy, tending to freedom, destined to freedom, but not yet all free.

I cannot now pause to qualify this view, and make the requisite discriminations between the different States of that quarter of the world.

To the tempest-tossed and weather-beaten, yet sanguine and enthusiastic spirits who came hither, New England hardly presented herself at first in all that ruggedness and sternest wildness which nature has impressed indelibly upon her. But a few summers and winters revealed the whole truth. They had come to a country fresh from the hand of nature, almost as on the day of creation, covered with primeval woods, which concealed a soil not very fruitful and bearing only the hardier and coarser grains and grasses, broken into rocky hills and mountains sending their gray summits to the skies, the upland levels, with here and there a strip of interval along a pleasant river, and a patch of salt-marsh by the side of the sea,—a country possessing and producing neither gold, nor diamonds, nor pearls, nor spices, nor opium, nor bread-fruit, nor silks, nor the true vine,—to a long and cold winter, an uncertain spring, a burning summer, and autumn with his fleecy clouds and bland southwest, red and yellow leaf and insidious disease;—such was the ungenial heaven beneath which their lot was cast; such was New England, yielding nothing to idleness, nothing to luxury, but yet holding out to faith and patience and labor, freedom and skill, and public and private virtue,—holding out to these the promise of a latter day afar off, of glory and honor and rational and sober enjoyment. Such was the

country in which the rugged infancy of New England was raised. Such was the country which the Puritans were appointed to transpose into a meet residence of refinement and liberty. You know how they performed that duty. Your fathers have told you. From this hill, westward and southward, and eastward and northward, your eyes may see how they performed it. The wilderness and the solitary place were glad for them, and the desert rejoiced and blossomed as the rose. The land was a desolate wilderness before them; behind them, as the garden of Eden. How glorious a triumph of patience, energy, perseverance, intelligence, and faith! And then how powerfully and in how many ways must the fatigues, privations, interruptions, and steady advance and ultimate completion of that long day's work have reacted on the character and the mind of those who performed it! How could such a people ever again, if ever they had been, be idle, or frivolous, or giddy, or luxurious! With what a resistless accession of momentum must they turn to every new, manly, honest, and worthy labor! How truly must they love the land for which they had done so much! How ardently must they desire to see it covered over with the beauty of holiness and the glory of freedom as with a garment! With what a just and manly self-approbation must they look back on such labors and such success; and how great will such pride make any people!

There was another great work, different from this, and more difficult, more glorious, more improving, which they had to do, and that was to establish their system of colonial government, to frame their code of internal law, and to administer the vast and perplexing political business of the colonies in their novel and trying relations to England, through the whole Colonial Age. Of all their labors this was the grandest, the most intellectual, the best calculated to fit them for independence. Consider how much patient thought, how much observation of man and life, how much sagacity, how much communication of mind with mind, how many general councils, plots, and marshalling of affairs, how much slow accumulation, how much careful transmission of wisdom, that labor demanded. And what a school of civil capacity this must have proved to them who partook in it! Hence, I think, the sober, rational, and practical views and

conduct which distinguished even the first fervid years of the Revolutionary age. How little giddiness, rant, and foolery do you see there! No riotous and shouting processions,—no grand festivals of the goddess of reason,—no impious dream of human perfectibility,—no unloosing of the hoarded-up passions of ages from the restraints of law, order, morality, and religion, such as shamed and frightened away the new-born liberty of revolutionary France. Hence our victories of peace were more brilliant, more beneficial, than our victories of war. Hence those fair, I hope everlasting, monuments of civil wisdom, our State and Federal Constitutions. Hence the coolness, the practised facility, the splendid success, with which they took up and held the whip and reins of the fiery chariot flying through the zodiac, after the first driver had been stricken by the thunder from his seat.

Do you not think it was a merciful appointment that our fathers did not come to the possession of independence, and the more perfect freedom which it brought with it, as to a great prize drawn in a lottery,—an independent fortune left unexpectedly by the death of a distant relative of whom they had never heard before,—a mine of gold opened just below the surface on the side of the hill by a flash of lightning? If they had, it would have turned their heads or corrupted their habits. They were rather in the condition of one of the husbandmen of old Ipswich, a little turned of one-and-twenty, who has just paid off the last legacy, or the last gage upon the estate left him by his father,—an estate where his childhood played with brothers and sisters now resting in early graves, in which the first little labors of his young hands were done, from which he can see the meeting-house spire above the old intervening elms, to which his own toil, mingled with that of his ancestors of many generations, has given all its value, which, before he had owned, he had learned how to keep, how to till, how to transmit to his heirs enlarged and enriched with a more scientific and tasteful cultivation.

I can only allude to one other labor, one other trial of the Colonial Age,—the wars in which for one hundred and fifty years our fathers were every moment engaged, or to which they were every moment exposed, and leave you to estimate the influence which these must have had on the mind and character, and at last on the grand destinies of New England and of North America.

It is dreadful that nations must learn war; but since they must, it is a mercy to be taught it seasonably and thoroughly. It had been appointed by the Infinite Disposer, that the liberties, the independence of the States of America should depend on the manner in which we should fight for them; and who can imagine what the issue of the awful experiment would have been, had they never before seen the gleam of an enemy's bayonets, or heard the beat of his drum?

I hold it to have been a great thing, in the first place, that we had among us, at that awful moment when the public mind was meditating the question of submission to the tea-tax, or resistance by arms, and at the more awful moment of the first appeal to arms,—that we had some among us who personally knew what war was. Washington, Putnam, Stark, Gates, Prescott, Montgomery, were soldiers already. So were hundreds of others of humbler rank, but not yet forgotten by the people whom they helped to save, who mustered to the camp of our first revolutionary armies. These all had tasted a soldier's life. They had seen fire, they had felt the thrilling sensations, the quickened flow of blood to and from the heart, the mingled apprehension and hope, the hot haste, the burning thirst, the feverish rapture of battle, which he who has not felt is unconscious of one half of the capacities and energies of his nature, which he who has felt, I am told, never forgets. They had slept in the woods on the withered leaves or the snow, and awoke to breakfast upon birch bark and the tender tops of willow trees. They had kept guard on the outposts on many a stormy night, knowing perfectly that the thicket half a pistol-shot off, was full of French and Indian riflemen.

I say it was something that we had such men among us. They helped discipline our raw first levies. They knew what an army is, and what it needs, and how to provide for it. They could take that young volunteer of sixteen by the hand, sent by an Ipswich mother, who, after looking upon her son equipped for battle from which he might not return, Spartan-like, bid him go and behave like a man—and many, many such shouldered a musket for Lexington and Bunker Hill—and assure him, from their own personal knowledge, that after the first fire he never would know fear again, even that of the last onset. But the long and peculiar wars

of New England had done more than to furnish a few such officers and soldiers as these. They had formed that public sentiment upon the subject of war which reunited all the armies, fought all the battles, and won all the glory of the Revolution. The truth is that war, in some form or another, had been, from the first, one of the usages, one of the habits, of colonial life. It had been felt, from the first, to be just as necessary as planting or reaping,—to be as likely to break out every day and every night as a thunder-shower in summer, and to break out as suddenly. There have been nations who boasted that their rivers or mountains never saw the smoke of an enemy's camp. Here the war-whoop awoke the sleep of the cradle; it startled the dying man on his pillow; it summoned young and old from the meeting-house, from the burial, and from the bridal ceremony, to the strife of death. The consequence was, that that steady, composed, and reflecting courage which belongs to all the English race grew into a leading characteristic of New England; and a public sentiment was formed, pervading young and old, and both sexes, which declared it lawful, necessary, and honorable to risk life, and to shed blood for a great cause,—for our family, for our fires, for our God, for our country, for our religion. In such a cause it declared that the voice of God Himself commanded to the field. The courage of New England was the "courage of conscience." It did not rise to that insane and awful passion,—the love of war for itself. It would not have hurried her sons to the Nile, or the foot of the pyramids, or across the great raging sea of snows which rolled from Smolensko to Moscow, to set the stars of glory upon the glowing brow of ambition. But it was a courage which at Lexington, at Bunker Hill, at Bennington, and at Saratoga, had power to brace the spirit for the patriots' fight,—and gloriously roll back the tide of menaced war from their homes, the soil of their birth, the graves of their fathers, and the everlasting hills of their freedom.

But I cannot any farther pursue this sketch of the life which tasked the youthful spirit of New England. Other labors there were to be done; other trials to pass through; other influences to discipline them and make them fit for the rest which remains to the heirs of liberty.

"So true it is—for such holy rest,
Strong hands must toil—strong hearts endure."

It was a people thus schooled to the love and attainments and championship of freedom—its season of infant helplessness now long past, the strength and generosity and fire of a mighty youth, moving its limbs, and burning in its eye—a people, whose bright spirit had been fed midst the crowned heights, with hope and liberty and thoughts of power—this was the people whom our Revolution summoned to the grandest destiny in the history of nations. They were summoned, and a choice put before them: slavery, with present ease and rest and enjoyment, but all inglorious—the death of the nation's soul; and liberty, with battle and bloodshed, but the spring of all national good, of art, of plenty, of genius. Liberty born of the skies! breathing of all their odors, and radiant with all their hues! They were bidden to choose, and they chose wisely and greatly.

They linked their hands—they pledged their stainless faith
In the dread presence of attesting Heaven—
They bound their hearts to sufferings and death
With the severe and solemn transport given
To bless such vows. How man had striven,
How man might strive, and vainly strive they knew,
And called upon their God.

They knelt, and rose in strength.

I have no need to tell you the story of the Revolution, if the occasion were to justify it. Some of you shared in its strife; for to that, as to every other great duty, Ipswich was more than equal. Some who have not yet tasted of death, some perhaps even now here, and others who have followed or who went before their illustrious La Fayette. All of you partake of its fruits. All of you are encompassed about by its glory!

But now that our service of commemoration is ended, let us go hence and meditate on all that it has taught us. You see how long the holy and beautiful city of our liberty and our power has been in building, and by how many hands, and at what cost. You see the towering and steadfast height to which it has gone up, and how its turrets and spires gleam in the rising and setting sun. You stand among the graves of some—your townsmen, your fathers by blood, whose names you bear, whose portraits hang up in your homes, of whose memory you are justly proud—who helped in their day to sink those walls deep in their beds, where neither frost

nor earthquake might heave them,—to raise aloft those great arches of stone,—to send up those turrets and spires into the sky. It was theirs to build; remember it is yours, under Providence, to keep the city,—to keep it from the sword of the invader,—to keep it from licentiousness and crime and irreligion, and all that would make it unsafe or unfit to live in,—to keep it from the fires of faction, of civil strife, of party spirit, that might burn up in a day the slow work of a thousand years of glory. Happy, if we shall so perform our duty that they who centuries hence shall dwell among our graves may be able to remember, on some such day as this, in one common service of grateful commemoration, their fathers of the *first* and of the *second* age of America, —those who through martyrdom and tempest and battle sought liberty, and made her their own,—and those whom neither ease nor luxury, nor the fear of man, nor the worship of man, could prevail on to barter her away!



