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AN
O R A T I O N,
DELIVERED
AT
P L Y M O U T H,
DECEMBER 22, 1802.
AT THE
ANNIVERSARY COMMEMORATION
OF THE
FIRST LANDING OF OUR ANCESTORS,
AT THAT PLACE.

BY *John Quincy Adams.*

[Published at the request of the Hon. JOSHUA THOMAS, JAMES THACHER,
and WILLIAM JACKSON, Esquires, the Committee of the town of *Ply-*
mouih, by whose desire it was published.]

Ad illa mihi pro se quisque acriter, intendat animum quæ vita, qui
mores fuerint; per quos viros, quibusque artibus, et partum et auctum
imperium sit—Hoc illud est præcipue in cognitione rerum salubre ac
frugiferum, omnis te exempli documenta in illustri posita monumento
intueri: inde tibi tuæque reipublicæ quod imitere, capias.—LIVY.



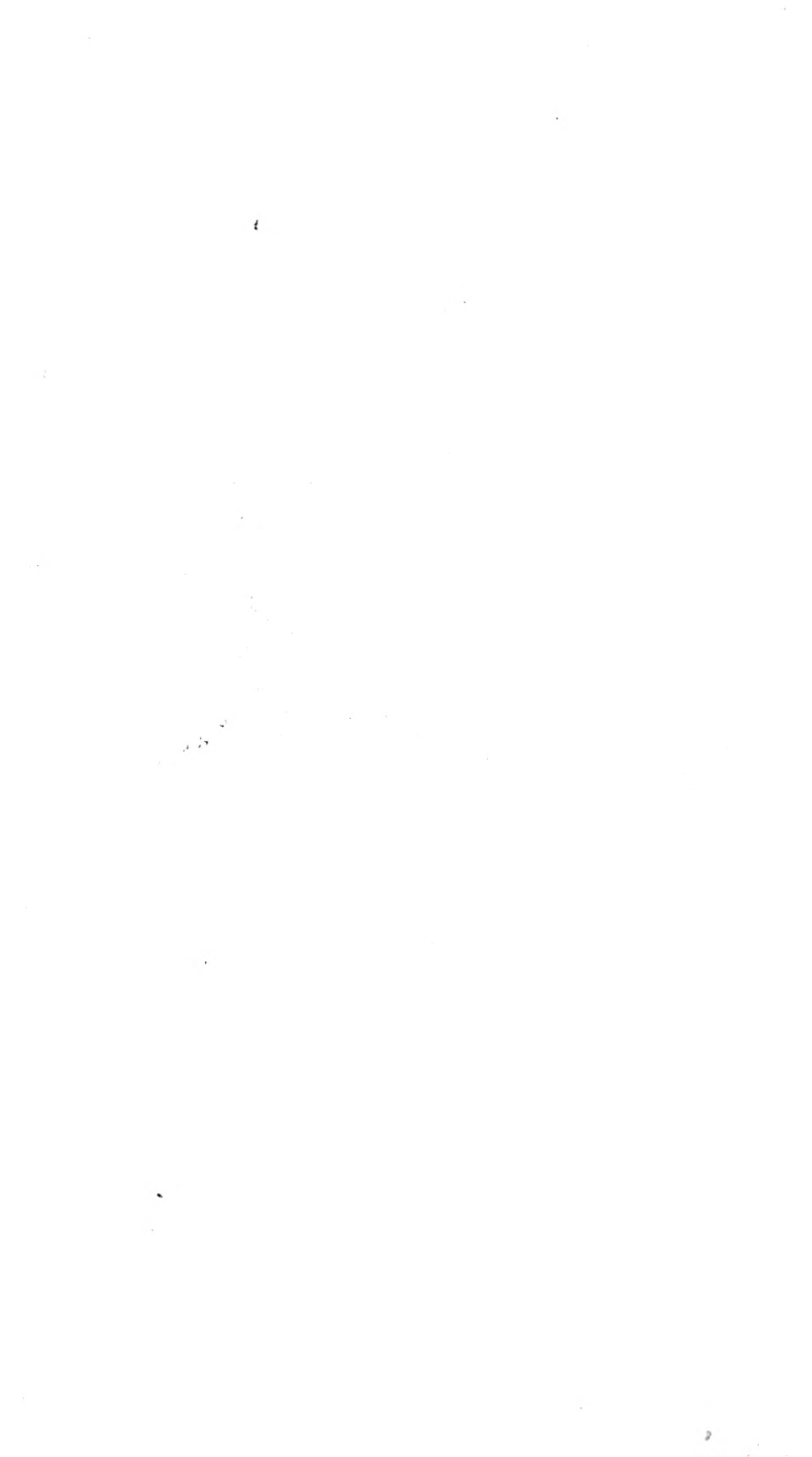
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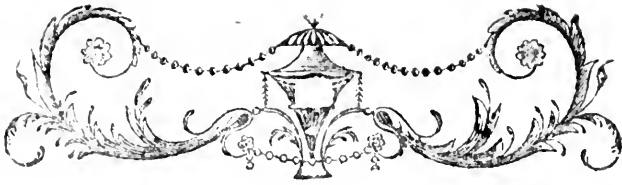
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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE historical facts, relative to the first settlers of the Plymouth Colony, noticed in this Discourse, are collected from the narratives in Purchas, from Prince's Chronology—from the Appendix to the second volume of Hutchinson's History, and above all from the second volume of Dr. Belknap's American Biography—a work which no American, interested in the honour of his country, can peruse without keenly feeling, as a national calamity, the stroke of death which arrested the author in the midst of his labours upon its continuation. I cannot forbear expressing here the hope, that some of the living ornaments of our literature will take up the plan which he had so successfully commenced, and make all the distinguished characters of past times on this continent, more intimately known to their posterity, than they have been hitherto.





An Oration, &c.

AMONG the sentiments of most powerful operation upon the human heart, and most highly honorable to the human character, are those of veneration for our forefathers, and of love for our posterity. They form the connecting links between the selfish and the social passions. By the fundamental principle of christianity the happiness of the individual is interwoven by innumerable and imperceptible ties with that of his contemporaries : by the power of filial reverence and parental affection, individual existence is extended beyond the limits of individual life, and the happiness of every age is chained in mutual dependence upon that of every other. Respect for his ancestors excites in the breast of man, interest in their history, attachment to their characters, concern for their errors, involuntary pride in their virtues. Love for his posterity spurs him to exertion for their support, stimulates him to virtue

for their example, and fills him with the tenderest solicitude for their welfare. Man, therefore, was not made for himself alone—No! He was made for his country by the obligations of the social compact: he was made for his species, by the christian duties of univerval charity: he was made for all ages past by the sentiment of reverence for his forefathers; and he was made for all future times by the impulse of affection for his progeny. Under the influence of these principles, “Existence sees him spurn her bounded reign.” They redeem his nature from the subjection of time and space: he is no longer a “puny insect shivering at a breeze;” he is the glory of creation—Form’d to occupy all time and all extent: bounded during his residence upon earth, only by the boundaries of the world, and destined to life and immortality in brighter regions, when the fabric of nature itself shall dissolve and perish.

THE voice of history, has not in all its compass a note, but answers in unison with these sentiments. The barbarian chieftain who defended his country against the Roman invasion, driven to the remotest extremity of Britain, and stimulating his followers to battle by all that has power of persuasion upon the human heart, concludes his exhortation by an appeal to these irresistible feelings*—“Think of your forefathers and of

* *Proinde itari in selem, et majores vestros et posteros cogitate.*

Galgacus in Vita Agricolaë.

your posterity." The Romans themselves, at the pinnacle of civilization, were actuated by the same impressions, and celebrated in anniversary festivals every great event which had signalized the annals of their forefathers. To multiply instances, where it were impossible to adduce an exception would be to waste your time and abuse your patience : but in the sacred volume which contains the substance of our firmest faith and of our most precious hopes, these passions, not only maintain their highest efficacy, but are sanctioned by the express injunctions of the Divine legislator to his chosen people.

THE revolutions of time furnish no previous example of a nation, shooting up to maturity and expanding into greatness with the rapidity which has characterized the growth of the American people. In the luxuriance of youth and in the vigor of manhood it is pleasing and instructive to look backwards upon the helpless days of infancy : but in the continual and essential changes of a growing subject, the transactions of that early period would be soon obliterated from the memory, but for some periodical call of attention to aid the silent records of the historian. Such celebrations arouse and gratify the kindest emotions of the bosom. They are faithful pledges of the respect we bear to the memory of our ancestors and of

the tenderneſs with which we cheriſh the riſing generation. They introduce the ſages and heroes of ages paſt to the notice and emulation of ſucceeding times : they are at once testimonials of our gratitude, and ſchools of virtue to our children.

THESE ſentiments are wiſe—they are honorable—they are virtuous—their cultivation is not merely innocent pleaſure, it is incumbent duty. Obedient to their dictates, you my fellow-citizens have inſtituted and paid frequent obſervance to this annual ſolemnity. And what event of weightier intrinsic importance or of more extenſive conſequences was ever ſelected for this honorary diſtinction ?

IN reverting to the period of their origin, other nations have generally been compelled to plunge into the chaos of impenetrable antiquity, or to trace a lawleſs ancestry into the caverns of raviſhers and robbers. It is your peculiar privilege to commemorate in this birth-day of your nation, an event aſcertained in its minuteſt details: an event of which the principal actors are known to you familiarly as if belonging to your own age : an event of a magnitude before which Imagination ſhrinks at the imperfection of her powers. It is your further happineſs to behold in thoſe eminent characters who were moſt conſpi-

enous in accomplishing the settlement of your country, men upon whose virtues you can dwell with honest exultation. The founders of your race are not handed down to you, like the father of the Roman people, as the sucklings of a wolf. You are not descended from a nauseous compound of fanaticism and sensuality, whose only argument was the sword, and whose only paradise was a brothel. No Gothic scourge of God—No Vandal pest of nations—No fabled fugitive from the flames of Troy—No bastard Norman tyrant appears among the list of worthies who first landed on the rock, which your veneration has preserved as a lasting monument of their achievement. The great actors of the day we now solemnize were illustrious by their intrepid valor, no less than by their christian graces; but the clarion of conquest has not blazon'd forth their names to all the winds of Heaven. Their glory has not been wafted over oceans of blood to the remotest regions of the earth. They have not erected to themselves, colossal statues upon pedestals of human bones, to provoke and insult the tardy hand of heavenly retribution. But theirs was “the better fortitude of patience and heroic martyrdom.” Theirs was the gentle temper of christian kindness—the rigorous observance of reciprocal justice—the unconquerable soul of conscious in-

tegrity. Worldly Fame has been parsimonious of her favors to the memory of those generous champions. Their numbers were small—their stations in life obscure—the object of their enterprise unostentatious—the theatre of their exploits remote : how could they possibly be favorites of worldly Fame ? That common crier, whose existence is only known by the assemblage of multitudes—That pander of wealth and greatness so eager to haunt the palaces of fortune, and so fastidious to the houseless dignity of virtue—that parasite of pride, ever scornful to meekness, and ever obsequious to insolent power—that heedless trumpeter, whose ears are deaf to modest merit, and whose eyes are blind to bloodless distant excellence.

WHEN the persecuted companions of *Robinson*, exiles from their native land, anxiously sued for the privilege of removing a thousand leagues more distant to an untried soil, a rigorous climate and a savage wilderness, for the sake of reconciling their sense of religious duty with their affections for their country, few, perhaps none of them formed a conception of what would be within two centuries the result of their undertaking. When the jealous and niggardly policy of their British sovereign, denied them even that humblest of requests, and instead of liberty would barely con-

sent to promise connivance, neither he nor they might be aware that they were laying the foundations of a power, and that he was sowing the seeds of a spirit, which in less than two hundred years would stagger the throne of his descendants, and shake his united kingdoms to the centre. So far is it from the ordinary habits of mankind to calculate the importance of events in their elementary principles, that had the first colonists of our country ever intimated as a part of their designs, the project of founding a great and mighty nation, the finger of scorn would have pointed them to the cells of bedlam, as an abode more suitable for hatching vain empires than the solitude of a transatlantic desert.

THESE consequences, then so little foreseen, have unfolded themselves in all their grandeur, to the eyes of the present age. It is a common amusement of speculative minds, to contrast the magnitude of the most important events with the minuteness of their primeval causes, and the records of mankind are full of examples for such contemplations. It is however a more profitable employment to trace the constituent principles of future greatness in their kernel ; to detect in the acorn at our feet the germ of that majestic oak, whose roots shoot down to the centre, and whose branches aspire to the skies. Let it be then our

present occupation to enquire and endeavour to ascertain, the causes first put in operation at the period of our commemoration, and already productive of such magnificent effects.—To examine with reiterated care and minute attention, the characters of those men who gave the first impulse to a new series of events in the history of the world.—To applaud and emulate those qualities of their minds which we shall find deserving of our admiration.—To recognize with candour those features which forbid approbation or even require censure, and finally, to lay alike their frailties and their perfections to our own hearts either as warning or as example.

OF the various European settlements upon this continent which have finally merged in one independent nation, the first establishments were made at various times, by several nations and under the influence of different motives. In many instances the convictions of religious obligation formed one and a powerful inducement of the adventurers; but in none, excepting the settlement at Plymouth, did they constitute the sole and exclusive actuating cause. Worldly interest and commercial speculation entered largely into the views of other settlers: but the commands of conscience were the only stimulus to the emigrants from Leyden. Previous to their expedition

hither they had endured a long banishment from their native country. Under every species of discouragement they undertook the voyage—they performed it in spite of numerous and almost insuperable obstacles : they arrived upon a wilderness bound with frost and hoary with snow, without the boundaries of their charter : outcasts from all human society ; and coasted five weeks together in the dead of winter, on this tempestuous shore, exposed at once to the fury of the elements, to the arrows of the native savage, and to the impending horrors of famine.

COURAGE and perseverance have a magical talisman, before which difficulties disappear and obstacles vanish into air. These qualities have ever been displayed in their mightiest perfection as attendants in the retinue of strong passions. From the first discovery of the western hemisphere by *Columbus*, until the settlement of Virginia, which immediately preceded that of Plymouth, the various adventurers from the antient world had exhibited, upon innumerable occasions, that ardor of enterprize and that stubbornness of pursuit, which set all danger at defiance and chain the violence of nature at their feet. But they were all instigated by personal interests—Avarice and ambition had tuned their souls to that pitch of exaltation—Selfish passions were the parents of their heroism. It

was reserved for the first settlers of New-England to perform achievements equally arduous, to trample down obstructions equally formidable to dispel dangers equally terrific under the single inspiration of conscience. To them, even liberty herself was but a subordinate and secondary consideration. They claimed exemption from the mandates of human authority, as militating with their subjection to a superior power. Before the voice of Heaven they silenced even the calls of their country.

YET, while so deeply impressed with the sense of religious obligation, they felt in all its energy the force of that tender tie which binds the heart of every virtuous man to his native land. It was to renew that connection with their country which had been severed by their compulsory expatriation, that they resolved to face all the hazards of a perilous navigation, and all the labors of a toilsome distant settlement. Under the mild protection of the Batavian Government, they enjoyed already that freedom of religious worship for which they had resigned so many comforts and enjoyments at home : but their hearts panted for a restoration to the bosom of their country. Invited and urged by the open-hearted and truly benevolent people who had given them an asylum from the persecution of their own kin-

dred, to form their settlement within the territories then under their jurisdiction; the love of their country predominated over every influence save that of conscience alone, and they preferred the precarious chance of relaxation from the bigoted rigor of the English Government to the certain liberality and alluring offers of the Hollanders. Observe, my countrymen, the generous patriotism, the cordial union of soul—the conscious yet unaffected vigour which beam in their application to the British Monarch—“ They were well weaned from the delicate milk of their mother country, and inured to the difficulties of a strange land. They were knit together in a strict and sacred bond, to take care of the good of each other and of the whole. It was not with them as with other men, whom small things could discourage or small discontents cause to wish themselves again at home.” Children of these exalted Pilgrims! Is there one among you, who can hear the simple and pathetic energy of these expressions without tenderness and admiration? Venerated shades of our forefathers! No! ye were indeed not ordinary men! That country which had ejected you so cruelly from her bosom, you still delighted to contemplate in the character of an affectionate and beloved mother. The sacred bond which knit you together was indissoluble

while you lived—and oh! may it be to your descendants the example and the pledge of harmony to the latest period of time! The difficulties and dangers which so often had defeated attempts of similar establishments were unable to subdue souls tempered like yours. You heard the rigid interdictions—you saw the menacing forms of toil and danger, forbidding your access to this land of promise: but you heard without dismay—you saw and disdained retreat. Firm and undaunted in the confidence of that sacred bond—Conscious of the purity, and convinced of the importance of your motives, you put your trust in the protecting shield of Providence, and smiled defiance at the combining terrors of human malice and of elemental strife. These, in the accomplishment of your undertaking, you were summoned to encounter in their most hideous forms: these you met with that fortitude, and combated with that perseverance which you had promised in their anticipation: these you completely vanquished in establishing the foundations of New-England, and the day which we now commemorate is the perpetual memorial of your triumph.

IT were an occupation, peculiarly pleasing, to cull from our early historians and exhibit before you, every detail of this transaction. To carry you in imagination on board their bark at the first

moment of her arrival in the bay—to accompany *Carver, Winslow, Bradford and Standish*, in all their excursions upon the desolate coast—to follow them into every rivulet and creek where they endeavoured to find a firm footing, and to fix with a pause of delight and exultation the instant when the first of these heroic adventurers alighted on the spot where you, their descendants, now enjoy the glorious and happy reward of their labors. But in this grateful task, your former orators on this Anniversary have anticipated all that the most ardent industry could collect, and gratified all that the most inquisitive curiosity could desire. To you, my friends, every occurrence of that momentous period is already familiar. A transient allusion to a few characteristic incidents which mark the peculiar history of the Plymouth settlers, may properly supply the place of a narrative, which to this auditory must be superfluous.

ONE of these remarkable incidents is the execution of that instrument of Government by which they formed themselves into a body-politic, the day after their arrival upon the coast, and previous to their first landing. This is perhaps the only instance, in human history, of that positive, original social compact, which speculative philosophers have imagined as the only legitimate source of government. Here was a unanimous

and personal assent by all the individuals of the community, to the association by which they became a nation. It was the result of circumstances and discussions, which had occurred during their passage from Europe, and is a full demonstration that the nature of civil government, abstracted from the political institutions of their native country, had been an object of their serious meditation. The settlers of all the former European Colonies had contented themselves with the powers conferred upon them by their respective charters, without looking beyond the seal of the royal parchment for the measure of their rights, and the rule of their duties. The founders of Plymouth had been impelled by the peculiarities of their situation to examine the subject with deeper and more comprehensive research. After twelve years of banishment from the land of their first allegiance, during which they had been under an adoptive and temporary subjection to another sovereign, they must naturally have been led to reflect upon the relative rights and duties of allegiance and subjection. They had resided in a city, the seat of an university, where the polemical and political controversies of the time were pursued with uncommon fervour. In this period they had witnessed the deadly struggle between the two parties, into which the people of the United Province, after their separation from the crown of

Spain, had divided themselves. The contest embraced within its compass not only theological doctrines, but political principles, and *Maurice* and *Barnavelt* were the temporal leaders of the same rival factions, of which *Episcopius* and *Polyander*, were the ecclesiastical champions. That the investigation of the fundamental principles of government was deeply implicated in these dissensions is evident from the immortal work of *Grotius*, upon the rights of war and peace, which undoubtedly originated from them. *Grotius* himself had been a most distinguished actor and sufferer in those important scenes of internal convulsion, and his work was first published* very shortly after the departure of our forefathers from Leyden. It is well known, that in the course of the contest, Mr. *Robinson* more than once appeared, with credit to himself as a public disputant against *Episcopius*; and from the manner in which the fact is related by Governor *Bradford*, it is apparent that the whole English church at Leyden took a zealous interest in the religious part of the controversy. As strangers in the land it is presumable that they wisely and honorably avoided entangling themselves in the political contentions involved with it. Yet the theoretic principles, as they were drawn into discussion, could not fail to arrest their attention, and must have assisted them

* In 1625.

to form accurate ideas concerning the origin and extent of authority among men, independent of positive institutions. The importance of these circumstances will not be duly weighed without taking into consideration the state of opinions then prevalent in England. The general principles of government were there little understood and less examined. The whole substance of human authority was centered in the simple doctrine of royal prerogative, the origin of which was always traced in theory to divine institution. Twenty years later the subject was more industriously sifted, and for half a century became one of the principle topics of controversy between the ablest and most enlightened men in the nation. The instrument of voluntary association executed on board the *Mayflower*, testifies that the parties to it had anticipated the improvement of their nation.

ANOTHER incident from which we may derive occasion for important reflections, was the attempt of these original settlers to establish among them that community of goods and of labor which fanciful politicians, from the days of *Plato* to those of *Rousséau*, have recommended as the fundamental law of a perfect republic. This theory results, it must be acknowledged, from principles of reasoning most flattering to the human character. If

industry, frugality and disinterested integrity, were alike the virtues of all, there would apparently be more of the social spirit, in making all property a common stock, and giving to each individual a proportional title to the wealth of the whole. Such is the basis upon which *Plato* forbids in his republic the division of property. Such is the system upon which *Rouffeau* pronounces the first man who enclosed a field with a fence and said *this is mine*, a traitor to the human species. A wiser and more useful philosophy however directs us to consider man, according to the nature in which he was formed; subject to infirmities, which no wisdom can remedy; to weaknesses which no institution can strengthen; to vices which no legislation can correct. Hence it becomes obvious, that separate property is the natural and indisputable right of separate exertion—that community of goods without community of toil is oppressive and unjust; that it counteracts the laws of nature, which prescribe, that he only who sows the seed shall reap the harvest: that it discourages all energy by destroying its rewards; and makes the most virtuous and active members of society, the slaves and drudges of the worst. Such was the issue of this experiment among our forefathers, and the same event demonstrated the error of the system in the elder

settlement of Virginia. Let us cherish that spirit of harmony, which prompted our forefathers to make the attempt, under circumstances more favorable to its success than perhaps ever occurred upon earth. Let us no less admire the candor with which they relinquished it, upon discovering its irremediable inefficacy. To found principles of government upon too advantageous an estimate of the human character, is an error of inexperience, the source of which is so amiable, that it is impossible to censure it with severity. We have seen the same mistake, committed in our own age, and upon a larger theatre. Happily for our ancestors their situation allowed them to repair it, before its effects had proved destructive. They had no pride of vain philosophy to support, no perfidious rage of faction to glut, by persevering in their mistakes until they should be extinguished in torrents of blood.

As the attempt to establish among themselves the community of goods was a seal of that sacred bond which knit them so closely together, so the conduct they observed towards the natives of the country, displays their steadfast adherence to the rules of justice, and their faithful attachment to those of benevolence and charity.

No European settlement ever formed upon this continent has been more distinguished for un-

deviating kindness and equity towards the savages. There are indeed moralists, who have questioned the right of the Europeans to intrude upon the possessions of the aboriginals in any case, and under any limitations whatsoever. But have they maturely considered the whole subject? The Indian right of possession itself stands with regard to the greatest part of the country, upon a questionable foundation. Their cultivated fields; their constructed habitations; a space of ample sufficiency for their subsistence, and whatever they had annexed to themselves by personal labor, was undoubtedly by the laws of nature theirs. But what is the right of a huntsman to the forest of a thousand miles over which he has accidentally ranged in quest of prey? Shall the liberal bounties of Providence to the race of man be monopolized by one of ten thousand for whom they were created? Shall the exuberant bosom of the common mother, amply adequate to the nourishment of millions, be claimed exclusively by a few hundreds of her offspring? Shall the lordly savage not only disdain the virtues and enjoyments of civilization himself, but shall he controul the civilization of a world? Shall he forbid the wilderness to blossom like the rose? Shall he forbid the oaks of the forest to fall before the axe of industry, and rise again, transformed into the habitations of ease

and elegance? Shall he doom an immense region of the globe to perpetual desolation, and to hear the howlings of the tyger and the wolf, silence for ever the voice of human gladness? Shall the fields and the vallies, which a beneficent God has formed to teem with the life of innumerable multitudes, be condemned to everlasting barrenness? Shall the mighty rivers poured out by the hands of nature, as channels of communication between numerous nations, roll their waters in fullen silence and eternal solitude to the deep? Have hundreds of commodious harbours, a thousand leagues of coast, and a boundless ocean been spread in the front of this land, and shall every purpose of utility to which they could apply be prohibited by the tenant of the woods? No, generous philanthropists! Heaven has not been thus inconsistent in the works of its hands! Heaven has not thus placed at irreconcilable strife, its moral laws with its physical creation! The Pilgrims of Plymouth obtained their right of possession to the territory on which they settled by titles as fair and unequivocal as any human property can be held. By their voluntary association they recognized their allegiance to the government of Britain; and in process of time received whatever powers and authorities could be conferred upon them by a Charter from their Sovereign. The spot on which they fixed had belonged to an Indian tribe,

totally extirpated by that devouring pestilence which had swept the country, shortly before their arrival. The territory thus free from all exclusive possession, they might have taken by the natural right of occupancy. Desirous however of giving ample satisfaction to every pretence of prior right, by formal and solemn conventions with the chiefs of the neighboring tribes, they acquired the further security of a purchase. At their hands the children of the desert had no cause of complaint: On the great day of retribution, what thousands, what millions of the American race will appear at the bar of judgment to arraign their European invading conquerors! Let us humbly hope that the fathers of the Plymouth Colony will then appear in the whiteness of innocence. Let us indulge the belief that they will not only be free from all accusation of injustice to these unfortunate sons of nature, but that the testimonials of their acts of kindness and benevolence towards them will plead the cause of their virtues as they are now authenticated by the records of history upon earth.

RELIGIOUS discord has lost her sting: the cumbrous weapons of theological warfare are antiquated: the field of politics supplies the alchemists of our times, with materials of more fatal explosion, and the butchers of mankind no longer

travel to another world for instruments of cruelty and destruction. Our age is too enlightened to contend upon topics, which concern only the interests of eternity ; and men who hold in proper contempt all controversies about trifles, except such as inflame their own passions, have made it a common-place censure against your ancestors, that their zeal was enkindled by subjects of trivial importance ; and that however aggrieved by the intolerance of others, they were alike intolerant themselves. Against these objections, your candid judgment will not require an unqualified justification ; but your respect and gratitude for the founders of the state may boldly claim an ample apology. The original grounds of their separation from the church of England, were not objects of a magnitude to dissolve the bonds of communion—much less those of charity, between christian bretheren of the same essential principles. Some of them however were not inconsiderable, and numerous inducements concurred to give them an extraordinary interest in their eyes. When that portentous system of abuses, the Papal dominion, was overturned, a great variety of religious sects arose in its stead, in the several countries which for many centuries before had been screwed beneath its subjection. The fabric of the reformation, first undertaken in England upon a

contracted basis, by a capricious and sanguinary tyrant, had been successively overthrown and restored, renewed and altered according to the varying humours and principles of four successive monarchs. To ascertain the precise point of division between the genuine institutions of christianity, and the corruptions accumulated upon them in the progress of fifteen centuries, was found a task of extreme difficulty throughout the christian world. Men of the profoundest learning, of the sublimest genius, and of the purest integrity, after devoting their lives to the research, finally differed in their ideas upon many great points both of doctrine and discipline. The main question, it was admitted on all hands, most intimately concerned the highest interests of man, both temporal and eternal. Can we wonder, that men who felt their happiness here and their hopes of hereafter, their worldly welfare and the kingdom of Heaven at stake, should sometimes attach an importance beyond their intrinsic weight to collateral points of controversy, connected with the all-involving object of the reformation? The changes in the forms and principles of religious worship, were introduced and regulated in England by the hand of public authority. But that hand had not been uniform or steady in its operations. During the persecutions inflicted in the

interval of Popish restoration under the reign of Mary, upon all who favored the reformation, many of the most zealous reformers had been compelled to fly their country. While residing on the continent of Europe, they had adopted the principles of the most complete and rigorous reformation, as taught and established by *Calvin*. On returning afterwards to their native country they were dissatisfied with the partial reformation, at which, as they conceived, the English establishment had rested, and claiming the privileges of private conscience, upon which alone any departure from the church of Rome could be justified, they insisted upon the right of adhering to the system of their own preference, and of course upon that of non-conformity to the establishment prescribed by the royal authority. The only means used to convince them of error, and reclaim them from dissent, was force, and force served but to confirm the opposition it was meant to suppress. By driving the founders of the Plymouth Colony into exile, it constrained them to absolute separation from the church of England, and by the refusal afterwards to allow them a positive toleration even in this American wilderness, the council of *James the First* rendered that separation irreconcilable. Viewing their religious liberties here, as held only upon sufferance, yet

bound to them by all the ties of conviction, and by all their sufferings for them, could they forbear to look upon every dissenter, among themselves with a jealous eye? Within two years after their landing they beheld a rival settlement* attempted in their immediate neighbourhood; and not long after the laws of self preservation compelled them to break up a nest of revellers,† who boasted of protection from the mother country, and who had recurred to the easy but pernicious resource of feeding their wanton idleness by furnishing the savages with the means, the skill and the instruments of European destruction. Toleration in that instance would have been self-murder, and many other examples might be adduced in which their necessary measures of self-defence have been exaggerated into cruelty, and their most indispensable precautions distorted into persecution. Yet shall we not pretend that they were exempt from the common laws of mortality, or entirely free from all the errors of their age. Their zeal might sometimes be too ardent, but it was always sincere. At this day religious indulgence is one of our clearest duties, because it is one of our undisputed rights. While we rejoice that the principles of genuine christianity have so far triumphed over

* *Wesley's* Plantation at *Weslaguffet*

† *Morton*, and his party at *Mount Wollaston*.

the prejudices of a former generation, let us fervently hope for the day when it will prove equally victorious over the malignant passions of our own.

IN thus calling to your attention some of the peculiar features in the principles, the character, and the history of your forefathers, it is as wide from my design, as I know it would be from your approbation, to adorn their memory with a chaplet plucked from the domain of others. The occasion and the day are more peculiarly devoted to them, but let it never be dishonored with a contracted and exclusive spirit. Our affections as citizens embrace the whole extent of the union, and the names of *Raleigh, Smith, Winthrop, Calvert, Penn,* and *Oglethorpe*, excite in our minds recollections equally pleasing, and gratitude equally fervent with those of *Carver* and *Bradford*. Two centuries have not yet elapsed since the first European foot touched the soil which now constitutes the American union—Two centuries more and our numbers must exceed those of Europe herself. The destinies of this empire, as they appear in prospect before us, disdain the powers of human calculation. Yet, as the original founder of the Roman State is said once to have lifted upon his shoulders the fame and fortunes of all his posterity, so let us never forget that the glory and greatness of all

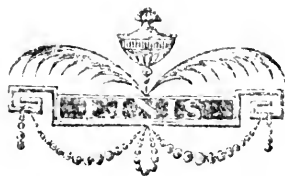
our descendants is in our hands. Preserve in all their purity, refine if possible from all their alloy, those virtues which we this day commemorate as the ornament of our forefathers—Adhere to them with inflexible resolution, as to the horns of the altar; instill them with unwearied perseverance into the minds of your children; bind your souls and theirs to the national union as the chords of life are centred in the heart, and you shall soar with rapid and steady wing to the summit of human glory. Nearly a century ago, one of those rare minds* to whom it is given to discern future greatness in its seminal principles, upon contemplating the situation of this continent, pronounced in a vein of poetic inspiration,

“ Westward the Star of empire takes its way.”

Let us all unite in ardent supplications to the founder of nations and the builder of worlds, that what then was prophecy may continue unfolding into history—that the dearest hopes of the human race may not be extinguished in disappointment, and that the last may prove the noblest empire of time.

* Bishop Berkeley.

Erratum.—In the title page, the last word of the notice, respecting the request of the Committee of the town of Plymouth, should be *delivered*, instead of “published.”





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