

**AN ADDRESS DELIVERED
BEFORE THE PILGRIM
SOCIETY OF PLYMOUTH,
DECEMBER 22, 1835**

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An Address Delivered Before the Pilgrim Society of Plymouth, December 22, 1835 by Peleg Sprague

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PELEG SPRAGUE

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DELIVERED BEFORE THE

PILGRIM SOCIETY OF PLYMOUTH,

DECEMBER 22, 1835.

BY HON. PELEG SPRAGUE.

BOSTON:
LIGHT AND STEARNS, 1 CORNHILL.
1836.

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1863. April 30

1863

Rev. John Gorham Lathrop,
Cambridge.

Mass., U.S.

PLYMOUTH, DEC. 23, 1835.

HON. PELEG SPRAGUE.

DEAR SIR:—In obedience to a vote of the Trustees of the Pilgrim Society, I have the pleasure to make the following communication :

“At a meeting of the Trustees of the Pilgrim Society, Dec. 23, 1835,

“VOTED, That the thanks of the Trustees be presented to the Hon. PELEG SPRAGUE, for his interesting and eloquent Discourse, delivered on the 22d instant—that a copy be requested for publication, and that the Corresponding Secretary communicate the vote.”

With great esteem and regard,

I am, Sir,

Very respectfully,

JNO. B. THOMAS, Cor. Sec. Pil. Soc.



ADDRESS.

WE are assembled on the day which gave existence to New England, on the spot consecrated by the first footsteps of the Puritan Pilgrims. It is good for us to be here—to pause for a moment in the hurried career of active life, to recur to the past and contemplate the present. Two hundred and fifteen years ago, this day, a small company of distressed emigrants, consisting of one hundred and one men, women and children, landed on this ice-clad, desolate and savage shore. About one half of their number perished of disease within the first five months: and now, that society, thus founded in weakness, and want, and misery, has grown to a community of millions, presenting on all sides a wide spread scene of unsurpassed abundance, security and joy; a community more blessed than any which the sun in his circuit now shines upon. And this increase of numbers has been attained, these fruits of prosperity have been gathered, from a terrific wilderness, from a barren and reluctant soil, beneath stern and relentless skies; they have been obtained, it may almost be said, in defiance of physical nature.

Go to other, the most favored regions of the earth, where nature seems to have done her utmost, breathing her mildest airs, and spreading her spontaneous feast in the greatest pro-

fusion; to Italy, the land of the arts—to Spain, upon whose prolific soil streams of silver and gold, from foreign mines, were poured for ages; go even to the Promised Land, or to the orient East, where the heavens shed their softest and kindest influences, and the earth yields her richest and most exuberant fruits—and behold what progress has been made within the last two hundred and fifteen years. There man, if he have not been retrograde, can hardly be said to have increased in numbers or advanced in the means of rational enjoyment. If he do not wither and decay, he seems scarcely to have the energy of active life. Whence this contrast? Will it be ascribed to the difference of political and religious institutions? That solution but carries back the question one step further: whence this continuing difference of institutions? Why is it that in all the mutations and revolutions of the earth, in France and Spain and Italy; in Greece, in Mexico and Columbia, in Egypt and Palestine—in Europe, Asia and South America—where there has been so much of breaking up and remodelling and mingling anew of the elements of society,—whence is it, that institutions like these, giving similar results, have no where been established?

The solution of the phenomenon of our unequalled progress is to be sought for in moral causes;—in the character of the people: and upon this topic, the moral and intellectual character of the people of New England, particularly in those aspects in which it has been most assailed, and in which I am not aware that it has been before discussed on this anniversary, I now propose to make such remarks as time and circumstances may permit. Not that I can do it justice: I am deeply conscious of my inability to do so at any time, and especially at this; for the crude preparation which alone I have been able to make has been under the pressure of disease, and amidst the distractions of business. If I had

regarded myself alone I should not have been here to-day. I am here from a feeling that no son of New England can, upon any proper occasion, withhold from her his tribute of respect and gratitude; that no son of the old Colony can, upon such an occasion, withhold his efforts, however feeble and at whatever personal sacrifice, to do her justice.

The elements of the New England character lie less upon the surface than those of any other people; and hence perhaps, it has been more misinterpreted and misrepresented than any whose history is equally accessible. And this, not merely by foreigners, but by other portions of our own country, and there are those, even here, among ourselves, who, not reflecting, or not having opportunities for comparison, have in some measure yielded to the constant repetition of unjust delineations, divesting this people of the higher and nobler attributes of ardor and generosity, and making even the virtues which are conceded to them to lean towards meanness, illiberality and disingenuousness.

From causes which need not now be investigated, mankind have been distinguished into distinct races; the North American Indian, the African, the Malay, the Mongolian, and the Caucasian; each transmitting its own marked peculiarities from generation to generation. Of these, the *Caucasian* has been eminently distinguished over all the others, for intellectual superiority. This has again been divided into many distinct varieties, of which the *Teutonic* has ever been pre-eminent for all the higher endowments; and of the subdivisions of this, the *Saxon English* have been most remarkable for endurance, perseverance, and tenacity of purpose. Wherever they fix their grasp it is never voluntarily relaxed; wherever they plant their standard they never recede, whether it be on the bleak rocks of the ocean, or the frozen regions of Canada, or the boundless plains of Indos-