

**EULOGY ON NATHANIEL BOWDITCH,  
LL.D., PRESIDENT OF THE AMERICAN  
ACADEMY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES:  
INCLUDING AN ANALYSIS OF HIS  
SCIENTIFIC PUBLICATIONS. DELIVERED  
BEFORE THE ACADEMY, MAY 29, 1838**

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**JOHN PICKERING**

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# EULOGY

ON

NATHANIEL BOWDITCH, LL. D.,

PRESIDENT OF THE AMERICAN ACADEMY

OF ARTS AND SCIENCES;

INCLUDING

AN ANALYSIS OF HIS SCIENTIFIC PUBLICATIONS.

DELIVERED BEFORE THE ACADEMY,

MAY 29, 1838.

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By JOHN PICKERING,

CORRESPONDING SECRETARY OF THE ACADEMY.

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BOSTON:

CHARLES C. LITTLE AND JAMES BROWN.

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1838.

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## ADVERTISEMENT.

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THE following Eulogy was originally intended to be addressed to the members of the American Academy only ; but the strong interest, felt by the whole community in the life and character of Dr. Bowditch, obliged the Academy to yield to the general wish, that it should be delivered in some place open to the public. In consequence of this arrangement, a deviation from the original plan, in certain particulars, became expedient ; and some of the topics are treated in a manner, which, if not strictly appropriate to an academic address, was yet indispensable, in order to give it as popular a form as practicable, and to adapt it to a mixed auditory. This, it is hoped, will be a sufficient apology for such parts of it, as might not be expected in a discourse before a scientific body. It should be added, that many parts of it, which were omitted in the delivery, are here retained.





## EULOGY.

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MR. PRESIDENT,

AND GENTLEMEN OF THE AMERICAN ACADEMY,

THE occasion, on which we are now assembled, is one of deep but melancholy interest. We meet to do honor to the memory of an eminent fellow-citizen and academic associate, who has recently closed a most useful life; which was filled up with faithfully discharging all the duties, even the most humble, that belonged to him as a member of the community immediately around him, while his leisure hours were employed in the highest department of science, in making those great acquisitions which have shed an unfading lustre on his country among distant nations.

It is painful to realize,—indeed, who among us can feel it to be a reality?—that, but a few weeks have gone by, since our illustrious President occupied that seat, as the head of our association, in the full exercise of those intellectual and moral powers, whose constant action, though not always observed, was yet felt through every circle of society in which he moved. How saddening is the reflection, that those

rare endowments now lie prostrate and powerless! that the funeral rites, not long since conducted in that simple and unostentatious manner, which was in harmony with his whole life, have separated us from him for ever!

The death of this distinguished man has been felt by all his countrymen; and the event was no sooner known, than a spontaneous burst of sorrow throughout the nation proclaimed the sincerest homage to his great attainments in science and his unsullied private worth.

By the Members of this Academy, with whose interests he had been so long connected, the loss is severely felt; and your earnest desire to exhibit to the public, as distinctly as was known to yourselves, that part of his character particularly, which was not so obvious to general observers,—I mean his scientific attainments,—has led you to adopt this public mode of honoring the memory of our departed associate, and to assign to me the arduous, though honorable task of discharging this last sad office. If, however, I had been permitted to consult my own feelings, it would have been my wish, that you should have selected for this duty some member of our association whose studies and pursuits were more closely allied, than my own, to those of the eminent man, whose rare attainments are to form the principal subject of the present occasion.

I am well aware of the motives, which had an influence in directing your choice; but, if my long personal intimacy with our late colleague, and my residence for many years in his native town, have afforded me personally some peculiar advantages over most of the members of our association, yet these advantages, I fear, will be outweighed by others, to which I can make no pretensions in comparison with some whom I see now before me. But your decision has been made; and, whatever may be my own judgment and feelings in the case, I yield to your opinion, and will now proceed to the discharge of the duty which you have assigned to me.

The lives of great and good men, it has often been observed, should never cease to be held up as examples, especially to the young; whose minds, as the great philosophical statesman of England has justly said, should be formed "to that docility and modesty, which are the grace and charm of youth," and "to an admiration of famous examples."\* And the public testimonials of gratitude with which we honor the memory of the dead, who have enlarged or adorned the edifice of human knowledge, are proper, in order to excite a useful emulation among the living who follow in their steps; while the glory of our country is also advanced by these very testimonials of its grati-

\* Burke's Letter to a Member of the National Assembly.