

**A DISCOURSE PRONOUNCED AT THE
REQUEST OF THE ESSEX HISTORICAL
SOCIETY, ON THE 18TH OF SEPTEMBER,
1828, IN COMMEMORATION OF THE
FIRST SETTLEMENT OF SALEM, IN THE
STATE OF MASSACHUSETTS**

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A Discourse Pronounced at the Request of the Essex Historical Society, on the 18th of September, 1828, in Commemoration of the First Settlement of Salem, in the State of Massachusetts by Joseph Story

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JOSEPH STORY.

PUBLISHED AT THE REQUEST OF THE SOCIETY.

BOSTON:

HILLIARD, GRAY, LITTLE, AND WILKINS.

1828.

DISTRICT OF MASSACHUSETTS, *to wit* :

DISTRICT CLERK'S OFFICE.

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

JNO. W. DAVIS,

Clerk of the District of Massachusetts.

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DISCOURSE.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

* 2 Hutch. Hist. 468, 469, 470, 472, 476; Prince's Annals, 268; Robinson's America, book 10; 8 Hist. Collect. 417.