

**AN ADDRESS DELIVERED  
ON THE DEDICATION OF  
THE CEMETERY AT MOUNT  
AUBURN: SEPT. 24, 1831**

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An Address Delivered on the Dedication of the Cemetery at Mount Auburn: Sept. 24, 1831 by Joseph Story

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**JOSEPH STORY**

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AN

**ADDRESS**

DELIVERED

ON THE DEDICATION

OF THE

**CEMETERY AT MOUNT AUBURN,**

SEPTEMBER 24, 1831.

BY JOSEPH STORY.

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TO WHICH IS ADDED AN APPENDIX, CONTAINING A HISTORICAL NOTICE  
AND DESCRIPTION OF THE PLACE, WITH A LIST OF THE  
PRESENT SUBSCRIBERS.

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BOSTON.

JOSEPH T. & EDWIN BUCKINGHAM.

1831.

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Bright fund.

At a meeting of the Committee of the Horticultural Society, September 24, 1831,—it was

"Voted, That the thanks of the Society be given to the Hon. Judge Story for his eloquent, feeling, and highly pertinent Address, and that he be requested to furnish a copy for the press."

H. A. S. DEARBORN, Chairman.

CAMBRIDGE, SEPT. 24, 1831.

DEAR SIR—

I resign the manuscript of my Address to the disposal of the Committee of Arrangements, with my grateful acknowledgements for the indulgence with which they are pleased to view my labors. I ought to add, that it was necessarily prepared in great haste, and without any thought of publication.

I have the honor to remain,

With the highest respect,

Your obliged servant,

JOSEPH STORY.

The Hon. HENRY A. S. DEARBORN,  
Of the Committee of Arrangements.

## A D D R E S S .

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MY FRIENDS,

THE occasion, which brings us together, has much in it calculated to awaken our sensibilities, and cast a solemnity over our thoughts.

We are met to cousecrate these grounds exclusively to the service and repose of the dead.

The duty is not new ; for it has been performed for countless millions. The scenery is not new ; for the hill and the valley, the still, silent dell, and the deep forest, have often been devoted to the same pious purpose. But that, which must always give it a peculiar interest, is, that it can rarely occur except at distant intervals ; and, whenever it does, it must address itself to feelings intelligible to all nations, and common to all hearts.

The patriarchal language of four thousand years ago is precisely that, to which we would now give utterance. We are "strangers and sojourners" here. We have need of "a possession of a burying-place, that we may bury our dead out of our sight." Let us have "the field, and the cave which is therein ;

and all the trees, that are in the field, and that are in the borders round about;" and let them "be made sure for a possession of a burying-place."

It is the duty of the living thus to provide for the dead. It is not a mere office of pious regard for others; but it comes home to our own bosoms, as those who are soon to enter upon the common inheritance.

If there are any feelings of our nature, not bounded by earth, and yet stopping short of the skies, which are more strong and more universal than all others, they will be found in our solicitude as to the time and place and manner of our death; in the desire to die in the arms of our friends; to have the last sad offices to our remains performed by their affection; to repose in the land of our nativity; to be gathered to the sepulchres of our fathers. It is almost impossible for us to feel, nay, even to feign, indifference on such a subject.

Poetry has told us this truth in lines of transcendent beauty and force, which find a response in every breast;—

For who, to dumb Forgetfulness a prey,  
This pleasing, anxious being e'er resigned,  
Left the warm precincts of the cheerful day,  
Nor cast one longing, lingering look behind?

On some fond breast the parting soul relies;  
Some pious drops the closing eye requires;  
E'en from the tomb the voice of Nature cries;  
E'en in our ashes live their wonted fires.

It is in vain, that Philosophy has informed us, that the whole earth is but a point in the eyes of its Creator,—nay, of his own creation; that, wherever we



are,—abroad or at home,—on the restless ocean, or the solid land,—we are still under the protection of his providence, and safe, as it were, in the hollow of his hand. It is in vain, that Religion has instructed us, that we are but dust, and to dust we shall return,—that whether our remains are scattered to the corners of the earth, or gathered in sacred urns, there is a sure and certain hope of a resurrection of the body and a life everlasting. These truths, sublime and glorious as they are, leave untouched the feelings, of which I have spoken, or, rather, they impart to them a more enduring reality. Dust as we are, the frail tenements, which enclose our spirits but for a season, are dear, are inexpressibly dear to us. We derive solace, nay, pleasure, from the reflection, that when the hour of separation comes, these earthly remains will still retain the tender regard of those, whom we leave behind ;—that the spot, where they shall lie, will be remembered with a fond and soothing reverence ;—that our children will visit it in the midst of their sorrows ; and our kindred in remote generations feel that a local inspiration hovers round it.

Let him speak, who has been on a pilgrimage of health to a foreign land. Let him speak, who has watched at the couch of a dying friend, far from his chosen home. Let him speak, who has committed to the bosom of the deep, with a sudden, startling plunge, the narrow shroud of some relative or companion. Let such speak, and they will tell you, that there is nothing, which wrings the heart of the dying,—aye, and of the surviving,—with sharper

agony, than the thought, that they are to sleep their last sleep in the land of strangers, or in the unseen depths of the ocean.

"Bury me not, I pray thee," said the patriarch Jacob, "bury me not in Egypt: but I will lie with my fathers. And thou shalt carry me out of Egypt; and bury me in their burying-place." — "There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife; there they buried Isaac and Rebecca his wife; and there I buried Leah."

Such are the natural expressions of human feeling, as they fall from the lips of the dying. Such are the reminiscences, that forever crowd on the confines of the passes to the grave. We seek again to have our home there with our friends, and to be blest by a communion with them. It is a matter of instinct, not of reasoning. It is a spiritual impulse, which supersedes belief, and disdains question.

But it is not chiefly in regard to the feelings belonging to our own mortality, however sacred and natural, that we should contemplate the establishment of repositories of this sort. There are higher moral purposes, and more affecting considerations, which belong to the subject. We should accustom ourselves to view them rather as means, than as ends; rather as influences to govern human conduct, and to moderate human suffering, than as cares incident to a selfish foresight.

It is to the living mourner—to the parent, weeping over his dear dead child—to the husband, dwelling in his own solitary desolation—to the widow,

whose heart is broken by untimely sorrow—to the friend, who misses at every turn the presence of some kindred spirit—It is to these, that the repositories of the dead bring home thoughts full of admonition, of instruction, and, slowly but surely, of consolation also. They admonish us, by their very silence, of our own frail and transitory being. They instruct us in the true value of life, and in its noble purposes, its duties, and its destination. They spread around us, in the reminiscences of the past, sources of pleasing, though melancholy reflection.

We dwell with pious fondness on the characters and virtues of the departed ; and, as time interposes its growing distances between us and them, we gather up, with more solicitude, the broken fragments of memory, and weave, as it were, into our very hearts, the threads of their history. As we sit down by their graves, we seem to hear the tones of their affection, whispering in our ears. We listen to the voice of their wisdom, speaking in the depths of our souls. We shed our tears ; but they are no longer the burning tears of agony. They relieve our drooping spirits, and come no longer over us with a deathly faintness. We return to the world, and we feel ourselves purer, and better, and wiser, from this communion with the dead.

I have spoken but of feelings and associations common to all ages, and all generations of men—to the rude and the polished—to the barbarian and the civilized—to the bond and the free—to the inhabitant of the dreary forests of the north, and the sultry re-