

**ADDRESS
COMMEMORATIVE
OF RUFUS CHOATE**

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Address Commemorative of Rufus Choate by Theophilus Parsons

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THEOPHILUS PARSONS

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COMMEMORATIVE OF

RUFUS CHOATE,

BY

THEOPHILUS PARSONS.

DELIVERED BEFORE THE STUDENTS OF THE LAW SCHOOL
OF HARVARD UNIVERSITY,

AT THEIR REQUEST,

On the 28th of September, 1859.

BOSTON:
LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY.
1859.

CAMBRIDGE, MASS., October 12, 1859.

PROFESSOR PARSONS:—

DEAR SIR,— By a vote of the Assembly of Harvard Law School, the pleasing duty devolves upon us to return to you the thanks of the Assembly for the interesting and instructive Address delivered before the members of the Law School, September 29th; and being desirous to have it in a permanent form, we have been instructed by the Assembly to request a copy of the same for publication.

Hoping a favorable answer, we remain,

Yours, &c.,

W. H. LILLY,
W. H. LIVINGOOD, } *Committee.*
W. J. STANLY,

DANE HALL, October 12, 1859.

GENTLEMEN,—

I am glad to learn by your kind note, that my Address was satisfactory to the students of the Law School, for whom it was prepared; and I am happy to place a copy at your disposal.

Very respectfully and sincerely,

Your obed't servant,

THEOPHILUS PARSONS.

TO MESSRS. W. H. LILLY, W. H. LIVINGOOD, AND W. J. STANLY.

ADDRESS.

No man dies wholly, even as to this world. When the soul ascends to another sphere of existence, and the body is placed in the earth to mingle with it once more, there is still something which remains with them whom the departing spirit has left, something which has not gone up out of our sight, nor down into the grave to rest in silence, and decay. It is the growth, the flower and the fruit of the seeds the man was planting in the fields of life as he walked through them; it is the influence and effect of his life. For this is a work which every man must do. Science assures us that there is no act of our lives which is not immortal in its consequences; that when one places his foot upon the ground, or gives utterance to a thought, the earth upon which he treads and the air which he has made vocal receive impressions or vibrations, and never can be again precisely what they would have been had these not been made; and therefore the universe

may be said to consist of the records of all past events, of all men's actions, of all human life. It is not easy to have a clear apprehension of this fact, even if we yield assent to the demonstrations of science. But there is an analogous truth, more real and more vital. It is, that the universe of mind, of thought and feeling, the world of human character, consists of the contributions made to it by all who have lived. And therefore every man, while building up his own nature and destiny, is preparing for others an inheritance which he cannot but transmit, and they cannot but receive. If this be an inheritance of woe, well may the thought sharpen the last agony. If of good, well may it bring comfort and strength. There are those who have thought that such a hope as this could mingle with those which point to other worlds only to mar them,— only to cumber the spirit, and bind to it a burthen of earthly thoughts and cares. But surely it need not be so. When the Roman poet rejoiced that he had builded for himself a monument, “ære perennius,” he adds: —

Non omnis moriar, multaque pars mei
Vitabit Libitinam.

It was in his mind more than a hope; it was a certainty of joy and exultation, that in the remembrance of him which would linger among men, a large part of himself would escape the grasp of the

grave. And certainly the Christian need not lose a consolation which the heathen had. Certainly the hope that he leaves a fair name and a wholesome influence, and that coming generations will rejoice to keep his memory green, may blend with the hope of entering upon new scenes of usefulness and happiness, and give to it confirmation and gladness. Certainly one need not value less the immortality of the spirit which comes when all that can perish is cast away, because this hope promises an immortality of good influence. It is not true, that, while

"The evil that men do lives after them,
The good is oft interred with their bones."

Long after the individual is wholly forgotten, the influence which he exerted upon the generation which remembered him, and which entered as a vital element into its character, passed onward to the next; and this indefinitely, and it may be with increasing force, even when the effacing flow of time has swept his name away so that no human lip can utter it.

It is not given to any man to die and make no sign; but how vast, how immeasurable the difference between the signatures impressed upon their times by different men! There are those who go down to their graves by a silent and unnoticed path, and who would leave nothing to live after them, were it not the universal law that every man must

add his mite, however small, to the common stock of human life. There are others, the few grand historical names, which, like the brighter stars of heaven, stud at great distances the night of the past, whose glory has not been touched by the fingers of decay, and the circles of whose fame and influence perpetually enlarge, but do not grow feebler as they expand.

Between these extremes all men stand. Far the greater number incline to the lower of the two; but there are in every age and place the great men of that time, and their place is nearer the summit. Assuredly I need not fear that it will be thought to be the language of flattery or panegyric, if it be said that he whose death we have met this day to commemorate had his own place among great men. For he was a great man, if eminent abilities, carefully cultivated and industriously exercised, and occupying a large field of action with great labor and great success, and filling a wide and ever widening sphere with his renown, could constitute a claim to greatness. It is many weeks since he died; but even now distant echoes still reach us, and tell us that his fame at home has gone abroad, and was welcomed and accepted there as true and genuine fame.

Gentlemen of the Law School, you have asked me to speak to you of Rufus Choate. I ought to comply, gladly, with any request of yours within my