Poems

ON THE

Celebration

OF THE

250th Birthday of Ipswich

Aug. 16, 1884.

By Gilbert Conant.

ESSEX:
Burnham's Job Print.
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Miss Caroline Conant

Falmouth, Mass.
LINES ON THE 250TH BIRTHDAY
OF IPSWICH, AUG. 16, 1884.

Our honored George, our President,
To thee, we would these lines present.
'Tis summer, and the sun sheds down
His mildest rays upon this town;
Most grateful breezes softly sing,
And clearest notes the church bells ring.
No cleaner streets e'er felt the tread
Of man and beast upon their bed;
We witness here no foolish waste,
But buildings are adorned with taste.
All nature, where we look or go,
With goodness seems to overflow.
Germania and her sister fair,
Cheer every heart with music rare,
And birds, though in their season late,
Sing out as sweet as when they mate.
Who, in the last half century born,
E'er knew a more auspicious morn?
Then, with such auspices, we may
Rejoice to celebrate this day,
Two centuries and a half ago,
As our enlightened people know,
The incorporation of this town
Was done by people of renown.
The year before, a little band
Was sent by Winthrop to this land.
There were explorers on this shore,
And some adventurers here before,
Who gave this place much worthy praise;
Still they did no rich harvests raise,
(Though Indians did these hills adorn
With beauteous fields of golden corn;)
But Winthrop's men came with a will,
To clear the valley, plain and hill.
They planted corn upon the glade,
And new accessions soon were made;
The forests fell before their hands,
And fields of grain spread o'er these lands;
Fruit trees, brought from old England here,
Were planted for their gust and cheer;
The elm, for beauty and for shade,
They planted on the streets they made.
Those queen-like trees, of just renown,
How do they beautify this town,
And turn our thoughts back to the hands
That planted them on these good lands.
But higher thoughts inspired each heart
To labor for th'immortal part.
Churches they built, and schools did found:
Let honor to their names redound.
They guarded well the rising youth
By good instruction of the truth.
Religion was the power that reigned,
And men's vile passions were restrained.
Then may we well commemorate
Those worthies of that early date.
Who laid foundations, deep and strong,
On which to build for ages long.
This celebration is not new,
Our predecessors kept it, too.
Just fifty years ago, to-day,
We witnessed here a like display.
The speakers, men of highest note,
Dana, Philips and Rufus Choate,
Performed their parts with brilliancy,
And all was joyful as could be;
Many an anecdote was told
Of what took place in days of old.
Our honored Choate, that man of state,
Did one with sparkling wit relate;
It waked an interest, deep and strong,
And was applauded, loud and long.
What next inspired that throng
Was, "Hall Columbia's" cheering song.
But still there is no perfect joy;
We find there's always some alloy;
And joy, that day, was marred in town—
The church gave signs of falling down.
No more will we encroach on time
To tell these incidents in rhyme.
But here we would, in simple verse,
Th' improvements since that time rehearse.
The business has increased ten-fold,
Our merchants have grown rich and old.
New streets have been laid out and made.
And houses built, of every grade.
Two bridges have the river spanned,
One institution, long and grand,
And mills, employing many a hand,
Have since been built upon this land.
The old Town-house has been enlarged,
And the old Court-house is discharged;
The churches and schoolhouses too,
Have all, since then, been built anew;
Mansions, in all parts of the town,
Upon high street, and from that down,
Have been erected in fine style,
Enough to line one street a mile;
The Manning school, on Central street,
In all its parts is made complete;
That building, too, in every part,
Shows beauty, symmetry and art.
Honor is due its founder's name;
To him that fosters it the same.
These works reflect their doers' praise.
They show man's progress in these days.
But praise, not all, belongs to men,
Fair nature wears her diadem,
Adorned with fruit, and flower and tree,
Sun, moon and stars her canopy,
She stamps her image on the earth,
Her grace and beauty speak her worth.
That bright exemplar of fine taste,
Has here that brightest jewel placed.
Has she not well prepared this land
For what is beautiful and grand?
Her everlasting hills that stand
Like sentinels on every hand.
To guard us from th' infectious foe
That comes in storms and winds that blow,
Exalt the glory of the land,
And our devoutest thoughts demand
To look up from the earthly sod
Through beauteous nature to her God.
We love to ascend their towering heights,
Where grandeur every soul delights;
And from those hilltops to look down
Upon the beauties of this town;
On works of nature and of art
That pleasure to mankind impart;
The winding river's gentle flow,
And fruits that in profusion grow;
The mansion and the cottage, too,
Sweet homes of joy where all are true:
To view the landscape spreading wide,
And the Atlantic's rolling tide;
To gaze upon that broad blue sea.
Fit emblem of eternity;
To listen to the ocean's roar.
Whose billows break upon the shore.
With deepest and sublimest sound
In nature's grandest anthem found.
Then looking up from that profound,
Where the deep rolling waters sound.
To view the broad expanse of skies,
And all the heavenly orbs that rise:
And see through clear ethereal air,
All nature in her glory there.
Such are the works of nature's hand.
And thus she beautifies this land.
Of late improvements in this town.
We've said a little, mark it down.
Now, let us take a broader view,
See what the world is coming to.
Inventive genius, wondrous power!
Facilitates man's task each hour;
Machinery, now, for every use
Man's hardest labor does reduce;
What, once, required a hundred men,
Can be accomplished, now, with ten;
Mechanics can, by art and skill,
Have their best work done at the mill;
Large stores, with their foundations laid,
Can, in a trice, be reared and made.
See how the farmers in their pride
Perform their labor as they ride!
How gracefully they ride around
And plough and rake and mow their ground.
How is the horse now utilized
By arts that mankind have devised!
Steam power; how well has that been tried.
And to a thousand arts applied;
That mighty force, on land and sea
Propels the vast machinery;
How swift the wheels are whirled around
Now that its usefulness is found!
The old stage coach is laid aside,
And steam cars like the breezes glide.
In eighteen hundred thirty-four,
The travel, here, was scarce two score;
Now, that the iron rails are laid,
Two thousand, daily are conveyed;
But time and space no one can find
To name its blessings to mankind.
And chemistry has opened wide
The doors of science long defied.
What wonders has that science wrought,
And blessings without number brought.
The telegraph: say who can ken
The mysteries of its magic pen?
That power annihilates all space,
And brings the nations face to face.
A correspondence that took months,
Can be accomplished now, at once:
Those separated by the sea,
Communicate immediately.
The telephone, we need not name,
Though worthy of immortal fame.
Here then we rest, for we are tired,
And more, we think, is not desired—
Still, one thought more we might express.
Though you may think that we digress.
Say then; how did these pleasant lands
Come into our forefathers' hands?
The red men of the wilderness,
That did these lands by right possess.
For the amount of twenty pounds
Sold them enough for a dozen towns.
Blessed with the riches of the sea.
And game abundant, too, and free.
They deemed them of but little worth.
Their only heritage on earth.
That people, proud, erect, and gay.
How soon they will have passed away!
Of all these tribes, but few remain.
Like lingering drops of dew or rain.
Their rights and claims, 'tis not for us.
On this occasion to discuss:
But in God's providence, we see
Extinction is their destiny.
The nations do not always last
Thus has it been in ages past,
They rise and reign throughout their day,
Then like the clouds, they pass away.
And may not the Caucasiens wise,
Sink down at length no more to rise?
One generation fades and dies,
And others, in succession, rise;
But none that live below the sun
Can farther than their cycles run;
The earth, alone, unchanged remains,
And that the life of all sustains.

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RUFUS CHOATE'S TOAST
GIVEN AT THE
Celebration of the 200th Birthday of Ipswich,
August 16, 1834.

Our honored Choate of whom we boast,
Took for the subject of his toast,
The memory of Good Parson Wise,
A man whom no one did despise:
A man of courage and of strength,
Of good proportions, size, and length:
His countenance was bland and fair.
He moved with a majestic air,
Was courteous and kind to all,
And reverenced by both great and small:
With heavenly food his flock were fed,
And in green pastures they were led:
Beside pure waters did they go
That from the heavenly fountain flow:
The churches’ bulwarks he sustained.
That have through ages since remained.
A philanthropic man was he,
Exemplar of what all should be;
A man of intellectual might,
That ever battled for the right.
In age, and from his early youth,
He did abide firm in the truth;
He quailed before no human foe,
Where duty called, there did he go:
And yet, so affable was he,
That children loved with him to be.
The record of good Parson Wise
Sheds incense where his dust now lies.
Now this wise man whose name was Wise
Could not be nonplussed by surprise.
There lived far off in Andover,
A man whose name was Chandler;
He made his boast, in that great town,
That no one there could throw him down.
This wrestler heard of Wise’s strength.
And dozing o’er that thought, at length,
Made up his mind and stubborn will,
That he with Wise, would try his skill.
One pleasant day, in all his pride,
Down to Chebacco did he ride.
The Parson’s house was to him shown,
And quick he made his business known;
That reverend man said: “My dear sir.
I am this people’s minister;
I have no time to waste in play,
I must prepare for th’ Sabbath day;
But seeing you have been at cost,
’Twere sad to have your journey lost.
So let us try our strength at once.
Although I may be called a dunce.”
Then quick they were in proper place,
And standing squarly, face to face,
The Parson raised the Wrestler thence,
And gently tossed him over the fence.
That champion, at his sad surprise
Cried out, while struggling hard to rise,
With sound much like the whooping cough.
Throw my horse over and I’ll be off.
The Parson spake with look sedate;
“Sir: take your horse out at the gate.
I hope no harm may you betide,
And may you have a pleasant ride.”
Then, with a graceful bow and smile,
He bade him “Farewell for the while.”