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THE STRANGENESS OF GOD'S WAYS.

A

S E R M O N

PREACHED BEFORE THE

Churches of Gloversville,

ON

Thanksgiving Day, November 24th, 1864,

BY THE

REV. HOMER N. DUNNING,

Pastor of the Congregational Church.

GLOVERSVILLE :

GEO. W. HEATON, BOOK & JOB PRINTER.

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THE STRANGENESS OF GOD'S WAYS.

ISAIAH, xxviii, 21. *That He may do His work, His strange work ; and bring to pass his act, his strange act.*

There are two opposite extremes in the gracious dealings of God's Providence with men for which they find it the hardest to be thankful, viz: for common blessings, and for uncommon trials. There come in our human life blessings which are special and remarkable—gifts of God in the form of signal prosperity or unexpected deliverance ; there come days of happiness which are, as compared with the common days that precede and follow them, like diamonds strung on the same thread with common glass-beads, shining forth conspicuous not only by their own intrinsic lustre, but so much the brighter by contrast with the dull hue of the others ; there come crises of experience at which the man seems lifted above the dreary level of common-place thought and feeling to mountain-heights of enjoyment, when Heaven seems to bend low above his head full of blessing, and the very air around him seems to palpitate with the sympathy and goodness of God. Such signal blessings as these—such days of diamond brilliance—such crises of exalted experience—often seem to make men grateful in spite of themselves—often as we may say, *surprise* them into gratitude to God, the giver of every good and perfect gift, and they are forced to cry out : "this is the finger of God—this is the gift of God—praise be to God—thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift." This spontaneous gratitude for such blessings is expressed in the very name by which they are commonly described—they are called *goodsends*, that is, things which come directly from God.

But the most of the gifts of Providence have no such special character ; they are rather what may be called *common* blessings, that is, they are blessings which are universally or ha-

bitually enjoyed. The blessing of *life*—a place to live in the world as a conscious, intelligent soul, inhabiting a vital, active body, upon this solid earth, beneath these blue heavens, amid this wondrous system of existence; the blessings of *health* and faculties of activity and enjoyment adapted to every object and phase of this existence; the blessings of *supply* for the wants and necessities of this condition—food, raiment, shelter, comforts for the body—objects of knowledge, pursuit, love, enjoyment for the soul; the blessings of daily activity and nightly rest—the shining of the sun and the glitter of the stars—the changes of the seasons with their spring bloom and autumn abundance, their summer showers and winter storms; the blessings of domestic felicity and social friendship and public order and religious privilege; all these and ten thousand others are what may be called common blessings—they are enjoyed more or less by all and more or less every day. And just because they are so common, they come to be regarded as a matter of course; because they are habitually enjoyed, their enjoyment becomes a kind of second nature; and the sense of the agency and goodness of God in their bestowment drops out of mind altogether. So it happens that the very habitual faithfulness of God in doing good to all men all the time, which really displays his goodness far more than any occasional benefit however remarkable, is made the reason for almost losing sight of his hand entirely, as if these common blessings came of themselves.

But still more difficult is it for men to feel gratitude for *uncommon trials*. Indeed the very naming of such a thing strikes the common mind as an absurdity. For how is it possible to feel thankful for what is unpleasant and afflictive? And if the only object of life was to make men happy, this would be the necessary conclusion. But because the object of life is something higher than this, viz.: to make men nobler and better; and because trials in every form—pains of the body, sorrows of the heart, afflictions of the life, disappointments and calamities of fortune, are the chosen means of providential discipline by which this moral benefit is secured; and because it is the same hand of Divine Goodness which mingles trials with blessings, sorrows with joys, afflictions with benefits, disappointments with successes; therefore these trials of our earthly condition are subjects, not for murmuring as unmitigated evils—not for mere resignation as to an irresistible fatality, but rather for real gratitude as for bitter, but most wholesome medicine. And if one can reach that height of grace where he can feel this down in the very center and core of his heart—feel this gratitude for the moral trials of his experience, then

there is no doubt whatever that his gratitude is genuine—that his thanksgiving is a sacrifice acceptable to God. So then I choose this for my theme of discourse to-day—*the occasion for gratitude in the strange works and ways, the strange trials and discipline of our national condition.* I have taken the text only as suggesting the strangeness of God's providential dealings with men, speaking, as it does, of his works as "*strange works,*" and his acts as "*strange acts.*"

Let it be observed in general that there is nothing really strange in the strangeness of God's dealings with men; rather we may say it is common to find them strange. As a general rule we find that God thinks and acts in just the way in which men have least expected—just the way in which they think he ought not to have acted. The Bible frequently speaks of this peculiarity of his conduct, "my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord;" "how unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out!" And all experience confirms these testimonies. In the creation of the world, for example, man's way would doubtless have been to have spoken it into existence by one word of omnipotent power; but God's way was rather to bring it into its present condition through millions of years of slow and patient preparation. In the government of the world, man's way would be to cause sin and wickedness to be followed by swift retribution; but God's way is rather to let justice slumber for a time, and leave iniquity to work out its own inevitable punishment. In the redemption of mankind, man's way would have been to have sent the Redeemer into the world immediately after sin and death had entered; but God's way was to put mankind through thousands of years of preparatory discipline before Christ should come. And yet in all these cases we can find reason to believe that God's way is infinitely better than man's. Let us see if we cannot find the same thing true in our national experience.

I. Let us find our first occasion for gratitude to God in the *strange origin and growth of slavery in our country.* It is not my intention to claim that God is ever in any sense the author or cause of evil. He is a God of goodness, "from whom cometh down every good gift and every perfect gift;" but "cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man." Nevertheless, since God is the absolute sovereign of the world, and nothing can exist which is not under the eye and hand of his government, therefore even what is evil must exist at least by his permission. It is one of the strange things of his unsearchable ways; but the mystery must not cause us to go so far as to deny his agency in the providential permission of evil. The

same Hand which planted the Garden of Eden with flowers and fruits, caused also thorns and thistles to spring up in the track of man's sin. The same Hand that planted the tree of life in the garden, planted also, hard by it, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The same Hand that made man in his own image, holy and perfect, made also the subtle serpent in whose disguise the spirit of evil crept into the garden and wormed his way into the human heart. If you ask why these things were done, your question strikes against the hard problem—the insoluble enigma—why there is any such thing as evil in the world at all. Only this can be said, that the tree of knowledge of good and evil and the serpent of temptation were the necessary means of the moral trial and discipline of man, the necessary prelude also to the great mystery and glory of Divine redemption.

Apply then these principles to the history of our country. We are accustomed to trace the hand of Divine Providence in the Landing of the Pilgrims—in the settlement of our country by English Puritans, the champions and pioneers of civil and religious freedom. We are accustomed to mark the agency of God in planting on the shores of New England the tree of liberty to be a tree of life and blessing to the nation. But was it not the same Hand of Divine Providence that in the very year of the Landing of the Pilgrims, the year 1620, brought the first cargo of African Slaves to Virginia? The same ocean that bore up the May Flower with her precious freight of freedom, bore up also that Dutch vessel with her baleful cargo of slavery; the same winds wafted them over the seas, the one to Plymouth Rock, the other to the James River.

And so in this new Garden of Eden, side by side with the tree of liberty and life, the tree of slavery was planted, destined to be to our nation the tree of knowledge of good and evil. And the tree grew and flourished; and the serpent of temptation nestled under its luxuriant foliage, beguiling men to eat with the flattering baits of power and pride: “ye shall be as gods”; and “when they saw that the tree was good for food and pleasant to the sight and a tree to be desired to make them wise” and rich, and powerful and great—to make them indeed *gods* on a small scale—they took of the tree and ate, forgetting that it was also the tree of death. Not only did the South eat of it, but it took of the fruit thereof and gave to the North and the North did eat. Even the descendants of the Pilgrims ate of it—sons of liberty; sending their ships to Africa to share in the lucrative traffic in slaves. Political parties ate of it, permitting none to be exalted to seats of power and honor save those who had tasted of its forbidden fruit and

received "the mark of the beast in their foreheads." Religious societies and churches ate of it, echoing the flattering lie of the tempter: "yea hath God said, ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden"? is not slavery possibly right? is it not a providential blessing? is it not a Divine Ordinance, or at least a Divine Curse upon the African Race? And so the whole nation ate of it, building up its magnificent temple of National Union and Constitutional Freedom with its colossal columns and its swelling dome surmounted by the statue of the goddess of liberty, clad with the draping folds of the starry flag—all resting upon the black foundation of four millions of slaves!

Now the point of my argument is that this establishment and growth of slavery as so important an element in our national life was not a matter of accident, nor of mere human agency, but of Divine Providence. GOD'S HAND WAS IN IT.

What then is the meaning of the strange mystery? Why must this old dragon of oppression and wrong, which had so long crushed mankind in the old world, find entrance and scope for a new field of wickedness in the new? Why must the African Race be brought here to become the victims of injustice and the bone of contention for generations? Here is a problem whose full explanation I shall not pretend to give. Only so much is now apparent. Is it not plain that the providential design was that the institution of slavery might serve as our national tree of the knowledge of good and evil—the grand instrument of our national temptation and trial? Our nation was founded—our republic was organized upon the principles of freedom and the rights of man. In our infancy there was enough to test the faith and fidelity of our ancestors to these principles in their sufferings and sacrifices in the settlement of the country. In our youth the fiery trial of the Revolution still further developed those principles, matured them into strong convictions in the popular mind, and inscribed them upon the firm pillars of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the Union.

But when the nation has grown to manhood—when it has waxed strong and great and powerful—when it has stretched its long arms and spread its overshadowing wings over the continent—when it is reaching its ambitious hand upward like Lucifer among the stars of God, to snatch as from the heavens the dazzling diadem of majesty as the Imperial Republic of the world, what shall make it faithful to the principles and traditions of its past history—faithful to freedom and humanity? What else could compel it to pause in the mid career of its swelling power and pride, wealth and ambition, but just such a cancer at the heart as the terrible evil of African Slavery?

This has compelled it to pause, meeting us at every turn, like the fabulous Sphinx of ancient mythology with her puzzling riddles, requiring as conditions of all further progress—conditions indeed of life and death—answers to these trying questions : what is freedom ? is it the exclusive heritage of the White Race, or is it the rightful possession of mankind of every race ? what is Christianity ? does it mean privilege and blessing for the strong and powerful, or does it mean also liberty and justice for the poor and oppressed ? Tough questions indeed and hard to answer, especially when the right answer costs something—costs money—costs political power—costs worldly pride and ambition. But the trial is most wholesome and beneficent ; and has already done immeasurable good in purifying the heart—in rectifying the conscience—in determining the destinies of the nation as the world's standard-bearer of human freedom.

It is vain for us then, in the perplexity of our trial, to murmur against the strange providence of God—to kick against the pricks—by crying : oh that the African Race had remained in their own land, or could be restored to their own land, where they belong ! oh that freedom might have had this land as her heritage in peace without conflict with slavery ! For this is God's strange work of judgment for our national discipline—"this cometh forth from the Lord of hosts, who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working." And already as we begin to see the clouds of this judgment lifting and breaking away—already as we see some of the bright results of this trial shining forth to view, we find occasion for gratitude to God for thus "doing his work, his strange work, and bringing to pass his act, his strange act." Already we rejoice that God did not leave us to sail in the smooth seas of carnal ease and selfish enjoyment, but swept us out on the rough ocean to fight with winds and waves, that we may do something noble for the moral education of the world and the permanent benefit of mankind.

II. Let us find our next occasion for gratitude in the *outbreak and events of the rebellion and civil war that convulse the country.* War, like slavery, is, in itself, to be regarded as a terrible evil, always to be deplored, however just and necessary. War means destruction—destruction of life, of property, of everything that constitutes the order and welfare of society. War means the shedding of blood, the breaking of hearts, the flowing of tears, the wasting of treasure, the havoc and ruin of civilization. And yet even war, like slavery, may be a providential and moral necessity, appointed of God for the judgment and discipline of men. Let us here take another lesson from

the original entrance of moral evil into the world. When Adam and Eve had eaten of the forbidden fruit, they soon began to become conscious of their sins; and they would fain hide away from themselves and from the presence of God. But in vain their fig-leaves—in vain their hiding-place under the thick trees of the garden! God's voice penetrates their concealment with the ringing words: “Adam where art thou?” Those words meant not only discovery of their sin, but war and judgment—enmity with bruising of head and heel between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. And when our nation had eaten of the forbidden fruit of slavery and began to become conscious of its sin and its nakedness in the sight of God and men, it also would fain hide itself under the cover of excuses and compromises. But in vain; the voice of God's judgment is heard through all disguises, calling the nation to judgment, and proclaiming war against the evil—war in which the nation itself must be bruised for its sins, but in which the serpent of slavery must be fatally and finally crushed.

If the system of slavery were necessary for the trial and discipline of the nation, it would have been far more pleasant if the evil could have been got rid of by the peaceful action of moral causes—by appeals to the reason, the conscience, the Christian feeling of the people. And these influences had their time and course, and did their work. These many years the agitation has been in progress until the reason of all who wished to be enlightened has been enlightened—the consciences of all who wished to be convicted have been convicted—the hearts of all who wished to be touched have been touched, with the evil and wrong of slavery. And yet the evil existed in all its stupendous magnitude, unaffected by all these influences, entrenched in the passions, the prejudices, the institutions of the country, and fortified by its dangers against every assault. What can be done? The wisdom of man fails and sits down in despair. But now comes on the stage, the strange, wonder-working providence of God. War, God's red-handed messenger, with glittering sword, comes forth to cut the knot which man cannot untie. The Slave-Power, struck as from heaven with judicial madness, breaks out into rebellion, and raises its parricidal hand to stab the nation to its heart. And now the sharp questions strike home deep into the hearts of the people—shall the nation die that slavery may live, or shall slavery die that the nation may live? shall our free institutions be sacrificed that slavery may be maintained, or shall we give freedom to the African Race as the price of our own freedom? That is just where we *are*, or rather I may say, where we *have*

been, for I think we have passed the crisis of these questions. But that is precisely what the war means. It means that what reason, conscience, religion could not do, that must be done by "the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning." It means that those interests, prejudices, passions of men in favor of the wrong, which would not yield to peaceful influences, must be burned out of them by the breath of fire. Ah, when the man comes to stand under fire as a soldier in defence of his country he cannot help asking, what force sends the bullet aimed at his heart! When he gives those of his own flesh and blood as a sacrifice, he cannot help asking, who is guilty of all this bloodshed and sorrow! When the nation pours out its thousands of millions of treasure as the price of its Union and Liberty, it cannot help asking: What is the cause of this frightful waste? And so the anti-slavery providence of God has made our nation an anti-slavery nation!

Very wonderful is the way in which in this matter God has "done his work, his strange work, and brought to pass his act, his strange act." It is but a little while since it seemed as if everything human and worldly was on the side of slavery in our country. The interests of trade and commerce, bolstered up by four million bales of cotton; political parties bribed in favor of slavery by the dazzling prizes of place and power; ecclesiastical bodies gagged to silence by cowardly fears; public opinion corrupted into the defence of slavery and the persecution of the champions of freedom. All this marshalled host of forces on one side; and on the other side what? Nothing but the still small voice of God in the conscience and heart! But that was mightier than them all. For now what do we see? Freedom now speaks by the mouth not of a few despised Abolitionists, but by the mouth of the President of the Nation, proclaiming liberty to the enslaved. It speaks now not through the organization of a moral society, but through the marching columns of mighty armies. It speaks not through the platform-speech or sermon or newspaper, but through iron missiles sped to their mark by the wings of fire! It speaks not in favor of a race all crushed under the yoke of slavery, but a race of which two hundred thousand have already stood in the ranks as soldiers in defence of their own freedom. And therefore much as we deplore the calamities of war—much as we sorrow for lives sacrificed and homes desolated, yet when we contemplate these wonderful results, we cannot but rejoice and be grateful to God for them. We thank God for this terrible baptism of fire which has been the means of our purification. We thank him for the fidelity to principle which has nerved the people to meet the moral issues of the conflict. We thank

him for the stern determination that any sacrifice however costly, of life or property, shall be made to preserve the institutions of freedom and the integrity of the republic. We thank him for the patience of the nation in the endurance of these four years of war, its spirit never broken by disaster, its purpose never yielding in the darkest hours. We thank him for the heroism of brave men who have poured out their blood on the field of battle ; and for the not less noble heroism of brave women, who have endured in loneliness the absence of sons, brothers, husbands, friends, fighting in the ranks of the army, or suffering in distant hospitals, or dying by inches in rebel prisons, or sleeping in graves far away, never alas ! to be visited by the loving feet, or hallowed by the sacred tears of those they loved the best. God comfort them in their loneliness and sorrow to-day with the assurance that their country is grateful to them and grateful to God for their heroism and sacrifices !

III. Let us find further occasion for gratitude in *the strange manner in which God has thus far led us on through this crisis.* If we *must* pass through this ordeal of war, our human way would have been to get through it as soon as possible. The outcry at the outbreak of the rebellion was : let the war be short, sharp and decisive. And the standing prophecy and expectation ever since has been that three months more will end the war. This is always man's spontaneous feeling, when God puts him into some furnace of trial, to get out of the fire as soon as possible. Whereas God's way is to keep him in the fire till the design of the trial is accomplished. It takes time to melt hard metals and mould them into vessels for use and ornament ; and it takes time to melt men's hearts and shape them to the purposes of Divine wisdom. It takes time to burn deep into their natures moral lessons which shall abide for generations. The Israelites might have marched from Egypt to Canaan by a straight course in a week's time, but God's strange way was to send them on a roundabout journey of forty years through the angry waters of the Red Sea—through the dreary wastes of the desert, beneath the thundering brow of Mount Sinai, through privation, hardships, suffering, death, marking their sad way with the graves of the slain and the dead of a whole generation.

Well, is it not evident that something like this has been true in this trial of our nation ? The rebellion might have been ended and the war closed by a single campaign, if that had been all that God's Providence intended by this crisis. But no ! the deadly sore of the nation would not then have been touched ; the caustic would not then have been applied to the proud flesh of the nation's cancer ; the fire would not then

have consumed the festering corruptions of the nation's sins. So the trial must be not only severe but protracted, until the nation in its agony is ready to cry out not only for deliverance from its troubles, but also for redemption from its sins. The people must smart under the punishment of their national crimes and oppressions, until full atonement is made for their share and complicity with wrong. See how wonderfully God has "done his work, his strange work, and brought to pass his act, his strange act," in this respect also. The same madness that plunged the champions of slavery into rebellion, has settled into a dogged obstinacy in persisting in their course unto their utter destruction. They have been just successful enough to keep their purpose alive, and make them repel all offers of reconciliation. On the other hand the national cause has experienced just enough of defeat and disaster to try the hearts and determine the courage of the people, bringing up their principles and their spirits to the grandeur of the struggle and the moral issues of the crisis.

And, so step by step the process of education has gone on. First the nation as a whole was ready for nothing more than the crushing of the rebellion as speedily as possible. Then under the discipline of disaster it grew ripe for the proclamation of freedom. Then it advanced still further to the arming of emancipated slaves as soldiers of the Union. And now the voice of the people, smarting with the sorrows and burdened with the cost of the war—as the voice of many waters and as the voice of mighty thunderings—utters the solemn verdict: "let the Union live at all hazards! let not only the rebellion be crushed, but let its very heart—slavery—be torn out and stamped under foot until its last vestige of life is trampled out forever!" So the Providence of God marches on its strange courses, with majestic tread, slow in its movements, because sure of its results!

And the results already begin to appear; the signs in the heavens grow hopeful, that the storm may be indeed breaking away. We see them in the political world, not merely in the result of the late election, for which I give thanks not in any partisan sense, but only because it secures the vigorous prosecution of the war to its triumphant close; but especially in the late movements in the Border Slave States. Maryland through whose capital four years ago the President Elect passed in disguise in the night—through which also Massachusetts soldiers marching to the defence of Washington were struck down by murderous hands—Maryland has just adopted a Free Constitution emancipating her slaves. Missouri—the home of Border Ruffianism, by which free Kansas was so long threatened and

so often invaded—has just elected a Convention to form a Free Constitution and ordain emancipation. Even in Kentucky a strong party is already organized and rapidly growing, seeking the same result. And in every Southern State subdued by our armies the same influences begin to work. Even the rebels driven to extremities are agitating the dangerous question of recruiting their exhausted armies with their slaves.

And in the military field the signs are no less encouraging. Price's horde of guerrillas has just been defeated and driven out of Missouri. Sherman has swooped down like an eagle from the mountains of Tennessee upon the plains of Georgia, and has lately declared that there is nothing to prevent his marching wherever he pleases. Sheridan has three times charged upon the enemy with such staggering shocks as have sent their forces "whirling" and reeling down the Shenandoah Valley. And Grant is continually tightening the serpent coil of his forces around the throat of Richmond, waiting for the right time to strike the final blow. And now that the Government is upheld and the army invigorated by the verdict of the nation sustaining the war, we have every reason to hope for speedy and decisive triumphs. Disasters may still come to discipline our patience and test our fidelity, but the final issue is now certain. Now that we are right on the moral ground—now that our Government is working and our Armies are fighting in the same direction in which the Providence of God is working and fighting, there is no such word as failure to be mentioned. And for all this strange discipline—for all these strange works and acts of God, we have reason to give thanks to-day. Let us thank him for the dark hours of this struggle when our hearts have almost failed us for fear of the things coming upon us; for it is these dark hours, in the poet's words, which have

"Wrung forth the hidden might
Which had lain bedded in the silent soul—
A treasure all undreamt of."

Let us give thanks for our defeats which have wrought out the ends of God's providence even more effectually than our victories. Let us thank God for doing the very thing which we would not have done, in the very way which, least of all others, we would have chosen. Let us thank him for humbling the pride of man, and revealing the mystery of his judgments. Let us thank him that we have this choice evidence of his chastisements, that we are still his chosen people, for it is not merely the individual but the nation "which the Lord loveth, he chasteneth and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." Especially let us give thanks that streaks of the dawn of peace

and prosperity begin to shoot up in the horizon of the future, giving us reason to hope that the night is far spent and the day is at hand !

IV. Once more let us find occasion for gratitude in *the great historical lesson which God is preparing through this struggle for the nation and the world in the generations to come.* Let us remember that it is not the knowledge of books which constitutes the fundamental education of nations, but great events of their history, embodying great ideas—great struggles of their experience, involving great principles. The Exodus of Israel from Egyptian Bondage, and their forty years discipline in the wilderness were great landmarks in their history which never could be forgotten in all the subsequent generations, teaching moral lessons of infinite value to that nation and to the world. The settlement of our country by men who sacrificed all for a principle—the principle of religious freedom, was an event of moral heroism which wove its influence into every fibre of the life of their posterity for two hundred years. The struggle of the Revolutionary War made its deep marks, not only upon the political constitution of the country, but upon the whole character of the people down to the present time. And now has come the crisis when we are making history for the education of the coming generations. It is but a feeble impression which we can gain of the magnitude of the events amid which we are living. It is as when you are ascending a range of lofty mountains. At first so gradual is the ascent that you may be almost unconscious how far you have risen above the plain below. You go on ascending one height after another, each perhaps half hidden and overshadowed by its neighbor, so that you are unable to gain a clear view in any direction. There is only here and there a glimpse through the heights of the scenery beneath—there is here and there an awful shadow of some towering peak above, but nothing in your view is complete and distinct. It is only when you gain the summit, where the whole scene, like a vast amphitheatre bounded by the far encircling horizon, bursts upon your eye, that you are able to feel the vastness, the grandeur, the awfulness of this ocean of mountains rolling its billowy heights away far as your eye can reach. So it is with our nation in the great events of this crisis. These years past we have been ascending the mountains, and have scarcely known it. Now and then some clear-eyed prophet has given us a glimpse of the meaning of the scenes through which we were passing. Now and then the awful shadows of portentous events have flung their impression over us. But really we have scarcely yet begun to understand that we are among the great mountains of

God's Providence in our history. By and by when we gain the summit of these events, and look back over the scene, we shall be amazed at their gigantic and immeasurable significance. And even then we shall not appreciate their full measure of height and grandeur. But our posterity in the generations to come, far out at sea, shall catch sight of the summits of these events, and shall steer their course by them as landmarks in their voyage over dangerous waters!

So then, my hearers, as to-day we fill the cup of thanksgiving with the remembrance of the common and special blessings of God's Providence, let us mingle with its sweetness this element of gratitude to God for strange trials. It will prove a wholesome corrective of moral disease and an invigorating tonic of moral health to our souls. Perhaps you have had personal and domestic sorrows and bereavements, as well as your share in the great national trial. Rejoice then that God has given you the privilege and put upon you the honor of suffering! What but a poltroon or a coward will shrink and tremble when his General promotes him to a post of special difficulty and danger on the high places of the field? What but an animal would be satisfied to leave no other record of life but this: "he was born—he ate and drank—he enjoyed his life—and he died." No! let us be glad of the struggles that wring out our strength. Let us be glad of the trials that discipline our patience. Let us be glad of the perils that develope our heroism. Let us be glad of the sacrifices which are the price of victories. And especially let us be glad as a nation that God has called us by the strange works and acts of his providence to achieve something memorable in the history of the world—something which will live in its benefits long after we are dead. So, then, afloat as we are upon the stormy ocean into which the Hand of God has flung us—in the midst of the floods of great waters, buffeting the waves hither and thither, we lift our heads above the waves to praise the God of the ocean and the storm! We know that it is from the bosom of the blackest tempest that the presence of God gleams forth as with the awful splendor of lightning, and on the face of the blackest cloud the smile of God shines as with the tranquil beauty of the rainbow!



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