

Lincoln

RUSSELL

E

457

.8

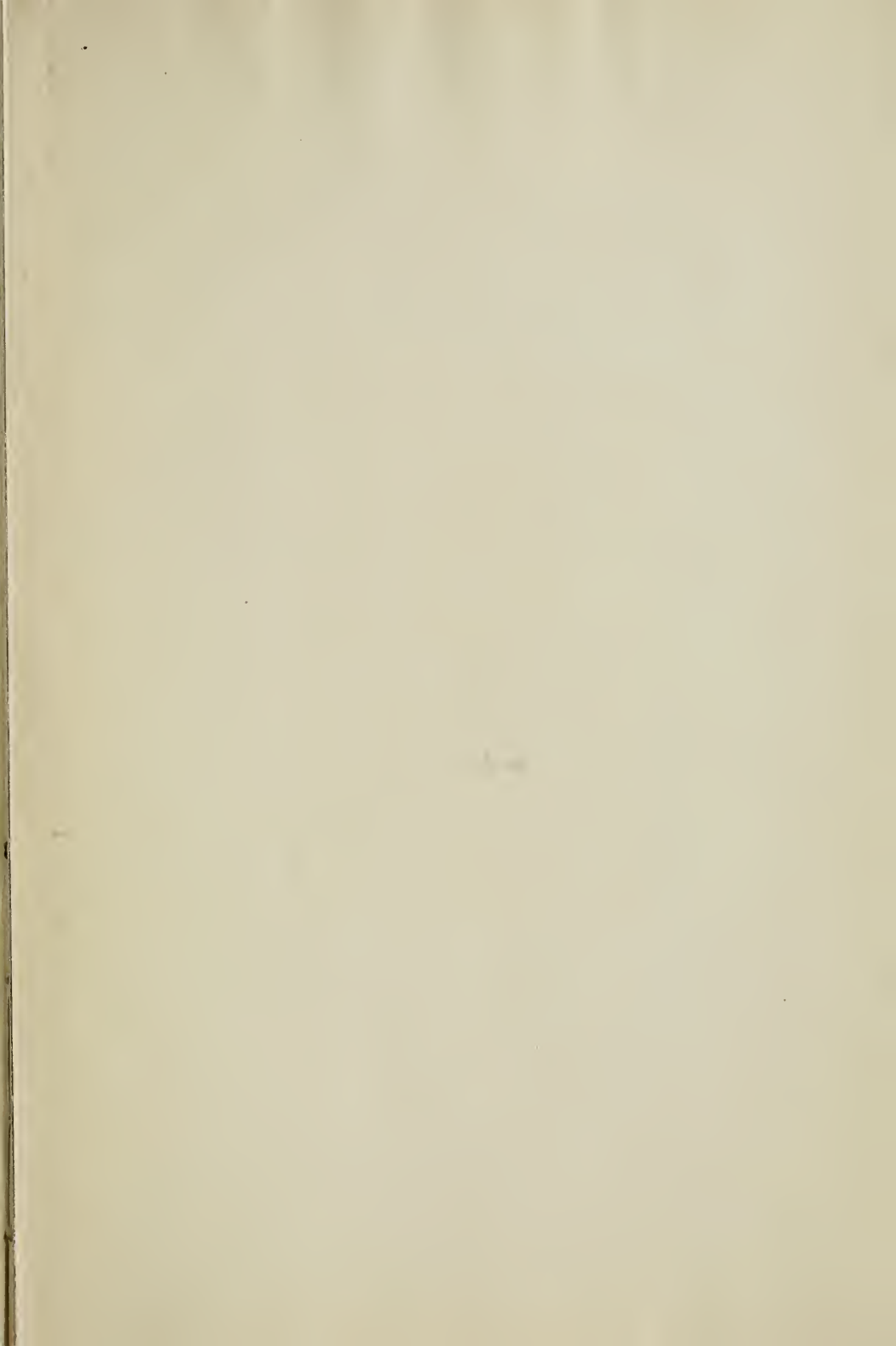
797

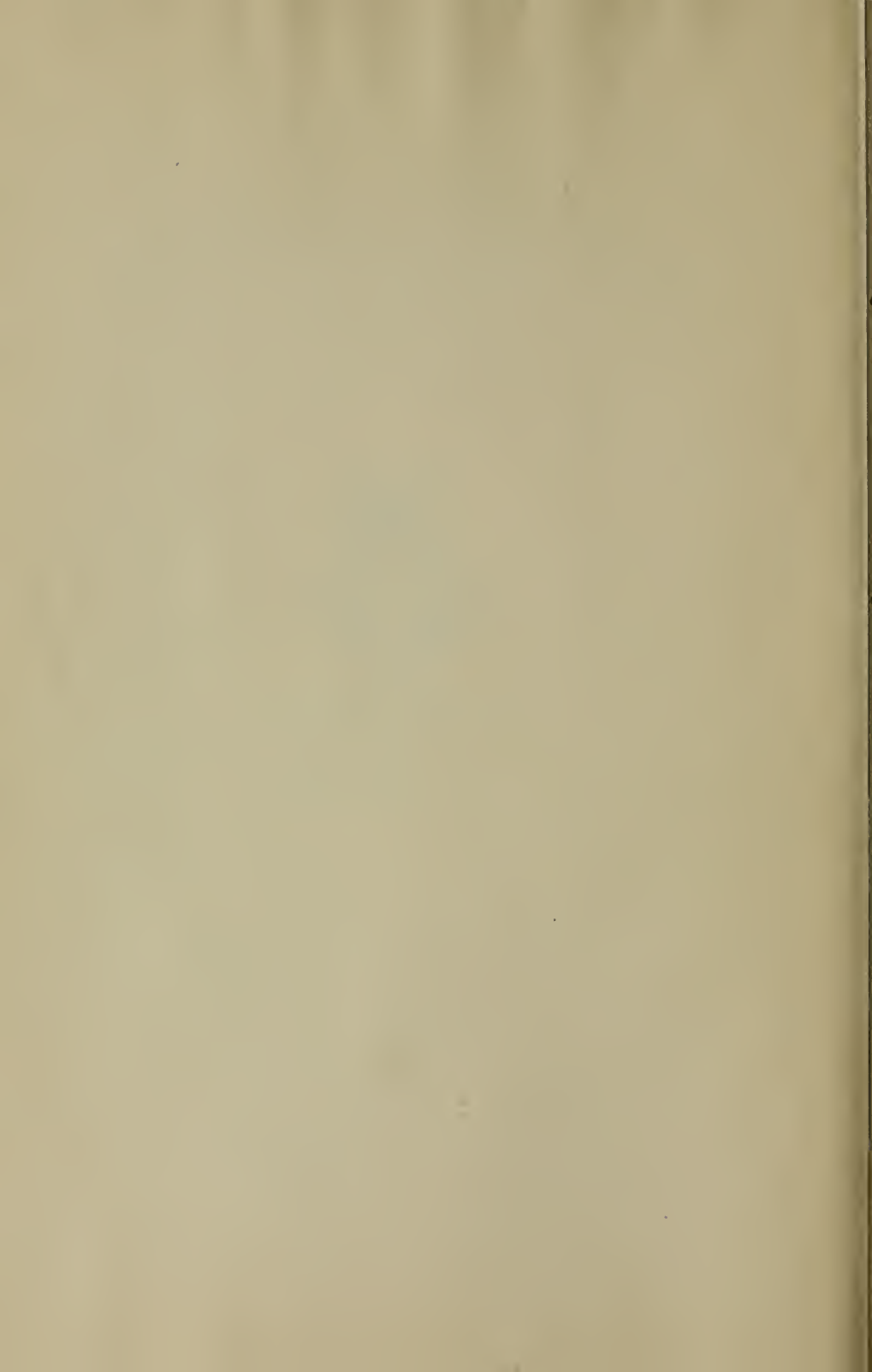




Class E 457
 .8

Book .R 97





OUR GREAT NATIONAL REPROACH

AND

The Counsel of Ahithophel Turned into Foolishness.

TWO SERMONS

PREACHED IN

St. JAMES' CHURCH, ECKLEY, PENNA.,

By Rev. PETER RUSSELL, Rector.

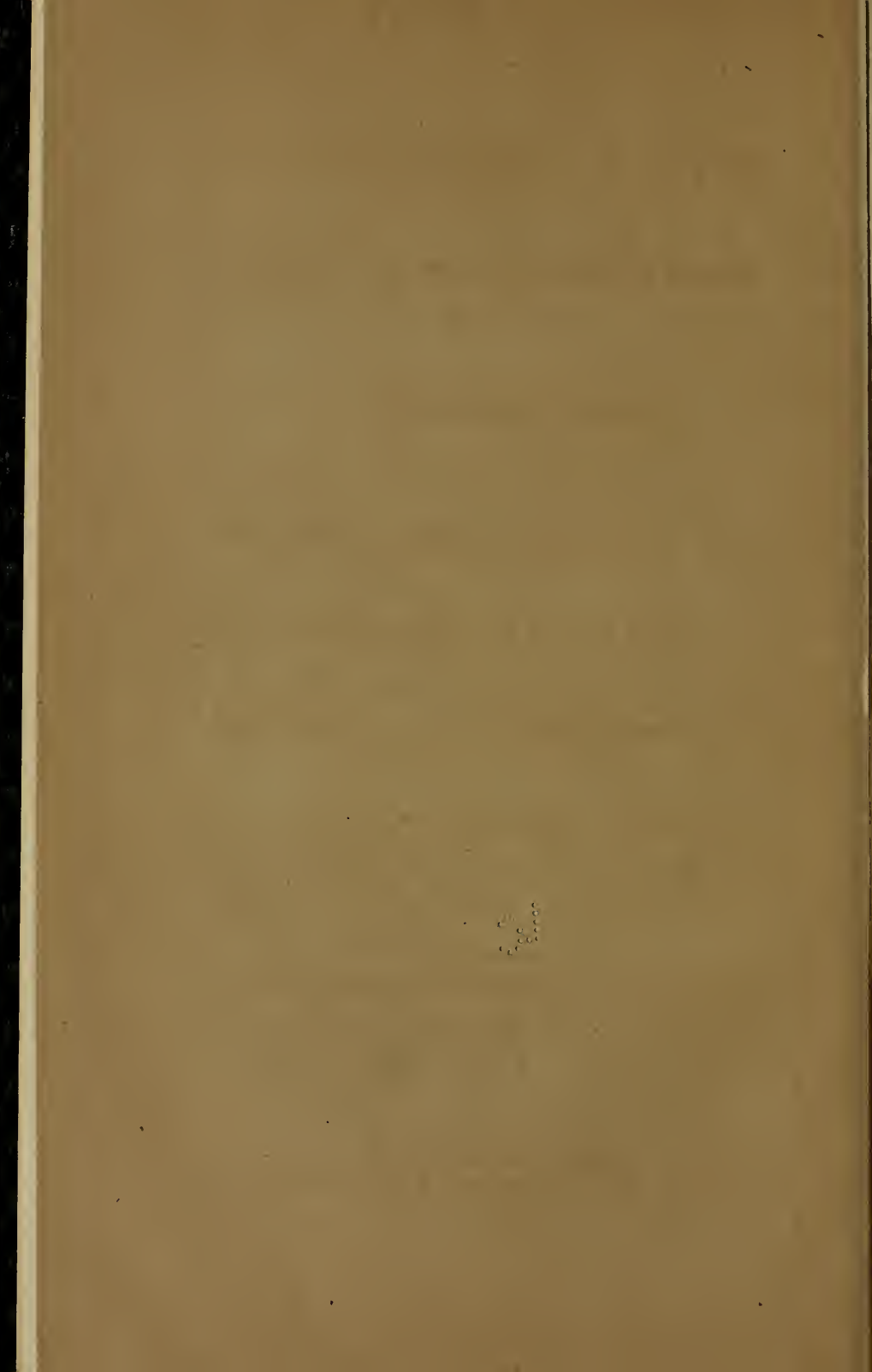
THE FIRST ON THE OCCASION OF THE FUNERAL SOLEMNITIES
OF PRESIDENT LINCOLN.

THE SECOND ON THE LATE FAST DAY, (JUNE 1st.)

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST OF MEMBERS OF THE CONGREGATION.

PHILADELPHIA:
KING & BAIRD, PRINTERS, 607 SANSON STREET.

1865.



OUR GREAT NATIONAL REPROACH

AND

The Counsel of Abithophel Turned into Foolishness.

666
59

TWO SERMONS

PREACHED IN

St. JAMES' CHURCH, ECKLEY, PENNA.,

By Rev. PETER RUSSELL, Rector.

THE FIRST ON THE OCCASION OF THE FUNERAL SOLEMNITIES
OF PRESIDENT LINCOLN.

THE SECOND ON THE LATE FAST DAY, (JUNE 1st.)

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST OF MEMBERS OF THE CONGREGATION.

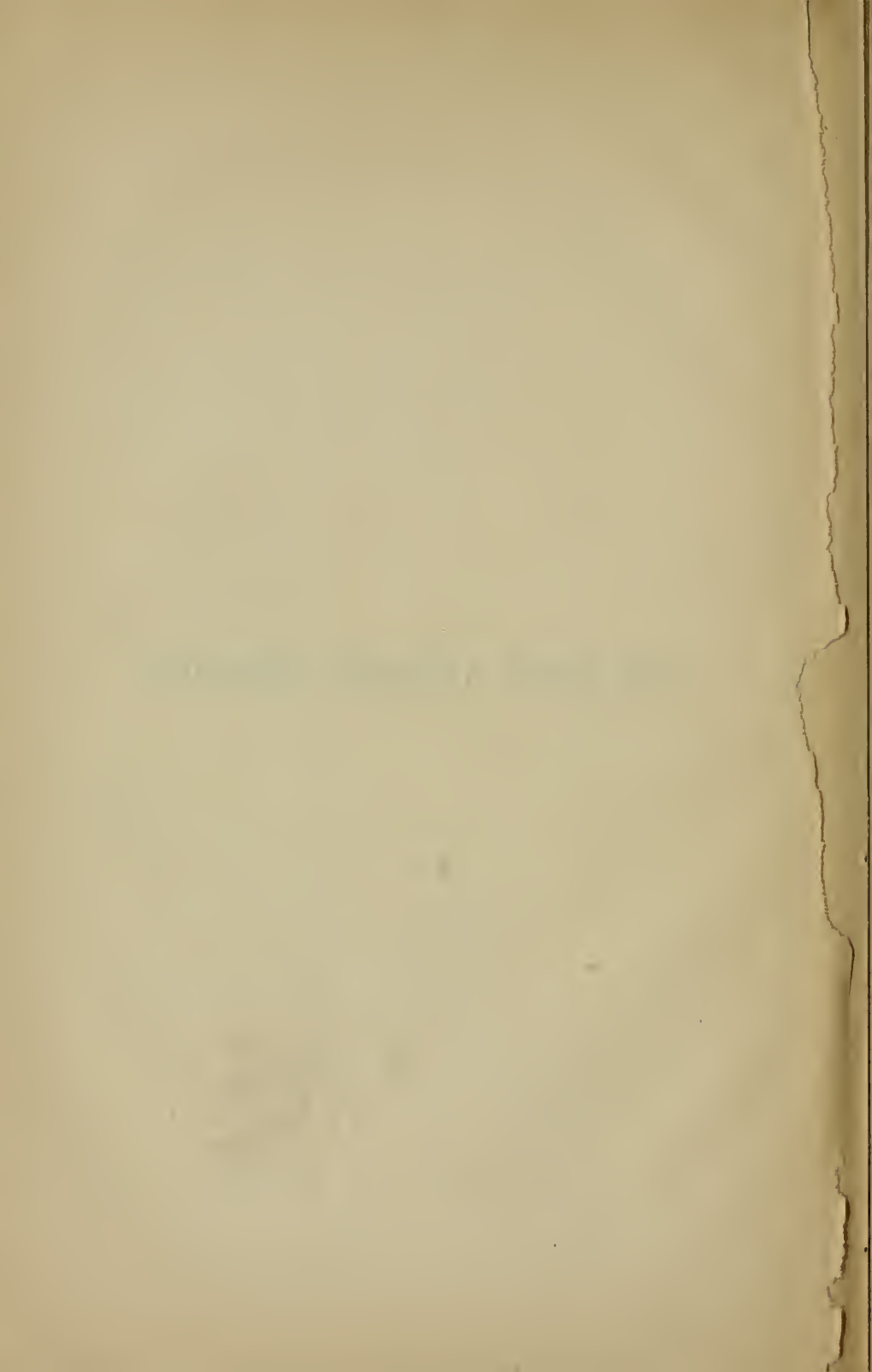
PHILADELPHIA:
KING & BAIRD, PRINTERS, 607 SANSON STREET.
1865.

EAST
8
11/11

5



OUR GREAT NATIONAL REPROACH.



SERMON.

LAMENTATIONS OF JEREMIAH, v. 1.

Remember, O Lord, what is come upon us. Consider and behold our reproach.

THE season of Easter is a season of joy and gladness, the season when we commemorate the triumph of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, over death and the grave. But this Easter season has been one of sorrow and gloom: joy's bright sun seems to have set in night. A heavy woe has befallen us: a calamity, such as no great nation has suffered for two hundred years, has come upon us.

Our Chief Magistrate has fallen. Not in leading our armies against the enemies of the nation; not upon a dying bed, with his strength wasting away by some lingering disease: for then we could have borne it: but he is stricken down by the murderous villany of man. We are reminded of the lamentation of David over one who fell in a similar manner: "Died Abner as a fool dieth. Thy hands were not bound, nor thy feet put in fetters. As a man falleth before wicked men, so fellest thou. And all the people wept again for him." Thus we wept as soon as we heard of it, and we are inclined to weep again as often as we make mention of it.

We were all astounded at the first announcement of this melancholy fact. We were slow to believe that such a crime had really been committed. We read the account over and over again. We desired to see other papers. But all told the same horrible tale. Then we caught at the faint hope which remained, that the wound might not prove fatal. But this lasted only a little while; for as soon as we learned

the nature of the injury, we saw that without a miracle he could not survive. Yea, we were forced to admit that he was already dead, though we had not as yet seen the official announcement.

Has it come to this? we exclaimed. Where are we? In what land? Crimes there had been enough committed already, we had thought. Crimes against humanity, crimes against the civilization of the age in which we live, crimes against Christianity, crimes against heaven and earth—against God and man; but to all this must be added, the assassination of the head of the nation, its worthy and honored Chief Magistrate. It was as if the father of every family and household had been murdered. The mourning in the land is like to that of old, in that country wherein there was not a house in which there was not one dead. True, in this instance, there has not been a beloved member of every household stricken down, but our sorrow and grief are almost as deep as if every household mourned its head or first-born. Such a crime as this was never committed in our country before. Yea, I may say it was a crime which was never committed in the New World.

Whether the parties immediately concerned in it were the agents of an extensive conspiracy, I know not. This will doubtless be disclosed and brought to the light of day in due season. Whether many or few are implicated, it is a pity for them that they did not remember the old threat: "Be sure your sin will find you out." It is a sin which cannot be always concealed. The authors, the aiders and abettors of such deeds are often discovered in the most unlikely and mysterious of ways. It would almost seem that while they are plotting and guarding against discovery, using all possible caution and secrecy, that Divine Providence was overruling and directing the minutest circumstances so as to prepare the way for unraveling the deepest-laid schemes of villany. This has oftentimes been effected by means which, as Dr. South says, were almost as much above nature as the crimes contemplated, or actually

committed, were against nature; and which verifies the declaration of the Psalmist: "Verily, there is a God that judgest in the earth."

In the words of the late Daniel Webster: "Such secrets can be safe nowhere. The whole creation of God has neither nook nor corner where the guilty can bestow it, and say it is safe. Not to speak of that Eye which gleams through all disguises and beholds all things as the splendors of noon, such secrets of guilt are never safe from detection, even by men. A thousand eyes turn at once to explore every man, every circumstance connected with the time and place; a thousand ears catch every whisper; a thousand excited minds dwell intently on the scene, shedding all their light, and ready to kindle the slightest circumstance into a blaze of discovery. Meanwhile, the guilty soul cannot keep its own secret. It is false to itself, or rather it feels an irresistible impulse to be true to itself. It labors under its guilty possession, and knows not what to do with it. The human heart was not made for the residence of such an inhabitant. It finds itself preyed upon by a torment which it dares not acknowledge to God or man. A vulture is preying upon it, and it can ask no sympathy from heaven or earth. The secret which he possesses soon comes to possess him; and, like the evil spirits of which we read, it overcomes him, and leads him whithersoever it will. He feels it beating at his heart, rising to his throat, and demanding disclosure. He thinks the whole universe sees it in his face, beholds it in his eyes, and almost hears it working in his thoughts. It becomes his master. It betrays his discretion. It breaks down his courage. It conquers his prudence. When suspicions from without begin to embarrass him, and the net of circumstances to entangle him, the fatal secret struggles with still greater violence to burst forth. It must be confessed. It will be confessed.

And then, again, there is no land under the sun to which such criminals can flee and take refuge. All good and

true men in all lands will be filled with dismay when they hear of the crime which has been committed in our day and our land. We have, indeed, heard of a person here and there who has had the hardihood to applaud and defend it; but such instances are happily rare. And it is well for the credit of our country, and our age, and our common humanity, that they are rare. For any man who approves of this deed partakes of the guilt of the crime itself, and, in the sight of God, and upon a moral account, he is a murderer and an assassin. I would not desire to live in the same community in which such a man resides. I would not willingly permit such a man to come under my roof. I would not sleep in the same house with him. I would be afraid of him. I would not trust my life in his hands, for he has the heart of a murderer; and I never could tell when, or under what circumstances he might be instigated and pushed on by the Devil to commit actual murder.

The crime is so great, so immense, that until I have the evidence before me, I will never affirm or believe that many persons in any section of our country could have had any knowledge that such a deed was seriously contemplated. I hope it will be generally, if not universally, denounced in the whole South. We know that some have spoken; that twenty-two thousand prisoners at Point Lookout have denounced it. God forbid that any considerable number of our Southern people should assume the guilt of this crime and make it their own, by applauding it, approving of it, and boldly proclaiming that it is just what they desired and counselled. Alas for them if generals and governors, and congressmen, and legislators, and papers, and public meetings should justify it! If this be so, I tremble for what may follow. It is an awful thing to rouse the anger of a great and mighty nation into fury—a nation which has at its command and in its service an army of seven hundred thousand men, perfect in discipline, courage, and skill in warfare, commanded by officers who have their superiors in no country. Also a navy

of six hundred ships, armed with artillery the most destructive ever used on this earth. It is an awful thing, I say, to goad on the anger of such a nation until it becomes ungovernable fury.

The people of the Southern section of our country have made large claims for the superiority of their civilization and Christianity over that of the North. These claims are now on trial before the world. To quote the language of Dr. Dix, "We wait to hear what they will say. They must speak; and the whole world will listen to every word which they utter. The judgment is set and the books are opened. Christian civilization waits attentively to hear them speak. There is but one thing for them to do if they would stand in this audit: to denounce the act—to join in the common cry against the outrage done to God, to man, to Christ, to the age—to disclaim its responsibility—to shrink back from that bloody act, to say, we, too, are men—Christianized men—we abhor as much as you can a deed like this—charge it not on us—think not of us as though we would excuse or defend a crime fit only for a barbarous zone, and from which, with the enlightened world, and as acceptors of the principles of Christianity, we equally with yourselves revolt in disgust and horror. It is with indescribable anxiety many are now waiting for the response of the Southern people to this atrocious murder, which has been committed in their name. We will not think the worst until all hope is gone. We will hope against hope; but if it must be so, then, indeed, will it seem as if hope was at an end; as if all that has been said were just; as if the charges hitherto had not been rash; and, so far as that community is regarded, impartial lips must be silent henceforth." This last and most heinous of their crimes, which is the filling up of the measure of their iniquity, will prove to the world that they have committed, or are capable of committing, all those lesser crimes which have been charged to their account; and what is to follow God only knows.

But so awful a calamity which has befallen us, must have serious and solemn lessons for us, which, if we are wise, we will attend to and learn. Our business is not to rouse the passions of men and to excite their indignation, for we know only too well, that men have been fearfully excited already. Their anger, sorrow, and horror have been almost unbearable, and a word might lash them into uncontrollable rage or phrenzied madness. When we remember what men are, what mighty passions slumber in every one's breast, it is wonderful that more acts of violence have not been heard of. Forbearance so great under such provocation is almost unparalleled. We are amazed at it ourselves, and it must be a marvel to the world, and can only have come from God who controls the wills and affections of unruly men.

To improve this sad national affliction, let us view it in the light of Scripture, and not contemplate it as if God had forsaken the earth and vacated his throne. We must not forget that "The Lord God omnipotent reigneth." Let us look to him for guidance and protection, and if we do so, then the burthen of our prayer will be that of the weeping prophet, lamenting over the woes of Jerusalem: "Remember, O Lord, what is come upon us. Consider and behold our reproach." Oh, who will describe our reproach? We are bowed down with shame and grief. But is there not a cause for such reproach? Ah, yes! only too much, and it becomes us to bow in submission to God's will and say with the Psalmist, "I was dumb and opened not my mouth because Thou didst it." We have lost sight of God. We have idolized the human instrument. We have put our confidence in man, in our rulers, our generals, our armies, rather than in God. And this is a species of dishonor which God has ever resented.

There is no doctrine more frequently and more plainly delivered in the Bible than that all things are overruled and governed by a wise Providence; and that those events, in the accomplishment of which the abilities of men emi-

ment for prudence, and courage, and other endowments which deservedly gain public admiration, are employed, must not yet be regarded as having been brought about without the concurrence of a still superior wisdom and power.

This is a truth which we have largely forgotten. We have lost sight of the fact, that as God is the Bestower of every good and perfect gift, so He is, in an especial manner, of all public and national blessings. It is necessary that we have a firm persuasion of this truth would we rightly value the mercy received. The temporal blessings which God bestows may be invaluable; the dangers and perils we escape may be fearful; but we always regard them as more precious when we look upon God as the Bestower of the good and the Deliverer from the evil. And certainly no thought can be more comfortable, than that God, who is the Preserver of men, careth for us; that the Lord of all things delighteth to do us good; for that which adds the greatest price to any national mercy is, that it bears the signature of Heaven, and is sent as a sure token of the Divine favor.

And as this reflection will afford us a proper sense of the valuableness of the blessings bestowed or the deliverances vouchsafed to us, so also, will it excite in our minds a due respect and veneration for those worthy patriots whom God is pleased to select as the ministers of His Providence in conveying his blessings to the sons of men. The fame of such men may be great and wide spread. They may be of high rank and dignity, of great ability and moral worth and strong in the affections of the people. Yet these honors are of little worth in comparison with the greater glory which redounds to such from their being as it were the special agents of God through whom He dispenses His blessings to a people and nation. Great things are said of Naaman in the holy story, that he was "captain of the hosts of the king of Syria," that he was a "great man with his master an honorable," but the finishing stroke of his

character is this that, "by him the Lord had given deliverance unto Syria."

Chief among such worthy and honored Patriots was our late beloved Chief Magistrate, who, in greatness and goodness, in wisdom and integrity, must ever rank next to Washington.

Another lesson we may learn; and that is repentance. God afflicted our nation, sorely afflicted it, but we repented not. Men, alas, seemed to grow more worldly every day; and that which made it the worse was that they were thus impenitent when God's sore judgments were in the land, and pressing upon us.

I must confess that I have experienced for many months continual sorrow of heart, as I thought of the insensibility of so many of our people. They failed utterly to realize the solemnity of the times in which we live. Never did anything so discourage me in the whole twenty years of my ministry. Extravagance, absorption in business, indulgence in worldly amusements and fashionable follies, might well be described as unparalleled in the history of the country; and when we reflected that all this was taking place in time of civil war, dreadful civil war, in which hundreds of thousands had fallen, and for all we knew as many more might fall, it seemed unnatural, almost inhuman. For had we no sympathy with this untold amount of suffering? As I thought of all of this, I could not exult in the success of our armies as most did. I had fearful forebodings of some coming woe, which would make all feel. In what form the woe might come I knew not, it did not appear likely that it would be in the form of foreign intervention; the time for that had passed. The downfall of the rebellion seemed certain. I thought it might be that financial crisis which it was predicted was near at hand, and which would affect the profits, the business and means of living of every man, and make all feel. But the woe has come in another form different from anything which occurred to my mind; and we have felt it deeply. The national heart has been filled

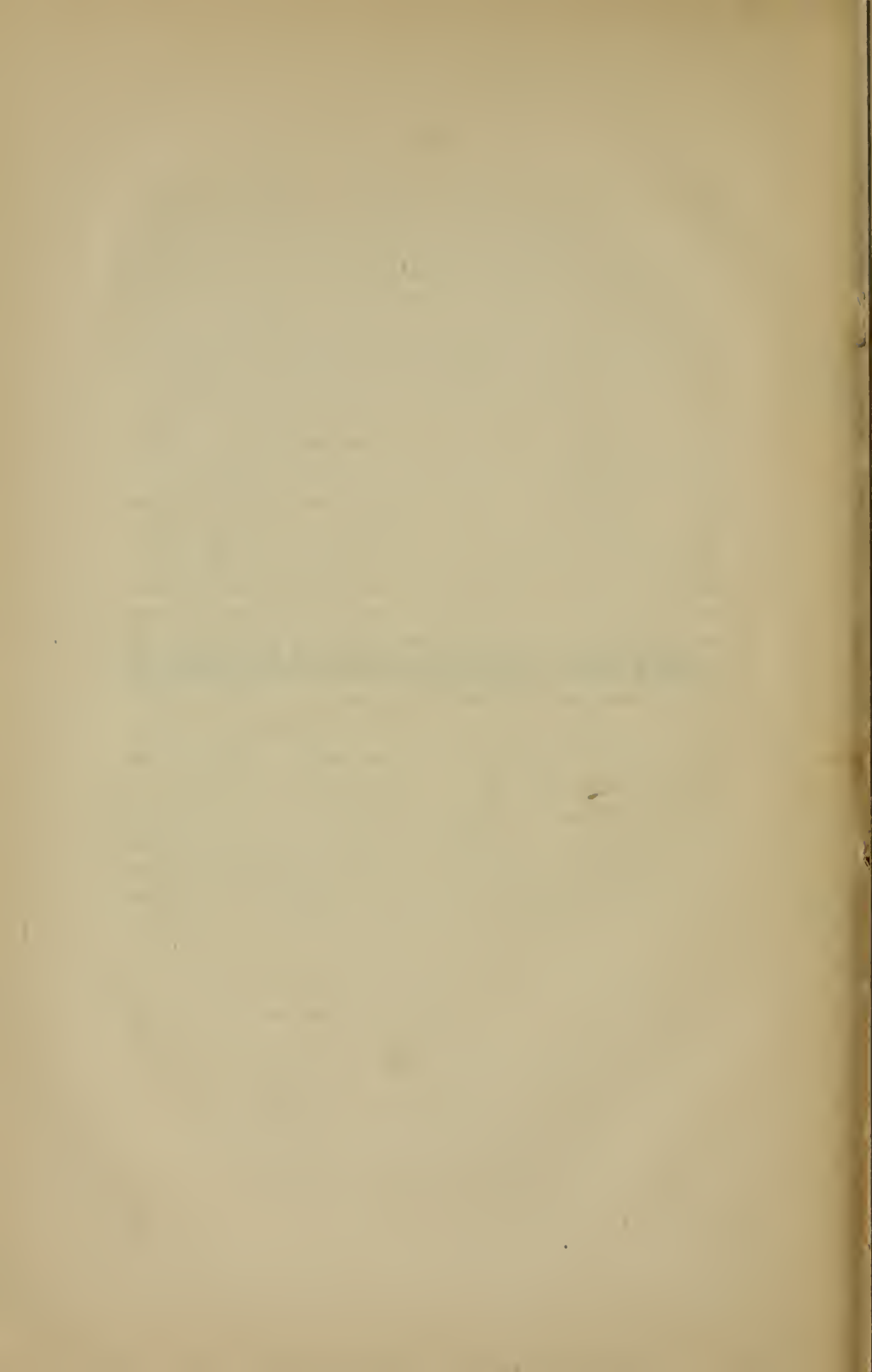
with grief such as it never felt before. Will we repent now? Will we realize the awful truth that God has a controversy with us? Most certainly we have all need to utter the prayer of the text—"Remember, O Lord, what is come upon us. Consider and behold our reproach."

We should also at this time try hard to yield up ourselves to the control of a mild, gentle and forbearing temper; we should strive to have the same mind which our Saviour possessed when he prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." We must not indulge in feelings of personal revenge. A great crime has indeed been committed—a crime which every right-minded man feels almost as much as if his own father had been basely assassinated. The provocation to anger and revenge is fearful, but we must moderate it. Heavy as is the woe which has come upon us, it is one which we richly deserve, and this ought to mitigate our resentment, calm our passions and aid us in keeping them within the bounds of reason. We are to consider that whatever we suffer is appointed of God, that whatever be the wickedness of men, we can suffer nothing from their wickedness except what God for wise reasons sees fit that we should suffer. This being so, it must follow that we are more concerned with God than man. Man may indeed be the rod used in scourging us; it is yet God who strikes, and a due reverence for God and His judgments will make us take the less notice of men, the mere instruments of our shame and reproach. This view of the case will leave us little cause to be angry with men except their own wickedness. We may be angry with their malice, their ill-will, but we must submit to what has come upon us as the will of our God. This ought to moderate our passions as it leaves so little of self in our anger. The more we attribute our reproach to God and the less to man, the more free will our souls be from any feeling of mere personal revenge; and we will remember who has said "Vengeance is mine: I will repay, saith the Lord."

I will present one thought more. On every side are the emblems of sorrow, of woe and mourning in our churches, in our houses, on our persons. It is well that it is so. Thus it should be. It is right and becoming to weep for the dead, especially when the dead is the head of a mighty people, a great and good man who was rapidly drawing to himself the hearts of all classes of our people, and securing the confidence of foreign governments. All this is well, all this is becoming.

But how many of us have great need to weep for ourselves and our children, for both we and they, it may be, are yet in rebellion against our God and Saviour. Yes, "there are many, very many whose hearts beat for their country's cause and welfare who are dead to the patriotism of a better country,—that is an heavenly. Those who boast and it may be, truly and honorably boast, that they love and appreciate our Constitution and free Institutions, may yet have no feeling or understanding for the magnificent polity of heaven. Alas, we worship the shadow of power, and have no adoration for the substance. We pour out a world of feeling—treasures of rich and noble emotion—upon the instruments of authority, the mere subordinates of God, and we have no loyalty for Him who moves the whole machinery, and from whom all power is derived, whether it be in the physical universe of matter and motion, or in the world of Governments, Principalities, Powers and Laws."

The Counsel of Abithophel Turned into Foolishness



The Lord had appointed to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel, to the intent that the Lord might bring evil upon Absalom.

MY hearers are doubtless well acquainted with that period of Jewish history to which the text refers. There was a rebellion in those days against the lawful government, and a daring attempt made to overthrow it, just as there has been in our time a rebellion against the constituted authorities of the land, and gigantic efforts put forth to overturn the government under which we live.

That was a wicked rebellion, most unnatural, because it was a misguided son making war upon a fond and over-indulgent father, whom he had resolved to dethrone. No less monstrous and unnatural is our rebellion; because it is a war waged against the noblest and most forbearing government upon which the sun has ever shone; a government, too, which has freely and lavishly bestowed its honors and its offices upon the leaders; it has nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against it.

That rebellion had on its side and in its interest the wisest and most sagacious of human counsellors, the most profound statesman and shrewdest politician of the time. "For the counsel of Ahithophel, which he counselled in those days, was as if a man had inquired of the oracle of God; so was all the counsel of Ahithophel, both with David and Absalom."

So, also, has the rebellion in our day and in our own land been planned and matured by the wisest and most sagacious counsellors which this, or any other land, has

produced. At the head of it, and arranging it, were men skilled in the politics of their country; men who had exercised a controlling influence over the government, both in its foreign and domestic policy. Long had they been preparing for the "inevitable conflict." Deep, far-reaching and all-comprehensive were their plans. They had ample time and opportunities allowed them to have all things in perfect readiness when the period for the great struggle should come. I imagine, if all were known of this rebellion, of its origin, the means used for bringing it to ripeness, how much was thought of it, how much was done, how much was guarded against, the efforts put forth to gain friends and sympathy abroad, also to foment discord and dissension at home,—I imagine, if all this were known, the world would by common consent pronounce it the "Master-piece of Human Wisdom."

In Absalom's rebellion, special arts were used to detach the masses of the people from his father David. The arch rebel "rose early and stood beside the way of the gate," to show his concern for the public good and tender his assistance to those who came to the King for justice. Of each he made conciliatory inquiries, assured them their cause was good, lamented there was no one to administer impartial justice, and concluded with convenient modesty by saying that "if he were Judge in Israel, every man who had a suit or cause might come unto him and be sure of receiving justice." Thus, by flattering speeches and profuse promises, "did Absalom steal the hearts of the men of Israel." And how similar to these arts were those which the rebel leaders used in order to "fire the Southern heart!" How large were the promises which they made of a mighty Southern Confederacy to embrace all Mexico and the West Indies! And what false charges, too, were made against the government, and the people of the North! But in all this, there was nothing "new under the sun;" they were but imitating the example and using the tools of that

demagogue who, in the olden time, attempted to dethrone his own father.

In the rebellion of Absalom, the heart of David sank within him when he learned that his old friend, his old trusted counsellor, had turned against him. And in the Slave-mongers' rebellion, what grave fears were aroused in our minds when, at the commencement, we heard now of one, and then of another of our former statesmen—officers of our army, and of our navy, many of whom the nation had trusted, honored and even educated, but now as very ingrates turned against it. We asked in deep solicitude, Where will this defection end? Who will maintain their integrity amid so many that are faithless? Sad were our misgivings as we thought of the influence and wisdom of the statesmen, and the warlike skill and science which would be arrayed against us in the mighty contest which seemed to be so near at hand.

Our feelings and fears were much the same as David's, upon hearing that his old familiar friend, whom he had trusted, and with whom he had so often taken counsel about the affairs of the nation, had abandoned him and gone over to the side of his unnatural son. And as our circumstances, feelings and fears bear so strong a resemblance to his, so was the burden of our prayers to Almighty God, in substance the same, which he offered in that extremity. His prayer was, that the counsel which Ahithophel gave Absalom might be turned unto foolishness; and that prayer was heard, for "The Lord had appointed to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel, to the intent that the Lord might bring evil upon Absalom." The counsel of this able statesman is not called good because of its being in accordance with what was just and right, but because it was well adapted to gain the end desired; and if it had been followed, the rebellion must have been successful. But God, who governs the unruly wills and affections of sinful men, inclined Absalom to follow other counsel, which led to his downfall and ruin.

Our own war has now ended; the government has maintained its power; the last rebel army has surrendered. As we look back upon the four eventful years just closed, we see clearly that had all things turned out as the leaders expected, success would either by this time have crowned their efforts to establish a slave empire, or else the war would still be raging, and might continue to rage for years. Let us then notice some of the things upon which they relied for success in this contest.

And first, they calculated largely upon foreign intervention. Perhaps, when the secret history of the rebellion shall be known, it will then be seen that the governments of several of the leading nations of Europe had an understanding upon this matter. They desired to see the nation divided, and they held out the hope that at the proper time the independence of the rebellious States should be acknowledged. We do know that at the commencement of the rebellion the leaders calculated largely upon receiving the aid of this coveted intervention. They had convinced themselves that this would become absolutely necessary in order to obtain a supply of cotton. They boasted that Cotton was a King to whose dominion all must yield.

But mark how their counsels were turned to foolishness. They did not obtain the aid of the desired intervention. And why? Certainly not from any unwillingness on the part of some of the leading governments of Europe. They showed they had the inclination to meddle in our affairs by their undue haste in conceding the rights of belligerents to the rebels.

There were several things which prevented this. First, It was an unpopular thing to admit into the family of nations a confederacy of Slave mongers. However willing many of the ruling classes might have been to have done a thing so monstrous—a thing most abominable in the eyes of the great masses of the common people—it was not deemed safe to inflict such an outrage upon their feelings and principles.

It so happened that just when the rebellion commenced, there was an oversupply of cotton and goods manufactured from that staple in England; sufficient indeed to supply the markets of the world for several years. There was, consequently, no very urgent reason for immediate interference. A total suspension of the cotton trade was just what was most desirable, and if we may rely upon statements in the papers, those who were engaged in the trade and manufacture of cotton realized profits to the enormous amount of five hundred millions of dollars.

The crops were very light in England and France for the first two years of the war, and bread enough to sustain and feed the teeming millions of those countries could only be obtained from this. These were little unforeseen things which had much to do in turning into foolishness the counsels of the rebel Ahithophels; and thus two years of precious time were gained; and in the meantime our armies were organized and brought under good discipline. The Monitor, too, had appeared on the scene of action; the New Ironsides had been completed; some hundreds of ships of war were in commission, and what might have been done at an earlier period with comparative safety, would have been very perilous now. And besides this, the certainty that every sea and ocean would swarm with privateers, had a wholesome effect in causing the peace to be kept.

Second, They counted largely upon a divided North and a united South. A sad delusion! They learned their error when they heard of the mighty uprising of the Northern people upon the firing on Fort Sumter. That was a most sublime spectacle. There was then a meaning and emphasis in old phrases which had been often before used, and that without much sense or reason, such as "the people rising in the majesty of their strength," that "the country was redeemed—disenthralled." This was seen to be true now. Corrupt politicians were silent and dared not open their mouths. They sank beneath the flood of popular indigna-

tion, which overwhelmed all in its course. We trusted that they had gone under to rise no more. But after the violence of the flood began to abate, they were seen to reappear upon the surface, and tried again to distract the country, and in this course they persisted until the fall of 1864, when all hope of aid from that quarter vanished finally and forever; in the meanwhile the South was becoming more and more hopelessly divided—united it never had been.

Third. They rushed into rebellion, taking it for granted that the North had neither the inclination nor the skill to engage in war—that they were of a sordid spirit; that they would sacrifice everything—honor, manhood, religion and the Government, as soon as their business, their profits and their trade were endangered. They have had ample time to learn into what a dreadful error they were permitted to fall. Never did nation meet the demands made upon it more cheerfully, whether in men or money; and the close of the war has left the Government in possession of an army of six or seven hundred thousand men of unsurpassed valor and discipline. The contest, instead of exhausting the resources of the country, has only fully developed them, and showed to ourselves and the world the real power of the country.

Fourth. They further expected to have allies in pestilence and in stormy winds and tempest, but in this they have been disappointed; as our Southern country has been visited with no plague except the plague of war, these four years; and that has fallen upon it in the most fearfully destructive manner. Nor have storms come to their rescue in destroying our navy.

Fifth. They boasted, too, that slavery was an element of strength. But this also has been turned against them. Many thousands of slaves left their masters, and to their dismay they soon saw them returning with arms in their hands, well disciplined and brave soldiers.

Sixth. And if all else failed it appears that the honored

head of the nation was to be murdered, together with all who, according to law, could succeed to his office. The President, unhappily, was killed, but the nation still lives, and is as strong, if not stronger, than ever, standing in the very first rank of the great powers of the earth. The office rendered vacant was instantly filled by a brave and determined man, who bids fair to be no unworthy successor of Abraham Lincoln.

Thus, in every way have the counsels of the rebellion been turned into foolishness, and our prayers have been answered; and, no doubt, it was the purpose of God to defeat the counsels of the Ahithophels of the rebellion to the intent that the Lord might bring evil upon the inhuman system of American slavery, and all the abominations to which it has given rise. And evil has been brought upon it.

An attempt was made to erect a new nation, the cornerstone of which should be human slavery. The attempt has signally failed, and the system of slavery itself is swept away; the leaders are either fugitives and vagabonds on the face of the earth, or are under arrest. Those proud, ambitious, and arrogant men have been brought low. They have, in one respect, changed places with their own slaves, who, when escaping from their cruel bondage, were hunted down even with bloodhounds, and for them there was no safety either in Slave or Free State—not until they reached some friendly foreign soil were they secure. And now, there is no refuge for those who demanded and called for the enforcement of a fugitive-slave law. They, too, are trying to hide and conceal themselves from the just vengeance of the Government, against which they have rebelled. Now, if never before, are they in a condition to sympathize with the poor black man as he fled from a hard task master; as he tried to escape from the lash of the remorseless slave driver. As we contemplate the reversed position of the parties, we ask, "What hath God wrought?" "This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes." He is blind who does not see the hand of God in all this.

It was a singular coincidence that Charleston and Richmond, the cities which were guilty above all other cities within the lines of the rebellion, were first occupied by negro troops; these soldiers of African descent entered those proud but fallen cities as conquerors. This was a result never dreamed of, never discussed in the early counsels of the rebellion. If anything could have been more humbling than this, it was the fact that this gigantic and wicked rebellion should have been put down under the administration of Abraham Lincoln, and that the work of reconstruction should devolve upon Andrew Johnson; men who rose from the ranks of the people; who belonged to the class upon whom the aristocratic leaders of the rebellion looked with contempt. How have all the counsels of their Ahithophels been turned into foolishness? This is just what might have been expected, when we consider the wickedness of the rebellion and the enormous crimes which it has committed. Its first heinous crime was, that it was an attempt to break up a great and good government; to erect upon its ruins a slave empire. Slavery was to be perpetual, to run on, widening and extending, generation after generation, until it should fill the entire land. Who will measure the magnitude of this crime? Perhaps the best description of it is that it is "the sum of all villainies."

And now, we ask, what crime has not the rebellion committed, or attempted to commit? or rather, we ask, is there any crime which it is possible for men to commit, which it would not have perpetrated rather than fail in its object? It would sooner have embroiled the whole civilized world in war and bloodshed than not to have succeeded. This amount of evil it did not actually commit, but it made most persistent attempts, and failed, not for the want of will, but because it lacked the power to do all the mischief which it would.

It attempted to bring about a state of anarchy in all the loyal States; to set county against county, city against

city, and class against class. It attempted to burn our Northern cities; to make raids across our Canadian border; to commit piracy on the lakes and on the ocean. Yes, with diabolical malevolence, it even made the attempt to introduce plague and pestilence into the densely-crowded population of our Northern cities. The fact has been disclosed, that garments infected with yellow fever were sent into our cities for this wicked purpose. Such counsels as these must have been suggested by Satan himself. These are some of the things they attempted, but in which they met with but partial success. But what were the things in which they succeeded? They succeeded in teaching men that they might perjure themselves, and yet be honorable men, good men, Christian men. They confiscated hundreds of millions of dollars which they owed to Northern men, besides robbing the Government of many millions more.

They succeeded in bringing on a war,—a war by sea and land,—a war which has desolated some of the fairest portions of our country,—a war which has carried mourning into every town and village in the land,—a war in which hundreds of thousands of lives have been sacrificed, and thousands of millions of treasure expended. Another of their crimes was to massacre our prisoners,—a deed of cruelty which in our day was considered as belonging to men in a savage and barbarous state; and to this must be added the inhuman treatment of our prisoners of war with even more savage cruelty, slowly murdering them by depriving them of necessary food, and exposure to rain and storm, heat and cold. This is a crime which it is hard to forgive, and what aggravates it beyond measure, is the fact that Southern Christianity approved of and sanctioned this barbarism,—sanctioned it certainly by its silence. For as yet there is no evidence that any body of Christians, in its ecclesiastical capacity, condemned or protested against it. In fact, there is as yet no evidence that a single Christian

minister of any body of Christian people raised his voice against it.

This I am afraid will be a great obstacle in the way of the restoration of Christian communion with our Southern people. I know not what they will be able to say in their defence. It looks now as if their very Christianity had been barbarized, and as if the spirit of the inquisition had reappeared in a new form in the hearts of those calling themselves Christians, who live in the midst of and are surrounded by the baleful influences of slavery. We all feel glad that our Government did not yield to the pressure that was brought to bear upon it to retaliate this great wrong. All of us felt at times that this ought to be done; but when we reflected that our Government was great and powerful, and that cruelty was an evidence of weakness; when we remembered that we were a Christian nation, whose lot was cast in the last half of the nineteenth century, we generally arrived at the conclusion of an eminent physician. This physician felt a deep interest in our returned prisoners. When he beheld their horrible condition, his first impulse was that the Government must retaliate; but he yielded to better feelings. He thought if the worst of the rebel leaders were placed in his power to punish them as they deserved, he could not have found it in his heart to have treated them in that barbarous manner, much less the common soldiers. He remembered the words, "Vengeance is mine: I will repay, saith the Lord." As he looked upon the living skeletons of our poor prisoners, he saw evidence of the downfall of the rebellion. The full conviction took fast hold of his mind, that Divine vengeance must overthrow and destroy a power which could be guilty of such inhumanity. There were other crimes the rebellion was guilty of which I pass over, and hasten to the last and greatest. The measure of its iniquity was filled up when it murdered the President on Good Friday evening. It did on that occasion attempt to do more, but only succeeded in assassinating our President. Alas! that

one so great and good should have so fallen ; but perhaps this was necessary to disclose to the world the true spirit of the rebellion. Abraham Lincoln had been marked as a victim from the first ; but in the good providence of God, the hands of his murderers were holden until his work was done--the rebellion crushed.

He had his work assigned him by God, and was the fitting human instrument for the work that was to be done ; just as much so as Washington was the man for his times. Of that day, we say, the times needed a Washington, and a Washington was suited for the times. So the peculiar emergency created by the slave-holder's rebellion required just such an one as Abraham Lincoln, and God provided the man needed. He was fitted for the crisis by the locality of his birth, which was in a Border Slave State. He had, in his early years, a good opportunity of seeing how heavily the system of slavery pressed upon that class of whites to which he belonged : the non-slaveholding part of the people. He was fitted for his position by his early training. He had to struggle with difficulties and hardships. He was a self-made man, possessed of a vigorous body and a sound understanding. He was fitted for his position by his honesty, his truthfulness, by the sincerity of his character. He was also a good man, a conscientious man, one who feared God. His last inaugural address was a model of its kind, and differed widely from those of former years. It was, indeed, said it was not statesman-like. Perhaps not, if judged of by other similar addresses which hardly come up in their moral tone to that degree of morality which Heathen Rome had attained. We are sure, however, that it was just such a document as we might expect to come from a God-fearing and Christian man.

Abraham Lincoln was a man of the people. He understood and spoke the language of the people, and knew how to put a great thought or argument in a few plain and simple words. Many of his sayings are like proverbs, and proverbs, we know, are the practical wisdom of men con-

densed in a few brief sentences. Never was a man called to a high office in more perilous times. But he accepted the trust which Providence had imposed upon him, and how well he fulfilled it the history of the last four years show, and will show to all time.

We only knew how much we loved and honored him when he was basely assassinated. We thought it could not be. We mourned and wept as never did nation for its ruler.

There are two journeys of Abraham Lincoln which will be memorable in the history of the country. The first was when he left his own quiet home in the west, asking the prayers of his neighbors as he started for the seat of government to assume the office which his country had conferred upon him. We followed him as he proceeded on his way in the accounts which appeared in the papers. We read the brief, but significant speeches which he delivered in towns and cities through which he passed. We were charmed with their plainness. We desired to know more of the man's mind whom the people delighted to honor. We were startled when we heard that he had been compelled to hasten in disguise, to escape those wicked men who were prepared to cut him off, even before he could take the oath of office, or reach the seat of government.

In Washington he spent four eventful years, and who can tell all he endured, all he suffered—the amount of care and anxiety which pressed upon him with almost crushing weight in those weary years! How patient he was! how forbearing! how forgiving! but withal firm and immovable as a rock in his efforts to maintain the honor and integrity of the Government. As his term of office drew to a close, he was re-elected in order to carry on to completion the great work which had prospered so well in his hands.

He enters upon his new term of office and fills it for little more than a month, during which time the rebellion re-

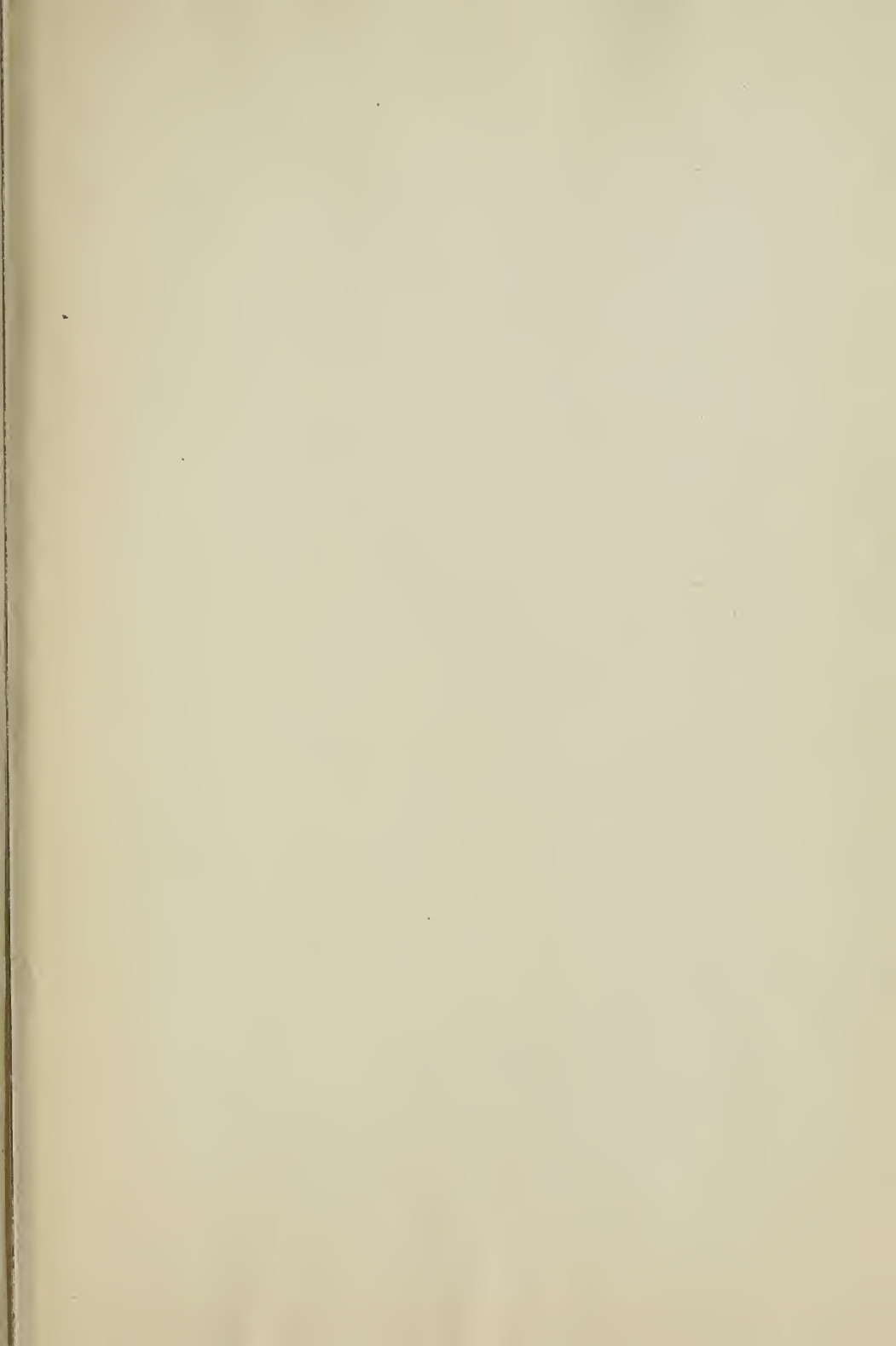
ceived its death-blow. He is permitted to enter the capital of the Rebel Empire, which had fallen to rise no more. He is again in Washington, where, with his heart full of kindness and good-will to those in arms against the Government, he is stricken down, and a nation mourns his death.

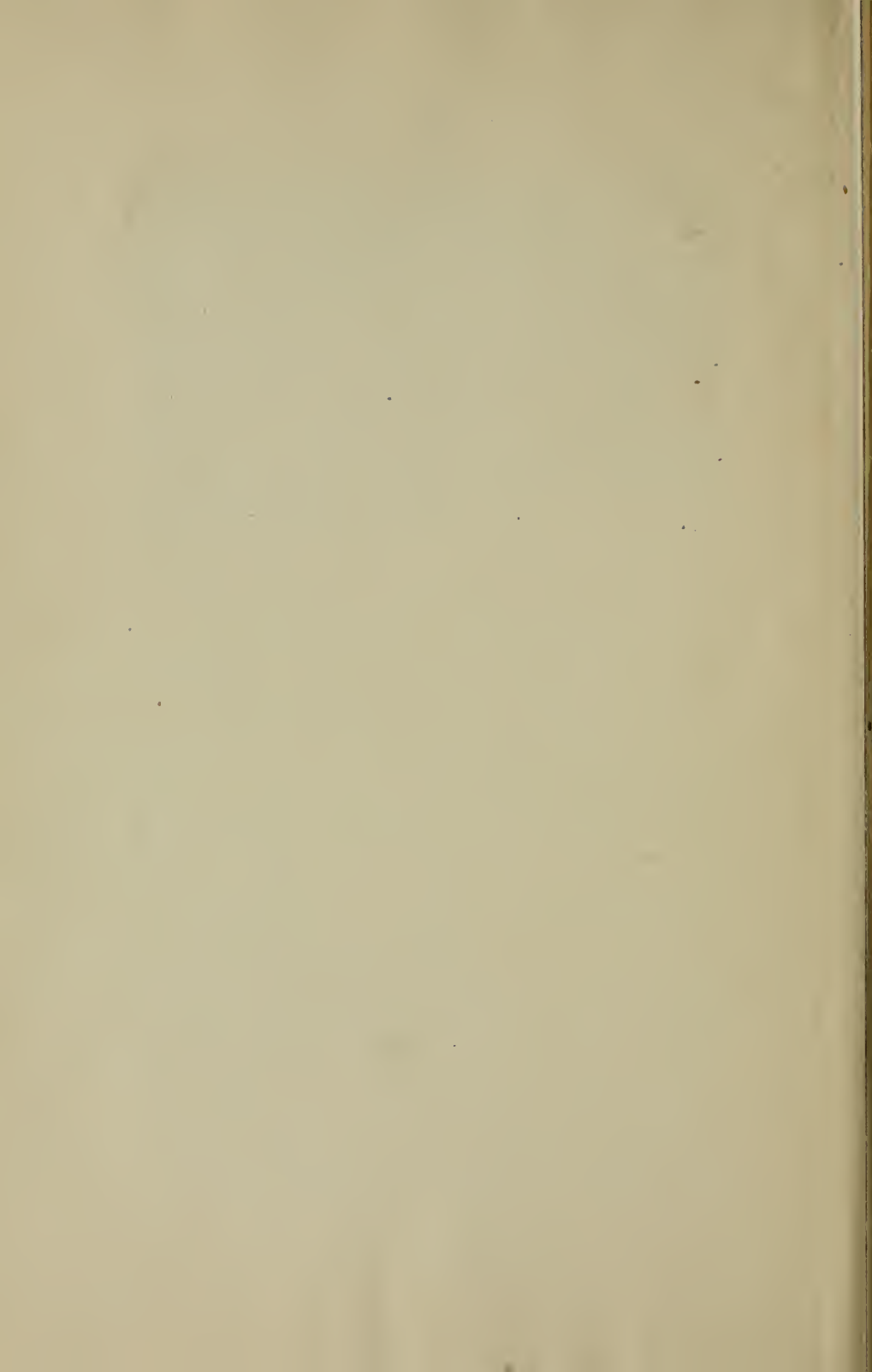
And now, his unconscious body is borne in its journey back again to the place from whence he had come. Never did so many honest and sincere mourners attend a funeral before. Never was there such a funeral procession, which extended through States and was protracted for many days passing through our largest cities.

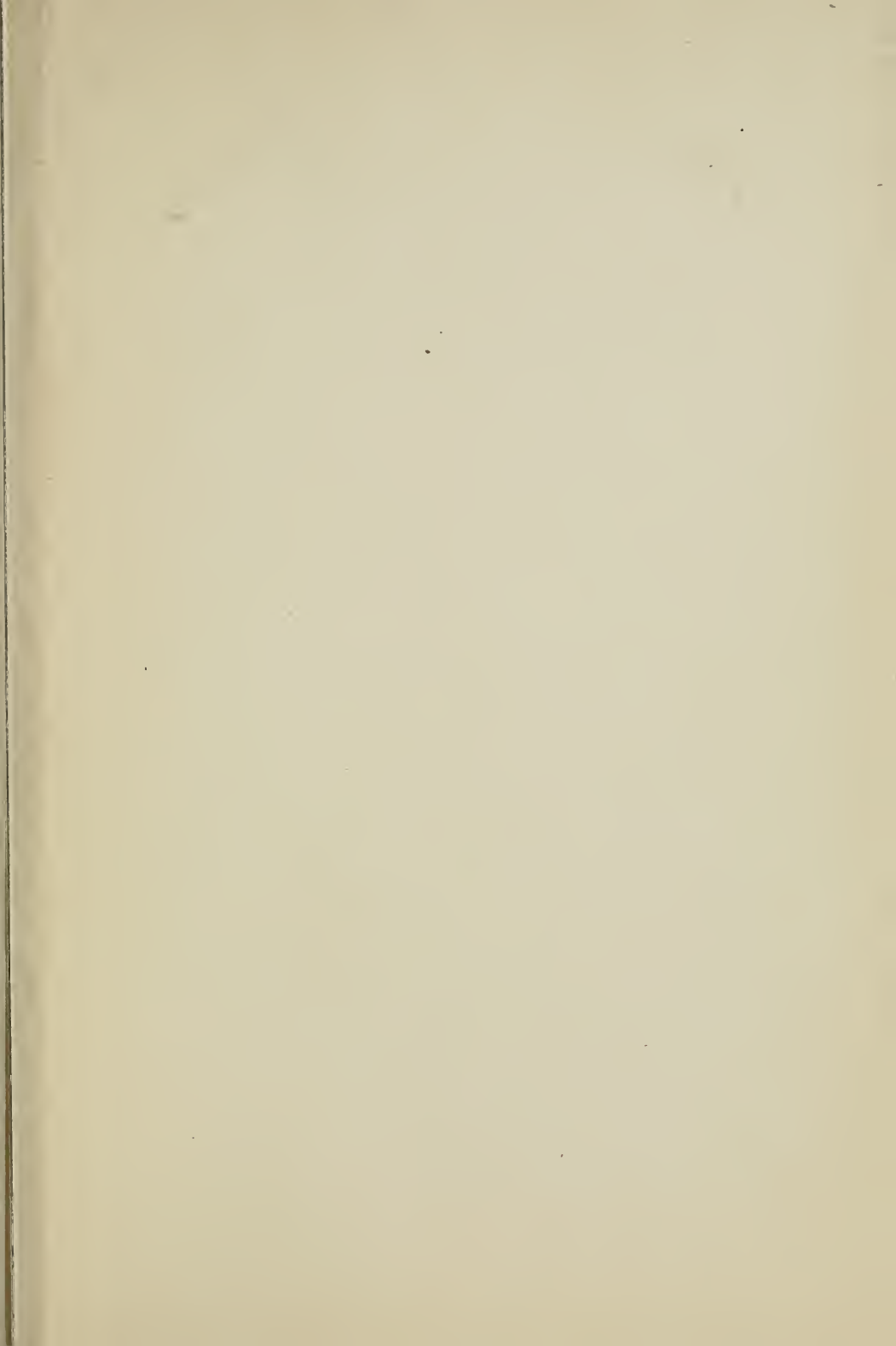
The people in millions crowded to get a last sad view of him now silent in death, and then wept again. And now the funeral is over; his mortal remains repose amidst his old friends and neighbors, out in the great West. He seemed to come to an untimely end, but, perhaps, he fell at the most fitting time for his own fame. Evermore, hereafter, as we tell our children of our Washington, the father of his country, we shall speak to them of Abraham Lincoln, the saviour of his country; and never will men cease to denounce his murder as a crime the most enormous ever committed in this or any other age; a crime which has not only filled our hearts with grief and sorrow, but has sent a thrill of horror throughout the whole civilized world.

And now our long and bloody war has ended. Soon our victorious armies will be disbanded and return to their homes in triumph. It is cause of devout thankfulness that our cause has succeeded, that the counsels of the rebel Ahithophels have been turned into foolishness at home and abroad. We have succeeded, too, with the ruling classes throughout the world against us. And we know and feel that the country is, and must be, "one and inseparable." But great duties now press upon us. Let us rise up and discharge them, in reliance upon the grace and aid of our God. Christian men must now labor and toil for the temporal and eternal welfare of our beloved country as they

never have done before. They must put forth mighty and unceasing efforts to counteract the great flood of evil which, in manifold forms, has flowed and is flowing in upon the land, the sad consequences of the fearful war just ended. Crippled and maimed soldiers in countless thousands have been thrown upon us. And who will count the number of widows and orphans? And then, too, there are the millions of freed blacks. And Southern society is largely disorganized. Here is a great work for Christians: a work which in magnitude almost equals that which was thrown upon the Church at the downfall of the Roman Empire. Most weighty and interesting are our duties. Will we be found faithful to our country and to our God?







LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 012 605 279 0

