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W. H. H. H. H.

THANKSGIVING FOR PEACE;

A SERMON,

PREACHED IN THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, AT
PITTSFIELD, MASS., ON THE OCCASION OF THE

NATIONAL AND STATE THANKSGIVING;

DECEMBER 7, 1865.

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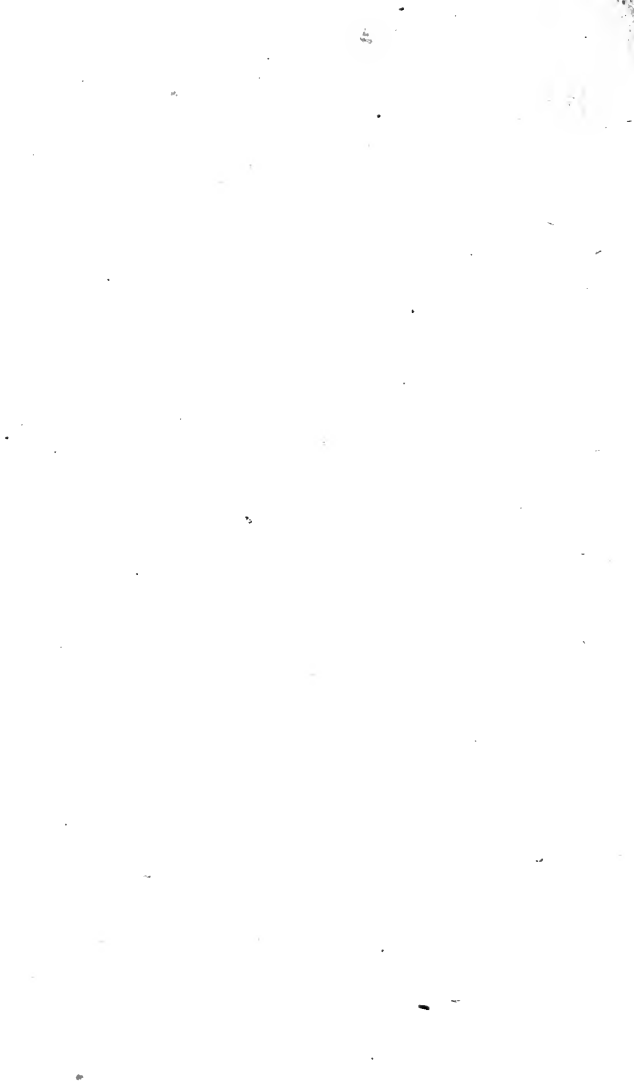
BY

WILLIAM C. RICHARDS,

PASTOR OF THE BAPTIST CHURCH, PITTSFIELD.

“Victoria concordia crescit.”

NEW YORK :
SHELDON & COMPANY,
498 BROADWAY.
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CORRESPONDENCE.

PITTSFIELD, Dec. 10, 1865.

Rev. Prof. RICHARDS,

Very dear Sir : — We, the undersigned, who heard your “National Thanksgiving Sermon,” on the 7th instant, were so impressed with its liberal and conservative spirit, as to earnestly desire that it may be given to the people in some permanent form.

We therefore respectfully request a copy for publication.

THOMAS COLT,
GEO. P. BRIGGS,
W. R. PLUNKETT,
W. B. RICE,
J. L. PECK,
E. B. WILSON,

H. M. PEIRSON,
M. H. WOOD,
J. D. FRANCIS,
C. V. SPEAR,
E. S. FRANCIS,
L. G. BURNELL,

PITTSFIELD, Dec. 15, 1865.

GENTLEMEN :

It cannot be otherwise than gratifying to me to know that my views and utterances in my Thanksgiving Sermon, commend themselves to your cordial approbation. With the hope that their extension beyond the immediate audience to which they were spoken, will contribute a little to the great work of making the Peace which God has given us, an equal blessing to the North and the South, I cheerfully comply with your request, and remain,

Very truly yours,

WM. C. RICHARDS.

Messrs. THOS. COLT, GEO. P. BRIGGS, and others.

BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

A PROCLAMATION.

Whereas, It has pleased Almighty God, during the year which is now coming to an end, to relieve our beloved country from the fearful scourge of civil war, and permit us to secure the blessings of peace, unity and harmony, with a great enlargement of civil liberty ;

And whereas, Our Heavenly Father has also, during the year, graciously averted from us the calamities of foreign war, pestilence and famine, while our granaries are all full of the fruits of an abundant season ;

And whereas, a righteousness exalteth a Nation, while sin is a reproach to any people :

Now, therefore, I, ANDREW JOHNSON, President of the United States, do hereby recommend to the people thereof that they do set apart and observe the first Thursday of December as a day of Thanksgiving to the Creator of the Universe, for their deliverance and blessings.

And I do further recommend that, on that occasion, the whole people make confession of our National sins against his Infinite goodness, and with one heart and one mind implore the Divine guidance in the ways of National virtue and holiness.

In testimony whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the United States to be affixed.

Done at the City of Washington, this twentieth day of October,
in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred
[L. S.] and sixty-five, and of the Independence of the United States the ninetieth.

(Signed,)

ANDREW JOHNSON.

THANKSGIVING FOR PEACE.

“O COME, let us sing unto the Lord ; let us make a joyful noise to the Rock of our Salvation.

“Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto Him with psalms.”

PSALMS xciv. 1, 2.

THE sacred challenge of the inspired Psalmist comes to us to-day in a double echo. We are assembled in this sanctuary in obedience to two proclamations ; one from the Governor of our Commonwealth, and another from the Chief Magistrate of the Republic ; both of which call us, as the summons of the Royal Poet called his people of old, to the service and sacrifice of Thanksgiving unto God.

Our State Thanksgiving which has hitherto concentrated, in its almost immemorial fes-

tival, the quickest and profoundest emotions of our hearts—and which has exalted itself from a custom into almost the sanctity of a sacred ordinance—is, to-day, blended with a National service, of such peculiar dignity, and of such irresistible force of fitness, that, in effect, the former is merged and absorbed into the latter. We keep indeed both festivals at once, and while fealty to the Commonwealth, and fidelity to the principles bequeathed to us by our fathers, forbid us to omit the State ordinance, we yet joyfully consent to overlay its gifts upon the altar with the broader and more special offerings of gratitude and praise, due from us as an integral part of the great Nation coming up, to-day, with Thanksgiving to the Lord.

Five years have passed away since any State of the American Union celebrated its annual Thanksgiving, in such circumstances of peace and prosperity, as would naturally

inspire the song of praise upon our lips and melody in our hearts unto God. Four times our own Commonwealth has been summoned to this service, while the clouds of calamity hung thickly in the national sky ; and while upon all the horizon there was scarcely a ray of light to be seen. The din of battle, the shock of arms, the “confused noise and garments rolled in blood,” the slaughter of our brothers and sons, and innumerable other tokens of the melancholy prevalence of civil war within our borders—seemed almost mockeries of our successive festivals, making of them, to multitudes, times of fasting rather than of feasting ; occasions for sorrow rather than of song ; and clouding them, even to the most favoured and hopeful participant, with the shadows of impenetrable gloom.

I cannot but remember and recall here, the emotions with which, in a sister and contiguous State, I prepared to obey the call of its

Executive for public Thanksgiving services four years ago. Then the first fearful surprise—the awe I may fitly say—of the National calamity was upon all hearts. There was a paralysis of almost every arm of wonted industry. Looms were idle. The wings of commerce were folded. The strokes of labour fell feebly and with many intermissions. The only activities were of a strange and startling nature. They were the activities of vast and augmenting preparations for war. The foundry and the forge were aglow with the lurid fires that melted and moulded the iron for Death's deadly implements.

In these circumstances, the Thanksgiving proclamation of 1861, in our New England States, and doubtless in others, had, at first, a tone of untimeliness in it. Some asked with irony, some with bitterness, some with only heedlessness—"What have we to be thankful for?" Without misgiving, I charged my peo-

ple, in the words of Nehemiah, "Go your way ; eat the fat—drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared. For this day is holy unto our God : Neither be ye sorry, for the joy of the Lord is your strength."* There were darker clouds upon the national sky, on subsequent Thanksgiving days, than those which infolded the annual feast in 1861. But we had become too familiar with their gloom to fear them as we did at first. And having risen once to the grandeur of the occasion, and offered unto God Thanksgiving in War ; remembering His mercies in the midst of judgments ; looking through the lurid smoke of battle upon plentiful harvests ; hearing, in the intervals of the sullen boom of the cannon, the sweet tones of Divine promise—"For a small moment have I forsaken thee ; but with great

* Nehemiah viii, 10.

mercies will I gather thee ;”* we were encouraged and strengthened to meet every recurrence of the festival with renewed confidence in the final success of our cause and in the restored favour of Heaven.

And this day, my hearers, we hold the Thanksgiving for Peace. *Peace* is the foremost blessing, of that throng of Divine gifts, for which we come, to-day, “before His presence with Thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto Him with psalms.”

With a noble fitness our Chief Magistrate calls upon the Nation to thank God for *Peace*. I am glad that he did not substitute for this sweet, this significant, this pregnant, this all-embracing word—that other word—which perhaps a less thoughtful, less gentle, less catholic mind would have seized upon as the watchword of the great National Thanksgiving

* Isaiah, liv, 7.

summons : I mean the word *Victory*. I say, I am glad the President did not substitute *Victory* for *Peace* in his proclamation. He might have done this and our beautiful flag, with its stars and stripes everywhere waving in the breeze, would have justified the word. The dispersion of the rebel armies ; the humiliation of their proud and skillful leaders ; the surrender of their strongholds ; the urgency of their chief men in their pleas for the Executive Pardon ; the restoration of Federal authority in courts and citadels, recently proud and defiant with Rebellion ; these and a thousand other signs would have warranted the use of the word. Why, then, am I glad it was not used ? Because the Victory which has been achieved is more *worthily* expressed, and, indeed, only fitly expressed in the sweet word *Peace*. Had we not conquered a *Peace*, we had won no *Victory*. If the Roman people held, as we are told by the historian, and

without the influence of christianity, that there *could be no victories in civil war*—how much more shall we, under the moulding power of the gospel, hold that every victory of arms we obtained over our rebellious brethren was yet but our melancholy defeat, as much as theirs, until we had subdued their hearts.

For our sectional victories over their sectional revolt ; for our arms triumphant over their weapons ; it had been mockery—and the refinement of it—for the representative of our still undivided Nation to call them with us to *Thanksgiving*. His call is not to Massachusetts in her proud loyalty, any more than to South Carolina in her bitter repentance ; but to both alike and together ; at the common altar of National sacrifice, to give thanks unto Him, whose arm hath gotten Him the Victory—not for Massachusetts and not over Carolina ; but for them both as parts of

the great and undissevered league of States, that but yesterday seemed about to be dissolved in blood ; but, to-day, is by that very blood—a solvent no more, but a cement—compacted into a unity before impracticable.

Had the call been to Thanksgiving for Victory, instead of Peace, how sadly marred would not the people's compliance with it have appeared ! At first we think, perhaps, that there could have been no imperfection, no dimness on the glory of New England's votive offerings unto God at this hour. She had sighed and longed and prayed and toiled and sacrificed and bled *for Victory*. While the Rebellion was erect and defiant and insolent, the thirst for victory, for the red trophy of conquest, for the humbling of a proud foe, for the degradation of a false standard and a usurping banner, for the retributive punishment of the begettors and abettors of Treason—the thirst for these things, though in a

sense sanguinary, did not seem to be altogether unreasonable. Yet, had it been, the real and not the seeming, the deep and not the superficial sentiment of the heart of New England—had there been beneath it all no profounder, no purer, no more patriotic and philanthropic purpose and prayer—we must have been convicted, my hearers, of putting an estimate on triumphs in civil strife which the unchristian public sentiment of Rome scorned. But even New England--the blood of so many of whose gallant sons has reddened the soil, and tinged the streams of Southern battle fields—would not have given thanks to God, to-day, for mere physical victories, however many or magnificent they might have been ; if dominant in all, and over all the sounds of loyal victory, there were not, swelling upon every breeze, and echoing from the beetling cliffs of ocean, and the bluffs of mighty rivers, North, South, East and West,

the heavenly pæans of Peace. It is for Peace, and not for Victory, that the heart of New England is thankful to-day. The mother whose noble boy fell in the battle ; the grey-haired sire who has no son left to take his place, because his country needed him for a sacrifice ; even these are breathing out of their swelling, sobbing bosoms, not the fiery, feverish word Victory, but the sweet, soothing, healing word—Peace !

But if even in our loyal States, a thanksgiving for mere *Victory* must have been a blemished and distorted offering—as savouring to multitudes of the spirit of Moloch and not of the Messiah—what shall I say of the hollow mockeries of compliance with the Thanksgiving call, which would be now enacting solemn falsehoods and sacred farces in the sanctuaries of the people who were, but a few months ago, englamoured with the spells of Secession and the hope of successful

Revolution ! Where, in all the region over which the flag of revolt waved, would a Thanksgiving for Victory—I mean for the triumph of Northern over Southern force—have been anything but a lie ? For would it not have been the exultation of the vanquished over their defeat ; their rejoicing in what their pride must count as their shame ! There could have been no Thanksgiving, to-day, in Virginia, in Carolina, in Georgia—amid the ruins of desolated towns, the blackened skeletons of once fair forests, the ravaged fields where always plenty smiled, the wrecks of a luxurious prosperity, and the still present signs of the conqueror's power and authority. It needed that the form of Victory should be disguised at least, with the beautiful habiliments of *Peace*, in order that the subdued and yet spirited sons of the South should come to the festival of the Nation with any other aspect and spirit than that of sul-

leness and shame. And, my hearers, if there is not more in the national heart and intention, than a mere disguising of Victory's proud form in the lovely vestments of Peace; if the substitution is seeming and not *real*, there will be still victory, perhaps, but not, in perpetuity, that which makes victory of value—amity, brotherhood, charity!

Thanksgiving for Peace! This is the requisition; this the sweet, welcome, easy duty of the day and the hour. It excludes no part of the regenerated and delivered land; no State of all the great family so recently plunged in the wild turmoil and turbulence of a strife, which, for deadly earnestness and deadly peril to both parties, had never a parallel in history. Before the blessed image of Peace which has been set up at the National Capital, there is no reason why every lately revolted State shall not come and, with every other loyal State, cast down its pledge of

fidelity and lift up its song of Thanksgiving to God. In the Thanksgiving for *Peace* all partizan wranglings may fitly be hushed. Although months have elapsed since Peace was virtually achieved—its public proclamation has waited for the utterance of National Praise ; that the clamours of section and party prejudice might have time to rage and swell and diminish, until now they should utterly die away, while the universal song of Thanksgiving soars heavenward from the National heart.

Peace has returned to our land. The grim visage of war is shrinking into the shadows of the past. The soldier is laying aside his arms and resuming the implements of industry. The forge is taxed no longer, day and night alike, with a demand for deadly weapons. Already the spades which heaved the soil into ominous billows of wrath, are leveling the mounds for the happy toil of the hus-

bandman. Arsenals are no longer the hope of the country. Academies resume their ascendancy. Military tribunals yield up their usurped functions to the civil courts, and the scales of justice hang no longer from the glittering, but unstable sword-hilt. Forts, if not dismantled—as prudence disallows—swarm no longer with crowded garrisons. Battle-ships are transformed into merchantmen. Our great railways are blocked no longer with troops and munitions of War; but rapidly exchange the generous produce of the teeming fields and prairies of the West, for the ingenious and useful products of the busy looms and workshops of the East.

The familiarity of the National mind with wholesale carnage and havoc is receding into that natural and wholesome horror of blood, from which it was violently dragged forth by fierce battles and slaughters, whose distinctive names are burdensome, for their multi-

tude, to the memory. Everything around us speaks the promise of a National prosperity, which may have simulations, indeed, in a time of War, but can be substantial only in a time of Peace.

If to us of the loyal States, never impoverished by the progress of the War, but on the contrary displaying, in the face of a gigantic Terror—threatening our political and social ruin, a constantly recuperative energy, amazing to the nations of Europe and hardly less so to ourselves ; if to us, upon whom the dread burden of War has pressed with comparatively little force, the advent of Peace with all her attendant train of blessings, is an occasion for ardent thanksgiving—how can it be less to the people whom the War has reduced from a proud affluence to almost penury, and who have seen—in the track of the unhindered march of an avenging Government—not only their estates despoiled,

their possessions consumed, their strength wasted, their armies overwhelmed, but beyond these disasters—their cherished institutions and ideas shattered and dissipated in the tempest, until they rest from a hopeless conflict enfeebled and indeed exhausted. Must not Peace be welcome to them? They might indeed scorn it at the hands of an alien foe, though his foot were upon their necks! We should expect this from those in whose veins our blood courses, and whom we could not afford to despise in the field. But at the hands of the Nation, of which they and we are equally integers, why should they not take the beautiful olive branch, already blossomed thickly with the signs of happier days, and press it to their wan lips with fervent praises to God!

For Peace shall be even more to them than to us—if heartily embraced and thoroughly appreciated. To us it will bring renewed

and, it may be, augmented prosperity. To them it will be not a progress only, but a new birth; not an enhancement of good alone, but a new inheritance. Under the sway of the new Angel of Peace—the social life, the political condition, the industrial resources, the very soil of the beautiful and generous southern clime will find regeneration and burgeon into aspects and products of beauty and wealth, which we of this less genial clime may yet, with brotherly kindness come to envy.

But I shall disappoint your just expectations, and do injustice to this great National occasion for Thanksgiving, if I find no other reason for it than the restoration of Peace.

There are, indeed, two other grounds upon which, if the service we render to-day needed to be justified, I should confidently stand up for its vindication. At one of these I shall merely glance—assured that the briefest ob-

servation of it will suffice to convince you that it is solid and no quicksand ; no deceitful mirage merely.

Our gratitude, as a Nation, is due to Him who holds the destiny of kingdoms and dynasties in His hand, for *the preservation of this Union of States without a flaw*. The disintegration of the Union, to the extent contemplated and so vehemently desired by the States recently in revolt, would have been a calamity, the measure of which we shall now never determine ; but which might, perhaps, have been unfolded, to the loyal and disloyal alike, in the endurance of the inevitable political, social and personal misfortunes which would have been the only fruits of our National dismemberment. In some sense, I know, these alleged woes are only conjectural, but I have, again and again, sought to look with strained eyes into the thick gloom of Disunion, if haply I might discover there

some faint promise of good to both, or even to one, of the great divorced parties. While I did not, indeed, desire to find some such sign, I think there were times, in the gloomy and weary march of events, when it would have given me some sort of comfort to say to my burdened heart—"Well poor, troubled heart, if the worst comes to the worst, and this glorious league of married States is broken in violent divorcement—there is yet a gleam, a ray perhaps, of promise on the far horizon, that may grow into brightness for the divided peoples." But I could not discern that gleam. All beyond the melancholy disruption was dark with the presage and presence of disorder and strife. I saw not then, any more than I see now, how States drifted asunder by conflicting principles and policies—till the fierce strain snapped the cable that held them together, should thereafter peacefully and prosperously sail in the

same sea, the jurisdiction of whose waters and shores must be forever in perplexing question, and often in complications of doubt, ending only in fierce and bitter and relentless antagonisms and strifes—hindering progress and imperilling the existence of one or both. With the imminence of the *danger* connected with the disjunction of the States—a danger circumscribed, to the deliberate judgment of multitudes, by no narrower sweep than the wild orbit of anarchy—the violence such a catastrophe would do to the patriotism and affection with which loyal hearts cherished the Union, devised by the wisdom, framed by the toil and cemented by the blood of our fathers, was as nothing, in comparison, while yet the result was impending as a fearful possibility of doom; but now that the doom is averted, by the Divine interposition, we feel, in all its absolute terribleness, the anguish it would have cost us to see the beautiful fabric

of American popular government crumbled into fragments, by the fratricidal strength of those to whom its pillars should have been more dear than their personal aggrandizement, more sacred than their fondest ambitions. Shuddering, as we must, to realize the extreme narrowness of our escape from ruin, with the overthrow of our National temple, we recover our calmness only before the altar of Him, whose wisdom and strength and grace constituted the trinity of force required for the conservation of a Government too exceptional and too beneficent, in the history of nations, to be jeopardized by caprice, or ambition, without the deep dishonour of those who dared the crime, and without our grateful acknowledgments to Him who prevented its dread consummation.

The third reason I shall offer for our hearty observance of this service of gratitude to God is *the extension and perfection of our National*

Liberty. I use the word perfection in a relative rather than in an absolute sense, and as applied to the scope, rather than to the quality of freedom resulting from the great convulsions of the Union. Without conviction—without even the thought—that the extinction of American slavery, existing as it did by the suffrage of the great Charter of our Federal organization, would have been a wise and worthy end of an internecine war; or, in its bare accomplishment, a vindication of the measures in which such a war had its origin on the part of the Government; I am nevertheless not only prepared, but profoundly eager, to “make a joyful noise unto the Rock of our Salvation,” for the result of Emancipation, as incidental to the progress of the conflict betwixt unconditional loyalty to the Union, and uncompromising hostility to it. The logic of events is too resistless to be opposed with mere preferences of judgment as

to the manner in which truly grand and immeasurably lofty moral consummations shall be reached.

The uprooting of Slavery was of this order of consummations, 'devoutly to be wished'; and in the face of its astonishing achievement, all merely judicial scruples as to the doing of it assume the aspect of solemn impertinence. The ship with the dark flag has gone down in the tempest madly evoked for its preservation from a form of ruin, which existed, perhaps, only in the imagination of those whose idolatry of it disturbed their reason. They counted its perpetuation as more to be desired than the conservation of the Government, which yet held in its Charter all the warrants it could boast, or claim, for its continuance; and in their reckless zeal to immolate the Constitution of the United States, they brought Slavery, instead, within the sacrificial stroke of the knife and the fire. And

now over its blood and its consuming corpse, how shall the Nation do less than rejoice with trembling, and give unfeigned thanks to God for His salvation vouchsafed to us, from the peril of a fearful cancer in the body politic—which, disguised as it might be, was never stripped of its terror, and yet was in such close proximity to the life of the Nation, that no hand but God's could ply the knife and cut the festering death away.

I am claiming—observe my hearers—that the extension of Freedom to the enslaved race in the midst of us, is a fit occasion for National Thanksgiving to God. I do not now think of sectional interests, but of universal interests. If I did not sincerely believe that the people, upon whom the sacrifice of Slavery has fallen with the immediate aspect of a calamity, and who, from their long association with it, and from their general unconsciousness, and inapprehension even, of any social

or moral wrong-doing in maintaining, defending and perpetuating it ; if I did not believe, I repeat, that the late slave-owners have fully as much reason as any of us—aye vastly more than any of us—and not less, by the least whit, than the emancipated slaves themselves, to give thanks to God for the very thing they shunned, as the worst of evils and the saddest of disasters, I should not think it possible for this Thanksgiving festival to be in any just and broad sense—National. Millions of the people of the United States would be unable to unite with other millions in the recognition of what these latter will doubtless most exult in to-day, as ground for National praises to our Fathers God—the emancipation of all the slaves in our land. But on this point I am in no perplexity of mind or conscience. The deliverance of the slave-holder is as great as that vouchsafed to the slave. Both are emancipated. The freedom of the

slave is the freedom of the master. I can well appreciate the feeling with which one of the latter class, in Georgia, said to his father—also a slave-holder—the morning when the President's final decree of Emancipation was received, "I congratulate you, sir, that you and I are both freemen now." The father's perception was not so quick as that of his son, but it needed only the impulsion of the felicitous thought, seconded by a few words of explanation, and father and son shook hands and looked into one another's faces with smiles of unwonted brightness, as they felt together that, in Slavery's overthrow, they were enlarged. And while I cannot flatter myself, or you, with the idea that a majority of the late slave-masters of the South have reached the Pisgah of a vision, so broad and fair as at I have alluded to, I do believe that thousands are climbing to it, and that ere long the people of the South will atone for any lack

of fervour in their gratitude to-day for Emancipation, by originating a special Thanksgiving ordinance—for themselves, their children, and their children's children to honour.

The masters who held slaves were themselves slaves to the system of servitude and its sad entail of evils upon the white class. In the atmosphere of this unconscious servitude, Agriculture, Industrial Arts and Education were all dwarfed and stunted. Labour, which is the vitality of a people, was disparaged and dishonoured by Slavery. The slave agriculture was slovenly and exhaustive to the land. The childhood of the white class was degraded, intellectually, by association with the slave children. Without pressing this view further, and without defining the injustice of Slavery to the subjects of it, which is foreign to my point, I insist that in an economical and social—not to say *moral*—sense, the extinction of Slavery will result speedily

to the vast benefit of those who may now sullenly, or more patiently, deplore the dispensation of Providence which has broken the yoke from the neck of the black man. A new industry, new processes of competitive agriculture, labour the law of the white man as well as of the black man, and compensation according to toil ; these alone will prove grand and rapid regenerating forces in the now paralyzed and desolated South ; and we shall see the wilderness blossom as the rose, and the people of that afflicted region will have appointed to them “ beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.”

For this Jubilee Year then to the Southern land and its population, white and black alike, the National heart should pour out, to-day, its thankfulness to the Rock of our Salvation ; the pulse and throb of the Southern heart answering to the pulse and throb of the North-

ern heart ; while the clanking of chains is a sound dying away into the preludes of the new song of universal liberty.

I do not forget, to-day, because I fail specially to dwell upon them, those reasons for profound gratitude to Almighty God, which are, from their constant recurrence, *not* extraordinary, like those I have indicated. The common blessings vouchsafed to us in the alternation of the seasons, with their healthful work and happy wages for it, with their out of door charms and their home delights, are, like ten thousand other gifts of our beneficent and loving Father, the *staple* themes of our thanksgiving. Surely, we are not less thankful for them, to-day, because they are for a season overshadowed by the grander gifts which make the year an *Annus Mirabilis* in our National Annals. We look up now to the great gift of Peace, as the pilgrim in the Alps lifts his eye to the sky-piercing Matter-

horn ; its wondrous peak supplanting a little while all less, all lower objects in his regard. To that summit of our national elevation—which we call *Peace*, we lift *our* eyes to-day. We send our songs thitherward. We shout our anthems that the strain may soar and soar till that peak shall “catch the flying joy,” and “roll the rapturous hosanna round.”

This sermon would have an inexcusable imperfection in it (as I know it has other imperfections, which I trust in your generosity to hold excusable ;)—if I should close it without attempting to indicate some of the ways in which true thankfulness to God will reveal itself, not in the National voice alone, but in the National conduct.

The times are confessedly momentous. Every day may be shaping grand historical events. Every day is, indeed, maturing to perfect ripeness the fruit of the conflict ; or else hastening within its heart the melancholy

processes of blight and decay. And the people are individually responsible for the character of National counsels and acts, mediately if not immediately. It is, therefore, of vast moment, that we should understand our responsibility, and with right judgment and right action, acquit ourselves of it right manfully. The Peace and restored National Authority, and the wide extension of Freedom, which are the experiences of the Nation, this present memorable year, all demand the extremest wisdom for their conservation and happiest development.

At the foundation of true National thankfulness to God, as the Rock of our Salvation, lies, essentially, a profound sense of His interposition for us, in the fearful exigencies to which we were brought by the Rebellion and the War. Inseparable from such a consciousness as this, is the conviction that only the hand which saved us can keep us from

falling again and fatally. At such a doctrine as this Infidelity and Atheism may sneer. Rationalism may smile with ill-concealed scorn; but spiritual Reason and Christian Faith, two divinely irradiated principles, which will endure when all the sneers and cavillings of unbelief shall be hushed in eternal silence, will accept and vitalize the doctrine into duty and obedience.

The speedy restoration of mutual confidence between the lately antagonistic sections of the Union is the pressing demand of the times. To effect this should be the aim of every enlightened statesman and of every true patriot. Upon the altar of true amity all partizan creeds and platforms and prejudices and schemes should be cast and consumed. The clamours of sectionalism should die away in fraternal words. In the accomplishment of a result so noble and lofty as this, the *initiative* clearly belongs to the successful

contestant in the now ended conflict. The people, humiliated by defeat of every kind, physical, political, social and moral ; smarting with surprising hurts ; bewildered by amazing revolutions ; confounded by the collapse of bubbles which they fondly believed were spheres of granite ; impoverished to a degree of which their own serfs never afforded an example, and their own generous land no type ; awaking only with clouded and reluctant eyes to the stern conviction that “ old things are passed away and all things are made new ” in their condition and destiny ; distrusting and often utterly disbelieving the professions of their successful competitors, that they desire only the highest good of the whole country—knowing no North and no South ; dreaming yet, it may be, of impossible extrication from the meshes of Fate which are about them ; the subdued, broken, disappointed, discouraged, but yet generous, warm-

hearted, open-handed people of the lately revolted regions, should be spared every needless pang of fresh bitterness in the waters of the full cup poured out to them. It is ours, my hearers, it is Massachusetts' privilege to kill their lingering pride and hate and doubt and defiance, with genuine magnanimity, with Christian kindness, with incontrovertible proofs that, Slavery being now moribund and practically out of the way, there is actually nothing between Massachusetts and Carolina—as the representatives of all the loyal and all the returning Commonwealths—to hinder the true embrace of sisterly love and fellowship.

The exercise of magnanimity is not within the power of the South. This high privilege belongs to the North. I do not mean that the people of the South cannot be generous. I mean only, that now they have nothing to give but their consent to what being inevi-

table, they may allow with cheerfulness or sullenness, with high resolves to make the best of it, or stolid inaction as sufferers, according to the spirit and temper of those who have the power of the majority to press whatsoever cup they will to the lips of the prone.

The people of the South can be won by kindness. The people of the North can be exalted, ennobled, enriched by the exercise of kindness—than which God never ordained an easier and happier method of a people's aggrandizement. Henceforward, indeed, there is but one people beneath the stars and the stripes. The mad dream of another flag has proved a baseless vision. The stars are not for one section and the stripes for another; but both for all—the stars to multiply and not the stripes.

We shall not be truly grateful to God in this great epoch of deliverance, my hearers, if we do not hold our judgment and

our impulses in the strong leash of moderation, while we discuss and determine the grave matters originated by the new order of things. We are unquestionably debtors to the emancipated people of this country, to the whole extent of the persistence and vehemence with which we have desired their freedom. A faithful discharge of our debt to them will well attest the sincerity of our gratitude to the Giver of Liberty. Our efforts, our contributions, in their behalf, for the amelioration of their sufferings in the strange vicissitudes of sudden independence, for their education, cultivation and conversion, are all the legitimate sequences of our hopes and prayers for their enlargement.

But even in this direction, there is need of earnest and intelligent discrimination, lest our impulses rush far beyond the limit of judicious interference for them. The freedmen must, for obvious reasons, abide in the

South, either with or without the white class which recently held them in Slavery. You and I, and all thoughtful men, deprecate the idea of a separate, isolated community of colour. If, then, the white and coloured classes are to dwell together, it is absolutely vain for outside legislation to fix and define the precise terms of their relationship. It is safer to entrust these grave questions to the statesmanship and to the conscience of the Southern people—who being obliged to adjust themselves to the new order of social conditions, will not blindly override and oppress those who must yet do their hard labour for them. Moreover, I am persuaded that there is a conscience in the South, which being now unbound from the green withs of an almost irresponsible power over the slaves, will rise up and assert itself in just requirements and judicious regulations for the freedmen.

What we have to do at the North, is to co-operate with the yet crippled Southern people, in repairing the immeasurable damage they have sustained in their vain uprising against the Union, and by the gentleness of our spirit convince them of the true greatness of our social and political and moral status, that they may copy all its excellencies, and excel if they can, all the proudest developments of its worth and wisdom we have yet realized.

“Our whole country” is henceforth the true watchword of our lips and our hearts, and if we mean less than this to-day, our Thanksgiving must be marred. There will be discordant notes in its melody—which will gravitate it downward, instead of wafting it upward *to Heaven*.

Let us, my hearers, go forward, in our imagination, forward a whole decade—until we reach Thanksgiving Day in 1875. Some of

us will never see that day with other eyes than those of imagination. Happy, I think, will be those eyes that physically behold, and those ears that physically hear, the scenes and sounds of that not far distant day. If the beneficent Father whom we worship, accepts the National service we bring, to-day, to His altars—and He will accept it if we are true patriots, true philanthropists and true Christians,—then, upon this anniversary in 1875, there will stretch “from Eastern coast to Western,” a glorious league of *Forty married States*, the basis of whose magnificent prosperity will be universal Liberty—under the ægis of which no privileged class will oppress or wrongfully restrain another class ; but all will have their rights before the law and before God. To all orders of the people, to its forty millions of minds, the blessings of Education will be accessible, and even obtrusive, so that “he who runs may read.”

The great oceans, and the multitudinous seas and harbours of the world will be whitened with the sails of our commerce. The metals and the coals, from the mines and the measures of our great mineral storehouses, will help to vitalize and adorn the industry of all nations. The vast and fertile plains and prairies of the West and South will choke the granaries of Europe with food for its hungry masses, and tire her looms with staples for clothing her sons and daughters. Science, never idle, will have done in a decade of years, the marvels which before had no parallel in a decade of centuries. She will have reticulated the Western Continent with the iron web, every fibre of which is a filament of far reaching thought and speech. She will have linked the great seas together with bands of steel. She will have lighted our cities, our highways, our coasts, with carbon or metallic suns—almost literally fulfilling the inspired prediction, "For there is nothing

hid which shall not be manifested."* She will have controlled the subtle and mysterious sisterhood of unseen forces—transforming them into one another, and by their agency combining the elements with a wondrous skill for the benefit of man. All this will she have done, and more; but most of all, she will have revealed to us God, in earth and sea and sky and air, God only wise, God only great, God only to be worshipped with perpetual Thanksgiving.

On that Thanksgiving Day, if any of us, my hearers, may not look forth upon the development I have imagined: may it be ours to take part in a grander and loftier service of Praise than will ever send its echoes flying from spire to spire, from hill top to hill top, on this round earth—even in the perpetual festival of Thanksgiving before the Throne of God and the Lamb, in which all whom the Son has made free by His blood, shall have part "with joy unspeakable and full of glory."





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