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The

Banners of a Free People

Set up in the Name of their God.

To President Lincoln
With the Writer's regards.
H. J.

The Banners of a Free People
Set up in the Name of their God.

A

THANKSGIVING SERMON

PREACHED BEFORE THE

First and Third Presb. Congregations,

IN THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, PITTSBURGH,

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 1864.

BY

REV. HERRICK JOHNSON,

PASTOR OF THE THIRD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

PITTSBURGH:

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1864.

Pittsburgh, November 24, 1864.

Rev. Herrick Johnson,

Dear Sir :

The undersigned, regarding the Sermon which you have this day delivered, as eminently worthy a place among the records of our annual thank-offerings to the God of Nations, for his munificent favors to us as a people, would most respectfully solicit a copy for publication.

FRANCIS G. BAILEY,	WM. A. PASSAVANT,
ROBERT BEER,	I. C. PERSHING,
ALEX. LAUGHLIN,	W. THAW,
JOHN D. M'CORD,	JAMES LAUGHLIN,
SAMUEL REA,	GEO. ALBREE,
ROBERT S. DAVIS,	H. W. WILLIAMS,
JOSEPH M'KNIGHT,	R. EDWARDS,
JOSEPH W. SPENCER,	GEO. W. BLAIR,
DAVID ROBINSON,	WM. A. HERRON,
JOHN A. RENSHAW,	J. K. MOORHEAD.
J. M. SMITH,	

Pittsburgh, November 24, 1864.

Messrs. Francis G. Bailey, Robert Beer, and others :

Gentlemen :

Grateful for the manner in which you have been pleased to speak of the accompanying Discourse, I submit it to your hands for the purpose indicated.

Very truly, Yours,

HERRICK JOHNSON.

A PROCLAMATION.

IT has pleased Almighty God to prolong our national life another year, defending us with His guardian care against unfriendly designs from abroad, and vouchsafing to us in His mercy many and signal victories over the enemy, who is of our own household. It has also pleased our Heavenly Father to favor as well our citizens in their homes as our soldiers in their camps, and our sailors on the rivers and seas, with unusual health. He has largely augmented our free population by emancipation and by immigration, while He has opened to us new sources of wealth, and has crowned the labor of our working men in every department of industry with abundant reward. Moreover, He has been pleased to animate and inspire our minds and hearts with fortitude, courage and resolution sufficient for the great trial of civil war into which we have been brought by our adherence as a nation to the cause of Freedom and Humanity, and to afford to us reasonable hopes of an ultimate and happy deliverance from all our dangers and afflictions.

Now, therefore, I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, do hereby appoint and set apart the last Thursday in November next as a day which I desire to be observed by all my fellow-citizens, wherever they may then be, as a day of thanksgiving and prayer to Almighty God, the beneficent Creator and Ruler of the universe; and I do further recommend to my fellow-citizens aforesaid, that on that occasion they do reverently humble themselves in the dust, and from thence offer up penitent and fervent prayers and supplications to the Great Disposer of events for a return of the inestimable blessings of peace, union and harmony throughout the land which it has pleased Him to assign as a dwelling-place for ourselves and our posterity throughout all generations.

In testimony whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the United States to be affixed. Done in the City of Washington, this 20th day of October, in the year of our Lord 1864, and of the Independence of the United States the eighty-ninth.

By the President : ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

WM. H. SEWARD, *Secretary of State.*

S E R M O N .

"We will rejoice in thy salvation, and in the name of our God we will set up our banners."

PSALM 20: 5.

LUTHER calls this psalm "a battle cry." Alexander says it is "a prayer for the use of the Ancient Church in time of war." The Psalm in our English version is headed thus: "The Church blesseth the King in his exploits. Her confidence in God's succor." It is both a prayer and a psalm. It embraces petition and praise. It was evidently written for troublous times, and is most fit embodiment of the sentiment of a Christian nation, invoking aid of Jehovah for the king going forth to battle, and pledging a jubilee in the name of God for his successes. The whole Psalm breathes the most devout recognition of the Nation's dependence upon the God of Nations. "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; but we will remember the name of the Lord our God."

Israel had a king. And it was the salvation wrought or experienced by him, in the overthrow of Israel's enemies, that the people celebrated in their song. Yet in their rejoic-

ing they looked higher than their king, and in the name of their God they set up their banners.

In America the people is king. The will of the Government is the voice of the people. The rule is by masses — by majorities. This war of ours is the people's war. And here, in the fourth year of it, after signal victories martial and peaceful, by bullet and ballot, with the tokens and pledges of a full and complete deliverance thickening about our path, what could better express the feeling of every patriot heart on this day of national thanksgiving than the triumph-song of Israel: "We will rejoice in thy salvation, and in the name of our God we will set up our banners."

The salvation that we thank God for this day — what is it? Surely it is not the mere success of a party at the polls: it is not simply a political, partisan triumph: nor yet the gain of a battle. The Nation is now before God's altars with joyful tribute of gratitude and praise, for other and better reasons than these. In order to grasp the greatness of the deliverance that has been wrought for us, and to realize its just significance, our thought must go back beyond the year just closed. I ask you, my fellow-citizens, to a brief review of so much of the Past as shall place clearly before us the true nature of our present conflict: the principles that underlie it and that are involved and at stake in it. Events are important. But what they stand for, is the vital thing. If we get at these and grasp them, we shall have truer appreciation of the crisis and be helped to a heartier thanksgiving.

There is another reason why this should be a day of historic reminiscence. Four years ago this Nation declared its will at the ballot-box, and elected to the Chief Magistracy a man, whose elevation to that office was made the occasion, though

it was not the cause, of civil war. The war has raged ceaselessly ever since, and yet the Nation has just reaffirmed and emphasized its will, as constitutionally expressed four years ago. Then, however, the ballots gave somewhat uncertain sound. This year they thundered. The event marks a Presidential term — a cycle of time in our history. It dates the fourth year of a struggle that will make the cycle forever illustrious. Hence the manifest propriety of extending our retrospect beyond the year, on this day of National Thanksgiving. Hence the demanded fitness of putting on record here to-day that which shall impress us with the greatness of the salvation for which we are assembled to praise God.

I need not recount the steps that led to our nationality. The immortal paper that told the world our purpose was a solemn protest against oppression. However the exigencies of political partisans may have led them to pervert that document and torture it into a series of "glittering generalities," the men who signed it and the men who sustained them in signing it, heartily believed the principles it set forth, and were willing to die for them. The partial inconsistency of their practice with this belief was owing to circumstances held to be, in part at least, beyond their control. When the Mayflower buffeted the sea and bore to these shores the Pilgrim Fathers consecrated to human liberty, another ship came freighted with a cargo dedicated to human bondage. It landed nineteen slaves at Jamestown in Virginia. And when we struck our sturdy blows for independence, the ignoble fruitage that sprung from the germ concealed in the hold of that slave-ship had spread itself over the land. Slavery was therefore interlaced with our institutions, and rooted in our soil, when we became a nation. The posture of the leading

men of that day, however, was hostile to this barbarism. They were convinced of its wrongfulness, and expected and desired its gradual and ultimate extinction. "The prevailing ideas . . . were, that the enslavement of the African was in violation of the laws of nature: that it was wrong in principle, socially, morally and politically."^{*} But with advancing years and the development of mechanical appliance, the interests of men changed, and whether as a coincidence or a consequence, their convictions changed with them. Alas, that moral ideas should be so often harnessed to the neck of material gain!

Meanwhile we prospered beyond all historic parallel. Our only national outfit "was the wilderness and our head," but these proved a richer dower than infant nation ever had before. The wilderness we changed into fruitful fields. Our head we put into schools and colleges and churches: into inventions, mechanics, the arts. We spanned the continent with our industry. We whitened the seas with the sails of our commerce.

But with riches and power came pride and corruption. We took sacred Principle up with us into the mount of Material Interests, and bound it upon our altars, and sacrificed it there to Mammon. We nursed an insane passion for gain, until it overrode all else. Trade, commerce, territorial acquisition—these were the high-roads to individual and national aggrandizement, and nothing must bar them up. Was any measure of policy proposed? It was canvassed in the interests of Cotton and of Commerce. If Commerce was at all scrupulous, and ventured with bated breath even the mildest protest against a scheme manifestly in the interest of oppression and injustice, it needed only a muttered threat from Cot-

^{*} A. H. Stephens' speech, March 21st, 1861, Savannah, Ga., after the State's secession.

ton to make Commerce ashamed of itself and willing to strike hands with the Southern King in the furtherance of almost any pernicious and unjustifiable measure. And the *spirit of party*—how that grew into a power and swept men from their convictions, until majorities sanctioned at the ballot-box what but a little while before the universal conscience of the nation would have branded with the sternest condemnation, if not with infamy. “Our party, right or wrong,” was the bold battle-cry. Under its leadership, men stained their hands with corrupt legislation, and even perjured themselves before God.

Losing sight, also, of the fact that governments are ordained of Heaven, we ignored our relations as a nationality to the King of kings. In the clatter of our looms, in the ring of our anvils, in the rattle of our machinery, in the chink of our hard coin as it was dropped into our coffers, in the groans of our slaves, we were deaf to the voice of our God; or hearing, did not heed it. God in history, God in providence, and God in his word, said unto us, “*Seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, loose the bands of wickedness, undo the heavy burdens, and break every yoke.*” This was our safety, but we saw it not. We saw not the spirit that was being nursed in the nation’s bosom. We would not believe that the system of African slavery could give birth to and feed and vitalize into alarming power, passions and lusts and purposes and plans whose iniquitous and damning nature stamps them as having their spring and motor in the very heart of hell.

At last the veil was uplifted. The ballots of a free people struck a blow at the ambitious power that had dominated the nation, and forth from the brain of Slavery, as Minerva from

the brain of Jove, sprang the child Treason, full armed and stalwart. The Government was summoned to decide for existence by the dread arbitrament of the sword. I need not now recount the events that preceded and culminated in this appeal to arms. Whether the development of the plot was hastened by the tokens of an aroused Northern conscience that threatened to set a bound to the blight of human bondage, or whether the plot was fully ripe for execution and the occasion for bursting it upon the country purposely and deliberately made by the disruption of the Democratic Convention at Charleston, and the consequent election of our present Chief Magistrate, is not material to my present purpose. The question to be asked and answered is, what were the devices of these men's hearts who sought to rend this Union, precious now with countless memories of blessing already brought us, and rich with larger prophecy of good to come? If we can have before us just what these men designed to do and dared to attempt—if we can read their deep, dark purposes, and get the full proportions of their mad, unholy schemes—if we can know just why they lifted the starred and barred standard of revolt, we shall better realize the greatness of the deliverance, and rejoice more heartily in the salvation for which we thank God to-day.

Did the South strike for rights they had been robbed of? Was their resort to violence a justifiable protest against oppression and misrule? Let the answer be given by Alex. H. Stephens, a prominent Southern statesman, a slaveholder, and now the dishonored Vice President of the treasonable Confederacy. I trace the placing of this unimpeachable testimony before the world, to the direct providence of God. Though familiar to you all, I would here put it on record, as an es-

sential link in the chain of evidence illustrating the character and animating spirit of the rebellion. Stephens, at Milledgeville, in January, 1861, stood up in the Georgia Convention, about to vote on an act of secession, and spoke these memorable words: "Pause, I entreat you, and consider for a moment what reasons you can give that will satisfy yourselves in calmer moments; what reasons you can give to your fellow sufferers in the calamity that it will bring upon us; what reasons you can give to the great nations of the earth to justify it. . . . What right has the North assailed? What interest of the South has been invaded? What justice has been denied? Can either of you to-day name one governmental act of wrong, deliberately and purposely done by the Government of Washington, of which the South has a right to complain? I challenge the answer." O, it does seem as if the God whose favoring providences have marked all the war's progress, was there working by unseen and subtle forces to lead such a man in such a place, just before he with prostituted patriotism became the bribed and forced acquiescent and participant in the plot of treason, to hurl a challenge in the teeth of traitors that they could not and dared not answer! That calm voice of reason failed to quell the troubled Southern sea, but the words shall stand for all time, as the triumphant vindication of "the best and freest government," as he himself in that same hour pronounced it, "the most equal in its rights, the most just in its decisions, the most lenient in its measures, that the sun ever shone upon."

If then the leaders of this rebellion could point to no proofs whatever of the perversion of national authority, why did they so recklessly cast off their sworn allegiance, and inaugurate the horrors we now see? What urged them on in their

work of ruin, with such dire and dreadful purpose? *What was the cause?* We are not left to inference or conjecture, for answer. Nor yet to the biased judgment and, it may be, unwarranted prejudice of the North. Out of their own mouths shall they be condemned.

I call Stephens to the witness-stand again. In his celebrated "corner-stone" speech, delivered in Savannah, March 21, 1861, just prior to that dark day when our flag was shot through and shot down at Sumter, he said, "*African slavery as it exists among us—the proper status of the negro in our form of civilization—this was the immediate cause of the late rupture and present revolution;*" and Savannah's Athenæum never before shook with such thunders of applause as greeted that sentiment. Thus the Forum.

Now hear the testimony of the Pulpit. Dr. B. M. Palmer, of New Orleans, a representative man, and one of the ablest in the ministry, in a sermon preached November 29, 1860, after the Presidential contest was decided just four years ago, declared it to be the present solemn trust of the South, "*to preserve and transmit our existing system of domestic servitude, with the right unchanged by man to go and root itself wherever Providence and nature may carry it. This trust we will discharge in the face of the worst possible peril. . . . It is this that makes the crisis. Whether we will or not, this is the historic moment when the fate of this institution hangs suspended in the balance.*"

One more witness as to the cause and purpose and inspiration of this dark conspiracy, and I have done. The Richmond *Examiner* of June, 1863, a representative press, conducted with marked ability, put out before the world the principles and designs of the rebellion thus: "*The establishment*

of the Confederacy is a distinct reaction against the whole course of the mistaken civilization of the age. . . . For 'Liberty, Equality, Fraternity,' we have deliberately substituted Slavery, Subordination, Government. . . . By these principles we live, and in their defense we have shown ourselves ready to die. Reverently we feel that our Confederacy is a God-sent missionary to the nations, with great truths to preach."

Here, then, is the evidence. The Forum, the Pulpit, the Press, leading exponents of the political, religious and social convictions of the South, unite in the distinct and unequivocal avowal that *slavery was the cause*. This is no charge of Northern fanatics. It is the bold and boastful affirmation of our enemies. Not to be rid of oppression, not to escape unconstitutional enactments, did these men plot their treasonable schemes and attempt their bloody execution; but, as they themselves authoritatively declare, to reverse the tide of mistaken civilization, to protest against every idea which the world accepts of justice and liberty, to perpetuate and extend a monstrous outrage upon the manhood of a fellow man by making this stone, African slavery, which was rejected by the first builders, "the chief stone of the corner" of a new governmental edifice. They could not do this in the Union. "Perish the Union, then," they said; "this is our God-given trust, and we will be true to it."

Nor was independence their only object. It was not enough to curse their own soil with the blight and mildew of unrequited toil. It was not enough to rend Freedom's only governmental fabric, that they might stand untrammelled before the world and impiously claim their Confederacy as a God-sent missionary to the nations. It was not enough to hold up to the scorn of despotism and the scoffs of aristocracy, the

failure of free institutions, a broken and shattered Republic. It was not enough to make the sweet name Liberty, a hissing and a by-word. But they schemed and plotted for the right of slavery "to go and root itself wherever Providence and nature might carry it." They meant, with their Northern allies, to wheel the loyal States by force and fraud into the line of treason, and to fling to the breeze the banner of a new government reared on the ruins of the old, inscribing upon its folds not that immortal declaration: "All men are created equal," but the motto: "There are slave races born to serve; master races born to govern." The very day that the booming cannon opened the carnival of treason in Charleston harbor, the Confederate Secretary of War, Mr. Walker, threatened at Montgomery, Ala., that before the first of May the Confederate flag should be waving over the Capitol at Washington, and Faneuil Hall, Boston.

Such were the dark designs of these men. Such their monstrous subversion of natural rights. Such their hostility to Him who said He came to this world "to preach deliverance to the captive and to break every yoke." How near they came to success we may never fully know. They laid their plans with the craft and subtlety of the first arch rebel. They plotted to win. The military force of the country was small and purposely scattered. The navy was small and also scattered. Treason was in them both. Treason was in Congress. Treason was in the Cabinet. Imbecility, if not treason, sat in the Chair of State. The time was well chosen. And no schemers ever went to their work with deeper cunning. No poisonous reptile ever coiled itself more secretly for the fatal spring. No murderer ever crept with stealthier tread to his place of concealment to strike the death-blow. The treacher-

ous devices of their hearts were framed with protracted and covert preparation. But they have failed. *They were athwart the will of God!*

Send up your thanksgivings for this, O nation of freemen. Let the peal ring through the air. This is the great salvation in which we rejoice to-day: not only that the Government of these United States is saved from hopeless disintegration and ruin, but that it is also saved from the vitiating, degrading, deforming, poisoning presence and power of the infernal spirit of slavery. The spirit that has ever been the nurser of unholy ambitions, and the feeder of unhallowed lusts. The spirit that prompts such utterance as this, which I quote from the Richmond *Examiner*, one of the ablest of the Southern press: "We have got to hating everything with the prefix 'free.' Free farms, free labor, free society, free will, free thinking, free children, and free schools, all belong to the same brood of damnable isms. But the worst of all these abominations is the modern 'system of free schools.'"

The spirit of slavery, I say, that nursed pride and passion and lust of power in the hearts of men until they were urged to the inauguration of civil war, with the hope and purpose of nailing their black-bannered motto to the nation's flag-staff of freedom. The spirit, that has added to the horrors of war the hideous barbarisms of men who have grown up under its fell and foul dominion. The spirit, that has led to the raising of the black flag, "not courageously on the battle field, but over prisons and hospitals in the South, full of surrendered and helpless men." The spirit, whose odious features are revealed by the sworn testimony of scores on scores of escaped and exchanged prisoners taken by a Commission of Inquiry appointed by the U. S. Sanitary Commission, and whose testi-

mony compels these men constituting the Commission to say, "It is the same story everywhere:—prisoners of war treated worse than convicts, shut up either in suffocating buildings or in out-door enclosures, without even the shelter that is provided for the beasts of the field; unsupplied with sufficient food; supplied with food and water injurious and even poisonous; compelled to live in such personal uncleanness as to generate vermin; compelled to breathe an air oppressed with an intolerable stench: hemmed in by a fatal dead-line, and in hourly danger of being shot by unrestrained and brutal guards: despondent even to madness, idiocy and suicide; sick of diseases, appearing and spreading like the plague, caused by the torrid sun, by decaying food, by filth, by vermin, by malaria and by cold; removed at the last moment and by hundreds at a time, to hospitals corrupt as a sepulchre, there, with few remedies, little care and no sympathy, to die in wretchedness and despair, not only among strangers, but among enemies too resentful to have pity or to show mercy."

"These are positive facts," say this Commission in their official report now published to the world. "Tens of thousands of helpless men have been and are now being disabled and destroyed by a process as certain as poison, and as cruel as the torture or burning at the stake. . . . No supposition of negligence, or thoughtlessness, or indifference, or accident, or inefficiency, or destitution, or necessity, can account for all this. So many and such positive forms of abuse and wrong cannot come from negative causes. The conclusion is unavoidable, therefore, that these privations and sufferings have been designedly inflicted by the military and other authority of the rebel government, and cannot have been due to causes which such authorities could not control."

And here I turn from this historic record, some of it the very language of our enemies, some of it the statement of scores of credible witnesses under the solemnity of an oath, and all of it supported by an overwhelming mass of collateral evidence—I turn from this historic record and boldly brand Slavery as the cause of all this crime and woe. In the name of Christianity, I impale it here before high Heaven. The ambitious souls that would rule or ruin, were bred in thy bosom, O black barbarism of perdition! The thousands of braves who have made their last charge and fought their last battle, and whose rough mounds tell where they were buried,—the blood of our precious slain that crieth unto God,—the shrouded homes and desolate firesides,—the orphaned and widowed and sonless hearts all over this fair land,—the marred forms and mangled limbs of the heroes, battle-scarred in the holy cause of Freedom,—the poor victims of heartless tyranny who perished in numbers every day last winter on Belle Island under the very walls of Richmond, whom the cold froze because they were hungry and whom the hunger consumed because they were cold,—the new comers who entered the “horrible rottenness” of the prison pen at Andersonville, exclaiming “Is this hell?”—the human skeletons with their pinched and pallid features and looks of physical and mental agony, and the driveling idiots and mental imbeciles that have come forth from rebel prisons and worse than rebel cattle-pens, all make their dreadful arraignment, and say: “*It was thou, O Slavery, pestilent, iniquitous and damning; mother of Treason and child of Hell!*” And a jury of millions of loyal freemen have heard the indictment, have weighed the evidence, and by their millions of voiceless ballots, on the eighth day of November, 1864, thundered the

verdict: "DIE! O SLAVERY, PESTILENT, INQUITOUS AND DAMNING; MOTHER OF TREASON AND CHILD OF HELL!"

This, my hearers, is the scope and grandeur and high significance of the salvation we celebrate in our song to-day. The Nation is not only saved, but it is saved to freedom and the rights of man. The evil possession has been exorcised by agencies of which we little dreamed, but all of them under the ordering fiat of Almighty God. We here grasp the greatness of the deliverance, we get some adequate conception of the spirit and aim and inspiration of this mad attempt against beneficent rule; and here, in the midst of the sounding praises, in the name of our God, like Israel of old, we will set up our banners.

And upon the folds of the first banner that we lift aloft in joyful token of gratitude and victory, let the inscription be.

Our Constitution.

I have taken occasion once before to refer to this written instrument, as a cause of thanksgiving. But to-day, when we have just given to the sight of the world the sublime and unparalleled spectacle of a great people, after four years of civil war and while still in the midst of it, electing their rulers under the prescribed constitutional forms, and casting their millions of ballots without riot or bloodshed and without armed intervention, at perfectly free polls, there is fitness in giving special emphasis to our recognition of the legacy our fathers left us in the Great Charter. For its breadth and comprehensiveness, for the guards it sets about our liberty, for its equitable distribution of power, for its manifest leaning to freedom, for its general consonance with eternal principle,

and above all for its wonderful adaptation to the perilous exigencies of the hour, framed as it was with no reference to such a crisis, is it not meet that we accept it as one of God's best gifts to the nation, and to-day thank him for it with all our hearts?

Perfection is not claimed for it. God's law only can be that. It needs amendment, and is about to receive it, I trust and pray. Yet not by force. *Never*, while there is any manhood left to the nation. But the Constitution, as it is, has so wonderfully allowed the adjustment of the nation to its present anomalous circumstances, it has so met and proved equal to the emergency, enabling the Executive without abuse or usurpation of power, without blotting out a line of the Great Charter, to provide all needful means for thwarting and crushing this wide-spread treason, that it seems to me the favoring providence of God could alone have secured to us its wise provisions, directing the minds of the men who framed and fashioned it. If, up to this hour, order has been maintained and the laws respected and obeyed except within the theatre of military conflicts; if twenty millions of people have given the grandest possible demonstration of the practicability of government by universal suffrage and of rule by majorities; if republican institutions have been shown to be better based than the sternest despotism, in the very circumstances where they were thought to be weakest — in the midst of civil war, I believe it attributable in large part to the people's faith in the beneficence of the supreme law. If treason has always unsuccessfully schemed and plotted here at the North, though with an ingenuity of appliance and a fertility of resource worthy of a better cause, it has been because the Constitution fully met the crisis, and placed ample power in the hands of the Government to throttle the hydra.

This is neither the time nor the place for a constitutional argument upon the war powers of the President. But I believe he has never exceeded them. I believe he has been literally true to his oath of office. Never so much as an instant has he departed from the *spirit* of the written instrument. And if the question might justly be raised, which I very much doubt, whether the exact *letter* of the law has been rigidly complied with, what of it? Is not the first law of a nation, self-preservation? An old Roman maxim declares that "the safety of the Republic is the supreme law." There may come a crisis in the national as in the individual life, when conviction of right shall override the form, and act in what the universal conscience would concede to be the spirit, of legal enactment; trusting to God and that conscience for vindication. Such crises are possible, because man is human, and his statutes are only a proximate, never a perfect, expression of the highest intelligence and will.

It is said of Switzerland's hero, the immortal Tell, that when he was about crossing a lake on a dark and stormy night, he was told by his companion, "Sir, it is impossible to cross the lake in such a storm as this!" Turning to the speaker, he sternly and resolutely answered, "I know not whether it is impossible, I know it must be attempted." The attempt was made; the lake safely crossed; and Switzerland was free.

Our Ship of State, riding upon a quiet, peaceful sea, was confronted with a sudden peril. Murky, threatening clouds appeared above the distant horizon. They rose higher and higher, blackening as they came up. From out their bosoms shot red-hot thunderbolts. Their artillery volleyed and thundered through the upper air. The storm burst, and the gallant ship was unprepared. The very suddenness and magni-

tude of the peril seemed to have struck officers and crew with a dull, strange, death-like apathy. Strand after strand snapped asunder like the brittlest thread. The sea surged and swelled with wilder and wilder fury. The grand old hull creaked and groaned with the terrible strain upon it; it swept toward hidden reefs; in the distance were descried the breakers; all the precious hopes with which the vessel was freighted seemed about to be engulfed in the tumultuous waters; and an imbecile *word-stickler* was in command, who saw and admitted the overwhelming danger, yet denied the power under the rules of navigation by which the ship was sailed, to escape it. Who shall say that law was violated, and liberty endangered, and rights imperiled, and the Constitution trodden under foot, when another took his place at the call of the people crowding the deck, and amidst the wild war of the elements, whilst the forked lightnings played about the mast-head, and the blinding spray shot high in air, and the turbid sea grew madder with the lash of the howling storm, seized the helm, and planting his foot firmly on the deck, silenced the impotents who shouted it was impossible to save the ship, and whose wish was father to the thought, by saying: "*I know not whether it is impossible. I know it must be attempted.*"

He did attempt it; and after four years of storm, the ship rides still. Who is any the less a freeman for it, save the mutineers? Yet for this, Abraham Lincoln is called a tyrant. He is charged with usurping despotic powers and reviving the Bastille. He is branded as a guilty and lawless oppressor. He—whose every step has been with his face resolutely set toward freedom! He—who immediately after being reborne to office on the proudest wave of popular triumph the world ever saw, and having been the target of most vile and venomous detraction, could stand up before the Nation and say: "I

am thankful to God for this approval of the people. But, if I know my own heart, my gratitude is free from any taint of personal triumph. I have never willingly planted a thorn in any man's bosom!" He, a trampler on the Constitution and the people's rights! No, said the people to this man of the people. All through the years of trial they had felt the throbbings of his great heart, in profoundest sympathy with them, and at the ballot-box, where freemen pronounce judgment, their verdict was: Well done, thou good and faithful servant.

And the Constitution remains to us. Notwithstanding all the clamor of demagogues, it is to-day throughout the loyal States, in its essential spirit, sacredly inviolate, the supreme law of the land; revered, I verily believe, more than ever. So high homage was never given it, so eloquent eulogy was never paid it, so grand a vindication of its scope and aim and grants and reservations was never made, as at this very hour, when the minority, after a heated canvas, peacefully yield to the decision at the ballot-box, and the Democracy say as one man, We bow to the verdict. To-day, therefore, as in the name of our God we set up our banners, we inscribe upon the folds of one of them, OUR CONSTITUTION, thanking God that our fathers were given wisdom to write out the Great Charter.

The second banner that we lift aloft, this national day of thanksgiving, let it couple the nation's heroes, bearing that proud inscription,

The American Soldier and the American Sailor.

If these should be forgotten, as the nation brings its tribute to the altar, the very earth would cry "Shame." All honor, therefore, this day, to the rank and file, and thanks be to God

for what they have suffered and achieved in behalf of the country and freedom. Weave amaranths for them, O people. They have breasted the tide of treason with a wall of living hearts. Their eyes and their muskets have flashed fire all along the lines. And their eyes have quailed not as their bullets have failed not, in the deadly strife. There they are and there they have been, one, two, three years, hundreds of thousands of them. They have marched, they have camped, they have picketed, they have slept on their arms, they have gone without sleep, they have dug and fortified and skirmished and charged and fought and fallen, by night and by day, in cold and heat, in dust and mud, amidst the pelting rain-drops and the pelting sleet and the pelting bullets, with a perseverance and prowess and patriotism, a vigor and valor and victory, that have convinced amazed Europe the American soldier is no mere slave or hireling, nor yet the lawless member of a mob; but that beneath his bronzed temple is a thinking brain, and back of his brawny arm, a principled heart, locking his jaw with the clench of duty and keeping him true to an idea, though he die for it.

All that these soldiers in the ranks and these sailors on the ships have borne and braved and suffered for liberty, we shall never know. Never war yet gave so many and so sublime illustrations of almost more than mortal heroism by the man and by the mass. I cannot here enumerate them. They will be told by and by in the homes and at the firesides of our children's children, as the deeds of the Revolution have been told, by the veterans themselves, with their hearts aglow with the old-time ardor and their eyes flashing the fire of their martial manhood, shouldering their crutches and showing how fields were won.

We know how the heroes have fought through wildernesses, and crossed wide rivers amidst a storm of bullets, and scaled mountains, charging up their jagged sides, and hurling themselves against the serried ranks of the foe, until the flash of their rifles has been seen above the clouds. We know the charge of the Light Brigade "into the jaws of death, into the mouth of hell," has had its peer and superior on this side the sea, as the earth has shook with the tread of our armed hosts, their faces set toward the volleying thunder of the enemy as if "cut out of determined bronze." We know how with their iron hearts in wooden ships they have run the gauntlet of death, their gallant leader the while lashed high up toward the mast-head. We know how as if by magic they have wrung victory from defeat, and sent the exultant foe whirling up the valley under the inspiration of a loved leader, whose black steed flecked with foam had borne him to the field to the music of the red artillery. But we do not know the countless instances of personal daring—the sublime heroism of individuals in the field, and, if possible, the sublimer fortitude of individuals in the hospitals. We hardly realize that the farmer boys who mowed the grass one year, have sprung to the skill and bravery of veterans the next. It is not heralded to us, it cannot be, all the silent, patient endurance, the waiting and suffering, the victories over pain, the cold in the rifle-pits and in the trenches and in the shelter tents, the hours spent on bloody fields as life has ebbed away, without a human hand held out in sympathy, and with no watchers save the still stars. Ah, this is the unwritten history. Yet all this neither abates the port nor bends the spirit of the hardy braves. Nestling in their bosoms, are thoughts of home and wife and mother and children; but they have counted the cost, they

But amidst our sounding praises and songs of thanksgiving, let us this day set up another banner in the name of our God, inscribing upon its broad and beautiful folds,

The Great Commissions.

I choose this inscription, because it represents the two organizations whose nationality and catholicity best reveal the great heart of the people flowing out in channels of sustained and marvelous benevolence — the U. S. Sanitary and the U. S. Christian Commission. Other agencies have been put in operation. Soldiers' Aid Societies and Relief Associations, the Freedmen's Relief Association, and organizations like our own nobled and honored Pittsburgh Subsistence Committee; and these have been able to prosecute a work through the free-will offerings of the people that shall be to the nation an everlasting monument of praise. But the two great Commissions have confined their operations to no local arena. Wherever the flag has gone, from the National Capitol, around the whole war-circle, over the mountain ranges, down and up the great rivers, along the gulf and by the coast of the sea, they have been on errands of mercy, performing helpful and beneficent ministry, caring for the mortal and immortal interests of the army and navy of a nation at war.

They represent no State. They answer to no sect. They are the agents of no party. From all over the land and from all classes and conditions of men, contributions amounting to millions have poured into their respective treasuries. No such national achievement, through voluntary and often unpaid effort, honors the historic page. It was left for a Christian people, instinct with the heaven-born spirit of liberty, and all aglow with patriotic fire, actuated by love for God and their

country, to set such example to the nations. It relieves war's sombre picture. It lights up the dark back-ground of this awful strife. It seems like a ray from Heaven, shot down into the blackness of this shadow of death. To-day we set up a banner in joyful remembrance of it, thanking God.

In attempting to conceive the vast benefits that have flowed from the varied and multiplied agencies, that have been the spontaneous outgrowth and organized expression of the nation's benevolence, and of which the two Commissions are fit exponents, our minds are lost in bewildering wonder. Working in harmony with the Government, and supplementing as auxiliary help its vast official work, they have saved thousands of lives to the army and the nation. "Wounded heroes on the battle-field have been rescued from death and given back to their families. Those wearied, worn and exhausted on long marches and from hard fighting, have been refreshed and saved from perishing. Bread has been dealt to the hungry, clothing to the needy, medicine to the sick, delicacies to the convalescing, and cheer to all." Over and above this, and higher and better than this, the Gospel in its power of salvation has been furnished the bronzed veterans. Messages of truth and love have been wafted to them on the wings of the wind in every form in which thought takes shape and expression, publishing glad tidings like the beautiful feet of morning upon the mountains. Men of God have borne living testimony to the truth of Christ's evangel, and found and followed the Master's foot-prints, as they have gone to preach the Gospel and to pray by the side of the bayonet and the cannon, breaking the bread of life to men running the extra hazards of war, and walking daily on the brink of death. For these and kindred objects, aiding the families of soldiers, relieving the

freedmen, giving bounties, caring for the sick and wounded, the loyal States have made a free-will offering, in addition to the vast outlay of the Government, of more than one hundred and fifty millions of dollars. And this is a people who were charged with worshipping the almighty dollar. It is true, as we grew rich we were increasingly disposed to make an idol of it. But God has broken the idol to our faces; and the magnificent charities evoked by the war, prove that the lesson was not in vain. It is not the least among the compensations of this dreadful strife, that we have been taught the blessedness of giving.

There is still another banner that we should lift high in air to-day. We should set it up anew in the name of our God, its staff planted more firmly than ever on the solid rock of freedom—that standard sheet, symbol of Union, token of liberty, hope of the oppressed, joy of every patriot,

The Stars and Stripes.

It is our country's banner. All around the world bondaged hearts have beat toward it with high hope. When it was enveloped in this cloud of treason, strong men wept lest they should see it no more. Wronged men looked with dimmed eyes from across the sea, wondering if our starry ensign were no longer to make proclamation of an asylum for the oppressed. Base men, who had been nursed under its protecting folds, threatened that it should be lowered forever. But the sons of the sires who raised it, sprang to their arms, and said, It shall float still. And they have kept their word. How well they have kept it, let the undying record of their deeds and words bear witness.

It makes the blood tingle and the cheeks glow to read how they have gone into battle under the inspiration of the red, white and blue. It is enough to make the nation weep for joy—their devotion to the dear old flag. “Old Glory,” they call it. Yonder is a begrimed color-bearer, just after the battle. He was in the thickest of the fight, mangled with shell and pierced with bullet, and scarcely able to crawl from the field. And the old hero, pointing to the revered banner, says to his comrades: “*Boys, she never touched the ground.*”

There is the dying son of one of our American missionaries, who fell in a brave assault upon the enemy’s works. “Chaplain,” says he, as life is fast ebbing away, “Chaplain, tell my comrades, if the war should seem to drag, that I said to you and I say to them: *Stand by the dear old flag.*”

I saw a young sergeant in a hospital at Fredericksburg. He was dying there with the stars and stripes about him; arms, haversack, canteen, blanket, all were lost, but he had clung to Old Glory. His lips moved. We stooped to listen. He was making his last charge: “Come on, boys,—our country and our *flag* forever.” When asked, Is the Saviour with you? he whispered: “Do you think he would pass by and not take me? I go.” And wrapped in stars, he went up among the stars.

So it has been, everywhere; even amidst the sufferings of Libby prison, where one might think hunger and cold and filth would quench somewhat the patriotic fire in our brave soldiers’ hearts. There, the imprisoned officers last year determined to celebrate the Fourth of July. They tore up a portion of their scanty apparel to make the red, white and blue. They draped those dingy prison walls with the significant symbol of freedom. But just as they were ready for the celebration, a rebel officer entered, and casting his eye on

the hated banner, he insolently ordered it to be taken down. To their lasting honor be it said, *not a man of them obeyed. Not a foot stirred. They would sooner die.*

Up then, O loyal, thankful hearts, with the starry flag of Freedom. It is to-day, a truer emblem than ever, of *liberty*. It is now the symbol of a nation committed wholly to justice and the rights of man. This is the voice of the people, with the issue fairly before them, at the recent election. Their ballots did not applaud the sentiment: "If any man hauls down the flag, exhaust all the resources of statesmanship to get him to raise it up again, but don't shoot;" but that other and ringing order: "If any man hauls down the flag, shoot him on the spot." They voted for a *continuance of the war and the extirpation of its cause*; and I verily believe in this instance, "the voice of the people is the voice of God." For I believe, with another, that "God has made this whole land a 'cradle of liberty,' and is rocking it, rocking it to and fro, to and fro, with omnipotent arms. And as the nations hear the thunder of that rocking, we pray God that it may never cease, until Liberty shall need rocking no more in her cradle, but shall stand up fair and young and strong; true liberty—liberty for the body and liberty for the soul: and shall walk as a queen through the land,—the daughter of our Christianity, nursling of God and America." Lift aloft, then, the star-spangled banner. Forever float that standard sheet. Unfurl it to the breeze, that every zephyr may kiss the sacred folds, red with the blood of God's heroes, white with God's justice, and blue with Heaven's own pure azure. Bear it onward and onward, O braves of a free people, until over the whole vast extent of Liberty's soil shall again be "seen the gorgeous ensign of the Republic, once more full high advanced, its arms and trophies

streaming in [even more than] their original luster, not a stripe erased or polluted, nor a single star obscured—bearing for its motto no such miserable interrogatory as, *What is all this worth?* but everywhere, spread all over, in characters of living light, blazing on all its ample folds, as they float over the sea and over the land, and in every wind under the whole heavens, that other sentiment, dear to every true American heart, *Liberty and Union, now and forever, one and inseparable!*”

It would ill befit us to close this enumeration, without rearing one more banner in joyful token of gratitude and victory. We set it up in the name of our God, THE BANNER OF THE CROSS; and upon its pure white folds we place in letters of golden light the sacred inscription,

Immanuel, God with us.

Inscription as true, with reverence be it spoken, as prophet or apostle ever wrote.

O, has not God been with us! None but the atheist and the fool, saying in their hearts, “There is no God,” can doubt it. In the midst of His judgments, all through these dreadful years of war, He has not forgotten to be gracious.

Ample returns have crowned the labors of the husbandman, and our barns have been plethoric with golden grain. We have had bread enough and to spare, so that we could even reach out our helpful hands to hungered Europe. Famine, therefore, skeleton-fingered, grim, gaunt, ghastly, has knocked at no doors. God has wonderfully preserved us also from the ravages of the enemy “that walketh in darkness.” We have breathed no noxious vapors, no pestilential airs, deadlier than the shot and shell of martial fee, and that might have made

mounds about our homes more thickly than they are made in the track of war. Nay, our population has been augmented during this destructive, decimating strife. The earth too, Nature's great work-shop, has been alive with the hidden and subtle forces of God, manufacturing wealth for us. And now in the time of our need, that wealth is being poured into our bosoms.

And in the war itself, what signal proofs we have had that God is with us. You remember, when that seemingly almost omnipotent, soulless, iron-mailed, murdering monster came into Hampton Roads, belching forth fire and shot and shell and smoke, dealing destruction and death one day, to be met and driven back to its haunt by a foe worthy of its steel the next. Was it all chance that built the Monitor and launched it and completed it, and sent it on its way just in time to reach that perilous point on that perilous night of March, 1862? Who is it that holds the winds in his fists!

You have not forgotten how Lee with his army, as if in utter contempt and scorn of his foe, uncovered his capital, left the Rapidan far behind him, crossed the Rappahannock, crossed the Potomac, entered Maryland, entered Pennsylvania, and here upon the soil of this free commonwealth, wily, bold, confident, gathered his forces and took them well in hand to hurl one last destructive blow at the Government, and from its ruins to dictate terms of peace! It was one of the pivotal battles of the war. Rebel journals shouted their huzzas over the audacious movement, and were wild with anticipation of triumph. The English Thunderer caught up the shout and repeated it to the echo, predicting that the next arrival would announce President Davis at Washington. Was it all chance that led that rebel invader back by the way by which he came, with a hook in his

nose and a bridle in his lips? Let the remembrance of Sennacherib banish the atheistic thought. Who is it that rules in the armies of heaven and amongst the inhabitants of the earth!

Once more. You all remember the depression that grew and grew upon loyal hearts last summer, when loyal arms were held at bay before Atlanta and Richmond. With high hopes the two great armies under their two great leaders had set out in the spring, and by matchless generalship, heroic fighting, fearful sacrifices and hard blows, had forced their way south, until at last they seemed baffled and uselessly defied before frowning fortifications. Gloom settled down upon the nation. Just when it was thickest and blackest, August 29th, a Convention met at Chicago, and did what it would not have dared to do sixty days before, what it would not have dreamed of doing thirty days after—declared the experiment of war a failure and demanded peace. Then straightway, as if rebuked of God, peal after peal of victory shook the heavens. Mobile, Atlanta, the Weldon road, the Shenandoah; Farragut, Sherman, Grant, and Sheridan thrice, gave the nation hope and heart; and overwhelming majorities at the ballot-box said the declaration at Chicago was a lie. Was it all chance that arranged that grand mosaic? Ah, the arrow, sped from a bow drawn at a venture, which smote the King of Israel between the joints of the harness, was winged of the invisible God. May He not wing ballots as well?

Above the banner of the Constitution, then; above the banners to the American Soldier and Sailor, and the Great Commissions; above the Stars and Stripes—high over all, let us raise the BANNER OF THE CROSS, that we and the world may read its sacred motto, *Immanuel, God with us*. This Chris-

tian nation cannot and will not longer withhold its public and official recognition of dependence on the God of Nations. The elective head of the people has conspicuously placed it in his state papers and official proclamations. The people have emphasized it in their public acts all through the war. The Government has sealed it, too, upon our coin; and no gold piece ever stamped in United States mint, no weighty ingot ever cast, was half so valuable to the nation, as that little nickel coin bearing the inscription, "In God we trust." Let us place such recognition in our Constitution. Aye, if God saves us our country, let us do with it as the mother did with her babe, placed by an intrepid sailor safe in her arms again after having been borne by an eagle to his cyrie home. Before she allowed the first kiss of maternal love to press her darling's brow, she carried the babe to the altar, and dedicated it there to God. So may we take our saved Country, if God shall give it wholly back to us redeemed indeed, and first of all, make holy consecration of it to its Almighty Saviour.

And then, from rejoicing in this salvation thus accepted, "the mystic cords of memory stretching from every battlefield and patriot grave to every living heart and hearthstone all over this broad land," swelling again the chorus of the Union, we shall go on, giving light to the nations, and liberty to man, and honor to God, passing from brighter to brighter apoealypse of the New Jerusalem descending out of Heaven, until every kindred and people and tribe and tongue on the whole earth shall rejoice in the salvation of the King of kings, and everything that hath breath shall praise the Lord.

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