



THANKSGIVING SERMON,

Delivered April 13th. 1815.

ON OCCASION OF THE

TREATY OF PEACE

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THE FLOWERS COLLECTION
A THANKSGIVING SERMON.

PSALM, cvi. 10-12.

“ He saved them from the hand of him that hated them, and redeemed them from the hand of the enemy. And the waters covered their enemies : there was not one of them left. Then believed they his words, and sang his praise.

Gratitude for providential blessings is a duty which religion enjoins, and reason approves. Every man will acknowledge the propriety of feeling his own personal obligations to his divine Benefactor, and of endeavoring to render to his excellent name, according to the number and value of his benefits. Nor is it, my beloved brethren and fellow-citizens, less incumbent upon us to present our grateful acknowledgements to heaven, for distinguished blessings conferred upon us in our national capacity. With a view to the discharge of this pleasing duty hath this day been appropriated by the constituted authorities of the American Nation. Three years nearly we have experienced the distresses and privations of war. We are now by an indulgent providence restored to a state of peace. The martial trumpet is hung up in the hall ; the destroying sword is returned to its scabbard ; and our plains are no longer drenched with the blood of the slain. Every heart should overflow with gratitude : every tongue should be employed in praise.

The words from which we have proposed to address you on this truly important occasion, are a record of the conduct of the Israelites, when, by a most remarkable providential interposition, a signal deliverance had been vouchsafed to the whole nation. With some slight variation, they may, we think, be accommodated to our present

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purpose. May every person here assembled, most devoutly exercised, while in that view, consider, 1. The deliverance granted to the Israelites, 2. The manner in which they improved it.

The first thing offered for consideration is the deliverance granted to the Israelites.

They had been in a state of extreme danger and distress. After their departure from Egypt, where the whole nation had groaned in bondage for the term of four hundred years, they marched to the Red Sea and encamped on its western shore. On the right and left of their encampment, it is generally supposed there were impassable mountains or fortifications; while the sea was in the front, and Pharaoh with his pursuing army pressed upon their rear. The Tyrant of Egypt, hardened and desperate in presumption against the wonderful works of God which he and his people had seen and severely felt. With his immense and well disciplined army he pursued the defenceless thousands of Israel; nor doubted but that he could easily and speedily destroy them all. They on their part, having no human appearance, no means of self defence, no prospect of escaping by flight, no hope in submitting to such an enraged tyrant; and, worst of all, no confidence in God, seemed in their own apprehension, devoted to instant and inevitable ruin.

But when hope had fled, and death seemed near and certain, Moses, their pious leader encouraged them in God. Fear ye not, stand still and see the salvation of the Lord; which he will shew you to-day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to-day, ye shall see them again no more forever. So remarkable would be the divine interposition, that it would not be needful for them

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so much as to fight against the Egyptians, but only to stand in silent astonishment, and witness their entire destruction.

God Omnipotent, whose arm doeth wonders, did accordingly vouchsafe to his chosen people a most seasonable and wonderful deliverance. He prevented the nearer approach of Pharaoh by interposing between the Egyptians and the Israelites, a thick cloud. To the Egyptians this cloud increased the gloom of the night, while on the side which faced the camp of Israel, it was miraculously illuminated, and served to direct the march of the Lord's people quite to the shore of the sea, where the wonders of divine power were to be exhibited in their deliverance and salvation. Ere long arrived the predestined moment; and at the waving of Moses' consecrated Rod, a strong east wind drove back the surges of the sea & dividing the waters before them hither and thither, formed two stupendous fail walls; Between these walls a spacious road presented, along which the thousands of Israel marched securely as on dry land, & all in safety attained the further beach, the shore of deliverance. Meantime Pharaoh & his host, given up to judicial blindness and desperate presumption, followed the example of the sons of Jacob, and rushed precipitately, as he some suppose, unwillingly, into the midst of the sea: even all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen.

In this situation the overwhelling surge, by the appointment of heaven, returned upon them. The sea covered them: they sank into the bottom as a stone; they sank in the mighty waters. The thousands of Israel, on the bank of sweet deliverance were spectators of their own

throw, and saw the dead bodies of their enemies which it is supposed, were generally deposited on shore near the place where the Israelites were cast up out of the sea. This circumstance, if the opinion be correct, would prove an occasion of furnishing arms to the tribes of Jacob, as well as of greatly enriching them with spoils.

When the favored nation had witnessed this stupendous scene, they were, for the present, greatly affected, both with reverence to the Lord's majesty, power and justice; and with gratitude for the wonderful deliverance he had wrought for them. An interposition of Deity so signal and so seasonable, conferred an obligation upon them, which every ingenuous heart must feel which every tongue must gratefully acknowledge. Under a divine afflatus Moses dictates, and the whole congregation chant with raptures of joy, the high praises of their Deliverer. Who is like unto thee, O Lord, amongst the gods! Who is like unto thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praise, doing wonders? But we have a little anticipated the other division of our subject;

The improvement which the Israelites made of their deliverance. This we learn from the concluding words of the text: "Then believed they his words, and sang his praise."

In many instances Israel had shown themselves an unbelieving, as well as ungrateful people. But now, for a short season a remarkable change was manifested in their disposition and deportment.

1. They believed God's word. The promises which the Lord made to them on many occasions before, they had had sufficient reason to accredit. They had been attested beyond all reasonable contradiction. God had enabled his servant Moses by

whom he brought his people out Egypt, to confirm the assurance he gave them in the divine Name of deliverance and enlargement, by a train of stupendous miracles. The wondrous Rod of God and every plague by it inflicted upon Pharaoh and his people as they followed one another in succession, afforded a new and additional attestation to the divinity of the commission under which this holy messenger of heaven acted, and to the truth of the declarations which he uttered.

Yet notwithstanding the abundant evidence exhibited to their senses on so many occasions, no sooner did any new difficulty arise, than they renewed their unbelieving murmurs, and gave fresh proof that they were called with truth a stiff-necked and rebellious people. They were constrained, however, on this occasion, to acknowledge the faithfulness and mighty power of God. His interposition was so obvious, so seasonable, attended with circumstances so unprecedented and miraculous as to impose conviction upon the most incredulous and unreflecting minds. Infidelity was silenced. They believed in God, in his providential government, in his gracious promises, and in the infallible certainty of his performance. And so strong was their alliance that, probably, they apprehended no fear of ever again yielding to unbelief.

2. They sang his praise. Inexpressibly great and wonderful was the salvation they had experienced. In it the hand of Jehovah was too visible to be overlooked; its saving help too necessary to be disregarded. The occasion was calculated to inspire them with joy. Humanity indeed might dispose them to pity their foes who perished in the devouring depths; yet was it natural for them to rejoice in their own deliverance and

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salvation. Nor could they refrain from celebrating the praises of that gracious Being, whose right hand alone had wrought salvation for them. For this express purpose Moses indited a sublime Anthem, in which the thousands of every tribe sung joyful hosannas to their great Deliverer, and gratefully adored the wonders of his power and mercy. Happy would it have been for them had they retained those impressions, continued sensible of their obligations to God, and disposed to the exercise of praise. The sacred narrative alas! gives us a different account. We may view it, and see our own picture. "*They soon forgot his works; they waited not for his counsel: but lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert.*" But though through frailty they so soon degenerated, the effects mentioned, while they lasted, were good, suitable and salutary.

Having thus, in a summary way, considered the wonderful deliverance of the nation of Israel, and the favorable effects by it produced, in relation to their faith and practice; it remains that we accommodate the subject to the occasion of our present Meeting, by taking a retrospective view of our difficulties, successes, and final happy triumph in the late war with the Kingdom of Great Britain, and shewing our duty to our supreme Guardian, Protector, and Saviour.

It is not pretended that the similarity is exact between the circumstances in which we have been placed in the late contest, and those in which the Israelites found themselves at the Red Sea: neither has our national salvation been effected by similar means. Yet a resemblance may be traced

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sufficiently near to lay a foundation for grateful recollection and songs of thanksgiving.

It is a well known fact that the British nation with which we have been at war, has been long practised in military arts, and is in a considerable degree formidable, both from the number and valor of her troops, and from the uncommon amount of her martial preparations. Her Navy, especially, before the commencement of the war, was viewed as an object of no small terror, and scarcely was it expected, that our puny inconsiderable Armament could venture, without the prospect of certain destruction, to lose sight of our own shores and harbors. These were some of the advantages possessed by our foes, which taken in connexion with the savage allies whom they basely allured into their service, rendered our prospects not a little gloomy, and made a considerable portion of the citizens of the United States averse from hazarding the events of a war. The American Nation, on the other hand, laboured under various disadvantages. Besides the infant state of her Navy, already noticed, owing to a happy peace of more than thirty years continuance, her soldiery was comparatively raw and undisciplined, her seaports almost without fortifications; her military preparations in ordnance, firearms, &c. very inadequate to meet her powerful invader. It is with reluctance we have to add yet another consideration: the large number of dissenting voices which did not cease to be heard, both in the public Councils of our Nation, and in every Section of our Country; not only previous to the commencement, but during the whole continuance of the war.

In these respects our situation bore some faint

resemblance to that of the defenceless & desponding Israelites, when Pharaoh & his army overtook them encamping by the sea, beside Pi-hahiroth before Baalzephon. If our danger did not appear equally great and imminent, yet from the circumstances alluded to, especially our unhappy division, there seemed for a while, to be ground for very serious apprehensions. We did not apprehend the subversion of our government, or the privation of our liberties and independence. We regarded our free constitution as being, under heaven, our invincible bulwark; and conceived a hope, which has not been disappointed, that even those who dissented from the public measures, would not feel willing to exchange it for the vassalage of a provincial state, and the miseries produced by tyrannical usurpation. But we ought at the same time, my fellow-citizens, gratefully to acknowledge the goodness of an indulgent God, in our wonderful preservation, as well as in our signal successes. Heaven, it would seem, has visibly owned the justice of our cause, by appearing remarkably on our side; otherwise we might have expected, on the Ocean especially, far greater losses and disasters than we have experienced. Our calculations were that we had no might comparatively to cope with Great Britain on that element where she has been wont to boast of unrivalled power; but through the benign interposing hand of providence, we have done more, perhaps, to humble her pride, in the destruction of her navy, than in all the other injuries she has suffered by our arms in the course of the war. The floods of great waters have been to our troops, as to the hosts of Israel in ancient days, the scene of the Lord's saving interposition. There, let us

adore, and love his name, there he hath saved us from the hand of him that hated us, and beyond all human calculation redeemed us from the hand of our enemies.

It was the fortune of our naval officers to gather the first laurels in the late contest. Many splendid victories achieved on the Lakes of Canada, and on the wide-extended Atlantic, have gained immortal renown to the names of Perry, M'Donough, Decatur, Hull, Bainbridge, Jones, Porter and others; while the British Admiralty and Parliament have been brought to their wit's end to account for their frequent failures and defeats, and to invent what they should publish to the world to wipe off the foul disgrace daily accumulating upon their naval honor. To every true American it must be a subject of boastful and gratifying reflection, that we have in this manner taught the Tyrant of the Ocean to feel our maritime consequence; that in many instances his ships of war have been compelled to strike their flags to vessels of our fleet of inferior force; and that our intrepid and enterprising cruizers, held by him in the most sovereign contempt, have been able to send terror into his very inlets and harbours, and to hold them under all the disadvantages of a regular blockade. Had the circumstance last alluded to, been predicted previous to the war, not the smallest degree of credit would have been attached to the conjecture on either side of the Atlantic. Such, however, has proved the fact; and Britain, haughty Britain, has condescended publicly to groan out her complaints, by her suffering Merchants, under the disasters of her commerce, and the enormous burden of her insurances. If, then, the waters

of the mighty deep, have not covered our late enemies in toto, as in the case of the Egyptians, they have at least proved the scene of their very great humiliation; so that where they had expected to spread nothing but terror, and to add triumph to victory, they have been taught to yield the palm to superior prowess, and it has been demonstrated to the world, that the minions of royalty, with every advantage in their favour, are unequal to combat with the intrepid sons of freedom and independence.

The occasion also requires us to take honorary notice of the exploits and achievements of our land forces in the different quarters where they have met the invading foe. On the land, indeed, we have suffered more, and we have more to regret. Our principal disasters have happened on the coasts of Canada where, it may be remembered, we had entertained the most sanguine expectations of success. Our calculations were made with too much self-confidence. We seemed to have forgotten that the race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong; and that it is God who putteth down and setteth up. The disasters which befel our armies in the early stages of the contest, I have ever regarded as the appointments of a wise providence to correct the false estimates of scepticism, and to enforce this divine maxim. "The Lord reigneth." It was painful to the pious mind, in the first stages of the war, to find in the official reports from our Armies, upon every little success, only the vauntings of self-applause, and the high swollen praises of our heroism and bravery. On the contrary when the subject of detail was unfavorable, the adverse hand of fortune, or fate was acknowledged, but not the

deserved frowns of heaven deprecated. Nor was this principle, of sceptical origin by any means confined to the department of the military; it pervaded all ranks, classes, and grades of our citizens and the language we have described as its result, was heard in every circle both on civil and sacred occasions. It was necessary that our views and opinions should be corrected; that we should be brought to acknowledge the hand of God in the events of battle; to humble ourselves in his sight, when our arms were unsuccessful, and to adore his interposing goodness when they were crowned with victory. When we were brought in a degree to this rational and christian-like disposition, when the supreme authorities of the nation began to recommend to all christian churches the observance of days of fasting, prayer and penitence, the events of the war as they respected the American arms, soon became evidently more propitious. Those events which we have to regret; the treacherous surrender, by Gen. Hull, of the fortress of Detroit, and the whole army under his command; the bloody defeat at the river Raisin, and again of Col. Dudley near the Rapids of the Maumee—these and other lamentable disasters all preceded the change to which we have above alluded. Some will call them the fortune or fate of war. The mind accustomed to rational reflection will no doubt adopt the opinion which I am inclined to advocate as correct; that they were wisely ordered to produce in the public mind a sense of dependence on the Power above, and to enforce a belief that He who ruleth in heaven is the God of battles, and the disposer of the destinies of nations.

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It is worthy of notice that the very illustrious victory obtained by the heroic Perry, when the whole British Fleet on Lake Erie was captured by him and his brave squadron in one single action, happened on the very day succeeding the national fast of 8th September, 1813. A victory so signal, and standing in such a connection might render it difficult for the most determined sceptic to deny that that God whom the pious adore is the hearer of prayer. From that period until the conclusion of the war, the American arms were generally crowned with success. Some actions were severely contested, and many slain on both sides; but victory was usually ours, and by far the greatest carnage thinned the columns of the enemy. Even in the few instances in which the troops of England carried their point the numbers killed on the part of the Americans were comparatively inconsiderable. But on the other hand, when the hour of conflict has turned in our favor, slaughter has laid low her thousands along the lines of the enemy. Fort Erie, Plattsburg, Baltimore and some other places have been signalized for the valour displayed by our brave soldiery and militia, and for the immense numbers of unhappy Britons, who have either bitten the ground in death, or been reduced to the condition of prisoners. We would not make the destruction of our late enemies matter of rejoicing. They who are fallen were by nature our brethren. The circumstances which made it necessary to shed their blood we may justly review with regret. Yet for our own salvation, viewed even in such a connection, we are no doubt bound to tender to heaven this day, our united tribute of praise.

But this short digression dispatched, it is time

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● turn our wondering eyes to the regions of the the South and West. For a few moments let us follow the successful movements of the hero of Tennessee, the wary, the brave the desperately intrepid JACKSON, & his undaunted companions in arms. See him at the head of his resolute and effective Tennesseans, scourging the hostile savages of the South, and teaching them the folly of yielding to British influence and seduction. Victory awaits him at every step. If in an instance or two the conflict be obstinate, and the fate of the day dubious for a time, yet the conclusion proves auspicious, and the poor infatuated Creeks strew the field in slaughtered thousands. Having reduced the savage hordes to submission, he directs his march to the City of New-Orleans; there to await a large British force, which it was understood, was destined to that place. The English squadron soon arrives, and the veteran troops of Wellington, recent from a train of victories in Spain, with General Pakenham at their head, appear in formidable array, but a few miles below the city. After one battle, and some skirmishing at different times, on the memorable eighth of January of the present year, the flower of the British army were led forth at the dawn of light by Lord Edward Pakenham, and Major Generals Gibbs, Keene and Lambert to our batteries. Two hours decided the fate of New-Orleans, and Louisiana. The enemy were beaten, most dreadfully beaten: not 1500 out of 4000 escaped unhurt. Such was the deadly fire of our well served artillery, and skilfully aimed rifles and muskets, that it would appear every ball was the minister of death, every explosion announced destruction to the foe. The enemy, a his

the narrative from which these facts are selected, have to lament the loss of Lord Edward and Gen. Gibbs killed, and Gen. Keene wounded; beside their best field and platoon officers; and the 8th. January, 1815, will cause more tears to flow in England than any action fought by British troops since Lord Wellington took the field in Spain in 1810.

We have enlarged upon this signal and illustrious action, as it may be viewed nearly the last and certainly the most remarkable that has been fought in the late war. It stands indeed, unparalleled in the history of martial achievements. Search the annals of the most celebrated heroes and conquerors from the earliest ages down to the present, and except in the page of sacred history, no instance has ever occurred in which a victory so decisive was obtained at the expence of so small a number of lives.

A gentleman of the state where this memorable action was fought, in giving a relation of it, has made the following pertinent reflexions:—
 "To the all protecting power, the Great Ruler of the universe we do humbly offer our thanks for our deliverance. His hand was with us. Never was the power of heaven more clearly shewn in any cause!!! After our orizons to heaven let us Louisianians give the meed of praise to Maj. Gen. Jackson, and the hardy sons of Tennessee, Kentucky and the Mississippi Territory who have been instruments, under the guidance of omnipotence, in saving our city and state from the barbarian hand of a cruel and bloody enemy."

Having submitted these cursory remarks upon the principal events of the late war between G. Britain and the United States, which is now ter-

eth for you. Take good heed to yourselves, therefore that ye love the Lord your God.

God has indeed done great things for us. His interpositions in our favor have been frequent, they have been signal. We must be blind to the situation if we have not seen with attention his benevolent hand stretched forth again and again for our protection and defence. Though our successes have not been so miraculous as the event recorded in the text, they have been sufficiently so, at the close of the war at least, to silence the tongue of scepticism and to extort the rational confession, "This is the Lords doing." The most inconsiderate have been constrained to adore an Omnipotent God who controls all events and determines the destiny of nations. And, to adopt the language of the presidential proclamation. "No people ought to feel greater obligations to celebrate his goodness, and tender him their devout and grateful acknowledgements than the people of the United States. His kind providence originally conducted them to one of the best portions of the dwelling place, allowed for the great family of the human race. He protected and cherished them under all the difficulties and trials to which they were exposed in their early days. Under his fostering care, their habits, their sentiments, and their pursuits, prepared them for a transition, in due time to a state of independence, and of self government. In the arduous struggle by which it was attained they were distinguished by multiplied tokens of his benign interposition. During the interval which succeeded he reared them into the strength, and endowed them with the resources which have enabled them to assert their national rights,

add to enhance their national character, in another arduous conflict which is now happily terminated by a peace and reconciliation with those who have been our enemies. And to the same divine author of every good and perfect gift, we are indebted for all those privileges and advantages, religious as well as civil, which are so richly enjoyed in this favored land." Under this review may it be verified of us and our fellow-citizens throughout the Union "Then believed they his words and sang his praise!

The best way to express our gratitude, will be to turn to the Lord our God with all our heart. To break off our sins by righteousness, and our iniquities by showing mercy to the poor, if it may be a lengthening of our tranquility. To cultivate a growing sense of our obligations to the Lord, and to serve him incessantly in holiness and righteousness, because he hath redeemed us from the hands of our enemies. To abound in the practice of that religion which commands us to do justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with our God;—which enjoins the breaking of every yoke, and the manumission of every man;—to do unto all men as we would that they should do unto us. That religion which commands us to love, embraces all men as brethren, and which, when it shall become universal, shall be the joyful voice of all that dwell upon the face of the earth. Let the eyes of the Lord be acceptable unto us. Let the Lord direct our paths, and let his mercies be in us continually. Let us have our hearts as shields, and may our hands be as plates, and may our feet be as the feet of the righteous.

The Day we are permitted to celebrate by indulging in all natural and decent expressions of

Let our emotions of gratitude vent themselves in songs of praise, and adopt the devout and appropriate strains, which were chanted by the thousand Israelites, when the Lord delivered them from the hands of the host of Pharaoh. Sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously. The Lord is our strength & song, & he is become our salvation; he is our God, and we will praise him an habitation; our Fathers' God, and we will exalt him. The Lord is a man of war; the Lord is his name. Thy right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in power; thy right hand hath dashed in pieces the enemy. Who is like unto thee O Lord, amongst the Gods? Who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders. Now is our head exalted above our enemies round about us; therefore will we offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; we will sing, yea, we will sing praises unto the Lord. Allelujah! Praise ye the Lord.