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THE NATION'S

SUCCESS AND GRATITUDE.

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The Nation's Success and Gratitude.

THE SUBSTANCE OF A DISCOURSE DELIVERED IN DANVILLE,
KY., ON THE 26TH OF NOVEMBER, 1863, THE DAY OF
NATIONAL THANKSGIVING AND PRAYER.

At the close of one of the most remarkable passages of the Word of God the great Apostle of the Gentiles exclaims, "*Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!*"—1 Cor. xv. 57.

Let no one suppose that the manner in which I apply these words, and use the exalted sentiment they convey, is a wresting of the Scripture. For the image of the supreme triumphs immediately alluded to is taken from the triumphs which men and nations win concerning the things of this world; and all of them of every kind, are gifts of God through Jesus Christ our Lord; and whosoever obtains them, whether they be temporal or eternal, will find them fruitful only in proportion as he renders back to God gratitude and love. And God, who gives us victory, whether over sin and death and hell, or whether over ourselves and over the world, and over his enemies and ours, will make the victory itself complete, and our fruition of it consummate, in proportion as we win it in his name, and use it to the glory of his grace. For it is to him that *overcometh* in the work upon which God has set him, and in which the Lord Christ is his leader, that the glorified Redeemer will give to eat of the tree of life; it is to him he will give a crown of life; it is he who shall eat of the hidden manna, and receive power over the nations, and his name shall stand in the Book of Life; he it is who shall be a pillar in the temple of God, with the name of God, and of the city of God, and the new name of the son of God, written upon him; and to him saith Jesus, will

I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my father in his throne.

To thank, to praise, and to bless God, therefore, for every mercy he bestows on us, as, on the other hand, to humble ourselves before him at every hiding of his face from us; is the constant duty of every one of his dependent, rational creatures. And in proportion as the mercies are special and signal, or the calamities and dangers great and pressing, should the thanksgiving or the humiliation be earnest and particular; fasting and confession being the appropriate accompaniments of our humiliation; praise and rejoicing in God, in like manner, being parts of our thanksgiving; and earnest prayer to God, indispensable to both. These solemn duties stand so high, in the judgment of God, that he has established them as perpetual ordinances, constant as to their divine obligation, occasional as to the times and seasons of their special celebration. It belongs to each individual to determine for himself, so far as the special celebration of these ordinances of God appertains to matters wholly personal to himself. It belongs to the head of each family to determine concerning his own household, in like manner. It belongs to the tribunals of the church of God to determine the times and seasons proper for their observance by the Christian congregations and people under their care. But it appertains, also, to the civil magistrate to recommend to the people of any community of which he may be chief, to sanctify unto God special days and times, in the fitting recognition of God as God, and as their God and Redeemer, in the reverent and hearty observance of these institutes of Christ's kingdom in this world. This belongs to the civil magistrate, because he is not only the temporal head of the people, whom he ought to guide in the way that is pleasing to God; but, especially, because he holds his place, first by the ordination, and secondly by the providence of God; and because thus distinguished of God, he is moreover the servant of God in that place, and the minister of God for special ends revealed in his word; the sum of which is, that the people may be kept from the wrath of God on account of their sins, and that they may be partakers of

those blessings which mankind can receive only through the knowledge of the living and true God.

Thus it is with a full authority derived from their office, and ordained of God, that the Governor of the Commonwealth of Kentucky and the President of the United States, in concert with the chief magistrates of many other States, have set apart this day, and invited the people to observe it as a day of public and special thanksgiving and praise to Almighty God for the many signal mercies we enjoy in the midst of our present deplorable condition of civil war; and also as a day of special prayer to God for the continuance and increase of these tokens of Divine favor, unto the complete deliverance of the nation from its present danger, trouble, and temptation. And so we are now gathered in the house of God, in concert with the thousands of God-fearing men and women throughout this commonwealth, and the many tens of thousands throughout this nation—to praise and magnify the name of God, to pour out our hearts in thankfulness at his mercy seat, and, with earnest love, to make loud and high recognition of his wonderful works and ways of judgment and justice and goodness; beseeching him, by every plea he has put into our mouths, to continue to this great and free nation—as unto a living and perpetual monument of his own glory—all that loving kindness and infinite protection, for which we now call upon all that is within us, to exalt and bless and adore him! So shall we be brought, in triumph, through our present sore troubles; and in God's good time and way, the heavy calamities prepared for us, shall be swallowed up in victories given to us by him.

As we participate in this solemn and acceptable service, with full consent and preparation of heart, let us especially remember, amongst the many things to be deeply pondered concerning ourselves, those that follow, as being too important to be passed over, with slight consideration. In the *first* place, it is the high privilege of the followers of Jesus Christ, the sons and daughters of God Almighty, to come with great confidence to his throne of grace. A believing, penitent, loving people find

favor where their divine Redeemer sits at the right hand of the majesty on high ; and their praises and their supplications go up with acceptance in the ears of the Lord God of Hosts. Therefore, let them beware that the things for which they thank and praise God are really things which God has done ; and let them beware that the things for which they pray are things right in themselves and acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. And so, in the *second* place, remembering the abounding iniquity which surrounds us on every side, defiling so much the very instruments which God uses in our deliverance, and profanely seeking union in the very favor which he shows his people ; let us beware of any fellowship before God with such works of darkness, doubly jealous of ourselves, lest we go before him with the taint of the filth of his enemies upon us and the idols of reprobates in our hands. God is to be praised for all that he is, and all that he does ; and it is only the pure in heart who shall see him. It is heathenism that uses its God to bring its own carnal desires to pass. Wherefore, in the *third* place, all we offer and all we ask should be in a deep sense of our own insufficiency in all respects ; and with strong desires that our will may be swallowed up in the will of God, and that his infinite wisdom and goodness, and not our manifold errors and imperfections, shall be the rule of his dealing both with us and with our country. For they are the circumcision, saith God, which worship God in the spirit and rejoice in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh. And the service which most becomes the children of God, is that they offer themselves a living sacrifice unto him, which he will make holy and acceptable.

One more step in the direction indicated by all I have said, places every one imbued with the spirit of such an occasion as this, in a position where the particular subjects of his thanksgivings and supplications are as clear as I have endeavored to make the spirit in which those acts of worship should be performed. God has made our duty so plain that he calls it a highway, and a way of holiness, and declares that wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. We have in our

hands the complete revelation of his will, wherein he has made known to us all that belongs to our present salvation and our eternal blessedness. The sum of it all, and therefore the whole duty of man, as God himself explains, is that we fear God and keep his commandments. And the meaning of that is, as God declares, that having shown us all good, what he requires of us is to do justly, to love mercy, and walk humbly with our God. And in addition to his blessed word, we are surrounded continually by his adorable providence, so that we absolutely live, and move, and have our being in him. It is from the person of the Lord Jesus, who is alike the only head of his church, the head over all things, and the sum of the revelation of God, that all providence takes its rise since the creation of our universe, and that the course of all providence is developed. It is true, that, in the widest sense, the providence of God is from eternity, and over all things in every other universe there may be beside this of ours; and will reign over all, after this episode of our universe, and sin and redemption shall, so far as time shall exist to measure it, have been swallowed in the infinite dispensation of God. Nay, the whole dispensation of salvation for lost sinners of the human race, by the Son of God, is a great act of the providence of God. It is also true, that, by reason of our weakness and blindness, and the shortness of our lives on earth, and the small portion we behold of God's infinite providence, we are liable to be always taken by surprise, and often to deceive ourselves concerning the significance of those acts of God of which he had revealed nothing to us in advance. But this is hardly more than must be said of the plainest revelations of God, concerning which, that men resist, evade, and pervert them—there are innumerable proofs always before our eyes. Still, it is none the less true, that God's word is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path; that the Spirit of God is with us, crying, This is the way, walk ye in it; and that the crucified Redeemer calls us to evermore, follow me. And in like manner the providence of God, unrevealed till it reveals itself, and unsearchable as to its whole significance, becomes to us as it develops itself, often a general, and oftener still a topical com-

mentary of Christ himself, upon his own teachings and commands. To-day, with the word of God in our hands, and the wonderful providence of God toward us and our country during the past three years, open to all men; the special mercies pertinent to our present condition, for which we should thank and praise God; and the particular blessings relevant to our immediate future, for which we should implore God, seem to me to be capable of the most precise statement.

In proceeding to make such a statement, exactly responsive to the whole current of what I have now said, it is well to remind you that it is now within a few days of three years since the President of the United States then in office, (Mr. Buchanan,) struck, perhaps, with the impending ruin of his country, (for which very few were more deeply responsible than himself,) made proclamation of a day of national humiliation and prayer, with open confession, on his part, that there was no remedy for the vast and accumulating national perils but the direct interposition of God. It had been better if he had taken the divine rebuke to a far better and greater man, under circumstances far more desperate: Wherefore criest thou unto me? Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward! The Lord heard the supplications of the people, but not to the intent indicated by their chief magistrate. The war he dreaded came; but the ruin he connived at, came not. Almost three years of war, well nigh unparalleled for the extent and cost of it, as well as for its possible effects, bring forth this day of national thanksgiving responsive to that day of national humiliation. Called in providence, without any procurement of my own, to point out the duty of our country then, I find myself, in like manner, called to point out its duty now, under a change of circumstances so remarkable. No clearer exposition could be given of the difference between the condition of the country at the two periods, than a just comparison of the two proclamations of the two Presidents. What falls to us now is to fill up this portentous gap in our national career by recounting briefly, and in order, the chief intervening acts of God's providence toward us, which make this day, so justly, what it is; pointing out at

the same time, that these are among the very mercies most relevant to every purpose of our present national appeal to the throne of God.

In the *first* place, there is ground of fervent and everlasting thanks and praise to God that he kept back the nation from giving any just cause for any part of the enormous wickedness which has been perpetrated. Legal pretext for breaking up the nation, there was none whatever. But even if it could be supposed possible for the right of the legal destruction of the nation, at the caprice of a portion of it, to exist either by nature or otherwise, it is perfectly certain that no national act had ever been performed that would justify the smallest approach toward the exercise of such a caprice. On the contrary, since the foundation of the world, there never existed a supreme government which ought to have been less liable to serious complaint on the part of those subject to it, much less to wide-spread insurrection and open war, than the Federal Government was during the long course of years that traitors were secretly conspiring to destroy it, than it was at the moment the Southern States seceded from it and took up arms against it. Now let any human mind attempt to form a somewhat adequate conception of the misery and ruin that have been inflicted, and of the sin that has been committed, in the attempt to consummate the original wickedness of this attempt to destroy this great republic. Let it be remembered that all this incalculable guilt and suffering had for its original justification no pretext that would excuse a private person for causing another even a moment's uneasiness. Yet it is all to be accounted for at the bar of God. To speak of nothing else, they who are responsible for this terrible war, and the frightful slaughter which has attended it, must answer to God for every drop of human blood that has flowed in torrents along its cruel track. That which God would not pardon, was that Manasseh had shed innocent blood till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another. "Therefore," thus saith the Lord God of Israel, "Behold I am bringing such evil upon Jerusalem and Judah that whosoever heareth of it both his ears shall tingle. I will wipe Jerusalem as a man

wipeth a dish, wiping it, and turning it upside down." Whatever may be the judgment of God, in the world to come, upon the authors of such crimes, it requires no seer to reveal that God is bringing the curse of blood-guiltiness upon them in this life. Who shall impeach the righteous judgment of Jehovah? Who, in the survey of such a course of providence, and in the knowledge of the divine record it is illustrating, is not ready to call upon his soul, and all that is within him, to bless God that he has kept us back from doing aught to provoke iniquities so abominable in his sight?

In the *second* place, there is abounding cause of gratitude to God for the manner in which he has stirred up the hearts and guided the course of the loyal population in every part of the country, in the terrible ordeal through which they have been led. Taken by surprise, seduced by diabolical deceits, or overpowered by sudden force, the faithful population in the seceded states were still a source of weakness to the insurgents; their cruel oppression operated as a constant stimulant to the national efforts for their deliverance; their presence in the revolted states afforded the surest means of restoring society after the rebellion should be crushed; and the tens of thousands of them who coöperated with us, as soon as they had opportunity, added continually to our strength. In the border slave states, all of which were embraced in the scheme of the revolt, and all of which have been already secured to the Union, the hand of God has been more manifest, perhaps, than anywhere else. At first, everything, in all of them, wore the most threatening aspect to the national cause; and they have suffered by the war many fold more than all the Northern States; large portions of them to an extent that is frightful. But, through the constant blessing of God, the steadfast courage of the loyal people, sustained by the prompt coöperation of the border free states and the vigor of the Federal Government, has constantly and now finally triumphed over an almost perpetual Confederate invasion, combined with the treason of, probably, half of their own aggregate population. Of the course of events in Kentucky especially, with which I have been familiar from the be-

ginning, I feel assured that any just consideration of what has occurred, from the complete triumph in 1859 of the party which has furnished the bulk of our domestic traitors, up to the present time, will reveal a course of providential interpositions as well calculated to fill us with awe as with profound gratitude. The Northern States met the great crisis with a universal uprising of heroic patriotism, hardly surpassed in the history of the human race. And if, in the unsatisfactory aspects which our public affairs have sometimes put on, disloyal factions have arisen, the providence of God has broken them to pieces. And if untimely party spirit has sought ignoble success, even at the risk of the degradation of the country, the providence of God has brought such base attempts to open shame. And now, as if to rouse and unite the nation to give one final and crushing blow, a great demonstration of resolute support to the Government comes, attended with the horrible cry of thousands of our brethren systematically starved to death as prisoners of war, while thousands of insurgents, our paroled prisoners of war, are captured afresh, fighting against us! It is as if God would rebuke us for allowing space for an hour in which such unparalleled dishonor may be practised, and such atrocious cruelty may be perpetrated! It would hardly be a marvel to see the whole nation hurl itself against the barbarians, who cause the people they rule with a rod of iron to revive crimes long since banished from the earth!

In the *third* place, we ought to come before God, with his awe and his dread upon us, as we magnify his great name for his goodness towards us, in confounding all the counsels of the chief leaders of this insurrection—defeating all their expectations—and turning their wickedness to their own destruction. In one thing posterity will remember with respect this insurgent population—they have generally fought well, often with heroic courage. But even in this praise—which we are glad they merit, as it redeems in some degree a people of our own blood—few or none of those who are conspicuous in leading them to destruction have any part. The traitors most conspicuous in the detestable conspiracy which preceded the revolt,

and in the organization of the insurrection when it broke out, and in the violence and fraud which marked it from its birth, have been conspicuous also in the diligent practice of the great duty of self-preservation. As statesmen, as leaders of a great revolution, as financiers, as diplomatists, as anything on which success of any kind depends—if it be not that God has confounded them—there is nothing to redeem them from contempt. They would establish a new and immense empire, whose corner-stone should be laid in African slavery; and they proceeded to the execution of their vast design, in the only way by which it was possible for African slavery among themselves to be destroyed—the only way in which it was certain that the immense region that they already possessed, could be completely desolated. They would make the whole commerce and capital of the world tributary to their designs, by means of their control of the cotton market of the world; and they speedily succeed in reducing their population to a condition rapidly approaching want—hurrying the country they governed into irredeemable bankruptcy, and forfeiting forever the greatest agricultural monopoly ever possessed by any people. They would separate forever from the United States, as from a nation that had lost its freedom, and was degrading its civilization; they would prohibit all intercourse with their former fellow-citizens, whom they pronounced the basest of mankind; they would condescend to do all this peaceably, on terms the most insolent and preposterous, if reverently accepted at their dictation; otherwise they would chastise the Yankees into submission, make Washington the seat of their empire, establish slavery in favored portions of the North, and hold the rest in subjection. And so on through all the phases of a self-conceit exalted into phrenzy, and an audacious insolence unrestrained by principle or common-sense. God blowed on them: and what now, for the realization of their insane attempts? What woe to us—what woe to the world—if they could have accomplished even a small part of what they proposed to themselves! What thanks are due to God for frustrating designs pregnant with folly and wickedness, and unmixed with a solitary chance for good?

In the *fourth* place, God has stood by us in a wonderful manner throughout all the vicissitudes of the great war upon the issue of which depended, not only our national prosperity, glory, and independence, but our national existence as well; and for this, as it is the most palpable manifestation of his providence, so it should receive the most distinct and grateful recognition by us. War of itself, like pestilence and famine, is always a calamity—a calamity springing directly from the depravity of the human race. But, like pestilence and famine, it is an instrument which God employs in the course of his adorable providence; and from which, as from all evil, it is his divine prerogative to bring forth good. And so great is the good brought out of it by God, that little exists on earth worthy to be possessed, that is not held, first or last, by the blessing of God upon stout hearts and strong arms in the day of battle; and that no race or people ever did anything for the glory of God, or the advancement of human kind, who shrunk from maintaining by force whatever God had given them, or from achieving by force whatever God required of them. Of all wars, bloody insurrections are the most desolating, the most offensive to human reason and to the majesty of God, and the most certain to fail of their design; and as of all insurrections not one has ever been more bloody, more desolating, more causeless, more abominable than this. The unshaken conviction of all God-fearing loyal men, from the beginning, that it must utterly fail, has, at every step, been vindicated as just, and realized as true. Within less than three years our valiant troops have overrun, subdued, and occupied more than half of the immense territory, more than half of the States, claimed by the insurgents; and in doing this have reduced, by more than half, the power of the insurgents to carry on the war, and have rendered their design of dividing the Republic by force on the slave line, and erecting the fourteen slave States into a new nation, forever impossible. And now we are many times more competent to do what remains, than we were at the beginning to do what has been done; and the insurgents are many times less competent to offer effectual resistance than they were at first. Well might the President say, “No human council hath devised, no mor-

tal hand worked out these great things." And what remains for us is to take new courage as we see new proofs that God is with us, and do what remains of our great work as those should do who are guided by the hand of God. But remember that God is a jealous God, and we are a sinful people. Not for thy righteousness, said he to his ancient people, or for the righteousness of thine heart dost thou go to possess their land; but for the wickedness of these nations the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee. And, in another place: I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for my own name's sake.

In the *fifth* place, we owe to the God of all grace and mercy peculiar thanksgiving for that he not only made all things work together for our good, in our own land, but also embraced us in the acts of his providence concerning foreign and distant nations, bounding and limiting and ordering the things which vitally concerned the greatest of them all, so that we have been constantly delivered from great and impending danger. There were two prominent dangers to which our country was exposed. The first was, that while the nation was wholly unprepared, the Confederate leaders, who had the whole period of Mr. Buchanan's presidency in which to reduce our means of prompt defense to the very lowest point, and to exalt their own means of attack to the very highest; should rapidly concentrate the whole military strength of the insurgent states and hurl it, in immense masses, upon the wavering border states, and through them into the very heart of the nation. They had a million of fightmen; one-half of that force, perhaps, one-third of it, thus used, at the proper moment, presented in reality the obvious and certainly the only possible chance of success. They could not do it, or they did not see it; they lost the great occasion; and their destruction, if they were unaided, remained only a question of time. The other great peril was the intervention of the great commercial nations of Europe in their behalf. This they confidently expected; and it is probable that when all the secrets of their conspiracy are laid bare, it may appear that their leading men had better reasons to expect decisive

military aid, both from Great Britain and France, than for their clamorous folly about the sovereignty of cotton. I shall not, on this occasion, array the proofs of the manifest intention of both those great nations, persisted in up to a very recent period, to secure the independence of the Confederate States, if that could be done without too great risk to themselves. Few enlightened men in this country have any doubt on the subject. I shall not stop to show that the recent favorable change in the conduct of both of these nations, towards the United States, produced in part by the manifestation of our power and in part by the threatening state of European affairs, is probably worthy of little reliance any longer than the events which produced the change remain to confirm it. Nor can I now recount the circumstances of that immense and increasing European agitation, which took its rise since the commencement of our civil war; which may speedily convulse all Europe in a manner far too deep to render it convenient for either France or Great Britain to provoke a war with the United States at present. But what I wish to point out is, the hand of God in our deliverance, even if it were but temporary, from this second of our chief perils, by delivering us from the combined menace of France and England, and possibly from war with both, as allies of our insurgents. In this age, nothing is more certain than that nations that would be free must be powerful. That God has given to this nation a glorious mission, which is not yet accomplished, it were mere atheism to deny. That having done so, however he may chastise us for our sins, or purge us by suffering unto greater fitness for our destiny, that he will withhold those acts of his almighty providence, which are needful for our national preservation, is beyond conception. That he will not, let the events I have feebly recounted, and which involve a deliverance so signal and so opportune, satisfy our hearts and fill our mouths with praise.

In the *sixth* place, God is greatly to be praised for the spirit of a sound mind, which by his grace and providence has constantly increased in the loyal people of the United States, enabling them to see more and more clearly, the supreme duty

of preserving the integrity, the supremacy, and the independence of the Republic; and confirming them, more and more, in the determined purpose to perform that duty. This result is the more remarkable, as we reflect on the manner in which the infinite mass of confused opinions has worked itself out, and cleared itself up, to the distinct and almost solitary test and purpose: *the insurrection must be put down, absolutely and at whatever cost.* And it adds to the importance and efficacy of this result that it cost, in thousands of cases, the most heroic sacrifice of feeling; that it was reached, in thousands of others, against temptations as strong as were ever overcome; that it has been adhered to by all in full view of the immense sacrifices it would require, and that not even mistakes of great gravity, and errors full of danger, on the part of those in whose hands is the immediate fate of the country, have shaken for an instant the unalterable purpose. The question of negro slavery, for example, in its relation to the insurrection to the Federal Government, and to the future pacification of the country, has furnished the severest test of this sublime loyalty that could be imagined. And therefore, while I can not, at this time, argue any part of it at large, its immediate relation to the subject before me and to this whole occasion, as well as proper respect for public opinion, and perhaps I may add, for myself, forbid my passing over it in silence. I will therefore observe, in the first place, that traitorous slaveholders everywhere are destitute of any right or just authority in any national decision concerning this subject: because they perfectly understood that they risked their slaves as well as their lives upon their fatal revolt, and because by their treason they have laid themselves justly liable to the forfeiture of both. In the second place, I observe, that as the people of this country have never sanctioned the use of the Federal Government as an instrument to extend or to perpetuate negro slavery, so, I am persuaded, they never will approve the use of it as a direct instrument in its extinction. In the meantime, all men and parties, who, on the one hand, oppose the permanent pacification of the country until and unless negro slavery is first abolished; and all men and parties,

on the other hand, who resist that pacification, until and unless negro slavery is accepted as a permanent element, are equally and alike mere factions, out of sympathy with the nation and perfectly certain to be finally repudiated by it. For myself, whenever this question is forced upon me, no one who remembers that in 1830, I sought to open the way to a system of gradual emancipation, under the old Constitution of Kentucky, by proving the legal power over the after born; no one who remembers that, in 1850, I sought to have a system of emancipation engrafted on our present State Constitution: can, for a moment, suppose that after the immense progress of free opinions in the interval, I am likely, for the sake of negro slavery, to risk the triumph of the nation, or to give countenance to proceedings or opinions which tend directly to a collision between the Government of Kentucky and that of the United States. On the other hand, I made public in 1862 my objections to the special policy of the present Administration touching this vast and difficult subject, even before the final proclamation of the President was issued. What the final issue as to the black race may be, depends, first, upon the future course of the insurgents themselves; secondly, upon the future course of the Federal Government; and thirdly, upon the future decision of the people of the United States; neither of which can be known at the present time. Thus far the temper of the nation, and especially of loyal persons in the slave states, seem to me to be as I have stated; and I judge it to be a temper eminently the product of that spirit of a sound mind, manifested in so many other ways, for whose wide existence we are called on to thank God. No nation ever occupied a situation, in which it was more important that every species of fanaticism should be banished from its councils and its conduct, and every tendency toward disloyalty denounced and put down.

In the *seventh* and last place, the only remaining topic I will suggest, as demanding our special thanksgiving to God, is that, amidst all the shocks which the nation has received, and all the turmoil of a great and bloody civil war, and all the rank corruption of the times, he has kept the great body of the people

sound at heart concerning those great principles of liberty and free government, which lie at the base of all our institutions, and which are the fruits of the longest and most effective political training ever enjoyed by any portion of mankind. I know there is an incessant clamor to the contrary by all who are in sympathy with the principles of the insurgents, and that this clamor is taken up, to a certain extent, by many who are classed in a kind of general and qualified way with the supporters of the Union and the National Government. There is, undoubtedly, a wide distinction, in ordinary times, between a government considered of itself and the body of civil magistrates who administer that government. But when the nation is arrayed in battle, and the existing magistracy represent alike its civil and its military existence, habitual clamor against their honest—even though, in some respects, improper—endeavors to secure the triumph of the republic, far more resembles sympathy with its enemies than patriotic jealousy for constitutional liberty. The safety of the state is the supreme law. And though this great rule of public duty may be abused by wicked magistrates, the rejection of it for the purpose of giving security to public enemies is the direct way to destruction. War is for the protection of nations, not for the protection of traitors and insurgents against them. And when life, the supreme gift of God to men, is forfeited by crime, what rule of reason or of morality requires special care to be taken of the personal liberty of those whose whole endeavor is to destroy public liberty, or heedfulness of the personal and property rights of those whose business it is to kill us and destroy all we possess? When this clamor degenerates into an outcry against the Government, on questions of the neglect of mere forms of proceedings, and the non-observance of purely technical, civil ideas, in dealing with justly suspected traitors, by way of military police in the midst of a desolating war, it is not easy to forget who has taught us that the habit of straining at gnats is usually the indication of power to swallow camels. There is no rule whatever, either of reason, or morality, or religion, that requires the public enemies of the state to be treated before the civil law as if they

were its friends; nor do the Constitution and laws of this country, or of any other, secure to rebels, and those who aid and comfort them, the rights and immunities, either as to form or substance, which belongs to peaceable and loyal citizens. To allege, on such grounds as are constantly urged, that the Federal Administration is corrupt and tyrannical; that the laws are thereby set at naught, and the Constitution subverted; that the submission of the nation to such proceedings is proof of its own incapacity for freedom; and that, as the general and terrible result, we are already in subjection to a military despotism, is proof only that there is a party in the country which abuses the forbearance of the Government, and the patience of the people, and insults the providence of God. If every word they say was as true as it is false, the citizens of the republic who are in arms for its defence, would, before laying those arms aside, restore the liberty, the laws, and the institutions of their country. What is true, theoretically, of every country, and of every form of government, is also true practically with us. The community, by its very nature, and by the express ordinance of God, is altogether superior to any possible form of government, by means of which its national life is held forth. Our present Constitution is our present means of manifesting our national existence and desires. Our fathers made it; it has served the most glorious purpose for us; we love it, and intend to maintain it. But we were a nation before we made this Constitution. And before we were a separate nation, we were free Britons—a part of an empire already glorious. And when we separated as a nation from that empire, it was a constitutional monarchy; before that, it had been a kingly oligarchy; before that, almost a despotism; before that, six hundred years ago, it was a feudal monarchy. And all these changes came by convulsions. But all the time, Britain was Britain. And all the time, for nearly a century, America has been America, under whatever form of political institutions. And, by the blessing of God, free America shall be free America forever, under whatever form of free constitution, this one, or any other one, it shall please her unconquerable people to create. And, from

the bottom of my soul, I thank God for every proof that this heroic and long-descended temper of the people abides in all its strength.

Having now presented some of the special grounds pertinent to this peculiar occasion, on which the united thanks and praise of all loyal and God-fearing people throughout this nation are due to God, I will very briefly point out the corresponding blessings specially relevant to these grounds of praise, for which they who thus rejoice in God should offer their supplications at his throne of grace.

We ought implore God that he would give to us, and to every one like-minded with us, great grace, wisdom, and courage, that we may be enabled to stand in our lot, and, come good or come ill, quit ourselves like men unto the uttermost. That he would, of his great mercy, give grace and sense to the disloyal men and women scattered over the land, and mixed with the loyal people, to see the great wickedness and danger of the principles they cherish and the practices they encourage, so that they may repent thereof, and turn to a better way. That he would confound the counsels and break the endeavors of all open rebels against the life of this nation which God has set up and enlarged, and against its government which God has ordained, and so show his wonderful compassion to them as to keep them from perpetrating all further mischief, and to turn them from their dreadful sin and folly. That he would so order, in his great goodness, that all in authority among us may be kept from every evil way, and from every purpose unworthy of the great necessity laid upon us, and the great end set before us, so that complete triumph and lasting peace may be speedily secured for us, by means which God will own and bless. That God, having fitted the nation for complete success, and having given that to it, would incline and enable all men to walk in such ways of wisdom, justice, and humanity, that all the results of this frightful struggle shall turn to the glory of his adorable name, and that the evils of these troublous times may pass utterly away, and return no more forever, while the good that God will bring out of them, both to this

republic and all the inhabitants thereof, and to the world, may be a perpetual inheritance, to his endless praise, through Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world.

It is in the light of eternity alone that the real importance of all these things to us, considered as individual persons, can be duly estimated. It is not as they tend to make us miserable or make us content; to reduce us to want or fill us with abundance; to strip us of freedom or confirm our liberties; to exalt us very high or reduce us very low; but it is as they tend to wean us from the Lord Jesus, or to lead us to a more perfect conformity unto him, and a higher service and enjoyment of him, that they are all of supreme significance to us. To keep ourselves aloof when God is shaking, not the heavens only, but the earth also, may be to separate ourselves from him, who is overturning all things that can be shaken, in order that his people may inherit all that cannot be moved. And one of the most mournful aspects of the sins and miseries with which this insurrection has polluted the land, is the phrenzied participation which thousands who profess to be ministers of Christ, and tens of thousands who profess to be his followers, have had in originating it, in sustaining it, and in applauding it. Nevertheless, the kingdom of Messiah will purge itself, and survive and triumph, and Messiah, the Prince, will vindicate to himself his dominion over all things; and they who put their trust in him shall never be confounded. While hypocrites and apostates perish in their sins, we may trust that the deluded children of God will be saved as by fire, and we know that the faithful witnesses for Christ will be brought off conqueror, and more than conqueror, through him who loved them and gave himself for them. To him be glory in the highest!

THE NEGROES AND THE WAR.

IMPORTANT LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT.

The following noble letter from President Lincoln appears in a correspondence published in the Frankfort (Kentucky) *Commonwealth* :

EXECUTIVE MANSION, WASHINGTON,

April 4, 1864.

A. G. HODGES, ESQ., Frankfort, Ky.,

MY DEAR SIR :—You ask me to put in writing the substance of what I verbally said, the other day, in your presence, to Governor Bramlette and Senator Dixon. It was about as follows :

I am naturally anti-slavery. If slavery is not wrong, nothing is wrong. I cannot remember when I did not so think and feel. And yet, I have never understood that the Presidency conferred upon me an unrestricted right to act officially upon this judgment and feeling. It was in the oath I took, that I would to the best of my ability, preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States. I could not take the office without taking the oath. Nor was it my view, that I might take an oath to get power, and break the oath, in using the power. I understood, too, that, in ordinary civil administration, this oath even forbade me, to practically indulge my primary, abstract judgment on the moral question of slavery. I had publicly declared this many times, and in many ways. And I aver that, to this day, I have done no official act in mere deference to my abstract judgment and feeling on slavery.

I did understand, however, that my oath to preserve the Constitution to the best of my ability, imposed upon me the duty of preserving, by every indispensable means, that Govern-

ment—that Nation, of which that Constitution was the organic law. Was it possible to lose the Nation, and yet preserve the Constitution?

By general law, life and limb must be protected; yet often a limb must be amputated to save a life; but a life is never wisely given to save a limb. I feel that measures, otherwise unconstitutional, might become lawful, by becoming indispensable to the preservation of the Constitution, through the preservation of the Nation. Right or wrong, I assumed this ground, and now avow it. I could not feel that to the best of my ability I had even tried to preserve the Constitution, if to save slavery or any minor matter, I should permit the wreck of Government, Country and Constitution, all together. When early in the war General Fremont attempted military emancipation, I forbade it because I did not then think it an indispensable necessity. When a little later, General Cameron, then Secretary of War, suggested the arming of the blacks, I objected, because I did not yet think it an indispensable necessity. When, still later, General Hunter attempted military emancipation, I again forbade it, because I did not yet think the indispensable necessity had come.

When, in March, and May, and July, 1862, I made earnest and successive appeals to the Border States, to favor compensated emancipation, I believed the indispensable necessity for military emancipation, and arming the blacks would come, unless averted by that measure. They declined the proposition, and I was, in my best judgment, driven to the alternative, of either surrendering the Union, and with it the Constitution, or of laying strong hand upon the colored element. I chose the latter. In choosing it, I hoped for greater gain than loss; but of this I was not entirely confident. More than a year of trial now shows no loss by it, in our foreign relations; none in our home popular sentiment; none in our white military force—no loss by it any how or any where. On the contrary, it shows a gain of quite a hundred and thirty thousand soldiers, seamen and laborers. These are palpable facts, about which, as facts,

there can be no caviling. We have the men, and we could not have had them without the measure.

And now, let any Union man, who complains of the measure, test himself, by writing down in one line, that he is for subduing the rebellion by force of arms, and in the next, that he is for taking these hundred and thirty thousand men from the Union side, and placing them where they would be, but for the measure he condemns. If he cannot face his cause so stated, it is only because he cannot face the truth.

I add a word which was not in the verbal conversation. In telling this tale I attempted no compliment to my own sagacity. I claim not to have controlled events, but confess plainly that events have controlled me. Now, at the end of three years' struggle, the Nation's condition is not what either party or any man devised or expected. God alone can claim it. Whither it is tending seems plain. If God now wills the removal of a great wrong, and wills also, that we of the North, as well as you of the South, shall pay fairly for our complicity in that wrong, impartial history will find therein new cause to attest and revere the justice and goodness of God.

• Yours truly,

A. LINCOLN.