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1862

A Discourse Upon Causes for Thanksgiving

John Weiss

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CAUSES FOR THANKSGIVING:

PREACHED AT

WATERTOWN, NOV. 30, 1862.

BY JOHN WEISS.

BOSTON:

WRIGHT & POTTER, PRINTERS, 4 SPRING LANE.

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MARK iv: 28.

FIRST THE BLADE, THEN THE EAR, AFTER THAT THE FULL CORN IN THE EAR.

The content and thankfulness of New England are committed every spring to her soil by the hands of farmers, who find it again spreading the color of California gold over their autumn fields. And what an alchemist is a farmer, to get that color out of land so poor and climate so harsh; where, what with the prices of labor, the expense of implements, of draining, manuring, keeping of stock and buildings, and a comfortable life through a tedious winter, not a great deal of that color finds its way into his pocket, however much he may store in his bins or send to market. And wherever a plough runs, from the Kennebec to the Mississippi, turning fat or meagre soils to the sun of a temperate summer, there springs the beautiful thanksgiving harvest of New England and of the North. Manufactures, shoe and leather dealing, all the trades and inventions, eat the pumpkins and the corn of the farmer. And the pursuits which are closely allied to agriculture, such as the breeding of cattle and the growing of wool, help the farmer to create and feed a North. Lawrence and Lowell can consume all the cotton they get, when the farmer of the East and West dumps his potatoes at the factory door. When the great arm of the engine vibrates, and a million spindles and the hearts of those who tend them sing, see how the slender thread goes up from the ball, carrying all the crops of the year with it to spin them into Wamsutta or Merrimac, or other famous brands. The morning tattoo which the Lynn shoemakers beat on their lap-stones is the echo of flails in a thousand barns. Genesis says, that the Lord God took a little earth to make the first man; now man

breathes his own breath of life into the earth again, and it makes him and sustains him every day.

There is not much land, even among the rich river-bottoms and prairies of the West, so genial that man has "only to tickle it with a hoe to make it laugh with a harvest." What would our farmers think of that great tract of black earth in the empire of Russia, "lying between the fifty-first and fifty-seventh parallels of latitude, comprising about 247,000,000 acres, so rich that if manured the first years of culture, the crops often prove abortive from excessive vegetation. The thickness of this deposit varies from three to six feet, and in many places it runs to an unknown depth."* But how hard it is to evoke civilization and knowledge out of that depth, because neither of them cultivate it. Yet it is in that great temperate plateau of Russia, called "The Industrial Region," that freedom and religion when planted may be expected to subdue the rankness of the soil. Here freedom and religion coax and flatter sterility till it fairly forgets itself and smiles.

In a still autumn morning, when the brown roads have drift-heaps of red and yellow leaves, and the air seems to be nothing but a mingling of shine and warmth, what a ride it is to take up and down the valleys here, through the north part of Watertown, where the first farmers of New England sowed their English grass, and across Beaver brook through the uplands of Waltham, and behind Prospect-hill, where the farms and wood-lots stretch pleasantly away. Perhaps you turn off towards Lexington, and cross the famous turnpike down which the farmers "fired the first shot heard round the world," when, as minute-men, they top-dressed their fields with English blood, and were not chary of their own. Religion and liberty have grown well ever since. You ride past their manifest tokens; you pause at their memorial when you hitch your horse at a farmer's door, and ask the price of his potatoes and pumpkins which lie there, great heaps of plenty, before barns bursting with corn-shucks and upland grass, the sinews of war and of peace. No sharp-shooting behind the stone fences now, nor irregular firing up and down the road. The cricket chirps from the door-step a tranquil song, whose burden

* Patent Office Report, 1861. Agricultural.

seems to be that Nature is laying in sunshine, with good husbandry, for another spring. The children break out of the little primary school-house, where New England planting is carried on too,—boys and girls trained to grow straight and sturdy, to handle some day the plough, the loom, or the musket, as the country needs. Now they are the finest of all the crops on the slopes which they shall one day inherit. What a ride you can take through the country lanes, bordered with nothing finer than the pendent barberry and the purpling sumach, unless you have an eye for the comfort, and thanksgiving, and popular Liberty, whose stateliness lines all the road, and stretches far away between the hills.

When a people own the land, and own themselves, and consequently do not depend upon one product and one employment for their means of intelligence and happiness, they are superior to bad luck, and know little of the discomforts of a crisis. In this respect what a different sight meets the traveller who is passing to-day through the cotton districts of Lancashire, England, where a population of nearly three millions have their welfare entangled in the mill-machinery, and cease to hope as the factory chimnies cease to smoke. They are as much the slaves of the cotton-plant as the negroes who hoe it and gin its blossoms. They belong to a style of civilization which thinks little of man, but a great deal of trade; which dooms a man all his life, and his children after him, to make the head of a pin, to pick under ground at a stratum of coal, to pull and ripple flax, or tend a machine in a mill. Take away his pin-head, his pick-axe, or fail to feed his machine with cotton, and he is a pauper; he comes upon the parish for his daily support, or has a bowl of soup ladled out to him at the door of some charity. In Manchester, which has a population of 357,604, the pauperism is now $10\frac{3}{8}$ per cent., and out-door relief is distributed to 16,334 persons at the rate of 1s. 4d. per head per week—about two shillings of our money. Out of eighty-four cotton mills, twenty-two are stopped, and thirty are working short time. But Manchester is comparatively well off. The town of Stockport, about six miles from Manchester, has, out of a population of 54,681, 18,000 engaged in the factories, in good times; but now there are only 4,000 working on full

time, 7,283 are wholly unemployed, and 7,000 are working on short time. Then 1,000 people belonging to other trades depend upon the staple trade, thrown out of work. 30,000 people in Stockport receive relief. But what an amount of misery do those figures represent. The more able-bodied men go tramping over the country to seek work, but spinners and weavers are not able-bodied, and a day's march often lays them up. Some of them who can sing form a little company, and go singing glees, "with nobody minding," and few farthings for their half-starved music. The women also try to win a bitter meal with the sweetness of their voice. A spectator describes a scene of this kind: "One young woman, about thirty years of age, with a child in her arms, was standing in a by-street, singing in a sweet, plaintive voice, a Lancashire song. It was her first song in public; and the tremulous voice and downcast look, as she hugged with nervous grasp her little one, was very touching. When the song was over, the poor creature looked round with a timid air to the bystanders; but she had miscalculated her strength—the occasion was beyond her power of endurance—and she burst into a passionate flood of tears."* I see in that woman the patient England held in slavery by a selfish Toryism, which would be glad to-morrow to recognize another slavery in order to keep its own fed and quiet. A relieving officer in Stockport, says: "I have gone into the rooms of the English operatives when they have not had a mouthful of bread under the roof, and perhaps not had what you may call a meal the whole day, and nothing but shavings to sleep on through the night, yet they talked as cheerfully and resignedly as if there was every prospect of employment on the morrow." These are subjects of a government which has trained their bodies and souls to do only one thing, to mind the brutifying monotony of one machine, and is now exulting over what it calls the failure of a Democracy, as it lets arms and steamers for a Southern aristocracy slip through one hand, and a little soup for its starving poor through the other. This, then, is the largess of a constitutional monarchy,—piratical cannon and comfort for slave-drivers abroad, and the great institution of Soup for slaves at home!

* A Visit to the Cotton Districts, 1862, p. 4.

Even this latter is grudgingly bestowed. Many of the richest mill-owners have not yet subscribed a farthing to the relief funds, so that it is a difficult matter to secure a shilling a head per week to the poor applicants. Yet who subscribed to the "Alabama?" Whose money fits out steamer after steamer with munitions to keep the life in Southern slavery? What capital is it that buys Confederate bonds at eighty-four cents, and that is willing to take the risks of sea and a blockade to help in undermining the great Republic whose manifold prosperity it dreads? Thank God, the elements of an American Thanksgiving, material and spiritual, are, and forever will be, beyond the reach of open levy or secret malice of its hearty haters.

In Ashton-under-Lyne, whose population is 36,791, there are 10,933 hands employed in cotton, representing a population of nearly 22,000. The existing means of relief reach only 9,000 of these; that is, there are more than 10,000 dependent on private charity, or their own resources. The 9,000 cost £480 per week. The mill-owners in this place have been disposed to help the operatives. Some of them have allowed their unemployed hands as much as two and sixpence a week, some lend them money, others maintain a daily distribution of food.

In Preston the progress of the distress is shown by the following figures: in August of this year the number of poor relieved by the rates was 12,205, and by the Public Relief Committee, 21,616; but in September the number had swelled to 14,289 relieved by the rates, and 23,932 by the Committee. "During the week ending September 13, the Relief Committee distributed 16,832 loaves, weighing 61,016 lbs.; 11,301 quarts of soup, and 4,820 quarts of coffee." There are seventy-one firms owning mills in Preston: of these, forty-eight contributed the pitiful sum of £1,978 to a relief fund of £12,000. Yet there are 27,600 factory operatives whose actual financial loss per week amounts to more than £12,000. This happens every week, and one in every seven and a half of the entire population of Preston become entirely pauperized. To counterbalance this, forty-eight rich mill-owners contributed less than £2,000, not per week, but their definitive subscription for the year!

See how these poor men were obliged to take their money out of the savings banks. In the single town of Blackburn

the annual deposits, from 1855 to 1861, "had risen from £18,118 to £49,943, or more than £30,000." But what was that sum to the working classes who had lost since August, 1861, at least £350,000 in wages, "and that amount is now being increased at the rate of £12,000 per week." During six months, down to last May, the withdrawals from the banks were £10,000 in excess of the usual amount. These savings have been all swallowed up by this time. "A lass, thinly clad, but bearing evidence of better days, saw a dog with a bone. She tried to take it away. The dog snarled—would not give it up; and she stood foiled, in hungry attitude. A tradesman seeing her said, 'What did you want with that bone?' 'I could have swapped it for salt,' she replied, 'and the salt I might have swapped for a bit of bread.' As she said this she burst into tears."

In the midst of this distress, the painful and touching instances of which need not be repeated, the Boards of Guardians in many places have established what is called the "Labor Test," to protect the parish funds from the poaching of professional paupers and vagabonds. They commence an excavation, or provide work in stone-yards and on the roads, where every unemployed man must do his chore in order to draw his relief. These honest and unfortunate operatives are reduced to labor at these aimless tasks by the side of vagrants, ragamuffins, gamblers, "and corrupt old hucksters," to get a miserable dole of parish bread. What a poisoned mess is this which the proud old monarchy tosses jealously to her plain, straightforward children, who have woven, spun, carded, drawn and pieced her million bales of goods, which stock the markets of the world!

The resort to Indian cotton, which is carelessly gathered and imperfectly cleaned, appears only to have aggravated the prevailing wretchedness. Overseers and "managers report the most harrowing scenes in the factories, owing to the exhaustion of the patience of the men and the women who 'cannot go on with their work, owing to constant breakages.' The machines which they tend stand idle, whilst innumerable threads break from sheer rottenness, and almost before the wheels are again in motion the work is again required to be suspended, from a cause which had but the moment before been remedied. The

worry of such work is exhausting; it depresses the physical energies and wears the heart. Some give up in despair, and leave the factory to beg or work on the moor or in the stone-yard; others grow haggard or pale under the trial; the strong men grow weak,—the weak, ill. The men curse, and the women sit down and cry bitterly. A manufacturer resident in Manchester, who is by no means a tender-hearted gentleman, said, that instances of the kind were of daily occurrence in his factory, and that he had ceased to go into most of the rooms, ‘for the women were all crying over their work.’ ”*

The London “Times” informs us, that from the first of September to the twenty-fifth of October, the number of persons receiving parochial relief in all the cotton districts had increased by 68,456, and that there were in all 208,621. In addition to this, there are 143,870 persons who receive their aid from local committees. Total, 352,491. The weekly loss of wages is estimated at £136,094, and that amounts to £7,000,000 a year. “Nor does this prodigious sum,” says the “Times,” “represent the whole loss incurred by these districts, for the ordinary receipts of a manufacturer must be such as to cover not only wages, but the expense of machinery, and the interest of capital sunk in buildings and land, besides a handsome profit.” It is the loss of this handsome profit which, more than all the suffering of the men and women who used to earn it, inspires the “Times” to unroll its columns of appalling figures in the interest of intervention and Southern slavery. The loss of this profit, and the discomfort of having 400,000 fresh paupers added in one year to its list of vagabonds, is the only drawback to English satisfaction at seeing the great Republic shrivelling from loss of blood, and sinking from the menace of its former estate to insignificance beneath debt, dismemberment, and national disgrace.

But it reminds me of the principal cause for thanksgiving which we have to-day. In spreading before you a few facts in relation to the distress of the English workmen, my object was not only to contrast it with the substantial comfort which the institutions of a Democracy sustain, at the same time that it can wage war at the rate of \$2,000,000 a day, and deaths and

* Visit to the Cotton Districts, p. 75.

wounds incomputable, but to bring that rebellious aristocracy, to whose bad cause this distress is incidental, before the tribunal of our grateful thoughts.

Men of New England never had such a reason for returning thanks as to-day, when they can perceive so clearly that the whole history of their country has inevitably led to this death-struggle between two ideas as incompatible in the same civil society as deceit and sincerity in the same heart; an Aristocracy founded upon depriving men of natural rights, and a Democracy founded upon securing them to men. We are thankful that the issue is honestly and squarely made at last, and lurks no longer behind politics and compromises, and that every measure of the past which expected to stifle it has distinctly led, by the logic of a God who cannot bear iniquity, to a great historical situation, which tears the mask from the evil tendency, and bids a good tendency assume its grand proportions. The first Revolution of '76 was only a graft upon the rugged American stock, which blossomed in these latter years, and is now maturing its fruit. It will be the task of some future pen to show how the divine thought has picked its way through the political confusion and disgraces of a generation, to finish its work of founding a Republic.

How premature were all our notions that we were citizens of an America. We have been in our minority all the time—a lusty, passionate and unsettled one, out of which we are stepping now, to the rights and privileges of an honest democratic manhood. To show how we grew to this, will one day be the task of some man who will devote to it the flower and prudence of his life. He will have to divide it into three epochs—the first comprising the establishment of the Constitution, and the subsequent years to the abolition of the slave-trade. This was the epoch when the rights of man were the accepted theory of the country, slavery was supposed to be a self-limited disease, and the Revolution slumbered after resisting one aristocracy, till it was awakened by another. The second epoch will tell the great material and political story of the growth of slavery, in a generation which forgot the feeling of the fathers from interest and ambition. It will show how adroitly the new aristocratic ideas helped themselves to power

with the country's great watchword—Democracy—by relating the successive encroachments of an unconstitutional tendency in the name of the Constitution, in each of which free-labor voted to extend and protect slave-labor, and our mother, with the Revolution's blood yet hallowing her starry garments, was scorned and almost turned out of her own children's house. This epoch, with its three sub-divisions of nullification, the territorial questions, and the reaction of Republicanism, will extend to the election of Abraham Lincoln. The third epoch will open with secession, and tell the story of the reappearance of the rights of man in the reawakening of the Revolution, when the Democrat and the Aristocrat see each other clearly at last, only a bayonet's length apart, as they did at Bunker's Hill and Yorktown. And as it is just as impossible to write history without ideas as it is to make nations and epochs without them, so the idea of this history will be to show how providential and inevitable was the rise of this aristocracy and the resistance of this democracy, with all the triumphs, disgraces, defeats and miseries of their irrepressible conflict, with all the accidents, treasons, indecisions and weaknesses of the people's war; and that these things were for the sake of having a People at last to illustrate, uphold, and organize the rights of mankind, first for America, but no less for the world. It will be a history of two necessities born of two incompatible tendencies: the necessity of aristocracy born of slavery, and the necessity of democracy born of freedom. Those two necessities not only account for all that has happened, but show how nothing could have happened otherwise, not even military disappointments, delays and imbecilities; how, in short, slavery would never have been destroyed by freedom in any other way, or upon other terms, or at any other period.

We never believed this, and yet we see that it comes true, and every fresh bulletin confirms it; for if, out of all the crowd of events which makes the history of a country, a few of them happened by chance alone, the whole series of events would be vitiated, and the divine intentions, if there are any such, would be spoiled. If even one event occurred by chance, that is, illogically, shoved in, or slovenly, like the dropping of a stitch, the splendid web which we call history would

be shoddy. All the great forces of the world make all their slightest movements in obedience to law. The only mistake which slavery makes is in being slavery; that will destroy it, but in the meantime it is consistent and fatal as consumption. And God means that it shall be, for consistency's sake, to show the necessity of health and freedom. Therefore, we shall find that there was never a moment previous to the war when slavery could have been overcome by freedom, and never a moment during the war. We return thanks for the presence of God in every disappointment of our history.

Let us look at this point a little closer. When the Constitution became the charter of a Federal Union, slavery had just strength enough to prevent freedom from destroying it, and not strength enough to pique freedom in making the attempt. The two tendencies were neutral, but it was because one tendency was felt to be evil and unrepugnant, and short-lived. In 1790, '91 and '92, only 733,044 pounds of cotton were exported from the United States, a great deal of which was foreign cotton which had been previously imported.* The total value of this export was only \$137,737; an amount that would not keep an aristocracy in tobacco. But the development of the cotton-crop has been unchecked and regular ever since, excepting in the year of the embargo, 1808, and the three years of war, 1812, '13 and '14. In 1805, the value of the export was \$32,004,005; in 1821, it was \$64,638,062; and in 1850, it was \$118,393,952. The "cotton zone" extended from the Atlantic to the Rio del Norte, including the States and portions of States lying between the 27th and 35th parallels of latitude, "and all of the State of Texas between the Gulf of Mexico, and the 34th parallel of

* Before the Revolution, hemp and silk competed with cotton for preponderance. In a copy of Nathaniel Ames's Almanac for 1765, I find the following item: "March 14; above 20,000 cwt. of hemp has been exported from South Carolina since Nov. 1. Several stalks measured 17 feet long and 2 inches diameter at the base." Thus hemp was exported while foreign cotton was imported, and more pounds of hemp were raised than of cotton. In a copy of the Almanac for 1766, is another item: "June 30. Last Friday voted by ye House of Commons of ye Province (S. Carolina) £1,000 towards establishing a Silk Filature in this town under the direction of Rev'd Mr. Gilbert. Mrs. Pinckney of Belmont Plantation, within four miles of Charleston, has made near 50 bushels of Cocoons this season, which are esteemed of the best kind."

North latitude." In this vast area of upwards of 450,000 square miles, nearly a third is adapted to the growing of cotton.* Here, if any where, was the development of a geographical party with sectional politics. But at the same period, in 1850, the value of the crop of Indian corn was \$456,091,491; of wheat, \$156,786,068; and of hay, \$254,334,316.† Cotton was smaller than each of these great staples, being only one hundred and eighteen millions. Why did no aristocracy spring from those enormous figures, whose growth is mainly Northern? Because the men who owned the crops *raised them*, and therein lies the difference between a sectional party and the national life.

At what period during this great development of the cotton staple would you have expected slavery to come to an end by the operation of natural laws? We used to hear a good deal about letting slavery alone that it might die out. Why, the operation of natural laws was favorable to slavery—to the protection both of slaves and cotton. We might have expected to see Northern agriculture die out as soon.

The abolition of the slave-trade, in 1808, which the South regarded at the time as a hostile measure, has proved immensely favorable to slavery. It was indeed the first act of positive legislation with a tendency to nourish and protect that institution. For when annual cargoes of half-barbarous Africans are introduced into a country, local disturbances occur more frequently, the mortality among the slaves is greater, and their increase comparatively feeble.‡ The abolition of the trade gave

* Andrews' Report on Colonial and Lake Trade. 1852.

† These figures, taken from the Agricultural Report, 1861, vary from those which had been previously given in the Census for 1850. Of wheat alone, the two States of Pennsylvania and New York, raised of course more bushels than the aggregate of all the Southern and Middle Slave States.

‡ In 1714, the number of slaves was 55,850; and 30,000 of these had been brought from Africa.

Between 1715 and 1750	there were imported	90,000	slaves.
“ 1751 “ 1760	“ “ “	35,000	“
“ 1761 “ 1770	“ “ “	74,000	“
“ 1771 “ 1790	“ “ “	34,000	“
“ 1790 “ 1808	“ “ “	70,000	“

These amount to 303,000; but the total number of native and imported slaves in 1808, was only 1,100,000, showing a feeble increase for a century. But from 1808 to 1850 the number leaped to 3,204,373. The slave-ships always landed more men than women.

to Southern slavery all those peculiarities which the masters are pleased to call patriarchal. Plantation life has reared two generations of American slaves, in a climate comparatively temperate, where they have preserved and propagated all their native excellencies undisturbed by the annual relays of native vices which the slave-ship brought. A good many savage habits have dropped away from them. Fetichism and serpent-worship lingers only in a few places in Mississippi, and perhaps in Louisiana, where the slave-trade lasted longer. The natural religiousness of the negro is more healthily developed by Methodism and the Baptist sects, as in Jamaica, than by Catholicism, as in Hayti, or by the half-savage rites of Africa. When the "Wanderer," in 1858, landed a cargo of native negroes on the coast of Georgia, the better portion of the Southern press and people were alarmed and indignant; many disliked the violation of law; the rest felt that it was an infraction of law which brought harm instead of benefit to the institution. A few papers were clamorous with approbation, but the more influential recorded their disgust at the sight of the sickly and savage cargo.* In 1850 it was calculated that not more than eight or ten thousand of originally imported Africans were yet alive.

It was not long before the politics of the South represented its controlling interest, in the doctrine of State rights, the interpretation of the Constitution, the jealous safeguards thrown around the property in man, the absolute necessity to encroach and domineer, to invent new compromises, to abolish old ones, to thrust the fatal tendency into the courts and every department of government. The South never did a single act that was not strictly in harmony with the exigencies of its position. It had recovered from the amiable expectation of the fathers, that slavery would disappear. Figures, which are said to never lie, began to prove slavery a divine institution. It was the cotton crop which sent Southerners to the Old Testament after a divine sanction for slavery, and to the New, to applaud Paul for remanding Onesimus to his master. Washington, Jefferson, Lee, and Lowndes and Mason never cared to build a hedge of

* See Charleston and Savannah papers of that date.

texts around the institution. If they thought there was no attribute of God that could take the part of the slaveholder, they would not dare to search their Bibles for slaveholding texts. But their sons of the next generation saw an undoubted law of God whitening all their fields with the cotton-bloom. Then the Bible texts became pods that burst with the doctrines of Calhoun and his descendants; for men search the Scriptures to justify their interest as often as to control their passion; *

There was an anti-slavery party in Virginia as late as 1832. Worn out tobacco-fields helped it to chew the cud of bitter fancy, as it revolved the sentiments of Jefferson and Mason. An act of emancipation narrowly escaped passing the legislature of that State. Why did it not pass, if the prosecution of slave-labor was hostile to the interest of Virginia? We have heard that the efforts of anti-slavery men in that State were paralyzed by the commencement of an anti-slavery agitation at the North. Slavery was just on the point of dying out, when the publication of the "Liberator" infused a new and antagonistic life into its decrepit frame. How far men have to go for nothing, when their prejudices drive! That publication heralded a great awakening of the republican tendency, but the Southern tendency was already pledged to its own laws and obedient to their direction; a "Liberator" in every town and village of the North could have neither accelerated nor retarded the march of natural laws. Just look at the facts. In 1832, while the legislature of Virginia was discussing laws relative to emancipation, the slaves rose immensely in price. They should have fallen. The discussion itself was in consequence of their being worth so little. Why did they rise? Did slaveholders give three or four times as much for able-bodied negroes, against their own interest, and to spite the "Liberator"? It was the increasing demand for slaves, the growing activity of the internal slave-trade, the imperious necessity of slave labor, the prospect of new territory and an expansion of the cotton zone, that caused the

* Descourtilz, a French Naturalist, was in Charleston in 1798, and heard a Quaker declaiming in the square, to quite a gathering of people, against the enormity of separating and selling some slaves who were exposed there on a platform. The sale went on, and so did the Quaker. But the snake had a full equipment of rattles by the time of Mr. Hoar's mission.

price to rise and emancipation to be shelved as a Virginia abstraction. It was found to be against nature, and against the dreadful fatality of Southern wants. An act of emancipation would have been as much waste paper in Virginia, as if it had been passed in Massachusetts. The "corner-stone" would have fallen upon it and ground it to powder. It was not the abolitionist alone who was antagonistic to slavery, but the spirit of the age itself.* The savage instinct of slavery divined this enmity which pervaded the air; steadily but resolutely, because pushed on by the necessity of self-defence, and the necessity of working out its bitter problem, it sought for guarantees and for expansion, and stuck at nothing to attain its end. Only revolution can bleed and pacify such passion; its logic will not come to the ground until its blood does. The whole long story of Southern aggression is a story of Southern self-defence, from the expulsion of Mr. Hoar, through the annexation of Texas, Fugitive Slave bills, Kansas-Nebraska bills, border and senatorial ruffianism, Ostend conferences, fillibusterism, to the secret treason which armed and comforted secession.

Slavery gradually dying out! Slavery was a system which decreed its own expansion. It was mightier than 350,000 slaveholders. Do we suppose it is that insignificant body of men which has controlled the politics of this country for fifty years, and is now dashing its armed columns against the bosses of the shield of Liberty? It is a natural force hidden in slave-labor, and enslaving the slaveholder. It ensnared him through his lust, his pride, his political ambition, his local prejudices, and his pocket. It invigorates his arm, and employs all his gifts to enforce the extremity of its passion against the vigor of liberty. The moment when slavery can be arrested is the moment when it bleeds to death, and not before.

* How clearly this is shown by the scorn and contempt with which for twenty years the prominent men and journals of the South met the most conservative advice which its own Northern friends ventured to offer. The vitriol dashed into the face of the abolitionist was not diluted before being used to asperse the genteel remonstrants. The Southern exigency was long ago betrayed by the passionate tone of able editors. For specimens of rhetoric hitherto unequalled at the North, see the Richmond "Examiner," 1853, "The Paramount Question;" March 7 and 31, 1854; May 19, "Every Northern Man a Swindler;" July 4, 1854; October 16, 1855, etc.

What moment of the past would you select now, upon deliberate afterthought, when, if things had turned out differently, you can imagine that the Southern tendency would have been checked? When great natural elements are at their work of making history, things happen naturally, and could never happen differently; they express with mathematical accuracy the state of the elements. To suppose a change in the circumstances you must previously suppose a change in the forces that are at work, including the mental and spiritual condition of the people. Sometimes men speculate that if the events of a period had been different the results would have been different.”* There is but little virtue in that “If,” for an event, by occurring, shows that it could not have been different. Events are always the products of all the forces at the period of their occurrence. While one force checks, and another force propels, still another must lie dormant, and others do little but appear upon the field. And masses of men are but the embodiments of the forces, which they help at every moment to create, and which illustrate their period. It is as absurd to wonder what would have happened if William the Conqueror had not invaded England, or Washington had not organized the spirit of '76, or if Daniel Webster had made a different speech on the 7th of March, 1850, or if Fremont had been elected President six years ago, or if Buchanan had garrisoned the Southern forts, as to wonder what the movements of the solar system would have been if the planets had no moons, or if the sun were half its present bulk. The good and ill of history combine to repeat the wondrous tale of the divine necessities. England was invaded, Washington arose, Webster fell back before advancing slavery, Fremont lacked three hundred thousand votes, and Buchanan loaded the first gun and trained it on Fort Sumter, from combinations and foregoing influences and momentary moods that expressed themselves thus, in scorn of all ifs and buts, and leaving the future to explain them. Even the disgraceful things which men do at critical moments are nice expressions of an evil tendency, show how far it is disposed to go at every point where a good tendency does not yet suffice, and are the unconscious menials

* See, for instance, Niebuhr's Lectures, ii. 59.

of goodness. The vices of men finish up a great deal of scavenger-work in the housekeeping of God.

Examine any political moment of the past thirty years, when, if there had been a united and indignant North, you think that the career of slavery would have been checked, and you will find nothing out of which to make your supposition. Such a North was an impossibility. Examine the same period of time for the moment when the natural decay of slavery might have commenced, and you will find that the natural growth of slavery forbade that supposition also. When the Republican party triumphed in 1860, its leaders thought that slavery was hemmed in by a permanent change in Northern sentiment, expressed by a majority of votes, and that the time had at last arrived when we should see slavery commencing its decline. This shallow expectation was soon corrected, because it underrated the logical necessities of slavery, and overrated the vitality of republicanism. The triumph of the latter was a moment most dangerous for real democracy, because the North proposed to be content with the election of a president. The danger was that republicanism would have burnt itself out in four years with making a Cabinet-pot to boil. Any Secretary of State might keep that fire well fed with old speeches that were once plump with generous abstractions, but served at last only for a crackling of thorns. After the pot had boiled itself dry, and republicanism had shrivelled all up inside and scorched sadly to the bottom, it would have been lifted off the political crane, and a new democratic pot hung in its place, with the South to blow up a fresh fire of cotton-waste and bagasse, and the North to watch and stir the new pottage of compromise for the the homely Esau of liberty. It was a dangerous and almost fatal moment, not only because the North was disposed to be content, but because a large portion of the South was disposed to wait for the reaction in its favor which would have certainly taken place. But slavery is stronger than the South, just as liberty is stronger than the North. And there is always one place where a tendency comes to its focus of white heat which shrivels up reserve, prudential consideration, and all respect: a moment and a place where a domineering passion breaks through every restraint to ravish its object. The focus of slavery was in South Carolina.

Every channel in her body sent the black blood rushing to her brain, and congested it with fatal suggestions. How plain it is now that the temporizing policy, which was always the trait of half-living republicanism, was the instrument in the hands of Mr. Buchanan to conjure liberty out of republicanism, decision out of uncertainty, and draw the bolt out of the gates of the great North-wind. History will return thanks that the Southern forts were left without their garrisons, seeing that God meant to garrison them with liberty. At first it seems clear that there was a moment when the whole Revolution was in the power of a few hundred men to be judiciously posted where slavery understood itself the best, and was throbbing with evil purposes. No, we do wrong to say there was such a moment. If such a moment had been essential or possible, it would have become actual. But the strength of slavery appeared just as much in the weakness of Mr. Buchanan as in the determination of Jefferson Davis; it was against the divine logic that a few hundred men should tear a glorious page of history.

Seeds are not ready to germinate in April, but after the first thunder how they swell and burst their flinty husks and send up shoots like sword-blades over all the soil! Liberty was waiting for the thunder. The awful-looking cloud that blotted out half her sky and the stars which ought to shine there, gathered and gloomed continually, rolling in upon itself as if to concentrate and fiercely hearten, till the passion that reddened its great edges could not bide there another moment, and forth it sprang. The lightning was neither premature nor disastrous. It subserved the needs of liberty, which had lain frost-bound through a long northern winter, waiting for a genial hour.

But green shoots do not make a harvest. There is never a moment in the summer when the corn might stop growing, with the delusion that it was ready to furnish food for man. What moment would you select to break off your corn-tops, expecting to leave full ears upon the stumps to ripen in the sun,—when the joints send forth their ribands, or when the mealy tassels come, or when the first silk is spun out of the future husk? Summer's sun is a growing sun, fierce and almost intolerable. Autumn points with long shadows to the ripening hours.

Was the corn ripe in the early July sun of the first Manassas; was it ripe at New Orleans, or ready to be picked at Shiloh? Was it mildewed at Ball's Bluff, or blasted on the Peninsula, or did the husbandry of God come to nought in the sunless and chilly days of the second Manassas?

You cannot mention a single moment in this thunderous war-summer when liberty could have found her crop. If the war had closed with early successes, the cause of the war would have been preserved. Every mistake that we have made, especially the mistake of underrating the power of slavery, every lukewarm general who has been commissioned for the field, every traitor in the cabinet or the camp, every check experienced by our arms, every example of mediocrity holding critical command, has precisely represented our immature and growing condition, and was its logical necessity.

Beauregard hammering at Sumter nailed a flag to the mast in every village of the North. But though a Republic ran up all its bunting and had none to spare, it was not till summer and winter had weather-stained those brave flags and almost fretted them from the poles, that they began to signalize the rights of man to every portion of the country, and to stream like a torn aurora with true American influence from the lakes to the gulf. Death and sorrow pry up the lids of the heaviest sleepers; we are all awake now; but when General Banks said to the North, "Raise 600,000 men and hold the South as a conquered province till she is regenerated," we were astonished at his exaggeration. And when, still later, General Fremont said, "The strength of slavery is in slave-labor, and the sinews of war are concealed beneath black skins," the North shuddered at the bold invasion of property in man, and was not prepared to see the country itself the sole owner of its men and women. So that if a Wellington had gained a complete and subjugating victory at any of the points where we fondly expected one, he would have subjugated liberty, and clapped the North again into the harness of compromises and adjustments. The dreariest moments have seemed to me the lightest, because I heard the corn filling with milk under the shadow of the cloud. The bloodiest days have yielded the finest growing weather to liberty.

“Then,” you say to me, “you do not care for the loss of men and the anguish of women? Your liberty is a hyena which snatches a loathsome feast from lost fields of battle?” No more than she was when Washington seized her hand as he retreated, and nourished her in his winter-tent upon the gloom and foreboding of America. No—I am so little careless about the blood which has been shed, that I want to see *for what use* it has gone forever out of the dear hearts of Northern homes. It is not enough for me that you repeat the hackneyed sentiment that it is beautiful to die for one’s country. There must be *use* as well as beauty, or there is no such thing as a country to die for. Things that are useful lay the corner-stones of a great Commonwealth, and build the shafts around which beauties cluster. If you wish to see the men who care nothing for the blood of your kindred, look at those who shout how beautiful it is to die to keep the cause of death alive, the men who could stretch a hand to slavery across three hundred thousand graves, with a welcome back into a country full of the widows and orphans she has made. We thank God that His thoughts are not as such thoughts. A balance in His hand has held a scale weighted with the glorious truths of this Republic; into it He has thrown free-labor, knowledge, art and beauty, the common school, the pulpit and the plough, all of these moulded into liberty in the shape of a winged victory. Into the other scale the lacerated days of two campaigns have dripped with blood; every precious drop has been marked by that unslumbering eye to be heavy with New England and Western homes, and rich with privileges dearly bought; the scale sinks slowly—they are almost even—the winged victory rises to its equivalent of blood.

And what thought of the most ardent worshipper of the liberty that costs so much can embrace the future which waits at the outposts of this emancipating war! After every field-battery has rolled away into the distance of peace, and the bayonet hides a strange blush within its sheath, and the last tent is folded, that future shall step from grave to grave, bringing new life, new duties, great trials and appropriate joys into the heart of America. Nations who have been astonished to see how a free people can organize war by sea and land, will admire its

greater victories over the embarrassments and trials which must still dispute its path to the highest glory.

When peace returns, it will prove to be a heavy assessor of our common sense and patience. The problem of self-government will include the governing and rearing of four millions of people, richly endowed with affection, veneration and docility, but ignorant and awkward, superstitious, full of childish tricks, and unconscious of the duties of a freeman. Their feeble ambition has been hitherto one of the advantages of the slaveholder in perpetuating their servile state. But it is also fostered by the tone of religious instruction among their own preachers, who represent and confirm the gentle tendencies of the African. Mr. Pierce describes, in his first report to Secretary Chase, a sermon which he heard at Port Royal, from the text, "Blessed are the meek." The slaveholder may well tremble for his acres when he recalls the promise of that text. It was characteristic of the American slave that the preacher urged upon his hearers not to try to be "stout-minded." How congenial this advice is to the average negro is shown by the infrequency and feebleness of all insurrectionary movements. It was not possible for the slave to organize a formidable insurrection while the South was in full strength, nor will he ever be disposed to hazard the attempt, except, perhaps, in case the Proclamation of Emancipation is recalled, or hampered with gradualism, or local efforts are made to reëstablish or continue the status of slavery. Then their scattered condition and the geography of the country would be less unfavorable to a successful rising than the slave's inborn predisposition for bloodless and pacific ways. Not that the negro dreads death: his mobile and fluttering imagination becomes fixed in the presence of a real danger. He is impassive or frenzied, and will charge up to the very mouths of cannon and coil about them. He is singularly cool to meet what he cannot avoid, but night-fears and fancied terrors make a child of him. The threat of a novel mode of torture is too much for him. It is imagination only that makes a coward of a negro.

If the Proclamation wins, we shall find among the slaves a general deference to the plans of Government for confirming their freedom, to make it useful to themselves and to the country.

And mixed with these four millions of children are the poor whites, a great horde of immature and stupid boys instead of men, who never sat at the forms of liberty nor worked out one of her sums. The North must call its master-builders together, and those whose business it is to raise and transport habitations, for the primary school-house must be shifted South, and in the little wake which it creates the people's chapels must follow, till along that highway of our God, the court and the jury, the ballot-box and printing-press can safely pass to disinfect all half-civilized neighborhoods. And wherever a plough can run, the power-wheel shall follow, and its band shall turn new wants and enterprises, and hum worthy ambitions into ears that have been tuned only to slavery's lash. And the great turbine shall go down to put to perpetual labor the streams that have carried so much of our blood into the sea. Everywhere the North shall take its revenge, deep, thorough, to the uttermost farthing, by imposing all the firm and gentle arts of liberty, with the uplifted ferule of the school-master, at the edges of reaping-blades, and beneath the weight of every material and mental instrument that can crush clods, pulverize a soil, and scatter seed.

There will be a new meaning for the phrase "a geographical party," for the new Union will circulate by all the great channels of internal navigation, arteries which God opened for distributing the red blood of an undivided heart. Geography itself, with mountains, streams, lakes, prairies and defiles, shall write a people's creed; and all platforms, whether made at Buffalo, Chicago, Baltimore or Charleston, shall be supplanted by the square miles of the national domain. And it seems as if nature, foreseeing that not cotton but man would be king of this domain, had sealed up craters, cleared out earthquakes, warned off the hurricane, and spread a firm soil for every product, from kitchen comforts to sovereign luxuries—a zone for the orange and the fig, a zone for cotton, rice and sugar, for flax, for wool, for wheat, for cattle; districts for grapes, for the silk-worm and the cochineal, so that the democrat can dress for dinner and dine in his own house, if he will; and when he wants to ship his surplus to feed and clothe the English pauper, every spar that the wind can stretch without breaking grows, from the live oak

to the mountain pine. Florida and Georgia will lay the ribs and knees, North Carolina will careen and caulk the democrat's vessel, Lake Superior mines will bolt and sheathe it, Maine will send its suit of spars, and Kentucky strain them with her hemp. Pennsylvania shall build the boiler and feed the fires beneath it, and the Great West shall victual New England sailors as they go floating round the world with a cargo of Rights, Intelligence and Freedom, samples of the failure of a Democracy.

What a house this is to build, furnish and stock with comforts, to set wide open to starving spinners and weavers, colliers, peat-burners, all the landless and the hopeless, where they can come to hear our mother's daily lessons of thrift, usefulness and the true dignity of man, as she goes in and out of all her rooms, cleanly, cheerily, helpfully, with hands whose touch is order, with a shape whose noble lines are full of grace, with a countenance that can leap from serenity to power, and unchain pure lightnings at those eyes. She is the mother of us all, Thanksgiving America, divorced from hideous wedlock with slavery, all her beauty coming back to her, all her gifts enhanced, and with a deeper meaning in her face than ever when she bids all her children again to the glittering board which she spreads between the Atlantic and Pacific seas.