
Pamphlet Collection

1863

The Mistakes of the Rebellion

Alexander H. Vinton

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.cedarville.edu/pamphlet_collection

This Sermon is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@Cedarville, a service of the Centennial Library. It has been accepted for inclusion in Pamphlet Collection by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@Cedarville. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@cedarville.edu.

THE MISTAKES OF THE REBELLION.

A SERMON,

PREACHED ON

The National Thanksgiving Day,

NOVEMBER 26TH, 1863,

BY THE

REV. ALEXANDER H. VINTON, D.D.,

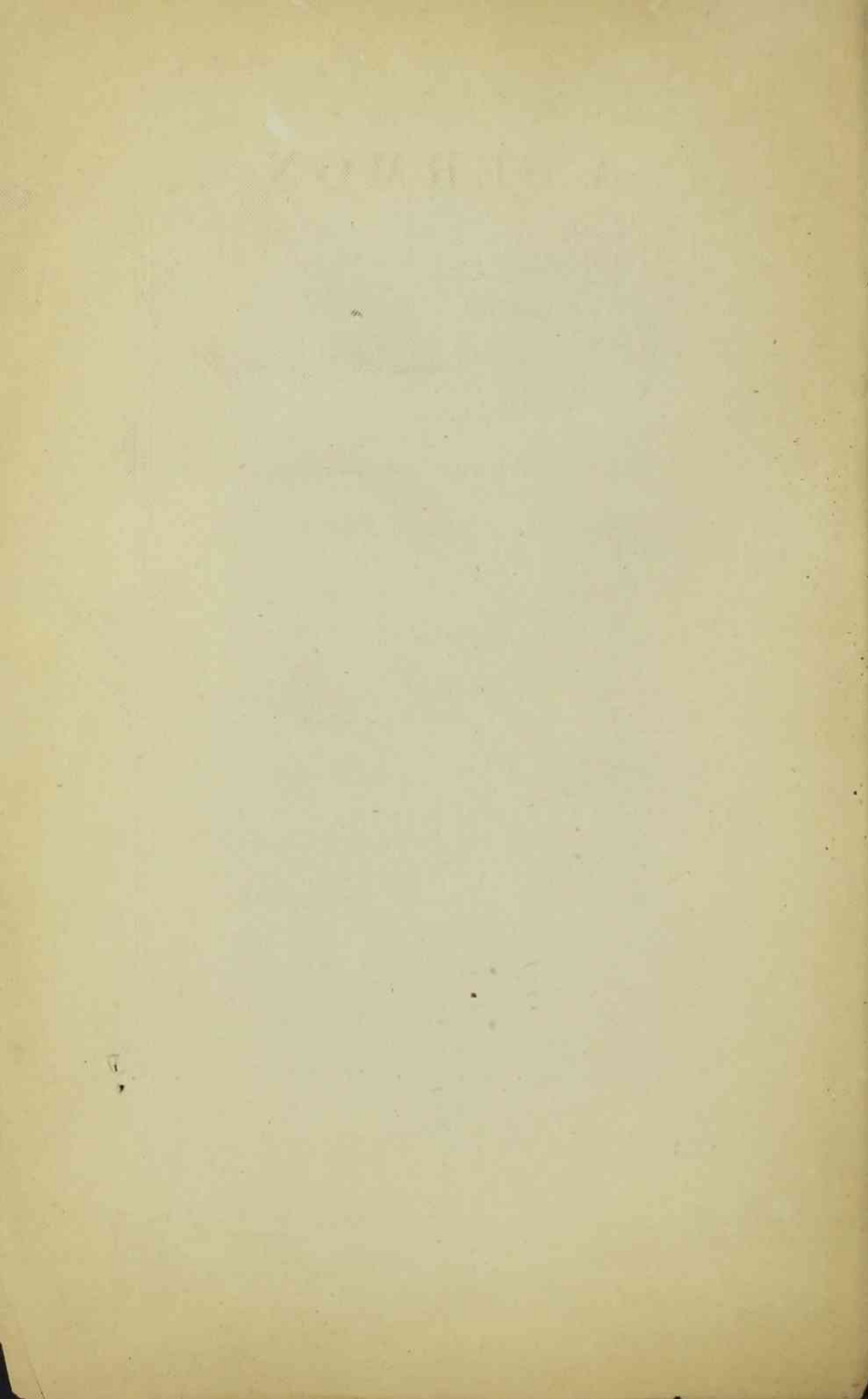
RECTOR OF ST. MARK'S CHURCH, IN THE BOWERIE,

NEW-YORK.

NEW-YORK:

GEORGE F. NESBITT & CO., PRINTERS AND STATIONERS,
COR. PEARL AND FINE STREETS.

1863.



Dec 2nd 1874 c/o 8

Edw. Loring 1864

A SERMON,

PREACHED ON

The National Thanksgiving Day,

NOVEMBER 26th, 1863,

BY THE

REV. ALEXANDER H. VINTON, D.D.,

RECTOR OF ST. MARK'S CHURCH, IN THE BOWERIE,

NEW-YORK.

NEW-YORK:
GEORGE F. NESBITT & CO., PRINTERS AND STATIONERS,
CORNER OF PEARL AND PINE STS.

1863.

A

973, 788

V791M

76-70770

NEW-YORK, *November 28th*, 1863.

TO THE REV. DR. VINTON :

DEAR SIR,—We, the undersigned members of Saint Mark's Church in the Bowery, having been present at the discourse delivered by you on Thanksgiving Day, and being deeply impressed with the truth and value of its sentiments, and equally convinced that its circulation would be beneficial to the community, respectfully request that you will consent to its publication.

We are, dear sir,

With esteem and regard,

Yours, faithfully,

CHARLES EASTON,
JOHN W. CHANLER,
E. B. UNDERHILL,
LEWIS M. RUTHERFORD,
E. B. WESLEY,
H. STUYVESANT,
F. W. BOARDMAN,
W. H. SCOTT,
P. C. SCHUYLER,

THOMAS McMULLEN,
ALBERT G. THORP, JR.,
WILLIAM J. REMSEN,
MEIGS D. BENJAMIN,
GRANT THORBURN, JR.,
B. R. WINTHROP,
P. M. SUYDAM,
RUTHERFORD STUYVESANT.
ALEX. T. STEWART.

TO MESSRS. CHARLES EASTON, J. W. CHANLER, AND OTHERS :

GENTLEMEN,—I am happy to learn that you think my Discourse may be of use, and, as you request it for publication, I forward it to you cheerfully and thankfully.

I am, gentlemen,

Very truly and respectfully yours,

ALEXANDER H. VINTON.

ST. MARK'S RECTORY, *Dec. 1st*, 1863.

JUDGES 5, 11.

“They that are delivered from the noise of the archers in the places of drawing water ; there shall they rehearse the righteous acts of the Lord towards the inhabitants of His villages in Israel —then shall the people of the Lord go down to the gates.”

This is a part of the triumphal song of Deborah and Barak. Jabin the Canaanitish king had been defeated, and Sisera, his head captain, had died by a woman's hand ; and then the prophetess and the warrior of Israel sang this psalm of praise, ascribing the victory to the Lord, and indicating, in the words of the text, that the war shall be memorable.

They who have escaped the noise of the archers, the whistling of their arrows, shall gather at the places of familiar resort and rehearse the righteous and beneficial acts of the Lord towards his people, and they shall go down to the gates, in and out of the land, without embargo or hindrance of any sort.

It is man's prerogative alone, as head of the animal creation, to register and rehearse the deeds of his Maker. Brute creatures behold events, but they behold them as facts not as phenomena, that witness to a power behind, and within, and above.

Another and yet higher attribute of man is, that he can sort these facts into a system and a sequence ; can develope a design in the deeds of his Maker ; can prove a plan in His providence, and bear witness to a wisdom in all the ways of God as he traverses His world to and fro ; and so man can lay his intellect alongside of God's mind.

And a third and superlative faculty of man is, that what his mind thus perceives his heart and soul appreciates and adores. He is mute with admiration. He thrills with reverence. He is rapt and possessed with love. He rises to his feet and shouts his exulting gratitude, and thus his heart and soul are side by side with God's heart. They pulse together. The sympathy makes them one.

This attribute of man is moral not mental, higher and diviner than mind, for mind is a mechanism ; but the moral is a character and a state of being. This makes man kin to the angels even while he is first cousin to the brutes. It proves him capable of Heaven even while he crawls and gropes in the dust and dirt of the earth.

Thanksgiving, therefore, exercises and gives play to man's whole triplet of powers—to rehearse God's deeds—to read and recognize their righteous purpose, and to praise and rejoice over them because they are righteous, and because they are His.

For this we are come together to-day, to praise

God for his righteous and kindly providences towards us. And not towards you and me alone, but to the whole legitimate nation.

Even now in this forenoon ten thousand voices are rehearsing, as mine is, the righteous acts of the Lord; and a hundred times ten thousand are sounding forth His praises, as you have done in psalm, and chant, and anthem, and hallelujah. How comes it? The nation's chief invites the nation to a service of solemn and holy praise, and the nation with one and glad consent join in jubilate. But for what? Is not the nation in mourning? Is it not whirling round and round in the maelstrom of civil war, that threatens to engulf it bodily and forever? Are we not struggling in the stern sad strife of fratricide? Is not the land stained red every where and soaked with blood? May you not almost say: "There is not a house where there is not one dead." Do you not meet maimed and useless men at every corner? Have we not given the best blood and the best talent in sacrifice to Moloch—men of birth, of culture, and highest moral worth. Are not whole households draped in black with their hearts broken. And can you then give thanks? Can you change all these signs of woe into evidences of blessing? Can you distil bitter tears into sweet joys? Can you coin golden gratitude out of the dust and ashes of our dead?—or turn the quiver of agonized

nerves and muscles into the thrill of ecstasy. From all this minor key of manifold mourning that creeps in ten thousand dirges over the land, can you combine a chorus of praise and rejoicing? Thanksgiving in the midst of a home war; is it not absurd?

These questions seem to be pertinent, and from one point of view, forcible, if not convincing. We must admit the many wrecks of health, wealth and peace; the desolations of home and heart; the failure of plans, prospects and hopes, and above all, the bloody cost of the war—paid in wounds and death, by the thousands, who have gone forth to the fight. I would not tone down the picture by a single shade. Foreground, middle, distance and perspective, I would bring them all under one stream of bright light, and in that light I would group the classes of sufferers at once, and invoke your keen compassion, your sympathy, your tears, your help. As we gaze on the picture we witness the shock of battalions; the wild mixture of warring men, piercing, and hacking, and cleaving each other to the ground; the sweep of cannon shot, laying the columns low, as if by a huge besom; ghastly wounds, gushing blood, fractured limbs, explicable and inexplicable; we see and wonder at the placid smile of him who died in an instant from a gun shot, as his frame lies easily on the turf where he fell; and we see, with no less wonder, the writhings and grimaces of

agony of those who could not die, doomed to carry about a life too strong for wounds, though not too strong for woe. We see the field when the battle is over, when the hosts are gone, and the fruits of war are ripe to rottenness; and then our natures are overpowered by the complication of feeling; of pity, which draws us on, and honor, which revolts and repels us, and we shut our eyes and wave the dark vision away. And, in another part of the picture, we seem to stand among the prisoners of war, packed together in starvation and filth; dying of unmedicated wounds, or by the slow torture of hunger and cold. And as we draw back our gaze to the foreground that is nearest to us, we count for every single sufferer on the field or in the prison, a sympathizing group, of which he was once the centre, and in whom his agony is multiplied over and over. And this is but a fraction of the woe. I presume that war can have no adequate picture. It can tell its own story only to witnessing eyes and ears upon the spot, and they can never catalogue its horrors, for no eye and ear can know the cruelties that are going on every where at once, and no heart could sustain itself against the crushing accumulation if all the agonies were massed into one view. Say "*War*," and you have pronounced a word whose one syllable contains all animal sorrow concentrated. Prefix the adjective and call it "*Civil War*," and you add a social and a

moral element to the agony which makes it three-fold, and leaves no other woe in the world to be compared to it.

Yet, strange to say, it has its compensation and redress. Even though it be the mother and the child of sin, God has many a time overruled its wrathful mission, to evoke all the better powers of humanity; to stir up slumbering energies of mind and heart, in persons and in nations; to hew the pathway of civilization, and to open the yet brighter path of grace and the Gospel. The savagery of fight is sure to give place at last to the gentlenesses of a better humanity. The reaction from the warlike is always towards the womanly and the tender, because the overworked passions collapse from sheer necessity of nature, and in their sleep and inanition they can only dream of the horrors which they have not strength enough to re-produce, and they shudder as they dream, and take on compunction. And at this first sign of sensibility the kindly sentiments raise their modest lips to the ears of the soul, and whisper "love, fraternity, forgiveness, peace," and when the nature wakes it is warlike no more. When the ugly passions have been thus quenched and drowned in blood, war leaves for its generation a surer heritage of peace, security and social advancement, through the energies, moral and mental, that it waked into such forceful play. There is blood upon the arena; but it is the price that manhood

paid for a higher style of manhood. It was a strenuous leap of society for the next foothold of civilization. It was the last and critical struggle of a people for the stability of the government and the unity of the nation, in which is garnered up all possible prosperity, through an indefinite and progressive future, and when that last warlike struggle is successfully achieved, the patriot may die with the prayer on his lips, that is both a prayer and a prophecy: "My country, be thou perpetual as the ages."

If such, then, be our war, as who can doubt it is, surely we are not without a theme for thanksgiving, that we are permitted to look through the dark vista out upon an expanse of serene light and beauty. And we may do more than this, we may recognize God's sovereignty in this war which he has permitted to be waged against the sovereignty of the nation. Although conceived and born in selfishness and pride, he has not so forfeited or foregone his claim of supremacy as to leave the war without his watch and supervision. He has purposes of his own divine pleasure to be worked out through it, and he will win praise even through such wrath of man as caused this fratricidal strife. Fratricidal did I call it? It is worse. It wears the black unnaturalness of a matricide. For they who fired the first shotted gun in this embroilment aimed at the heart and life of the most benign of mothers, and would have slain

her if they could, even as she lay asleep, reposing in fond confidence in her children. Could that Divine power, who, when he established civil government among men, made patriotism and piety, to be identical? could he look with indifference, look without a frown upon a rebellion that wore such a maniac look of hate to a nation and a government which he had nursed and fostered, and led with his own right hand? He could not, and he has not; and I ask you to review with me the ways in which He has shown displeasure with rebellion. Without arrogating any merit of prowess to ourselves, or rejoicing for our own peculiar skill, let us see how God has bent back the point of the rebellion to pierce its own bosom, and dealt with the plans of our enemies, and disappointed them every one.

Recall the high and boastful pretensions with which this war was plotted and begun, and then mark how an overruling power has, by a single touch, caused them, one by one, to wilt and shrink away, like some succulent shoot, made up and swollen with sap, which, when crushed between the thumb and finger, leaks out its moisture, and leaves not fibre enough for a skeleton, or a dried specimen, or a fossil.

The first influence that led the rebellion to its birth, was the conviction, which was universal at the South, that the men of the Northern States

would not and could not fight. It was a very natural state of mind for a people who, themselves not largely educated, knew us only at a distance; a people who, trained and grown up in the indolence of absolute power, despised the labor and activity which lay at the foundation of our mechanical, manufacturing, commercial, and educational success. Deeming us ignoble, they supposed us incapable of sentiment, of high mindedness, and of courage. Accustomed to act from whim, from passion, or from will, and so to act vehemently, they had no conception of a *principle* as supreme above impulse, and holding the passions under curb; of courage, that acted only when it was right and dutiful; of manliness, that was noble and, at the same time, cool.

And so in their calculations of relative force, they had fixed it as an axiom, that every Southern warrior bore a ^{quintuple} ~~triple~~ superiority to every Northerner. They have discovered their mistake. They have learned that the valor which is guided by principle is worth twofold the courage of passion. It has that immense repelling power which consists in simply standing still and saying: "You shall not." It may be as negative and stolid as a granite rock—but the rock has the strength of centuries packed into it; and when the rushing assault comes, alas! for the assailant. His very vehemence is his destruction. His momentum mea-

suers his mischief. Waterloo was a battle of South and North. The victory was the power of a simple negative. Such was Corinth and such was Gettysburgh.

But the courage of principle is not alone the power to stand. Being passionless it is prudent, and as the highest prudence consists sometimes in quick and vivid action, so, on occasion, it is no less bold in assault than brave in resistance, and plucks victory out of death's very jaws, and such was Donelson and Fort Henry.

The South had forgotten the opinion of Washington, that in a conflict between them and the North, though they might win the early fight the quality of endurance would give the final victory to us. Out of this prolific misconception of character sprang the first act of rebellion. Had they known us as well then as now, it is safe to say, the gunner at Charleston would have plunged his port fire into the sea.

There was another misconception that lay by the side of this like a twin-brother, rocked in the same cradle. It was the persuasion that a predominating portion of the North would coalesce and act with the South. Even if they had no direct assurance of this, there was enough in the political history of the country to suggest the thought. In the Caucus, in the Congress, in the Cabinet, they had been accustomed to dictate and always with power.

They spake and it was done. They wished and we were willing. They planned, we executed. They sketched the programme of the drama, and the obliging and many-sided North played every part from hero down to harlequin. But this was in piping times of peace and party, and the dramatis personæ were only politicians. They represented Northern character to the lordly patrons of the scene, and how should the supercilious natures who knew us only in this scenic character of easy subserviency, ever dream of the deep and solemn soberness with which the Northern conscience held to its patriotism and its loyalty, as a drowning wife clings to her husband's waist, her last and only hope of life. They feel now how cruel their mistake has been; and we, who are nearer to it, know how complete it was. We know that the party sympathy they leaned upon is not only a broken reed but a reed split in twain from top to bottom. We know how the grand voice of the people which, when it is thoughtful and well advised, is only second in its magnificent authority to the voice of God, has pronounced upon that sympathy; has pronounced that fellowship with rebellion is treason to the nation; and we know by the prophetic light of history that the politician who, in a time of his country's war, is in sympathy with her foes, seals in advance the doom of his own discomfiture. A dignified retirement into an

unnoticeable privacy is henceforward his best success. With his coronet unjewelled and lustreless, his choicest hope must be, that the world may please to forget him.

A third mistake which buttressed this bold rebellion, was the persuasion on the part of the South that their great product, cotton, was so indispensable to the manufacturing nations of Europe, that rather than lose it, they would make common cause with the rebellion and ensure its success. To their minds the royal ships of state in Europe had all cast their anchors in South Carolina; they were held to their moorings by the one stout cable of cotton, and if this were stranded and broken, the empires would drift disastrously upon a lee shore. The very poor would starve for want of labor in cotton, the middle classes would sympathize and rebel; the aristocracy, instinctively hostile to our republic, would coalesce. The governments under such stress would be compelled into a Southern alliance, and under this partnership of empires, the success of the rebellion would be easy and complete. All this was to be accomplished by virtue of that one self-same vegetable, cotton, which was deemed so indispensable to the world, that it might almost seem to be the necessary clothing of the universal humanity, the raw material of the human cuticle, so that without it the race would be not only naked but skinless.

They have now learned—and we are sharers in the lesson—the wonderful recuperative powers of human nature, among communities as well as with individuals. We have seen the elasticity with which men can accommodate themselves to strange and hard conditions, discover new resources, and supplement their wants with fresh and varying substitutes.

One of the most disastrous results of this mistake to the South itself is, that necessity has ploughed up new cotton fields in various parts of the world: Egypt supplants the Sea Islands, Central America promises to be a paradise of cotton, and the rich monopoly is broken up forever. There have been times, indeed, when the expectation of foreign interference seemed probable enough, and specially from two of the leading powers of Europe. To one of these nations we bear a blood relationship, and it is said, a strong family likeness. Yet our common character is worked out on the two sides of the Atlantic into marked differences.

Planted in the midst of a large continent, with a boundless horizon of enterprise and an indefinite line of progress, the Saxon nature has here run out perhaps into exaggeration, like a countenance reflected from a convex mirror. While cabined in the little isle across the water, it has become insular in all respects; its capacities have lost much of their native breadth and its peculiarities have

grown more and more minute, like the same countenance seen in the converging power of a concave glass.

The victim of prescription, and precedent, and concrete forms of life, the Anglican mind stretches itself rarely and reluctantly to the breath of a general principle, either in morals, philosophy, politics or law; and so upon the transatlantic face of the Anglo-Saxon nature, we see the wrinkles of caste and class, and other practical prejudices furrowed deep in the leathern skin of its hopeless old age, and the character is dull, partial, self-willed and self-satisfied to supercilious and snarling excess.

With such differences of development between us, it is natural that while our oneness of blood qualifies us to analyze the Saxon character, the tribal feeling should make us more sorely apt to criticise its blemishes. If we feel obliged to admit the ingrain excellence of England, and respect her fundamental honesty and her bluff boldness, we admire only with a qualification; her beauty is but "freckled fair."

We rank her as the greatest of the nations, yet repel her as the most disagreeable of all the peoples of the earth. We disaffect the triple compound of nobility, commons and paupers that forms the nation, even though we tolerate gallantly and lovingly the crown that beams with the virtues of Victoria.

A nobility, boastful of its blood, none the less because it bears the bar sinister, a commercial Commons that carries its conscience in its hand, but its hand always in the pocket, graduating goodness by the scale of the counting-house, and regulating right by the balances of the ledger, will have none but marketable virtues; and a whole people, from top to bottom, with its manliness fettered by the taught reverence for mere rank: this was the nation shop-keeping, and aristocratic, too, that turned away from us and listened with a grim smile to the golden promises of the patrician South. For we were England's rivals in shop-keeping—this was the obvious offence. The backflow of our democracy across the Atlantic had begun to undermine portions of her class prerogative, and this was an added grudge.

Perhaps the old pique of being worsted in two wars may have been a third, and the three combined were motive enough for an effort to cripple and disjoin the obnoxious Republic.

True, therefore, to her instincts of profit, prejudice and pride, yet untrue utterly to her traditions of philanthropy and moral policy, England had well-nigh committed herself to the Southern alliance for better or worse.

But in good season she discovered that the rebel cause was tottering, and her politic conscientiousness receiving this new light, she began to revise

some of her equivocal admissions and initiated a sort of tardy justice to the United States. Her leading newspapers spoke out a half-way reclainer of their former arguments—spoke more absolutely for complete neutrality, and always capped their logic with the potent suggestion of self-interest, that their committal to the Southern cause might furnish precedents which would be found by-and-bye to be not wrong, not unlawful, not unfriendly, but simply reactionary and troublesome. This turned the scale of conscience and of favoritism, and the South saw itself crippled of its best hope.

But one other hope was left. There was, a nation, we can hardly call it, and still less can we call it a people in any political sense of that word—but there was another power interested, no less than England, in favor of cotton and against democracy. This power invested in one despotic person, keen, ambitious, unscrupulous, whose antecedents make up a biography that in some other century than the nineteenth would have suited a Borgia or a Cataline—this power, in its own left-handed way, gave the rebellion hope. But it was a short-lived consolation. The bow being strung too far, the forbearance of the French people having run to the length of its tether—the exchequer giving signs of collapse—the jealousy of the European powers being stirred, and the grand demonstration stood still where it was. The rebel hopes of friends

abroad were changed to disgust, and the rebel cause turned its back upon Europe, in doing so faced its foes at home, in whose countenance it read no hope but in submission and loyalty. And thus another prime delusion of the rebel mind collapsed in disappointment.

Again, the rebellion was nursed by an added hope, viz., that the North, deprived of the Southern market, would be bankrupted and ruined; grass would grow in our streets, labor would be worthless, gaunt famine would watch at the doors of the poor; hungry mobs would march and parade in our streets with the watch-words on their banners of "bread or blood."

We can hardly believe it now, amidst the whirl and rush of all the activities of commerce, with a freshet of prosperity filling the channels of business and overflowing in munificent and magnificent charities; with an increase of taxation that would have scared us once, met and paid easily and cheerfully; with an abundant supply of life's supports and life's elegancies, and a greater abundance of means to procure them; with sure evidences that this is not inflation and falsity, but a positive increase of material wealth—with all this around us, we can hardly conceive that the death-dealing prophecies of the South were ever seriously uttered or honestly believed.

But they did believe it, and believe it still, until

some truant Southron, trusting in our tolerance, ventures among us for a refuge from his troublesome tribes, and sees with his amazed eyes what he would never else have believed, that we are neither perished nor perishing. We may not be able to explain it thoroughly to ourselves, for it is one of those strange phenomena in political economy which prove it to be the most perplexed of anything that was ever called a science.

Yet so it is, a magnificent verity and a magnificent refutation of another great mistake of the rebellion.

I name one more delusion, the most fatal and hopeless of all on which this melancholy cause leaned its weight. It was fondly believed that the system of slavery would be secured beyond all touch and meddling from the officious North henceforward. For this the rebellion was plotted. The Confederacy was organized with slavery for its corner-stone. It was the grand peculiarity which was to signalize it above all other political systems—inaugurate a new era in government, and realize the beau ideal of the social state.

The Confederacy was to perpetuate the constant distinction between lord and serf—between power and submission.

I know no example of the blinding effect of passion on the intellect, or of the perversion of the conscience by pride, than such a purpose de-

liberately uttered in a theory of government. Can it be that thinking men are laying their strength together to roll back the wheels of time—to restore a system which had its birth in barbarism, and has been dying of civilization, ever since civilization began to bless the race? Can it be that while they rejoice in the title of “the chivalry,” which belongs to the condition of lordship and serfdom, they are really willing to accept the character which that title originally and truly denoted? Would they be as knights and barons of the middle ages, living in their plantation castles, with crowds of banded retainers to execute their will, with a code of principles in which mere arbitrary power was first and last and midst—a code which exalted the sentimental graces and ignored the solid virtues of life, which frowned upon an insult but warranted an injustice, which bade a man be watchful for his honor, though bereft of honesty, which taught him to be gallant, and permitted him to be unchaste, to be polished in manner and rotten in conscience, generous yet grasping, hospitable, yet cruel at the pleasure of his passions, courtly in the saloon and savage in the court-yard? Is this the character that they would emulate and re-produce in this noonlight of civilization and the Gospel?

It would be difficult to credit it but for the fierce pertinacity with which they claim it, and their practical illustration of the character in the uncon-

scientious means by which some of the proudest of them procured the rebellion — means involving breaches of trust, violations of truth, and other huge dishonesties, that entitle them to take rank with any of the robber knights who stood foremost in the semi-barbarous chivalry of the middle ages. It is strange, too, that thinking men with an open Gospel should have dared to re-affirm a system of bondage which stands in essential antagonism to the spirit and power of Christianity.

For no matter what defences of slavery may be extorted by elaborate inferences from the Bible, there is one simple and indisputable principle in the code of Jesus Christ, which condenses the argument and the refutation into the briefest form: "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so unto them, for this is the law and the prophets." It is simple, it is comprehensive, it is universal. It liquidates all sophistry, and escapes all entanglement. It determines involuntary servitude to be wrong, unless every master is willing to exchange places with his slave. "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." There is but one escape from the searching exaction, and that is to deny that the slave is a man. How then could such a system make head against the spirit of such a Gospel.

It was a huge mistake, demonstrated to be such by the overruling power, that has already turned

slavery into the heaviest burden the rebellion has to bear. Forty thousand strong, the emancipated slaves have turned their arms against their masters, and hundreds of thousands strong, the unemancipated, have been driven into the corner States, where the diminished form of the rebellion now crouches, and there like a plague of locusts, they overwhelm the land with a hungry and non-producing population.

Who can fail to foresee the issue of this great problem of slavery to the Confederacy itself? Who can help seeing that its corner-stone was laid on sand, that the noisy proclamation was a blatant falsehood, and the projected system a stupendous mistake?

We have now run through the catalogue of capital errors out of which the rebellion was engendered. Each one of them has been evaporated or exploded, till there remains not a tangible shred of any. It is not our skill or prowess that has produced this issue. It is the supremacy of that guiding power that holds the hearts of princes in his hand, that makes the diviners mad, and orders all things after the counsel of his own will. It is God moving in the earth, to foil the rebellion with its own weapons, and turn its strength to weakness. And although it is only a refusal of power, and not a positive conquest, that we have recited. Yet God's refusal is a conquest. To baulk the rebel-

lion, is to destroy it, for it may say with Shylock: "You take away my life when you do take the means whereby I live."

Let us praise and give thanks to Him therefore, for his simple, grand and awful negative. Let us bow down and adore Him. And then let us thank Him for those positive successes in which though we were the actors, yet if He had not gone forth with our hosts, we had been the vanquished too.

Recall the splendid victories of the year. Listen to the booming cannon that proclaims to-day, a new victory to our arms, and fresh disaster to the bad cause. These successes have at last pent in the active rebellion to five States — have tamed its confidence, cut off its supplies, and reduced it to a condition in which its courage is desperation, and its very victories, if it achieve any, will be almost as disastrous as defeats. It cannot afford to win battles and live, and surely it cannot afford to lose them. In fact, it can only afford to die. We may praise God therefore, not only with devout gratitude but with hope.

We may look forward to the period of restored unity, of ripened loyalty, of a more fervent patriotism, and of universal freedom. In fact, we may anticipate a day when the moral and mental developments, and the wide play of sympathy elicited by this great struggle, shall have so exalted the character of this people, and joined the thirty mil-

lion hearts into one great national heart, that the Republic shall be perpetual—so strong and so pure that man cannot, and God will not destroy it. Then will the nation hold jubilee again, and bless the Almighty for the war itself.

In this bright forecast of the future why should not the African have his place of hope and joy? Shall not he too be lifted up by the exalting influence of freedom to the prerogatives of a true manhood? True, we hear it said, "You cannot elevate him; his nature wants capacity — wants the true electricity of mental life." But has the trial been fairly made? We crust him over with our contempt and prejudice; we wrap him up thickly in all the disadvantages of ignorance and disappointment, and then when we touch him with a non-conductor of pride, or tyranny, or selfishness, if we do not see the instant flash, or feel an answering shock, we boldly pronounce him to be a non electric. But unwrap those folds of ignorance and fear, crack off that crust of contempt in which slavery has insulated him, let his naked nature come into contact with the life-restoring agencies of freedom, and then see if he, for whom Christ died, does not exhibit enough of the light and spiritual life of manhood to entitle him to a place in the future of our Republic as a citizen, a man and a brother.

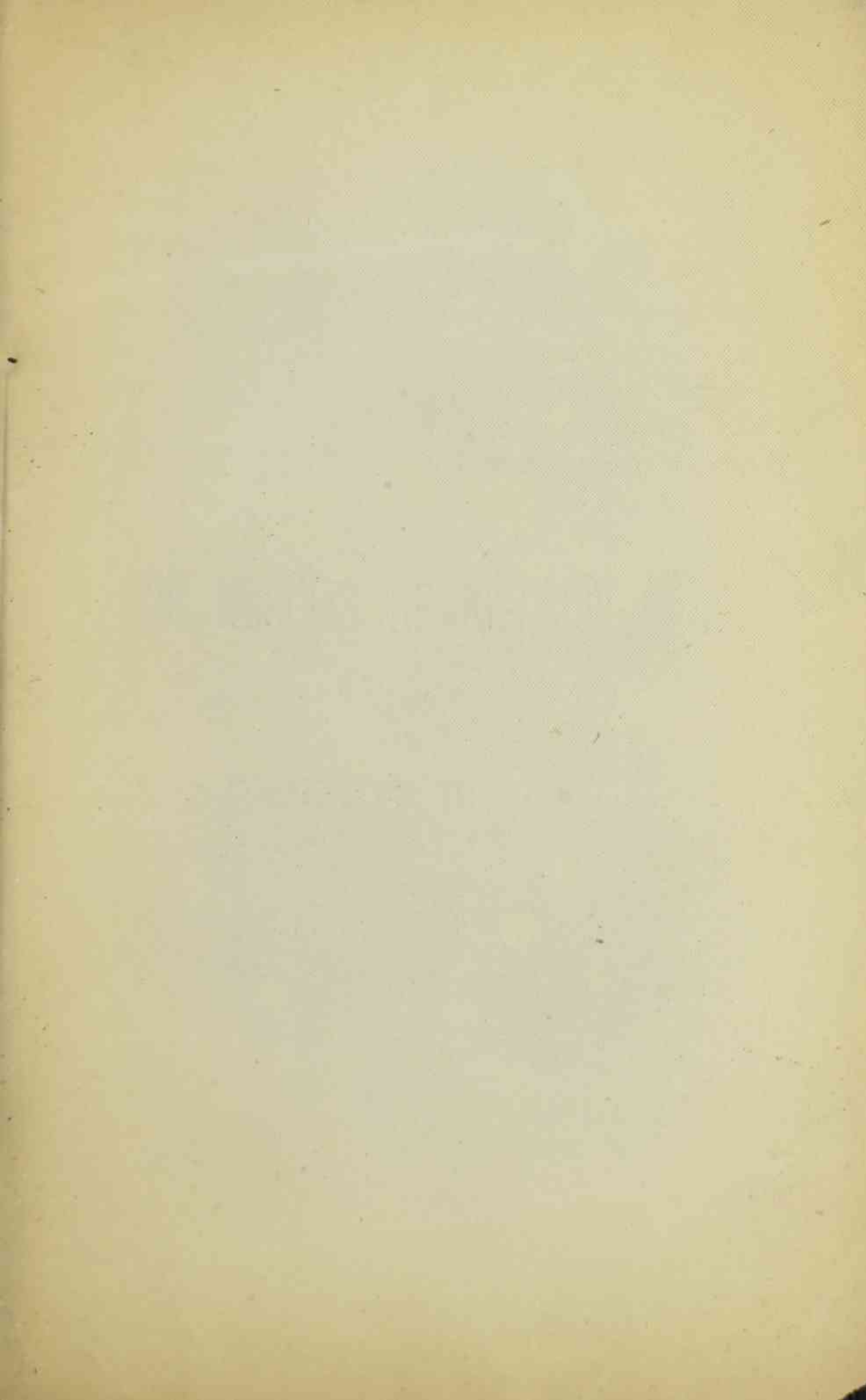
If the war shall be thus regenerative — creating four millions of men out of four millions of beasts .

of burden—then Ethiopia may begin to lift up her hands to God and herald the millenium of Christ.

If, while I speak thus, there comes before any of you the image of bereaved households, and the thoughts of bleeding hearts, and of the fresh-made graves of the slain in war, yet even these are not incompatible with thanksgiving. Often does gratitude grow out of the grave. Its roots dive down into the mould of the loved dead, hero, or martyr, and hug, and kiss, and feed upon the very bones of their decay, and so gather nutriment for the sweet blossoms of remembrance, and the mellow fruits of thanksgiving and praise. So let it be with us. Honored is that father who can to-day name a martyred hero in the person of his son. Blessed is that mother who has given the nursling of her bosom to save the life of our common mother from shame and death.

And now need I add a word to remind you of those for whom your charities are asked to-day—the wounded and imprisoned soldiers, forced to share in rebel destitution, and so almost starving with the leavings of rebel poverty?

The living are worse off than the dead. While you remember these with gratitude, remember the others with your generous pity.



OUR MERCIES OF RE-OCCUPATION

BY

PHILLIPS BROOKS.
