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# S E R M O N S

ON THE

## DEATH OF PRESIDENT LINCOLN.

BY

R. BETHELL CLAXTON, D.D.,

RECTOR OF ST. LUKE'S CHURCH, ROCHESTER, N. Y.



PHILADELPHIA:

J. B. LIPPINCOTT & CO.

1865.

# SERMONS

ON THE

## DEATH OF PRESIDENT LINCOLN,

DELIVERED IN

*St. Luke's Church, Rochester, N. Y.,*

ON

Wednesday, April 19th,

AND ON

Sunday, April 23d, 1865.

BY

R. BETHELL CLAXTON, D.D.,

RECTOR.

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PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

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## CORRESPONDENCE.

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ROCHESTER, April 25, 1865.

REV. R. BETHELL CLAXTON, D.D.

DEAR SIR,—

ENCOURAGED in the belief that your recent Discourses, delivered in St. Luke's Church, on the 19th and 23d inst., upon the death of the late lamented President of the United States, should receive a more extended circulation than can be expected by mere oral delivery from the pulpit, we take the liberty to request copies thereof for publication; as well to secure the end above indicated as to perpetuate in the mind of every lover of his country into whose hands they may fall, the just and patriotic sentiments so eloquently spoken by you on each occasion.

Very truly yours,

(Signed)

ALFRED ELY,                      FRED. A. WHITTLESEY,  
E. DARWIN SMITH, WM. PITKIN,  
WM. BREWSTER,      E. R. HAMMATT,  
THOS. C. MONTGOMERY.

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## REPLY

MY DEAR FRIENDS,—

I CHEERFULLY acquiesce in your wish that my recent Discourses may be published; although conscious that their chief interest will be found in their solemn themes, and in the affecting circumstances under which they were delivered.

Sharing with you the earnest desire that a true patriotism may be more and more cherished as a Christian principle,

I am faithfully,

Your friend and pastor,

(Signed)

R. B. CLAXTON.

To the HON. ALFRED ELY,

E. DARWIN SMITH, and others.

S E R M O N

ON

April 19th, at Noon,

THE DAY AND THE HOUR APPOINTED FOR THE

OBSEQUIES OF PRESIDENT LINCOLN

IN WASHINGTON.

## S E R M O N .

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Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it.  
JER. XXX. 7.

WHAT day, my hearers, in all our country's experience, has there been like this day? Our fathers have told us, and we have read in history—yes, some here present may remember what they themselves knew and felt—how throughout this land, five and sixty years ago, the whole people “mourned with a great and sore lamentation” when the tidings came that the Father of his Country had lain down to sleep the sleep of death! But that day of sorrow was not like this!

Many of us can call to mind the day, five and twenty years ago, when the illustrious Harrison, having sat for one short month in the chair of Supreme Magistracy, was called suddenly away, and the startled Nation wept and bewailed his loss with a sorrow for which there was cause far deeper than the nation then knew or even conjectured. But that day was not like this!

Still more of us there may be who, looking back through fifteen years, can recall with what true,

though unavailing grief, our people humbled themselves before God, when the heroic Zachary Taylor, his term of Presidency cut short, passed to the shadowy regions of the unseen world. Then tears were shed, many and bitter tears; then the nation draped itself in the insignia of mourning; then sorrow seemed to fill all hearts. But that day was not like this!

Four short years ago (exactly four years last Saturday) all loyal hearts throughout our land were startled, were thrilled, were almost maddened with the tidings that armed treason had humiliated the ever-honored banner of the Republic; and that the foul insignia of rebellion had taken its place over the walls of Sumter. On that day the voice of Abraham Lincoln went forth to our people, with Heaven-sanctioned authority, bidding the nation rise to defend its own life against the parricidal blows of traitors. That day was "great;" but it was not like this!

Four years this day patriot soldiers hastening to the protection of the national capital were murdered by traitorous hands in the streets of Baltimore. The deed of shame and blood was heard of all over the land ere that day's sun went down. It was a day sacred to memories of the first sacrifice of precious life on the Altar of Liberty as the American colonies were struggling for birth as a free nation: the day on which was shed the first blood wherewith our country's independence was baptized. It was a time

of trouble, that day of 1861, as was that of 1775. But it was not like this!

Ever and anon since then the Republic has seen dark days! After many a battle in which the hosts of conspiracy and rebellion were for the time triumphant; after many an unveiling of depths of intrigue and of faction wherein the emissaries and abettors of secession, right in the heart of the loyal States, hoped to bury the nation's cause; under many a report that seemed too well founded, promising the open help of our country's foes abroad to the enemy that was of our own household; often and often, there were days of gloom, through whose clouds none but the clear eye of faith in the right could catch even a glimpse of Heaven's favor. But of all those days of trouble there was none like this!

When Washington went home to the skies, he had fulfilled to the utmost his country's hopes and even desires; and amid the plaudits of a grateful people and of an admiring world he passed out of human sight at the call of Heaven's King, his death-bed cheered and soothed, and its pains alleviated by all that highest skill and warmest love could minister. When President Harrison and General Taylor laid aside their robes of office, it was, in like manner, at the inevitable summons of the Great Ruler of all earth's rulers, and in the fullness of their years and honors; and for them the nation's universal sorrow was not tinged with any shade of darkening passion;

was not embittered by the thought that the nation's enemies were the instruments of the heavy affliction.

But now that one is gone who had been treading in the footsteps of the wise and of the good who had walked the paths of magistracy before him; who, in the clearer light that the rising and ever-ascending sun of freedom sheds on human rights and human duties, could not but see more than had been seen by the earlier sages of the Republic; one who had struggled successfully with difficulties such as made all the labors of his predecessors seem easy in comparison,—now, just when he seemed about to lead the nation out of night into day, out of storm into calm, out of grief into joy, out of war into peace, out of strife into love, that he should die, should die such a death; that “the strong staff” on which the nation leaned should be thus broken; that “the beautiful rod,” to which the world was looking with daily increasing reverence and admiration, should be thus despoiled,—“this is a lamentation and shall be a lamentation!”

The ship of state had been for four long years tossed with such tempests as it never before had known. For four long years armed mutiny, powerful in the advantages which conspiracy and robbery and perjury had given it in the outset, had resisted all attempts to subdue and cast it out. But just as quiet seas are almost gained, just as law and justice and truth have proved themselves victors over wrong,

in an unlooked for moment, the wise and patient commander falls before an assassin's blow! What day has there been like this?

What can I say to you, my beloved people and Christian friends, that will be becoming this place and this occasion, and that will awaken in you or intensify at all a sense of your own and of our nation's loss?

Most of you, I doubt not, understand the character of Abraham Lincoln as well as I do; many of you, it may be, much better than I do. In this I think all will agree with me: that his was a character of singular transparency. In his position it was of course often necessary that his plans and purposes should be veiled, at least for a time. He was, when need be, wisely reticent; and yet when the necessity for concealment had passed, his whole action was seen to be consistent with the principles and the policy that professedly he upheld. It was altogether foreign to his nature to stoop to the low arts of political trickery. The sinuous paths by which so many in public station have sought to reach their objects were his aversion and contempt. And there was in him a remarkable simplicity of taste as to all that concerned his manner of living. There was nothing about him that savored of ostentation or a vain fondness of display. Used in his earlier life to toil, and often to hardships and privations, he retained in his high position a perfect

sympathy with the classes and conditions in life above which he had been elevated. He had been trained in a rough school; but the lessons he had learned were of great practical worth. Especially was he imbued with a love of those great principles which underlie our whole fabric of government. The equality of all men before the law, which stands in the forefront of the principles enunciated in the Declaration of Independence, was to him no cold, lifeless theory, but a warm, cherished reality. It was upon this principle he stood, before his election to the Presidency, when combating that gigantic system of oppression and cruelty, for which some of the fathers of the Republic asked a temporary toleration, but which an overbearing oligarchy in the Southern States were more and more determined to use for their own aggrandizement; which they were resolved to make perpetual and universal in the land. It was from his keen sense of right that he hated and sought to eradicate that monstrous wrong; and it was also from his kindly and generous sympathy with the down-trodden, from his love of his fellow-men in the lofty spirit of Christian philanthropy, that he felt it to be a glorious and a blessed result if he could be, in any rightful way, the instrument of its removal. He was, indeed, as he ought to have been, exceedingly unwilling to inflict injury in the endeavor to redress and remove an injury, to do a wrong in order to establish the

Right. He was duly mindful of his obligations so to respect the Constitution of the land as to make it answer the great ends for which it had been adopted.

And so, firmly and steadily, to some it seemed too rapidly, to others too slowly, he advanced in the establishment of those principles in his administration of the government intrusted to him. His course, like that of some planet in the skies, seemed to many an observer unsteady and erratic; but like that planet, his progress was in a fixed orbit around the central Sun of Truth. The path of the planet, seen from a world whose complex motions, on its axis and around the sun, give seeming motion to the heavenly bodies, may appear to be eccentric and fitful; and so, amid the daily shifting scenes of our political affairs, especially in times of such fearful commotion as those through which we have been passing, it is no wonder that men have been uncertain at times in which direction the public policy was tending. For a like reason there has been in many minds an uncertainty whether the President sought to be a leader or a follower of public opinion. Yet if I have not misjudged, it was to his eminent prudence that this uncertainty was due. He led, generally, even when he seemed to follow; but he took care that his public measures were not so much in advance of the sentiments of the great mass of thoughtful lovers of their country, as to part

company with them and thus lose their indispensable support.

For no trait of character was he more conspicuous than for the absence of all animosity, even toward those who had most deeply wronged and maligned him. Macaulay, in a most unjust criticism on Archbishop Cranmer, describes that gentle Christian prelate as "a placable enemy;" and never, I think, has the country had a statesman to whom could more fittingly apply this phrase than to the lamented dead. His tenderness to all was almost womanly; his readiness to show mercy was almost Divine.

Nor will any one here deny him one other lofty attribute: an intense love of his country. It was not wordy but hearty; not sentimental but practical. He knew—what the unprincipled traitors of the South never knew—the meaning of love of country, of true patriotism. It was no narrow State pride, no sectional arrogance, no boastful spirit of exclusiveness, but a love which, in its expansion embracing man as man, men as men, intensified itself in its devotion to the land which was his home, the people who were his countrymen, the Government and the Constitution to which he owed and rendered his supreme allegiance.

I wish I could speak as I would of his religious character, as known and manifest to all. I could wish that he, like some of his illustrious predecessors, had been openly identified with the Church of

the Lord Jesus Christ. That he had deep religious convictions, that he respected and revered the Christian religion, that he sought to shape his life, public and private, by the precepts and the truths of Christ's gospel, we have good reason to believe. I could wish—oh, how earnestly!—that he had seen, in what I believe to be the light of Christian experience, the evils that, so far as I have known, are inseparable from the theater, and that make that hot-bed of immorality forbidden ground to every consistent disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. I could wish—oh, how earnestly!—that his religious culture had been such as would have led him to unite with the great mass of Christian people in regarding the anniversary of the day whereon Jesus died for sinners as a time for devotion to serious thought, and not for attendance on public spectacles. But in this I judge him not. HE to whom we are to give account, although he cannot pardon unrepented and willful sin, is very merciful and plenteous in goodness; ready to save every sincere believer in Christ's blessed gospel.

There is much that I would gladly say of our lamented President, for which there is now no time. I hope, if spared until Sunday evening next, to examine at some length the religious aspect of this event which the nation mourns, and to draw from it those practical lessons which it so impressively teaches. Let us, for

a few minutes, go in thought to the mansion in the nation's capital, in which, at this hour, lie the remains of the illustrious, lamented dead. There, in the presence of those highest in office in the Republic, in the presence of those bound to him who has gone by dearest ties, are now performing those sad offices which precede the interment of his mortal body. The form that last week towered high above the multitude now lies prostrate in the embrace of death. The eyes that beamed so kindly are sealed in a sleep from which man can never waken him who slumbers there. The genial smile plays no longer on the now pallid cheek. The voice, whose public utterances were heard with interest throughout the civilized world, is hushed in unbroken silence. The heart, that beat so warmly responsive to all that is just and right and honorable and benevolent, is now still. The funeral solemnities there are but the central services around which, at widening distances, cluster like solemnities, following the sun's westward course as the hours march on, from the Atlantic to the Pacific coast. And never, never, never was there such a funeral as Abraham Lincoln's! Never has a death in our land caused so many so sincerely and so deeply to mourn. Never, it seems to me, has a nation had such cause to mourn a ruler's death. He was so loved and so deservedly loved; he had done his country such service, and he had it in his heart and in his power to do so much more; he was, to all human appearance, so indispensably needed

for the settlement of the perplexing questions that attend the reconstruction of our National Government.

And then the manner and the instrument of his death! How can I speak of it? Such a crime as makes the nation stand aghast with horror! One that kindles at every thought a just resentment; an irrepressible indignation! What a deed of infamy! of fiendish malice! of hell-born hate! a parricide for whose baseness, I was about to say, we search history in vain to find a counterpart! But no! whose baseness, the natural outgrowth of treason, can only be exceeded by the depravity of that man or that woman whose words or looks express—whose cruel heart conceives—a thought of pleasure, of satisfaction, in its terrible result. This gigantic war, in its record shows a fearful catalogue of crimes that, from the first overt act of treason, have ever and anon made humanity shudder! Deeds so inhuman that none but men who had given Satan full possession of their souls could possibly have performed them. The men who were guilty of the massacre at Lawrence and at Fort Pillow—the men who treated with more than savage barbarity our poor prisoners in Richmond, at Andersonville, and Salisbury,—these are the men who, first lifting their hand against their country's sacred flag, have gone down from depth to depth of wickedness until by their last foul blow they have exceeded all the wickedness of their previous career.

But thank God the Nation did not perish when its illustrious Chief Magistrate fell under the assassin's hand!

When on that Good Friday evening, eighteen hundred and thirty-six years ago, the enemies of Christ desired to make certain the suppression of the faith of the Crucified, they made sure (as they thought) the sepulcher in which He lay, "sealing the stone and setting a watch." But the death of Jesus, notwithstanding all they could do, was followed by His resurrection; and thenceforward His gospel went forth everywhere, "conquering and to conquer."

The conspirators in the national capital, last Good Friday evening, purposed, by slaying the President and the Heads of the Government, to inaugurate anarchy and make sure work of destroying the Nation's life. But I need not tell you how signally they failed! God be thanked for what Abraham Lincoln has done for the American people! That, his enemies cannot undo! God be thanked for the evidence already so clear that out of his lamented death the Nation will draw new life; will have every high and holy purpose quickened; will be made more firm, more resolved, more united for the right! A costly sacrifice has been given. God will not let it be given in vain.

"It is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it."

High hopes, that burned like stars sublime,  
Go down the heavens of Freedom ;  
And true hearts perish in the time  
We bitterliest need them !  
But, never sit we down and say,  
There's nothing left but sorrow,—  
We walk the wilderness to-day,  
The promised land to-morrow.

Our birds of song are silent now,  
There are no flowers blooming ;  
Yet life beats in the frozen bough,  
And Freedom's Spring is coming !  
And Freedom's tide comes up alway,  
Though we may stand in sorrow ;  
And our good bark, aground to-day,  
Shall float again to-morrow.

Through all the long, dark nights of years,  
The people's cry ascendeth,  
And Earth is wet with blood and tears ;  
But our meek sufferance endeth !  
The few shall not forever sway,  
The many toil in sorrow ;  
The Powers of Earth are strong to-day,  
But Heaven shall rule to-morrow.

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Though hearts brood o'er the past, our eyes  
    With smiling features glisten ;  
For, lo ! our day bursts up the skies-  
    Lean out your souls, and listen !  
The world rolls Freedom's radiant way,  
    And ripens with her sorrow ;  
Keep heart ! who bears the cross to-day,  
    Shall wear the crown to-morrow.

Build up heroic lives, and all  
    Be like a sheathen saber,  
Ready to flash out at God's call,  
    O, chivalry of labor !  
Triumph and toil are twins, and aye,  
    Joy suns the cloud of sorrow ;  
And 'tis the martyrdom to-day  
    Brings victory to-morrow.

S E R M O N

ON THE EVENING OF

THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EASTER,

April 23d, 1865.

## S E R M O N.

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When Thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness. ISAIAH, xxvi. 9.

THE prophet, in this chapter, gives the church a psalm to be sung by the people of God after their return from the captivity in Babylon, which he had foreseen and foretold: and we can well imagine with what reverent hope and joy Jeremiah and Ezekiel and Daniel, prophets themselves, sat down by the rivers in the land of their exile, and, in the darkest days of their guilty nation, found comfort here. Their trials and afflictions might be ever so grievous, but they should have an end. The tribes of Israel were not only to be restored to their country and their homes, but they were also to be made wiser and better by what they had suffered. "In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah: We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks. Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in." \* \* \* "In the way of Thy judgments, O Lord, have we waited for Thee; the desire of our

soul is to Thy name, and to the remembrance of Thee. With my soul have I desired Thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek Thee early: for when Thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness."

We, as a people, dear hearers, have had during the last four years a solemn and painful experience of the judgments of God on our land. Such afflictions as we have endured, the word of God expressly teaches us\* to regard in this light. They are admonitions to us that God had and still hath a controversy with our nation. The prophet, from whose words our text is taken, elsewhere says: "The Lord is our Judge; the Lord is our Lawgiver; the Lord is our King;" most wonderfully discriminating in his distribution of the powers of government into judicial, legislative, and executive; and pointing to the Triune Jehovah, as Himself fulfilling for His people all these functions. Our Congress, our Courts, our Presidents and Governors, all owe to Him supreme allegiance. Their statutes, their decisions, their official acts of authority are all subject to His revision; to His approval or disapproval. And so are all those expressions of will and of purpose that come from the people, whose servants Presidents, Judges, Legislators represent themselves to be. Our

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\* Ezekiel, xiv. 21; Leviticus, xxvi. 25.

rulers may be in theory (and to some extent in practice) the servants of the people; but rulers and people are alike servants of Him who is over all. If we observe His will, we receive, as a people, His favor. If we violate and contemn His will, we are liable either to the chastenings of His love for our correction and reform, or to the outpourings of His wrath for retribution, and, if we turn not, for our destruction.

It is in this light that, as a Christian pastor, I feel compelled to view the whole civil war through which we have been passing, and especially that most grievous national affliction under which the heart of the American people now bleeds. There is an important sense in which we are to view this war and this assassination of our loved Chief Magistrate, as a JUDGMENT from God. Had our national policy been right, and had our national character been conformed to God's will, I am sure that the war would never have taken place. Had not the sins committed by our people displeased Him, who is our Judge, our Lawgiver, and our King, that awful deed of blood would never have stained our land. While, as to the war itself, I have no shadow of suspicion that our Government was not authorized to resist and subdue armed treason by force; while it was the bounden duty of the Government to wield the Divinely-given Sword of Magistracy to defend the nation's life; while the crime of making unlawful war rests wholly on its guilty

authors in our Southern States and their abettors in the North,—yet it is no less true that the sins of the whole people, North and South, brought upon us this terrible evil. While the victims of the rebellion have included in their numbers thousands from among the best, the wisest, the noblest of our citizens, men whose conspicuous virtue was seen in their willing offering of their own lives on their country's altar; while among the impoverished and the heart-broken may have been those who for years had been weeping in the bitterness of their souls over the sins, public and private, by which Heaven's King was every day provoked, their death, their impoverishment, their bereavement, was nevertheless God's judgment on our guilty land.

So when by the last fearful deed, whose atrocity exceeded all that had gone before in treason's shameful career, HE was taken whom our country so loved, so honored, so trusted, so relied on, it was God's judgment; not on the nation's President, but on the people whom he so wisely ruled in the fear of God: a judgment, I devoutly trust, not in wrath, but in mercy. When death removes the parent, it is the family that is chastened. When God, by whatever instrument, takes away our chosen ruler, in an hour in which he seemed most needful, He speaks in tones of solemn admonition and rebuke to the nation. May we hear the rod and Him who hath appointed it.

It is the intention of these judgments, the prophet

tells us, that the world should “learn righteousness,” and we, the people of this land, as most nearly interested, should be most of all anxious to learn.

I regard this event, then, as calling on us—

I. To a careful scrutiny into our personal and national sins. Time would utterly fail me to-night, were I to attempt to follow up the fearful catalogue that might be made of offenses whereby our Heavenly Ruler is every day defied. But there are some forms of wrong-doing exceedingly prominent. Foremost among these is that to which our late beloved President so touchingly refers in his last brief Inaugural: that sin in the interest of which the rebellion began; that sin, for his manly abhorrence of which our President was so intensely hated, so cruelly maligned,—the sin of African slavery.

It is not of slavery as a political system, but as a moral evil, that I here and now speak, as I have spoken before in this place; and in that aspect I would here confess, as a part of my own dereliction, that until the rebellion unsealed my lips, I had never spoken concerning it as freely and as fully as I ought. I used to excuse myself by saying it was not a national, but a local, sectional sin. But when the attempt was made to take the nation’s life, I began (as did thousands of others) to realize that the nation is, in an important sense, a unit; and that the whole could not rid itself of responsibility for the wrong-doing of one of its parts; and that a failure on the

part of the pulpit to speak, was giving a tacit approval to the evil. I used to say to myself, that I feared I might do more harm than good by meddling at all with the subject; but the advocates of the wrong, not satisfied with silence, demanded of the whole nation, and the whole church, an indorsement of that wrong. The courts, including the Supreme Court, were compelled by Southern politicians, before the rebellion began, to nationalize the iniquity; and THEN God's judgment came to *reverse* the unjust decision. After four years of most painful discipline, the nation, by its highest legislature, and with the approval of the Executive, is attempting to make its fundamental law, the Constitution, speak out the condemnation of slavery, which the national conscience demanded. But even yet there could be found men, parties, legislatures that would hesitate and refuse to give constitutional validity to that condemnation. Then came what I cannot but regard as a fresh and more fearful judgment; not on the individual who fell by the assassin's hand, but on the nation. The voice of that judgment, in this respect, sounds distinctly in my ear. It says, If anything is wanting to convince the honest portion of the American people what the true character of slavery is, here is the proof. That rhapsody of the murderer, which the press has given us this last week, shows, among other things, what are the legitimate fruits of that system: its inevitable ten-

dency to make men call evil good, and good evil; to put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter. It is enough to make every man, who has hesitated hitherto, say slavery has attempted to take the life of the nation; it has taken the life of Abraham Lincoln, and slavery must, shall surely die! That is, in one aspect, the righteousness which this judgment was intended to teach; and which our whole people must learn, or be prepared for further, if possible, heavier chastenings from the hand of Him, the Maker of all; before whom the rich and the poor, the bond and the free, the master and the servant, stand on one common level. As to this we must say, with the prophet (Lam. iii. 40), "Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord. Let us lift up our hearts with our hands unto God in the heavens. We have transgressed and have rebelled: thou hast not pardoned." \* \* \* "The joy of our heart is ceased; our dance is turned into mourning. The crown is fallen from our head; woe unto us, that we have sinned! For this our heart is faint; for these things our eyes are dim."

II. Of other public national sins I will not attempt now to speak; but there are two or three forms of flagrant transgression which, I conscientiously believe, are increasing in our land in frightful rapidity, and for which, so common are they becoming, we have reason to expect especial judgments from God.

One of these is the sin of *drunkenness*. It is a sin

which men are very ready to palliate and excuse, but which God loathes. The very mercies that God has bestowed on us during this terrible war have been perverted into occasions for this sin. Our press (I speak not of all, but of many of our papers), just after the news came that Richmond had fallen,—and still more when the rebel chief, Robert E. Lee, surrendered,—encouraged and applauded drunkenness as a proper expression of popular joy. In ribald rhyme—that, I would fain hope, meant not what it said—it intimated that he who would not thus imbrute himself was wanting in patriotism! It spoke flippantly of the many whose conviviality in the excitement of these happy tidings overflowed into intemperance; and, as I noticed in one item, numbered so many thousand “inaugurations” as having taken place in one of our western cities, on receipt of the news: thus sporting with the national shame, like fools making a mock at sin. My dear friends, a nation of drunkards can never be a free nation; and our victories will be dearly bought indeed, if, beyond the cost in precious lives of our heroic soldiers, they make drunkards of our young men. The assassin who took from us our President was not only a fanatical advocate of slavery, but also a libertine and a drunkard; and in his deadly work a kind but just Providence bids us see and repent of this our sinfulness. He bids every drunkard in the land say, “I am helping not only to ruin myself, body and soul, but also to bring down God’s

displeasure and His judgments on my country! I am an Achan among the hosts of Israel. I am, practically, whatever my intent, my country's foe."

Of profanity, of licentiousness, of gambling, of Sabbath-breaking, of dishonesty, of avarice, of greed, like things may be as truly said. It was the aggregate of the offenses of individuals in Sodom and Gomorrah that brought down on these cities a deluge of fire; and all through the world, God, the Searcher of hearts and the Omniscient Witness, is scanning national character, not only by the course of public policy, but also by the principles, the characters of the mass of the individuals of which the nation consists. Now I do not hesitate to say, as of drunkenness so of the other evils just named, that they have been largely and rapidly increasing among us during the past few years; and, as to them, we may well hear the prophet's words: "Shall I not visit for these things? saith the Lord. Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?"

III. This judgment, it seems to me, is meant to teach us to view treason with deeper detestation than we have ever yet felt for that crime of crimes. A few in every community have, from the beginning of the rebellion, characterized in fitting terms this offense against God and man; but even after all the revelations made of its real enormity, by the misery it has caused, by the blood it has shed, by the homes it

has made desolate, by the burdens it has brought on this afflicted nation, even now there are in almost every community some who can think and (if they dare) speak lightly of this wickedness. With a morbid sentimentality that assumes the cloak of Christian forbearance and forgiveness, they have plead, not only for the misguided masses who were involved in this rebellion, but for their leaders, who, moved by ambition and by greed, violated not only their common obligations, but their solemn, oft-repeated oaths of fidelity to the Constitution and the Government of these United States: for men who were, many of them, fed and clothed and educated at the nation's expense; for men who had gained all that they had of wealth, of reputation, of influence, under the nation's fostering care; for these men, who, through perjury and craft and dishonesty and dishonor, launched the nation into this sea of trouble and of blood,—for these men apologists have ventured to speak with bated breath, as though their offense were some venial indiscretion of excitable temperaments. It was not enough that all along through the course of this war bad faith, and indescribable cruelty to prisoners, and tortures inflicted by fanatical officers on Union-loving citizens of the South, had brought upon the rebel authorities the execrations of almost all who love the right and feel for human woes; it needed this last great crime to bring a unanimous verdict from the impaneled jury of the whole honest people

of the land, pronouncing on treason and on traitors a deserved doom. It needed this judgment to make all right-minded men be of one mind concerning this crime and its promoters, and to secure the vindication of law, of government, of order, by making it impossible for the leaders of the rebellion to escape, by our consent or our connivance, the punishment they have so richly deserved. Upon the hand of every one of these leaders was already the blood of hundreds of thousands of their slaughtered countrymen; now the deeper, darker, more ineffaceable stain of the blood of Abraham Lincoln makes it impossible that any one of them should ever be again permitted to stand, honored and honorable, before the American people.

IV This judgment, it seems to me, is meant to teach us more impressively than ever our dependence upon God. Its voice is, "Cease ye from man whose breath is in his nostrils; for wherein is he to be accounted of?" It is natural to man—and not at all peculiar to the American people—to indulge in what has been called "Hero worship." We are all apt so to magnify the instruments by which blessings are conferred as to be forgetful of their real Giver, to whom belongs all the glory. It is well for us to value and to honor those who are public benefactors. We can scarcely appreciate too highly the worth of such a man as our late President; but while loving and praising him, we must much more love and thank Him, the Source of all good, whose gift to our nation our Presi-

dent was. It was perhaps needful for us to be made to realize, more impressively than we ever did or could before, how frail and uncertain our dependence on man must ever be. Our Supreme Ruler must be a ruler that ever liveth; one "in whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." We must feel that it is He in whose hands we and all the interests of our nation are; and trusting in Him, we shall not be confounded. There are about us and among us on this earth wicked men who are ready at any moment to injure and destroy us and our country for their own base and selfish ends; but above them all, we and our nation have a Protector, who says to all wickedness, "Thus far and no farther;" who makes the very wrath of man to praise Him; who has promised that the "remainder of wrath He will restrain." Humanly speaking, all that is good and desirable is at every moment in the power of the wicked; but, thank God, neither the malice of men nor that of devils can hurt a child of God, nor overturn Messiah's kingdom in the world, nor go a hair's breadth beyond that which, in wisdom and mercy, is permitted. This, then, is a part of the righteousness we are to learn from God's judgments—to depend on God, not on man.

V Another thought I must briefly indicate. From this judgment of God on our land, we may learn that high place and wide-swaying power are of little worth as the prizes of human ambition. How was our country moved, less than six months ago, by the

question put to millions of our citizens, Whom do you wish to have as your President? Had Abraham Lincoln sought that place only through ambitious aspirings, how utterly would his hopes have failed, even in the moment of their seeming fruition!

“Life’s loftiest stage is a small eminence,  
Inch high the grave above, that home of man  
Where dwells the multitude.”

The desire to rule may be a perfectly lawful motive; if it be combined with a sincere regard to justice and truth, and to the best interests of those over whom authority is sought. He who is qualified for high office, and faithfully discharges his duty therein, may challenge justly the esteem and grateful love of his constituents. But power, honor, fame, wealth, influence may be dearly bought, if desired and procured as ends, not means to the good of others.

“The glories of our mortal state  
Are shadows, not substantial things;  
There is no armor against fate:  
Death lays his icy hand on kings.  
Scepter and crown  
Must tumble down,  
And in the dust be equal made  
With the poor crooked scythe and spade.”

VI. Once more, God would have us learn by this judgment to abate the rancor of political animosity

and the severity of language too often employed, orally and by the press, in censuring our public men. If speakers and writers would but think of the living while they live, as they would speak of them when dead, they would have far less to regret in reviewing the past. Men may speak freely of those in official station, but they should speak more kindly than they usually do: and above all, they should speak truly. Especially should they take care lest by familiarizing the minds of the excitable with violent charges and false denunciations, they prompt some dark spirit to a deed of everlasting infamy, such as that which has clothed our country in mourning. Many a citizen of the Republic has refused to permit his name to be used as a candidate for an office which he might have filled with advantage to the community or to the nation, simply from his dread of the almost inevitable detraction and insult and calumny to which in his candidacy or in his office he would be exposed. The *liberty* of the press must indeed be carefully guarded. The *licentiousness* of the press should be as carefully curbed, if not by the penalties of law, at least by the righteous indignation of those who prize free institutions.

My dear hearers, it belongs to each one of us to take home to himself the painful lesson that God is teaching us by the judgments through which we have been passing, and which may not as soon as we hope come entirely to an end! Our hearts' lan-

guage should be that of the prophet: "Come and let us return unto the Lord; for He hath torn and He will heal us! He hath smitten and He will bind us up."

There are pleasing tokens that such will be the course of at least a large portion of the American people. Of this we may be sure, that the need of chastening was great, or our God, merciful and gracious, would not have laid on us His hand in such heavy strokes of His afflicting rod. Oh, may His own Holy Spirit teach us; then, from His judgments, we shall indeed learn righteousness!

## THE INAUGURAL.

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WE reproduce President Lincoln's second Inaugural Address here, not because we suppose our readers will not have already seen it elsewhere, but because we wish to have it appear on our own files as a matter of record, and a matter too of testimony; and that we may take opportunity to thank God that He has in His wise, loving favor to the nation, given to it a man as its chief officer, and that He has himself taught and led this earnest and simple-minded man till he does not fear, nor hesitate, even from such place, and on so high occasion, to utter the pure, the pious, the strong, the brave, yet tender words which fell there from his lips. It gives us a new confidence, a fresh impulse of hope and assurance for the American people, that its chief citizen has so had his vision clarified, so couched from the cataract of official blindness, so set open to the meaning and the purpose of God in his dealings with us, as to have uttered the sentence we have italicised. We are fain to recognize in this the lowly and penitent voice of the people, humbling itself with a

genuine humility, before that mighty God, who is now scourging, but will, in due time, exalt us, if we honor Him.—*Western Episcopalian*.

FELLOW-COUNTRYMEN:—At this second appearing to take the oath of the presidential office, there is less occasion for an extended address than there was at the first. Then, a statement, somewhat in detail, of a course to be pursued, seemed fitting and proper. Now, at the expiration of four years, during which public declarations have been constantly called forth on every point and phase of the great contest which still absorbs the attention and engrosses the energies of the nation, little that is new could be presented. The progress of our arms, upon which all else chiefly depends, is as well known to the public as to myself; and it is, I trust, reasonably satisfactory and encouraging to all. With high hope for the future, no prediction in regard to it is ventured.

On the occasion corresponding to this four years ago, all thoughts were anxiously directed to an impending civil war. All dreaded it—all sought to avert it. While the inaugural address was being delivered from this place, devoted altogether to *sav-*  
*ing* the Union without war, insurgent agents were in

the city seeking to *destroy* it without war—seeking to dissolve the Union, and divide effects, by negotiation. Both parties deprecated war; but one of them would *make* war rather than let the nation survive; and the other would *accept* war rather than let it perish. And the war came.

One-eighth of the whole population were colored slaves, not distributed generally over the Union, but localized in the southern part of it. These slaves constituted a peculiar and powerful interest. All knew that this interest was, somehow, the cause of the war. To strengthen, perpetuate, and extend this interest was the object for which the insurgents would rend this Union, even by war; while the Government claimed no right to do more than to restrict territorial enlargement of it. Neither party expected for the war the magnitude or the duration which it has already attained. Neither anticipated that the *cause* of the conflict might cease with, or even before, the conflict itself should cease. Each looked for an easier triumph, and a result less fundamental and astounding. Both read the same Bible, and pray to the same God; and each invokes His aid against the other. It may seem strange that any men should dare to ask a just God's assistance

in wringing their bread from the sweat of men's faces; but let us judge not, that we be not judged. The prayers of both could not be answered—that of neither has been answered fully. The Almighty has His own purposes. “Woe unto the world because of offenses! for it must needs be that offenses come; but woe to that man by whom the offense cometh.” If we shall suppose that American slavery is one of those offenses which, in the providence of God, must needs come, but which, having continued through His appointed time, He now wills to remove, and that He gives to both North and South this terrible war, as the woe due to those by whom the offense came, shall we discern therein any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a living God always ascribe to Him? Fondly do we hope—fervently do we pray—that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. *Yet, if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword; as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said, “The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.”*

With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow and his orphan—to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and a lasting peace among ourselves, and with all nations.