

A

S E R M O N ,

PREACHED

IN THE BOWERY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,

NEW YORK, DECEMBER 10, 1835,

ON THE DAY OF THE PUBLIC THANKSGIVING, APPOINTED BY THE
GOVERNOR OF THE STATE.

BY JOHN WOODBRIDGE, D. D.,
PASTOR OF THE BOWERY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

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To his partial friends, at whose request it is now published, the following discourse, which was hastily written, with the sole design of edifying his hearers during the delivery, is respectfully and affectionately dedicated, with his best wishes for their temporal and eternal welfare, by their pastor and humble servant,

THE AUTHOR.

NEW YORK, DEC. 1835.

WILLIAM VAN NORDEN, PRINT.

THANKSGIVING SERMON.

DEUTERONOMY, iv. 6, 7. "Keep, therefore, and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon him for?"

In his dealings with mankind, God has chosen a course of procedure, adapted at once to manifest his own moral perfections, and make an exhibition of the real character of human nature, amidst all the conceivable varieties of situation in which it can act in the present world. He, indeed, as the Creator and omniscient Proprietor of the universe, has foreseen, with infallible certainty, the final issue of every dispensation; but, as it regards the moral instruction of creatures, every new arrangement in the circumstances of human beings, has been a new experiment on the genuine tendencies of the heart of fallen man. The result, alas! has been one, demonstrating the inveteracy of that moral corruption which has infected the species, and which is never removed, but by the interposition of such a Divine agency, as can conquer the most stubborn resistance. Before the general deluge, true religion had become almost extinct;

and after that dreadful catastrophe—in which God declared to listening worlds His view of the incorrigible obstinacy of the generation that perished beneath his stroke—the remnant of the human race soon revolted into idolatry, unmoved by the kindness, and setting at defiance the authority and judgments, of their Maker. When the apostacy had become almost universal, the Most High was pleased to select a particular family, to be the depository of his truth, the last abode of pure religion on earth, and a centre of moral light, amidst the surrounding darkness of paganism and infidelity. “In Judah, was God known; his name was great in Israel.” Never had a people been so highly privileged. Jehovah had revealed to them his will; had placed them in a land, where they were in a great measure separated from other nations; had supplied them with all needful temporal favors; had established among them ordinances, fitted to make religion the subject of their most familiar thoughts; and had a thousand times wrought the most amazing miracles for their protection from enemies, and deliverance from dangers. What return did they make? Of their fickleness, ingratitude, profligacy, manifold idolatries, and consequent punishments, we are well assured from that inspired volume, which records the wonders of Divine love towards that faithless nation. The text reminds them of the unrivalled kindness of Divine Providence;—the *result* of this experiment we learn, not only from the sacred history, but from the present condition of the Jews, in all parts of the earth in which they are dispersed.

In our own country, human nature is tried in a manner

not a little *unusual*; and there can be no doubt, but such a trial was one leading object in Divine Providence, in ordaining for us the circumstances and allotments, by which we are distinguished. Other nations, and perhaps spiritual beings of other worlds, are looking upon us, to observe the developments of mind and heart, which will ensue from the *peculiarity* of Heaven’s dealings towards this highly favored land. In the remarks I am to offer, I shall notice some of the more prominent things, which serve to aggrandize the experiment with respect to us, that is now being transacted on the stage of this world’s shifting scenery and sublime moral acting, where every occurrence has some relation to the interests of eternity and of universal being.

Our local and physical advantages are perhaps unequalled. It is not my design to give you a table of statistics; the time will not permit me; and this you will find in numerous publications, which have been prepared with care, and which are issuing daily from the press. Our distance from powerful nations gives us the opportunity, unmolested, of putting to the test our peculiar institutions, and using any means which we may judge expedient to multiply our resources. Our extensive territory—with all its diversities of soil, surface, and climate, with its mineral riches, its forests, its prairies, its lengthened sea-coast, its chains of lakes, its rivers and all its facilities of internal navigation and improvement—seems fitted to be the seat of an empire such as the world has never witnessed, and such as has never been dreamed of, save in the fables of romance and poetry. Let all the arts of cultivation and

skill be brought to bear upon us, combined with the advantages of wise enterprise and an orderly population ; and there may be, in the course of a few generations, presented here one beautiful garden of fertility, plenty, and happiness, from Maine to Florida, and from the Atlantic to the Pacific ocean. The mind can hardly conceive a more charming picture. When, with the intersections of numerous roads and canals, our whole land shall be subjected to the hand of thrift, and studded thickly with well regulated villages and cities, like the stars in a clear evening sky; and the hum of business, and the voice of gratulation and thanksgiving, shall mingle with the roar of every mountain-torrent, and the soft breezes of every plain, (a vision, which may be realized ere our gravestones shall have crumbled away,) then, and not till then, may the high destiny of our country be fully appreciated.

Our peculiar descent should not be forgotten. The puritan fathers of New England, and many others of the original settlers of this country, were nature's noblemen—and more than noblemen by grace—of whom the earth was not worthy. Nurtured amidst hardships and persecution, they acquired a Roman energy, united with a simplicity, meekness, wisdom, and comprehensiveness of views, which would have done honor to the patriarchs of the Christian church in her best days. While their axe cleared the wilderness, and their musket defended them from the assaults of their savage foes, their piety built churches, settled ministers, and erected the schools of the prophets; and their godliness, prayers, and political sagacity combined,

laid the foundation of an empire. By such men, who had felt the galling yoke of oppression in Europe, and had fled hither as an asylum, the genius of liberty, too often an exile from the mansions of opulence, was sought as their most familiar associate, dearer far than all the pageantry of wealth, the pomp of courts, and the pride of titled grandeur. With a bravery and genuine independence of thought, which had never been surpassed, and of which the little beings who affect to sneer at their peculiarities have not the simple idea, they pored over the pages of the Bible with perpetual delight, and hung their immortal hopes on the atoning sacrifice and grace of their Saviour. Man they feared not ; but they knew nothing of that impudent daring, which scorns the Heavens, and defies the thunders of the Almighty. They were great, because they revered and obeyed God—the eternal Patron of righteousness, comprehending in himself all true dignity, and nobleness, and greatness. They would not bow the knee to tyrants ; because their confidence was in HIM who is the source of all power, in whose sight kings and peasants are on a level, and who will judge the judges of the earth, as well as men of an inferior rank, according to their deeds. They gained a rich inheritance below, while they were toiling for an incorruptible crown above the skies. For their posterity, their main solicitude was, to train them for manly thinking, frugal plainness, patient industry, honorable achievements, glorious goodness, and “a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” Cradled amidst perils, the infant boy was taught that while he should do

worthily for his generation, he was to seek his home "beyond this visible diurnal sphere," among "the spirits of just men made perfect." Never had nation such an origin as ours. It tells of the wisdom, grace, and energy of godliness, in commencing and conducting the best designs of patriotism and philanthropy. In a word, what lessons does it not give us, adapted to elevate us above all that the world has ever yet seen! The names, the tombs, the epitaphs, the institutions of our ancestors, rebuke all that is injurious to freedom and virtue; all that debases the intellectual powers; all in the public mind that tends to the substitution of a reckless, shameless infidelity, for the manliness of Christian principle, and the ardor of enlightened piety. While we are instructed by the characters and incidents of our early history, we are cheered by the assurance that the sturdy hands which felled our forests were daily lifted towards the God who hears prayer, in behalf of posterity down to the end of time. We are called to protect the memory of our fathers from insult, and especially to beware that we disgrace not our lineage by effeminacy, vice, and profaneness. They bequeathed to us, as the richest legacy, their religion, their altars, and their reverence of law and order, united with their quenchless love of freedom. Oh, let not strangers—who have come among us to improve on our improvements, and to extend the domain of free inquiry and liberal views, at the expense of all that was held sacred by our pilgrim progenitors—men, disgorged upon us from the prisons of Europe, discontented spirits, who would rather "rule in hell than serve in heaven," or the emissaries of that spiritual despot, whose

nod once caused the world to tremble—let not *these strangers* rob us of that fair inheritance, which was earned amidst toils of savage warfare, and handed down, wet with the blood of self-sacrificing heroes, from the plains of Lexington, and Bunker's hill.

Our civil and political privileges are unrivalled. Our constitutions of government are designed to extend equal immunities to all, and ours is the only example of a great nation which has pursued such an object with success. The only hereditary distinction we know is confined to a portion of the states; and *that*, it must be admitted, is the most odious and unjust of all—the distinction of *master* and *slave*. After the freedom with which I have been accustomed to express my opinions, I fear not that my hearers will misunderstand me on this subject.* Slavery, everywhere a disgrace, is surely a blot most foul on the escutcheon of a nation of freemen; and it should grieve rather than surprise us, that some, who see the infamy attached to it, attempt to wipe it off, with an inconsiderate rudeness and officiousness adapted to repel co-operation, and fix indelibly the stigma they would remove. Indiscreet men, when unduly excited, will doubtless do indiscreet things; and they may be in danger of setting fire to the house itself, in their zeal for consuming whatever in it de-

* The writer has never taken any part with those who have lately styled themselves abolitionists. He utterly disapproves of their imprudence, their violence, their opposition to that excellent institution, the Colonization Society, and not a few of their doctrines. He is disposed, however, to give them, as a body, the fullest credit for good intentions; and he is happy to believe, that experience will correct many of their errors. For some of these gentlemen he feels the sincerest respect and esteem.

serves to be destroyed. We blame their rashness; but, be it known, we are none the less the enemies of hereditary bondage *for all that*; and we contend that the cause against which their vengeance is directed, is one of the most execrable that the sun, in its journeyings around the globe, ever shone upon. Nor is this a new discovery. The doctrine we maintain was that of all the non-slaveholding states who adopted our federal constitution; it was poured into our ears, and gained an immovable lodgment in our souls, as we were dandled on the laps of our mothers; and it cannot be extirpated from our bosoms till we lose the most cherished reminiscences and associations of our infantile days. We will not allow that the freedom of discussion should be curtailed to please any man, or any set of men; it is secured to us by the spirit of all our institutions; and when it is once taken away, our government will have been virtually changed, and our national glory have set for ever. Let legislative acts, or mobs, be permitted to dictate to us in this matter; and, though the shadow of the republic may remain, its dignity, its substance, its soul, will be gone. If a man be guilty of slander, let him be prosecuted before our courts of justice; if he be foolish, he will of course lose the confidence of the wise; but let no one be thrown out of the protection of law for his abstract opinions, however preposterous, or however weakly or extravagantly they may be defended. Our constitution knows of no constructive treasons; and the attempt to make them, under whatever pretext it may be done, is the very essence of tyranny; and would ere long demand, as

its auxiliary, the dungeons of the Bastille, or the axe of the guillotine.

With the exception of the evil to which I have now referred, our institutions are the freest upon earth. We are endeavoring to show with how little of law and coercion a great people may be protected in their rights, and advance to the highest degree of social improvement. The question is to be decided, whether we can live and be happy in the possession of unexampled freedom; or whether, by anarchy and misrule, we shall, in imitation of the ancient republics, create the necessity of a despotism, and thus forge chains for ourselves and our children.

We are trying the effect of a system of general education. The deficiencies of the system we now have are indeed many; in some of the states, the amount of ignorance among the common mass is truly alarming; and in nearly all, the thirst for useful knowledge is far less than it need to be under a government like ours, which is necessarily based in the intelligence and virtue of the people. Nevertheless, every true patriot, and every true Christian among us, is intent on diffusing the blessings of education to the greatest possible extent through the length and breadth of the land. We would make the schoolhouse, the schoolmaster, and the sabbath school, as familiar to the thoughts of all our children, from one extremity of the country to the other, as are their sports of infancy, the hills, the meadows, and the groves, that first meet their eye, and the blue sky over their heads. We would have them so habituated to the influence of books, of teachers, of mental and moral

discipline, that they could no more conceive of a respectable and happy community without these, than of competency and comfort without a dwelling, without fuel, without clothing, without a place of repose. Judicious and well directed efforts must be unremitted till this end, so desirable, is fully secured. We mean to pursue the noble course marked out by the puritans of Massachusetts and Connecticut, till the work is done. When we compare our past success in this enterprise, with what has been accomplished by most other nations, we feel the strongest encouragement to redouble our diligence; and, when we contemplate the unprecedented increase of our population, we surely betray an utter insensibility to the value of our privileges, if we do not summon every nerve to accelerate the march of intellectual improvement among all classes of our countrymen. Who among us are so debased by ignorance as many of the emigrants from foreign shores? and over whom is it needful to watch with such unceasing jealousy, lest, becoming the infatuated dupes of party passion, they are urged forward to such deeds of madness as shall shake our political fabric to its very foundations? *Educate* these men, and they will be safe;—*neglect them*, and, sooner or later, the tale of our folly will be inscribed on the tombstones of our liberties.

With all our deficiencies, we have a greater supply of the means of grace than is enjoyed by any other people. Where, comparatively, is so great a number of copies of the Scriptures to be found? Where are there so many readers? Where so many whose names are enrolled in sabbath schools and Bible classes? Where are there so many self-

denying, evangelical, and laborious preachers of God's Word? Where so many seminaries—so many efficient institutions designed to furnish the country and the world with able and faithful ministers of the gospel? Where do you find an equal comparative number of beneficent and energetic associations, adapted to the work of enlightening and saving all the tribes of men? We are in danger of becoming satiated by the abundance of our religious privileges, and losing the benefit of Christian ordinances for their very cheapness. The maxim is sometimes as applicable to the spiritual as it is to the animal part of our nature: "The full soul loathes the honey-comb."

In the frequency and power of revivals of religion, we have been accustomed to say, (and probably our opinion is just,) that we stand pre-eminent among the churches and communities in Christendom; and it remains to be seen whether such seasons of mercy shall be succeeded here, as they have been elsewhere, by the general prevalence, in the first place, of spurious, fanatical excitements, and then of spiritual apathy, coldness, and scepticism, not to be removed till the extravagances producing them are forgotten.

We are making the first experiment on a large scale that has ever been made,* of an entire separation of religion from the state. Pure Christianity indeed has seldom been patronised by human governments; they have rather sought the aid of superstition; or, if they have attempted to

* The temporary abolition of all religious establishments in France during the frenzy of her great atheistical revolution, can hardly be reckoned an exception.

uphold the church by providing it with funds, or by any rigorous positive enactments, they have generally corrupted it by their kindness, as they have thus allured to its highest departments ambitious men, whose principal recommendation was their subserviency to the reigning powers. The church asks nothing from the state but that protection which the latter professes to extend to every lawful association, and which cannot be denied without partiality and injustice. The church can live without the state, and even in defiance of the most cruel and sanguinary edicts. Evangelical piety was never more vigorous, active, and influential, than at the very time when all the strength and resources of the Roman empire were employed to crush the rising cause of Christ, and rebuild the crumbling walls of Paganism on its ruins. The sword which shed the blood of the martyrs, hewed down at the same blow those prejudices which had fortified the breasts of the multitude against the gospel. The patience and meekness of the sufferers were more eloquent than words; and told of such inward supports, such celestial visions, such godlike goodness, as heathenism and philosophy in their highest flights of speculation had never even fancied. Thus it was once; and thus, we doubt not, it would be again, should a similar state of things occur. The Church, leaning on her Beloved, may smile at the rage of a world in arms against her; and shout "SALVATION," in sight of dungeons, and fagots, and fires, prepared for her destruction. But what will become of the government that dares to set itself in opposition to the church? Christ will put down all rule, and all authority,

and all power, which would contravene his purposes of love to his people, and establish interests hostile to his own.

What the issue of the policy of our government, as it regards religion, will be on the government itself, there has not been sufficient time, since the adoption of our political system, to furnish us with the means of judging. So far, however, as it has originated from a respect for the rights of conscience, and not from indifference or enmity to the gospel, it will, we trust, prove altogether salutary; as it is in manifest accordance with the revealed will of God. At all events, by leaving religion unembarrassed, it will supply to the friends of Christianity the most powerful motives to indefatigable labors for its propagation. As government can neither directly aid them nor hinder them in this work, their sole reliance, under God, must be on their own wisdom, zeal, and union of effort. Will they not realize, that as civil freedom cannot be perpetuated without the influence of religion, our invaluable institutions are, in a peculiar sense, committed by Providence to their guardianship? Yes, enlightened and faithful Christians must save our country, or it will not be saved. The enemy is unwearied in mischief. Let our men of God forget their high trustments, and soon will a cloud of thick darkness roll over us, shutting out from our sight all the smiling orbs of heaven, as well as all the glories of this nether world.

We possess the best facilities for blessing other nations. Our country seems like the bow of promise on the cloud, spreading itself, and exhibiting its gorgeous colors, in sight of all the world. It tells mankind of the blessings of freedom,

and of the means by which they may be procured. It has awakened inquiry; it has brought to light and confirmed principles, that would once have been classed with the visions of Utopia; it has conveyed truths before unthought of to the cabinets of kings, to ancient seats of learning, and to the cottages of the oppressed and the poor. The world is looking on us with eager expectation; the friends of humanity, with solicitude, hope, and many prayers for our success; the enemies of liberty, with alarm, and dolorous predictions of our fall. Let the prophecies of evil be accomplished, and a note of triumph will be sounded far and wide by all the advocates of legitimacy and ancient abuses. The continuance of our prosperity would ensure the emancipation of the world; our overthrow, the perpetual bondage of nations now enthralled, and annihilate the hopes of the aspirants after liberty through the earth.

We have the best advantages for holding up the light of true religion to all nations. Already our missionaries are to be found in the isles of the Pacific, and on the continent of Asia; they preach Christ to the Jew, the Pagan, and the Mahomedan; and by the record of their travels, conflicts, and successes, show us what uninstructed man is, exemplify the nature of Christian goodness, and leave us, if we continue to close our hands in unbending parsimony, emphatically without excuse. Wherever these servants of Christ go, they take with them our knowledge, our language, our acts, and our political principles, as well as our religion. Our continually growing capabilities of usefulness to the rest of the world are incalculable. Should Christians else-

where do nothing, American Christians alone could carry the gospel to every land, and become the instruments of the conversion of every human family.

Thus it is, that we perform our part on an eminence, to which every eye is directed. We could not, if we would, fulfil our high destiny in a corner, without exerting a mighty influence on the character and condition of the human race.

Let us this day thank God for the distinction which he has conferred upon us; especially, for the privilege of being the almoners of his bounty, to send his own religion to the millions of our fellow-men who are perishing in ignorance and sin. We may well say, "He hath not dealt so with any nation: and as for his judgments, they have not known them. Praise ye the Lord."

Let us reflect on our high responsibility. Our past and present prosperity gives no certain pledge for the future. There is a God, who judgeth in the earth. The singularity of the circumstances in which we are placed, serves as a test of our character; and, if we prove worthless under the trial, He who has been pleased to exalt us to heaven, will most assuredly thrust us down to hell. There is no fixed law of nature, no charm in our free institutions, or in the name of American, that will impel us on to illustrious deeds, and give permanency to our republic, if we abjure the principles, and forsake the God, of our fathers. Let us remember the free states of antiquity: above all, let us remember God's own once most favored people—and tremble. Let us beware of self-confidence. In speaking of what is before us

there is sometimes a presumption, which reminds a serious man of the swelling words of a maniac, who fancies himself a king, and, in imagination, disposes of crowns and empires, as if they were the baubles of children. What have we that we did not receive? Have we forgotten the divine aphorism, "Pride goeth before destruction; and a haughty spirit, before a fall"? Will not this awful declaration of God be verified in us, if religion and virtue do not grow with our growth, and advance with our prosperity? And are there no indications of danger? Are there not with us many and heinous sins against the Lord? Oh, shall it be, that we are raised to the height of earthly glory, only to furnish another example of the deadly influence of prosperity; and of the ingratitude, profligacy, and hardened impiety, occasioned by the singular smiles of Heaven? Shall the great lesson we are to teach the universe, by our whole history, be, the base selfishness of man, and the impossibility, by any force of mercies, to reduce him to obedience to his Maker? God FORBID.

Unite, then, Christians, your thanksgivings with earnest prayers, that, whatever else the Most High may deny us, he would not refuse us that Divine instruction, and those gracious influences of his Spirit, without which we shall but provoke him to consume us. What doom may await this nation, we know not. Let us do our duty, brethren; and then, whatever events occur, we may say, "We have not neglected any suitable means in our power, to perpetuate the safety, peace, and happiness of our country." If, in future time, the feet of slaves, or of ferocious infidels,

should tread over our ashes, they will not disturb our slumbers in the grave, nor disquiet our spirits in the abodes of the blessed. But we will not indulge gloomy forebodings respecting this land of our fathers—this home of the free. Long after our names shall have been forgotten on earth, generations yet unborn will, we trust, here participate in a fulness of Divine bounty, such as we have never known. Here the Prince of Peace will reign over unnumbered millions of loyal and happy subjects, who, sitting quietly under their own vines and fig-trees, shall consecrate to Him their treasures, and their all. With these hopes, brethren, we will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord.

Since the last anniversary Thanksgiving, some of you have been bereaved of dear friends by death. You will find to-day vacant seats at your tables. But what am I saying? Let me not tear open your wounds, and cause them to bleed afresh. MOURNER! I would remind you of the many, many mercies which remain. May God Almighty comfort you, and wipe away your tears.

APPENDIX.

AFTER the foregoing Sermon had been sent to the press, the citizens of New York were called to witness the destructive fire of the night of the 16th of December, which will ever be regarded as a memorable event in the history of the city. It is not necessary to give the details, since they are to be found in all the newspapers, and are familiar to the reader.

There is great danger that this awful calamity will fail to make that deep moral impression, which it is fitted to produce, on the minds of this community. The business concerns of the city have a vitality and energy, which seem to rise above all disasters; and it is difficult to fasten despondency on minds full of vigor, used to success, surrounded by circumstances adapted to inspire hope, and urged to the immediate and full exertion of all their powers by an uncontrollable necessity. Over the half-extinguished embers, contracts are made for the erection of new edifices; arrangements for sustaining personal and public credit, and restoring trade to its former activity, are in successful operation; and it begins to be believed, that New York will ere long regain all she has lost by the late dreadful visitation of God. This is well, if pride be not fostered rather than self-reprobaton, and presumption—rather than affectionate, penitential, and humble reliance on Heaven. God grant, that the lessons which he has been rolling upon us in a deluge of flame, may not leave us uninstructed and unreclaimed.

APPENDIX.

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It is our first duty to trace and acknowledge his righteous hand in the desolations we have witnessed. We should overlook, comparatively, all second causes. Reason assures us that the creation in all its parts must be continually and entirely dependent on its Creator. To suppose otherwise, were to exclude the Deity from his dominions, as an uninterested or helpless spectator; or, rather, to take away all the proofs by which his being is demonstrated; since it is as easy to conceive of finite existence commencing uncaused, as of its being perpetuated by its own independent energies, or without a cause foreign to itself. That which was dependent in its origin must, for the same reason, be equally dependent for all its modifications and changes on the power which gave it being. There is no medium, then, between the full admission of God's providential agency in reference to every event of our life, and the adoption of the cheerless and heart-freezing doctrines of atheism itself.

In regard to the late fire, the time and circumstances of its occurrence were such as to mark a peculiar Providence. The intense severity of the cold rendered almost powerless the ordinary means of resisting the destructive element. Had it commenced on almost any night for many previous months, the conflagration might have been arrested with little difficulty.

The Scriptures teach us to eye the Deity in all events. While they affirm in general that he upholds all things by the word of his power, they at the same time testify to the minuteness and constancy of the supervision he exerts over his creatures. He feeds the fowls, he gives to all creatures their meat in due season, he clothes the lily, he directs the falling of the sparrow, and he numbers all the hairs of our heads. He claims our acknowledgment as the Author alike of our joys and of our afflictions. "I kill and I make alive, I wound and I heal; and there is none who can deliver out of my hand. Affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground. He

maketh sore and bindeth up; he woundeth, and his hands make whole. Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?" Let us beware, then, of virtual infidelity in view of the late chastisement which has been inflicted upon us. All the elements, as well as the palmer-worm, the canker-worm, the caterpillar, and the locust, help to compose that "great army," any part of which he employs, when and where he pleases, for the punishment of transgressors. Let there be no occasion here for the solemn rebuke of the Christian poet:

"Forth steps the spruce philosopher, and tells
Of homogeneal and discordant springs
And principles; of causes, how they work
By necessary laws their sure effects
Of action and re-action: he has found
The source of the disease that nature feels,
And bids the world take heart, and banish fear.
Thou fool! Will thy discovery of the cause
Suspend the effect, or heal it? Has not God
Still wrought by means since first he made the world?
And did he not of old employ his means
To drown it? What is his creation less
Than a capacious reservoir of means,
Form'd for his use, and ready at his will?
Go, dress thine eyes with eye-salve."

There may be a multiplicity of ends to be answered by the late calamity, which are too remote or too complicated for human discovery in the present world. One design might have been, to unfold and strengthen those kind social sympathies, which are essential to man's happiness and his state of probation, but which are too apt to remain uncultivated in a time of general prosperity, if they are not actually stifled by its influence. BROOKLYN and NEWARK, our neighbors, have given substantial proofs of their humanity, such as they could not have afforded on ordinary occasions; and PHILADELPHIA, high-minded and generous, has manifested a spirit which cannot fail to be reciprocated by intense grati-

tude on our part, and to confirm, in no ordinary degree, those principles of patriotism, which, next to the sentiments of true religion, insure the union and prosperity of our country. Welcome those chains of love that bind us together, though they be cast in a furnace heated at the expense of millions of our treasures; for wealth without union, however valued by men of slavish souls, is but weakness, insecurity, and splendid wretchedness. May those whose fortunes were rescued, "when flames encircled and cinders covered" them, be prompt to show an efficient compassion towards such as have lost their earthly all.

God, by this solemn act of providence, rebukes our sins. We are to avoid, indeed, an uncharitable judgment with respect to the sufferers. The individuals whose blood Pilate mingled with their sacrifices, and the men upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, were not sinners above all their countrymen who escaped so melancholy an end; judgment not unfrequently begins at the house of God.

He calls upon us to *remember* our sins with unfeigned compunction and ingenuous sorrow. Looking at its privileges and the number of righteous persons whom it contains, have we not reason to believe that few places more guilty than this city can be found in the world? Contemplate the general indifference to the great realities of eternity; the frauds of trade; the oppressions of the opulent; the restlessness and dishonesty of many of the poor; and the unblushing impurity, impiety, and blasphemy of thousands. What a wonder that the patience of a long-suffering God is not wholly exhausted! And how have his own professed children been employed? Has not Jesus been grievously wounded by their worldliness, their stupidity, their hardness of heart, their unholy dissensions, and the little they have done for his kingdom? While wealth has been accumulating almost without bounds, has not pride advanced with equal pace? Have Christians increased in liberality in proportion to the enlargement of their means? Is it not

true, that, while Christ beseeching in behalf of those for whom he died has been refused, time, talents, influence, health, in short every thing, have been sacrificed to worldly pomp, and the demon fashion, and the monster avarice, crying with its hundred hydra-mouths, "Give, give"? Is it not true that?— But I forbear. Let us reflect on our sins: let us weep over them.

God has been telling us that the silver and the gold are his; and unless our covetousness be corrected, he may teach us, in a manner still more awful, how he regards the guilt of withholding from his cause the treasures which he claims.

He has been writing, in characters of fire, the worthlessness, *as a portion*, of that world, which we have been accustomed to idolize; and pointing us, by his providence, to that day when earth, sea, skies, shall be dissolved in the last conflagration. "Behold, the day cometh that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch."

He has mingled his rebuke with a mercy truly paternal. He might justly have destroyed us. Think of the few lives which have been lost; of the few families that have been driven from their homes. His correction has served to stimulate exertion, rather than prompt to despair. Oh, may it drive us to the Bible, to the throne of grace, and to the field of Christian labor which is opened before us.

Let us, as a community, bow down before him; let his children be faithful; let sinners repent: and then, enjoying the blessings of a general reformation, we shall find occasion to say, "It is good for us that we have been afflicted."