

DAILY EVENING BULLETIN.

"HEW TO THE LINE, LET THE CHIPS FALL WHERE THEY MAY."

PER WEEK SIX CENTS.
SINGLE NUMBER ONE CENT.

MAYSVILLE, MONDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 28, 1881.

Vol. 1. No. 6.

Thanksgiving Sermon.

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"Unto Thee O Lord do we give thanks
—Ps. lxx. i.

I felicitate myself on this occasion, that while the brethren have voted me the task of the sermon, never before have the materials for thanksgiving to God been more abundantly supplied, nor more clearly preached, in that which is realizing about us. It was John Ruskin, I believe, who said that he was the greatest artist, whose creations are inspired, not by the musty folios of the past, but by the living realities of his own times.

Happy is the moral artist who can succeed in painting, in human consciousness, indelible pictures out of the wonderful expressions of God to man in these pregnant times. There are croakers, and there always will be—men who had rather live in the dust of the past, than in the organized life of the present. Men who will exhaust themselves in predictions of a direful future rather than take the pains to read the real and true promise contained in the present.

Never before in human history has the fact that God lives shone more brightly than now. God in history past and written is a delightful study. But God making history is the one Supreme being of interest to us all.

And the one great central ground of thanksgiving to-day is the increasing tendency in man to recognize God in world-life, in national and individual life.

Man has been trying to construct a world on scientific principles without God ever since the days of Thales and Democritus, the one about six hundred and the other four hundred years before Christ. He has succeeded in getting up very good forms, but has never been able to put into them life. To meet the difficulty Bain and Tyndall have coquetted with matter trying to induce its consent to a kind of innovation, and be called a double-faced somewhat with a "physical and mental side." But matter preferring to be in harmony with the Scriptures refuses to be two-faced, and answers I must be simply what I am—matter and nothing more. Germany for a long time bowed her head to the scepter of materialism, and the halls of her materialist professors were crowded with students. But Germany to-day repudiates materialism in her best thought, and her students are rushing away from the halls of a lifeless and soulless philosophy. Molescott Buchner and Haeckel do not now reign. Herman Lotze and Henry Ulrich are the lights which shine with an unfading luster. Not Bain's cold, cheerless materialism, but Lionel Beale's God—recognizing philosophy vibrates the highest intellectual chords of the English mind. Indeed there is a rapidly increasing tendency in all the best thought of the world to own God as the source of world-life, and that by the word of his power all things consist.

The history and facts of national life are being also more and more interpreted as pointing Godward for their highest solution. cannot have been an accident that the three greatest countries of our globe are christian—countries which give tone to

universal national treaty and policy; countries which lead in the intellectual and commercial life of the whole world that they distinctly recognize God is a fact which irresistibly points to the Creator in national life.

Great Britain, Germany and America, Great Britain leading in the commercial and civilizing agencies. Her Prime minister the best model of christian statesmanship which the world produces. Germany patient plodding steady intellectual Germany. She has given us the model for universities, and is herself one grand university (her robust thought has impressed the universal mind.) Her Premier acknowledges God in this handsome manner, I serve the king, not because the king's family is better, nobler than my own, but because the king is God's representative in government—not the king himself, but the king as ruler. Like the great philosopher Aristotle, he teaches that "he who makes the law supreme makes God supreme. Next, America, shall I speak it? like Zion, "beautiful for situation and the joy of the whole earth." What wonderful invention and activity. What wonderful expression of what is highest in man—free and God fearing. The chief magistrate of the United States voices forth the sentiment of fifty millions of people when he recognizes God as the dispenser of national blessings. God's hand putting into our granaries the food of life. God's wisdom striking the scales of ignorance from our eyes and giving us almost universal education. God's power settling on us peace with all mankind. If there ever was a country whose history points to the fact of its being a child of providence, it is ours. When we were an infant in swaddling clothes the great power of England was called into requisition to strangle the life out of us, but we would not die, we would still breathe. And to-day it is a mystery to us, if we do not look upward, why we did not die. Only a few days ago an inquiring mind of my Sunday School class asked, "Is it not remarkable that England with all her resources could not conquer the little colony?"

We then tried afterward to kill ourselves in an internecine war, but failed in that. Then we have carried on a twenty years bitter newspaper war, and a man of vituperation, and yet we are still more intensely alive than ever. Happily, however, the ammunition of this war is about exhausted, and God is clearly writing its destiny on the wall. It was a classical notion of antiquity that nothing more durable than wood should be monumental of a victory in civil strife between brethren. The promise of the present is that the spirit of war between the two great sections of our country shall have nothing to commemorate it but monuments of wood, of which even already "decay's effacing fingers" have left but a feeble trace. The doctors have even laid hands on us and predicted that in the wake of the last severe winter that there would be a great sweeping off of the population by pestilence, but God brought to naught the prophecy of the doctors by giving us the drouth. Then the weather prophets and season makers thought the remedy worse than the disease

and the skeleton of famine loomed up before their excited imagination. God, however, spread summer over the face of the fall and thus "tempered the wind to the shorn lamb." So that to-day we are the happiest and most contented people on the earth.

One dark spot, it is true, rests on the picture. It is this, that in a land so free and full of plenty—a land so interwoven with the thread of religious faith—it should be possible for the chief magistrate to fall by an assassin's hand. This leaves on all hearts a sense of sadness, but God has even put into that dark spot a center of His ineffaceable light, and that light says "He will make the wrath of man to praise him." Men will come up from all parts of our country and look into our economy of government as they have never done before and an unpartisan effort will be made to remove its defects and give it that form which will answer more and more to God's ever unfolding purpose concerning us.

More than ever we poor blind mortals are beginning to look toward and recognize God in the seasons, in Government, and in individual life—even the unbeliever tacitly yielding to the thought, that after all God is the best disposer of all events—Let men everywhere cease their complainings and know that if they live right God will hold over them a wise and gracious reign.

The configuration of our country is well adapted to the thought that God has reserved this land for the highest expression of himself in man. The country lying North of us, though we never possess it, is neither large enough, nor sufficiently habitable ever to produce a race able to extinguish us. We are protected on our Eastern and Western shores by broad deep seas, and on our South by a great gulf. We have every variety of soil and climate and our rich area is vaster than any other power.

Heretofore the centers of influence which have controlled the world, have been small. In the language of Geikie, "Greece, the mother of philosophy and art for all time, was not quite half the size of Scotland, Rome the mighty mistress of the world was only a city of Italy, Palestine, the birthplace of our lord, and the cradle of revelation is about the size of Wales."

These have all ceased to be controlling centers. Their very Geographical bearing to the eye of the observer shows that in the natural order of time this must have been their destiny. A great habitable country lay out from them, waiting only to be peopled in order to extinguish them. No such danger lies off from us. No Natural Nemesis hangs over us with its threat of destruction. God in the natural lettering of our map tells us that here he proposes to make the greatest display of his power and grace, in the strength of human thought, the elevation of human character, and the play of human genius. Some have said that Christ is a myth and that his disciples are in the fog of ignorance and superstition. If so it is the most astonishing of all facts, that a people with a mythical leader and themselves superstitious, succeed somehow or other in directing the life forces of the three great national powers of the earth. Most singular of all that those with a real and intel-

ligent leader and themselves in intellectual noonday according to their own interpretation, are so far outdone in the battle of life, by the blind and credulous.

For my part I say all hail to such mythical leaders as Christ. All hail to such superstition as shines forth in the christian civilization of the great countries to which allusion has been made. We have further ground for thanksgiving in the intelligence, progress and morality of our times. The age in which we live is intellectually superior to any in the past. This appears not only from its progress but from the fact that it is, in a preminent sense, an age of inquiry.

To probe to the bottom of theories, systems and discoveries is now one of the chief traits of mind. There is a search for the real of things. Shams and chimeras have about closed their reign. Men want to get down to realities and facts. The popularity of the natural sciences has contributed a share to this. And there is no fear of this tendency. It is rather to be hailed—this day of mindsearching—as an inestimable blessing. For the disposition to probe to the bottom of things will not only effect the religious, but also the philosophic and scientific realms. It may tear many a cherished idol from the bosom of the credulous and superstitious. It may show to the christian that some things are false which hitherto he has regarded as true.

But it will also dash from the embrace of the philosopher and scientist, many cherished theories and boasted principles, and leave them standing forlorn at the grave of their former hopes. All havoc will be wrought in the field of error and the field of truth will remain the same. This intellectual activity is the child of christian principle. And I am surprised that any one should have ever alluded to the treatment of Galileo by a corrupt and ignorant priesthood as evidence that christianity opposes free inquiry. For that priesthood was itself as ignorant of the truth and the spirit of the Bible as it was ignorant of those sublime truths proclaimed by that philosopher Mr. Tyndall thought of a materialistic bent has made this acknowledgement when putting the question whether life belongs to matter or whether it was put into it from without. He says "Let us put the question with all the reverence due to a faith in which we all were cradled, a faith moreover what is the undeniable historic antecedent of our present enlightenment."

This also is a day of progress. Growth is a marked feature of it. The human mind was never so creative. Inventions are on every hand, and all looking to one great end the bettering of human condition. It is a day which almost obliterates time and overcomes distance.

It is a day which puts highways over the wilderness and roses in the desert. It passes under the seas and makes continuous the oceans. It fills home with every convenience, and lessens even the number of sweat-drops from the brow of labor. It lights up the darkness with the fire of electricity, and even preserves imperishable the human voice. The divine feature of this progress is that human invention keeps pace with the demnad

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