

according to the admonition of the text—offering unto God thanksgiving and paying his vows to the Most High.

But there is a second ground of thankfulness: namely, the preservation, and enjoyment of peace in the land, which has been suggested to us by the civil authority, and in acknowledging which we recognize the supreme government of God, in the world of mind, as well as of matter—as respects the powers and passions of men, as well as the forces of material nature. Scripture, indeed, in speaking of the supreme government of God unites the two—and represents the same almighty power as stilling the noise of the seas, and the tumults of the people: ruling in the army of Heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. It would be preposterous indeed to imagine that God would confine his rule to inanimate nature, and leave out of the sphere of his authority, the immortal minds which he has endowed with reason and understanding, and created after his own image. In them, and in their transactions, there may be a long chain of second causes—and these, unlike the forces of nature, having each a moral character,—manifesting good or evil,—manifesting wisdom or folly, yet all subject to the dominion of God,—all subject to an invisible government, regulating, controlling, guiding, according to its own principles,—seeking the execution of its own high ends,—carrying forward its own great purposes, and that with an influence and energy, irresistible and uncontrollable, by the strength or the wisdom of man. Take for example the two states of mankind suggested to our consideration, by our second ground of thankfulness this day—the state of war and the state of peace. St. James tells us the immediate cause of war: “From whence,” says he, “come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence even of your lusts, that war in your members?” He may have alluded in these words to the quarrels of individuals. But the same is true in regard to the strifes of nations. Immediately they spring from evil and wicked passions,—the lust of power,—the desire of conquest,—the desire of revenge,—the desire of glory and pre-eminence. But behind these immediate causes, there is the purpose of Him, who maketh the wrath of man to praise him, and can convert man’s worst and wickedest passions into the executioners of his will. Though Sennacherib meant not so, neither did his heart think so, he was yet the rod of God’s anger,—the staff in his hand was the instrument of the divine indignation. “I will send him,” said the Lord, “against a hypocritical nation; and against the people of my wrath, will I give him a charge to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets.” And as it is with war, so it is with peace. A great many second causes may easily be specified in each instance in which it is preserved or restored: the wisdom of statesmen—the returning sense of the people—their impatience of the necessary expenditure of life and treasure. But behind these also is the purpose of God,—of whom, if it may be said, “Behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made on the earth,” it is

also said, “He maketh wars to cease unto the ends of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire.”

And if war and peace may both be traced ultimately to the Divine Providence, whose dominion is over all—the one a scourge, and a judgment,—the other a blessing and privilege—how just a ground of thankfulness there is to that Providence, in the peace and security, which we have so long enjoyed, and which even in the neighbourhood of the fierce strife, of what may now be called contending nations, has continued undisturbed. For as war to a nation—above all war carried on—within its own borders, is the greatest of calamities—involving and producing an incalculable amount of misery: so peace—a stable peace—an honourable peace, gained by no mean or forced subservience to foreign power—peace in the enjoyment of civil and religious liberty, and giving scope and leisure and security to cultivate the arts of life—such peace, as we under Providence do now enjoy, is the greatest of earthly blessings.

It should quicken our apprehension of the value of peace and our sense of gratitude for the continuance of it, to consider how near we were during the last year of having lost it, and being plunged into the very vortex of a war between two great empires—the one standing with inflexible determination for the honour of its flag, and the safety of all under its shelter, of what race, or creed, or clime soever they might be,—the other wild with suspicion and jealousy, and rancour that its internal troubles should be discussed, or even witnessed, by others—to consider how near we were, less than a year ago, to a share of these calamities of which we are daily hearing, as occurring in the American Republic. It should quicken our apprehension of the value of peace, and our sense of gratitude for the continuance of it, to consider the extent of these calamities, and the slight prospect there yet is of any speedy period being put to them,—the prodigious loss of life—the interference with personal liberty, the disorder of trade and finance, the demoralization of the people, the infuriated passions of civil warfare. It is of God’s good providence, to be devoutly and thankfully acknowledged this day, that we share not in these calamities, and that hitherto, they have affected us so little.

That good may come out of such calamities, renders them not less calamities,—good no doubt will come out of them. There will be good if the overweening pride of long prosperity be humbled. There will be good in empires less extended—and the inhabitants of which are more identified in interests and pursuits. There will be good in the establishment of stable government. There will be good in the conviction that the extension of self and popular government does not necessarily imply wise government, or freedom from abuse, from tyranny, from corruption, from the strifes of intemperate passion, from civil broils or foreign war. There will be good in the extinction of slavery, which the extended growth over the world, of the production, which chiefly makes slave labour valuable, promises to render inevitable. There is good in the spectacle which