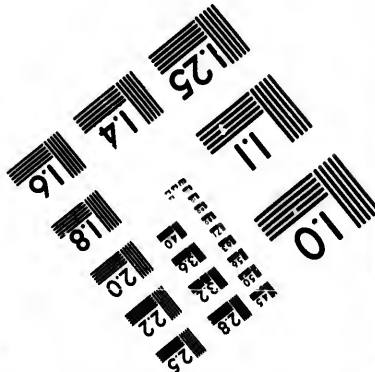
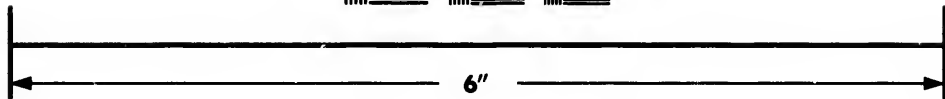
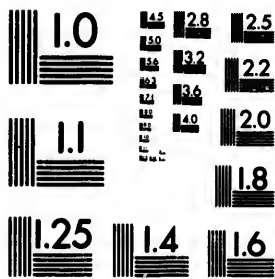


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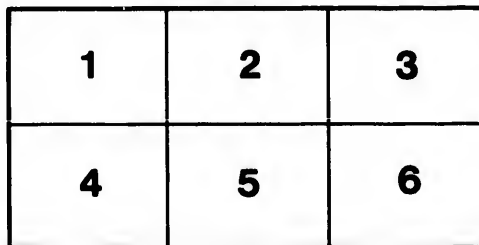
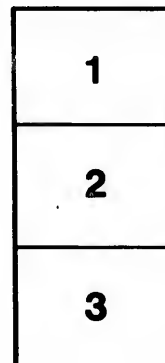
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# O WHEEL!

OR

## THANKSGIVING-DAY THOUGHTS;

# A SERMON,

PREACHED IN ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH, MONTREAL,

ON WEDNESDAY, 18<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER, 1865.

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BY THE

REV. ANDREW PATON,

*Assistant Minister.*

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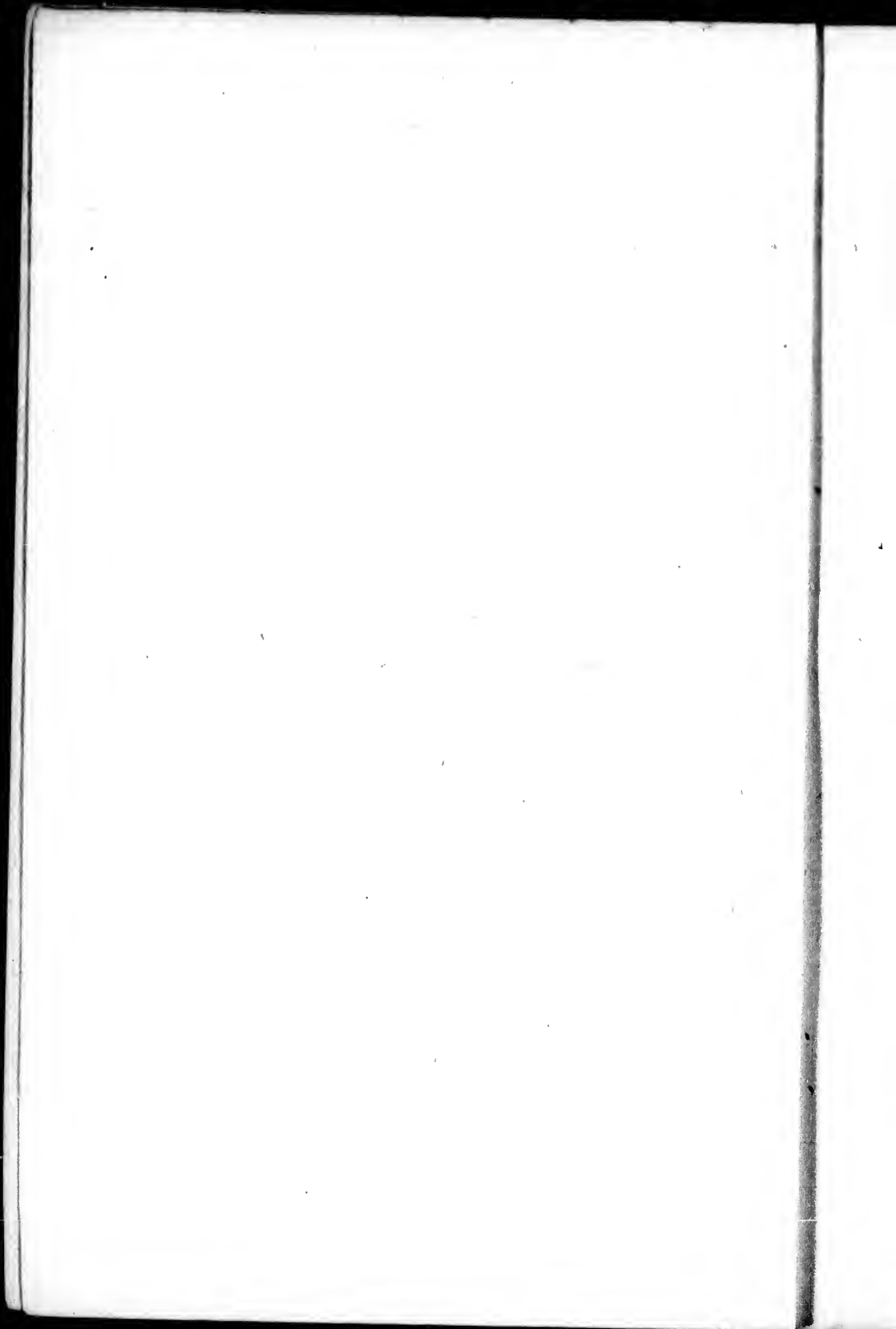
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At the desire of several Members of the Congregation, these thoughts—almost as they were noted down on the evening before delivery—are allowed to assume a more permanent form, than they had, as spoken from the pulpit on the day of National Thanksgiving.

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## EZEKIEL X. 13. "O WHEEL!"

—:—

Ezekiel—as his name may imply—was the prophet of visions. Some of these are dark and almost inexplicable. Yet through them God's Government is to some extent unfolded, his mercy and his judgment foreshadowed. By the river of Chebar a very peculiar vision passed before the Prophet. A vision as of a "living creature." There seemed to be four Cherubims moving on wheels, all acting in harmony and regulated by one head. There was thus a great complication, but at the same time a great beauty and order in every motion. The wheels seemed as wheels within wheels; yet there was not only a harmony, but also a purpose in their movements, for "when the Cherubims went the wheels went, and "when they stood these stood;" "and to the place "whithersoever the head looked, they followed it." The living spirit seemed to be in the wheels, so that they were not guided by chance; neither was the living creature blind, like Fortune, but was full of eyes round about. All were but parts of one complex whole, for "as for the wheels it was cried unto them in my hearing, O wheel!"

Such was Ezekiel's vision ; and a special meaning it had in Israel's history. But beyond its original application we may this day fitly extend our meditations, and see shadowed in this wheel the principle of God's action in what is termed His providence.

It is with general principles that we shall deal, as in God's providence we perceive

1st.—Law, order, regularity,—as symbolized by the wheel.

2nd.—Complication and mystery,—as symbolized by the wheel within a wheel, and expressed in the exclamation “O wheel !”

The lessons embodied in this combined order and mystery we shall seek to learn, as we reflect upon the causes which we have for observing this day,

I. As one of Thanksgiving, and

II. As one of Warning.

“O wheel !” beautiful but mysterious is your action. “Clouds and darkness are round about him ; yet, righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne.”

Order, is the principle of God's Government.—This, through observation, we are able to a great extent to recognize. And all enquiry tends to reduce this government to a few first principles. But, as we arrive at this result, there grows up a disposition in a certain class of minds to rest in these as final ; beyond which there is no need to look for a guiding agent. Thus there springs up the most refined species of Atheism or Pantheism. And while we have to regret this, nevertheless it is part of the price

which we have to pay, for the intellectualism of the age. To some a living God is lost, through the very beauty and perfection of his laws, or his personal existence is absorbed into the universal consciousness of man. And not only is God thus banished from his universe, but even man's actions and thoughts, his morality and spiritual aspirations are reduced to the sway of a law over which the man has no control. Such is our consolation, if we follow the Positivist, through his Theological and Metaphysical into his Positive stage of development!

But still we can fall back upon this "reign of Law," and find a far nobler consummation to which this universal order and harmony point us. Law we will recognize, and simple principles we will recognize; we will even narrow our converging principles, till they meet in one pure white ray of truth, which offers to us the simplest of all principles and the simplest of all explanations, that of a living God, the source of all this order, who makes these very Laws his willing messengers; controlling them, not controlled by them; charging them with mercy or with doom, according to his pleasure. Not less distinctly to my mind, but far more clearly is perceived the action of a living personal God, through the beauty and order that characterise the universe. There are wheels within wheels, but he is the living spirit in the wheel. "O wheel!"

Believing in this living God, let us but for a moment glance at his providence in what is to us its widest aspect. And he appears as the Spirit of the

universe, guiding every thing animate and inanimate by principles which we cannot comprehend, and to destinies which we cannot realize. Let us confine our thoughts to the physical aspect of the universe. And with what feelings do we contemplate the noiseless play of that gigantic machinery which his wisdom has devised, and which his power still keeps in action. To some great goal in all probability, may be hastening these millions of suns and systems full of eyes, as they circle, in these heavens, on their own axis, as they circle round each other, and as they circle in mass round some common centre. Here is the literal wheel. And as we break it up into suns and systems, it is the wheel within the wheel. Law and mystery here combine. We find the law in gravitation, whatever that may be; yet let the astronomer turn to heaven his telescope, let the mathematician extend his calculations almost to infinitude, let the philosopher indulge his boldest speculations; and as they think, and calculate and observe, a voice even in their very hearing will cry "O wheel!"

Such thoughts are almost too high for us. To earth we turn, and there we see the same order and the same mystery, alike in individual and in national life. It is more to national life that we are called this day to allude. The wheel is rushing round, but it is guided by a law. The world is still ruled by great general principles,—and to read aright the development of the world, historians must more and more recognize this truth, in order

to understand more clearly how, "Through the ages an increasing purpose runs." And although order and mystery mingle in national affairs it is not because of the mystery simply—for that is purely the result of our ignorance, all being order to God—but equally because of the mystery and the order, as reflected in our present national position, that I ask you to regard with feelings of liveliest gratitude this day,—

I. As one of Thanksgiving.

We have cause for gratitude, as, notwithstanding our disregard of laws, we have been visited in mercy. We know that the cultivation of our lands on principles contrary to all laws of good husbandry, results not only in stunted crops, but breeds grain disease and insect pests, the stern visitation of broken laws. Is it altogether because of our attention to the laws of culture, tillage and rotation of crops, that our barns are this autumn filled with untarnished grain, while many other nations have but scanty yields, bleached and blanched too by heaven's rains? Is it the superior management of our live stock that enables us to-day to rejoice in healthy flocks and herds, while through Britain rushes that Pest, which threatens ruin to many of those who constitute no small part of her strength; which threatens destruction to what constitutes no small portion of her wealth; which threatens, if not soon stayed, to make scanty the poor man's meal, and the rich man's too? We know, that the undrained and ill-ventilated houses of filth and poverty are the

hotbeds in which are nursed all pestilence and disease. And is it our care and attention to sanitary laws, that have turned this day into one of Thanksgiving, instead of mourning, or of terror? Is it because every precaution has been taken, and thus the monster disarmed of its power, that there is not heard this day among us, as along the Mediterranean shores, the wild cry of despair, as to their graves, almost without warning, the Cholera is hurrying its thousands of victims? Is it entirely on account of our sagacity and our good government, that our condition contrasts so vividly with that of a nation, which from the horrors of actual conflict is awaking to the consciousness of what she has endured, and what she has lost, as she seeks to readjust her internal affairs, while mourning the desolation which is but shadowed in the ruined homes, in the bleaching bones, in the universal garb of mourning? In all this there is a law, though to us shrouded in mystery. And not in the spirit of superstition, but with an intelligent and humble reverence, does it become us to give thanks to Almighty God, that although so near, yet war has not shown to us its face of horror; that pestilence has not dragged its noisome trail across our land; that want and famine have not told to us their dismal tale; that our stalls are not empty; nor our homes desolate; but that in peace and plenty we can freely rejoice. It is good to give thanks not only in worship, but in life, and in charity, for "is not this the fast that I have chosen? To deal thy bread to the hungry, and to cover him that is naked?"

The wheel is revolving with rapid sweep; and even while we raise the voice of thanks, another voice is heard telling of this day,—

II. As one of warning.

“O wheel!” The rim which is now uppermost, ere another revolution has been accomplished, shall be lowest; and from prosperity we may be plunged in adversity. What is every day seen in individual life is experienced also in national existence.

It is a very healthy symptom in a nation's religious life, when, like one family, in the abundant gratitude of the heart its people bows before the Heavenly Father. The power of religion is most fully felt when adversity comes, but the highest tone of religion is manifested in gratitude for prosperity. And we can conceive that God may be more pleased with the thanks of a nation, than with their prayers of dismay, when pestilence stalks forth. What a bitterness in the words, “I will mock when your fear cometh.” To some extent we are at this moment prosperous. Prosperity is fleeting as the winds. The hour of apparent safety is often the very hour of danger. It was just after Christ had entered Jerusalem, amid the hosannahs of the multitude, that he was led to Calvary. The man who observed not yonder little dark speck on the horizon, might regard as the prelude to a lasting peace, that hushed and tranquil hour, when not a breath stirred, when not a leaf fluttered, and scarce a sound broke the dead silence, as the sultry sun, high in

mid heaven, poured down its burning rays. Yet before another hour has passed, the heavens have blackened, the lightnings have been gleaming, and the thunders been roaring. Almost dread the hour of over prosperity. It was when the man's barns were full to overflowing that the awful words of doom were sounded to him, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee." Now no famine is felt, and yet in another year our crops may be destroyed, and our herds be decimated. No pestilence sweeps over us; in all probability before another year rolls round, tired with its ravages on the other side of the Atlantic, a messenger may travel on wings of wind to our own shores, and turn this day's song of praise, into a cry of lamentation, and the shout of revelry into the prayer of agony.

Not only on general grounds, but as a young country this is to us a day of warning. We are not yet very rich in *realized* resources, on which to fall back; although, physically, the country may be one of immense resources. Its agricultural, and its mineral wealth, along with its great commercial facilities, put within its reach, a future of which none need be ashamed. And while this future depends very much upon its political development, yet we say without hesitation, it depends equally, even more, although not so evidently, upon its religious life. These resources are to be developed by just and equitable political measures; but along with this there must be found permeating the Government, the country, the family and the individual a high



religious principle. This is the religious aspect of our position, as one of warning. And from the nature of the case, as well as from past history, we can learn, that, without this high Christian principle, a country's security is uncertain. This we cannot for a moment lose sight of. For we believe that a constitution may seem absolutely perfect in form and in detail, and yet, if the spirit of religion be wanting, it may be nothing more than the perfect body, but without the life; and as certainly, as the lifeless body, having in itself the elements of dissolution. Religion may be spiritual, but must become an influence which shall be felt in every action of the individual and of the state life. Religion must animate all. Even from a religious point of view, no more interesting study could occupy our attention, than to trace the rise, and watch the decline and fall of Empires. For, as civilization from her cradle in the East, has been westward taking her course, many nations have risen above the political horizon, run their course, and set in the western sky—and each speaks its own lesson, which not only the politician, but the moralist, and the preacher must learn. And in their life, we learn that while there is much that is mysterious, as the "wheel within the wheel," there is also much that speaks the regularity which characterizes the wheel's revolutions. Were we to confine our attention to the history of one nation, or one national epoch, we might learn, in the varying visions that passed before Ezekiel, the grounds of national stability, the

source of national weakness, the causes of national decline, and the elements which work national ruin. Such a review we cannot now make. Avoiding even a direct reference to the religious and educational position of our own Provinces, we shall speak simply on general principles, as, viewing this as a day of warning, we allude to a few religious elements, which common observation and universal history seem to mark as essential to the life, health and success of any nation.

Let us select three—

1st. National Religion.

2nd. Domestic virtue.

3rd. Personal holiness.

In these lies the nation's religious strength. To the question of Education, however important, we cannot at present allude. But as the Church of God cares for a nation's existence, it is her duty to nurture the elements of life here referred to.

No doubt much of a nation's success depends upon the form of political constitution which it may adopt. There are forms more perfect than others. Ideal governments have been tried; and some of them have proved ruinous. Different forms of government may, perhaps, be adapted for different countries; and it is not always the best ideal that is the most successful government, but one which has grown up out of a long experience, and been moulded by the circumstances. In regard to the general principle of government, we cannot help making two remarks, suggested by Ezekiel's vision.

(1.) There must be a head. (2.) There must be harmony between all the parts. The whole government must have a common object in view, and that object must be the welfare of the community. (1.) There must be a head to guide—and by virtue of its headship, around it must centre the highest respect and regard. And while this head must have much control, yet it must be so connected with the members of the body, that without them it cannot move or act, even although it guides them. This is the regulating influence in the governed, which they have as a final resort, to prevent absolute abuse of power and prerogative. And where there is such a just and well regulated balance of power, there is the best security for good administration. But seldom have England's Sovereigns abused their power; and so, but seldom have her people had recourse to their last resort. Extreme measures are dangerous. A Stuart's power and position may have been abused, and yet a blot is made on the nation's life, as she asked her King to die on the scaffold.

(2.) The people's representatives must all have a common desire to advance the country's weal. The head, cherub and wheel must act in complete harmony. No nation is safe so long as her politicians step into power, mainly for personal aggrandizement, or with a view to distribute to needy relatives government windfalls. No positive security can be felt until the honor of representation shall be considered its own reward, and rulers be found who seek not to foist themselves into place

for personal ends, but rise naturally to power, as the nation's true benefactors.

This is the politician's work. Let us suppose that the external framework of a constitution is nearly perfect, and yet we say that that nation has within itself elements of weakness, unless—

1st. Through its national existence a high religious spirit is diffused.

Of so much importance do we regard this, that, whatever means might be most effectual to secure it we would adopt them. And in order to spread thoroughly throughout the state, the religious spirit, and religious training, we see no means which are adequate, but those by which religion is recognized as an essential portion of the constitution; out of which recognition necessarily grows a National Established Church—a Church which has voluntarily entered upon an alliance with the state, to teach a national religion; which thus takes a recognised position as a power alongside of, though not deriving its existence from the State. These two have separate existences; but they may co-exist, and be mutually dependent on each other. Such a position, of course, entails certain responsibilities and secures certain advantages. That Church recognizes it to be her duty to place within reach of each individual member of the State, the means of religious training. And while having certain rights secured, she may permit within herself a greater religious freedom on minor matters, than is generally found to be attainable in voluntary associations. She will

not, of course, demand that every one shall adhere to her communion ; but while regretting that any should leave her courts, would say, "Go in peace, but remember that you sacrifice something, and you loose something." We speak thus from the strong conviction that it is only through such a recognized Church that religion can obtain and maintain its true position. In a country, where such a Church exists, we may no doubt as Dissenters do very much good, and we may be quite justified in our own consciences ; in fact we may almost feel compelled to take that position. And wherever, from principle, such a position has been assumed, let no harsh word be breathed, no unkind thought entertained, but let us respect the pure motives which have dictated the course. But let us also remember that as such, we cannot obtain for religion that recognition in the highest political and judicial courts which it gains as the religion of the Established Church. And although this recognition by these highest judicatories may, through time dwindle into something of mere form, yet it is a form into which at any time may be breathed a life and a power, which in emergencies may be the salvation of the state.

This alliance is no mere untried ideal, for religious establishments are historical institutions. They have existed from the very first moment that Israel assumed a national existence ; and in germ, if not in development, they existed even earlier. And again, as soon as in the nature of the case, the Christian

religion could be recognized as such a power, it was adopted as an established religion by Constantine. As a state religion it has ever since existed, even after the reformation. This alliance may no doubt sometimes have produced evil results ; as when the Priests forgetting their position and mixing too much in politics, over stepped their bounds and made religion little else than a political engine to work their selfish ends. This was mere abuse of their position—an abuse too as dangerous, as when religion is denied its true position. Yet when properly adjusted and worked, this alliance has been productive of the greatest good to the world ; not only as ensuring a religious training, but as keeping alive the highest forms of art and refinement. The Church is the world's safety in the ages of darkness, and equally so in the heyday of intellectualism. Of many faults and delinquencies our own national church, and that of England, may have been guilty. But who can tell how much of Britain's greatness is this day attributable to their national teaching ; and in their maintenance lies one element of her political, as well as social safety. We speak at present merely in regard to general principles, as our observation of colonial sectional and denominational differences and distinctions is much too limited to warrant direct discussion of the means by which may be best secured the highest religious and educational interests of the Provinces.

As a necessity we must have a high religious life ; without this we cannot believe it possible for

any nation to be lasting, prosperous or truly happy. To insure this religion must have a recognized position; for if left to take care of itself, the ministers of religion lose their position, which would matter less, did not religion itself thus become degraded, and its influence weakened. Let this religious influence slip from the community and from the government, and men practically say, no Church, and then no God. Poison courses in the nation's veins, atheism creeps in; domestic virtue is going; personal holiness is going too, ruin is the issue. The nation falls an easy victim to internal dissension, or external assault. "It is righteousness that exalteth a nation."

2nd.—Another source of national strength is the maintenance of the sacredness of the family relationship.

The family, as it is the earliest, is also the most sacred of religious relationships. Out of the family has grown the state itself, and even many of its laws. The family is the nucleus of the state. In the patriarchal family was displayed the miniature state constitution. In Israel the family broadened into the clan; the clan into the tribe; and the tribe into the nation. Thus grew up the Jewish nation. The father of the family was the source of all law—he ruled with unqualified right. And even in their highest national development under the monarchy, the patriarchal idea was maintained, for their king became not only supreme judge, and absolute master, but had the power to

impose taxes and demand personal service, as the vicegerent of God himself. This was no doubt the source of that idea of even recent times, which supposed that equity flowed from the King's conscience.

Out of the family relationship grew in like manner the Roman Commonwealth, and her code of laws. There we find first the individual, then the family—so sacred that any who were admitted to family privileges had to go through the form of adoption—next we have an aggregation of families forming the tribe, and lastly an aggregation of tribes constituting the Commonwealth. For Law as the word of a God, the Romans had even a greater reverence than the Jews. Thus out of the family relationship has sprung much of that Law, which, in germ in the Jewish and more fully developed in the Roman, has greatly influenced the Jurisprudence of Western Europe.

In the sacredness of that word *home*,—which France never incorporated into her vocabulary, and which America has done much to banish from her's—lies a power which nurses all that is holiest and best in the human heart, which stimulates that virtue, through which alone a man becomes noble in temptation, and brave to dare all that is arduous. It was this home sacredness that gave the old Romans their strength; for through it was nurtured that manliness, and that virtue, which was synonymous with courage. So long as their feelings and their actions were in harmony with their battle cry "For the altar and the hearth," no power could overcome



them. It was when their domestic purity was touched, and luxury and licentiousness crept in to destroy the sacred homes, that they fell victims to their enemies. And that fall proclaims to us the sacredness of the family relationship. And in like manner as the horrors of the French Revolution display the danger of denying God; so its licentiousness unfolds the sacredness of domestic purity and the fatality of disregarding it.

We cannot help regarding it as an unfortunate feature in United States' life, that home relationships are being broken up, and with that home feelings, home power, and we fear we must add, home virtue. There was something of grandeur in that old feeling, which characterized many of the middle classes of Scotland,—as manifested in her history and woven into the romances of her Novelist—a feeling which regarded as almost the greatest possible calamity, the disgrace of any son or daughter; a feeling which counted as almost more precious than noble blood, the purity of every branch of the family. In the home of domestic morality is nursed a nation's strength. And if in upon the family should creep a laxer feeling, its sacred influence is being shaken, and there rushes up a rank growth of immorality, which induces enfeebling luxuriousness, destroys moral, mental and physical courage, and robs the nation of its elements of greatness. This accomplished it may read its doom shadowed in Rome's decline; or hear it sounded in Israel's "Icabod! the glory is departed."

As if a compensation by Providence, domestic life thrives always best under the colder and more northern climate. And there too, manliness and determination are nurtured, as among the sterile uplands where exertion, at first a necessity, becomes a habit, and again through habit a necessity. Surrounded by such circumstances through generations is formed that noble and hardy character, which, wherever found, always commands success and even pre-eminence. Let us not therefore altogether grudge the tenant of the southern clime, his luxuries, nor envy him his rich fruit which calls forth no exertion, nor covet his easy life which affords no stimulus. But let us even welcome that severity which braces for nobler and more sustained effort; which demands exertion, but then invites us into the sanctity of home life, Enemies may threaten and storm, and yet be little more dangerous than is the play of the idle wind howling around the old Baronial Castle, so long as there is religious life in the community, virtue in the home, and

3rd.—Personal, individual holiness in the heart. The State is composed of families, and the family of individuals. And thus national righteousness resolves itself back into personal holiness. No security is found, unless the heart is animated by a lively faith, filled with a pure hope, and warmed by an active charity. Let me refer to the absolute necessity for personal holiness, as manifested in a firm manly regard for religion, by those of us who are just entering life, in a new country, and in a

new and rapidly growing commercial city. Many of us are thrown under the influence of new companions, and new associations. This is a new period of existence, and we are very apt to drift from the old moorings; and in the absence of home are apt to throw off the influence of home training. Our temptations must be very strong, for in a central commercial city like this, all kinds of characters, from every quarter of the globe, mingle; and it is a melancholy truth, that they leave more of their influence for evil than for good. They have thrown off their restraint; so, to some extent have we, and thus we stimulate each other's wickedness. Hence a purely commercial, and especially a seaport city is by very force of circumstances likely to be more wicked and immoral than any other. If we have come from the pure quiet home, and been thrown upon this scene, our characters will be tested. But let us cherish the spirit of holiness; drift not from principle; be resolute. Let our religion save us. Not the religion of pretentiousness, which generally results in self-deception or mere profession; but the religion of manly regard for God's word and will; and which must in the end gain for us the respect even of the most irreligious.

Another danger to which I would allude, is that which tends to lead us into a mere routine. Life is given us as a term in which we are to be educated; religion is a great educator; but even ordinary duties are part of the means. The dignity of life is missed unless viewed in this light. And the ten-

dency of the business life of a city through which principally *pass* goods, is not so likely to be of the highest nature as a healthy training. As a whole the *tendency* of such business is not to stimulate the highest powers of the mind. We deem it a duty to point to this tendency, that along with your ordinary business, so far as possible, you may pursue some other intellectual training. This tendency points to a want which, however, unfortunately, is felt in the inverse ratio of its greatness. It points to the necessity for stimulating Literary Institutions, Art Associations, and every kind of refining intellectual enjoyment, to occupy those few hours which can be spared from business in a restless city. Here we will find many unsettling tendencies, and many unforeseen difficulties. Let the religious life still animate us. Let the religious thought and feeling be kept alive in the heart, and flow out through every action, and

“ As knowledge grows from more to more,

“ Let more of Reverence in us dwell ; ”

perfecting thus that triple bond of National Strength, holiness in the heart, in the family, and in the state.

“ Happy is the Nation, whose God is the Lord.”

Back over the past we can look, and read the lessons of Nations as they have run their courses. The fate of Chaldea, of Assyria, of Babylon, of Media, of Persia, we can read, as a master spirit of Oxford sketches their story. The fate of Egypt we can read,

as her explores interpret for us her monumental inscriptions and as from her ruins and her tombs start to new life, her by-gone years. The fate of Greece and of Rome we can read, as they pass before us under the magic influence of Historians worthy of the task. The story of Israel is our constant study as told to us in the word of God. And the whole world as it at present exists is reading to us its varied lessons—oh wondrous wheel! We may watch the course of events, and mark the world's cycles. They tell of a history, which seems ever repeating itself; yet not exactly repeating itself, it is not in a circle that we move, but in a gigantic spiral. At this round of the spiral, we see something of the same view, that presented itself to wondering eyes thousands of years ago; but we behold this from a higher stand point. We see now more clearly to what goal life is moving. The past is clear, the future dark; yet he who has studied the past can, to some extent, divine the future; and combining the spirit of both can mould the present. By the past he holds firmly, as something certain; yet hears

“ A motion toiling in the gloom,—

“ The spirit of the years to come,

“ Yearning to mix itself with Life.”

We seek not to draw aside the veil that hides the future of our own Provinces. Elements of giant strength they have. But they shall have to pass through a hard experience of national life. That experience may test the principles of all; a firm faith

and confidence in God are certainly demanded of us. Each country like each man has a life of its own to live, it has its own temptations to meet, and its own difficulties to encounter. We are trembling on the verge of early manhood, with all the weakness, but also with all the strength incident to that period of existence. We may rise to strength to play out our part in the world's great drama. It may be either a subordinate or a principal part, which we are called to represent; but as we with others mingle on the world's stage, we can rejoice in the development of the whole, and hope, hereafter to share in the final consummation. With rapid rush the wheel of existence is turning; now one rises to greatness, and again is crushed beneath its power. Law and mystery mingle in its motion. Yet to some great end God guides all, for though

“The individual wither, yet the world is more and more.”

“As for the Wheel, it was cried unto them in my hearing,  
O Wheel!”

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