

The North Branch Democrat.

HARVEY SICKLER, Proprietor.

"TO SPEAK HIS THOUGHTS IS EVERY FREEMAN'S RIGHT."—Thomas Jefferson.

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M. GILMAN, has permanently located in Tunkhannock, and respectfully tenders a cordial invitation to the citizens of this place to call on him.

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Office over Tuttle's Law Office, near the Post Office.

Jan. 11, 1866

SERMON OF THE REV. JOHN CHAMBERS, ON THANKSGIVING DAY,

Thursday, December 7th, 1865.

The services of the day were commenced by the reading of the 55th Psalm, in connection with the 5th chapter of the 1st epistle to the Thessalonians. The speaker then said:

We have assembled in compliance with the request of the Chief Magistrate of the United States, that we should, on this day, meet and give thanks to Almighty God for the restoration of peace to our lately distracted and unhappy land—not that I recognize the right of any civil magistrate to dictate the Church of Christ in any way—but a request, such as the one put forth by President Johnson, must find its echo in the heart of every man and woman before me, and call forth unmingled gratitude to God for the mercy vouchsafed us in being delivered from one of the most cruel, bloody, and desolating wars the world ever saw. At the same time, I am sure that no one amongst us has waited until this hour to pour forth the gratitude and praise which the cessation of hostilities must have caused to spring in the heart of every Christian and lover of humanity. What minister of the Prince of Peace has not urged upon his people the duty of devout thankfulness from the moment the last gun was fired? For it is a glorious truth that Christ, His gospel, and His ministers are alike opposed to war, which in all its consequences is fraught with evil and evil only.

Mr. Chambers then offered up a prayer, in which he thanked for the return of peace and freedom, that the writ of *habeas corpus* had been restored, so that men were no longer in danger of being dragged at the midnight hour from their homes and families. He ardently invoked the richest blessings of the Almighty upon the President of the United States, the Governor of each sovereign State, and the Judiciary of the nation, supreme and subordinate.

The sermon was based upon the text, St. Mt. 16th chap. 33d v.: "Can ye not discern the signs of the times," and was as follows:

No man ought to be an idle or inattentive spectator of passing events, or shut his eyes to the signs of the times. But it is a melancholy fact, that comparatively few of the great mass of men think for themselves either politically or religiously, and hence they are the slaves or dupes of others who have the courage or the ambition to bethiel leaders. It is known to the world at large, that no people on earth boast more of their civil and religious liberty than do the American people; but it is a sad truth that, in many cases it is but the empty sound without any solid foundation, and that the many are led captive by the few—especially politically. The past four or five years have been among the most eventful of the world's history. The great experiment of self-government has been stretched to its utmost tension. As a nation we have been upon the verge of ruin, and I confess that even now my mind is not satisfied that the ship of State is entirely off the lee-shore or safely moored. There is a wilderness in the political heavens which to the attentive observer must appear portentous of evil in the future, and what makes it more alarming is that the masses of our people are ignorant of their chartered rights. How few of the teeming millions of this nation ever carefully read or studied the Constitution of the United States? Do you suppose that more than one in every thousand has ever done so? And yet this grand instrument is the book of the people—not by any means the exclusive property of the jurist, the lawyer or the politician, but I repeat, it, the book of the people, made for them, and for their special benefit; and the man who fails to make it the rule of his life, as a citizen, is derelict of duty.

But let us now proceed to inquire into what is our present condition, and what our future prospects; and first of all, I shall view them as they stand related to the Bible standard of Christian purity and excellence. Let us go to the law and to the testimony. We read, Titus, 3d chap. 1-3 verses: "Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work—to speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, showing all meekness unto all

men—for we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in envy and malice, hateful and hating one another. I ask you whether this nation as a whole, nay, even that portion of it who profess and call themselves Christians, are living in the state of mind so beautifully described by the Apostle in the first two verses which I have read, or whether, alas, the condition to which he refers as being in the past with Him is not in the present with us? Is it not an undeniable fact that, in many instances, even the ministers of religion have not the politeness of the publications spoken of by our divine Master in St. Matt., 5th chap., verses 4-6-7? Is that the spirit of gentleness, meekness and forbearance which the Apostle enjoins in his letter to Titus characteristic of those who call the same Lord, Master, and who declare publicly by their own act and word that henceforth they will walk together according to His commandment? On the contrary, is not the spirit of intolerance and persecution rampant in the land? What does our Lord say, John., 12th chap., 35 verse, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples if ye have love one to another." Remember what St. Paul tells us, "Love worketh no ill to his neighbor—therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. By their fruits ye shall know them." Is it true that we, as a Christian Church, are carrying out the principles of the good Samaritan? We have, at this day thrown out upon the world some four millions of human beings who never before had any care about the future, and what is being done to render them comfortable or provide them with the means of an honest, honorable self-support? I acknowledge there is any quantity of blatant oratory on this subject, but that unfortunately neither feeds nor clothes, nor shelters the miserable and unhappy creatures whose present condition, if we may believe one half even of what we are told in the public prints, is horrible in the extreme. We are told upon the best authority that they are dying by the hundreds—yea, by the thousands. The public journals of the day inform us that hospitals and almshouses are being prepared for them.

These are both new inventions so far as the negro is concerned, and never were needed for him before. And not only are we told that the physical condition is deplorable, almost beyond their description, but that the hot breath of moral pestilence is sweeping over them like the sirocco of the desert. Moral disease, moral death is worse than any temporal calamity. To rescue them from human servitude, only to leave them to the bondage of Satan, is a poor compensation. Therefore, I hold it is the duty of those who took these people from their former condition, and through whose agency they now occupy their present one, to provide amply for them, especially that portion of the American people whose ancestors were chiefly concerned in bringing them to these shores, and whose children's children are now living on the princely fortunes made in the African slave trade. It is a well-known fact that the principal part of that trade was carried on by men of Massachusetts and Rhode Island. Why, then, do not the men who have filled our land with confusion and misery, without delay import into those two States at least one million of these homeless destitute creatures, in order that they may be cared for by those who ought to consider themselves their natural protectors under existing circumstances?

Another fearful sign of the times is the general demoralization which we find meeting us on every side. It may, indeed, be said that "iniquity abounds," and yet what indifference there is to the increase of crime. The press teems with murders, frauds, defalcations, robberies, blasphemy, and general lawlessness. Some tell us that this is the necessary result of increase of population, but that cannot be. We have lost more men by the war than we have gained by emigration. No—it is in a great measure owing to the four years of blighting, desolating hostilities through which we have passed, in which all the evil passions of men, and I blush to say, of women, too, have been called into action and kept in constant play, and which have so completely gained the mastery over us as to refuse now to be allayed. This alarming demoralization runs through all grades of society. Who does not know that in our legislative halls we are largely represented by corrupt and venal men, and that it is an understood and accepted fact that in many cases it is but necessary to offer a bribe sufficiently large in order to have your point carried? The ballot

box, of which we boast so much, is rotten to the core, and our independence, in which we appear to glory, is little more than a farce. It is a fact, as patent as the noon-day sun, that free Americans can be, and are, bought upon election days as readily as you can buy sheep in the market, and that the party which has the most money is the winning one. The tyrant, too, who employs labor will compel his employees to vote in the way to suit himself, or discharge them from their places. And this employer call himself a free American—a lover and promoter of civil and religious freedom! And the men who thus obey his behests are called freemen, and challenge the world to admire the liberty of thinking and acting for themselves, which the institutions of their country guarantee to them! Am I wrong in denouncing this so-called freedom as a farce when such things can be cited as facts? What significance, too, has the common expression which so many of you have heard, "He can be approached." What does it mean, but that the man is in the market, and up for the highest bid? My hearers, if we do not awake to a full sense of our danger, we will be swept by this tide of avarice, of grasping cupidity, which is widening and deepening every day, into the maelstrom of irrecoverable ruin. And then, too, let us see what is the style, and what the character of the men who are selected to represent us in the law-making, as well as in the executive departments. What is the first question? Not, "Is he a man of great moral worth—of spotless integrity and unflinching courage in the discharge of his duty—of the proper intellectual calibre or educational fitness?" Alas, it is only, "Is he available? Can we by any means, fair or foul, elect him?" Hence it is that the veriest dolts and most illiterate of men are elected to fill places for which they have not one qualification, unless it be to receive pay for their votes. Look in upon your city councils. By whom are those seats filled? By your best citizens—your experienced and staid men—your most honorable and capable financiers—men whom every citizen would be proud to call our city fathers, not because of their wealth, but solely on account of their eminent qualifications and fitness for the place? But alas, this is not the case. In many instances half-fledged and not half-educated, young, and inexperienced men, who have nothing at stake and nothing to lose, but everything to gain, and who very rarely the moral courage to resist the outside pressure brought to bear upon them, when for example a pet scheme for contracts is before the people, and who can be approached—such, I say, are the persons elected to fill offices of public trust among us. Then, again, look in upon the Congress of the United States of to-day and compare it, if you have sufficient temerity, with that of thirty years ago. Call up to your remembrance the mighty men, the intellectual giants who then composed that body—men of sterling worth, of unimpeachable integrity—men, the dash of whose pen would make thrones tremble and tyrants grow pale—Webster, Clay, Bell, Benton, Calhoun, McDuffie, Cass, Choate. And the lower House, too,—what an assemblage there met the gaze. Lived there a man in those halcyon days of the republic who would have presumed to lobby a bill through in either or both Houses by the use of money? There are sitting before me now grey-headed men who know that the man who would have ventured such an attempt upon the integrity of one of the then representatives of the nation, would have been roughly and properly dealt with. I sadly fear the sun of those days has set to rise no more, unless we have an entire moral and political reformation.

Another alarming sign of the times is the growing spirit of insubordination commencing in the family and running through society in all its ramifications. Behold the veriest boys and girls who through our thoroughfares. What boisterousness, what profanity, what obscenity! And yet these are the germs of our future as a nation. Then, again, look at the frightfully growing disregard of law, both constitutional and statute. But perhaps the most dangerous sign of the times which we are called on to observe, is the assumption of the military over the civil power. The knell of all former republics tolled out upon the morning of that sad, sad day, when the military triumphed over the civil authority. You have but to refresh your memories with the history of the past to understand this thoroughly. And there is nothing more true than that "history repeats itself." When that great privilege of which England and America boasts as the bright

est evidence of their civilization and christianity, the writ of *habeas corpus*, was assailed, and you were left at the mercy of anybody and everybody, it required but another cast of the die to fix upon you a military despotism. Then your high would have gone out at noonday. Nicodemus asked with startling emphasis, when the chief Priests were clamorous for the blood of Jesus: "Doth our law judge any man before it hear him and know what he doeth." So asks the *habeas corpus*, why arrest this man—why ruthlessly tear him from his wife and children? Doth our law judge any man before it hear him and know what he doeth? And in thunder tones it rolls out *no! no!* and thus the great chart of the American citizen's liberty stands by his side as the military despot drags him away under the cover of midnight, and "pleads like angels, trumpet-tongued, against the deep damnation of his taking off." Let us be fearlessly jealous of our rights. We are the sovereigns. We make the laws. It is we, the people of these United States, who make Presidents and Governors. They are our servants appointed to serve us, and if they do not please us, we put them out and put others in their places. What other nation can like ourselves, make use of the plural pronoun, We—we the American people—we the sovereign people. Thank God for this proud distinction!

Let us never lose sight of the fact that as the Union is made up of separate and independent States, so also are the States made up of individual sovereigns, and just so long as each citizen maintains his individuality, amenable only to the laws and Constitution, so long we are safe. The most alarming thought to a right thinking man in this matter is the fact that we are departing from our old landmarks. Would that I were able to impress upon all my countrymen the danger of such a course, and especially the necessity of guarding against all fanatical and unconstitutional innovations. What can be more unnatural, more unreasonable, than any attempt to amalgamate discordant elements which God never intended should be united? We are a nation of white men. Our national compact was formed by and for white men. The Convention which assembled to form our Constitution was composed of white men, and the Chairman of that body was no less a person than George Washington, the pure, uncompromising patriot. Think you that he, or any other of the wise and good men composing that assemblage, ever contemplated the idea that the government they were using their best efforts to establish was to be anything but a government of white men? Thank God I have never seen the time when I could say "let the Union slide"—when I could pronounce the great chart of our nationality "a covenant with death and an agreement, hell," or declare the flag of our country to be a "haunting lie." Let us keep our government as it was originally intended by its founders. The moment you admit the negro to an equality of citizenship, you make him eligible from the Presidency down—otherwise he is not your political equal. All I ask is that the man who is so clamorous for negro equality should throw open the doors of his house and invite him to share in his social enjoyments—permit him to take a seat on his crimson velvet sofa, tete-a-tete with his beautiful daughter, and freely accord to him the right to demand her hand in marriage, if he be so inclined. Then, and then only, will I believe in and respect his consistency. Until then I deny the propriety of his assuming as his own any such characteristics. No man is a better friend to the negro than I am. I would have him cared for, protected, and elevated in the scale of humanity, as far as possible. But it must be in his proper place and position. If you have any real regard for him, or for the comfort of the white man, do not attempt this pernicious, this fatal work of equalizing the races. My dear people, you have long known that I entertained the most serious fears in regard to the final issue of this question, which for many years has been agitating the minds of the two sections. It came at last, and in such horrible shape as nothing but the lapse of time can banish from the memory of any who lived during that fearful period. Thank God, it is over, and now our duty is to endeavor by every means in our power to promote, as far as in us lies, the peace and happiness of the nation now once again united, and, above all, to allay that thirst for blood which I am forced to fear still lingers in the breasts of many who bear the name of Christian.

Let us now consider what are our prospects for the future. I must confess that to my mind it bears a threatening aspect, and that that the whole political heavens are overhung with clouds surcharged with ruin. What can ward off the impending doom? Can armies or navies? Can hatred and strife? Never! We must come back to the old landmarks, as I have told you before. The pulpits must cease their cry for blood and vengeance and preach the gospel of peace and good will. Every American citizen must be a man, and a white man too. Taking for the rule of his political life the Constitution, as prepared and interpreted by its framers, and having an intelligent perception of the rights guaranteed to him by it, he should exercise those rights without fear or favor. And this brings to my mind an overflowing compliment made by an English paper to the former slaveholders of the South, in which it said that inasmuch as the leading politicians of this country propose at once to confer upon every negro over 21 years of age the right of suffrage, it is of course to be taken for granted that these negroes must have been well instructed by their masters in all questions of political ethics, and consequently all that has been said and written us to the condition and ignorance, and utter degradation in which they were kept up to the moment of their emancipation goes for nothing.

No my friends—No such means as these will avail us, if we wish to escape future destruction. The evil is too deep-seated for any mere patching up or temporizing, to remedy it. We must strike at the root of it. We must as a people be imbued with virtue, intelligence, and scriptural piety. Then, and only then will we be safe. These alone are the bonds which can hold us together. Our destiny is in our own hands. The men who fill all official stations must be men of unblemished integrity. Those whom we appoint to make our laws, must be of the highest order of intellect and morals. The ermine on the judicial robes must be as pure as the snow flake on its way to the earth. Every man who goes to the ballot-box must go as a free man, untrammelled by fear or bribe. Our noble manhood must be untarnished by passion; prejudice, or avarice. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. St. Paul says "Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth," and David, the King of Israel, with his dying breath charged upon his son Solomon, "I go the way of all the earth—be thou strong therefore, and show thyself a man"—and Paul again exhorts all men thus—"Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, and quit you like men—be strong." He also declares: "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child—but, when I became a man I put away childish things." Let us understand and apply to ourselves this glowing and eloquent admonition. As American citizens let us be men—strong, in our political rectitude, and in every Christian grace and virtue.

Mr. people, I have done. I have endeavored to give you my simple yet firm convictions of what I believe to be the state and condition of the country, and of what the future will be. I beg you to believe that it has been done in all truth and honesty, without any attempt or design at dictation or interference with the conscience of others. I am only too willing to accord to others the right which I claim for myself—that of thinking and acting for myself. But in my humble position as a minister of the Church of Christ, I feel that a solemn duty rests upon me to warn those who are my special charge and care of the perils which surround them in this day and generation, and to implore each and all to exert his individual influence to avert the consequences which must befall this nation in the event of no effort being made to roll back the tides of sin and ruin which are, day by day, rushing in upon us. Let each one lend his voice to swell the cry of "Peace on earth and good will to men." And when the last great day shall come, when Gabriel with one foot on the land and one on the sea, shall sound the trumpet which shall call the nations of the earth to judgement, may you and I, mine and yours be of that mighty host who shall take up their march around the throne of God, having received from our Lord and Master the welcome, "Well done, good and faithful servants, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

Never despise counsels from whatever quarter they reach you. Remember that the pearl is keenly sought for in spite of the coarse shell which envelops it.