

The Weekly Mariettian.

Devoted to Politics, Literature, Agriculture, Horticulture, The Fine Arts, General News of the Day, Local Information, &c., &c.

F. L. Baker, Editor and Proprietor.

Terms, One Dollar a Year.

VOL. 7.

Marietta, Pa., Saturday Morning, December 15, 1860.

NO. 22.

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IS PUBLISHED EVERY SATURDAY, BY
Frederick L. Baker,
AT ONE DOLLAR PER ANNUM,
PAYABLE IN ADVANCE.

PUBLICATION OFFICE in the second story of CHURCH'S ROW, on Front Street, five doors East of Mrs. Flury's Hotel, MARIETTA, LANCASTER COUNTY, PENN'A.

If subscriptions be not paid within six months, \$1.25 will be charged, and if delayed until the expiration of the year, \$1.50 will be charged. Any person sending us five new subscribers shall have a sixth copy for his trouble. No subscription received for a less period than six months, and no paper will be discontinued until all arrears are paid, unless at the option of the publisher. A failure to notify a discontinuance at the expiration of the term subscribed for, will be considered a new engagement.

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Thanksgiving Sermon.

Delivered in the Presbyterian Church, Marietta, on Thursday, November 29, 1860.

BY REV. F. J. TIMLOW.

And out of them shall proceed thanksgiving and the voice of them that make merry—and their nobles shall be of themselves and their governor shall proceed from the midst of them.

Jeremiah xxx: 19, 21.
We are summoned this 29th day of November, 1860 by a proclamation of the Governor of this Commonwealth to consider and acknowledge the mercies of God toward us as a people, during the year that is past.

He recommends to all the people of this State that setting aside on this day all worldly pursuits they assemble in their respective places of worship and unite in offering, "Thanks to God for His manifold goodness and imploring his forgiveness and the continuance of his mercies."

We observe this day then, not because it is commanded—for no one could command it but God, but because the recommendation of the executive meets a cordial response from every grateful heart. We honor the summons. In obedience to it we are all here. We have entered these gates with thanksgiving, and these courts with praise.

We might on an occasion like the present, profitably advert as subjects of grateful thanksgiving to our personal mercies, such as our continuance in being, our vigor of body and soundness of mind, our restoration from sickness, our preservation in peril, our means of instruction, a competent share of the good things of this life, our homes, our food, our raiment, our friends and our rest.

We might advert to our family blessings. We might advert to our abundant harvests enough for the wants of a world to the seasons that have come freighted with unprecedented abundance, filling to overflowing our barns and crowding our great thorough fares and store houses with food for every land.

We might advert to the fact that no pestilence has swept over the land, or fallen upon any portion of it. We might advert to our friendly relations with all the nations of the earth, to our peace and continued national prosperity. We might advert to our spiritual mercies, to the open Bible, free to all, to the returning Sabbath that weekly greets us, to the house of prayer, to which we can resort unmolested, to the freedom of conscience that suffers every man to choose his own mode of worship and praise, and to all the promises of the gospel and to the hopes of the future.

These are only a few of our mercies—O, how great is the sum of them! The Lord hath done great things for us whereof we are glad. True, in the midst of all this abundance and prosperity there has arisen occasion for anxious solicitude to every lover of his land and race.

A little cloud, at first no bigger than a man's hand has been rising in the south, looming up darkly and ominously and threatening to cast its baleful shadow over the whole land. Good men are trembling for the ark of our national safety. Whether the cloud will go on gathering thicker and darker till it burst with overwhelming fury and disaster, or whether it will be rolled back or scattered, and the sun of our prosperity again shine forth with its wonted brightness upon a united, peaceful and prosperous nation. No human sagacity or wisdom can predict.

We will hope for the best. We know that God can and will make the wrath of man to praise him so that even out of the very troubles of a nation may be extracted material for praise.

But out of all this abundant gatherings

of the year we can select but one as the theme of thanksgiving on the present occasion—and out of them shall proceed thanksgiving and the voice of them that make merry, and their nobles shall be of themselves, and their governor shall proceed from the midst of them."

To understand this we must remember that the Jews, to whom the text refers were captives in a foreign land, cut off from all their former privileges, civil and religious. They had no voice in the election of their rulers, or in the affairs of the nation. Their time and service were at the disposal of others. They could meet for the worship of the God of their fathers, only by permission of their rulers.

The prophet Jeremiah had predicted this state of things and had again and again warned his countrymen to repent of the sins that were soon to bring upon them such sore and overwhelming calamities. But the warning was unheeded—the judgments came and for seventy years they were slaves under a government in the affairs of which they had no voice, no representation, no liberty of conscience.

But better times were in store for them. They were soon to be returned to their own land and to a restoration of all their civil and religious privileges—"Thus saith the Lord, Behold I will bring again the captivity of Jacob's tents and have mercy on his dwelling places, and the city shall be builded upon her own heap and the palace shall remain after the manner thereof." For this he says there shall be a general thanksgiving of the people, "and out of them shall proceed thanksgiving and the voice of them that make merry."

And then the prophet goes on to specify some of the particular causes of thanksgiving. Their numbers should be greatly multiplied. Their children should be as they had been formerly; their congregation should be established; their oppressors should be punished, and they should have the privilege of electing their own rulers, "and their nobles shall be of themselves, and their governor shall proceed from the midst of them."

It is a great privilege and matter of devout thanksgiving to have a voice in the election of those who are to act for us and into whose hands are entrusted great and valuable interests.

It is a great privilege to have a voice in the election of those who are to manage and control our temporal affairs. In all matters in which we are personally concerned, we claim to be heard by men of our own choice.

Every member in a fire insurance company, every stockholder in a bank, or rail road, every parent in the education of his children, every member of a church claim a voice in the election of the men into whose hands they entrust their children, their property or their spiritual interests.

The denial of this right led to the separation of the colonies from the mother country. The denial of this right drove thousands of christians of the different countries of Europe from their homes to this western world—they claimed the right to worship God in their own way and as their own conscience dictated and rather than surrender this right they chose to surrender all that was dear in life. Nay life itself.

In a free government two things are self evident propositions—the one is that all laws constitutionally enacted shall be faithfully and conscientiously obeyed, and the other is, that the people by their representatives shall have a voice in the enactment of those laws.

Now in the days of Israel no other nation enjoyed this privilege. It was peculiar to them whilst they continued in their land a free people; they were deprived of it during their captivity in Babylon, and it was to be restored to them on their return to their own land, "and their nobles shall be of themselves, and their governor shall proceed from the midst of them."

Their form of government was at first republican, it consisted of twelve tribes, each under its own leader, constituting a little commonwealth, while all were united under one great republic. When their form of government was changed to a monarchy it was at their own request, and by their own vote. Their kings did not enter upon the functions of their office until accepted and crowned by the people, their laws were approved by themselves, they were always proposed to the representatives of the people and received their unanimous consent.

Not a nation now in Asia or Africa enjoys this privilege, not one in Europe to its full extent. This is the only government on the face of the earth where

rulers are invested with authority by the people, "Their nobles are of themselves." Here every man is a noble, or may be one, and should be one,—and their governor proceeds from the midst of them. He is one of their own number and invested with authority by their consent and voice.

The people hold the government in their own hands, they can control the destiny of the nation, they have a voice in every matter that concerns their prosperity or welfare. What more than this could they ask or desire? Surely out of them should proceed thanksgiving and the voice of them that make merry, for their rulers are of themselves and dependent upon their will, and their governor is of their own election.

II. Rulers have an amazing influence on the morals and destiny of a nation; it is a matter of thanksgiving that their subjects can direct and control that influence,—this is so, or may be so, when their nobles are of themselves and their governor proceeds from the midst of them.

We have no adequate conception, we will venture to affirm of the extent and power of this influence; it is said of Jeroboam the ruler of Israel that he drove Israel from following the Lord and made them sin a great sin, for the children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did. His influence was felt two hundred and fifty years after his death. He corrupted twenty kings in succession and almost all their subjects; 'tis said of the kings Nadab, Baasha, Zimri, Omri, Ahab, Ahaziah, Jehoram, Jehu, Jehozab, and others on to twenty that they "walked in the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat and in the sin wherewith he made Israel to sin."

The heart sends the blood through the arteries, to every part of the human system, as the blood at the heart, so is the blood in all the minute and remote ramifications of the arteries. The ocean sends its rolling, surging tide into every inlet, creek, harbor, river and sea—as the ocean so are these.

And so rulers as the heart of the nation send down their influence through the body politic, even to the most minute ramifications of society. The tide of their influence is felt not only in the great cities and towns but penetrates the most remote province and district and is felt in the most distant hamlet.

Single senators have controlled for years the political destiny of whole States. Who can doubt that the present anomalous attitude of South Carolina is chargeable to the influence of her earnest, gifted, high-minded, but as we think mistaken statesman, John C. Calhoun, and that the destiny of that State, whether for weal or woe, and the destiny of other States, and it may be the destiny of the nation is inseparably linked with him.

John C. Calhoun rests in quiet in the bosom of the State he loved so well, his voice is no longer heard in the councils of that State or in the councils of the nation, and yet we doubt not that to-day though dead, he is speaking with a voice louder and more powerful and with more telling influence on the minds and on the acts of the people of his native State than he ever did in the most active and vigorous years of his life. And who can measure the influence of such men as Clay, Webster and Benton over single States, and President Jackson over the nation, impressing upon it ineffaceably and permanently their own principles and character.

And who can measure now the mighty interests that stand connected with the wisdom, prudence and virtue of our rulers, and of men in authority and influence in the various departments of this government, by mild, yet firm counsels, by mutual forbearance, by patient waiting, by soft words that turn away wrath, by avoiding grievous words that stir up anger, they can calm the excited passions of men, allay the rising spirit of discontent and insubordination and still the tumult of the people.

But if they are ambitious, selfish men—if they are demagogues rather than statesmen—if they are unprincipled wicked men, who regard neither God nor man, they can involve us in all the evils and horrors of civil and sectional strife. They can array section against section, and brother against brother, they can lash into fury the passions of the masses and drive them on to fraternal strife with all its havoc of human life, and the havoc of peaceful homes not only, but the havoc of virtue and morals and religion. Opening the flood gates of crime and dark oppression and wrong and violence—to sweep with appalling desolation over the land and whelm in one common ruin our

cherished and invaluable blessings.

There can be no question that the influence of many of our public men has been most disastrous upon the morals of the nation—many in public life, who would scorn to rob or defraud an individual will not hesitate to rob and defraud the government—men high in public trusts have startled and amazed the community by their wholesale plunders, their magnificent frauds. As the consequence of all this the moral sense of the nation is blunted, public crime has received a new name and been softened down or covered over with a kind of respectable garb, and as a matter of course the influence travels down from the rulers to the ruled, from the center to the circumference, and hence the falsehoods, the breaches of trust, the acts of trespass and bribery and corruption and fraud and flagrant violations of law that so alarmingly and extensively abound.

And upon whom, we ask, rests the responsibility of all this? We may strive to throw it upon our rulers, but God will hold every man responsible, who lends a helping hand to place such men in power. There are, alas, too many men, moral men, nay christian men, who under party drill and party influence vote for corrupt and vicious men, knowing them to be such. It is a maxim in morals as well as in law that what a man does by another he does himself, and if a man helps to elevate to offices of responsibility and trust notoriously incompetent and unworthy men he is justly chargeable with a share of all the mischief and guilt caused by such rulers—such may mourn over the corruption of the times and the degeneracy of our public men and talk of the need of reform, but the work of reform must begin with them, for their nobles are of themselves and their governor proceeds from the midst of them.

III. And then what mighty interests, effecting not only us, but ours, not only ours, but that of this land, and other lands for ages to come it may stand connected with those placed in authority, by our suffrages.

We are entering confessedly on stormy times, men driven on by fierce passion and blind, mad infatuation at both ends of the Union, are toiling might and main at their feuds of dismemberment. Fools in the madness of their folly are heaving at the pillars of our great national temple. Shall the good, the prudent, the wise of every party and every section stand by and calmly look on at this work of destruction when they hold the restraining power? It is time, high time that every lover of his country and of his race should rise in their majesty and strength and hurl such men from their place and power. By the men of the present generation is the great question to be settled, whether there can be maintained in the midst of us an enlightened and tender moral sense to keep us a virtuous, free and united people in the face of all these assaults upon the peace and integrity of the nation.

By the honest men, by the moral men, by the christian men of this land is the great problem to be solved, whether this noble birth right of ours shall be continued unto us and be handed down—our richest and most valued legacy to those coming after us, or whether Esau like us shall barter it away—for that which in the end will cause bitter though unavailing repentance. Think of this vast territory filled up with a population of so many millions, speaking the same language, governed by the same laws and brought in contact by arts and science and commerce with every part of the globe, sending her ships and seamen and presses and books over all seas and to every continent and port and city on the wide world and who can measure the extent and power of that influence for good or evil that is to be the result.—And on the other hand who can measure the folly, the madness of a people who will stand quietly by and see the men of their own election bring such a calamity upon them, upon the nation, upon the world.

And now what lessons may be gathered from all this?

1. And the first is, that they who are laboring, working to tear down this great political national fabric, know not what they do, in their blindness, infatuation, may it be said of them as it was said of those maddened, bigoted rulers who stood around the cross of their King and Messiah shouting crucify him, crucify him,—*"They know not what they do."*

There are evils in every State and government in our world; in the government of the family there are evils incident to that government, yet who would have it overturned with the expectation that a better would be or could be re-

constructed on its ruins.

In the government of the christian church there are evils incident to its organization, which no sane man would hope to remove by the destruction of the church. This government is not a perfect one, there are evils connected with it incident to all human institutions, and there are evils that by a wise and prudent policy would disappear, but what assurance have we, or can we have that if this government were sundered, broken up we should get a better one instead. The men who framed it were men of singular wisdom and prudence. Have we such men now? Men like Washington, Franklin, Henry, Hamilton, Greene, Morris, Lee, Carroll and a host of other giants in those days—would we get rid of our present evils? or rather is there not ground to fear, nay a moral certainty that far greater evils would be entailed upon us.

Besides we have the remedy for all our national evils in our hands. Our nobles are of ourselves and our governor is of our own choice; we choose the men who make or repeal our laws—time and patience and forbearance and faith will do much. In the mean time let us hope and pray that better counsels will prevail—that present evils will be patiently borne until they can be removed or remedied by lawful, constitutional means. Of all remedies for national evils fancied or real we think that resolved upon by a sister State as the most hopeless, the most to be deprecated; we doubt not that it will be a sad day for her when in her frenzy she shall go forth to seek other alliances and confederates, yet we are free to say, that much as the act is to be deplored—sad and disastrous as may be the influence on sister States or on the nation, we would not have the government exercise her right and power to restrain her against her protest and her will.

Better, far better be apart, separate than that there should be angry strifes and contentions and bitter feuds and animosities, terminating it may be in civil discord and bloodshed and desolation, the extent and end of which no one could predict. "The beginning of strife, says the wise man, is like the letting out of waters. Therefore beware of contention he says before it be meddled with a wise precaution surely. We would say, in the language of the good and wise old patriarch to his kindred Lot. "Let there be no strife I pray thee between me and thee for we be brethren. Is not the whole land before thee. Separate thyself I pray thee from me, if thou wilt take the left hand then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand then I will go to the left."

If a boy is determined to run away from home in spite of all entreaty and remonstrance of parents and members of the family, if his remaining should cause bickering and contention and angry feeling, then would those parents wisely forgo their authority and power and say to him, go and prosper, trusting that in due time he would see his folly and come back and prove himself a good and useful member of that family; it was a sad day for that younger son when he felt that the restraints of home were oppressive and he resolved to go forth free and unfettered, an independent young man. But alas for all his bright anticipations, his new independence ran him very soon into the most degrading servitude, and the wisest step he could take was to return to that home that he had left. The father acted wisely in letting him go when all remonstrance and counsel and warning was lost upon him. He did not want a forged, constrained service. And so he divided with him his living."

2. We may learn the duty of praying for our rulers. No class of men need more than the prayers of christians.—Hence the apostle says, "Exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings, and for all that are in authority, that we may lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty."

Who, we ask can carry us safely through the storm but God; he has the hearts of rulers in his hand. Whilst men are crowding at the sail and thus are driving the ship on with appalling swiftness among the breakers, we can only turn away and look to him who has power over the storm and who can give to our Senators wisdom and prudence in this time of our peril. He has carried us through threatening dangers in times gone by. We can with confidence now implore him for help, by imploring him to guide and bless our rulers.

There is hanging a large and beautiful picture in the Rotunda of the capital at

Washington. It is a representation of our forefathers leaving their native land to come over to these western shores, on that proud old vessel that was soon to bear them away; they are represented to as be engaged in prayer; parents and children together, while that old minister whose name is a household word familiar to every child almost, is offering up their hearts devotion unto God; in their midst lies an open Bible open where the New Testament begins. On the side of the picture the artist represents the rain bow of promise, their guide over the waters.—They trusted their noble ship to his guidance and relied upon the promises of his word and were carried safely over—never, never can the storms whelm our noble ship, with its priceless freight so long as that open Bible is our chart and guide and the wise and good who have embarked their all of earthly wealth and hope, ask the counsel and help of the God of their fathers. The bow of promise rests even now on those dark, lurid clouds, and they will retreat and scatter till all is again clear—if only men by their faith and prayers will call down the blessing of God upon their rulers.

3. But if the worst should come and judgements should befall us, we will hope to come out of the trial a stronger and better nation.

It may be that God intends to punish us in the line of our offences. I have no time or heart to dwell upon our national sins, our ingratitude as a nation, our pride, our covetousness, our Sabbath breaking, our fraud, our injustice, our oppression of the defenceless Indian and slave, our practical atheism. We have been boasting of our manifest destiny.—We have Ahab-like cast covetous eyes upon the little viceroy of some neighboring Nation, to annex it by fair means or foul to our already vast possessions, and it may be that God will suffer piece after piece to be broken off that we may be cured of our pride and repent of our sins.

"If my people which are called by my name shall humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wickedness then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land." Righteousness alone can save and exalt this nation. Sin will prove its reproach and ruin. What if every man were a righteous man like Wilymerforce or Howard—would there be a jail, or court house, or almshouse, or house of refuge in the land? would there be found a den of crime? would there be an oppressor, a robber? or fraud or injustice? Righteousness exalts the man, makes him a better citizen. It would elevate every man to the highest nobility of earth. It would elevate every fallen, sunken man. It would take him from the tombs and chains, like Christ took the demons of Gadara and restore them to their right mind, to their home, to their friends, to society, to usefulness. It would break the fetter from every slave of despotism and passion and lust and elevate them to the dignity of Sons of God.

Righteousness would stretch a cordon of strength around this great nation and around every home mightier, stronger, more enduring than all the frowning, bristling fortifications that the power or wealth of the nation could erect. Give to this nation—and by this we mean give to its people, to individuals, righteousness and you would give to it an elevation and permanency such as statesmen or political men never dreamed of.

It is a glorious birthright given to each man here and for which he ought to show his thankfulness by becoming himself a righteous man. The righteousness of each helps to secure this—and so each man is honored with a commission no less than that of helping to exalt and save this nation and through it the world. This being so, it is clear that we should work to put our great interests in the hands of religious men; and by this we do not mean of any particular sect, but men who fear God and keep his commandments.

4. Our thanksgiving should always be with a cheerful, merry heart. "Out of them shall proceed thanksgiving and the voice of them that make merry." It would be a great attainment for themselves and a great means of good to others, if the disciples of Christ in our day could let the hope and gladness which cheers their hearts shine in the faces also. "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine, but a broken spirit deth the bones."

There is nothing like a cheerful, merry heart and cheerful conversation in storing the tons of body and mind when both have been overdone. The christi-