

NATIONAL PEACE THE SOURCE OF
NATIONAL PROSPERITY.

A

S E R M O N,

DELIVERED AT

FRANKLIN,

ON THE

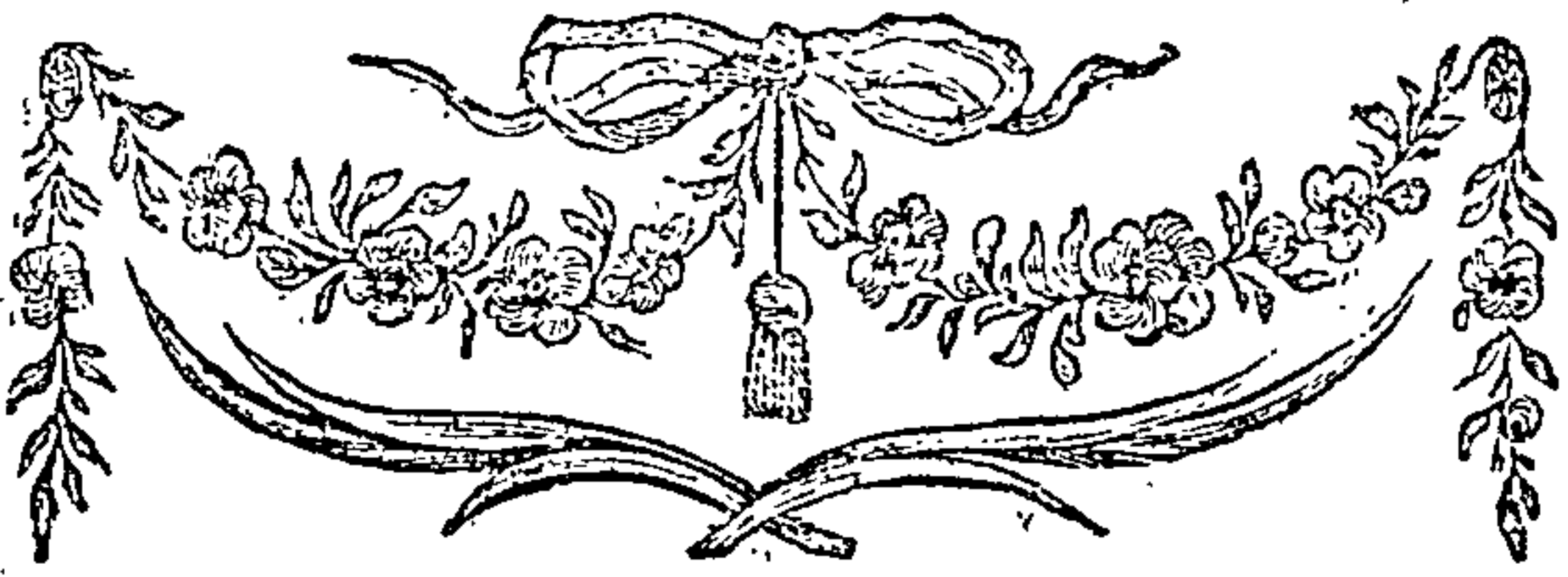
DAY OF ANNUAL THANKSGIVING,

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A

THANKSGIVING SERMON.



1 KINGS iv. 25.

And Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine, and under his fig tree, from Dan even to Beersheba, all the days of Solomon.



OVEREIGN princes have often raised their own greatness and grandeur, upon the poverty and depression of their subjects. But Solomon pursued a more just, as well as a more wise and honorable course ; and raised himself to the summit of human glory, by seeking and promoting the highest happiness of his kingdom. The first and principal step, which he took, to reach this noble and benevolent purpose, was, to cultivate and maintain mutual peace, with all the neighboring nations. He never gave them any just provocation to wage war
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with him ; nor took any unjust occasion to wage war with them. This prudent and pacific conduct promoted the prosperity of his people ; and, at the same time, spread the fame of his wisdom and policy among the greatest princes of the earth. Accordingly, the sacred historian first informs us, that “ Solomon had peace *on all sides* round about him.” In the next words we are told, “ Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine, and under his fig tree, from Dan even to Beer sheba, all the days of Solomon.” And, as the natural consequence of his wise and peaceful reign, we read, in the conclusion of the chapter, “ There came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon, *from all the kings of the earth*, which had heard of his wisdom.” The hand, as well as the counsel of the Deity, was concerned in all this national prosperity. For God promised to give David a son and successor, who should be a prince of peace. “ Behold, a son shall be born unto thee, who shall be a man of *rest* ; and *I will give him rest from all his enemies round about* : For his name shall be Solomon, and *I will give peace and quietness* unto Israel, in his days.” It appears, from this prediction, that Solomon was only the instrument, in the hand of God, of promoting the peace and prosperity of his people. And taking our text in this connection, it naturally suggests this general observation :

It is God who bestows the great blessing of national peace.

To place this subject in a clear and profitable light, I shall,

I. Show

I. Show that it is God, who bestows national peace:
And,

II. Show that national peace is a great national blessing.

I. I am to show, that it is God, who bestows national peace.

This God claims as his peculiar prerogative. “ I form the light, and create darkness : *I make peace*, and create evil. I the Lord do all these things.” Again we read, “ The Lord sitteth King forever. The Lord will give strength unto his people ; the Lord will bless his people *with peace*.” The voice of Scripture here concurs with the voice of reason. National peace is one of the links in the great chain of providence, and, of consequence, comes under the divine direction. It belongs to God, to determine when, and where, national peace shall be enjoyed. And it is easy to see how God can give this blessing to different nations, notwithstanding their native pride and selfishness. For,

1. God can make it the mutual interest of neighboring and foreign nations to be at peace with each other. This was the case in the days of Solomon. By the instrumentality of David, God had delivered his people from their enemies, and put them in possession of all the land, which he had promised to give them. This we are expressly told in the context. “ And Solomon reigned over all the kingdoms, from the river unto the land of the Philistines, and unto the border of Egypt.” The children of Israel had gained as large a territory, and secured as great advantages, as they had
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any grounds to expect, or even to desire. And, on the other hand, their neighbors had no reason to flatter themselves, that it would be for their interest to attack the people of God, in their present state of strength and prosperity. All things, therefore, conspired with the policy of Solomon, to cultivate national peace. Just so God is able to unite the hearts of other nations, by uniting their interests. It has long been a maxim in politics, that *national* interest is the first principle of *national* policy. It is only for God, therefore, to make it the mutual interest of different nations to be at peace with each other, and they themselves will naturally seek and promote this agreeable object. Besides,

2. God is able to govern the *hearts* of nations, and, in that way, dispose them to mutual peace and harmony. It was a proverb in Israel, "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water : He turneth it whithersoever he will." There is a supreme power in every nation; and the men, who possess that power, have the right of making war, or peace. But the hearts of those very men are in the hand of the Lord, who has a supreme control over all their views and designs. God standeth in the congregation of the mighty ; and while they are deliberating upon the most important of all national concerns, he is able to turn their hearts, and voices, and exertions, to national peace. This power of disposing the hearts of nations to peace, God signally displayed, thrice every year, in his special providence towards the natural enemies of his chosen people.

people. “Thrice in the year shall all your male children appear before the Lord God, the God of Israel. For I will cast out the nations before thee, and enlarge thy borders: Neither shall any man *desire* thy land, when thou shalt go up to appear before the Lord thy God thrice in the year.” On those great occasions, God preserved his people from the power and depredation of their enemies, by actually disposing their hearts to peace. Indeed, national peace must always be ascribed to the mediate, or immediate influence of the Deity, upon the hearts of men. When any nation dwell safely, every man under his vine, and under his fig tree, they ought to consider this public blessing, as coming from the hand and goodness of God. I proceed to show,

II. That national peace is a great national blessing.

So long as Solomon had peace *on all sides* round about him, it diffused universal happiness through his widely extended kingdom. National peace is naturally productive of the greatest national prosperity. This will appear, if we consider a variety of particulars.

1. National peace naturally tends to increase the *numbers* of a people. It was promised to Abraham as a great blessing, that his seed should be extremely numerous. This blessing is diminished by war, but promoted by peace. The seed of Abraham, at certain seasons, were diminished and brought low, by war, and its natural attendants. But, in times of peace, they rapidly increased again. And, perhaps, they never increased with greater rapidity, than in the long and peaceful reign of Solomon. Accordingly, we
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are told, in our context, that “Judah and Israel were *many*, as the sand which is by the sea in multitude.” National peace preserved them from the sword and pestilence, which commonly go hand in hand, and make dreadful havoc of the lives of men. It is almost incredible how fast a people will increase in numbers, while they are free from public and wasting calamities. And the increase of numbers not only adds to the happiness of a people, but to the glory of their government. So Solomon thought, and so he said: “In the multitude of people is the king’s honor: But in the want of people is the destruction of the prince.” How valuable is national peace, which preserves the lives of millions, and adds millions to the numbers of a nation!

2. National peace directly tends to promote national *wealth*. Wealth is a temporal favor to nations, as well as to individuals, though it be often perverted and abused by both. Solomon says, “The blessing of the Lord maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it.” Peace is the parent of wealth. For peace promotes industry, industry promotes commerce, and commerce promotes the wealth of any nation. The national peace, in the reign of Solomon, promoted a very extensive and lucrative commerce, which made both the prince and the people immensely rich. This the pen of inspiration has recorded, for the instruction of all future ages. “Now the weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year was six hundred three score and six talents, beside that he had of the merchant men, and of the traffic of the spice merchants,

merchants, and of all the kings of Arabia, and of the governors of the country. The king had at sea a navy of Tharshish, with the navy of Hiram. Once in three years came the navy of Tharshish, bringing gold, and silver, ivory, apes, and peacocks. So Solomon exceeded all the kings of the earth for *riches*. And the king made silver to be in Jerusalem as stones, and cedar made he to be as the sycamore trees that are in the vale for abundance." While a nation enjoys the blessing of peace, its individuals are at full liberty to cultivate the earth, and pursue every lucrative calling. Peace, likewise, opens the ports of numerous nations, and gives them a fair opportunity of exchanging the fruits of their own industry, for the wealth of the world.

3. National peace has a happy influence upon every branch of *human knowledge*. Leisure and learning go together. While any people are free from the terrors and distresses of war, and are increasing in numbers and wealth, they have time and opportunity for turning their attention to mental improvements. The long and uninterrupted peace, which Solomon enjoyed, was the happy occasion of the astonishing advances, which he made, in the various branches of science. He was no less celebrated for his knowledge, than for his wealth and magnificence. We are told, in the context, that "Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all men; than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, and Chalcol, and Darda, the sons Mahol: And his fame was in all countries

countries round about. And he spake three thousand proverbs : And his songs were a thousand and five. And he spake of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon, even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall : And he spake also of beasts, and of fowls, and of creeping things, and of fishes." The peace and prosperity of his kingdom, gave Solomon a happy opportunity of pursuing his own studies, and of encouraging the sons of science, to diffuse useful knowledge through every part of his extensive dominions. Learning never flourished, but under the united influence of wealth and power. The Greeks and Romans became rich and powerful, before they had either leisure, or inclination, to turn their attention to the useful and liberal arts. But, after their conquests had put them in possession of wealth and peace, they carried agriculture, manufactures, commerce, architecture, poetry, sculpture, and painting, to a surprising degree of perfection. National peace has always had a tendency to promote national knowledge. The noblest works of genius, in the most refined nations of Europe, have been brought forth, not in the din of arms, but under the calm and auspicious influence of public peace. Hence, the history of ages assures us, that the friends of science have commonly been the enemies of war.

4. National peace affords a favorable opportunity for forming public designs and performing public works. Every rising nation find, that, in order to be happy as well as respectable, they must build cities, erect churches, endow colleges, open canals, make bridges,

bridges; repair highways, remove public nuisances, and perform many other expensive works of general utility. To promote such national objects was highly reputable among the Romans, in the zenith of their prosperity. Pliny congratulates one of his friends upon being appointed a surveyor of the highways; an office, to which even he, and Cæsar himself, had been promoted. It is only when nations are settled in peace, that they can form and execute public designs. One principal end, which God had in view, in giving peace to Israel, in the reign of Solomon, was to afford them leisure to build the Temple, and to perform other great and useful works, which should raise their dignity and glory in the sight of surrounding nations, and in the view of future ages. “And David said, Solomon my son is young and tender, and the house that is to be builded for the Lord must be exceeding magnificent, of fame and of glory throughout all countries. Then he called for Solomon his son, and charged him to build an house for the Lord God of Israel. And David said to Solomon, My son, as for me, it was in my mind to build an house unto the name of the Lord my God: But the word of the Lord came to me, saying, Thou hast shed blood abundantly, and hast made great wars: Thou shalt not build an house unto my name, because thou hast shed much blood upon the earth in my sight. Behold, a son shall be born unto thee, who shall be a man of rest; and I will give him rest from all his enemies round about: For his name shall be Solomon, and I will give peace and quietness unto Israel in his days.

He shall build an house for my name." The Temple, which Solomon built, was the most rich and magnificent structure, that ever was raised by the hand of man. It was seven years in building; it daily employed above an hundred thousand workmen; and there was more gold and silver expended in adorning it, than is now in circulation in all the nations of Europe. And, after he had finished this great work, he still went on to build cities and palaces; and to make Jerusalem, the seat of his kingdom, the metropolis of the world. Such vast and important designs were accomplished; in the long and peaceful reign of Solomon. And when any nation enjoy peace on all sides round about them, they have the fairest opportunity of forming and of executing designs of public utility and importance. In this view, national peace is highly conducive to the general good of every civil community.

5. It is the direct tendency of national peace to promote personal as well as public prosperity. There is no other national blessing so extensive in its kindly influence. It pervades every part of a nation, and yields a peculiar pleasure to high and low, rich and poor, young and old. It looks, with a mild and cheering aspect, upon every individual, and increases every other public and private blessing. In the peaceful reign of Solomon, all his subjects appeared to be in a state of real happiness and self enjoyment. This is expressly mentioned as the fruit of national peace. "Judah and Israel were many, as the sand which

which is by the sea in multitude, eating, and drinking, and making merry." These expressions cannot mean carnal mirth and levity; but that serenity and cheerfulness of mind, which God required his people to feel and express, in a state of outward prosperity. Universal peace diffuses universal joy through any community. While they dwell safely, and sit under their vines and fig trees, none being able to make them afraid, they enjoy a train of pleasing reflections. The idea of safety, with respect to ourselves, our friends, and our country, is not only agreeable in its own nature; but it also gives a high relish to every other earthly enjoyment. Happy is that people that is in such a case; that there is no breaking in, nor going out; and no complaining in the streets. This was the case of Israel in the peaceful reign of Solomon. And this is the case of any nation, who enjoy the blessing of universal peace. I may add,

6. National peace is very friendly to the interests of religion. During the peaceful reign of Solomon, religion greatly flourished. As soon as he was first upon the throne, he invited the people to go with him to Gibeon, where he offered sacrifices, and called upon God for wisdom, to enable him to discharge the weighty duties, which should devolve upon him, in the course of his reign. His prayer was graciously heard and abundantly answered. When he had finished the Temple, he consecrated it to the service of the Deity, with great solemnity and devotion, which met the approbation of Heaven. Nor did he stop here;

here; but, by his example and authority, promoted the regular and solemn worship of God in his house. "Then Solomon offered burnt offerings unto the Lord on the altar of the Lord, which he had built before the porch, even after a certain rate every day, offering according to the commandment of Moses, on the sabbaths, and on the new moons, and on the solemn feasts, three times in a year, even in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles. And he appointed, according to the order of David his father, the courses of the priests to their service, and the Levites to their charges, to praise and minister before the priests, as the duty of every day required. And they departed not from the commandment of the king unto the priests and Levites, concerning any matter." Such was the happy influence of national peace upon religion, in Solomon's reign. And it had the same effect in the reigns of other pious and pacific princes. All the revivals of religion, which we have an account of in the succeeding reigns, were in times of national peace. Of Asa we are told, "In his days the land *was quiet ten years*. And Asa did that which was good and right in the eyes of the Lord his God. For he took away the altars of the strange gods, and the high places, and brake down the images, and cut down the groves, and commanded Judah to seek the Lord God of their fathers, and to do the law and commandment." His son Jehoshaphat was a great reformer, and promoted the cause of religion, in a time of peace. Accordingly it is said, "The fear of the Lord fell upon all the kingdoms

doms of the lands that were round about Judah, *so that they made no war against Jehoshaphat.*" There was another revival of religion in Hezekiah's peaceful reign. And another after that, in the peaceful reign of Josiah. Indeed, public peace and true religion have always promoted each other. It is the natural tendency of peace in any nation, who enjoy divine revelation, to promote the interest of religion. And in this view especially, the reign of Solomon is represented, by the Psalmist, as a type of the future spread of religion, and prosperity of the Church, under the reign of the Prince of peace. "In his days shall the righteous flourish ; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him ; and his enemies shall lick the dust. The kings of Tarshish and of the Isles shall bring presents ; the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea, all kings shall fall down before him : All nations shall serve him." As soon as universal peace shall reign, and men shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks, this glorious prediction shall be fully accomplished. Our Savior was born in a time of peace, and he shall reign in a time of peace. The peace of nations always has been, and always will be, highly favorable to the cause of religion. In a word, national peace serves to promote every national interest, and is the greatest of all national blessings.

IMPROVEMENT.

I M P R O V E M E N T.

1. IF peace be the greatest national blessing, then war is the greatest national calamity. War and peace are diametrically opposite to each other, in their nature and tendency. War tends to destroy all that prosperity, which peace tends to produce. War diminishes the numbers and wastes the wealth of nations. War obstructs the progress of science, and destroys the works of ages. War corrupts the hearts and lives of men, and wounds the interests of religion and morality. War spreads a general gloom over the beautiful face of nature, disturbs the peace and destroys the hopes of families, and pierces the bosoms of old and young with the keenest anguish and distress. It is impossible to paint the horrors of war, and all its attendant miseries. It will appear in its truest light in contrast with the blessings of peace. And to view it in this dreadful light, we need only turn our eyes to Europe. It has there spilt the blood of millions. It has there trampled upon all laws, human and divine. It has there laid waste the labors and wisdom of ages. It has there spread ignorance, infidelity, vice, and misery, through a large portion of the globe. In a word, war is the calamity of calamities, and the greatest of all natural and national evils.

2. If peace be the greatest of national blessings, then it is the wisdom of those, who possess the supreme power in any nation, to promote and maintain this desirable and important object. Solomon was
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the greatest and wisest prince, that ever swayed a royal sceptre. He was wiser than all men. The greatest princes admired his wisdom, and placed themselves as pupils at his feet. And this wisest of men and of princes was a prince of peace. He had a just sense of the importance of saving his people from the evils of war, and of turning their attention and exertions to the arts of peace. And through a long reign of forty years, he maintained peace on all sides round about him, and raised his kingdom to the first rank among the kingdoms of men. This is a noble example, which it is not beneath the greatest princes and potentates of the earth to imitate. There is nothing of so much importance as war, that is commonly undertaken with so little coolness and prudence. It is much more frequently the result of folly, than the fruit of wisdom. From whence come wars and fightings? Do they not too often come from the bitterest passions of human nature? It highly concerns those, who hold the reins of government, and carry in their hands the lives and interests of their subjects, to take good advice, before they make war. This was Solomon's counsel, and Solomon's conduct. Near the close of his reign, some of his neighbors gave him just grounds of offence; but he had more wisdom, than to chastise their insolence, at the expense of the peace and prosperity of his own kingdom.

3. If it be the natural tendency of national peace to promote national prosperity; then it is the wisdom of a people to do all in their power, to retain this

invaluable blessing. A prosperous people are very prone to forget the source of their prosperity, and to become extremely stupid, avaricious, and revengeful. These are the passions, which naturally enkindle the spirit of war. And when the spirit of war has inflamed and infatuated the minds of a people, they are deaf to the voice of reason, and blind to the motives of interest. While they feel the powerful impulse of malignant passions, they would much rather sacrifice their own interest and happiness, than fail to pour their vengeance on the head of their enemies. How often have all the powers engaged in war, been heartily sorry, before they finished it, that they forsook the way of peace, and spread their paths with misery and destruction! After the flame of war has once broken out, it is extremely difficult to restrain its fury, until it has greatly weakened, diminished, and exhausted all the parties concerned. No people can suffer the spirit of war to seize their breasts, without exposing themselves to the folly and danger of adopting rash and precipitate measures, which they will always have reason to regret. It is, therefore, the wisdom of any nation, who enjoy the blessing of peace, to cultivate a cool and pacific spirit; and, if possible, to avoid the horrors and calamities of war. The beginning of public as well as of private strife, is as when one letteth out water; therefore, let us, in this land of peace, leave off wars and fightings before they are meddled with.

4. We learn, from what has been said, that we are under peculiar obligations to God, for the bestowment and continuance of our national peace. For

thirteen years past, we have dwelt safely, sitting under our vines and fig trees, none being able to make us afraid. Before this peaceful period commenced, we were engaged in a long and bloody contest with Britain. And though we established our independence, and took a rank among the nations of the earth ; yet, at the close of the war, we found ourselves in a miserable state of poverty, anarchy, and depression. But the happy return of peace soon revived our hopes, enlarged our views, and awakened our attention to the national interest. Particular States reviewed and revised their particular forms of government. This wise and prudent measure naturally led them to devise and adopt another, of still greater importance ; which was, to frame a federal constitution, that should give them a national capacity, and secure their national interests. And as soon as this new and excellent government was established, it put a new face upon all our public affairs. It spread a spirit of industry, and enterprise, through all parts of the Union. And it is almost incredible, what wonders we have wrought, by our united and vigorous exertions. How many new plantations have we made ! How many cities have we founded ! How many large and costly bridges have we constructed ! How many useful and expensive canals have we opened ! How many manufactories have we set up ! How many well regulated schemes of commerce have we devised and adopted ! How many colleges and seminaries of learning have we erected ! How many public libraries have we collected ! And how many men of science have

we raised up and qualified for public usefulness! Nor have we altogether neglected the great interests of religion. For, while we have been increasing in numbers, we have been extending our settlements over vast tracts of our new acquired territory, where we have carried the gospel, planted new churches, and supplied many of them, with able and faithful Pastors. Ever since the ravages of war have ceased, and the blessing of peace has come upon us, we have rapidly increased in numbers, in wealth, in knowledge, and in every thing, which is really conducive to national prosperity.

And now all this is ultimately owing to the Supreme Governor of the universe, who has been pleased to bless our nation with peace. We have more than once been threatened with internal convulsions and foreign invasions. But, through the blessing of God upon the wise, prudent, and pacific measures of our Political Father, we have happily maintained peace on all sides round about us; while other nations have been groaning under the complicated miseries of war. We stand surrounded and distinguished, by the blessings of heaven. God has crowned the closing year, with his goodness; and plentifully supplied us, with the bounties of his providence. We are become numerous, as the sand which is by the sea in multitude. A pleasing prospect lies before us. We see our friends, our neighbors, and our countrymen, eating, and drinking, and making merriment. The voice of peace, of health, and of plenty, is heard from Dan even to Beersheba, from one end
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of our land to the other. Never, perhaps, had we more occasion of gratitude to our sovereign and kind Benefactor, than on this present auspicious anniversary. We have abundant reason to call upon our souls and all that is within us, to bless and praise the Lord, for all his goodness and wonderful works to our peaceful and prosperous nation. And here two very serious and weighty considerations naturally occur, to press upon our minds the duty of gratitude for our national peace.

First, If we are ungrateful for this distinguishing favor of God, we shall justly provoke him to destroy our prosperity, and chastise our ingratitude, by the hand of our enemies. This was the method which he took to punish his own peculiar people, for murmuring and complaining under the happy and peaceful reign of Solomon. As soon as that great, and wise, and prudent prince was laid in his tomb, the state of his kingdom was suddenly and totally changed. The horrors of war succeeded the blessings of peace. The infatuated people placed Jeroboam the son of Nebat upon the throne of Israel, who corrupted and divided the nation, and finally involved them in the most unnatural and bloody war, that they, or any other people, ever experienced. In one day, and in one battle, five hundred thousand Israelites were slain by the hands of their brethren. In the same severe and exemplary manner, God is able to punish us, if we are ungrateful for our national prosperity. Though we are, this day, rejoicing in universal peace and security; yet, before another such joyful anniversary,

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fary returns, we may hear the noise of warriors, and behold the distressing sight of garments rolled in blood. I would not, however, suggest, that there is a probability of such a sudden transition from peace to war. But this we know to be true, there is a dark cloud arising, which spreads a gloom over all our promising prospects. The nations of Europe are in arms ; and some of them wish to disturb our peaceful and prosperous state of neutrality. And should we be unthankful to God for his distinguishing favors, and despise the hand of his justice ; we may reasonably expect, that blood and violence will be the fruit of our ingratitude and folly.

Besides, we ought to consider, in the *second* place, that nothing but sincere gratitude to the Author of all our mercies can secure us against the destructive influence of national prosperity. The bounties of Providence naturally tend to destroy an ungrateful people. Pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness, proved the ruin of the ungrateful inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah. National prosperity gradually brought on the declension and overthrow of the most renowned nations of antiquity. And before God had put his people in possession of the land of promise, he solemnly cautioned them against the dangers of peace and prosperity. “ Beware lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses and dwelt therein ; and when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied ; then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God,

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God, and say in thine heart, My power, and the might of mine hand, hath gotten me this wealth. If thou do at all forget the Lord thy God, I testify against you this day, that ye shall surely perish." But notwithstanding this seasonable and solemn admonition to gratitude, the peace and prosperity of Israel, from time to time, corrupted their morals, destroyed their religion, and exposed them to the severest marks of the divine displeasure. Human nature is still the same; and national power and wealth may have the same fatal influence upon us, that they have had upon other nations of the earth. Let us therefore maintain a deep and habitual sense of the great and distinguishing goodness of God towards our rising and flourishing republic, that it may be a lengthening out of our public peace and tranquillity. May these serious and interesting motives to gratitude deeply affect all our hearts, and excite us to give unto God, the glory, which is due to his name, for our national prosperity.

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