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OUR NATIONAL BLESSINGS IN 1895.

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A Thanksgiving Sermon Preached at Oxford, Ga., on November  
28th, by Rev. W. A. Candler, D. D., President  
Emory College. Text, Psalms LXVII.

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We are called by the chief magistrates of both our State and Federal governments, to assemble this day at our accustomed place of worship to give thanks to Almighty God for his manifold mercies toward us during the year. He hath crowned this year as he hath all former years, with his loving-kindness and tender mercies, and this great nation may joyously exclaim to-day, "Surely goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life."

The day itself is occasion for thanksgiving. It is a blessed thing that our rulers recognize the claims of God upon us, even if this recognition is in any degree perfunctory. Back of their proclamations is a public sentiment and a national conviction worth more than all executive decrees. What are the carpings of all the skeptics in the face of a great people gathered about their millions of altars worshiping with grateful hearts the Giver of every good and perfect gift? If the philosophic agnostic declares his inability to find God, let him follow the steps of these millions of plain people, with their unperverted hearts, and he shall discover that the pillar of fire and of cloud still leads them, and about their altars he shall find Him shining forth who dwelt between the Cherubim. Let us be thankful to-day that our people are not of the nations which forget God.

## THE YEAR'S BLESSINGS.

While more prosperous years than 1895 have been granted to us, we have received blessings enough to justify the joy and gratitude of this day. Our agriculture has been blessed with good harvests, and in all our borders there is no gaunt want. Drought in the cotton belt and freezes in the orange groves have affected adversely sections of our country; but our land as a whole has prospered, and we have bread enough and to spare. Our ships have come from over the seas rich in the spoils of commerce, and the cunning hands of our manufactories have been well repaid for all their toil.

With all the nations of the civilized world we have felt the effects of a world-wide commercial depression; but from it our country has suffered less than any other land, and the South has suffered less than any other section of the Union. Not since the war between the States, if ever, have the Southern States been as full of the comforts of life. These good things have come to us, not through the wisdom of our statesmanship, which has been notoriously hesitant and incapable, but through the industry of the people and the goodness of God.

#### THE PERIOD OF DEPRESSION

Has not been an unmixed evil. It has taught our people lessons of frugality, industry and contentment, which are worth more than many plenteous harvests and prosperous periods. It has brought one pre-eminent blessing which has been overlooked. It has contributed to national unity by retarding immigration and giving the nation time to assimilate the foreign elements which have poured into our land in dangerous tidal waves during more prosperous times. While I have no sympathy for agitations like the "know-nothing craze" of the fifties, I cannot disguise, nor refuse to see the dangers which come to the Republic when foreigners come to our shores faster than we can Americanize them. With our wide territory and mixed population the danger of a divided people is ever present with the Republic. It is good, therefore, that we should have periods when the currents of immigration run slowly.

#### OTHER FORCES CONTRIBUTING TO NATIONAL UNITY

Have operated during the year which deserve mention to-day. There have been three notable occasions the influence of which extended throughout the Union, and promoted fraternal feeling between sections once estranged and hostile. I refer to the dedication on the last Memorial Day of the first Confederate monument in the North, the dedication in the early autumn of the Chickamauga National Park by the survivors of the armies engaged in the great battle there thirty years ago, and the meeting of the Grand Army of the Republic in Louisville, a Southern city, in the month of September.

In Oakwood cemetery at Chicago, there are buried 6,000 men who fought on the Confederate side in the Civil War. The United Confederate Veterans erected a monument there to the memory of their fallen comrades and it was dedicated on

Memorial Day with imposing ceremonies. Everything said and done on this occasion, when was dedicated in the State of Lincoln and Logan the first monument in the North to the memory of Confederate soldiers, contributed to the promotion of fraternal feeling between the sections. Northerners and Southerners took part in the ceremonies. Only one harsh voice broke the harmony which prevailed. A man named Boutelle, who some years ago broke into congress from the State of Maine, addressed a letter to the mayor of Chicago praying that he would exert his influence against "this occasion," "to prevent the desecration of the day solemnly devoted to the memories of the preservers of the Union." It is difficult generally for us to be thankful for such creatures as Boutelle, but in this instance the matter is easy. His dissonant sectionalism provoked an outburst of rebuke North and South which did good. The Chicago papers warmly approved the celebration, and even the *Inter-Ocean*, a paper which has often been very bitter against the South, said: "They were brave and true to the cause they had been persuaded was right, and why should not their children and the comrades who survive them erect a monument to them and scatter flowers on their lonely graves, so far from the homes they left when they responded to the bugle call to arms? Considered in that light, is there a man who wore the blue in the early sixties who would say them nay?" [We answer no, not one. It was Boutelle who objected.] The editor of the *Inter Ocean* continues:

"Besides, the war is over. It has been over nearly thirty years. There are no living 'Confederates.' North and South stand side by side as loyal in devotion to the stars and stripes, and alike believe in 'the indestructible Union.' It is all right about the camp-fires and in homes to tell the stories of the bravery of those who followed the flag to glory and the grave. All these things are good to stir the blood and inculcate in the youth the spirit of patriotism. But it is neither wise nor right to stir up the animosities and bitter feelings of thirty years ago. These have grown less and less with every year, and happily for the country will soon be entirely things of the past."

The *Indianapolis News*, printed at the home of General Harrison, said, in commenting on the occasion: "We have at last what Webster longed to see and died without seeing, liberty and union—an undivided union of indestructible states." The

*Dispatch*, of St. Paul, Minnesota, usually a pronounced sectional paper, said: "The blue and the gray have clasped hands by the graves of their dead comrades. Let all others accept this truce to the end of time." So mote it be.

The acts and utterances which marked the dedication of the Chickamauga Park and the national encampment of the Grand Army of the Republic in Louisville, were equally as significant as showing the almost total disappearance of sectional distrust and animosity. Well said *Harper's Weekly* ("a journal of civilization"): "Here history does not repeat itself, for history never had anything like this to record. While these celebrations are going on in this country, Germany also is celebrating certain great events in connection with her history which happened twenty-five years ago, but their old antagonists do not join with them in the celebration. It is only in this country the victors and the vanquished alike join in commemorating the events of a past civil war. He who fails to notice this strange, yet complete reconciliation of old enemies, fails to notice a significant event of his age and his country. He who fails to appreciate its meaning, fails in the appreciation of the higher qualities of his fellow countrymen. That war is so recent that many of those who are renewing its experiences are only middle-aged men. Yet from its memory every vestige of hostility or trace of rancor has disappeared, more completely than from century old struggles elsewhere. The strength of the nation at its best is put forth in these fast increasing reunions of the old enemies of the Civil War. They prove that the bonds which make us instinctively and spontaneously one are stronger than the influences which might urge us asunder."

May we not hope that the Exposition in Atlanta will offset some of the notoriously evil influences which are issuing from it, by intensifying these forces which make for national unity and sectional amity? Surely the mingling of the multitudes by mere attrition, if by no nobler process, will wear off some points of provincial misunderstanding and sectional asperity.

The increasing forces of intelligence will certainly contribute to national concord. More than one-fifth of our population is at school. The like of that was never seen in the history of the world. It means that within the next quarter of a century the people of the United States will be the most nearly universally educated people on the planet.

The "hard times" have not prevailed to reduce the appropriations to the common schools of any of the States, and the high schools, colleges and universities of the nation were never so rich and never so largely attended. Gifts to higher education continue almost in undiminished volume. During the year, President Seth Low, of Columbia College, has given to that institution a library building at a cost of \$1,000,000. That gift has no parallel in the history of colleges and college presidents. Mr. Rockefeller has also increased his gifts to the Chicago University.

At the outset of this century the beasts of the wilderness roamed along the lake-front of Chicago. At the close of the century, overlooking it, will stand one of the richest universities of the world. No statement could give a better index of American progress and prosperity.

While these rich gifts are being poured into the lap of Northern institutions, little is done South, but even with us there are tokens of a better day.

During the year past three bequests have come to our own Emory, and for the first time in its history it now owes no man anything. Surely we may thank God and take courage.

I cannot refrain from mentioning in this connection the disastrous fire by which the noble old University of Virginia suffered recently. If any event can open the springs of Southern liberality toward the work of higher education, this grievous affliction which has fallen upon that famous foundation will surely do it. Its alumni are numerous, wealthy and influential. Its traditions stretching back to Jefferson and the best days of the republic are inspiring. Will not all these things avail to restore its loss as far as money can, and make the glory of the second house to surpass that of the first?

While these and a multitude of other blessings have crowned the life of the nation at home, there is much for which to be thankful in

#### OUR FOREIGN RELATIONS.

We are, despite all contentions of diplomacy and conflict of interests, at peace. If we had had fifty years ago as many international controversies as we have had this year, the nation would most certainly at this time be in the midst of war. We have had issues with England over the Behring Sea matter, the case of Nicaragua and the Venezuelan affair. With Spain we have had a settlement of the "Mora Claim," the "Allianca

incident" and all the irritating difficulties which naturally arise from the Cuban war. With China we have had the case arising from the massacres in that unhappy land. We have borne and are bearing our part in dealing with the unsettled Armenian question. And yet so mightily have the forces which make for peace prevailed that we have not fired a hostile gun nor endured a national injury. He is a dull man indeed, who does not see that every year augments the pacific influences which more and more cement the brotherhood of nations. The vision of Tennyson in which the powers of war were seen to become so titanic as to force peace, is rapidly approaching fulfillment.

Far less prevision of the seer than when "Locksley Hall" was written is now required to discern the dawning of that divine era,

"When the war drum throbs no longer and the battle flags are furled  
In the parliament of man, the federation of the world.  
Where the common sense of most shall hold a fretful realm in awe,  
And the kindly earth shall slumber lapt in universal law."

The wars and rumors of wars which have shaken the Orient, and the uprising in Cuba, while attended by bloody and regrettable occurrences, are opening the way for the spread of that gospel to the propagation of which this great nation is sent. So that even in these things we may clearly see that our God maketh the wrath of man to praise him, and we may rejoice with thankful hearts that the advancing years enlarge our opportunities for work in the establishment of his kingdom in the earth.

The two most solid blocks of anti-Christianity in the world are the Chinese and Turkish empires. Providence is laying upon both of them the most active solvents. The former cannot, since the recent war, ever be the same again. The spell of the centuries is broken. The whole Ottoman Empire, by reason of the Armenian massacres and the pending action of the great powers, is convulsed and apparently on the brink of destruction.

For three thousand years Armenia has been trampled into dust by devastating armies and migrating hordes. It has been the prey of Nebuchadnezzar, Xerxes and Alexander. Romans, Parthians and Persians have afflicted this unhappy land. Ottoman, Russian and Kurd have laid violent hands upon it. But no hand was ever so hostile or so heavy as that of the unspeak-

able Turk. The land is inhabited by a simple, industrious and moral people, who have been adherents of Christianity since King Dertad was baptized in 276, A. D. Their roll of martyrs is long and honorable. It stretches across every one of fifteen centuries; for however the days of martyrdom may have passed from other lands, the Mohammedan oppressors of Armenia have not let the day pass there. Thousands have perished during the last twelve months. In one place, after the husbands and brothers had been slain, a proposition was made to several of the more attractive women to spare their lives if they would change their faith. "Why should we deny Christ?" they replied. Pointing to the mangled forms of their husbands and brothers, they said: "We are no more than they. Kill us too." And they were killed.

But the day of deliverance is at hand, and with it deliverance of thousands more besides the Armenians. The Turk must at least depart from Europe, and must sheathe his persecuting sword in Asia as well. Capable in government of nothing but cruelty and corruption, the sentence of heaven has been entered against him. While we sit secure here to-day, worshiping in peace, a scene is being enacted near Constantinople that hardly has a parallel in history. The six great powers of Europe are acting in concert, and there are assembled near the entrance of the Dardanelles some seventy-five steel battle ships and cruisers. Behind these vessels are military forces of the great nations to which they belong. The powers who are thus banded together have more soldiers under arms than there are able-bodied inhabitants in the Ottoman empire. The armies of Sennacherib or Alexander or Caesar would look small alongside the millions who march under the flags of the six powers that confront the Turk. No military combination ever before existed upon earth, the magnitude of which can be compared with that of these six Christian powers. The spectacle is unsurpassed in history. Turkey will be mended or ended.

With Turkey reformed and China opened, where is there left a considerable national barrier to the Christianity which this great nation of ours is set to propagate?

How we should praise God for his mighty acts and the doings of his glorious power.

Can we not, in contemplation of these great things, forget our personal griefs and disappointments, and rejoice to-day in

the God of our salvation? As we discern in our own time the outcropping of the purpose which runs through the ages, shall we querulously inquire,

“What is that to him who reaps not harvest of his youthful joys,  
Though the deep heart of existence beats forever like a boy's.”

Nay, nay, “the individual” is not “withered” by the finding that the “world is more and more.” Hereby the individual is strengthened and comforted.

Personal sorrows we have had. Our little village has been a valley of weeping for several years past. But high above all our private griefs and defeats are shining to-day glorious tokens of our Father's love.

And the whole firmament is ablaze with the radiant forces of his kingdom advancing everywhere.

Surely the Lord of Hosts is with us. The God of Jacob is our refuge.

