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Lathrop, Joseph, 1731-1820.

A Sermon, Preached in the First Parish in West-Springfield, December 14, MDCCLXXXVI.

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*Mr. Lathrop's Thanksgiving Sermon.*

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A  
S E R M O N,

PREACHED IN THE  
FIRST PARISH *in* WEST-SPRINGFIELD,

DECEMBER 14, MDCCLXXXVI,

Being the DAY appointed by AUTHORITY for a  
PUBLIC THANKSGIVING.

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BY JOSEPH LATHROP, A. M.

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*Published at the general desire of the hearers.*

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MDCCLXXXVII.



A

## THANKSGIVING SERMON.

ISAIAH I. 19, 20.

IF YE BE WILLING AND OBEDIENT, YE SHALL EAT THE GOOD OF THE LAND : BUT IF YE REFUSE AND REBEL, YE SHALL BE DEVoured WITH THE SWORD ; FOR THE MOUTH OF THE LORD HATH SPOKEN IT.

**W**HAT was spoken by the prophets to the ancient people of God, is written for our use, that we, through the warnings of scripture, might be moved with fear ; and, through the comforts of scripture, might have hope.

OUR relation to God, as a people redeemed by his hand and preserved by his care, as a people enjoying his oracles and professing obedience to his laws, is so similar to *theirs*, that we may justly apply to ourselves what was here spoken to them. I shall therefore consider my text in accommodation to our own case : and shall observe,

I. That the land, in which we are placed, is a *good* land : and,

II. That our *enjoyment* of the good of the land depends on our *obedience* to God.

I. It may as truly be said of *us*, as of ancient *Israel*, that God has given us a *good land*.

WE lately thought it worth defending by our *arms* : it is still worth securing by our *virtue*.

IT is an *extensive* land. Few empires on the globe are so large, as the territory claimed by these states. It will admit a vast increase of numbers ; and probably distant generations will not find themselves straitened for room.

IT is a *pleasant* and *fruitful* land. As it lies in the midst of the temperate regions, no part of it is afflicted with intolerable heat, or rendered uninhabitable by eternal frosts and snows. With proper culture it yields us, not only the necessaries, but the delicacies of life, in such plenty and variety, that we need to be but little indebted to foreign trade.

GREATER *industry* may be necessary here, than in some other climes : but this is no unfavourable circumstance ; for industry contributes to health, virtue, freedom and security.

WITH regard to *commerce*, nature has given us every advantage that can be wished. We have an extensive coast, convenient harbours, navigable bays and rivers, materials of all kinds for shipping, a rich and inexhaustible fishery, and a variety of exportable produce, which may be exchanged for the riches of other climes. Late experience shews, that we are in greater danger from the *excess*, than from the *want* of commerce. Moderate trade contributes to polish and enrich a people ; but when it is carried beyond its proper limits, it produces contrary effects, dissipation, poverty and vice.

THIS is a *healthful* land. Those direful pestilences, which have ravaged other countries, are unknown here. A considerable proportion of the people live to old age; fewer die in infancy than in most European nations: Our natural increase is supposed to double our numbers as often as once in twenty five years.

IT is a land of *liberty*, and has been so, with little interruption, from the days of our fathers.

THE royal charters first granted to the American colonies, particularly to those of New-England, were of the most liberal kind, and fully agreeable to their views and wishes. No attempts hitherto made, to subvert our liberties, has been successful. They will probably be preserved, until the people themselves, sunk in vice and corruption, destroy them with their own hands. How near we are to this fatal period, Heaven knows!

THE freedom of these colonies was first invaded by James II, who, with a design to establish an absolute monarchy, seized their charters, together with those of the corporations in England. But by the revolution which took place on the accession of the prince of *Orange* to the throne, the freedom both of Britain and America was restored and established.

THE late encroachments of the British court on our charter-rights awakened a just and general concern. Though we were but an infant people, and our enemies were an ancient, rich and powerful nation, we ventured to resist their claims; and, by a series of wonderful interpositions, our resistance defeated their designs, and terminated in the establishment of our independence.

WE are now under a government of *our own fram-*

ing and chusing. There is perhaps scarcely another instance of the kind on earth. It is a privilege, which few nations ever enjoy, and which the same nation probably can never enjoy more than *once*.

MANY of the governments, now subsisting in the world, were established by the conquering arms of a powerful invader ; some were introduced by the usurpation of princes ; others have been fixed in consequence of a civil war, in which one party prevailing has by arms given law to the rest. Governments, which owe their existence to such a birth, must, you know, in their very nature, be *tyrannies*. The *British* constitution was settled in a more liberal manner, by an explicit compact between the king, the hereditary nobles and the representatives of the people ; and it is undoubtedly more favourable to liberty, than most other forms of government in Europe. But the constitution of these states, and particularly of *this*, was framed and ratified in a manner still more liberal. It is not, in any sense whatever, a compact between the rulers and the people ; but it is a solemn, explicit agreement of the people among themselves. It was constructed by a convention of wise men, whom the people deputed solely for that purpose, and who, at that time, could have no share, and no appearance of a future share in the government they were framing. It was then remitted to the people at large, and competent time allowed for their deliberate examination and discussion ; and it was finally adopted and confirmed in consequence of their *general* approbation. So happily was it adjusted to the views of the people, at a time when the spirit of liberty was at the height, that not a *single* article was found in the *whole*, but

