

**THE RAILROAD JUBILEE: TWO
DISCOURSES DELIVERED IN
HOLLIS-STREET MEETING-HOUSE,
SUNDAY, SEPT. 21, 1851 PP. 3-53**

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THOMAS STARR KING

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The Railroad Jubilee :

TWO

DISCOURSES

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SUNDAY, SEPT. 21, 1851.

BY THOMAS STARR KING,

PASTOR OF THE CHURCH.

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DISCOURSE I.

PROV. xvi. 9: — "A MAN'S HEART DEVISETH HIS WAY; BUT THE LORD DIRECTETH HIS STEPS."

It is true, not only that God sometimes overrules the evil which men create to some good result, but also that he always bends the good they achieve to some better offices than the agent could have conceived. Men are ever "working together with God." Our action becomes implements for his providence; and, although we are free, so that every heart deviseth its own way, we often see clearly how our toil, instead of ending with the result before our own desire, plays, like the mechanic's cog-wheel, into a vaster wheel, whose roll carries a great and beneficent design of Heaven. Here, indeed, is a prominent element

in the glory of goodness, that we do not know, and cannot prophesy, where its blessed sequences will end. We fling out the tokens of our fidelity to become instruments of God, and he alone knows what purposes in his rule they are competent to serve; he alone can foresee what a family of benefits will be their lineage. And, ah! is it not one of the most eloquent warnings against unfaithfulness to right, that the consequences are not limited to ourselves, but that such agency undulates, we cannot know how far, and spreads the power of the prince of darkness in society, instead of starting, as it might, if obedient to the higher voice, a train of blessings, which God had laid near our will?

The old prophets, for instance, were not far-sighted enough to see the effect of their words upon the intellect and heart of after-times. They supposed that the greatness and limit of their office were reached in announcing the approach of some judgment or mercy upon their Hebrew race. But it turns out, that their fidelity to a perilous summons, and the

sublime and tender language in which they clothed their messages of doom or love, remain long after the events they promised are forgotten, and kindle the religious sensibilities of generations whose advent was concealed from their eye. How could David imagine that the prayers for aid to which the forest-leaves of Hareth stirred, and the trustful hymns which filled the dim caves of Adullam, and the rapturous odes which he sent from his palace to be chanted in the tabernacle on Mount Zion, and the penitential breathings that brought back the divine presence to his breast, should be used as part of Christian worship in the cities of an unknown hemisphere, and furnish the souls of millions, of all latitudes and times and tongues, with a liturgy of devotion, gratitude, remorse, and hope? Had David been an irreligious man, had he never prayed, and sung, and wept for sin, what a sad blank would be left in the forces of civilization! how many thousands less would have known the peace of communion with God! how different might be your condition and mine! His heart

devised the utterance of aspiration and endeavor as a private necessity, and God directed their agency to the help of countless needy souls.

In secular affairs, also, it is so. Little did the men who went up to die at Thermopylæ conceive for what they were to die. It was not merely to prevent the Persian yoke from weighing upon their brethren: their swords were to open a path for the advent of the tragedies of Sophocles, the studio of Phidias, the Parthenon and Plato, from the ideal realm of possibilities into the domain of history: they went up to die for the classic culture of the world. Little did Columbus know of the importance of the hour when the western land broke the dim horizon through the morning twilight of October. The pilot of the "Mayflower" could not estimate the freight she bore. Feebly did Luther fancy the consequences of his defiance of the papal edict, and his tearing off the monkish cowl. And what a slight and incompetent idea did the wisest of our fathers entertain of the meaning and

promise of their heroism, when, less than a century ago, they kindled with their eloquence the flame of revolution upon this continent, and deliberately cut the last bond that knit them to a throne beyond the sea! Something very suggestive was there in the appearance of those two veterans of the Revolution in the pageant which, two days ago, moved through our streets; something to touch the secret springs of our wonder and gratitude. Their tremulous frames were the visible link of all the pomp of that spectacle to the most critical season of our history. I know not on what fields they fought, or what exploits in their country's service they can relate; but their presence was a thrilling admonition to fidelity to duty. Must it not have seemed strange to them, strange as the legends of enchantment, that they should live to see such fruitage from their labor! Is it improbable that they thought, as they might well have thought, while their carriage was threading our avenues, "This, then, is the echo of our valor; this, the offspring of the blood with which our