A Short Address, Delivered before the Sufferers by the Late Fire in Wiscasset and Alna, at their meeting January 18, 1824, to Express their Gratitude for Donations made for their relief, to which are Added Several Exhortations, and the Lord's Prayer, Paraphrased

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A SHORT ADDRESS,
DELIVERED BEFORE THE SUFFERERS BY THE LATE
FIRE IN WISCASSET AND ALNA,
AT THEIR MEETING JANUARY 18, 1824, TO EXPRESS
THEIR GRATITUDE FOR DONATIONS MADE
FOR THEIR RELIEF,
TO WHICH ARE ADDED
SEVERAL EXHORTATIONS,
AND
THE LORD'S PRAYER, PARAPHRASED.

BY HEZEKIAH PACKARD,
MINISTER OF WISCASSET.

Published by the desire of the Joint Committee.
A SHORT ADDRESS.

MY FRIENDS,

THE occasion of this meeting reminds us all of the awful and tremendous scenes of the 4th of September last, when you all were filled with apprehension and terror, and when you and your families were in jeopardy and distress. On that memorable day you saw with trembling solici­tude immense clouds of smoke and portentous volumes of fire, rising in different directions and threatening speedy and undistinguishing ruin. You were struck with horror and consternation at the crackling sound, the direful ravages and rapid progress of the devouring element. You beheld vast sheets of flame at one moment shooting forward with wild impetuosity, then ascending in awful majesty toward heaven, and now bending their more destructive course in a horizontal direction, reducing to ashes your dwellings and your gathered harvests, your fences and your forests, together with every substance of a combustible nature upon which they deigned to breathe.

Notwithstanding the promptitude and eagerness with which your fellow citizens endeavored to check the desolating marches of the unprovoked enemy, all efforts were in vain, and you became anxious for your wives, your husbands and your children; and while you were astonished at the sight of your buildings enveloped in flames, you saw fragments of boards and shingles on fire, upborne upon the wings of the wind, carrying far distant the tidings of your distress. Let me remind you, my friends, that it is matter of grateful acknowledgement, that when the furious and sweeping conflagration was so terrific in its appearance and
so rapid in its movements, marking its course with ruin and desolation, the awful calamity was not more extensive and disastrous, and that your lives and the lives of your children were preserved, so that one person only fell a victim to its relentless fury. In the solemn scenes and wasting calamities of that eventful day, have you not, my friends, traced the footsteps of a frowning providence, and humbled yourselves under the mighty hand of God? Have you not seriously reflected on your past lives, and called your sins to remembrance? Have you had no self-reproaches in consequence of neglecting God’s word, profaning the Sabbath, abusing your privileges and blessings, and perverting, at least in some measure, the means of grace and the designs of life? Have you not reflected, with much regret, that you did not erect domestic altars to the God of our fathers, and offer thereon your morning and evening sacrifices, and that you did not in this way commit yourselves, your families and your substance to his holy keeping and protection? that your closets never witnessed your more private devotions? that your children were not more faithfully taught to remember their Creator, and to unite with you in prayer and praise? that you made no better improvement of the good things, which once made up your favored lot? If such reflections and regrets have never employed your thoughts and rested upon your minds, and touched you to the quick, we now exhort you to enter upon the business of serious reflection, and upon the work of sincere repentance. Prepare, O my friends; prepare to meet that God, who has visited you in an awful manner. Be persuaded to flee the wrath to come. Secure the proffered refuge from the consequences of sin by repentance and reformation, and walk in newness of life. Your own experience has forcibly taught you, my friends, the uncertainty of earthly possessions, and you have marked with lamentation the unhappy and distracting influence, which the common and awful calamity produced upon the minds of some of your fellow-sufferers. We here pause, that you may indulge your sorrows and drop a sympathetic tear at the recollection of one, whose mind was wrecked at the direful scenes which you witnessed; and who thought the pressure of calamity too great to be encountered, and the burden of life too heavy to be borne.* Consider and acknowledge,

*Mrs. Maria Decker, aged 56, to whom this remark refers,
my friends, that protecting hand, which sustained you, and devote yourselves to him, who holdeth your souls in life.—You will bear in remembrance and mention to your children the active sympathy and kindness of this and neighboring towns, and you will keep in grateful recollection and often name to your households the noble generosity of individuals and associations, of towns and cities through the country. Donations exceeding our expectations, have been made to relieve your necessities, and to render your condition comfortable. We hope and trust that the charities bestowed will be applied to useful purposes, and produce good moral effects upon your minds. While, in years to come, you recount to your children and neighbours the story of your recent calamities, and call their attention to the afflictive hand of a righteous and holy providence, you will not forget to notice the full hand of charity promptly extended for your relief and comfort, and thus allow them to swell the tide of grateful emotions. That you may wisely apply what has been kindly bestowed and make all needful improvements upon your schemes of life, we recommend to your constant and reverential regard the sacred volume, which is full of grace and truth, and is able to make you wise to salvation through faith in the great Redeemer. As it is the word of God and contains the charter of our privileges and hopes; as it teaches whence our blessings flow, provides means of rescue from the consequences of sin, and opens a way of salvation; as it manifests the wisdom and grace of God, the love and sacrifice of Christ, and brings life and immortality to light, we exhort and beseech you to consult it as the man of your counsel and the guide of your faith and practice. Make the Bible your family Book.

was for some years subject, at times, to great depression of spirits, so that her life appeared unimportant to herself, to her family and to the world, but she was an industrious, affectionate and anxious wife and mother. At the time of the destructive fire, she exerted herself to the utmost to save the house and furniture from devouring flames. Her agitation, terror and efforts amid the awful scenes spread before her, gave such a shock to her intellect, that she became more deranged than before, so that, notwithstanding the vigilance and solicitude of her husband and the family, she was awfully left on the night of the 15th of Nov. 1825, to put an end to her earthly existence.

A 2
In the divine presence and with sincere desires to promote your present peace and eternal welfare, we entreat you to live in the fear of God, and to manifest a sacred regard to his worship and ordinances. Reverence the sanctuary, and neglect not the assembling of yourselves together for public and social worship. In every dwelling let there be an altar with this inscription "Holiness to the Lord," and upon this altar offer your morning and evening sacrifice. Acknowledge God in all your ways, and he will enlighten and direct your path of duty. And may he, who bestows all we enjoy, and is the rightful Disposer of all events, preserve you from future calamities, prosper you on your earthly pilgrimage, and make you and your families the charge of his protecting providence, and the subjects of his saving grace, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

AMEN.

In addition to the foregoing Address, it may be useful to subjoin some short exhortations adapted to the capacities of all, and designed for the benefit of families.

1. EXHORTATION

On the Sabbath and Public Worship.

Remember the Sabbath and keep it holy, and forsake not the assembling of yourselves together with God's people.—While on his holy day you contemplate with growing admiration the vast and stupendous works of creation, and the deliverances wrought out by his hand in favour of his chosen people, let your thoughts dwell much on the resurrection of our divine Lord and Master, who on the first day of the week, according to his own prediction, arose triumphantly from the dead. May you be in the spirit on the Lord's day and worship him in spirit and in truth. May the day be the Sabbath of the Lord in your dwellings and in your hearts, a Sabbath of rest from sin and of rest in God. By resting from your worldly employments, may your hearts be suitably detached from things of time and sense, and by employ-
ing consecrated hours in the worship and service of God, may you be led into a more experimental acquaintance with the proper work of heavenly minds, and be made more meet for the entertainments and joys of that blessed world. And let me remind you, my friends, that the temple of God is the place where he records his name and meets his people. It is the consecrated place where the divine honor is said to dwell; where many circumstances conspire to fix attention, to excite and cherish devout meditations, to open and enlarge the understanding, and to acquire divine instruction. In former ages of the Christian Church the sanctuary was deemed the birth-place of souls, and you are taught that God is the same yesterday, to day and forever. The blessed Saviour is as able and ready to speak pardon, peace and comfort to those who engage in the duties of public and social worship, and in the celebration of Christian ordinances, as he was to impart his smiles and blessing to his first disciples. The spirit of truth and grace has the same doctrines to seal, the same truths to apply, the same comforts to impart, and the same consolations and hopes to inspire, as when multitudes were touched and cured of their spiritual maladies by its sanctifying and saving influence. All, therefore, are encouraged and required, when circumstances permit to meet, inquire and worship in God's holy temple with desires of religious improvement and edification. And those, who thus appear before God in his house, may indulge the pleasing hope, that what they hear and feel and apply will be blessed to their spiritual good, and may lead them effectually to aspire after the knowledge and love and obedience of the truth. These exercises, undertaken and performed in the fear of God, and with sincere desires of divine teachings, and of edification in faith and holiness, will render the sanctuary, the house of God and the gate of heaven. Desires, supplications and praises will acceptably ascend to him, with whom is the residue of the spirit, and rich blessings in Christ Jesus our Lord will be shed upon the whole assembly thus employed. Humble and devout worshippers in temples made with hands, become qualified and prepared to be fellow worshippers with saints and angels in that temple not made with hands eternal and on high. Let those then, who fear the Lord speak often one to another concerning his word and worship, and let them be wakeful, active and strenuous in promoting the order and stated services of his house. Let all join with
them that keep holy day and appear before God, where they may see his goings and taste his love; where he is wont to impart his peculiar influence and blessing; where instructions are afforded to the ignorant, warnings given to the heedless and impenitent, encouragements and consolations imparted to the faithful and pious; where understanding putteth forth her voice, and where wisdom crieth aloud, saying, Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, and waiteth at the posts of my doors. Unto you, O men, I call, and my voice is unto the sons of men.

Let all then regard the Sabbath with sacred veneration, and reverence the sanctuary. Let the devotion of the closet and the morning and evening sacrifices offered upon the family altar prepare the mind and heart for the more public services of God's holy temple. And may He, whose favour is life and whose loving kindness is better than life, impart his gracious influence to enlighten every dark mind, and to soften and melt every hard and stubborn heart.—Through sanctification of the spirit and belief of the truth may multitudes take refuge from sin in repentance and reformation, be brought to see and admire the beauties of holiness, and to rest upon the promises and lean upon the bosom of the blessed Saviour.

2. EXHORTATION

On the importance of Peace and Union.

See that ye fall not out by the way.—Gen. 45, 24.

THIS is the language of an eminently wise and pious man in addressing persons for whom he had a tender concern and affection. It is the affectionate exhortation and charge, which Joseph gave his brethren when they left him in Egypt to return to their common father in Canaan. His pious soul was anxious for their welfare, and with the concern and sympathies of a brother, he cautioned and warned them not to fall out by the way. He was desirous that they should indulge in no jarring discord, but pursue the things that make for peace. He reminded them, that they were
brethren, and had a common journey to perform, and a common interest to promote; and that they had every inducement to preserve peace and harmony among themselves, and to aid each other's progress. How exactly this language is adapted to a neighborhood, whose situation and circumstances make them fellow-travellers on the journey of life! How justly human life is compared to a journey, in performing which there is constant occasion for mutual counsel and aid, for mutual forbearance and kindness!—Not to fall out by the way; not to be partial and censorious in our intercourse with each other; not to encroach upon the rights, nor disturb the enjoyments of fellow-travellers, we must be pacific and conciliatory, just and kind, benevolent and charitable. According to the spirit and import of Joseph's exhortation to his brethren, we should lay aside all variance and wrath, all bitterness and evil speaking, and cherish growing desires to bring forth and diffuse the fruits of holiness, which are peace and love and gentleness and temperance and meekness. It is owing to the want of these virtues and to our neglect of divine things, that we are so much attached to the world and its vanities. It is because we are not careful to keep our hearts with diligence, that we have no better control of our passions, and are not more systematic and useful in our social intercourse.—Were our thoughts and desires more fixed upon the objects of faith and duty, the world and its blandishments would be less delusive and infatuating. Were our good resolutions and our purposes of obedience stronger, the temptations of the world would of course be weaker. Were we more active in the service of God and religion, we should be less liable to mistake our direction and fall out by the way. Permit me then, my friends, to exhort and beseech you to be more thoughtful, provident and religious. Keep yourselves in the fear of God and act as in his presence. Daily look to him for his enlightening influence and renewing grace. Give diligence in working out your salvation according to his faithful word. Instead of following the suggestions and adopting the maxims of this vain world, seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. Instead of sowing to the flesh, sow to the spirit, that of the spirit you may reap life everlasting. And instead of yielding to unruly passions and falling out by the way, strive to live peaceably with all, and to enter into the straight gate, which leadeth unto life.
After the Address, inserted in the first pages of this sheet, was delivered, the following votes were passed by the meeting, unanimously, viz:

1. That whereas by the hand of a righteous providence we have been suddenly and awfully deprived of our dwellings and comforts in whole or in part, we have had great occasion to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God.

2. That we retain a grateful sense of the sympathy and kindness of those, who have remembered us in our low and destitute state, and contributed to our relief.

3. That we acknowledge it our duty and for our interest to use in our families the holy Bible, which has been kindly bestowed for that purpose, and that we are under fresh obligation to pursue a course of industry and virtue, and to contribute to the peace and welfare of the community, whose liberality has placed the comforts of life and the word of salvation within our reach.

4. That the doings of this meeting be transmitted to the general Committee of Wiscasset and Alna to be by them communicated to the public in the manner they may think proper.

Wiscasset, January 18, 1824.

P. S. The whole amount of donations for the relief of sufferers in Wiscasset and Alna was about $30,000, including money and specific articles.

THE LORD'S PRAYER,....Paraphrased.

AS a legacy of regard and affection to a sinful world, our blessed Saviour left a summary of his religion to guide our faith and to influence our practice. That form of devotion, which he prescribed to us, and which is called The Lord's Prayer, teaches us to cultivate the dispositions of reverence and submission, mutual forgiveness, extensive benevolence and unfeigned piety. It clearly denotes the importance of sincerity and devotion in our religious addresses, and the necessity of conforming in heart and life
to this excellent form of supplication. It is plain and rational, concise and devout. Had the name of the real author been concealed from the world, every observing and good man would be likely to discern and admire the full vein of piety, which runs through the whole of it. This may more fully appear, if we now consider and explain the several passages and petitions, which it contains. And it becomes us all to come before the Lord with a filial temper and say in the words of our Saviour,

"Our Father, who art in Heaven."

By this mode of expression, we acknowledge God to be the author of our lives, our hopes and our happiness. We consider ourselves as the creatures of his power, the pensioners of his bounty, and the subjects of his government.

And when we cherish these pious sentiments and pay homage to our Father in Heaven, with proper temper and disposition, it is our heart's desire and our earnest prayer, that His great name may be revered and magnified by all intelligent creatures, and that all may join us in offering incense to God, holy and acceptable. Our minds dwell on the next expression of reverence and adoration,

"Hallowed be thy Name."

And that all may unite in the sincere and devout worship of God, whose name is sanctified by them who come nigh Him, we are desirous to see God's moral kingdom erected upon the ruins of satan's empire, and to have all become the willing and obedient subjects of the Prince of peace. We devoutly wish, that all hearts may yield to the power and energies of divine truth. And in this language of piety, we pray to the Parent and Lord of all,

"Thy kingdom come."

And while we cultivate submission to God, and commit all we have and wish for to his care and keeping, it should be our earnest desire, that a spirit of religion may pervade all ranks of men and all nations of the earth, and that all mankind may become subject to the glorious empire of reason and religion. The language of our hearts should be,

"Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven."

May thy will be the law and thy good pleasure the delight of man. Those, who thus pour out their hearts before our Father in Heaven, reverence his great name, and cordially desire that his just dominion may be acknowledged in every land and by every tongue, do not indulge any anxious solicitude about the things of this life; but, in the diligent use of appointed means of support and comfort, they commit all to Him, whose eye surveys, and whose goodness
feeds his creatures; and they are ready to join in the next petition, "Give us this day our daily bread."

Grant us the fruits of honest industry, and give us as many of the good things of life as are best for us; especially, afford us a supply of that bread, which came down from Heaven, and the guidance of that spirit, which comforts and animates.

Conscious of our unworthiness and sin, we ought to humble ourselves before God, and implore his pardoning mercy. And if we cultivate the feelings of penitence on account of our transgressions, and ask forgiveness, we are willing, on reasonable terms, to forgive those who offend us. We are ready to shew to others that mercy, which we ourselves pray for and really need. And, having on easy conditions buried our resentments, and cultivated a mild and forgiving temper, we may with confidence adopt the language, which our Saviour recommends,

"Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors."

As we forgive may we be forgiven. As we forgive those who wilfully injure us, when we discover in them marks of sorrow, so in the exercise of repentance may we experience Thy forgiving grace.

The trials, which we are called in Providence to suffer, we should endure with patience; but, when we consider the treachery of the human heart and the allurements of the world, we should dread and avoid the favorite abodes of temptation. We must be sensible of our exposedness to sin, and of the necessity of vigilance. All, who are conscious of their own weakness, and see the dangers which encompass human life, feel the propriety and force of our Saviour's words,

"Lead us not into temptation."

Lay nothing before us which will allure us into sin. Shew us no sinful indulgence. Be our present Helper in trouble. Let not the storms of affliction overcome us; but do Thou guard and protect us, and when evils oppress and calamities invade us, do thou assist and deliver us. Rescue us from evil, or support us under it.

Such aid and help the children of God often implore, while they patiently endure what he sees fit to appoint. It does not become us, to decline any dangers, or sufferings, designed for the trial of our faith, or the improvement of our virtue; but we should studiously avoid the haunts of sin, and carefully shun the paths of iniquity. And we should ask wisdom of God, who knows our weakness and sorrows, and can stretch forth his hand and support us. Unto Thee, O Lord, will we, therefore, direct our prayer and look up. Wilt thou grant us what is good, though we do not ask for it, and deny what would be injurious, though in ignorance we should pray for it. And we beseech Thee to teach us what is good, teach us Thyself, and may our desires and hearts aspire to Thee; for Thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever. Amen.