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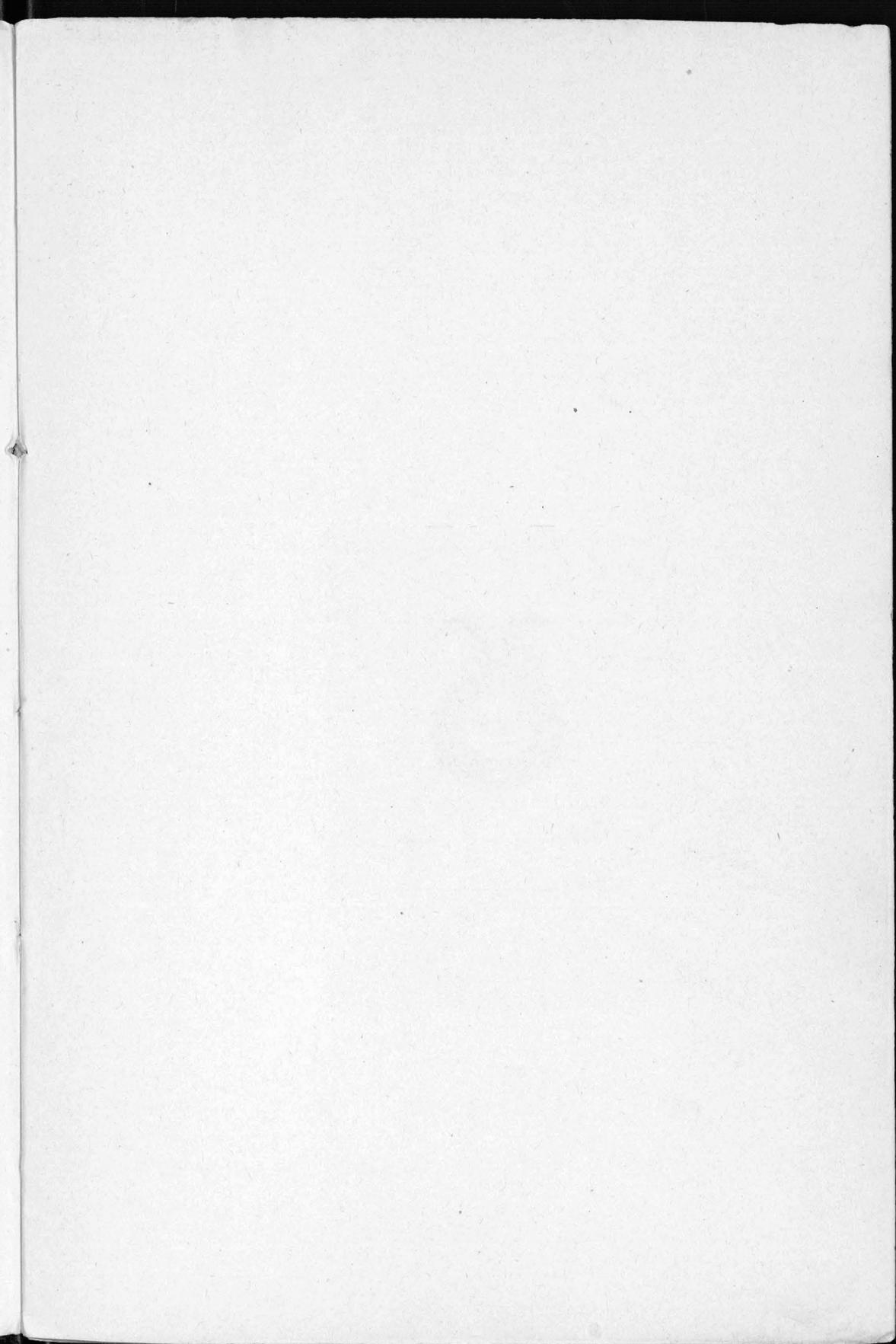


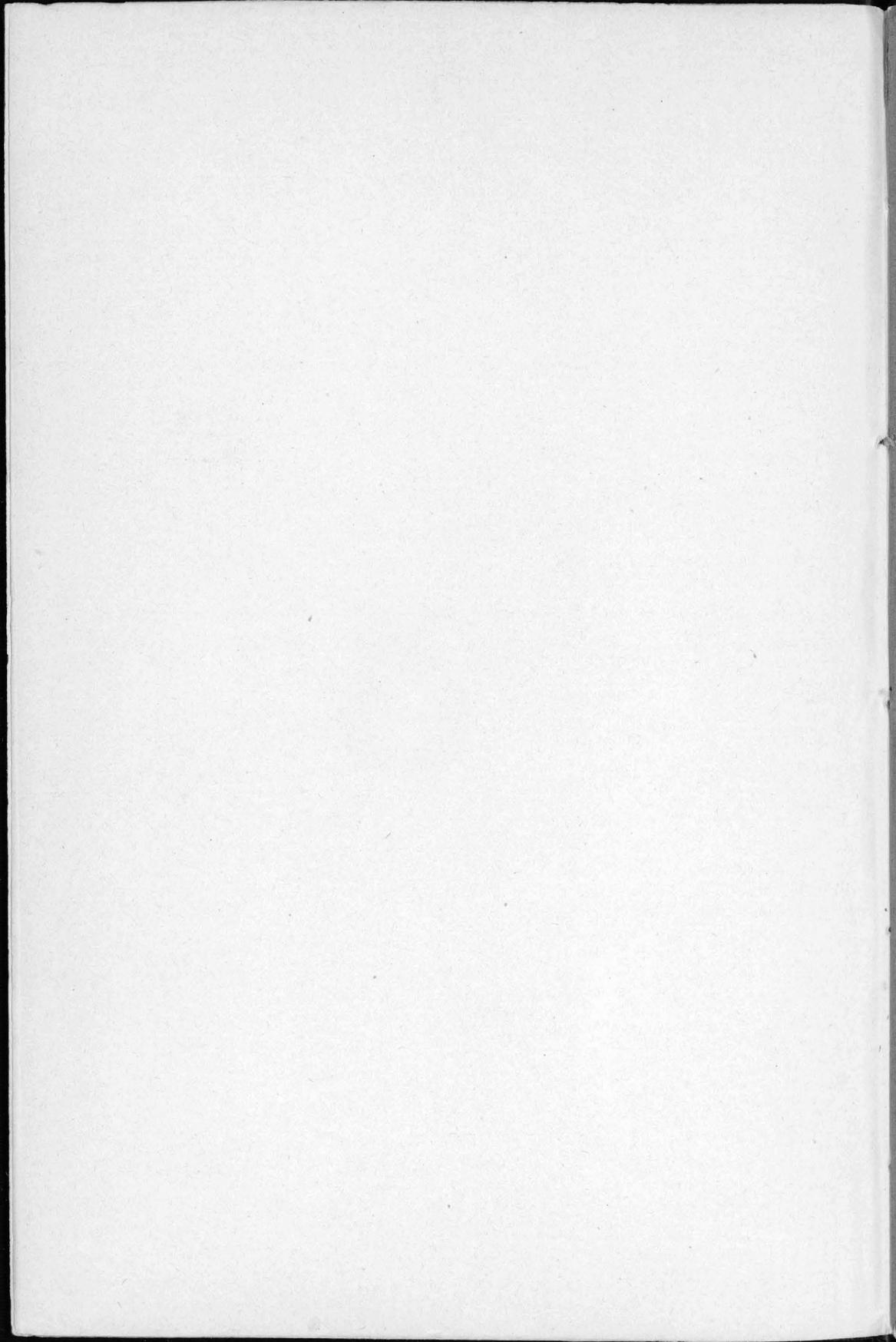


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S E R M O N

ON THE DEATH OF THE LATE

ABRAHAM LINCOLN,

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.

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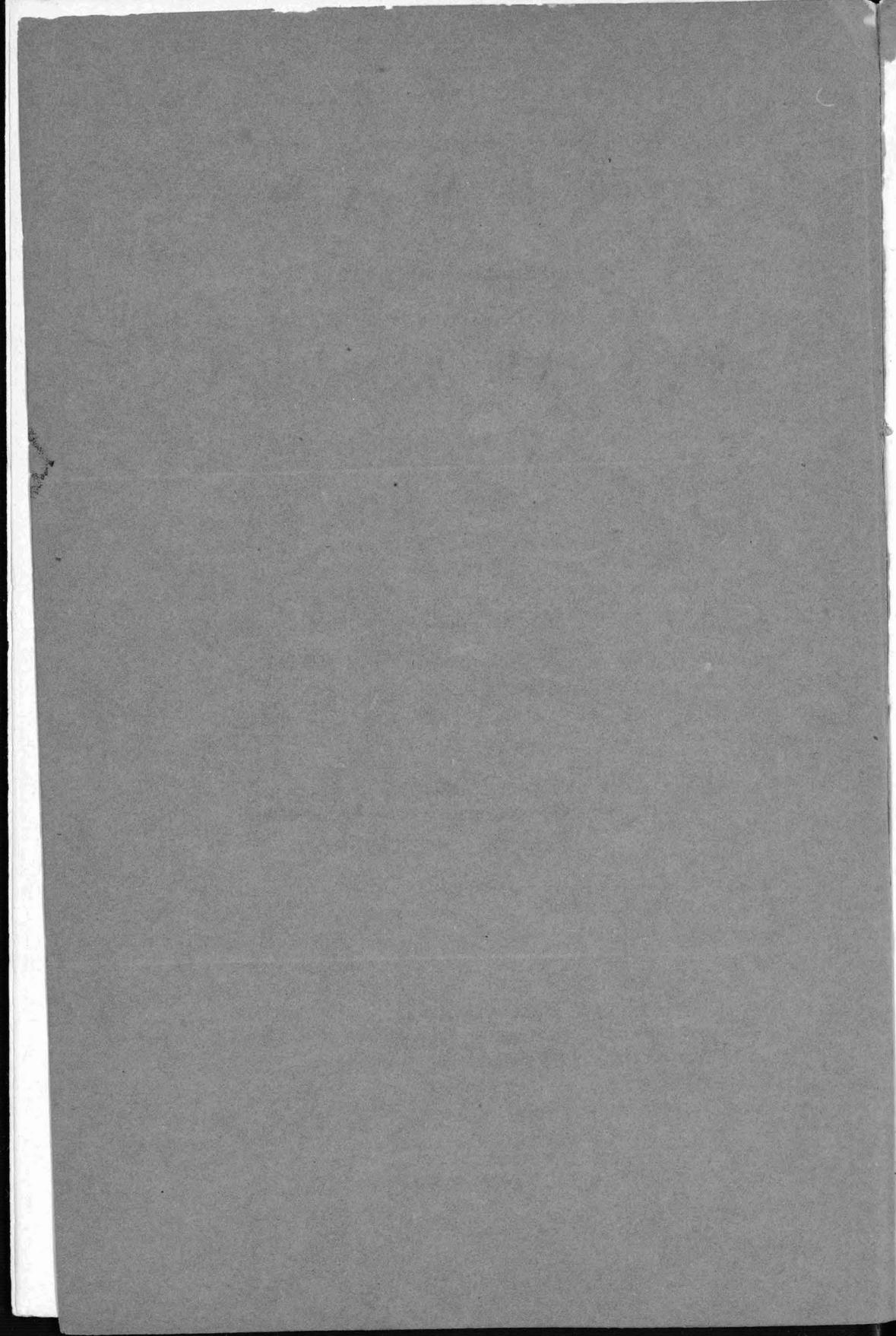
Delivered Sunday, April 23, 1865,

IN THE POST CHAPEL, CITADEL SQUARE, CHARLESTON, S. C., REPEATED,
BY REQUEST OF OFFICERS AND FRIENDS, ON THE DAY OF
HUMILIATION AND PRAYER, MAY 2D,

By Rev. SAMUEL B. WILLIS, Post Chaplain,
127th N. Y. Vol.

NEW YORK:
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GOD'S THRONE IN DARKNESS.

"Darkness and clouds are round about him: righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne."—Psalms xviii: 2.

The government of God should be a cause of joy, and source of gratitude to all people. It is so to all his friends. Even when his ways are involved in the most profound mystery:—"when darkness and clouds are round about him," it is our privilege to confide, and rejoice in his supremacy; knowing that "righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne." It requires a strong and steadfast faith, thus to view Jehovah aright, under all the dispensations of his providence.

What vast and sudden changes have transpired in our National history, and experience, in a few brief hours! Tidings of great national joy, were being proclaimed among us, and almost every city, every camp, and every post were resounding with peals of victory; and at the same time we had raised our triumphal arches, as our dear old flag, once dishonored, was now restored to its own high and original position, as our own cherished and preserved ensign of unity, victory, and glory.

With tears of gratitude to the God of our army, our navy, and our country, for past success;—with full hearts beating high with national love beneath that glorious old banner, again unfurled on Sumpter, we responded to that sentiment in the address of our speaker, offering "to the President of these United States our solemn congratulations, that God had sustained his life and health, under the unparalleled burdens and sufferings of four bloody years, and permitted him to behold this auspicious consummation of that national unity, for which he has waited

with so much patience and fortitude, and for which he has labored with such disinterested wisdom."

Relying, under God, upon the wisdom, prudence, and firmness of such a leader, we seemed to see our country's future glowing with victory, peace, unity, and glory.

But the sublime scenes, the lofty triumphs, and the joys of that day, were too high; too peaceful; too grand, to be endured by the enemies of our peace, our country, and our God. How true it is of such men, that "destruction and misery are in their ways, and the way of peace have they not known." *Men*, did I say? Could the actor in that horrible tragedy be human? Could that assassin of Abraham Lincoln, our beloved President of these United States, be a being of any better grade than that of a devil incarnate?

But while we shudder at this terrible exhibition of guilty depravity; as we constitute a fraction of our stricken, weeping, bleeding country, it becomes us to realize still, that our God, as a sovereign, fills the throne. While gloomy clouds are his surroundings, that throne is based upon principles immutably just and righteous. True, his ways are, to us, inscrutable:—they are indeed "past finding out;"—but they are above our ways, high as the heavens are above the earth. Although he seems to dash our hopes; thwart our plans; and disappoint our fond expectations;—all this is no evidence that he is unmindful of us; or that he will not go before us and give us, ere long, the crowning victory, and the lasting peace. He did not abandon the children of Israel when Moses, their leader, went up into Mount Nebo and died; but he still led them on by the guidance of Joshua to the land of Promise. The experience of his wonderful manifestations of delivering power in the darkest periods, has led his people to say, "Verily, thou art a God that hidest thyself: O God of Israel, the Saviour."

It was a dark dispensation, and a black deed of Joseph's brethren, when they conspired against him, cast him into a pit, and then sold him to be carried down into Egypt. They meant it for evil; and they were, as they afterward, by the power of conscience, were forced to confess, "verily guilty concerning their brother." But, God meant it for good. His deeply laid

plan comprehended their future welfare and his own glory. From his throne, enveloped in clouds and darkness, he was watching over the interests and welfare of his own chosen nation.

How fully we see this illustrated in the manifestations of his grace to our lost world, in the person of his beloved Son. The ages immediately preceding his advent, constituted a very gloomy period in the world's history. For about four hundred years, no prophetic voice had been heard: every oracle was silent! "Darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people." It appeared as if the last hope of Israel had been well nigh forever extinguished. But God had not forsaken his throne. He still held out the sceptre in the hand of his Son, who at the time appointed, came for a "Light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of his people Israel."

"The race that long in darkness pined
Have seen a glorious light;
The people dwell in day, who dwelt
In death's surrounding night."

To the eye of mere sense, and human reason, the darkest day the world, or Zion, ever saw, was that of the crucifixion of the world's Redeemer. He had come, as "The Desire of all nations," to set up, and establish a glorious and everlasting empire in the regenerated hearts of the children of men. The nature and principles of that kingdom were not fully understood during the time of his abode on earth. The people had expected their deliverer to appear in regal splendor, and public triumph: He appeared with no pretensions, no worldly pomp, no costly array; but, "a man of sorrows!" They expected a mighty deliverance from the power of the Roman army. He was "delivered up," to them for a mock trial, condemnation, and death! Even his own professed friends, in that hour of darkness, "all forsook him and fled!" And there, alone, the suffering Saviour trod the wine-press, enduring all the scorn and hate of his malignant foes. Alone, he laid prostrate in Gethsemane; and amid his dying pains on Calvary he cries, "My God my God; Why hast thou forsaken me!" Dark, indeed, was that day!

"He dies. The heavens in mourning stood!" The solid granite burst in sunder! The sleeping dead rested not in their graves. The whole earth quaked in dread amazement. Oh, did it not then seem as if the throne of the Eternal was forever concealed from human view, and sinful man, left to wander into the blackness of darkness forever?

But soon a heavenly radiance appears. From the midst of that thick darkness; from the deep, gloomy scenes of Calvary, the glorious light of Redemption breaks forth upon a world of tears and death. It was from that cross, that the full glories of the Messiah were to be revealed; and the immortal blessings of his salvation flow forth, for the ruined race of man. Yes, hearers,

"We'll sing our Saviour's wondrous death;
He conquered, when he fell!"

Then he entered in person, the domains of death, from whence he rose in Almighty Majesty, and ascended on high, leading captivity captive. And now, our glorious Conqueror "is marching on" in the omnipotence of his truth, and the all-subduing energies of his love; extending far and wide, the light and order which ever attend his growing conquests.

We read that in the early stage of Christianity, the persecution that arose against the advocates of a pure gospel, was bitter and violent. Stephen, "full of faith and power" did great wonders, and wrought many miracles. His strong opposers were not able to resist the wisdom and spirit by which he spake: and this ability of wisdom, and pureness of spirit, only enraged them so much the more. He made a grand vindication of the ways of God to man, in history, in providence, and in grace. The reward which men accorded to him for his wisdom and virtue was—they stoned him to death. He died, a martyr for his principles, and his honest decision of purpose, in illustrating those principles, before his nation. Momentarily, the disciples were "scattered." The very existence of the church seemed severely threatened by the powers of darkness. But what was the result? Despondency? Failure? No—precisely the reverse. "They that were scattered abroad, went everywhere, preaching the word!" Samaria heard it: "and there was great joy in that

city." The Ethiopian Treasurer heard it; and rejoicing, bore the tidings far away into the land of Paganism; and so the gospel advanced, until "the uttermost parts of the earth," heard its sound, beheld its light, and owned its saving power.

To-day, United America weeps! suddenly, dreadfully, in a moment; our beloved country is in tears! Our flag is in mourning! O, America: "Land of the Pilgrims' pride;" must the beauty of Israel be slain by the murderous hand of treason, upon thy high places? Added to all that noble blood which had already crimsoned all our Southern soil; must his, finally, be shed, whose acts of justice were tempered by the ministrations of mercy? "How are the mighty fallen!" Ye sons and daughters of a free Republic, your tears are justified. Take your Cypress to the grave of your country's friend, and weep there. Weep over him who entered the breach, in the midst of such peril, and guided you thus far, through a dreary four year's night of weeping, of conflict and of blood! He lived—just to see the brightening dawn of day—the morning of our national peace and glory; as from the top of Mount Nebo, Israel's leader saw the land of promise! He saw it, and he died.

Our hearts are sad. But shall we yield to hopeless sorrow? Does not the God of our fathers still fill a throne established in truth and in righteousness? Is he not still, our Nation's Ruler? What though we can not fathom the profound and gloomy mystery before us; shall not we submissively accept the chastisement, and carefully seek to improve by the teachings it conveys?

"Nor let a murmuring thought arise :—
His ways are just; His counsels wise."

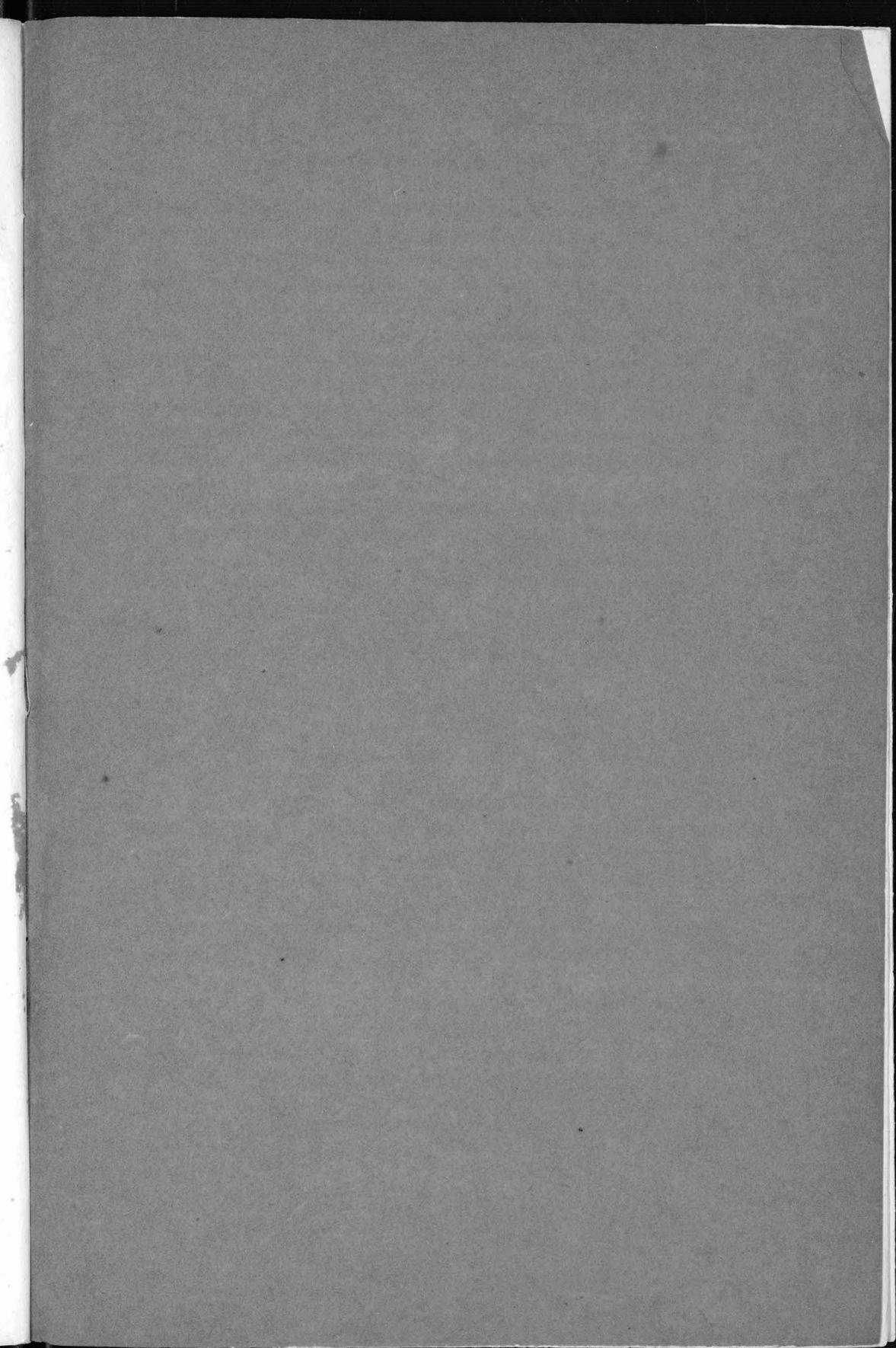
Those high and just principles which our beloved President maintained; and for the triumph and illustration of which he toiled and waited with so much patience, and fortitude, and disinterested wisdom, and consuming zeal, to the last day of his eventful life; those principals, I repeat, will prevail! His testimony, sealed with his own martyr blood, will be inscribed still more deeply than ever, by his blood, upon the heart of every true friend and real lover of his country.

Those principles to us, ever dear, but now doubly so; will be

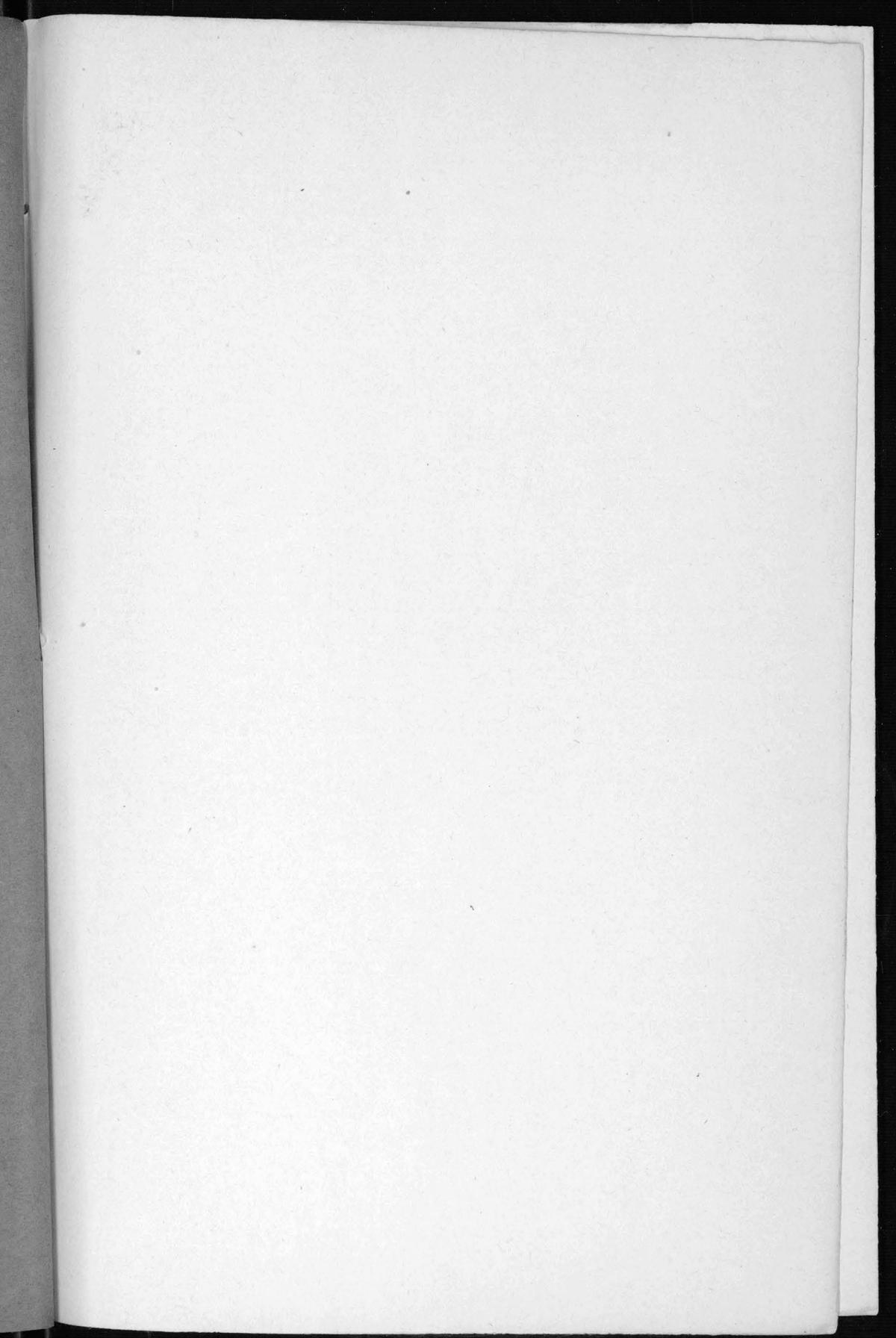
sustained by our pledged lives our influence, and our sacred honor; and that pledge, now solemnly renewed over the grave of Abraham Lincoln.

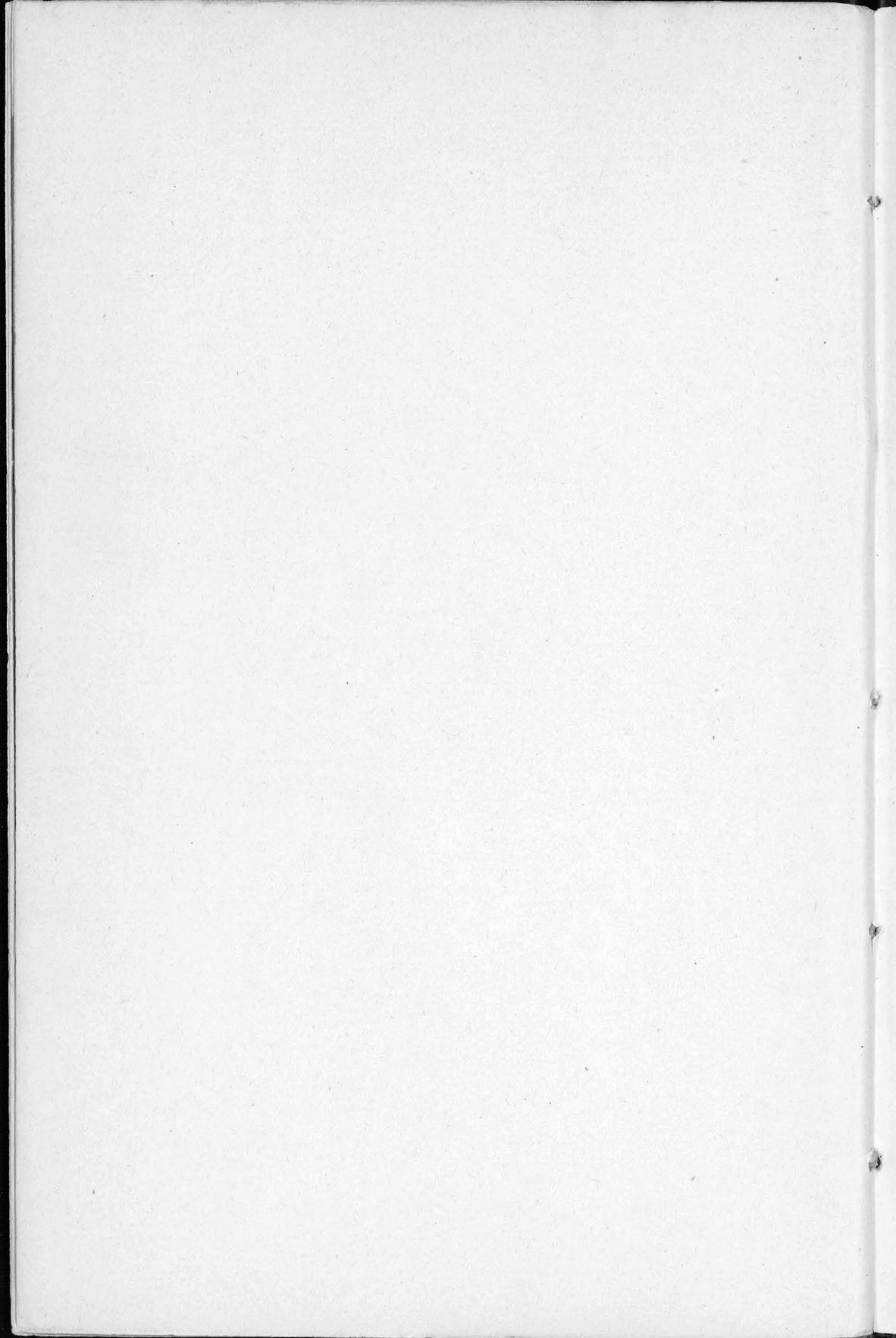
If ever in the future our patriotism should begin to wane, it will instantly rekindle again, when we call to mind the blood shed upon every gory field of battle. We shall remember all these passing scenes, as a guarantee for the future safety of our Nation. And hereafter, in the performance of our highest duties as American citizens, we will never forget, no, never! the thrice memorable fourteenth day of April, and the sacrifice of blood—shed at Washington!

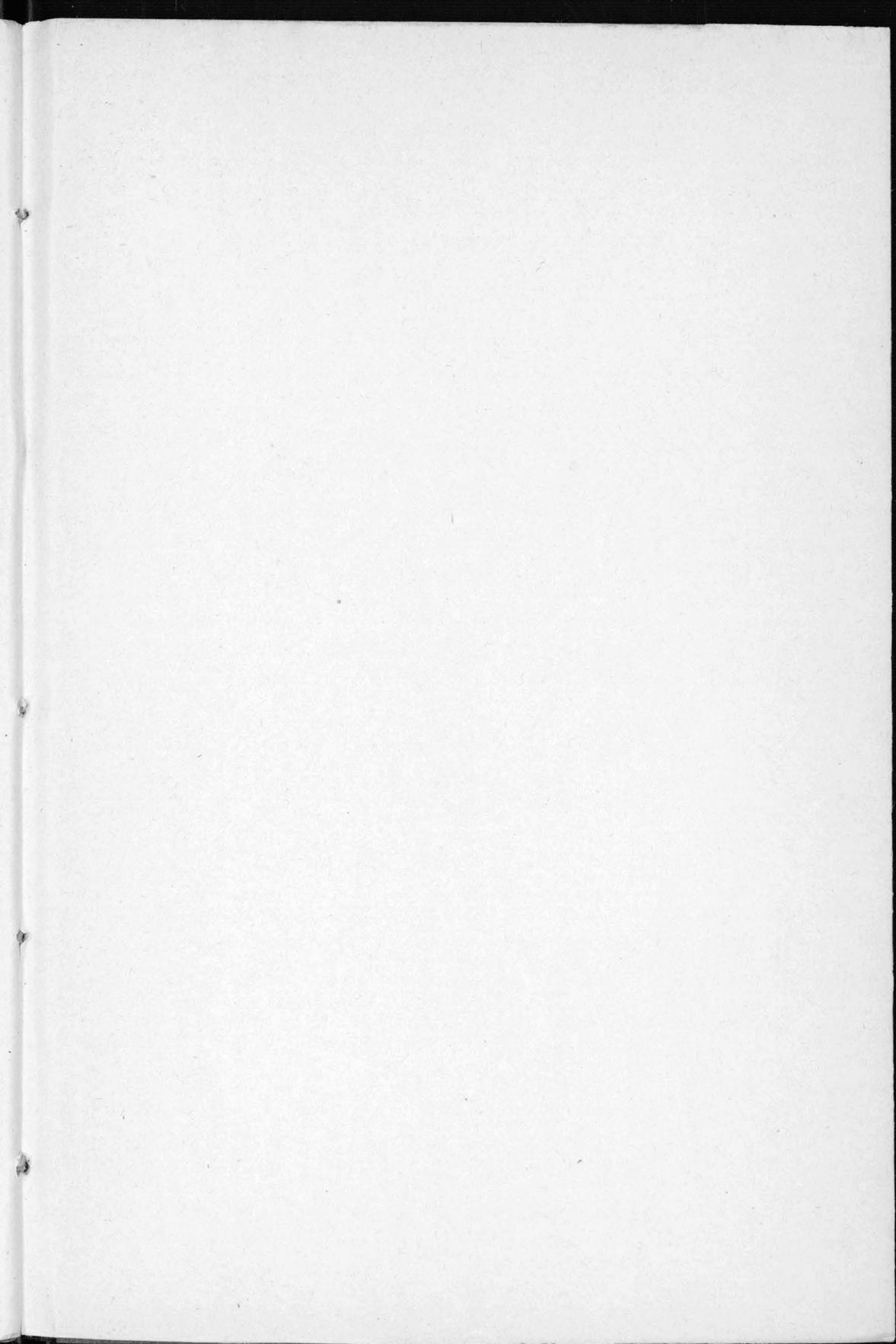
“The Lord reigneth: let the earth rejoice. Clouds and darkness are round about him; righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne.” To that throne of mercy we bring in the name of Jesus our weeping, yet trusting country. On that thick surrounding darkness, and on those black, tempestuous stormy clouds,—already passing over,—we see the encircling Bow of Promise!



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