

THE OLD THANKSGIVING DAYS.

ERNEST W. SHURTLIFF.

Sitting silent by the window, while the evening's fading beam
Turns to lonely gray, the winter's silvered sky,
Not a voice to break the reverie of thought's
too pensive dream,
Not a footstep—only memory and I.
From the past the veil seems lifted, and I am a
child once more;

On the hearth again the old-time fagots
blaze.
Hush! again I hear the voice of the guests
about the door,
In the greetings of the old Thanksgiving Days.

All the air outside is frosty, and in gusts the
blithe winds blow,
And I hear the distant sleigh-bells faintly ring;
And against the rime-touched windows comes
the purring, stirring snow.

Like the brushing of a passing angel's wing.
But within, O, see the faces that are smiling
'round the board,
How they shine with love, and gratitude, and
praise!

Hushed the voices are a moment for the thank-
ing of the Lord,
In the blessings of the old Thanksgiving Days.

There were all the joyful kinsfolk gathered in
that smiling host,
Aged sire and laughing children, sweet and
fair,

Sorrow haunted not that banquet with her
poor, unwelcome ghost,
Peace and gladness were the unseen angels
there,

O, the stories, and the music, and the friendly,
blithesome jest!

O, the laughter and the merry, merry plays!
Was there ever more of heaven in a happy
mortal's breast,

Than was with us in the old Thanksgiving
Days?

That was years ago, and curfews for the loved
have rung since then.

As to-night I watch the dawning evening star,
In my dreams I see the mansions Christ pre-
pared in heaven for men—

It is there to-night the absent kindred are—
It is there their feast is ready, and I hold the
fancy dear.

That they often turn to earth their loving
gaze,

And perhaps they, too, are dreaming, as they
see me sitting here,

Of the sweetness of the old Thanksgiving
Days.

EWEN M'QUARRIE.

BY R. A. B.

Fifty years and more ago, the old farm house stood on the banks of the West River. As you came along by what was then the main road between Pictou and Colchester, you saw it down in the hollow just after you had passed the spot where the old oak tree stood, and where to-day the little hostelry of Durham village stands. If you were traveling westward it lay on your left hand. It was not a very pretentious building, but was cosy and clean, in appearance and reality. It was built on a little knoll rising some twenty feet above the surrounding intervals or meadow land. A little crater like hollow in this knoll, showing where the cellar was, is all that you can now see of the place. It was a "braw" house, however, in the times we speak of. Long and low, like all the farm houses built by the Highlanders of that region, it was as snug-looking a place as one could see between the Ten Mile Brook and Pictou. It was, of course, built of frame, and was shingled from the sills to the roof tree. Both the house and the neighboring barn were whitewashed every year, and the pure color contrasted well with the deep green of the grass, and the lighter hue of the foliage of the group of elms that grew about the place, and shaded it from the burning heat of July and August. A hundred feet from the doorway, and full in sight, the little West River babbled on its way to the Harbour and Strait. The opposite bank was steep and abrupt, and was crowded with a dense growth of spruce. When first Angus Sutherland and I saw the place, we allowed it was as pretty a spot as

in our long two days tramp we had seen. It was on a cool September evening and the sun was just setting behind Mount Thorn, and all the way from the Green Hill, right around by the valley head to Patrick's Mountain in the north west, the woods were full of autumn's glory, the rock maples being decked in gorgeous colouring. The quietness of the scene lent to it an added impressiveness, for the only sounds we could hear were the cawing of some rooks, the rush of the water, and the tinkle of a few cow bells whose bearers were pasturing on the hill slopes around us. We were right glad, however, to find our way to the farm house, and to find old Ewen McQuarrie at home to welcome us, and tell us to sleep soundly for the night before discussing business matters.

Our business was not of a very weighty character. We had heard of Ewen and his place, and had made up our minds to try to induce him to let us board with him whilst we had to spend the fall and most of the winter in the valley. The fact is we were both of us aspirants for the ministry, and were there to become students in as primitive a seminary as probably was ever organized.

The Synod of Acadia in these days was weak and poor, but its members had a high conception of the kind of education a Presbyterian minister should have, and that conception they were resolved to realize if possible. Some half a dozen young men were willing to give themselves to the work of the ministry, but to send them to Scotland was impossible. The Kirk Synod did that with their men, and not a few of them failed to return; but the Antiburghers wanted to have their students under their own eye. So as the two most scholarly men of their Church lived, the one in Pictou and the other on the Green Hill, they resolved to start their first Hall in a little country school house that stood in a clump of spruce and hemlock trees, about a quarter of a mile along the road from Ewen McQuarrie's house, and about a mile from the Durham church. This last was a plain, barn-like building, and its minister was a famous preacher in Gaelic, with which language everybody in that country side was more or less familiar. Angus and myself understood enough of it to go along, but were wholly unqualified to preach in it. We were natives of Cumberland County, where the bulk of the folk are English, and Methodists at that, and all the Gaelic we heard was round our own fire sides. But to return to Ewen. After making some objections to the effect that he thought it hardly fair to his sister, who kept house for him, to give her so much extra bother, he consented, upon her averment that our company would be cheering on the long winter nights, to receive us as boarders for the three or four months of the session.

Ewen, we speedily found, was a bit of a character. He had been left a widower without family when still a man under thirty years of age, and had never remarried, so that after thirty years of single life, he did not differ greatly in his notions from any old bachelor, excepting that he was not so "crusty" as such characters generally are. He had accumulated, not so much by farming as by investments in shipping, a very decent fortune, and preferred to live here in the healthy solitude of the country, rather than amidst the stir of some large town. Having for some five years led a seafaring life, his mind had been broadened by what he had seen of the world, and he was less conservative and critical than many Celtic natures are. Having plenty of leisure time during the winter, he felt considerable interest in our work as students, and being well grounded in the Shorter and Larger Catechisms, he could take his part in many of the impromptu discussions that arose, when on a cold night we would gather around the big open fire place (stoves were scarcely known then) where the logs blazed merrily. I think I see the group still. Flora McQuarrie busily spinning, Angus and I conning our books in a rather listless fashion, and Ewen of the white locks, as his neighbors called him, sitting there right in front of the glow telling yarns of his cruising days, or oftener debating some "kittle" point with us budding theologues.

More than once during these wintry days the old farm house became a college indeed, for when the schoolhouse, being rickety, became unbearably cold, professor and students would adjourn to Ewen's big kitchen, and there continue our work. On such occasions Ewen was a patient and sometimes puzzled listener, once

venturing to ask me when the class was dismissed: Did we learn theology by delving among bones, and forgetting that the folk about us had bread, and wanted not mouldy but fresh bread?

Occasionally at the Durham church we were favored by having a strange minister preach, more especially at a communion season. When this happened we were always on the lookout for a criticism from Ewen. He was, if frank, always fair in his judgments, and we generally conceded that, in a word or two, he could hit off the weaknesses of a preacher better than even our preceptors could. "Spiced ginger-bread" was his comment when a somewhat ornate orator had finished. "Yelloquence," was another word he sometimes used. Some seven miles away there was a minister who used to work very hard when in the pulpit, and we never heard his method more curtly described than by Ewen, who said: "When that man through you're tired and he's tired." In Colchester, one of the ministers was somewhat fond of parading his linguistic gifts in the pulpit, but he never did it at Durham again after Ewen thanked him, when the service was over, for the few admirable English selections he had introduced during his sermon.

Altogether during two winters at the Hall, we found in Ewen an entertaining and instructive host. When at the commencement of the third session we returned, we were saddened to find that the old man had been stricken with cancer. His mind was as clear as ever, but the anguish he endured in body rendered him able to see us but seldom. Still, though we could not stay at his house, we contrived to spend each Friday afternoon with him, and he liked and looked forward to our visits.

When strong and well he had always conducted family worship himself, but now he seemed pleased to hear either Angus or myself pray with and for him. As February was drawing to a close his strength failed rapidly, and one afternoon he sent for us to come and see him. We found him walking far along "the Valley of the Shadow," and evidently not afraid. He said scarce anything but asked us to read to him. By turns we read and prayed, and as the wintry sun was throwing its evening beams over the snow-clad fields and ice-bound river he began to repeat brokenly, in Gaelic, snatches from the Psalms. Soon the quavering voice was hushed and he fell asleep, and as Angus and I came softly from the room, we looked sadly at each other, and he said: "A true and righteous soul has passed. He is blessed, for they that are pure in heart shall see God."

Poet (to farmer): See what a beautiful prospect is unfolded in yonder billowy fields; and, hark! the voice of the plowman! Farmer: Yes; he's been a cussin' of that mule since daylight; and it's one of them German mules that used to pull a beer wagon and he can't understand a word of it! —Atlanta Constitution.

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