

Our Contributors.

WHAT KIND OF A THANKSGIVING DAY HAD YOU?

BY KNOXONIAN.

How did you spend Thanksgiving Day?

Did you lie in bed until near noon and then "sit around" all the rest of the day doing nothing in particular?

Did you get up in the morning growling about the weather or something else and growl all day in the most industrious manner?

Did you go on a visit to some of the neighbours instead of going to church?

Did you attend a football match and give thanks by applauding the most vigorous kickers. That did not use to be the way in which grateful people gave thanks for their mercies, but this is an age of progress. There is no reason why we should give thanks as our fathers did. Perhaps the old men did not know how to give thanks with their heels. They were so primitive in their ways, that they used their hearts for thanksgiving exercises. This is an age of education. The students of Yale and Princeton and other high-class American institutions, give thanks by kicking a ball, while admiring thousands show their gratitude by shouting to encourage the young men in their thanksgiving exercise. Why should we be behind our neighbours in their mode of giving thanks. We have copied their tariff and adopted the method of arranging the boundaries of constituencies originated by His Excellency the Hon. Elbridge Gerry, Governor of Massachusetts. Why should we not adopt their Thanksgiving Day? We set out in 1867 to found a nation on British models. The intention was good, and we are bravely carrying it out by copying some of the worse features of American politics. Why not still further display our love for British institutions by turning Thanksgiving Day into a national holiday as our neighbours do? The good people over there give thanks as good Christians ought to do, but it is not the good ones we generally imitate.

Did you go on a shooting expedition Thanksgiving Day, and show your gratitude by killing a few small birds? That was a noble thing to do. A man who gives thanks devoutly by killing a few small birds, can hardly fail to prosper in his business next year.

Did the people of your town hold a union meeting on Thanksgiving Day instead of an old-fashioned thanksgiving service? Did all the denominations meet on that "common platform" that has become so very common and listen to crude semi-political speeches about everything in general and nothing in particular. That substitute for a thanksgiving service was perhaps ascribed to the growing union sentiment of the community. The people had so much union sentiment that they preferred a joint platform meeting to a religious service, and fourth-rate platform speeches to praise, prayer and preaching. Union sentiment must be a great thing when it works such reforms in a community.

But after all, is union sentiment solely responsible for the substitution of platform meetings for a proper thanksgiving service? Is it not a fact that many of the churches that have adopted the platform meeting did so because there was not gratitude enough in their congregations to secure a decent attendance at a thanksgiving service. The union meeting was held to hide the empty benches. The pastors, like John McNeill, did not enjoy preaching to a lumberyard, and naturally enough suggested, or at least fell in with the proposal to substitute speech-making at a union platform meeting as a substitute for a religious service. Then the union meeting is held up before the public as evidence that union sentiment reigns triumphant in the community, while in reality it proves that there was not

grace enough in any one of the congregations to meet in their congregational capacity and thank God for His mercies.

The musical service held in some congregations as a substitute for a thanksgiving service is outward and visible evidence that the people do not want to thank God for His mercies. Listening to vocal or instrumental music for an hour or two in the evening is not giving thanks. If we mean to have a Thanksgiving Day in this country, let us have one. If we merely want a holiday, let us honestly say so. Fellow Canadians, now honestly, what kind of a Thanksgiving Day had you?

CASTING OFF OLD PASTORS.

Sir,—I was glad to notice by your paper lately that you were inviting correspondence on the above subject, and it pleased me much to see the article on this subject in your issue of the 8th inst. The sentiments expressed at the close of that article are those which have forced themselves upon my mind for some time, and I also find the same opinion in the minds of many others with whom I have conversed on the subject. I believe that this question at the present time is one that is exercising the minds of a large number of members and adherents of our good Presbyterian Church, and that the sooner this matter is taken up and brought before our Church courts in a public manner, the better, as being beneficial to both ministers and members. There is no doubt but there are some in all the Presbyteries of our Church who have seen or known the evil effects of too long pastorates as having a tendency to create an indifference and dissatisfaction in many congregations, and no doubt has led in some cases to the starving-out system, even in some short pastorates, and thus ruining congregations for many years. The system that now prevails in our Church of a congregation being unable to get rid of an inefficient minister without resorting to such a method, has a tendency to lower the respect for each other, both of ministers and congregations, the evil effects of which are long felt. No less hurtful is it in some cases, when a minister who gets the offer of a larger salary in another place, at short notice leaves a congregation to the winds of heaven to be blown hither and thither, it may be for years. Even the system of going about preaching looking for a call, it seems to me must be repulsive to a man of fine feelings. A few figures taken from your issue of the first inst., may be here given to show in a comparative way what we are now doing with reference to changes of ministers. I find that our Church contains forty-six presbyteries, and that they generally meet quarterly, which with special meetings would amount to 184 meetings per annum. Taking the six Presbyteries, reporting in your issue of the first inst., I find that between calls in course of process, vacancies, and resignations tendered, there were fourteen, or about an average of 2.12 to each Presbytery reported, leaving aside Barrie, which seems to have an enormously large number of mission fields and preaching stations to be supplied. Now, supposing that these were a fair sample of the proceedings of our Presbyteries, it would give about 460 changes in one year throughout the Church, or 1,380 in three years, which would nearly amount to much the same as if we adopted the system pursued by our sister Church, the Methodist. It appears to me that the itinerating system would be much easier for ministers and impart new life to many congregations, as it is almost impossible for a minister in a congregation for fifteen or twenty years, to give his people fresh food for 52 Sabbaths each year during that time. In the Presbytery with which I am connected, I know of three congregations who would be very glad if they could get a change without just saying to their minister to go, and there are also two congregations in the same Presbytery who have just lately told their pas-

tors plainly that they did not desire their services any longer. And of course they left. One of them is now going through the country endeavouring to secure a call, and the other, I understand, who is well advanced in years, continues preaching to one of the stations forming his previous charge, and takes what salary they are able to give him. If true, this is indeed a humiliating position for a minister to occupy. Another feature of the subject which is detrimental to congregations, is the long vacancies which many of them have before they can agree upon a pastor. They get what is called supply by the Presbytery or Home Mission Committee, perhaps a young student, or a minister without charge is sent, in some cases a distance of two hundred miles from Toronto or some other place. He arrives on Saturday night and leaves on Monday morning by train, preaches a sermon on a passage which, perhaps, the congregation has heard expounded a dozen times, and leaves no good impression, but rather the reverse; nevertheless, they are compelled to pay the usual allowance in such cases made and provided, as the legal documents express it.

A sincere desire to see some change brought about for the better, is my only excuse for asking you to give this a place in your next issue, in the hope that some others will ventilate their views on this subject through your columns. AN ELDER OF THIRTY-FIVE YEARS' STANDING.

SUBSTITUTES FOR MISSIONARIES.

When the need of more men and means for the extension of mission work in Western Canada is urged, and the number of fields that have to go without winter supply, is deplored, it is frequently asked, why can not the people read their Bibles at home? Why can not the elders hold services during the winter? Why not organize Christian Endeavour Societies, and let them hold meetings in the absence of a missionary? Since many using these arguments are undoubtedly sincere, let me through your columns endeavour to supply an answer.

To the first question, let me say, that the policy of leaving people to read their Bibles at home, sent them in shoals out of the Church in the Maritime Provinces; that in Quebec it sent them, and especially their children, into the Roman Catholic Church, from which at heavy expense we are now painfully trying to regain them; that in Central Ontario, it bled the Church, so that she can not even now stand alone, and that, north of Lake Erie, from Niagara to Windsor, it nearly wiped her out of existence. The policy of neglect has cost the Christian Church in some of the Eastern and Western States adherents by the million, and filled certain parts of Australasia with agnostics and infidels. The fruit of neglect is evil and only evil, and we have no desire to reap it in the West. The Bible-reading plan has been weighed in the balances and found wanting.

We further reply to the question, that if the policy of reading the Bible at home can meet the wants of the West, it ought to meet those of the East. Why should Eastern people build expensive churches, buy high-priced organs, and call talented pastors, when they might stay at home, read their Bibles, and send the ministers and their money to the foreign field? But if such a policy would speedily decimate, if not destroy the Church even in Ontario and Nova Scotia, will its effect be less disastrous in Manitoba or British Columbia? Generally speaking, many of the people that push to the frontier, are not so enamoured of Bible-reading, that they can with confidence, be left without religious ordinances. To the experienced, the suggestion does not meet the need.

2. To the second question, we reply that at certain places, whether we have a missionary or not, the church door is never closed. But at many points we

have no elders, and no persons who will undertake to conduct a service, and if we had, we fear that satisfactory work could not be done. How long could services by elders be conducted successfully in the majority of congregations in Ontario? If it can be done, why not set forty or fifty Ontario ministers free for the coming winter to labour in the Northwest? Those who have considered the matter know that church services to be attended, must be attractive and edifying, and if such services can be conducted long by elders who are working all the week, then we can dispense with ministers entirely and with the colleges where they are educated.

3. To the third question, our reply is that Christian Endeavour Societies are confined mostly, and of necessity to cities, towns or villages of some size, and that services of the kind proposed are not practicable for scattered settlements and distant outposts. A missionary sent to a new field this spring reported that he found one professing Christian in a distance of seventy miles; another reported four, and quite a number reported fewer than a dozen. When services are held at several points in one mission, how can C.E. Societies be organized, or expected to conduct them successfully under such conditions? Such services require numbers, variety, good music, suitable accommodation, and the rest to make them attractive, and these essentials are difficult to secure in a new country.

Perhaps it should be added that much of the success of mission work in the West is due to pastoral visitation. Many of the people had been long neglected or are estranged from the Church, and it is only by visitation and private dealing that they are to be won. We must seek if we are to save the lost. For such work a missionary is absolutely necessary.

J. R.

A CHURCH ORGAN.

Editor of the Canada Presbyterian:

Dear Sir,—After having perused your good article in your issue of 13th Sept., under the heading "Are We Becoming Congregational?" every word of which I agree with, the first thought that passed through my mind was one of regret, from the fact, which I believe it to be, that the instructive action of the Toronto Presbytery in sending Rev. Mr. Gandier to Fort Massey, Halifax, which might be said to be an object lesson to the whole body and is well worthy the attentive observation and imitation of all our presbyteries, and still more of all our congregations, will be so little known by the great bulk of the members of our country congregations at any rate, I fear only a small proportion of the members know little if anything of the general business transacted in the various presbyteries of our Church, and perhaps ignorant of what their own presbyteries do and how they do their work, unless in exceptional cases, which the secular press gives publicity to. If my fear has good foundation, then there is cause for regret and serious consideration.

I take it to be important that the great bulk of our church members, at any rate, should be informed of how presbyteries do their work, whether wisely or otherwise. Humanly speaking, I do not know of anything more likely to tend to wise action prevailing, and so strengthen the Presbyterian form of Church government. We fully believe it is the Scriptural form and will endure. Its leading principles, I take it, are of Divine origin. Some of the details in carrying out the principles, doubtless cannot be so described, and should be carefully considered, not only by those who are members of Presbyteries, Synods or Assembly, but by every member in full communion.

My object in writing this is, if possible to increase the diffusion of necessary information, and of giving better opportunities of doing what little may be in each one's power to spread abroad the knowledge of our Lord and