

# BRIGHT SIDE OF SHIELD

TIMES BETTER NOW THAN IN THE "GOOD OLD DAYS."

## REPLY TO THE PESSIMISTS

**Fault Finders Have An Ancestral Record As Old As The Human Race—What the People Have to Be Thankful For On the Thanksgiving Day of 1904—A Sunlit Picture of Modern Days.**

Watered according to Act of Parliament of Canada, in the year 1904, by William Baily, of Toronto, with the Department of Agriculture, Ottawa.

Los Angeles, Cal., Nov. 20.—In reply to the pessimists, the preacher in this sermon turns the brighter side of the picture of our national life and shows us that we ought to be thankful that we are living in times that have undergone vast improvement since the "good old days" of our grandfathers. The text is Psalm iv., 6. "There be many that say, Who will show us any good?" The deprecators, the carpers, the fault finders, the calamity howlers, the pessimists, who like the blind fish of Kentucky's Mammoth cave, cannot see the light of day, have an ancestral record as old as the human race. They belong especially to no one century or generation. Their family connections are not limited to the Caucasian race, or to the Ethiopian, or to the Malay, or to the red-skinned American Indian, or to the Mongolian, or to the jaundiced Chinaman. They are found alike in the poor man's hut and the rich man's palace, among the sailors on shipboard and the citizens on land. Like the Eskimos, they thrive well in the temperate zone. They bask in the boiling heat of the tropics. They are found among all social classes of all nations of all times.

Mythology placed a representative of the class among the Greek gods on Mount Olympus. His name was Momus, the god of fault finding and mockery. He took pleasure in finding fault with men. He found fault with the gods themselves. He criticized Vulcan because after he had made man he did not place a window in his breast, so that man's thoughts could be seen by the passerby. He denounced Minerva after she had built a house because she did not make the house movable. He found fault with Neptune because he did not place the horns of the beast he had created farther forward in his forehead, so that he could fight better. He kept on finding fault with everybody and everything until at last the gods became disgusted and drove Momus out of heaven, because, said they, "heaven can be no heaven with a chronic fault finder around."

What the Grecian mythological gods said in reference to heaven with a Momus in it is literally true. No society on earth can be happy or contented with a chronic grumbler around. And yet, coming up to the glorious celebration of our autumnal Thanksgiving day of 1904, we find our pessimistic Momuses everywhere. This is the time when we ought to be making an inventory of all our blessings; instead of which these modern calamity howlers are making a false collection of misanthropic statements. They are also making their pessimistic prophecies. Not only are they saying that the world is going to the dogs, but they furthermore assert that it has already gone to the dogs. "Why," they say, "we have nothing to be thankful for this Thanksgiving day. 'Tis true there is ever before, but we do not have it. Our social, civic and spiritual conditions for the great mass of folks were never at as low ebb as they are to-day. Who will show us any good?" they cry, as the calamity howlers of my cry cried in David's time, thousands of years ago.

Some of these modern fault finders are trying to make our times out to be much worse than were the ancient times. I will pick up their challenge. They ask, "Who will show us any good?" I answer, "I will." And I will show that the church of Jesus Christ is better to-day spiritually than the ancient church. I will show that modern Governments are better and the homes are better and people in the mass are higher toned morally and better. The fact that a

lot of chronic croakers at this Thanksgiving time are going around finding fault with things does not in the least prove that most people are poorly clad, poorly fed, poorly housed and under the merciless heels of despotic tyrants. As a rule, you will find that those people who grumble the most have the least to grumble about.

The Momus of political life declares that there is nothing in our national life to warrant thanksgiving. He says: "Modern rulers and legislators are selfish oppressors. They do not govern by God's Golden Rule, but by force. The code of civilized nations is immoral, merciless and unjust. It convicts at the crimes of government and condones the theft of a province. Strong governments trample upon the rights of the weaker governments. Within these governments one social class places the yoke of tyranny upon the other social class. Within those governments laws are not equitable and just. We find that the poor man who steals a loaf of bread to avert starvation is hustled off to jail, as Jean Valjean was sent to the galley with a twenty years' sentence for stealing two loaves of bread to feed the gaunt and haggard and starving children of his widowed sister. On the other hand, a man like James Fisk, if he is a big enough scoundrel to steal a railroad, can defy justice, while a millionaire, like Edward Stokes, who shoots a James Fisk, has no more to fear from the gallows than a leopard has who slays a helpless fawn." "No," say the living pessimists, "our modern governments and their internal laws are all corrupt. There are none that doeth good—no, not one, not one."

'Tis true, O carping critic and calamity howler against rulers and national laws, that modern governments are not all that they ought to be. This is not the age of perfection even in legislative hall or Presidential Cabinet or Privy Council. Perhaps England did not do right in her dealings with the African Boers. Possibly the United States Government did not do right in compelling Mexico at the point of the bayonet to cede to her all of Texas, all of New Mexico, one-half of the present State of Colorado, all of Arizona, all of Nevada, all of Utah and the whole of California. We know that Russia, trying to steal Manchuria, and Turkey, in her massacre of the Armenians, have been outrageously wicked. We know that Spain, in her cruelties toward Cuba and the Philippines, and the United States Government, in its cruel treatment of the North American Indians, have done wrong. But though modern governments in some of their dealings with the weaker nations and with their own weaker subjects may have been sinfully culpable the present governments are as far ahead of the ancient governments in righteousness and justice as the brightness of mid-noon is ahead of the darkness of midnight.

Compare the conquests of our day with the conquests of ancient times. Like the eagles of ancient Rome, the British standard has been unfurled in every clime. It waves over an Empire greater than Rome ever dreamed of. What does England do when she conquers a country? Study her treatment of India. She immediately stamped out in India the horrors of infanticide and suttee. She immediately made the home safe and compelled man to respect the liberties of woman. She gives the liberties of woman to her subjects of every man. She makes it possible for every man to worship God in his own way. What England has done for India and her other colonies the United States Government is doing for Alaska and the Philippines and Porto Rico. What did ancient Rome do when she conquered a country? Did she consider her conquered colonies a sacred trust? Did she care for their rights as carefully as she would care for her own people's rights? Oh, no. In ancient times the law of conquest implied the right to enslave and oppress the conquered foe. When Scipio Aemilianus returned from his celebrated Carthaginian wars what did he do? He brought back with him 60,000 of his late foes whom he had not slain upon the field of battle and sold them in the common slave markets to be the chattels of the Romans. These men who fought for their country's liberties now had to moan and wince and beg for mercy under the slave master's lash. When Caius Marius made his triumphal entry into Rome he handed over 140,000 Cimbric spoils for the slave markets. Aemilius Paulus' conquest over

the Greeks glutted the Roman slave markets with 150,000 captives of war, while the conquests of Pompeius and Caesar gave to Rome at least 1,000,000 new slaves. I ask you, are not our modern governments in their treatment of fallen foes more merciful and just than were the ancient governments?

The Governments are better and continually growing better. The churches are also purer in thought. They have higher ideals of spirituality and morality than they ever had before. It is easy enough for critics and the pew, and criticizing the pulpit, and criticizing the ways of raising church money, and criticizing the choir loft, but I want to tell you that the church of the Lord Jesus Christ is not only purer in thought, but that the leaders of the churches as well as the common people are purer in their spiritual lives.

There is more tolerance and humanity in the modern church. In ancient times no mercy was shown by the leaders of the church to heretics. When they heard of men who differed from the doctrines of the church they immediately got together their thumbscrews and started forth with sword and spear and battle-axe. They said, "If you will not believe as we believe we will cut out your tongue and blind your eyes and cripple your feet and burn your homes and slay your sons and daughters." Read the history of the covinators. Read the story of the massacre of St. Bartholomew at Paris. Read the history of the dark ages. Look at Charlemagne trying to convert his kingdom by having the priests drive the masses into the water like herds of cattle and there baptize them by the wholesale. Christianity became a matter of political allegiance. Individual conviction, spiritual purity, devotion to Christ, counted for little in those times. Men did not read or think. They accepted without question the dogmas of the leaders of church and state, some of whom were men without principle, openly immoral in life. Let us thank God that we did not live in those times. There is still much to be desired. We are still far from Christ's ideal, but as we read of those times of spiritual and moral darkness we realize how far the church has advanced.

So lax were the ideas of the Christian church a hundred years ago that after a presbytery meeting it was the usual custom for the presbytery to adjourn to a nearby tavern, and all the ministers would there openly drink their intoxicating liquor the same as the majority of the sports of a race track would now drink. The assistant pastor of my Chicago church told me when he entered the ministry every minister of the presbytery which ordained him, with the exception of one, publicly drank intoxicating liquors. Yet, he furthermore stated that within a few years he lived to see all the ministers of his presbytery total abstainers and out and out temperance advocates with but one exception. Among the records of a presbytery in the western part of Pennsylvania I have been told that one church elected one of its members an elder because that man on the day of the laying of a cornerstone of the church furnished a barrel of whiskey, so that all who came to the cornerstone laying could drink as much as they would.

Then, too, there is improvement in our country's comforts. The private homes of the present day have better wardrobes, better food, healthier and warmer living rooms, better pictures, better musical instruments, better carpets, better libraries, better furniture, than they have ever had before. The common laborer of to-day lives far better than the common people of any other age have ever lived, while, on the other hand, the middle classes, to which most of us belong, live far better than the princes and princesses of old lived. It is about time for some of us to stop prating times. A Cinderella's slipper might change a peasant girl into a queen, but the average queen of the olden times did not have as many luxuries as many merchants' wives have at the present day.

I would sooner live in my present modest home than in the damp and dreary quarters of the poor, had to dwell. And as for the habits of my grandfathers and grandmothers, they were places no living man would now put up with for a moment. We sentimentally talk about the andirons of the old fashioned hearth. Did you ever try the luxury of one? Most of the rooms of the old farmhouses had to be closed in winter, because they could never be kept warm. In the bedrooms the ice would freeze in the pitchers. In the kitchens our grandfathers would be hugging the fires and burning their coat tails on one side of them while they were having a whole carnival of chills playing hide and seek on the other side of their physical anatomies. Then our grandfathers, for the most part, had the pleasure of dressing without any woolen underwear next to their skins. They had the luxury of malaria fever, scarlet fever and diphtheria, which used to ravage almost every house on account of poor water and drainage. They had the luxury of sitting up in the house at night and using a small tallow candle light to read by when they were not too dead tired to read.

But oh, if the well people, physically and mentally, are better off from a temporal standpoint in this day than they were in our grandfathers' and grandmothers' times, how much more ought the sick to be thankful unto him who is the Giver of all good gifts! Think of the merciful institutions which have been erected for the invalids, called hospitals! Think of all the marvelous wonders which have been discovered or invented by means of which pain can be driven away at the point of the surgeon's knife or cured by the medicinal angel's whisper, which comes to the side of the out-

ing table and lays the soothing hand of benumbment upon the twitching nerves and the agonizing brain! Tell me, O sick man, that this is not a better time to live in than those times in which our grandfathers lived!

Then to-day make a big inventory of the blessings of the modern public school system of America. In olden times it was the exception for the son or a daughter of a home to have what is called a liberal education. But though a hundred or even fifty years ago the man who had a liberal education was the exception, the man of the generation which is to come after us who is an uneducated man will be the exception. Oh, carping pessimist, do you not see any blessing to-day in the fact that you can educate your mind so that you can daily be the associate of the master minds of the centuries? Do you not see a blessing in the fact that Shakespeare and Burns and Scott and Irving and Motley and Prescott and Gladstone and Webster and Edison and Millet and Raphael and Angelo and Beethoven and Wagner and Thorvaldsen can all be invited to your study desk any night you will, to paint, or sing, or chisel, or preach, or teach for you? Education is not a mere affectation. Education is the wings of inspiration which lift a man up so that his horizon takes in all lands, all seas, all worlds and all ages.

Is not the opportunity of developing the mind and heart and the life of man by education a great advancement over the educational opportunities which were offered to the generations that are past and gone? Thus at this glorious Thanksgiving time I find the world is not only growing better, but it is better than it has ever been before. I find we have a better Government, a better church, better homes, better physical and mental men and women and better children to take our places after we are gone. Let us thank God on this coming harvest festival for what he has done for us. May we pray to him to give us strength to go on doing the work he has given us to do, and may the time come when our future work may yield even far greater harvests, mental, physical and spiritual, than the work of the past and the present have yielded. In thanking God for the blessings of the Thanksgiving Day of 1904 let us also thank him that as this Thanksgiving is better than any Thanksgiving in which our ancestors lived, so may employ all our talents and energies to make this world even a better world in the future than it is at the present time.

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