

not sorrow do? And so we learned one lesson, that sin and sorrow are everywhere, that perfect peace and love have no dwelling-place on earth. But, thank God, we forget it sometimes, and fondly dream our childhood's dream again, waking only to yearn for the "Home land," of perfect peace and love. God bless the old home! its memories have been more helpful than even we can tell.

But another drive rises up, and will not sleep. News had come to the manse that an old man, one who had welcomed home the young pastor and his wife some twenty years before, was putting out to sea, the boundless sea of death. With a heavy sigh the pastor turned to prepare for a last visit to his old friend. And I must go. "He was one of your mother's great friends."

Silently we drove to the quiet home, and memories swelled in each heart, as we entered the yard, so strangely still. Even the dog forgot to bark, and the fowls seemed to hush their screaming.

Sorrowing faces, smiling through their tears in that pathetic way strong natures have of hiding their grief behind joy, met us at the door, and quietly ushered us into the chamber of death. By the open window tossed the vine leaves in the soft summer air, stealing in as if to peep at the silent one, then whispering and tossing and hanging their heads. The snowy lace curtains moved gently as if loth to break the peace, while on the sill slept the great cat, revelling in the sunshine. The little table with its crocheted cover, on which stood the Bible and some bottles, the long chest of drawers guarded by the china shepherd and shepherdess, over which was hung the sampler worked by fingers long ago locked in rest, the stiff, hair-cloth chairs with their long white tidies, all seemed to-day instinct with quiet waiting. But the head among the snowy pillows moved, and the pastor was by the bed in an instant.

"So, Mr. MacInnes, you are near your journey's end."

In a clear, quiet voice came the ready response.

"Aye, very near. I thought to win hame last night, but it seems He's no ready for me yet, or I'm no ready for Him. But it cannot be long now, and I'm not sorry, I'm just aye bide biding."

"You have no pain?"

"No, no pain, just a ripe apple falling off the tree."

And very like that beautiful fruit he looked, his skin fresh and soft as an infant's; his eye clear and bright, his white hair so pure and chaste.

"You are very weak?"

"No, not so weak, but just wearing awa'. I think it will not be long now. I don't think I will see another sunrise on this earth, it will be over yonder, the next one I see, aye, and it will be a grand one. Have you any message to send to those over there?"

"Yes, you will see my Marion there (how the name lingered on his lips, he never spoke it now) and you will tell her how you left us. I brought her little girl, (you know Ellie,) tell her she is growing up a good girl, she has, I think, given her heart to the Saviour, and is what she would wish her to be. And John is at college, a good boy. Tell her we will all come soon. If they know you are coming, she will be one of the first to meet you, I'm sure."

"She will that, I'm sure. I'll tell her that."

"You will see our Saviour soon, in all His glory. You have no fear!"

"Fear, going home? Who is afraid to go home?"

After reading the fourteenth chapter of St. John's Gospel, with a lingering over the "many mansions," and a short prayer, we said good-bye. Thus these two who had stood together for thirty years cheerfully bade farewell on the shore of that sea, and over morning came, the boatman had called, the wilderness had passed for one weary traveller.

The drive home was silent, the silence eloquent of thoughts too deep to be expressed, of queries too vague to be formed. Home was reached once more, and life was bounded by that far-off land in a way it had never been before.

Years have quietly covered with their shadows many things, but bright stands out the Sabbath days.

Did not the sunshine fall softer, the birds sing sweeter and the trees cease their restless tossing? "All the air a solemn stillness held," while it pulsed with an indescribable joy. But our joy was hushed. "Good-mornings" were softer spoken, and all our movements were subdued, as much perhaps by the look of holy calm upon our father's face as by aught else. How grandly he bore the weight of his high embassy! Conscious of the import of his message, of the burden of souls laid upon him, he bowed not, but calmly, resolutely sought to find that message, to bear that burden faithfully. To him it was a time of holy awe and trembling; to us who had dimly understood him then, it was not joyous, but grievous, but has it not wrought in us many peaceable fruits. Let those who will, scoff at the puritan Sabbath, which at the threshold of the day, leaves worldly cares and works to tarry, while in devoutness they worship; but we have yet to see nobler men and women than those nurtured under this puritan faith. Laxity is less grievous, but is it more strengthening? Time will tell.

Oh, those quiet Sabbath evenings, when the weary pastor, after two services and Sabbath school superintendence, still laboured on in the lengthening shadows with his loved ones.

Texts were repeated, the sermons given, as best remembered, a psalm sung, followed by the shorter catechism, when as a reward each child was allowed to choose and read a chapter.

As long as memory itself will live the fragrance of the closing prayer on evenings such as these. The weary voice, the relaxed form, and the restful, trustful heart, telling of a commission fulfilled, touched even our young hearts, and the father of Sabbath evenings was one to be yearned over, caressed, aye, in solitude wept over, and loved intensely.

But such work wears, and too soon came the hot sultry days of August, '83.

Quietly and masked stole into our homes God's messenger, an unbidden guest. For days he sat there and we knew him not, but his breath was chill, and we hovered round our loved one, and watched him oh! so stealthily and tenderly! But the guest, the cold, chill guest, crept closer to him, and ere fifteen days were gone we knew that we were face to face with death.

Oh! the awfulness of death! Terrible in its unreality, more awful in its truth. We knew it, yet we could not know it. He, our father, to cease to be? No, no it cannot be. Nature itself would cease to be were he stilled in death. We could not do without him, his people—they could not do without him. Death, it cannot be!

His people—aye, how he loved his people. "Lift me, lift me," he said as the carriages rolled past to morning service, the last Lord's day he spent with us, "Let me see my people, my dear people, for the last time! Oh! I have loved my people."

But not his people, not his children's love could keep him, and relentlessly, coldly moved our guest, snapping bands of a lifetime, severing soul and body.

Outside the sick room was the blackness of darkness, inside the light of life. How brightly burned that light as he stepped quietly down to the riverside! How sweetly he lost his will in his Father's, feeling that "His will was sweetest to him, when it triumphed at his cost."

"If my child could continue to trample underfoot the blood of Christ, and do despite to our Saviour, I could but set my seal to the justice of His condemnation and say amen."

Our wills, God's will—is not this life's lesson?

But his friend, our unbidden guest, God's kindly messenger, drew closer to him and he whispered, "Read me, 'I have finished my course, I have fought a good fight'; aye, the fight was hard and strong, but victory is near;" and as the words—

Goodness and mercy all my life,  
Shall surely follow me;  
And in God's house forever more,  
My dwelling place shall be—

pulsed out from breaking hearts on the close August air, a look of ineffable peace and fulfilment passed over his beautiful face, and we knew our father was with our God—had died to live.

But oh! the desolation! What is human love and sympathy, when face to face with death, but the breath of the day on the fevered cheek? Below burns on the fire and will not be quenched.

How brightly shone the sun, dancing across the steps he had climbed so often, and he was not, for God had taken him!

The trees nodded and whispered as if to greet him and he came not. Men bought and sold and ate and drank, and he dead.

Oh! the cruel mockery of it all. Why talk of the sympathy of nature? She is herself, and heeds none else but sings to our dirge, and waits to our glee, as is her pleasure.

Under the shadow of his books they laid him, in his narrow bed. Sobbing women were near him, he moved not; broken-hearted men bowed over him and he spoke not; back from his marble brow we brushed the locks and he smiled not; and into the room stole the little ones with bunches of wild flowers, which they shyly, weepingly laid on his breast, and he heeded not.

Oh! death, your power is perfect to us-ward so, but God-ward impotent.

They came, for miles around they came, and in the garden amongst the trees they stood, while from the mouth of the preacher, through the quivering vine leaves, into the quiet study stole the words of hope, "So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality."

O! death where is thy sting? O! grave where is thy victory? Thanks be unto God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Out under the whispering trees, past the old church we bore him, and by his Marion laid him. For him all the sweetness now—for us, the wormwood and the gall.

Who shall tell the exquisite sadness of those days, the dumb, gnawing heart-hunger, the terrible dreamings of a dream, with wakings to the truth? but it passed; and in the grey October morning we gave our last look to the old manse and whispered as we wept. "All is of God that was and is to be, and God is good."

#### THANKSGIVING.

MR. EDITOR.—On November 2 you published a note from the Rev. D. J. Macdonnell on your remarks the previous week on Thanksgiving Day. Kindly allow me a word or two suggested by one sentence in it, viz.: "I submit that it will be time enough to advise the churches 'to appoint a day of their own' after the churches have approached the Government on

the subject and have failed to secure what they consider desirable."

On reading his "word of comment" my first thought was that of disappointment, it seemed he showed more anxiety about the reputation of Sir John Thompson than that of the Church, that he failed to apprehend your true motive or appreciate your wish or desire, which was so plainly stated in your first words, viz., "Whether Thanksgiving Day in this Dominion is to be what its name indicates or a mere holiday is a question that should be settled at once," and further on, "Perhaps the better way would be for the churches to appoint a day of their own." Can it be that he showed undue anxiety and sensitiveness when it was not needed when he objects to what he calls "your attack on Sir John Thompson in this connection"? You reply very correctly to it by saying "As ostensible head of the administration the acting Premier comes in for his share of public criticism." I cannot see that you have done Sir John a wrong, or that "you write as though the Presbyterian Church had entered into 'negotiations' with Sir John Thompson and endeavoured to 'arrange' this matter," and so on, unless your remark, "the sooner we get out of it the better," can be construed to mean that such negotiations had actually taken place. Neither Mr. Macdonnell nor yourself, I suppose, had any thought that any such thing was done.

Am I to infer that Mr. Macdonnell believes that it is within the proper sphere and the duty of the civil rulers to appoint a national Thanksgiving Day, and not the duty of the Church to appoint a day of their own until the Government, after having been approached by the churches, decline to appoint one, and that it is the duty of the Church to approach the Government on the matter before they "appoint a day of their own"?

This opens up a pretty wide and very important question, and one that ought not to be kept in the background, but one that "should be settled at once." Many would rejoice if Mr. Macdonnell and all those on Zion's watch-towers would be anxious to aid in its proper and speedy settlement.

It seems to me a matter of much importance at this time that this question should be settled, but who can or where are the proper parties to settle it? As long as the State goes out of its proper sphere and intermeddles with other men's matters, whether they be individuals or church organizations, so long will incongruous things be exhibited, so if individuals or church organizations go out of their proper spheres and intermeddle incongruous things will be done. To my mind it is not a pressing duty, and perhaps will not be a duty until such time as Church and State are synonymous terms—have become assimilated—for the civil rulers to appoint a Thanksgiving Day to be observed by all and sundry, but a most pressing duty for the churches to appoint one to be observed faithfully by its members and adherents. Thanksgiving is prayer or a part of prayer, but there is another part equally incumbent in order that the thanksgiving be acceptable, viz., confession, which involves repentance and reformation. How can we reasonably expect our civil rulers to be a pattern to us in this, or even consistent in proclaiming a Thanksgiving Day worthy of the name? "The king can do no wrong" is a significant expression. In our dispensation and system of things the members of the Government are the Sovereign's counsellors, advisers, ministers or servants, but in these times in which we live these ministers do not admit having done wrong when charged with it, in the proper place, at the proper time and by the proper parties, but deny having done wrong by denying having done that with which they are charged, and use improper means to prevent legitimate enquiry which, if it did not or could not establish the wrongdoing, might at least for the satisfaction of all concerned make manifest and declare their innocence, and thus show them to be worthy of their high office.

\* We read in the Book of Books: The people of Nineveh believed God, and they proclaimed a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them, and the tidings reached the King of Nineveh and he arose from his throne and laid aside his robe from him, and covered himself with sackcloth and sat in ashes. What profound instruction is here for us! Are we better than the people of Nineveh were or more worthy when we consider our privileges, which they did not enjoy? Are the churches prepared and in a proper mood to observe such a day? Are the church rulers prepared to proclaim it? What mean these union thanksgiving services? you ask the other day. It is easy and profitable to ask such questions, it may be easy to shirk or neglect to answer them, but it might not be profitable. Surely it is a pressing duty for the churches to appoint and observe such a day for themselves. Is it not at our peril, and perhaps the peril of this Dominion of which we form such a considerable and important part, if we continue to neglect such a duty and precious privilege? You, Mr. Editor, have been led, through the incongruity of the Dominion Government, to stir the soil in which is this seed which is now come to the surface and sunlight. I doubt not you will delight to tend and nourish it, and continue the good work until the fruit is ripe. May you have all needed help from the many zealous watchmen all over this broad Dominion! If I cannot give any real help I would like at some future time, if spared, to try and show what my answer would be to some of these questions. But meantime would much like to see some of our teaching elders come to your assistance, and glad if Mr. Macdonnell would give us, through the medium of your good paper, his views of these questions.

A MEMBER OF THE CHURCH.

November 21, 1892.