

## OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

### THANKSGIVING.

PART OF A SERMON BY REV. JAMES LITTLE, BOWMANVILLE.

"I will mention the lovingkindnesses of the Lord, and the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord hath bestowed on us."—1st Thess. v. 18

"In every thing give thanks"—1 Thess. v. 18

The sweet singer of Israel opens one of his beautiful songs of praise with the words, "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord." The very mention of lovingkindness received from God is profitable to the recipient. It is also well pleasing to the bestower. Every review we take of God's mercies tends to awaken and strengthen in our souls feelings of obligation, gratitude, and praise to Him, and if we cease to recall and meditate on his favours, they will soon fade from our recollection and be forgotten, and we will cease to have either sense of indebtedness or desire to give thanks for them. The return of an annual day of thanksgiving affords us a happy opportunity of taking such review, and of presenting the tribute of a becoming gratitude; and since we have been convoked to-day by the representative of the Crown to unite with all our fellow-countrymen in giving thanks for the mercies of the year to Him "from whom all blessings flow," we may conjoin in this service the duty of good citizens with that of humble Christians. And we earnestly ask the Lord to be in this and in all the assemblies throughout the Dominion, which meet to-day to render thanks for his mercies. May He both inspire and accept our united offering!

In the first part of the Scripture announced as our text we have the prophet Isaiah declaring that he "will mention the lovingkindnesses of the Lord and His praises, according to all that the Lord has bestowed on us," or, giving the first verb the causative sense contained in the original, putting for lovingkindnesses its synonym, *mercies*, and leaving out the pleonastic copulative *and*, we may read his words, "I will cause the mercies of the Lord to be remembered, the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord hath bestowed on us." Thus the prophet recalls and makes mention of God's mercies bestowed on His people, both that He may cause them to remember favours already received, and that God may also be reminded of them through the expressions of his people's gratitude. In the second part of the text we have the apostle Paul urging on those he addresses the discharge of an important duty, viz. giving thanks for every thing God is pleased to bestow on us. Says he "In every thing give thanks." The apostle enjoins the duty for which the prophet's review of God's mercies prepares the way. They unite in furnishing us with a theme for our thought, which is appropriate for the occasion, and which I hope may be profitable to us, i.e., mentioning the objects and urging the duty of thanksgiving, or briefly, the objects and motive of our thanksgiving.

I. In the first place, we will endeavour to help you to remember God's mercies by making mention of some of them. When we consider them in their widest extent, they appear numerous as the blades of grass in spring, or the leaves before the winds of autumn. They are spread before us in the heavens over our heads, and come down on us in the floods of light which the sun scatters over us by day, and the moon and stars by night. We also enjoy them in the bounties which a generous earth beneath our feet so freely yields to supply the wants of all things that live. All nature is full, and overflows with God's mercies, even as springs of sparkling and refreshing waters when gushing from an unseen and inexhaustible source; also in the capacities and cravings of our natures in connection with the abundant means provided for appropriately filling and satisfying them. As in our own constitution and nature, so in the constitution and nature of things, God's mercies abound. In the managing as in the working of the world God shews his benevolence toward all sentient creatures. He affords provision and protection even to the weakest of his creatures, through those instincts for seeking needed food, and readiness for escaping from impending danger, which He has given them. It would be most pleasant, did time permit, to traverse these fields over which God's mercies are scattered so liberally, and gathering some of them, to cause you to remember them. But we must limit our survey by

the time at our disposal and by the object for which we have to-day been called together. We shall therefore employ the time remaining to us in bringing before you, under a few general points of view, the mercies which God has bestowed on us as a people during the year.

We may first mention in a general way the increase of our temporal prosperity in the year. The channels of all kinds of business flow with a fuller and more vigorous current than for some time before. All our industries are both more active and remunerative. Agriculture, manufacturing and commercial pursuits and interests have made generous returns for the skill and labour invested in them; also, every kind of labour finds ready employment and fair wages. The increase of our fields and of our stocks is not merely equal to meet the wants of home consumption, but yields a large surplus for the wants of those who elsewhere need them. Then the facilities for transportation of all marketable products is increasing through the enterprise of competing lines, as well as the opening up of new ones. Besides, the area for the profitable prosecution of farming and agricultural industries is widening indefinitely in the new and productive lands of the North-West. In them a rapidly increasing population, whose enterprise and perseverance must command success, will be sure to attract many new settlers to that new region. The outlook for national development as well as personal advantage in this vast field is most promising. There are good possibilities there opening before us, and while we hail them with joy, we admit it is this rather than what is actually realized for which we are grateful. It is with us, to a large extent, as when we look on a fine and healthy child who promises by-and-by to become a vigorous man, we are delighted with the child, not because we see him actually a man, but because we see in him the possibilities of all we admire in a man. We see greatness in type, in promise, as it were in prophecy. These great possibilities will in due time become, no doubt, great realities. The future which opens before the country now is, and for many years must be, toward the west. One of the chief factors in realizing a full success will be the successful opening and operating of that great national work, the Canada Pacific Railroad. When it rushes over the thousands of miles between the eastern and western borders of the country, it will be the bearer of thousands of thrifty settlers to their new fields, and of carrying their products to the markets of the east. As then we take the most cursory view of our increasing prosperity for the year, we thank God as well for the possibilities opening before us, as for all actually realized. But to be more specific, we must mention the general enjoyment of good health by our people during the year as a great mercy for which we are to give thanks. It is indeed true that not a few have borne pain or been under the power of disease. Some have been afflicted in the members of their families, and the homes of others have been darkened by the shadow of bereavement. This must be true in every year of our world's history. There can be no escape from it while we are liable to disease and death. We have not been visited, however, by any distressing epidemic, wasting plague, or noisome pestilence, though a year ago numerous predictions of such calamities were made by prophets of evil, who saw fearful omens in the sky portending great disaster in this year. It was asserted that because certain of the larger planets would be in conjunction, and in their orbits would be in the position of *perihelion*, great climatic and atmospheric disturbances would take place, and malarial influences become so active that all great centres of population in the old world would by disease be decimated or wholly depopulated. No such scourges, we are happy to say, have wasted the people of the east, nor disturbed us of the west. There has not even been the appearance of that too frequent and always dreaded visitant, the yellow fever, to any portion of the southern seaboard. It is God, the God of Providence, who is full of goodness and mercy, and not chance, or astrology, or luck, who rules in the realm of life and health. And we give joyful thanks to Him to-day for shielding us from all such calamities, and for clothing our faces with the glow of health, as well as our loved ones who are not with us.

But again, for the blessing of peace throughout the land, and around all our widely extended border, we render thanks to-day. No sounds of war have been heard either from invading foe or of civil strife. Our

tranquillity has been so undisturbed that we have been able to devote our undivided strength and time to prosecuting the arts of peace. Those of us who know nothing of the evils of war from experience of them may be well satisfied to remain long in practical ignorance of them. For soon it lays the hand of a complete paralysis on every industry, and stays the productive energies of a people. It also wastes their accumulations and destroys their resources; besides, it spreads feelings of insecurity and alarm among a people. With a frontier so vast and a population so sparse as ours, great would be our danger if nature, happy circumstances and the favour of Providence did not combine for our defence. But on three sides we have the impregnable defences of nature—the Atlantic Ocean on the east, the Pacific on the west, and along our undefined northern border we have a fortification stronger than a Chinese wall, in the girdle of almost perpetual ice and snows encircling us. Then along our vast southern frontier we have a powerful and friendly neighbour, to whom we are related by the strong ties of sameness of origin, of language, of religion, and of civilization; and never have these ties united us in closer or stronger friendship, we are happy to believe, than at the present time. Long may we each, pursuing the path of his own orbit, exert a beneficial influence on the other, and therein move on to the highest prosperity!

Closely related to the blessing of peace is the universal prevalence of security and civil order. The fabric of civil government is constructed, and power is lodged in the hands of its chief officers mainly for the protection of life and property. We are surely enjoying these blessings in a pre-eminent degree. Also, justice is dispensed with impartial hand to all the people, and is not swayed from its proper course by either personal influence or interests. We even venture to assert that no country of such extent, at so early a period in its civil life, can boast a greater degree of order and security; nor has any country under like circumstances sustained a judiciary so able, so far above reproach, and so faithful to its high trusts. It is matter of gratitude, and perhaps of congratulation, that though we are not far from the bitterness of political agitation and party strife, no outrage has, during the year, been committed against any of our leaders or rulers.

We looked with horror at the sad spectacle presented to us a few weeks ago of the head of a great and free state suddenly struck down by the murderous bullet of a cowardly assassin! and this when he was in the prime of life, in the enjoyment of rare popularity, and fulfilling to the general satisfaction the high trusts which not long before had been committed to him by the voice of the popular suffrage. We abhor and detest the crime which has deprived our neighbours of the United States of a citizen so irreproachable, of a statesman so able, and of a President so exemplary. We even wonder that in a country regarded as the home of freedom and the guardian of liberty, so fell an outrage could be perpetrated; and it is also saddening, though not perhaps so strange, as we roll the curtain of the year a little farther back, to gaze on another tragedy in some respects so like this, but in others so wholly unlike it, i.e., the destruction of the life of the Czar of the ancient autocracy of Russia by a missile hurled by that incarnation of anarchy and destructiveness known as Nihilism. Alexander II., though not the head of a popular government nor sovereign of a free people, was yet a lawful, and, in comparison with most of his predecessors on the throne of Russia, a clement ruler. It will, no doubt, be a topic which will interest some of the students of political history to explain how in the same year, in the broad light of day, by similar means, while each was peacefully pursuing his proper duties, the heads of two countries so different in their forms of government, in their political principles, and in the exercise of popular rights and enjoyment of popular freedom, should be cut off in so tragic and so cowardly a manner. We do not boast of, but are thankful for, freedom during the year from such outrages on the lives of our honoured and prominent citizens. And we heartily thank God for peace, good order and security, in all parts of our country, for all classes of our people.

Also, we must recall and mention another mercy which God has bestowed upon us in the bountiful harvest and fruitful year He has given us. The increase of the field has been generous. We have plenty to supply the wants of all our people and also our cattle,