

Let us Give Thanks

A recent visitor to Winnipeg reports that he gave up his seat on the street-car twelve times to lady passengers without ever hearing a word of thanks. In this he may have exaggerated or he may have been deaf, but at least he called attention to a danger that is ever present in a land where men are given over to gallantry. Ladies are so accustomed to receiving this proper courtesy from men that they sometimes take it as a matter of course and forget that it is a courtesy rather than a legal right. In some countries this courtesy is not extended. A young lady from Manitoba relates that recently she was travelling between Buffalo and Toronto and that she gave up her seat to a tired mother who was carrying a small baby. Meantime she had to stand beside the husband, while a dozen young men gazed at her in a critical way without offering her a seat. Shortly afterwards a seat became vacant, and the husband made a dash for it, leaving our young Winnipeg lady to stand all the way to Toronto. The young lady was careful to say that the husband was evidently not a Canadian. Let us hope he was not. And as we hope courtesy will ever be a recognized trait of Canadians, we can hope at the same time that gratitude for courtesy bestowed will be equally common.

Nor need gratitude be expressed for courtesy alone, but for every favor from every source. The favors received by the people of Western Canada are so many, that they should, of all people, have thankfulness in their hearts and praises on their lips.

The Problem of the West

By William Lutton

Interesting discussions took place at the recent meeting of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, in Toronto, on the problem of the spiritualization of the West, which found its chief expression it was said, in materialism.

Several of the younger ministers, who had been sent to settlements remote from civilization, spoke of the vicious conditions which obtained in raw settlements, when groups of differing nationalities, belonging for the most part, to the submerged tenth, in older lands, found themselves free from the restraining religious and other influences which held them in leash in European countries.

It is not that the settlers desire or countenance immoral conditions; but wherever the nucleus of a town is formed, certain extraneous elements, vicious in their nature and purpose, engraft themselves as features of the new life. These do not endure; for when the school, the church and the civic expression find themselves, grossly vicious elements and features disappear. Much will remain which is morally indefensible; but the majority of the people will be found desiring, in the main, approximation to decency of life and habit. The people who come to us in the West are for the most part the victims of economic systems in the old world which still keep the masses in ignorance and poverty, and still show, especially on the European continent, the oppressions of old and ruthless feudal systems. They have been dispossessed of the land, and forced to herd in cities where they have been submerged by the untoward circumstances of their condition.

When such people hear of the opportunity in the West, their chief obsession is to share in the amazing wealth of which they hear such thrilling stories. They have known great state religions which have kept them aloof and humble and poor. In the West they have found free spaces, independence, freedom of volition, opportunity to develop

and progress. They are keyed up. They kiss the soil in reverent token of thanks and ownership.

Every thought and purpose is to do, to acquire, to make themselves over in the new. Small wonder that the spiritual is neglected for the material. The spiritual has been associated in their minds with elaborate metaphysical creeds, the A B C of which they were unable to understand. Moreover these creeds had little comfort for the masses, they solved no economic problem, they did not fill the larder, they did not pay the rent or taxes, they did not find employment at living wages.

At first, the heady sense of freedom provokes license in ill regulated organisms. Even, however, when wholesome civic institutions have been set up, materialism will remain. We see it in every new land. All are obsessed by it. Even those in whom the spiritual lingers, over-laid with outward cares, confess the drawings of the material.

What has the church done?

Not enough, according to the statements made at the recent meeting of the General Assembly. Several speakers addressed the great meetings, with an uneasy sense of pessimism, as regards the West—not as to its prosperity, of which there was evidence on every hand, but with respect, first, to the possible limitation of assimilation on the part of the foreign elements, and, second, in respect of the spiritual ideal in life. It was mournfully insisted that there was doubt as to the outcome in these two regards. The people it was said, in many places, had not begun to understand the meaning of citizenship after the British model, while as for spiritual feeling, this seemed wholly absent.

This was a doleful picture enough; but those who have made the West a study are indeed startled to consider the amazing problem which awaits solution there, in the two regards referred to at the Toronto meetings.

Nevertheless the church has had the wisdom to see the folly of duplicating denominations with the old bewildering creeds. If corporate union has not been realized, co-operation, especially in a new country like the West, making at once for simplicity and social service, can be employed. The cry is for more men, for more money, for more machinery, but if the North-West is to be spiritualized in its manifold racial and linguistic expression, it must be through a medium which will be at once direct and strong and sympathetic, which will reach the common people not stooping from a height, but walking step by step and side by side with the great bulk of the new citizens.

Keep the eyes and ears open when you visit any of the towns and cities of the West, and materialism will be all too evident. There is, however, a candor and heartiness about it which almost compels admiration. In the older lands, it was the "other world" which impended.

This was a vale of tears in which, according to the decree of Providence, a few favorites were permitted to have a good time while the bulk of the people were to be miserable in order that in another world they might have eternal recompense—a happy notion which kept the "people" humble, and allowed the classes to give Lucullan banquets.

Our Heritage

Consider our national heritage. In arable land, in forest, mine, water stretches, there is nothing on this wide earth, can compare with our own possessions. And all this we obtained freely. Those who came before us

were too early and those who succeed us will be too late to receive all this as a gift. We have been selected out of all people of all time to receive free homesteads. Let us be thankful. The truly thankful heart will not rest satisfied to utter empty platitudes, little lip praises that do not warm the heart of the Giver and that do not enrich the soul of the receiver. There is a thankfulness that ends in deeds. Our duty and supreme privilege is to use wisely, to conserve carefully what a kind Providence has bequeathed us. The grateful heart is not wasteful. All the good things of God are given to be used so that posterity may be the better. Maternal and paternal love were not implanted in the heart without a purpose. Our very natures compel us in every act to think of those that must follow after.

The Harvest

Consider what we have received this year. Probably never before in the history of the West was there such a bountiful harvest. We count our grain by train loads, we estimate it in hundreds of millions of bushels. The sun and rain came in season, the wind stirred the growing plants and warded them from disease. All that men had to do during the long warm days was to watch and wait and wonder. And now that the fields have been reaped shall there not be a hearty song of praise, a thanksgiving sincere, which will be followed by a decision to use the gift wisely—for God's glory and the good of mankind? For that is no true thanksgiving which falls short of this. The aim of living was forever set forth in that great commandment—Thou shalt love the Lord thy God and thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. A thankful people is a generous people. Every gift from God is a test of worthiness to receive further gifts.

International Peace

Consider our peaceful relations during the year. We have had no war and no rumor of war. We have lived in friendly intercourse with our neighbors and the bonds of friendship are growing stronger. Every year we are adding to our people scores of thousands of Americanized settlers. The people across the line are becoming as well known to us, and as companionable as the people of the Eastern provinces. Though political unity is lacking, the social and commercial ties are more numerous than ever. We should indeed be thankful that we are able to show how two great nations can live side by side like two friendly neighbors. They are none the less true to home because they delight in one another's company and because the sons and daughters intermingle freely and love each other.

Nor has our love for the Mother Land grown any less. How can we fail to love such a Mother? During the year we have been troubled as to how we could best help our Mother. None the less is our love sincere, and we can say with all filial devotion "Daughter am I in my mother's house But mistress in my own."

We have indeed been blessed during the year in our international relations, and we can return unfeigned thanks. As we do so, shall we not determine that peace must continue? Neither the loud clamors of military leaders, nor the frenzied appeals of the manufacturers of ship-armor and war equipment will induce us to quarrel with our fellows. Our mission is not to destroy, but to save. We should be more than grateful that just at this time there is in command of international policies in the countries that bear the closest relation to us, such lovers of peace as Sir Edward Grey and William Jennings Bryan.