

Messenger and Visitor

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Thanksgiving.

Thursday of the present week has been proclaimed by the Government of our country a day of public thanksgiving to God in recognition of the blessings of the year. There are perhaps a few persons who do not approve of this act of the Government, regarding it as an invasion by the civil authority of a sphere which does not belong to it. If such a view as held, we need not say that it is one in which we do not share. The proclamation of a day of public thanksgiving appears to us eminently fitting as a recognition of the fact that the people of Canada are in general terms a Christian people—a people to whose thought theism is fundamental, who recognize the existence of an Infinite Being as the source of their own lives and of all that ministers to their happiness. This very general belief of our people in a God in whom they live and move and have their being may surely find some fitting reflection in the words or acts of their Government, and how more appropriately than in the annual proclamation of a day of public thanksgiving? Of course this proclamation is suggestive or advisory, and not mandatory. No attempt is made to compel anyone to worship on that day or in any way to simulate a thankfulness which he does not feel. The irreligious and unthankful may be as much so on Thanksgiving Day as on any other day of the year, without any apprehension of civil penalties. Nobody's liberty, religious or irreligious, is interfered with by the proclamation of a Thanksgiving Day. But that proclamation has a value and an appropriateness in that it is on behalf of the people generally a recognition of God and His goodness, and because it affords the opportunity for all grateful and devout hearts throughout the land to unite, on one day and with one accord, to give public thanks to the Infinite Author and Dispenser of good in recognition of the benefits continually received at His hand, and especially in view of the blessings of the year.

There is perhaps no country whose people have greater reason for uniting in a general public thanksgiving than Canada. We may well be thankful for this country which God has given us. It is a country great in extent and in resources. In its fertile lands, its fisheries, its forests, its minerals, its waterways and its water-powers the country has resources and means of development almost unparalleled. Its climate is temperate and healthful, and no country is better adapted to the production of vigorous manhood. Its people live in the enjoyment of the fullest measure of civil and religious liberty. They are a people richly blessed in their ancestry, their education and their institutions. There is no country where justice is more profoundly respected, and where the administration of justice through the laws is more prompt and equitable. It is a people which has been greatly blessed in respect to its religious teachers and in the moral principles which have been instilled into its life. In what the country is in itself, in its history and the results of the work of generations of patriotic and God-fearing men and women, the Canadian people of this time have abundant reason for the most grateful recognition of the Divine Hand which has been shaping their destinies.

Considering the record of the year, every devout heart must feel that there is abundant reason for gratitude to the Giver of all good. As a whole the labors of the husbandman have met with fair returns, and the Northwest grain crop is of unprecedented extent and value. Other departments of industry have proved fairly remunerative, trade and

commerce are increasing in volume, peace has prevailed within our borders, no great disasters have occurred, and in respect to the material welfare of the country generally there is much that should inspire profound thanksgiving.

In view of these great and numberless tokens of the goodness of God to us as a people, one might hope that there would be a sincere and universal expression of thanksgiving, and that on Thursday next the churches all over this wide Dominion would be crowded with Christian worshippers, eager to express the feelings of their hearts in praise and adoration to the good God who has so bountifully opened his hand toward this land. If it should be so it would be a beautiful and becoming thing and a prophecy of good for Canada. But judging from the record of the past "Thanksgiving Days," one may well doubt if there will be generally any eager disposition to heed the Thanksgiving proclamation. Doubtless there will be a full attendance at the festal board where the thanksgiving turkey is discussed, the places of amusement will be well patronized and the saloons will not be empty. But how many of the people of Canada will visit their places of worship, to consider God's benefits, to confess their gratitude for heavenly mercies, to acknowledge their transgressions and to unite in an anthem of praise to the "Parent of Good"? As a matter of fact we fear that the elements of devotion and thanksgiving do not enter largely into the celebration of the day. Thanksgiving Day, as it is commonly kept, makes far greater demand on the digestive than on the devotional faculties of the people. It seems to be interpreted, even by many who are called religious, as being addressed to the animal rather than to the spiritual side of our natures. This ought not to be so.

Editorial Notes.

—The Examiner of New York comes to us this week in a complete new dress of type and other changes, giving it a very handsome appearance.

—Dr. P. S. Henson of Chicago, has accepted the call of the Hanson Place Church, Brooklyn, N. Y. The addition of two such men as Dr. Lorimer and Dr. Henson to the Baptist ministry of New York is notable and must make itself strongly felt for good in the great American metropolis. Where the men are to come from to fill the places left vacant by the removal of these eminent preachers from Boston and Chicago does not yet appear. We have heard the name of a Canadian Baptist pastor mentioned as a not unlikely successor to Dr. Henson.

—At the recent Baptist Congress in New York, the principal subjects discussed were: The Consolidation of our National Societies; Modern Evangelism; The Function of Penalty in Christianity; The Ethics of Gambling; Cosmopolitanism versus Patriotism, and the Keswick Movement. The subjects, which are all of deep interest and some of them of a character to tax the best thought of the ablest thinkers, appear to have been discussed with much ability. The Watchman, in closing an editorial report of the meetings and summary of the discussions, says that as a whole the sessions reached a very high level, and it was generally felt that the New York meeting was certainly one of the best that the Congress had ever held.

—Though the Rev. John Jasper is no more, yet the world is not, it appears, left without advocates and defenders of the "sun do move" theory. The Independent declares that it has evidence that there is in the United States a denomination of German Lutherans who reject the Copernican system of astronomy, and hold that the earth is the centre of the universe, and that the heavens revolve around it after the Ptolemaic fashion. The Independent says that Professor Pieper of the Concordia College, St. Louis, President of the St. Louis Synod supports this view, as does also the Rev. L. Lange of Pacific Grove, Cal., author of a learned pamphlet opposing the Copernican astronomy in the interests of Bible truth.

—Apropos of the hand-shaking ordeals experienced by the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York in Canada, the London Chronicle recalls an amusing story connected with Mr. Gladstone's memorable Midlothian tour. On one occasion, so the story runs, there was a great hand-shaking ordeal at the window of the old gentleman's railway carriage, and he was rapidly getting the worst of it. A stalwart young policeman who accompanied Mr. Gladstone proved equal to the occasion. Crouching behind the great man and thrusting his hand under Mr. Gladstone's Inverness cape, the muscular 'peeler' gave each comer a grip that had no lack of cordiality. 'The auld man's uncommon veegerous at his time o' life,' observed one unsuspecting Scot as he stroked his fingers. 'He is that,' concurred another of the policeman's victims, 'but did ye notice his nails?'

—A reformer should have clean hands. This fact is illustrated in the experience of Mr. Morris, lately Mayor of Ottawa. He had been engaged in what would seem to be the praiseworthy work of spurring up the police force of the city to a more efficient discharge of its duties. The Chief of Police seems to have felt the spur somewhat acutely, and, as a demonstration of the Chief's determination to enforce the law without respect to persons, His Worship found himself summoned before the Police Magistrate of the city to show cause why he should not be fined for violating the license laws. The Mayor was obliged to confess to an infraction of the law in respect to the provision for early closing on Saturday evenings. A fine of five dollars was duly imposed and paid, and as the conviction involved the unseating of the mayor and his disqualification for two years, there was nothing for Mr. Morris to do but to present his resignation and retire into private life.

—Chancellor Kirkland in addressing the students of Vanderbilt University said: "This University was put here not primarily to help you make a living, but to help you make a life." And the distinction between "making a living" and "making a life," is one of immense importance for all students both in and out of College to keep in mind. The motive indicated by the one expression is higher than that indicated by the other as the heavens are higher than the earth. All men and women should regard themselves as students in God's University, and his purpose for them is fulfilled in "making a life," conformed in its motive and endeavor to the perfect example of Jesus Christ. It was the essence of the Great Teacher's doctrine embodied in his Sermon on the Mount, that men should regard the making of a life as the supreme consideration, and for "a living" trust in the bountiful providence of Him who feeds the birds and clothes the flowers.

—The decision of the Imperial Privy Council in respect to the validity of the Manitoba Prohibitory Law has been announced, and although the form in which the matter is put by the despatches leaves a great deal to be desired in point of definiteness, it is generally understood that the decision of the Privy Council reverses the judgment of the King's Court of Manitoba, which declared the law ultra vires, and that accordingly the validity of the Manitoba Act is now affirmed by the court of final authority. The Minister of Justice for Canada is said to express the opinion that the result of the Privy Council's judgment is to establish the principle of provincial authority in the matter of prohibitory liquor legislation. The judgment will therefore have important bearings in other Provinces of the Dominion, and especially in Ontario, where Premier Ross had promised that if the principle of provincial prohibition should be affirmed, a law as effective as conditions would admit would be brought forward.

—A few new cases of smallpox have been reported and two or three deaths from the disease have occurred, in St. John during the past week, but on the whole the situation is not greatly changed. Most of the patients are reported to be doing well. The authorities have at length succeeded in securing a property for an epidemic hospital in an isolated position in the neighbourhood of the city, and it is presumed that the danger to the public health of having cases of the disease quarantined in houses in different parts of the city will be removed. There is certainly need of the utmost carefulness and vigilance in order to the stamping out of the disease. Rev. H. H. Roach continues in his ministrations to the sick and the bereaved, and we are glad to report that his health continues good. Most of the schools in the city are running as usual, but some of them with diminished attendance. With the exception of the Tabernacle church which is closed, the usual services are, we believe, being held in all the churches. In some cases the attendance at the Sunday Schools was smaller last Sunday than usual, but the congregations in most of the churches were not, we believe, seriously diminished.

Acadia Notes.

DR. KEIRSTRAD'S LECTURE.

Dr. Keirstead returned from his trip to Europe ten days ago, in good health, and laden with spoils gathered from the rich fields of the old-world life. He was heartily welcomed by us all, first for his own sake, and secondly for the sake of the spoils which we all expected to share. The proposal was made that an evening should be given to this distribution of the spoils, to which the Doctor generously consented, and Friday evening, the 22nd inst., was fixed upon for what he preferred should be called a Lecture-Talk on his tour. A large audience gathered, including the teachers and students of the three institutions and people from the town.

It is a wonderful experience for any man to visit the old world for the first time. Much, however depends upon the man who makes the visit. Given a man of rich and varied learning, possessed of the historic sense, a man of poetic insight, of large emotional capacity, of