

Messenger and Visitor

The Maritime Baptist Publishing Company Ltd
Publishers and Proprietors.

TERMS } \$2.00 PER ANNUM.
 } \$1.50 IF PAID IN ADVANCE.

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Printed by PATERSON & CO., 92 Germain St.

Thanksgiving Day.

Thursday, the 24th inst., has been proclaimed by the Government of Canada as a day of public thanksgiving to Almighty God in view of the blessings of the year. The annual proclamation of a thanksgiving day, which is now of many years standing, is doubtless considered to be in harmony with a general desire on the part of the Christian people of Canada. No particular directions are given as to the holding of thanksgiving services or the manner in which they are to be conducted. The proclamation involves nothing in the way of compulsion. It names a day on which all devout and thankful hearts may, if they will, at one time and with one accord, worship God in thanksgiving and praise for the blessings of the year, and unite in entreating the continuance of the Divine favor. If, however, any person or any congregation chooses to disregard the proclamation, the civil authorities call no one to account for doing that which is right in his own eyes as on other days of the year.

It would seem to us to be a good and comely thing if there might be a general and hearty response on the part of the people to this thanksgiving proclamation. It would be a prophecy of good for Canada if, on Thursday next, the religious congregations all over the land should be found assembling for worship, as they are accustomed to do every Lord's Day,—ministers and people uniting "with all their powers of heart and tongue" to declare the goodness of the Lord, to express sorrow for our national sins and to commend the country to the divine mercy and watch-care. As a matter of fact, however, we fear that the elements of devotion and thanksgiving do not enter largely into the celebration of the day. Comparatively few in number are the congregations which are accustomed to assemble for worship on thanksgiving day, and the attendance upon the services which are held is correspondingly small. To the great body of the people, the day, so far as any significance is attached to it, means simply a holiday—an opportunity for recreation, feasting and amusement. In this latitude even the devout women seem to value thanksgiving-day chiefly as a favorable opportunity for holding turkey suppers in the interests of the church treasures. On the whole no one will be inclined to dispute that thanksgiving-day, as it is kept, makes far greater demands upon the digestive than upon the devotional faculties of the people. It is practically interpreted as being addressed to the animal rather than to the spiritual side of our natures.

But if the people of Canada could for a single day withdraw their minds from business and from pleasure in order to take account of their national mercies and consider the blessings of the year, they would surely find that the tokens of the Divine goodness are not few, or far to seek. No other people inhabiting this planet has greater reason for gratitude. In the land itself, its climatic conditions favorable to the production of the sturdiest manhood, its vast extent, its immense and various resources which every passing year does something to reveal and to develop, its political institutions giving the fullest measure of civil and religious liberty to its people, its relation to the mother land and its position under a flag upon which the sun does not set, and which, wherever it floats, is a symbol and a guarantee of freedom and righteous government—in Canada herself, in what she is and what, in the providence of God, she may become, we have that which should cause every reflecting mind to glow with feelings of the truest patriotism and of humble, grateful trust in God.

The blessings of the year just passing have been bestowed in no stinted measure. The harvest as a whole has been bountiful, and this, with the growing development of the country's resources, has

stimulated trade and commerce. In most departments of industry men have reaped fair, if not abundant, returns for their labors, and probably no country can be named in which the necessities and comforts of life are more generally enjoyed by the people. We have to thank God, too, not only for the inestimable blessing of continued peace, but for the fact that our relations with our neighbors to the south, and indeed the relations generally between the two great branches of the English-speaking people, are more cordial than they have been for many years past, and apparently with good prospect that this happier condition of things will endure. The war which has occurred during the year and rumors of war, still rife, ought surely at this time to inspire gratitude that within our borders there has been peace, while the danger that at times seems great that Britain may be drawn into conflict with one or more of the great European powers, affords reason for apprehension and causes our prayers for the perpetuation of peace to be offered with a keener sense of the value of the boon for which we pray.

Light and Darkness.

Our Bible lesson this week contains counsels and admonitions which no young man can afford to treat with indifference. The distinction between moral good and evil, between wisdom and folly, uprightness and wickedness, is as real and as vital as the distinction between light and darkness, health and disease, purity and corruption, life and death. There was never greater need than today that this distinction be clearly recognized and emphasized. The influence of the world, the flesh and the devil is ever tending to obliterate these distinctions, putting darkness for light and light for darkness, and invoking confusion in the minds of men as to what is good and what is evil. The subtle serpent power which has been in the world from the beginning still insinuates its doubts and falsehoods into every ear that will listen. "This fruit so pleasant to the sight and taste," it says, "was it not made for man's use? Surely no poison lurks in it. This way so beautiful, so inviting, cannot surely lead to death." Still the tempter cunningly persuades men that it is man's natural right to eat of every tree of the garden and that the fruit of transgression is not death, but god-like knowledge. And today, as of old, men and women listen to the voice of the serpent, while the poison of a practical atheism is insinuated into their hearts, conscience suffers a partial paralysis and the power of keen discrimination between good and evil is lost. It would be well if the preaching and teaching of this present age could be made such as to cause the eaters of forbidden fruit to feel that no thicket of moral sophistries can hide them from the All-Seeing Eye or from the Almighty Voice that calls the sinner to account.

Very urgent and very important is the admonition of the wise man to the youth whom he addresses, to be loyal to the truth. "Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go; keep her; for she is thy life." The truth is not merely to be discerned, but to be obeyed. The right way is not merely to be perceived or talked about, or even pointed out to others, it is to be walked in. This loyalty to truth and practical acceptance of wisdom involves equally a prompt turning away from evil as from a thing to be abhorred. "Enter not into the path of the wicked. . . . Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it and pass on." There must be no dallying with sinful pleasures, no experimenting with wickedness, no "sowing of wild oats" or playing with fire. If any young man wants to know what are the fruits of licentiousness there is plenty of evidence ready to his hand. No sane man thinks it necessary to thrust his hand into the fire in order to be assured that fire will burn. But too often the words of the wise and the results of human experience are disregarded. Young men somehow persuade themselves that the fire that has burned others will not burn them, that the quagmire in which others have sunk to perdition will afford them a firm and safe footing, and that what has been poison to others will be to them only a delicious and refreshing draught. No man is so strong that he can afford to play with the Maelstrom and Niagaras of sin, and it is no mark of wisdom or of courage to venture within the circle of their influence. Regard for others as well as for himself should keep the young

man to the ways in which it is safe for men to go. Suppose that a man can occasionally go to the theatre without injury to his own moral character, is he not bound to consider what the theatre is as a whole in its character and its influence, before, by giving it countenance and patronage, he commends it to others who will not, as he does, discriminate between its worse and better elements? Suppose one is able to drink wine or strong drink upon occasion without losing self-control or becoming dominated by the drink habit, is he not bound by considerations which no true man can disregard to consider the terrible results of the drink traffic as a whole and the effect of his own influence upon the great numbers of men who are so easily led away and destroyed by strong drink?

The teaching of the lesson is not merely that the evil way is to be avoided, because it is evil and works ill to men, but the path of wisdom and uprightness is to be chosen because it is good and in following it there is great reward. The man who walks in the way of wisdom has a sense of liberty. "When thou goest thy steps shall not be straitened; and if thou runnest thou shalt not stumble." These words recall the saying of our Lord: "If ye continue in my word, ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." The man who steadfastly follows the truth is like one who walks by the light of the rising sun. The pathway may not at first be clearly discerned, but every minute the light is growing and all things are coming more and more to appear in their true outlines and relations, the traveller's horizon constantly enlarges, any fears that he had missed the right way are banished as he proceeds and he rejoices in the light that shines more and more unto the perfect day. How forceful and how true in contrast is the description of that other way and its travellers, the wicked plunging on in the growing darkness, stumbling, and knowing not at what they stumble.

Editorial Notes

—The short article which appears in another column on "Ordination—What it Means," will be welcomed as a valuable contribution to the discussion of a subject, the importance of which is widely recognized. We are sure that the readers of the MESSENGER AND VISITOR would be glad to have more on the same subject from the same source.

—It is stated that the successor of the late Dr. John Hall in the pastorate of the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian church, New York, may probably be found in his son, the Rev. Thomas Cumming Hall. Mr. Hall is said to bear some resemblance to his father, but possesses greater energy and eloquence, combined with much of the directness which especially characterized the late Dr. Hall.

—Our Methodist brethren believe in the value of money in religious work, and they evidently believe also in their ability to raise it. Early in the year it was announced that the British Methodists, or Wesleyans, had resolved on raising a million pounds sterling as a Nineteenth Century fund for the prosecution of their work. Inspired by this example, Canadian Methodists at their General Conference resolved to undertake the raising of a similar fund of a million dollars. And now the Episcopal Methodists of the United States have set their hands to the work with the purpose of raising a Nineteenth Century fund of twenty million dollars.

—The Baptist congregations of St. John will this year as usual join in a united thanksgiving service. The service will be held at eleven o'clock Thursday morning. The place of meeting is to be the Main Street church, and Rev. A. T. Dykeman, of Fairville, is announced as the preacher. No doubt the discourse will be worthy of the occasion. There are many reasons why the service should be one of great interest and why the spacious audience room of the church should be filled with grateful worshippers, but we wish we could feel sure that half as much zeal will be manifested in the religious services of the morning as is sure to be expended in connection with the numerous church suppers of the evening.

—One result of the agitation in England over the advance of sacerdotalism, and its accompanying high church ritualism, in the Established Church

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