

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., 105 and 107 Germain St.

Thanksgiving Day.

The observance of an annual Thanksgiving Day is in our view a thing to be commended. But when we say "Thanksgiving Day" we have reference to the proper meaning of the word and not to the purposes to which what is called Thanksgiving Day is too generally devoted. With the large number of public holidays that we have, it may reasonably be questioned whether it is worth while for the Government to declare another day a holiday, for the sake of encouraging the people to engage in feasting in their homes or elsewhere and to devote themselves to such amusements, wholesome or unwholesome, as an idle day and their various tastes may suggest. If it is worth while to have a holiday for such purposes, it were better certainly to call it by some other name than Thanksgiving Day. In accordance, however, with what has become a time-honored custom, the Government of Canada has named Thursday, the 18th inst., as a day which the people may, if they will, observe by uniting in public thanksgiving to Almighty God in view of the blessings of the year. It seems indeed a right and a comely thing that the people of the land, recognizing the Divine Source of all their blessings, should thus on one appointed day, as with one accord and one voice, unite devoutly in thanksgiving and praise to the Infinite Giver of all good. What indeed could be regarded as a better indication of national health or a surer prophecy of coming good than to see all the people gathered on this one day in their places of worship, with the devout purpose of rendering praise and thanksgiving to God for national mercies, confessing national sins and shortcomings, and seeking the Divine mercy and help for days to come? If the men and women of Canada would, for one day in the year, lay aside their ordinary tasks, not for the purpose of feasting and merry-making, or the indulgence in some form of physical or mental relaxation, but for the purpose of drawing near to God on behalf of the nation and for the acknowledgment of national mercies, it would be a thing worthy of a people which calls itself Christian.

It would surely be impossible to find a people which has greater and more abundant reasons for national thanksgiving than ourselves. He who appoints to men the bounds of their habitations has given us a wide-stretching land, fair to behold and immensely rich in those resources which make for the material wealth of nations. These resources every passing year does something to reveal and to develop, thus indicating the great future which lies before us if only we shall make ourselves worthy of it. The climatic conditions of the country are such as develop the sturdiest qualities of physical and intellectual manhood. In the traditions of the races from which we are sprung we have a noble heritage. Our form of Government and political institutions afford to all classes of the people a most generous measure of civil and religious liberty. Our relations to the motherland and to the Empire of which we form a part assures us a position of respect and of growing influence among the nations. So that in this great new country of ours, which is, so to speak, now stretching its limbs in the consciousness of national adolescence,—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 the truest patriotism and every heart to burn with devout thanksgiving to the Infinite Source of good.

If we turn our attention more particularly to the past year we shall find that, like its predecessors, it has been laden with benefits. In the harvest of the year there has been indeed some falling off in comparison with the preceding year, especially in respect to the wheat crop of Manitoba. But with this exception, the crop of the year throughout the Dominion has not probably fallen short of a fair

average. There is no dearth, no wide-spread distress. The industries of the country have been generally in a flourishing condition, and in all departments of labor there have been fair if not large returns. The resources of the country are being developed. Especially is this true of the mineral resources of Cape Breton, where the stimulation of coal mining and the establishment of iron and steel works promise much for the future interests of that part of the country. There has been little interference, through strikes or other causes, with the course of industry and its productiveness. The laboring man in Canada appears to be fairly well satisfied with his lot. Owing largely to the good harvests of preceding years and a general stimulation of the world's commerce, there has been a remarkable expansion in the external trade of the country and the public revenues have been correspondingly increased.

It has been another year of peace within our borders, slightly disturbed indeed by the attempt of certain enemies of the country to destroy the locks of the Welland Canal, and by the rumors of the renewal of the Fenian raids which caused trouble in years gone by. The people of Canada should be in a position at this time to appreciate the blessings of peace as they have not been in the past, for though there has been peace at home, Canadian soldiers have been fighting for the Empire in South Africa. And those far-away battle-fields have seemed very near and very real to us, because exposed to their perils were thousands of brave lads who had gone out from our own communities and our own homes. And as Canada rejoices now at the prospect of soon welcoming home again many of the men who have so well upheld the honor of their country on the battlefield, we must not amid our congratulations forget that there is many a heart and many a home made sad, because of those whom war has claimed as its victims and who will return no more to their Canadian homes. War may sometimes be inevitable, but at best and always it is a terrible business, and as we unite with devout hearts in all parts of the Empire in thanksgiving that this costly war in South Africa is being brought to a close, we may well pray that our country may be kept from war, and that the blood and treasure expended in South Africa may result in peace on broader and firmer foundations, and in a larger measure of liberty for all the people of that land.

Lost Things Worth Finding.

The Scribes and the Pharisees found it difficult to understand Jesus, even when they were honest enough to wish to do so. We have no doubt that many of them were at times honestly perplexed in reference to his teaching and his actions. The precepts and the traditions in which they had been educated had led them to regard with contempt and loathing those classes who are designated in our Bible lesson of this week, and in other passages of the gospel, as publicans and sinners. Despising the precepts of the law and plunging into open sin, these people had, in the estimation of the Pharisees, cut themselves off from Israel and from the covenants of promise. They had no longer any lot or part with God's people, but were under the curse of the law, and a devout Israelite could no more have fellowship with them than he could with the heathen themselves. We can understand therefore how scandalous a thing it would seem to a devout Pharisee that a Jewish Rabbi should accept an invitation to dine in a publican's house, that he should show such an interest in this class of people and accord to them such a measure of esteem as was involved in his sitting at meat with them. There may therefore have been not a little perplexity as well as indignation and scorn in the murmuring of the Scribes and Pharisees when they said, "This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them." It will be observed that our Lord deals gently here with these murmuring Scribes and Pharisees, as he endeavors to win them to a truer view of their relations to their fellowmen by showing them, through the parables which follow, that though a man has fallen into sin and disgrace he is still a man, bearing the image of the Most High. Though a sinner, he is still within the circle of God's mercy, still in God's sight worth saving, and therefore surely not to be scorned and neglected of any who call themselves the children of God.

The two parables which are embraced in the les-

son differ somewhat in respect to the imagery employed, but in each the central truth taught is the same. It is the truth of God's compassion and redeeming grace toward sinners. God values men because they are men, and because there is in them a capacity for salvation and fellowship with himself. A sheep, though it has strayed from the flock, is still a sheep. It is one of the flock, it is needed to make the number complete, and though the ninety and nine are safe folded, the thought of that one sheep alone amid perils, so works upon the shepherd's heart that he leaves the ninety and nine and goes to seek the one that is lost. The piece of money which the woman had lost did not represent great value in itself, but its being lost did not make it the less a piece of money. It is one of her ten pieces, too, which she must have to make her little hoard complete. So with diligent hand and anxious heart she searches until she finds it. And if a lost sheep is of so much account to a shepherd, and a lost piece of money is of so much account to a woman, is it strange that a lost man is a matter of great account to God? Should the Scribe and the Pharisee be scandalized if they see the Divine Shepherd seeking the lost sheep of the House of Israel wherever they are to be found? Can any search be too eager, too painful, when its object is to reclaim for God that treasure the value of which is too great to be measured in terms of silver and gold—the soul of man?

It is worth while to observe how these parables call attention to the importance which lost things acquire to us because they are lost. If a woman loses one piece of money, that one lost piece begins at once to occupy her thoughts more than all the pieces that still are safe. One sheep lost from the fold so calls forth the shepherd's thought and sympathy that, leaving his flock to the care of others, he goes away into the wilderness to find the one that has gone astray. One child strayed away from the home immediately attracts to itself the thought of all the household. In like manner the case of the lost ones appeals to God, the Infinite Father of the household. So Jesus teaches "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which is lost." His mission was not to confer honor upon the good but to call the sinners to repentance. Christ calls his disciples into partnership with himself in the work of finding the lost.

There is joy over the finding of things that had been lost. The woman who has found her lost bit of money calls her neighbors to rejoice with her. The shepherd makes glad with his friends when he has found his sheep and brought it safe back to the fold. There is feasting and gladness in an earthly home when an errant son returns. But Heaven itself is glad when sinners return in penitence to their God. Doubtless it had never occurred to the Scribes and the Pharisees that anything which could occur in connection with publicans and sinners would cause joy in heaven, unless it were their entire destruction. The happiness of heaven over the redemption of the lost is one in which earth is invited to share. It is one in which Christ's people have shared largely, and there is none more worthy of men. But are the churches of Christ so filled with that joy today as it is their high privilege to be? If we had more of Christ's self-sacrificing love for the lost, should we not also know more of his joy over the redeemed?

Editorial Notes.

—Faith, someone has said, is the trolley which, reaching up and impinging on God's power, gives that power to our action so long as it is in the line of God's purpose. It is evidently all important that that line be followed. The car that leaves the track thereby separates itself from the source of power, and therefore soon comes to a standstill, if not also to destruction. The mistake that we are too apt to make is to suppose that we can have God's presence and power when our path does not coincide with His purpose.

—Preachers who turn away from Bible themes to discuss some subject of current interest, with the hope of tickling the ears of the people and attracting a multitude, make a great mistake. If a man who knows and loves and lives the gospel cannot get a hearing when he discusses the great truths which have to do with human sin and divine redemption, he may be sure that the people will not care much to hear him on any other topic. If a preacher finds his popularity waning, the one remedy for the case that is worth anything is to live and preach the gospel more profoundly.

—There are two questions which perhaps it would be well for us all to ask ourselves. One is—If I should be suddenly taken away from earth, and all my relations with the world made manifest, what would be the result

to my family and in business relations. The other, still more to be called away, between myself and

—Rev. Dr. Reid, Presbyterian church, Doukhobors of the opinion of the Divine in the beautiful Christian their communities their lessons to the pretation of the application of the every-day lives of ing all these amon much of the beau do manifest it, in found myself w churches could o sibility of appli Galicians, both much less satisfac dom of Austria, which are the co is much sickness fits of the more b munities, they to their own count for the winter an well as medical s of a New Testam

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The opening le last Monday even Haycock, M. A. served for two ye the departments o that time advan departments. Th appropriate inaug trees, books in r good in everyth The treatment w adjusted to the p form was felicite lecture was a ski wonderland of ge great interest and by the audience.

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