

## Our American Thanksgiving.

BY CHARLES S. ROBINSON, D. D.

Each year, from all our central and crowded cities, there is pouring forth a positive exodus of people, going down into the rural neighborhoods where their fathers have lived and died, in order that they may meet together and freshen the cherished associations of their youth. Generally it is "the old boys and girls" who are first and faithfulest in these annual flittings; those whose age is multiplying upon their heads, but whose young hearts persistently refuse to grow chill or forgetful nevertheless.

It so happens that we are called in the order of our lessons to study the festival of ancient Israel which most resembles ours. Leaving those to teach in the classes to point out the simple particulars of resemblance, it might be our privilege now to talk for a while together about the advantages of such a national custom.

1. For one thing, first and chief, there is the consideration that for all God's love and care for us there is due at least full acknowledgement of the hand which has bestowed our blessings.

"Be careful for nothing," is the encouraging admonition of inspired Scripture; "but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." One day in each year is surely not too much to be given to this formal rehearsal before God of our gains and prosperities. Israel surrendered seven days. When the plow is laid aside, and even the busy fall is still; when the autumn fruits are all safely housed under sure shelter, and even the Indian summer is over; when the glorious crisp frosts have come, filling the veins with vigor and the step with a more elastic spring; then indeed, it is a sight worth looking at and admiring, to see a great people, summoned by their chief magistrate, coming up devoutly to thank a beneficent Creator for his patient care of them all. It gives hope for the future.

2. In the second place, there is manifest advantage in these annual festivals growing out of the cultivation of our domestic affections, and the perpetuation of our home tastes and feelings.

It mingles religion with our best sympathies. He cannot be called a manly man, who did not feel himself a weaker man from the month when his praying mother died and was buried; or who does not feel himself a stronger, braver man, if now perhaps the beloved old voice still lives to be his counsel and his inspiration.

I speak very deliberately when I say this now: I do not know how I could ever be made to care for anyone or even to trust him, who, without awful cause, suffers himself to be estranged from those brothers who slept with him in the room next the sky, and heard in the winter frost, as each told his stories before going to sleep, the weird cracking of the beams overhead. I do not see how he could hope that pure starlight, like a shower of benediction, could ever fall upon him again on the other side of the roof. God gives men these sensibilities; and woe to him that defies his noblest nature in checking them! Let us get together, if we can, and keep together—God willing—for many and many a faithful fond year yet!

3. Again: there is a manifest advantage in these thanksgiving festivals found in the perpetuation of ancestral memories to which they are calculated most strongly and valuably to minister.

It is instinctive in the heart of every true man and woman to desire to live beyond the limits of an immediate generation. Some of us, who are not ready to confess we have been particularly ambitious or inordinately vain, do yet honestly feel it would be a sad mortification and a sore disap-

pointment to be even after some few years, forgotten. We toil hard for many a season to keep our name unsullied and preserve our fair fame unstained for the sake of our offspring. Grown people, I judge, are more thoughtful and appreciative in this respect than there is reason to expect children to be. When there is one boy, who really feels the worth of the education which the young Timothy received, I suspect there are a sorrowful score of Loises and Eunices, who modestly believe their own "unfeigned faith" ought to count for more than it does.

Thanksgiving times are excellent as reminders of a vanished generation of worthy ones and beloved. The young need to be drawn clear back now and then into association with the old. It is as edifying as it is pathetic to hear one of these old grandmothers, whom we are bound to respect, interrupting our hasty discussions at the chimney-corner with the quiet assertion: "Your father, boys, used to think and say so and so!" Just as if that ought to settle it on the instant, without any more talk! Possibly she is right.

Now in this there is not such pride as needs rebuke, nor any such sensibility as needs to make one ashamed, but a keen and far-sighted recognition of a profound truth, namely, that a nation of people grows by the gathered accretions of individuals; a line of genealogy is elevated in worth by the aggregated worth of such men and women as compose it. Children will be builded up more on that principle if they are kept in mind that they have ancestors, whose names are remembered in the annals of a decent past.

4. And this leads us on to mention, a fourth advantage derived from such an annual festival; it kindles and fastens an attachment between city and village life which is profitable to both.

Once, in the midst of David's troublous history, Saul was to be told by Jonathan that the young man had asked his leave "that he might run to Bethlehem his city." There was to be a yearly family gathering there. Now Bethlehem was a poor little town any way; but David, even when he became king, remembered how the cool water in the well by the gate used to taste, and he loved the old place because it was his; he wanted to go home, and get away from the palace.

Some of us feel very glad we were reared in the country rather than in the city; we cherish a loving regard for the prosperity of our old birth-places. If we have been making money, and have now a sort of competence, we propose to keep up things a little there. It may be assumed that the shutters on the church need some small fixing; the minister ought to have a parcel of books for his library, and we remember his fourth boy is going to college this autumn. Some of the stones in the graveyard are toppling, and the sexton is not quite sure, if he lays out two days' labor, that any one will be "responsible." The school house is sadly in want of a new bell. It is just as well to be somewhat public-spirited in the old town.

In every rope on every vessel in the British navy, the world over, there is always twisted one red strand; one more of slender body, but of imperishable color. And in every line of manly or womanly feeling—no matter how rude, no matter how delicately fashioned—there should be always twined a one sweet element of reverent honor and love for one's birth-place. The hills are fairer in the blue distance there than anywhere else; the blossoms are thicker, the autumn leaves are richer in color, the frosts are crisper, the snows are purer, the homes are brighter, and even the graveyard is the dearest on earth. One feels often like uttering over again the simple-minded and wise

words of old Barzillai: "Let thy servant, I pray thee, turn back again, that I may die in mine own city, and be buried by the grave of my father and of my mother."

5. Once more: These thanksgiving days are needed to keep our own family histories abreast of the times which the other families are having, while the rapid years are hurrying us all along.

Do you observe how queer these conferences are growing to be as time proceeds? Something fresh is revealed every year when the old boys and the old girls come home. What an eager interest when we try to teach our children to know each other, and love the aged faces we meet there! How the eyes glisten and the hearts leap, as we tell the little family secrets while the boys are out of doors!

How odd it seems to see William's children! And what quaint specimens of demureness Sister Martha brings up here to greet us on Thanksgiving day! How familiar become our confidences: "Stephen, your oldest boy is a splendid fellow; what are you going to do now that he is through college? Minister? Well, that is good! It is worth scripping for a little; and we shall all be proud of him." "Kate, how does Charley get on with his velocipede? Mother says her Gertrude has joined the church. And something else, too? You surprise me! Why, how old is she? Oh, how they do keep growing up! When did that happen? and do you approve of the young man?"

Then the dinner; and the eldest son carves; and Stephen's educated boy, that is going to be a minister, asks the blessing in grandfather's place—and never forgets that till the day he dies!

Then the snow fort, and the chestnuts in the evening, with a few stories; and then Kate's Gertrude makes the fire-lit room ring with a song; and Stephen puts in an appearance on the base while she carries the air, and breaks down as he knows the old mother remembers his father's voice twenty years ago. Then comes the thanksgiving prayer: mother chooses that this shall be made by her first-born, who henceforth is the high-priest of the family. And now the sandman is here with weights for little eyes; and so we all vanish into sweet sleep that folds us into unbroken rest. And on the morrow we go home with a softer, more gentle heart for every one.

6. Finally: The annual thanksgiving feast is valuable for opportunity it affords for quickening a lofty and true patriotism in the hearts of the people who love it and cherish it.

Thanksgiving Day is a bright symbol of religious liberty and popular freedom. All there is in our republican institutions which is priceless to our hearts is commended in the festival. In our country this is the only point at which the church and state come into contact; may God grant there shall never be so much as one other! The state invites the church to pray for peace and love.

Some of us can go no more to the old homesteads. We sit here in the twilight, and think it all over, however. And we come forth from the reverie, thanking God we once did have a sweet circle of faces to look upon. And we pray so humbly over and over again that we may be able still to keep the faith, to live penitently and purely, so that by and by we may hope to look upon them all once more in God's shining and without shame!—S. S. Times.

## Voice of the People.

R. V. Pierce, M. D., Buffalo, N. Y.:

I had a serious disease of the lungs, and was for a time confined to my bed and under the care of a physician. His prescriptions did not help me. I grew worse, coughing very severely. I commenced taking your "Golden Medical Discovery," and it cured me. Yours respectfully,  
JUDITH BURNETT, Hillsdale, Mich.

## What Have They Seen?

From the golden city which sat as a queen upon the river Euphrates came royal ambassadors to the palace of good king Hezekiah. The Babylonian monarch had heard of the dangerousness and speedy recovery of the Jewish king, and perhaps moved by kindly impulse, or by royal courtesy, sent letters of congratulation and a present to his brother king.

The Jewish king was elated at such attention paid by the head of the grandest empire on the globe, and could not conceal the pride and vanity which the visit aroused within his mind. "Hezekiah was glad of them, and showed them the house of his precious things, the silver and the gold and the spices, and the precious ointment, and the house of his armor, and all that was found in his treasures: there was nothing in his house nor in all his dominions that Hezekiah showed them not." The ambassadors went their way and speedily there came to the presence of the king the prophet of the Lord of hosts.

"What said these men, and from whence came they unto thee?" said he.

"They have come from a far country, even from Babylon."

"What have they seen in thine house?"

"All that is in mine house have they seen, there is nothing among my treasures that I have not shown them."

"Then said Isaiah to Hezekiah, hear the word of the Lord of hosts, behold the days come that all that is in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store unto this day, shall be carried into Babylon, nothing shall be left, saith the Lord. And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, shall they take away, and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon." (Isa. xxxix.)

The humbled monarch bowed before the prophet of God and said, "Good is the word of the Lord which thou hast spoken."

There were many things which Hezekiah might wisely have exhibited to his heathen visitors, he might have told them of the glorious truth of God, he might have showed them the law of the Lord, which is perfect, converting the soul; perhaps he might have exhibited their blasphemous letter which was sent to him from the Assyrian general, and which he spread before the Lord in prayer, and he might have related the answer that came from God, when 185,000 Assyrians were smitten by an invisible foe, and left lifeless in the invading camp, he might have disclosed to his wondering visitors the might and power of Israel's God, as manifested in the history of his dealings with his chosen people, and thus have sent them back with a salutary impression, or wholesome fear of the God of heaven and earth. But no. As if he had nothing better to exhibit he showed them his gold and his silver, his treasures and his gems, his costly raiment and his magnificent armor, and they looking upon it all with eager, covetous eyes, went back to tell the story of his wealth, and awaken the avarice of the Babylonish monarch, which was not satisfied until all that wealth was carried to Babylon and placed in the imperial treasure house.

My readers, visitors have come to your house, they may have come from afar with friendly words and curious glances, they may have waited to catch your words, and eagerly gazed upon everything which came within their view. "What have they seen in thine house?" What has been the impression which has been made upon them? Have they learned the lesson of pride, envy, vanity and sin? or have they learned the solemn lesson of the fear of God, which is the beginning of wisdom? What have they

seen? what have they heard there? Has the talk been of worldliness? Has the gloryfying been in things that perish? Have the vanities of time engrossed your attention? Have the world's delights been the best thing you could show to the friends around you?

"What have they seen in thine house? The result of their visit no mortal can tell, but the lesson from this godly yet vain-glorious king may teach us to exercise the most solemn watchfulness in the exhibitions which we make to those who enter our dwellings. If those who come to us from the outside world see in our houses only worldliness and pride, our influence over them is lost, and their influence over us may be for evil and not for good. If, on the contrary, they learn of us the fear of God, and hear us talk of the things that pertain to his coming, his kingdom and his glory, if the wonders of the Lord and his gracious works are the things which we most delight to boast, we shall disarm their unfriendly criticism we shall avoid their envy and malice, we shall make the memories of our dwelling to be such as shall bless their hearts, we shall have peace in our borders, and our influence shall be on the side of those who "follow after the things that make for peace, and the things whereby one may edify another."—Sel.

A lady, some weeks ago, spoke to a friend of a suggestive sermon she once heard preached from the text, "And Andrew, his brother." The lesson deduced from this text hung by this thread. We hear a great deal said about Peter in the Church of the first age, but very little about Andrew. If we examine the Gospel, we shall see that it was Andrew who first found the Christ and brought Peter to him. The disciples, men, who have no great reputation, are worthy, perhaps, hardly less than those who are well and widely known. The thought of this sermon came fresh to this lady, as she read about James Garfield; for she kept thinking, "and Thomas, his brother." For all who read the memorials of the greater brother must remember how nobly and with what unselfish denial the older made possible the elementary education of the younger. And when we now hear that Thomas has been, and is, just as in those early years, keeping up only a hard fight with adverse fortunes, we must share the wish we have seen expressed, that some of those who have done so nobly for the Garfield funds, monuments, and so forth, could bethink themselves of "and Thomas, his brother."—Pacific.

We always feel an interest in those who show an interest in us. Even those whom we do not know personally—public writers or speakers—gain a hold on our affections when they describe our personal feelings and our personal characteristics, and in giving this description show a sense of sympathy with these peculiarities of ours. Preachers and teachers would do well to bear this truth in mind; for there is no bond like sympathy; and attention to the characteristics and feelings of others seems the first step toward sympathy with those thus noticed. A recent writer on Addison, speaking of the power which that essayist had and still has over his many readers, says of its source and secret: "Man is the one interesting thing to him; he is never weary of tracking out human character into its shyest recesses, of studying human conduct, of watching the play of human thought and feeling, and contrasting man's infinite capacities of greatness with his infinite capacities of littleness. But the sight stirs in him not only interest but sympathy."

It was the sense of this that won him so wide a love in his own day; and it the sense of this that still makes his memory so dear to Englishmen—and to the English-speaking race everywhere.—S. S. Times.