

THE STAR OF ZION.

ORGAN OF THE AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL ZION CHURCH IN AMERICA.

VOLUME XX. NO. 48.

CHARLOTTE, N. C., THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 26, 1896.

CENTENNIAL VOLUME, 1796-1896.

THANKSGIVING DAY.

History of the Day in America.—Its Origin and Observance.

BY REV. J. C. JACKSON, D. D.

Once more the President's Thanksgiving proclamation is before us, with its enumeration of mercies temporal and spiritual, individual and national, for which we ought to give thanks. Surely it is a noble sight to see a whole great nation at the call of its chief magistrate prostrate itself in grateful adoration before the Giver of every good and perfect gift. A glance at the historical origin of our American Thanksgiving is timely now, and may help us to observe the season more properly and profitably.

It had its beginning among the Pilgrim Fathers of New England. In December, 1621, Governor Winslow wrote to England that they had erected seven dwelling houses, and four more for public purposes, besides having several others well on toward completion; they had also raised 20 acres of maize and six acres of barley and peas. All had now been safely housed. The cold weather had sent along the coast abundance of wild geese and ducks, and all manner of forest game was at hand on the land. Four hunters were sent out for material wherewith to make a feast, and returned with enough to support the colony for almost a week. They first assembled in their meeting-house for religious service, according to the governor's summons and then thankfully partook of the bounties of sea and land.

An interesting and illuminating side-light is cast upon the cause of Governor Winslow's proclamation by historical data gathered by Dr. Franklin. It came from a simple suggestion that men ought sometimes, at least, to look on the bright side of things. The Pilgrim Fathers were much given to taking somber views of life, and to humiliations and fastings upon a disproportionate number of occasions. Any season of storm or flood or sickness was sure to be accompanied by a time of meager diet and continual prayers. Thus existence became gloomy, religion unhealthy, and the young particularly were affected. In a time of great despondency a town meeting was called and the usual day of fasting proposed. But a farmer arose and said: "I move that, instead of having a day of fasting and humiliation and crying, we have a day of rejoicing." Then he went on to show the reasons for gladness:

"Our colony is getting stronger, our cornfields are enlarging, our wives are very obedient, our children are very dutiful, the air is very salubrious, the woods are full of game, and the rivers are full of fish; we have got what we came here for—liberty of conscience. I move that we have a day of thanksgiving." The suggestion was adopted, and the results were so blessed that the custom has become general.

But it is to the late Mrs. Sarah Josepha Hale, of Philadelphia, that, under Providence, we owe the nationalizing of the institution. From an article by Dr. Easter, published several years ago, we condense the following facts:

She had conceived the idea of the general observance of a day of thanksgiving by national authority some years before the war between the States. She labored with Presidents Pierce and Buchanan to that end, but received little encouragement. Mr. Buchanan saying he had no authority to issue such a proclamation. She also addressed the governors of the states from year to year, urging that although there was no constitutional provision for the national observance of any one day, yet there might be practical union if the head of the states would unite upon the date she suggested. By her persistence she secured success, and won some of them over to her plan, the governor of Alabama, among others, observing that "they had never had one, but he supposed it would not hurt them to have one."

Additionally, she urged the matter by extensive correspondence with army and naval officers, and with United States Consuls and Ministers in foreign countries, that wherever in

all the earth there was a citizen of our land he might have an opportunity of uniting upon a fixed day with his countrymen at home in praise to God for His goodness. Her letters ran up into the thousands; but her mind was filled with the purpose of securing what her heart was set upon, and she shrank not from any expense of time, money or labor.

She was not, however, enabled to accomplish her purpose until after Mr. Lincoln's inauguration. The first autumn of his administration she wrote him from Philadelphia, presenting her arguments anew, for a National Thanksgiving. Three days afterward Mr. Lincoln's proclamation appeared, embodying all of Mrs. Hale's suggestions, and even quoting many of her words. Since that time annual national recognition of God's mercies has been an established custom. We owe it, thus, very largely to the faith and perseverance of this good woman, which fell in at last with the inclination of the chief executive of our country and the temper of the people in a time of need, when all men's thoughts turned especially toward God.

May its observance become more and more general throughout the world. Mrs. Hale followed the matter up, and urged it upon Canada, with the result that several Thanksgivings have been appointed there. What more fitting thing could there be than that all Christendom should at last unite in bowing before God, upon a certain day, in universal recognition of His goodness?—*The Christian Advocate.*

MAJORS AND MINORS.

BY W. F. FONVILLE.

We are a great people for commencing at the top to build. A whole crowd of other people have been content, and would not be argued out of the idea that it was safest to start at the bottom and build up. Not so with us, and the result is we are waterlogged, held down with sinks, handicapped by shams in the form of big little men. You meet them at every street corner, espousing every alley-way, on the house-top—like the grass, it may be withering in the noon day sun—but you find it everywhere all the same. You just can't lose them. The race is Degreed and Professed nigh unto death. Pseudo-professors are found all along Life's pathway—not from the "cradle to the grave," but from the seminary to the cemetery.

Professors! Yes, thousands of 'em. There is the fellow who understands the laborious work of contracting and expanding an accordion for his own delectability and to the evident disgust of those who are forced to listen. But even you will admit that he is a professor. There is the fellow who blows a horn, the one with the leather lungs and iron windpipe; he is bronchitis proof, has never had consumption and never will have it. He is called professor, and that's just what he is too. One man can reap and bind more wheat than another. Another man can eat more of it after it has been ground into flour and cooled into bread—the hod carriers, bartenders—all of us are professors.

Are these all you ask? Why, bless you no! There is an army which "goes through" the normal course (they call it normal) of some school—some of them have never read a newspaper, and have never seen inside a boot; save those little language lessons, geographies, and arithmetics which they con while in school—but every last one of them is a professor the day before he pays his \$1 for his little certificate which some of the schools persist in grinding out of them. But it is a sight to make Diana blush and the gods weep tears to see him strut and hear him talk about his *alma mater*.

I know it. Just give time; I am coming to the others. Yes, it is true the crowds of us graduate and receive our degrees and diplomas from colleges. But the mere fact of receiving these two things has never convinced me that these make us professors. Professors of what? A proportion of us who get these things—degrees and a diploma—I mean

we college men and a great big gang of the other fellows) do not deserve them and we know it better than any body else. It is heart-rending to see how we "blow in" our dollars for diplomas and degrees. It is a mad rush, a crush, a hungry want-to-be big crowd. The institutions that hand out these degrees and attached paraphernalia and moonshine are out for the "dust," and they get it too.

Yes, I was just dipping my pen in my inkstand to speak about them. About whom? Why, have you forgotten so soon? I mean the pseudo-doctors. Not D. D.'s but M. D.'s and the would-be lawyers. Men who have taken one and two years' courses and fainted on the way. Men who could not pass their examinations—men without patients, men without clients—stranded high and dry upon the long, white beach of Life. But we call them Doctor and Lawyer and after awhile they begin to believe it themselves. What a sad irony it is!



REV. J. M. HENDERSON, M. D.
Rev. J. M. Henderson, M. D., the able and fearless pastor of Bethel A. M. E. Church, New York City, replies in this week's issue of the STAR to Bishop Walters' communication and our editorial.

on the eternal fitness of things when a man tries to deceive himself!

I beg your pardon. I never made such an assertion in my life. What, said the race had no professors? That's just what we have got. Some of them are professors in the true meaning of the word. They consist of men who have had only normal training, but have labored earnestly for the light after they went forth and by never ceasing toil they found it. Others are college graduates—young men—(God bless them) who were powers in the class room, in the forum of debate, who did not stop when they left school, but have educated themselves in various ways upon Life's broad battle field. They may not have had the smoothest sailing while in school, they may have been many-a-time treated wrongfully—shall I say "knowingly?"—but who in all the gaping, wondering crowd has tried to think of a polished diamond, disassociating that which makes it a diamond—brilliance.

I have just admitted that we have professors who measure up to the requirements, but there are so few of them till it gives me the headache. We sail under false colors so much until it becomes second nature to us.

We started out 80 years ago with Senators, both State and National, Congressmen, General Assemblymen, sheriffs, etc. Now when we should have these very things, the other people hold with a mailed hand to keep us out. The result of building from the top to the bottom.

News, N. C.

BETHEL AND ZION

As Societies, Not as Organizations.—Replies to Bishop Walters and to the Editor of the Star.

BY REV. J. M. HENDERSON, M. D.

For the first time in my life I am addressing the large and respectable body of men and women of the race who are the pastors and readers of the STAR OF ZION. I am speaking to hundreds whom I have never seen and who have never seen or heard tell of me before last week. I am sorry that the brilliant Editor was moved to announce my advent in tones so gruff and with epithets so ugly as escaped him last week. He has told you that I am a "hot-headed writer," a "clerical spit-fire," that I "rage and snort," that I am "prejudiced and unjust," and to cap it all he said that I am "troubled with indigestion and bad dreams." I take no offense, for I notice that he applies still stronger epithets to the Rev. E.

wealth of Bethel or Zion Church in New York City; we are not seeking to find out whether Henderson is hot-headed; whether Dr. Smith is unfair, or whether Bishop Walters is a fighter; but we are seeking the truth as it relates to the actual issue of facts as stated in the three propositions given above. For one I can discuss the issue without abusing the person and can stick to the argument without appealing to prejudice. I may get no plaudits from the gallery, but I will have the respect of the thinking class which is the only class that I am addressing.

There is but little to answer in Dr. Smith's editorial and I will dispose of it first. Every word that he quotes from Bishops Payne and Tanner is correct and is disputed by no one of whom I have ever heard. Now what? Simply this: he has quoted what they say about the organization of Bethel as a Connection, and not what they say about the first society out of which Bethel Connection was evolved. The discussion in no wise concerns the origin of Bethel and Zion Connections. Dr. Smith has misled those who do not think, by substituting new terms and thus changing the issue; but he has not misled the thinking readers who know the difference between Zion and Bethel associations and Zion and Bethel as Connections. Zion Connection was begun June, 1821, and Bethel Connection, April, 1816. These dates are accepted by both churches and have never been disputed. Zion celebrated not the Centennial of her Connection, but of the movement which gave her first society organic form. Bethel celebrated in 1887, not the origin of her Connection, but of the movement which gave her first society organic form. The Centennial of Bethel Connection will be in 1916 and of Zion Connection in 1921. The Centennial of the oldest society of Bethel was celebrated in 1887 and that of Zion in 1896.

I need say no more in reply to the brilliant Editor of THE STAR. I thank him for the courteous manner in which he introduced me to his readers and only regret that my ideas of what is proper to me as a gentleman will not permit me to respond to his effusive adjectives. I can only say, thank you.

Reply to Bishop Walters.

With regard for logic that is surprising, Bishop Walters prefaces his defense of Zion's age by stating that the church in New York City is wealthy and out of debt, and that Bethel is deeply in debt. Just what relation this has to the relative ages, I cannot see, unless he means to imply that the junior is known by his debts.

I certainly rejoice to learn that Zion is so well off in New York City. There must be an oil well or a gold mine in the lot on Bleecker St., to make it worth \$90,000, as other plots in the same neighborhood have sold at a rate more than one-third less than that. (See *Real Estate Guide* for June.)

Bethel came near dying on Sullivan St., and hence removed to the present fine location on W. 25th St. She sold her property, which it was always claimed was worth \$90,000 for a sum that was 8 per cent higher per foot than an adjacent lot subsequently brought, yet she got far less than \$90,000. The same disappointment awaits Zion on Bleecker St., and in five years it will be seen, for Zion Methodism will be defunct in New York City in that period unless the church gets in a respectable part of the city.

I don't know as it concerns any one about the debt of Bethel or her comparative influence; but if it do, then let this representation stand as what our side claims. Bethel has taken in 500 new members in twenty months and has a congregation averaging 1,500 Sunday nights. She has twenty-two district organized activities and is doing all she can for God and humanity. Our success should not be regarded as a discredit to Bishop Walters.

It has taken all of this space to clear the way and get to the sole issue to which I trust all future talk will be confined, and some one cries, "Enough, Rev. Henderson, you are right, I will be glad to see you in the store-room and hold meetings ourselves." We are just trying to settle questions as to the comparative

not silence me by abusing the local church of which I am pastor, and Dr. Smith cannot silence me by calling names. Until the issue raised is settled, I will stay right at my post and exhibit facts so long as the door is open.

THE BIRTH OF BETHEL AS A SOCIETY.

No one denies that it was in 1787 that Richard Allen, Absalom Jones and others withdrew from St. George's M. E. Church, Philadelphia. The issue is, was that event the inception of African Methodism as represented by the A. M. E. Church now extant.

It was not the beginning of the ecclesiastical existence of the A. M. E. Church, for that could not take place until she had a Bishop, which was in 1816. It was the beginning of African Methodism, although not of African Episcopal Methodism. In her organic structure and episcopal quality the A. M. E. Church is essentially like the M. E. Church and is differentiated in organic life only. The only thing for which African Methodism stands as the distinct exponent, and the only basis upon which rests her mission in the world as a distinct body is this: "God our Father, Man our Brother." The first assertion of this truth which perpetuated the succession of its exponents is traced backward from the present through the A. M. E. Church to the event of 1787 with which Richard Allen is connected as the leading spirit. It is not the fact of the "incorporation" that has moved the world; it is not the founding of a "paper" or the birth of a "school" that makes African Methodism; there are incidents of the existence of African Methodism.

An event is one thing; an incident is another thing. The birth of a boy is one thing, and his first pair of red-top boots is another thing. The birth of African Methodism is one thing; the incorporation of its first society is another thing, and the addition of the episcopacy and the evolution of a connection is still another thing.

No reader and no writer can advance in thought beyond the comprehension of isolate facts unless able to apprehend relations and to differentiate and discriminate.

The historic fact is that Richard Allen first stood up for the truth, which is the essential and distinctive quality of African Methodism. To prove this I must show that it was his intention to have not merely a separate, but likewise an independent Church when he organized the original band in 1787.

The best possible authority on this point is Richard Allen himself, and I will quote from what he himself says: (See *Life, Experience and Gospel Labor of Richard Allen*, pages 10 et seq. Edition 1871, St. Catharine's.)

"In February, 1786, I came to Philadelphia. Preaching was given out for me at five o'clock in the morning at St. George's church. We had a good time and several souls were awakened. I preached at different places in the city. My labor was much blessed. I now saw a large field open in seeking and instructing my African brethren, who had been a long forgotten people, and few of whom attended public worship. I established prayer meetings and raised a society in 1788 of forty-two members. I saw the necessity of erecting a place of worship for colored people. I proposed it to the most respectable people of color in this city; but here I met with opposition. I had but three colored brethren that united with me in erecting a place of worship—Absalom Jones, William White and Dorcas Ginnings.

"The Rev. S. G. B.—opposed the plan and would not submit to any argument we could raise. (The initials are just as given by Richard Allen and refer to the elder in charge of St. George's Church—J. M. H.) The Rev. Mr. W.—succeeded to the charge of St. George's Church and was much opposed to an African Church and used very degrading and insulting language to us to try to prevent us from going on. We all still belonged to St. George's Church. The elder forbade us to hold meetings. We reviewed the forlorn state of our colored brethren, as they were destitute of a place of worship. A number of us went to a service at St. George's Church and were forced to go to the gallery."

Here follows a description of the oft repeated scene in the throes of which African Methodism was born. Because Absalom Jones, Richard Allen and others had taken forbidden seats in the gallery they were maltreated and left the church never to re-enter as members. Says Richardson: "The store-room and held meetings ourselves. We got subscription papers out to raise money to build the House of the Lord. The elder of the Methodist Church still pursued us. He said, 'We told you all out.' We told him we were dragged off of our knees in St. George's Church and treated worse than heathens and we were determined to seek out for ourselves, the Lord being our helper. We told him that we did not mean to go to St. George's Church any more, and if you deny us your name you cannot seal up the Scriptures from us and deny us a name in heaven. We believe heaven is free for all who worship in spirit and truth. And he said, 'So you are determined to go on.' We told him—'Yes, God being our helper.' He then replied, 'We will disown you from all Methodist Connection.' This was a trial that I had never passed through before. I was confident that the 'Great Head of the Church' would support us."

Here follows an account of the purchase of a lot on Lombard and Sixth Sts., and one on Fifth St. The latter was bought in the name of the committee and the former was purchased by Richard Allen in his own name. Richard Allen then says: "The day was appointed to go and dig the cellar. As I was the first proposer of the African Church, I put the first spade in the ground to dig a cellar for the same." (The lot on Fifth St.)

Says he, "We held an election to know what religious denomination we should be. There were two in favor of Methodism, Absalom Jones and myself, and a large majority in favor of the Church of England. I favor Methodism; for I was confident there was no religious sect or denomination would suit the capacity of the colored people as well as Methodism. We are beholden to the Methodists, under God, for the light of the Gospel we enjoy; for all other denominations preached so high-flown that we were not able to comprehend their doctrine.

"I bought an old frame that had formerly been used as a black-smith shop and hauled it on the lot in Sixth and Lombard Sts. (1793) The house was called Bethel because when opened Rev. John Dickens prayed that it might be a 'Bethel' to the gathering in of thousands of souls." (1794).

There were no articles of incorporation then because Richard Allen owned the property. Incorporation is needed only when an organized body would hold property. African Methodism did not begin as an organization to hold property, but as a society to advocate a certain truth. When the society was well established an attempt was made by Richard Allen to transfer to it the title to the property. Upon this hangs a tale unrivaled in the annals of Christianity for the simple courage and heroism exhibited. But I have simply designed to show by Bishop Allen's own words that his intention from the start in 1787, until his death, was to found an independent African Methodist society.

The prayer-meeting organized in 1786 was separate, but did not seek to be differentiated from organic Methodism. This took place in 1787, when Richard Allen and his followers were expelled for refusing to submit to the rule of the white elder. This act was a formal recognition by the M. E. Church of the fact that Allen and his followers were outside of the Connection by their act of revolt.

This article is long, too long; but the words, the simple expression of his faith, the noble story of his trials as told by Richard Allen cannot be irksome to any honest reader. In 1816 Bethel societies united to form a Connection and the episcopacy was begun through ordination by a priest of the Church of England. The same source as the episcopacy of the M. E. Church.

Sometimes I would like to show that our good sister Zion has not until this day a right to use the term "Episcopal" in her title. Enough for now.

As the other two propositions made in my original article have been opposed simply by assertions and not by questions or statements of facts, I pass them over and promise to defend them against any attack from any son of Zion who enters the lists and is entitled to knightly honor.

Dr. Smith has won his spurs and I would like to have a tilt with him. He is Zion's knight of the quill and is a worthy foe for friendly combat.

Say, friends, the subscription price of the STAR to everybody has been reduced to \$1.00. For six months, 60 cents. No three months subscriptions received.