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A THANKSGIVING INSPIRATION HOW A PASTOR AND HIS YOUNG PEOPLE MADE TWO HUNDRED SOULS HAPPY

By Rev. Anna Taylor



It was in the early winter of '90. I had undertaken the pastorate of a small church in a country town in central New York and was desirous of receiving the interest of a young people's club. Thanksgiving was approaching, and I was anxious that the society should undertake something which would promote the spirit of the day.

The county house, containing about 200 of the poor and insane, was located two miles from the town, and I conceived the plan of having our society give them a genuine Thanksgiving treat. At the first meeting of the society I made the suggestion. Of course, it interested the young people, but then there came the difficulties. How could twelve or fifteen young people, poor ones at that, with a burden already too heavy to bear, contribute to the happiness of 200? Expense, labor, time—all the costly factors in such undertakings, loomed up, and though bright eyes sparkled and cheeks glowed at the thought, the young people sadly shook their heads, fearing the undertaking beyond their ability.

Some of them were estimated as worth not less than \$3. In them were oranges, bananas, apples, malaga grapes, figs, nuts, cakes, boxes of candies, cakes of chocolates, cough drops, chewing gum, booklets, fancy pictures and other articles.

These bags were carefully carried to the county house by a committee on Thanksgiving morning, and with the aid of the keeper, his wife, and the domestics, assorted and distributed. First, the bags were placed upon a large table and the contents assorted into baskets, pails and tubs. There were bushels of oranges and apples, more than a bushel of bananas, pails of grapes, nuts and candies and other things. Then 200 plates were spread along the sides of the long corridor of the hall, and one article from each was placed upon each plate, till the plates were heaping high and lusciously beautiful. Yet one-third only of the contribution had found place.

One hundred of these plates were taken into the dining hall of the institution, placed upon the tables, and then the aged inmates to the same number were invited to be seated. The members of the committee were then

parture, feeling that in addition to the blessedness of having remembered the poor, we had established a red-letter day in the history of the institution. The keeper, in a communication to our society many weeks afterwards, added to previous expressions of gratitude, the assurance that the event had caused a happy divergence in the thoughts of the inmates, and instead of dwelling upon their unfortunate condition, they had continually talked of the thoughtfulness of their friends. It ought to be added that our contribution provided the inmates of the institution with a tasty dessert after each Sabbath dinner till some time after New Year's, and also gave our feeble society the first spur of inspiration which led it out into larger and more active spheres of altruistic endeavor.—Ram's Horn.

Sonnet—Thanksgiving Day.
Thanksgiving Day! The memory of our sires
Comes o'er us at the murmur of thy name;
And once again we see them as they came
Weary and heart-sick, hushing their desires
For homes and kindred far across the sea,
That, without fear or hindrance, they
Might raise
Daily to God their prayers and hymns of praise.
And walk His paths in all humility,
We knew thee first in sixteen twenty-one;
The shores of bleak New England claim
Thy birth;
And though thy cradle buried was in snow,
And chill November winds, with icy tone,
Hushed thee to sleep, yet now with joy
And mirth
We celebrate that day of long ago.
—Louise Boyd.

Their First Thanksgiving.



—From Harper's Bazar.

invited in and introduced by the keeper and given the opportunity to convey to them the greetings of the loving hearts which had inspired the kindly remembrance. After a few words by the pastor the responses began. One

SEASON OF GOOD CHEER.

Next Thursday, by proclamation provided, every civilized corner of this country will throb with the thanksgiving spirit and resound with hymns of praise for the bountiful blessings of the year. The most sober celebration on the American calendar, Thanksgiving is yet an occasion for general rejoicing and feasting, and it is always heralded with joyous anticipations. And this year's observance promises to be most heartily enjoyed by the great mass of people throughout the land.

It is an occasion that opens the great, broad heart of the country to the distress of the unfortunate, when the millionaire is (sometimes) thankful he has purse strings to unloosen, when the financially comfortable indulge in unusual luxuries, when one struggling tradesman is satisfied with a medium sized turkey, when the ragged child of poverty gets only a smell of the savory dishes of the day and philosophically murmurs that he is thankful to be alive. However, there are few unfortunates unprovided for on this festive anniversary. The inmates of hospitals, jails, poorhouses and other public institutions all fare generously, and even the homeless outcast renews acquaintance with edibles that have long been strangers to his stomach. Thanksgiving is a day for pleasant family reunions, when the widely scattered members of a once united household gather at bountiful dinners of roast turkey, plum pudding, mince and pumpkin pies, etc.



"I NEVER SEED SUCH A SPREAD IN MY LIFE BEFORE."

by one, beginning at the head of the table, and passing around it, the whole 100 gave oral testimony to their gratitude for the kindly consideration.

We sometimes say we cannot pray and speak in prayer-meeting. If we were incarcerated in the poor house and some kindly friend remembered us, we would speak. Our tongues would not be tied. "God bless you, sir, the longest day you live for your thoughtfulness." "Say thank you for one to your young people, sir. I never seed such a spread in my life before." "I thank you, and our Heavenly Father for you." "This is a sad Thanksgiving to me, but this bright ray of sunshine makes it less dreary. I thank you." Such were the expressions of gratitude we heard. Some of them seemed like the welling up of the great frozen depths—the melting again into emotion of hearts that had become hard and flinty. The expression of their gratitude well-nigh broke our hearts.

After making the rounds of the hospital and the asylum, we took our de-

A SERMON FOR SUNDAY

AN ELOQUENT DISCOURSE ENTITLED, "SLEEP AS GOD'S GIFT."

The Rev. T. A. Nelson, D. D., Delivers a Stirring Address on the Subject, "Sleeplessness," With an Appropriate Text of Comprehensive Meaning.

BROOKLYN, N. Y.—At the Second Presbyterian Church Sunday morning the pastor, the Rev. T. A. Nelson, D. D., preached on the subject, "Sleeplessness." He took for his text, Daniel ii, part of first verse. "His spirit was troubled and sleep went from him," and said:

"That line of the poet Young, 'Sleep, nature's sweet restorer,' like every other true poet's saying, was inspired. 'Blessings light on him who first invented sleep,' says Sancho Panza, in 'Don Quixote.' Coleridge exclaims, in the 'Ancient Mariner,' 'O, sleep, it is a gentle thing! Tenneyson, speaks of 'the mystery of golden sleep,' and what a mystery indeed it is. It is the most interesting and the most perplexing of all physical and metaphysical mysteries. The mother bends lovingly over her infant in the cradle and wonders what it is that is so harmless, painless, lapsing of all life into unbroken tranquillity. Those little hands, now so quiet, but so busy most of the time, how beautiful and still they are now. Those limbs composed in attitudes of such unconscious grace, yon how hard it is generally to keep them in order during wakeful hours. And how unexpressed, how unfeeling is it to think how far the child is now beyond our reach. Who is it, when the face of the mother fades from the vision, that takes its charge?"

But when a man sleeps the spectacle is more suggestive. Think of Caesar on his couch, his vigilant eyes closed, his voice silent, his brain unworking and still. Think of Alexander in the night, looking as he finally looked, when he saw Saul entering the cave. Think of Cicero fast asleep. Think of the sleeping Christ lying in the midst of the tempest, as if he were resting in the heart of God. When Christ turns away from us with closed eyes, he is always afforded opportunity for the storm. We are only at peace while He is wakefully with us. While He sleeps not only is the light withdrawn, but the darkness is felt to the utmost; the ship is tossed with the storm and we are threatened with mortal danger. A sleeper Christ will do me no good. A painted Christ will not be of the vaguest service in my life. A wooden crucifix or ivory cross will not help me. It must be a waking Christ with ever-moving, a living Christ with every look and movement; an actual, positive, real and personal Christ. We are saved by His personality. It is Christ, not in the temporary paralysis of unconscious sleep, but Christ alert in watchful omnipotence that I need. Unless we nightly sink into sleep we are not prepared to live, and anything over which we have control which prevents our sleeping in proportion to our needs, should be cast into the sea. Since the strength of the body belongs to Him, you are not at liberty to waste it. Nevertheless, in our day we live in such fashion that, like the eastern monarchs, our spirits are troubled at our sleep departs.

This has come about sometimes from the haste to get rich. People rise early and sit up late in their eager pursuit of wealth, and when the jading day is done at last and they lay their heads upon their pillows, sleep may fly from them and they may seek it in vain. Now this is not a light matter. There are few things more dispiriting and truly exhausting than the loss of natural sleep; to count hour after hour in feverish wakefulness, seeking forgetfulness which will not come.

Now what is the root of all this distress? The physician will doubtless diagnose it as owing to unhealthy excitement of brain and undue sensitiveness of the nervous system. But in its last analysis you will find as a general rule the great cause of this weary wakefulness, anxiety and misery is simply want of faith in God. It is because we are not able, as we ought to trust ourselves and all that concerns us to a sure providence, and many of you know that it is mental anxiety that breaks your rest. It is because you are trying to bear the burden and build the house yourselves; to keep the things that you have the anxious hours. It is because you will plan too far ahead instead of letting each day bear its own burden; because you will ask what is to become of you and your children if such and such an event should happen; because you will take the future into your own hands instead of leaving it to Jesus.

But why should we not have faith in God? If we had, many of us, would not we sleep? If, once for all, you have intrusted your life to His loving care, be sure that all things will go well; that nothing can go amiss; that God will keep you, angels will guide your footsteps and the Holy Spirit will dwell within you from hour to hour. You will then lay your head on your pillow and rise again, with the morning light, refreshed.

After trying to explain away our weary hours of sleeplessness on the basis of physical infirmity, we have to confess that the reason we find in the things that prey on our minds by day and break our rest at night, and mixed with those anxious thoughts there are the thoughts that will intrude themselves of a more serious character. In the still, wakeful hours, even if we have been lulled occasionally to think of Him before whom we must surely appear and give account of ourselves. It is impossible, then, quite to suppress a question as to where the soul will be when the body shall be down in its little bed, and all earthly things have faded from us. But if you can truly trust that it is well with you, that amid your deep unworthiness you are simply believing on your Saviour and are striving to grow like Him; that your task is appointed you of God, and that you have the strength to perform it; that you have the strength to achieve character; if you can always feel that Christ is near and ready to help; that you and those near to you are provided for by Him and that you never know what you have done or learned whether awake or asleep that you are the Lord's and that you shall live together with Him, then surely you may sink into peaceful rest and sleep a refreshing and untroubled sleep.

But let me come closer still to the experience of some perhaps among professing Christians. You know that healthful sleep is our most peaceful state. You see human nature in that state in which it is most thoroughly free from all annoyance and trouble, and that is a symbol of the promise. "That will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee." That is a wonderful promise, but there is no blinking the fact that comparatively few even among those who claim to be true followers, ever experience it in its fullness. As a rule it is far from being perfect. One of the ancient schoolmen wrote in summing up the chief characteristics of life: "I entered this world in loneliness; I live in anxiety; I shall leave it in

feared." That about expresses the situation of many of you. Look at the faces on the street. Almost every one is careworn and anxious. There is no doubt that care sits heavily on mankind. What it weighs simply this: That while God has promised peace and is ready to give it it must be received by faith. It goes without saying that the amount of peace and quiet we shall experience will be in proportion to our trust in God. If we were really able to trust God with everything instead of doing, as most Christians do, never trusting God and more than they can help and never feeling quite sure as to what He may do; if we would cast our cares upon Him instead of bearing them ourselves, what unspeakable peace we should enjoy.

But we have not quite got at the real root of the difficulty yet. Doubtless some of you are thinking that some particular thing vexes you were out of the way you would be all right and your peace would flow as a river. No, that is not the trouble. It is not some petty vexation that constitutes the bitterness in your cup. If you probe your hearts deeper you will discover that the real reason is that you are not right with God. You have not truly and heartily believed in Jesus. You have thought, "I am doing my duty, but you have never clearly taken the successful step, and until you do you will never experience a true and abiding peace. Until you do this fully in obedience and devotion to Jesus Christ; not until you are able to say, very humbly, yet with sincerity: 'I know whom I have believed.' Not till then can you be at peace."

I am not called upon to explain the mystery of Christ by which we are able to arrive at this conviction of faith. It would be a difficult thing to follow by logical process. There are many things in the working out of your deepest conscience which are beyond our logic. Nevertheless, if say there is no escape into the realm of reason. It is the great step in your progress to Jesus Christ. The thing that is at the bottom of the fear is the latent conviction that you are not right with God. It is that which kept you vaguely unsatisfied. It is that which has never been satisfied. It is that which has never been satisfied. It is that which has never been satisfied. It is that which has never been satisfied.

I have spoken of two things. First, the consuming care; second, the latent conviction. There is one other experience that may break our sleep. I pray God that none of you may have it. It is the experience of one who has committed spiritual suicide. In one of Victor Hugo's books there is a character who, after a long series of experiences, at last arrived at a great crisis; he wavers, hesitates, and then commits a colossal sin. Conscience is insulted beyond forgiveness. Then suddenly he hears, as it were, an internal burst of laughter—laughter of the soul—and the soul rarely hears this innermost laughter more than once without hearing forever. This character afterward falls asleep and dreams. He stands the town; he comes upon many men standing in various postures, silent and immovable, as if dead. In unspeakable terror he tries to flee out of the lifeless city, when, looking back, he is appalled to see the inhabitants coming after him. They overtake him and hold him and cry: "Do you know that you have been dead for a long while?" Now then, in polite society, in select communities, even in this fellow-city unknown to us, but not unknown to God, one comes upon one of these dead men, who have heard the internal burst of laughter, who mocks and defies God and insults divine mercy. There is such a thing as spiritual suicide. Men, some men by their action or non-action take the life of the soul; they are dead to repentance and to hope, and at last they are dead to God. Thus men drive sleep forever from their eyelids, like Macbeth. When once the conviction seizes upon the soul then reverts to slumber and peace. God forgive me if I have spoken too plainly, if I have misrepresented the spirit of truth, but if I have been true to the word of God then let him that hath ears hear, and let him that hath a heart, let him hear His voice, harden not your hearts." Lay hold upon eternal life. Then you may lay down in sleep, since when you awake you shall still be with Him; and whether you wake or not, you will be the Lord's and His forever.

Keep Moral Ideas Clear.
We need, above all things, to keep our moral ideal clear and high. "Woe unto him that puts light for darkness and darkness for light, sweet for bitter, etc. That is, woe unto him that confounds moral distinctions. Not our patriotism or our patriotism nor our country nor our party may we condone sin or falsehood or meanness. If a prophetess, a chosen messenger of God, could go wrong, how easily may we. Dean Hodges is just publishing a book, "The Human Nature of the Saints." A companion volume might be "The False Judgments of Christian People." Bias is almost irresistible. What helps on that which we much care for we are apt to praise without looking too closely at its moral quality. So doing, we close our insight, extinguish the light of God kindled within us, and by and by we may find ourselves walking in darkness rather than light, perishing, perhaps, as Balaam perished among the enemies of the Lord.

He Completely Satisfied.
God is love! God is light! This ancient message is also the most recent report of the mysterious joys of an earthly Christian home. Yes, we are at home with God. He satisfies! He satisfies! It is He who gives the completing touch to thought, to work, to pleasure and to life. Without Him our intellectual ladder has neither foundation to stand upon below nor rest to lean against above. Without Him our purposes miss their best fruition and our joys their perfume. He is our home indeed, and we know the unmistakable sign when we feel the outstretched love of our Father bending over us.



THE DISOBLIGING BEAR.
There once was a man who said, "OK. Please, good Mr. Bear, let me go. Don't you think that you can?" The bear looked at the man, and calmly responded, "Why no?"—Carolyn Wells, in St. Nicholas.

UNCLE'S OPINION.
"Which is the luckiest day to be married, Uncle Joe?" "Matrimony knows no lucky day."—Houston Post.

SOTTO VOCE.
The Bridegroom (to himself)—"What a brute I have been, and how I must have frightened her!" The Bride (to herself)—"Well, I'm glad he is going to be so easily managed."—Brooklyn Life.

HE KNEW.
Physician—"What makes you think you could not be permanently cured by the sun-bath process?" Patient—"Because I've tried hot air for years, and I know it's only a stimulant."—Detroit Free Press.

ONE MEANS BOTH.
"Which would you rather have, influence or affluence?" asked the earnest man. "Influence," replied the practical politician. "Give me that, and the affluence will come easy."—Cincinnati Commercial-Tribune.

PARTICULAR.
"Yes, siree, this hotel is a historic building. General Washington stopped here in one of his trips across New Jersey." "Oh, that's all right about his stopping here. But he didn't stay here, did he?"—Baltimore World.

IN MODERN TERMS.
Edits—"Much war news in the paper this morning." Jinks—"No, the game yesterday was postponed on account of rain, but Oyama is trying to persuade Kuropatkin to play a double header to-morrow."—Cincinnati Commercial-Tribune.

THE OLD STORY.
Jones—"What have you got that string around your finger for?" Brown—"My wife put it on so that I should remember something, I forget what it was. I'm keeping it on now to remind me to ask her what it was when I get home this evening."—Boston Transcript.

BUSY AT TIMES.



"Does that chimney always smoke?" "No, not always; only when there's fire in the stove."—Chicago Journal.

THE TROUBLE.
"Yes, sir," said the man with the frayed collar, "that land is now worth £300 a foot, and only a year ago I could have bought it for a mere song." "But you couldn't sing, eh?" cackled the funny man. "Oh, I could sing, but I couldn't get the right notes."—London Tid-Bits.

INSUFFICIENT.
"So your wife has given up the study of theology." "Yes. She decided that one astral body would be of no use. Unless she could be at a tea, a progressive eucure party, a meeting of the sewing circle, a matinee and a department store at the same time it wasn't worth worrying about."—Washington Star.

RAISING A QUESTION.
"At what point," said a delegate to the Congress of Mothers, "would you consider a boy too old or too large to take upon your knees?" "When he becomes so big that you can't lay him across your knee, face downward," replied a large, resolute, hard-featured delegate from the far Northwest.—Chicago Tribune.

The Young People's Society —OF THE— Helping Hand Church

IS desirous of giving the poor and unfortunate in our County Alms House and Asylum a Thanksgiving treat, and to that end are willing to be the almoners of the gifts of generously disposed persons. If you will kindly fill this bag with confectionery, nuts, foreign and domestic fruit or candies, we will see that they are conveyed to them. The bags and contents will be called for on the evening before Thanksgiving Day.

"Blessed is he that considereth the poor. The Lord will deliver him in time of trouble. The Lord will keep him alive and he shall be blessed upon the earth. The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing. Thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness." —Ps. 41:1-3.

Of course, the newspaper man was deeply interested and glad to contribute the slips as his share toward the benefaction. The slips were then pasted upon the bags, and by the committee appointed for the distribution, left at the homes of those who had been selected. No consideration was given to either the denominational or the religious character of those solicited. Roman Catholics, Jews and infidels were asked, and responded generously. The entire population of the village felt the generous thrill and the happy glow. Two hundred households were made happy for days in discussing their contributions. When the bags were gathered together it was found that we had nearly half a ton of goodies for the poor people, and not



"THIS WAS A SAD THANKSGIVING FOR ME, BUT THIS BRIGHT RAY OF SUNSHINE MAKES IT LESS DREARY."

one of the bags was found missing or returned empty. And what a revelation of the generosity and kindly sympathy of the people those bags were.