

IN LANDMARKS SET BY OUR FATHERS WE ARE TO FIND SOLUTION OF PROBLEMS BEFORE US

Dr. Frank G. Beardsley Recalls Some Reasons Why We Should Not Forget These Gifts Which the Pilgrim Fathers Have Left For Us, and is of the Belief That a Citizenship Founded on Their Principles Will Have No Trouble in Solving the Questions We Face Today in Our National Life.

Contrasting conditions in the days of the Pilgrim fathers, and emphasizing the fact that we should not forget the landmarks set by our forefathers, Dr. Frank G. Beardsley, pastor of the First Congregational church, preached the sermon at union services held yesterday morning in the Westminster Presbyterian church. In these landmarks set by our fathers, Dr. Beardsley sees the solution of the problems which both the body politic and the individual citizen face. An intelligent God-fearing patriotism is the key to the solution of our national problems.

"Remove not the ancient landmark which thy fathers have set." (Prov. XXII:28.) "Forgetfulness is a characteristic of human nature. We are prone to forget. In seasons of great prosperity we often overlook our present blessings in our quest for further objects of happiness. Even when we take an inventory of things we are apt to leave out of consideration some of our chief blessings such as health, our happy homes, the families with which we have been surrounded, our churches in which we may worship God as conscience dictates, and our country with all its splendid institutions together with the influences which combine to make it what it is. Even the memorials which have been designed to serve as a reminder of some of these blessings we are prone to forget. Independence day is no longer a memorial of the struggle of our heroic ancestry, but has degenerated into a day of sports, fireworks, and red lemonade. It is in vain that our fathers in the Grand Army protest annually against the growing deterioration of Decoration day, while Thanksgiving day has come to be a thanksgiving of feasting and merry-making rather than of solemn thanksgiving to Almighty God for his manifold mercies and blessings. A small boy returned home from school one evening and to his mother, said, 'We had thanksgiving at school today. Well, what did you do?' 'We ate.' 'You what?' 'We ate.' In that small boy's mind Thanksgiving was synonymous with eating. And that seems to be the common conception. Now do not misunderstand me. I do not object to feasting on Thanksgiving day, nor to the noise and gaiety of July, provided only that the real significance of these days is not lost to view.

The First Thanksgiving. "Thanksgiving in the first instance was not an occasion for feasting as it was for calling to mind the blessings and bounties of Providence. Originating in New England it was pre-eminently a religious day. When our Pilgrim fathers planted their colony at Plymouth, they were confronted with incredible hardships. Sickness and death wrought havoc among them. The first winter nearly half of their number died. Food was scarce and often they were brought to the very verge of starvation. Days of fasting prayer were frequently appointed, but this only served to make the colonists disheartened and discontented. Finally a shrewd old colonist observing the ill-effects of brooding over their misfortunes, when a day of fasting and prayer was again proposed, arose and reminded them that they had had a bountiful crop, the streams were full of fish, and the woods abounded in game, but therefore moved that the resolution be amended and that a day of thanksgiving be appointed instead in order that they might consider their mercies and blessings. The day was appointed which was observed in an appropriate manner, thanksgiving being rendered to Almighty God for his kindness and his blessings. Having originated in this way and being observed from time to time Thanksgiving day was crystallized into custom and has be-

come one of the landmarks of our national life. It is fitting, therefore, that we should observe the day in an appropriate manner by the giving of thanks to our Heavenly Father for his bountiful blessings. The conditions which confront us today are certainly very different from those which our Pilgrim fathers faced nearly three hundred years ago. Our harvests have been bountiful, our country is reasonably prosperous, and in addition to that we have been spared the horrors of war. During the past year or so we have seen the nations of Europe, one by one, drawn into the terrible vortex of war. Up to the present time we have escaped. For this we should render thanks to God and fervently pray that in the coming days we may be kept from the tragedy and horror of war.

Conditions in Puritan Times. "In order that we may appreciate more fully the blessings which we enjoy, since it is by contrasts that we learn, it might be well for us at this time to forsake the beaten paths of Thanksgiving day discourses and make a comparison of life such as we find it today with the conditions which confronted our Pilgrim fathers generations ago. I realize fully the difficulties of such an undertaking. It is no easy task to go back over the dim tracks of time and get an understanding of conditions as they prevailed long ago. We are so in the habit of looking at everything through these intensely modern eyes of ours that it is almost impossible to take a sympathetic view of the past. Notwithstanding the inherent difficulties of the undertaking I am persuaded that it is possible for us to obtain such glimpses of conditions in early New England as will enable us to reconstruct a fair picture of the life of that period.

In place of the commodious houses such as we enjoy, heated as they are by furnaces or steam, and lighted by gas or electricity, the houses of our Pilgrim fathers were rudely constructed of logs, and often consisted of a single room in which the family, and families were large in those days, slept, and cooked, and ate, and spent their leisure. The only means of heating these cheerless houses was the large open fire-place in which the greater portion of the heat ascended the chimney, while the shivering occupants would crowd about the open fire for warmth when their backs were almost freezing. The furniture consisted of the most primitive sort, and for the most part was rudely fashioned at home. Pictures and libraries and instruments of music were scarcely dreamed of, while rugs and carpets were unknown. When Henry Ward Beecher's mother procured her first carpet, it was a rough canvas affair upon which she painted the design herself. Soon after it was laid down one of the deacons of the church killed, and when the door was opened he stepped back aghast, asking in open-mouthed wonder if he should step on the thing. That was nearly two hundred years after the coming of the first colonists. For some time after the arrival of the Pilgrims there were no domestic animals and the soil was tilled by hand in the most primitive manner. Everything that was worn was fashioned at home. There were no tailor shops or dressmaking establishments with the late Paris fashions, but every article of wearing apparel was home made, from the carding, spinning and weaving processes to the completion of the finished garment. When we consider the home life of that period in contrast with our own, how grateful we should be for modern homes with present-day comforts and conveniences.

Some Other Contrasts. "The churches of that period were

as unattractive as the homes, there being but little difference in their form and manner of construction. In place of the majestic church of today with its stained glass windows and frescoed walls, the meeting houses of those days were most primitive and were lighted by little bits of windows of glass or oiled paper. These meeting-houses were usually in the center of the town and were often surrounded by a palisade to ward off the attacks of hostile Indians. The churches were never heated. Ladies sometimes would bring warming pans or hot bricks with which to keep their feet warm during the service. There was no instrumental music and the singing was confined to Psalms, metrically arranged. The tunes made use of for this purpose seldom exceeded six or eight. The sermons, which were highly metaphysical in character, were almost interminable, sometimes continuing for two and three hours. If we should attempt to preach such sermons today our people would all go to sleep. Mine would, I know, in much less time than that and I should not blame them. But the people did not go to sleep in those days. They were obliged to stay awake, a constable or tithing man being employed for that purpose. These officers were armed with a pole or rod at one end of which was a hare's tail and at the other a hare's foot. If a woman was found asleep in meeting, her face was gently brushed with the hare's tail, but if a small boy was seen nodding he was promptly whacked over the head with the other end of the stick. The ministers of that day were never worried about the size of their congregations. They never had to lie awake nights wondering how to reach the masses, or what scheme they should resort to next in order to attract people to the services. Cheerless as those services were, the people were present en masse. They simply were obliged to go, for church attendance was made compulsory by law. Unnecessary absences could be punished by fines and if persons were absent four consecutive Sundays without cause they could be put into the pillory or stocks. The people were summoned to the service, not by the despotism of a bell, but by a trumpet blast, the beating of a drum, or a volley of musketry. When we look at the magnificent church edifices of the present, when we consider the attractiveness of modern worship, have we not occasion for profound gratitude to God for the age in which we live?

Social Life Very Different. "The social life of that period was vastly inferior to our own. Means of communications were primitive in the extreme. Today we have our railroads, telegraphs, telephones, our Atlantic and trans-Pacific cables, our steamships and a thousand other conveniences to relieve the tedium of travel, and lessen distances between points that are remote. At that time, to pass from one place to another, it was necessary to travel over rough and uneven roads on horseback or in vehicles without coverings or springs. It took a letter longer to travel a hundred miles or so than it does to cross the ocean today. Newspapers were unknown, books were few, and educational facilities meagre. The average high school course of today being more than an equivalent for the college education of that time. But little attention was devoted to the cultivation of the finer traits in character. The morals of the people were austere and punishments for slight misdemeanors were rigorous. Much has been said and written about the so-called Blue Laws of Connecticut. It was said that a woman could not kiss her child on the Sabbath, that mince pies were forbidden, that the observance of Christmas was not

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permitted, that no cooking was allowed on the Sabbath day and a hundred other provisions equally absurd and ridiculous, when as a matter of fact no such laws ever appeared upon the statute books of Connecticut or any of the other colonies. These blue laws existed only in the mind of one Samuel Peters, an Episcopalian clergyman of Connecticut, who was obliged to flee to England during the revolutionary war on account of his Tory sympathies. To get even with the people of Connecticut he wrote a book ascribing to them these absurd practices. The laws of that period were severe and the punishments rigorous, but on the whole they were not unjust and were calculated to promote the right conduct of the people. In addition to the other infelicities of the period, the colonists were in constant apprehension of danger. Every home had its firelock and the men usually went armed for they lived in momentary fear of massacre by wild and blood-thirsty savages. What occasions for gratitude we have in this age when we live and the blessings with which our pathway is crowned!

Don't Sigh for Good Old Times. "We often hear people sighing for the good old times. If we could go back to those times I do not believe that there is a single one of us who would be willing to exchange the present for the past. The most humble of our people today are in the enjoyment of comforts and conveniences of which the most affluent of our Puritan ancestors never so much as dreamed. Macaulay says: 'It is the fashion to place the golden age of England in times when noblemen were destitute of comforts, the want of which would be intolerable to a modern footman; when farmers and store-keepers breakfasted upon leaves, the very sight of which would raise a riot in a modern workhouse.' This statement applies with equal force to conditions in our own land. It is a strange fantasy of the human mind, however, to suppose that the golden age lies in the remote past. 'This said that distance lends enchantment to many of us if it seems as if the sun shone a little more brightly, and the snows were a little deeper, and fish in the streams were a little larger when we were boys than they are today. Another difficulty is found in the fact that we often forget present blessings in our quests for forgotten objects of happiness. We are apt many times, to think of the things which we want and too little about the blessings which we now have. The story is told of a southern planter, who in ante-bellum days was making the rounds of his plantation. As he approached a cabin he heard a voice in prayer and listening he drew nigh he heard a poor slave pouring out his soul in fervent prayer to God for the blessings of his distressed lot. The planter was deeply touched and cried out, 'Oh my God! I have my thousands and tens of thousands, but unworthy wretch that I am I never thank thee, as this poor slave does, who scarcely has clothes to put on, or food to satisfy his hunger.' We, too, have been guilty of the sin of ingratitude. May God help us, in this year of grace 1915, to count our many blessings, to consider the many privileges and advantages which we enjoy, and render suitable thanks to our Heavenly Father for bestowing upon us the same.

"While emphasizing the occasion for thanksgiving by these contrasts we should not forget the heritage which our fathers have left us. 'Remove not the ancient landmark which thy fathers have set.' What are these landmarks? "The Landmarks Left Us. "I—A free church. It was for this that our forefathers braved the perils of the stormy deep. As Greene, the English historian, says: 'They were driven forth from their fatherland, not by earthly want, or by greed of gold, or by the lust of adventure, but by the fear of God and the zeal of Godly worship. It was for freedom of conscience that the Pilgrim and

Puritans came to Massachusetts, the Quakers and Mennonites to Pennsylvania, the Lutherans to Delaware, the Huguenots to the Carolinas, and the Scotch Covenanters to Virginia and Pennsylvania, and others elsewhere. It is true that those who sought freedom of conscience were not always ready to confer the same privilege upon others, but in the process of time it came to pass that in all of the colonies freedom of worship and freedom of conscience were respected, so that when the constitution was adopted it was provided that 'congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.'

"2—A free state. On board the Mayflower the pilgrim fathers entered into a solemn compact to form 'a civil body politic' in which they covenanted to live together in peace and harmony, with equal rights to all, and in obedience to just laws enacted for the common good. This document has been regarded as the forerunner of our American constitution. In accordance with its principles the early New England town-meeting was the simplest form of pure democracy in which each freeman had an equal voice and an equal vote. When it became necessary to set up a general government, the various town meetings elected representatives and so was born the principle of representative government which lies at the basis of our civil affairs.

"3—Free schools. The first school in this country was opened in New Amsterdam in 1637. The first school in New England was established at Boston in 1635. In 1642 the general court or legislature of Massachusetts enacted a law for the encouragement of education and five years later passed a law which is known as the 'law of compulsory education' providing for common schools in every community of fifty householders and grammar schools in every community of a hundred householders. Harvard college was founded in 1636, William and Mary in 1693, and Yale in 1701. Since then schools and colleges have multiplied almost without number. Today in the public schools of America twenty million pupils are enrolled, more than a half million teachers are employed, and these schools are maintained at an annual cost of three quarters of a billion dollars, that every boy and girl in this broad land may be adequately fitted and trained for the duties and responsibilities of life.

Solution Found in These.

"It is a custom, I know, in Thanksgiving sermons to deal with the problems which affect our national life. We have avoided these today, not because we are disposed to ignore such problems, but because in these landmarks which our fathers have set, in our free churches, our free schools and our free state we shall find the solution for all of the problems which may affect our body politic. A citizenship that is intelligent, God-fearing and patriotic is capable and competent of solving all of the problems which confront us as a nation. Then on this Thanksgiving occasion let us not only thank God for bountiful harvests, and a nation at peace, but let us cherish those institutions in which the hope of this republic rests, our free churches, our free government and our free schools, ever remembering the admonition of our text, 'Remove not the ancient landmark which thy fathers have set.'

"Three Cheers for the Germans!" [United Press Correspondence.] LONDON, Oct. 9. (By mail.)—How war was suspended for five minutes while British soldiers in northern France rescued two wounded Germans from No Man's Land is told in a letter from Sergeant A. E. Berry to friends in London: "I heard a cry and looking in front of the parapet, begging us to bring him in. He had been there from the time of Saturday's charge and it was then dinner time Monday. He was near dead from his wounds. We could not go out to him but one of our officers shouted in German asking the enemy if we might bring him in. The Germans agreed to a five minute truce. "One of our officers and a private carried the poor man in. He cried with joy as they laid him down and he knew he was safe. He was very badly hurt. While carrying this man in they saw another, nearly buried with earth. We brought him in and then we gave three cheers for the Germans, for they had proved that they are not all bad. I can tell you that this incident very nearly brought tears to many a man's eyes there in the trenches."

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