

R.W. Harned

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THE TRUE SPIRIT OF THANKSGIVING

At this season, when the crops are mostly gathered in, when the season's work is about over and we are beginning preparations for another year, it has become a custom for men of all classes and conditions to pause, as it were, in the labors of their hands and take account of the blessings that are theirs, to give one day to enjoying and expressing their gratitude for the good things that have come to them. It is a beautiful custom, too; especially so when it is made, as in many cases it is, the occasion for the reunion of friends and families, and of wholesome and grateful rejoicing.

Coming, as it does, at a time when the farmer is able to take stock of his possessions and to estimate the results of his year's labor, the day has grown to be associated with the idea of prosperity, of material gains: we are expected to be thankful because crops are good and prices high, because barn and store-room are filled, because, forsooth, we have turkey on the table and money in the bank.

This is all well enough, but it seems to us that a far finer spirit is expressed in our Thanksgiving poem—that we should be thankful, not only for herds and flocks and rich harvested fields, for which we have planned and worked all the year, but also for the gifts that come to us unsought, often almost unheeded:

*"For the morning blue above us
And the rusted gold of the fern—"*

For the everyday beauty of this good old world of ours, and "the pure joy of living" as Browning puts it.

Thankful we should be, not only for the friends who gather with us to enjoy the season's cheer, but also for all the men and women of the past who toiled and strove to make the world better and brighter:

*"For those who wrought aforetime,
Led by the mystic strain
To strive for the larger freedom
And live for the greater gain."*

Thankful above all, not for any of the things we have, but for the things we can do; counting as our chiefest blessing, not that we have goodly stores, not that we live in peace and se-

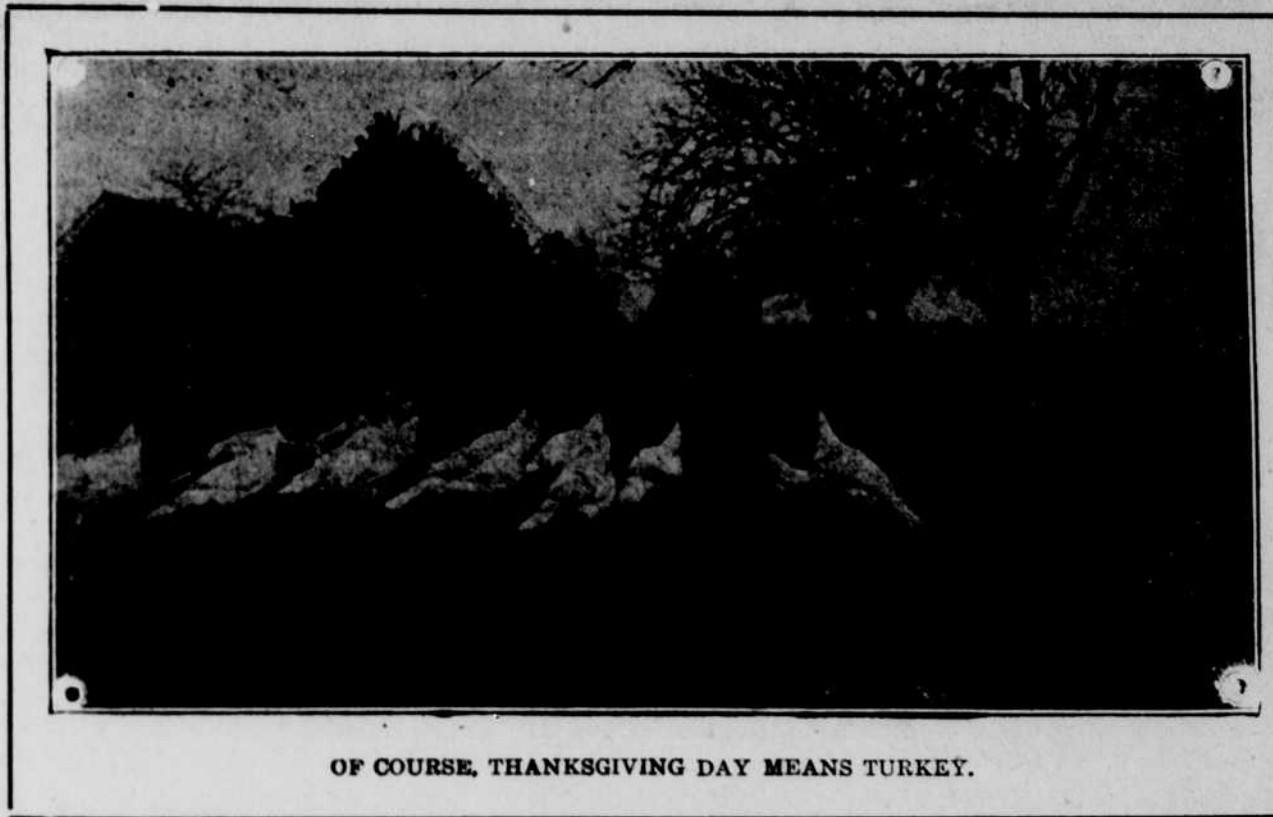
curity, not that this world of ours is fair and good, but that it is our privilege and our duty to make it fairer and better, to add to its prosperity and well being: our greatest possession still the desire to do something worthy—

*"The spirit
That can not rest nor bide . . .
But still inspired and driven,
Must seek what better may be."*

We should be especially thankful for this spirit, this desire, because it is this that has given us to dwell in a land of personal liberty and of National aspiration; because it is this spirit that is—slowly, perhaps, but surely—bringing about in the land

a higher standard of living, a finer sense of justice, a truer discrimination between right and wrong, a nobler conception of life, both in its attainments and its aims. It is because men have not been content merely to enjoy things as they were, because men today are not content merely to enjoy things as they are, that the progress of humanity has been, and is, upward and onward.

That spirit of fretful dissatisfaction which blinds a man's eyes to the beauty of life as it



OF COURSE, THANKSGIVING DAY MEANS TURKEY.

is, is a thing no one should be willing to harbor in his heart at this season of thanksgiving; but the possession of that "divine discontent" which enables him to see the beauty that is not yet reality, and to strive to bring it into being, is a cause for thanksgiving than which no man can possess a greater.

And as there are two kinds of discontent, so there seems to be two kinds of gratitude. There is the kind that says to itself: "See, all this is mine; is it not good to be grateful since I have been able to get so much? I certainly have cause for rejoicing for I am much more fortunate than others." Then there is the gratitude which makes a man glad not so much for what has been given him as for what he can give, which enables him to say, "How fortunate I am since I am able to do this needed work so long left undone."

Can there be any question as to which of these is the true spirit of Thanksgiving Day, or which will contribute most to the happiness of humanity and to the growth in the individual of those qualities most likely to add to the joy of future Thanksgivings?