

Leyden and where they were joined by their remaining brethren in 1608. The opportunity of a Thanksgiving day for some special blessing had long been a custom among the Dutch as well as among other nations of Europe, and the general gratitude to heaven for some great war victory, for the proclamation of peace or for deliverance from pestilence or famine often found expression in this way. They after fully satisfying themselves that their principles could never take root in Holland and that their number instead of increasing was greatly diminishing there the Puritans abandoned the country, and when they had landed on Plymouth Rock and had found a home in a new world, they retained the old Dutch custom of a general thanksgiving for special blessings. An unusually bountiful harvest was always deemed a fitting occasion for the appointment of a thanksgiving day by the governors of the colonies of Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay, and as the earth began to reward more abundantly the labor which the colonists bestowed upon it, the harvests became so uniformly plentiful that an annual Thanksgiving day followed as a natural sequence.

This observance was always both a religious and social one. The early Puritans attended "meeting" as they called their church services twice on every Thanksgiving day, and this pious custom has been continued in many parts of rural New England down to the present time, though the most righteous dwellers in the cities and large towns now deem attendance upon one service a sufficient opportunity for offering their thanks.

What a quaint appearance a rural New England "meeting house" presented at a Thanksgiving service seventy-five years ago? The pulpit towered high and was surmounted by a huge sounding board which seemed liable to fall and crush the minister at any moment. Upon an elevated seat in front of the sacred desk sat the ruling elder facing the congregation. Upon another seat less elevated than his, sat the deacons, while the plain seats in the body of the house were occupied by the fathers and mothers of families with their children and hired help.

The pastor opened the service with a prayer of at least fifteen minutes length, and followed it with the reading and exposition of a chapter of holy writ. Then the ruling elder gave out a psalm in which all the congregation joined, and when it had been sung the minister preached for one hour, measuring the time by means of an hour glass. Prior to the contribution which followed, one of the deacons would rise and say, "brethren of the congregation, now there is a time remaining for thanksgiving and contribution to the Lord, wherefore, as the Lord hath prospered you, freely offer." Collection plates or baskets were not passed from seat to seat but a large box of wood was placed upon a stand or table near the pulpit. When the deacon had resumed his seat, the whole congregation arose and proceeded to the contribution box. First came the magistrates and "chief gentlemen," then the elders, then the deacons, and after them the entire assembly. They deposited their offerings one by one and then passed to their seats again. These contributions consisted not only of money, but of

notes of hand and any article which could be sold or otherwise profitably appropriated to the benefit of the church, thus making up a strange, miscellaneous collection of goods and chattels of various descriptions.

It was the custom in the old Puritan churches to endeavor to reconcile upon Thanksgiving day any dispute which might have occurred among the members, whether arising from the affairs of the church itself or from private transactions. In the former case when there was a division upon any question of doctrine, church policy or discipline, it was often customary to call in as arbitrators, some wise and good man—usually a clergyman or elder—from another church. The Rev. Mr. Buckley of Colchester, Conn., a distinguished Puritan ancestor of mine, was famous in his day as a casuist and sage counselor. A church in his neighborhood had fallen into unhappy divisions and contentions which they were unable to adjust among themselves. There was appointed a committee whose members laid the case before Mr. Buckley and desired him to communicate his judgment in writing that it might be read to the assembled congregation at the close of the morning service on Thanksgiving day.

Now it happened that on the outskirts of town, Mr. Buckley owned a farm which he had entrusted to the care of a hired man. In dispatching a letter to his farmer, at the same time with his letter of advice to the church upon the question submitted to him, the papers were inadvertently mixed, and the document intended for the good elders and deacons was sent to the hired man, while the letter intended for him was handed to the pastor at the termination of the morning service on Thanksgiving day. Imagine the amazement of the good man and his congregation when he read as follows: "You will see to the repair of the fences that they be built high and strong, and you will take special care of the old black bull."

For several minutes a most profound silence reigned among the good brethren. All were completely puzzled by this mystical advice. But at length there was found among the more deserving ones an interpreter, who arose and said: "Brethren, this is the very advice we most need. The direction to repair the fences admonishes us to take good heed in the admission and government of our members. We must rule the church by our Master's laws, and keep out strange cattle from the fold, and we must in a particular manner set a watchful guide over the devil, that old black bull that has done so much damage among us." All now perceived the wisdom and fitness of Mr. Buckley's advice, and resolved to be governed by it. As a consequence, all animosities subsided and perfect harmony was restored to the long dissentient church. What was contained in the church letter sent to the farmer, and what effect it had upon him, I am unable to say.

Strict as the old Puritans were, they were not opposed to certain games—particularly those of an outdoor character. Bowls and lachgammon were permitted, and the young men and maidens were not restricted, at least in the colonies of Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay, from participating in them

upon Thanksgiving day, after they had devotedly attended to meetings." Some of the old English fire-side games were also permitted, and many a bevy of Puritan lads and lasses participated in snap dragon and blind man's bluff, on Thanksgiving night. This custom of making the occasion one for family and social reunion and devoting it largely to innocent amusement, is still one of the most honored in connection with Thanksgiving day, and no where more so than in New England.

The Puritans and their descendants for many years after them were strongly opposed to the introduction of any musical instrument at divine worship. But in 1799 a member of the choir connected with the Hingham, Massachusetts, "meeting house"—the oldest church in this country, having been built in 1681—had learned to play upon the violin cello, was anxious to display his skill, and according brought his big fiddle into the singing gallery on Thanksgiving morning. While the hymn was being read he ventured to try his strings to ascertain if the instrument were in tune, and thereby attracted the attention of the pastor. The good man paused, laid down his hymn book, and proceeded with his sermon as though singing formed no part of his public worship, and finally dismissed the congregation without vote or comment. The members of the choir were indignant. The young men and girls resolved not to go into the "singing seats" at all in the afternoon, and the elders who did go there wore a look of stern resolution. The pastor read a psalm and sat down. No sound followed. After a long silence he read the psalm again, with flushed face and stern manner, looking interrogatively at the gallery. The choir leader—my great grandfather, by the way, from whom the story has been handed down to succeeding generations—could bear it no longer and called out decisively, "there'll be no singing here this Thanksgiving."

"Then there'll be no preaching," said the pastor, and taking his cocked hat from its peg he marched out of church, leaving his congregation paralyzed with astonishment. The big fiddle did not again appear in the "singing seats."

The general observance of an annual Thanksgiving day spread very slowly outside of New England. An American edition of the Episcopal Prayer Book dated 1789, strongly advised it, but the recommendation was not then acted upon. Thanksgiving day was not regularly proclaimed by any state governor outside of New England till 1817, and it is only within 24 years past that it has been customary for the President of the United States to proclaim it.

GEOFFREY WILLISTON CHRISTINE.

### SANPETE STAKE CONFERENCE.

The regular quarterly conference of the Sanpete Stake of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was held in Moroni on the 16th and 17th of November, 1895. Elders Canute Peterson, Henry Beal and John B. Maiben, the presidency of the Stake, Elder J. D. T. McAllister, of the Temple, High Councilors, Benjamin of war and a very large congregation of Saints were in attendance.

Bishops C. N. Lund, of Mount Pleasant, W. T. Reid, of Mount North,