

3

Lesson I.

The Modern Pioneer

Written to give courage and inde feulness and
faith to people just recovering from a period of
discouragement.

Subject; The wooden fence.

Text; John 6 ³⁸ For I have come down from Heaven not to do
mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.

Scripture, Lev. 23^{34-36, 39-41}, Deut. 16¹³⁻¹⁵, Gov. Proclamation, Rev. 21¹⁻⁷

We are looking forward this morning to one
of the great festival days of the year. Happy
was the thought which inspired Gov. Bradford
to ^{establish} a harvest festival day of thanksgiving
and joy. So it happens that year after year
we make with elaborate and extensive
plans to make this day, a day of great joy
and pleasure. By the very exuberance of
of our delight we try to show our thankful-
ness, and our good feelings towards each
other and the world. If we are people of
deep feeling and devotion we try to acknowl=

2
edge our dependence upon God, and offer
our prayers of thanks and praise unto him
for whatever has befallen us during the year.

With this whole hearted joy and gladness
and reverence we join in wishing this
day, a day of great meaning to all.

But why is it that we can thus feel
as we do? Those whose life for the past
year has been filled to overflowing
by every desire and almost every wish
being satisfied, such, I say, may well
join the the joys of such a day. But some
of them ~~do~~ do not. Others, whose life
has been one continual series of hardship
disappointment, suffering, and sorrow.
such people seem to look forward to a

day like this with a far greater sense of appreciation, and expectancy than those who have been most favored. Even those who hardly know what a luxury is, flow and surge so that on this one day of the year, they may shut out the poverty and want of daily life and give themselves over to one day of comparative luxury and comfort.

No, it cannot be that the real significance of Thanksgiving day rests in our feeling of thanksgiving for the abundance of good things that have come to us during the year, for it seems that those who have had the worst, care the least, and those who have had the

least, save the worst. Then too I wonder
 if we ~~to-day~~ celebrate as sincere a
 festival of Shrovetide as did the
 early pilgrims. It seems that out of
 the very needs of their life, rather
 than out of its abundance, came this
 day of Shrovetide. No! it is not so
 much out of the past with its accom-
 plishments, as out of the future with
 its hope comes this feeling which
 prompts us to a festival of Shrovetide.
 At a time such as this your feelings are
 feelings of hope, rather than exultation
 of forward looking rather than
 backward looking. Not what has
 been done through us and for us

in the fact so much as what we
hope to have done through us and for
us in the future. Not what we love, or
what we have done, or what we are is
the basis of our thanksgiving, but what
through God's grace and our own effort
we hope to have, and do hope to do, and
hope to become in that way is
ever alluring, but our known future
which stretches out before us. It is
a consecration to the things undone rather
than an exultation over the things done.
So do we face, not the fact, but the
future.

In solving the problems of the ^{future} ~~past~~ we often avoid many foolish mistakes and embarrassing blunders by going back to the ~~fact~~ for help and wisdom. I often try to picture to myself the kind of men they were, those pioneers who first settled in this country, and held their thanksgiving festivals on the shores of an unknown continent, thanking God for the things that had been vouchsafed to them, and consecrating themselves to the unsolved problems of a new world with all its hardships. I try to get some conception of the mental and moral equipment of those men who in the

middle of the 18th Century picked their way through the Hoosac mountains, leaving behind the comforts of the settlements near the coast, and resolutely faced the vast unknown and unexplored. They began that great movement westward which in a centuries time had covered the continent and made the settlement of those far away western cities on the Pacific Coast. From our ease and safety and quiet we can look back to those days of hardship and danger, and read in the stories of their adventures, and try to glean from them something of the spirit something of the character which lead

them through days of discouragement and
 darkness, to days of victory and rejoicing.
 We can read there the elements of character
 which were sown to them all, and
 which sustained them in all their ad-
 venturous pioneer work. We can look
 at the lives of men who have been
 the pioneers in political, moral, and
 social advances, there we read the
 same story, and understand that
 the same type of war, ^{is fought} in one case as
 in the other. It is all very faintly
 brought out in this bit from Pitts-
 field history, the more important because
 it speaks of the moral rather than
 the unmoral. By the summer of 1752

9
so the story tells us "which is usually
accounted the birth-year of Pittsfield,
some of the settlers had log-cabins
ready to receive their families. and
first came Solomon Sewing from
Methenfield, with his wife Sarah
behind him on the pillion. She
was a maiden of seventeen when
Solomon first essayed to provide
them a dwelling place in the
wilderness of the Green Mountains.

Now a brave young good wife of
twenty six, she entered Pountosuck, the
first white woman who ever called
it home." There were the kind of
people who were pioneers in all

the new world movements. Such as they held their festivals of Thanksgiving and praised God for what had been accomplished towards the realization of their hopes, and consecrated themselves to work of the future in what they hoped to love, and do and become. The great advance in civilization which distinguishes the country today from the country of two hundred years ago and war, represents the half defined, hazy dreams that skirted the flitted across the vision of their dream life, and filled their hearts with joy and praise as they offered their prayer of thanks.

11
III. It was no ordinary voyage that led
these men and women across the un-
known ocean into an unknown land, and
there, ^{to establish} a new home, a new government, a
new society. It was rather the voyage
of a few who were willing to follow
the unusual course, and commit
themselves to all the dangers and un-
certainties of an untraveled road. As
soon as the fractional safety of these strag-
glers had become assured, men of the
same adventurous nature began to turn
their faces to the west. Leaving behind
them the safety and security of the well
settled towns, they resolutely faced the
uncertainties, the dangers which the

unexplored country had in store for them.

The advancing wave of civilization rolled across the country carrying on its crest the bravest and most courageous of our race. They were men of courage those pioneers of an early day.

But it requires something more than courage to take such a step. Many a man of courage never goes outside of the ordinary, simply because he acts according to the dictates of other people. For a man to free himself from tradition, to break with the habits and customs of the people among whom he lives, to resolve to do a thing in the doing of which he must act alone, such conduct requires courage, but it also requires independence.

No weakling who follows along in the
wake of the majority, and quietly assents
to the will of everyone around him, can
ever claim that independence which
the world is calling for. What we would
have become of the genius of liberal religion
in New England had Channing and
Theodore Parker lacked that independence
of spirit which thrust them into the
vanguard of the advance in religious
thought of that day. How well the slave
problem has been handled had not a
few men had the independent spirit
sufficient to take the initiative and
raise the issue. These early pioneers
who bravely took the advance step

enduring the hardships that others might enjoy the comfort, they were men of independence, not that independence born of conceit and arrogance but that independence born of a sublime conception of duty and obedience to God's will.

But beneath courage and independence there is the still more profound characteristic which is the basis upon which all else rests, — that is faith. It is not without reason that so much suffering has always been put upon faith. Faith in the integrity of life, in the triumph of goodness, in the solidity of God's truth. — it is this that is at the bottom of every movement and act of life. We can

follow on facts just as far as they lead,
 we can follow exact knowledge so far as
 exact knowledge is obtainable, but beyond
 that we must commit ourselves to
 faith, and set in accordance with
 what we believe to be true. It was
 a deep unquesting faith, - faith in
 the integrity of nature's law, ~~of man's~~
 faith in the mind of man, and in
 the wisdom of God that supported the
 pioneers as they crossed the ocean
 to this new world, and took up
 their slow but steady march across
 across the mountains and fairs
 to the Pacific coast. Such laws
 were the characteristics of those early

pioneers — the men and women who
laid the foundations of our American
life.

But we turn from the past to the present and future, and what is our outlook. It is true that nearly all the levels of the world have been explored, it is true that our country is quite thoroughly settled. It is true that the dangers and heroisms of early days no longer offer themselves to us as fields for our courage, independence and faith. But there are, ^{but} the beginnings of civilizations, no man can face the duties of life to-day, as a worker, as a citizen as a man, who does not feel that he is challenged to take the place of a pioneer in solving the problems of a people by conditions which are as great

a menace to us as even the lurking
savages were to our white ancestors.
I am fully aware of the tremendous gains
that have been made, I know that
there is no warrant for a cry of
despair, and I am certain that this
world as it is this minute is a
very gentle comfortable sort of a
place in which to live, But just
because so much has been done
and because there are things now
which everyone can see needs to
be done, just because of this, I say, every
man who lives at all seriously must
feel the challenge to his own personal
effort and consecration. The very

limitations of our physical safety call for
 almost infinite labor to destroy the
 invasions of crime, carelessness and
 disease upon the safety of life. In
 political life from one end of this country
 to the other, in town, state or ^{city} country, men
 of honor and public spirit are calling
 almost in vain for helpers in their
 efforts to remove the political interests
 of the country from the meshes of
 corruption. That call is to every
 man that can cast a vote.

No less urgent and pressing is the
 call which is coming to us every
 day from the warfare between
 labor and capital. The great city

of it all is that no one, ~~seem~~ who is in the bottle can seem to get above the floor of dollars and cents, truly now and then does there appear a person who sees that it is not a question of wages, or the number of hours of labor that is at the bottom of all the trouble, but it is the moral principle of the recognition of personability.

Closely connected with this labor problem is the problem of the idle classes. The vagrants, the criminals, the defectives, the idle rich, we cannot afford to support such a mass of useless material

and it is our problem to turn them to some advantage to the progress of the world,

There are problems of a moral nature that are very pressing. It is useless to repeat the evils that demanded the efforts of every earnest man and ~~not~~ woman in relieving the strain and removing the temptations to sin, which are so apparent in daily life.

Then and above all else, does not the condition of things in the religious affairs of this country demand most pressing service. Not alone the people, but the ministry as well have feared to

face the problems of religion which the conditions of the new world have put upon them. The result is that the church, the ministry, the people, and the cause of religion itself have suffered, and at this moment demand courage, independence and faith as no other problem in modern life demands them.

Is all the work done? Can we sit back and fold our hands glorifying in the deeds of a former generation, and offering our prayer of thanksgiving for the things which through God's grace have been accomplished and wote for a little more ease?

God forbid! If ever there was a time
 when pioneers were needed, that time
 is now. In whatever direction one may
 turn there is the demand for a
 pioneer with courage, independence
 and faith enough to launch out
 into the unknown, and undiscovered,
 leaving behind the traditions and
 an accumulation of custom which
 has become too much of a hindrance
 to the normal growth of man. This is
 the soul of this Thanksgiving festival
 Not so much the joy over what has been
 done, as the rejoicing life over
 the ^{distinct} realization of dreams as yet
 but half-outlived, ^{at life} that fills our

swe with joy and ^{joyous} life. Out of
 our sorrow, out of our pleasure, out
 of our failure, out of our success
 we all join in this life of the
 harvest season, - the life of things
 to love, and things to ~~do~~, and
~~things to do~~ ~~and~~ ~~to be~~ in the
 realization of the future towards
 which we look with courage
 and faith. The satisfaction with
 which we reap the harvest is not
 in the harvest itself, but in the volume
 of the harvest for the coming
 year, and the hope in the fertile
 seeds which give promise of
 still greater harvests, As the

day comes and goes let our hearts be filled with thanksgiving for the fine thoughts, the noble ideals the divine aspirations which lead us into the future consecrated to their realization of God's Kingdom.

There, too, we cannot control entirely the working of things which bring about our own harvest, whatever it may be that we plant. So if it happens that our crops are a failure, we shall come to another harvest with sad and heavy hearts. But we can control the high thoughts, the noble ideals of service, the right-minded hopes of days to come.

and no disaster however cruel can
take from us our hopes of days to
come. For our own comfort then
let us fill our minds with noble
hopes as we join this festival day,
and let our thanksgiving be a thank-
giving of consecration to the pioneer
service in Gods Kingdom. For I come
down from Heaven, not to do mine own
will, but the will of him that sent me.

Pittsfield Nov. 20. 1904