



THE THANKSGIVING EDITORIALS OF SARAH JOSEPHA HALE FROM THE PAGES OF *GODEY'S LADY'S BOOK*

1837

This month [November] is the ninth in order in the old Roman Calendar, as established by Romulus, March being the opening month in the year. It still retains its ancient name, which it received at the hands of the founder of the "Eternal City" - a name surviving the wreck of Rome's imperial majesty.

In "Britain's Isle" this is accounted the month of gloom and discomfort, when melancholy is fashionable, and gentleman-like, as though sympathy with the cheerless and sunless face of Nature ought, of course, to make the heart of man sad, and his face stern and sullen.

But this chill from the "Spirit of the frozen ocean" has never pervaded our young country. That merry anniversary, our Thanksgiving, has changed, to us, the gloomy aspect of the season, and made November (in which month the Thanksgiving should always be held) one of the brightest and best months in the year

December has her own peculiar festival, which, to us, as Christians, cannot but make a powerful appeal by its holy associations. Christmas is a day set apart by Christendom to commemorate the nativity of our blessed Lord. What heart is there that does not beat with high emotion on the morning of this glorious day, as on the wings of imagination we are transported to Judea, and observe that group of simple-hearted shepherds, who were abiding in the fields, keeping watch over their flocks, on the memorable night previous to our Saviour's birth! We hear the encouraging language which the angel of the Lord addressed them, as in view of the dazzling brightness which shone around them - they were sore afraid.

"Fear not! for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people! For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour; which is Christ, the Lord."

We listen to the music of the heavenly hosts, as in tones of the sweetest melody they celebrate the praises of God. "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace and good will towards men!" From this circumstance it is that we regret that the festival of Thanksgiving has ever been divorced from November, to whom it rightfully belongs, and wedded to December, who is already honored above her peers, by the most sacred of all festivals - that commemorative of the nativity of Jesus Christ.

The noble annual feast day of our Thanksgiving resembles, in some respects, the Feast of Pentecost, which was, in fact, the yearly season of Thanksgiving with the Jews. It might, without inconvenience, be observed on the same day of November, say the last Thursday in the month, throughout all New England; and also in our sister states, who have engrafted it upon *their* social system. It would then have a national character, which would, eventually, induce all the states to join in the commemoration of "In-gathering," which it celebrates. It is a festival which will never become obsolete, for it cherishes the best affections of the heart - the social and domestic ties. It calls together the dispersed members of the family circle, and brings plenty, joy and gladness to the dwellings of the poor and lowly. None are left to pine in that most abject state of physical want,

hunger, on the Thanksgiving; even the poor prisoner is cheered in his solitary cell, not so much by the thought that a good dinner awaits him on that day, as that he finds h
The moral effect of this simple festival is essentially good. It is a season of grateful joy in view of the rich blessings of Providence, which has thus crowned the year with its goodness. It is a part of the noble patrimony of our Puritan Fathers. Blessed be their memories! May their stern, uncompromising integrity -- their deep piety which pervaded all their thoughts, feelings and actions, running through all their institutions -- their simplicity of character -- their devoted love of country -- their fearless support of religious liberty -- may these virtues ever be the inheritance, the guard, the guide, and guerdon of their descendants. The Puritans stamped themselves for good upon the institutions which they established, and the habits and customs which they formed and transmitted to their descendants. And this spirit has gone out over our whole country, more or less, and has fashioned and modified the American character.

1842

CONVERSATIONS AT THE EDITORS' TABLE BY MRS. HALE.

"How I do love the light of the fire, when our autumn evenings begin to grow long!" exclaimed Ellen Marvin as she drew her chair close to the book-covered table, over which the schoolmaster was leaning. "It always seems to me," she continued, "as though all the sweet visions of domestic bliss which the poets have painted were brightened and beautified in such a light. I often wish, at this season of the year, that I too could write poetry."

"Yes," said the schoolmaster, smiling at her enthusiasm, "yes, the bright hearth often awakens the poetic, as it certainly doe the social spirit in our nature. One reason doubtless is, that our cares and labours are sooner over, in these short days, and therefore we do not bring wearied minds into the domestic circle. And then the warm bright hearth is more welcome and joy-inspiring at this season than even in the depths of winter, because it is a new enjoyment, as it were, and of course seems a luxury. All these circumstances augment our happiness."

"I never could understand why the English people were disposed to melancholy at this season," observed Mrs. Marvin. "To me, November is one of the most cheerful months in the year."

"Because you were born and brought up in New England rather than in Old England," returned the schoolmaster.

"And besides, we have our Thanksgiving day in this month, usually," said Ellen.

"Yes, and better still, we have, as a whole people, cause for fervent and grateful thanksgiving," said the schoolmaster. "At this season every family, almost, in our land has the comforts of life, and nearly all have the hope and prospect of living thus comfortably through the coming seasons. In Old England it is not so. Thousands, aye, million of her people are suffering daily from the 'want of all things!' To such persons the approach of winter must seem almost like the sentence of death. When suffering from cold is added to all other woes the poor have there to endure, even the soothing influences of religion can scarcely calm the spirit to patience and submission."

"It is dreadful to think of these wretched sufferers," said Mrs. Marvin; "and then to reflect that this wide-spread and consuming poverty is borne in the richest country in the whole world!"

"I do not see how the English nobility can enjoy their enormous wealth, while so many of their countrymen are literally pining with hunger," said Ellen. "I should fear the judgments of heaven on such selfishness."

1847

THANKSGIVING DAY. -- The Governor of New Hampshire has appointed Thursday, November

25th, as the day of annual thanksgiving in that state.

We hope every governor in the *twenty-nine states* will appoint the same day -- 25th of November - - as *the* day of thanksgiving! Then the whole land would rejoice at once.

1848

THANKSGIVING DAY. -- The observance of this hallowed day is another strong link in the chain that binds the states in brotherhood. We are more than glad, we are grateful that the suggestion, emanating from our "Lady's Book," has been so kindly received. We suggested, early last year, that the Day of Thanksgiving should be observed on the last Thursday in November, throughout the nation. Of course, the appointment of the day rests with the governors of each state; and hitherto, though the day of the week was always Thursday, that of the months had been varied. But the last Thursday of last November was kept as Thanksgiving Day in twenty-four of the twenty-nine states -- all that kept such a feast at all. May the last Thursday of the next November witness this glad and glorious festival, this "feast of the ingathering of harvest," extended over our whole land, from the St. Johns to the Rio Grande, from the Plymouth Rock to the Sunset Sea.

1848

OUR THANKSGIVING FESTIVAL. -- November should be, in America, marked with "a white stone," and called the Festival Month!

Before this number of our Book goes out, the day of rejoicing will have been appointed. We earnestly hope that in every state and territory of our Union it will be on the same day -- the last Thursday in November. Then, indeed, the festival will be national, and joy and thankfulness pervade the whole land. What a glory on our institutions, on our people, will such an observance confer! Miss Bremer, in her last work, thus alludes to this custom: --

"In America there is annually celebrated what is called the Thanksgiving Festival. It occurs in the autumn when the harvest is finished. The families then assemble to rejoice together, and to distribute the earth's best wealth amid praises of the giver.

"'Oh, what beautiful Thanksgivings,' writes a lady from that distant land, 'have I not spent in my father's house. How like was he to a patriarch as he stood there surrounded by his children! And with what smiling, joyful countenances stood we round the table of which he was the host, and entertained us with the best that the house possessed. When the meal was ended, we had songs and merry stories told. They were happy times.'

"Beautiful is this popular custom, and worthy to be adopted by all people. Beautiful, that after harvest time, when the earth has stripped herself of all her riches, that therewith her children might be fed, clothes and gladdened, such a feast should be celebrated as if for the completion of the year."

1849

THANKSGIVING DAY, 1849. -- We must again remind our friends of this National Festival. Sincerely do we hope and trust the cholera will leave our land before the time for this day of rejoicing, in the abundance of the gifts which the earth has produced for our people, arrives. If the LAST THURSDAY IN NOVEMBER, falling this year on the twenty-ninth of the month, might be set apart by each and every Governor of State and Territory, what a glorious spectacle would be exhibited to the Old World! Our great nations, by its States and families, from the St. John's to

the Rio Grande, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, all gathered to a Feast, in which there would be abundance for all, and where all might rejoice in peace and safety!
Will not the editors of the weekly and daily papers lend their aid to establish unity of time as well as design in this great Festival, thus making it a National Jubilee?

1851 (October)

This month of October, with its showers of falling leaves, brings assurance that the "Fall" season is really reigning over our land, and will close with that great festival, our glorious Thanksgiving Day. A friend has sent us the following, cut from one of the popular newspapers: --

"Governor Wood, of Ohio, is endeavoring to effect the adoption, by all the States, of a uniform Thanksgiving Day. The day selected is the last Thursday in November. A uniform day for thanksgiving has never yet been adopted in this country. Some States appoint the time just after their harvests are gathered; others, after the public canals are closed, according as each finds it most convenient to its citizens. It matters little, religiously, whether all agree upon one day or not, so that each has one day for that purpose."

We differ from the conclusions of this writer; it does *matter* much, religiously as well as nationally. There would be more significance of universal concord in our rejoicings as a people, were the day the same in all the States and Territories of our great nation. The sympathy of feeling would develop greater fervor of spirit in the thanksgivings which would rise from the altars and the hearths of twenty-three millions of the human race, who would unite in grateful remembrance of the blessings which had crowned the year, and spread a full feast for all. And, though the members of the same family might be too far separated to meet around one festive board, they would have the gratification of knowing that all were enjoying the feast. From the St. Johns to the Rio Grande, from the Atlantic to the Pacific border, the telegraph of human happiness would move every heart to gladness simultaneously, and to render thanks to God for the blessings showered on our beloved country.

This is no new theme to our readers; most of them will recollect that we have been, for the last three or four years, urging this subject on public attention. We thank Governor Wood for his timely aid and encouragement in this matter. The last Thursday in the month of November might easily be fixed as the time of the feast, and each State make its own appointment in harmony with this general plan. There would then be two great American national festivals, Independence Day, on the Fourth of July, and Thanksgiving Day, on the last Thursday in November. This year it falls on the twenty-seventh.

Will not every State Governor in our republic lend a favorable ear to our petition, and name the last Thursday in November as the THANKSGIVING DAY of 1851?

1851 (November)

THANKSGIVING DAY. -- In our last number we suggested some reasons for making the time, when this festival is observed, the same in all the states of the Union; in other words, making it a national festival. The Fourth of July has a marked effect on our national character. In foreign countries, the American citizen feels the influence of the day; it gives him an increase of honor among the millions who are vainly wishing for such freedom as is his birthright; and he is proud of the name -- American!

The day of our thanksgiving should be holier still, because it acknowledges the Source of our prosperity and blesses the Giver of all our good gifts. Let the last Thursday in November be set apart as the "Thanksgiving Day of the American People;" and, wherever an American is found, the day will be kept. The people of the Old World would thus be taught that our freedom from man's

tyranny brings us nearer to God; that, while rejecting earthly lords, we willingly acknowledge our dependence on the Lord of heaven and earth. We hope this month will be the commencement of this universal observance; the first year of the half century is a good starting-point. Now we have twenty-three millions of people to enjoy the festival; at the close of the century there will probably, be an hundred million.

The governors of our thirty-and-one States may now have the honor of beginning the concert of that rejoicing which will then proclaim that the Union is sacred.

1852 (OCTOBER)

“Festivals, when duly observed, attach men to the civil and religious institutions of their country; it is an evil, therefore, when they fall into disuse. Who is there who does not recollect their effect upon himself in early life?” – SOUTHEY

THE American people have two peculiar festivals, each connected with their history, and therefore of great importance in giving power and distinctness to their nationality.

THE FOURTH OF JULY is the exponent of independence and civil freedom. THANKSGIVING DAY is the national pledge of Christian faith in God, acknowledging him as the dispenser of blessings. These two festivals should be joyfully and universally observed throughout our whole country, and thus incorporated in our habits of thought as inseparable from American life.

Our Independence Day is thus celebrated. Wherever an American is found, the Fourth of July is a festival; and those nations who sit in chains and darkness feel that there is hope even for them, when the American flag is raised in the triumph of freedom. Would not the light of liberty be dimmed were this observance to cease?

Thanksgiving Day is a festival of ancient date in New England, being established there soon after the settlement of Boston. The observance has been gradually extending; and, for a few years past, efforts have been made to have a fixed day, which shall be universally observed throughout our whole country. The “Lady’s Book” was the pioneer in this endeavor to give unity to the idea of Thanksgiving Day, and thus make it a national observance.

The last Thursday in November was selected as the day, on the whole, most appropriate. Last year, twenty-nine States, and all the Territories, united in the festival. This year, we trust that Virginia and Vermont will come into this arrangement, and that the Governors of each and all the States and Territories will appoint *Thursday, the 25th of November, as the Day of Thanksgiving*. The year 1852 would thus be an era from which to date the establishment of this national festival; and henceforth, wherever an American is found, the last Thursday in November would be the Thanksgiving Day. Families may be separated so widely that personal reunion would be impossible; still this festival, like the Fourth of July, will bring every American heart into harmony with his home and his country. The influence of such an American festival on foreigners would also be salutary, by showing them that our people acknowledge the Lord as our God. In our own wide land, from the St. John’s to the Rio Grande, and from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean, every heart would, on one day in each year, beat in unison of enjoyment and thankfulness.

Therefore, we hope to witness this year the first of these national festivals.

1852 (NOVEMBER)

THANKSGIVING DAY FOR 1852. -- *Thursday, November the 25th*, will, we trust, be appointed as *the day*, by each and every Governor who holds sway in this wide sisterhood of States and Territories. What a grand spectacle to the world it will be! Nearly twenty-five millions of people

sitting down, as it were, together to a feast of joy and thankfulness, and *none* pining in hunger throughout our Republic!

1853

THANKSGIVING DAY. -- The last Thursday in November -- shall it be THE DAY? If the State Governors will this year unite on *this day*, there is little doubt but a precedent will be established, and become a fixed custom forevermore. Then our nation will have a holiday worthy of republican Christians. The last Thursday in November will be an American jubilee of thankfulness to the Lord of Heaven, from whom all blessings flow; and as other nations attain to the political and religious privileges we enjoy, their people would adopt the same day for a public thanksgiving, till the tide of rejoicing rolls around the globe.

1854

THANKSGIVING-DAY FOR 1854. -- For several years past we have discussed the subject of a general agreement on the time of this annual autumnal festival. We believe the people would be gratified to have this union of sentiment carried into effect. *The last Thursday in November* has been selected as the day best suited to the general convenience, when people from Maine to Mexico, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, might sit down together, as it were, and enjoy in national union their feast of gladness, rendering thanks to Almighty God for the blessings of the year. Therefore we pray, on behalf of all friends of the "Lady's Book," that the Governors of the several States and Territories would issue their proclamations, each one for his own State, unanimously appointing *Thursday, the 30th of November, as the DAY OF THANKSGIVING!* Will not the Press throughout the Union join the "Lady's Book" in this petition?

1854

The American Thanksgiving. --

"After breakfast, we went to church, for this day (Thanksgiving) is as sacred throughout the country.

"Why have not we, why have not all people such a festival in the year? It has grown here out of the necessities of the nobler popular heart; it is the ascribing of our highest earthly blessings to their heavenly Giver. We, in Sweden, have many publicly appointed days for prayer, but none for Thanksgiving; it is not right and noble."

Such was Miss Bremer's appreciation of our Thanksgiving Festival, and thus it will be approved and followed in all Christendom, when the popular heart and voice shall bear sway. A national Thanksgiving Day! If this could once be established in our own land, Americans would soon introduce its observance and cheerful festivities into every part of the world where they are found, and thus, our American Thanksgiving would be the example for all people.

The last Thursday in November has these advantages -- harvests of all kinds are gathered in -- summer travellers have returned to their homes -- the diseases that, during summer and early autumn, often afflict some portions of our country, have ceased, and all are prepared to enjoy a *day* of Thanksgiving. The unanimity was nearly perfect last November; still it would be better to have the day so fixed by the expression of public sentiment that no discord would be possible, but, from Maine to Mexico, from Plymouth Rock to Sunset Sea, the hymn of thanksgiving should be

simultaneously raised, as the pledge of brotherhood in the enjoyment of God's blessings during the year. How this national festival can be made sure, we must leave to those who have the guidance of public affairs; but we do earnestly desire to see the *last Thursday in November* become the fixed time for this American jubilee.

1855

THANKSGIVING DAY. -- When shall it be? The last Thursday in November falls on the 29th. We petition each and all the State governors to appoint that day for our national rejoicing. Then all the land will be glad together, and union among the people would be a sure pledge of heart-thankfulness to God, who has given to us, as a nation, such wonderful prosperity, such universal blessings.

The readers and friends of the "Lady's Book," that is, a large majority of the people of these United States, agree in our petition. Let us have a national day of Thanksgiving on Thursday, the 29th of November.

1856

THANKSGIVING DAY, *November 20th*, being the third Thursday in the month. Then the war of politics will be over for the year; and all elections, State and National, will be closed; the harvests of the country gathered in; the preparations for winter made; and the crowning glory of all the blessings God has, during the year, bestowed on our great nation would be the union of all our States and Territories in a *day* of National Thanksgiving. The peoples of the Old World would thus be taught that freedom from man's tyranny brings us nearer to God; that, while rejecting earthly lords, we willingly acknowledge our dependence on the Lord of heaven and earth. The celebration of the Fourth of July has a marked effect on our national character. The American citizen dwelling in foreign countries feels the influence of observing that day. It gives him an increase of honor among the millions who are pining in vain for such high privileges as his national birthright bestows; and he is proud of the title, "American citizen."

The Day of Thanksgiving would, if observed nationally, soon be celebrated in every part of the world where an American family was settled. If the *third Thursday in November* could be established as the Day, and known to be the time in each year when, from Maine to New Mexico, and from Plymouth Rock to the Pacific sands, the great American People united in this festival of gladness and gratitude, the whole world might be moved to join in the rejoicing, and bless God for his goodness to the children of men.

1857

THANKSGIVING DAY -- We hope the Governors will unite on November 26th, the last Thursday in the month. Then the war of politics will be over for the year; and all elections, State and National, will be closed; the harvests of the country gathered in; the preparations for winter made; and the crowning glory of all the blessings God has, during the year, bestowed on our great nation would be the union of all our States and Territories in a *day* of National Thanksgiving. The peoples of the Old World would thus be taught that freedom from man's tyranny brings us nearer to God -- that, while rejecting earthly lords, we willingly acknowledge our dependence on the Lord of heaven and earth. The celebration of the Fourth of July has a marked effect on our national character. The American citizen dwelling in foreign countries feels the influence of observing that day. It gives him

an increase in honor among the millions who are pining in vain for such high privileges as his national birthright bestows; and he is proud of the title, "American citizen."

The Day of Thanksgiving would, if observed nationally, soon be celebrated in every part of the world where an American family was settled. If the *last Thursday in November* could be established as the Day, and known to be the time in each year when, from Maine to New Mexico, and from Plymouth Rock to the Pacific sands, the great American People united in this festival of gladness and gratitude, the whole world might be moved to join in the rejoicing, and bless God for his goodness to the children of men.

Last year, nearly all the States and Territories united on that day. This year, we trust, there will be no blank in the number, nor a seat left vacant at the Table of the Nation.

1857

The National Thanksgiving

"Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the Lord is your strength," NEHEMIAH viii. 10.

SUCH was the order given to the people of Israel for the celebration of their *National and Religious Festival*, the "Feast of Weeks." We learn from this that a day of yearly rejoicing and giving of gifts was not only sanctioned but enjoined, by Divine authority, on God's chosen people. Such yearly festival is not positively enjoined on Christians; but that it is both expedient and beneficial may be safely urged, when we find that the practice was approved by our God and Father in heaven. We have, for many past years, urged the advantages of having a day set apart by the civil authorities of each State, which every heart in our wide land may welcome as the time of joy and thankfulness for the American people.

Our Day of Thanksgiving represents, in many striking coincidences, the Jewish Feast of Weeks; only make our day national, and we should then represent the union of joy that was the grand proof of the Divine blessing.

Such social rejoicings tend greatly to expand the generous feelings of our nature, and strengthen the bond of union that binds us brothers and sisters in that true sympathy of American patriotism which makes the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans mingle in our mind as waters that wash the shores of kindred homes, and mark, from east to west, the boundaries of our dominions.

The Creator has so constituted the race of mankind that their minds need a moderate portion of amusement as imperatively as the body at times wants stimulating food. This recreative joyousness, this return, if you please, to the gayeties of childhood, is good for the soul. It sweetens the temper; it brightens hope; it increases our love for each other, and our faith in the goodness of God. There are individuals and nations who, from an unhappy state of things, vice in themselves or in other persons, from poverty, or political oppression, never "drink the sweet, nor eat the fat," but drag on a starved and miserable existence. These are not, physically, true specimens of the human being; want is written on the sunken cheek, and wasting despondency cripples the feeble limbs.

Even thus mental starvation from all the sweet joys of social intercourse and innocent merrymaking, has a wasting and deforming effect upon human character, similar to bad or insufficient diet on the bodily constitution. God intended that all our faculties should, in the right way, be exercised; and neglect of such exercise changes us to incomplete creatures. One has but a lame existence who has lost or neglected to cultivate "the store that nature to her votary yields." Or busy, wealth seeking people require to have days of national festivity, when the fashion and the custom will call them to the feast of love and thanksgiving.

So we agree with the large majority of the governors of the different States, that THE LAST THURSDAY IN NOVEMBER should be the DAY OF NATIONAL THANKSGIVING for the American people. Let this day, from this time forth, as long as our Banner of Stars floats on the breeze, be the grand THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY of our nation, when the noise and tumult of worldliness may be exchanged for the laugh of happy children, the glad greetings of family reunion, and the humble gratitude of the Christian heart.

Consecrate the day to benevolence of action, by sending good gifts to the poor, and doing those deeds of charity that will, for one day, make every American home the place of plenty and of rejoicing. These seasons of refreshing are of inestimable advantage to the popular heart; and, if rightly managed, will greatly aid and strengthen public harmony of feeling. Let the people of all the States and Territories set down together to the "feast of fat things" and drink, in the sweet draught of joy and gratitude to the Divine giver of all our blessings, the pledge of renewed love to the Union, and to each other; and of peace and goodwill to all the world. *Then the last Thursday in November will soon become the day of AMERICAN THANKSGIVING throughout the world.*

1858

Our National Thanksgiving

"All the blessings of the fields,
All the stores the garden yields,
All the plenty summer pours,
Autumn's rich, o'erflowing stores,
Peace, prosperity, and health,
Private bliss and public wealth,
Knowledge with its gladdening streams,
Pure religion's holier beams
LORD, for these our souls shall raise
Grateful vows and solemn praise."

We are most happy to agree with the large majority of the governors of the different States as shown in their unanimity of action for several past years, and which, we hope, will this year be adopted by all that THE LAST THURSDAY IN NOVEMBER shall be the DAY OF NATIONAL THANKSGIVING for the American people. Let this day, from this time forth, as long as our Banner of Stars floats on the breeze, be the grand THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY of our nation, when the noise and tumult of worldliness may be exchanged for the laugh of happy children, the glad greetings of family reunion, and the humble gratitude of the Christian heart. This truly American Festival falls, this year, on the *twenty-fifth day of this month.*

Let us consecrate the day to benevolence of action, by sending good gifts to the poor, and doing those deeds of charity that will, for one day, make every American home the place of plenty and of rejoicing. These seasons of refreshing are of inestimable advantage to the popular heart; and, if rightly managed, will greatly aid and strengthen public harmony of feeling. Let the people of all the States and Territories sit down together to the "feast of fat things," and drink, in the sweet draught of joy and gratitude to the Divine giver of all our blessings, the pledge of renewed love to the Union, and to each other; and of peace and goodwill to all men. *Then the last Thursday in November will soon become the day of AMERICAN THANKSGIVING throughout the world.*

1859

SHALL THANKSGIVING DAY BE AN AMERICAN NATIONAL FESTIVAL?

Join, every living soul,
In adoration join, and ardent raise
The general song!
THOMPSON

Dear Lord, our God and Saviour! for Thy gifts
The world were poor in thanks, though every soul
Were to do nought but breathe them.
HAILEY'S FESTUS

THAT the American People shall have an annual Thanksgiving Festival after the ingathering of their harvests is now a settled matter. Every State and Territory has, in some way, signified its willingness to adopt this venerable custom, which we recognize in the Jewish "Feast of Weeks," as appointed by Jehovah for His Chosen People. Is it not, therefore, peculiarly appropriate that "we, the People of the United States," who acknowledge only the Supreme Ruler of the Universe as our Sovereign, should pay this yearly tribute of gratitude and thanks in national unanimity?

The propriety and general advantages of a common Day for our whole Nation to express and acknowledge that "goodness beyond thought and power divine" which blesses the increase of the husbandman, and keeps ward for the safety of the city, have never failed to win the approbation of those who have thoughtfully considered the subject. Still, in our wide land so many occupations and such varied interests and distractions, in the multiform demands of private as well as public life, abound, that men are apt to *forget* duties which are not brought before them with the regularity of dates and appointed epochs.

In order to overcome this difficulty, we have, in our Lady's Book, been in the habit of urging on the attention of our readers and friends, year by year, for the past ten or more years, the plan of a National Thanksgiving. We have suggested *the last Thursday in November* as the most suitable DAY to be set apart by the Governor of each and every State for this Festival, which would then become a National Jubilee.

The last Thursday in November was suggested because then the agricultural labors of the year are generally completed; the elections are over; those autumnal diseases which usually prevail more or less at the South have ceased, and the summer wanderers are gathered to their homes. We have received letters approving this Union Festival from Governors of nearly every State and Territory, and within the last few years the idea has been acted on widely, but not yet unanimously. Last year (1858) there were, according to a work lately published, twenty-one States united on the 25th of November, while four States held Thanksgiving on other days. But there were a large number united -- twenty-six, we believe; still, the union was not complete.

We now make our appeal to the people and their rulers for the year, the Governors of each and every State and Territory, praying the former to aid by expressing their approbation, and the latter by their proclamations to make the last Thursday in November of this year A THANKSGIVING UNION FESTIVAL!

We have now but two days set apart for popular rejoicing. The 22d of February is the Day of National Patriotism; the Fourth of July is the Jubilee of National Independence. Let the last Thursday in November be consecrated by gratitude to God for His wonderful blessings on our people, the crowning glory of which is our National Union. We shall then have three American Festivals, which our own citizens, wherever they might be, would observe with pride, joy, and thankfulness. The influence of these stated seasons of sacred remembrances, high aspirations, and tender, yet happy household rejoicings would not only be salutary on the character of our own citizens, but the world would be made better and happier by the sentiments which our Festivals teach.

It may be asked, would you put people in mind of being good and grateful?

Yes! if they neglect those virtues without a reminder. If the germ of good feeling be ever so deeply buried under "the cares, and riches, and pleasures of this life," it may be brought out by sympathy and vivified by culture and effort. A national feeling of THANKSGIVING, putting the bounty, goodness, and love of the Creator before the eyes of the dullest and the hearts of the coldest, would effect incalculable benefits to our Country.

1859

OUR THANKSGIVING UNION

THE last Thursday in November -- will it not be a great day in our Republic? Seventy years ago the political union of the United States was consummated; in 1789, the thirteen individual States, then forming the American Confederacy, became, by the ratification of the Constitution, over the forming of which Washington himself presided, the United American Nation. The flag of our country now numbers thirty-two stars on its crown of blue, and some half dozen or more additional starlets are shining out of the depths of our wilderness continent, soon to be added to our system of independent and united Government of the People. God save the United States! He has saved, enlarged, blessed, and prospered us beyond any people on this globe. Should we not be thankful, and keep high holiday of gratitude and gladness in acknowledgment of these national blessings? Seventy years ago, there were only about three millions of people under our flag; now it waves its protecting folds from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and nearly thirty millions of souls are enjoying its blessings. If every State should join in union thanksgiving on the 24th of this month, would it not be a renewed pledge of love and loyalty to the Constitution of the United States, which guarantees peace, prosperity, progress, and perpetuity to our great Republic?

Letter to the Editress of the Lady's Book

DEAR MADAM: Your admirable suggestions in relation to the simultaneous observance of Thanksgiving Day over the whole Union have, before this, made a deep, and, let us trust, an abiding impression in the most influential and desirable quarters. At the risk of repeating your own ideas, let me express some thoughts which naturally occur to me in this connection. The Union of these States is not consummated by appeals to national loyalty, nor to that national pride expressed in our motto, that union is strength. In short, all theoretical and abstract appeals to the Union are without root, and consequently without fruit. What makes the Union more than a mere word for poets or politicians, what makes it a blessing to be prayed for and preserved at any hazard, is quite on other grounds than price. An angry man hesitates to set his house on fire, because in every room is one of his own sleeping children. In these United States are scattered broadcast, growing up side by side with the natural productions, or else grafted on the ancient trees, the universal Yankee nation. Peddling his nutmegs and tinware, or presiding with energy and dignity over a seminary for education, inventing the most wonderful machinery for the most common purposes, or infusing into a languid and inert population some of the superfluous breezy activity of his own arid and mountainous districts, everywhere meddling, making, contriving, but everywhere inspiriting and improving, is the Yankee. He is one of the older children of the household, and, as such, assumes a superiority in many matters, but ill borne out by his manners. Be this as it may, wherever he wanders he weaves his web of prosperous industry; the land is better for him. He brings home to his native hills the sweet southern flower, or he stays amidst southern gardens to water and refresh them by a *patent irrigator*. Family ties increase and are strengthened. The youth of farthest Maine writes love-messages on the *magnolia grandiflora* leaf to the pale Floridian; the rosy belles of Massachusetts link hands and hearts with the elegant and languid Carolinians. In every chamber there is a child of the house.

Now, next to ties of blood and kindred come language and national observances. We are already spread and mingled over the Union. Each year, by bringing us oftener together, releases us from the estrangement and coolness consequent on distance and political alienations; each year multiplies our ties of relationship and friendship. How can we hate our Mississippi brother-in-law? and who is a better fellow than our wife's uncle from St. Louis? If Maine itself be a great way off, and almost nowhere, on the contrary, a dozen splendid fellows hail from Kennebec County, and your wife is a down-Easter. Now, when the Autumn sheaves are bound up, when the harvest moon bends smilingly above us, when Nature, having finished her annual work, throws herself wearily down, tossing from her lap abundance, and saying, not in words, but deeds, "Be thankful to the Giver!" -- then, in every true American heart, wherever beating, comes the thought of the family gathering, kindred smiles, or tearful memories. Wherever we may be, it is a good and pleasant thing to feel that we look at the same stars, pray to the same God, and hold high festival of gratitude at the same hours throughout the broad land that He has so blessed!

1860

The New National Holiday.

We may now consider *Thanksgiving a National Holiday*. It will no longer be a partial and vacillating commemoration of gratitude to our Heavenly Father, observed in one section or State, while other portions of our common country do not sympathize in the gratitude and gladness. It is to be a regularly recurring Festival, appointed by the concert of the State Governments *to be observed on the last Thursday in November* thus made, for all future time, THE AMERICAN THANKSGIVING DAY.

Such is the happy inference we draw from the patriotic unanimity of the Governors in their last appointments of Thanksgiving. On the last Thursday of last November, the people of the following States and Territories held and consecrated this New National Holiday:

*New York	Indiana
*Pennsylvania	Mississippi
*Massachusetts	Illinois
*Maryland	Alabama
*New Hampshire	Maine
*New Jersey	Arkansas
*North Carolina	Michigan
*South Carolina	Florida
*Georgia	Texas
*Connecticut	Iowa
*Rhode Island	Wisconsin
* <i>Virginia</i>	California
Vermont	Minnesota
Kentucky	Nebraska Territory
Tennessee	Kansas Territory
Ohio	District of Columbia

*The old States of the "Confederacy" that framed the Constitution and decreed the perpetual Brotherhood of citizens of "The United States of North America."

Virginia, as a State, did not, we regret to say, participate in Thanksgiving; because Governor Wise had doubts concerning his official authority to appoint such an observance. But the Presbyterian

Synod of the State, and the Cities of Fredericksburg, Norfolk, and Alexandria joined in the Festival, which was thus sanctioned by a large portion of the people of old and honored Virginia. Next November, we hope, that State will have its Union Thanksgiving.

It will be seen from this list that the concert of public opinion is nearly unanimous. Indeed, we may assume that *all* the States approve this idea of a National Thanksgiving, because those that did not join last November have done so in years past. The late omission, therefore, was caused, no doubt, by forgetfulness. This leads us to suggest the necessity that the *time* of holding this New Holiday should be fixed by each State, making it the duty of the governor to issue his proclamation yearly for *the last Thursday in November*.

God has given to man authority, to woman influence; she inspires and persuades, he convinces and compels. For the last twelve years, the editress of the Lady's Book has been endeavoring to bring about this agreement in popular feeling. We have used our influence, always, we trust, in a womanly way, and now we would render deep gratitude to God who had blessed our humble prayers and efforts, and express thus publicly our thanks to those generous men who have encouraged and accomplished our plan. We now leave the perpetuation of this good work, by the enactment of a statue in each State, to the good and patriotic men everywhere to be found, who love the Constitution and the Union.

Everything that contributes to bind us in one vast empire together, to quicken the sympathy that makes us feel from the icy North to the sunny South that we are one family, each a member of a great and free Nation, not merely the unit of a remote locality, is worthy of being cherished. We have sought to reawaken and increase this sympathy, believing that the fine filaments of the affections are stronger than laws to keep the Union of our States sacred in the hearts of our people.

Is it not fitting that from the heart of the Keystone State, this city of Independence Hall, the impulse of the new National Holiday should go forth? "A threefold cord is not quickly broken." This American festival adds the third strand to the cord that binds American hearts in nationality. *The twenty-second of February, the Fourth of July, the last Thursday in November* these three DAYS observed, will make and keep us American citizens. Well did that patriot divine, Rev. Charles Wadsworth, exclaim, in his last Thanksgiving sermon

"Thanks be unto God for this American Pentecost! Never were the bonds of our beloved brotherhood so revealed in their strength! Never before did so many sister States keep lovingly together this feast of harvest. It is the gathering of the one great household with offerings of praise to the one common temple the central Salem of peace the God of love."

We believe our Thanksgiving Day, if fixed and perpetuated, will be a great and sanctifying promoter of this national spirit. Our whole people will then look forward to it, make preparations to honor and enjoy it. Literature will take her part and send her tribute of gratitude. We have received and read a number of excellent articles lately, and, what gave us particular pleasure, "A Thanksgiving Story," setting forth the sterling virtues and the happiness derived from family reunions and the cultivation of fireside enjoyments. Let Thanksgiving, our American Holiday, give us American books, song, story, sermon written expressly to awaken in American hearts the love of home and country, of thankfulness to God, and peace between brethren. We do earnestly hope and pray that *the last Thursday in November* may be established as the American Thanksgiving Day. Then, on *that Day*, our citizens, whether in their own pleasant homes, or in the distant regions of Oriental despotism, would observe it on board every ship where our flag floats there would be a day of gladness wherever our missionaries preach the Gospel of "goodwill to men," the *day* would exemplify the joy of Christians; and in our Great Republic, from the St. John's to the Rio Grande, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, all our people, as one Brotherhood, will rejoice together, and give thanks to God for our National, State, and Family blessings.

1860

THANKSGIVING *the new National Holiday*. We must advert once more to this grand object of nationalizing Thanksgiving Day, by adopting, as a permanent rule, *the last Thursday in November* in all the States. Last year, 1859, *thirty States and three Territories* held Thanksgiving on the same day the last Thursday in November. This year we hope that every State and Territory will be included in the list. Last year this Thanksgiving was observed by the American residents in Paris, Berlin, and Berne; in the last two cities the American ministers to Switzerland and Prussia took the leading part of the festivities. Thanksgiving was also held on board two of the American squadrons, that of the Mediterranean and the African; and, moreover, several of the American missionary establishments in foreign lands have signified their willingness to set apart the day named.

This year the *last Thursday in November* falls on the 29th. If all the States and Territories hold their Thanksgiving on that day, there will be a complete moral and social reunion of the *people* of America in 1860. Would not this be a good omen for the perpetual political union of the States? May God grant us not only the omen, but the fulfillment is our dearest wish!

1860

Thanksgiving a Legal Holiday

Perseverance

Keeps honor bright. To have none is to hang

Quite out of fashion, like a rusty nail,

In monumental mockery.

SHAKESPEARE.

Attempt the end, and never stand to doubt;

Nothing's so hard but search will find it out.

HERRICK.

The plain meaning of our mottoes is, have an aim, and pursue it; a work to do, and do it. Thus hoping and working, success is sure.

We accept the augury. Thanksgiving will become an American Festival; the LAST THURSDAY IN NOVEMBER will be made a *legal National Holiday* in every State of the Union. This consummation that we have devoutly wished must be kept before the public till perfected. To have the DAY legalized by every State Legislature is now the only question. That this movement is popular in every portion of our wide land need not be argued; it was proven by nearly unanimous appointments of last Thanksgiving. Our list in the February number of our Book shows that twenty-nine States held this Festival on the same day. There should have been another name. *Louisiana* was omitted, not by purpose or mistake, but for want of information. We shall now give a corrected list, and take the liberty of prefacing this by inserting the pleasant and welcome letter which announced that the "*Pelican State*" took its part in the Festival.

WASHINGTON CITY, *January 22, 1859*

I notice in your February number a list of States and Territories that observed the last Thursday of November as a day of thanksgiving, and find that you omit, as most of the papers have also done, Louisiana. For the last ten years, the day has been observed in that State, and no dislike or opposition has been manifested to it. I give a list of legal holidays in that State, as a matter that may be of interest, more especially as I find very erroneous and ridiculous ideas prevailing at the

North in regard to the Pelican State. By act of Legislature, New Year's Day, the 8th of January (Anniversary of the Battle of New Orleans), 22d of February, Good Friday, 4th of July, Thanksgiving, and Christmas are holidays, and legally *dies non*.
A LOUISIANIAN.

The *corrected list* of the States that held Thanksgiving on the last Thursday of November, 1859:

New York	Ohio
Pennsylvania	Indiana
Massachusetts	Mississippi
Maryland	Illinois
New Hampshire	Alabama
New Jersey	Maine
North Carolina	Arkansas
South Carolina	Michigan
Georgia	Florida
Connecticut	Texas
Rhode Island	Iowa
Virginia	Wisconsin
Vermont	California
Kentucky	
Louisiana	Nebraska Territory
Tennessee	Kansas Territory
Minnesota	District of Columbia

Moreover, we have a letter from the Governor of Oregon, Hon. John Whittaker, expressing regret that our notice did not reach him in season, and he appointed the Day in December; but this year we feel sure that that new and patriotic State will join the National Festival, which will be held if all the Governors agree on the last Thursday, the 29th of November, 1860.

The State of Rhode Island has lately legalized the 22d of February as a holiday. Would it not be well if all the States which have not done this would follow the example and set apart the Birthday of Washington and Thanksgiving Day the *last Thursday in November* as perpetual holidays for American citizens?

1861

Thanksgiving Day: the Last Thursday in November

Oh, praise the Lord, for he is good, and his mercy endureth forever.
Psalms.

Yes, amidst all the agitations that stir the minds of men and cause the hearts of women to tremble in fear and sorrow, among all the woes generated by human passions and human sins, the mercy of the Lord is over his children. It is the King of Heaven who gives us, year by year, the kindly fruits of the earth, and prepares our bread in due season. The past harvest has been a time of rich blessings over nearly all Christendom; from the greater portions of Europe, throughout the length and breadth of our own beloved land, come the glad tidings of food enough and to spare.

This past year has also been distinguished by its freedom from pestilence and wasting

sicknesses. Health has been in all our borders - would that we could add, *peace has reigned and goodwill has been extended!* But we must acknowledge that the goodness of God has not failed. Shall we not, then, lay aside our enmities and strifes, and suspend our worldly cares, toils, and pursuits on *one day* in the year, devoting it to a public Thanksgiving for all the good gifts God has bestowed on us and on all the earth?

Surely it is ground for no ordinary thankfulness to know that even at a time like the present we have a surplus of food to spare, should the poor of other lands need a supply. Ought not this fact to teach us to extend our sympathies beyond the limits of our own country, and to do all that lies in our power to promote the reign of "Peace on earth and goodwill among men?"

All nations are members of one brotherhood, under the fostering care of the one beneficent Father of humanity. What could do more to arouse and preserve the fraternal feelings which should exist, especially among the nations of Christendom, than the establishment and universal observance of one general Christian Festival of Thanksgiving, *on the same day of the year*, throughout those nations? All sects and creeds who take the Bible as their rule of faith and morals could unite in such a festival. The Jews, also, who find the direct command for a feast at the ingathering of harvest, would gladly join in this Thanksgiving and in every country of Europe it would become, as we trust it will soon be in our own country, a universal holiday on the LAST THURSDAY OF NOVEMBER.

The enjoyment of it would be heightened in every land by the knowledge that in all other lands where the Bible was the BOOK of faith, in all places throughout the globe where Christians of any nation or creed could meet together, this happy, hallowed festival was and forever would be kept on *the last Thursday of November*.

We can do no more at present than to offer this suggestion for the consideration of the friends of peace and of religion in all countries, believing that it must commend itself to the sympathies of every one who will give it due attention; and that with judicious exertions it may be carried into effect. There is something so cheering and delightful in the idea of a DAY OF UNIVERSAL THANKSGIVING, set apart among all the branches of the Christian family, when the storms of war would be hushed, and the strifes of factions, parties, and sects forgotten for a time, and all hearts united in one sentiment of gratitude to the Divine Father of humanity, that the mere proposal of this plan seems almost to insure its fulfillment.

The way is already prepared; for the last ten years or more the idea of our American national Thanksgiving has been gradually growing in favor and becoming an observance in all our States and Territories. The last Thursday in November has thus been known as the American Festival Day, and for the last three years has been observed by Americans in European cities and wherever our countrymen could meet together. It has been kept on board our fleets in the Mediterranean, African, and Brazilian stations; our missionaries in India, China, Africa have approved of this festival, and last year it was observed by our countrymen in Japan. Hon. Townsend Harris, American ambassador to that empire, inclosed in a letter to us his proclamation setting apart, in conformity with American custom, *the last Thursday in November* as a day of public Thanksgiving to Almighty God.

The following extract from a letter of an American resident shows how it was observed:

"YOKOHAMA, JAPAN,

Dec. 5, 1860

Last Thursday, the 29th, was Thanksgiving, by proclamation of the American Minister at Jeddo and Gen. Dorr, our consul here at Kanagawa.

The Rev. Mr. Brown, one of the American missionaries of this place, preached a sermon at the residence of Gen. Dorr. Nearly all the American residents here at Yokohama and

Kanagawa were present. Hon. Townsend Harris was down, and spent Thanksgiving with General Dorr.”

Thus, from our Western world to the Isles of the rising sun, this chord of sympathy in thankful gratitude to the true God has been awakened, and the sentiment that makes Christian brotherhood a source of joy and hope has been strengthened. This feeling was strongly drawn forth at the last year’s festival in Berlin, now the centre of German movements for nationality. The following pleasant description of the dinner will show the good influences it promoted as well as the happiness it conferred:

THANKSGIVING DAY IN BERLIN

BERLIN, Nov. 29, 1860

“In the most splendid street in this great city, ‘Unter der Linden,’ is one of the loveliest little dininghalls I ever saw. Its walls are adorned with the portraits of Schiller, and Goethe, and Beethoven, and the other masters of pen and of song. These worthies looked very strange tonight, peeping out from the folds of innumerable ‘stars and stripes,’ which draped the walls on every side. The sides of the room seemed to be a greenhouse of large, luxuriant plants, and the table itself was groaning under its weight of flowers. A few minutes after five o’clock P.M., Gov. Wright, our ambassador to the Prussian Court was seen to talk to the head of the table, and take his seat. In a moment the hundred guests, students in Berlin, travellers to and from our native land, American residents of other cities, called in from their present homes to eat this patriotic dinner, together with a few German friends, took seats at the ample board. The band commenced; we all expected, from the preliminary flourishes, some unknown composition of Beethoven; but what was our surprise and delight to hear them soon fall gracefully into the grand measures of Old Hundred! By instinct every voice joined in the hymn ‘Praise God, from whom all blessings flow.’ Then a fervent prayer of praise and thanksgiving was offered by Rev. Geo. C. Robinson, of Cincinnati, and in a moment more every distinguishable sound was lost in the clatter of busy knives and forks. There was everything which we could have got at grandmother’s, except the pumpkin pies. The ladies tried it; but here the Dutch cooks declared that forbearance ceased to be a virtue, and openly rebelled against baking such “ausgezeig net nujeheur” (adverbs so transcendently superlative that they can’t be described) compounds in their ovens! But, as a remuneration, Gov. Wright had generously imported at his own expense an abundance of more delicious sweet potatoes, and cranberries, and dried sweet corn direct from home! How we did feast on these goodies! And then we would sing a song, and make the kelner bring us one more plate of roast turkey, with just the least bit of sweet potato and some of that delicious cranberry sauce. Ah, you hundred grandmothers, who prayed so fervently for your boys off here in a strange land, we had everything to remind us of you tonight. And now the Governor arose: all was silence. He said, before he gave the first toast he wanted to make this a true American Thanksgiving by remembering the poor. The plate was passed, and seventy-five thalers were collected, to be distributed by a city missionary, recently established here through Gov. Wright’s instrumentality in great measure, in imitation of similar institutions in New York. And then began the speeches, and the toasts, and the stories. The enthusiasm soon kindled to such a degree that a German friend, Prof. Holsendorf, of the University, rose voluntarily and said he wished he had his countrymen here now who never heard anything about America except Bowie knives and steamboat explosions. At that, a student jumped to his feet and said he loved all the institutions of our country, even such peculiar institutions as steamboat explosions; for who would not rather be blown a half way from New York to Albany than never get there!”

If this *November* does not seem the time for rejoicing, then consecrate the *last Thursday in the month* to benevolence of action, by sending gifts to the poor, and doing those deeds of kindness that will for *one day* make every *American home* the place of gladness and every American heart hopeful and thankful. A day of fasting might seem more becoming, if the festival had reference to the condition of the country or the deeds of men; but when God is the Benefactor we praise, the Ruler we exalt, have we not always cause of joy and gratitude? It was to human vision a gloomy time in Judea when the prophet said unto the people:

Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared, for this day is holy unto our Lord; neither be ye sorry, for the joy of the Lord is your strength. Nehemiah viii. 10.

Shall the 28th of November (the last Thursday) be this year an American Thanksgiving Day?

1862

THANKSGIVING DAY – THE LAST THURSDAY IN NOVEMBER

Oh, give thanks unto the Lord, for He is gracious, and His mercy endureth forever.

PSALMS.

The annual Festival of Thanksgiving is near at hand. Will it not be remembered and observed? The mercy of the Lord is not slack; He has given us rich harvests and filled the garners of our land. Health has been all our borders would that we could add *peace* has *reigned and goodwill been extended!* But we must all acknowledge that the goodness of God has not failed.

Last year this National Feast Day was celebrated in twenty-four States and three Territories; all these, excepting the States of Massachusetts and Maine, held the Festival on the same day the *last Thursday in November*. We suggested last year that, as all nations are members of one brotherhood, under the fostering care of one Beneficent Father of Humanity, it would be of much effect in promoting the kindly feelings which should be cultivated among Christian people if the universal observance of one General Festival of Thanksgiving for the bounties of Divine Providence could be established *on the same day of the year* throughout all Christendom.

All sects and creeds who take the Bible as their rule of faith and morals could unite in such a Festival. The Jews, who find the direct command for a Feast at the ingathering of harvest, would gladly join in this Thanksgiving, and in every country in Europe it would become, as we trust it will soon be in our beloved country, a universal Holiday on the **LAST THURSDAY OF NOVEMBER**.

This year the day falls on the 27th of this month. We earnestly hope every State in our Union will unite on that day in a fervent Thanksgiving to God for his blessings and bounties.

1863

Our National Thanksgiving

Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the Lord is your strength. *Nehemiah* viii. 10.

THUS commanded the inspired leader of the Jews, when they kept the "Feast of Weeks;" in a time of national darkness and sore troubles shall we not recognize that the goodness of God never faileth, and that to our Father in heaven we should always bring the Thanksgiving offering at the ingathering of the harvest?

Wise lawgivers and great patriots have acknowledged the salutary effect of appointed times for national reunions which combine religious sentiment with domestic and social enjoyment; thus feelings of benevolence are awakened, and gratitude to the Giver of all our blessings is seen to be the great duty of life. Owing to the different economy of different churches, among Protestant denominations, except the Christian Sabbath, all our religious commemorations are partial and local.

Can we not, then, following the appointment of Jehovah in the "Feast of Weeks," or *Harvest Festival*, establish our yearly THANKSGIVING as a *permanent American National Festival, which shall be celebrated on the last Thursday in November in every State of our Union?* Indeed it has been nearly accomplished. For the last twelve or fourteen years, the States have made approaches to this unity. In 1859 *thirty States* and three Territories held the Thanksgiving Festival on the same day the last Thursday in November. It was also celebrated that year and the following on board several of the American fleets ships in the Indian Ocean, the Mediterranean, and on the Brazil station; by the Americans in Berlin at our Prussian Embassy; in Paris and in Switzerland; and American missionaries have signified their readiness to unite in this Festival if it should be established on a particular day which can be known as the *American Thanksgiving*.

Then, in every quarter of the globe our nationality would be recognized in connection with our gratitude to the Divine giver of all our blessings. The pious and loving thought that every American was joining in heart with the beloved family at home and with the church to which he belonged, would thrill his soul with the purest feelings of patriotism and the deepest emotions of thankfulness for his religious enjoyments.

Would it not be of great advantage, socially, nationally, religiously, to have the DAY of our American Thanksgiving positively settled? Putting aside the sectional feelings and local incidents that might be urged by any single State or isolated Territory that desired to choose its own time, would it not be more noble, more truly American, to become *nationally in unity* when we offer to God our tribute of joy and gratitude for the blessings of the year?

Taking this view of the case, would it not be better that the proclamation which appoints Thursday the 26th of November (1863) as the day of Thanksgiving for the people of the United States of America should, in the first instance, emanate from the President of the Republic to be applied by the Governors of each and every State, in acquiescence with the chief executive adviser?

1864

OUR NATIONAL THANKSGIVING – A DOMESTIC FESTIVAL (HELD YEARLY ON THE LAST THURSDAY IN NOVEMBER)

On the twenty-fourth of this month recurs the Day -- "The last Thursday in November" -- which has now become firmly established as one of the three National Festivals of America. "The Birth of Washington," which brings before all minds the example of the patriot hero and the Christian man; "Independence Day," which reminds us of the free principles on which our Government was founded; and "Thanksgiving Day," which lifts our hearts to Heaven in grateful devotion, and knits them together in bonds of social affection are three anniversaries such as no other People have the good fortune to enjoy. We fervently trust that, so long as the nation endures, these three Festivals will continue to be observed with an ever deepening sense of their beauty and value.

In our endeavors, which have been continued for many years, to secure the recognition of *one day throughout the land as the Day of public Thanksgiving*, we are conscious of not having in any manner gone beyond the proper limits of the sphere which we have prescribed for the Lady's Book. It is the peculiar happiness of Thanksgiving Day that nothing political mingles in its observance. It is in its very nature a religious and domestic holiday. It belongs to the altar and the hearth, at which woman should ever be present; and the *women* of our country should take this day under their peculiar charge, and sanctify it to acts of piety, charity, and domestic love.

There is one duty connected with the *day* which on present occasion should be especially called to mind. In the divine order which was given to the Israelites for the celebration of their great National Festival, the "Feast of Weeks," they were bidden to "eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and *send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared.*" Although Providence has blessed our land with an abounding harvest, we must remember that there are among us many who will have but a scanty and insufficient share in this abundance. The civil war has given to our care many maimed and helpless men, many widows and orphans, many destitute refugees. Notwithstanding all the provision made by the Government, there will be ample room for all that private benevolence can bestow. Let us each see to it that on *this one day* there shall be no family or individual, within the compass of our means to help, who shall not have some portion prepared, and some reason to join in the general Thanksgiving.

Who can estimate the benefits and blessings which may flow from the faithful observance of this happy Festival? For one day the strife of parties will be hushed, the cares of business will be put aside, and all hearts will join in common emotions of gratitude and goodwill. We may even hope that for one day war itself will cease by common consent, as was the custom in the Middle Ages during the solemn church Festival known as the "Truce of God;" and it is not impossible that sentiments may then be awakened which will aid in bringing on that return of true union and peace which is so earnestly desired.

At all events, we may be sure that, wherever it is possible, among our warworn soldiers in every camp and hospital, among our gallant sailors on every sea, among our devoted missionaries, laboring throughout all heathendom, among patriotic Americans in every foreign country, as well as among millions of homes in our own wide land, between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, this great National and Domestic Festival will be celebrated with happy recollections and cheerful hopes, and with grateful and softened hearts.

Let us all, with devout thankfulness to the beneficent Giver of all good gifts, do our best to make this coming Thanksgiving Day a foretaste of that happy period of "peace on earth and goodwill among men," in which all wrongs and sufferings from evil are to dissolve like shadows before the noonday sun, in the righteousness and goodness which will crown the glorious reign of Christ on earth.

NOTE. – On the last Thursday in November, 1859, the following States united in holding their Thanksgiving by proclamations from their respective Governors, thus, by the will of the people, sanctioning the establishing of this National and Domestic Festival as an American institution: Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas, Arkansas, Tennessee, Kentucky, Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Kansas (then a Territory), California, Nebraska Territory, District of Columbia.

In November, 1860, the number was about the same, and also this American Festival was celebrated by the resident Americans abroad, by our embassies, and on board our fleets. Last year, 1863, the Day was appointed by the President, and was joyfully observed in our own land, wherever the American flag held sway, and in the Old World wherever the

knowledge of this *fixed day, the last Thursday in November*, was known to American residents as the American Festival.

THANKSGIVING HYMN

Our father! To thy throne our thoughts ascend
In grateful symphony of thanks and praise,
For all the mercies that our steps attend,
The smiles that bless, the hopes that cheer our days;
For all the gladness of the budding spring,
The golden garniture of summer fields,
The sheafy crown that Autumn glories bring,
The sweet content the Winter fireside yields.
For all the bounties of the fruitful sod,
We give thee thanks, our Father and our God.
We thank thee for the ward thine angels kept
Above the precious heads to us so dear,
That no ill thing should harm them while they slept,
Nor noonday pestilence should come anear.
And ah! the strokes that pierced our quivering hearts,
the blows that tore our dearest from the day!
We know thy mercy aimed the fatal darts,
We know 'twas thine to give and take away.
Alike for fostering hand and chastening rod
We give thee thanks, our Father and our God.
We thank thee for the guiding radiance shed
Along the way wherein we journey here;
The faith that smooths the loftiest steep we tread.
The hope that lights us through the vale most drear;
The love unequalled, shown by Him who died
That we might live, who lives that we may rise
Through death to follow him, the Crucified,
Redeemer and Exemplar, to the skies.
We mark the shining path our Leader trod,
And give thee thanks, our Father and our God.
H.H.

1865

OUR NATIONAL THANKSGIVING DAY. THE PLEDGE OF AMERICAN UNION FOREVER

Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, goodwill toward men. St. Luke, Chap. II, ver. 14.

Never, since the night when the angels shouted their tidings of great joy over Judea, has any nation on earth had such a glorious opportunity of echoing back to Heaven this song of joy and thanksgiving, for the blessings of peace and goodwill, as the American people have now before them.

Our annual Thanksgiving Day - the *last Thursday in November* - is near at hand. Then, throughout the length and breadth of our Great Republic, the song of peace may be

chanted, and goodwill or union, as the fruit of peace, should it not be the keynote to sound our joy and rejoicing over the wide world?

“Glory to God in the highest!” If we take this sentiment as the ground of our National thanksgiving, because our Lord and Saviour was sent to show by His example and to teach by His precepts how men and women were to live on earth so that they might be fitted to enjoy Heaven then we may easily learn the duties this American Festival day imposes on every person who enjoys its blessings.

Our Thanksgiving Day, becoming the focus, as it were, of the private life and virtues of the people, should be hallowed and exalted, and made the day of generous deeds and innocent enjoyments, of noble aspirations and heavenly hopes.

What themes and opportunities are here for our reverend clergy! A holy day is added to our days of rest from worldly labors; a third joyful anniversary is sealed for the American Republic.

The Twenty-second of February is sacred to the memory of Washington and patriotic duties. The Fourth of July is the Jubilee of National Independence. The *last Thursday in November*, let it be consecrated now to our Father in heaven, for His bounteous blessings bestowed on us, as the perpetual DAY OF THANKSGIVING for the American people. Hitherto the observance of the day has been circumscribed. To the Eastern colonies we must look for the beginning of this custom. The Pilgrim Fathers incorporated a yearly thanksgiving day among the moral influences they sent over the New World. After our Independence the light crept slowly onward and westward, broken by State enactments into stars that glimmered at different times and at distant intervals; yet still it blessed and beautified the homes it reached, thus suggesting its beneficence and power for good whenever the stars should shine out together and make joy and thanksgiving through United America. It would be like a new revelation of the dayspring from on high. And now the time and the day are come.

Nineteen years ago the idea of this united American Thanksgiving Day was put forth by the Editress of the Lady's Book. Our readers know how steadily, year by year, we have kept this theme before the public. The Governors of all the States have, at different times, signified their approval. This was shown in 1859, when thirty-three stars (State and Territorial) united in the galaxy that made the white brightness of the annual Thanksgiving. As the deepest and holiest emotions of the heart must be founded in truth and strengthened by religion, can there be a doubt that to make this anniversary truly national will be to create a powerful means of national unity? When kneeling together in adoration to Him whose precepts are “Love one another;” “Do unto others as ye would they should do unto you;” when joining in prayers for the same blessings and in thanksgivings for the same good gifts of the season, can Americans feel otherwise than as brethren, whose interests are united? whose aims should be to ennoble their common country? whose lives, liberties, and fortunes are safe only under the same glorious flag?

Our late beloved and lamented President Lincoln recognized the truth of these ideas as soon as they were presented to him. His reply to our appeal was a Proclamation, appointing the last Thursday in November, 1863, as the day of National Thanksgiving. But at that time, and also in November, 1864, he was not able to influence the States in rebellion, so that the festival was, necessarily, incomplete.

President Johnson has a happier lot. His voice can reach all American citizens. From East to West, from North to South, the whole country will be moved at his bidding; at home or abroad, on sea or land, the appointed day will be welcomed as the seal of national peace and the harbinger of national blessings.

Thus our own ideal of an AMERICAN THANKSGIVING FESTIVAL* will be realized, as we described it in 1860. The 30th of November, 1865, will bring the consummation. “On that

DAY our citizens, whether in their own pleasant homes, or in the distant regions of Oriental despotism, would observe it on board every ship where our flag floats there would be a day of gladness wherever our missionaries preach the Gospel of "goodwill to men," the day would exemplify the joy of Christians; and in our Great Republic, from the St. John's to the Rio Grande, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, all our people, as one Brotherhood, will rejoice together, and give thanks to God for our National, State, and Family blessings."

*Since the year 1859, the *last Thursday in November* has been known over the world as the "American Thanksgiving Day." It has been observed by Americans in Europe, Asia, and Africa; by our fleets in the Mediterranean, African, and Brazilian waters; our foreign missionaries have expressed their approval; it has been observed by the American plenipotentiaries in London, Paris, Berlin, Berne, and Japan. Thus, from our Western World to the isles of the rising sun a new chord of sympathy has been awakened, and the sentiment that makes Christian brotherhood a source of joy and hope has been strengthened.

The opportunity is now presented for a cordial and universal enjoy of this festival in the *United States*. And when our Christian temples of worship are crowded on Thanksgiving Day, and from every altar goes up the sacrifice of faith and love, prayer and praise, to the only living and true God, will not the nations of the Old World learn and confess that *America is a Christian Nation?*

1866

AMERICAN NATIONAL THANKSGIVING

This Annual Festival is near at hand. The very idea brightens gloomy November with the sunshine of household joys that makes the month like spring-time to all young hearts. Even sober-minded elderly folks catch glimpses of their own childhood's happiness through the vista of past Thanksgivings, which make life more sweet, and their own souls more thankful for the good gifts God's love has bestowed on our favored land.

Six millions of households gathered together on the *last Thursday in November* and uniting as one Great Family Republic, whose States and Territories are all enjoying this AMERICAN FESTIVAL OF THANKSGIVING-DAY; is not this a spectacle to move the Old World with admiration and respect for the domestic, social, and religious characteristics of the American nation, as well as to impress the idea of an invincible moral power in our political institutions?

No wonder that Americans abroad, wherever they may be found, are glad and proud to keep this National Thanksgiving-Day. For years past it has thus been celebrated - *the last Thursday in November* - in many cities of Europe and Asia, and on board of our American fleets at sea and in harbor. Our missionaries in Turkey, India, and China have kept the day; and wherever the tidings of appointment can reach, there this festival will be held, as the best exponent which American residents in foreign lands can give the native population of the prosperity and happiness of the American people.

As yet we have been slow to use the great advantages for art and literature which such an established national festival furnishes for the pencil and pen of American genius. A popular writer truly remarks: -

"There is something about the great central idea of our Thanksgiving - the bringing together of scattered families, and the tender recollection and renewal of old ties - which has no less poetry, and romance, and pathos, and thorough geniality, than the Yule log, and the mistletoe of Christmas. Every reader who knows what Thanksgiving is, and has spent one

at home after a few years' absence, can bear witness to the beautiful, romantic, touching incidents and associations of that hallowed family time. Sooner or later these lovable aspects of our Thanksgiving-day will give birth to original species of American poetry, essay, and story-telling."

But when there is a positive certainty that the last Thursday in November will be, by Presidential appointment, fixed as the day for the Nation, and each State invited to bid its own citizens to join the Festival, then the beautiful flowers and rich fruitage from this perennial root of love, peace, and union, will burst forth and ripen in the joyous pleasure of children, the happy reunion of families, the tender sympathy that gives good gifts to the poor and suffering, and the Christian charity that provides, on that day, a feast of fat things for all who need, whether in the poor-house, the prison, or the penitentiary.

Shall 1866 be the glorious year that establishes the custom forever, by the union now of every State and Territory on the 29th of November in this American National Thanksgiving?

NOTE. – On the last Thursday in November, 1859, the following States united in holding their Thanksgiving by proclamations from their respective Governors, thus, by the will of the people, sanctioning the establishing of this National and Domestic Festival as an American institution: Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas, Arkansas, Tennessee, Kentucky, Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Kansas (then a Territory), California, Nebraska Territory, District of Columbia.

Since the year 1859, the *last Thursday in November* has been known over the world as the "American Thanksgiving Day." It has been observed by Americans in Europe, Asia, and Africa; by our fleets in the Mediterranean, African, and Brazilian waters; our foreign missionaries have expressed their approval; it has been observed by the American plenipotentiary in London and Paris, Berlin, Berne, and Japan. Thus, from our Western World to the isles of the rising sun a new chord of sympathy has been awakened, and the sentiment that makes Christian brotherhood a source of joy and hope has been strengthened.

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1867

THE LAST THURSDAY OF NOVEMBER

"Where are the flowers, the fair young flowers, that lately sprang and stood
In brighter light and softer airs, a beauteous sisterhood?
Alas! they all are in their graves; the gentle race of flowers
Are lying in their lowly beds, with the fair and good of ours.
The rain is falling where they lie; but the cold November rain
Calls not from out the gloomy earth the lovely ones again."

So sang the American Poet Laureate of nature. But surely Mr. Bryant could not thus have given the month up to melancholy if he had recollected the scenes of his boyhood, and how mirth and charity hold, in our land, their happiest carnival in November. A vision of the

Thanksgiving dinner in his New England home, with roasted turkeys and pumpkin pies, and the family “round the board,” would have brightened the gloomiest picture his fancy could have painted. Next to Christmas, in the household festivities, comes AMERICAN NATIONAL THANKSGIVING-DAY.

The important festival falls this year on the 28th of November. On that DAY we trust that every household in our land will have a good portion in the feasting and a grateful heart in the Thanksgivings. Think of the grand spectacle!

“Six millions of families gathered together on the *last Thursday in November*, and uniting as one Great Family republic, whose States and Territories are all enjoying this AMERICAN FESTIVAL OF THANKSGIVING-DAY; is not this a spectacle to move the Old World with admiration and respect for the domestic, social, and religious characteristics of the American nation, as well as to impress the idea of an invincible moral power in our political institutions?

“No wonder that Americans abroad, wherever they may be found, are glad and proud to keep this National Thanksgiving Day. For years past it has thus been celebrated – *the last Thursday in November* – in many cities of Europe and Asia, and on board of our American fleets at sea and in harbor. Our missionaries in Turkey, India, and China have kept the day; and wherever the tidings of appointment can reach, there this festival will be held, as the best exponent which American residents in foreign lands can give the native population of the prosperity and happiness of the American people.”

Moreover, this year is distinguished by a great enlargement of our borders. Walrussia is now American territory. From the icebergs of the North Pole to the Gulf of Mexico stretches the latitude of our Republic, while the two wide oceans wash its eastern and western borders. Around this circuit of half a world the proclamation for “a Day of public Thanksgiving” will draw the golden cord of National Union; and lift up the heart of the American People in grateful adoration of their Almighty Benefactor.

1868

AMERICAN NATIONAL THANKSGIVING DAY

The last Thursday of November seems to be designated by peculiar fitness for our National Thanksgiving. The harvest labor has gathered in subsistence for the coming year; the turmoil of elections is over, the cold blasts of winter begin to be felt, while yet the beauty and freshness of our Indian summer remind us of the pleasant season that has gone. The moral significance of our great festival is too plain to need a comment, and the joyful family reunions that are its invariable accompaniment are the pleasant feature of the whole.

We can look back to a year marked upon the whole with many signal blessings, and great advance in matters of national importance. Since last November, the republic has considerably extended the boundary of her territory; the great festival will be held this year amidst the snows of Alaska. The great Pacific Railroad, that is destined to bind together the confines of our empire with a closeness and intimacy as yet unknown, is making rapid progress. Probably before another year has passed it will be but an ordinary railway journey from New York to San Francisco. And while our internal communication has thus been quickened, our commerce is also on the increase. The dearth that reigns through Europe has not come near our shores; the abundant harvest which has crowned the year will pour its surplus into the lap of the Old World. Our farmers look forward with joy to the open market across the Atlantic and the heavy exports of the coming winter.

Let every American who reads the President’s Proclamation, that brings together our national blessings, join in the praise of the Great Benefactor to whom we owe them all, and

in the spirit of peace and good-will to men, prepare to keep his Thanksgiving Day.

1869

AMERICAN NATIONAL THANKSGIVING

This important Festival Day seems now settled as the National Holiday. Last year it was observed by American citizens abroad in many countries and cities of Europe and Asia. The first appointment of the National Thanksgiving was made by President Lincoln in 1863. It had previously been made by State appointments; but these united on the last Thursday in November for many years: in 1859 almost every State celebrated the festival on the same day. But since the appointments have been made by the President of the United States foreign countries are becoming interested in our Holiday. Last year it was kept in every part of the world where Americans resided. Of course, it was duly observed in Alaska – the first Thanksgiving Day ever known in that boreal region. There were thanksgiving dinners in London, Paris, Liverpool, Frankfort, Berlin, Florence, and Rome. The traditional roast turkey was served up under the American flag in Japan, and at the mouth of the Amoor River, in St. Petersburg, and in Rio de Janeiro. The last Thursday of November falls this year on the 25th. On that day President Grant has an opportunity not often afforded of addressing the whole nation in the spirit of peace and good-will, of making the people of every section feel their brotherhood with one another, and of healing the discord and division that threaten our national happiness.

1870

A NEW NATIONAL HOLIDAY

When the last Thursday in November shall become, by special enactment of Congress, THE AMERICAN NATIONAL THANKSGIVING DAY, then the people of the United States will have three holidays, each one representing an idea not only of importance to our own citizens, but also of interest to the world.

Washington's Birthday represents the influence of a perfect patriotism which won our *Independence Day*, under the blessing of Almighty God, in whose name we celebrate our *Thanksgiving Day*. In the light of these three ideas American history must be read, if we would rightly understand the moral power it now wields over the destiny of humanity.

The importance of this third holiday to the union and happiness of those who enjoy it can hardly be overestimated. The influence of its family reunions, its generous beneficence to the poor, its public acknowledgement of the Divine Being who spares the destinies of nations – all these combine to strengthen, to ennoble, and to purify the character of our Republican Government.

To the Colony of Massachusetts belongs the honor of introducing this holiday, soon after the settlement of Boston, though the exact date is not known. From that Colony the observance of Thanksgiving became the custom in all New England, then advanced slowly but steadily on to the Middle States and the West. The first thanksgiving in Pennsylvania was held in the year 1843. Few of the Southern States had then adopted the custom. The precise time of the year when the holiday should be kept was for a long period left undetermined. The governor of each Colony, and afterwards of each State, fixed the day from year to year at his own pleasure, without regard to the convenience of any persons but those residing within his jurisdiction. As the country expanded, and the custom of celebrating the festival became general, this isolation was found to have many

disadvantages. For more than twenty years, as the readers of the LADY'S BOOK are aware, the propriety of fixing one day for the whole Union has been urged in these pages, and the last Thursday of November has been mentioned as, on many accounts, the most suitable day. This view has been confirmed by the action of the governors and religious bodies of almost all the States with gratifying harmony. On the last Thursday of November, in 1859, Thanksgiving Day was thus celebrated in every one of the original thirteen States, and in nineteen of the other States and Territories, comprising all which then existed, with two or three exceptions, and in those the festival had been held on the last Thursday in November in previous years.

The reasons for selecting the day which has been preferred are so strong that they need only be mentioned to be appreciated. That Thursday is the most convenient day of the week for a domestic holiday is an opinion in which all housewives will certainly unite. And that a public Thanksgiving, for the blessings of harvest, will be most appropriately held *in the last week of the harvest season* is also too clear for argument. Add to this that it is a period of general leisure, when the autumnal farm work is well over; the elections are concluded, and political excitement has had time to subside; at the North some of the "Indian summer" mildness still lingers; while at the South the welcome breath of the colder season is beginning to be felt in bracing and healthful breezes. These reasons are quite sufficient to account for the general consent with which this day has at last been chosen. If authority and precedent are needed, we have them in the example of Washington, who, eighty-one years ago, issued the first proclamation of a day of National Thanksgiving for the last Thursday in November, 1789. The proclamation of the illustrious Father of our Republic is so characteristic, so admirable, and expresses views so appropriate to the present circumstances of the nation, that our readers cannot fail to derive pleasure from its perusal, and we add it here: -

GENERAL WASHINGTON'S PROCLAMATION

Whereas, It is the duty of all nations to acknowledge the Providence of Almighty God, to obey His will, to be grateful for His benefits, and humbly implore His protection and favor; and, whereas, both Houses of Congress have, by their Joint Committee, requested me to recommend to the people of the United States a day of Public Thanksgiving and Prayer, to be observed by acknowledging with grateful hearts the many and signal favors of Almighty God, especially by affording them an opportunity of peaceably establishing a form of government for their safety and happiness. Now, therefore, I do recommend and assign Thursday, the twenty-sixth day of November next, to be devoted by the people of these States to the service of the great and glorious Being who is the beneficent author of all the good that was, that is, that will be. That we then all unite in rendering unto Him our sincere and humble thanks for His kind care and protection of the people of this country previous to its becoming a nation, for the signal and manifold mercies, and the favorable interpositions of His Providence in the course and conclusion of the late war; for the great degree of tranquility, union, and plenty which we have since enjoyed; for the peaceable and rational manner in which we have been enabled to establish constitutions of government for our safety and happiness, and particularly the national one more lately instituted; for civil and religious liberty with which we are blessed, and the means we have of acquiring and diffusing useful knowledge and in general for all the great and various favors which He hath been pleased to confer upon us. And also that we may then united in most humbly offering our prayers and supplications to the great Lord and ruler of nations, and beseech Him to pardon our national and other transgressions; to enable us all, whether in public or private stations, to perform our several and national duties properly and prudently; to render our national government a blessing to all people, constantly being a government of wise, just,

and constitutional laws, discreetly and faithfully executed and obeyed; to protect and guide all sovereigns and nations (especially such as have shown kindness unto us), and bless them with good government, peace, and concord, to promote the knowledge of true religion and virtue, and the increase of science amongst us; and generally to grant unto all mankind such a degree of temporal prosperity as He alone knows to be best.

Given under my hand, at the City of New York, the third day of October, in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and eighty-nine.

GEORGE WASHINGTON

The day thus proclaimed by President Washington was celebrated by four millions of people, in thirteen States, clustered along the Atlantic coast. This year the holiday will be observed by a nation of forty millions, in forty-five States and Territories, stretching from the Atlantic to the Pacific. How far the wonderful growth of our country, not only in population and extent, but in every other element of prosperity and greatness, has been due to observance of the maxims comprised in this proclamation is a question which others must decide.

It seems strange that this remarkable paper has not been more generally known. In the writings of Washington this production is worthy of being classed with his best. It seems his exposition of the moral power of the Constitution.

When President Lincoln, in 1863, issued his proclamation for a National Thanksgiving, there were hindrances to a universal observance that could not be overcome. President Grant has now the happy opportunity, not only of following the great example of Washington, but of speaking, as he did, to a united people, a nation at peace within itself, and at peace with all the world. Look onward another eighty years to November, 1950, what then will be the record of our NATIONAL THANKSGIVING DAY?

1871

THE AMERICAN NATIONAL HOLIDAY

PERHAPS few of our readers know how old is the celebration of our National Thanksgiving. Washington, in the first year of his administration, in 1789, inaugurated as a day of praise and rejoicing for our whole people the last Thursday in November, before set aside only in a few commonwealths. His proclamation, which we published last November, is a model of its kind. The observance was evidently in accordance with the feelings of our people, and has grown at last into a custom. For twenty-five years the separate States have celebrated the last Thursday in November, and the National Government has at length taken up the matter.

We have long endeavored to secure the celebration of this great festival upon the same day in every American State and Territory, so that it might be a National Holiday. In 1863 the Southern States could not be reached. Application was made to President Lincoln, who issued a proclamation, the first since that of Washington from the representative of the nation, and appointing the same day, the last Thursday of November. His example has been yearly followed by his successors.

But one thing is wanting. It is eminently fit that this National Holiday shall rest upon the same legal basis as its companions, the Twenty-second of February and the Fourth of July. As things now stand, our Thanksgiving is exposed to the chances of the time. Unless the President or the Governor of the State in office happens to see fit, no day is appointed for its observance. Is not this a state of things which calls for instant remedy? Should not our festival be assured to us by law?

We hope to see, before many months have elapsed, perhaps before our next Thanksgiving, the passage of an act by Congress appointing the last Thursday in November as a perpetual holiday, wherein the whole nation may unite in praise to Almighty God for his bounty and love, in rejoicing over the blessings of the year, in the union of families, and in acts of charity and kindness to the poor.

The influx of foreigners into our country is prodigious. Not only by the natural increase of population, but by immigration, our numbers are growing, and our Western wilderness is fast shrinking before the pioneers of civilization. To bind together the discordant nationalities into one American brotherhood, what strand so potent as Thanksgiving? A community of praise and of kindly offices will soon establish a community of feeling and of language. Let every one who claims the name of American, wherever he may be – in the old world or the new, on the land or the sea – unite to commemorate the day. It will be stronger than laws or armies to make our nation one.

There will be no lack this month of special topics for thanksgiving. Each one's memory will suggest a multitude. Our harvests are abundant. We have enjoyed the fruits of summer and the plenty of autumn - poured upon us with a liberal hand. We have been untroubled by war or pestilence. We have seen the bonds of union gradually reknitting. We have seen the completion of one great railway and the undertaking of another, to traverse the continent from the Atlantic to the Pacific. And, last but not least, we have seen the conclusion of a treaty between our country and the motherland, honorable to ourselves, healing the sore division that might have led to war, and affording to the world an example of dignified and cordial reparation of a national injury unexampled in the history of diplomacy. For these, and for the many private blessings lavished upon us by the Divine Ruler, let us rejoice and give thanks upon this pleasant anniversary.

1872

AMERICA'S THANKSGIVING HYMN

WRITTEN FOR THE LAST THURSDAY IN NOVEMBER, 1872

ALMIGHTY LORD of glory!
Our praise to Him we bring;
and chant our country's story,
Where GOD alone is KING;
His outstretched arm sustaining,
Behold the Mayflower come!
His mercy foreordaining
Our land for Freedom's home.

Though wintry darkness gathers,
And dearth and death prevail,
The faithful Pilgrim Fathers
Could look within the veil;
O joy amid the sadness!
They're free to do and pray,
And keep in sober gladness
Their first Thanksgiving Day.

These seeds of Faith and Freedom
God's Word hath wafted free;

O'er rocks outsoaring Edom|
They reach the Sunset Sea;
and East and West uniting,
One family become;
With North and South relighting
Love's lamp. - WE'RE ALL AT HOME!

With half of Heaven above us,
An ocean on each hand,
We've room for all who love us,
And join our brother band;
We praise the Great All-Giver,
Our Home Feast we display,
And through the years forever
Keep free Thanksgiving Day.

In palace and in prison
Our Festival is one,
The witness CHRIST is risen –
Good-will for men begun;
Our hearts one hope rejoices,
Our souls in concert pray,
'Mid songs of choral voice -
GOD BLESS THANKSGIVING DAY!

1872

OUR NATIONAL THANKSGIVING DAY

For many years we have been seeking to gain an end which now seems close at hand. We refer to the establishment of a National Thanksgiving Day on the last Thursday of November. The propriety of celebrating the day by praise to God throughout the whole nation will hardly be questioned. The separate States have appointed the festival for many years, but the institution will never reach the national importance which it so richly deserves until from Maine to Texas, from Atlantic to Pacific, Americans unite upon a single day. The last Thursday in November has, likewise, an obvious title to be the day of Thanksgiving. The great majority of States have celebrated it for many years. It was appointed by President Washington in 1789, and by President Lincoln in 1863. and by each of our subsequent Chief Magistrates. It is Thursday, the most convenient day of the week for a household feast. It is in the last days of November, when the weather is generally pleasant. It is not too near any of the great yearly holidays. It is in every way suitable for the "harvest feast." after the labors of spring and summer have been crowned with the overflowing abundance of autumn. Will not the representatives of our people, assembled in Washington, make the time uniform by enacting that from this year of 1872, our national thanksgiving shall be kept on the last Thursday of November?

The proclamation of our beloved first President is so admirable, so characteristic, that our readers will enjoy even a second perusal: -

GENERAL WASHINGTON'S PROCLAMATION

Whereas, It is the duty of all nations to acknowledge the Providence of Almighty God, to obey His will, to be grateful for His benefits, and humbly implore His protection and favor; and, whereas, both Houses of Congress have, by their Joint Committee, requested me to

recommend to the people of the United States a day of Public Thanksgiving and Prayer, to be observed by acknowledging with grateful hearts the many and signal favors of Almighty God, especially by affording them an opportunity of peaceably establishing a form of government for their safety and happiness. Now, therefore, I do recommend and assign Thursday, the twenty-sixth day of November next, to be devoted by the people of these States to the service of the great and glorious Being who is the beneficent author of all the good that was, that is, that will be. That we then all unite in rendering unto Him our sincere and humble thanks for His kind care and protection of the people of this country previous to its becoming a nation, for the signal and manifold mercies, and the favorable interpositions of His Providence in the course and conclusion of the late war; for the great degree of tranquility, union, and plenty which we have since enjoyed; for the peaceable and rational manner in which we have been enabled to establish constitutions of government for our safety and happiness, and particularly the national one more lately instituted; for civil and religious liberty with which we are blessed, and the means we have of acquiring and diffusing useful knowledge and in general for all the great and various favors which He hath been pleased to confer upon us. And also that we may then united in most humbly offering our prayers and supplications to the great Lord and ruler of nations, and beseech Him to pardon our national and other transgressions; to enable us all, whether in public or private stations, to perform our several and national duties properly and prudently; to render our national government a blessing to all people, constantly being a government of wise, just, and constitutional laws, discreetly and faithfully executed and obeyed; to protect and guide all sovereigns and nations (especially such as have shown kindness unto us), and bless them with good government, peace, and concord, to promote the knowledge of true religion and virtue, and the increase of science amongst us; and generally to grant unto all mankind such a degree of temporal prosperity as He alone knows to be best.

GEORGE WASHINGTON

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1872

THANKSGIVING DAY

The eve of our annual Thanksgiving Day is drawing peacefully to its close. Strange, that though this day comes in the dreariest month of the whole year, yet a golden glory always seems clustering about it, and all the joyousness and the bright freshness, and the beautiful charm of spring-time seem concentrated in this one happy day; and our hearts instinctively swell with grateful thanks for all the blessings plentifully meted out to us by the merciful hand of our Heavenly Father, throughout the long by now dying year.

The spirit of Thanksgiving day! who does not recognize its silent and pure presence? No matter how lonely one may be, however far removed from friends and home – where is held, on this day, the family reunion – still in your silent room where you sit in loneliness, perhaps in grief, this peaceful and shining spirit glides noiselessly in, and its cheering presence sheds a golden glory around – you feel that you are not alone, and as if some loved friend had burst in upon you with their joyous welcome and beaming face, your heart leaps with sudden gladness, and your sorrow is vanished as if by magic.

'Tis the holy spirit of Thanksgiving Day. It cheers every heart, and gathers up many tearful thanks – often silently offered – and wafts them on snowy wings to its starry home in the

skies.

May its beautiful presence, on this day of the coming year find all sorrowing hearts made happy, all desolate homes rejoicing, the lonely wanderer sheltered in his haven of rest. That all may offer up, in one grand melody, that glorious hymn to the Creator, "Glory be to God on high, and on earth peace, good-will towards men."

1873

SHALL THE LAST THURSDAY IN NOVEMBER BECOME OUR NATIONAL THANKSGIVING DAY?

Our country has now two national holidays. On the Fourth of July we celebrate the birthday of our national life. The twenty-second of February is sacred to the memory of the man who, after leading the armies of America in the great struggle for freedom, gave back to the government of his country the power he had received from it, and went back to the private life of a citizen. By his example, he has established Freedom and Brotherhood in our land. Greater than a hero, he was hailed the Father of his Country and so, with filial reverence, we celebrate the birthday of our Washington.

But do we not need a third holiday, adequately to express the worth of the two we now enjoy? The sword is not a Christianizer; the hero is not a husbandman. That our hero was a good man, who feared God, loved man, and made his home the haven of his earthly happiness, are things which made him an example to us forever. War, too, undertaken in a righteous cause, should be commemorated. But the blessings of Heaven that are treasured in the homes of the whole people - men, women, and children - should not these have their day of joyous festival?

The English settlers of America could not, as colonists, appoint a national holiday, but the first emigrants to New England soon established a yearly Thanksgiving Day.

Massachusetts set the example, and the colonies around her soon followed their sister. But over the rest of the country the festival did not take place; and after our independence had been won, and the Constitution adopted, still, except in one notable instance, the New England Thanksgiving had no recognition. This exceptional occasion was the passage of a resolution by our First Congress, at the close of the session in 1789, requesting the President to appoint "for the people of these United States of America a day of public thanksgiving to Almighty God." The proclamation was issued, and the day designated was the last Thursday of November, 1789.

It is well known to the readers of the LADY'S BOOK that for twenty-seven years our Magazine has been steadily urging the adoption of this great festival over the length and breadth of our land. Its benefits have been so fully set forth in our pages that we need hardly allude to them here. That the ties of home should be strengthened; that families should gather, after the harvest season, around a single board, and renew those sweet remembrances that bind to each other children of one household in bonds of love; that the poor, and the sick, and the prisoners, should have one day of peace and plenty in the year - these are surely reasons enough for the establishment of one holiday as a season of rejoicing over the blessings poured upon us, and of thankfulness that we are permitted to enjoy them. We have not space to trace the slow but certain progress of this great idea in the minds and hearts of Americans; but our readers know that almost every State united in 1859 to keep the last Thursday in November as a national thanksgiving, and that for several years the President has issued an annual Proclamation, appointing that day for our great holiday. But one thing more is requisite. Our festival is not secure so long as it depends upon the yearly inclination of the Executive and the varying customs of the several States.

We ask Congress, in this its coming session, to enact that, from henceforth evermore, the last Thursday in November shall be an American Thanksgiving Day. It will not be the least service which the Forty-Fourth Congress will have rendered to its country, if its session shall be signalized by the sure establishment of a day which, more than any in the annals of national festivity, heralds peace on earth and good-will to men.

AMERICA'S THANKSGIVING HYMN

WRITTEN FOR THE LAST THURSDAY IN NOVEMBER, 1872

ALMIGHTY LORD of glory!
Our praise to Him we bring;
and chant our country's story,
Where GOD alone is KING;
His outstretched arm sustaining,
Behold the Mayflower come!
His mercy foreordaining
Our land for Freedom's home.

Though wintry darkness gathers,
And dearth and death prevail,
The faithful Pilgrim Fathers
Could look within the veil;
O joy amid the sadness!
They're free to do and pray,
And keep in sober gladness
Their first Thanksgiving Day.

These seeds of Faith and Freedom
God's Word hath wafted free;
O'er rocks outsoaring Edom
They reach the Sunset Sea;
and East and West uniting,
One family become;
With North and South relighting
Love's lamp. - WE'RE ALL AT HOME!

With half of Heaven above us,
An ocean on each hand,
We've room for all who love us,
And join our brother band;
We praise the Great All-Giver,
Our Home Feast we display,
And through the years forever
Keep free Thanksgiving Day.

In palace and in prison
Our Festival is one,
The witness CHRIST is risen –
Good-will for men begun;
Our hearts one hope rejoices,
Our souls in concert pray,

'Mid songs of choral voice -
GOD BLESS THANKSGIVING DAY!

To be sung to the measure of Bishop Heber's hymn, "From Greenland's icy mountains."

1874

OUR NATIONAL THANKSGIVING DAY

Shall this happy holiday be preserved as our Home Festival, teaching our children the greatness of Freedom that upholds the faith, the hope, and the charities of life?

The subject has been before the country for twenty-seven years. In 1859 the Governors of the States united on the same day, and this Union thanksgiving was enjoyed by the whole nation. But then came the war, and it was not till 1863 that President Lincoln issued his proclamation for a *National Thanksgiving on the last Thursday of November*. It was observed in all the States then subject to the flag.

Since that time, successive Presidents have yearly appointed a thanksgiving day, and measures have been taken to draw the attention of Congress to the importance of legalizing the last Thursday in November for the perpetual celebration of our national holiday. Bills for this purpose have twice been before a committee, but have never been reached in the House. Will not the Forty-Fourth Congress come to our help? In doing so, they will have the example of the first Congress of the United States, whose members, at the close of the first session, unanimously instructed President Washington to appoint such a day. Washington appointed the last Thursday of November, 1789.

We may say with just pride that the LADY'S BOOK has steadily and consistently, for twenty-seven years, been the advocate of a thanksgiving held on that day; but not until very lately did we discover that in so doing we had the illustrious precedent of the Father of our Country and the first of our Congresses.

And now will not our legislators settle this great question? We make this appeal on behalf of the women of America, who see on Thanksgiving Day their sons and daughters reunited, and their homes happy. They have deserved well of our legislators, if only for the sacrifices they have made, and the substantial aid they have afforded to the noblest efforts of men.

On behalf and in the service of womanhood, we beseech Congress to settle, once for all, either that the President shall issue every year his proclamation appointing this November holiday, or that the last Thursday in that month shall from henceforward be observed, throughout the length and breadth of our land, as a time of rejoicing and giving thanks for the blessings of the year.

PRESIDENT WASHINGTON'S PROCLAMATION, 1789.

Whereas, It is the duty of all nations to acknowledge the Providence of Almighty God, to obey His will, to be grateful for His benefits, and humbly implore His protection and favor; and, whereas, both Houses of Congress have, by their Joint Committee, requested me to recommend to the people of the United States a day of Public Thanksgiving and Prayer, to be observed by acknowledging with grateful hearts the many and signal favors of Almighty God, especially by affording them an opportunity of peaceably establishing a form of government for their safety and happiness. Now, therefore, I do recommend and assign Thursday, the twenty-sixth day of November next, to be devoted by the people of these States to the service of the great and glorious Being who is the beneficent author of all the good that was, that is, that will be

That we then all unite in rendering unto Him our sincere and humble thanks for His kind

care and protection of the people of this country previous to its becoming a nation, for the signal and manifold mercies, and the favorable interpositions of His Providence in the course and conclusion of the late war; for the great degree of tranquility, union, and plenty which we have since enjoyed; for the peaceable and rational manner in which we have been enabled to establish constitutions of government for our safety and happiness, and particularly the national one more lately instituted; for civil and religious liberty with which we are blessed, and the means we have of acquiring and diffusing useful knowledge, and in general for all the great and various favors which he hath been pleased to confer upon us. And also that we may then unite in most humbly offering our prayers and supplications to the great Lord and Ruler of nations, and beseech Him to pardon our national and other transgressions; to enable us all, whether in public or private stations, to perform our several and national duties properly and prudently; to render our national government a blessing to all people, constantly being a government of wise, just, and constitutional laws, discreetly and faithfully executed and obeyed; to protect and guide all sovereigns and nations especially such as have shown kindness unto us), and bless them with good government, peace, and concord, to promote the knowledge of true religion and virtue, and the increase of science amongst us; and generally to grant unto all mankind such a degree of temporal prosperity as He alone knows to be best.

Given under my hand, at the City of New York, the third day of October, in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and eighty-nine.

GEORGE WASHINGTON

The day thus appointed by President Washington was celebrated by four millions of people, in thirteen States, clustered along the Atlantic coast. This year the holiday will be celebrated by a nation of more than forty millions, in forty-five States and Territories.

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WRITTEN FOR THE LAST THURSDAY IN NOVEMBER

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One family become;
With North and South relighting
Love's lamp. - WE'RE ALL AT HOME!

With half of Heaven above us,
An ocean on each hand,
We've room for all who love us,
And join our brother band;
We praise the Great All-Giver,
Our Home Feast we display,
And through the years forever
Keep free Thanksgiving Day.

In palace and in prison
Our Festival is one,
The witness CHRIST is risen –
Good-will for men begun;
Our hearts one hope rejoices,
Our souls in concert pray,
'Mid songs of choral voice -
GOD BLESS THANKSGIVING DAY!
SARAH JOSEPHA HALE

1875

OUR NATIONAL THANKSGIVING FOR 1876

The great celebration of our coming Centennial will mark an era that should be held forever in the hearts of the American people. the most durable monuments of a nation's power, greatness, and glory are not material. These things are perishable, and, if they be made so strong as to resist the forces of time and of man, they buy their duration by the loss of all human interest. Is not the great Pyramid of Egypt, a mass of stone and brick, as dumb and useless in the history of mankind as the frozen peaks of the Himalayas?

The great ideal we would allow as an exemplar for all time must be stamped into the mind and heart of this living generation, who must impress it on their successors. We must have duties to do, laws to obey, hope to cherish, that will be living memorials as long as our Republic shall last. How shall we best call out and sustain this living patriotism in our wide land? It must be done by the establishment throughout the country of national customs and institutions, and especially by the celebration of those national feasts of brotherhood and goodwill which will bind our history together, and cause our forty States to feel as one. We must make at least one month in the twelve, and one day of that month the festival of the nation. Our National Thanksgiving must be made a legal holiday for the people of America. In 1859 thirty-three of the governors of States and Territories united to celebrate as Thanksgiving the last Thursday of November. the few governors who appointed no day (none of them over any one of the original thirteen States) made no objection to the unity of time. Only the breaking out of the war prevented unanimous acquiescence. But even if all the States should join this year upon a single day (the last Thursday of November), still our festival will not be secure so long as it depends upon the yearly inclination of the Executive,

and the varying customs of the several States. Congress can only ensure this great boon by enacting that, from henceforth evermore, the last Thursday in November shall be an American Thanksgiving Day. It will be a noble service which the Forty-fifth Congress will render to our country, if its first session shall be signalized by the establishment of a day which, more than any in the annals of national festivity, heralds peace on earth and good will to men.

The coming Congress has the illustrious precedent of the Father of his Country. In 1789 President Washington appointed the last Thursday in November as a National Thanksgiving. This he did at the express request of both Houses of Congress. The movement which originated in our National Legislature should by it be conducted to a happy issue.

The unifying influence of such a festival can hardly be overrated. The pulpits during that day, once in every year, will be occupied with the stirring incidents of national history, and with a retrospect of the moral and religious progress of the nation. The press will recall the early history of our country, the great deeds of generations long gone by, the endurance and the bloodshed through which the foundations of our civilization were laid. The people of our country will learn to value the bond of national union when they know with what mighty labors and sacrifices it was wrought.

What the Centennial is doing for us this year will be annually repeated in the century to come, and with the material growth of our country will go on a growth in charity to all men and in love to the State which will keep us forever a great and happy people.