

**THE OLD THANKSGIVING DAYS.**

Being silent by the window while the evening's fading beam,  
Turns to lonely gray the winter's silvered sky,  
Not a voice to break the reverie of thought's too positive dream,  
At a footstep, only memory and I,  
How the past the veil seems lifted, and I am a child once more.  
On the hearth again the old time fagots blaze.  
Hark! Again I hear the voices of the guests about the door  
In the greetings of the old Thanksgiving days.  
All the air outside is frosty, and in gusts the blithe winds blow,  
And I hear the distant sleigh bells faintly ring,  
And against the rime touched windows comes the pattering, stirring snow,  
Like the brushing of a passing angel's wing,  
But within, oh, see the faces that are smiling round the board!  
How they shine with love and gratitude and praise!  
Hark! The voices are a moment for the thanking of the Lord  
In the blessings of the old Thanksgiving days.  
That was years ago, and surfeits for the loved have rung since then.  
As tonight I watch the dawning evening star  
In my dreams I see the mansion Christ prepared in heaven for men.  
It is there tonight the absent kindred are,  
It is there their feast is ready, and I hold the fancy door  
That they often turn to earth their loving gaze,  
And perhaps they, too, are dreaming, as they see me sitting here,  
Of the sweetness of the old Thanksgiving days.

—Philadelphia Ledger.

**JEM HASTINGS' LUCK.**

The Widow Wilson's farm had seen better and more prosperous days and now was traveling backward. It began at the top of Brindle hill, where it was bounded by the county road, and straggled down to the lake shore, its hundred acres or so wandering over hills and dipping into hollows until they terminated at the bay, with its rim of white and glistening sand.

One of the most picturesque spots of earth, and right in the center of it, crowning a rounded knoll, surrounded with stalwart oaks and butternuts, squatted the house of its owner.

It was always a difficult spot to reach in winter, when the drifting snows piled high their white billows against the low eaved structure and hid the view down from the outer world. But in summer it was a delight, this moss lawn dwelling beneath the oaks, and at one time had been a home around whose hearthstone had gathered sons and daughters.

Now it was desolate. The passing stranger would have but added it to the category of deserted farms. No sign of life was visible this bright Thanksgiving morning. From its wide, paneled eave no curl of smoke invaded the crisp and frosty air. The light fall of snow that had covered the ground the night before showed no trace of foot-steps leading from the weather beaten door. And yet there was a stir of life in the farmyard, in the hollow among the trees, where the old barn tottered, ready for its fall. There a flock of fowl and turkeys wandered disconsolately about. In the adjacent stall an old horse stamped impatiently for his breakfast and a forlorn cow chafed restlessly at her stanchions. Except for these the old farm was as silent as when its first owner carved it from the virgin wilderness. A rustling of the shrubbery that fringed the tall, stiff ranked pines on the hill beyond the barn told that a visitor was coming to Lonely farm. A human head appeared in sight. It was crowned by a wooden cap, from beneath which peered a pair of black, bright eyes. Their owner took off the cap and mopped his brow. He was a rugged country lad of 18, well knit and sturdy, with a pair of ruddy cheeks, white teeth and lips rosy, but with a droop of sadness.

New England, always hard to her children, had taken from this boy the home and mother that make Thanksgiving, even as it had taken from the widow all but the wretched framework of what had once been home.

"House looks like mother's used to after she got so she couldn't get about," soliloquized the boy, staring at the smokeless chimney. "I'll bet there ain't been nobody near the widder in a week, and I'll bet, while I'm a-bettin, that she needs somebody. Guess I'll find out what's the matter."

He strode down to the house and knocked. There was no response. Only the crow in the oak tree was disturbed by the unwanted noise and flew away, with a caw of alarm. A second knock startled the fowl in the barnyard which greeted him with a suppressed chuckle, but there was no answer from within. "Guess I might's well go in." He pushed open the creaky door and entered the room which served as kitchen and sitting room all in one. A table stood in the center of it, covered with a snowy cloth and set as if for supper. A tall clock ticked in the corner under the stairs, but its rhythmic beats only seemed to make the silence audible. "It seems kinder creepy, that's a fact. Hope there ain't nothin' happened to her. Wonder where she is? Perhaps she's asleep!"

He rapped loudly, and then put his ear down to the keyhole, listening intently. At first there was no response. Then he thought he heard a faint, quavering voice.

"It's me—Jem Hastings. I've come to see if you need anybody."

"Come in." The feeble voice struggled with a cough. Then: "Yes, I'm so glad you've come. I was taken faint yesterday and had just strength enough to crawl to bed. Perhaps—"

"What, an you ain't had nothin' to eat?"

"No," with a feeble smile.

"Well, if you'll let me try, I'll make a cup of tea."

Jem closed the door, set his gun in a corner and looked around for the place in which the widow kept her stores. The dressers ranged against the wall were bright with old fashioned pewter platters and china. Here he found a caddy of tea and then set about making

a fire. A huge fireplace yawned at one side of the room, hung with a black iron crane from which was suspended a tea-kettle. The woodpile was outside, near the back door, and brushing off the snow Jem soon had some dry wood, with which he made a roaring blaze. It was not long before he had the satisfaction of seeing the kettle send forth a volume of steam, and a few minutes later he tapped again at the bedroom door with a tray, on it a tempting cup of tea and two well buttered slices of bread.

Wrapped in a shawl of Canton silk, the heirloom of a grandmother whose father once sailed from Salem to the Indies, the widow sank back into her comfortable armchair with a deep sigh of content. She closed her eyes from sheer weakness, while Jem tiptoed about the room, "setting things to rights" and preparing the table for a prospective meal. To be sure there was very little in sight, but he had faith that there might be something in the cellar and in the cupboards, for the widow was known in the township to have been a "good provider" in her days of affluence.

"You've made me very happy, Jem—very thankful."

"Well, ma'am, I'm glad of it. It's Thanksgiving."

"What! Really Thanksgiving day? It's the first time I've forgotten it—ever. I must be growing old."

Jem grew bolder.

"There's a turkey out in the barnyard. He ain't very fat, but if you say so I'll help you fix a turkey dinner."

The widow urged no objection, and both fascinated at the prospect of a Thanksgiving dinner, with themselves as host and hostess, the boy trudged out to the barn.

Some sticks of hard wood were soon piled on the fire, and by the time Sir Turkey was ready for the oven the widow had peeled the vegetables and dropped them into the mysterious depths of the steaming kettles, Jem looking on with glowing but bashful appreciation.

A snowy cloth over a round table, with two seats opposite each other, is always an inspiring sight, and when topped by a steaming brown turkey, with all the "fixings" of a turkey dinner, the feast is one to melt hearts harder than that of the lonely widow and the homesick New England lad.

"It is the happiest Thanksgiving dinner I have had in many a year, my boy," she said to him as he cleared away the dishes and brought out the desert of fragrant quince preserves.

"May God bless you! And to think how the dreadful, gloomy morning has been turned to such bright sunshine by your coming!"

Jem turned to the window to hide some tears that would persist in squeezing themselves out of his eyes. "I wish she wouldn't be so sentimental," said he to himself quite wrathfully. But to the widow he said: "Why, ma'am, I ain't done nothin' great—no more'n you'd have done for me, I'll bet. I ain't enjoyed a dinner so myself sence I can remember. I wish I could jest stay here all the time."

A new light came into the woman's faded gray eyes born of a thought that had been struggling for expression for an hour or more. "And why can't you stay, Jem?"

"I could, ma'am, if I could come as—as partners."

It was out at last, the boy's yearning for something as his own and the chance he saw upon the widow's farm. "I could fix things up," he went on eagerly, "and make the chickens lay eggs and the cow give milk and—"

Jem stopped, but the widow's respectful attention led him on.

"I could earn my board in saving things that's goin' to waste. When I come through your wood lot this mornin', I noticed corks and cords of dead trees that ought to be cut an' made firewood of. An' as for timber, there's more'n \$100 wuth there that'll be spiled if it ain't cut an' sold pretty soon."

The boy hesitated, amazed at his audacity, but the widow nodded her head and smiled approval. "That's true, Jem. The farm is running down for the lack of some one to oversee out of doors. So, then, it is a bargain."

And so this strange partnership began. The first winter Jem spent in thinning out the superfluous wood in the neglected lots, stacking up behind the house enough fuel to satisfy even the cravings of that yawning fireplace for years to come and selling to the sawmill on the pond timber for shipment that came to quite \$500.

As the spring opened he was soon afield, continuing the good work of improvement, and "planting time" found the farm with more and earlier labor performed than it had ever before experienced. In front of the western door he threw out a platform, protected by a lattice work covering, and here the widow passed all the spare time she could snatch from her indoor duties. It had never occurred to any one before that farm work might be made attractive. The widow had only looked upon the beauties of her farm around her through the kitchen window or during a hasty trip to the well or farmyard. The latticed porch was a revelation to her, and a haven of rest where she sat and muscd during the long twilight of summer.

"I never thought I should take such comfort here," she said. "Before you came I was more than willing to give up the farm and go away. But now, Jem, I want to live here the rest of my life. I would not leave it for the world."

"That's a great mistake to leave the old place. Why, there ain't a prettier view in all the world than this from your front door. If there is, then it is right there, down in the woods, where the great trees meet overhead, the brook sings a soft song of rest and the fern covered banks stretch down to the pond. I never traveled any yet, but I don't want to. This suits me." And he returned to his work with a cheery whistling that sent a thrill of satisfaction through the widow's heart.

A wonderful change had been effected

by the time another year had rolled another Thanksgiving into the calendar. The roof of the old house no longer leaked. The barn had been raised from its attitude of deep dejection, and its mows were crowded to bursting with hay and grain. The old horse spent his days chiefly in the pasture, while a younger and more vigorous animal did the work, assisted by a yoke of big and handsome oxen. The solitary cow now had plenty of company, and frisky calves gambled about her in the summer time. There was no longer any doubt as to the availability of any of the fat gobblers for a Thanksgiving dinner.

Thus the seasons succeeded one another with their measure of content. Each found the widow more and more dependent upon her stalwart helper. She clung to him as she might have clung to the son of whom she had been deprived in the springtime of her widowhood. As her tottering footsteps were supported down the aisle of the village church on a Sunday few of the congregation knew that the handsome young man who watched over her so assiduously was not in fact her own son. Those who were cognizant of the relations between the two shook their heads knowingly, saying to themselves and to each other: "Lucky boy that! Stepped right into the farm just as the old lady was about to leave it. He knows the side of his bread that has the butter on it."

But it is doubtful if Jem had ever given that a thought; so happy and content was he that the merely material conditions of his life had never troubled his consciousness. Only one thing troubled his thoughts of late. He was deeply stirred by the soft, brown eyes of pretty Susie Jones, a chorister in the church—Susie, who lived, as he had done, with friends for board and keep—another of New England's orphans.

He never mentioned this daring speculation, not even to the widow. But her eyes, though growing dim, were acute enough to penetrate his honest soul. His whole life lay centered in the farm, which had become as essential to it almost as the air he breathed. But now there must be young life there. A pair of brown eyes persisted in dancing before his face, in wood pile, in field, in garden.

And so it came to pass that there was a wedding next Thanksgiving in the little cottage, now pretty with vines and cheery within. Susie was glad of so pleasant a place for the troth which she was to plight with Jem, while he, lucky fellow though he was, could not take time to travel to Susie's home, far away over the rough, hilly roads. "A wife's a good thing," he remarked to the widow the evening before his marriage, "but there's cows to be looked after and hens to be fed—more'n you could 'tend to alone."

"That's so, Jem," said the widow, smiling brightly, "and thanks to you for it all."

Under branches of autumn leaves from the last reddening trees Jem and Susie promised all the things of the simple marriage service. Then came the country wedding supper.

When the last guest had gone, driven away in the farm wagons that had clustered around the door all afternoon, the widow turned to Jem and Susie, sitting bashfully in the firelight.

"You're my children, now, both of you," she said. "Call me mother just once, Jem and Susie."

"Mother!" cried Jem, taking the feeble hands together and kissing them tenderly. "My darling mother, dearest tenderly I ever had!"

She returned his loving glance lingeringly, gratefully, as they led her to the door of her room.

Next morning Jem knocked again at the Widow Wilson's door just as he had done on that lonely Thanksgiving day four years ago. This time not even a feeble voice answered his repeated calls.

Three days later, as the neighbors struggled back from the little cemetery on the hill, Squire Lothrop drew Jem apart.

"I's pose you know the widder's left the farm to you? No? Sho! It's mighty strange she didn't tell you. She made her will more'n a year ago, and you're her only heir. She seemed to set a lot by you, the widder did, and"—looking around approvingly over the snow covered fields—"I'd no's I blame her. The last four years hev been the peacefulest of her life, and she's left her peace with you, for sure!"—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

**Dr. Talmage Likes Turkey.**

"I am cosmopolitan in my likes," said the doctor, "because I have traveled so much. Therefore pardon me when I say that I want my turkey stuffed with little English oysters and trimmed with French fried potatoes. Each year there is a little wicket fence of the brown potato strips placed around the turkey, and when he is brought in he looks like a picture in a child's story book. 'And can't the poor turkey get out of that fence?' asked my little granddaughter once."—Exchange.

**Serve Dinner at Midday.**

An old fashioned Thanksgiving demands a midday dinner. Whatever fashion may dictate on other days she should not be listened to on this one, particularly when there are children to be considered.—Exchange.

**Thoughts For Thanksgiving.**

When you awake on Thanksgiving morn, you will doubtless feel a cynical questioning as to whether you have any cause for gratitude or not. You undoubtedly have. You should be thankful that convention does not require you to be publicly grateful but once a year.

Be thankful that nearly a month intervenes between the Thanksgiving turkey and the Christmas goose and that you have time to recover from the effects of one before attacking the other.

Think over the gifts you have to buy before Christmas and be grateful with your whole soul because the custom of making Thanksgiving presents does not prevail also.—New York World.

**Some Curious Book Titles.**

In the sixteenth century we find the greatest extravagance displayed in the titles of books. These may be taken as examples: "The Spiritual Snuff Box, to Lead Devoted Souls to Christ," and "The Spiritual Serraga for Souls Steeped in Devotion." A work on Christian charity published in 1587 is entitled "Buttons and Button Holes for Believers' Breaches." The editor of this paper has Father La Chaucie's work entitled "Bread Cooked on the Ashes, Brought by an Angel to the Prophet Elijah (Elijah) to Comfort the Dying." Another was issued with the curious title of "The Lamp of St. Augustine, and the Flies that Flit Around It."

The following very attractive title appeared in a book published at Newcastle in 1605: "Some Beautiful Biscuits Cooked in the Oven of Charity and Put Aside for the Fowls of the Church, the Sparrows of the Spirit and the Swallows of Salvation."—St. Louis Republic.

**Professors are Plentiful.**

An ordinary teacher now considers himself a professor when he teaches a high school and demands the title. A township superintendent is always a professor. In the educational line it takes some little work to acquire the title. A barber cannot call himself a professor unless he can shave a man without cutting him twice and asking him if the razor hurts. Twelve music lessons at a quarter apiece have made several professors of music. Many have fairly earned the title by hard work, but many more haven't. Dancing masters cannot be anything but professors. There are thirty-eight professors in Hazleton. Enough to crowd a small hall when a university extension meeting is going on.—Hazleton Sentinel.

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