

AN OLD-TIME THANKSGIVING

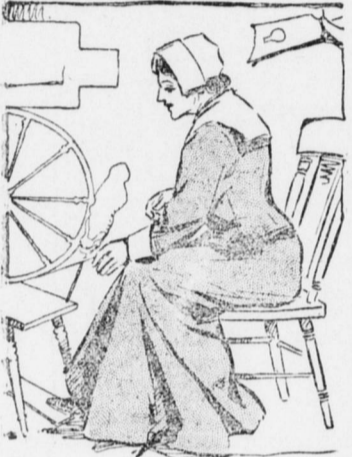
BY BERTHA E. BUSH

THE parson hath appointed a day of Thanksgiving for this village that the cruel tide of Indian invasion is turned back and our lives are spared," said Mistress Lovejoy Goodwin, bustling into the warm kitchen where her sister-in-law Mistress Prudence Goodwin sat knitting by the fireplace and her listless daughter, young Mistress Patience Halcomb, bent languidly over the spinning-wheel.

Mistress Prudence made a sign for silence, but it was too late. The face of the pale young widow grew whiter, and without a word she rose and glided away.

Mistress Lovejoy looked at her sister-in-law inquiringly.

"Hath she not yet become reconciled to the decree of God?" she asked. Mistress Prudence shook her head. "Nay," she said. "She saith ever that it is not by the decree of God she suffers, but by her own wilfulness. If



Bent Languidly Over the Spinning Wheel.

she had not come away from her husband against his desires—so she saith ever—she would at least have died with him."

"That is wicked repining," said the aunt sententiously. "She ought to be dealt with by the meeting. She should be thankful that her life was spared when her neighbors were taken. Doubtless it was a leading of the Spirit that caused her to come here e'er the savages fell upon Wyoming. She, above all others, surely has reason to be thankful. You should deal with her, sister, and check this untoward spirit," said Mistress Lovejoy sternly. Mistress Prudence sighed.

"I know not rightly how to do it when she is in such sorrow," she said. "She hath ever been a willful and unreasonable child, but a very loving one."

"You have ever spoiled her, and her husband did the same. Perhaps this is a punishment to you both," said Mistress Lovejoy.

Mistress Patience, a bride of a year, had left her home in Wyoming valley for a visit with her mother in an older settlement. She had begged and pleaded to make this visit with a willful demand that would not be denied. It was an unusual occurrence. The journey through the wilderness was too long and toilsome to think of visits. Most of the mothers who said farewell to daughters going to pioneer homes could hardly expect to see them again. But Mistress Patience—who was anything but patient in spite of her name—would not submit to this state of things. She begged and pleaded to go until her husband—to whom her lightest wish was law—gave his consent. He was the more ready to do this as there were ugly rumors of alliance between the British tory forces and the Indians and the settlement of Wyoming, standing on a disputed tract, and not so well protected as other regions was peculiarly liable to attack. But Mistress Patience did not know this or she would not have gone. She was very much in love with this grave, middle-aged husband, who treated his young wife like a petted child. Many of the settlers had shaken their heads over Mistress Patience's going. "He ought not to let her do it," they had said.

"I will only stay a little while. I will come back soon," she had said at the parting, regretful at the last minute for her action. But the savage Indians had come down upon the village of Wyoming and swept it off from the face of the earth. The houses were burnt, the people massacred or carried away captive. Every day brought a fresh story of horror, especially dreadful had been the tale of John Halcomb and 15 companions who had been carried off and sacrificed in a sort of religious ceremony.

"She must be roused. She must see people. I would make her go to the Thanksgiving service," said Mistress Lovejoy. She was a notable manager, and her sister-in-law, with all the village, were wont to submit to her sway; and Patience went to the service.

"There can never more be a day

of thanksgiving for me," she thought drearily, as she sat in her widow's weeds in the square wooden pew.

The long, long prayer was finished. Patience liked the prayer, for in it she could hide her face. It was never too long for her, although a modern church-goer would be aghast at having to listen to even a sermon of such a length. The psalms of rejoicing had been sung. These had been harder to bear. The preacher had settled into his discourse. He had turned his hour-glass, and was already at "thirdly."

"God in his providence has exceedingly blessed us in delivering us from danger—he was saying. Patience shuddered. What good was it to her to be delivered since John had perished under the Indian tomahawk!

A figure appeared in the doorway. Such a figure! Gaunt, tattered, wild-eyed, unkempt, barefooted, bleeding—a mere skeleton covered with ragged shreds of garments. It stood in the doorway quivering and motioning strangely.

"Patience! Patience!" it cried. "'Tis some crazy exhorter such as used to come and harrange the congregations in my grandfather's time," said Judge Fletcher, whose ancestor had been a judge in the days of the persecution of Anabaptists and Quakers. The tithing-man stalked down the aisle to put out the intruder. Some of the men half rose, but sat down again when they saw that the matter was being attended to. It was a dreadful thing in those days to disturb a meeting. But John Halcomb's widow, unmindful of disturbance, started up at the cry and fairly ran down the aisle.

"It is John! It is John!" she cried. Never had a religious service in Bethlehem Hill been broken up like this one. The minister stopped in the very middle of his most important sentence. The dreaded tithing-man himself, who bore upon his soul the awful responsibility of every man and woman, boy and girl in the meeting-house, forgot it all and cried out like a frightened boy: "It is a ghost!"

But it was not a ghost. It was John Halcomb himself, safe. The story of the Indian attack on the village of Wyoming in 1778 is a story of marvelous escapes as well as of torture and massacre. No adventure in it seems more marvelous than that of John Halcomb which is one of the well attested stories of history.

With 15 other captives, John Halcomb had been ranged around a large flat stone while a woman fury called "Queen Esther," who seemed at the head of this ceremony of sacrifice of prisoners, crushed the heads of one after the other with a great stone death maul. Two of the captives suddenly leaped to their feet and dashed into the forest. The Indians pursued them but did not shoot, probably because their plan was to bring them



A Figure Appeared at the Doorway. back alive and torture them to death. One of the two—and it was John Halcomb—tripped on a vine and rolled down the steep river bank. Then he gave himself up for lost. But the fall, instead of bringing him to death, saved his life. He lodged under the heavy branches of a fallen tree and the pursuers, sure that he was ahead, dashed past it without discovering him. He lay concealed in this lucky hiding place until darkness came. Then wounded, lame, and almost famished, he started out on the journey of days through the trackless forest infested with hostile Indians that lay between him and Patience. A man less brave of heart would have given up a score of times, but there was no give up to John Halcomb. He might be so weakened that he could only crawl, but he crawled on. Tottering, stumbling, crawling, dragging himself along his painful way by inches and in danger of his life all the way, he covered the toilsome miles and came to make for his wife Patience a real Day of Thanksgiving.

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Thanksgiving. Thanksgiving makes our prayers bold and strong and sweet, feeds and enkindles them as with coals of fire.—Luther.

OUR NATIONAL BIRDS.



"May one give us peace in all our States,
The other a piece for all our States"



THANKSGIVING

BY STANLEY WATERLOO.

Behold the crowning of the year!
—The wheat is garnered from the field;
The season's harvesting is here,
A mighty and abundant yield.
Nor war nor pestilence has come;
Peace still abides throughout the land.
Should we, O Lord, be creatures dumb,
As they who do not understand?

The bins are swollen with the grain,
Broad pastures hold their flocks and herds;
They've borne their fruit, have field and plain,
Gone but the summer and the birds;
The fire's alight in every home,
For all there are the warmth and roof.
The sun still shines, though gray the dome,
—Life's fabric's fair in warp and woof.

Not ours oppression, nor the lack
Of what gives manhood unto life;
Unbared the head, unwhipped the back,
Unknown the bondsman's hopeless strife.
Blessed among earth's creatures, we,
In pleasant place our lines are cast,
Should we not know it all from Thee,
And worship Thee unto the last?

Help us, O Lord, when fortune-fat,
When goods and gear have made us coarse,
In thoughtfulness, O, teach us that
We should remember but the source.
Sturdy in trust, we come today,
Nor come with faltering and tears,
But in proud gratitude, and pray
The bounty of the future years!



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The Secret of Thanksgiving

By MARGARET AYER

ASOLITARY and impatient traveler paced the platform of a deserted station.

It was the evening of Thanksgiving day, and through some mischance he had missed the early train that was to take him to town and to Thanksgiving dinner.

The spirit of the day was not with him, for he had two long hours to wait, and it was bitter cold, and for some unaccountable reason the station was locked.

A flagman came to watch for a passing express train. Seeing the traveler's plight, the flagman invited him to come into his shack and warm himself.

The flagman's home was a tiny place, fitted out with the barest necessities, but, in varied contrast to the surroundings, along one side of the wall was a rough pine bookshelf containing well thumbed volumes of all that the world holds greatest in literature, philosophy and science.

After a short conversation the traveler marvelled to find that the flagman possessed a fund of knowledge on most subjects, and of the classics in particular, which would have put many a college professor to blush.

"Why don't you leave this solitary life of hardship and come to the town, where with your learning you will soon be one of the great lights?" asked the traveler, wondering at the flagman's lack of ambition. "Have you no desire to better yourself?"

"No," replied the other, "I am content with my lot. I have outdoor work, indoor quiet with the companionship of my books; I make enough to live on and I want nothing more. I should be out of place among your city folk. My friends are here in the village. What more should I want?"

For hours the traveler argued with the flagman, and his home-bound train passed unheeded. He was interested in trying to save this great intellect for the world, as he termed it, and trying to awaken some spark of ambition in the man, but the flagman refused to be disconcerted.

"Are you satisfied with your position in life—are you contented?" he asked the traveler.

"Of course not," answered the traveler. "I should consider myself lacking in spirit if I were satisfied and did not want to rise higher in life. I shall never be contented until I reach the top of the tree."

"Then," said the flagman, "you are not really thankful for the blessings that you possess, but merely look up

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