

THE DAILY NOVELETTE

LOST, STRAYED OR STOLEN

By Jessie Douglas

IT WAS almost too much. Any one would have admitted that Janet Brown had made a hard fight of it. And this was the result.

She looked blindly about for her tam, and found it at last on the book behind the door, drew on a pair of heavy woollen stockings, and took her crooked stick from its place over the fireplace.

"By Auntie," she tried to call cheerily. She gave a last look around the bright room. The legs were laid on the table, some brilliant red berries stood in the gleaming brass jug above the hearth.

There was the big wicker chair covered in gay-flowered ecru, that she had always hankered for, and the shelf of books beside the window, that looked firm enough if you did not touch it.

Every single thing Janet had done herself. She had painted the dainty woodwork of the sitting room white, she had scrubbed the old rug and polished it till her arm ached, gathered the leaves, and covered the shade with its workman-like gaiety. She had even put up the shelf and hammered her thumb black and blue in the attempt.

"It was pretty enough," Janet thought, as she tramped down her front walk switching with the knobby stick at the dry brown of the grass. "But at last it was proved to her that it was about all over."

As she walked open the big gate she stopped every few steps to peer over a crumbling stone wall, to make at a

flicker of leaves and to call, "Here, Drumstick, here!" but without result. Every one laughed at her in the beginning and told her she couldn't do it. Utterly impracticable for a girl to try to run a place like that herself! Now, if she could raise violets or even make jam for a living, if she were tired of business in the city. But to raise turkeys!

All those cousins and near-relations and aunts who comprised Janet's family could shake their heads and cry complacently, "I told you so!" and not a word would she be able to answer.

She knew she could raise turkeys, and she thought with a sudden surge of the result. "Here, Drumstick!" she called aloud thrashing at the roadside woods, but no sign of the wanderer rewarded her.

"Why, no millionaire's baby with two purses, and a whole retinue of servants could be so delicate as one wretched well-fed turkey," her thoughts ran. These carefully she had studied books from Cornell and looked she had found them and even then into their coops at night. But they had never got a disease that she said they had, but had died, quickly, suddenly, mysteriously of unknown ailments.

Sixteen baby turkeys for the Thanks-

giving market—and only one left gone off by himself! "He doesn't need to think he can get away. I'll eat him!" Janet told herself fiercely.

Again she sent up her call, but there was no answering rattle in the stubby cornfield and over the rough-green hedge.

Then suddenly before her horrified eyes she saw that her next-door neighbor was plucking a bird. He had a turkey of his own and he had made way with hers!

"Mr. Leonard!" she said running up the walk. "What have you got there?" "He looked on guiltily. "Why—I—"

"And you went and stole him!" She stood up with flushed face. "Why, I was raising that turkey for market and you knew it perfectly well and now—"

plucked him, now you can cook him and eat him!" "Not unless you and your aunt will have Thanksgiving dinner with me," Tom Leonard explained, looking at her with suddenly earnest eyes.

Although he was dressed in rough corduroy and his hands were roughened by farm work, he was very handsome. There was a glint in his brown eyes, a crisp veve to his dark hair that drew Janet's eyes back.

"Thanksgiving!" Janet said, she turned away quickly to hide her tears. "I can't be thankful. I shall have to go back to the city and give all this up—and the typewriter again," she stammered.

"Janet, you know—I—" He took a step toward her, but Janet, bright cheeked, with hurried breath was backing away.

"Maybe I'll come to dinner. I'll ask Auntie. It will be the last." She scurried down the path and fled up the road, her heart beating with rapturous thuds at the knowledge his eyes had sent her.

pride of turkeydom, was Drumstick, the wanderer! "Go along!" she cried, making alarming gestures with her stick, and the turkey gobbled on ahead while she thought of a revenge stern enough for Tom Leonard.

When two hours later she and her aunt, dressed in their best, made their decorous way to Tom Leonard's small farmhouse, Janet was still pondering. But she was the loudest in her praise of "the turkey."

"He's so tender and so fat!" she exclaimed delightedly, "but how I hate to eat my dear old Drumstick!" When Tom Leonard's housekeeper had cleared away the dinner and Auntie had gone to the chamber to take her forty winks, Janet was left alone with her neighbor.

"Janet, you know what I want to say—" "Never," said Janet gravely. "I like you, but a thief—I should never feel able to trust a man who stole—" "Why, it was all a joke, you darling little goose!" he begged, reaching for her hand.

"Do you mean to say?" Janet gasped in pretended surprise, "but not until I see my own Drumstick can I believe—"

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across his porch was Drumstick, the errant, the matchmaker to the life! And looking up into his eyes that had lost their teasing light, Janet knew she was going to do more than "think."

"You mean, then, Janet, that if I can find your turkey, you'll—you'll think of me?" he pleaded.

And Janet with the demon of mischief gleaming in her eyes answered, "Think, perhaps." For she saw Tom Leonard on a wild pursuit of her wandering bird, through fields and over fences, a goose-chase that would cure him forever of teasing.

"I'm afraid, dear," he said suddenly, raising and catching her hands, "you've got to do more than think!" He turned her about and there strutting vainly

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