

Dolly's Thanksgiving
By WILLIAM ROSSER COBB.

THE sun set clear but left chill the air on a November day among the New Hampshire hills, which leafless trees shook their branches mournfully as the northwest winds passed them by.

The promise of the next day was bright despite the fall, which brings no terrors to the New England crowd, long inured to the blasts from the north. It was Thanksgiving eve, and no other day of all the year brings such gladness to those born where Thanksgiving first had its being. Poor, indeed, was the household that had not ready its glorious pies of pumpkin, nor its plump, fat turkey in readiness for the evening of the morrow. Few were the hearts that had been unable to forget what of the past was sorrowful that they might hail and welcome this day of home-bringing and home joys.

Since they could first recollect, aye, since the days of their fathers and fathers' fathers, it had been so, that with pure and glad hearts, grateful for benefits the day should be heralded and kept throughout. To greet it otherwise would be a dishonoring of the mothers who bore them and the sires from whose loins they sprung.

Yet in a neat, well-ventilated, half-hidden beneath one of those great black hills, was a young woman who, in defiance of parental authority and the traditions of her people, refused to enter into the spirit of the season.

Dolly Benson was an only child and, if the truth must be told, a somewhat spoiled although a very pretty one. She had had her way since she could remember, and even yet, although nearly two years had passed, she could not understand why her parents had refused to let her marry Jaber Jackson.

He, too, was an only son, and his mother a widow. They labor and save, and even playmates in childhood and lovers since they were young, they knew the meaning of the word—love.

To be sure, Dolly's mother was not, but that is a matter that does not concern us. There was a reason in the world for everything.

She hated everything, she declared, this night. The world was hateful and every body in it. She could not understand why anybody could have the heart to be thankful for anything.

It was just two years this very night that Jaber had asked her to marry him. Two years ago tomorrow her father had sent him away without home.

Then he had smiled and gone away to the Philippines. Stories reached her at his every letter and his rapid promotions for gallant conduct. Her heart beat fast with pride, even though she could not hope to be his.

But there followed a long night of darkness and despair. He had been killed by



SEIZED DOLLY IN HIS ARMS.

cruel bolomen, and his body disfigured beyond recognition.

What did she care this night that her father felt for her sorrow, or that he regretted his conduct toward the man she loved? This would not call him back from the dead, nor all the wealth in her wonderful heart.

There was no man for her in all the world. There had been, but one; there could not be another.

Her anniversary had served to intensify her sorrow. She moved about helping her mother, for there was yet much to be done in preparation for the morrow. But her spirit was not in her household duties. The bright glow of the fire, the steady flare of the lamp were no joys to her. The house within was as dark as the night without.

If her parents observed her mood they did not comment upon it.

Dolly thought the evening never would end. How she detested pies and cakes and every suggestion of feasting as well as of merriment. She longed to be alone in her room, where she might cry out her very eyes for sorrow and longing for dear love. God was not good, nobody was good, there was no cause for gratitude, and how she did wish she was dead. If the letter, then she would meet him. The only kind friend, the only good friend in all the world was dead.

The simple, hearty occasional words of her parents' gladness upon her ear. They had had their lives together. Of course they might be thankful, but—

Then there was a knock at the door, and then a tall, soldierly-looking fellow had entered and seized Dolly in his arms. And then he told her how he had been wounded severely, but had not been killed, and how he was to remain in the army, and—

"But, Dolly," he exclaimed, "why are you crying? Surely you are not sorry I have returned!"

"For the joy of your coming, dear," she answered, as she buried her face on his breast, "and for the gladness of this Thanksgiving—and, and, Jaber, dear, just a bit, too, in sorrow because I was so rebellious when I thought I had lost you forever."

The blessing that heaven may be found by yearning, and every heart may find much for which to be grateful at the coming of Thanksgiving day.

Cause for Joy.

Sunday School Teacher (during Thanksgiving week)—You, Jenny, can tell us something, perhaps, for which we ought to be thankful.

Jenny—Mamma says we ought to be thankful that Sister Sue is married at last.—N. Y. Times.

A Word of Warning.

"Now, Ham," said Noah, in kind but firm tones, as he noted the approach of Thanksgiving. "I want you to bear in mind that I have but two turkeys in the ark, and that you will have to curb your instincts for the present."—Baltimore American.

THE LIMIT.

BY FRANK T. DECKARD.

He had been known as a hopeless drunk and a "good for nothing" for so long that he believed it himself. His friends had argued with him until, at last, they had abandoned further effort and decided to let him drift on as he would. They were disgusted with him, and even he admitted they had cause to be. And yet, they still found something fine in his nature—perhaps it was his frank manner of confessing his faults or his humanity in the face of criticism, or, perhaps, his sincere, if false, desire to reform. And, as his friends would urge, make something of himself—in, perhaps, with some, it was the only way he had of smiling under fire. His friends told him he was weak and not vitally bad, and he himself believed he was weak and was very doubtful about the latter.

Finally there came one who had faith in him, abundant enough, he began to think, for both of them. He remembered their first meeting, in her own parlor, she standing at the side of the fireplace, with its glow illuminating her face. He remembered that she did not impress him as being as very pretty then—sweet, sweet, and attractive, certainly—with a pleasant and sympathetic voice and "good-better" kind of manner. He drifted back again, he did not understand why, and soon, to his own surprise, found himself on quite an opposite footing, contented to sit silently studying her features and their ever-growing beauty. As a result, he grew ashamed of himself and made determined resolutions to reform, which were as frequently broken as made, and as promptly made again. He even began to think that she understood him as no one else had ever done. She looked so many good traits in his character, delightful surprises to him, that he finally decided to become the man that she believed him to be. He decided to start with a clean slate—and so told her one evening, as they were sitting before the glowing fire, of his life, and spared nothing in the relating. Dolly's smile was sweet, and, of all his, he had never been a hypocrite, and he wanted to show her what good she had done him. Not a word she uttered during his recital. She simply sat so quiet, with her hands folded on her lap, gazing steadily into his fire. He wondered, now and then, as his story progressed of what she was thinking, whether his recital shocked her, if she was trying to read in his face the dreary future opened up to her, while she sat and smiled him through his leg.

When he had finished, he, too, sat quiet, vaguely wondering if he had been wise in telling her, but then he did not want to be a hypocrite. Listening to the heavy clock ticks, he seemed to hear them set themselves to the words: "You have had her." He wondered why he only saw her now very dear she was to him and how useless life seemed without her. What was the use of it all, anyway, of his good resolutions, of his strenuous efforts, of his abstinence? No matter now what he did or became, he had just shattered her good opinion of him and how could a woman love a man after that?

"Is there any more?"

Her mild question startled him out of his reverie. He was but dimly aware of the stillness of the house, of her quiet, constrained tones as she remarked how late it was, as she bade him good-night, of her saying that she wanted to think it all over. As he walked slowly homeward, he reviewed again all he had told her. Yes, he had certainly been frank, brutally frank, and made a clean breast of it. After all, had it been necessary? Well, he would leave it until to-morrow. The night's sleep would clear his thoughts.

The next day he received her answer and he thought that if he loved her before, he certainly adored her then. Her faith in him remained unshaken, and she loved him more than ever. How bright the world suddenly looked! How joyous his heart sang!

They had been secretly engaged for almost a year, a whole year of unalloyed happiness, for they knew there would be parental objections. His friends had noticed the change in his habits, but ceased to wonder, and accepted his reformation as complete. He felt that he had worked hard, but it had been a pleasure to work, thinking constantly of her. Her faith in him was firm. His progress was slow, but they were encouraged. He was steadily gaining headway and, this evening, he and she attended the play together. The evening passed quickly, as all such evenings had, and he gladly accepted her invitation to come in a moment and warm himself before going home. The moment had lengthened silently, as usual, when she said:

"I realize I've made a mistake. I've been wanting to tell you for some time, but did not have the courage. I'm so sorry—but I think it best to break our engagement, don't you? You know you don't like hypocrites."

He found himself trying to remember what the play they had just seen had been and dimly wondering why he couldn't.

"Why don't you say what you are thinking? Why don't you abuse me, as I deserve!" she added.

He stood looking at her dumbly, numbly.

"I suppose," she continued, "you will go back to your dreadful drinking—to your old life!"

"I don't know," he muttered. "Good-night"—Mirror.

Did His Best.

Ruggles was taking his Thanksgiving dinner at a down-town restaurant.

"What is your order, sir?" asked the waiter.

"I don't care what," replied Ruggles, "so it's tender and all white meat."

"Frog's legs!" yelled the waiter.—Chicago Tribune.

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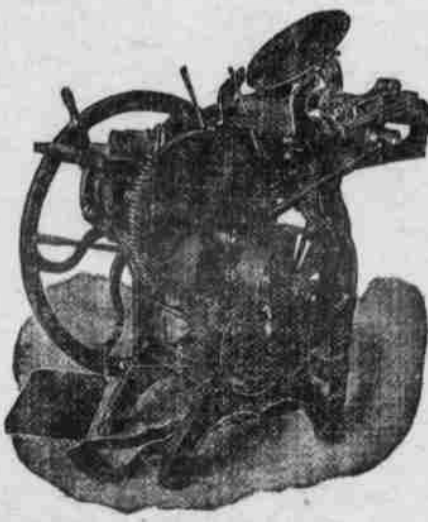
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