

# The Night Before Thanksgiving

By SARAH ORNE JEWETT.

There was a sad heart in the low-storyed, dark little house that stood humbly by the roadside under some tall elms. Small as her house was, old Mrs. Robb found it too large for herself alone; she only needed the kitchen and a tiny bedroom that led out of it, and there still remained the best room and a bedroom, with the low garret overhead.

There had been a time, after she was left alone, when Mrs. Robb could help those who were poorer than herself. She was strong enough not only to do a woman's work inside her house, but almost a man's work outside in her piece of garden ground.

At last sickness and age had come hand in hand, those two relentless enemies of the poor, and together they had wasted her strength and substance. She had always been looked upon by her neighbors as being independent, but now she was left, lame-footed and lame-handed, with a debt to carry and her bare land, and the house ill-provisioned to stand the siege of time.

For a while she managed to get on, but at last it began to be whispered about that there was no use for anyone to be so proud; it was easier for the whole town to care for her than a few neighbors, and Mrs. Robb had better go to the poorhouse before winter and be done with it.

At this terrible suggestion her brave heart seemed to stand still. The people whom she cared for most happened to be poor, and she could no longer go into their households to make herself of use.

The very elms overhead seemed to say "Oh, no!" as they groaned in the late autumn winds, and there was something appealing even to the strange passerby in the look of the little gray house, with Mrs. Robb's pale, worried face at the window.

Some one has said that anniversaries are days to make other people happy in, but sometimes when they come they seem to be full of shadows, and the power of giving joy to others, that inalienable right which ought to lighten the saddest heart, the most indifferent sympathy, sometimes even this seems to be withdrawn.

So poor Mary Ann Robb sat at her window on the afternoon before Thanksgiving and felt herself poor and sorrowful, indeed. Across the frozen road she looked eastward over a great stretch of cold meadowland, brown and windswept and crossed by dry ditches.

It seemed to her as if before this, in all the troubles that she had known and carried, there had always been some hope to hold; as if she had never looked poverty full in the face and seen its cold and pitiless look before.

She looked anxiously down the road, with a horrible shrinking and dread at the thought of being asked, out of pity, to join in some Thanksgiving feast, but there was nobody coming with gifts in hand. Once she had been full of love for such days, whether at home or abroad, but something chilled her very heart now.

Her nearest neighbor had been foremost of those who wished her to go to the town farm, and he had said more than once that it was the only sensible thing. But John Mander was waiting impatiently to get her tiny farm into his own hands; he had advanced some money upon it in her extremity and pretended that there was still a debt, after he cleared her wood lot to pay himself back.

He would plow over the graves in the field corner and fell the great elms, and waited now like a spider out to send away the man to bring a wagonful of wood from John Mander's and came in himself, laden with pieces of the nearest fence to keep the fire going in the mean time.

They must cook the beefsteak for supper right away; they must find the pound of tea among all the other bundles; they must get good fires started in both the cold bedrooms. Why, Mother Robb didn't seem to be ready for company from out West!

The great cheerful fellow hurried about the tiny house, and the little old woman limped after him, forgetting everything but hospitality. Had not she a house for John to come to? Were not her old chairs and tables in their places still? And he remembered everything, and kissed her as they stood before the fire as if she were a girl.

He had found plenty of hard times, but luck had come at last. He had struck luck, and this was the end of a great year.

"No, I couldn't seem to write letters; no use to complain of the worst, and I wanted to tell you the best when I came," and he told it while she cooked the supper. "No, I wasn't going to write no foolish letters," John repeated.

He was afraid he should cry himself when he found out how bad things had been, and they set down to supper together, just as they used to do when he was a homeless orphan boy whom nobody else wanted in winter weather while he was crippled and could not work. She could not be kinder now than she was then, but she looked so poor and old!

He saw her taste her cup of tea and set it down again with a trembling hand and a look at him.

"No, I wanted to come myself," he blurted, wiping his eyes and trying to laugh. "And you're going to have everything you need to make you paste."

"I feel just as if somethin' was goin' to happen," she said. "Poor Johnny Harris, perhaps he's thinkin' of me, if he's alive."

It was dark now out of doors, and there were tiny clicks against the window. It was beginning to snow, and the great elm creaked in the rising wind overhead.

A dead limb of one of the old trees had fallen that autumn, and poor firewood as it might be, it was Mrs. Robb's own, and she had burnt it most thankfully; at least she could have the luxury of a fire.

She had a feeling that it was her last night at home, and with strange recklessness began to fill the stove as she used to do in better days.

"It'll get me good an' warm," she said, still talking to herself, as lonely people do. "It's comin' on to storm."

The snow clicked faster and faster against the window, and she sat alone thinking in the dark.

"There's lots of folks I love," she said once. "They'd be sorry I ain't got nobody to come, an' no supper the night before Thanksgiving. I'm dreadful glad they don't know." And she drew a little nearer to the fire and laid her head back drowsily in the old rocking-chair.

It seemed only a moment before there was a loud knocking, and somebody lifted the latch of the door. The fire shone bright through the front of the stove and made a little light in the room, but Mary Ann Robb waked up frightened and bewildered.

"Who's there?" she called as she found her crutch and went to the door. She was only conscious of her one great fear. "They're come to take me to the poorhouse!" she said, and burst into tears.

There was a tall man, not John Mander, who seemed to fill the narrow doorway.

"Come, let me in!" he said gaily. "It's a cold night. You didn't expect me, did you, Mother Robb?"

"Dear me, what is it?" she faltered, stepping back as he came in, and dropping her crutch. "Be I dreamin'? I was a-dreamin' about—oh, there, what was I a-sayin'?" "Tain't true! No! I've made some kind of a mistake."

Yes, and this was the man who kept the poorhouse, and she would go without complaint; they might have given her notice, but she must not fret.

"Sit down, sir," she said, turning toward him with touching patience. "You'll have to give me a little time. If I'd been notified I wouldn't have kept you waitin' a minute this stormy night."

It was not the keeper of the poorhouse. The man by the door took one step forward and put his arm around her and kissed her.

"What are you talking about?" said John Harris. "You ain't goin' to make me feel like a stranger? I've come all the way from Alberta to spend Thanksgiving. There's all sorts of things out here in the wagon, an' a man to help get 'em in."

"Why, don't cry so, Mother Robb. I thought you'd have a great laugh if I came and surprised you. Don't you remember I always said I should come?"

It was John Harris, indeed. The poor soul could say nothing. She felt now as if her heart was going to break with joy. He left her in the rocking-chair and came and went in his old boyish way, bringing in the store of gifts and provisions. It was better than any dream.

He laughed and talked and went out to send away the man to bring a wagonful of wood from John Mander's and came in himself, laden with pieces of the nearest fence to keep the fire going in the mean time.

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## Gems of Thought.

Domestic bliss is worth more than all the glory in the world.

The capacity to enjoy simple things characterizes all great souls.

The world generally gives its admiration, not to the man who does what nobody else ever attempts to do, but to the man who does best what multitudes do well.—Macaulay.

To make some nook of God's creation a little fruitfaler, better, more worthy of God; to make some human hearts a little wiser, manfoller, happier—more blessed, less accursed! It is work for a God.—Caryle.

Man is his own star; and the soul that can

Render an honest and a perfect man Commands all light, all influence, all fate;

Nothing to him falls early or too late.

comfortable long's you live, Mother Robb!

She looked at him again and nodded, but she did not even try to speak. There was a good hot supper ready and a happy guest had come; it was the night before Thanksgiving.

No matter how unfortunate your environment, or how unpromising your present condition, if you cling to your vision and keep struggling with all your might toward its realization, you are mentally building, enlarging your ideal, increasing the power of your mental magnet to attract your own.—O. S. Marden.

Keep in the sunshine as much as you can, and impart some of the warmth to those around you

Deep within every heart that has not dulled the sense of its inner vision, is the belief that we are one with some great unknown, unseen power; and that we are somehow inseparably connected with the Infinite Consciousness.

The eyes of all wait upon Thee, O Lord: and Thou givest them their meat in due season.—Ps. 145: 15.

## Thanksgiving Day, 1921

With the recurrence of our national day of thanksgiving the question naturally arises: What definite reason has Canada to be thankful; what outstanding feature of our nationhood have we that is not common to all countries; what can we discern on the horizon of our national life that augurs well for the future of Canada and Canadians?

During the past year the world has been passing through a period of depression. No country has entirely escaped. Canada, fortunately, has not been greatly affected. True, we have felt a slackness in business, we have our unemployment problem, and we are passing through a period of readjustment of wages, but without, we have experienced in only minor degree the depression which is causing so much suffering in other countries. For this happy position we are undoubtedly largely indebted to our abundant and varied natural resources. Our people are looking earnestly to the development of these as a means of securing a return of prosperity, of employment, and of plenty. The rich heritage which Na-

ture has provided, in our forests, our waterways, our fisheries, mines and our fertile soil, is yielding up treasure at the call of man to such an extent that we may well say it is from our natural resources we will pay our war debt.

What, however, do our natural resources mean to the average Canadian? How much does he know about them. When challenged to support his country's claim to greatness, has he the intimate and close touch that denotes the student?

Some information supplied by the Natural Resources Intelligence Branch of the Department of the Interior may be of interest. This branch of the Ottawa Government has been established especially for the purpose of answering enquiries regarding our natural resources.

Canada's area is 3,729,665 square miles, of which 8.37 per cent. is water. It equals in area the United States and all her possessions. Canada has more than doubled her population in 28 years.

The water-power energy of Canada is equal to nearly twenty million horse-power, of which Ontario has 5,800,000 h.p. and Quebec 6,000,000 h.p. Approximately 1,652,650 h.p. used by central stations for electrical energy is developed from water-power.

Canada has the only two coal regions on the sea coasts of North America, in Nova Scotia and British Columbia, while Alberta possesses coal deposits estimated at 15 per cent. of the world's supply.

The Mackenzie oil field is in process of development, but sufficient work has not as yet been performed to prove its value. Oil shales are found in quantity in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. In each province, known deposits must total over a billion tons, with an oil content of from 20 to 110 gallons per ton.

The total area of land covered by forests in Canada is estimated at between 500 and 600 million acres. Commercial timber covers 225 million acres and the remainder is suitable for pulpwood.

Canada supplies over 87 per cent. of the world's requirements of asbestos. This is largely produced in Quebec. Of nickel, Ontario's output represents 80 per cent. of the world's supply. Developments are taking place in the nickel situation which should make this industry again active at an early date.

The above are but a few of the outstanding features of Canada's natural resources. Her agriculture and fisheries, her transportation systems by land and water, and the indomitable spirit of her people are assets of invaluable worth.

What has Canada to be thankful for? It is obvious that Nature has been very generous to Canada, and with such boundless resources we may with pride in our country look forward to the day when the northern half of the American continent will contain a large and contented population, a credit to the pioneers who blazed the original trails from coast to coast, and to those far-sighted statesmen who, in 1867, sponsored the creation of this great Dominion of Canada.

in time to the real music. The children entered into the spirit of the fun, and became almost too enthusiastic in their mimicry.

The rest of the children were eager to try it, so harmonicas were supplied for everyone. (It is best to let the two groups take turns, as an audience is needed.)

Charmades followed, under the leadership of Dorothy's mother and big sister.

The last game before supper was perhaps the jolliest of all. It was called a Wild Turkey Hunt. No—they didn't hide paper turkeys around the room to find. No!

One child was chosen as turkey, and had a bell tied around the neck on a ribbon. The rest of the children were blindfolded, and called the hunters. Of course, their object was to catch the turkey, whose bell jingled at every step. Once caught, the turkey became a hunter, and the hunter who caught him turned into the turkey.

Ready enough for supper were the children when they were summoned to the dining table, where now, instead of the Popcorn Art Exhibit, a row of tiny brown paper wigwags circled the table—each in front of each place on a plate. Each bore a child's name "Indianized." Thus, Dick Brown had Dickbrown, Bessie Perkins had Bessiepink, Bessie Stevens had Bessiepink.

The wigwags were found to be removable, and disclosed tiny pots of baked beans. With them were served popcorn sandwiches—rounds of baked brown bread shutting together over shrimp popped corn.

The ice cream was enclosed in individual packages of chocolate crackers, and there were "Indians" (sometimes famous as "Brownies").

The favours were a great surprise. Each was an animated popcorn boy, who proved to be made of a jumping-jack with a big popcorn ball moulded over his wooden head as a foundation. The "popcorn jacks," with their possibilities for antics, were designed to be carried home as souvenirs from Polly Popcorn's nice Pioneer Party.

"While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest shall not cease."



## As David Sang--

O, GIVE thanks unto the Lord, for He is good; for His mercy endureth forever.

Oh, that men would praise the Lord for His goodness and for His wonderful works to the children of men!

And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving and declare His works with rejoicing.

He turneth the wilderness into a standing water and dry ground into watersprings.

And there He maketh the hungry to dwell, that they may prepare a city for habitation; and sow the fields and plant vineyards, which may yield fruits of increase. He blesseth them also, so that they are multiplied greatly; He suffereth not their cattle to decrease.

Praise ye the Lord. Praise ye the Lord from the heavens; praise Him in the heights.

Praise ye Him, all His angels; praise ye Him, all His hosts.

Praise ye Him, sun and moon; praise Him, all ye stars of light.

Praise Him, ye heavens of heavens, and ye waters that be above the heavens.

Praise the Lord from the earth, ye dragons and all deeps; fire and hail; snow and vapours; stormy wind fulfilling his word; mountains and all hills; fruitful trees and all cedars; beasts and all cattle; creeping things and flying fowl; kings of the earth and all people; princes and all judges of the earth; both young men and maidens; old men and children; let them praise the name of the Lord: for His name alone is excellent; His glory is above the earth and heaven.

It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord!

## An Autumn Party

Everybody's invitation came wrapped up in a reddish-greenish-brownish-campy-cornucopia, and this is what it said:

Polly Popcorn bids thee to a Pioneer Party at three o'clock on ye

afternoon of Thanksgiving at Dorothy Smith's house. Watch out for ye Indians!

Polly Popcorn, who looked suspiciously like Dorothy Smith to her little friend that appeared to be all popcorn. Really, her mother had made it out of some big-checked yellow-and-white gingham, by running a gathering stitch around edges of the white squares and drawing them up into little fat white bunches. Her cap was just the shape of a frilly round popped popcorn kernel.

The first amusement was Popcorn Art. All the girls and boys sat around the dining-room table. In front of each one was a saucer of snowy pop-corn, a sheet of yellow paper, a pencil, and a was tube of Henry

You know what queer shapes corn pops into—a face, or a head, a cat, a monkey, a spider, an Eskimo's hat. The idea of this contest was to select a promising popcorn kernel—one that suggested a picture—then stick it by means of the library paste to the yellow paper, and with the pencil draw whatever else was needed to complete the picture.

Legs, tails, whiskers, bodies, back yards, all sorts of things you can imagine, were added, and the results were very funny. Each child was permitted to make three, provided they would all go on the sheet of yellow paper.

Then each child signed his or her name, and the pictures were carefully collected and laid out on the table for an art exhibit, later, of course, to be taken home by the individual artists.

Next, sides were chosen for a game called Indians and Settlers. Indians were given handbands with gay feathers to wear. Settlers had wide-brimmed brown paper hats. A space was cleared down the length of the living-room, and the Indians and Settlers formed in two parallel files. At the opposite end of the room a popcorn ball leaned against a wigwag,

and a little white baby doll lay in a doll's cradle.

The game was really a rival relay race. At a signal the first Indian and the first Settler started for their respective goals; the Indian snatched the white doll, the Settler the popcorn; then they turned hastily and ran back to their separate teams, handing their prizes to the next in line, who, in turn, ran to deposit the prizes in wigwag and cradle, as first found. These runners, on returning, touched hands with the next in line, who then had to run and snatch the prizes in their turn, and so back to the team.

Thus the runners alternately stole and returned the popcorn and the white baby. The first team to complete the circuit was hailed as the winning one, and marched triumphantly about the room to the music of the phonograph.

The phonograph came into use again for the next game. Ten children were selected to belong to the popcorn chorus. Each was given an unshelled ear of popcorn, and told to pretend it was a harmonica. The children arranged themselves in a musical-looking group and put their popcorn harmonicas to their mouths, whereupon the phonograph started a lively tune. The members of the group were expected to go through the motions of playing the harmonicas