



## THE MASKERS

A NEW YORK  
THANKSGIVING DAY STORY

**I**T WAS not a typical Thanksgiving day, being so warm that no flake of snow was possible. Over all New York, from the Battery to Bronx, and beyond, the luminous pearl-gray mist hung, a ragged canopy, which in spots reached down to the moist street level.

When Carolyn Martin looked out, she of necessity looked up, and as the only opening in her tiny apartment was toward the sky, she saw nothing but a mass of gray fog. As she stood with her hand on the pulley of her skylight, a chorus of children's voices, now in laughter, now in snatch of song, came faintly from the street below.

As Carolyn knew that the lodger who occupied the top floor front had gone



She Stole to One of His Windows.

out, she stole to one of his windows. It was 11 o'clock, and the mounted police, as is their wont, had cleared West Seventy-second street of all traffic vehicles, to make ready for the carriages that later on throng this boulevard. Carolyn had risen late. The demands of the stomach are not as peremptory when one is quiet, and she had faced the fact, the night before, that she stood possessed of exactly 18 cents.

It was still early for pleasure driving, so that the boulevard, for the moment, was given over to companies of gayly garbed maskers, who were ringing door-bells, and in merry impertinence, accosting passers by. Through the silvery, silken mist they went caracoling, a broken tangle of bright color, as far as Carolyn could see, and she wondered, as many another newcomer to New York has done, as to this odd Thanksgiving day custom, which has a history that it is not the purpose of this narrative to relate.

The savor of the Thanksgiving dinner, in course of preparation below stairs, which was exclusive to the keeper of the house and her family, floated upward. As Carolyn stood looking out, the appetizing odors beat at the door of her demanding young stomach with tantalizing insistence.

The carriages were now beginning to pass, and, from one of them, she saw a shower of coin flung to a group of singing maskers. With quick resolve, she turned, went to her room, took the paints with which she eked out the little allowance her old uncle was able to send her, and in a few minutes had finished a dainty masque. She was a fragile little thing, and when she had donned a costume which she had worn

at a fancy dress affair one never-to-be-forgotten evening when Dick had told her of his love, and tied about the loosened curls of her dark hair a fillet of gold-colored ribbon, she looked no more than a child.

She slipped softly down the stairs, and reached the outer door of the ground floor unobserved. A company of maskers went scurrying down the street like bright, wind-swept autumn leaves. Quickly she stepped in among them, and, seized with the abandon of the moment, she began to sing that rollicking little bird song, "The Robin." A passer halted and thrust a coin into her hand, remarking to his companion:

"That child has a wonderful voice." The half dollar insured a warm dinner, but what the man said of her voice was far more to her than a dinner, much as she wanted one. Her voice was now her hope, a hope which was leading her to struggle alone in a big city that has no time to succor those who fall, and where only the fittest survive.

An automobile drew up to the curb, and a young man sprang to the walk. Carolyn quickly raised her hand to adjust her masque, bringing into view an antique moonstone ring, on which was cut, in intaglio, a quaint and singularly beautiful head. As the man saw it he exclaimed:

"Carrol, it is you. What does this mean?"

"What right have you to ask?" Her words were brave, but her voice trembled.

"No right now, Carrol, save that of an old friend who has been looking for you everywhere, and is so glad to find you that he does not care what anything means," he said gently. They walked on, leaving the wandering maskers behind, to the entrance of the park.

"Let us sit here for a few minutes, Carrol, I have something I must say to you." She glanced at her costume.

"Never mind," he said, interpreting her look. "The first time I saw you in that dress we were very happy, and why did you leave me, Carrol, with only the little message that I was free?" She raised her eyes, limpid with unshed tears, and she answered: "I did not want you to find me. Why did you look for me?"

"Because I love you, Carrol, and life is not worth living without you, but



She Began to Sing.

tell me, why did you go away as you did?" She hesitated a little, and then said, steadily:

"When the bank failed, and I had nothing, your aunt came and told me that if you married me it would ruin your career, as she would disinherit you. She said what you should do was to marry Alice Gurry, and that she was sure you would, but for a notion that you were bound in honor to me."

"Just as I thought. But how could you go away, Carrol, without seeing me; without hearing what I had to say?"

"Dick, do you think I could spoil your life? What sort of love would that be? And I knew I might grow selfish and weak, if I saw you."

"You darling," he said, and pressed the slender fingers of the hand on which was the old moonstone ring until she winced. "Did you know," he continued, "that Mrs. Dempsey is no my aunt?"

"Not your aunt? Why, Dick, what do you mean?"

"Just this: she was adopted, but not legally, by my grandparents. When my mother died, shortly after I was born she and her husband managed, by a series of clever frauds, to get hold of the property. No one knew about it but old Candes. Mrs. Dempsey paid her to keep mum, but when she knew she was going to die, money did no count, and she sent for me and told me the whole story.

"When the truth came out about Aunt Dell I made up my mind she had something to do with your going, and I set out to find you. I knew you were somewhere in New York, from Mabel—your uncle told her that, but said you told him not to give your address to anyone, so I made up my mind to just hunt till I found you. But



"How Could You Go Away, Carrol?"

tell me, little girl, why you were pranking with the maskers? Was it just a lark?"

"No, Dick, it wasn't; I wanted some money. I was hungry for a warm dinner."

"Great Scott, Carrol, you don't mean to say you are in want? To think of your being hungry."

"It isn't so bad, Dick. It's only this, Mr. Ferguson, the cashier here I sell the menu cards and other things I do was away yesterday, and what Uncle Charles sends me did not get here as usual. I had a few cents for rolls, but it is Thanksgiving day, and I did want something else."

"Poor little song bird! Come, get off those togs, quick, and as soon as the auto can get us to the Holland we'll have a bang-up Thanksgiving dinner. And such a dinner as they had. Carolyn declared she had never tasted anything as good, and that never before had she been so truly thankful for a Thanksgiving dinner. Dick started out by saying they would be married in a month, which Carolyn thought was too soon, but when the dessert was brought in he had shortened the time to ten days.

When their dinner was over, they went out on Fifth avenue, vivid with light and life, and, crossing over to Twenty-ninth street, walked on past the quaint little church of the Transfiguration, where, as a college friend of Dick's was one of the assisting clergymen, they decided to be married.

It was a quiet, pretty high-noon wedding, and Dick's friend who officiated, and who performs a large proportion of the many marriages solemnized at this far-famed "Little Church Around the Corner," had he not belonged to the order of "White Friars," would have envied his old college chum his pretty, winsome little bride.

ANTOINETTE VAN HOESEN.

## Thanksgiving Day



**T**HANKSGIVING DAY is as distinctly indigenous to America as is the turkey, that bird which is so indissolubly connected with due commemoration of the season. A dinner in that day without the gobbler or its mate would be no feast at all, though a hundred other viands were included in the menu.

Thanksgiving day, known nowhere else than in the United States, as a national institution, is of decided modern invention. President Lincoln, just 40 years ago, was moved by the great victories of Gettysburg, Vicksburg, and other points, these coming thick and fast after so many previous disasters, to designate a day in which the people of the entire nation might meet and render thanks to God. This first national Thanksgiving day was designed to be distinctly religious in its character, and the intent of the president was understood and carried out by the people. The churches of the cities and towns and villages were filled that day with fathers and mothers and sisters who offered grateful prayers to God for the victories won and for the preservation of their loved ones who moved daily amid scenes of imminent danger.

True, the Thanksgiving day idea dates back of this. The Land of Pilgrims in Massachusetts, in the year following their landing at Plymouth, met in their church in obedience to the governor's proclamation to return thanks for a generous harvest. Intermittently thereafter for many years, and then regularly each year, the day was commemorated, spreading throughout the New England states. It did not reach New York state until 1821, and was regarded indifferently by many states until Lincoln gave it national standing.

Washington did make two Thanksgiving proclamations, but only at the suggestion of the congress. Two subsequent presidents flatly declined to issue such proclamations, insisting that the silence of the constitution as to religion forbade any such exercise of power by the chief executive.

Hence, it is within reason and right to say that Thanksgiving day, as a national festival, began in 1863, and was instituted by President Lincoln.

But by a rapid process of evolution the religious feature, that which gave

rise to the day, has been diminished. In larger cities but a limited number of churches open their doors for services, while in the smaller ones a single house of worship will conduct what is termed "union service" for all denominations. Usually there are many vacant pews in those churches that are opened.

The day has developed into "home" day, one in which the loved ones meet with glad hearts, and doubtless thankful ones, too, and felicitate one another that it is as well with them as it is. Those who live at a distance, and those who are traveling upon the road, turn their faces towards the home roof in advance of the coming of Thanksgiving day, that they of one blood may be together on that day, and spend the hours in recalling the past, so much of it as is pleasant. Or they engage in joyful songs, or innocent pastimes, all filled and thrilled with the goodness of life.

Whether or not the people are less religious than formerly does not enter into this discussion. There are 52 days in the year set apart for Sunday church observance, and the people by a sort of common consent have seen fit to spend this, the one day of the year, under their own vine and fig-tree, undisturbed by callers, holding communion with those who are bone of their bone and flesh of their flesh.

Surely there can be nothing in contravention of religion in the home sentiment, that is so marked a feature of Thanksgiving day. The hope is the safety of the state. It is here that youth receives its influences for good or ill. It is here that men are made or unmade. Can there be higher tribute to the beneficent influences of home life and the happiness of it than the modern universal practice in these states of every man and woman, with their children, making a "home day" of Thanksgiving? May not the happy hearts and glad faces of these home gatherers be a pleasanter sight in God's eyes than the spectacle of long and solemn-faced couples going to church to sing solemn psalms. In any event one may not sacrifice any spirit of gratitude to the good God for His mercies because his heart is glad and warm in the surroundings of a loved and lovable home.

Yet blessed is that nation whose God is the Lord, and it was a happy suggestion that came to the great Lincoln to nationalize one day of the year in which to praise the Lord because He is God, and to give thanks to His holy name for mercies that endure from generation to generation.

WILLIAM ROSSER COBBE.



**F**AIR Autumn has painted the fringe of the wildwood. The rivers are clear as they sing to the sea. And back from the vistas of golden-orebed childhood Come laughter and song that are boundless and free; The feasts of old every heart doth remember. For the tides of the years have an echoing flow, And again the soft skies and the frosts of November Recall the Thanksgivings we kept long ago.

**T**HEY will not desert us and Memory traces With love and affection the days of the past. We hear the sweet songs and we see the fair faces That charmed the Thanksgivings, too happy to last! How often we looked at the fields in the morning And saw on the corn the first flurry of snow. With the sun in the east all the landscape adorning To welcome Thanksgivings we loved long ago.



**T**HEY fade not, no matter how swift is Time's river. We cherish them all for the loves that they hold, And dearer they grow. May they linger forever, Framed by Affection in Memory's gold! Again in the gloaming of russet November The tides of another Thanksgiving doth flow, Repeating the days we rejoice to remember— The feasts and the smiles of the dear long ago.

**W**E kneel as a people, for great is the Nation Whose banners are waving from sea unto sea; Our power is boundless and lofty our station. For this is the land of the brave and the free; The bells of Thanksgiving are tunelessly ringing. They call to the chancel the high and the low, And millions to-day are in gratitude singing. The songs that their forefathers sang long ago.



**T**HE chorus is heard from the far-away pinelands To the aureate shores of the occident sea; It echoes anew in the depths of the vine lands, And quivers the bloom of the fair orange tree; The Nation rejoices, for Peace crowns its banner, The rivers of plenty through all the land flow, And hunger's unknown in the cot and the manor, And spanned is the sky by the Thanksgiving bow.

**P**RAISE God for His goodness! He kept us a Nation When darkness and trials overshadowed the land; His love and His care were the Pilgrims' salvation Who planted their faith on the wave-beaten strand; O bells of Thanksgiving! ring out in the morning. We've planted in love, and we reap as we sow; The sun of God's love is the landscape adorning, And Freedom remembers her birth long ago.

T. C. HARRAUGH.

