



JOHN WHITE'S THANKSGIVING.

"Thanksgiving—for what?" and he muttered a curse—for the plainer of food and an empty purse; For a life of hard work and the shabbiest clothes; But it's idle to talk of a poor man's woes! Let the rich give thanks, it is they who can; There is nothing in life for a laboring man." So said John White to his good wife Jane, And o'er her face stole a look of pain.



"Nothing, dear John!" and he thought again; Then glanced more kindly down on Jane. "I was wrong," he said; "I'd forgotten you; And I've my health, and the baby, too." And the baby crossed "was a bouncing boy— And o'er Jane's face came a look of joy; And she kissed her John, as he went away; And he said to himself, as he worked that day; "I was wrong, very wrong; I'll now grumble again, I should surely be thankful for baby and Jane."

AN IDEAL THANKSGIVING.

As there are plagues the law cannot reach, so there are people no holiday includes. There is a time of the year when vagrants—criminals, in a word, the destitute as a body—are feasted with good things and made to share the comfort of the rich. But as comprehensive as this charity may be, as minute in its search after recipients, as thoughtful in the choice of creature comforts, it is pitiful to think how many yet remain in the "highways and hedges" out of reach.

Can you imagine a gathering of such as these? We see much of the other side of the picture, but it is startling to think that those who come to this surface are only the minority. Beneath every success, however modest and obscure, there is a substructure of accumulated failures; and for one or ten whom we see in moderate comfort and unassuming ease, there are 100 or 1,000 who have been too weak to swim.

I had been to many fully spread boards, public and private, on this day of typical thanksgiving for all the blessings and good gifts of the year; but one to which I was accidentally introduced late in the evening proved of greater interest and rarity than any of the others.

The host was a gray-headed man, wifeless and childless, rich, odd, disappointed and generally supposed to be misanthropic. He had no aim in life; no interest strong enough to absorb him, no will stable enough to hold the reins. He gave to every one who asked, but no work of charity interested. There was no pursuit, physical or mental, which could so sustain him as to turn him from vain regrets and impatient longings. He had never found his place in life; had never known necessity, and therefore never tasted the excitement of the race for existence, which some time or other gives at least a dash of interest to the most unsuccessful career. He was not irreligious, but he belonged to no religious body, and when any one told him that he had much to thank Providence for he would shrug his shoulders in wonder.

As the years went on this man brooded more and more over disappointed hopes, and took a morbid pleasure in finding out cases of failure in all the various callings of life. He dwelt on the subject until it became a monomania. One or two acquaintances—he had no heart friend—out of compassion advised him to turn his brooding to practical use by benefiting men in situations like his own.



Such was the singular host. As for the guests, they were as various in class, education, birth and appearance as they could be, even in a city where everything under the sun is more or less represented. All who are bankrupt and ruined in reputation and position, or in their own estimation, had a representation at this strange feast of moral equality. Every degree of shabbiness, of dissipation, in face or garment, was present; for no rule was made as to dress, and those

whom shame or ill-repute made remiss were as freely admitted as they who had made little pitiful attempts at decency. The talk was mild and characteristic, chiefly occupied with the past or the future as it might have been.

On the host's right hand sat a man in rusty black, with nervous hands that clutched at things and trembled as they held glass or fork or napkin. He had never been a criminal, never willingly harmed any one, never entertained a deliberately unkind thought, and yet to all intents and purposes he was a murderer and a suicide. His spirit was dead, or in its last agonies, and of this he was dimly conscious in a despairing sort of way.

A curious rivalry between many of the guests attracted my attention. Each thought his own misfortune the heaviest, and was jealous of the consideration which another won. Some even flung it into the faces of certain others that when they were enjoying prosperity they had been appealed to in vain. Any want about equality in spite of loss of money was promptly resented by those who had been in the attitude of solicitors. This talk not supported by fine character. The restrictions which obtain in society less honest of speech, though more polished, were laid aside and each one spoke his mind. All told their worldly circumstances quite plainly.

One said that he lived with his wife, three children and mother-in-law in two rooms in an unwholesome tenement house, and earned \$3 a week in a shop selling rotten clothing to grocerians.

Another said: "I started in life with the notion of being a great author. I am over 40 now, and glad to get \$5 a week in a book store. I have covered reams of paper and made about \$1,000 altogether in little sales, but no one knows my name. I can't get a novel and an epic from one publishing house to another for ten years, and never could get any editor even to read them. I am trying to save a little money now to get the poem published after my death, with a little autobiography which may teach the world what it has lost, and make people sorry that they let such a man die a miserable death after so disappointing a life."

"You talk of death like a child," said a croaking voice across the table. "Here am I, an old man, once Minnie St. Angel, the famous actress, but none the less a starving, broken-down drudge now. Never despair while you are young; it is only the old who know what trouble is. To have been 'some one' and then fall to being nobody, that is the hardest thing of all, much harder than to have been unknown all your life."

"Well, I think it is harder for those who never had a brief hour of success at all," said a thin woman. "I was the daughter of a theatre hack, and was on the stage from a child. But as I grew up plain and not clever I was used in all the common parts and never knew what it was to have an individuality. I have never had a home, and since my father died have never even had a friend. Now I am a wardrobe woman in a low theatre, and glad—yes, thankful—to have the place, too."

"It is hard to work for no pay," said a rough voice opposite. "I was a soldier of Napoleon's as a lad, fought in Algeria and in Russia; and because I took part in some plot—they call it revolutionary—lost my little pension, and starved in consequence. I ran away, and once here could find nothing to do, and I am trying to beg money enough to buy a hand organ and camp stool."

Near him sat a prim old body in a shiny black silk gown. She seemed rather shocked by the mention of the organ and stool, and remarked that as he was a man he could surely find some work to do. She went on to say: "Although I am only a woman, I set to work at once as soon as our fortune was gone. I got a teacher's place in a school, and ever since I have taught and supported myself. But it is very hard for a lady tenderly brought up, and not taught very thoroughly—as people were not in my day—to mix with common people and be knocked about in the world. My father was a rich man and a gentleman, and we have good blood in our veins for many generations back, long before our family ever crossed the ocean. Our name is known in the history of the country, and there was never one bearing it who disgraced it."

"A good pedigree is a fine thing if it be genuine," said a crippled man near the old lady. "But if I had it, and could exchange it for a straight back and sound limbs, I would gladly give it up. Yet I believe I am happier than most of you here. I set out to get one thing and got it, though it brought little else with it. I was a poor man's son and had no family to boast of, and the one thing I wanted was learning. As I was a cripple and good for nothing to work, I got books from kind neighbors and taught myself sitting by the kitchen fire in winter and on the doorstep in summer. Sometimes I got to school, when I had clothes good enough to wear, and at last, through the compassion of neighbors, to college. But I grew more infirm as I reached manhood, and, indeed, but for this I should have no right to be here among you. I have earned my livelihood teaching other young men; and so I jog on—land my books; and though my meals often consist of bread and milk, I am not unhappy. I said I would

give noble blood in exchange for good health and strong, sound limbs; but I would not give my books for health or good blood, nor even health alone for a long pedigree."

The host smiled at us and said: "There is the man who is really monarch of all bo-bo-voys."



It was saddening to turn from the cripple to the others. Many of them were equally gifted intellectually, yet they had never attained his contentment with his lot. A man in a rough jacket, with a careless air, which was contradicted by his face, said: "Well, I may have had a wider experience than any of you, if change of employment gives experience. There are few things I have not tried, but I never succeeded in any. I have been an errand boy, a plow boy, a peddler, a miner, an engineer and an expressman. I have written dismal trash to sell to vilely cheap and mean papers. I have taught grown men to read in exchange for a crust of bread. I have distributed advertisements at street corners; and now I am just where I was when I started. I have no home, I left my last boarding place without paying, but left my only good coat behind instead. I slept last night in a car depot, and picked up a few cigar ends to keep the hunger off this morning. I would take any job; but people don't seem to want jobs done just now. They look at me suspiciously and say: 'There's lots of work if you only bestir yourself and look for it.'"

"You and I are much alike," said a man opposite. "I have looked for work both in and out of my profession. I am a musician, young and unknown. I have heard you all talk of being poor, but when a man loses many a possible good chance in his business through the want of a postage stamp at the right time, I tell you he knows something of poverty, though he may have a good coat on his back. In our profession poverty is a matter of course. We may be ever famous and starve. Meanwhile I am obliged to keep up appearances and live in a decent house."

"Yes," said a woman near him, "and I dare say not your own house. Well, if poor boarders have their troubles, don't think that the boarding house keeper sleeps on a bed of roses. There is a hopeless side to poverty, and a contented side, and an expiring side. But I know of another. It is the hard-earned side. My husband died in debt. They want out the weary old way to support myself. I opened a boarding house, and wish ladies could go lower down to make money. I had not the strength of mind to do differently from other of my set, and I think with us women that is one of the great causes of our troubles. We don't dare to face the world's talk, even when there is nothing to get empty too, and I was obliged to compromise. Sometimes I did not like a man's manner or a woman's costume, and I was stiff, which lost me considerable money. Then again, some men's business was not to my taste, though they were very silent and unobtrusive themselves. I lost many a good boarder the first week by standing too much on my dignity. If a dancing master generally teaches deportment to his pupils, I think some one should teach a banker's daughter, in view of certain possibilities, how to attract and deal pleasantly with boarders. If it were not a good thing to be merry under the worst circumstances, I should not detain you so long with my experiences; but if we persistently ignore the humor that is concealed in almost every stage of poverty, we are making ourselves more miserable than God intended us to be. Then she went on to enumerate the ludicrous incidents which her poor boarders treated her to day by day.

"If money troubles were everything," said a moody man, "you would all be quarrelling with the worst of among you. You might be rich in money, and yet broken and worthless."

My host whispered to me that this man had lost his faith in woman. Then he pointed out a pale woman in good but not showy clothing, who was yet more wretched than the poorest at the feast. Her husband carried nothing for her. She was dying of a broken heart. Just opposite her were a man and woman whom no recital seemed to affect. Their only child had been suddenly killed a few weeks before.

My friend pointed out a man at the bottom of the table. He had an uneasy eye and a restless conscience. I asked what this man had done.

"His traps for the feet of others," said my host. "In old times, legends say, men sold their own souls. He has sold those of others. Anciently, to trample on the Cross was the worst sacrilege a man could commit; but he has trampled beneath his feet the very image of God. Such as he are called 'men about town.' I need not tell you more."

Near him sat a woman with a faded shawl, a soiled and shabby bonnet, bronzed face and dirty hands. No teaching, no help, no good example, no chance of good had ever come to her. And there was a woman in a Parisian dinner dress who sat between two men of the homeless kind in upper life—the lay figures of society. She was more hopeless looking than her neighbors. She had no work. No object save pleasure ever stirred her. Then my host told me in low tones, while the others were talking among themselves, how he had gathered these people together for this extraordinary Thanksgiving feast. Some had met by accident. Others he hunted up, going into dismal places to find them. He said: "The most despairing were the ones he chose. He said: 'To some I sent formal invitations by post. I knew it would please them. The invitation itself, put in language they had not known for years, would be more of a blessing than the mere feast to which they were bidden. The moral pleasure given, or the self-respect induced by these invitations, is more than half the boon of my Thanksgiving feast. To a few the mere food is much, but then to those few sunk in the mud, animal comfort must precede a moral impression. When

people are comfortable they like to listen to good talk, and when you have laid the foundation in corporal works of mercy you may safely begin the superstructure of their spiritual. Indeed, the physical parts of their trials are really the least, and the physical reward of a good feast also comparatively small. Some of them dine well every day of their lives, and yet have no pleasure in it or anything else. They who do not find more pleasure in the comfort, the security, the absence of anxiety to-night than in the mere abundance of food. Those who are poor do not mind hard work and scanty fare, but they do mind the uncertainty of their lives, the lack of a home, the want of appreciation of themselves, the want of sympathy and understanding, the cold drawing back of the prosperous, the divided attention, the fair words and no deeds, the barren good wishes—in short, the whole repellent attitude of the world."

"Do you see," he said, "that old man at the foot of the table? He has peace enough to bathe us all in it, patience enough and joy enough to share with us all. He does not know how to read, but he knows the thing that St. Paul counted a higher knowledge than all his Hebrew learning and Greek subtlety. He had a great misfortune in his youth—no matter what it was—and if ever there was a child of God, fashioned by God's own hands and chastened in his own way, it is he."

Here the host stepped forward, and raising his voice said: "There is one among you, my friends, who has no word to speak of his troubles and disappointments, yet they have been harder to bear than all yours, save those miseries born of guilt. I did not invite him here because he was unfortunate, but because I needed something you could all join in being thankful for. He has that treasure; he has the secret which would turn all your misery into joy. Instead of showing you only a full board, I have brought you the most beautiful thing on earth to see and to imitate—for it is in the power of each of you to imitate him—a happy man."

"He is old, poor, silent, and as the world would add, ignorant, sad and lonely. But listen to what he once told me: 'There is one who breathes, moves, converses constantly with me. I feel him, I hear him, sometimes I even answer him in my heart. But it is a speech without words, which we understand without having learned to read in books. That is one of the pillars that uphold the world for him—his trust in God. The other is his trust in conscience. If you can imitate that the first will come as its natural consequence. To live by the rule of my friend needs two things—grace and a real resolve. The first is never wanting. You can count on it whenever and as long as you make up your mind to furnish the other thing, a fixed resolve.'"

This and much more said our host, and when he ceased we noticed there was one less at the table. He had gone; but no one spoke.

Then, here and there one from out this strange company came forward to thank the host with tears of genuine gratitude in their eyes. Some went away without a word, some all were gone. The loaded table disappeared, but I heard my host say with joyful freedom: "That is what we propose to do next year." It was only then that I realized that I had not assisted at a veritable banquet. We had talked ourselves into the belief that our longings and imaginings were facts. Could we not do something like this? To restore self-respect is even better than to fill with bread. But, understand, that although in many instances the latter can be done without the former, in most cases the former must rest on the basis of the latter. Thanksgiving is a good day to begin things. Still every day may become a thanksgiving for those who seek out the hungry, both in body and in spirit, to feed and the naked to clothe. B. M.

MOTHER WAS THERE.

The Silent Figure at the Little Table in the MacMoffat's Home.

Six towheaded MacMoffats struck their heads over the rim of the pine table and looked anxiously but cheerfully at their Thanksgiving dinner of boiled codfish and potatoes which Mr. MacMoffat, with his head in a sling, from a fall he got from a scaffold last August, was commencing to ladle out to them.

"The Cape Cod turkey," exclaimed Master John MacMoffat, who was the wit of the family, and all laughed.

"Our turkey costed too high this year," said Mr. MacMoffat, at which they all laughed again, though a broken arm and ill-faces and doctor's bills had served off the turkey.

"Turkey makes your feet sore," said the family wit, and there was another laugh.

"I'd rather have well cooked codfish than tough turkey for my part, any day," remarked Miss Mary Ellen MacMoffat, who was aspiring to be a young lady.

"An' pie," suggested the youngest towhead, at which they all laughed again, for there really was to be an apple pie, with a piece all round, at the end of the meal, though it was as yet held to be too good to be talked about.

"Well, it's a great blessing that we're all here and in good health," remarked Miss Eliza MacMoffat, the spinster aunt, somewhat dully and quite irrelevantly.



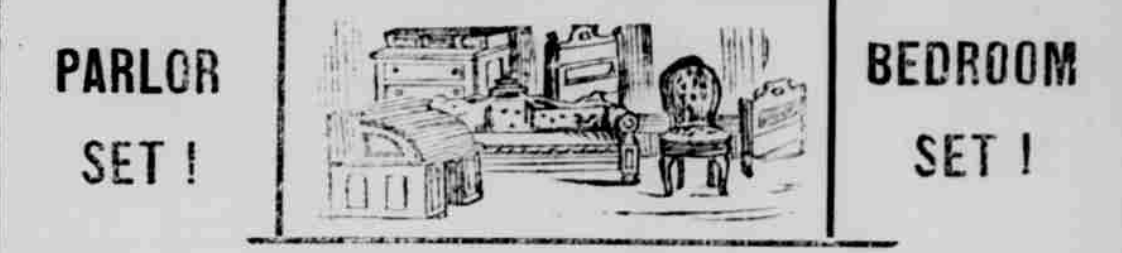
A quiet hush fell on the clothless table. For a second the tin ladle in MacMoffat's hand rattled faintly on the platter's edge. "Sister Eliza, would you mind running up to lend me the loan of his almanac till I see a date?" said MacMoffat. "A accommodating as she was stupid, and did not mind it a bit. The quiet around the table was unbroken. An unseen form was at the board. Aunt Eliza's careless words had turned the eye of the heart upon the face that had passed away in the last spring. The tin ladle stopped its rattle on the platter. MacMoffat laid it down. He did not trust his eyes with the six little faces around the table, but gave them to his heart to see the face that was there yet invisible. "Yes, dears," he said, slowly and softly, "she's here, but maybe we can't see her, but she's here, Mother's here with us, children. We are all, all here."

CHEAP BOOTS & SHOES

The same quality of goods 10 per cent. cheaper than any house west of the Mississippi. Will never be undersold. Call and be convinced.

ALSO REPAIRING PETER MERGES.

THE FURNITURE EMPORIUM



FURNITURE

Parlors, Bedrooms, Dining-rooms, Kitchens, Hallways and Offices.

HENRY BOECK'S

Where a magnificent stock of Goods and Fair Prices abound.

UNDER-TAKING AND EMBALMING A SPECIALTY HENRY BOECK

CORNER MAIN AND SIXTH PLATTSMOUTH, NEBRASKA

F. G. FRICKE & CO.

Drugs and Medicines, Paints, Oils, Wall Paper and a Full Line of DRUGGISTS' SUNDRIES. PURE LIQUORS.

E. G. Dovey & Son. E. G. Dovey & Son.

Fall and Winter Goods.

We take pleasure in saying that we have the fullest and Handsomest line of

Fall and Winter Goods

Ever brought to this Market and shall be pleased to show you a

Superb Line

Wool Dress Goods, and Trimmings, Hoisery and Underwear, Blankets and Comforters, A splendid assortment of Ladies' Misses' and Childrens CLOAKS, WRAPS AND JERSEYS.

We have also added to our line of carpets some new patterns, Floor Oil Cloths, Matts and Rugs.

In men's heavy and fine boots and shoes, also in Ladies', Misses and Childrens Footgear, we have a complete line to which we INVITE your inspection. All departments full and Complete.

E. G. Dovey & Son.