

# Marion's Promise

The Story of an Exciting Thanksgiving Day.

Marion and her father were shooting a match out under the trees. The old man carefully sighted, with his rifle over a rest, then he pulled the trigger, and the edge of the brass tack fastened in a tree, about thirty feet away, disappeared.

He grumbled a little as his daughter ran forward and then called out, "Good for you, daddy; that's hard to beat."

"Humph! Any one can do that with well with a rest. You will beat it without one. The old man had to take a back seat," he added with a sigh, for he had been a famous shot in his days, and it was a sore trial to have used the rest.

Marion had her rifle at her shoulder. "Bang!" and the tack's glittering head was gone entirely.

"Bravo, bravo!" cried the veteran, aglow with pride. "I'd like to see anybody beat that rest or no rest."

"Listen," said Marion, then, "What's that?"

"Abram, Mary Ann," piped a thin voice, shrilly, from the edge of the woods. "Where are ye? I heard your heathenish gun firing and I ain't dared to stir a peg nigher for you shot."

"It's Aunt Perkins," said Marion, laughing.

"Ye confound it," muttered her father under his breath following slowly. "I wish she'd let us alone," he added.

Already Marion was getting supper when he reached the bridge cottage, so called from the drawbridge that spanned the river just in front of the cottage, that had deep woods at its back, and the town half a mile away.

The soldierly-looking man, Marion's father, was the keeper of the drawbridge, and Marion, his only child, was his housekeeper and comrade. They were most happy when Aunt Perkins let them alone, but she had been a frequent visitor of late.

While Marion stepped lightly around getting supper, Aunt Perkins sat on the extreme edge of the hardest chair she could find in the best room, eyeing her husband's rifle and dust, and once she went over to the little round table and drew her hand across its shining surface, carefully wiping it afterward with her pocket handkerchief, although she knew there was no dust there.

"There's one thing I come over to see about today," Aunt Perkins began, as Abram limped in, his face shining with his long drawn out polishing on the roller towel.

Abram had lost a foot fighting for his country, but the cheery old philosopher made the best of his affliction.

"They're welcome to my old foot if they want it," he would say; "use to give me a lot of misery with coons, anyway; but I'm obliged to 'em for leaving me a foot to work for Marion, my little girl," he would add tenderly.

The two sat down to Marion's dainty supper, with but little appetite, and a sense of coming trouble.

Aunt Perkins was the only person before whom Abram would open his heart. Her thin, acid tones ruffled his placid disposition, and it was thoroughly exasperating to see her sitting on the edge of her chair eating Marion's delicious biscuit as though they were poisoned, and his gentle heart seemed to turn to hot iron within him.

The worst of it was that he knew she would have her own way, with his heart growing heavier every minute, he listened to the plan which the thin voice rapidly unfolded.

Aunt Perkins proposed to take Marion home with her—she lived in the village some five miles away—and have her apprenticed to Miss Abby Perkins, her husband's sister, and the village dressmaker, to learn to sew.

"Pur too long!" asked Abram huskily, trying in vain to banish the vision of his lonely hours without his comely daughter.

"Jedgin' from her lack of ability I'll take her considerable time to master the fundamental principles," replied Aunt Perkins dryly.

It was little use to kick against the pricks and they both knew the matter was as good as settled when Aunt Perkins proposed it, and they listened in silence while she unfolded the details.

"She ain't to be a comin' back and forth, Abram. I want to have a steady one, for it's only right that women should know how to sew. Her mother would a wanted her to learn, I know, but you needn't to think that she won't do her duty like a settled daughter, as she is—". His voice trailed off into a cough, that was half a sob and was hushed in Marion's arms.

"Daddy, dear, don't!" she cried, her tears falling on his head. "I will go and do my best, but I'll count the hours until Thanksgiving, when I'll surely come home, and then—"



A CRITICAL MOMENT.

explained to their dog, as named from his brilliant color, "we ain't want the dining table home and work her pretty fingers to the bone first thing, indeed we don't."

"Then he, accompanied by the faithful Gold Dust, entered the kitchen, and the big woods, bringing back quantities of green stuff, which he hung everywhere, and with his stiff old fingers he laboriously fashioned the sort of tablecloth that is so common and hung it over the mantel shelf.

There was a small turkey hen in the cellar, plump and tender. There were good things of all sorts in the pantry. For it was Thanksgiving, that we'll have a proper feasting for a dinner this Thanksgiving, oh, old fellow."

Gold Dust licked his chops and wagged his tail solemnly, for if there was one dog that loved a good dinner it was the one adjoined to the table.

But now it was all over. The brief, unsatisfactory message from Aunt Perkins had arrived, stating that Marion had concluded to stay over Thanksgiving with them.

"She promised, Gold Dust, she promised," said the old man, "and she ain't never broke her word yet. I think it's the old cat's work, but she ain't never broke her word yet, the martial sister-in-law, 'Ef Marion had made up her own mind that she'd stay, she'd stay with her own hand full of lovin', and she'd have a respectable burial for her old dad, but it don't make no matter, she won't be here now, no how, wherever she falls, and the old gray head again went forward on the table.

At 8 o'clock the ferry was due, for the river was not yet frozen over, and the ferry boat was still running. When the first whistle for the bridge sounded, the old man arose and lit his lantern and went out to open the bridge.

Two weeks before the porter of the red express had been discharged for dishonesty and impertinence as Bridgeton, and the big, burly fellow hung around the town, doing odd jobs and plotting vengeance against the conductor and crew of the red express, and when the old man of bad whisky, he had maturated his plans.

He was hidden in a dark corner of the draw, as it swung open, and Abram stood behind and threw an arrow through the hole, the ferry had steamed through. Then, as he turned to close the draw for the red express, die in fifteen minutes, he was seized from behind and thrown over the side with a half-stunned, the old soldier struggled to arise, but the negro held him fast and bound him tightly with a long rope, gagging him to prevent any cry.

It was five minutes past 8 when Marion softly opened the door of the bridge house, and called, "Daddy, darling, no one here but me, and I'm coming in to see you." He jumped all over her, and with demonstrative enough for four dogs, but Marion wondered at her father's absence.

"He ought to be home now, Bussy," she said, and the dog looked toward the open door. Marion stood on a chair to reach her rifle, which was loaded, and hanging, slung up by her father, over the door, "where come," which she kissed with happy tears in her eyes.

That something was wrong she at once saw when she reached the bridge, for the draw was still open, and she could hear the red express at Bridgeton.

Quickly she got into her father's boat, and rowed across the river with a superior stroke, was quickly at the bottom of the stone pier, on which revolved the draw.

Then she stepped out on the metal rounds of the workman's ladder, hung on the pier, and swiftly climbed up with her rifle slung across her shoulders.

She came up with rat-like stillness and she was leaning out on the opposite side, listening for the train, but not heard her. Softly she swung herself up and covered the man with her rifle; then he, hearing the click, turned with an imprecation and looked into the shining barrel.

The minutes were few now, as the train approached, and soon the whistle would ask if the draw was at right; then if the lights—which the negro had placed—were right, and there was no answer from the bridge, the train would come to destruction.

"Cut that rope!" cried Marion, in ringing tones; then when the old soldier was free, "Give him his cane," and her father sprang to the signal lights and then down.

When the whistle of danger rent the air and the red express stopped just on the edge of the bridge, the men ran forward to the signal lights, where they found the

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# A THANKSGIVING MEMORY OF THE WAR



BY MAJOR ALFRED R. CALHOUN.

"I could stay back, of course, but Osterhaus' division never went into action, since I was on the staff, that I haven't tried to keep up with the head of the procession."

As Allen Gordon said this he grasped my hand, shook it in his boyish, hearty way, and threw himself into the saddle. "Tomorrow," he added, as he waved his right hand toward Lookout Mountain, "if we finish our job in good shape before daylight you fellows will carry Mission ridge. Hope we'll have our usual luck and be ready for roll-call when the light is over. Tomorrow will be Thanksgiving home, but much as we want to see the folks, I reckon we'd rather be here and help."

A shell from the enemy's battery near the rocky crest of Lookout burst over our heads, as we stood there on Moccasin point, and Allen Gordon's horse—the animal had been sent down from northern Kentucky a few weeks before by the young soldier's father—took fright and dashed down the river, in the direction of Osterhaus' division.

Allen Gordon and myself had been schoolmates. We were born on adjoining plantations, and had always been friends, though we were both 16—two years before the war—I imagined I disliked him for a time, because the pretty daughter of a neighbor thought him better looking than myself, and so preferred his attentions.

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