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The Acton Free Press

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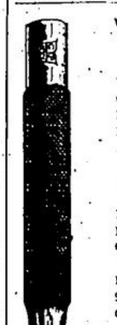

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Fresh Candies of all kinds. In this line too, we can please you.

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—Cisterns Made— —All Repairs Promptly Attended to— Wells Cleaned.

THE CHICK CO HORMOTOR

Is acknowledged the lightest running and best windmill manufactured. I am agent for this district. Call and investigate before you buy.

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Poetry.

THE OLD FOLKS' THANKSGIVING.

The season's over, mother; the harvest all is in;
The corn has all been gathered, the oats are in the bin;
The wind sounds like November. It's gettin' cold and drear,
And everything reminds us that winter's drawin' near.
The days are creepin' by,
It looks this year as if we'd keep the day, just you and I.
Alone, for I've been thinkin' that it's goin' on a year
Since we have heard from Jim—it does seem kind o' strange and queer
That he should be neglectful and should never even write
Just to say that he remembers and has not forgot us quite.

Well, well, I He's busy, I suppose, and prosperin', no doubt,
But still, it cuts me close to have him leave the old folks out.
But, mother, we will not complain, and we will keep the day
And thank the Lord for all we have. He deals in his own way.
I've kept the biggest turkey I know he's plump and fat.
I've fed him corn a month, I guess, and maybe more than that.
I've brought the popcorn in from out the little corner lot—
I wonder now if Jim's forgot that little garden spot.
How proud he used to be to see the popcorn growin' there—
I plant it now jes' thinkin' of the way he used to care.

The berry bushes in it an every path you know,
And the big tree in the corner where the biggest greenings grew—
Yes, yes, the busy life he leads has made him quite forget;
And yet sometimes I feel as if he, is thinkin of us yet,
And that old mortgage, mother; it grieves us every day—
Sometimes I get to thinkin' that 'twill grind our lives away.
And Cropp will want the interest as soon as it is due;
I guess that thin old overcoat 'll have to last me through.
Yet I could stand the mortgage, the drouth, the blight and all—
But Jim forgot us, mother! That's the wormwood and the gall.

Yet we will keep Thanksgivin', Though we can't see the way.
We'll trust to Him who leads us through the darkness and the day
So cook the doughnuts, mother; you mind Jim liked 'em brown—
There's Perkins drivin' in with mail, He's just got back from town.
He's brought a letter, mother; my eyes are getting dim,
But I am almost certain, that letter is from Jim.
You read it mother, read it; you'll read it best, I know,
For my old eyes are poor—and then my hands are tremblin' so.

THE LETTER.

"We're coming home, dear father—I'm bound to find a way.
We're coming, children, wife and all, to keep Thanksgiving day.
Once more with you and mother in the home we love so well.
We want to see you, father, far more than we can tell.
I should have written sooner, but I'd written down no Crupp
To see about that mortgage, and—I bought the old thing up.
I've planned for this a long time, and I waited, for you see
I thought you'd like it better with Jim for mortgagee.

I'll bring the papers with me, and when the day is o'er
And in the wide old kitchen the lamps are lit once more,
And when the children, tired with play but as happy as can be,
To hear the old-time stories, climb up on Grandpa's knee,—
Then, when Grandma stirs the fire and makes it blazing hot
To pop the corn that grew, I know out in the corner lot
With the little garden in it,—'tis a picture still to me—
The bending berry bushes and the wide-armed greening tree—
Then, when the fire is roaring with a crackling merry blaze
We'll drop the papers in it and watch the mortgage "raise."

You needn't thank me, father, 'tis but we'll remember Him
Who, in his ways of goodness saw fit to prosper Jim,
So, mother, cook the doughnuts—I know you'll have them brown;
I think this time you'll have to feed some hungry folks from town.
And kill the turkey, father, for we'll be sure to come
To celebrate Thanksgiving with the dear old folks at home."

SHELDON C. STODDARD.

Select Family Reading.

John's Folks.

A Thanksgiving Story.

BY ANNIE HAMILTON DONNELL.

"AND—and, John's folks, Phineas?"

Amelia Quimby's breath failed at the last syllable. She had gathered all her strength, for that question. She did not dare to look across at Phineas. His reply rumbled deeply in his throat, but she could make out all the words. Fifty years she had lived with Phineas Quimby.

"I said we'd have Jerry's folks here to Thanksgivin' dinner. We ain't had 'em for some time, and this is a kind of a extry year, bein' our anniversary."

"I know, father,—our fiftieth anniversary. That's why I wanted—wanted—John"—

"You better write to Jerry right off. Better do it to-day, and Silas Blunt'll mail it for ye to-night. It's Si's night to lodge."

Nothing more, and when she had said "father," Amelia Quimby had played her last card—her trump. She had not called him "father" since Jerry and John were great brown boys and it had happened. Twenty-seven years ago, was that? Ah, the heartbreak a mother can hide in twenty-seven years. When she has watched them grow out of pinafores into trousers, out of childhood into tall splendid strength, when she has fed them and patched them and loved them—ah, to lose one of them, then! Mothers know.

At first she had hoped for a reconciliation. Year after year, at Thanksgiving time, she had hoped. For, oddly enough, it was on Thanksgiving Day she had married Phineas Quimby, and two years later, on the day after, that they had laid his twin sons in her arms. The day was doubly momentous to her.

But year had added itself to year and the wound was yet unhealed. Phineas Quimby was Phineas Quimby still, and John was still his son. How could they change? How could one ever say the relenting word to the other, that in her heart the wife and mother knew was all that would be needed?

"Only, I'd hoped so much from this Thanksgiving!" Amelia Quimby mourned. "Why, it's going to be our fiftieth anniversary—you'd think a father and son would come back to each other on the golden wedding day! It was too soon to hope for it on the silver one; but now, after all those years, you'd think I had a right to hope for it!"

"Jerry's folks" meant Jerry and his wife and the two grown girls. But John's folks—the mother mulled wistfully as she counted up the little names on her fingers. There were so many; it took all her fingers but two. John had not been married as long as Jerry. His "folks" were little folks.

"And this year there's the twins. They'd be big enough to come. And to think they're both boys, and their names"— Suddenly the wistful voice quivered and John's mother cried over the names of his little twin sons. The pathos of them and of her empty arms that yearned for them broke down her patient endurance.

"I want them—oh, I want them! I want John's little baby boys!" she cried out aloud. But there was no one to hear. Phineas had gone away to his work. She sat down, as she had done so many times, to write to John. That was her only comfort, and it had never been denied her. Two sacred things there were in the life of Phineas Quimby and his wife, Amelia, that had never been violated, even by the quarrel which long ago had separated father and son. The father had never denied the mother the solace of her letters to her boy, and never by word or intimation had Amelia Quimby complained of her husband. To-day, as always, she said only kind words of him. There was no mention of Thanksgiving Day, or of the disappointment that rankled in her breast.

"Kiss both the babies for me—first one and then the other," she wrote. "Tell Jerry I love him, and tell little John. And tell me about their eyes—you've forgot to say their color,—and their hair, and their little flats. Does little Jerry keep his thumb between his first and second fingers when his flat is shut up tight? Little John?—then you've named them wrong. You've mixed those children up! Before it is too late you'd better let them swap names."

The letter ran on lovingly, with a message in it for one child after another. And for John himself there was the old message—"Your mother is loving you John." It was always there.

To Jerry, she wrote briefly. Jerry was a busy man, with a hundred outside interests—outside of mother. His letters to her were wont to be rare and short, but there was always a message to father in them. She missed that in John's long, tender letters.

"I'm half afraid to write," she thought, as she took up her pen; "Jerry's folks have so many rich friends, and so many places to go to—I'm afraid they won't want to come." But she dipped the pen in ink and began.

"My dear boy,"—she always began her letters to both her sons that way—"My dear boy, your father says to put on all you rhonnets, every one of you, and come to the old home to keep Thanksgiving. He's quite set upon it. You know, you haven't forgotten, dear?—this is your golden wedding Thanksgiving, and it's time you came. Think of having a father and mother fifty years married and not coming. Your father says he has waited as long as he can—now you must come home or he will disown you. And he is in earnest, dear. He is hungry for a sight of your face. And your mother—dear boy, come right home quick. I want to kiss you all."

Both letters were sealed, and then mother directed them in a quavery, quaint little hand. But her face was grave enough.

"I'm afraid Jerry's folks won't want to come, and I don't know what Phineas would do if they didn't. He's set his heart. We ought not to have waited till the last minute—I don't see why we did. There won't be time for them to answer—oh, dear, they haven't been home for so long, and I can't help thinking they won't want to come now."

But she went briskly to work with her preparations. She cooked and cooked till the shelves in her neat little pantry groaned under their loads. Jerry's folks could not have cleared them in a week. She made the mince pies the way the boys had liked, long ago. She made a molasses sauce for the pudding because they had been so fond of that kind. Perhaps Jerry had forgotten, but she had not. And she made the two little saucer pies she had never failed to make, long ago. They were pumpkin pies, and she crimped the edges carefully.

"Jerry's girls are grown up and maybe they won't care for them—maybe nobody will," she thought, "but I always made them for the boys, and I said I would to-day. Only I hoped, then, John's folks would come. I hoped till the last minute."

It was the last minute now, and mother had given up. She had set the long table with her whitest linen and her prettiest dishes. Then she had dressed herself in her best dress and sat down to wait. She was quite pale. Mother was a little afraid of Jerry's folks. She wished Phineas were here to help receive them, but he had been called away unexpectedly, and would not be back much before dinner-time. One of the neighbors had needed him.

Somewhere down the road sounded the rumble of stage wheels, and mother got up, nervously, and stood on the floor, listening. It was such a pity Jerry's folks had had to come up in the stage. Hark!—yes, it was turning into the lane. It was almost almost here. She must go to the door and meet them. A strange, girlish shyness swept over the little old figure, and two spots of pink color blossomed in the wrinkled cheeks.

The rumble ceased. A confusion of voices greeted mother's ears—sweet, shrill little voices, with the bubble of laughter running through them. And then above them all, a man's deep voice called: "Mother! Mother, where are you?" What did it all mean—for it was John's voice calling! It was John'd wife getting out of the stage, and John's little children, chattering and babbling! "John's folks!"

Mother found herself at the door in the midst of them all, and her wonder and faint dismay were drowned in the sweetness and joy of their coming and the warm rain of their kisses on her face.

There were so many little voices in her ear, so many little arms around her neck. And John was there—a big bearded John, with little John's love in his voice. There was no room for dismay at all—only joy. It was later when the mystery had cleared itself away and it was almost time for Phineas to come that the dismay came back. Dear land, what would Phineas say!

Mother stole away by herself and looked things in the face. She had not told John that it was all a mistake and that his letter had gone to Jerry and Jerry's invitation come to him. It was all clear enough to mother now, but she had not told John. How could she? In a moment the joy was overwhelmed in the utter dismay. For Phineas would be home soon, very soon.

Something must be done. The little children—if father should see John's children, would they not plead him? No, wait,—the babies—John's tiny twin sons. Mother laughed aloud with delight of the inspiration. She hurried up to the lumber room over the woodshed and pulled down the long old cradle that Phineas had placed out long ago, to keep baby toes from meeting when little Jerry lay at one end and little John at the other. It was heavy, but what did mother care? The strength of ten slender women animated her as she tugged and pulled it down.

Now, the pillows and the little old log-cabin quilt. As if she did not know where those were. She arranged them with eager fingers and pulled the cradle into the kitchen, for father would come in at the kitchen door. Then mother went back to John's folks.

"I want the babies, John, give me them both for a little while," she said. "No, don't you come, dear—do you think I don't know how to take care of little twin sons?"

She carried them both at once, in the old way. A little head lay warm against each arm. There was not a moment to lose if her plan was to succeed, and she went swiftly away with her precious load, out to the kitchen, straight to the little old cradle. There was time to deposit the babies, one at each end, on the soft, time-yellowed little pillows, and to draw the log cabin quilt snugly up under each tiny pink chin. There was a minute or two even to jog the cradle a few times, and then mother heard the creak of Phineas' wagon wheels. She stole softly away and left John's babies to do their work alone. But a prayer was on her lips.

"'A little child shall lead them'—it's in thy Book, Lord. Let John's little children lead father back to John," she prayed silently.

Phineas Quimby was late. The neighbor had kept him longer than he expected, and it fretted him. Neighborly assistance was all right enough but on Thanksgiving day, when your son's folks were coming home, it was vexing to be kept almost till dinner-time.

"Get up, Dan; get into a trot, will ye? Do you want the turkey to be all eat up before we get there? Jerry's folks won't know what to make of these doings; get up, there, pony!"

He rattled home, into the lane, past the house to the barn, his mind intent on his grievances, else he might have seen the peering little faces at the parlor window—mother had forgotten those.

Old Dan put up and given his Thanksgiving dinner of oats and clover-sweet hay, Phineas Quimby strode into the house. A frown was on his face. Being Phineas Quimby this interference with his plans annoyed him greatly. Jerry's folks were not plain farmer folks. They would hardly understand this—what! What was the old cradle on the kitchen floor for! And little Jerry and little John in it?

Phineas Quimby stood still over the old cradle and gazed down into it in helpless bewilderment. Had he lost his wits, or had the years rolled from his bent old shoulders and left him standing there, strong and straight, looking down at the crumpled faces of his little twin sons? Was he young again? Were the old age and the loneliness and the heartbreak in his stubborn old soul only a bad dream? And he was young and had little John again—had both his boys!

The babies stirred from their plaid drowse, and one of them flung out a lusty little fist and opened a pair of wide blue eyes. Little John, that one was! With an inarticulate cry of tenderness and love, father stooped and gathered the warm, sweet morsel into his old arm, and laid his grizzled head against it, in the old, old way. Mother found him so.

"Father, father!" she cried, from the doorway. All her soul was in her eager old voice.

"Hush, don't speak, mother; don't wake me up! I've got little John in my arms."

In the quiet kitchen there was only the sound of baby crooning then. Mother had lifted little Jerry, and was cradling him in her own arms. The noon sunshine lighted all their faces, young and old. It was father who spoke first, after awhile:

"Don't tell me, mother, I know we ain't grown young again and found our baby boys. It was only a minute I believed that,—I come in so sudden and found them in the old cradle with the old quilt over 'em. I've got my wife back now and I know all about it. This is John's baby I've got here, and John's baby over there in your arms. They're John's twin babies—did you think I never hunted up John's letters to you and read 'em through and through? Do you think I don't know the names of all John's little shavers by heart, mother? Here, you may have 'em both. I've got to go—I want John."

"Here I am, father, I'm here!" And it was John standing there in the door, and father striding toward him with his hands out. And it was mother with her arms full of John's babby, who hovered over them both with unspeakable thanksgiving in her heart.

TWO GREAT MUSICIANS.

A charming little incident which connects the two wonderful and greatly beloved musicians, Mendelssohn and Jenny Lind, is told by Elsie Polko in her "Erinnerungen an Mendelssohn."

It was after a grand concert in Leipzig at which both artists had taken the audience by storm, that Mendelssohn made his first appearance as an orator. The directors of the Gewandhaus gave a torchlight serenade in honor of the famous singer, and so many people thronged into the garden of the Brockhaus, where Jennie Lind was at the time, that it was crowded to overflowing.

The ovation was so wildly enthusiastic that it bewildered the "Swedish Nightingale," who turned to Mendelssohn and asked what she should do to satisfy the crowd of people who had thronged to serenade and do her homage.

"You must go down and say a few words to make them happy," prompted Mendelssohn.

"Good," she replied, after a moment's hesitation. "I will go to them, but you must lead me and speak in my place."

Mendelssohn presented his arm, and they went down and out into the crowd of artists and admirers in the garden. The appearance of these two together raised a perfect tempest of applause. When Mendelssohn could at last make himself heard he spoke:

"My dear friends," said he, "you must not think for one moment that I am now Mendelssohn; I am Miss Jennie Lind, and I thank you heartily for this delightful surprise."

"After, however, taking to myself the honor of this splendid personality, I will now return to my former self, the Leipzig music director, and cry with you all, "Long live Jennie Lind."

A thousand-voiced echo followed the cry; even though the singer protested against the manner in which he had performed the task she had entrusted to him, she was moved by the beauty and grace of his little speech, and accompanied by the strains of Mendelssohn's "Wood Song" the pair left the place together.

EARLY THANKSGIVING DAYS.

The first recorded Thanksgiving was the Hebrew Feast of the Tabernacles.

There have been but two English Thanksgivings in this century. One was on Feb. 27, 1872, for the recovery of the Prince of Wales from illness; the other, June 21, 1887, for the Queen's Jubilee.

The New England Thanksgiving dates from 1632, when the Massachusetts Bay colony set apart a day for Thanksgiving.

The first national Thanksgiving proclamations were appointed by Congress during the Revolutionary War.

The first great American Thanksgiving Day was in 1781 for the declaration of peace. There was one more national Thanksgiving in 1789, and no other till 1832, when President Lincoln issued a national proclamation for a day of Thanksgiving. Since that time the president has issued an annual proclamation.—St. Louis Post Dispatch.

A THANKSGIVING OF THE PAST.

An old-time rambling farmhouse set
Far back among the trees,
A broad walk leading up to it,
A door that open with ease.

A snow haired couple just inside
To grasp your willing hand,
A merry welcome from a large
And ever-growing band.

The slow and solemn service, led
By father's trembling voice,
And hymns which stir the soul and make
The weary heart rejoice.

The festal board round which we meet
In joyous happy throng,
The stories of the year just past,
The jest and laugh and song.

The glorious old fireplace, filled
With crackling, glowing flame,—
The roasted apples, cider, nuts—
Do others taste the same?—

The quiet nook upon the stairs,
With only room for two,
The downcast eyes, the sweet, soft voice
That opened heav'n to you.

Did even modern Thanksgiving
Contain such joy and bliss?
Can theater or football game
Bring happiness like this?

After the grip, pneumonia or typhoid fever, take Hood's Sarsaparilla—it restores health and strength.

GLAD THANKSGIVING.

We walk on [illegible] fields of white
And yet ignore [illegible] dainties;
For blessings ever [illegible] in our sight
We rarely offer [illegible].
We sigh for longer [illegible] delight,
To crown our lives with splendor,
And quite ignore our [illegible] stare
Of pleasures sweet and tender.

Our cares are told and [illegible] their way
Upon our thought [illegible],
They hang about us all [illegible],
Our time for pleasure [illegible].
So unobstructive many a [illegible]
We pass by and forget it,
But worry strives to own our [illegible]
And conquers if we let it.

There's not a day in all the year
But holds some hidden pleasure
And looking back joys oft appear
To brim the past's wide measure.
But blessings are like friends I hold
Who love and labor near us.
We ought to raise our notes of praise
While living hearts can hear us.

Full many a blessing wears the guise
Of worry or of trouble.
Farseeing is the soul and wise
Who knows the mask is double,
But he who has the faith and strength
To thank his God for sorrow
Has found a joy without alloy
To gladden every morrow.

We ought to make the moments notes
Of happy, glad Thanksgiving;
The hours and days a silent phrase
Of music we are living.
And so the theme should swell and grow
As weeks and months pass o'er us,
And rise sublime at this good time,
A grand Thanksgiving chorus.

ELLA WHEELER WILCOX.

WHY THEY WERE CHEAP.

President McKinley used to tell with a good deal of amusement a story which related to his early days in the law. On his way to and from the office he was accustomed to pass a butcher's shop, and for a long time was puzzled by a certain notice which he saw there.

In the morning he would read, "Good pork sausages twenty cents." On his return in the evening he would sometimes find those sausages still twenty cents a pound, but more often the notice was changed and the sign read: "Fine pork sausages twelve"—or sometimes ten—"cents."

The matter, he said, used to worry him. Sausages were not of so perishable a nature that they would not keep till the next day, and he could not understand it. So one evening he stopped at the shop, made a casual remark, and then inquired the price of sausages.

"Ten cents, said the shopkeeper.

"But," replied Mr. McKinley, "they were twenty cents this morning."

"So they were, Mr. McKinley," replied the butcher. "So they were. Then I had 'em now I haven't. Sausages at ten cents is simply to get me a reputation for cheapness. See?"

The future President saw, and was in the habit of saying that a great many reputations were made in that way.

AN UP-TO-DATE MODERN BABY.

The Chicago Inter-Ocean prints this true story of the way a baby in Chicago telephoned his New York relatives when he was only 10 minutes old.

The telephone bell rang in the home of a New York man, who, whether at home or abroad, keeps his finger on the pulse of the world. Half awake, and duly conscious that it was long past midnight, he staggered to the phone.

"Hello!" he said.

Over the wire came the plaintiff wail of a new born babe.

"Hurrah!" he cried, "It's Jack's long-distance telephone! The baby has come! Say, mother, mother, get up quick! You are a grandma!"

"How do you know?" cried a woman's voice excitedly.

"Why, the baby himself is telephoning from Chicago!"

"Well, father," said another voice through the telephone, "what do you think of your first grandson? Just ten minutes old and announcing his arrival to his New York grandparents! He is lying on a pillow, and whenever he screams I put the phone to his mouth."

SHARE YOUR JOY WITH OTHERS.

The pilgrim colonists shared the first Thanksgiving feast with Massasoit and his 90 Indians. We should invite to ours not only those near and dear to us, but some of those others who would eat it in solitude if we did not remember them. To many minds this will seem an almost unjustifiable sacrifice of the coziness of the family party. The blessedness of giving something more than of our material substance will compensate for it. Those who have never known what it is to be alone in the world or even temporarily divided from their own kindred cannot conceive what it is to the solitary one to be welcomed into a home. A far more substantial benefit would not give a tithe of the pleasure that is felt when its doors unclose to them.—Ex.

MALT BREAKFAST FOOD

SUSTAINS HARD MANUAL LABOR.

It Contains as An Abundant Constituent, an Element of Food Absent in Meats.

Malt-Breakfast-Food furnishes the energy necessary to vigorous digestion and the vital functions in a more uniform and more liberal manner than any other breakfast grain food on the market, and is specially suited to sustain hard manual labor.

Malt Breakfast Food contains as an abundant constituent an element of food almost absent in meats; it is carbohydrates. This constituent, together with the proper proportion of mineral elements, gives Malt Breakfast Food first rank as a builder of flesh, bone and muscle. Every workingman called upon to perform daily manual labor should have Malt Breakfast Food regularly for breakfast. It is the most economical and nourishing of foods. A 1t grocers.