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WHITE'S THANKSGIVING. "Thanksgiving!-for what?" -and he muttered a curse-"For the plainest 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

"Nothing, dear John" and he thought again; The a glanced more kindly down on Jane.

"I'd for cotten you; And I I've my health. and the baby, too." And the baby crowedtwas 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 not grumble again, I should surely be thankful for baby and Jane."

AN IDEAL THANKSGIVING.

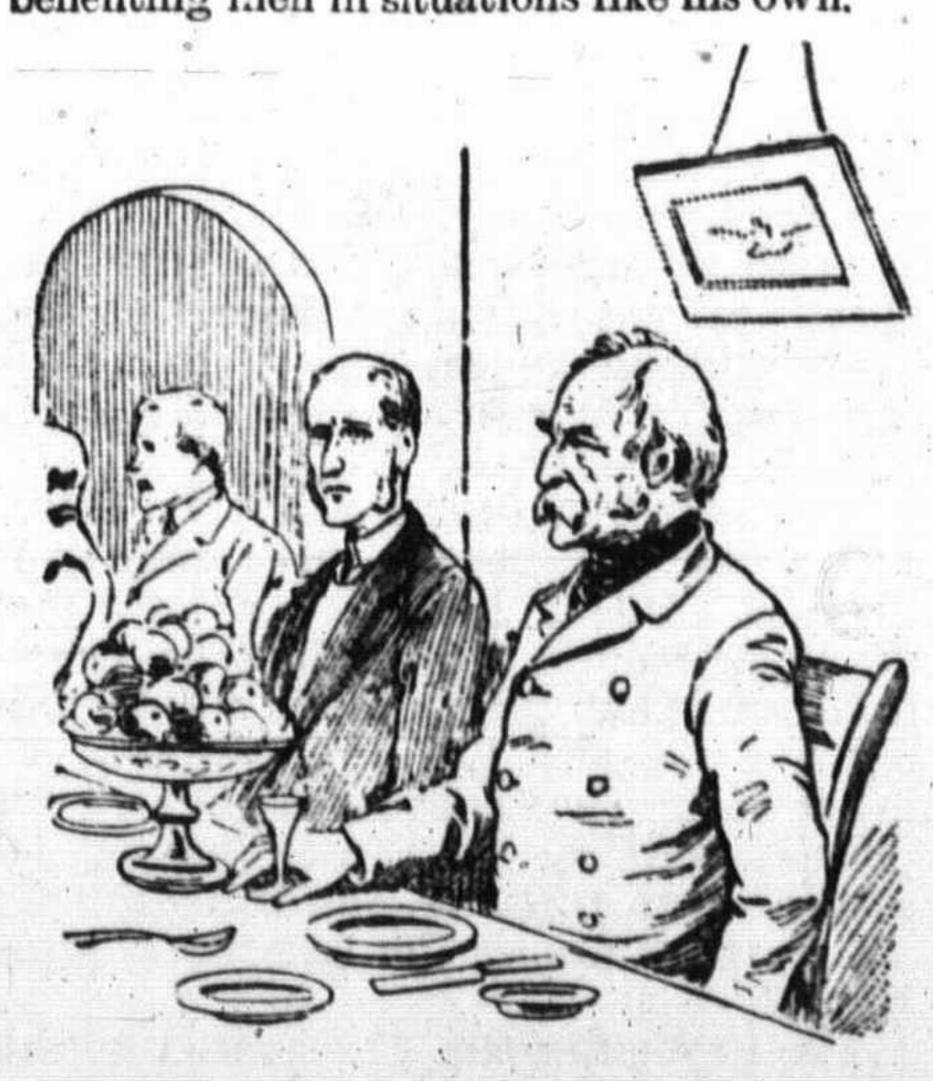
As there are abuses the law cannot reach. so there are people no holiday includes. There is a time of the year when vagrantscriminals, in a word, the destitute as a body -are feasted with good things and made to share the comfort of the rich. But as comprehensive as this charity may be, as minute in 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 the 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.

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 impartial 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 t. . 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 that strange feast of moral equality. Every degree of shabbiness, of dilapidation, in face or garment, was present; for no rule was made as to dress, and those

whom shame or idleness 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. On the host's, left, the other place of honor

-and what a significant distinction to occupy those prominent seats—sat the jauntiest individual of the whole party. At first sight it would have been difficult to say why he had his share at this banquet of the ruined, disappointed, bereaved and afflicted. It was not his look nor his dress that told the secret, but his words. He was better dressed than any of his fellows, and a self satisfied expression was upon his face. But you soon saw a blank in the midst of that self satisfaction—the lack of something, which mysterious something would have just put him beyond the pale of our friend's circle. He talked louder than the rest and held out the comfort of irresponsibility in the present and annihilation hereafter-no God to restrain us now, and none to judge us later; but the lack of that "something" made his face grow ugly and hard as he expounded his theories, and his own appearance was but a poor argument in favor of his theories,

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 cant about equality in spite of loss of money was promptly resented by those who had been in the attitude of solicitors, This feast was no good place at which to air fine 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 \$5 a week in a slop shop selling rotten clothing to greenhorns.

Another said: "I started in life with the notion of being a great author. I am over 40 now, and glad to get \$6 a week in a book store. I have covered reams of paper and made about \$1,000 altogether in little sums, but no one knows my name. I carried 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."

"They say some people have forced themselves on the public by the manner of their death," said a wild, melancholy looking man by the author's side, "and I think it would be worth while to try such a scene to make my Romeo and Juliet sell."

"You talk of death like a child," said a croaking voice across the table. "Here am I, an old woman, 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 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 called it revolutionary-I 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-I and 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 he sur-



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 fancy I 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 manopposite, "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 even 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 expectant side. But I know of another. It is the ludicrous side. My husband died in debt. There was only the weary old way to support myself. I opened a boarding house, wish ladies could go lower down to make money. I had not the strength of mind to do differently from others 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 be ashamed of. I had a hard time with inefficient servants, for I did not thrive and could not pay high enough prices to secure good ones. But I sent for two of my nieces, as poor as myself, and together we did the work and shared the profits. Let me say to you that if you are poor and have tolerable health, do your own work. By that means we got on and had order and cleanliness, and though life is not exactly delightful to us, it is tolerable.

"As to the ludicrous side of poverty. We see enough of it. So many little shifts and pretenses, though they are pathetic enough sometimes. I began by asking rather high prices, and if they were refused, let the rooms stay empty. But my purse began 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 year by standing too much on ruy 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 quarreling who was the worst off 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 cared 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.

"Set 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 sacrilego 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 rakish bonnet, brazen 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 he had met by accident. Others he hunted up, going into dismal places to find them. 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 far sunk in the mud, animal comfort must precede a moral impression. When