

The Inglenook.

A Thanksgiving Surprise.

BY JOHN A. CAMPBELL.

"I say, it's too bad?" exclaimed Bronson, tapping his geography with his pencil.

"We wanted him so much," said Elsie, sighing. "And we had his name all picked out for him."

"He's already named," corrected twelve-year-old Frances, the oldest of the three children. "Bruno,—he has such a nice one, too. But father knows best, of course."

"I don't see why we can't have him," grumbled Bronson, after a short silence.

No one answered. Frances and Elsie began to lay their school-books away, for the study hour was past. The pretty young governess, Miss Morse, in her black gown and rather worn cloak, was preparing to depart; Bronson followed his sister's example, and then rose with the girls to say "Good-by" to the teacher.

"What is the matter?" the latter asked, pausing for a moment in front of the cosy fire.

"Oh," replied Frances, "a man in the city has a big St. Bernard dog that he wants to sell, and we coaxed father to buy him for us. He said he would think about it, but before he went to his office this morning, he told us he had decided not to get Bruno, and Bronson's mad over it!"

"Well, your father will do what is right, I'm sure," said Miss Morse, glancing kindly at each of her young charges in turn.

"If he doesn't buy the dog, we'll save up our money and buy him ourselves!" cried Bronson, rebelliously. "We can soon save up fifteen dollars; can't we, Elsie?"

Which was true; for the Flemmings were wealthy people, and the children had plenty of pocket money. A look of sadness passed over Miss Morse's face,—in her home money was much more scarce.

"Good night," she said gently. "Be a good boy, Bronson, and obey your father."

"Good night, Miss Adelaide," they all cried, and then the teacher passed out into the ga hazy twilight of the wild November day.

"Now, Bronson," observed Aunt Margaret, who had entered the library in time to hear her nephew's cross remark, "you know you wouldn't buy that dog without your father's consent, even if you had saved twice the cost!"

And Bronson looked ashamed.

"If you save your money, you can put it to a better use than that."

All three children looked interested.

"Your teacher, Miss Morse, is very poor," said Aunt Madge, softly. "Her mother and father died two years ago; and last April the ship that her brother helped to sail was wrecked, and he drowned, for he never came home; and the little group have a hard time of it. Miss Adelaide, who teaches you, is the oldest, and she is only nineteen. Just think of it! And poor lame Madeline makes and sells paper flowers and lamp shades; and Perry runs errands out of school and looks after that little witch of a Dotty. And they just manage to get along, as it is. Now, Thanksgiving Day is only two weeks

off; take your money, then, and give them a Thanksgiving surprise."

"How?" asked Elsie, eagerly.

Aunt Madge whispered something to each child that made six small ears tingle with anticipation.

"You cannot save fifteen dollars by that time," she snatched; "but a third of that will do very nicely."

"We'll do it! We'll do it!" cried Elsie and Frances, and Bronson forgot to sulk any more.

And that was how it all came about.

II.

It was a moonless night, two weeks later. The wind swept noisily round the Morse house, banging shutters and rattling window-panes; and there was a prospect of ice for the morrow—Thanksgiving day! In the sitting room, which was homelike and neat, even though very small, were gathered the four members who now composed the little family. Crippled Madeline lay upon the old sofa, with some half completed paper roses near at hand; three year-old Dotty was darting busily to and fro, her yellow curls gleaming in the lamp-light, and her brown eyes shining with mischief, as usual; Perry stood by the window, drumming upon the glass; and Adelaide, who had just come home from her teaching labors, was resting in a big chair near the fire and sadly comparing the lot of the Flemmings with the Morse's fallen fortunes.

"Thanksgiving to morrow!" mused Madeline.

"We haven't very much to be thankful for," said Perry, rather bitterly.

"Oh Perry, you mustn't say that!" cried Madeline, her fragile fingers toying with the paper posies at her side. "Indeed, we have a great deal to be thankful for! Let's see. First, we have a home."

"That's because we've always owned the house," said Perry, unmoved.

"And we have clothes and food," went on Madeline. "We'll not have a grand dinner to-morrow, to be sure, but we shall have something to eat. We ought to be thankful for these things. And we all have our health, and we don't have to run up big doctor's bills—a great mercy!"

As Madeline laughed, Adelaide glanced very tenderly at her; for she was aware that not one day of her crippled sister's life,—fifteen long years,—had been entirely without pain, and that sometimes the cruel aches were nearly unbearable. Brave Madeline! But the latter returned the look with a bright smile as she whispered: "I know what you are thinking, Addie; but I am honest,—I am, at least, given strength to endure." And then she once more turned her attention to her brother.

"Addie has found pupils; you have your errands, and I my paper things. And we are all together!" But here even Madeline's courage could not prevent a tremble in her tone as she thought of her lost brother—big, bluff, hearty Tom, who had met his fate under far off skies, with none of his loved ones near. Last Thanksgiving he had been with them.

"Yes," answered Perry, hastily, in a subdued voice; "I will take it all back! I'm

the man of the family now, and I'm a regular muf to talk so! But I saw Bronson Flemming this noon, and he was talking about the good time he's going to have. He said it would start already tonight too! I'd like to be rich!"

"It would be very nice," assented Adelaide, truthfully. She was thinking of her young scholars,—how unusually well behaved and civil they had been that afternoon,—how their eyes had sparkled whenever they gazed at her,—and how they had whispered among themselves about some—no doubt—momentous secret!

Suddenly little Dotty demanded when supper would be ready. Declaring that she had entirely forgotten it, Addie sprang up, and bustled about for some moments with such good results that they were soon enjoying a substantial meal. When it was ended, and the things had been put away, the young people gathered again in the sitting room, there to rest and enjoy their chat until Dotty's bedtime. That hour, seven o'clock, shortly arrived; but as the young lady strongly objected to retiring so soon, Adelaide decided to let her stay with them for an extra hour, in honor of the morrow. You may be sure that Dotty was enraptured, and that she made the best of those flying moments!

"I want some turkey to-morrow," announced she, presently, to Madeline.

"Oh, darling, no! We—"

"Turkey!" was the peremptory response, Dotty having heard the word mentioned just before.

There was no further argument. There came a loud rap upon the front door that made even Perry jump, and caused Dotty to beat a hasty retreat behind Addie's chair. Perry hurried to open the door, and on doing so, gave such a surprised "Oh!" that all three of his sisters came hurrying into the hall, Madeline on her well worn crutches. The supposed visitor was nowhere to be seen; but upon the porch, right in front of the astonished Morses, lay a huge basket filled with various bundles, and surmounted by an awe-inspiring object that made Dotty shake in her little shoes,—a great turkey, devoid of all feathers, with two legs, charmingly suggestive, reaching pathetically upward in the chilly evening air.

For three minutes there was an excited debate, with a wicked draught blowing in unnoticed all the while; then the articles were carefully borne into the kitchen by willing arms, Dotty never once losing sight of that terrific body with the extended legs.

"We'll have turkey for dinner now!" cried Madeline to Dotty, now lying with her upon the sofa.

"Wonder who brought it?" asked Perry.

"Oh, some kind friend, who knew how badly off we were," said Adelaide, thankfully. "I'm sorry that he can't see how happy we are over his gift."

But although they knew it not, their gladness had been seen. The end curtain had not been drawn, in order that a stream of light might flow out across the dark road; and through this window, as soon as the Morse door closed, peeped six eager eyes, their owners securely hidden behind some distant fir! And the three children who soon afterward bounded merrily homeward over the hard ground, were surely no other than Frances and Elsie and Bronson! They had thoroughly enjoyed the little surprise.

Meanwhile in the Morse home there was new amazement. When eight o'clock struck, and Adelaide picked up Dotty to bear her away to bed, that sleepy little lady pointed a short finger at the window with the un-