

# Turkey 'n Fixin's

By Annie Hamilton Donnell.

The Lodge it was to be then. It was a relief to this fair young Decider of Things that that was settled. She went to find Ned.

"We're going out to the Lodge for Thanksgiving, Neddle. My mind is made up."

"Then we're going out to the Lodge for Thanksgiving," nodded the husband of the Decider. He was rather relieved to have it settled, himself. Nell might easily have hatched up a good deal crazier scheme—she and the girls.

"Girls know yet?" he inquired, for Nell might be sole hatcher.

"They will before the clock strikes ten tonight," laughed she. "You and I will tell 'em, Neddle. We'll make the rounds."

The Lodge was, true to name, a lodging-place for the gay little coterie of the Big Four. The Big Four was Ned Winters' pet name for the four young couples who had jointly built and now jointly owned it. Only a matter of twenty odd miles away, it could be reached whenever the fancy of the Big Four demanded a woody retreat and all the fresh trout the Big Four husbands could inveigle out of the cool depths of the best trout stream (yes, sir!) anywhere in reach or out. But so far, in its five years of existence, the Lodge had never been put to use as a winter resort.

At dinner Nell waxed eloquent over what she considered her inspiration.

"Huge fire every minute, in the stone fireplace—snapping, roaring! Hear it roar?"

"I do—I hear it!" Small Peter's eyes glistened in their clear blue depths. Peter and Cicily had been allowed as a remarkable concession to come down to dessert because it was ice-cream. "Don't you hear the fire a-roarin' like ever-thing, Cecie? This way—r-r-r-r-r-r!"

"That is enough! You children run up to bed now. You weren't going to talk, you know, if I let Nurse bring you down—"

"That wasn't talkin'. That was roar—" His eager little voice pelted on, getting fainter and fainter as Nurse got him farther and farther away.

"Aren't they little nuisances? Well, maybe not nuisances—Of course the children won't go out with us. Not if we want a good time! Ned, we will have a good time, you see! A regular old-fashioned dinner."

"What's that? Say it again! You aren't referring to sage stuffing and the heart and giblets chopped up in the gravy and cranberry sauce and mashed turnip and creamed onions and pumpkin pie and—'fixin's'?"

"Yes, all those grandmotherly things and 'fixin's'—any other fixin's you can think of. To match the big open fire and out-in-the-countriness of it. We'll send the cook out two or three days ahead—" but no further did the Decider of Things progress.

"If you dare to send our cook! She'd put mayonnaise in the stuffing and some thing crazy and Frenchy in every other last thing—my aunt! Shades of my aunt! That was where I had real Thanksgiving dinner last, at beloved old Aunt Nancy's. My mouth has watered ten years, Nell—Nell, don't you love me?"

She laughed across the beautiful Frenchy table and nodded her head.

"Enough to give you an Aunt Nancy dinner this time. Watch me!"

"You mean—cook it yourself?" His voice, if she had noted, was a wistful voice. Of course she didn't mean exactly that, but to see Nell in a blue-checked apron basting a turkey—no, no, it wasn't done.

It wasn't.

"Ned Winters!" which sufficiently answered the wistful voice.

The plan of the Decider of Things went through with a snap, as of course. Did her plans ever fail? The "girls" who were to be parts and dainty parcels of it all, cheered her on. It was a perfectly lovely plan—good for Nell! The husbands of the girls added their plaudits and offered their services, their cars' services, their servants—plunged eager hands into full pockets to "dig up" their shares of expenses. For four Thanksgivings these friends of the Big Four had had Thanksgiving together, with more—or less—success in the way of a grand good time. But last year—well, last year—

Ellen Winters expressed the Big Four's mind as to last year.

"I must say I don't want another restaurant Thanksgiving! Ugh! The cold things we ate that ought to have been hot, and the side dishes. Think of a Thanksgiving dinner in side dishes! The one year before last, at the Club House, was twenty degrees hotter, anyway! Neddle, wait till you get a taste of this year's!"

"How can I wait?" sighed Neddle. But it was not hotness his mouth watered for, not even sage turkey and cranberry sauce, a la Aunt Nancy of beloved memory. It was the blue gingham apron—on Nell. And all

that would have meant. What was the use, anyway! He sighed and let the vision slip. He ordered the two big turkeys and the "fixin's" that were down on Nell's list. He saw to it that plenty of generous logs for the great fireplace were hauled out to the Lodge; that he lights were in order, the place swept, flowers engaged, his full part of the arrangements attended to. But there was something he could not understand—why in thunder wasn't he tickled at the pleasant prospect? Nothing as pleasant in Thanksgiving had come his way since he watched Aunt Nancy baste her turkey and smelled the old kitchen full of Thanksgiving smells.

"Is it going to be at noon?" he suddenly inquired over the top of his newspaper. It was three days now to "it." He had a queer sensation of holding his breath for Nell's reply. Of course, though, it would not be at noon, not at noon like Aunt Nancy's. "—er—two o'clock." Along about two o'clock? That's a good Thanksgiving dinner time—"His voice coaxed like a boy's."

"It is going to be at half-past six o'clock—naturally. You don't feel as if you were going to break down, or anything, do you, Neddle? In your mind?" She was regarding him with amused eyes. But they were loving eyes, too, although the love in them had the effect of being a little out of practice. As if so many other immensely important things occupied the spacious blue fields of vision that Love had been crowded into the background. Gowns to be looked at with sharp appraisal, dust to be ferreted out in the wake of careless maids, little Peter's socks to match exactly the gold-brown of his soft hair—for Peter's mother looked to the perfect outer perfection of his small round body, although the little perfect soul of Peter was almost a stranger to her.

"I've got everything going at last. For the dinner, I mean. I had no idea it would be such an undertaking to get up a dinner twenty miles from a lemon! I've hired a woman who lives right on the edge of the woods to do all the cooking—an Aunt Nancy woman, Neddle."

"Blue-checked apron?"

"Blue-checked or pink or some-checked. She had the liveliest bunch of kiddies. They're like a flight of steps, from the lowest up! I mean to tell her to keep them out of the kitchen."

"Oh, no!—er—I mean—" slipped past Neddle's still boyish lips, but she did not wait for what he meant. It had not occurred to the mother of little Peter and Cecie as it had to their father what joys they themselves were missing in being kept out of the kitchen. So many other things occurred to Ellen Winters.

"I wish we had somewhere to send the babies for Thanksgiving—a grandmother or Aunt Nancy," Ned Winters mused aloud wistfully. "It is tough on 'em to be shunted off up into the nursery alone. They should have a Thanksgiving to remember when—"

"I don't believe you have heard a word I've been saying, Ned Winters! But I shan't begin over—you'll have to find out by the context. Canned plum pudding will have to do because she hasn't time to make everything. Four kinds of pie, I told her, but I forgot pumpkin and that will make five. I told her to strain the cranberries and make jelly. She was going to roast her turkeys before hand and get her vegetables all started. I shall motor out Saturday and see she doesn't, though—I ought to have insisted. They must taste right, even if she does have to work harder," and on and on ran the soft voice that could with so small exertion, put on hardness, when necessary.

On Saturday, Nell motored out to see how the cook was faring, but too late to keep the turkeys out of the oven. The warm, savory smell of them met her on the threshold. As also did the "flight of steps from the lowest up." She was too late to keep the "steps" out of the kitchen, too! One "step" sprang shyly at her.

"She's just basted 'em an' all of us smelled three smells. She let us, Essie began 'cause Essie's tallest. But—but—they sort of didn't smell good's own smells. Once we had own smells—my! Didn't we have, Essie? It was 'fore the war, when Fardie had both his legs in Canada."

"In—Canada?" Ellen Winters, mother of a man child, shivered.

"Yes, before he left one in France. You have to have both your legs in the same country to earn Thanksgivin' dinners, Fardie says, an' he says that's a joke, so we all laugh. But Mardie doesn't. Mardie goes right up to Fardie an' kisses the France leg—" "Genie Ross!" The tall Essie found her voice in rebuke.

"She does too! An' then Fardie doesn't laugh either—" "Genie Ro—" urged Essie all in

vain. The soft little torrent swept on straight from the heart.

"We are goin' to laugh all tomorrow to keep Fardie an' Mardie from thinkin' we mind—'cause—'cause the smells aren't own smells! But—enable Genie's lips to reach Ellen Winters' ear. "But we do care ev'ry time the oven opens—sh! It's very difficult to laugh when those puffed-up splendid smells come out. I can, though—watch me laugh; Mardie's goin' to open it again!" And Ellen watched that valiant little roar of mirth for Mardie's sake and Fardie's whom Ellen could discern in another room.

"One, two, three! Now it's my turn to smell, Genie!"

Ellen Winters, muffled in her rugs and furs, rode home smoothly and swiftly. She stopped at the flat of one of the "girls," Esther Sherman. No mob of little children met her there. Esther was alone and eager to hear the details of the Lodge dinner. Nell was such a dear dear to do all the work, besides having all the inspirations. What was she going to do with Peter and Cicily? The other girls, Meg and Carolyn, were going to send theirs—David and Meggie two—off to grandmothers.

"No grandmothers here," sighed Nell. "Nurse will have to play by one. We're away so much, anyway, Cecie won't know the difference, and if Peter does, he won't let on. He keeps things to himself, nurse says. I'm not awfully well acquainted with Peter myself."

"They couldn't—you don't think they could go too, Nell?" This Esther without a Peter or a Cecie was a bit troubled for those of her friend.

"Certainly not," Nell returned firmly. "Not if we want a good quiet time. Much you know about children?"

"I'm acquainted with Peter, anyway!" retorted Esther. "He tells me things. I run in to the nursery often. And Cecie kisses me."

"That's more than she does to me," laughed Nell. And suddenly she heard her own laugh as if someone else had laughed it in her ears. It sounded forced. Why should Cecie be kissing people who were not even mothers? A sudden question leaped up in her mind as if it had been some one else's mind and demanded an answer.

"Are you—a mother?" it asked distinctly, sternly.

Ned was not downstairs when she reached home and she wanted him downstairs to talk to, to get the taste of that question out of her soul.

"Where have you been?" demanded she, as he at length appeared. "What's the use of having a husband if you can't have him when you want him?"

"What's the use of having babies if you can't see 'em when they are asleep?" countered he. He had been taken a little unawares.

"Neddle! You mean to tell me—" "Didn't mean to," he muttered.

"—that you—"

"That I—I," he confessed, a flushed, found-out Ned. "Well! A bit explosively. "It isn't a crime to look at your own babies in their sleep, is it? 'Tis, I'm guilty all right. Say, Nell—" sweeping about toward her suddenly. "Did you know there are dimples in their knees? There are. I—I undressed the little buggers one night. Cost me two dollars—bribed the nurse to beat it. That was one. Cecie's are the deepest—Cecie is a little witch! What do you suppose she said? That I could drop a kiss in the deepest dimple—that made two—for a dollar. Most I ever got out of two dollars!" He made a little chuckling noise in his throat but, curiously, it was not really a laugh. Nell, leaning forward on her chair, was not laughing either.

"Go on—and what did you do?" "I dropped it in."

It was a beautiful room they were sitting in—too beautiful. Too perfect. It needed this—little things, on the floor, over a chair, over a little chair. It needed beautiful sounds, like soft father-mother laughter over a Peter's funny performance that day or how a Cecie had got round the cook for tiny doll-cookies for her party. It was a beautiful, cleared-up room and very silent. A pity, since this was a rare at-home-together evening for Ned and Ellen Winters—when before had they been alone and together here, at nine o'clock? Ned there in his stuffed lounging chair—Nell here on the couch that was so becoming in its pastel shades to the faint pinkness of her cheeks.

"Hark! That's the fire siren again—how I hate it! Why must they have such a shriek, moany thing that sends the creeps up and down your spine? It makes me think of lost souls wailing in the dark. I suppose somebody's house is afire."

"Poor somebody! It must be the most awful death to be burned—" "Ned!—for pity's sake! Is that the cheerfulest thing you can think of to say after being still most an hour? Why, Nurse! What is the matter? The children—" Nell was on her feet, in alarm. The usually calm, phleg-

matic face of the children's nurse was startled and pale.

"They're gone—I can't find them! It's the siren; it's been ringing the longest while. Their clothes are gone! Peter is perfectly possessed about fires. He always wants to follow the siren. He must have waked up and heard the alarm and seen—have you looked out? The sky is ablaze."

Together they tore the heavy draperies aside—dropped them—sprang for the long motor coats that hung ready.

"Stay here, Nurse! Have hot bottles and things ready. They'll be chilled. Hurry, Nell! Did you count the times it rang?"

"We don't need any directions. The crowd will tell—it's a big fire. I've got Peter's overcoat—where's Cecie's?"

"I've got it—hurry!"

A tenement, huge and tall, was flaming to the sky. There was din of engines and men's voices and a woman shrieking. The crowd was held back but with difficulty. Din and confusion reigned. Ellen Winters, moaning under her breath, clutched at Ned's arm. Suddenly the woman's shrieking ceased.

"She's gone in! She got away from 'em! She's gone after her baby!" A voice close behind Ellen—a mother's voice—was lifted high in terrible excitement. "Well, I'd a-gone—they couldn't a-held me back neither."

Another excited, lifted voice. A mother voice—Ellen seemed to know. "But it's too late, Ida! They aren't letting the firemen in now—don't you see the walls are just ready to fall in! Ida, the baby! Oh, the poor mother! Poor, poor things!"

An awful death Ned had said so short a time ago, back there in the beautiful safe room. The voices, other added voices, went on saying terrible things.

"They say the baby's burned to ashes by this time!"

"So's she by this time! Oh-oooo—" a shudder ran through the crowd. For the walls were caving. A crash and spouting sparks and flames—they had fallen in.

"Ned! Ned!" shrieked Ellen Winters. She could bear no more. She too was a mother. He caught her to him and hid her face in his arms.

"Don't look, dear. Don't think! It's all right—we're all right. We'll find the babies and go home—" but it was not of her own babies Ellen Winters was thinking at that one shuddering moment. It was of that other mother's baby—ashes to ashes, mother and baby. Oh, she hoped there'd been time to get to it—to snatch it into her arms—

"Yes, I am a mother!" she whispered, at last answering the stern question of her soul. Then dire panic seized Ellen Winters.

"Ned, we can't find them! They're lost!" She hurled herself upon strange little ones in the surging crowd only to be freshly disappointed, freshly frantic. One small creature, almost a Cicily, she clasped to her and refused to give up until Ned gently released the child who wanted its own mother.

"Come dear," he soothed, "I am going to take you home—I can hunt better all by myself. Besides, I've set the police hunting. You must obey, Nell. I'm Decider of This!" He tried to coax a smile but in vain. They went homeward in spite of Ellen's objections, he, talking steadily to keep her mind from dwelling on terrible things, she, dwelling shudderingly.

Peter met them at the front door. A sobered but unrepented Peter.

"Here's us!" he greeted gravely.

"Was you lookin' for us? I brang Cecie home—of course I brang her. I made her wear my coat. An' I said 'run!' an' we runned—ranned, I mean. And Nurse toasted us; we're all toasted now. Father, there was a woman all burned up—up! An' her little boy was all burned up. I—I cried, but Cecie didn't. Cecie said if she'd been the mother she'd been glad she'd burned all up, too." Oh, the eternal motherhood of Cecie's, little and big!

"Father, are you glad 'twasn't us burned—Mother, would you have run in and bur—"

"Oh, darlings, don't—don't—don't!" And Ellen Winters on her knees before her unharmed darlings felt a great light sweep in on the tide of her child's words, the glaring and awful light of truth. She saw herself in the light once more and heard the question.

Half an hour later the children were still downstairs. Mother'd sent Nurse away! Mother'd held 'em both in her arms to once! An' Father'd held 'em. An'—my! Only girls went to sleep those times. Peter stayed broad awake an' had splendid times!

"Peter, how would you like an old-fashioned Thanksgiving right here in our dining-room—and—and kitchen, Peter? And you and Cecie smelling the good smells every time the oven-door opened? No cooks 'round, no Nurses, and Mother in a blue-checked apron—"

"What's old-fashioned like, Mother? Is a blue-checked apron nice?"

"Nicest apron in all the world, son!" sang Father. "It is the Badge of Home and Joy."

"Father can wear one, too!" laughed Nell unevenly. "Neddle? Just us four together? Us four, alive and safe!"

"Us four! Us four an' Thanksgivin'!" sang Cecie to the world at large. It was a kind of a song. She liked it. So did Father.

"And Thanksgiving," repeated Father. "Thanksgiving, Nell!"

The Decider of Things had it all decided. She slipped away to the telephone and explained to the girls. Back she flew, joyous with her news.

"I got them all three. They are all rather relieved, Ned, and I told them about that flight of little steps, on the edge of the woods, and they all want the little steps to have the dinner! The girls are dears! I told them how that boy Genie said it wasn't the same to smell other folks' smells—now he can smell 'own' smells! I'll send word out to them the first thing Monday. Neddle, Peter, Mother's going to baste the turkey!"

Early on Thanksgiving day Esther Sherman appeared but could not be induced to sit down.

"I've only got a minute, while she's asleep. I came over to tell you—we've got a baby, Nell! Hush, let me talk! Richard chose the very homeliest one, I do believe, but I can make her pretty! I can—love her pretty. I've begun new. I told Richard we'd borrow one for today—when you phoned you were going to have a real home Thanksgiving. We had to have a real home one, too. I sent him to the Baby Home for one. Nell, do you think we'd give that baby up after—after it snuggled its little soft head in our necks! And went to sleep—here?" She laid her hand upon her breast. "And—would kissed its little knees—let me go! Don't keep me or I'll cry I am so happy—"

"Neddle," whispered Nell later, when "own smells" like holy incense of Home and Joy floated through the big house, "did you think a Thanksgiving could be so very thankful?"

And Neddle wiped her mother-tender eyes on the corner of the big blue apron.

## FARM LIFE FOR YOUNG FOLKS

Farming is more than a business. It is also a life, a life which many people who have had opportunity to compare it with urban life greatly prefer. Many of the people with this viewpoint have been able to satisfy it only after they have passed middle life or, perhaps, have not sooner appreciated the advantages of farm life. Some have made their comparisons while young and decided in favor of the farm, regardless of the handicaps involved.

If the experience of the older people, who go back to the farm life from choice after middle life, is worth anything, the young people who make farm life their first choice are on the right track. From the standpoint of a satisfactory and wholesome life, there can be no doubt about it when the possibilities of present farm living conditions are considered. And, from a business standpoint, they are making no mistake in the long run. While farming may not be on a par with some other present business opportunities so far as immediate returns are concerned, it is a stable business in which average successes are probably more numerous than are average successes in most other lines. It is not alone in being subject to periods of depression, and it holds no hazard of unemployment with which industrial and office workers must ever contend.

All of these factors should be well considered by young people who stand at the fork of the road, where they must choose between farm life in God's open country and the possibility of an unsatisfactory existence in the crowded city.

"Give thanks, oh, Heart of mine, with very mirth for need To Him who gave us knowledge of the cunning of the seed, For beauty of the growing and the joy of blossoming And granting of the harvest from the promise of the Spring."

—Theodosia Garrison.

Did you ever try to drive nails into seasoned timber, such as white oak, post oak or hickory? Hard job, wasn't it? I have learned that axle grease or lubricating oil applied freely to the point of the nail will make it drive much easier and the grease also prevents the nail rusting in the timber. Use any grade of oil or grease, just so it is greasy, and be careful! To get none on the nail-head, for your hammer will slip off and bend the nail.