

"Help yourselves, dearies," answered the old woman, composedly, never turning to see how often or to what extent her injunction was obeyed. She was seated in the doorway again, busily sewing on a calico apron. She still sat there when, near the dinner hour, Mrs. Allyn passed through the kitchen and a little surprised at its coolness and quietness at that hour, asked wonderingly.

"What has happened, Thanksgiving? Haven't decided upon a fast, have you?" "No, honey; thought I'd give ye what I happened to have when de time come," said Thanksgiving Ann, coolly, holding up her apron to measure its length.

It seemed a little odd, Mrs. Allyn thought. But then old Thanksgiving needed no oversight; she liked her little surprises now and then, too; and doubtless she had something all planned and in course of preparation; so the lady went her way, more than half expecting an especially tempting board because of her cook's apparent carelessness that day. But when the dinner-hour arrived, both master and mistress scanned the table with wide-open eyes of astonishment, so plain and meagre were its contents, so unlike any dinner that had ever before been served in that house.

"What has happened, my dear?" asked the gentleman, turning to his wife.

"Dat's all de col' meat dar was—sorry I didn't have no more," Thanksgiving said, half apologetically.

"But I sent home a choice roast this morning," began Mr. Allyn, wonderingly; "and you have no potatoes, neither—nor vegetables of any kind!"

"Laws, yes! But den a body has to think about it a good while aforehand to get a roast cooked, an' just the same with taters; an' I thought I'd give ye what I happened to have when de time come, and I didn't happen to have much of nuffin'. 'Clare! I forgot de bread! and, trotting away, she returned with a plate of cold corn cake.

"No bread!" murmured Mrs. Allyn.

"No, honey; used it all up for toast dis mornin'. Might have made biscuit or muffins, if I had planned for 'em long enough; but dat kind o' makes a body feel 's if dey had to do it, an' I wanted ter get dinner for yer all o' my warm feelin's, when de time come. Cur'us how things make a body think o' Bible verses," said Thanksgiving, musingly. "Dar's dat one 'bout 'who giveth us all things richly to enjoy,' an' what shall I render to de Lord for all his benefits to'ard me.' Dar! I didn't put on dem peaches."

"Has Thanksgiving suddenly lost her senses?"

"I suspect there is a 'method in her madness," replied his wife, a faint smile crossing her lips.

The old woman returned with the basket, sadly despoiled of its morning contents; but she composedly bestowed the remainder in a fruit dish. "Dat's all! De chilern eat a good many, an' dey was used up one way an' 'nother. I'se sorry dar aint no more; but I hopes you'll 'joy what dar is, an' I wishes 'twas five times as much."

A look of sudden intelligence flashed into Mr. Allyn's eyes; he bit his lips for a moment and then asked quietly: "Couldn't you have laid aside some for us, Thanksgiving?"

"Wall, dar now! s'pose I could," said the old servant, relenting at the tone; "b'lieve I will, next time. Allers kind o' thought de folks things belonged to had de bes' right to 'em; but I'd heard givin' whatever happened to be on hand was so much freer an' lovin'er a way o' servin' dem ye love best, dat I thought I'd try it. But it does 'pear's if dey fared slim, an' I spects I'll go back to de ole plan o' systematics."

"Do you see, George?" questioned the wife, when they were again alone. "Yes, I see. An object lesson with a vengeance!" "And if she should be right, and our careless giving seem anything like this?" pursued Mrs. Allyn, with a troubled face.

"She *is* right, Fanny; it doesn't take much argument to show that. We call Christ our King and Master; believe that every blessing we have in this world is His direct gift; and all our hopes for the world to come are in Him. We profess to be not our own but His; to be journeying towards his royal city; and that His service is our chief business here; and yet, strangely enough, we provide lavishly for our own appareling, entertainment and ease, and apportion nothing for the interest of His kingdom, or the forwarding of His work, but leave that to any chance pence that may happen to be left after all our wants and fancies are gratified. It doesn't seem very like faithful or loving service," Mr. Allyn answered gravely. "I have been thinking in that direction occasionally, lately, but have been too indolent, careless or selfish to come to a decision and make any change."

There was a long talk over that dinner-table—indeed, it did not furnish opportunity for much other employment; and that afternoon the husband and wife together examined into their expenses and income, and set apart a certain portion as sacred unto their