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How it Came to Pass

By Eben E. Rexford

IT WAS the day before Thanksgiving. In the kitchen of the Hunter farm house, great preparations were being made for to-morrow's feast. Rows of pumpkin pies were ranged along the pantry shelves, and pies of cranberry were there also. And the fragrance of dough-nuts was in the air, mingled with odors of fruit cake.

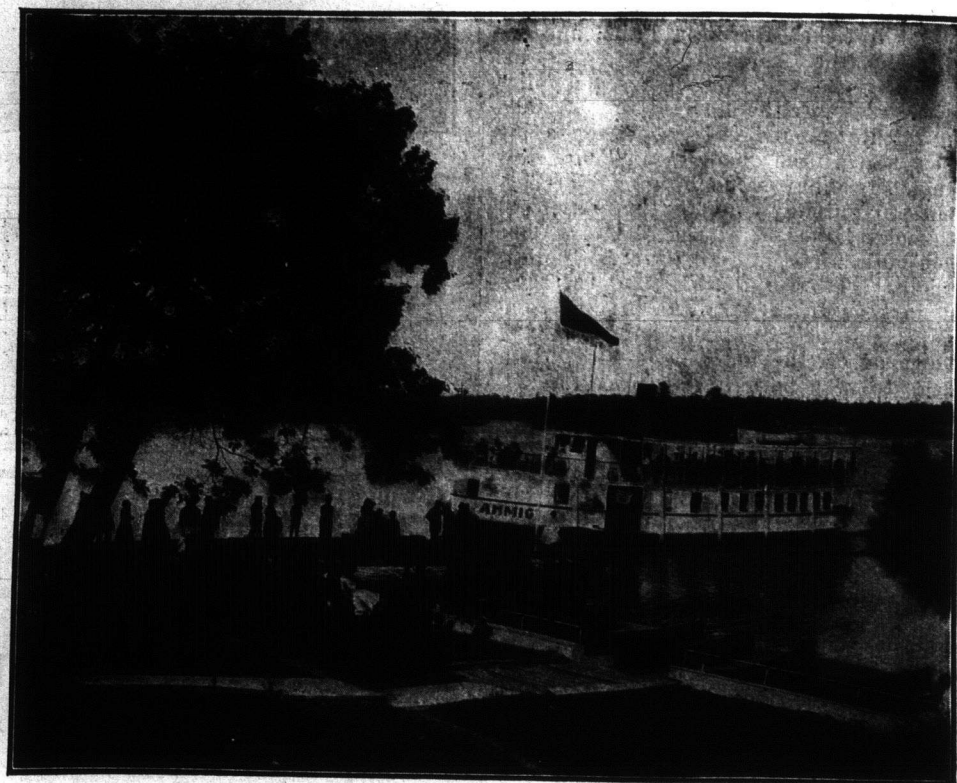
That made John Henry's mouth water, every time he got a sniff of it. He had taken a stand by the kitchen table when the concocting of cakes and pies began, and that position he had steadfastly maintained all day, in spite of many peremptory orders and plaintive appeals from his mother to take himself off.

"I wish Thanksgivin'd come once a week," he said, after having cleaned off the last bit of frosting from the knife he had begged the privilege of licking. "If there's anything I like, it's cake, an' pie, an' turkey, an' —"

that I thought you got handsomer every year. But just look at me! Sometimes I think I look old enough to be John's mother, but he just laughs and says I look all right to him, so I don't mind it if my hair does begin to show gray streaks in it. I hope you won't think, from what John Henry said, that John and I ever thought of such a thing as calling you an old maid, when we've spoken of you. I don't see where the boy got the idea."

"Don't worry about it," responded Margaret. "As you say, it saves me a great many worries and troubles, no doubt. The one unpleasant feature of it is the possibility that some day I may come to realize that I am in the way, and that John and you, and Hugh and his wife, may feel that it would be a good deal better for all concerned if I had a home of my own."

"Now, Margaret Hunter, don't you ever



Sailing through the beauty spots of Muskoka Lakes

"And 'anything that's eatable," said his mother. "I never saw such a boy for eating. You never know when you get enough."

"That's cause vittels keep tastin' good," explained John Henry. "I wish my stummick was bigger, so I could hold more. It's 'cause I can't get enough, to once, that I wish Thanksgivin'd come evry week."

"Well, I don't wish so," said his mother, as she dropped into the rocking-chair. "What I'm 'most thankful for Thanksgivin' is, that it comes only once a year."

"I've often thought that maybe you'd be happier in a home of your own, Margaret, than with relatives, but I don't know's you would, come to think it over. You don't have the responsibility a married woman has. You're independent, and that's a good deal to be thankful for, specially at Thanksgivin' time."

"What's independent, ma?" asked John Henry. "Is it bein' an old maid?"

"John Henry Hunter, start straight for the wood shed, and don't you dare show your face in this kitchen till I tell you you can come in," said his mother, in a tone that convinced him she meant business.

"I hope you won't mind him, Margaret," said Mrs. Hunter, when the door closed upon John Henry. "You know how it is with children, they're always saying the very things they have no business to. They're enough to try a saint's patience, specially John Henry."

"Oh, I don't mind being called an old maid," laughed Margaret Hunter, "because I am one, you know. I was thirty-four last month."

"Thirty-four! I declare, Margaret, it don't seem possible! You don't look a day older, seems to me, than you did ten years ago. I was telling John, yesterday, not an hour before you came,

let me hear you talk like that again!" cried her sister-in-law, indignantly. "You know you'll always be welcome to a home with us, or with Hugh's folks. We're always glad to have you come, and you'd be welcome to stay forever, if you wanted to. I've heard John say, time and again, that as long as he had a roof over his head you were welcome to the shelter of it, and I know Hugh and his wife feel just as we do about it."

"I didn't say what I did because I thought you ever entertained such an idea," responded Margaret, "but I think it's natural to feel as if it would be better, all around, if we had homes of our own. You'd feel that way, if you were in my place, I'm quite sure."

"Yes, I presume I would," admitted Mrs. Hunter. "But maybe you'll have a home of your own, some day, after all. There's no telling what may happen, you know. I—I suppose Mr. Blair is coming over with Hugh's folks to-morrow, isn't he?"

"Oh, yes, I suppose so," answered Margaret, reddening a little. "It wouldn't seem like Thanksgiving without him. Let's see—how many years is it since he began to attend our Thanksgiving dinners?"

"Six, I guess," answered Mrs. Hunter. "John said at the time that he reckoned there'd be another place to go to Thanksgivings, before long, but I've about made up my mind that—Mr. Blair hasn't made up his mind about it," and Mrs. Hunter laughed till her fat sides shook. "You don't mind my laughing about it, I hope? I can't help it, when I get to thinking about it. The idea of a man's being in love, year after year, and not saying so! I wonder you don't get out of patience with him, Margaret."

"I'm not supposed to know what his intentions are," responded Margaret, "and