

The Family Circle.

THANKSGIVING ANN.

IN the kitchen doorway, underneath its arch of swaying vines and dependent purple clusters, the old woman sat, tired and warm, vigorously fanning her face with her calico apron. It was a dark face, surmounted by a turban, and wearing, just now, a look of troubled thoughtfulness not quite in accordance with her name—a name oddly acquired from an old church anthem that she used to sing somewhat on this wise—

"Thanksgivin' an'—"

"Johnny, don't play dar in de water, chile"

"Thanksgivin' an'—"

"Run away now, Susie, dearie!"

"Thanksgivin' an'—"

"Take care o' dat bressed baby! Here's some ginger-bread for him."

"Thanksgivin' an' de voice o' melody."

You laugh: But looking after all these little things was her work, her duty; and she spent the intervals in singing praise. Do many of us make better use of our spare moments?

So the children called her "Thanksgiving Ann"; her other name was forgotten, and Thanksgiving Ann she would be now to the end of her days. How many these days had already been, no one knew. She had lived with Mr. and Mrs. Allyn for years, whether as mistress or servant of the establishment they could scarcely tell; they only knew she was invaluable. She had taken a grandmotherly guardianship of all the children, and had a voice in most matters that concerned the father and mother, while in the culinary department she reigned supreme.

The usual early breakfast was over. She had bestowed unusual care upon it, because an agent of the Bible Society, visiting some of the country places for contributions, was to partake of it with them. But while she was busy with a fine batch of delicate waffles, the gentleman had pleaded an appointment, and, taking hasty leave of his host and hostess, had departed unobserved from the kitchen window; and Thanksgiving Ann's "Bible money" was still in her pocket.

"Didn't ask me, nor give me no chance. Just 's if, 'cause a pusson's old an' colored, dey didn't owe de Lord nuffin; an' wouldn't pay it if dey did," she murmured, when the state of the case became known.

However, Silas, the long-limbed, untiring, and shrewd, who regarded the old woman with a curious mixture of patronage and veneration, had volunteered to run after the vanished guest, and "catch him if he was anywhere this side of Chai'ny." And even while Thanksgiving sat in the doorway, the messenger returned, apparently unwearied in his chase.

"Wa-ll, I came up with him—told ye I would give him the three dollars. He seemed kind of flustered to have missed such a nugget; and he said 'twas a generous jonation—equal to your master's; which proves," said Silas, shutting one eye, and appearing to survey the subject meditatively with the other, "that some folks can do as much good just off-hand as some other folks can with no end of pinchin' an' screwin' before-hand."

"Think it proves dat folks dat don't have no great amount can do as much in a good cause by thin. in' 'bout it a little aforehand, as other folks will dat has more, and puts der hands in der pockets when de time comes. I believe in systematics 'bout such things, I does;" and with an energetic bob of her head, by way of emphasis, old Thanksgiving walked into the house.

"Thanksgivin' an' de voice o' melody,

she began in her high, weird voice; but the words died on her lips—her heart was too burdened to sing.

"Only three dollars out'n all her 'bundance!" she murmured to herself. "Well, mebbey I oughtn't to jedge; but then I don't jedge, I knows. Course I knows when I'se here all de time, and sees de good clo'es, an' de carr'age, an' de musics, an' de fine times—folks, an' hosses, an' t'ibles all provided for. an' de Lord of glory lef' to take what happen when de time comes, an' no prepration at all! Sure 'nough, He don't need der help. All de world is His; an' he send clo'es to His naked, an' bread to His hungry, an' Bibles to His heathen, if dey don't give a cent; but den dey're pinchin' an' starvin' der own dear souls. Well—taint my soul! but I loves 'em an' dey're missin' a great blessin'."

These friends, so beloved, paid little attention to the old woman's opinion upon what she called "systematics in givin'."

"The idea of counting up one's income, and setting aside a fixed por.ion of it for charity, and then calling only what remained one's own, makes our religion seem arbitrary and exacting; it is like a tax," said Mrs. Allyn, one day; "and I think such a view of it, ought by all means to be avoided. I like to give freely and gladly of what I have when the time comes."

"If yer ha'int giv'n so freely an' gladly for Miss Susie's new necklaces an' yer own new dresses dat ye don't have much when de time comes," interposed Thanksgiving Ann.

"I think one gives with a more free and generous feeling in that way," pursued the lady, without seeming to heed the interruption. "Money laid aside beforehand has only a sense of duty and not much feeling about it; besides, what difference can it make, so long as one does give what they can when there is a call?"

"I woul'dn't like to be provided for dat way," declared Thanksgiving. "Was, once, when I was a slave, fore I was de Lord's free woman. Ye see, I was a young no-count gal, not worf thinkin' much 'bout; so my ole massa he lef' me to take what happened when de time come. An' sometimes I happened to get a dress, an' sometimes a pair o' ole shoes; an' sometimes I didn't happen to get nuffin, an' den I went bar-foot; an' dat's jist de way—"

"Why, Thanksgiving, that's not reverent!" exclaimed Mrs. Allyn, shocked at the comparison.

"Jist what I thought, didn't treat me wid no kind o' reverence," answered Thanksgiving.

"Well, to go back to the original subject, all these things are mere matters of opinion. One person likes one way best; and another person another," said the lady smilingly, as she walked from the room.

"Pears to me it's a matter of which way de Massa likes best," observed the old woman, settling her turban. But there was no one to hear her comment, and affairs followed their accustomed routine. Meanwhile, out of her own little