

out I forgot me, he'll never forgive me," and out she went into the fast-falling snow, and the pan of corn under her arm, and her shawl streaming in the wind.

Little Hester climbed upon a chair by the kitchen window to watch her sister's return.

"There she comes!" she announced presently, "and she's bringin' back the corn."

"Something must have happened," said Mrs. Holway, hurrying to open the door.

Something had happened. Linda came in with wild, anxious eyes, and very pale cheeks. "The turkeys are gone!" she cried. "Yes the whole lot 'em!" Somehow or other they got the door open, and they're gone. Oh, what will Nat say? and the tears rose to her eyes, and stood there thickly.

"You couldn't have fastened the door after you fed them last night," said Mrs. Holway.

"I suppose not," answered Linda, dejectedly. "And yet I meant to be so careful! O, mother, what shall I do?"

"Go look for them," said her mother. "Perhaps you can track them. They've taken to the woods, of course."

"If they've met any wild turkeys you'll never get 'em back," said Maggie, who was a year younger than Linda. "Don't you remember what Mr. Barlow told us about losing his turkeys? The wild turkeys keep 'em, he said."

"I must get them back," said Linda. "Nat would never get over it if he should come home and find that coop empty."

Maggie offered to help her in the hunt, and they started out at once. But the fresh snow had covered up the turkeys' tracks, and after spending two hours roaming about in the woods, the girls returned, wet, tired, and utterly discouraged.

A more wretched girl than Linda, it would have been hard to find. The thought of her brother's return on the morrow, made her faint with grief. She did not dare hope for a moment that the turkeys would come back, but nevertheless went to the coop half a dozen times before night-fall to see if they had come. But though she found some rabbit tracks, there were no signs that the turkeys had been there.

She slept very little that night, and when she came down stairs Tuesday morning she was pale and haggard.

"You mustn't stop eating just because those turkeys are gone, Linda," said her mother, when at breakfast the girl sat with her plate empty before her. "Take some hot cakes, now; they're real good this mornin'."

Linda shook her head dismally, and two tears rose to her eyes and plashed down on the empty plate.

"I can't eat," she said. "I'm almost sick. Oh, if I'd only never taken the responsibility of those turkeys! What will Nat say to me?"

"He's sure to feel awful bad," said Maggie. "I wouldn't be in your shoes for any thing."

"Come, now, don't talk like that," said Mrs. Holway. "Linda feels bad 'nough as 'tis."

That was a long day to Linda the longest, most unhappy day she could remember. She went out to the turkey coop at noon, and scattered some corn there, but with no hope that anything but the rabbits would eat it.

Nat was expected home before dark, but at six o'clock he had not come, and supper was eaten without him.

"He'll be along soon, I guess," said Mrs. Holway. "I'll keep something hot for him."

Linda sat by the window looking out on the snow-covered ground, her face pressed against the cool pane, and let her mother and Maggie clear the table and put away the dishes. She didn't feel able to help.

All at once she started up, and took the lantern from the shelf over the sink.

"I'm going out to that coop just once more," she said. "It's no use, I know—of course, the turkeys won't be there. But it will be some satisfaction, and I can't sit here. My head aches as if it would split."

She lighted the lantern, but the wind was blowing a gale, and as the glass of the lantern was cracked the light flickered a moment and went out, almost before she had closed the kitchen door behind her. But she did not go back for the stars were shining, and she could see her way very clearly.

She tried to think as she went along in what words she would tell Nathan of his loss, but finding none, could only hope she would have time to get back to the house and go to bed before he came. Then her mother could tell him, and she need not meet him until the next morning.

As she neared the turkey coop she heard a rustling sound inside, and stopped short, her heart beating almost to suffocation. Then a distinct *gobble* sounded on the air.

For a moment her joy was so great that she could not move. Then with one bound she was at the door of the coop, and had shut it at once and fastened it, in less time than it takes to tell it.

"They've come back!" she gasped, as she dashed into the kitchen. And then she threw herself down on the old patchwork-covered lounge, and cried as she had seldom cried before.

"You've got something to be thankful for now, Linda," said little Hester.

"Thankful! that's no word for it," cried Linda, when she could trust herself to speak.

Nathan had not come at eight o'clock, and the whole family retired, leaving the kitchen door unlocked that he might be able to get in if he came late. But Linda was hardly in bed when she heard him creeping up the stairs, and the next moment he rapped softly at her door.

"Are you awake, Linda?" he asked in a low whisper. "How are my turkeys? All right?"

And how glad Linda was to be able to say "Yes" and then sink to sleep with an easy conscience.

She was awakened at daylight next morning, however, by the sound of her brother's voice in the kitchen below, raised in tones of the most intense excitement.

Those turkeys! There was something wrong with them, after all. Cautious and trembling with vague apprehensions of evil, Linda sprang up and hurried on her clothes. She was so weak when she went down stairs, that she had to cling to the balusters for support, and she looked pale and frightened as she pushed open the kitchen door.

She expected to find Nathan looking the picture of woe, and when he turned toward her a face fairly radiant with joy, she looked at him wonderingly.

"There's nothing wrong, I hope, Nat," she said, in a voice that faltered a little.

"Wrong!" shouted Nat, in a state of wild exultation. "No, everything's all right. How glad I was to shoot a wild turkey up on the mountain! And then to come home and find my own sister had caged over twenty! Packed in like sardines they are! How did you manage it, Linda? Mother declares you never told her a word about it."

"I—I don't understand," stammered Linda.

"You don't mean to say you don't know that there are more than twenty wild turkeys in the coop!" cried Nat, amazed.

And then gradually poor, bewildered Linda was made to understand that when the nineteen hungry turkeys had returned the previous evening they had brought with them about the same number of wild geese as hungry as themselves, and that she had closed the door on the whole tribe, just in the nick of time.

They were all very now, large and fat and round, and an hour later they were being in a heap in Mr. Barlow's wagon on their way to the market town.

"I'll leave you in charge of my turkeys

again next year, Lindy," said Nat, as he stood by his sister's side, and watched the wagon roll away.

"Never," said Linda, emphatically. "I've had enough of taking care of turkeys to last me a life time."

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