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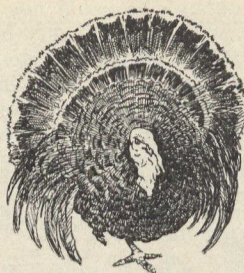
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# ABDUL

A Tale of a Christmas Turkey

By E. A. DENT



THE trouble really began with our wedding trip. Not that we realised the beginning of any trouble at the time, for we had a perfect honeymoon. We did not go to New York or even down the St. Lawrence, as all orthodox bridal couples are supposed to do. We are most unfashionable folk, and as we were both tired out with a hard winter's work followed by a hot summer, we decided to go to a quiet little farmhouse on the border of a secluded Muskoka lake where Marion had spent her holidays a summer or two before and where we found the restful holiday we both needed. I say both, for we were both workers. Marion had been a teacher in one of the city public schools, and I am book-keeper in one of the big wholesale houses.

It was September, and we had ten days of bliss at the lonely little farm, walking, boating, canoeing, just as we had planned to do, and breathing in health and happiness with every breath of the delicious pine-laden air. Mrs. Martin, our kind hostess, raised poultry, and the poultry-yard was a constant source of interest to Marion. She loved to feed the chickens and ducks and to make pets of the little ones—barring the turkeys, which she said were both ugly and cross.

One day very near the close of our honeymoon, my wife came to me, her face aglow with enthusiasm.

"John, dear, do you remember the dinner we've planned to have next Christmas?"

"Oh, yes; the two maters, I remember."

"Well, I've been thinking—don't you think it would be lovely to get one of the young turkeys here and take it home and feed it, and so raise our own Christmas turkey?"

"Jehosaphat, Marion!" I laughed. "I thought you were afraid of the turkeys! Anyway, that yard is rather small to take any off to make a turkey yard, don't you think so?—for we simply must have a little garden."

"Yes, I know, John—but I've thought it all out, and Mrs. Martin says we may have a young turkey and welcome—she says they're not hard to raise after they've reached a certain age—and that if they don't get wet they're all right."

"Well, I suppose we could have rubbers made for it, and rig up a little umbrella for it to use in wet weather—"

"Don't be ridiculous, John. We'd keep him in his coop in wet weather. I feel sure I could manage it quite nicely. He'd get tame, of course, and we could make quite a pet of him. He would eat all the scraps, so that our Christmas turkey would practically cost us nothing, and of course that's a great consideration. Then think of the triumph it would be to raise our own Christmas turkey right in the city!"

Well, of course, I told her to go ahead and do as she liked—it was her establishment from the front door clear out to the lane gate, and when we left for home, in addition to our ordinary baggage, there was a largish basket of which I was directed to take charge, containing a particularly ugly young turkey which was declared by Mrs. Martin to be the flower of her flock.

One of my first tasks on arriving at the little home which I had in readi-

ness for my bride was to get some lumber and slats and make a pen for the turkey. I never was a handy man with a hammer and saw, but the boy next door, who was intensely interested in the proceeding, gave me the benefit of his advice, and as it seemed to be rather good in most cases I followed it, and so the pen was made before nightfall and his turkship duly installed.

"Now, my dear," I said, when I entered the kitchen, where Marion was cooking some bacon and eggs for supper, "Now, my dear, come out and see your turkey."

She came out. She had a big blue apron on, and the sight of her radiant face and housewifely costume was a most satisfying compensation for a few hammered thumbs and chipped fingers which I had won in the course of the erection of the turkey's domain. She declared that the pen was perfectly lovely—I'm not so sure that she didn't say "sweet"—and she talked baby-talk to the turkey. She liked the way I had partitioned off a corner of the shed and made a little door opening on the penned up corner of the yard, and the box of straw and a roost which I had placed inside the turkey-house, as I called the shed apartment (not knowing whether he would want to sleep in straw or on a roost I gave him the benefit of the doubt and let him take his choice).

That night we consulted the great encyclopaedia that Uncle Mortimer had given us for a wedding present, and read all we could find on the subject of turkeys.

"What are you going to call him?" I asked.

"I haven't been able to think of a name that I quite like. I would like something out of the ordinary, a Turkish name, I think, although the encyclopaedia does not say that the bird came originally from Turkey, as I thought it had."

The only Turkish name I could think of was "Abdul." I read a sonnet once written by an English poet and addressed to the late Sultan of Turkey; "Abdul the Damned," I remember was the pet name by which he playfully accosted His Majesty. I therefore suggested "Abdul" which Marion liked at once. When I told her about the sonnet, though, she cooled a little, and said she disliked profanity. It took me some time to make it clear to her that there was no intention of being profane, either by the poet or by myself, and I explained under what circumstances the name had been employed. She came to see after a bit that it was all right, and then she objected that it was hardly fair to saddle a poor young, innocent turkey with the name of such a Sultan. However, we couldn't think of any other name she liked as well, so we finally agreed that "Abdul" it should be, in spite of the bad odour attached to the name, and I may add that my wife has since expressed the opinion that we would not have had so much trouble with the turkey if we had started right and given him a better name. (Just between ourselves I don't mind confessing that there have been times when I have given him in private the full title hurled by the poet at the Sultan.)

It would take the pen of a poet to describe the happiness that reigned within the walls of that tiny little home, but without those walls, in the

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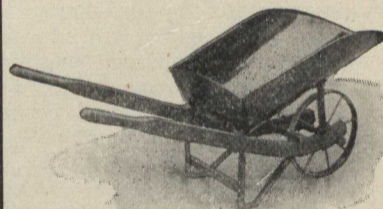
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