

Their Happiest Thanksgiving

By Anna Nixon.

"**H**ERE'S the basket, Daniel. You'd better put it on the seat beside you, so the eggs won't break, Sary Criswell tells me they're twenty-eight cents a dozen and still going up; on 'count of Thanksgiving being so near, I s'pose; it takes a sight of eggs for punkin pies and doughnuts. I guess you'll not have any trouble getting red of these punkins; they're beauties, every one."

"I guess not," agreed Daniel Ware, pausing as he carefully placed the basket of eggs on the seat, to look with pride at the big pumpkins, piled high in the spring wagon box. "Them punkins'll go like hot cakes."

"I'll keep your dinner warm, but don't be later than you can help. I wish you could have started earlier, but I s'pose it's better that you finished huskin' the corn, for the weather may turn cold

any time. Now don't forget the raisins," she admonished, as her husband climbed stiffly to the high seat, gathered up the lines, and chattered to Billy, the old family horse. "Five pounds'll be about right, I calculate to make a big jar of mincemeat, Monday."

It was ten o'clock when Martha turned to enter the house, and most of her Saturday's work still awaited her, for she had churned that morning, sorted the eggs for market, and held Billy while Daniel loaded the pumpkins. But the seventy years that had turned her soft hair white and somewhat dimmed both sight and memory had left her feet nimble and hands capable; and the little

woman worked so busily and cheerfully that by one o'clock, when she heard the wagon coming up the lane, the porch was scrubbed and the house tidy; a row of cup cakes and three pumpkin pies breathed spicy fragrance from the pantry window, and dinner was ready to serve.

"Dinner's ready, soon as you are, Daniel," she called, hurrying to the door as his step sounded on the porch. As she took the basket from his hands, she lifted a corner of the paper that covered it, there were the clean, white eggs and the roll of butter she had packed that morning, instead of the groceries she had sent for.

"Why, Daniel," she questioned, "what-ever made you bring these things back? I can't understand it. You—you don't mean to say that Jim wouldn't take them? He's always so glad to get a churning of our butter, and he says we bring the biggest, cleanest eggs to market of any one in Jefferson Township." Then, glancing past her husband, she noted that the pumpkins were still in the wagon, and inquired anxiously, "Did anything happen to the harness, that you couldn't get to Mapleton?"

"No, Marthy, I got to Mapleton all right; but I don't know what's got into the town. Every house and store's shet up as tight as wax. Even the post-office was closed. I can't account for it, nohow."

"I never heard tell of the like, Daniel; and on a Saturday, too. There must be something unusual going on to make Jim Thornberry close his store on a week day. Why didn't you ask some one?"

"There wasn't anybody to ask. I didn't see a soul but old Gran'ma Smith, and when I went past the window she threw up her hands and put her apron over her face and acted plumb queer. Poor old woman; she must be getting childish. I stopped at nearly every house on Main street, thinking maybe I could sell some pumpkins or a few dozen eggs; but every house was shet up tight as if 'twas Sunday morning, and I didn't meet anybody on the road."

"I can't understand it," mused Martha in a worried tone. "The only thing the Chronicle mentioned that was going on today was a ball game between the Mapleton boys and the Battlesburg team, but that doesn't explain why all the women have gone off and left their Saturday's work; and I don't s'pose Jim Thornberry'd close his store for the biggest ball game that ever was."

"I reckon not," agreed her husband, emphatically. "There ain't nothin' Jim would shet up shop for, 'cepting a funeral maybe. Say, Marthy," he continued, his face clearing, "do you s'pose that's it? Maybe somebody's dead and we haven't heard about it."

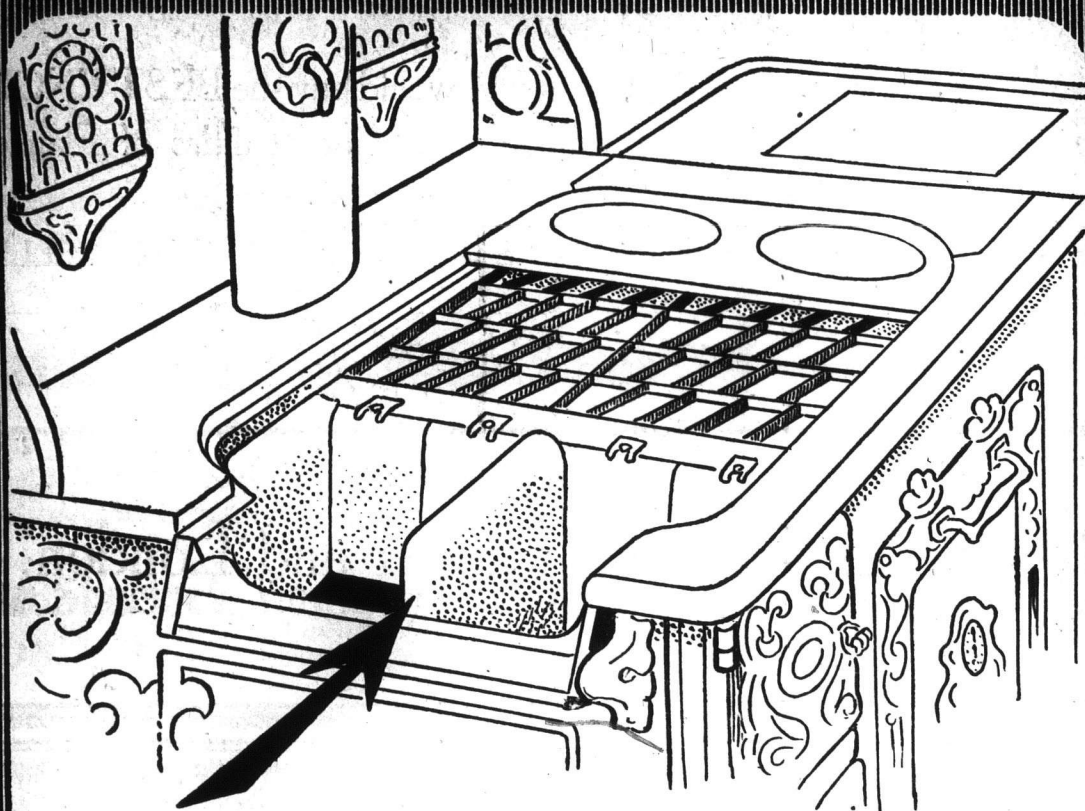
"I'll tell you, Daniel! It must be that Laura Green's dead—she that used to live on the Ridge, and married a man out West. Sary Criswell was telling me that Laura's been poorly for nearly a year and she'd made her husband promise to bring her home to be buried. That's why you didn't see any rigs in town. Her folks always 'tended church at Mt. Zion, on the Ridge, and the funeral'd be held there, of course."

"I reckon you're right, Marthy. You're the greatest hand to figure things out," and he looked down at the little woman with the admiration that her quick wit and woman's instinct always won from him.

"Now go along, father, and unhitch Billy, and I'll dish up the dinner. I'd run the wagon on the barn floor, if I was you and let it set till Monday. I can get along without the raisins and spieces for another day, I guess."

"I b'lieve I'll haul in a few shocks of fodder this afternoon, sence you're not particular 'bout having them groceries before Monday. From the looks of the sky, I reckon we're due to have a spell of weather shortly, and it goes hard with me to haul fodder in rough weather. We're getting old, Marthy," and his wife noticed as his tall form passed through the door, that the rugged looking man was stooping more and more, and that his feet dragged a little as he walked. It was true; they were getting old. She had been thinking only the day before how her memory was failing.

"But we're pretty spry yet," she insisted to herself, and flitted about the kitchen more briskly than ever, washing the dishes and sweeping the floor free



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