

THE BOYS AND GIRLS

LINDA'S RESPONSIBILITY

A Thanksgiving Story Founded on Fact

By F. B. Hallowell

"Now, Linda, remember, I trust those turkeys entirely to you, and you're responsible for 'em," said Nathan Holway, as he stood at the barn-yard gate one morning, his gun at his shoulder, and a rough canvas game-bag hanging at his side.

Linda was milking the old red cow, and she paused as Nathan spoke, and glanced up at him, a weary look on her youthful face.

"Goodness, Nat, how you do go on about those turkeys! You really scare me, givin' me so many directions about 'em. You'll be gone only three days. What can happen to 'em in that time?"

"Well, I don't know," and Nathan looked reflectively at his smiling sister. "You might get careless 'bout fastenin' 'em up, or forget to feed 'em."

"I hope I'm old enough to know how to take care of a few turkeys," and Linda tossed her head. "You needn't fret. Everyone of the nineteen will be waiting for you when you get back Tuesday night. Mr. Barlow is comin' for 'em Wednesday, isn't he?"

"Yes, he said he'd be along by seven o'clock so as to get 'em to market early. I'll have to get up by daybreak to kill 'em. I do *hope* you'll take good care of 'em, Linda."

"Oh, go, go, long, Nathan; you're real foolish about those turkeys. One would think they were your own flesh 'n' blood."

"You won't say I'm foolish when you see me gettin' ten cents a pound for 'em, feathers 'n' all," rejoined Nathan. "It's because so much depends upon those turkeys that I tell you so often not to forget to take care of 'em while I'm gone."

"Well, I am going to take care of 'em," said Linda. "You needn't worry one bit. And now don't say 'turkey' to me again, or I'll throw something at you," and she bent her head against the cow's side and resumed her milking with redoubled energy.

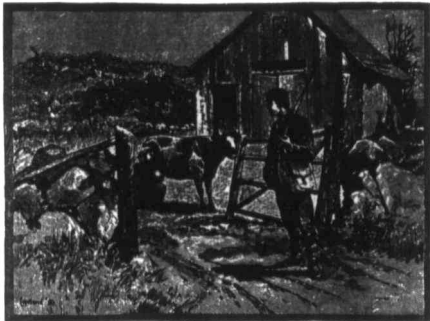
Nathan laughed, and went off whistling, but not entirely easy concerning his cherished turkeys. Linda was always ready enough to do a favor, but she was proverbially careless, and it was giving her a great responsibility to put her in charge of that coop-full of turkeys.

But Nathan could see no help for it, for he could not miss his hunting expedition to Bald Mountain. For several years he had made a practice of going to the mountain every November just before Thanksgiving (this was all before our Thanksgiving Day was changed to October, a month earlier than it used to be) to spend three or four days with an old hunter who lived there, and who put him in the way of killing all the game he could care to hunt. Nathan was an enthusiastic sportsman and looked forward all the year to his annual visit to old Joe. They often found deer, and once they had actually come within an ace of killing a black bear, and were resolved that sooner or later Brian should fall a victim to their keen marksmanship, for that he still haunted the mountain, they were well convinced.

"We may come across the old black rascal this time," mused Nathan as he trudged along over the snow-covered fields after leaving Linda. "We'll have a hunt for him anyway. And if Linda only takes good care of my turkeys I'm sure of making more money this Thanksgiving

than ever before, and I'll have that horse, sure."

The house which the Holway family called home was a rough, unpainted building of six rooms and a "lean-to." It stood in a large ill-kept yard, and was enclosed by a rail fence, a pair of bars in front doing duty as a gate. Back of the house was a dilapidated barn, several sheds, a farm-yard, and a pump; and on one side was an orchard, scantily stocked with apple and pear trees. Back of the barn was a garden, and back of that were fields of stubble, over which Nathan plodded all through the spring and summer. Beyond this was a pasture, full of rocks and bushes, in which some lean cattle grazed; and then came a belt of woods, where beech and birch, oak and maple trees grew thick and close.



"I hope I'm old enough to take care of a few turkeys," said Linda.

Nathan was a boy "with a head on his shoulders," as his mother often remarked proudly, and he had a great ambition to "live like other folks." But he found it hard work to get along, weighted with the support of a mother and three sisters; and they were all very familiar with the howling of the wolf at the door.

Linda was the only one of the girls old enough to help much, and she and Nathan had long talks about the best way to make the farm pay. It was not mortgaged. There was solid comfort in that.

And whatever they made off of it was their own.

"What we need is a horse," said Nathan. "It's awfully expensive hiring all the time."

And a horse he determined to have. He looked upon it as the first step toward respectability. With a horse of his own, he felt sure he could make the farm pay, and then would come other things that were wanted. He had proposed to sell the six cows in order to buy a horse; but his mother and Linda opposed this so strenuously that he gave it up. The milk was taken to town regularly every morning by Mr. Barlow, and gave them an income of a dollar and half a day, and naturally they were loath to agree to a proposition that would take this sum from them.

So Linda concluded to go into turkeys. He bought half a dozen full-grown turkeys to start with in the early spring, and fully expected to reap a rich reward. But he did not make any calculation as to pro-

bable losses, and instead of having forty or fifty young turkeys by Thanksgiving, he had only nineteen, all told. Of these he expected to sell thirteen, which would give him about fifteen dollars, which, added to the thirty dollars he had on hand, and the proceeds of the sale of the venison and birds he would bring from Bald Mountain, would make enough to pay the first instalment on a stout horse which farmer Hildred had offered to let him have for one hundred dollars.

"And with that horse in the barn we're sure of a good living," he said to Linda, when they talked the matter over.

So it was not strange that he was anxious about the turkeys, and that he thought he had invested Linda with a great responsibility in putting her in charge of them.

But Linda regarded the responsibility very lightly.

"As if anything *could* happen to those turkeys!" she thought, as her brother left her, and she finished milking. "Nat's got turkey on the brain."

The turkey coop was a large, rough affair, which Nathan had built himself, and stood on a little knoll at the edge of the belt of woods back of the barn.

"I don't see what possessed Nat to build that coop so far from the house," grumbled Linda when she came in from feeding the turkeys, in the evening of the day her brother left. "It's a real journey to that wood, and how I'm going to get to it if a heavy fall of snow comes I'm sure I don't know."

The snow came that night, and layed a foot deep on the ground when Linda looked from the window the next morning.

"You'd better put on Nat's high rubber boots when you go to feed the turkeys, Linda," said her mother. "You'll get your feet wet wearing only those old shoes."

"Bother the turkeys!" rejoined Linda. "I wish Nat would come home 'n' take care of 'em himself. It's no fun going out in this snow."

But she mixed up a pan of corn meal, put on the big boots, tied a shawl about her head and shoulders, and went out to attend to her troublesome charges at once.

She fed them again at night; but Monday morning she forgot all about them. It was wading day, and she was very busy, and so was every one else. No one thought of the turkeys until late in the afternoon, when it began to snow again. Then little Hester suddenly reminded Linda of her charges.

"If it snows much more you *can't* go to the turkey coop, Linda," she said. "The turkeys will have to starve."

"Oh, those turkeys!" cried Linda, catching her shawl from a peg, and running in to the pantry for some corn. "If Nat finds