

We were all crazy enough to jump into the hole in a heap, and Towt fit like a tiger to go down first, but we stopped him. I yanked a rope 'round my waist and the boys let me down purty consid'able rapid, I tell ye. 'Twa'n't more'n two minutes afore I touched bottom and were screeching up like a mad Injun:

"All safe! Hist away!"

And, in a twinkling, old Towt had a-holt of little Nugget, a-laughing and a-crying and cavorting 'round, and a-hugging of her as no nugget wa'n't never hugged afore.

'Twa'n't nothing short of a miracle that her little bones wa'n't all broke up, and there she was, a-smiling at us, kinder sleepy like, over Towt's shoulder, and without ary scratch.

Well, up speaks old Towt, all choked up, as ye might say, and says:

"Boys, I'll never get even with you for this day's work, never!" says he. "But long as old Towt Deatherage has got a dollar to his back, you've got a dollar, too, and don't none on yer ever fergit it. I was 'lowing to have you all in to-night," says Towt, "to Nugget's Thanksgiving. So come round to my shanty bimeby, and don't fergit to bring your mugs and spoons."

With that we all filed home, old Towt leading

turkey all stuffed and roasted, which we sot it down before the fire to warm, and a sucking pig, ditto, which we hung it up a-top, and a ham which it we left cold.

There were real, white, baker's bread and butter, and 'tatoes, which we roasted them, and cranberry jam and coffee.

There were mince-pies and cheese, too, and a genewine plum-pudden, which we heated up and passed it around in the can, and dug it out with our spoons. It was fearful good, so was the nuts and sweeties.

You never seen the ekal o' that dinner in yer borned days, and howsomever old Towt brung that load into the Diggings, without his mule, too, is a myster'ous mystery to me.

Well, so we had a big fire, a crackling, roaring, sweet-smelling fire of hemlock and juniper, and the good things was all steaming and sizzling and smelling sweeter than the fire or any other sweet thing, for the matter of that,—when in comes the boys stamping and shaking themselves, and brushing off the snow.

Every digger in Soledad Diggings were there, and Gritty O'Goudy, from Shirt-Tail Gulch, and Tony Yankton and his tenderfoot brother from over Inquest way, which were grub-staking with

Ye see I couldn't help remembering the gist of that blessing, 'cause Towt got the feller to write it off, and he alwus asked it after that when we had ary meat in the shanty, if it wasn't more'n a bacon-rind.

Well, we all felt amazing good and thankful after that blessing, and somebody proposed three cheers for the tenderfoot feller that said it, but was a little doubtful of the proprieties, and some of the other boys hushed him up, and so the cheers didn't go off.

Then Towt sat little Nugget down on the bench alongside on him, and the way he used his knife in that turkey was a caution.

I weren't not to say idling the hours of youth away over the pig, and as for the ham, we didn't stop to make shavings of it, not by no means. Then every chap for himself, and each for all the rest was the word; and if we didn't have eating enough, and fun enough for a dozen good Thanksgiving dinners,—then I'm a sinner.

Old Towt he kept cutting turkey and cutting pranks, and cracking nuts and cracking jokes until nigh midnight, and semi-occasional he'd make a grab at little Nugget and hug the breath nearly outen her, and sometimes big tears would ro l down and drap offen his chin. Fin'ly the little 'un she



the percession with the little 'un on his shoulder. I poked the fire, and Towt sat down with Nugget in his yarms, a-crooning like, with the tears a-streaking down his lank, old jaws, till she went to sleep, and then he took her in and put her onto the bed.

"Now, old man," says he, "let's caper."

I done what he told me to,—I alwus made a p'int o' that, but afore we had got the job done, that old Towt had laid out, I 'low I was about as surprised a critter as there was on top o' the yearth. First we took two long boards outen the floor from where they wouldn't be missed much, and put them acrost the top of two cheers, and when we'd covered them with a clean sheet,—Towt alwus would have sheets for Nugget,—we had a scrumtious and beautiful table, big enough for all of the boys. Then Towt rustled out somewhere in the snow, and when he came back he brought a yarmful of ground-pine and sich, which he frilled the table all 'round with it.

Then me 'n' him took turns tramping back and forth to the dugout, bringing in the things old Towt had hid there the night before; and when we had finished up the job and sat down, our eyes rested onto the roarin'est Thanksgiving dinner that ever ye seen.

It were a blooming success. There were a big

the Stringy Dan set, in Rattlesnake Tunnel. It was a crowd, I tell ye, and our little shanty was p'lum full.

Little Nugget she woke up jest in the nick o' time, and we sot her up on the end of the table. Old Towt stood up aside on her, and the rest all joined and circled round.

Towt laid holt of that big hunting-knife of his'n, and swung it round with a flourish; then, all to onct, afore he stuck it into the turkey, he stopped stock still a minute, looking queerish and confused like, and then he looks all round the table and says: "Boys," says old Towt, "can't none on ye say so'thin'?"

Everybody looked at everybody else, a-squirming and looking sheepish, and then at old Towt a-standing there as stubborn as a bucking burro. The sitewation were precar'ous, I tell ye.

Then up riz that tenderfoot brother of Tony Yankton and come to the front, and shut his eyes, and the beautiful blessing he asked on them victuals, I sha'n't never fergit it:

"Some have meat, more'n they can eat,
And some folks want a panful.
We have meat and we can eat,
And so,—Lord make us thankful."

Or words to that effect.

went off to sleep, and Towt took her up in his yarms, and stood up right tall, and says he:

"Boys," says he, "you heerd what I said out there, and I mean every word on it. This child has been give back to me this Thanksgiving day by God A'mighty. That sounds some like swearing," says Towt, speaking up, quick-like, "but 'taint. I've swore my last swear."

Then the boys gin three cheers for old Towt, and then I riz up as bold as a lion, and made 'em a little speech. I talked very reasonable to the boys. I told them 'twas my belief how that the Lord had a heap of work for old Towt to do yet, and He knowed He couldn't get a thing outen him without Nugget. And when He saw how real kinder attached they was to each other, He hadn't the heart to separate 'em, nohow. Then I told how I found Nugget down there safe and warm, and fast asleep on a soft fur cushin, which the Lord He put that cushin there in His own inf'nite mercy, if He did have ter make it outer Towt's lame, old sorrel mule.

And the boys all yelled and laughed, some on 'em a-sneaking their coat-cuffs acrost their eyes. Then we gin three cheers for little Nugget, and gripped hands, and so old Towt's Thanksgiving were done for.—*Youth's Companion.*