



Thanksgiving

By James Whitcomb Riley

Let us be thankful—not only because
Since last our universal thanks were told
We have grown greater in the world's applause
And Fortune's newer smiles surpass the old—
But thankful for all things that come as alms
From out the open hand of Providence:
The winter clouds and storms—the summer calms—
The sleepless dread—the drowse of indolence.



The Step-Mother

(Continued from last week)

After the ceremony, followed the usual reception, and they left for Los Angeles at two. The days that followed were days of enchantment for both Carleton and Philippa. The former had succeeded in keeping his fears at a distance until the day on which they turned their faces Eastward. But the nearer home they came, the more anxious he grew. Philippa, on the other hand, frankly announced her delight at the prospect of getting home, and settling down. To all her little obdurations, however Carleton made no direct response. His nerves had got him to where he had no sense of discrimination as to what he ought not to say to his wife regarding their future home. So he resolved heroically to let things take their course, and whatever might be in store for him, to make the best of it, as he had told Sutton he would.

Of course the train was a full hour late. When had a train ever reached Boltonville on time—especially when

there was a bride and groom aboard, and the groom's impatient children and capricious old father doubtless waiting to meet them?

A long, hoarse whistle of the engine announced the station at last, and notwithstanding his eagerness to reach there, Carleton felt the blood cooing from his cheeks, and when he stood up to collect their grips and suit-cases, his knees actually quaked under him. Philippa was radiant. Two crimson discs burned in her soft cheeks, and her eyes sparkled with happiness. "Oh Tom," she said with a little quiver of joy trickling through her tone, "home at last!"

The next minute, they were standing on the platform, while the noisy accommodation train rumbled off down the incline.

"Papa!" and "Papa!" "Oh Papa!" and Carleton felt himself fairly smothered with kisses by three plump rosy little girls in blue homespun aprons and pig-tails plaited down their

backs. Their feet were bare and they were painfully starched sunbonnets of impossible hues.

Philippa stood apart, surveying the proceedings with a fluttering heart and a beatified face.
"By ginger—Tom, you look like a thoroughbred! And so this is Philippa—well, well, how d'ye do?" He trust out a grimy paw to the elegantly gloved hand of his son's bride.

The blood flamed to Philippa's face, but she gave him her hand valiantly; there was no faltering in her clear, sweeping lashes. "And this is Pa? My face is horribly cinderly, but I'm going to kiss you anyhow—and I'm mighty glad to see you!" Her voice firm tones, no flicker of her long, ran over in mellow little gurgles as she stooped to take the three little girls in her arms, one after another, and hug them roundly. "Why, Tom," she cried, "they're just angels!"

Tom's father was struggling futilely with the luggage by this, his great, green-lined sun-hat flapping ludicrously over his ears, his face beneath it red and perspiring. It was a warm day and he'd left his coat off; a pair of blue goggles effectually concealed the color of his eyes, while his suspenders held his trousers at an angle half-way between his waist and his shoulder-blades and his feet shone conspicuous in the new brogues.

With a baffled expression on his face, Tom Carleton turned and looked at the old man. But he only said: "You take Philippa and the kiddies to the carriage, Pa. I'll look after these things."

And with a little girl on each side of her, clinging to her hands, and "Pa" and the youngest bringing up the rear, Philippa was escorted down the deserted platform to the waiting carriage. Tom followed immediately, and they were soon whirling off down the steep clay road toward home.

Carleton was unusually silent during the drive; his relief over his wife's reception of the family had come to him almost as a shock. He had had an exaggerated notion of having to smoothe things down between them from the start, and now! Here were the children hanging over her, looking into her face with worshipful eyes, helping to carry her things, while she looked back at them with eyes full of fondness, and answered their innumerable questions just as if she had been their own mother! Outside his father occupied the box seat with the driver, and vastly entertained that individual with a lively string of anecdotes which, better than anything in the world, betokened his good-humor.

It was growing dusk as they crossed the bridge, a flush of red still shone in the Western sky, behind the solemn green hills while the village lights twinkled behind them and the lights from the old homestead beckoned them on.

Suddenly Tom Carleton leaned over and putting his arm about his wife's shoulders, gave them a little quick embrace. He was flushed and trembling, and the greatest happiness he

had ever known swelled within him. A moment afterward, they drew up under the *porte cochere*, and as they stepped out of the carriage on to the veranda, were welcomed by a bevy of devoted old family servants.

Philippa was tired out, Carleton said, and must go to her room at once, to rest before supper. Pa went off to look for his pipe and "brush up a bit" himself. "Mammy" appeared and handed over her reluctant charges, while Carleton sat about the stables.

An hour later, in response to the cheerful summons of the supper-bell, Philippa floated down the long, winding stairs like a white cloud, her pale gold hair plaited loosely high on her dainty head. She paused in the doorway of the richly-furnished, old-fashioned dining-room, her scarlet lips parted and smiling, her eyes joyous and shining. The rest were all there before her, eager to do homage to the "new Mama," and Philippa's face underwent a kaleidoscopic series of changes as she stood looking from one to the other. Each little girl was dressed in snowy white, with fluted ruffles and fresh, crisp ribbons. Their hair unconfined now, rippled in golden waves over their fluffy shoulders. At one end of the table sat a scholarly old man with a long white beard, and gold-rimmed glasses that did not disguise the twinkles of the bright blue eyes behind them. He wore a frock coat, and a spotless shirt, collar and cravat. He looked up with a smile as she came forward, and the twinkle in his eyes deepened.

"My daughter, welcome home! May you be as happy in your new home as we all are to have you grace it!"

Without in the least recovering from her astonishment, Philippa took her place at the table, looking prettier and daintier and younger than ever. Carleton was devouring her puzzled face with luminous eyes while the "angels" sat perfunctorily still, but radiant through their silence. In a moment, the scholarly old gentleman was speaking again:

"You'll forgive an old man's whim, my dear, (as I'll find I'm full of them, said waves, but they've been warning me that you were a fastidious young lady with scornful airs, who wouldn't waste much time on a lot of children and an old man"—so I just made up my mind I'd try to find out what sort of stuff Tom's wife was made of at the start! Maybe it wasn't exactly fair for us to meet you in the kind of masquerade we did, but it seems to me it's turned out to be the finest thing in the world all round; it's done away with a heap of red tape, so to speak. How does it seem to you?"

And as light flashed on Philippa's brain, her face rippled into a hundred smiles and a little soft laugh broke musically in her throat.

"Why," she cried, "it was just folly, and I'm sure we're going to be the very happiest family alive. I think I have always loved you because you are Tom's; but now," her eyes shone affectionately upon each one in turn, "now I am going to love you—because you are you."



At One End of the Table Sat a Scholarly Old Man with a Long White Beard and Gold-Rimmed Glasses