

## UNDER THE EVENING LAMP

## THANKFUL'S THANKSGIVING

BY MARTHA H. PILLSBURY.

Only a few days remained until Thanksgiving, and the little town of Whately was alive with interest in the coming feast day. The air was redolent with the odor of mincemeat, and preserves, and pumpkins simmering into sweetness.

The hard times seemed only to have increased every one's appetite and hospitality, and Mr. Hodges, the veteran store-keeper, was authority for the statement that there had not been, for thirty years, so many orders for turkeys.

Thankful Bean lived right in the centre of the village, and many an anxious matron had consulted her judgment in the festal preparations. Bags of sage and summer-savory, from her garden, waited in many a pantry for the grand turkey-stuffing, and every family for a mile around had her recipe for plum-pudding, which had been given her by Governor Henshaw's wife, and had been the standard recipe for Thanksgiving pudding, in his family, for years. Thankful had helped them all, as they desired, no more and no less, but she had gone about with a stern look on her face, and with no pleasant thoughts for the near thanksgiving day.

Ever since she was born the day had always been sacredly observed at Thankful's home. Time was when the dining-room table had to be re-enforced by the kitchen table and two light-stands, to make room for the large family and the invited guests. But the number had gradually grown less, until for years, Thankful had kept the day alone, in the silent, old house, browning her turkey, and steaming her diminutive pudding, and eating her dinner, with no company but her memories.

This past year, as Thankful looked back upon it, seemed to have brought nothing but trouble and loss. A bank in which some of her money had been deposited had failed, and other investments had kept her constantly anxious. Then Millie had gone away with the summer. The very thought of her made Thankful's heart sore. Millie was an orphan niece who had come last winter, to live with her aunt. She was a sweet young girl, and, in the few months of her stay, she had grown into Thankful's heart as no one ever had before. Her bright presence had brought an unwonted softness into Thankful's face, and her dainty touches had transformed the house.

The girl had seemed happy and contented, until the city people up at Hudson's had chosen to be attracted by her pretty face and winsome ways. They had fascinated her with their stories of city life and of the art schools where her talent could be cultivated.

Thankful had watched the acquaintance, and the growing discontent of the girl, and she knew what the end would be.

When the city people went back to their homes, Millie went with them, and Thankful said good-bye with a steady voice and went back to the old life, and no one knew the bitterness in her heart.

Then followed a slow fever, days and nights of helplessness and pain, and the torture of having to accept the unloving service of an ignorant girl. Thankful's strong constitution had triumphed, and she was about again, but it had been in spite of utter indifference.

So, with Thanksgiving near, Thankful, knitting by her fire, thought the whole year over, and she said to herself that, for once in her life, this day should be the same as every other day. The outward observance of it would be hypocrisy, for the year had brought nothing but trouble, and she had no thankfulness in her heart.

Thankful had just come to this decision when she heard a knock at the door. A little boy stood on the step. He had an honest face, framed in a shock of red hair, which fairly lifted up his small cap. His gray, threadbare coat had black sleeves in it, and his shoes were patched.

"Mother told me to tell you I was Mary Ellis' boy. My name is Billy Peters. Can't I come in?" he said.

Thankful led the way into her sitting-room, with a little more warmth of manner than she usually showed

to boys of Billy's age. Mary Ellis and she had been nearest neighbors and intimate friends in girlhood, but after the former's marriage, her home had been a mile away, and, as the cares increased with the years, she and Thankful drifted apart. Her husband had died recently, leaving her penniless, with four little boys.

Thankful had heard, sometimes, of her friend's brave struggle to keep the wolf from the door, but her own misfortunes had absorbed her mind so completely that she had little place for thought of others.

"I'm a committee," said Billy settling himself in the big chair which Thankful drew out for him, and holding his hands up to the cheerful blaze of the hearth.

"You are?" said Thankful, putting on her glasses, to examine him more minutely.

"I be." And Billy drew himself up proudly. "You see it's like this; There's ten poor children down to the country farm this year, and Mr. Walker, what manages the farm, says he hain't got no 'thority to git up no 'Thanksgivin' dinner for 'em. So, down in our Sabbath school, some committees was chose, to go round and see what folks would give towards gittin' 'em a 'Thanksgivin' dinner. We want 'em to have a first rate one,—turkey, 'n' cranberry sarce, 'n' onions, 'n' punkin-pie, 'n' a puddin' chuck full o' raisins, 'n' a 'n'orange apiece."

Billy dwelt long and lovingly on each item of the Thanksgiving dinner.

"Are you going to have all those things yourself?" said Thankful, looking keenly at the poorly clad child.

"No'm, not this year; but we have had 'em some years. Father's dead, 'n' the rent's high, 'n' mother don't get much washin' now. But she says things might be a good deal worse. 'Tain't as though we were poor, like them children. We're goin' to have some fried liver. We ain't poor," he added, stoutly.

Somehow Thankful's glasses needed wiping, as she looked at Billy, who had his mother's eyes. Indeed he was not poor! His bravery and utter forgetfulness of self were possessions a king might envy!

"How much shall I put you down for?" said Billy, taking down his little stump of a pencil from behind his ear. "Some folks gives five cents. Mother give ten, and she said she guessed you'd give that."

"You may put me down for twenty-five cents" Thankful answered, with a burst of generosity.

Billy almost bounced out of his seat at the munificence of the gift, and he mentally resolved to add nuts and raisins to the Thanksgiving bill of fare of the county-farm children.

Long after Billy's sturdy figure was out of sight, Thankful sat idly with folded hands, gazing into the fire. Billy's earnest little soul had awakened new thoughts within her, which were destined to change the current of her life. Could she, too, not be thankful that things were no worse? She had lost her small deposit in the bank, but another investment had proved successful beyond her expectation. She had got up from her illness better than she had been for a long time before. Millie had gone, it was true. But had she not cause for thankfulness that the bright young life had touched her own, even for a little time? If she so willed it, might not this tender memory keep her heart from being quite the withered thing it was?

Now that Thankful was in a softer mood, there came to mind many little causes for gratitude which she had not reckoned before. How they grew, as she thought of them, every one standing out clear and beautiful, a gift of a Father who never forgets His children!

At length Thankful arose, and, going to her desk, she wrote in a fine, old-fashioned hand, an invitation to Mary Peters to come with the boys and take Thanksgiving dinner with her. Then she went out and ordered the largest turkey Mr. Hodges could procure. After that her kitchen was a scene of unusual activity. Cranberries popped and sizzled, pies and cake baked into odorous richness, and jellies quivered in the most approved way.

Early, Thanksgiving morning, a little procession of red-headed boys, led by Widow Peters, wended its way toward Thankful's home. Billy meant to be decorous, but just as they passed the kitchen window, Thankful had opened the oven to give the turkey a basting. It lay in full view, in all its grand proportion, and was a sight to turn an older head than Billy's. He gave a whoop of joy, and executed a somersault, much to the mortification of his mother.

Thankful's currant-cookies kept the boys in a state of bliss till dinner time. And that Thanksgiving dinner! It