

Somebody's Thanksgiving Dinner



Yesteryear's Feast Days

By LAURETTA JOY
in Central Falls Daily

YER father, it went off all right, but it wasn't like our Thanksgiving when the children were home," and mother and grandmother fell winking back a sentimental tear. There were only two of them at the supper table with its dais of cold chicken and pork, cranberry sauce, celery, nuts, cold squash, and all the orthodox remnants of the great American feast.

The four children and twelve grand-children had been invited and fed in the old home and had gone on their way rejoicing after "the girls" had helped mother "do up the work." The home where Tom and Bob and Ruth and Alice had been born, where they had been fed and loved and spoiled, where they had scraped and made up, and maintained the first sparks of the genius within them, was very still.

"Yes, mother, it wasn't like the old Thanksgiving," said the man with most of the perpetuation of youth genes, and they were silent together.

The mother was remembering those long ago years with a home full of children joy in Thanksgiving or our holiday gave it a freshness and vigor that had faded in later years. She remembered the warm hours wrapped in winter shawls building over with the joyful enthusiasm of childhood. First of all, there was their own joy in the distant vague preparations for the holiday she could see Tom's girls when she was little to the store for rubies and citrines and amethysts and the smiles of all of them when the big rich cake was put in the old brown crack.

There was Ruth and Bob, came home with their "pieces" to speak in school the day before Thanksgiving and joyfully revealed that "teacher" had told them what they had known all along—that school would close on Wednesday night and they didn't have to come back until Monday.

And then their watchful, fearful waiting for the first snowflakes, and Tom getting out his coarser and painting the runners, and Alice and Ruth going to the woods for bittersweet and partridge berries and sprays of evergreen and decorating the mantel and windows and archways, and then the day before, when father killed and dressed the chickens or turkey or duck. And what a hurry and bustle there was of cleaning, baking, roasting and boiling, and how golden the big kitchen was with the winter sun glancing through the maples outside, and how warm it was with the big oven sending out waves of warmth, and the odor of baking pie, cake and cookies.

And then the great day itself—no need to call her brood that day, for snow had come in the night and the boys had risen with the fiery red winter sun to try out the sled before breakfast and had come in all cold and rosy to gulp down pancakes and sirup and eggs and bacon.

And then, no matter how great the feast for how much remained to be done, the six of them were dressed in Sunday best and the family trailed down the white street to church, meeting neighbors on the way, smiling, chatting, asking whether it was a holiday or a chicken bill of fare this day, growing solemn as they trailed into the little white church and down to the pew that held the six of them each Thanksgiving, and then the tremendous Thanksgiving dinner and games and

the choir, the sermon of plenty from the pastor, and the yellow winter sun streaming through the stained windows. The benediction, the moment of chat and good will from neighbor to neighbor, a little herd guided down the steps where they burst from church sobriety into the puppy spirits demanded by a cold, snappy day.

Home again and the last scramble for the feast—the girls setting the table with the best linen, silver and china, with a bowl of tiny yellow chrysanthemums from the backyard bush, the trips down cellar for a can of relish; tiny, firm pickles; some chili sauce; strawberries, and the squash and carrots and turnips and potatoes and onions, each with its part to play in the feast.

The turkey or duck stuffed with spicy dressing was crackling away in the oven, father was out in the garden staking some celery put to bleach for the occasion a month or so ago, the boys were cracking nuts and polishing apples—how sweet it was to do her work in her own place for those who needed and enjoyed this work—how serene and sure and peaceful it all seemed—looking back over those years all the doubts and torments of later years seemed impossible.

How had it come about? What had life done to her, to them? Her friends, her neighbors thought that life had been kind. Truth had never looked at the door of her faith, but now had been almost withdrawn. In the eyes of the world, her children had "turned out well." Tom was a successful lawyer in a big city and a prominent business attorney. He had married "a nice girl" and so one could not see for present, better material grandchild-ness than this family had given her.

Alice had married a physician and was prominent socially and in club work. Mother and Father had rarely picked up a Sunday paper without seeing a picture of "Mrs. John Gray" or one of other of the "Bible" characters, who were included "among those prominent in the juvenile set." Bob was a successful merchant and active in furthering employee welfare work. Ruth had never married, but was more than successful as a home decorator. She traveled all she wanted to, dressed beautifully, maintained a charming apartment, was invited to the homes of those whom the world calls "great"—so, there was not one of her children who had not "done well" or was anything but a credit to the parents.

And yet, why did a mother hunger to even if her children were all that she had ever hoped for them? Why more heartaches and sometimes for the price to pay for this very success? Why did such a sense of baffled purposement fill her at the Thanksgiving table? Why did their coming not satisfy? Why did this longing for the other days persist in seizing her?

She knew the answer. Knew that their very success, their very homes, their very children, meant that her work was done. It was but a visit of a day, and as such had no faintest connection with the yesteryear feast days which meant one home, one interest, one working and playing niche for all. She and their father and their home made up their life's groove then. Today they are making those grooves for others and finding their own therein.

There are thousands of fathers and mothers the country over who find only poignant loneliness and even bitterness in a repetition of the feast days which were so joyful in days gone by. The winter sun still streams through the backyard maples into the big kitchen. The same old range bakes the turkey and squash and mince and pumpkin pies for the same old brood. The same china and silver and best tablecloth may be upon the dining-room table, but Thanksgiving is not what it was.

Even if the same farms, with no breaks in the ranks, are grouped about the same old old hillsides now. They are grown in the place where they were common workmen. They are struggling in the home that gave their birth. They live but as other jobs for those who gave them birth in the world? This is the question that the

BEAUTY OF GRATITUDE

By FRANK HERBERT SWEET

THANKSGIVING DAY should be the keynote of the year. No one is really thankful who is not really happy.

Praise spoken by the lips is very faint and hollow unless the heart re-echoes it.

Thanksgiving is a home day. The young person who accepts the invitation of friends for some form of merry-making, which takes one from the family circle makes a mistake. There are enough days in the year for the ordinary good times. Save Thanksgiving for the home folk.

The girl or boy who looks on thankfulness as a hard duty is not likely to make much of a success of it. The beauty of gratitude is that it should be spontaneous, bubbling up in the heart like a spring, not pumped up to the surface with an effort that leaves one out of breath.

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the steady hearts of mother and father Bell.

In those early hours of their heart-true parents who had their faith light must be spent with folded hands, thinking of the better life that is to come. It is the old story of paying the price for everything which one attains in life? I think not. I think it's a matter of personal viewpoint. In the first place, parents who conclude that their life's work is over just because their children are grown and away from home, are only wasting their own days.

Life is not static. It is ever flowing. The water goes on over the mill wheel and he who seeks to hold it back will be able to sweep up only a pool or so and keep it until it grows stagnant. Many parents are like this. The waters of their own lives flow on deeply and smoothly and when a stretch of clear, sparkling, rapid water, which would be a phase of living especially dear to them, comes along, the parents sweep it up and seek to hold it, forgetting that the mill is going off-hand the same.

Parenthood is an essentially deep phase of living to most people. Nature has a vital reason for this, but she does her job too well. One is inclined to think that if she had created a man or woman so that child-rearing would be the one job they craved during the days of their youth, but would so make them that they would crave another job when the children were grown and going about their own job of parenthood, the old game would have done a better job.

Then, too, it's a human trait to remember the fair and shining side of things that are gone, and hence to pine for them.

To go back to the Bell family: Ruth, the single damsel, glimpsed her parents' mood to the full and discussed it with her sister like this:

"You'd think to hear mother rave that she was supremely happy when we were all home, and sometimes it makes me furious when I distinctly recall how she fussed and worried and stewed around about one thing and another—where in the world the money for our winter underclothes was coming from, how much schoolbooks cost, what in the world she would do with Bob's bad temper and Tom's lying and my vanity and your craziness after the boys. And many a time she made her moan about how overworked and thankless her life was, and would the time never come when she had a chance to rest and get a little peace?"

And that's that! If Mother and Father Bell live to be eighty they will look back upon their peaceful, serene, quiet life together now as the best of their days, and at one hundred they would regard the days of eighty as altogether desirable.

If Thanksgiving does nothing else for us, may it quicken our vision of the glories of the present!

LOVING AND GIVING

Thanksgiving is a fitting preparation for the beautiful festival which follows on Good-Thursday. It is a good child truly feels and experiences gratitude that he is born in this free land to the others. "Loving and giving" will make gratitude in our hearts. "And we thank thee, O God"

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