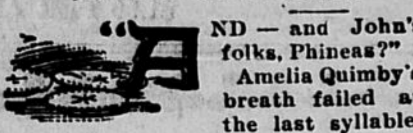


JOHN'S FOLKS

A Thanksgiving Story

By Annie Hamilton Donnell.



"ND — and John's folks, Phineas?" Amelia Quimby's breath failed at the last syllable. She had gathered all her strength for that question. She did not dare to look across at Phineas. His reply rumbled deeply in his throat, but she could make out all the words. Fifty years she had lived with Phineas Quimby.

"I said we'd have Jerry's folks here to Thanksgiving dinner. We ain't had 'em for some time, and this is a kind of a sorry year, bein' our fiftieth anniversary. That's why I wanted—wanted—John's—"

"You better write to Jerry right off. Better do it to-day, and Silas Blunt'll mail it for ye to-night. It's Si's night to go to lodge."

Nothing more, and when she had said "father," Amelia Quimby had played her last card—her trump. She had not called him "father" since Jerry and John were great brown boys and it had happened. Twenty-seven years ago, was that? Ah, the heartbreak a mother can hide in 27 years! When she has had twin sons laid in her arms, and held them one on one side and one on the other, and gazed for long, weak days from one little pink face to the other,—when she has watched them grow out of pinafores into trousers, out of childhood into tall, splendid strength, when she had fed them and patched them and loved them—ah, to lose one of them, then! Mothers know.

At first she had hoped for a reconciliation. Year after year, at Thanksgiving time, she had hoped. For, oddly enough, it was on Thanksgiving day she had married Phineas Quimby, and two years later, on the day after, that they had laid his twin sons in her arms. The day was doubly momentous to her. "Only, I'd hoped so much from this Thanksgiving!" Amelia Quimby mourned. "Why, it's going to be our fiftieth anniversary—you'd think a father and son would come back to each other on the golden wedding day! It was too soon to hope for it on the silver one; but now, after all these years, you'd think I had a right to hope for it!"

"Jerry's folks" meant Jerry and his wife and the two grown girls. But John's folks—the mother smiled wistfully as she counted up the little names on her fingers. There were so many; it took all her fingers but two! John had not been married as long as Jerry. His "folks" were little folks.

"And this year there's the twins. They'd be big enough to come. And to think they're both boys, and their names"— Suddenly the wistful voice quivered and John's mother cried over the names of his little twin sons. The paths of them and of her empty arms that yearned for them broke down her patient endurance.

"I want them—oh, I want them! I want John's little baby boys!" she cried out aloud. But there was no one to hear. Phineas had gone away to his work. She sat down, as she had done so many times, to write to John. That was her only comfort, and it had never been denied her. Two sacred things there were in the life of Phineas Quimby and his wife, Amelia, that had never been violated, even by the quarrel that long ago had separated father and son. The father had never denied the mother the solace of her letters to her boy, and never by word or intimation had Amelia Quimby complained of her husband. To-day, as always, she said only kind words of him. There was no mention of Thanksgiving day, or of the disappointment that rankled in her breast.

"Kiss both the babies for me—first one and then the other, a hundred times!" she wrote. "Tell little Jerry I love him, and tell little John. An tell me about their eyes—you forgot to say the color—and their hair, and their little fists. Does little Jerry keep his thumb between his first and second fingers when his fist is shut up tight? Little John?—then you've named them wrong. You've mixed those children up! Before it is too late, you'd better let them swap names."

The letter ran on lovingly, with a message in it for one child after another. And for John himself there was the old message—"Your mother is loving you, John." It was always there. To Jerry she wrote briefly. Jerry was a busy man, with a hundred outside interests—outside of mother. His letters to her were wont to be rare and short, but there was always a message to father in them. She missed that in John's long, tender letters.

"I'm half afraid to write," she thought, as she took up her pen; "Jerry's folks have so many rich friends, and so many places to go to—I'm afraid they won't want to come." But she dipped her pen in the ink and began. "My dear boy"—she always began her letters to both sons that way—"My dear boy, your father says to put on all your bonnets, every one of you, and come to the old home to keep Thanksgiving. He's quite set upon it. You know—you haven't forgotten, dear?—that it is our golden wedding Thanksgiving, and it's time you came! Think of having a father and mother 50 years married and not coming! Your father says to say he has waited as long as he can—and you must come home or he will disown you! And he is in earnest, dear! He is hungry for a sight of your face. And your mother—dear boy, come right home quick! I want to kiss you all!"

Both letters were sealed, and then she directed them in her quavery, quaint little hand. But her face was grave enough.

"I'm afraid Jerry's folks won't want to come, and I don't know what Phineas would do if they didn't. He's set his heart. We ought not to have waited till the last minute—I don't see why we did. There won't be time for them to answer—oh, dear, they haven't been home for so long, and I can't help thinking they won't want to come now!"

But she went briskly to work with her preparations. She cooked and cooked till the shelves in her neat pantry groaned under their loads. Jerry's folks could not have cleared them in a week. She made the mince pies the way the boys had always liked them, long ago. She made a molasses sauce for the pudding because they had been fond of that kind. And she made two little saucer pies she had never failed to make, long ago. They were pumpkin pies, and she crimped the edges carefully.

"Jerry's girls are grown up, and maybe they won't care for them—maybe nobody will," she thought, "but I always made them for the boys, and I said I would to-day. Only I hoped, then, that John's folks would come. I hoped till the last minute."

It was the last minute now, and mother had given up. She had set the long table with her whitest linen and her prettiest dishes. Then she had dressed herself in her best dress and sat down to wait. She was quite pale. Mother was a little afraid of Jerry's folks. She wished Phineas were here to help her receive them, but he had been called away unexpectedly, and would not be back before dinner time. One of the neighbors had needed him.

Somewhere down the road sounded the rumble of stage wheels, and mother got up, nervously, and stood on the floor, listening. It was such



PHINEAS QUIMBY STOOD STILL OVER THE OLD CRADLE.

a pity Jerry's folks had had to come up in the stage! Hark!—yes, it was turning into the lane. It was almost here. She must go to the door and meet them. A strange, girlish shyness swept over the little old figure, and two spots of pink color blossomed in her wrinkled cheeks.

The rumble ceased. A confusion of voices greeted mother's ear—sweet, shrill little voices, with the bubble of laughter running through them. And then, above them all, a man's deep voice called: "Mother! Mother, where are you?" What did it all mean—for it was John's voice calling! It was John's wife getting out of the stage, and John's little children chattering and bubbling! John's folks!

Mother found herself at the door in the midst of them all, and her wonder and faint dismay were drowned in the sweetness and joy of their coming and the warm rain of their kisses on her face.

There were so many little voices in her ear, so many little arms around her neck! And John was there—a big, bearded John, with little John's love in his voice! There was no room for dismay at all—only joy. It was later when the mystery had cleared itself away and it was almost time for Phineas to come that the dismay came back. Dear land, what would Phineas say?

Mother stole away by herself and looked things in the face. She had not told John that it was all a mistake, and that his letter had gone to Jerry and Jerry's invitation came to him. It was all clear enough now to mother, but she had not told John. How could she? In a moment the joy was overwhelmed in the utter dismay. For Phineas would be home soon, very soon.

Something must be done. The little children—if the father should see John's children, would they not plead for him? No, wait—the babies—John's tiny twin sons! Mother laughed aloud with delight of the inspiration. She hurried up to the lumber-room over the woodshed and pulled down the long old cradle that Phineas had pieced out long ago, to keep baby toes from meeting when Jerry lay at one end and little John at the other. It was heavy, but what did mother care? The strength of ten slender old women animated her as she tugged and pulled it down.

Now, the pillows and the little old log-cabin quilt! As if she did not know where those were! She arranged them with eager fingers and pulled the cradle into the kitchen, for father would come in at the kitchen door. Then mother went back to John's folks.

"I want the babies, John—give me them both for a little while," she said. "No, don't you come, dear—do

you think I don't know how to take care of little twin sons?"

She carried them both at once in the old way. A little head lay warm against each arm. There was not a moment to lose if her plan was to succeed, and she went away swiftly with her precious load out to the kitchen, straight to the little old cradle. There was time to deposit the babies, one at each end, on the soft, time-yellowed little pillows, and to draw the log-cabin quilt snugly up under each tiny pink chin. There was a minute or two even to jog the cradle a few times, and then mother heard the creak of Phineas' wagon wheels. She stole softly away and left John's babies to do their work alone. But a prayer was on her lips. "A little child shall lead them"—it's in Thy Book, Lord. Let John's little children lead father back to John," she prayed silently.

Phineas Quimby was late. The neighbor had kept him longer than he expected, and it fretted him. Neighboring assistance was all right enough, but on Thanksgiving Day, when your son's folks were coming home, it was vexing to be kept almost till dinner-time.

"Get up, Dan; get into a trot, will ye? Do you want the turkey to be all eat up before we get there? Jerry's folks won't know what to make of these doings; get up, there, pony!" He rattled home, into the lane, past the house to the barn, his mind intent on grievances, else he might have seen the peering little faces at the parlor window—mother had forgotten those.

Old Dan put up and given his Thanksgiving dinner of oats and clover-sweet hay, Phineas Quimby strode into the house. A frown was on his face. Being Phineas Quimby, this interference with his plans an-

noyed him greatly. Jerry's folks were not plain farmer folks. They would hardly understand this—what! What was the old cradle on the kitchen floor for? And little Jerry and little John in it!

Phineas Quimby stood still over the old cradle and gazed down into it in helpless bewilderment. Had he lost his wits, or had the years rolled from his bent old shoulders and left him standing there, strong and straight, looking down at the crumpled faces of his little twin sons? Was he young again? Were the old age and the loneliness and the heart-break in his stubborn old soul only a bad dream? And he was young and had little John again—had both his boys!

The babies stirred from their placid drowse, and one of them flung out a lusty little fist and opened a pair of wide blue eyes. Little John, that one was! With an inarticulate cry of tenderness and love, father stooped and gathered the warm, sweet morsel into his old arms, and laid his grizzled head against it, in the old, old way. Mother found him so.

"Father, father!" she cried, from the doorway. All her soul was in her eager, old voice.

"Hush, don't speak, mother; don't wake me up! I've got little John in my arms."

In the quiet kitchen there was only the sound of baby-crooning then. Mother had lifted little Jerry, and was cradling him in her own arms. The noon sunshine lighted all their faces, young and old. It was father who spoke first, after awhile: "Don't tell me, mother, I know all about it," he said, quietly. "I know we ain't grown young again and found our baby boys. It was only a minute I half believed that—I come in so sudden and found them in the old cradle with the old quilt over 'em. I've got my wits back now, and I know all about it. This is John's baby I've got here, and John's baby over there in your arms. They're John's twin babies—did you think I never hunted up John's letters to you and read 'em through and through? Do you think I don't know the names of all of John's little shavers by heart, mother? Here, you may have 'em both. I've got to go—I want John."

"Here I am, father. I'm here!" And it was John standing there in the door, and father striding toward him with his hands out! And it was mother with her arms full of John's babies who hovered over them both with unspeakable thanksgiving in her heart.—Country Gentleman.

Strength of a Locomotive. A railroad engine may be roughly said to be equal in strength to 900 horses.

REQUESTS OF CONSTITUENTS.

Some of the Remarkable Things Asked of Representatives at the Nation's Capital.

Congressman Conry tells a story concerning his congressional experience which may or may not be intended to discourage his political rivals in the Ninth district, states the Boston Herald.

"Every spring," says Mr. Conry, "the government at Washington sets aside a large amount of garden seed for free distribution among the people of the country, and one of the functions of a congressman is to see that his constituents get their due share of this seed. Now, there isn't a great deal of vacant soil in my district which could be utilized for the purposes of a flower garden, but, thinking it would be a good idea to encourage the cultivation of window plants, I sent out last spring as many packages of the different plants suitable for window culture as I thought would suffice to go around. A little while after I received from a lady to whom I had sent some seed the following letter:

"Dear Mr. Conry: I have received your seed, for which I am very thankful. Will you kindly send me 100 feet of black rubber hose, set of garden tools and a lawn mower?"

"This story somehow got out, and was given some circulation. In the course of its travels it reached the ears of a lady in the Berkshire hills, who immediately wrote me that she didn't care to receive any lawn mowers or rubber hose, but she would like very much to know if I could send her a pair of oxen which she could use for plowing fields.

"Of all the requests, however, which I received as a result of my well-intended offices in seed distribution, the one I shall cherish longest was received from a lady on the banks of the Connecticut river.

"My Dear Congressman," wrote this lady, "I have ten acres of land covered with tobacco. Will you kindly select from the civil service six able-bodied men and send them to my farm to cultivate my tobacco?"

THE BATTLEFIELD.

Victory in War Will Soon Be the Fruit of Scientific Equipment, Training and Handling.

It is a commonly expressed belief nowadays that in warfare, so scientific has the art become, the courage and grit of the individual soldier will not count for much. Victory, it is said, will be the fruit of scientific equipment, training and handling, and if he be but scientific enough, trained to a nicety, and is moved about the battlefield with skill, his personal strength and nerve and stamina will not need to be of a very high order. This is not the opinion of Linesman, the author of "Words by an Eye-Witness." While he lays great and unceasing stress upon the necessity for science and thorough training, he just as strongly emphasizes the importance of the morale of the soldier. In his latest book he shows how immeasurably greater is the strain upon the fighter in modern warfare than in past days. In former times armies could maneuver and encamp well within sight of each other, and an attack often meant nothing but a dash over a narrow zone of ground, a short, sharp struggle and a rout. It was over before the blood had time to cool, and even the timid could be excited and sustained by the rush and fury of the onslaught. To-day a man may die as soon as the enemy's long guns, hidden away in the distant, cloud-topped mountains, seven miles off, begin to talk. And over that seven miles he must walk with caution, with a wide interval between him and his pal on either hand.

FATAL WORDS.

The Mistake Which Sealed the Doom of General John Andre, of the British Army.

At Tarrytown there is a monument, surmounted by a bronze figure ever on duty, that marks the spot where, on September 23, 1780, a man sprang, as it were, out of the ground, seized the bride of the traveler's horse, and at the same instant demanded a halt. Two other men joined the first, and to these three the traveler offered the authority for John Anderson to pass on public business, and signed by the major general commanding West Point, writes L. K. Becker, in Four-Track News.

For one moment the pass sufficed; then there was doubt. In that moment of hesitation the traveler's eyes rested upon a coat that one of the men wore, which he had obtained while a prisoner not long before, and recognized the garb of the Hessian soldiers attached to the British army, the traveler concluded, hastily, that he had fallen among friends, instead of foes. "I see you belong to the army down below, as I do," he remarked, with a slight gesture of the head toward the river. Fatal words! they sealed the doom of Adj. Maj. Gen. John Andre, of the British army. He was quickly dismounted and searched, without result, and still there was delay. Some latent sense of required vigilance incited these humble militiamen to renewed search of the traveler's person—West Point was saved.

Useless Clause.

Old Gotrox—I had a clause inserted in my will to the effect that if any of my relatives should contest it they are not to get a cent. Mr. Neighbors—That was altogether unnecessary. "Why was it unnecessary?" "Because if there is a contest the lawyers will see that your relatives don't get anything."—Chicago Daily News.

EQUAL TO THE OCCASION.

An Invitation in Business Form That Met with an Acceptance in Kind.

A Baltimore woman, the belle of her set, was much surprised not long ago, says the New York Times, to receive an invitation of which the following is the substance:

"Mr. Blank presents his compliments to Miss Dash, and requests the pleasure of her company at the theater Thursday evening next.

"Awaiting and hoping for an early and favorable reply, we are, yours very truly, "Blank & Co."

The writer of this remarkable effusion is a young business man who is a partner in a large furniture concern. He attends to a large proportion of the correspondence of the firm, and, of course, signs the firm's name thereto. So absorbed was he in business that he concluded his invitation with the stereotyped sentence above, and, to cap the climax, signed the firm's name to it. The fair recipient, however, appreciated the situation, and the young man was thunderstruck to receive a letter addressed to him personally, but containing the following reply to his invitation: "Messrs. Blank & Co.: Your favor of recent date to hand and contents noted. In reply will say we accept the proposition therein made and hold the goods ordered subject to yr. further instructions. Very respectfully, Miss Dash & Co."

Explanations and apologies followed, and the invitation was duly accepted, but the matter was too good to be kept a secret, and for some time after life was made a burden to that young man. Even the meaningless query: "How's business?" sufficed to drive him frantic.

A Puzzled Housewife.

"Hello," called Mrs. Cookem, over the phone, "is this Mr. Sellem's grocery?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Well, you folks sent me a cake of patent plum pudding and a cake of imitation coal this morning, for me to try."

"Yes, ma'am. And did you wish to order some more?"

"I don't know. You'll have to send some one down to explain matters. I've put one cake on the fire and the other in the oven and I can't tell whether the plum pudding smells comes from the firebox or the pudding pan."—Baltimore American.

Old Ones.

Quads—Funnymen tried writing his jokes on the typewriter, but had to go back to his fountain pen.

Space—What was the matter with the typewriter?

"The bell rang too often."—Mania American.

At Least One Symptom.

Kind Father—My dear, if you want to marry a good husband, marry Mr. Goodheart. He really and truly loves you.

Daughter—Are you sure of that, pa?

"Yes, indeed. I've been borrowing money of him for six months, and still he keeps coming."—Stray Stories.

Tom—"Our engagement is off." Dick—"You don't say, how's that?" Tom—"She got mad because I couldn't explain to her satisfaction why I loved her more than other girls."—Philadelphia Press.

"Builds up the system; puts pure, rich blood in the veins; makes men and women strong and healthy. Burdock Blood Bitters. At any drug store.

She—"A woman is as young as she looks." He—"Yes; but she ain't always as young as she thinks she looks."—Cincinnati Enquirer.

Piso's Cure for Consumption is an infallible medicine for coughs and colds.—N. W. Samuel, Ocean Grove, N. J., Feb. 17, 1900.

Fleeing from responsibility is a good deal like hiding from reward.—Cooperation.

"I suffered for months from sore throat. Electric Oil cured me in twenty-four hours." M. S. Gist, Hawesville, Ky.

Truth is more of a stranger than fiction.—Chicago Daily News.

Anxiety never yet successfully bridged over any chasm.—Ruffini.

CATARRH THIRTY YEARS.

The Remarkable Experience of a Prominent Statesman—Congressman Meekison Gives Peruna a High Endorsement.



Congressman Meekison of Ohio.

Hon. David Meekison is well known not only in his own State, but throughout America. He was elected to the Fifty-fifth Congress by a very large majority, and is the acknowledged leader of his party in his section of the State. Only one flaw marred the otherwise complete success of this rising statesman. Catarrh with its insidious approach and tenacious grasp, was his only unconquered foe. For thirty years he waged unsuccessful warfare against this personal enemy. At last Peruna came to the rescue. He writes:

"I have used several bottles of Peruna and I feel greatly benefited thereby from my catarrh of the head. I feel encouraged to believe that if I use it a short time longer I will be fully able to eradicate the disease of thirty years' standing."—David Meekison, Member of Congress.

If you do not derive prompt and satisfactory results from the use of Peruna, write at once to Dr. Hartman, giving full statement of your case and he will be pleased to give you his valuable advice gratis.

Address Dr. Hartman, President of The Hartman Sanitarium, Columbus, Ohio.

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