

**The Mouse's Thanksgiving.**

"Twas Thanksgiving Day, and a little mouse  
sat busily thinking alone in her house.  
The little mouse-babies had gone out to play  
with the gray mouse's children just over the  
way.

And O, how they wanted a Thanksgiving  
treat!  
But there wasn't a crumb in the cupboard to  
eat.  
Mouse sat a few minutes, then ran through  
the entry  
And down the long stairs and into the pantry.  
There were puddings and pies and cake on the  
shelf;  
The mouse-mother thought she would just  
help herself.  
She took a small piece of everything there;  
Then fastened the closet and ran up the stair.  
She put on the table bread, butter and cheese,  
Some nice jelly-roll and a tart, if you please.  
The little mouse-babies came home very soon,  
Each put on her bib and took her small spoon.  
Then they ate and they nibbled, they nibbled  
and ate,  
Not a crumb did they leave upon saucer or  
plate.  
And they said as they put spoons and bibs all  
away.  
"Twas the jolliest kind of a Thanksgiving Day."  
—Ellen A. Holmes, in Our Little Men and  
Women.

**A THANKSGIVING RIDE.**

"The long storm is over at last, but how the wind does blow," remarked Jessie MacDonald, glancing out of the window at the rapidly scudding clouds overhead.

"Yes, we shall have a cold day for Thanksgiving," replied her mother; and she sighed as an unusually fierce blast shook the old red frame house, and her thoughts flew to her absent husband, who, if still in the land of the living, was probably tossing about on the high, tempestuous seas. But nearly a year had elapsed since any news had been heard of brave, warm-hearted Sandy MacDonald, and a vague fear, as well as the gaunt wolf Poverty, was stealthily but surely creeping into the little household of women and children, waiting and watching for the son, husband and father among the fair New England hills.

"Aye, aye; to-morrow is Thanksgiving, sure enough," chimed in the old Scotch grandmother. "Sandy loved the day as well as though he were a born Yankee like you, Susan; but I'm thinking it will be a sorry feast we'll have this year, with him away and ne'er a pasty in the pantry, nor a bubblyjock (Scotch for turkey) in the barnyard."

"Yes, the luck of the MacDonalds sailed away in the Heather-bell!" responded her daughter-in-law, sadly.

"Do you mean, mother, that we are to have no Thanksgiving dinner at all?" cried thirteen-year-old Chatty, who at that moment appeared.

"Corn beef and cabbage, perhaps, but there is no money to spend on delicacies. Mrs. Peterkin promised me a young turkey, but the week's storm has prevented me sending for it."

"Let me go now, then," said Chatty.

"Why, child, you would be blown away!" said her mother, while Jessie shivered, saying, "Tomboys may like such things, but I would not stir out to-day for all the turkeys in the country."

"Oh! I'm strong," laughed Chatty, "and I love to feel as though I was a leaf tossed about by the wind. Then I have an errand of my own. I want to call on Mrs. Jellife and ask her for two or three of her crickets, Dan says they are overrun with."

"Crickets! And what would you do with them?" asked Jessie.

"Let them sing on the hearth, of course. They sound so cheery; and besides, you know, they are said to bring good luck to a house; and I'm sure we need it bad enough."

"But the Jellife farm is half a mile farther than the Peterkin's and beyond the railroad bridge," protested her mother.

"I shall not mind that if I can get my lucky crickets, and I will stop for the turkey on my way back. Do let me go, mamma dear."

Mrs. MacDonald could rarely refuse any request of bonny, auburn-haired Chatty, and she now yielded, although reluctantly.



She wrapped the plaid about the bright head and slender figure.

"You must wear my plaid, then, bairnie," said the grandmother, and she hobbled off to bring her tartan scarf—a relic of her early home in the land of "hills and braes"—and wrapped it about the bright head and slender figure, crossing, and tying it carefully behind.

Five minutes later, then, Chatty was speeding up the country road, fairly flying indeed, for the wind was in her back and helped her on her way.

"Chatty should have been a boy," Sandy MacDonald had often said; and fragile, ladylike Jessie frequently found fault with her young sister for climbing trees and fences, playing ball with the country lads, and even indulging in stolen rides on the bare backs of the horses which had been turned out to pasture by the neighboring farmers. She was indeed a fearless little horse-woman, and her most ardent desire was to own a spirited animal of her very own.

"If father would but come home, it would be the best Thanksgiving we could have; for he has been gone so long—so very long!—more than eighteen months," said the girl to herself, as she turned into a lonely road leading to the

eyes as she thought it might be they should never see the gallant captain of the Heather-Bell again.—"But what is that?"—A rushing, roaring sound fell on her ears, and, wondering, Chatty hurried forward until, on reaching the railroad bridge that in a secluded spot spanned the Five Forks, a scene of devastation suddenly burst upon her view.

The heavy November rains—longer and more severe than had been known in many years—had swollen the small river to an enormous height. It had overflowed the banks, and now appeared a broad and really imposing stream, that rushed turbulently along, bearing on its heaving bosom a motley mass of flotsam and jetsam that it was whirling angrily onward towards the sea.

"Why, the water is nearly up to the railing!" exclaimed Chatty in surprise, as with some misgivings she stepped upon the weather-beaten old bridge and picked her way along the iron track. There was no danger of a train at this hour; but it was rather frightful to hear that seething, boiling torrent directly beneath her and feel the wooden structure vibrate and quiver like a creature in distress. It was with a sigh of relief that she touched Mother Earth once more and hastened up the hill to the Jellife farm, for there was not another person in sight, most of the men and boys of the rural district having gone to assist at the village, where there was serious apprehension of an overflow and much destruction of property.

Chatty found the usually cheerful, busy farmer's wife standing idly by her kitchen window. She welcomed her young visitor cordially saying, "I'm so glad to see some one, for I am all alone in the house, and that noisy water out there makes me as nervous as a cat. Such a flood has never been known in the fall of the year before; and Jake Spindle, the peddler, just came down from Millville, and says they are afraid there the dam will give way. If it does, there is no telling where the damage will stop."

"But this house is too high up for the water to reach it, surely," said Chatty.

"Yes, thank Heaven! And with the men folks all away at market, too! But the old bridge may go. It is a rickety affair at the best, and the railway company have been warned of it again and again. I believe men are coming to repair it next week if it holds together so long. But sit down by the fire, Chatty, and try a piece of my pumpkin pie. I made six this morning for Thanksgiving."

The little girl gladly did so, and while enjoying her collation became so interested in her hostess' conversation that she quite forgot her errand, until a cheerful chirp, chirp fell upon her ear.

"Oh, there are the crickets singing," she exclaimed. "And that reminds me I came over on purpose, Mrs. Jellife, to beg you to give me two or three of them. They are said to be so lucky to have on the hearth."

"Of course I will—a dozen if you like," and the renal dame bustled about, catching the merry little insects and popping them into a box, which Chatty tucked away in her pocket as carefully as though it contained gold dust.

"Thank you so much, Mrs. Jellife; but it is getting dusk, and I must start towards home, as I don't care to cross the bridge again after dark."

"Good-bye, then, and I hope the crickets may bring you a world of good luck."

"I wish they would bring my father home," said Chatty; but at that instant a crash and a louder and more deafening roar made both start and rush to the window in affright.

"The dam must have given way!" exclaimed Mrs. Jellife, white to the very lips; and peering out they beheld the terrible force of an uncontrollable element.

What had gone before seemed mere child's play, for now, with the volume of Niagara and the din of a thousand water fends, the seething torrent came foaming, dashing, leaping downwards, carrying all before it and sending up dense clouds of steamy spray; while, as they watched, they saw it strike the bridge—saw the timbers tremble and sway, and then, crushed and swept from their moorings, go tossing like a cockle-shell out of sight.

"Five minutes later, and I should have been on it," whispered Chatty, turning pale at the thought.

"Yes, I came in good time for you; but I am afraid for the evening express. It is due here at quarter of six, and there is no time to stop the train after it rounds the curve, when the engineer can see what has occurred."

"But will no one send word to the next station?" asked Chatty, looking up aghast.

"I can't say. 'Tis a lonely spot, and few can know what has happened, while all the men are away at market or helping in the village. Heaven have mercy on the poor souls coming home to spend their Thanksgiving!"

"It is dreadful! Oh, Mrs. Jellife lend me a horse, and I will ride over to Cranston and carry the news myself!"

"You, child! Are you crazy? It is just three miles, and it is on the stroke of five now."

"But I must try, anyway; and I believe I can do it. Think if you had any friend on that train! May I have Whitefoot?"

"Whitefoot has gone to market, and so have Jerry and all the rest. There is not a horse in the stable except Wildfire, and nobody can ride him but Dan. The men don't dare touch him."

"I am used to horses. Give me some sugar, and I will see what I can do."

"It is no use; you could never saddle the critter." But, nevertheless, Mrs. Jellife brought out some lumps of sugar and followed the girl to the barn, where in one of the stalls stood a large, powerful black horse.

He eyed them viciously, and tried to bite Chatty when she ventured to pat his nose; but, instead of the little hand, his jaws came together on a sweet lump she had deftly slipped into his open mouth, which so astonished him that he submitted, in his amazement, to be led out and having the saddle placed on his back; but when she attempted to

back his ears, and was evidently preparing to kick.

"You will have to hold his head, Mrs. Jellife," said Chatty; and in fear and trembling that good woman took hold of the halter.

Soothing words and the persuasive power of sugar were again brought into requisition, and Wildfire, who was blessed with an uncommonly sweet tooth, began to feel more amiable as he crunched the delicious morsels, until, with the last lump, in went the curb bit; and Chatty felt she had gained a victory as she fastened the buckles and sprang lightly into the saddle. In an instant Wildfire was upright, dancing on two legs, roaring and plunging madly, and then, with a sudden swerve, bolted out into the fast gathering twilight.

"You will be killed! Come back! Oh, come back!" wailed Mrs. Jellife, frantically. But Chatty hardly heard her as she was borne swiftly down the hill, her whole attention being occupied with endeavoring to keep her seat and guide the fiery beast in the right direction. Chatty had good Scotch grit, however, and had not ridden bareback for nothing. So she now set her teeth hard, grasped the reins firmly, and flew over the ground like the wind that howled above her head.

Could she reach Cranston in season? was her one thought, for the saddling had necessarily been a work of time. But what a ride that was! Now going with such swiftness she felt that she must be hurried into space; now floundering in mud-holes; now swaying backwards while Wildfire pawed the air. Once she had to ford a stream where the water came up to the girths, and she could only cling closely to the horse's neck. Every moment seemed an hour. She had attempted a short cut across the lots, and all at once there arose before her a high stone wall that she had entirely forgotten. Could Wildfire take it? Her heart was in her throat; but she



Her heart was in her throat; but she braced herself for the leap.

braced herself for the leap. Wildfire paused, breathing heavily, hesitated, and then, lightly as a bird, vaulted gracefully over. It is nearly dark, but the lights of Cranston can be seen glimmering in the distance! "Get up! Get up, Wildfire!" urges Chatty impatiently, for the horse, having expended his superfluous energy, is beginning to quiet down. Her plaid falls back, her long hair floats on the evening breeze and her pulses beat wildly. A bright spot like a red and fiery eye suddenly shines across the fields. It is the head-light of the engine. The train is already at the refreshment station, where they linger ten minutes for supper. O! if it should start before she gets there! "Hurry, hurry, Wildfire," she screams, although the horse is almost running. She hears the whistle, hears the bell sound the signal for departure, and, carried out of herself, stands up in the saddle, shouts aloud and waves her plaid, in the hope of attracting attention. The long refreshment counter has been swept clean, and the passengers are hurrying to the cars, when all pause in surprise at a huge black steed that comes dashing on to the platform, stopping so suddenly that the little rider loses her hold, flies over his head and is caught in the arms of a tall man with bushy whiskers, while she cries: "Stop! stop! the railroad bridge is down and you will be lost if you go on."

The excitement is intense. Passengers and employes crowd around; but she hears only one voice, which exclaims, "Why, its Chatty, my little Chatty!" and now that danger is past, she gives out and faints away in her father's arms, for the tall man is no other than Captain MacDonald, given back to home and family from the perils of the deep. And very proud he is of his young daughter, when, restored to consciousness, she tells the story of the flood, and receives the thanks and blessings of the grateful travelers. What a Thanksgiving that was in the old red house when the crickets—not a whit the worse for their journey in Chatty's pocket—chirped a merry chorus on the hearth. Chatty nestled close to her father's side and beamed with happiness, while the dear old grandmother, her mother and Jessie fairly scintillated with delight. Mrs. Peterkin's turkey did not grace the feast; but a far larger and plumper bird, over which Sandy related his adventurous story of shipwreck, fever, and weeks of insensibility in a foreign hospital, and lastly of a lucky stroke which sent him home with honor and fortune.

And just as Chatty thought her cup of happiness was running over, another drop was added in the arrival of a beautiful little lithe-limbed steed, "the gift of the grateful passengers of the rescued train to the heroine of the Five Forks."

"The dear little crickets brought us a shower of good luck after all, did they not, Grandma?" asked she, gaily. "Yes, my bairnie, so far as if you had not gone for them yesternight the rest would not have followed; but much more I fancy is owing to the bravery of one wee lassie named Chatty."—*Agnes Cary Sage, in American Agriculturist.*

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"Why so?"

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