



THE KIND DEEDS MESSENGER

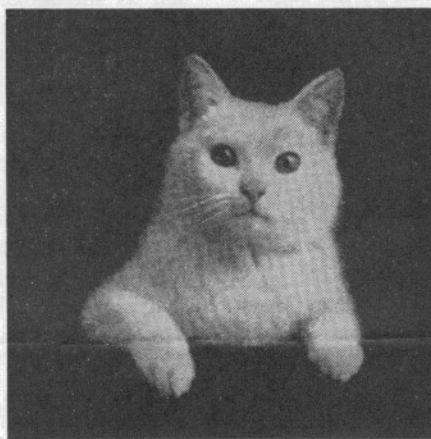
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A HAPPY THANKSGIVING

By ANNA HARRIS SMITH



IT WAS the night before Thanksgiving and cold enough to snow. The wind was blowing so hard in gusts that it sounded as if it were trying to force the blinds off the houses and drive every living creature into some shelter to escape it.

In the dining-room of a small city house, on an unfashionable street, a boy and girl, Martin and Ruth Belton, were sitting. On one end of the dining table was a plate, cup and saucer set neatly on a tray cloth; on the other end were some books which the boy was studying, though he got up every now and then and joined his sister, who was looking out the window.

"Mother is late tonight," he said at last. "I think it's too bad to keep her so late the night before Thanksgiving."

"I suppose she is finishing a dress somebody is going to wear tomorrow," said Ruth. "Everybody but us seems to be going away or having company. We shan't have any good time. We've nowhere to go to and nobody to visit us."

"We shall be lucky," said Martin, "if we have a Thanksgiving dinner. Mother said she couldn't afford to get much of a dinner unless she is paid tonight for her work."

A gust of wind swept down the street just then and rattled the blinds. When it died out Ruth said: "Hark! I thought I heard a cat crying in the back yard. It may be that poor little cat that we saw the other day running away from our garbage pail. She jumped up on the

fence and went over into the alley. I suppose she's cold and hungry. Mother said some family must have moved and left her, and she wished we could coax her into our shed. I'm going to see if she is in the yard now."

Martin and Ruth went into the little kitchen and looked out the windows, which opened on the back yard. In the moonlight they saw a cat crouched up against the shed door mewing pitifully. "Why, she is asking us to let her in," said Martin. "I'll go and open the door."

"Better let me go," said Ruth. "Cats and dogs that are homeless are apt to be afraid of boys, they chase them so."

"I never chase them," said Martin. "I wouldn't be so mean as to chase a poor, hungry, homeless cat or dog."

"I know you wouldn't, but the cat doesn't know it. You go and get a saucer of bread and milk. I'm sure mother would let us take it for her, and I'll try to coax her in," and, saying this, Ruth went into the shed and opened the door into the yard very softly and quietly.

The cat did not run away far, only a step or two; she looked up into Ruth's face and again mewed very mournfully. Ruth held the door open and stepped back a little out of sight, calling gently: "Pussy, pussy," and the cat came in very cautiously, crouching down, ready to run if anyone made a sudden motion to catch her.

Martin had the kitchen door open a little way, and now, without coming into the shed himself, he handed Ruth the saucer of bread and milk. Ruth put it on the floor, as far from the outside door as she could, and after

another mew, and another look into Ruth's kind face, the starving cat ventured to approach the warm food. She was so hungry, and lapped it down so eagerly, that Ruth had no trouble in getting to the outside door and closing it.

"Now we have got her! Won't mother be glad!" exclaimed Ruth.

"And now we've got a Thanksgiving visitor," laughed Martin, as the two children went back into the kitchen shivering, for the shed was very cold, and closed the door.

"When mother comes," said Ruth, "I think she will get her in here where it is warm, but if we take her in now she might be wild and run out when we open the door for mother. At any rate, it is better for the poor pussy to be in our shed than out of doors, and the warm bread and milk will do her good."

As the children were about to sit down again the bell rang, and both Martin and Ruth rushed to open the door. A slender little woman, loaded with bundles, stood on the threshold and was dragged into the hall by the eager children, who, without giving her a chance to speak, took her bundles from her and, kissing her cold cheeks, led her into the warm dining-room.

"Dear mother you are so late! The kettle is boiling, and I will make the tea in a minute," said Ruth. "And I will toast the bread," said Martin.

"I've had my supper, my dears, and a very good supper, too, but you may make a cup of tea for me, Ruth, I hope you had your supper long ago."

"Oh, yes; we had ours at six, as you told us. Let me take your hat and jacket, mamma. I know you are tired," said Martin.

"I am tired, but you don't know how it rests me to come home to such dear, thoughtful children," Mrs. Belton said, "and I am happy because Mrs. Tolman was so kind, and paid me generously, so I can afford a good dinner for my dear children. After I have had my tea you shall help me stone raisins, and pick over the currants, and make cranberry jelly, and I will make an old-fashioned plum pudding for you this very evening."

Ruth set the tea on the table and then helped Martin open packages of nuts, raisins, apples, oranges, cranberries, squash and sweet potatoes. They spread out the inviting fruit and vegetables on the kitchen table; then Ruth remembered the little stranger in the shed.

"I have got that poor pussy you pitied so much. She is in the shed, but it is so cold there I think you will want to bring her in here."

"Oh, I'm very glad, Ruthie. I have been thinking since I came in about the poor animals out in the cold tonight that have no one to feed them or give them any shelter from the storm that is coming on, and I was wishing so much that I could get some of them and give them shelter and a Thanksgiving dinner. I bought some meat on purpose to put out in our yard, thinking we might get that very cat you have taken in."

Mrs. Belton went out in the shed, Ruth holding a light, and they found the cat crouching down in one corner on an old mat. She cried when she saw them, but did not move. Mrs. Belton stooped down and stroked her gently. "Run in and get that basket in the closet under the stairs," she said, "and put that old piece of blanket in it that I took off the ironing board yesterday. Pussy isn't well, and she needs a bed. I am so thankful you took her in."

In a few moments Ruth came back with the basket.

"That is a fine bed for her, mamma," she said.

"Put it on the floor, Ruth, and go back with the light; I'll follow," and Mrs. Belton, lifting the cat carefully, put her in the basket, carried her into the large closet under the stairs, which was warm and snug, and partly closed the door, saying: "We won't disturb her now. I will give her some warm milk again before I go to bed, and I hope she will be all right in the morning."

II.

Thanksgiving morning dawned cloudy and cold. The children were up early, and when they came downstairs they found their mother busy cooking up good things for the day.

"If we only were going to have some company," said Ruth, "it would seem more like Thanksgiving, but we can have a good time anyway, because we will all be together." "All but one," Mrs. Belton said sadly to herself as she looked up at her husband's picture on the wall, but she would not let her lasting grief sadden the day for her children.

"We have got company, my dears," she said cheerfully; "we have three Thanksgiving guests." "Where are they?" Ruth asked.

Mrs. Belton opened the closet door wide and a loud purring was heard.

"Come here and take a little peep, but don't touch," she said, and there in the basket was the homeless cat, her eyes no longer wild and despairing, but full of mother-love and peace as she washed the faces of two of the sweetest little kittens the children said they had ever seen.

"Oh, mother! Aren't they cunning? How thankful I am we took her in last night," cried Ruth.

"The little kitties would surely have been dead this morning if you had not listened to the poor creature's cry for help, and she would have suffered worse than death," said Mrs. Belton. "How people can be so cruel as to desert a cat or a dog or even to turn one away from their door is something I can't understand. They don't realize how much they can suffer."

"Now, children, I am going to ask you to invite another guest. You know Mrs. Bruce, who has a room on the third floor, is very deaf, and old, and lonely, and I found she was going to be alone today. Let us invite her to take dinner with us at five this afternoon. That is the most lonesome time, when it is growing dark and one has been alone all day. Are you willing?"

Neither of the children spoke for a moment, then Ruth said slowly: "If I were deaf, and poor, and old, I would like someone to invite me to dinner. It won't be quite so jolly for us, but I am willing."

"And you, Martin?" said Mrs. Belton.

"Yes, I consent, if you and Ruth say so."

"Then I will write a note and send it up by you, Ruth, and you may wait for an answer."

Mrs. Belton sent up the note, and Ruth came back smiling. "She was so glad she thanked me over and over again and sent you this note."

All the note said was: "You are very kind and thoughtful, and I will accept with pleasure."

"So we shall have a party after all," said Ruth, "Mrs. Bruce, and Mrs. Pussy and her two babies."

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HIGHLIGHTS FROM DR. FOX'S HOSPITAL

WHAT A PUP CAN DO FOR A BOY



The doctor pulled down the shades, placed his office chairs in position and with a weary yawn started for the light switch. The day's work was over. His little patients had been made comfortable for the night.

Here a crash sounded! A splintering of glass! Dr. Fox, turning hastily, saw that a large stone had been thrown through the plate glass of his front door, shattering it into pieces.

He could hear excited voices—the patter of running feet. Unlocking the broken door, the veterinarian dashed out and looked about him.

A friend of his was just getting out of a car at the curb. "What's the matter?" asked the man. Dr. Fox hurriedly explained.

"There they go," he added, pointing to some figures running rapidly a block or so away. Jumping into the car the two men gave chase and soon caught up with the little group, which consisted of two boys and two girls, youngsters of from twelve to fourteen years of age.

All four indignantly denied any knowledge of the broken glass. But, as the doctor asked, "Why are you running, then?" They looked confused, but had no answer.

"Well, come back to my office, anyway," declared the veterinarian. As the two men herded the children toward the automobile, the girls broke away and, running down a side street, were lost to view. The doctor let them go, but, bundling the boys into the car, they drove back to the hospital.

No sooner were they inside the office than one youngster broke down. "He did it!" he blurted, pointing to the other lad. "He threw the rock."

The boy gazed at him in deep disgust. "You would!" he exclaimed and lapsed into a sullen silence. To the doctor's questioning he gave absolutely no answer. "Not a bad looking kid," thought the man, observing with pity the hard, forbidding expression so foreign to such a young face.

Suddenly a look of dismay crossed the boy's countenance as the door opened and a young girl of about seventeen entered.

"Oh, Harry, how could you do this again?" she asked anxiously, and dropping into a nearby chair began to cry. A dull flush rose to the boy's face, but he did not reply; merely looked down.

Dr. Fox touched the girl gently on the shoulder. "Tell me," he said. "Perhaps I can help."

The girl looked up in astonishment, "Why, aren't you the doctor?" she faltered, "Isn't that your door?"

"Yes, it's my door," answered he, drawing up a chair beside her. "But just suppose you forget that for a bit, and tell me why you said what you did to your brother. He is your brother, isn't he?"

The girl nodded. Then, responding to the kindly interest of the veterinarian, she told a pathetic little tale of a young girl trying to shoulder the responsibilities of the mother who had died a few years before; of striving to keep the little family together, caring and tending the two younger children, Harry and Bob; of a father who could evidently provide materially, but who could not supply the love and understanding which children need most of all.

"At first it seemed all right," she said, "but a year or so ago, Harry got in with some dreadfully rough boys, and I haven't been able to do anything with him since." Here she gave a glance of scorn at the boy who had accompanied her brother.

"Has he been in trouble before?" asked the doctor.

"Yes, for breaking a window; he's on probation now," confessed his sister.

"Well," said Dr. Fox thoughtfully, "Let's see what we can do about it. Harry," he turned to the lad, "did or did you not throw the stone that smashed that glass?"

Harry faced the doctor defiantly, but oh, what a world of unhappiness his fine, brown eyes held. "Yes, I did," he declared harshly.

"Then are you willing to pay for a new glass?" asked the doctor.

"Haven't any money," muttered the boy.

"Would your father pay?" Dr. Fox knew what the answer would be to this question, but he wanted to be sure. Both brother and sister winced, and the latter said quickly, "Oh, doctor, does father have to know? He is so hard on Harry; he doesn't seem to realize he's only a kid."

"I see!" commented the doctor, and he did see far more than those words would indicate. A father who causes fear to spring into the eyes of his children at the thought of his knowing of a mischievous deed of one of them, has failed in the essential meaning of parenthood. There can be no bond of love between them. Sorrow and shame for the disappointment a child might bring to father or mother in knowing of their misdeed, but not the stark terror that had shown in the eyes of brother and sister at the mention of their father's name.

"No wonder the boy is sullen," thought the doctor. "Perhaps you could help around here, Harry," he suggested. "Do you like dogs?"

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A HAPPY THANKSGIVING

(Continued from page 2)

It was a happy day for all, and after dinner, which they all enjoyed, Mrs. Bruce told them very interesting stories about what she did, and the pets she had when she was a little girl, and the children were delighted with her company.

"It has been such a happy day," said Ruth when Mrs. Bruce had left them, "and Martin and I both thought we wouldn't have any Thanksgiving at all."

"I am sure the greatest reason why we have all been so happy today," said Mrs. Belton, "was because we

were giving happiness as well as receiving it."

As Mrs. Belton said this there was silence, and in the stillness they plainly heard a steady, gentle murmur of Thanksgiving from the closet. They stepped softly to the door and looked in a moment upon Mother Pussy lying in her basket and purring happily with two little heads resting on her soft, warm, loving heart.

"Good night, dear Pussy! Good night, dearest Mother," the children said as they went smiling up to bed."

WHAT A PUP CAN DO FOR A BOY

(Continued from page 3)

"Don't know, never had a dog," said the lad, shortly. While the girl added, "Father doesn't like animals; says they are dirty."

"Oho, really!" Dr. Fox exclaimed. A thought suddenly struck him—it might be—why not try?

"Come out in the yard with me, Harry; I want to show you something," he said. The boy hesitated, but seeing that the doctor was smiling at him he got up and followed him into the back yard. Turning on a powerful electric light that illuminated the out-door kennels, Dr. Fox led the way to a cozy dog house where a mother dog was sleeping with a couple of big, floppy, brown and white puppies.

"What do you think of these?" he asked. Harry squatted down beside the doctor to look more closely at the little family. For a moment he watched in silence, while breathlessly the veterinarian scanned his face. Was the hard expression changing? It was!

The doctor lifted up one of the puppies. "Here, Harry," he said, "hold this fellow. I'll be back in a moment," and thrusting the dog into the boy's arms he hurriedly returned to the ward. Standing just inside the door, the man chuckled to himself. He had seen the almost involuntary clasping of the animal to the lad's breast, the amazed, yet eager look in his eyes.

"I'll wait a few minutes and then go back," thought the doctor, wise in the ways of boys and dogs. But when he re-entered the yard more had happened than even he had anticipated.

Harry was seated flat on the ground in front of the kennel; the puppy, tightly clasped in his arms, was gently licking his face, while the boy, bent over him, was sobbing as though his heart would break. The floodgates were down. The feeling of misunderstanding, the hurt and grievance of years were being washed away in a torrent of healing tears.

"Poor little motherless kid," said Dr. Fox to himself, a knot in his own throat that was hard to swallow.

"Would you like to have that pup for your own, son?" he asked.

"Father wouldn't let me have a dog," was the muffled reply.

"Oh, yes, he will!" declared the doctor.

And then and there the man and boy had a real talk, the kind that clears up many a situation that might otherwise lead to sad complications.

Afterwards, Dr. Fox sent Beth and Harry home with their new pet, while he and his friend went to see their father who was still working in his place of business. It wasn't easy. The man was all the doctor had imagined he would be, but little by little they won him over.

"If you think that an 'ornery pup can change that boy, why of course he can keep him," finally declared Harry's father, and Dr. Fox gave a sigh of relief. The battle was won.

Harry was to come for a few hours every Saturday to work for the veterinarian until the price of the broken glass was paid, and a very happy youngster, whose brown eyes no longer held the hurt, sullen look, turned up at the end of the week, glad and eager to help the doctor.

He has joined the Boy Scouts now, and he and his dad have begun to go places together. When father and son are friends, a boy is safe.

But who really did the work?

Only a pup.

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NATIONAL CHILD WELFARE ASS'N.

PROCLAIMS THAT—

Cruelty or indifference to our animal friends is the unfailing mark of a backward nation. It is also, in the individual, the sure sign of an unawakened imagination and an uncultured heart.

An understanding, sympathetic, protective attitude toward animals should be aroused in every child, not only for the sake of the animals, but equally for the sake of the child himself. Ultimately, also, this attitude will benefit the nation, for the love and protection which the child extends to his dumb playmates will, later, widen into a finer, higher citizenship.