



THE KIND DEEDS MESSENGER

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THE HISTORY OF THANKSGIVING

Compiled by DOLORES WILKENS KENT

THROUGHOUT the ages the nations of the world have celebrated a harvest festival. Far back in the time of the Canaanites, we read in the Bible, in the book of Judges, that "the people went out into the field and gathered their vineyards, and trod the grapes and held festival and went into the house of their God and did eat and drink."

Later on this same harvest celebration was kept by the Hebrews as an act of worship to Jehovah and was called "The Feast of Tabernacles," because everyone lived in booths, or tents, during the festival, in memory of the many years when the nation had had no settled home. Nothing could have been more fitting than these thanksgivings after harvest which were the principal festivals of the Jewish year.

The harvest celebration of ancient Greece was like the Jewish one—it was the feast of Demeter, the goddess of harvests, and was celebrated in Athens, in November, and by married women only. Two wealthy and distinguished matrons were chosen to represent the women by preparing the sacred meal, corresponding to our Thanksgiving dinner. Afterwards all the married women joined in a long procession and, laughing and rejoicing, marched to the temple of Demeter where they celebrated for three days. Upon their return to Athens a general holiday was declared.

The Romans also worshipped this harvest goddess under the name of Ceres. Her festival occurred yearly on October 4th, and was called the Cerelia. There were processions in the fields with music and rustic sports, and the ceremonies ended with the usual feast of thanksgiving.

The English Maypole is a relic of Apollo worship. It is adorned with garlands of flowers on May Day to welcome the approach of the Sun, or Apollo. A meal of new corn is also eaten as an offering to the god.

There were different ways of celebrating in the



English counties, but Thanksgiving always began when the last load of grain was carried from the field, and ended with a bountiful dinner at the farmer's home.

In some parts of Suffolk and Essex there still remains the old custom of "Hallooing Largess."

On the last day of the harvesting the best reaper, the one who has cut the most grain, is named "the lord." He is placed on top of the last

load of grain. The other reapers with neighboring men, women and children, form in a procession behind the wagon, carrying sheaves of wheat, green boughs, and waving handkerchiefs as, laughing and singing, they march on to the farmhouse, where a bountiful dinner has been prepared for them called "The Horkey."

After all have dined, the reapers climb a high hill and from the summit shout as loud as possible, "Hallo! Largess!" When they yell at the top of their lungs the farmer throws money—largess—to them.

In Scotland a special service is held in the village church, which is beautifully decorated with fruit and flowers for the occasion. This service is followed by a dinner in a tent or some large building. Rural sports come afterward and a "tea-drinking" for the women.

There was a good deal of unhappiness in England in the early part of 1600. Many of the people had suffered imprisonment and persecution by the King for not worshipping in just the way he wished them to. They had their own prayers and religious meetings of which the King did not approve. As the result of this trouble a great many of the English people fled to Holland where they could live and worship as they pleased. They called themselves Pilgrims.

Living in Holland the Pilgrims learned to enjoy the holiday of October 3rd, which the Dutch celebrated in honor of their deliverance from the Spanish. This feast occurred at the city of Leyden, and was one of the most popular ones of the whole year.

When the Pilgrims came to America it was natural that they would establish a time for thanksgiving and rejoicing for their first harvest, which had yielded so well.

The voyage from Holland to America in the famous ship, the Mayflower, was a very hard one, and after many dangers the hundred men, women and children on board landed on Plymouth Rock, December 21, 1620.

The women and children lived on the ship, while the men went back and forth each day, building shelters on shore. Before long they had completed a "common house," where those who had become ill from the hardships were placed. They had also built two rows of houses, with a wide street between.

In March the whole company landed with all their stores and provisions. In April the Mayflower sailed away.

During the hard conditions throughout the voyage and the winter over half of the little company of people had sickened and died, but with the coming of spring the sick improved and the brave men and women, guided by Governor Bradford and Captain Miles Standish, began to clear land for planting. The friendly Indians taught them how to plant their wheat, corn, peas and barley, and when summer came they foresaw a splendid crop.

The delightful warm weather, the wild flowers coloring the fields with rainbow hues, the cool shade of the green trees in the deep forests, and sweet song of birds made the weary Pilgrims take new heart. They soon learned to love this new land.

When autumn came, painting the forest with its crimson and gold, the corn, grain, and other harvest were gathered in. The woods gave many different kinds of nuts, wild berries, plums and grapes. The Pilgrims realized this was a land of abundance, and in a true spirit of thanksgiving the Governor appointed three days in which they should thank God, who had so blessed them.

Great preparations were made by the women, including the fair Priscilla (whose pretty love story with John Alden is so well known), cooked, baked and worked until wonderful feasts were ready for all the Pilgrims and their Indian friends. Chief Massasoit and many of his tribe were invited, and for three days they celebrated in friendship and thanksgiving.

This was the first Thanksgiving holiday in America, and from it dates all our Thanksgivings, even down to the one we hope to celebrate on the last Thursday of this month.

GIVING THANKS

(Anon)

From "Thanksgiving" by Schauffler.

For the hay and the corn and the wheat that is reaped,
For the labor well done, and the barns that are heaped,
For the sun and the dew and the sweet honey-comb,
For the rose and the song, and the harvest brought home,
Thanksgiving! Thanksgiving!

For the trade and the skill and the wealth in our land,
For the cunning and strength of the workingman's hand,
For the good that our artists and poets have taught,
For the friendship that hope and affection have brought,
Thanksgiving! Thanksgiving!

For the homes that with purest affection are blest,
For the season of plenty and well deserved rest,
For our country extending from sea to sea,
For the land that is known as the "Land of the Free,"
Thanksgiving! Thanksgiving!

An article, "California's First Thanksgiving," by William Warren Ferrier, was published in the Berkeley daily *Gazette*, on November 26, 1924. The following quotations are from it:

"California had not yet been admitted to the Union, although matters were then being arranged, when California's first Thanksgiving Proclamation was sent from Monterey, October 24, 1849. It was signed by General Riley, of the United States Army, Governor of California, and by Captain H. W. Halleck, Secretary of State. It was written in Spanish as well as English, the first announcement to the Spanish-English speaking people of California of a custom dating from the time when the Pilgrim Fathers were laying the foundation on our New England shores of a nation whose westward march had finally reached California.

"In 1849 there were only nine Protestant churches in the state, five in San Francisco, two in Sacramento, one in San Jose, and one in Benicia. The total membership was 250.

"There were only three newspapers in California, the *Alta California*, and the *Pacific News* in San Francisco, and the *Placer Times* in Sacramento. These did not mention the celebration of our first Thanksgiving. But in the journal of Rev. Samuel H. Willey, he writes, 'A clear, bright day here in Monterey, where so few of the population know of the custom of keeping Thanksgiving, but we few Americans worshipped at eleven o'clock, and afterwards at our home had a social dinner composed of such good things as could be had in Monterey.'

"The Rev. Albert Williams, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of San Francisco, also held services in the tent where his members were worshipping at the time, a bountiful dinner being afterwards served at the home of one of the members.

"Some celebrations were doubtless held in Sacramento, Benicia and San Jose, but no record of them can be found. Dr. Samuel H. Willey was the foremost founder and upbuilder of the College of California, which is now a part of the University of California."



WHY THE MOORE BOYS MISSED THEIR THANKSGIVING DINNER



By DOLORES WILKENS KENT

It was Thanksgiving morning, and as Mrs. Moore bustled about her home preparing the dinner, her two boys, John and David, aged twelve and fourteen, finished packing a large basket with all the delicious things that make a holiday dinner. There was a poor family across the town with whom Mrs. Moore always shared her good fortune.

"Be home early, boys," she said, "we'll have dinner at two o'clock. It looks as though it might snow, too," she added as, standing in the doorway, she watched her sons start off.

"We'll be back in time, mother, don't worry. We don't want to be late for your Thanksgiving dinner. A little snow won't hurt us, though," and laughingly they waved goodby.

John and David walked briskly down the street carrying the basket between them. They had gone a little over half the way when, coming to the north end of the town, they started to cross a bridge. Suddenly they heard a dog barking, and on the farther bank of the river saw that a small crowd of people had gathered.

Stopping, the boys looked closely to see what the people were gazing at. In the middle of the stream an Airdale dog was barking wildly, only his head projecting through a small hole in the ice. He was unable to get his paws upon the edge and was barking for help.

The crowd grew in numbers every moment. Without a word, John and David hurried over the bridge and joined the group. A man was trying to reach the dog with a ladder, but the ice was too thin and could not bear the weight.

Another began walking cautiously toward him, but when a few feet from the bank the ice gave way beneath him and he swam ashore dripping wet.

"What's all this? What's happening here?" A voice of authority spoke just behind David, and a big, burly policeman shouldered his way to the front.

Everyone began talking at once; a dozen different suggestions were offered, but none seemed feasible. While they were talking John and David had spoken

quietly to each other and now, setting the basket down, they asked a man in the crowd to keep an eye on it for a moment as they would be right back; they ran swiftly off.

The policeman said there was nothing to do except to keep the poor animal from suffering. Another young man made an attempt to crawl out on the ice, again it broke—and he had to swim back shivering with cold.

The dog was growing weaker, his barks were turning into whines. Suddenly, with a gesture of determination, the policeman drew his gun and shot twice at the dog. He failed each time and before he could try again the people had protested so indignantly that he hesitated, when a shout went up from some one further down the river, "Look! Look!" Everyone turned in that direction—a small rowboat was coming toward them, cutting its way through the ice as it came. Within it, rowing energetically were two boys—our friends, John and David Moore.

Within a few seconds they reached the now exhausted dog, who could only whimper as they lifted him into the boat. A shout of joy went up as the boys and the rescued dog reached the land, and willing hands assisted them up onto the bank.

"Please take the boat back to Winton's boat house," said John to the policeman. "There was no one around when we took the boat. We must get this dog where we can care for it right away."

"Go ahead, boys, I'll attend to the boat," answered the "arm-of-the-law," with a sheepish grin, as he realized that two young boys had accomplished what he and all the grown men in the crowd had failed to do.

How they did run! David had grabbed the basket from the hands of the kind man who had guarded it for them, and John, holding the dog close in his arms wrapped in a big scarf a woman had donated, they raced as fast as their legs could carry them to the home of the friends they had started out to visit.

Poor old Mr. and Mrs. Mason were terribly frightened at first when the lads dashed in demanding "hot blankets," but in no time the suffering animal was rubbed as dry as possible and, wrapped in a woollen blanket, was placed in front of the stove. When he slowly began to lap the warm milk they heated for him, the boys knew that their rescue was not going to fail.

Leaving him to rest, they went into the front room and told the whole tale to Mr. and Mrs. Mason.

"Bless your hearts," said the old lady gently, "your kindness in bringing us the lovely basket helped to save a poor dog, too."

They had to stay a long time, as the dog settled down in a heavy sleep, and the boys didn't want to wake him up, fearing that he might get pneumonia if he was taken out into the cold too soon.

It was four o'clock when a knock was heard and Mr. Mason, opening the front door, admitted a very worried mother.

"Have you seen—" she began, when John and David sprang forward and threw their arms about her.

"Mother, dear, we just couldn't help it," they cried, and one word falling on top of another, they managed to tell the whole story.

Mrs. Moore fairly cried with relief and pride when she learned what her boys had done.

"I am so glad and proud that you had the heart and brains to think out a way to save the poor dog," she said, "even if you did miss your Thanksgiving dinner and scare me half to death. I couldn't wait even for a taxi and almost ran all the way, hoping and praying that you would be here."

"You're a brick, mother dear," declared David. "Come and see our dog." He looked closely at Mrs. Moore as he uttered the last words, for they had lost a dear friend and companion some years ago, and their mother had vowed as they cried over his death that she would never have a pet again.

Mrs. Moore didn't answer, but walked into the kitchen with the boys. The Airedale had wiggled free of the blanket and was lying in front of the fire. He raised his head and wagged his tail as they approached, then got up and, although a bit weak, managed to walk fairly well.

He went first to John and then David, as though greeting old friends who had helped him. Mrs. Moore had sat down in a low rocker beside the stove. The dog slowly went over to her, looked into her face and, putting his head in her lap, gave a low whine.

That was too much for Mrs. Moore, a true dog lover; she simply put her arms about him and hugged him closely.

John and David solemnly shook hands—they knew!

"Come, boys," she said, as gently putting the dog back on the floor, she rose and started to put on her wraps. "Mr. Mason, could you manage to get a taxi for us? I want to get my boys and OUR DOG home quickly."

That night as the boys lay quietly in bed, with their new pet cosily sleeping beside them on a warm blanket-bed of his own, they decided that this had been the dandiest Thanksgiving they had ever had even if they did miss their dinner.

SCHOOL CORNER

WHAT THE FRIENDSHIP OF ANIMALS MEANS TO MEN

SECOND PRIZE

By LORRAINE EVERSON, age 13, Eighth Grade,
St. Cecilia's School.

The poet Mathew Arnold wrote a lovely poem on the death of his dog, Kaiser. It seems to show that he never realized till he was gone forever what his canine friend meant to him.

"All those virtues which commend
The humbler sort who serve and tend,
Were thine in store, thou faithful friend;
What sense, what cheer
To us declining toward our end!
A mate how dear!

An animal is a friend true to the last. While other friends fall away the animal remains, blind to the faults, remembering only the kindness of his master. Content to serve humbly, seeking little, delighted with a caress from the hand he loves. His faith and affection when his master fails often serve to restore his master's hope. He is a friend, sympathetic and kind, a companion in one's loneliness. There never was an old lady living by herself who did not have at least a cat to keep her company.

The great St. Francis of Assisi shows his understanding of what animals mean to us by his love and kindness to them. We of the City of St. Francis should especially try to follow in our patron's footsteps.

Many people ill-treat animals. We might quote Saint Paul when he says of the three virtues Faith, Hope and Charity—Charity is the greatest, and say that we should be kind to animals out of charity, yet we could hardly call kindness to these faithful friends charity, as charity is giving and receiving nothing, whereas kindness to animals is giving and receiving in return life-long faithfulness and service.

Therefore we say we are kind to animals out of gratitude and appreciation to Our Creator for having bestowed on mankind these helpers and companions

and our understanding of what their friendship means to us.

We are, lastly, kind to animals out of gratitude to our Creator who bestowed them on us as helpers and companions. Let us continue daily to have a clearer understanding and a broader vision of what the "Friendship of Animals Means to Men."



WHAT IT MEANS TO BE HUMANE

THIRD PRIZE

By DOROTHY ROSE, 12 years of age, 6th Grade,
Niles Grammar School, Niles, California.

One day while we were playing near an abandoned old shack we heard a strange noise. At first it sounded like a moan coming from a human being. So we crept slowly to the spot and, to our surprise, there lay a poor stray mother-dog with her seven little puppies.

It had rained all that night, and the bed she had made for the babies and herself was wet through. The poor mother was trying to keep them warm, but she was shivering all over, and I think her moaning must of been her way of trying to attract someone's attention. When she saw us she was frightened. After we talked nicely to her, and patted her head, she became friendly.

We hurried home and returned with our little wagon and placed the babies in it. We took them home and made a warm bed for the mother and her babies. Then we brought the mother some nice, warm milk.

The little family grew very fast, and we thought that we had better find them good homes. Mother allowed me to keep one of them. I told my friends at school, and finally got all my little pals a good place to live. Then each week I checked up to see how they were all getting along, because I felt a responsibility for these helpless little creatures.