

GOOD STORIES FOR THANKSGIVING READING.

JAMIE DUGIN'S THANKSGIVING.

By COFFYN MOODY.

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Jamie Dugin stood on the platform of a little railroad station far out in the farming regions of New Jersey. He was a pale, thin little fellow of 17 years, although he looked much younger than that. And he had come from New York in order to buy a turkey for Thanksgiving day. Of course he could have purchased one in New York, but he had very little money—less than a dollar—and a big policeman had told him he could get a turkey very much cheaper on a farm than in a great city market.



"LAY A THIN, PALE LITTLE LAD, RAGGED DIRTY, MOTIONLESS."

Peter's farm, where the turkeys were kept, and Jamie's feet were blistered and sore by the time he arrived. Hardly had he walked in the front gate, however, when a great black dog, growling and snapping and showing his teeth, came bounding across the dooryard. Of course Jamie was frightened, and he climbed into the branches of an apple tree as quickly as if he were a monkey. This little boy, trembling with terror above in the branches, was so intently watching the dog that he did not notice the approach of a short, heavily-built man with bushy hair and a thick, red beard, who kicked the dog until the poor animal howled with pain and slunk away. When the dog really had gone, however, Jamie was not so frightened, and he called out:

"Are you Mister Peter?"

"Yes, I am," the red-bearded man answered, looking up in the tree. Then he caught sight of the boy's torn clothing and old shoes and he flew into a passion, shouting:

"Get out of 'at, you young tramp! Git down here quick, or I'll tear the tree up by the roots and slam ye down!"

Now, Jamie was much more afraid of this angry man than of the dog, but he was a New York street boy, who had learned a great many useful things; and one of them was the folly of letting any one see you are afraid of him, no matter how terrorized you really are. So, instead of coming down to the ground at once he sat perfectly still for a moment and then asked, as calmly as he could:

"Is this the way you treat all of your customers?"

"What's that?" said Peter.

"Is this the way you treat all of your customers? I came here to buy a turkey."

"Oh, you did?"

"Yes."

"More like to sneak in the house and steal something, you young villain. Anyhow, there ain't no turkeys for sale. The Thanksgiving lot is gone long ago to the city and them out there in the pens is sold for Christmas trade."

"Can't you let me have one?" asked the boy.

"No," said Peter.

Jamie said down to the ground and stood still for a moment, thinking deeply. Then he spoke again:

"Does that lake out there in the big field back of the trees belong to you?"

"Yes," said Peter, "but it ain't no lake—it's a duck pond."

"Well, if I can't buy a turkey can I go fishing there?"

"Fishing?" roared Peter, throwing back his head and laughing until his face was redder than his beard. "Fishing in the duck pond! Oh, dear, yes! You're welcome to all the fish you catch there and to all the turkeys that ble your bait, too!"

"Can I really?" the boy asked again, and Peter replied:

"Yes, indeed!"

Jamie went from the farm straight to a store near the railroad, where he bought six fishhooks and a long line and a bamboo rod. Then he purchased some crackers and cheese for supper, and before it was fairly dark he lay fast asleep in the hayrack of a barn near by. Half an hour after he awoke next morning he was sitting in the branches of a tree on Peter's farm. He had cut the fishing line into five pieces, and on one end of each piece had fastened a hook baited, not with work or grub, but with two or three kernels of corn. And the other end of each line was tied hard and fast to a pole, the butt of which Jamie held firmly as he sat up there in the tree. Another curious thing was that some one had sprinkled corn from the tree to the pens where the turkeys and ducks were kept; and some one had actually opened the pens! Lastly, about fifty turkeys and sixty chickens were fighting each other in efforts to gobble the corn, and they were coming from the pens toward the tree as fast as they could swallow the kernels. Jamie happened to look far across the fields and saw Peter and his wife and son drive off down the road before he had dared to try his plan. They were taking the black dog

with them, too, and nobody was left at home. There was a sudden tug at his pole, so heavy that he nearly pulled out of the tree. Then there was another and another, until three turkeys and two chickens were squawking and flapping around on the ground, as if they had suddenly gone crazy—for in swallowing kernels of corn each one of them had swallowed a fishhook. Jamie braced his feet against the trunk of the tree and held to the pole for dear life, while turkeys and chickens fought and flogged and gobbled and squawked in the most fearful manner. Then, without warning, they ceased their noise and stood perfectly still in a circle, looking at each other, black and trying to decide which was responsible for the awful state of affairs. Jamie improved the opportunity to slide down to the ground, still holding fast to his pole. Then he wrung the neck of one fowl after another and tied them together, and putting the heavy weight on his back, started for the nearer railroad station as fast as he could go.

It was not very long after this that a carriage pulled by two splendid bay horses came down the road from the opposite direction. A coachman sat on the box, and within him a lady dressed in black which made the gray streaks in her hair look almost white. A heavy veil covered her face, but tears silently stole from her closed eyes as she leaned her head back against the cushions. Her right hand held a single white rosebud. She had just placed others on a little grave. Her only child—her boy with golden hair and blue eyes—



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had been laid to rest the day before Thanksgiving of the preceding year. Suddenly her carriage stopped with such force that the horses reared, and she heard her coachman cry out:

"Quit, Peter! Leave him alone!"

The woman hurriedly looked out of her carriage, and saw the chickens and turkeys lying near her wheels. Yonder a red bearded man—his face bloodshot with rage, his lips moving involuntarily, his great hands working nervously—stood toward the road where lay a thin, pale little lad, ragged, dirty, motionless; his eyes were closed, his face was white and above his left temple there was a mark getting more and more purple.

All this the lady saw in a single instant. Then she sprang from her carriage and with one bound was by the boy's side. Her hand quickly tore open his coat and shirt and felt his heart beating.

"He's alive," she said, quietly, looking up into the man's face, as he straightened and trembled under her steady gaze. "So it's probably a long term in the penitentiary you'll get instead of being executed. I will inform my husband, the judge, when he returns home this evening."

Peter, for he was the man, shivered and choked as he tried to reply. But the judge's wife spoke first.

"Quick," she commanded, "lift the child into my carriage and lay him on the rear seat where I can steady him."

When Jamie opened his eyes he was somewhat surprised, for he lay on a couch in a room filled with sunshine and pictures and curtains and a beautiful lady was sitting beside him, while two other ladies (only they wore white caps and spotless cuffs) were doing this and that about the room. The boy's head was somewhat dizzy from Peter's cruel blow, and the beautiful lady only smiled when he said faintly and asked anxiously:

"Where are they? Where are the turkeys and chickens? Oh, Mary and Baby Sunshine won't have no Thanksgiving after all!"

Weak and half sick, Jamie sank to the couch and buried his head, so the beautiful lady wouldn't see him "crying tears down his cheeks," as he would have said. The beautiful lady stroked his hair with her soft white hand and spoke to him soothingly, but he sobbed and sobbed and told her all about himself and about Mary and Baby Sunshine waiting for their Thanksgiving dinner, and about his mother, sick in the hospital uptown.

Now the beautiful lady was a very wise lady, and almost before Jamie had finished her last and shavily never thought things would come to this pass," she murmured, but her brother took no notice of her words.

He accompanied her to the gate and stood watching the team of his brother-in-law until it disappeared from sight over the crest of a hill. Then he walked slowly toward the great white house which had been the home of the Tanners for many generations. His face was thoughtful. Notwithstanding his brave words to Mrs. Skinner, he was troubled over the forthcoming dinner.

Job Tanner had never married. In his early manhood his only sister had been left a widow with four small children. Her share of their father's property was gone, so Job unhesitatingly offered herself and family a home. For twenty years he had cared for them, educating the children and submitting to Abigail's exactions.

"I don't see any way out of it," Job admitted to himself, "Thanksgiving is only ten days off. Sally's good enough in her way, but she is a poor cook and no kind of a housekeeper. That was Abigail's strong point—she kept my house well. I'd as soon have Sally's work, though, as to have Abigail's scolding and whining. But it will never do to set company down to a Thanks-

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Mrs. Tanner's supper strengthened this resolution. The dining room of the Tanner house was a pleasant place, with a bay window looking to the south. But the bread was underdone, the steak was burned and the cabbage salad contained neither salt nor vinegar. Then the sugar bowl had been filled with the lukewarm water, a fact not perceived by Job until he gulped down a swallow of coffee. He pushed back his plate.

"Sally!" he called, sharply.

There was a startled cry from the kitchen, accompanied by a fall and the sound of breaking dishes. The next moment Sally put her head in at the door, an injured look on her face.

"I'd thank you not to speak so suddenly again. It makes me nervous."

"What have you broken this time, Sally?"

"Now, only a plate that belonged to them air dishes," pointing to the delicate blue-wreathed dinner set that had belonged to the mother of Mr. Tanner.

He rose from the table and left the house. "Fifty years old, plenty of money, but no home," he thought, as he made his way down the road toward the little brown cottage which Mrs. Skinner pointed to with a nod observed from his porch.

Here lived the Widow Clemens. She and Job had been schoolmates and warm friends. There had been a time when he had hoped that they might be still more to each other, but a misunderstanding had arisen between them an "before," as he explained she was the wife of Will Clemens.

Her life had been one of poverty and toil, for Clemens had been an exacting invalid many years. He was dead now. Mary lived on in the little home, eking out a slender income by assisting her neighbors with their work.

The door was opened by Mrs. Clemens herself. She was a plump little woman with soft black eyes and a sweet voice.

"Why, Job, I am glad to see you. Walk in. I'll have to give you a seat in the kitchen, as there is no fire in the other room."

He looked around him. The floor was covered with a rag carpet, the tiny stove was black and shining, and the entire room was in perfect order.

"How cozy you are here, Mary!" Then he plunged at once into his trouble. He told of his firm determination to give his usual Thanksgiving dinner and his still firmer resolve not to accept Abigail's proffered help.

"I want you to come and plan it all," he said in conclusion. "You can have all the money to spend and all the help you want. I'll take care of the turkey and all work hard. Will you help me, Mary?"

A delicate pink flush colored her cheek. "Mrs. Skinner, what will she say?"

"It's none of her business. Say yes, Mary. I'll pay you anything you like."

She raised her head a little proudly. "Of course, I will do anything you want, but my one else," she began, but he broke in gladly: "Which means that you will come. Thank you, Mary."

All the way home Job Tanner was contrasting the cozy little house he had just left with his own spacious but lonely abode. Meanwhile Mrs. Clemens was assuring herself that she was regarded by her late caller in the light of a capable servant.

At last Mrs. Skinner spoke with a degree less than her usual assurance. "Of course I'd do most anything for you. My years of service to you have proved that. Under the circumstances I am sure Mrs. Skinner will consent to overruling the preparations. I will come Monday and lay in for the turkey."

"O, I wouldn't think of putting you to the trouble," her brother interrupted her to say: "You tell about years of service; that's enough."

Mrs. Skinner's thin dark face flushed, and she moved uneasily in the cushioned rocker. "You'll have to have my help, Job. Sally can't cook a dinner fit to set before our family."

"See here, Abigail," and into the shrewd, but kindly blue eyes of Job Tanner came a look his sister understood. "There's no use talking about this matter. I shall give you my usual Thanksgiving dinner, and I shall not need your services. Skinner is coming down the hill. You better get your things on."

Mrs. Skinner sniffed audibly as she donned her hat and shawl, never thought things would come to this pass," she murmured, but her brother took no notice of her words.

He accompanied her to the gate and stood watching the team of his brother-in-law until it disappeared from sight over the crest of a hill. Then he walked slowly toward the great white house which had been the home of the Tanners for many generations. His face was thoughtful. Notwithstanding his brave words to Mrs. Skinner, he was troubled over the forthcoming dinner.

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