

Thanksgiving in Iowa Schools

The observance of Thanksgiving in Iowa schools dates back to an early day in Iowa history. There can be little doubt that many teachers were aware of the presidential as well as the gubernatorial proclamations calling upon the people to observe Thanksgiving. Iowa teachers accordingly carried on simple ceremonies that reflected for the most part their own personal feelings regarding the significance of the occasion.

Gradually, as the seasons passed, it became more and more obvious that something should be done to reach a more uniform and meaningful observance of Thanksgiving in Iowa schools. By the turn of the century the Department of Public Instruction had established a well-rounded program for the observance of various holidays and, through an excellent *Special Days* publication, had provided teachers with an effective and useful tool to educate and inspire student awareness, not only of legal holidays, but of such days as Arbor Day and Bird Day, Peace Day, Flag Day, Louisiana Purchase Day, and Conservation Day.

The following material on Thanksgiving Day appeared in various *Special Days* brochures, issued annually, and distributed to the various schools in

Iowa. While Memorial Day (see the May 1968 issue of *The Palimpsest*) and Thanksgiving usually occupied the lion's share of the space, other holidays were by no means overlooked. Many Iowans who received their education in the early years of the 20th century will recall nostalgically the indelible impressions made by these poems. Indeed, many may recall, as does the writer, that several of these poems had to be committed to memory and can still be recited in whole, or in part, with a little coaxing. They represent only a part of the varied Thanksgiving Day material provided by Iowa teachers.

WILLIAM J. PETERSEN

THE LANDING OF THE PILGRIM FATHERS

The breaking waves dashed high
On a stern and rock-bound coast,
And the woods, against a stormy sky
Their giant branches toss'd;

And the heavy night hung dark
The hills and waters o'er,
When a band of exiles moor'd their bark
On the wild New England shore.

Not as the conqueror comes,
They, the true-hearted, came,
Not with the roll of the stirring drums,
And the trumpet that sings of fame;

Not as the flying come,
In silence and in fear,—
They shook the depths of the desert's gloom
With their hymns of lofty cheer.

Amidst the storm they sang,
And the stars heard and the sea!
And the sounding aisles of the dim woods rang
To the anthem of the free!

The ocean-eagle soar'd
From his nest by the white wave's foam,
And the rocking pines of the forest roar'd—
This was their welcome home!

There were men with hoary hair
Amidst that pilgrim-band—
Why had they come to wither there
Away from their childhood's land?

There was woman's fearless eye,
Lit by her deep love's truth;
There was manhood's brow, serenely high,
And the fiery heart of youth.

What sought they thus afar?
Bright jewels of the mine?
The wealth of seas, the spoils of war?—
They sought a faith's pure shrine!

Ay, call it holy ground,
The soil where first they trod.
They have left unstained what there they found—
Freedom to worship God.

Mrs. Felicia Dorothea Hemans

THE FIRST THANKSGIVING DAY

"And now," said the governor, gazing abroad on the piled-up store
Of the sheaves that dotted the clearings and covered the meadows o'er,

" 'Tis meet that we render praises because of this yield of grain;
'Tis meet that the Lord of Harvest be thankful for his sun and rain.

"And therefore I, William Bradford (by the grace of God today,
And the franchise of this good people), governor of Plymouth, say,—
Through virtue of vested power,—ye shall gather with one accord
And hold, in the month of November, Thanksgiving unto the Lord.

"He hath granted us peace and plenty, and the quiet we've sought so long;
He hath thwarted the wily savage, and kept him from wrack and wrong;
And unto our feast the sachem shall be bidden, that he may know
We worship his own Great Spirit, who maketh the harvest grow.

"So shoulder your matchlocks, masters, there is hunting of all degrees;
And fisherman, take your tackle and scour for spoils the seas;
And maidens and dames of Plymouth, your delicate crafts employ
To honor our first Thanksgiving, and make it a feast of joy!

"We fail of the fruits and dainties, we fail of the old home cheer;
Ah! these are the lightest losses, mayhap, that befall us here.
But see! in our open clearings how golden the melons lie!
Enrich them with sweets and spices, and give us the pumpkin pie!"

So bravely the preparations went on for the autumn feast;
The deer and the bear were slaughtered; wild game from the greatest to least
Was heaped in the colony cabins; brown home-brew served for wine;
And the plum and the grape of the forest for orange and peach and pine.

At length came the day appointed; the snow had begun to fall,
But the clang of the meeting-house belfry rang merrily over all,
And summoned the folk of Plymouth, who hastened with glad accord
To listen to Elder Brewster as he fervently thanked the Lord.

In his seat sat Governor Bradford, men, matrons, and maidens fair;
Miles Standish and all his soldiers, with corselet and sword were there;
And sobbing and tears and gladness had each in its turn the sway,
For the grave of sweet Rose Standish o'ershadowed Thanksgiving day.

And when Massasoit, the sachem, sat down with his hundred braves,
And ate the varied riches of gardens and woods and waves,
And looked on the granaried harvest, with a blow on his brawny chest,
He muttered: "The Good Spirit loves his white children best!"

—Margaret J. Preston

THANKSGIVING DAY

Over the river and through the wood,
To grandfather's house we'll go;
The horse knows the way,
To carry the sleigh
Through the white and drifted snow.

Over the river and through the wood,
Oh, how the wind does blow!
It stings the toes
And bites the nose
As over the ground we go.

Over the river and through the wood,
To have a first-rate play,
Hear the bells ring,
"Ting-a-ling-ding!"
Hurrah for Thanksgiving Day!

Over the river and through the wood,
Trot fast my dapple-gray!
Spring over the ground
Like a hunting hound!
For this is Thanksgiving Day.

Over the river and through the wood,
And straight through the barnyard gate;
We seem to go
Extremely slow;
It is so hard to wait!

Over the river and through the wood,
Now grandmother's cap I spy!
Hurrah for the fun!
Is the pudding done?
Hurrah for the pumpkin pie!

—*Lydia Maria Child*

WHO GIVES US OUR THANKSGIVING DINNER

On Thanksgiving day little Dorothy said,
With many a nod of her wise, curly head,
"The cook is as busy as busy can be,
And very good, too,—for 'tis easy to see
She gives us our Thanksgiving Dinner."

"Oh! no, little Dorothy," answered the cook,
"Just think of the trouble your dear mother took
In planning the dinner and getting for me
The things that I cook; so 'tis mother, you see,
Who gives us our Thanksgiving Dinner."

"Of course it is mother; I ought to have known,"
Said Dorothy then, in a satisfied tone.
But mother said smiling: "You are not right yet;
'Tis father who gives me the money to get
The things for our Thanksgiving Dinner."

But father said: "I earn the money, 'tis true;
But money alone not a great deal can do,
The butcher, the grocer, whose things we must buy,
Should not be forgotten, for they more than I
Will give us our Thanksgiving Dinner."

"Oh, isn't it funny?" said Dorothy then;
"And now, I suppose, if I asked these two men,
The grocer, the butcher, about it, they'd say
It surely is somebody else and not they
Who gives us our Thanksgiving Dinner."

And soon little Dorothy heard with delight
That her guess about grocer and butcher was right.
The grocer said he only kept in his store
What miller and farmer had brought in before
To help for the Thanksgiving Dinner.

The jolly old butcher laughed long and laughed loud,
My Thanksgiving turkeys do make me feel proud,
And one's for your dinner; but then, you must know
The turkeys are raised by the farmer, and so
He gives you your Thanksgiving Dinner."

"Oh, yes! 'tis the farmer; at last I've found out,"
Said Dorothy then with a glad little shout.
"The miller must go to the farmer for wheat,
The butcher from him gets the turkeys we eat;
Yes!—he gives us our Thanksgiving Dinner."

"But yet all the others had something to do;
The miller and butcher and grocer helped, too.
And then there was father and mother and cook.
I never knew before how many it took
To give us our Thanksgiving Dinner."

So said little Dorothy, full of surprise,
And feeling that now she had grown very wise.
But what do you think? Had she found it all out?
Or was there still more she might learn, about
Who gives our Thanksgiving Dinner?

—Emilie Poulsson in *Kindergarten Review*

WHEN THE FROST IS ON THE PUNKIN

When the frost is on the punkin and the fodder's in the shock,
 And you hear the kyouck and the gobble of the struttin' turkey-cock
 And the clackin' of the guineys and the cluckin' of the hens,
 And the rooster's hallylooyer as he tiptoes on the fence;
 O, it's them's the times a feller is a feelin' at his best,
 With the risin' sun to greet him from a night of peaceful rest,
 As he leaves the house bareheaded and goes out to feed the stock,
 When the frost is on the punkin and the fodder's in the shock.

They's something kindo' hearty like about the atmusfere
 When the heat of summer's over and the coolin' fall is here—
 Of course we miss the flowers, and the blossoms on the trees,
 And the mumble of the hummin'-birds and buzzin' of the bees;
 But the air's so appetizin'; and the landscape through the haze
 Of a crisp and sunny morning of the early autumn days
 Is a pictur' that no painter has the colorin' to mock—
 When the frost is on the punkin and the fodder's in the shock.

The husky rusty rustle of the tossels of the corn,
 And the raspin' of the tangled leaves as golden as the morn;
 The stubble in the furries kindo' lonesome-like, but still
 A-preachin' sermons to us of the barns they growed to fill;
 The strawstack in the medder, and the reaper in the shed;
 The hosses in theyr stalls below—the clover overhead!—
 O, it sets my heart a clickin' like the tickin' of a clock,
 When the frost is on the punkin and the fodder's in the shock.

Then your apples all is gethered, and the ones a feller keeps
 Is poured around the cellar floor in red and yeller heaps;
 And your cider-makin's over, and your wimmern-folks is through
 With theyr mince and apple-butter and theyr souse and sausage, too
 I don't know how to tell it—but ef sich a thing could be
 As the angels wantin' boardin', and they'd call around on me—
 I'd want to 'commodate 'em—all the whole indurin' flock—
 When the frost is on the punkin and fodder's in the shock.

—James Whitcomb Riley, *in Neighborly Poems*

THE CORN SONG

Heap high the farmer's wintry hoard!
Heap high the golden corn!
No richer gift has Autumn poured
From out her lavish horn.

Let other hands, exulting, glean
The apple from the pine,
The orange from its glossy green,
The cluster from the vine;

We better love the hardy gift
Our rugged vales bestow,
To cheer us when the storm shall drift
Our harvest fields with snow.

Let earth withhold her goodly root,
Let mildew blight the rye,
Give to the worm the orchard's fruit,
The wheat field to the fly:

But let the good old crop adorn
The hills our fathers trod,
Still let us, for his golden corn,
Send up our thanks to God.

—*John Greenleaf Whittier*

HIS THANKSGIVING DREAM

Three plates full of turkey with cranberry sauce,
And four or five vegetables, too,
And candy and raisins and ice cream and pie—
Poor Tommy! How little he knew
What a quarrel they'd have in his little insides
In the course of that Thanksgiving night!
The people he dreamed of were all so mixed up,
He couldn't get one of them right.
Miss Muffet was sitting on something quite high,
It wasn't a tuffet at all;
It looked very much as if—yes, it must be!
It *was* Humpty Dumpty's red wall!
And Humpty see-sawed with Miss Margery Daw—
He tumbled, and came down too soon;
And Little Red Riding Hood, dear little girl,
Ran away with the Man in the Moon.
King Cole, he was busily shaving the pig;
The barber was singing "Ding Dong!"
The maid wasn't hanging out clothes as she should,
She was singing the sixpence song.
Jack Horner was asking the little black sheep
To give him a bag full of wool;
And "Diller a Dollar," that ten o'clock scholar,
For once was quite early at school.
Now "Rock-a-by, baby, upon the tree-top"
Was queer for Tom Tucker to sing.
The Queen ate her honey with Little Boy Blue;
The little dog laughed—at the King!
Now Little Bo Peep rode to Banbury Cross
So fast that Cock Horse couldn't stop!
When Old Mother Hubbard went to the cupboard,
She found it was full to the top!
Now Tommy slept badly because of all this;
He hated his pie and ice cream,
And he was right glad, when he woke up next day,
To find it was only a dream.

—*Agnes M. Smith*

THE BOY IS COMIN' HOME

I tell you it is busy times jest now for me and marm;
 The boy is comin' home to spend Thanksgivin' on the farm.
 'Tis ten long years since he went West to mingle in its strife;
 He's done first-rate, and furthermore, he's got a Western wife.
 We got the letter yesterday, and marm she laid awake
 Full half the night, to praise the Lord and think what she must bake.
 If I should feed the turkey now, as she declares I must,
 Why, long before Thanksgivin' day he would swell all up and bust.
 I've had to grind the choppin' knife and go to choppin' mince,
 And things are brewin' rich and fine and fit to feed a prince.
 The Boy, he writ for chicken pie, "With double crust," says he,
 "And mix with cream that lovely pie you used to make for me."
 He wants a big red apple from the hillside Northern Spy,
 And butternuts—I've got 'em round the stovepipe, brown and dry;
 He wants to lay the fire himself with maple hard and sound,
 And pop some corn upon the hearth when all are gathered 'round.
 He wants the things he used to have when he was but a lad.
 'Tis somewhat strange, it may be, but it makes us mighty glad.
 We're both a little whiter, but our love, depend upon 't,
 Is jest as green and stiddy as the hills of old Vermont,
 It flustered marm a bit at first about the Western wife,
 What she should do for one so fine and used to city life;
 But tucked between the Boy's big sheets she found a little slip;
 She read it with a happy tear, a gently quivering lip;
 "Dear mother," them's her words, "I write this on the sly,
 So don't tell John, but make for him a big, big pumpkin pie;
 I know it will delight him, for he still is but a boy—
 His mother's boy—and so he fills his wife's glad heart with joy."
 And so you see 'tis busy times jest now for me and marm—
 The boy is comin' home to spend Thanksgivin' on the farm.

—John Mervin Hull, in *Lippincott's*

ON RECEIPT OF A PUMPKIN PIE

Ah! on Thanksgiving day when from east and from west,
From north and from south come the pilgrim and guest;
When the grayhaired New Englander sees round his board,
The old broken links of affection restored.
When the care-wearied man seeks his mother once more,
And the worn matron smiles, where the girl smiled before;
What moistens the lip and brightens the eye,
What calls back the past, like the rich pumpkin pie?

Oh, fruit loved of boyhood, the old days recalling,
When wood grapes were purpling, and brown nuts were falling;
When wild ugly faces were carved in its skin
Glaring out through the dark with a candle within;
When we laughed round the corn heap, with hearts all in tune,
Our chair a broad pumpkin, our lantern the moon,—
Telling tales of the fairy who traveled like steam,
In a pumpkin shell coach, with two rats for her team.

Then thanks for thy present; none sweeter or better,
E'er smoked from an oven or circled a platter.
Fairer hands never wrought at a pastry more fine,
Brighter eyes never watched o'er its baking, than thine.
And the prayer, which my mouth is too full to express,
Swells my heart, that thy shadow may never be less;
That the days of thy lot may be lengthened below,
And the fame of thy worth like a pumpkin vine grow;
And thy life be as sweet, and its last sunset sky,
Golden tinted and fair as thy own pumpkin pie!

—*J. G. Whittier*

A TURKEY'S SOLILOQUY

Thanksgiving day is coming;
I scented pumpkin pie
Today while walking near the house;
Ah me, I soon must die!
The first snowflakes are falling.
The little birds have fled,
Thanksgiving day will soon be here,
And I shall lose my head.
Last night my sleep was broken.
I dreamed a dream of woe;
I saw the farmer's table spread
With dishes, row on row;
And in the very center,
Flanked round with plates of pie,
Was *something* on a platter huge,—
I looked. Alas! 'Twas I.
My head and feet were missing,
And I was nicely browned;
With glistening eyes and watery mouths
The children gathered round:
The farmer raised his carving knife
And made one dreadful stroke,—
I gobbled loud in terror
And luckily awoke.
Why do folks keep Thanksgiving,
I cannot see the use?
But I wouldn't mind it half so much
If they would eat roast goose.
But they're so fond of turkey
They'll never pass me by;
And so, I think I'll hurry round
And bid my friends good-bye.

—*From Western Teacher*

IT IS COMING

It is coming—it is coming—be the weather dark or fair;
 See the joy upon the faces, feel the blessings in the air!
 Get the dining chamber ready—let the kitchen stove be filled;
 Into gold-dust pumpkin—have the fatted turkey killed;
 Tie the chickens in a bundle by their yellow-downy legs;
 Hunt the barn, with hay upholstered, for the ivory-prisoned eggs.
 'Tis the next of a procession, through the centuries on its way;
 Get a thorough welcome ready for the grand old day.

—Will Carleton

GIVE THANKS FOR ALL

Give Thanks for all the love that brings
 To us a host of precious things;
 Let's stop and think that here we are—
 Close to our sides and near and far
 Spread God's good gifts of pleasant Foods,
 And Joys in waiting multitudes;
 And Toys and Games and lots of Fun;
 And Sky and Stars and smiling Sun;
 And Thoughts awake and Dreams asleep;
 And Things to give and Things to keep;
 And rosy Hope, that never ends;
 And cozy Secrets, Laughs and Friends;
 And Little Things like Flowers sweet,
 And useful Hands and dancing Feet—
 O, stop and think of all of these,
 And for a moment bend the knees
 Before a Loving God that brings
 This endless store of precious Things;
 Let's prove to God by grateful living
 How full we are of true THANKS-GIVING.

—By John Martin from *John Martin's Book*

THE DRESSED TURKEY

One of the parish sent one morn,
A farmer kind and able—
A nice fat turkey, raised on corn,
To grace the pastor's table.

The farmer's lad went with the fowl,
And thus addressed the pastor:
"Dear me, if I ain't tired! Here is
A gobbler from my master."

The pastor said: "Thou should'st not thus
Present the fowl to me;
Come, take my chair, and for me ask,
And I will act for thee."

The preacher's chair received the boy,
The fowl the pastor took—
Went out with it, and then came in
With pleasant smile and look;

And to his young *pro tem* he said:
"Dear sir, my honored master
Presents this turkey, and his best
Respects to you, his pastor."

"Good!" said the boy, "your master is
A gentleman and scholar!
Many thanks to him, and for yourself
Here is half a dollar!"

The pastor felt around his mouth
A most peculiar twitching;
And, to the gobbler holding fast,
He "bolted" for the kitchen.

He gave the turkey to the cook,
And came back in a minute,
Then took the youngster's hand and left
A half a dollar in it.

TOM'S THANKSGIVING

Thanksgiving tomorrow, the teacher said,
"Now I wish you each to say
What you have most to be thankful for
Upon Thanksgiving day."

A flutter of paper, a pencil's scratch,
A puzzled and anxious look,
As each little head bent over his task
And scribbled his thought in his book.

Tom wrote "Thanksgiving is always a day
To give God thanks," then a whirl
Of his pencil, "I'm giving my thanks,
I'm thankful 'cause I'm not a girl."

—*Emma Playter Seabury*

LITTLE PAUL'S THANKSGIVING

They tossed him and they squeezed him,
And they kissed him one and all;
They said, "You blessed, blessed boy!"
And "Darling little Paul!"

But they didn't give him turkey,
Nor any pumpkin pie,
And when the nuts and grapes went 'round,
They slyly passed him by.

But he didn't seem to mind it,
For in the sweetest way
He sat and sucked his little thumb,
His first Thanksgiving Day.

—*From Western Teacher*

GENTLEMAN GAY'S THANKSGIVING

Said old Gentleman Gay, "On a Thanksgiving Day,
If you want a good time, then give something away;"
So he sent a fat turkey to Shoemaker Price,
And the shoemaker said, "What a big bird! How nice!
And since such a good dinner's before me, I ought
To give Widow Lee the small chicken I bought."
"This fine chicken, oh, see!" said the pleased Widow Lee,
"And the kindness that sent it, how precious to me!
I would like to make some one as happy as I—
I'll give Washwoman Bidy my big pumpkin pie."
"And oh, sure!" Bidy said, "'tis the queen of all pies!
Just to look at its yellow face gladdens my eyes.
Now it's my turn, I think; and a sweet ginger cake
For the motherless Finigan children I'll bake."
Said the Finigan children—Rose, Denny, and Hugh—
"It smells sweet of spice, and we'll carry a slice
To poor little lame Jake, who has nothing that's nice."
"Oh, I thank you, and thank you!" said little lame Jake;
"Oh, what a bootiful, bootiful, bootiful cake!
And oh, such a big slice! I will save all the crumbs,
And will give them to each little sparrow that comes."
And the sparrows, they twittered, as if they would say,
Like old Gentlemen Gay, "On a Thanksgiving Day,
If you want a good time, then give something away."

—Marian Douglas, in *Little Men and Women*.

ADVICE TO A BOY

Remember, my boy, you *must work*, whether you handle a pick or a pen, a wheelbarrow or a set of books, digging ditches or editing a paper, ringing an auction bell or writing funny things, you must work.

If you look around, you will see the men who are most able to live the rest of their days without work, are the men who work the hardest. Don't be afraid of killing yourself with overwork. It is beyond your power to do that on the sunny side of thirty. Work gives you an appetite for your meals; it lends solidity to your slumbers; it gives you a perfect and grateful appreciation of a holiday.

There are young men who do not work but the world is not proud of them. It does not know their names even; it simply speaks of them as old So-and-so's boys. Nobody likes them; the great busy world doesn't know that they are there. So find out what you want to be and do, and take off your coat and *do something* in the world. The busier you are, the less harm you will be apt to get into, the sweeter will be your sleep, the brighter and happier your holidays, and the better satisfied will the world be with you.

—Robert J. Burdette

THANKSGIVING DAY

Ride a Turkey Gobbler
All around the town,
When the days are frosty
And the leaves are brown.

Apple Pie and Pumpkin,
Cranberry and, O!
Mince Pies in the pantry
In a smiling row.

Pantry's full of good things,
Safely stowed away
For a certain Thursday,
Called Thanksgiving Day.

Everybody's waiting
Man and Bird and Beast,
Everybody's waiting for
A great Thanksgiving Feast.

—E. W. Peckham in *John Martin's Book*

THANKSGIVING

Thanks be to Thee, O God!

For the throbbing music which the world's voice thrills;
But most for melody which sings, alone—

The bird in deepest wood—or song that stills
A child to sleep, far from the grand refrain
Of Fame's great chorus, chanting tones well known.

Thanks be to Thee, O God!

For Autumn harvest men have toiled to reap;
For love, for home, for laughter through our tears,

But most of all for seeds which, in the sleep
Of winter, wait for sun and Spring-time rain,
Holding potential growth for coming years.

—Edith Livingston Smith

THANKSGIVING

Harvest is come. The bins are full,
The barns are running o'er;
Both grains and fruits we've gathered in
Till we've no room for more.

We've worked and toiled through heat and cold,
To plant, to sow, to reap;
And now for all this bounteous store
Let us Thanksgiving keep.

The brown birds are flying
Like leaves through the sky;
The flow'rts are calling,
"Dear birdlings, good-bye."

The bird voices falling
So soft from the sky
Are answering the flow'rts,
"Dear Playmates, good-bye."

Heavenly Father, hear our thanks
For thy loving care;
Help us now to show our love
And each blessing share.

And for the home with friends to love,
For clothes, for health, for gain,
We thank our Father, He who sends
The sunshine and the rain.

In the sky above us,
Where the angels dwell,
God will ever love us,
If we serve him well.

Trees bare and brown,
Dry leaves everywhere,
Dancing up and down,
Whirling through the air.

The happy thank-you day has come,
And harvest time is past;
We've gathered fruits and nuts and grains,
We'll say good-bye at last.

Good-bye to Autumn, Autumn dear,
And with our parting words
We'll sing our thanks to God above
For fruits and trees and birds.

COMMON MERCIES

Dear Lord, are we ever so thankful
As thankful as we would be to Thee,
For Thine angels sent down to defend us
From dangers our eyes never see;
From perils that lurk unsuspected,
The powers of earth and of air,
The while we are Heaven-protected
And guarded from evil and snare?

Are we grateful, as grateful we should be,
For commonplace days of delight,
When safe we fare forth to our labor,
And safe we fare homeward at night;
For the weeks in which nothing has happened
Save commonplace toiling and play,
When we've worked at the tasks of the household,
And peace hushed the house day by day?

Dear Lord, that the terror at midnight,
The weird of the wind and the flame,
Hath passed by our dwelling, we praise Thee
And lift up our hearts in Thy name;
That the circle of darlings unbroken
Yet gathers in bliss round the board,
That commonplace love is our portion,
We give Thee our praises, dear Lord!

Forgive us who live by Thy bounty,
That often our lives are so bare
Of the garlands of praise that should render
All votive and fragrant each prayer.
Dear Lord, in the sharpness of trouble
We cry from the depths to the throne!
In the long days of gladness and beauty,
Take Thou the glad hearts as Thine own.

Oh, common are sunshine and flowers,
And common are raindrops and dew,
And the gay little footsteps of children,
And common the love that holds true.
So, Lord, for our commonplace mercies,
That straight from Thy hand are bestowed,
We are fain to uplift our thanksgivings—
Take, Lord, the long debt we have owed.

—Margaret Sangster

A THANKSGIVING WOOING

The frost was on the cottage pane,
The skies were gray and chill;
But with a trembling hand she smoothed
Her kerchief's dainty frill.
For then she saw the youthful squire
Dismounting in the snow,
In velvet coat and buckled shoes,
Thanksgiving long ago.

While with her wrinkled sire, he talked
Of weather and of wheat,
His ear was ever strained to catch
The music of her feet.
Her dimpled arms were deep in flour,
Her rounded cheek a-glow;—
Her father slept; he stole a kiss,
Thanksgiving long ago.

Her stately mother and her guests
Were waiting at the Hall
Before the feast in silver served;
But he forgot them all,
And at the farmer's humble board,
With curly head bent low,
He called a courtly blessing down,
Thanksgiving long ago.

Clear rose the moon above the woods
And twilight veiled the farm;
But still he lingered at the gate,
The bridle on his arm.

"Oh, bake and brew for me alone,
Be mine for weal or woe;—
I love you dear," he softly said,
Thanksgiving long ago.

In yonder carven frame she stands,
In pearls and blue brocade;
And still tradition fondly keeps
The pumpkin pies she made,
And tells again the story sweet,
When granaries overflowing,—
Of how the squire a-wooing went,
Thanksgiving long ago.

—*Minna Irving*

THE FIRST THANKSGIVING

Children do you know the story
Of the first Thanksgiving Day,
Founded by our Pilgrim fathers
In that time so far away?

They had given for religion
Wealth and comfort—yes, and more—
Left their homes and friends and kindred,
For a bleak and barren shore.

On New England's rugged headlands,
Now where peaceful Plymouth lies;
There they built their rough log cabins,
'Neath the cold forbidding skies.

And too often e'en the bravest
Felt his blood run cold with dread,
Lest the wild and savage red man
Burn the roof over his head.

Want and sickness, death and sorrow,
Met their eyes on every hand;
And before the spring had reached them
They had buried half their band.

But their noble, brave endurance
Was not exercised in vain;
Summer brought them brighter prospects,
Ripening seed and waving grain.

And the patient Pilgrim mothers,
As the harvest time drew near,
Looked with happy thankful faces,
At the full corn in the ear.

So the governor, William Bradford,
In the gladness of his heart,
To praise God for all his mercies,
Set a special day apart.

That was in the autumn, children,
Sixteen hundred twenty-one;
Scarce a year from when they landed,
And the colony begun.

And now, when in late November,
Our Thanksgiving feast is spread,
'Tis the same time-honored custom
Of those Pilgrims long since dead.

We shall never know the terrors,
That they braved years, years ago;
But for all their struggles gave us,
We our gratitude can show.

And the children of New England,
If they feast or praise or pray,
Should bless God for those brave Pilgrims,
And their first Thanksgiving Day.

—*Youth's Companion*

THE THANKSGIVING OF THE PUMPKINS

Five jolly, fat pumpkins one moonlight night
Said, "Come, let us all take a ride.
The turkeys will take us, with ease and delight."
So away they all rode in great pride.

But soon Mistress Cook cried out in dismay,
"O, where are my turkeys, my pies?
"They all went away to spend Thanksgiving Day,"
Said the moon, laughing down from the skies.

—Ella M. Powers

THE OLD NEW ENGLAND THANKSGIVING

The king of all the festivals was the autumn Thanksgiving. When the apples were all gathered and the cider was all made, and the yellow pumpkins were rolled in from many a hill in billows of gold, and the corn was husked, and the labors of the season were done, and the warm late days of Indian Summer came in, dreamy and calm and still, with just enough frost to crisp the ground of a morning, but with warm traces of sunny hours at noon, there came over the community a sort of genial repose of spirit,—a sense of something accomplished, and of a new golden mark made in advance,—and the deacon began to say to the minister, of a Sunday, "I suppose it's about time for the Thanksgiving proclamation."

—Harriet Beecher Stowe in *Oldtown Folks*

BOY'S THANKSGIVING

The meal was done. The father then
Addressed the youngest guest, aged ten;
"On this Thanksgiving, tell me, sir,
What do you feel most thankful for?"

The youth he sighed, for past delight
Had filled his ample jacket tight,
Then glanced the empty table o'er;
"I'm thankful, sir, there is no more!"

A SONG OF LIFE

In the rapture of life and of living,
I lift up my heart and rejoice,
And I thank the great Giver for giving
The soul of my gladness a voice.

I can laugh at the world and its sages—
I am greater than seers who are sad,
For he is most wise in all ages
Who knows how to laugh—and be glad.

—*Ella Wheeler Wilcox*

THE AMERICAN TURKEY

O, who has not heard
Of Columbia's bird,
The Eagle, that soars to the sky;—
Chants Liberty's song—
The whole twelve-months long,
But loudest on Fourth of July.

There is another,
Plain barn-yard brother,
Belongs to this Land of the Free;
Not much on the wing,
And no voice to sing,—
Just says, "Gobble, gobble," to me.

He has his day, too,
For what would we do,
Without Turkey dinner, Thanksgiving?
And all the good things,
That holiday brings,
To make a boy glad he's living.

—Addie B. Billington