

The THIRTEENTH TURKEY

In Fancy, It Was Roasted For More Than One Thanksgiving Day Dinner.

THE streets were practically deserted. A blue haze shrouded the big buildings, above which there was mist for a sky. A cheerful enough day, perhaps, out in the homes, but downtown silently drab. Turning a corner where traffic ordinarily caused a contest between clatter and clang, Mr. Champine, in his car, encountered a flock of pigeons enjoying the pavement as though in an open field. The bleak warehouses seemed to understand, just as all of them understood—boss and office boy, stenographer and solicitor, customer and clerk. It was Thanksgiving day.

Mr. Champine, the elevator stilled, climbed three flights of stairs of a bee hive that had turned tomblike, and on entering his office stepped to the telephone before removing his hat and coat. He was some time in getting connection, but eventually—

"That you, Mr. Clifford? Mr. Champine speaking. I want you to come down right away. Yes, I know it's a holiday, but I want you to come down. I'll be waiting for you here at the office."

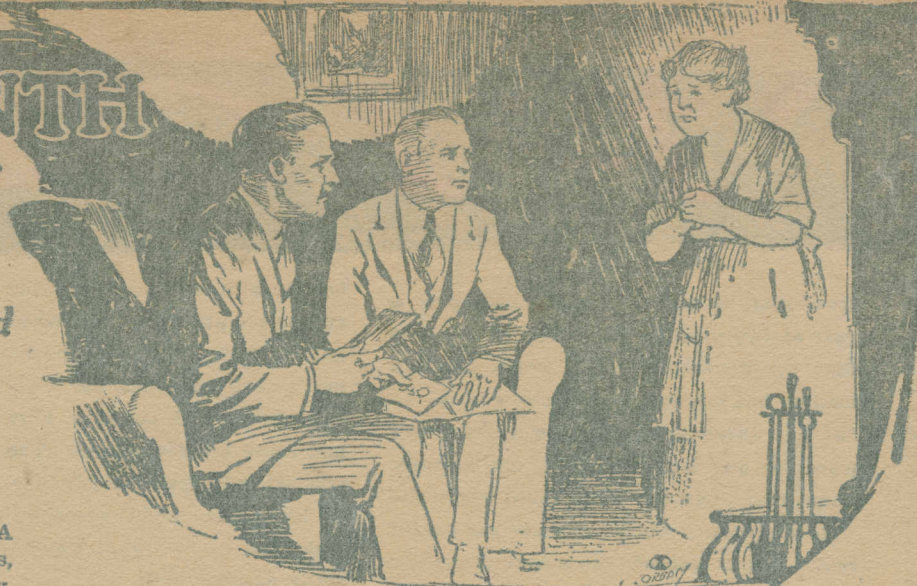
The president of the Champine company hung up the receiver. He was a reserved, elderly man who had given his life to the institution that bore his name. For several years he had partially retired—there was on his cheeks a Florida tan—but changing conditions in the business world had brought him back to his desk. He wheeled about in his chair when Mr. Clifford, a questioning expression on his fat face, finally appeared.

"It was at your own suggestion that I hired you, Clifford," began Champine, clearing his throat. "You came to me with recommendations of your ability to create good will among employes. It was a new stunt to me. I never had any trouble. But you explained the existence of unrest, the need of new methods for dealing with labor. I thought that possibly I was getting out of touch with the times; I hired you. And I am called out of bed this morning by Jensen, the watchman, who has been with us for thirty years; he wanted to let me know he'd quit. had suddenly turned bolshevik—I gathered had suddenly turned bolshevik—I gathered that much, although much of his conversation was not clear. And he tried to tell me how they were running things in Turkey."

"He was merely expressing his appreciation," smiled Clifford.

"He was doing nothing of the sort," snapped the president. "He was leaving our employ, and he is a man I don't care to replace. His loyalty up until this morning has been all that could be asked. Now—now we're without a watchman here tonight apparently."

"Mr. Jensen got his turkey; it must have pleased him," puzzled Clifford. "I think you must have misunderstood his conversation on the phone. You see, yesterday—"



Oney Fred Sweet

"I understood him, all right. I've known him for thirty years and I tell you that he had a tone of voice that might have belonged to Emma Goldman. I never heard such ranting in all my life, and Jensen has always been a peaceable sort of fellow. He got his turkey, you say—what turkey?"

"I took good care of Jensen," insisted Clifford, reminiscently. "I took good care of all the boys—you understand, gave each of them a big turkey for their dinner today, despite the high price and scarcity of the birds. You will remember you approved of the plan a week or so ago."

"I had forgotten," nodded the president, losing some of his agitation.

"Yes, I got each of the boys a turkey," continued the welfare worker. "I went down the list and took care of everybody. During the noon hour some of the boys chopped off the heads and legs of their birds, and when one of the truck drivers came along in the afternoon and insisted that he ought to have been remembered with the bunch—well, we gave him a bird, too. You would have laughed. It looked just like the real thing—the heads and feet all nicely wrapped up with a pair of feet sticking out the end. We gave that to the truck driver. It looked like a fifteen pound bird, just like the others. I hadn't put the truck driver on the list; I bought just a dozen turkeys. He could hardly have expected one, but he's got a lot of nerve. It was hard enough and expensive enough taking care of the number we did. But, as I say, the truck driver came along in the afternoon and asked where his turkey was, and—we simply provided a thirteenth turkey."

"You gave him the wrapped up heads and legs with a pair of feet sticking out the end," finished the president, tersely. "Well—"

"Well, he must have examined the thing before he had gone far, because he threw it out in the alley. I suppose for a time he had visions of a real Thanksgiving dinner out of that package, but he saw the joke and threw the thing away. It couldn't have been in the alley long, for about 3 o'clock the city salesman, looking out the window, saw an old fellow starting off with it under his arm and he had a hunch that it had been stolen here. The city salesman thought surely that it was the real thing. It did look natural."

"Then the poor old fellow who picked it up had his vision of a Thanksgiving dinner shattered too," cut in the president. "A turkey used to be just a turkey, but a fifteen pound turkey nowadays—"

"But the city salesman reported what he supposed was a theft and two or three men from the shipping department started out to chase it down," Clifford interrupted. "They

didn't know but what it was one of their own turkeys. They had visions there for awhile of their own dinners slipping from them, I guess. Anyhow, they put up a hot chase. The old fellow seemed determined to get away with the fowl, and he came close to being run over a couple of times in trying to make his getaway. But they caught him, and they brought the package back. We all had a good laugh when we opened it up. Then we tied it up again and threw it over in the corner, figuring that that was the end of the excitement."

"But it wasn't," hemmed the president, impatiently.

"No, you see the truck driver came back again about 5 o'clock. 'Say,' he hollered, 'that was a nice trick you tried to play on me.'

"'Oh, I knew you'd be back,' I says to him; 'here's your real turkey.' And I went and brought back that fake thirteenth turkey again and gave it to him. Never saw a thing so realistic in my life—just the shape and size of a nice fifteen pounder with those two legs and feet sticking out."

"And you gave him the fake turkey again?"

"Why shouldn't I? There was no reason to include him on the list. Not one of our own men. I only bought twelve for the old timers. Wait until you see the bill for those turkeys, Mr. Champine."

"I agree with you," yawned the president. "There was no reason for including the truck driver on the list. But since you have given him one of the good turkeys—"

"But Mr. Jensen, our faithful night watchman, was given the one good turkey that was left when he came on at night," frowned Clifford.

"You said a while ago that it looked very realistic," nodded the president. "It was so realistic, in fact, that it was mistaken many times yesterday, according to your strange narrative. No doubt it was the cause of great anticipation on the part of the watchman as he made his rounds last night. He was probably very happy over it all the way home. And his wife must have smiled when she met him at the door. The faces of the ten children must have brightened while it was being untied. But when the strings were opened—well, it wasn't a very dainty dish to set before a night watchman and his family on Thanksgiving day."

"But do you have an idea—?" began Clifford in alarm.

"I have an idea it's getting toward dinner time," remarked the president, rising. "Look through the files there and get the watchman's home address. We've got to get a turkey to take out there, but nobody's going

to have a chance to wrap it up. I want Jensen to glimpse it in full before we attempt to invade his premises. You didn't hear him resign over the phone this morning; I did."

"We can't recover the truck driver's turkey now," shrugged Clifford. "I imagine it's full of dressing and well browned by this time. And I said to him, 'I knew you'd be back; here's your real turkey.' One less lie held against me, anyhow."

Half an hour later Messrs. Champine and Clifford, provisioned with one unwrapped turkey, drove up in front of a number above a basement door. Holding the fowl aloft, Mr. Champine knocked, waited, knocked again.

Mr. Jensen, coming to the door, glanced at the turkey and glanced at the boss. He had been in Mr. Champine's employ for too long a period not to pay a bow of homage, despite the telephone conversation of the morning. Anyhow, the cause of the talk over the phone had been removed by what the boss held in his hand. And besides it was the first time the boss had ever called.

"I am sorry to say, Jensen, that, unwittingly, a very low trick was played on you last night," the president began, passing over the gobble. "The explanation is too complicated for me to go into details because I realize your Thanksgiving dinner has been delayed as it is. I might say that I have a poor opinion of any one who would wrap or rewrap up a bundle of refuse, realistically hinting of a turkey within, and pass the same on to a fellow man, in these days of social unrest and high priced food."

"Aye be back to work tonight," assured the night watchman, hefting the bird in hand.

Returning to the car, the president of the Champine company gave a sigh of relief. "You're to come out to the house to take dinner with me," he said to his welfare worker. "Thank goodness, we're through with this turkey business."

The president had returned to good mood as he sat with Clifford by the fireplace in his home. He was showing his guest some Florida snapshots when the housekeeper, realizing his return, came to the room. She was plainly embarrassed.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Champine," she hesitated, "but I have been waiting to tell you. It's about the turkey."

"Turkey?"

"There were two of them and now there aren't any," the housekeeper continued. "I ordered one and a boy came with one this morning. Not long afterward another boy came with another turkey. I told the second boy that the turkey had already been delivered; that there must be a mistake; and I let him take his back. When I unwrapped the first turkey it wasn't a turkey at all—just heads and legs with a fair of feet sticking out."

Mr. Clifford groaned and Mr. Champine fidgeted in his chair.

"I tried phoning them, but it was too late," went on the housekeeper. "There was a note with the turkey that wasn't a turkey. I found it inside the package when I opened it up. As near as I could finally figure out, it was from a Mr. Jensen, who explained he was sending the package out by his boy so you could better understand what he had been talking about over the telephone."

"It's all right, Martha," gasped Mr. Champine, after a pause. "Mr. Clifford and I are tired of turkey, anyhow."

THE CURSE OF A THOUSAND KISSES

[Continued from page two.]

a lonely spot in the path—for this was not a "Sphinx and Pyramid night"—that is to say, the moon was not at the full—a tall, muffled native appeared at my elbow. He was the same man who had brought me the heart of lapis lazuli, or his double. I started.

He touched me lightly on the arm.

"Follow," he said, and pointed ahead into the darkness below the plateau.

I moved off obediently. Then—suddenly, swiftly, came revolt. The modern man within me flared into angry life. I stopped dead, and, "Who are you? Where are you leading me?" I cried.

I received no reply.

A silk scarf was slipped over my head by some one, who, silently, must have been following me, and drawn tight enough to prevent any loud outcry but not so as to endanger my breathing. I fought like a mad-

man. I knew, and the knowledge appalled me, that I was fighting for my life. Arms like bands of steel grasped me. I was lifted, bound, and carried—I knew not where.

Placed in some kind of softly padded saddle, or, as I have since learned, into a shibriyeh or covered litter, on a camel's back, I felt the animal rise to its ungainly height and move off swiftly. As suddenly as revolt had flamed up, resignation returned. I was contented. My bonds were unnecessary; my rebellion was ended. I yearned, wildly, for the end of the desert journey! Some one was calling me and all my soul replied.

For hours it seemed the camel raced ceaselessly on. Absolute silence reigned about me. Then in the distance I heard voices, and the gait of the camel changed. Finally the animal stood still. Came a word of guttural command, and the camel dropped to its knees. Pillowed among a pile of scented cushions, I experienced no discomfort from this usually painful operation.

I was lifted out of my perfumed couch and set upon my feet. Having been allowed to stand for a while until the effects of remain-

ing so long in a constrained position had worn off, I was led forward into some extensive building. Marble pavements were beneath my feet, fountains played and the air was heavy with burning ambergris.

I was placed with my back to a pillar and bound there, but not harshly. The bandage about my head was removed. I stared around me.

A magnificent eastern apartment met my gaze—a great hall open on one side to the desert. Out upon the sands I could see a group of men who had evidently been my captors and my guards. The one who had unfastened the silk scarf I could not see, but I heard him moving away behind the pillar to which I was bound.

Stretched upon a luxurious couch before me was a woman.

If I were to seek to describe her I should inevitably fail, for her loveliness surpassed everything which I had ever beheld—of which I had ever dreamed. I found myself looking into her eyes, and in their depths I found all that I had missed in life, and lost all that I had found.

She smiled, rose, and, taking a jeweled dagger from a little table beside her, approached me. My heart beat until I felt almost suffocated as she came near. And when she bent and cut the silken lashing which bound me I knew such rapture as I had hitherto counted an invention of Arabian poets. I was raised above the joys of common humanity and tasted the joy of the gods. She placed the dagger in my hand.

"My life is thine," she said. "Take it." And, clutching at the silken raiment draping her beautiful bosom, she invited me to plunge the blade into her heart!

The knife dropped, clattering upon the marble pavement. For one instant I hesitated, watching her, devouring her with my eyes; then I swept her to me and pressed upon her sweet lips the thousand and first kiss.

(Note: The manuscript of Saville Grainger finishes here.)

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Next week an original story entitled "Lover's Reckoning," by John Fleming Wilson, will appear in this section.