

*On an afternoon in late August*  
*In the late afternoon in August, first, his*

One night a farmer drove up to our back door, took ~~an~~ old hat off his tousled head and said rather dubiously to the man of the family:

"I got a bird here that I caught up along the bank of the Clackamas River. I know it's a young pheasant, but some of my neighbors argue that it's a common turkey. I bet a dollar it <sup>was</sup> a pheasant, and they bet it <sup>wasn't</sup> ain't. But I can't save my dollar unless you identify it as a pheasant. Kin you do it?"

He pulled out of <sup>his</sup> ~~old~~ coat pocket a ~~wispy~~ ragged little fellow who immediately "Cheeped-cheeped" a friendly greeting to all around. The voice and half goofy trustfulness was identification enough. He was indiscriminately speckled <sup>had</sup> with a colorless knobby head and no tail feathers, and he went <sup>unconcernedly</sup> "peep-ing" about looking for bugs on the grass. No pheasant that. He would have been a crouching, frightened-eyed little waif watching for a chance to scutter away and hide. Besides, his markings were not those of a pheasant.

<sup>by your face</sup> "Well, I see you ain't with me," <sup>"said the man."</sup> "You think it's a turkey, too. I ain't got no use for it. You can have it. It's starved and won't live anyway." And with that he was off.

*a skinny frame*  
I picked up the little runt. <sup>He was bigger than sheepest</sup> There was nothing to him but feathers and he cuddled down in my arm. I took him into the back porch and then got some cottage cheese and fresh lettuce. He gobbled the cheese, talking thanks all the time, and then snipped off bites of crisp lettuce that I held in my hand. <sup>for two weeks now,</sup> And he has hung close to his new home and family, coming to the back door every little while to "peep" for more cheese and lettuce. He stores away a lot of grain every day, also, as well as hunting continually for bugs, ~~and~~ worms and insects. He roams out into the ~~mowed~~ stubble field and finds crickets and grasshoppers. At this date he has more than doubled his weight and has <sup>stubby</sup> two ~~first~~ tail feathers coming in like new teeth in the wrong place.

"Well, what shall we call him- the runt?" asked one of the family.

"No, of course not," I said. "We'll call him Thanksgiving Dinner!"

That brought a great laugh.

"Thanksgiving Dinner, when it's only a month away and he isn't bigger than a sparrow! That's a joke," <sup>said Bud.</sup>



*Ans. That gave me*  
I had an idea, but said nothing. I would feed him warm mash with some hamburger and codliver oil, and keep milk where he could drink every little while.

Thanksgiving Dinner considered himself a member of the household <sup>pet</sup> without any ceremony and was tamer than any chicken. He knew his name and came *At my call* pigeon-toeing up the path, his wings helping, (any time he was called.) The two Scotty pups usually lolled about the back yard and if one got in his way he hopped him and came right on coming. The pups couldn't understand why this runt of a bird got so many meals a day and they got only one about five o'clock in the afternoon. If my back was turned they tried to snatch from the bird's dish, but ~~from~~ the first Thanksgiving Dinner stood up for himself, giving a jab with his sturdy bill. <sup>But there was never any bad feeling.</sup> Sometimes I found him lying down by the side of one of the dogs as if he liked the feel of the fur. He accepted the food, comforts, and conveniences and never lost a bet.

He took the whole ten acres - and some more - for his manor, hunting over the lawns and under bushes for bugs, worms, and insects, and off into the mowed hay field for crickets and grasshoppers. Added to this he consumed an enormous amount of grain, mash, cottage cheese and his special favorite, lettuce. He wanted the <sup>latter</sup> ~~last~~ fresh and crisp and if any of it was wilted or a little discolored he threw it out or refused it. He was the choosiest bird I ever met. In two weeks he had got his stride at growing and had more than doubled his weight. Two stubby tail feathers began to grow on his bare rump like new teeth in the wrong place. His feathers took on a gloss and red wattles showed under his throat.

One day when I was feeding him lettuce from my hand, which he always enjoyed, I leaned over to pick up some bits. He backed away, stretched his ~~neck~~ head up, puffed out his wings, and came at me giving my bare head a drubbing and tousling my hair. Then he stood off and looked at me with a wicked eye. It was only a sham battle. <sup>he said.</sup> He was soon snipping lettuce again and <sup>perhaps</sup> talking softly. When I walked about the yard he was always at my heels, talking companionably. Turkeys talk all the time wherever they are, soft little "Kirt-kirts."

*I became accustomed to this, as it seemed to be a part of his daily day on*



One evening at the dinner table, I said, "There are sixteen more days to go in this Thanksgiving Dinner race. Who wants to bet a dollar that the runt won't make it?"

Young Bud, the Don Quixote of the household, piped up, "Sure I'd bet a dollar if I had it! He'll never make it in the world."

The days went by and Thanksgiving Dinner did his best by stuffing to the limit. That bird was eating something every minute of the day till it became too dark for him to see. *For the last few days he had been shut up* Then he was put in a private ~~room~~ *chance* of his own, a little cage with a good roof and heavy wire netting all around. He slept on a high perch and under neath was a deep bed of straw. Only a herd of buffaloes could have dislodged him.

By this time he had developed into a big bodied fellow with heavy legs and feet and deep red wattles that liked to flare up at every chance. His feathers had taken on a half irridesc<sup>richer</sup>ent shade and he walked with his head up and his body poised in a stately manner. His eye and ear were quick. He gobbled, loudly if a strange dog happened into the yard and started for him. Sometimes he was doubtful and walked over to stand stiffly by the gardner.

The fatal - or fateful- day was approaching. In fact, it was only forty-eight hours off. The bird for the festal meal *ought to* ~~should~~ be hung to chill and season. It should have been done sooner, but not a soul in the household had Bud said nothing about his dollar bet. Neither did I. even peeped about it, let alone joking. The runt was a runt no more. He was not an eighteen pound bird, but he was a perfect specimen and size for our table.

"Well, I'm not going to be chicken," I affirmed. "Who wants to be the executioner?" No one grabbed at the chance. "You get a rope, Bud, while I sharpen the ~~big~~ butcher knife," I said firmly. "We'll hang him under the big apple tree to drain the blood. Come on."

We all filed out the back door, I with my butcher knife, Bud with the rope, the others standing about dumbly. I gave my turkey call, and waited. In a few seconds I saw him coming from away over in the stubble field. He was legging it like a good one, head up and eager. He came across the garden be-



tween the corn rows and for a minute I lost him. I half turned. For some reason I didn't want to see him come out of those green stalks. But I did see him, his shining body, red head and sparkling eye.

I felt embarrassed, rattled when he came up. "I guess I'll get some lettuce for him as a last bite," I said and hurried into the kitchen. I brought it out and held it tight in my hand so he could pull off snips of it as I had been doing <sup>every day</sup> for over a month. He dropped some and I stooped to pick it up. He squared back, I heard his big wings scrape <sup>rasping</sup> ~~roughly~~ <sup>ingly</sup> on the ground, then they enveloped my bare head and drubbed till I was dizzy. Then he stoddup and looked at me with a wicked red eye. The next minute he was talking softly asking ~~for~~ <sup>for more lettuce. Our little game was over.</sup> where the lettuce was. And a few minutes later he away off in the stubble field hunting grasshoppers. <sup>again. He never knew.</sup>