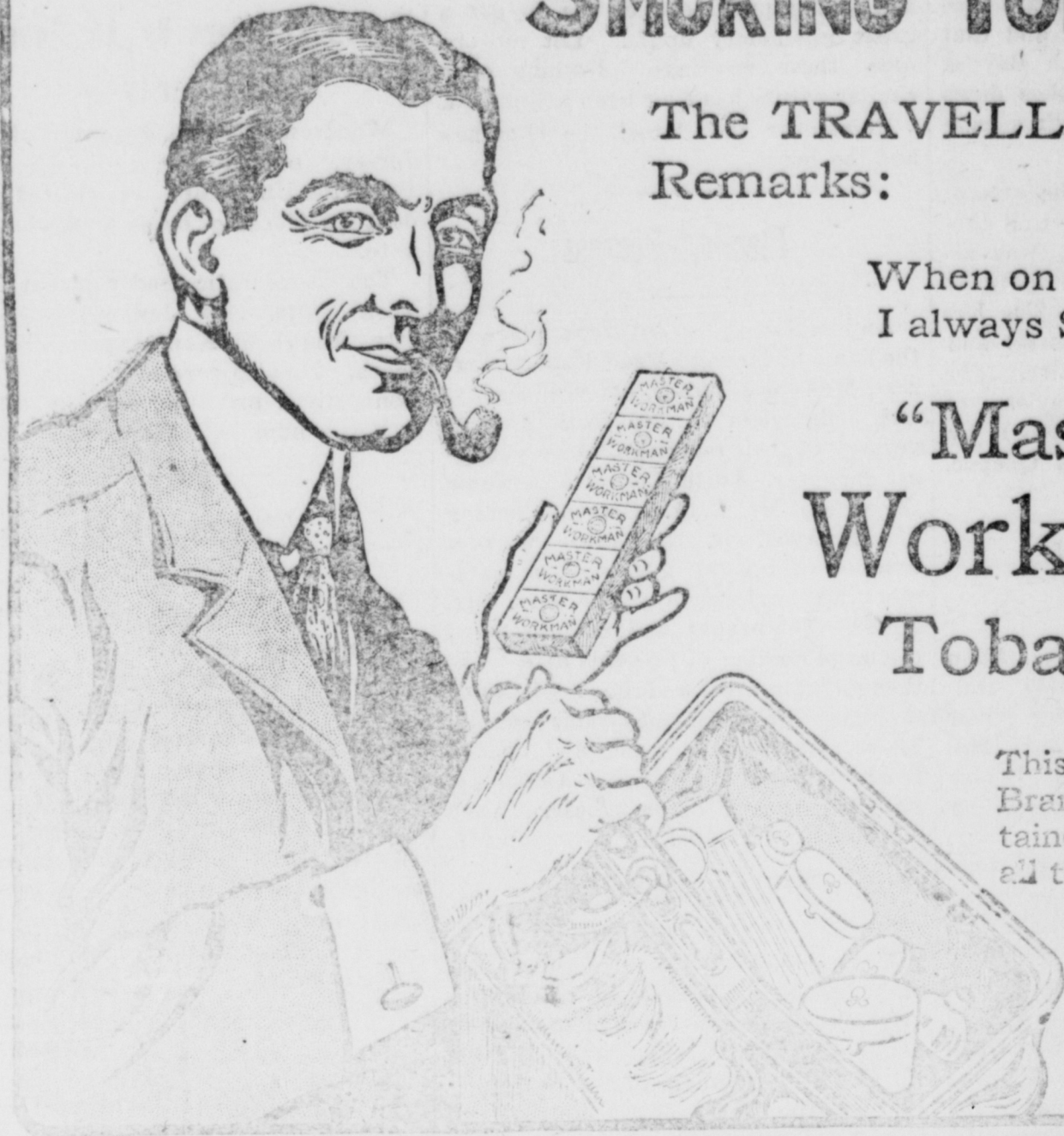


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The Travelling Man.

The Plymouth Rock Rooster.

The Story of a Sacrifice Under Difficulties, and of a Thanksgiving that was Almost Thwarted (By SOPHIE SWEET.)

"There's only one thing about being poor that I can't stand," Lisha said.

Lisha Cottrell, a little lean old man, with snapping black eyes looking out of a face wrinkled to the semblance of a baked apple, stared in astonishment at his sister Minerva as she dropped, in a dejected attitude, into the old winged rocking-chair, and began to rock vigorously.

Minerva seldom complained; she was in the habit of saying that when you saw dark it was just as well to hold your tongue.

"I want something to give away," she went on with the effect of abandoning herself suddenly to long pent-up emotions. "My heart is wrung by hearing about those poor people who have lost everything in the Parker City fire. O, yes, Lisha, I know well enough that there are plenty of rich people that will help, but I want to have a little bit of a share in it myself."

"That kind of a feeling is nothing in the world but vanity," growled Lisha. "It's what makes a man want to march in the procession and hear folks holler, 'Hooraay!' and makes a woman put a red flower in her bonnet."

"I don't know as I should care whether 'twas vanity or foolishness, or what it was," cried Minerva despondently, "if I could only do my part—just a little mite of a part! If I could know that some one of the poor things was fed or warmed and comforted by something that I had given, I don't say it isn't a weakness," but I'm all worn out with never having a chance to give way to the weakness."

Minerva's voice—she was a large woman, with strong, somewhat harsh voice—fairly shook with the intensity of her emotions.

"Well, there, Minerva, I did think you had a little better sense!" Lisha cried in a thin, high-keyed voice. "Look at the way we are fixed, with only that little mite in the bank, and what if the bank should fail? there isn't any telling how soon we may have to be helped ourselves. And my asthma likely to run into consumption, like Uncle Hiny's, and my bes-boots come to patching, and—and Thanksgiving coming, and we not able to invite Ansel and his folks that have had us three times—"

"I suppose you're right," Lisha interrupted Minerva, nervously locking and unlocking her large-jointed hands. "There's nothing but patience for me, as there always have been," she said to herself, quelling with the eas-

iness of long habit, the little stirrings of resentment against Lisha for the strong sense of their difficulties that never seemed to result in effort. "I've never had a chance to give a single thing away,—for even your old clothes and mine have had to go into the rag,—not a single thing since I had my missionary hen, and that was when I wasn't more than ten or eleven years old. Such a layer as that hen was! and I carried every cent she earned to Sunday-school, for one good cause or another—"

"Speaking of hens," interrupted Lisha, still with a trace of shrillness in his easy drawl, "makes me think of Thanksgiving. There doesn't appear to be any fowl that we can see our way clear to make a Thanksgiving dinner of without it's the Plymouth Rock rooster."

"Why—why, I forget that we had no turkey!" exclaimed Minerva in a dismayed tone. "I expect the great fire drove it out of my mind."

—Minerva had left the poultry to Lisha's care, an unusual thing, and he had left the brood of young turkeys out in a thunder shower that killed them all; then she had sold all the other turkeys, being too rheumatic to follow them through the tall, wet grass. Lisha's easiness and his asthma combined made him irresponsible.

"Thanksgiving's next week," said Lisha inexorably. "Lisha liked his Thanksgiving dinner."

"I kind of set by Timbertoes," said Minerva slowly. "I raised him in cotton-wool. And his crow is different from any rooster's that I ever heard. Mother liked to hear it. Mother had been gone only a year, I suppose it is another one of my weaknesses." There was a touch of unwonted bitterness in Minerva's tone.

"Well, I don't know as it would be called a sign of a lofty intellect to love a rooster," said Lisha with what he felt to be fine sarcasm. "But—his tone changed to sudden eagerness—Philander Ross will give you a dollar and a quarter for him and he will keep him. He has a lot o' Plymouth Rocks, but his eggs didn't hatch a single rooster. You could hear Timbertoes same as ever, and may be we could put a little something to the dollar and a quarter and get a turkey. There doesn't seem to be any sacredness in Thanksgiving without a turkey,"

Minerva paused to reflect, looking wistfully, doubtfully, at Lisha.

"Lisha, those little Egggs children that were in my Sunday-school class were burnt out at Parker City. It seems as if I must give something to the fund on that account. Would you be willing to eat corned shoulder,—there's some still left in the barrel,—and let me give the money that the rooster will bring to the Parker City relief fund? It's just for one Thanksgiving, Lisha."

"The rooster is yours; I expect you have got a right to do what you're a mind to with him," said Lisha gruffly. "Corned shoulder doesn't disagree with you now, does it. 'Lisha?' asked his sister solicitously, but with evident relief and eagerness.

"It doesn't disagree with anything but my mental state," said Lisha dryly. "I don't really expect I can praise the Lord quite so enthusiastic on corned shoulder as I could on roast turkey."

"There'll be plenty of vegetables, and I will make plum pudding," said Minerva persuasively.

"I feel like a wicked woman, depriving Lisha for such a little money; but the sacrifice will be good for him. I was reading the other day how people fostered selfishness in their own by giving in to them. It's of no use for me to make Lisha's selfishness a subject of prayer, and then keep encouraging him in it. Lisha always spends money to go to the country fair, and for once I'm going to have my fling."

Small matters loomed large in Minerva's meagre life. So they did in Lisha's and his heart was heavy as he carried the struggling old rooster across the field to Philander Ross.

The prospect of a corned-shoulder dinner depressed him, but that was but a small part of his heaviness; if Minerva could have seen into his heart, she would have been utterly amazed. He had a sensitive consciousness of his inadequacy to life, and he shrank, as from a blow, from the thought that he was a burden upon his sister.

"If it wasn't for me—or if I could be as smart as she is, she would have something to give," he said to himself with a bitterness compared with which Minerva's troubles were but small.

Philander Ross said that he had got over thinking about the Plymouth Rock, seeing he had two roosters of another kind; but he didn't care if he did give a dollar and a quarter for it, it was such a handsome bird.

Minerva's hand closed tightly over the money when Lisha gave it to her; she looked almost defiantly into his face.

Lisha opened his mouth to speak, and then closed it again.

—He had been so far taken out of himself that he wished to say, "I wish you had more to give, Minerva."

But what Minerva thought—and not unnaturally—that he had begun to say was that charity began at home, or that, considering his weak lungs, he ought to have nourishing food, and surely, surely the good cheer of a real Thanksgiving dinner.

She heard across the field the cheerful morning crow of Timbertoes, who was not afflicted with homesickness, and thought little of his absence from their own barnyard; but on morning, two days before Thanksgiving, she missed the familiar sound. But Lisha, too, had missed something out of the morning, and knew how Minerva must feel.

"Wonne's minds are not strong like ours, anyhow," he murmured apologetically to himself as he made an excuse to go over to Philander Ross's as soon as breakfast was over. His axe needed sharpening, and Philander had a grindstone.

"Pa has gone to the city to market—started at three o'clock," explained Loretta Ross in answer to Lisha's breathless inquiry. "He took your great Plymouth Rock rooster. No, he didn't kill him; he took a whole crate of live ones; there's a firm in the market that likes them so—Reuben Coombs and Company; I don't know whether they sell them to Jews, or whether people want them to keep."

But Lisha was hurrying away with his unsharpened axe.

Minerva couldn't bear it anyhow to think of one of those Jewish women carrying Timbertoes off, head downwards," he said to himself.

He hurried to the telephone station in the village; he knew of no way to reach Philander Ross unless he should happen to be at the market. He telephoned to Reuben Coombs at the great market, to keep large Plymouth Rock rooster, sold by Philander Ross, until called for. Then he dropped down on a settee, and gasped for breath. Lisha was not used to hurrying, and the exertion had brought on one of his asthmatic attacks. He had them only infrequently, and Minerva always sent for the doctor in haste, and she sat up with him all night because he could not lie down.

The girl at the telephone was solicitous; and, when his face became purple, and there were flecks of foam on his lips, she was scared, not being accustomed to the disease. But he begged her not to send for help.

"I'll go, maybe, as suddenly as it came, and—and I'm not going to have Minerva's good time spoiled," he said faintly in his feeble voice.

"You mean Thanksgiving?" asked the girl, bewildered.

"No, no, I mean her giving-away time; she never had one before, and I'm not going to have her lose that rooster that she sets by! You just let me be a little while, and I shall be able to go about my business. I've got some very pressing business."

The girl let him go; she had always heard of Lisha Cottrell's asthma, and she supposed he knew how to take care of himself.

Every step was a struggle; but he managed to get to Jonas wing's house on the Pine Hill road; Jonas was going to market, and readily agreed to bring the rooster home, provided he was to be found.

Jonas anxiously offered to hitch up and carry Lisha home, but Lisha, still breathing like a steam-engine, persisted on his way.

Lisha now had a financial difficulty to contend with; Philander Ross would be sure to demand something extra for his trouble. Minerva had already sent the dollar and a quarter.

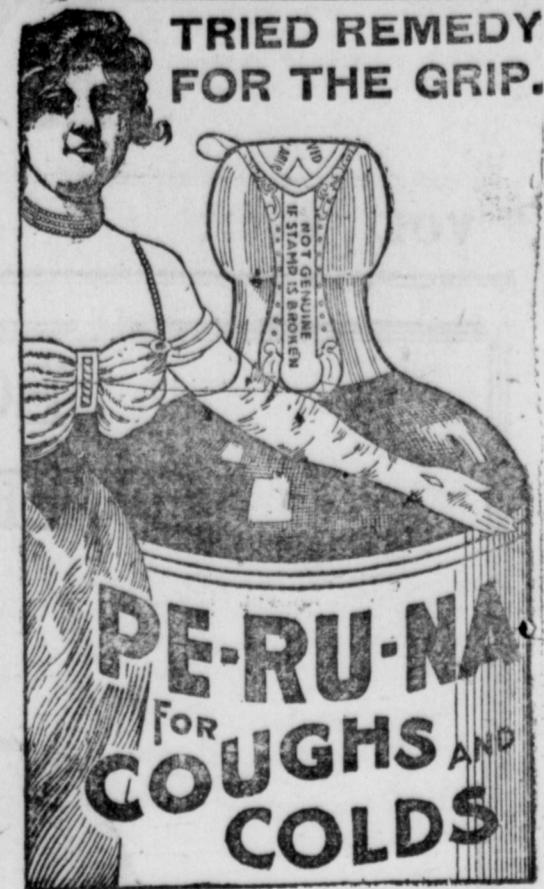
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TRIED REMEDY FOR THE GRIP. PE-RU-NA FOR COUGHS AND COLDS

Minerva must not be troubled; he had made up his mind to that, and he was going to stick to it. He wished that Minerva had been one to complain; he wished that he had realized before just how she felt about giving away things. He got over across Beaver Creek on the foot-bridge; he never quite knew how. Dick Preble who lived on the other side of the creek, had once offered him six dollars for the silver watch that had been like a trusty comrade to him for years. The sum offered seemed to Lisha providential, he probably could release Philander Ross's claim to the rooster with a quarter more than he had paid. He had always felt borrowing to be a degradation, and he shuddered to think of what Minerva would say; but he nevertheless accepted the loan with eagerness, only insisting that Dick should keep the watch as security.

The financial transactions would have been dizzying even if he had been in ordinary health; as it was, he staggered as he turned away from Dick; his breath came with a great throe—then a blackness of darkness descended upon him.

When he came to himself, drenched with water, he caught Dick's hand, and gasped desperately:

"Don't you send for Minerva! don't you do it! I'll come round all right soon; but, if Minerva should get hold of it, I could never get along with her again. She—she's kind of weak-minded about giving away things, and about making a pet of a rooster. I wouldn't want—it wouldn't do, anyhow, for her to think I was encouraging such things by taking as much pains as I have to get the rooster back! You just let me lie here on your lounge awhile, Dick, and I shall be able to go home."

"You've had one of your spells," Lisha cried Minerva as soon as she saw him; and remorse seized upon her.

"I got heated hurrying," said Lisha calmly, "and I did breathe some hard, but it's all gone now."

He spoke with a certain dignity. Minerva felt for the first time in her life that there was something about Lisha that she did not understand.

She had almost forgotten Timbertoes. But late that night, sitting up because Lisha did not breathe quite easily enough to go to bed, she heard the sound of wheels, and then a continued on page seven first column.

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continued on page seven first column.

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