

ALGER

HORATIO JR.

GRAND'THER BALDWIN'S
THANKSGIVING, WITH
OTHER BALLADS AND
POEMS

Horatio Alger

**Grand'ther Baldwin's Thanksgiving,
with Other Ballads and Poems**

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Содержание

BALLADS	5
GRAND'THER BALDWIN'S THANKSGIVING	5
ST. NICHOLAS	8
BARBARA'S COURTSHIP	10
THE CONFESSION	12
ROSE IN THE GARDEN	14
PHOEBE'S WOOING	17
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	18

Jr. Horatio Alger

Grand'ther Baldwin's Thanksgiving, with Other Ballads and Poems

BALLADS

GRAND'THER BALDWIN'S THANKSGIVING

UNDERNEATH protected branches, from the highway just aloof;
Stands the house of Grand'ther Baldwin, with its gently sloping roof.

Square of shape and solid-timbered, it was standing, I have heard,
In the days of Whig and Tory, under royal George the Third.

Many a time, I well remember, I have gazed with Childish awe
At the bullet-hole remaining in the sturdy oaken door,

Turning round half-apprehensive (recking not how time had fled)
Of the lurking, savage foeman from whose musket it was sped..

Not far off, the barn, plethoric with the autumn's harvest spoils,
Holds the farmer's well-earned trophies—the guerdon of his toils;

Filled the lofts with hay, sweet-scented, ravished from the meadows
green,
While beneath are stalled the cattle, with their quiet, drowsy mien.

Deep and spacious are the grain-bins, brimming o'er with nature's gold;
Here are piles of yellow pumpkins on the barn-floor loosely rolled.

Just below in deep recesses, safe from wintry frost chill,
There are heaps of ruddy apples from the orchard the hill.

Many a year has Grand'ther Baldwin in the old house dwelt in peace,
As his hair each year grew whiter, he has seen his herds increase.

Sturdy sons and comely daughters, growing up from childish plays,
One by one have met life's duties, and gone forth their several ways.
Hushed the voice of childish laughter, hushed is childhood's merry
tone,
the fireside Grand'ther Baldwin and his good wife sit alone.

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Sturdy sons and comely daughters, growing up from childish plays,
One by one have met life's duties, and gone forth their several ways.

Hushed the voice of childish laughter, hushed is childhood's merry
tone,
By the fireside Grand'ther Baldwin and his good wife sit alone.
Yet once within the twelvemonth, when the days are short and drear,
And chill winds chant the requiem of the slowly fading year,

When the autumn work is over, and the harvest gathered in,
Once again the old house echoes to a long unwonted din.

Logs of hickory blaze and crackle in the fireplace huge anti high,
Curling wreaths of smoke mount upward to the gray November sky.

Ruddy lads and smiling lasses, just let loose from schooldom's cares,
Patter, patter, race and clatter, up and down the great hall stairs.

All the boys shall hold high revel; all the girls shall have their way,—
That's the law at Grand'ther Baldwin's upon each Thanksgiving Day.

From from the parlor's sacred precincts, hark! a madder uproar yet;
Roguish Charlie's playing stage-coach, and the stage-coach has upset!

Joe, black-eyed and laughter-loving, Grand'ther's specs his nose across,
Gravely winks at brother Willie, who is gayly playing horse.

Grandma's face is fairly radiant; Grand'ther knows not how to frown,
though the children, in their frolic, turn the old house upside down.
For the boys may hold high revel, and the girls must have their way;
That's the law at Grand'ther Baldwin's upon each Thanksgiving Day.

But the dinner—ah! the dinner—words are feeble to portray
What a culinary triumph is achieved Thanksgiving Day!

Fairly groans the board with dainties, but the turkey rules the roast,
Aldermanic at the outset, at the last a fleshless ghost.

Then the richness of the pudding, and the flavor of the pie,
When you've dined at Grandma Baldwin's you will know as well as I.

When, at length, the feast was ended, Grand'ther Baldwin bent his
head,

And, amid the solemn silence, with a reverent voice, he said:—

"Now unto God, the Gracious One, we thanks and homage pay,
Who guardeth us, and guideth us, and loveth us always!

"He scatters blessings in our paths, He giveth us increase,
He crowns us with His kindnesses, and granteth us His peace.

"Unto himself, our wandering feet, we pray that He may draw,
And may we strive, with faithful hearts, to keep His holy law!"
His simple words in silence died: a moment's hush. And then
From all the listening hearts there rose a solemn-voiced Amen!

ST. NICHOLAS

In the far-off Polar seas,
Far beyond the Hebrides,
Where the icebergs, towering high,
Seem to pierce the wintry sky,
And the fur-clad Esquimaux
Glides in sledges o'er the snow,
Dwells St. Nick, the merry wight,
Patron saint of Christmas night.

Solid walls of massive ice,
Bearing many a quaint device,
Flanked by graceful turrets twain,
Clear as clearest porcelain,
Bearing at a lofty height
Christ's pure cross in simple white,
Carven with surpassing art
From an iceberg's crystal heart.

Here St. Nick, in royal state,
Dwells, until December late
Clips the days at either end,
And the nights at each extend;
Then, with his attendant sprites,
Scours the earth on wintry nights,
Bringing home, in well-filled hands,
Children's gifts from many lands.

Here are whistles, tops and toys,
Meant to gladden little boys;
Skates and sleds that soon will glide
O'er the ice or steep hill-side.
Here are dolls with flaxen curls,
Sure to charm the little girls;
Christmas books, with pictures gay,
For this welcome holiday.

In the court the reindeer wait;
Filled the sledge with costly freight.
As the first faint shadow falls,
Promptly from his icy halls
Steps St. Nick, and grasps the rein:
And afar, in measured time,
Sounds the sleigh-bells' silver chime.

Like an arrow from the bow

Speed the reindeer o'er the snow.
Onward! Now the loaded sleigh
Skirts the shores of Hudson's Bay.
Onward, till the stunted tree
Gains a loftier majesty,
And the curling smoke-wreaths rise
Under less inclement skies.

Built upon a hill-side steep
Lies a city wrapt in sleep.
Up and down the lonely street
Sleepy watchmen pace their beat.
Little heeds them Santa Claus;
Not for him are human laws.
With a leap he leaves the ground,
Scales the chimney at a bound.

Five small stockings hang below;
Five small stockings in a row.
From his pocket blithe St. Nick
Fills the waiting stockings quick;
Some with sweetmeats, some with toys,
Gifts for girls, and gifts for boys,
Mounts the chimney like a bird,
And the bells are once more heard.

Santa Claus! Good Christmas saint,
In whose heart no selfish taint
Findeth place, some homes there be
Where no stockings wait for thee,
Homes where sad young faces wear
Painful marks of Want and Care,
And the Christmas morning brings
No fair hope of better things.

Can you not some crumbs bestow
On these Children steeped in woe;
Steal a single look of care
Which their sad young faces wear;
From your overflowing store
Give to them whose hearts are sore?
No sad eyes should greet the morn
When the infant Christ was born.

BARBARA'S COURTSHIP

'Tis just three months and eke a day,
Since in the meadows, raking hay,
On looking up I chanced to see
The manor's lord, young Arnold Lee,
With a loose hand on the rein,
Riding slowly down the lane.
As I gazed with earnest look
On his face as on a book,
As if conscious of the gaze,
Suddenly he turned the rays
Of his brilliant eyes on me.
Then I looked down hastily,
While my heart, like caged bird,
Fluttered till it might be heard.
 Foolish, foolish Barbara!

We had never met before,
He had been so long away,
Visiting some foreign shore,
I have heard my father say.
What in truth was he to me,
Rich and handsome Arnold Lee?
Fate had placed us far apart;
Why, then, did my restless heart
Flutter when his careless glance
Fell on me by merest chance?
 Foolish, foolish Barbara!

There are faces—are there not?—
That can never be forgot.
Looks that seen but once impress
With peculiar vividness.
So it was with Arnold Lee.
Why it was I cannot say
That, through all the livelong day
He seemed ever near to me.
While I raked, as in a dream,
Now the same place o'er and o'er,
Till my little sister chid,
And with full eyes opened wide,
Much in wonder, gently cried,
"Why, what ails thee, Barbara?"

I am in the fields again;
'Tis a pleasant day in June,

All the songsters are in tune,
Pouring out their matin hymn.
All at once a conscious thrill
Led me, half against my will,
To look up. Abashed I see
His dark eyes full fixed on me.
What he said I do not know,
But his voice was soft and low,
As he spoke in careless chat,
Now of this and now of that,
While the murmurous waves of sound
Wafted me a bliss profound.
Foolish, foolish Barbara!

Am I waking? Scarce I know
If I wake or if I dream,
So unreal all things seem;
Yet I could not well forego
This sweet dream, if dream it be,
That has brought such joy to me.
He has told me that he loves me,—
He in rank so far above me;
And when I, with cheeks aglow,
Told him that it was not meet
He should wed with one so low,
He should wed with one so low,
Then he said, in accents sweet,
"Far be thoughts of rank or pelf;
Dear, I love thee for thyself!"
Happy, happy Barbara!

THE CONFESSION

I am glad that you have come,
Arthur, from the dusty town;
You must throw aside your cares,
And relax your legal frown.
Coke and Littleton, avaunt!
You have ruled him through the day;
In this quiet, sylvan haunt,
Be content to yield your sway.

It is pleasant, is it not,
Sitting here beneath the trees,
While the restless wind above
Ripples over leafy seas?

Often, when the twilight falls,
In the shadow, quite alone,
I have sat till starlight came,
Listening to its monotone.
Yet not always quite alone,—
Brother, let me take the place
Just behind you now the moon
Shines no longer in my face.

It is near two months ago
Since I met him, as I think,
By God's mercy, when my horse
Trembled on the river's brink.
I had fallen, but his arm
Firmly seized the bridle-rein,
And, with one decided grasp,
Drew me back to life again.
I was grateful and essayed
Fitting words my thanks to speak.
Arthur, when the heart feels most,
Words, I think, are oftenest weak.
So I stammered and I fear,
What I said had little grace
But I knew he understood,
By the smile upon his face.
There are faces—his was such—
That are sealed when in repose;
Only when a smile floods out,
All the soul in beauty glows.
With that smile I grew content,
And my heart grew strangely calm,

As with trustful step I walked,
My arm resting on his arm.

Brother, turn your face away,
So, dear, I can tell you best
All that followed; but be sure
You are looking to the west.
Arthur, I have seen him since,
Nearly every day, until
If I lose him, all my life
Would grow wan, and dark, and chill.
Brother, this my love impute
Not to me for maiden-shame;
He has sought me for his wife,
He would crown me with his name.
Only yesterday he said
That my love his life would bless:
Would I grant it? Arthur, dear,
Was I wrong in saying "Yes"?

ROSE IN THE GARDEN

THIRTY years have come and gone,
Melting away like Southern Snows,
Since, in the light of a summer's night,
I went to the garden to seek my Rose.

Mine! Do you hear it, silver moon,
Flooding my heart with your mellow shine?
Mine! Be witness, ye distant stars,
Looking on me with eyes divine!

Tell me, tell me, wandering winds,
Whisper it, if you may not speak—
Did you ever, in all your round,
Fan a lovelier brow or cheek?

Long I nursed in my heart the love,
Love which felt, but dared not tell,
Till, I scarcely know how or when—
It found wild words,—and all was well!

I can hear her sweet voice even now—
It makes my pulses leap and thrill—
"I owe you more than I well can pay;
You may take me, Robert, if you will!"

One pleasant summer night,
the garden walks alone,
Looking about with restless eyes,
Wondering whither my Rose had flown,

Till, from a leafy arbor near,
There came to my ears the sound of speech.
Who can be with Rose to night?
Let me hide me under the beach.

It must be one of her female friends,
Talking with her in the gloaming gray;
Perchance—I thought—they may speak of me;
Let me listen to what they say.

This I said with a careless smile,
And a joyous heart that was free from fears;
Little I dreamed that the words I heard
Would weigh on my heavy heart for years.

"Rose, my Rose! for your heart is mine,"
I heard in a low voice, passion-fraught,
"In the sight of Heaven we are truly one;
Why will you cast me away for naught?"

"Will you give your hand where your heart goes not
To a man who is grave and stern and old;
And whose love compared with my passion-heat,
As the snow of the frozen North, is cold?"

And Rose—I could feel her cheek grow pale—
Her voice was tremulous, then grew strong—
"Richard," she said, "your words are wild,
And you do my guardian bitter wrong.

"Did you never hear how, years gone by,"—
She spoke in a tremulous undertone—
"Bereft of friends, o'er the world's highways,
I wandered forth as a child alone?"

"He opened to me his home and heart—
He whom you call so stern and cold—
And my grateful heart I may well bestow
On him for his kindness manifold."

"Rose," he said, in a saddened tone,
"I thank him for all he has done for thee;
He has acted nobly—I did him wrong—
But is there no voice in your heart for me?"

And Rose—she trembled—I felt it all;
I heard her quick breath come and go;
Her voice was broken; she only said,
"Have pity, Richard, and let me go!"

And then—Heaven gave me strength, I think—
I stood before them calm and still;
You might have thought my tranquil breast
Had never known one passion-thrill.

And they alternate flushed and paled;
Rose tottered, and I feared would fall;
I caught her in supporting arms,
And whispered, "Rose, I heard it all.

"I had a dream, but it is passed,
That we might journey, hand in hand
Along the rugged steeps of life,
Until we reached God's promised land.

"This was my dream;—'tis over now;—
Thank Heaven, it is not yet too late!
I pray no selfish act of mine
May keep two young hearts separate."

I placed her passive hand in his—
With how much pain God only knows—
And blessing him for her sweet sake,
I left him standing with my Rose!

PHOEBE'S WOOING

"PHOEBE! Phoebe! Where is the chit?
When I want her most she's out of the way.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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