

30 GRAND'THER BALDWIN'S THANKSGIVING

Underneath protecting 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 and chill,
There are heaps of ruddy apples from the orchard on 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,
By the fireside Grand'ther Baldwin and his good wife sit alone.

Yet once with 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 and 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 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 alway!

"He scatters blessings in our paths, He giveth us increase,
He crowns us with His kindness, 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!

Sources:

Boston Transcript, December 2, 1862.

Harper's Weekly, December 6, 1862.(Anonymous)

Grand'ther Baldwin's Thanksgiving, 1875.

Alger Street, 1964.