

Elizabeth's  
Thanksgiving  
Dinner

Lucy Maud Montgomery  
1904

**\* A Distributed Proofreaders Canada eBook \***

This ebook is made available at no cost and with very few restrictions. These restrictions apply only if (1) you make a change in the ebook (other than alteration for different display devices), or (2) you are making commercial use of the ebook. If either of these conditions applies, please contact a FP administrator before proceeding.

This work is in the Canadian public domain, but may be under copyright in some countries. If you live outside Canada, check your country's copyright laws. IF THE BOOK IS UNDER COPYRIGHT IN YOUR COUNTRY, DO NOT DOWNLOAD OR REDISTRIBUTE THIS FILE.

*Title:* Elizabeth's Thanksgiving Dinner

*Date of first publication:* 1904

*Author:* L. M. (Lucy Maud) Montgomery (1874-1942)

*Date first posted:* Nov. 3, 2017

*Date last updated:* Nov. 3, 2017

Faded Page eBook #20171106

This ebook was produced by: Alex White & the online Distributed Proofreaders Canada team at <http://www.pgdpCanada.net>

# ELIZABETH'S THANKSGIVING DINNER

L. M. Montgomery

First published *Western Christian Advocate*, November 16, 1904 and  
November 23, 1904.

“Well,” said Mrs. Murray, laying down the letter she had been reading, “that settles the question of our Thanksgiving guests. Your Aunt Margaret writes that her husband’s parents wish to have a Thanksgiving reunion at the homestead this year, and so they must go there instead of coming here as usual. I must confess I’m very sorry, for I thought that we might count on them at least. You and I will have to hunt up some new guests if we do not want to eat our Thanksgiving turkey all alone, Elizabeth.”

“What a clean sweep!” said Elizabeth, a little blankly. “Of course, I knew we couldn’t have all the old crowd this year. But to think that not even one will come! How strange it will seem! Why, as far back as I can remember”—Elizabeth spoke as if her memory were reviewing a period of seventy years instead of seventeen—“we’ve always had so many here at Thanksgiving. Grandpa Murray and Aunt Alice and Uncle Archibald and Uncle Geoff and Aunt Margaret and Uncle Howard, with cousins galore to fill up the chinks! They were all here last Thanksgiving, and not one of us thought then but that they’d all be back this year! Really, mother mine, I have an uncomfortable feeling that we ought not to be here, either, and will presently be whisked away.”

Mrs. Murray smiled and sighed. She felt the change in the old order even more keenly than did Elizabeth. Every year the same circle of brothers and sisters, nieces, and nephews had come joyously to the big town house to eat their Thanksgiving dinner. And now not one would come. Dear old Grandpa Murray was dead, and Aunt Alice was ill; Uncle Archibald and Uncle Geoff had moved out West with their families, and now Aunt Margaret and Uncle Howard must go to the homestead reunion.

“It won’t seem a bit Thanksgivingy,” went on Elizabeth, dolefully, looking for once grave enough to match her name. As a rule she did not. Her blue eyes were too merry, her fair hair too curly, her laughter and smile too quick and full of mischief to suit her queenly title, which only her mother ever gave her in full. Her friends called her Betty and Bess and Beth and Elsie interchangeably, and Elizabeth liked it so. She always said that when she wanted to bring herself into a sedate, dignified mood for some special occasion she said her full name, “Elizabeth Patterson Murray” over to herself three times, and it always worked like a charm.

“I ordered a twenty-pound turkey from Mr. Whiteside last week,” said her mother, laughingly. “You see, I knew Aunt Margaret’s boys had such appetites, and Mr. Whiteside said he had a big gobbler who had taken a prize at the agricultural fair, and was foreordained for a Thanksgiving feast. So I bespoke him on the spot.”

“Mother, mine,” said Elizabeth solemnly, though with dancing eyes, “how long do you suppose it will take us to eat up twenty pounds of turkey, not to

mention chestnut stuffing, and all the other appointments of any well-regulated Thanksgiving gobbler. Just think of us sitting down, one at each end of the long dining-room table, with that foreordained bird between us! You will try to carve him. And you know, darling, many and varied as your accomplishments are, you can not carve a turkey. And I shall watch you in agony lest you cut off your own dear, wee fingers instead of the monster's wings. It would destroy my appetite completely, and you'd be so exhausted you couldn't eat anything yourself."

"That settles it," laughed her mother. "We must have enough guests to eat that turkey at least. I'll tell you what I'll do, my dear. I'll put the responsibility on your own young shoulders. This shall be your Thanksgiving dinner, and you may ask all the young folks you please to help you demolish Mr. Whiteside's prize turkey."

Elizabeth hopped up from her ottoman, threw her arms about her mother's neck, and gave the little woman a vigorous hug.

"Mother, mine, you are delicious. There, did I muss up your crimps? Never mind, I'll fix them all up pretty again. I wish your daughter had just such lovely brown ripples instead of these disorderly curls that never will stay neat. Why, we'll have a delightful Thanksgiving after all! I'll have in my very dearest girl chums—Agnes Baxter, of course, and Connie Bentley and Kathleen Black and the Burton girls and Helen Campbell and Ella Chase. O, I have a dozen plans simmering in my brain already!"

"Well, I leave it all to you," smiled Mrs. Murray, indulgently. "Only don't ask more than the turkey will go around, and do have somebody who can carve it."

Elizabeth, with a final hug and kiss, ran upstairs, and as she dressed for shopping she planned out her Thanksgiving-day. She was very fond of entertaining her young friends, and her little parties and afternoon teas were always delightful. She was deservedly popular in her set, for she was sweet-tempered, good-hearted, and full of fun. Moreover, her wealth and social position gave her an acknowledged leadership.

In the first shop she entered downtown a bargain sale was in progress, and the counters were crowded. The shop-girls looked tired and worn. One of them brightened up as Elizabeth approached her.

Elizabeth knew Maggie Blackwood very well. A year ago her mother and she had spent the summer in a country village and had boarded at Maggie's home. While the latter was showing her some handkerchiefs, Elizabeth noticed that the girl looked pale and tired—very different from the rosy creature of a year ago.

"I'm afraid you are working too hard, Maggie," she said, kindly. "These big sales must be terribly trying. But you'll have a holiday next week, anyhow,

and I suppose you are going home for it.”

To Elizabeth’s surprise, Maggie’s eyes suddenly filled with tears.

“No, Miss Murray, I can’t. You see, it’s too far. It would take three days to go and come. I shall just have to stay here.”

“Won’t it be very lonesome to spend Thanksgiving in a boarding-house?” asked Elizabeth, sympathetically.

“O, I suppose there are worse places,” said Maggie, trying to speak lightly. “Of course, I will be lonesome, but there will be hundreds like me. But I was never away from home at Thanksgiving before, and when I think of them all at home around the table and me not there—O, I mustn’t think of it! I know I’ve a great deal to be thankful for. How many handkerchiefs did you say?”

“Half a dozen,” said Elizabeth, absently. But she was not thinking of handkerchiefs. And when Maggie had wrapped them up and handed them to her, she went away without even a good-bye smile, and walked down the long store like a girl in a dream, bumping into people and not knowing it at all. As she went down the street her thoughts ran something like this:

“How miserable Maggie looks! And to spend Thanksgiving in a boarding-house, especially such a boarding-house as she can afford! It makes me shiver to think of it. I feel as if I ought to invite Maggie to dinner, but how can I? She wouldn’t know my other guests, and she’d feel stiff and out of place among them and wouldn’t enjoy herself a bit.”

By this time Elizabeth had reached her dressmaker’s. Miss Claxton was busy, so she had to wait. Two other girls were waiting also—Bertha and Winnie Burroughs. Elizabeth knew them slightly because they were members of the Flower Committee of the Christian Endeavor, of which she was chairman. They taught in the big uptown school, and were strangers in the city. That was really all she knew about them, but she began to chat to them in her friendly way, and they soon responded.

“Yes, I like teaching,” said Bertha, in answer to Elizabeth’s question, “but I get tired at times. Sometimes things go wrong, and the children try one’s patience, and I feel discouraged. And I get so homesick, too, at times.”

“You’ll be going home for Thanksgiving, of course?” said Elizabeth.

Bertha shook her head.

“No. We haven’t any home now. Mother died last year. We will have a holiday, of course, and we have planned a walk together in the big beech woods over at Rocky Point. But it won’t seem like Thanksgiving.”

“O, it just seems to me that I’m getting to hate all these special festivals like Thanksgiving and Christmas,” said Winnie, impatiently. “At other times one can jog on comfortably enough, but times like these, when nearly every one else seems to be planning to go home and have a good time, make me remember all that used to be and isn’t any more. It emphasizes our loneliness.

There, now, Bertha, don't pinch me. I won't grumble any more. Of course, I know it's foolish, but I just have to break out once in a while."

All three girls laughed, but Elizabeth went away with a very serious look on her pretty face. She had other errands, but she forgot them and went musingly home. In her own pretty room she sat down in a rocker, looked gravely at herself in the mirror, and said, "Elizabeth Patterson Murray" three times.

"Now, what is to be done? My Thanksgiving celebration as I planned it has gone out in a puff. I wouldn't enjoy it a bit if I did have it. I'd be seeing Maggie's tired face and Bertha's sad eyes, and hearing the bitterness in Winnie's voice all the time. Elizabeth Patterson Murray, just put on your thinking-cap and think to some purpose."

Evidently she did, for when she went downstairs she looked bright and serene again. It was twilight and Mrs. Murray was in the library. Elizabeth curled herself up on the rug at her mother's feet and laid her curly head in the motherly lap.

"Mother, mine, I want to talk to you. I want your Advice and Assistance, spelled in capitals."

Then she told her mother all about the experiences of the afternoon.

"Now, mother, dear, I want to have Maggie and Winnie and Bertha here for Thanksgiving. And I know several other girls like them whom I mean to invite, too—girls who are working here in the big city and have no homes or can't go to them. What do you say to it?"

Mrs. Murray patted the golden head on her lap tenderly.

"This is your dinner, as I said, and you may ask any one you like. But I'll whisper this in your ear, deary, I like your last list of guests very much better than your first."

"What excellent judgment I had to select a mother like you!" said Elizabeth with a hug.

And so it came to pass that the guests who came on Thanksgiving morning to the handsome uptown house were not those whom Elizabeth had at first planned to ask. Maggie Blackwood was there, looking bright and happy again. Bertha and Winnie Burroughs, Maggie's cousin, who worked at the same counter; the timid little dressmaker, who sat next to Elizabeth in her Bible-class; the girl who gave Elizabeth embroidery lessons, the clever little girl who was on the staff of a society paper, and half a dozen other hardworking girls, who had looked forward to nothing more than a boarding-house Thanksgiving until Elizabeth's invitation came, given with the sweet graciousness that made it seem a favor asked, not conferred.

What a merry day they had, those girls who had learned by hard work how to appreciate a holiday when it did come! Mr. Whiteside's turkey was the very

ideal of a Thanksgiving gobbler, and was carved expertly by the newspaper girl, who amused them all with the story of her first attempt at carving.

“It was at school. We had turkey one day for dinner, and the teacher who had charge of our table wasn’t there. We girls drew lots to see which of us must carve the turkey, and it fell to me. I didn’t know the first thing about it, and the girls all gave advice and rattled me still further. And, O, that turkey was so tough! I sawed away and cut it up after a fashion. But the very next day I bought one of those little books that tell you how to carve—with diagrams and letters, like a geometry problem, you know. I studied up the rules until I knew them off by heart, and when I went home for Christmas I made father let me carve the turkey. And I’ve never forgotten.”

When the girls went home in the clear, purple twilight of the autumn evening, Elizabeth had the satisfaction of realizing that her guests had thoroughly enjoyed themselves.

“I just dreaded this Thanksgiving,” whispered Winnie, “and it has been the very pleasantest I ever spent.”

“I never once thought of being homesick,” said Maggie, radiantly.

Each and all had some such sentence to whisper to Elizabeth when they bade her good-night, and Elizabeth, with shining eyes, told them that they must come often to see her after this, and that she meant to have them all back again at Christmas.

“This Thanksgiving has taught me something,” she said to her mother, when they were once more alone. “You’ve often said I hadn’t any hobby, mother, but I’ll have one after this, and it is to be all the busy girls who are working so bravely and cheerfully in this big city, without homes and with few friends. I’m sure I can help them, and I mean to try.”

Cavendish, P. E. I., Canada.

## TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Mis-spelled words and printer errors have been fixed.

[The end of *Elizabeth's Thanksgiving Dinner* by L. M. (Lucy Maud) Montgomery]