

(Thanksgiving,) A Folk Tale

Here have we all in 1951
Together gathered, in a spirit marked as one.
Our hearts are linked by Time's long trailing Chords
Attached to hearth's delights of long ago.

For almost all were close at hand
When harvest came upon the land,
And feasting brought us those short miles
That linked our hearth with grandsire's house
And bounteous fare that brought us there,
With crumbs left over for the mouse.

The years have gone and we are slower now.
Another sits within the old man's seat,
Himself today a portrait of the first,
With his wide brow, and hair ~~so~~ white like the snow
And parted neat.

No long loose beard is his,
But memory's eye can see it there indeed,
And patriarch's picture present sight dismiss,
A voice that carries well and asks that everyone should heed.

First he himself, in year's before the North
Played havoc with the South, was young.
Young Daniel he was proud,
With eyes of blue that pierced forth with righteous fire,
Or smiled with fun when showing watch to child
Or giving penny new.

And there beside him in her wren like garb,
I also see my granddam's face.
Her name was Deborah, given long ago by Quaker parents true.
Mistake they made, for Patience was her name.
Her only beauty help a bite of lace
Old often, sometimes new.

Children we, who little understood
The formal greetings proffered to each other.
"How are you sister Ida? I hear this summer
almost lost its crops, with lack of rain
out Kansas way. Did Arthur finish school
and how is Nell?"
"Jordan worked hard you say to save the hay."
"God will provide I'm sure. It is his heavenly way".

Here comes sister Eva, bless her heart, jolly, positive and glad,
With Sam in tow.
There is a man indeed can take his part,
Among them all.
His voice booms out, both loud and clear,
"This one thing I am sure, I'm glad I'm here."
"I thought", says she, "this time we could not come
with Grace's three,
But we are here."

"Yes, Bertha has a beau, and Alice is right there."

"Now Paul, remember what I said, don't pull the children's hair."

"George, come right out, I know you're there."
Her baskets are chuck full for everyone to share.

"Dear Hannah, how are you today?"

"Are late....well, that is just your way."

"I vow you've been to church fore anyone was up, besides that nice old hen you had to pluck."

Life was so fast for her.
She scurried here and there
Between her hungry brood
And church to say her prayer.
For John had gone to heaven
Before young John was born.
Rejoicing at his birth,
Her heart was sorely torn.

Helen was fair to see, both beautiful and blond,
And she had those blue, blue eyes,
And her hair curled naturally.

But Johnny was an imp.

"What are you into now?"

And Dan was Ira then, a boy was good to see.

He had a bonny air and musical was he.

While Dwight would take your picture quite scientifically,
Or talk about his college and a PhD degree.

Young Horace was a Roman, why noone ever knew.

He'd go to Rome himself, before this life was through.

He'd gather pictures Roman and come back and put them up.

And tell you all about them when you came up to sup.

The Johnny dwelt on mischief there was a good side too,
He'd be the best of all before this life was through.

Upon some rare occassions dear Ira came to feast.

He made fair speech....a prayer at least.

Since he had come alone, just a corner would he take,

So little of disturbance his dignity would make.

He had two little daughters, young compared to him,

So delicate and thin.

This first was Natalie, too sweet for boy's rough games.

And Ruth was just an infant, a fair and pretty lass.

"I'm fraid this picture for her will have to pass."

"And Emma, how is she?"

"Dear Emma, the trip would be too much. She could not come
with me, but she'll be all right, for with the Browns
she'll be."

Now only Patience thought of a youth of long ago,

A son so fair to see was he.

She meditated then, though smiles her face made glow.

She had not heard the latest of the tales her Ottie told.

"I wonder", she was musing, as she looked at all around.

"What Frank would look like now?" how his voice would sound?"

"Just 17 odd summers, so handsome and so fair

I think I see him sitting,

No, Paul is over there."

"Grandma, can't you hear me", her grandson Ted has said.
 "I asked you, three times, grandma, won't you pass that bread?"
 "Yes, Teddy, here you are, I thought, at first....no matter,
 Of course, I know you're starved,
 Like boys of all the ages, can't wait till fowl is carved."
 "His hair it is like sunshine, and so sweet is he....
 I wonder, oh I wonder, will he stay till 18 summers so near and close to me?"

His mother sits beside him, her apron still around,
 To upward rise and rustle, when needed up and down.
 For Bertha is a woman, whose prayers must mix with work,
 So nowhere can she idle or humble matters shirk.
 Her all is for her husband a man of wit and humor,
 Who preaches well on Sunday but can do the washing Monday.
 For no common man is he, a man of many talents,
 Already bricks could lay, all straight and evenly,
 Before the Lord called to him, "Come now and speak for me".
 And ore his deep set eyes his bushy eyebrows arch
 His hair is rather curly, black as his preacher's robe,
 And when he stands among us his poise is fine to see.
 For all his father's people
 Could over mountains walk, with dignity and ease.
 Their strides were long and powerful and they came all silently.
 Sometimes, perhaps, myself I think, an Indian dignity.

~~But Joe knows well his critics watch him there,~~

His eldest son, our Paul, a humorist born is he,
 No one can watch his antics and not laugh out in glee.
 See how he learns against that old, old apple tree,
 His stuped look, his vapid stare, his mock inebrity.

But Joe knows well his critics watch him there,
 So gently he speaks up,
 "Oh Paul, a time and place for plays and verse have we.
 Let's wait till all can share."

Alfred born in May one year, was born when our Lucile
 Did open wide her blue, blue eyes
 To bind us to her weal. And mothers fond were romance bound
 So called their children dear for two in poetry,
 Who loved each other very much and came this time of year.

Diana was a huntress they said in days of old,
 Lucile was fleet and sure, a runner just as bold.
 While Alfred was a lover and he played upon his harp,
 Oh muse, oh god of Music, what tale before we part.

Now Bertha had two others who often met with us,
 When I had grown a little
 And the years had been stepped up. ~~They~~
 They were today's small baby, Jimmy fair to see,
~~That no one could be predicted and help us all to sing.~~
 But no one could predict his true majority,
 That he would be a preacher and help us all to sing.

And Richard would come after, as dark as dark could be,
That Richard was artistic no wonder we ascribed
For from his infant cradle,
Each flower he always spied.

My mother is a brown bird, and is contented when,
She sees us all so happy, and she's not unmindful then,
That children are a blessing, though there is much of care,
Oh, yes she knows it's worth it when they are young and fair.

You'll see me if you're looking, for I am also there,
Another little brown bird, half hidden in that chair.
I am no star I'll tell you, nor any athlete I,
When my small heart flows over I sometimes hide and cry,
A pity, oh a pity for one so soft to be,
It hardly gives me hope, success that I will be.

Upon his red, red wagon, behind his bold, bold steeds
Sits little chubby brother, our own, indeed, indeed.
His hands are on the reins, his heart is in his mouth,
For his horses big and ~~big~~ buxom have ~~to~~ decided to go South,
When by all his strenuous efforts, by all his mighty will,
They should be northward still.
For Charles is sweet and chubby and his eyes and hair are brown,
And grandma calls him Charlie when she looks him up and down,
For Charlie was my grandpa for whom our Charles was named
And when she calls him Charlie it's as though he still remained.

I see my grandma Adams, step-child this company,
But mighty busy step-child as everyone can see.
She is an expert baker. Her pies are grand delight.
She has a way with roasting no chef can put to flight.
I am her special problem, her front for all to see,
So I must walk the chalk line, and not a slip, Ah me.

My father is a speaker, a mighty man is he,
My grandsire's double picture, placed here for all to see.
When father tells the story of that grand old cherry tree
He lets you understand, right here and there and now,
My grandpa's wandering preachings were upheld by Ottie's plow.
For Ottie was a farmer, and must keep the larder ~~full~~ filled
From Southern farm and orchard while Dan's heavenly fields he tilled.

Now there beside our Patience, close with ~~by~~ us on this day,
Sits Elsie's husband Wallin, though she is far away.
The link that links her mother and this man who sits so still,
Is the one that from her lover, would bring her here by will,
The will that only those who were so very near
Can use to speak to dear ones
Gone before them up that hill.
And Patience looks at Wallin, and Wallin looks at her.
I seem to hear them whisper,
As their eyes each other find,
"No, she is here beside us, and if we're very still,
and each one thinks on Elsie, we'll feel her radiant presence,
and the rustling of her silks, the perfume of the flowers
and her voice both sweet and clear. We'll see those lofty towers,
and those Africanian bowers, for she is very near."

Young Glen is now persuasive, now pleasant and serene,
 I have a rig rigged up, something new and fine,
 And all you have to do is up the windmill climb,
 The journey is not harmful, and the ladder not too steep.
 I'll waken you get an eyefull of country side a heap.
 Then down the rope you fly and over fence you go,
 And all you do is land in that potato row."

"No, Glen, I do not think so", his mother says to him.
 "One day you'll fall way down and ~~about~~ what about you then?"

And we were all excited, a jolly pastime that.
 But Nell was right and Glen was wrong
 And fell cement beside.

That woman had her hands full,
 With all these lively boys, ~~The hardest pressed of mothers to keep Marie's small~~
 The hardest pressed of mothers to keep Marie's small toys,
 For dolls were made to whirl about,
 And tails were made to pull,
 And Teddy bears were very funny,
 When not so very full,
 And little girls were full of spice,
 And boys were not so good, How could they be so nice?
 But Alva said they should,
 For Alva was their father, a farmer bold was he.
 He needed Perchon horses
 And boys to help him feed.
 He always came to dinners with dignity indeed.

Right here today was Nellie, with Marie hold of her dress,
 A fair and pretty little girl, for flaxen braids had she.
 For dresses then were long and full, this I will have to stress,
 Unless of course you were a person in rich society,
 Then you would be all sheathed in hobble skirt so fine
 That held you so exactly.
 Yet these were hardly able thus garbed to work you see,
 But they could sit at table and discuss adversity.

I never got to know my uncle's boys real well,
 For once we got together I never knew you see,
 Just what they'd do to me. Once in the late, late summer,
 Down there upon the farm,
 They had a mellow battle, out there behind the barn.
 And balls did fly this way and that
 And then did split asunder.
 It filled me then with awe and fright
 And with a fearsome wonder.
 But they were Ralph, the youngest, and Clair next Glen
 And Frank.
 Ralph was a boy who raced my sister or my cousin John
 Or anyone who wanted to
 And often times he won.
 Frank and Clair were farmer boys
 And rough as they could be.
 I was afraid they'd pull my hair,
 Or other way annoy me
 And thus you see I do not know their personality.

Aunt Carrie came that year to us
 From far across the sea
 A lady fine with accent sweet,
 And worlds ~~away~~ from me.
 She had a fair haired little boy,
 Frail looking in his picture
 His name was Phil for Philippines,
 For that could make no mixture.
 They came to us and then they went
 To further disappear,
 Until some future feasting day,
 In other far off year.
 And Phillip had a brother,
 his name was Dan you see.
 He was a brown, brown baby
 And healthy as could be.
 But fate is strange and time's unkind
 And Dan is no more with us,
 For Phil was strong and Dan was ill,
 Reversed on future date.
 So Dan has gone and left us
 And Phil is quite alive.
 You can't predict the future no
 Matter how you strive.

Our uncle Oscar beat them all for gladness and for pleasure,
 His generous heart, his gracious ways,
 Noone could ever measure.
 He did not read it ~~it's a book~~ out of books
 Is all that I can say.
 He was the sort of person you wish would come and stay.

Then on these days some others came,
 Right near to us were they
 Sometimes they brought their parents
 When they had come to stay.
 For Reese and Daniel, brothers,
 Had a fondness for each other.

And we were country cousins,
 At least that's what they thought,
 Their father was so big,
 And /his presence he made felt,
 He was an engineer, a man who said his say,
 "Who wants a formal halter?"
 "You see," he says, "I tell you
 When Roosevelt was in..."

for
 And ~~of~~ this kith and ~~of~~ this kin,
 A warmish place had we,
 For here was fair Rebecca,
 Both sister Mayme and she.
 And Maymie lived at home and children two had she.
 Rebecca was a wonder and dressed her daughters fine,
 A stitch, some silk, a hat of fine maline.
 For they were both musicians,
 And when on the stage they stood,
 They could not look like heathen,
 Or dress like Robin Hood.
 Their brother was much older,
 And taught the violin.

And Ellis sang so sweetly,
And Norma did so well,
One day they'd go to Europe,
As anyone could tell.

Jeanette was shy and bashful,
And quiet all within,
And David was her brother,
Both Daniel's kith and kin.
For Maymie was his neice,
And so was Becky fine.
And their father said to Daniel,
"And how is thee and thine?"

The years have come,
The years have gone,
And scattered far are we,
And those who dwell in heaven,
Keep closer company,
Than we who here remain.
But in the hearts of those of us,
Who on this earth are scattered,
The picture I have painted
We all of us retain.

Pauline Lambert Warfel
Thanksgiving 1951