

MANUEL'S THANKSGIVING

(Short Story)

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"Good morning, Miss Dancel," politely greeted Manuel as he stepped into the room. The other children were already there. He was breathing deeply, trying to get to school on time. But just the same he was still late! He had been late to school many times but his kind teacher always knew what to do. She seemed to know everything about Manuel.

"Good morning, Manuel. Why are you late today?" asked Miss Dancel.

Manuel did not say a word. He just bowed his head. He was ashamed to tell his richer classmates that he had to help his mother at home before going to school. Poor Manuel!

Three years ago his father, who loved him so deeply, died and left Manuel with his mother. Manuel was seven years old then, but he was not going to school yet. But now he was in the Third Grade. He was a bright pupil. He could beat anybody in his class in language, arithmetic, or reading.

As he looked around from his desk, he saw his classmates all dressed in nice clean clothes. They had put them on, for that morning they were to hold a program. He looked at his clothes. They were ragged. There were holes in them. He said to himself, "If only my father were here, I could have new clothes also, and a pair of new shoes on!" His heart cried. He looked at his clothes again. "But they are as clean as the clothes of my classmates," he muttered.

Suddenly, "The first part of the program is a class song, 'Planting Rice.' Josefa will please lead the class," said Pablo, one of Manuel's friends.

The class sang. Manuel sang, too, but he thought his voice was drowned by the rest. On the program were dramatizations, stories, and pantomines. Manuel was going to give a recitation.

Later, "Manuel will give us a recitation, 'Father in Heaven, We Thank Thee,'" announced Pablo.

Manuel stood bravely. He had waited long to say his part. Had he not practiced reciting it at home to his mother that night? Now was his chance to show that he was better off than the rest.

He began:

"For flow'rs that bloom about our feet,

For tender grass..."

At the end of the first stanza, he paused then continued:

"For this new morning with its light,

For rest and shelter of night..."

He had never recited so well. No wonder as he said the last lines:

"For health and food, for love and friends,

For ev'rything His Goodness sends,
Father in heaven, we thank
Thee."

the room was filled with the clapping of his friends. He seemed to forget everything... poor boy, his old and ragged clothes were forgotten. He was very happy. Indeed there never was a day like this one he had now!

He whispered:

"For health and food, for love and Friends, and **HAPPINESS,**

For ev'rything His Goodness sends,
Father in heaven, **WE THANK
THEE."**