



Womans' Department

Conducted by PEARL RICHMOND HAMILTON

A HOUSEHOLD FORUM FOR THE DISCUSSION OF EVERYTHING THAT PERTAINS TO THE HOME



IF WE KNEW.

There are gems of wondrous brightness
Of times lying at our feet,
And we pass them, walking thoughtless
Down the busy, crowded street.
If we knew, our pace would slacken,
We would step more oft with care,
Lest our careless feet be treading
To the earth some jewel rare.

If we knew what hearts are aching
For the comfort we might bring;
If we knew what souls are yearning
For the sunshine we might fling.
If we knew what feet are weary,
Walking pathways roughly laid,
We would quickly hasten forward,
Stretching forth our hands to aid.

If we knew what friends around us
Feel a want they never tell,
That some word that we have spoken
Pained or wounded where it fell.
We would speak in accents tender
To each friend we chanced to meet;
We would give to each one freely
Smiles of sympathy so sweet.

—Genesee Richardson.

THE TOWN TRUST.

By Pearl Richmond Hamilton.

There were four organizations in Bainville, namely—the Town Council, the School Board, the Aid Society, and the Missionary Society.

Now the only capital to be found in any one of these clubs was the word *They*, and each body wanted the other organizations to know that it was the lawful owner of said capital. Every woman in town belonged to either the Aid Society or to the Missionary Society, except Jane Hanson, and when she wanted to start a new club, the female inhabitants waged a war of words.

Even those men whose working principles were not generous enough to be recorded sat on their accustomed much be-whittened benches and hurled sharp-pointed arrows at the proposed club. To be sure everyone liked Jane because she had a smile and a kind word for everybody, but another society could never thrive in the town of Bainville.

I say everyone liked Jane—everyone but Richard Brown. He did not like anyone—not even himself.

When Richard—alias Dick—heard of the plan, he slid his thumb into the arm-hole of his waistcoat and swelled his chest a little and drawled out in his usual pessimistic voice:

"What's the use in having another society—the one's we've got never did no good." Dick had always lived in the shade—he never saw the sun, nor a flower, nor a smile nor anything lovely in the whole world. His warped and shrivelled mind had affected his eyesight. In fact all of the men at Loafer's Retreat, which place shifted from the east side of the Post Office on sunny days to the inside on cold days, ridiculed and swore at the new idea. For the entire afternoon clouds of gossip and tobacco smoke were blackened with the threatening storm of bitter objection to the new club.

Finally Jim Watson with a beefy fist shoved back off his greasy forehead his felt hat, and his tight blue trousers stretched over his enormous knees as he

stiffened up to a painfully erect position while he announced the usual sentence that broke up these afternoon sessions: "Wall—I guess it's gittin' long about eatin' time."

Two or three heavy nickel watches came out of bulging pockets. Jim Watson stretched his stiffened muscles with great effort combined with a prolonged grunt, stood up and started down the lane with heavy uncertain steps.

Jack Smith coughed the frog out of his throat, stuck his cob pipe into his hip pocket and went into the post office to see if a train that never came in the afternoon had brought him any mail. This was a tri-daily habit with him. It was the only thing he ever did with regularity; he subscribed for no papers and never wrote a letter.

Richard Brown jumped up quickly as if some one had accused him guilty of a great offence, for he it said in all fairness that Richard rarely loafed. His one fault was that he was too ambitious, a condition not infectious in this town.

Shortly Loafer's Retreat was deserted and the inhabitants thereof were scattered to the four ends of the town.

Then came home to be a charge on her poor parents," and Mrs. Bowen shook her finger, freshly pierced by the needle during her exciting words.

"Well, they do say that she disgraced her folks somethin' terrible, but that ain't my business," Mrs. Watson rolled the frame over a little tighter after this remark. "Well, it serves them right. They should have been stricter in her bringin' up. I never let my girls walk the streets at nights."

Mrs. Watson wondered where these same girls were nights when Mrs. Bowen was poking around the corners of buildings with her lantern about eleven o'clock two or three evenings out of every week.

The two women looked out of the window just in time to see Mrs. Lamb and Mrs. Ramsay came up the walk.

"Well, I do declare, there's Mrs. Ramsay dressed up as usual. She will sew about ten stitches."

Mrs. Watson reached over for the ball that had rolled away just as the two new arrivals sat down on the opposite side.

Mrs. Ramsay began to talk about the minister's wife and the others listened

Then the four ladies with Mrs. Stevens looked over the afternoon's work. They had not accomplished much but "every little counts," Mrs. Ramsay said as she pinned on her plumaged hat.

The next afternoon the Missionary Society met and discussed the work in China for five minutes, then while they sewed carpet rags, the next one hundred and twenty minutes, they discussed the affairs of the town, especially Nina Kelsey.

As the Town Council and School Board met behind closed doors I cannot give the minutes of their meetings, but it was rumored that the President of the school board, Jim Watson, dismissed the primary teacher because his wife said that a girl who went to dances was not fit to teach her children.

When I saw the little teacher board the train for her home, I wondered which environment was the more harmful for children—the exercise of tongues in the movement of uneven measures and discordant tones of gossip, or the exercise of feet in the movement of perfect time and pleasing harmony.

The evening set for the formation of the club was at hand. Of course no one intended to join but everybody went through curiosity, even to Richard Brown.

Some say he did not go through curiosity, but anyway he went—was suffering from indigestion of the affections perhaps.

There was the sullen, silent stupid figure of the President of the School Board; Mrs. Watson with her neighbor, Mrs. Bowen, came in late and both sat in the back seat. On the face of each a proud, icy, loathing expression indicating their conviction of doubt.

There were the five Smith sisters who were all married and settled in a circle about the parental home. Ambitious plans of any of their respective husbands could not induce them to leave their father and mother. Every afternoon they met for two hours in the kitchen of their childhood, returning to their own homes in time to warm over the potatoes for tea. There they waited in various attitudes of weariness, expectancy and uncertainty.

For a few moments there was silence, then a buzz of suppressed whispering and a sudden hush at the appearance of Jane Hanson who walked across the platform with a freedom of movement and complete absence of self-consciousness which indicate great strength and body well under control.

There was a general feeling that this was a moment of importance, which resulted in concentrated attention. Then Jane's frank eyes seemed to look right into the shallow and shuffling little souls before her while a sense of calm assurance gave her courage to present her object and she began:

"Dear friends, this, no doubt, to you is a mysterious meeting, but I come before you with a plea for the improvement of our village. I have been studying conditions here and I find a goodly number of graduates from Grumbler's College and a very active Fretting Fraternity. Instead of praising our town, you are telling everyone who comes here that this place is dead. You are advertising this idea so widely that strangers



A Christmas Dinner in sight

The next day an extra meeting of the Aid Society was called, the notice read to tie a quilt for a box they were filling for Christmas. Now as this was in the month of July the Christmas rush was evidently on.

The quilt was one of those log cabin affairs that had been pieced by different members at the weekly meetings. It had been "set together" in classic style and sewed on to the quilting frames. These frames were stretched out in Mrs. Stevens' "spare room." The Aid Society always tied their quilts there because her "spare room" was the only room that was always "spare."

Mrs. Bowen and Mrs. Watson sat on the south side because they arrived first. After threading their long needles with cotton, they began their work of charity. "Nina Kelsey has come home to live off her father and mother I hear." "You don't say so, Mrs. Watson. Now I call that a right down shame for her to galavantin off to the city and spend a lot of their hard-earned money and

in mean silence. She had a head like a bell—the tongue was the only thing in it. Mrs. Ramsay's remarks, however, always commanded attention. She wore her black silk dress this day and the attention was even more marked.

"The minister's new wife cannot find time to attend our Aid Society and Missionary Society but she is encouraging Jane Hanson to start her new club!" exclaimed "the woman in black," flushed with the excitement of conveying to the society a fresh piece of news.

"Well, did you ever!" came a chorused answer.

Then a terrible thought twisted up Mrs. Watson's face.

Mrs. Bowen's thread knotted until she jerked it out in a mad manner, and Mrs. Ramsay's tight dress waxed tighter as she swelled in indignant protest. Then a terrific cyclone of words burst from every mouth and continued its swath of destructive abuse until the clock striking five warned them that "time's up."