

wanted—fancywork, sofa pillows, towels, holders, pillow-slips, and a long list of useful things. Perhaps Mrs. Farmer's Wife has butter and eggs she would exchange for something she needs. I know there is always good demand among town folks in the fall for crocks of good butter.

But I must cease, or you will be telling me to stop my chatter.

Grandma, I have not attended Women's Institute meetings, simply because there are none in my neighborhood. But I read and enjoy all the reports I can get of such meetings; and I believe they are

a great influence for good, but, as I said before, they reach only a few people, and unless it is a real live Institute, it is apt to drift into trivialities.

As someone else said, I read every word of "The Farmer's Advocate," even to most of the advertisements, and I enjoy the Home Department more all the time. I am sure we should be grateful to the publishers for giving us so many pages. We are not satisfied yet by any means, but we are very thankful for what we do get, and hope the constant improvement shown will long continue.

JACK'S WIFE.

The Emancipation of Lydia Duroe.

Mrs. Simon Bale stepped with ponderous solemnity up the path between the flower-beds with their brown and tattered company. It was the second of November, and the air was full of the fine, sharp voices of dead leaves and bare, scraping branches; there was quite a wind that afternoon. Before Mrs. Bale touched the door, Mrs. Warren opened it from within.

"I see you going over to Lydia's," she said in the repressed tone with which one speaks of a house where death is guest, "and I told Jessie that I thought likely you'd stop in on the way back, so I was sort of watching for you. Lay off your things, Em'line."

"I dunno's I'd ought to," Mrs. Bale responded, doubtfully unwinding the nubia that framed her broad face. "I can't stay more'n half a minute, for I've got to get back and make biscuits for supper. Well, there, Jessie, I've jest discovered you, curled up in that corner."

The young girl looked up with a serious smile. She had an odd, eager, little, brown face, with eyes so blue that at times, when alight with excitement, the effect was almost startling. People often looked at her with the curious feeling that she had spoken and they missed her words; they couldn't make her out, they confided to each other.

Mrs. Bale, surrendering her wraps, sank heavily into the nearest rocking-chair. Mrs. Warren took the one opposite, and for a moment or two they rocked in silence. Mrs. Bale was the first to speak.

"Well, and so poor Betsy's gone at last!" she sighed. "It came on me like a clap this morning; she'd been hanging on about the same for so many years that I s'pose we didn't realize that she really had been failing all the time. Lyddy says she passed away real easy, in her sleep."

"Last night," Mrs. Warren confirmed her. "Lyddy didn't know till this morning. She came running over before I was dressed, an' I jest flung on what was nearest and went back with her. She looked as peaceful as a child."

They both glanced instinctively towards the opposite house. A brown tangle of honeysuckle and roses hid the door, but every now and then something black fluttered against the pale sky.

"'Twas a blessed release, if ever there was one," Mrs. Bale asserted. "It's full five years now since she's been a comfort to herself or anyone else. There ain't many would have done for her as Lyddy has—and she no kin at all."

"I said so to Lyddy once. I said that it didn't seem right she should be wasting her life on an old woman that had no claim on her. If she knew, 'twould be different," I said. "But she don't sense anything that's going on round her, and you're jest throwing away the best years of your life," I told her."

"'Tain't hard to guess what Lyddy answered," Mrs. Bale said with some amusement. "Nobody ever got any thanks for telling Lyddy to consider herself."

"No more I didn't," her friend returned. "Lyddy said that Betsy had taken care of her mother, and she wa'n't one that could forget things like that. Betsy should have all that she could give her as long as she lived. As for her not sensing what went on around her, she didn't know about that. She certainly knew the difference between her and anyone else."

"She certainly did," Mrs. Bale agreed. "That was what made me maddest. She'd treat Lyddy like the dirt under her feet, but if Lyddy wanted to go over to

Medford for a day shopping or anything, there'd be hurrah, boys, sure enough. Poor Lyddy used to come home before half her errands were done, all wore out with worrying over things that might have happened. And there Betsy would set and scold at her for going and leaving her."

"I don't think Lyddy minded the talking—she always maintained that Betsy wasn't responsible. But it got pretty hard along towards the last when Betsy got so fractious. I recollect I was over one evening last summer when Lyddy was trying to get her to bed. I declare it was a reg'lar performance."

"Come, Aunt Betsy," she'd begin, sort o' peaceable, but commanding underneath. "'Come what?' snaps Aunt Betsy, sitting up straight an' prim."

"Why, come to bed—didn't you hear the clock strike nine?"

"Never struck!" says Aunt Betsy.

"So then Lyddy—I declare, her patience jest beat me—would go and bring the clock and show her, and like as not Aunt Betsy would declare 'twas only six, and that Lyddy was jest plottin' to get her out of the way. And sometimes she'd have to set up an hour or two before she could get her out of her chair. And even then 'twas only begun. Like as not when Lyddy took off her dress she'd ketch hold of the bed-post and refuse to let go. I mind one evening I was over when she jerked the bed all round the room—you know she was real strong in ways. I declare I laughed till I cried to see her—I jest couldn't help it," and Mrs. Warren wiped away mirthful tears at the remembrance. "I'd ought to be ashamed laughing with her laying over there," she acknowledged, "but there, I dunno's it's wicked. 'Tain't as if 'twan't happier for her more'n everybody else, even Lyddy. I've been thinking all day, and wondering how it seemed to her to be done with all her cranks an' twists. More'n once I've seen a puzzled look in her eyes as if she kind o' half realized that things wasn't right with her. Well, I guess they're all right now."

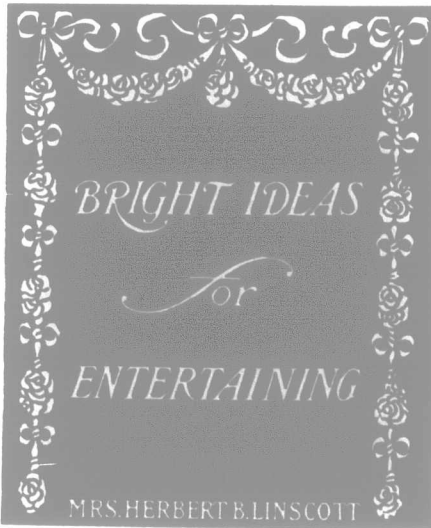
The two women rocked softly. In the silence the stove creaked and a fly buzzed about the pane. When Mrs. Warren spoke again, it was of the living, and not of the dead.

"I've been figuring up," she said. "Lyddy's forty-one, ain't she? And her mother had her first stroke when she was twenty-five; that makes sixteen years she's been tied up—first her mother all those years; then the very week after she was taken her father had that spell of rheumatism that left him crippled and helpless; and after he went there was Betsy. Sixteen years is a good deal to take out of a woman's life. There ain't many would have taken it the way Lyddy has."

"No more there ain't," Mrs. Bale assented warmly. "I said to Simon this morning as soon as the news came—'Well, Lyddy's free now,' I said, 'and I do hope the Lord'll make up to her for the years she's given to other people.' She's the salt of the earth, as Lyddy Duroe, but sometimes I dunno how much satisfaction there is in that. I hope the Lyddy Duroes will get rewarded hereafter, for it does seem, sometimes, as if about the only reward they get down here is more trouble."

"Well, it seems as if Lyddy might enjoy herself a spell now. She's got enough to live on, and she's real young-seeming. I declare, I've seen Lyddy times, when her cheeks was pink and her eyes shining, when she didn't look a day over thirty."

Mrs. Bale caught and answered the unspoken suggestion with an alertness



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