

Fidella looked at her fiercely. "Lily Almy," said she, "whatever else you may do, don't you do that. Don't you force yourself on any feller, when there's a chance you ain't wanted. Don't you do anything that ain't modest. You'd better live the way I've done."

"He may be sick," said Lily, pitifully. "The folks he's with would write. Don't you write a word. I didn't write. An' maybe you'll hear to-morrow. I guess we'd better sweep the parlor to-day."

This new anxiety seemed to wear on Fidella more than her own had done. She now talked more about Valentine Rowe than Mr. Lennox. Her faith in Lily's case did not seem as active as in her own.

"I wouldn't go down to the post-office, seems to me," Lily said one morning. Fidella tottered going out the door; "you don't look fit to. I'll go by an' by."

"I can go well enough," said Fidella, in her feeble, shrill voice. "You ain't goin' to begin as long as I can help it." And she crawled slowly out of the yard between the rows of dahlias, and down the road, her head nodding, her flabby black bag hanging at her side.

That was the last time she ever went to the post-office. That day she returned with her patient, disappointed heart for the last time.

When poor Fidella Almy left her little house again she went riding, lying quietly, her nodding head still forever. She had passed out of that strong wind of Providence, which had tossed her so hard, into the eternal calm. She rode past the post-office on her way to the little green graveyard, and never knew nor cared whether there was a letter for her or not. But the bell tolled, and the summer air was soft and sweet, and the little funeral train passed by, and may be there was one among the fair, wide possibilities of heaven.

The first day on which Fidella gave up going to the post-office, Lily began going in her stead. In the morning Fidella looked up at her pitifully from her pillow, when she found that she could not rise.

"You'll have to go to the office, Lily," she whispered, "an' you'd better hurry, or you'll be late for the mail."

That was the constant cry to which the poor girl had to listen. It was always, "Hurry, hurry, or you'll be late for the mail."

Lily was a sweet, healthy young thing, but the contagion of this strained faith and expectation seemed to seize upon her in her daily tramps to the post-office. Sometimes, going along the road, she could hardly believe herself not to be the veritable Fidella Almy, living life over again, beginning a new watch for her lost lover's letter. She put her hand to her head to see if it nodded. She kept whispering to herself, "Hurry, hurry, or you'll be late for the mail."

Fidella lay ill a week before she died, and the week had nearly gone when Lily flew home from the office, one night, jubilant. She ran in to the sick woman. "O Aunt Fidella!" she cried, "the letter's come!"

Fidella had not raised herself for days, but she sat up now erect. All her failing forces seemed to gather themselves up and flash and beat, now the life-giving wind for them blew. The color came into her cheeks, her eyes shone triumphant. "Ansel's letter!"

Lily sobbed right out in the midst of her joy: "O poor Aunt Fidella! poor Aunt Fidella! I didn't think—I forgot. I was awful cruel. It's a letter from Valentine. He's been sick. The folks wrote, but they put on the wrong state—Massachusetts instead of Vermont. He's comin' right home and he's goin' to stay. He's goin' to settle here. Poor Aunt Fidella! I didn't think."

Fidella lay back on her pillow. "You, dear child," she whispered, "you won't have to."

Valentine Rowe came the morning of the day on which she died. She eagerly demanded to see him.

"You're a-goin' to settle here, ain't you?" she asked him. "Don't you go away again before you're married; don't you do it. It ain't safe trustin' to letters; there's slips."

The young man looked down at her with tears in his honest eyes. "I'll promise you," said he. "Don't you worry. I'll promise you."

Fidella looked up at him, and shut her eyes peacefully. "The dear child," she murmured.

Along the middle of the afternoon she called Lily. She wanted her to put her head down, so she could tell her something.

"Them dresses," she whispered, "upstairs. You'd better take 'em an' use 'em. You can make that white one over for a weddin' dress. An' you'd better take the covers off the things in the parlor when you're married, an' eat the plum-cake."

Near sunset she called Lily again. "The evenin' mail," she whispered. "It's time for it. You'd better hurry, or you'll be late. I shouldn't be—a bit—surprised if the letter came to-night."

Lily broke down and cried. "O dear, poor aunt!" she sobbed. The awful pitifulness of it all seemed to overwhelm her suddenly. She could keep up no longer.

But Fidella did not seem to notice it. She went on talking. "Ansel Lennox—promised he'd write when he went away, an' he said he'd come again. It's time for the evenin' mail. You'd better hurry, or you'll be late. He—promised he'd write, an'—she looked up at Lily suddenly; a look of triumphant resolution came into her poor face—"I ain't goin' to give it up yet."

Minnie May's Dep't.

Why Christmas Comes.

Hang up the holly and the mistletoe,
Build up the fires and let them redly glow,
Set out good cheer in all your happy homes,
For this is why the Christmas yearly comes.

Renew old friendships and forgive all wrongs,
For loving kindness to the time belongs.
Be generous to the poor and needy ones,
For this is why the blessed Christmas comes.
—Lillian Grey.

MY DEAR NIECES:—

During the holiday season when everyone is looking forward to fun and frolic, we shall discuss the possibilities of a real old fashioned New Year's festivity. It need not be held on that night, but any time during the two weeks of the New Year, and though some rules will be given you, they can be altered to suit almost any company or circumstances. You must choose the number of your guests according to the room you have and the number of your company; but twenty is a good many at once, and we will provide for that number. First let me impress upon you the importance of having your house in shining array, the windows bright, and curtains white; stoves polished and floors spotless; and from attic to cellar all should be neat and clean. All this will cost a little time and trouble, but you are well repaid by the bright, cheery aspect of your home. Have all the fires warm and glowing, for warmth imparts such a sense of hospitality. Be ready dressed in your best before the hour of your guests' arrival, and put every other feeling but that of enjoyment far from you for that night. If you have a piano you have the enjoyment of your guests secured, but if not you must secure music.

Now we have attended to all that is necessary in this part of the house, unless you will decorate it with evergreens, and what so pretty or festive looking as wreaths of hemlock and cedar everywhere. Your supper may be just what you can afford—sandwiches and coffee only—but let them be good and abundant, and the coffee hot, sweet and strong; or you can provide a substantial supper for your guests at a very little trouble and cost. All can be cold, cooked before the day, and nicely decorated with green leaves, or the tender tops of turnips or cabbages as they sprout in the root cellar. You can provide salad if you like of celery, chicken or beet root, and so many sweet dishes can be made by my bright girls from the delicious cream that only a farm home can supply, that there need not be any difficulty to select them. Lay your table with a clean white cloth, and put the dishes tastefully upon it, the largest at each end, and in the centre you might put a plain fruit cake—the recipe for making and icing was given in the last number of the *Advocate*. This centre piece can be made to look very gala by dipping small sprigs of cedar in gum water, then rolling in fine sugar and drying. Arrange these all around the cake, and a piece out of the top of it, or a small flag may be placed there. You can make the flags from colored tissue paper. Believe me, a plain supper, well cooked, will be much better relished than a more elaborate one badly done. A cup of hot coffee served to each guest upon their arrival will just begin the evening, and be relished after a long drive perhaps. If you serve only refreshments the sandwiches can be placed upon large plates with a white cloth beneath, and this will make them look very appetizing. I am only offering temperance beverages, as there is no need of anything else among my happy young people.

MINNIE MAY.

Kitchen Hints.

Brooms before using should be dipped in hot suds and hung up to dry by the handle; treated thus they wear longer.

Granite ware can be cleaned of anything sticking to it by scouring with coarse salt.

A special saucepan should be kept for boiling onions; if obliged to use another, fill with hot water and wood ashes to cleanse from the smell.

Brush out the flues of your cooking stove at least once a month. On the morning of your scrubbing day is the best.

Do not use old pieces of shirt or corsets for dishcloths. Unbleached muslin is so cheap and will last so long. There is a suggestion of nativeness about using old clothing about your kitchen, and except for floor cloths should not be done.

Butter cloths should be of new cloth. A piece of old shirt around a butter print is enough to spoil the sale of it. Many a woman has turned in disgust from it. Soap and water will not wash away memories.

Try a spoonful of sugar in your pancakes before cooking, and you will have an agreeable variety.

Peel apples before baking them; there is not half so much waste, and they look better.

Cheese that has become too hard to use, can be grated and put between slices of bread and butter for sandwiches for tea.

Bread need not be wasted if too hard to use; stew apples and sweeten; put a layer of apples and one of bread; another of apples until the dish is full; put some little bits of butter on the top and bake for one hour; after pouring one cup of sweet milk over it; a wholesome and delicious pudding. Serve with cream.

When you use the white stalks of celery, tie up the green part and hang in a cool place to flavor stew or soup with.

Baked quinces are delicious served with cream and sugar.

Treat the family to coffee, or cocoa, for a variety at breakfast.

Cold meat, thinly sliced, looks far more tempting if a few sprigs of parsley or celery tops are put around the edge of the dish.

Parsnips fried are good with roast meat; cut in slices long ways and fry in hot lard.

Vary the shape of your loaves of bread and they will taste nicer. Make them in twists, or rolls, or bake in long, fancy cake pans. When they come out of the oven, brush over with milk and sugar or butter.

Save all your brown paper; use it for setting pots and kettles upon the painted dresser, or wiping the face of smoothing irons upon, or putting under and over a pan of cake in the oven to prevent scorching, or over a roast of beef or poultry; and when dressing poultry for the table do it on a big sheet of brown paper.

See that your kitchen stovepipes and chimney are clean; it will save you the discomfort of smoke, a slow oven, or, perhaps, the fright of a blaze out some breezy morning.

Throw a liberal supply of fresh lime into closets and sinks, or drains; or common salt is a very good purifier, and boiling water will carry away any grease that may accumulate in the pipe. If the pipe does choke, light a roll of newspaper and hold the blaze under the pipe until it heats it and the grease will go through with a rush; follow it with a deluge of boiling water and soda, so as to carry it away into the drain.

Treat the family to stewed celery occasionally; it is a little more trouble than ordinary vegetables, but it is a delicious relish with beefsteak. Stewed cranberries are good also.