

An Afternoon at a Women's Institute.

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In this fast-moving age nothing comes as a great surprise; still, I must say that on my last Institute trip I was surprised. I have watched from the first the development of Women's Institutes, but I had not thought to see them make such rapid progress, and that was the pleasant surprise I received. Why, it was not unusual for the women to outnumber the men at the meetings, and when, as was often the case, a separate meeting was held, the hall would be full, and it did me good to see the businesslike way in which most of the meetings were conducted.

Many ladies, and, for that matter, men, too, will say, "But what good are these meetings, anyway?" I wish all such inquirers could attend some of the sessions of such Institutes as those of East York, Halton, Brant, and others equally as flourishing. In the first place, the Institute brings women with like interest together. All are to a more or less extent interested in homemaking and housekeeping, and something pertaining to these usually forms the basis of the papers read, the address given, or the informal talk or discussion.

At several of our meetings we had what we called "A chat with housekeepers on house-keeping." We started with Monday, taking it as wash day. The ladies told their method of washing flannels, colored and white clothes; what washing preparations they used; discussed washing machines, etc. Then followed a little talk on starching, drying and folding the clothes. Next came ironing day, and many useful hints were thrown out to make easier that hot work—the use of an old saucepan and tin cover to heat the irons in, rubbing the irons over with bathbrick before heating, the use of wax to keep the irons smooth when ironing, what clothes should receive extra care and those which might be slighted—really there was so much to say on the subject we just had to leave it to hasten on to mending day. The truth of the old adage, "A stitch in time saves nine," was emphasized—darning weak places to prevent holes—a rent is much better darned with ravelings carefully taken from a strip of like material than when mended with silk or cotton thread, even though it be an exact match.

Thursday we treated as calling day. It was shown there was much need for sociability—a pleasant interchange of visits amongst the homes—not the formal calls or "at homes" now fashionable in the city, but more after the good old days when friends came to spend the afternoon and take tea. There was a warmth and genuineness about that old-time hospitality which we would do well to imitate. That we cultivate the social side of our character is just as essential as seeing that the family is well fed or that they attend church regularly. Just in this particular the Women's Institutes are doing a good work among the ladies in the country. It brings them together, they get acquainted, and other interests enter into their often too monotonous lives.

Friday was discussed as sweeping and dusting day. The use of the broom and carpet-sweeper was talked over, the latter being considered more hygienic and easier, although it must be used in connection with the broom. The feather duster was denounced, as it only scatters instead of gathering up the dust.

Saturday, perhaps, was considered the most important day of all, as the preparing of food for our bodies was assigned as that day's work. General methods were brought out, such as the necessity of using the measuring cup and scales. Instead of using so much time and material in the preparation of fancy cakes and rich pastries, it was deemed better to have simpler and more nutritious dishes, such as scalloped potatoes, tomatoes or salmon, milk toast, omelets, etc.; a hot dish followed by fruit is better than fruit followed by cake.

A little talk on making the Sabbath a day of peaceful rest and quiet enjoyment, both for the young as well as the old, brought out some commendable thoughts. One lady told how certain books were reserved for Sunday use only. Others said they provided a special treat in the way of homemade taffy, fruit or nuts; while another said the customary Sunday walk with "Pa" was the treat her little folks looked forward to during the week.

Who can estimate the good resulting from earnest women discussing together problems which affect so vitally the home and all its varied interests.

Drill Sergeant, who has been worrying raw recruit for a considerable length of time in drill lessons, but can never get him to understand the order—"Right about face." Raw Recruit (to himself, with a sigh of relief)—"Thank goodness, I am right about something."

The boarder was sitting at breakfast, vainly endeavoring to cut a piece of steak. He called the landlady, and said: "The next time you give me steak you might give me two pieces." "Why?" said she. "Because I have a box upstairs wanting a couple of hinges."

Ingle Nook Chats.

My dear Guests,—

The holiday festivities are over, and the souvenirs given by loving friends, and memory, are all that now is left of that memorable time. Memory is by some claimed to be a precious boon, and so perhaps it may sometimes be considered; when life still glows in roseate hues, no doubt the memory of past happiness, nay, even of grief, but enhances present joy; but when a heart is bowed beneath a sorrow too deep for words, does not the brightness gone before but more forcibly draw our attention to the gloom of the present? Ah, well, there is always the future to which to look forward, and for those who may chance to dread even that there is consolation in remembering that—

"The clouds have a silver lining, don't forget!
And though he's hidden, still the sun is shining,
Courage instead of tears and vain repining,
Just bide a wee and dinna fret."

A strange mood for the Hostess, you think? Well, are not women proverbially creatures of caprice; one cannot always account for moods.

I was pleased to be favored with photographs of three of my "Advocate" pen-friends, "Moache," "Puss," and "Essex," and thank them very much for remembering; indeed, in the matter of gifts I was very fortunate, although I did not hang up my stockings.

An exceptionally bright letter from "The Baby," a new guest, gave me much pleasure. Here's the hand shake, and just deposit your baggage in the most convenient corner and appropriate the cosiest seat you can find. "Mother's girl and father's boy all in one"—what an important little personage "The Baby" is. Fortunate parents to have such a sunbeam about their home; may you never shine less brightly, girls! dear. Yes, it is pleasant to receive many letters, but one sometimes grows lazy about answering them. I always like my guests to send a letter along with their work; it makes us more at home with one another, you know. Plenty of time yet for that "mantle" to descend; be careful how you use it should it alight upon you. Come again and often, "Baby."

"Weary Wiggins' Brother."—Thank you for your letter. Anything concerning the old friends of "Way-side" always interests me. "W. W." should find his present work congenial; compliments of the season to him when you write.

Jessie D.—I am glad you find pleasure in the Ingle Nook; please make yourself comfortable, and continue to share your company with us. You are fortunate in your first attempt.

There are several other new arrivals to whom I should like to speak individually, but space will not permit, so I offer them, collectively, my sincere thanks for their kind wishes and also for their co-operation, without which we should certainly fail to succeed.

OUR COMPETITIONS.

A large portion of the work sent in response to Contest XVI. was below the average. However, there were some very creditable poems received. The prizes have been awarded as follows: Class I, Miss Jessie Dunphy, Upper Blackville, N. B.; Class II, Miss Jennie Crosby, Brazil Lake, Yarmouth, N. S.; Class III, Miss Maud Jose, Rossmore, Ont. Other contributors were: Arthur D. Lloyd; R. E. L.; Frank Rae; Netta M. Nixon; Betsy S. Kelly; "Antrim Farm"; Martha Frankfort; L. Galbraith; A. L. McDiarmid; Bessie Bray; Fanny Fulton; Geo. H. Medd; Alex. Bell; Alice Ethel Bingham; Clara Hartel; John Dunlop; Alice Bull; "Thorndale" (a letter and poem came from Thorndale, but was not signed).

Contest XVII., announced last issue, is easy and amusing, and I hope to receive many contributions to it.

THE HOSTESS.

Ingle Nook Chats, Pakenham, Ont.

PRIZE POEM—CLASS I.

The New Year.

(By Miss Jessie Dunphy, Upper Blackville, N. B.)

I know not what of gladness,
Of revel or of mirth,
I know not what of sadness,
May greet the New Year's birth.

No need to know! For ever clear
Before me as I roam,
Hope's perfect music still I hear,
And know—beyond is home.

Time's iron hand may banish youth,
May banish peace and rest;
But I have proved each year this truth,
Who hopes is truly blest.

PRIZE POEM—CLASS II.

The New Year.

(By Jennie Crosby, Brazil Lake, N. S.)

The New Year is coming! We hail him with gladness,

We welcome him gaily with laughter and mirth;
Although in our hearts there are touches of sadness,
As the dear old year dies at his successor's birth.

The merry bells ring through the air cold and clear,
'Tis the holiday season and none wish to roam;
In every direction good wishes we hear,
From strangers abroad to the dear ones at home.

As the new leaf is turning, may old age and youth
From the world's grasping struggles for power and
wealth rest;

May they hold high the standard of love, peace and
truth,
And in all their doings be graciously blest.

A few days ago a beggar accosted a Jew, who was standing at the door of his "ole clo'" shop, with the remark: "Could ye oblige me with tuppence for my bed?" "Mine gootness," replied the Jew, "tuppence for a bed. Bring it in."

Something About Tunbridge Wells.

"A Happy New Year to you" is my message to all who on the first days of the second year of our new century take up their old friend, the "Farmer's Advocate." After satisfying themselves with the beautiful illustrations, the timely articles and most interesting correspondence upon its earlier pages, who knows but they may turn to our Home Magazine, and, giving a glance at Mollie's little corner, send her, in thought, a kindly greeting across the turbulent wintry waves of the big Atlantic Ocean which rolls between us? Believe me, my friends, you have the heart of Mollie with you even though her visible self is for the time being in a very beautiful and story-full (not strictly historical, you understand) corner of the English county of Kent. My gad-dings have come to an end for awhile, and I am again at quiet anchorage with my dear old relative at Tunbridge Wells.

One of my late letters told of that dreadful fog which lasted four days and which followed so closely upon the triumphal procession of the Royal travellers through London. And now, over a month later, there are still roses to be gathered in sheltered nooks, and belated blossoms smile up at you as you take your morning constitutional between the box-lined flower beds in the garden or amidst the greenery which never wholly forsakes the lanes and hedgerows of the dear Old Land. Neither birds nor flowers become frozen into utter speechlessness here. There are with us always the holly and the ivy and the other greeneries, which manage to hold their own in spite of anything which that imp of a Jack Frost may do. So far he has treated us very kindly. He has touched us but slightly, and probably this being his usual kind consideration for Tunbridge Wells is the reason why invalids choose it for their winter residence, and thus too is accounted for the anomaly that a place so avowedly healthful should yet be so full of pale-faced people languidly reclining in bath-chairs, each drawn at leisurely pace by a human biped who has become so accustomed to his daily round that he looks about as intelligent as a bit of mechanism. Never in my life have I seen so many invalids, never have I seen so many bath-chairs. One meets them by dozens, mostly occupied by rheumatic sufferers, and if one did not get used to the sight one would become reduced to a condition of chronic depression, and end, perhaps, by needing a bath-chair oneself. Not that all are invalids who come to Tunbridge Wells. By no means. There are a good many who apparently lead indifferent butterfly society lives here as elsewhere. Nor are we without our struggling poor. There are times when I put on my thinking-cap and wonder, and wonder, why everybody seems to want to live in cities, to crowd and elbow one another, when there is space and to spare in our big Northwest. It is computed that London's population increases by forty thousand yearly, and the problem of the housing and feeding of this vast multitude is a very serious one for England. Homes on the grand stretches of prairie in the Dominion would solve it for them, and open another channel through which her Colonies can help the dear old motherland to which they are proud to belong and whose battles they are so ready to fight, as ready now as when that weary war at first began, for I hear of another Canadian contingent having started for South Africa. May God guard our gallant boys and bring them safe home again. A kind voice asks me upon what doleful subject am I writing that I heave so portentous a sigh? "I think I am trying to do the impossible," is my reply. "I believe I am trying to carry the affairs of the nation upon my shoulders." "Don't do that, my dear, but instead, just tell them something of what you saw of Tunbridge Wells when we took our last pleasant drives together."

I suppose every one who has read the novels of nearly a century ago is familiar with Tunbridge Wells as a fashionable resort where "the elite" met and gossiped, where the Beau made his finest bow to the Belle, who returned his greeting with the most graceful and most sweeping of courtesies; where scandals were innuendoed, where reputations were torn into shreds, and where elopements were arranged, when society met at the "pump room," where it "drank the waters" and took its turn at the public baths. The people who frequented the Tunbridge Wells of that day usually arrived in their own big lumbering travelling carriages or coaches, with postilion-ridden horses and a retinue of servants. Only "people of quality," as they liked to be considered, could afford to come to the Wells, and they would endeavor to time their visit to coincide with that of one royal personage or another.

Many of the old landmarks still remain, an old-time flavor lingering around them, but the inflated descriptions of some of the writers of long ago have perhaps led us to entertain misleading expectations as to their size and grandeur, though they cannot deprive one altogether of a certain amount of satisfaction in planting one's 20th-century foot upon the actual spot where our great-great-great-very-great-indeed progeni-