



## A QUILTING BEE IN OUR VILLAGE.

BY MARY E. WILKINS.

One sometimes wonders whether it will ever be possible in our village to attain absolute rest and completion with regard to quilts. One thinks after a week fairly swarming with quilting bees. "Now every housewife in the place must be well supplied; there will be no need to make more quilts for six months at least." Then, the next morning a nice little becurled girl in a clean pinafore knocks at the door and repeats demurely her well-learned lesson: "Mother sends her compliments, and would be happy to have you come to her quilting bee this afternoon."

One also wonders if quilts, like flowers, have their seasons of fuller production. On general principles it seems as if the winter might be more favorable to their gray complexities of bloom. In the winter there are longer evenings for merriment after the task of needlework is finished and the young men arrive; there are better opportunities for roasted apples, and chestnuts and flip, also for social games. It is easier, too, as well as pleasanter, to slip over the long miles between some of our farmhouses in a sleigh if it is only a lover and his lass, or a wood-sled if a party of neighbors or a whole family.

However, so many of our young women become betrothed in the spring, and wedded in the autumn, that the bees flourish in the hottest afternoons and evenings of midsummer.

For instance, Brama Lincoln White was engaged to William French, from Somerset, George Henry French's son, the first Sunday in July, and the very next week her mother, Mrs. Harrison White, sent out invitations to a quilting bee.

The heat during all that week was something to be remembered. It was so warm that only the very youngest and giddiest of the village people went to the fourth of July picnic. Cyrus Emmett had a sunstroke out in the hayfield, and Mrs. Deacon Stockwell's mother, who was over ninety, was overcome by the heat and died. Mrs. Stockwell could not go to the quilting, because her mother was buried the day before. It was a misfortune to Mrs. White and Brama Lincoln, for Mrs. Stockwell is one of the fastest quilters who ever lived, but it was no especial deprivation to Mrs. Stockwell. Hardly any woman who was invited to the quilting was anxious to go. The bee was on Thursday, which was the hottest day of all that hot week. The earth seemed to give out heat like a stove, and the sky was like the lid of a fiery pot. The hot air steamed up in our faces from the ground and beat down on the tops of our heads from the sky. There was not a cool place anywhere. The village women arose before dawn, aired their rooms, then shut the windows, drew the curtains and closed blind and shutters, excluding all the sunlight, but in an hour the heat penetrated.

Mrs. Harrison White's parlor faced south-west, and the blinds would have to be opened in order to have light enough; it seemed a hard ordeal to undergo. Lurinda Snell told Mrs. Wheelock that it did seem as if Brama Lincoln might have got ready to be married in better weather, after waiting as long as she had done. Brama was not very young, but Lurinda was older and had given up being married at all years ago. Mrs. Wheelock thought she was a little bitter, but she only pitied her for that. Lydia Wheelock is always pitying people for their sins and shortcomings instead of blaming them. She pacified Lurinda, and told her to wear her old muslin and carry her umbrella and her palm-leaf fan, and the wind was from the south-west, so there would be a breeze in Mrs. White's parlor even if it was sunny.

The women went early to the quilting; they were expected to be there at one o'clock to secure a long afternoon for work. Eight were invited to quilt: Lurinda and Mrs. Wheelock, the young widow, Lottie Green, and five other women, some of them quite young, but master hands at such work.

Brama and her mother were not going to quilt; they had the supper to prepare. Brama's intended husband was coming over from Somerset to supper, and a number of men from our village were invited.

A few minutes before one o'clock the quilters went down the street, with their umbrellas bobbing over their heads. Mrs. Harrison White lives on the South Side in the great house where her husband keeps store. She opened the door when she saw her guests coming. She is a stout woman, and she wore a large plaid gingham dress, open at her creasy throat. Her hair hung in wet strings to her temples and her face was blazing. She had just come from the kitchen, where she was baking cake. The whole house was sweet and spicy with the odor of it.

She ushered her guests into the parlor, where the great quilting-frame was stretched. It occupied nearly the entire room. There was just enough space for the quilters to file around and seat themselves four on a side. The sheet of patchwork was tied firmly to the pegs on the quilting-frame. The pattern was intricate, representing the rising sun, the number of pieces almost beyond belief; the calicoes comprising it were of the finest and brightest.

"Most all the pieces are new, an' I don't believe but what Mis' White cut them right off goods in the store," Lurinda Snell whispered to Mrs. Wheelock when the hostess had withdrawn and they had begun their labors.

They further agreed among themselves that Mrs. White and Brama must have secretly prepared the patchwork in view of some sudden and wholly uncertain matrimonial contingency.

"I don't believe but what this quilt has been pieced ever since Brama Lincoln was sixteen years old," whispered Lurinda Snell, so loud that all the women could hear her. Then suddenly she pounced forward and pointed with her sharp forefinger at a piece of green and white calico in the middle of the quilt. "There, I knew it," said she. "I remember that piece of calico in a square I saw Brama Lincoln piecing over to our house before Francis was married." Lurinda Snell has a wonderful memory.

"That's a good many years ago," said Lottie Green.

"Yes," whispered Lurinda Snell. When she whispers her s's always hiss so that they make one's ears ache, and she is very apt to whisper. "Used to be hangin' round Francis considerable before he was married," she whispered in addition, and then she thought that she heard Mrs. White coming, and said, keeping up very loud, in such a pleasant voice, "How comfortable it is in this room for all it is such a hot afternoon." But her cunning was quite needless, for Mrs. White was not coming.

The women chalked cords and marked the patchwork in a diamond pattern for quilting. Two women held the ends of a chalked cord, stretching it tightly across the patchwork, and a third snapped it. That made a plain chalk line for the needle to follow. When a space as far as they could reach had been chalked they quilted it. When that was finished they rolled the quilt up and marked another space.

Brama Lincoln's quilt was very large; it did seem impossible to finish it that afternoon, though the women worked like beavers in that exceeding heat. They feared that Brama

Lincoln would be disappointed and think they had not worked as hard as they might when she and her mother had been at so much trouble to prepare tea for them.

Nobody saw Brama Lincoln or Mrs. White again that afternoon, but they could be heard stepping out in the kitchen and sitting-room, and at five o'clock the china dishes and silver spoons began to clink.

At a quarter before six the men came. There were only three elderly ones in the company: Mr. Harrison White, of course, and Mrs. Wheelock's husband, and Mr. Lucius Downey, whose wife had died the year before. All the others were young, and considered beaus in the village.

The women had just finished the quilt and rolled it up, and taken down the frame, when Lurinda Snell spied Mr. Lucius Downey coming, and screamed out and ran, and all the girls after her. They had brought silk bags with extra finery, such as laces and ribbons and combs, to put on in the evening, and they all raced upstairs to the spare chamber.

When they came down with their ribbons gayly flying, and some of them with their hair freshly curled, all the men had arrived, and Mrs. White asked them to walk out to tea.

Poor Mrs. White had put on her purple silk dress, but her face looked as if it were gummed to her forehead. Brama Lincoln looked very well; her front hair was curled, and Lurinda thought she had kept it in papers all day. She wore a pink muslin gown, all ruffled to the waist, and sat next her beau at the table.

Lurinda Snell sat on one side of Mr. Lucius Downey and Lottie Green on the other, and they saw to it that his plate was well filled. Once somebody nudged me to look, and there were five slices of cake and three pieces of pie on his plate. However, they all disappeared—Mr. Downey had a very good appetite.

Mrs. White had a tea which will go into the history of the village. Everybody wondered how she and Brama had managed to do so much in that terrible heat. There were seven kinds of cake, besides doughnuts, cookies and short gingerbread; there were five kinds of pie, and cup custards, hot biscuits, cold bread, preserves, cold ham and tongue. No woman in the village had ever given a better quilting supper than Mrs. Harrison White and Brama.

After supper the men went into the parlor and sat in a row against the wall, while the women all assisted in clearing away and washing the dishes.

Then the women, all except Mrs. Wheelock, who went home to take care of Lottie Green's children, joined the men in the parlor, and the evening entertainment began. Mrs. White tried to have everything as usual in spite of the heat. She had even got the Slocum boy to come with his fiddle that the company might dance.

First they played games—copenhagen, and post-office, roll the cover, and the rest. Young and old played except Brama Lincoln and her beau; they sat on the sofa and short gingers. Many thought it very silly in them, but when Lurinda Snell told Mrs. Wheelock of it next day she said that she thought there were many worse things to be ashamed of than love.

Lurinda Snell played the games with great enjoyment; she is very small and wiry, and could jump for the rolling cover like a cricket. Lurinda, in spite of her bitterness over her lonely estate, and her evident leaning toward Mr. Lucius Downey, was really very maidenly in some respects. She always caught the cover before it stopped rolling, and withdrew her hands before they were slapped in copenhagen, whereas Lottie Green almost invariably failed to do so, and was, in consequence, kissed so many times by Mr. Downey that nearly everybody was smiling and tittering about it.

However, Lurinda Snell was exceedingly fidgety when post-office was played, and Lucius Downey had so many letters for Lottie Green, and finally she succeeded in putting a stop to the game. The post-office was in the front entry, and of course the parlor door was closed during the delivery of the letters, and Lurinda objected to that. She said the room was so warm with the entry door shut that she began to feel a buzzing in her head, which was always dangerous in her family. Her grandfather, she remembered, been seized with a buzzing in his head, and immediately dropped dead, and so had her father. When she said that, people looked anxiously at Lurinda; her face was flushed, and the post-office was given up and the entry door opened.

Next Lottie Green was called upon to sing, as she always is in company, she has such a sweet voice. She sang "Annie Laurie" without any accompaniment, but Lucius Laurie, who is not an expert musician, did not know how to play that tune, but Lurinda was taken with hiccoughs. Nobody doubted that she really had hiccoughs, but it was considered justly that she might have smothered them in her handkerchief, or at least have left the room, instead of spoiling Lottie Green's beautiful song, which she did completely. If the Slocum boy could have played his fiddle it would not have been so disastrous, but "Annie Laurie" with no accompaniment but that of hiccoughs was a failure. Brama Lincoln tiptoed out into the kitchen, and got some water for Lurinda to take nine swallows without stopping, but it did not cure her. Lurinda hiccupped until the song was finished.

The Slocum boy tuned his fiddle then and the dancing began, but it was not a success. Lurinda would not dance after the first; she said her head buzzed again, but people thought—it may have been unjustly—that she was hurt because Lucius Downey had not invited her to dance. That spoiled the set, but aside from that the room was growing insufferably warm. The windows were all wide open, but the night air came in like puffs of dark, hot steam, and swarms of mosquitoes and moths with it. The dancers were all brushing away mosquitoes and wiping their foreheads. Their faces were blazing with the heat, and even the pretty girls had a wilted and stringy look from their hair out of curl and their limp muslins.

When Lurinda refused to dance, Brama Lincoln at once said that she thought it would be much pleasanter out-of-doors, and took William French by the arm and led the way. The rest of the quilting bee was held in Harrison White's front room. The folks sat there until quite late, telling stories and singing hymns and songs. Lottie Green would not sing alone; she said it would make her too conspicuous. The front yard is next to the store, and there was a row of men on the piazza settee, besides others coming and going. The yard was light from the store windows. Brama Lincoln and William French sat as far back in the shadow as they could.

Mr. Lucius Downey sat on the door-step, out of the dampness; he considers himself delicate. Lottie Green sat on one side of him and Lurinda Snell on the other.

There was much covert curiosity as to which of the two he would escort home. Some thought he would choose Lottie, some Lurinda. The problem was solved in a most unexpected manner.

Lottie Green lives nearly a mile out of his way, in one direction, Lurinda half a mile in another. When the quilting bee disbanded, Lottie, after lingering and looking back with sweetly-pleading eyes from under her pretty white rigolette, went down the road with Lydia Wheelock's husband; Lurinda slipped forlornly up the road in the wake of a fond young couple, keeping close behind them for protection against the dangers of the night, and Mr. Lucius Downey went home by himself.

### A Toilet Hint.

"Elizabeth."—Excessive perspiration in the armpits is extremely trying. Add a few drops of tincture of benzoin to your bath. Instead of rubber shields make yourself some muslin ones, and line with absorbent cotton, sprinkled with powdered chalk. The moisture will be absorbed, and there will be absolutely no odor. You can fasten the shields to your corset cover by means of tapes and safety pins.

## THE QUIET HOUR.

### Have Charity.

Have charity for others' views,  
And do not always think you're right  
And everybody else is wrong,  
If they see things not in your light.  
God gave us all our different views  
To best develop each one's soul,  
And, though we tread not the same path,  
We still may reach the same blest goal.

Forbearance with each other try,  
Have charity for others' views;  
Forbearance, love, and charity  
A wondrous power will infuse  
Into the heart, and make the world  
Seem like a much more joyous place.  
They'll scatter sunshine all around,  
And brighten every happy face.

It was Christ's lesson here on earth—  
Have charity for all mankind,  
And not unjustly to condemn,  
But help the weak, the poor, and blind,  
And try to teach Christ's better ways,  
With purest thoughts e'er fill the mind,  
By thus developing the soul,  
Life's greatest blessing we shall find.

### Nagging.

A dictionary will tell you that nagging means "petty teasing," but the fault, habit, or whatever you choose to call it, if persisted in, quickly grows beyond the bounds of pettiness, assuming alarming proportions that will undermine the firmest foundations of happy homes.

Every good housekeeper loves order, and untidiness in others often stirs up her indignation. Instead of ministering her reproof for any slip of orderliness and having done with it, she severely reprimands the offender, and applies the caustic of constant reminder to the wound already made by her sharp tongue.

It is small wonder that when a man goes home tired and hungry, and is met at the door with such a greeting as "Scrape your feet before you come in," "Do hang up your coat," "Gracious alive, how you smell of smoke," that the husbands and sons are glad to spend the evening anywhere else than at home.

Neither are the lords of creation altogether free from this sandpaper scolding. If, in the press of household duties, the wife or mother happens to spoil the bread or burn the meat, just once, be sure that these creatures that are just one degree lower than the angels will not forget to remind her of it for weeks to come.

A nagging man or woman in the home is like a hedgehog, pricking and wounding all they come in contact with, poisoning the sweet home life, eating like a canker into the peace and happiness of the family, and tainting what it cannot consume.

There is a certain class of people who take great satisfaction in saying unpleasant things. They call this peculiarity "speaking their minds," or "plain speaking." Sometimes they dignify it by the name of "telling the truth." As if truth must be unpleasant in order to be true. Are there no lovely, charming, gracious truths in the world? And if there are, why cannot people diligently tell these, making others happier for the telling, rather than hasten to proclaim all the disagreeable ones they can discover?

Would it not be well to cultivate the grace of saying agreeable things, even to the extent of hunting them up and dragging them to the light when they happen to be obscure? This power to say pleasant things—true ones—is an accomplishment which is generally overlooked or left as a mere worldly matter to light-minded people.

Don't look for flaws as you go through life;  
And even when you find them  
It is wise and kind to be somewhat blind  
And look for the virtue behind them.  
For the cloudiest night has a hint of the light  
Somewhere in its shadows hiding;  
It is better by far to hunt for a star  
Than the spots on the sun abiding.

Perhaps it were better for most of us to complain less of being misunderstood, and to take more care that we do not misunderstand other people. It ought to give us pause at a time to remember that each one has a stock of cut-and-dry judgments on his neighbors, and that the chances are most of them are quite erroneous.

### Recipes.

#### BIRD'S-NEST PUDDING.

Take six good-sized apples, pare and core, put into a deep pie-dish; in the place of the core fill it with sugar, butter, minced lemon peel, and a clove in each; fill up the dish with a pint of milk, two eggs beaten in it, a little nutmeg, and three ounces of sugar. Cover the dish with another turned upside down, and bake slowly in not a very quick oven.

#### PRESERVING EGGS FOR WINTER USE.

To preserve eggs for about seven or eight months, take 3 lbs. quicklime, 10 ozs. salt, 1 oz. cream of tartar, 1½ gallons water; mix well, cover closely. Let this stand 24 hours. Put in the eggs as fresh as possible. A bad or cracked egg spoils all. Examine now and again in case of this. For all purposes the eggs can be used except plain boiling. Keep them till the eggs are at their dearest, and you still may have a pudding and ham and eggs.