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The Agriculturist

A WEEKLY JOURNAL DEVOTED TO AGRICULTURE, LITERATURE, AND NEWS.

ANDREW LIPSETT, Publisher.

"AGRICULTURE THE TRUE BASIS OF A NATION'S WEALTH."

ANDREW ARCHER, Editor

VOL. 1.

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Literature.

CHRISTMAS IS COMING?

Feathery flakes are dancing, dancing, in the gray morn'g frosty gleam...

Feathery flakes are falling, falling, from the skies in softest way...

Feathery flakes are sifting, sifting, through the chill December air...

See, the trees are fair as any that ever wreathed with snow...

And the children dancing, dancing, till all their little feet...

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You will retire to your father's estate in Cambridgeshire, and there await his commands.

'Go to Fencourt!' cried Carla, in dismay. 'I'm sure papa would not wish me to take up my abode in a damp, ruinous oldhouse at this season of the year.'

'The house has just been repaired, so that excuse will not avail you.'

'But it is so lonely!' the young girl objected, with a shudder. 'and how could I live there, with no one to bear me company but the old man and woman who have charge of the place?'

'I am glad that the house is a secluded one,' answered Miss Taunton, deliberately. 'It will be a finer abode for one who can never be for five minutes in male society without her most attractive attention.'

'After what has happened, I should not be justified in permitting you to reside in any family where you could, with your customary indelicacy and oddness, seek out fresh victims. As for Drusilla, as she is not to me, and as she is not to be used as yourself, she can accompany you.'

'After what has happened!' repeated a young lady, gaily as she glided into the room, touched the reluctant hand of Miss Taunton, and then affectionately kissed her.

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had brought such an ample supply, hid the faded chairs of the worn carpet and while Drusilla, leaning back in her seat, watched her hand, boiled eggs, their energetic companion dived into his packages, and produced from their depths so many pleasant accessories to the tea table that Mrs. Moggs was kept in a state of open-mouthed astonishment, and there were continual bursts of delighted exclamations from the hungry girls.

'With one accord they kissed their merry friend as they hastened her to the seat of honour, and certainly she deserved it. Who but Ernie Hayes would have been so thoughtful as to bring that silver teapot, or that pretty silver tea equipage, or that well-filled tray, or that silver tray which enabled them to banish Mrs. Moggs's horn spoons, two-pronged forks, and chipped crockery? Or who but Ernie could have so thoroughly enjoyed her company, and best of all, who but Ernie could have so thoroughly enjoyed their own company?'

'Strangers in an awkward flx,' was the reply to her first question. 'My friends and I have been shooting in this neighborhood, and lost our way. Tell him that there is a village about a mile hence, whispered Ernie, and then asked what was to be done.

'Heaven's sake admit us!' cried the person outside, speaking with great urgency. 'The only refuge shelter till the morning, and will pay liberally for the trouble we give you.'

'I am sorry I could not see you sooner,' said Ernie, in very dignified tones. 'But Mrs. Moggs has the honor to be my aunt, and she is playing upon us? We are lonely and old,' Mrs. Moggs repeated, after the wavering Ernie.

'Some one outside uttered a malediction on the inhumanity of English people, and then another speaker exclaimed: 'Faith, if you're so afraid for your selves that you'd let us perish in the mist, we'll not press our claims upon you. Two of us will go in search of the village you name, if you'll consent to take in our poor friend, and look to him till we can bring a vehicle and remove him. He is fainting with cold.'

'I am sadly stupid myself,' acknowledged Drusilla, modestly; 'but I think I could make pie if you have a bit of mince-meat amongst your things, or somebody will roll out some crust.'

'Upon my word, young ladies,' said Ernie, severely, 'your ignorance is shameful. You know no more about mince-meat than I do myself. It's never too late to learn, so follow your brave leader to the kitchen. We'll devote the day to experiments, and to-morrow, with the aid of a cookery-book and our dearly-loved experience, we'll improve—keep the correct time, now-a-days, forevery thing that's cost one hour of labour—improve a banquet fit for the gods—no goddess that will partake of it.'

'Which there will be no one to share with us,' Drusilla rather ruefully reminded her.

'So much the better. Gentlemen eaters always reserve the tit-bits for themselves, and now they'll fall to and eat, if you'll permit me to be so bold as to say so, and Ernie's rison wrappers heaped over him, till the glistly paleness, that made Mrs. Moggs ask if he were a dying, gave place to a faint tinge of more healthful coloring.'

'When he had pronounced himself better, his friends had leisure to draw near the table replenished with viands for them, and to look curiously around.

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'He held up a little slipper, which Drusilla had dropped in her hasty flight. 'feebly mattered the invalid from his couch—women of culture and refinement condemned to dwell in the bogs!'

'We ought to apologize for our intrusion, but we are not at all pleased to see you, though but a year or two the senior of the others, took the lead. 'Is there a bell, Gerald? No? But here comes the woman who admitted us. We will send a message to them by her, and Mrs. Moggs, shaking her head and pleading her deafness, would say nothing but that there was a double bedded room ready for the gentlemen as soon as they liked to be shown to it; and as they were all fatigued with their wanderings, the invalid was assisted to climb the stairs, and in a very short time silence reigned everywhere in the lonely house but the distant apartment to which the three girls had retired. There a conflagration went on that lasted till nearly morning.'

'What a long day this has been!' yawned Gerald Power, throwing up his arms, and kicking together the blazing logs before which he was seated.

'I am so tired, I can't express myself. I have a headache, and I wish from my heart that you and Drusilla would leave me to my own devices. Why should you be detained in this needless place because I am so unlucky as to have injured my ankle?'

'Of course we shall not leave you, said Granton Danesborough, closing his book, which he had been reading by the firelight. 'As you are so tired, I will sit by you, and you shall have a classical scholar's opinion.'

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'Visitors' gasped Drusilla, putting up her hand to smoothe her wavy hair. 'Visitors at this hour? Absurd!' retorted Ernie. 'Besides, no one knows we are here.'

'It must be the turkey,' decided Carla. 'Or the waits or the carol-singers,' murmured Drusilla. 'Oh—oh, Carla, it is not likely to be burglars, is it?'

'Certainly not,' answered Ernie, speaking very boldly, though her face paled a little as she remembered that the only man in the house was so aged and decrepit as to be wholly useless as a protector. 'Of course burglars are unknown in these primitive places; but in consideration for your fears, dear, I will run and tell Mrs. Moggs to lock the door till she has inquired who is there.'

'Ernie's light footsteps carried her to the side of the old woman before she had time to unfasten the heavy bolt. Mrs. Moggs, who had been dozing, prompted the queries she quavered out.

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contrived to entangle her scholarly guest in such a discussion on magnetism, and showing such absorbed interest in his explanations, that when she brought it to an abrupt close the subject had not been recurred to.

'However, Granton Danesborough, urged on by Captain Power, preferred his request again when Miss Ernest came into the room at twilight leaning on her crutch-stick, and this time she reluctantly acceded to it.

'I have prepared my brother for your coming,' she added. 'But if you find him absent in manner you must not be surprised. Studies so abstract often carry him quite out of himself.'

'Let me come too, I am so very anxious to see this learned gentleman,' cried Gerald Power; and though Miss Ernest, by her lip, and farled and unfurled her huge fan in some perturbation, he did not choose to hear the objection she stammered, still followed to the study.

'The other gentlemen rose, and the figure slowly approached them. It was that of a tall, slight, elderly lady, whose white hair was drawn over a cushion in a style that precluded in the reign of George the Third. This was surmounted by a lace cap, above which she wore a black silk hood. Large blue spectacles partially concealed her still brighter eyes, and there were little black patches on her cheeks. Her broad silk dress stood out stiffly around her, and in one of her mittened hands she carried a large Japanese fan, in the other an ivory-handled pen-stick on which she frequently leaned.

'With a stately and old-fashioned curtsy she introduced herself as Miss Ernest, and named the embarrassed, blushing Drusilla who had timidly followed her into the room, as a young gentleman who was residing under her care.

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