LYDIA HERSEY

Of East Bridgewater.

Lydia Hersey sat out on the porch carding flax. She had taken her work out there that she might not litter the house. It was Saturday afternoon, and she had set every room in fine order for the Sabbath.

Three tall Lombardy popular-trees stood in a row on the road-line, and their long shadows, like the shadows of giant men, fell athwart the gray, unpainted house, and the broad grassy yard. At the south of the house was a flower-bed of pinks and honeysuckles and thyme, and also a small vegetable garden. Beyond that were three beehives in a row, with little black clouds of bees around them. Lydia carded assiduously, and never looked up. Her long black lashes lay against her pink cheeks, her full lips were half smiling, as if she were saying some pleasant thing to herself. Lydia wore her black hair in a braided knot at the back of her head; in front she combed it smoothly down over her ears, then looped it up behind them in two clusters of soft curls. Her flowered chintz gown was cut low in the neck, and she wore a string of gold beads around her long white throat.

Lydia sat very erect as she carded; her shoulders never wavered with the clapping motion of her hands; she even sat well forward in her chair, and did not come in contact with its straight back.

Lydia Hersey was noted round about for the majesty of her carriage as well as her beauty, and that was talked of as far as Boston. Young men had been known to come from other villages and walk past her house on the chance of seeing her at a window, although they dared not address her nor do more than halt and stand for a second with their hats raised like school-boys before the parson or the squire, and that might have been accounted poor reward for a long journey. But there were for these New Englanders no great pictures by old masters and no famous statues, and Lydia Hersey's beautiful living face, set like a jewel for a moment in a window of the gray old Hersey house, served them instead. The young Abington men, the North Bridgewater men and the Canton men would go home with their love of beauty all aflame, and never forget Lydia's face in the window; indeed, it would turn towards them like a portrait, whichever way they moved, through their whole lives. Years afterward, when these admirers were old men and heard some young beauty praised, they would look scornful and say, "You ought to have seen Lydia Hersey, of East Bridgewater."

A bumblebee flew with a loud buzz past Lydia's head, and she started a little. He flew straight into the open window of the keeping-room. "That's a sign of company," she thought, and she thought also complacently how nicely the house was set in order, and she did not care who came.

The doors were all open as well at the windows. She heard the bee buzzing and striking against the ceiling of the keeping-room. Presently she heard another sound that made her drop her cards in her lap and listen intently. It came from down the street, and sounded like an irregular chorus of horns, a medley of harsh, hollow screeches. Lydia frowned. The sounds grew louder; there were also great shouts of laughter and clamorous voices. Soon a company of young men came in sight; there were a dozen of them, and they had great conch-shells at their mouths, which they blew between their laughter and merry calls.

Lydia stood up. She laid the cards down on the chair, folded the linen cloth which she had spread on the porch floor carefully over the fluffy heap of carded flax and brushed all the shreds that she could from her gown. Then she walked, carrying her beautiful head high, down to the road. There was a sudden hush when the young men saw her. They took their conch-shells from their lips and saluted her respectfully. One young man, who came foremost of the troop, colored high. One of his comrades nudged him, and he thrust his elbow back angrily in response. Lydia took no notice of the other young men, she walked straight up to this one. He stopped, and all the others halted at his back.

"Where are you going, Freelove?" said she.

"Not far," he returned, evasively.

"Where?" she demanded.

The young man turned towards his companions. "Men or lads," he said, in an imperious voice, which he tried to make good natured, "I'll be with you in a moment."

His handsome face was burning. The young men trooped on; there was a subdued chuckle. Freelove Keith looked Lydia full in the face, and his blue eyes were as haughty as her black ones.

"We're going down to see Abraham White and Deborah," said he.

Lydia stared back at him scornfully. "You are going down there to blow those conch-shells under the windows with those loafers!" said she.

"'Squire Perkins's son is one of 'em," returned Freelove, defiantly.

"The more shame to him!" said Lydia. "And the more shame to you, Freelove Keith!"

It seemed as if her bright scornful eyes, full on Freelove's face, could see all the weaknesses that he hid from himself behind his own consciousness, but he did not flinch.

"I don't know what you call shame," he said. "'Tis what the young fellows in East Bridgewater have always done when they have not been asked to a wedding."

"Asked to a wedding," repeated Lydia, contemptuously. "A pretty wedding! Deborah Belcher marrying Abraham White, when he's twice as old as she is, and his wife not dead six months. No wonder she asked nobody to the wedding, marrying old Abraham White for his silver teaspoons and tankard, and his wife's silk gowns and satin pelisse!"

"You don't know that she married him for any such thing," protested Freelove, stoutly, although he had started on this very expedition with a gay contempt for Deborah White. She was a very pretty girl, and once, before he had dared address Lydia Hersey, people had coupled his name with hers. He had gone home with her from singing-school, and kissed her once at a husking.

"Stand up for a girl like that if you want to," said Lydia. She had always had a lurking jealousy of Deborah Belcher. Deborah's hair was very fair, and she had a delicate, evanescent bloom like a wild rose. Lydia had often wondered if Deborah were not prettier than she herself, and if men did not love fair hair better than black.

Freelove Keith did not continue the dispute. He looked uneasily after his comrades, who were nearly out of sight, even at their slow, lingering pace. Now and then the note of a conch-shell was heard. "I must go," said he. "Good-day, Lydia."

"Do you mean that you are really going with that noisy crew to blow conch-shells under Abraham White's windows, Freelove Keith?"

"Yes, I am going, Lydia Hersey," returned the young man, hotly; "and if you thought I'd be ordered back by you before them all, like a whipped puppy, you were mightily mistaken."

Lydia stared at him, she was so full of proud amazement that she would say nothing; this Freelove Keith had often fretted beneath her rule, but never before openly resisted it.

"Go back to your flax-carding, Lydia," said Freelove, in a softer tone. "See, the flax is blowing all over the yard. I shall be up to see you after supper."

Then Lydia found her tongue. "You haven't been asked to come that I know of," said she. "I don't know as I care to keep company with young men that go blowing horns and shouting through the streets, and disturbing decent people."

"Then you needn't," retorted Freelove.

He went quickly down the road after his companions. He was dressed like a farmer, in slouching homespun, but there was a certain jaunty grace about him, and a free swing in his gait, which did not accord with his appearance. He had followed the sea for a living, going as mate on a merchantman, and had been only home for a year and a half, since his father's death, managing the farm.

Lydia went back to the house. She stepped as if she bore a crown on her head instead of a tortoise-shell comb, and had a train to her cotton gown. The wind had indeed stirred the linen cloth, and bits of flax were floating about the yard, but she ignored that. She would not so far unbend her dignity as to gather it up, even with nobody but herself for witness. She folded the linen cloth firmly over the remaining flax, and placed her foot in its buckled shoe on it when she sat down. She fell to work with the cards again. The wild clamor of horns, which she had heard break forth when Freelove joined his comrades, died away in the distance.

Lydia sat there steadily carding flax, as if imbued by nature with the single instinct of industry, like a bee out in the garden. Her lips were tight shut and no longer smiling; her heart was anxious, but she still made her store of linen as unquestioningly as the bee its honey.

In about an hour the troop of young men with the conch-shells returned. Lydia heard them at a distance, and long before they reached the house she sat with stiffer majesty, keeping her eyes so closely upon her work that the flax became a silvery blur. However, she need not have taken the trouble, for Freelove Keith swung past with as scornful a lift of his head as she, and never once glanced her way. And, indeed, the young men all passed very decorously and quietly, and only a few dared raise their eyes towards the queenly figure on the porch, and then only for a second. One of them was Abel Perkins, 'Squire Perkins's son. He was home from college on a vacation, and was quite looked up to by the village youth, as he was the only collegian amongst them. Abel Perkins was slight and pale, and walked with a nervous strut; but he wore broadcloth and a fine flowered waistcoat, and carried a gold watch. He even gave a hesitating glance back at Lydia on the porch, turning his little face over his shoulder; but she did not see it. She did not look up from her work until long after the company had passed.

A half hour later the stage went by with the four horses at a gallop. A fair face, overtopped by white plumes, looked out of the surging window. Lydia turned her head hastily, and the red in her cheeks deepened. It was the bride, Deborah White, going with her new husband to spend the honeymoon with his relations in Abington. There was a nice little hair trunk strapped on behind the stage. Lydia eyed it contemptuously when Deborah could no longer see her. She thought: "Maybe his first wife's satin pelisse is in there."

A man emerged from the cloud of dust in the wake of the stage. He was old, and wore his white hair in a queue. He had on a green double cloak, although the day was warm, and walked with a stick, to whose weight he accommodated himself at every step with a downward motion of his shoulders. He did not seem to need its support. When he approached the house Lydia stood up and courtesied low.

"Good-day, Lydia," said he, in a solemn voice.

"Good-day, sir," she returned, with stately deference; and she ushered the minister, Elihu Eaton, into the fore-room, and placed the rocking-chair with the feather cushion for him.

The fore-room was close and cool, for the windows had been shut all day to keep out the flies. There was a smell of mint and lavender. The great testered bedstead, with its chintz valance and curtains, stood in one corner. There was a high chest of drawers and a splendid carved oak linen chest, which Lydia's grandmother had brought over from England. On one side of the fireplace was a great cupboard with paneled doors, and that was filled with gallipots. Lydia's father had been a doctor.

Lydia sat beside the window, opposite the minister. There was a restrained defiance in the lift of her chin. Now and then she picked a bit of the flax from her gown.

She knew well why the minister had come. Aunt Nabby Keith had warned her. It was ten months since her banns with Freelove had been published, and she held herself aloof, and would not marry him out of sheer willfulness and coquetry, the neighbors said. Freelove's aunt Nabby had come to see her only the day before, and talked seriously with her.

"You ain't livin' up to your professions," the old woman had said, "and I'm going to speak plain. If you let this year go by and don't marry Freelove according to your banns you'll have a good deal to answer for."

"Well, I'll ask nobody else to answer for me," Lydia returned.

"The parson says he's coming to reason with you, Lydia Hersey."

"Let him come," said Lydia; and her head tossed up like a rose in a wind.

And now the parson had come. It was some little space before he opened on the subject in hand. In truth, he stood somewhat in awe, although he did not know it, of this beautiful high-spirited young woman. There had always been a brisk feminine rule in his own house. Even now he sweltered under the weight of the green double cloak which his wife Sarah had hoisted upon his slender shoulders because she thought he had taken cold. The waistcoat, which she had made to suit her own ideas and not his requirements, bound his back; his neck-cloth, which she had wound with ardor, half choked him and fretted his chin.

When at length he reasoned with Lydia Hersey on the matter of her non-fulfillment of the marriage banns, and the report that she was about to let the lawful year go by and jilt Freelove Keith, it was with circumspect solemnity. Lydia's cheeks flamed redder and redder, but her black eyes never left his face.

"Did you meet Freelove Keith with that noisy crew, who ought to have been at home at work in the middle of the afternoon, shouting and blowing conch-shells under Mr. Abraham White's windows?" she demanded.

The minister admitted that he had, and had remonstrated with them.

"It would make a better text for a discourse than some others that meddlesome folks set," said Lydia, for she had no fear of any one before another, not even the minister or the squire. She stood up. The minister, Elihu Eaton's sober-peaked face, rising out of his great capes, which shrugged to his ears, looked up at her. "Either," said she, in a masterful way, and yet with a remembering sweetness, for the minister looked suddenly very old to her, "either Freelove Keith has either got to do as I say or I have got to do as he says before we are married, if the banns have been cried a thousand years."

Then she went out into the keeping-room, and presently returned with a tray, on which were set out a decanter of West India rum, a little silver bowl of loaf-sugar, a tumbler, and a plate of pound cake.

When the minister had partaken of these refreshments he offered a prayer and took his leave. Lydia courtesied when he went out the door, but her lips were tightly shut again, for Elihu Eaton, in his appeal to the Lord, had spoken with more fire concerning her affairs than he had dared use towards her. "O Lord, make this, Thy handmaiden, to keep to the vows which she has spoken, and let not a froward mind lead her aside into strange paths," the minister had said, and more, and Lydia could not expostulate.

She went into the keeping-room and got supper ready. Lydia Hersey had lived alone ever since her father's death. All the more reason, people thought, why she should fulfill her marriage contract with Freelove Keith. There was she, living all alone in a large house, with a comfortable little income, and there was Freelove, who was no longer so necessary at home since his sister had married and taken her husband there to live, and who could easily manage his farm and live in the Hersey house—there was Freelove, whom everybody liked, yet felt a certain anxiety about, because he had been to sea, and might have seen much evil in foreign ports, going too often to the tavern, people said, and neglecting his farm to go on junketings with idle young men, to Abington or Braintree, and once even over to Boston, and to be away all night. It looked no better, people said, because 'Squire Perkins's son went with him, and he was college-learned. It was generally conceded that Abel was not as reliable and would not make as smart a man as the old 'squire.

Lydia Hersey saw Abel Perkins again that night. After supper she strolled down the road a little way. She was mindful of how Freelove had said he was coming, and she wondered if her rebuff would quite drive him away. Before she started she stood hesitating a moment in the doorway. The evening was a little cool, and she had put a yellow blanket over her head and bare shoulders.

She thought, angrily, that she would not stay at home and watch for Freelove Keith, when he might not come; but, on the other hand, she did not want to go away and never know if he did.

Finally she pulled some sprigs of mint from the bank under the keeping-room windows, and she shut the house door, and stuck them carefully under the sill. Then she went on down the road, and soon she met Abel Perkins. He stood about, and took off his hat in a way he had learned in college, and Lydia courtesied gravely. Abel was considerably younger than she, and she had always had a certain disdain for him, in spite of his being the 'squire's son. Still it was quite evident that he humbly admired her, and some deference was due him for that.

So when he asked humbly if he might walk with her a way, she said yes, and they went on together. Alder-trees, faintly sweet in a pale mist of bloom, stood beside the road; there were distant peals of laughter, tinklings of cow bells and a hubbub of nestward birds. Lydia stepped proudly along beside the little anxiously smiling 'squire's son; her beautiful face looked out of her yellow blanket as if it were a frame of gold.

Abel Perkins kept glancing up at her and blushing. "If you had told me that you didn't want me to go to Abraham White's, I wouldn't have gone, Lydia," he said, after a while.

"I don't approve of any such goings on," Lydia returned, severely.

"I don't know as they are very becoming," said Abel Perkins.

They sauntered on slowly. The sunset light lay in red-gold patches on the dusty road, some elm trees ahead swayed in a mystical, rosy, smoke-like incense. Presently at the right of the road showed the red walls of Aunt Nabby Keith's house out of a thicket of purple-topped lilac bushes. Freelove suddenly appeared in the road. When he saw Lydia he started, then went on with a jauntier swing. He scarcely nodded as he went by. Lydia held her head like a statue.

"Is he huffy?" whispered Abel.

"I don't know and I don't care," replied Lydia, coldly. But in a second she faced about. "I must go home," said she. "It is getting damp."

Abel went obediently at her side. Freelove was still visible in the road ahead. Lydia talked and laughed very loud, but he did not turn his head, although he must have heard. When they reached the Hersey house Lydia turned promptly into the yard. "Good-night, Abel," she called loudly. And Abel Perkins responded with rueful sweetness, for he had thought to be asked in, and went on down the road in Freelove's tracks. Lydia watched him out of sight. She knew he would meet Freelove at the village store, if he did not overtake him. She did not go into the house and disturb the mint on the door-sill. She waited a few minutes, then she also went on a little way to the next house, where lived a young woman mate of hers. She went in and staid until nearly 9 o'clock, and the two girls talked over Deborah Belcher's wedding but not a word did Lydia say about her quarrel with Freelove.

When she went home, she got down on her knees in the porch, and examined the mint carefully. It was bright moonlight; not a sprig had been disturbed. Lydia opened the door and walked in, trampling the mint ruthlessly.

The next day was Sunday, and she went to meeting dressed in her best gown, with roses sprinkled over a blue ground, and her Leghorn bonnet trimmed with a rose-colored ribbon, and sat fanning herself calmly with a painted fan when Freelove entered, but he never looked at her.

The minister preached from Psalm lxxv, 5, "Lift not up your horn on high: speak not with a stiff neck," and there was much nudging in the congregation, and uneasiness among the young men who had saluted Abraham White and his bride. Freelove sat straight and stiff, but his face was red. Lydia smiled behind her fan.

The next morning Sarah Porter, the girl whom she had visited Saturday evening, came in. She had heard that Lydia had really jilted her lover. She and her mother had watched, and knew that he had not come courting the night before.

"I hear you and Freelove have fallen out," said she. Her lips were smiling archly, but her eyes were hard and curious.

"There's plenty to hear if folks keep their ears pricked up," replied Lydia, and she would say no more.

She smiled scornfully when presently she watched Sarah Porter's squat figure go out of the yard. "She didn't find out much," she muttered. "She'd give all her old shoes to get Freelove herself, but he wouldn't look at her."

That forenoon Lydia took her flax carding out on the porch again. Soon, as she sat there, she saw Abel Perkins coming. He hesitated at the gate. He carried a great bunch of white lilacs. Purple lilacs were plenty in East Bridgewater, but white ones grew nowhere except in the 'squire's yard.

"Ain't you coming in, Abel?" called Lydia, and she smiled her sweet imperious smile at him.

Abel came up the path, extending the great bunch of lilacs like a propitiatory offering to a deity.

"I thought maybe you'd like a bunch of these white laylocks, Lydia," he said.

"Thank you, Abel; they're real handsome, and I'll put them in a pitcher when I go in," replied Lydia, graciously.

This morning she wore a green and white gown, which made here face still more like a rose. Abel stood leaning against a post of the porch, looking at her, then looking quickly away.

"Have you got any errands or anything you want done, Lydia?" he stammered.

Lydia looked at him; a sudden wicked light came into her eyes. There he stood, in his fine waistcoat and broadcloth, with his handsome knee-buckles and gold chain. His hands were long, and slim, and white, much whiter than hers.

"Why, yes, Abel," said she; "if you really want something to do, the peas out in my garden need sticking."

Abel Perkins stared aghast a minute; then he stared eagerly.

"You'll have to go up in the pasture and cut some brush," said Lydia.

The truth was that Freelove Keith had taken it upon himself to tend Lydia's garden, which was but a small one, and she thought with spiteful delight how, when he came again, if he came at all, he would find some of the work done, and wonder. But it did not fall out as she had planned, for presently she heard loud voices out in the garden, and, peering around the corner of the porch, she saw Freelove and Abel, each with a bundle of brush.

Lydia gathered up her work hastily and fled into the house. She went up to the south chamber and peeped around the curtain. Both of the lovers were sticking the peas, Abel awkwardly, with trembling haste, and Freelove with a steady vehemence that might have suited Cadmus sowing the dragon's teeth. Just then there was a sullen quiet, but presently arose another altercation. Lydia spied a long rent in the skirt of Abel's fine coat. Soon Abel started towards the house, and she sat down on the floor of the south chamber and laughed. She heard a faint voice below calling her, but she did not reply, and Abel dared not search for her in the house.

Lydia peered out again, and saw Freelove at work alone in the garden, but he never once glanced up at the house. She saw Sarah Porter's face, and her mother's over her shoulder, at a window of their house across the yard, and she watched jealously lest Freelove should glance that way; but he did not. When the peas were finished, he went out of the yard, looking neither to the right or left. Lydia went down stairs cautiously, to be sure Abel Perkins was gone.

However, when he came again, as he did soon, she greeted him kindly, and smiled sweetly by way of indirect condolence when he told how Freelove Keith had driven him from the garden. Lydia spied the rent, which his mother had neatly mended, in his broadcloth coat.

"Why, Abel, you have torn your fine coat," said she.

Abel blushed. "I tore it getting the sticks for the peas. But 'tis of no account," he said, "and I am willing to tear it again if there is anything else you want done, Lydia."

"Maybe your mother won't be quite so willing to mend it again," said Lydia.

But presently she brought out the churn, and set Abel Perkins, in his fine clothes, churning cream out on the porch. Sarah Porter called her mother out into their front yard to see, and Freelove Keith went by. He went often to see his Aunt Nabby.

Abel churned until the butter came, and it took full long, and his fine waistcoat was spattered with cream; and then she sent him home like a little boy. Lydia found many an other domestic task for Abel Perkins, and all on the porch. She set him carding flax, and spinning, and making candle-wicks. She found errands also for him to do, and many commands for him to obey. She sent him to Abington with a couple of feather pillows for her aunt, and, awkwardly enough, he managed them on horseback. She forbade his going to Boston on a little trip with some of the village young men, Freelove being of the party. Abel Perkins never rebelled against her rule, but there came a time when Lydia herself arose for him.

One afternoon he sat on the porch spinning at the wheel, and Lydia had tied one of her blue aprons around his waist, when she suddenly spoke.

"Take off that apron now, and stop spinning, and go home, Abel Perkins," said she.

Abel jumped up, and stared at her.

"I mean what I say," said she. "If you are not ashamed of yourself, I am ashamed for you, and I am ashamed for myself more than I am for you. No man can make a woman like him by doing everything she tells him to; she only despises him for it. You remember it next time. Now you had better go home and learn your Latin books."

"Can't I come again, Lydia?" said Abel. He was quite pale, and tears stood in his eyes.

But Lydia would not speak softly to him. "No," she replied, "you can't. You mustn't come here wasting your time any more. You must study your books. You are not old enough to go courting; get your college books learned through first."

"Can I come then, Lydia?" he inquired, faintly.

"No," said she; "I shall never want anybody coming again. Take off that apron and go home."

And Abel Perkins obeyed. He looked very dejected and youthful going out of the yard. Lydia went into the house and cried.

Abel staid away for a week; then he came again. Lydia would not have gone to the door had she known who it was plying the knocker. She never heard the knocker but with a hope that it might be Freelove, although he never came now.

When she saw Abel standing there, she frowned.

"Don't look at me so, Lydia," he pleaded. "I couldn't help coming. I can't eat, and I haven't slept any. I'm sick, Lydia. Mother keeps asking me what the matter is."

Indeed, Abel looked ill. He was paler than usual, and had a pinched and woebegone expression that drew his face down and made it appear thinner.

"Well, you come in," said Lydia. "I'm going to mix you up some medicine, if you're sick. I know a very good one that my father showed me how to make. It'll cure you right up, Abel."

And Lydia made Abel seat himself on the settle in the keeping-room, and went with a cup and spoon to the cupboard in the fore room, where her father's old gallipots were kept. Then she took from this and that, and mixed carefully, and returned to Abel.

"Here, drink this," said she.

Abel held out his hand, but turned his face away.

"'Tis only a little assafœtida that I put in to quiet the nerves that you smell," said she. "'Tis mostly for the liver. My father used to say that the root of all sickness was the liver, and he did not know but it was the root of all evil. If your liver were in good order you would not fret, Abel Perkins. Drink it down."

And Abel drank it down with an effort.

"Now you'd better go home," said she, "and wait till it takes effect. I'll warrant you'll eat some supper to-night."

"I shan't, Lydia, if you don't let me come to see you," said Abel, piteously.

"Yes, you will. How long did you go without your supper when that girl in Abington gave you the mitten? I ain't the first one you've stopped eating for, Abel Perkins, and you not twenty! You know it's so."

Abel blushed and looked down foolishly.

Lydia laughed. "If you keep on this way you'll starve to death before you come of age," said she. "Now you'd better go home and study your books, and leave such matters alone until you get more sense to manage them. I suppose you will when you've got the college books learned through."

Abel arose. Lydia followed him to the door, and her voice was softer as she bade him good-bye. He looked piteously backward at her as he went out of the yard, but still she was not so touched as she had been before.

"That story about his being so crazy over that girl in Abington was true," she said to herself; and although she was generous enough to feel relieved that her unlucky lover had an elastic as well as a susceptible temperament, and was likely to recover from his wounds, still she disliked him the more for it.

It now wanted only a month for the expiration of the year since Lydia and Freelove's banns had been published. Should they not marry before then, they could not legally unless they were again published.

It was a month since Freelove had set foot in Lydia's house, or indeed spoken to her. He came, early in the morning sometimes, and cared for her garden, but they never exchanged a word. Everybody said that the marriage was broken off. Lydia kept on as usual. She had some beautiful linen in the loom, and she wove as if she were certainly going to be married. Sarah Porter used to come in and wonder, but she found out nothing from Lydia, who never spoke Freelove's name.

Had she not listened two months for the sound of the knocker she would not have heard it above the great hum of the loom that afternoon; but hear it she did, and went to answer it, wiping her eyes.

Freelove Keith stood in the porch, and out at the gate stood his horse, with a pillion behind the saddle.

"Come, Lydia," said Freelove, "I want you to get on the pillion and ride over to Aunt Nabby's with me."

"I can't," said Lydia, faintly. "I'm all over flax-lint from the loom."

"Put on an apron," said Freelove.

Lydia went into the house and tied an apron around her waist, and came out again. Freelove lifted here on the pillion, and they rode down the street without a word, until they reached the minister Elihu Eaton's house, which was about half way to Aunt Nabby's.

Freelove drew rein. "Now we'll go in and get married, Lydia," said he.

"Oh, Freelove, I can't," gasped Lydia.

"Now or never," said Freelove, sternly.

"I was going to have a wedding, Freelove, and a brocade gown, and cake—"

"Now or never," said Freelove.

He sprang off the saddle and held up his arms. Lydia slipped down into them, and followed him, trembling, her head drooping, into the minister's house.

When they came out a stout old woman stood waiting for them at the gate.

"I've got married, aunt Nabby," said Freelove, with a gay laugh.

"She's making more linen," Sarah told her mother when she got home, and the two women speculated anxiously. They knew that Freelove did not go to see Lydia, at all events, for they and all the neighbors watched.

When the last day of the year since the banns came there was no longer doubt in anybody's mind, nor was there, indeed, in Lydia's. She staid in-doors, and wove her linen in a mechanical fashion. She sat before the great loom, and it was as if she were playing a harmony of sweet housewifely industry upon it like a very artist, but the tears rolled down her cheeks, which were not rosy that morning.

"Well, I should think 'twas time," replied the old woman. She chuckled; her iron-bowed spectacles flashed back the light. "I've got a bedquilt made for Liddy, and six yarn socks for you, Freelove," she said, "and I'm going home and bake a pound-cake with some plums in it."

Aunt Nabby went scuttling down the road. Freelove and Lydia remounted and went back at a canter. Freelove pulled a conch-shell from his pocket and blew as lustily as a herald. Folks ran to the windows, and Lydia hid her blushing face against her husband's shoulder.

—Mary E. Wilkins, in Harper's Bazar.

PATRIOTIC SCHOOLMA'AMS.

Ludicrous Incident Growing Out of the Singing of "America" and "God Save the Queen."

Chicago Mail.

"I was considerably amused by an incident at Toronto the other day," said a Milwaukee traveling man last night. "The National Teachers' Association was in session in that city and several delegations from the Western states steamed into town one afternoon on board the Empress of India. The dear little schooma'ams were enjoying there vacation trip immensely and the party was one of the liveliest that the little Canadian steamer ever carried. Some one in the Nebraska delegation suggested that it look like deserting Uncle Sam to run off to Canada in that way for a good time. This sentiment seemed to stir up the whole crowd, and patriotism ran riot for a time. When Toronto was sighted the vacationists began singing 'America,' in order to give the Canada cousins audible proof of the loyalty of their visitors. The steamer was delayed a little in reaching her wharf, and in the meantime the American national air was sung with great vim and vociferousness on shipboard. Suddenly the crowd on the shore recognized the tune and began singing it. The Americans were surprised and delighted. The idea of being welcomed in a Canadian town by a great concourse of Canadians singing "America" with all the gusto of true-blue Yankees was rather startling, to say the least. But the Canucks apparently entered into the singing with as much enthusiasm as did the voyagers. Altogether it was a highly patriotic occasion. But when the steamer drew up to her wharf and the two factions became one great choral body each was surprised to learn what the air other was singing. The visitors were patriotically testing their lungs with 'America;' the Canadians were just as vociferously attesting their loyalty with 'God Save the Queen.' The two tunes are one—except, of course, the words."

A Prohibition Item.

Texas Siftings.

Colonel Yerger and several of his friends were talking about the intoxicating qualities of the various liquors.

"In my opinion, genuine champagne is less intoxicating than any other liquor," remarked Hostetter McGinnis.

"How do you make that out?"

"Because so few people can afford to drink it."

READING FOR SUNDAY.

Homeward.

When I come to my Father's house he will hear me;
I shall not need
With words implore
Compassion at my Father's door;
With yearning mute my heart will plead,
And my Father's heart will hear me.

One thought all the weary day hath caressed me
Though cloud o'ercast
Is the way I go,
Though steep is the hill I must climb, yet, oh,
When evening falls and the light is past,
At my Father's house I will rest me.

For thither—whatso'er betide me;
Howe'er I stray,
Beset by fears,
Wearied by effort, or blinded by tears—
Ah, surely I shall find my way,
Though none there be to guide me!

—Florence Earle Coates.

International Sunday-School Lesson for Aug. 2, 1891.

CHRIST AT JACOB'S WELL. (John iv, 5-26.)

GOLDEN TEXT—Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely. (Rev. xxii, 17.)

HOME READINGS.

M.—Christ at Jacob's well.....John iv, 5-15.
Tu.—Christ at Jacob's well....John iv, 16-26.
W.—Jacob at Succoth..........Gen. xxxiii, 16-29.
Th.—God to be worshiped....Psa. xcvi, 1-9.
Fri.—True-hearted worship...Heb. x, 16-25.
Sat.—A pure heart.............Psa. xxiv, 1-6.
Sun.—The water of life.........Rev. xxii, 1-7.

WHAT THE LESSON TEACHES.

The Independent.

Jesus improved his opportunities to talk to ignorant people, even to a working woman, of the kingdom. It did not make any difference that he was weary. If we improved our chances to speak a word for Christ to those we happen to meet, His kingdom would come much sooner.

We must not forget Christ's humanity as well as His Deity. He was weary and wanted to rest, like us.

The feeling of conceit, or superiority, coming from birth, or family, or education, or wealth, which might make us ready to treat other people as inferiors, as Samaritans, as unfit to associate with, is quite unchristian, and it is mean. Our Declaration of Independence contradicts it when it says that "all men are born equal," and Christianity teaches the same thing.

There is a difference between common water and living water, common bread and living bread, and the latter is vastly the most important. And yet most folks labor only for the bread and water that perish, and care very little for the instruction of Christ and the knowledge of God and His kingdom. It is enough for them to get enough to eat and drink when they might have their souls fed.

The comforts of the Gospel are perennial. It is a well of water ever springing up, so that one can thirst no more. If one knows God is his friend; that he is trying to serve Him and that He has eternal life, he need not fear any weariness or labor—all is peace.

Ask for this life from God as this poor woman did—seek it earnestly, seek first the kingdom of God. One will hardly seek it unless he understands somewhat of his sin and need. Jesus did wisely to teach this woman her sin first.

Thank God that Christianity purifies the family life and forbids divorce for trivial causes. Christ's great teaching is of the spirituality of religion. It makes no difference where one worships, in what church, or room, or field, if he only worships. It is the heart God looks at, and the most outwardly devout man who goes to Mount Zion or Mount Gerizim every Sabbath may be an enemy of God.

But those who do not worship in church are not likely to worship anywhere. "Forget not the assembling of yourselves together."

That hour is always coming, but never quite comes, when this spirituality of true religion is perfectly understood. We have now religions that make much of forms, and vestments, and ordinances, which are no part of religion.

It is Jesus we worship as the Messiah. His we are. Him we must acknowledge. Here He is. Let us seek and find Him now.

Of General Interest.

General Booth announces that he has received the £100,000 he wanted for his social reform scheme, and £10,000 in addition; but of the £30,000 wanted for annual working expenses only £2,000 had come to hand.

The City Mission in Sydney, Australia, reports for its twenty-sixth year an income of £2,000. Nine missionaries and two Bible women have been maintained, 1,305 meetings held, 30,356 families visited, 1,495 cases of destitutes relieved, 1,103 total abstinence pledges taken and 795 persons induced to attend church.

The Welsh Calvinistic Methodists, at their conference in June, report a membership of 136,051, and total collections for 1890 of £202,707. The Connexion shows no signs of decay, but is increasing in strength. Action was taken protesting against the statements made by clergymen of the Church of England, and demanding the disestablishment of that church in Wales.

In an address at the breakfast at the Holborn restaurant, London, last week, in honor of the United States and British colonial delegates to the international Council of the Congregationalists, Alfred Illingworth, M. P., declared that the aristocracy was the chief buttress of the Established churches, not 5 per cent. of the wage-workers being communicants.

A memorial cross is to be erected over the grave of Father Damien at Molokai. It is to be of red granite, and an inscription on the three lower steps is to be in parallel form, in English and Hawaiian, as follows: "Joseph Damien. Born Jan. 3, 1840. Died April 15, 1889. 'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.'—John xvi, 13. This monument is raised to his memory by the people of England."

According to Prof. A. S. Bickmore the Ainos or aborigines of Japan do not belong to the Mongol race but to our own Indo European or Caucasian family, and are more nearly allied to us than the Ayrians of India. A grammar and vocabulary on this hitherto totally unknown language has been prepared by the Rev. John Batchelor, of the Church Missionary Society of India, who has also finished a translation of the Gospel of Matthew, published by the British and Foreign Bible Society.

The next missionary council of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States will be held at Detroit, Mich., beginning Tuesday, Oct. 20. The work which is being carried on in the region of Cape Palmas, in Liberia, is growing faster than the resources of the board will enable it to meet. Bishop Ferguson, who is in charge, asks for about $5,000 more than last year. At the last meeting of the board of managers appropriations were made for foreign missions amounting to $159,841.31.

Thoughts for the Day.

He who does nothing is very near doing ill.—Montaigne.

The sea enters into the rivers before the rivers can run into the sea. In like manner God comes to us before we go to him, and heaven enters into our souls before we can enter into heaven.—Drelincourt.

Advanced thought is to be neither rejected nor accepted upon the ground of its novelty. To some minds no higher credentials are needed, while to others novelty is a certain ground for condemnation. Let us not be hasty in condemning, but let us be slow to leave the traditions of our fathers. Stand by the Word of God.—Tennessee Methodist.

There are very few churches that could not accommodate more worshipers than they do, there are not many who would not gladly see their vacancies filled up by non-church-goers. People do not attend because they do not find religious services attractive; it is just simply a fault of sinful human nature common to both rich and poor. —The Central Presbyterian.

By thine own soul's law learn to live,
And if men thwart thee take no heed,
And if men hate thee have no care—
Sing thou thy song and do thy deed;
Hope thou thy hope and pray thy prayer,
And claim no crown they will not give,
Nor bays they grudge thee for thy hair.

—Donne.

If only once in the long dull year,
For the space of a word, for the space of a breath.
We could see our dead whom we hold most dear,
Death would not be death.

—Adapted from Ernest Renan.

A Very Mean Trick.

Buffalo Commercial.

A well-known clergyman of this city was asked to solve the following puzzle a few nights ago: If all the children that King Herod killed were buried in such a manner that only their arms, from the elbow to the tips of the fingers, were visible above the ground, how could you distinguish the arms of the boys from those of the girls? The reverend gentleman worked at it faithfully, but was obliged to give it up. "For shame, doctor," cried the interrogator. "The idea that you should forget that the children that Herod killed were all boys."

OUT OF THE ORDINARY.

In sections of Florida cabbages are being given away for cattle feed, such a drug are they on the market.

The Declaration of Independence was read at Graham, Mo., July 4, by a little girl only seven years old.

An ex-policeman, who has done ten years' duty in one of the large cities of the East, declares that he has never seen a bald-headed tramp.

A young man who was barely able to read and write when he went to the Kansas penitentiary, some years ago, now teaches the highest class in that institution.

The report of the New Jersey State Board of Agriculture shows that it pays best to raise cucumbers, as they return $280 per acre. Sweet potatoes come next at $122.

A horse belonging to John Burtless, of Tipton, Mich., was found to be covered with honey bees the other day, and a fire had to be built to remove them. The horse may die.

One of the gardeners of Bayou Sara, in Louisiana, has produced a potato that weighs twenty-seven pounds, and he now proposes to rest on his laurels until his competitors catch up with that.

When the owner of a pet donkey in Jackson, Tenn., purchased a rival and installed it on his farm the jealous original pet resented the intrusion by braying so loud that it burst a blood vessel and died.

A resident of Monroe City, Mo., has recovered $100 from a man who tied his mules to a handsome maple shade tree belonging to the villager, letting the mules bark and kill the tree, it being one his grandfather planted.

An old ranchman in Harney Valley, Ore., has been in the habit of hauling his daily supply of water from eighty miles away, in order to save digging a well. He could secure an abundance of water ten or twelve feet deep.

The catacombs of Rome contain the remains of about six million human beings, and those of Paris about three million. The latter were formerly stone quarries. Many of the victims of the revolution of 1792-4 are buried there.

A Maine farmer recently sent a 10-cent stamp to a man who advertises to send for that amount the way to run a farm without being troubled with potato bugs. The answer received was as follows: "Plant fruit trees instead of potatoes."

Vincent Griest, of Lower Oxford, Pa., witnessed a combat between an owl and a smaller bird, and when the little one seemed to be getting the worst of the battle he went to her assistance. The owl thereupon attacked him and bit him in the arm and face.

An old table in the waiting-room of the Philadelphia, Wilmington & Baltimore depot at Wilmington possesses a peculiar interest for people fond of relics. It is the table on which the body of President Lincoln rested while being conveyed to Springfield, Ill., for burial.

Two cooks of Ashland, Ore., one a negro and the other a Chinaman, indulged in a novel contest, a few days ago, to see which could clean a chicken in the shortest time. The Celestial won in twenty second, and the fowl was still kicking after being denuded of its feathers.

The people of Thessaly were the first to break horses for service in war, and their proficiency as equestrians probably first gave rise to the ancient myth that their country was originally inhabited by centaurs, fabulous creatures supposed to be half horse and half man.

An eleven-year-old Polish girl passed through Scranton, Pa., last week. She was from Poland and traveled the entire distance without a care-taker. Across her shoulder was strung a tag on which was written: "Direct this girl to Shickshinny, Pa." She could speak no English.

Washington is the only city of its size in the United States which has no factory girls. Women who earn their living there are principally in politics, though there are a few employed in retail stores, photographic studios and private offices. In Washington tenement-house life is unknown.

The recent count of the money in the United States Treasury shows that there are 4,500 tons of coin in the vaults of the Treasury building. A statistician estimates that if a band of burglars broke into the building it would require 90,000 men of average strength to carry this money a distance of fifty feet.

One concern in Waterville, Me., made last year enough cloth to make a tent that would cover 370 acres and hold all the people of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont and Massachusetts, comfortably seated, with a ring of 168 acres in the center. In that ring the 84,000 horses of Maine could be exhibited at one time without crowding.

Between the years 1884 and 1888, according to official statistics, 949 soldiers of the Prussian army have committed suicide in the Twelfth Saxon and the Thirteenth Prussian regiments. The largest number of suicides occurred in the company stationed in the province of Posen; the next was in that of the Berlin company.

Near the old cemetery in West Alexander, W. Va., a big tree is growing, which forks at three feet nine inches from the ground. Apparently it is white oak, but on examination it appears that above the fork it branches into two species, one a white oak and the other a white cherry, with the foliage peculiar to each. The oak is about sixty-five and the cherry 55 feet high.

The existence of a cholera demon is still firmly credited in certain districts of India. A native in a village near Allahabad recently assured an inspector of police that, the previous night, his home had been visited by a cholera monster, with a head like a large earthen pot. He and his brother drove away the spirit with bamboo clubs, and fired a gun to complete its defeat, as the creature fears noise.

When the first vessel completed the passage of the new Erie canal, in 1825, there being no such thing as a telegraph line in those days, the news was communicated to New York and to Buffalo by cannons placed within hearing of each other all the way along from Albany to each of the other cities. The signal was passed along in this way from Albany to New York city and back again to Albany in fifty-eight minutes.

Precious opal has been discovered at White Cliffs, fifty miles north of Wilcannia, New South Wales, by Mr. J. E. Carne, mineralogist to the department of mines, Sydney. The opal is found in crevices of sandstone and fossil-wood, occurring in a formation resembling the desert sandstone beds of Queensland. Sometimes, too, it is found disseminated in a kind of cement which has penetrated the mass or body of the sandstone.

It has been demonstrated that, while the greatest velocity imparted to a cannon-ball scarcely exceeds six hundred meters a second—about 1,500 miles an hour—meteors from space penetrate the air with a velocity, it is claimed, of forty thousand, sometimes sixty thousand, meters per second. This tremendous speed raises the air at once to 4,000° or 6,000° centigrade, causing, in many cases, the complete destruction of the meteorite by combustion.

Americans Want No Repose.

Charles Dudley Warner, in Harper's Monthly.

Perhaps the American deceives himself when he says he wants repose; what he wants is perpetual activity and change, his peace of mind is postponed until he can get it in his own way. It is in feeling that he is a port of growth and not of decay. Foreigners are fond of writing essays upon American traits and characteristics. They touch mostly on surface indications. What really distinguishes the American from all others—for all peoples like more or less to roam, and the English of all others are globe-trotters—is not so much his restlessness as his entire accord with the spirit of "go-ahead," the result of his absolute breaking with the past. He can repose only in the midst of intense activity. He can sit down quietly in a town that is growing rapidly; but if it stands still, he is impelled to move his rocking-cair to one more lively. He wants the world to move, and to move unencumbered; and Europe seems to him to carry too much baggage. The American is simply the most modern of men, one who has thrown away the impediments of tradition. The world never saw such a spectacle before, so vast a territory informed with one uniform spirit of energy and progress, and people tumbling into it from all the world, eager for the fair field and free opportunity. The American delights in it; in Europe he misses the swing and "go" of the new life.