

The Bloomfield Times.

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The Bloomfield Times.

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For the Bloomfield Times.

Dolly Varden Visits Perry County.

There came to town the other day
A lady fair in ribbons gay,
Who worshipped Fashion and Display;
And this was Dolly Varden.

This "far off bird with feathers fair"
Was scrutinized with envious care,
In hope that some neglected hair
Disfigured Dolly Varden.

But sly inspection sought in vain
To find a fault from plume to train;
And each was foremost to obtain
The grace of Dolly Varden.

But, once the Scepter in her hand,
Entreaty yields to stern command;
For she, so suppliant once and bland,
Is regal Dolly Varden.

The ladies! Bless them! How their hearts
O'erflow with love for her whose arts
Can make a husband show his parts!
And this is Dolly Varden.

The dry-goodsman, intent to win
An honest penny for a pin,
"A fresh arrival" orders in
Express for Dolly Varden.

The priestess of "the latest style"
Surveys the costly silken pile,
And then pronounces it too vile
For dainty Dolly Varden.

In vain the merchant tries to show
The goods were ordered so and so,
It was a sell and would not go,
With pretty Dolly Varden.

There was no number fifteen there;
"The fifteen's broader by a hair,"
"Would you insult me? Would you dare?"
Cries ireful Dolly Varden.

Such gross indignities as these
Demand that trickery should seize
Another victim to appease
The wrath of Dolly Varden.

A self-devoted martyr bows
With complaisance upon his brows;
And to a ribbon bill allows,
His name for Dolly Varden.

The goods for Dolly Varden came
('Tis true she had not signed her name),
The bill was large, and hence became
A bore to Dolly Varden.

Her heart was full; not so her purse,
She was not furious, she was worse;
Her agent's fallings to rehearse
Began Miss Dolly Varden.

"You lie" and "har" plump and square,
In bolts of super-heated air,
Passed back and forth between this pair,
Her "snb" and Dolly Varden.

Now, you who chance to meet this lay,
Take heed from this propitious day,
Or you may have a bill to pay
For pretty Dolly Varden.

Squire Suffolk's Subscription.

SQUIRE SUFFOLK was the richest man in North Grafton, and gossip said the stingiest. "As close as the bark of a tree," as they described him, for in a country place like North Grafton a small fortune entitles one to rank with the Rothschilds. In the meantime let us hope that the Squire was not so narrow as they believed. How true it was, let Miss Catharine Poore answer. Miss Poore, who took in sewing, and had made more than one piece of fine linen for the Squire, and who, during her vacations and hours of relaxation, purveyed for the parish, or any needy body who came in her way—one human creature being quite as worthy as another of her aid and sympathy.

One summer morning, Miss Poore tied on her straw bonnet—the identical bonnet she had bought with the money Squire Suffolk had paid her five years ago, and which bonnet she had sewed over with her own fingers four separate times, in order to be as near the fashion of the day as respectability required—so that one morning she tied on this work of art, and taking her purse, as a necessary precaution she believed, bent her steps along the blooming country road toward the imposing mansion of Squire Suffolk, on charitable thought intent.

Now Miss Poore was no blooming miss of twenty, with dimples coqueting with blushes on her cheeks, and eyes running over with lovely mirth and peach bloom of youth thrown like a glamour over all. She was simply a plain woman of forty, or thereabout, with a face in no way remarkable, except for its expression of kindness and humor; and these, be it said, are faces that best outlive youth, and catch at last the reflections of the spirit, and grow beautiful in the illumination of good deeds and pure thoughts. Miss Poore was just the one to beg for others and desire nothing for herself; just the woman to make a thousand plans for the welfare of others, and feel their frustration as acutely as if they had been for her own personal happiness.

She was shown into the dining room at Squire Suffolk's, where she found him yawning over a late breakfast, which the servant had just brought in to him on a silver tray.

"You make me ashamed of myself," said he, reflectively sugaring his coffee by the aid of wrought silver tongs of an ancient design.

"I'm sorry. I hope to make you pleased with yourself before my visit is over."

"Then take this seat, Miss Poore, and drink a cup of this Moca; it's my own importation. There isn't another such beverage in North Grafton, I'll venture to say."

"Thanks. I love Moca, but it does not love me."

"That's odd, very odd of the Moca; unrequited affection, eh?"

Miss Poore laughed, but she was thinking rather of a family in North Grafton, who drink cold water every morning for breakfast, only indulging themselves in the luxury of tea on Sunday, in order to keep in countenance the father, who needed it to assist him through the wear and tear of the day, and who disdained any dainty which he must enjoy alone. This was the country pastor, Rev. Herbert Hasent and family, who lived, or rather suffered on a salary of five hundred dollars a year, and what extras were to be obtained by fitting stupid boys for college. She cleared her voice then, a little nervously, for action.

"Mr. Suffolk," said she, "I have come on a matter of business, and I may as well get it over at once and leave you at your breakfast in peace."

Some dim idea of the sewing work flashed through his mind, while he involuntarily ran over the items of his wardrobe.

"I don't see—" he began.

"Oh, please don't refuse till I tell you. With the aid of several charitable societies we are fitting out some young clergymen as missionaries to the Feje."

"Oh, the missionaries be hanged!" he interrupted, scenting danger perhaps for others besides the missionaries. "I beg pardon, Miss Poore; but—the devil—it seems to me that charity begins at home."

"I've no objection to that, only don't make her too much of a home-body; a little neighborliness is good."

"Eh? They'll be eaten alive, those young fools. It is down right unchristian to send them out merely as food for the savages. I won't lend a hand to such cruelty. I—"

"Very well," said crest-fallen Miss Poore rising to leave.

"No, it's not very well—begging your pardon again. Sit down. Now it stands to reason that if the said call were a worthy one—that is, I should be as ready as the next one. There's your minister, now, the Rev. Mr. Hasent—never was a poor devil better named—he hasn't a cent to bless himself; his wife wears calico in December; he buys tuel by the barrowful—so my gardener tells me; he wears patches in the pulpit; they live on beans and oatmeal! Why doesn't some one raise a subscription there? I would come down with something handsome—upon my word I would."

"And here the squire tossed off his cup of Moca, well satisfied that he had staved her off with his specious humanity. But Miss Poore was valiant, and not to be worsted in the encounter.

"You speak feelingly," she said; "it does you credit, I am sure," taking out her tablets. "What a luxury is to be able to give where your heart dictates and your judgment approves! Acting upon your suggestion, I will open a subscription for Mr. Hasent at once, and headed by your name. I am certain it will meet with great success."

This was a turn of affairs the squire had hardly anticipated.

"I shall make the effort, at least. What shall I put you down at? A great deal depends upon that, you know."

"I should think so. Why, my dear lady, you won't get a sixpence out of these clodhoppers. Come now, I won't put my name down, but I'll do this for you: I'll agree to double all you collect. Now, isn't that handsome? I guess I've heard the last of that story," thought the merry Squire.

"Thank you," said Miss Poore; "then you'll see me again. Good morning, Mr. Suffolk."

And she was away through the blossoming lanes again without a thought of anything but Mr. Hasent's comfort and the Squire's offer.

"How very good it was of the Squire! He isn't so mean as people believe, after all, if you only work the right vein. Heigh ho!—what a good send it will be to Mr.

Hasent—a little ready money for the necessities for next winter; a new gown for little Belle, who hasn't been at church for weeks; a jacket for Tom, who is out now at the elbow."

What comfort, what heart's ease was laid up in that blank subscription list! Oh, if the days were each a year long, and all the farmers' geese laid golden eggs! What a pity it was so many close-handed people lived in North Grafton! There was Mrs. Adams and Captain Jackson, they are both well to do, but to what a wretched extreme they carry economy! But now that she was passing she might as well go in.

"Good morning, Captain Jackson. I'm raising a subscription for poor, dear Mr. Hasent, and I want your name."

"You want my money, you mean?"

"Certainly; yours, and that of a good many other people. How pleasant it is to have something to give away!"

"I should think very likely! but I hain't got a cent ahead; never was so poorly off in my life."

"Dear me, what a pity!" sighed Miss Poore. "Now we all thought you were overhanded. How surprised the neighbors will be. Did you loose in that fire?"

"Loss! I hain't lost nothing. What put that bee in your bonnet? I hain't got a cent, tho' to give any prating parson—not I."

"Very well. Then I must go and try Mrs. Adams. The world has used her well—perhaps she is grateful enough to give a mite."

"A precious little mite you will get there. Why, my dear woman, she's closer than a glove to the hand. She wouldn't give a cent to save her soul, provided she has one. Come, I'll venture to give double what she gives; it won't stave a hole through my bulwarks, I'll be bound."

"Good morning then; perhaps you'll see me again."

And Miss Poore was off to Mrs. Adams'. She found the lady just turning a plum cake out the oven.

"Done to a charm," said the satisfied housekeeper. "You know I took a premium on bread last fall."

"I'm sure you ought to have one on cake, if it's as good as it looks. I wonder if Mrs. Hasent tastes such a thing even once a year?"

"Not oftener, I guess," laughed Mrs. Adams. "She's too slack to beat up the eggs—catch her."

This didn't look promising, surely.

"She is not well, you know; she's an invalid. She has been denied the greatest blessing God can bestow, of which you and I seem to have a store. Isn't it a pity she should be denied of so much beside?"

"Oh, but there must be a screw loose somewhere; either they are wasteful or—something."

"Bless you, they haven't anything to waste; they don't know the meaning of the word. Why, Mrs. Hasent has worn that chocolate calico for three years running."

"Well, you know, invalids don't wear out clothes as fast as active bodies like you and me, Miss Poore. Now, in my opinion between us two, that Mrs. Hasent might sit up and do her house work as well as her neighbors, if she chose. Lor, think of the parson bothering about and cooking breakfast! I'd like to see the morsel of bread I would eat of his making!"

"I guess if you were starving, you wouldn't ask who made it. I tell you it's a suffering household."

"I suppose that all this talk means that you are begging for them. Lor, takes it's as much as a widow can do to make both ends meet. What with ten tons of hay and a new barn swept off by fire, and a likely young calf drowned in the freshet, you see. Lor! this is the world, and the other's the country."

"That's true; and we shan't any of us reach that country if we are not openhearted toward one another. But Captain Jackson, he warned me that I wouldn't get the widow's mite here. He was so morally certain that he offered to double whatever you gave thinking, no doubt, it wouldn't hurt him to double nothing—quite in his line, to be sure."

"Ha, ha! did he? Well, that's a good one! I never expected the captain would be so generous. I'd like to twist a few coppers out of the rusty old skinflint. I'll make him lose flesh. Now I think of it, I've got a ten dollar bill that I was going to send away, but I suppose the Hasents may as well have it; and then, too, Captain Jackson will have to fork over twenty!"

"Thirty dollars is a very fair beginning," thought Miss Poore. It didn't seem exactly necessary for her to quarrel with the motive, when the action was so acceptable;

and, therefore, her business carried her back to Captain Jackson.

"Again!" cried he, looking a little blank. "Where's the widow's mite?—mighty small isn't it?" attempting the facetious.

"Well, no; it's very good of her. She was just going to send it away. It's a ten dollar bill, Captain."

"Thunder! You don't mean it? Let's see it? It isn't counterfeit, is it? Did it give her the cramp? How did she weather it? She must be on her beam's end! Dear, dear, and I agreed to double it! Well, I've doubled the capes, and a good many other dangerous points, but bless me if this isn't double trouble. There's a doubloon, at all events, and gold's up, you know. But I'm the last man to abandon a promise."

Very good trophies to begin with were the ten dollar bill and the doubloon. The story of how they were obtained raised a laugh in many a farm kitchen, and a hearty laugh opens the heart and the purse by one impulse. She painted Mr. Hasent's difficulties so graphically. She related her experience so humorously, that few could say to her nay. It would have been like going to an entertainment and then refusing to pay the price of admission. Besides, none could resist Miss Poore; and who would be outdone by Mrs. Adams and Captain Jackson? No one cared to compete with these worthies; and then, wasn't Squire Suffolk to double the whole amount, after all was said and done?

That was a pill which every one was anxious to administer to him, and they did their prettiest in the way of compounding it. The more nauseous the better; swallow it he must, if it made him black in the face and strangled him into the bargain.

Into every house in the place went Miss Poore and her subscription paper. Where money was scarce she accepted produce, and borrowing a team, drove into town, and drove her bargains as shrewdly as Reynard himself, only more honestly. Barnyard fowls, and game that the neighbors' boys had brought down for the benefit of the parson and the discomfiture of the Squire; butter and eggs, lamb's wool and sheep skins; bags of grain, and fruit and vegetables—all was grist that came to her mill.

One morning, going into town, she met the Squire himself, in his smart gig, behind a tall chestnut-colored horse, for the Squire's one extravagance was horse flesh, said the gossips again. He reined in, however when he recognized her, and asked if she had taken to farming; said he wanted to let his farm on halves—would she undertake it? and he threatened to waglay and rob her when she returned home with the funds in hand.

"You've some fine lamb's wool there," said he, alighting to examine it. "Card & Spinner have engaged a hundred weight of me at a premium. Here, I'll drop them a line, and you can take this up to them, if you like and say I sent it as an installment, they pay you cash, down."

"But do you know what the money's for?" hesitated Miss Poore. She could not make up her mind to this unfair advantage even in the cause of the church.

"Certainly I do. It's to ruin the Squire and enrich the Parson. Shall I have to mortgage the farm, do you think? In that case, I shan't ask you to take it at the halves."

"A persistent little brigand," laughed the Squire, rolling along over the country road, and enjoying the breezy morning; the odor of wild blossoms, the gushes of bird songs that palpitated on the air in an ebb and flow of harmony; enjoying them as no mere miser could enjoy such unsubstantial pleasure.

"It's your money or your life with her. She wouldn't disgrace the old place either, she wouldn't. Blood will tell. She's got the high and mighty ways of the Jerrolds, and they bought their lands of the Indian sachems. Nothing much older than this, I fancy, in this country—if they did part with them to the devil, so to speak. Heigh ho! I thought danger was over when a fellow reached the fifties, but I do believe that like the measles and whooping cough it goes harder with the adult."

And thus the Squire pursued his way, sometimes humming a strain of that old tune—

"Lovely Zitana, 'tist while I play—
Brigands abroad, I must not stay—
But thy bright eyes if brigand should see,
Thou art the basest, captive in he!"

All through the summer days Miss Poore pursued her scheme, and into autumn, they were pinch-pack.

It seemed as if one add all were bent on begging Squire Suffolk, for on the first day of November the amount had reached three hundred dollars, and the subscription list was closed, except to the Squire.

Accordingly, one afternoon, Miss Poore

put on her work of art, and taking her treasure with her, proceeded to the Suffolk place. It was bleak autumn day, the forerunner of sleet and storms and pinching wintery weather, and Miss Poore, wrapping a threadbare shawl about her, was glad at last to find herself before the blazing fire in Squire Suffolk's drawing room. It seemed to her at first as if he would never allow her to come to the point. Either he had forgotten about the affair, or meant to wear out her patience; but that was simply inexhaustible. In the meantime he entertained her with a detailed account of his estate, as if he were the steward and she the mistress; with the increase in his crops and prices; with the story of his youth and schooldays; of his awkward first love; and when he paused it appeared to Catharine that she knew him perhaps better than he knew himself. She wondered at this strange familiarity which was growing upon her; and when at length she pulled out her subscription list it was with a quaint reluctance of manner, not at all like Miss Catharine Poore's usual promptitude.

Was she afraid he would fail to fulfill his obligation, and so disappoint her hopes? Was it because, having acquired a sort of friendliness for him, she feared lest he would prove the niggard!

"Three hundred dollars," said he. "You have done finely."

It plainly wasn't a very stunning affair to him, or he met an emergency with consummate coolness.

"Yes, I have it here in ready money. You shall count it if you will."

"Three hundred dollars. Why, child, I hain't so much on hand," she had feared it would come to that. "I never keep it about me, you know," said he. "I don't like to put a premium on murder, to make it worth the servants' while to put a dirk through me any time after dark."

She left her seat then and prepared to go home. She was quite miserable at that moment. To be balked thus! Six hundred dollars would have gone so far with the Hasents—they needed it so sorely! Only yesterday she had seen Tad's stocking peeping through his shoes; and then the doctor had ordered porter for her mother; but it was one thing to order, and another to obtain. Here would have been porter and plenty. She did not realize that all this, had enough truly, was yet not enough to make her so dispirited as she seemed. She felt as if some disaster had overtaken her, which money in itself had no power to alleviate.

"I will send to town, to-morrow," said the Squire, "and you will have the money before night. Will that do?"

"Do!" The tears stood in her eyes; the reaction of feeling was so intense. You cannot understand what it was to this woman, who loved her neighbor as herself, who made his welfare, spiritual as well as material, a personal thing—happiness, the business of life.

She called in at Mr. Hasent's on her way home. There was no cheerful blaze in the grate. Mrs. Hasent sat bolstered up in bed darned stockings, while her husband made the toast and tea, and lighted a solitary lamp. Miss Poore looked about her and thought of changes to come; of the comfortably clad children; of the warm winter fires, of the new dress for Belle; of the new suit that should replace the shabby black of her father's; of porter and partridges for the mother—and then she bid them good night, and her gladness illuminated the path before her so that she seemed to walk in noonday.

She went about her work as usual next day, never allowing her gaze to wander out expectantly, till a sharp ring brought her to her feet, with her nerves all quivering in her flesh, as if the points of innumerable pins were stabbing her through and through. It was the money from the Squire, in crisp bank notes, the full three hundred dollars—but what else? What was it made Miss Poore's hand tremble like an aspen, that sent the tears dropping slowly one by one, and made her flush and pale before this scrap of paper?

"My Dear Miss Catharine:—The stingiest man in Grafton offers you his hand and heart. As this is the first time in his life that he has been guilty of such generosity, pray encourage him and heal him of his infirmity."
JOHN SUFFOLK.

And so Mr. Hasent's heart and home were gladdened with the six hundred dollars, and this gladness rebounded upon the Squire and Catharine Poore, and there was a great wedding, for North Grafton, in Mrs. Hasent's best parlor, and everybody had a new gown for the occasion, not excepting the hostess herself, whose new gowns were like angles' visits—few and far between.