

# HIGHLAND PARK NEWS-LETTER

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## DOROTHY LEE

LAST night at supper the Honorable William Leytown and the Reverend Nathan Birdsey, having the talk all to themselves, (as is usual!) fell to discussing the keeping of journals; for Mister Leytown has been beguiling some of his interminable leisure by reading a certain "Mister Prindle's" memoirs; in which he sets forth the doings and sayings of town, camp, and court, during the reign of the late king.

By LAURA DAYTON FESSENDEN

necessity forced to know ourselves too well. Humanity at its best is a miserable collection of

Mister Leyton said that "aside from a journal being able to offer satisfactory amusement for an idle hour, he thought it (the journal, I mean,) a worthless document to its time, "and as for posterity (quoth he) what, to be sure, have the manners of yesterday's fops and fine ladies to do with us of to-day? and what good (continued he) did it do to the man that wrote it? He presumed not to publish a line of it while he lived! and, had his valet been able to read, or his wife possessed herself of a tattling tongue it is probable that our little journal writer would have found lodgings in jail, and, mayhap, in the end have been rewarded with a tightly fitting hempen necklacc. For my part (added Mister Leyton) I prefer to jot down comments of a personal character upon the tablets of my brain, for there only are they safe, and beyond the reach of meddling souls. There, alone,

put some question to yourself concerning the goings and comings of your childhood days, or your early youth? Only to discover that the chain of memory is broken, that a link is missing here and there? It is at such times that the thoughtful experience a sense of having been self deserters, it is then that we realize that we have been less than appreciative of the life gift and its manifold blessings; it is then that we come to see how our yesterdays have been spilled, as water is spilled through a sieve.

negative conditions. And there is little to make the proud-spirited care to preserve such a chronicle, say, as this:

can what we think of it? investigation."

The Reverend Nathan Birdsey listened (as he always does listen to everything, that any body, and every body says to him) in grave, amiable silence; a silence conveying the realization that every word he is to utter in reply will be weighed upon the scales of his conscience. Oh! and again, Oh! how I should like to ruffle his temper! How I should like to see his calm eyes show fire! His firm lips quiver with anger! His evenly modulated utterance grow thick with passion! but, I never shall! no one ever will!

Hey-day! why should I blunt the point of my quill, with discussing *him*?—that is, individually—for of course, I shall have to frequently allude to the Reverend gentleman as he chances to be one of the puppets in the life drama I am about to record. \* \* \* Where did I leave off when I laid down my pen? Oh, yes, the Reverend Nathan Birdsey listened (as he always does) in grave amiable silence until Mister Leytown had quite concluded; and then said he, "I find it impossible to agree with you, my dear William, (as if my dear William cared a tuppence whether he was agreed with or not) for," said our Dominie, "while no writer can appreciate what value his work may come to have in after time, it is most probable, that if he lives long enough, the journal writer will turn back the pages he has written with satisfaction, as what he has set down can not fail to prove in after years an excellent reference book. Most of us," says he, "owing to some mental inaccuracy, forget whole chapters in our life story. Do you never

"Now, leaving self interest, let us for a moment consider our duty to to-morrow. Suppose we, each of us (gathered here to-night), in our own manner of expression, should set down in a book our opinions of the events of our daily lives.

"An humble and dull record say you! Dull for to-day, I grant you; but do you not realize what distinct and vivid pictures we are making for to-morrow? Mark you, the gossip of one hour, is the history of the next! Suppose, for example, each of us sitting about this table were to set down in our private journal such simple facts as our hours for rising and retiring, explain the manner in which this house was built, and then decorated; tell the cost of living, the number of servants, their duties,

should dwell upon the political opinions of this neighborhood, or descant upon our religious belief. Very dry topics, and petty details, you say. But be sure, in some after time, it all would take on a rich flavor, and become full of practical interest to mankind."

☉Mister Leytown laughed!

"A sermon a mid-week, Parson!" he said. And then he laid his small, thin, white hand (looking for all the world like a woman's with it's bejewelled fingers and showing out of his wrist ruffle of fine lace) upon Nathan Birdsey's shoulder.

"Not so" said the parson, coloring a bit, through the bronze of his skin, "I confine all my sermonizing to the pulpit upon Sabbath day, but this journal subject is one that interests me deeply, so much so that for many years I have tried each day to accomplish through its help two distinct purposes. First, to do for the future what the past has done for me, and second, by honestly jotting down my own feelings in regard to matters and things, to gain in time some insight into that great unknown called self. \* \* \* I suppose, if I am 'going to make history,' it is only fair that I should tell you (oh unknown, unborn to-morrow folk!) what we had for supper! There was a platter of cold chicken, garnished with 'pusley,' a 'sallit,' a fruit tart, and a silver jug full of new milk,—to pour into our porringer bowls,—and some crisp rolls."

Mister Leytown helped himself to some more of the chicken before he replied to the Dominie, and then he said: "So you not only preach but practice the study of self. To my thinking we are of

man's keeper, seeing that 'in the last day, when the trump shall sound, we shall all appear before the judgment seat of God and answer for the deeds done in the body whether they be good or evil.' So, I have come to speak with an unreserved freedom in the pages of my journal, and to all but me it shall be a sealed book while I live. But I hope that its words may be helpful to many others, when, having completed my earthly voyage, I shall cast anchor in the port of Heaven."

I wonder why I remember and have written down all this conversation in a fresh, goodly-sized book that I have purchased this day for the purpose?

Perhaps it is because, that, to a certain sense, I am quite alone in Sharon; am, as it were, a stranger in a strange land.

Or perhaps it is because I am one of the most contrary mortals that ever lived. Or it may be that, being my father's child, I am ambitious to be heard; if not to-day, why then, to-morrow; if not to-morrow, well, the day after that.

I agree about journals with Mister Leytown (charming, volatile Mister Leytown). I disagree entirely with Nathan Birdsey (tall, solemn Parson Birdsey), and yet, I have decided to keep a journal. I am going to put into it everything that really interests me, and I am going to say what I really think and feel, and it seems to me that it will be much more interesting to the people who are going to read it after I am dead and gone (and mayhap quite forgotten) if I tell them something about Dorothy Lee. Dorothy Lee is my name.