

Prologue.

The Ladies of Hanover.

1882.

*Essie Singmaster Lewis**May 12, 1932.*

Place: Home of Mrs. Susan Kroll.
 A parlor with a window and a door. There should be several pieces of handsome furniture and at least seven chairs, or a sofa and five chairs. A marble-topped table should occupy the center of the room. A mantel is desirable, draped with a very elaborate lambrequin - macramé cord, if possible, with fringe. It is the era of fancy-work and the more the better - tidies, cushions, etc. There may be a handsome kerosene lamp on the table.

Over the mantel should hang an old-fashioned engraving - Washington crossing the Delaware, or Garfield and his family. Or Lincoln and his family.

Occasional organ music or singing should indicate that the church is near-by.

Time: A very warm afternoon in early September.

Cast: Mrs. Susan Kroll, elderly and imposing. You should find some ancestral portrait in Hanover, of a pretty lady with a white fichu or lace collar or very conspicuous jewelry and make her up as much like this picture as possible. In the Epilogue she is long dead and this portrait takes the place of the engraving above the mantel. When Mrs. Kroll enters she carries an afghan which she is completing - the largest brightest one which can be found.

Mrs. Lucy Wildasin, elderly, very serious and dignified indeed almost grim. She wears an impressive bonnet and mitts and carries a parasol. In her large work-bag is a velvet lambrequin on which she is embroidering a border of golden-rod in chenille or French knots. These used to be quite common - if none can be found some other sort of lambrequin will do.

Mrs. Feiser, middle-aged, carries a work-bag in which is an enormous knitted bed-spread, or if this cannot be found, a very large pieced quilt with hundreds of patches in it.

Enter Mrs. Kroll.

(She carries her bright knitted afghan carefully folded, together with a box or bag of worsted, lays them down on the sofa or other convenient place, then turns back to the door and calls) Bertha, oh, Bertha! (There is no answer. She folds her hands and looks round the room.) Everything is changing, everything! When my mother was a young woman in the south, she rang a bell and servants came trooping. Now - Bertha, oh, Bertha!

Enter Bertha.

Hello! (She always speaks with the utmost cheerfulness and good-nature.) Here I am. Was fehlt?

Mrs. Kroll

(Pointing her long finger.) Look at the picture over the mantel, Bertha! It's crooked! And that mat! And unless I'm very much mistaken there's dust on the organ.

Bertha.

Three times to-day already I've dusted the organ. (She gets down on her hands and knees and straightens the rug. She rises and looks about.) And three times I straightened the pictures. It's the heavy teams.

Mrs. Kroll.

(As she speaks, Bertha lifts her gingham apron and measures from the mantel to one side of the picture, then from the mantel to the other side. She adjusts the picture about a quarter of an inch.) The dust is dreadful! We used to have a quiet street with little traffic. Living here was comfortable. I'm sure it's not comfortable now. Twenty wagons at least have gone past since morning. I don't know where the people go.

Bertha.

Ay, off.

Mrs. Kroll

They would much better stay at home. I'm expecting Mrs. Wildasin and Mrs. Feiser and Mrs. Gates and Mrs. Myers to sew. You may make some lemonade and cut marble cake and fruit cake. The fruit cake is perhaps a little rich.

Bertha.

Ach, old people need rich food! They can't live on pap! I guess Jennie won't get home in time to sew.

Mrs. Kroll.

You should say "Miss" Jennie, Bertha.

Mrs. Gates, Mrs. Wildasin's sister, younger than Mrs. Wildasin and very different. Breezy, hearty. She is old enough to be a grandmother. She carries a large fan.

Mrs. Myers, the minister's wife. About forty. Very attractive. Her work-bag is a market-basket. There is a lid on it, but a child's stocking hangs out over the edge.

Jennie Love, about twenty. Is Mrs. Kroll's niece and lives in the house. She teaches school. She is very graceful and pretty and friendly.

Ellen Myers, the minister's daughter, about sixteen, a quiet, earnest sort of girl.

Bertha, a stout young Pennsylvania German woman. The girl who takes this part should be able to drop into the Pennsylvania German accent. If she can, and wishes to, she may once or twice speak in Pennsylvania German instead of English. She should wear her hair parted and very smooth and plain. Her dress should be long, of blue chambray or gingham, buttoned down the front with long sleeves. She should wear two aprons, one white with elaborate cross-stitch or crocheted decorations, tied with a large bow; the other, worn over the first, an immaculate gingham apron. Neither should be a bib or bungalow apron.

Remember in working out these costumes that this is 1882.

Bertha.

Ach, I and Jennie were brought up together! I guess she'll get home in time to eat. I'll save her anyhow a good piece. (A bell sounds in the distance, not an electric bell but an old-fashioned pull-bell.)

Mrs. Kroll.

Take off your outside apron, Bertha.

Bertha.

(Obeying as she goes.) I near forgot. I'M coming!

Mrs. Kroll takes another look round the room. She seats herself, spreading out her skirts and folding her hands. Voices are heard in the hall.)

Mrs. Wildasin.

(In the hall.) Well, Bertha.

Mrs. Kroll

(Rising.) I'm very glad to see you Lucy. Spare your wraps.

Mrs. Wildasin.

(Hands her parasol to Bertha and removes her large and elegant bonnet.) It's very warm.

Bertha.

Spare your gloves, you'll catch your needle.

(Mrs. Wildasin takes off her gloves and gives them to Bertha and seats herself.)

Mrs. Kroll

And very dusty. It does seem to me that with all the inventing there is now-a-days some way ought to be found to lay the dust. (The bell rings.)

Mrs. Wildasin.

The door bell is ringing, Susan.

Mrs. Kroll.

Bertha will go.

Mrs. Wildasin.

I've noticed for some time that your hearing is n't quite what it once was.

Mrs. Kroll.

My hearing is perfectly good.

Enter Mrs. Feiser.

(She has some difficulty getting through the door with her large work-bag.) Well, well, here we are!

Mrs. Kroll.

Good afternoon, Mary, is n't it warm?

Mrs. Feiser.

It is outside. It's very nice here. You always keep your house cool, Sue.

Mrs. Kroll.

I keep it cool and I keep it dark. I have a great time with Jennie Love; she's always opening the shutters and lifting the shades while the sun is shining on them. I still tell her you can't keep a house cool and bright at the same time.

Mrs. Feiser.

You have right. I heard the music next door as I came by. It surely is nice to live so near the church. Then if you're sick, you can hear the singing.

Mrs. Wildasin.

(Unfolding her work.) The seasons are changing. The summers are growing warmer and the winters are growing colder. We're living in a different climate from the climate when I was young.

Mrs. Kroll.

Nothing is as it was when we were young. How are you getting on with your lambrequin?

Mrs. Wildasin.

Very well. I expect to finish it by Christmas. (~~Then I have the other to do.~~)

~~Mrs. Feiser.~~

~~It's hard on you, having two mantels in your parlor.)~~

Mrs. Kroll.

And how is your work getting on, Mary?

Mrs. Feiser.

(Taking her bed spread out of her bag.) Fairly well. I have it almost together, as you see. It's fourteen months today since I began it. When I heard that President Garfield had been assassinated I felt I must have something to occupy my mind. (She spreads the

enormous quilt open.) You see it will hang down well on all sides of my four-post bed. The question is who will value it. The young people are not as they once were, not as we were, they --

Mrs. Kroll.

I agree with you.

Mrs. Wildasin.

They ^{doubt} ~~do not~~ follow in the ways of the fathers. I heard to-day something dreadful. I don't know what fathers and mothers are coming to or what the world is thinking of.

Mrs. Feiser.

I know just what you mean. I heard it too. People don't feel any more that they must set an example. What I'd like to know is where does the money come from. I said to the Mister -

Mrs. Kroll.

What do you mean? What are you talking about?

Mrs. Feiser

(As she speaks the bell jangles.) Ellen Myers is going away to college.

Mrs. Kroll.

What! The minister's girl?

Mrs. Feiser.

The minister's girl. She's going to Boston.

Mrs. Kroll.

To Boston!

Mrs. Wildasin.

She's leaving her father and her mother and her brothers and sisters and going to Boston to enter a college for women. You know my sister, Georgie had those strange ideas long, long ago. She wanted to study Astronomy. Think of it, Astronomy! Think of the cold nights out under the stars! Think of the male companionship upon which she would have had to depend! This, of course, she had n't thought of. She was a good, modest girl, if she was foolish. A sort of innocent girl. My father settled her; he reminded her that she was made of Adam's rib. Fortunately along came Mr. Gates and that settled the Astronomy. *She* had ten children, and now she has eighteen, grandchildren. We never speak of the past, but I'm sure she has regrets that she ever thought of Astronomy. (The bell rings.) Your bell rings, Susan.

Mrs. Kroll.

Oh, does it? Georgie Gates is coming. And Mrs. Myers.
(Mrs. Wildasin and Mrs. Feiser press their finger-tips to their lips as though to blot out that which has been said. Mrs. Kroll lets her work slide to the floor and rises. At the same instant

Enter Mrs. Gates.

Mrs. Gates.

How do you do, everybody?

Mrs. Feiser.

Where's your sewing?

Mrs. Gates.

I'm not sewing. I'm tired of sewing. I've sewed enough in my lifetime to make a slip-cover for the world. If all my sewing were put together it would reach the moon. If you could fasten it you could ~~check~~^{climb} up on it.

Mrs. Wildasin.

There's no real sewing now. My aunt made herself a petticoat to wear over her hoops. It had twenty four quarter-inch tucks, all put in by hand and candle-light.

Mrs. Gates.

Yes, and the dear old lady died blind, if I remember.

Mrs. Feiser.

Have you heard the news? (The bell rings.)

Mrs. Gates.

What news?

Mrs. Kroll.

Hush! (She rises to welcome Mrs. Myers.)

Mrs. Myers.

Good afternoon, everybody. I'm afraid I'm the last. (~~I had a great many things to do.~~) The children have n't got into their regular school routine.

Mrs. Feiser.

I guess you're glad they're growing up.

Mrs. Myers.

(Sighing.) No, I'm not. I'd like to keep them all little, so that I could tuck them into bed at night and know where they are.

Mrs. Feiser.

(She speaks as though of something perfectly impossible.) Mrs. Myers, it is n't true that your sweet Ellen's going to leave you?

Mrs. Myers.

For a while. We can't give our children a great deal of money, or any money at all probably. But we can educate them. We've always intended that Ellen should be equipped to earn her living.

Mrs. Kroll.

Earn her living! Won't she get married?

Mrs. Myers.

Not necessarily. Not everyone does.

Mrs. Kroll.

But Ellen's such a pretty girl and such a nice girl. I think you could trust to her getting married.

Mrs. Myers.

(Shaking her head.) Not all pretty girls or all nice girls marry. What beautiful work you're doing! (She opens her basket and displays the great accumulation of socks and stockings.) Just see what I have!

Mrs. Wildasin.

(In a superior tone.) Don't you mend the stockings every week?

Mrs. Myers.

No, I don't. I have them for such times as this when I can sit down with my friends.

Mrs. Wildasin.

My grandmother taught me to mend and I'm an excellent mender. In my youth I had to darn knitted socks so that the mending was invisible.

Mrs. Myers.

(Wistfully) Do you like to mend?

Mrs. Wildasin.

Certainly I like to mend.

Voice at the window.

O - ho!

Mrs. Wildasin.

What's that? My nerves sometimes go back on me.

Mrs. Kroll.

It's Jennie Love. She does n't come home as early as this usually. (The front door slams.)

Mrs. Gates.

Come on in Jennie! We need a little youth and beauty.

Enter Jennie.

Good afternoon, everybody! How industrious you are!

Mrs. Kroll.

How do you happen to be home so early, Jennie?

Jennie Love.

One of the directors came and told all the teachers to dismiss the children because it was so very warm. It's hard for the little things to stay in school six hours at first. What beautiful work you're doing!

Mrs. Wildasin.

(Severely.) Have you no sewing, Jennie?

Jennie Love.

I make my clothes - that's all. Oh, Mrs. Myers, I heard the most wonderful thing about Ellen! Is it true?

Mrs. Myers.

Yes, it's true. My sister ~~is~~ helping us and Ellen's going to college.

Mrs. Wildasin.

Such a thing was never heard of in this part of the world!

Jennie Love.

Oh, how I wish I could go!

Mrs. Feiser.

You do!

Jennie Love.

I surely do! I could improve a hundred per cent as a teacher if I could just go one year.

Mrs. Wildasin.

Have you no expectation of marriage?

Jennie Love.

Hope, perhaps, but no expectation. I don't care. I love teaching little children.

Mrs. Gates.

I understand there's a movement on foot to give women the same pay for teaching as men.

Mrs. Wildasin.

I think that's a dreadful suggestion. ~~(It's contrary to nature.)~~
Man should be the oak, women should be the clinging vine.

Jennie Love.

But if we have n't any oaks how can we cling?

Mrs. Feiser.

What would women do with money if they had it?

Mrs. Gates.

They'd know what to do with it, you bet your life!

Mrs. Wildasin.

(Reprovingly.) Georgie!

Mrs. Gates.

That was awful! I hope you'll excuse me. That's the way my grandsons talk.

Jennie Love.

I know one thing I'd do with it. A new society is to be formed. I suppose Mrs. Myers has told you about it.

Mrs. Myers.

I had n't got round to it.

Mrs. Feiser.

They have enough societies. My Mister's out now three nights a week to Lodge.

Jennie.

I mean a woman's society.

Mrs. Wildasin.

If there's anything less desirable than a man's society it's a woman's society. A woman should be satisfied with her home and her church.

Jennie love.

But this is a church society.

Mrs. Feiser.

A church society for women?

Jennie Love.

For women.

Mrs. Kroll.

Sit down, Jennie, you make me nervous.

Jennie Love.

It's a society for women to be formed in the church. It's very exciting. It's a missionary society.

Mrs. Kroll.

Do you mean we're to be missionaries?

Jennie Love.

We're to help the missionaries.

Mrs. Feiser.

We do now. My mister subscribes five dollars a year to home missions. He is not for foreign missions. He says, and I hold with him, that you don't need to go outside our own country. There are enough heathen here. And we let in too many heathen. There was that man who assassinated the President. He ought never to have been let in.

Mrs. Kroll

How are we to help the missionaries more than we do now?

Jennie Love.

We're to form a society and hold meetings and give money and study about the mission fields.

Mrs. Kroll .

Here? In Hanover?

Mrs. Wildasin.

Women?

Jennie Love.

Yes, here in Hanover. And we women.

Mrs. Kroll.

I don't approve.

Mrs. Gates.

I do. I think it's grand. Next to Ellen Myers going to college it's the best news I've heard in a long time. It'll be something to do. Here I am - my children are grown up and most of them are gone, and I'm not ready to be laid on the shelf.

Mrs. Kroll.

You have your house?

Mrs. Gates.

Yes and I have my Sally and my Kate as you have your Bertha. There is n't anything in the world I need to do. When is the society to be formed? You can put my name down.

Mrs. Wildasin.

Why, Georgie! This is a new way for you to talk.

Mrs. Gates.

No, it is n't and you know it. When is the meeting, Jennie?

Jennie Love.

Next week. Why, it is n't a new thing, it's an old thing. There have been missionary societies for twenty years - Methodist and Baptist and Presbyterian and Episcopalian.

Mrs. Wildasin.

(With the utmost haughtiness.) We are Lutherans.

Jennie Love.

There are Lutheran societies too - there are two at Gettysburg and there are several at York and one at Shippensburg and - I'm sure we can do as well as Gettysburg!

Mrs. Feiser.

Our pastor will not allow it.

Mrs. Myers.

Oh, Mrs. Feiser he thinks it's a fine thing. He has great confidence in the ability of women. He's anxious to have the first convention here.

Mrs. Feiser.

Here? When?

Mrs. Myers.

This fall.

Mrs. Wildasin.

Our West Pennsylvania Synod will forbid the meeting.

Jennie Love.

The Synod is encouraging the forming of the Society. They have passed resolutions.

Mrs. Wildasin.

Then the General Synod will take a hand. It's dignified body. Its mature judgment will have to be the law.

Jennie Love.

But it has passed resolutions too, Mrs. Wildasin. They are anxious to have the society.

Mrs. Kroll.

Who would conduct these meetings? How would our busy pastors have time?

Mrs. Myers.

The women would conduct them.

Mrs. Kroll.

(Appalled.) You mean they'd speak in public?

Mrs. Feiser.

In church?

Mrs. Myers.

Why not?

Civil
Mrs. Gates.

Mary Feiser, do you remember the War?

Mrs. Feiser.

I should say I did!

Mrs. Gates.

Do you remember how you presided at meetings and begged for money for bandages?

Mrs. Feiser.

Yes, I do.

Mrs. Gates.

Well, then!

Mrs. Kroll.

(In awe) Are we to pray?

Mrs. Gates.

Don't you pray in prayer-meeting?

Mrs. Kroll.

Y-yes.

Mrs. Gates.

Well, then.

Mrs. Wildasin.

I hope that no unmarried young ministers from the Seminary at Gettysburg ~~would~~ ^{will} attend these meetings.

Mrs. Gates.

Why not?

Mrs. Wildasin.

And become the victims of female infatuation?

Mrs. Gates.

Where could a minister make a better choice of a wife than at a missionary gathering. Especially at a gathering of our Hanover young ladies. How about it, Jennie?

Mrs. Wildasin.

Sister, you are going too far!

Mrs. Feiser.

I'm afraid the women will lower themselves.

Jennie Love.

Lower themselves! Think of Florence Nightingale and Anna Dickinson and Mrs. Hutter and -

Mrs. Gates.

And Saint Elizabeth and Clara Barton and -

Mrs. Wildasin.

I am astonished at you, Sister!

Mrs. Gates.

Lots of things come back to me!

Mrs. Feiser.

Oh, I hope they won't wear bloomers. After the battle of Gettysburg Doctor Mary Walker came there wearing bloomers.

Oh, I hope -

There is a noise in the hall.

Enter Ellen Myers.

Still here? I thought I'd come and carry Mother's basket.

Mrs. Feiser.

Are you going away really Ellen?

Ellen Myers.

I'm going to be a doctor. I'd like to go to foreign lands.

Mrs. Feiser.

A doctor!

Mrs. Kroll.

Foreign lands!

Mrs. Waldasin.

(Folding her work.) Well, I do not approve of any of it. As for this missionary movement, the Presbyterians may give their approval and so may the Reformed and the Episcopalians and so may the General Synod of the Lutheran Church, but where is the woman who would so far forget her modesty as to become President of such a society?

Mrs. Gates.

I'd be president in a minute if I was smart enough.

Jennie Love.

You are smart enough, Mrs. Gates. I don't know a smarter woman.

Mrs. Kroll.

What is the matter, Lucy. You look faint!

Mrs. Wildasin.

I am faint. And I am going to return home. (She takes a smelling bottle from the depths of her bag.) I have been very much astonished this afternoon. And disturbed.

Mrs. Kroll.

Oh, Lucy, we all are astonished and disturbed.

Mrs. Wildasin.

James will be waiting. I can take you ladies home.

Mrs. Feiser.

(Rolling up her work.) That's fine!

Mrs. Gates.

That suits me.

Mrs. Myers.

I'll walk. It's just a step. Ellen will carry my basket. I've darned one whole pair of socks.

Mrs. Kroll.

(As they begin to depart.) Are you all right, Lucy?

Mrs. Wildasin.

I still feel oppressed.

Mrs. Gates.

What you need is fresh air and new ideas, Sister. Good bye, Sue. Next time you'll come to my house. Ellen, I wanted to be an astronomer.

Ellen Myers.

You did!

Jennie Love helps them with their bags and goes with them to the door. When she returns Mrs. Kroll is seated with her hands pressed to her eyes.

Mrs. Kroll.

Oh, Jennie, you spoiled my party!

Jennie.

How?

Mrs. Kroll

By talking about a society and starting so much that was unpleasant. I thought every minute you'd offer to be president.

Jennie Love.

I'd be president in a minute if they wanted me.

Mrs. Kroll.

You hold such advanced views, Jennie, but you should n't impose them on others.

Jennie Love.

I don't. I like to persuade others to hold them, but I don't impose them.

Mrs. Kroll.

You impose them on me! Do you think I'm going to let you go alone to such a meeting? When did you say it was to be?

Next week
~~late in this month.~~

Jennie Love.

Mrs. Kroll.

(Mrs. Kroll gathers up her work.) Not a single square have I done!

Jennie Love.

I wish I - (She turns her head toward the door. There is a rattling of glasses and Bertha enters, tray in hand. She looks wildly about.)

Bertha.

Where are the women?

Mrs. Kroll.

(Wailing!) Oh, Bertha, they went home! This is the first time in my life I ever let anybody go out of my house without offering refreshments. The fruit cake will keep, but who will eat the dried-out marble cake? And who will drink the lemonade?

Bertha.

What is wrong? Did it give a fire somewhere? Why did they all go?

Mrs. Kroll.

Oh, Bertha, they're going to have meetings and women are going to speak at them. Mrs. Wildasin felt faint and I never offered her even a drink of water.

Bertha.

(Setting down the heavy tray with a tremendous grunt.) I don't see why she should care. She'll be the first to speak, and the middle, and the last.

Jennie.

(Unable to suppress a hysterical giggle.) Bertha!

Mrs. Kroll.

You have n't the right spirit, Jennie.

Jennie Love.

I'm afraid I have n't. I'm ashamed. But I'm so anxious that the meeting should succeed. I'm too impulsive. I ought to be spanked. Sometimes I wish I could be spanked. I used to feel so good afterwards. Do forgive me, Auntie.

Mrs. Kroll.

I'll forgive you, Jennie. But you must n't go any farther with your ideas. First there will be this society, then another, then women will learn to make speeches and to argue and to down the men. Oh, Jennie, if the day should ever come when women should - oh, Jennie, never, never ask me to cast a vote!

Jennie Love.

That day will never come. I wish it would. But it never will. Oh, Aunt Sue, when Matthew Vassar saw the girls crowding to his college, he said, "God sometimes gives great thoughts to very little men." Perhaps that's the way with us and this society.

Mrs. Kroll.

I trust so. I'll go with you, Jennie, to take care of you. Oh, Bertha, a society is to be formed!

Bertha.

I know all about it. My Sunday School teacher, she told me. I'm going too.

Mrs. Kroll.

Oh, I'm afraid the world is coming to an end!

Curtain.

Epilogue.

After Fifty Years.

Hanover, 1932.

Place: The same room. The home of Mrs. Susan Kroll is now that of Miss Jennie Love. The furniture is pretty much the same. There should be electric lights instead of the kerosene lamp, or the room may be lighted by candles. It should be made as pretty as possible.

Over the mantel should hang the portrait which Mrs. Kroll was made up to represent in the prologue. Before it should stand a bowl of flowers.

On the center table, along with other books and magazines, should be copies of Lutheran Woman's Work and The Lutheran. On the mantel or table should be a Thank Offering Box.

Time: An evening in May. If it is possible there should be the sound of music from the church near by.

Cast: Jennie Love, now seventy years old. She sits in an arm-chair and is evidently an invalid. Round her shoulders is an ice-wool or other light shawl and over her knees is the afghan on which her aunt was working in the prologue.

Ellen Myers, also about seventy. She looks very different from Jennie, alert, well, still able for a great deal of work. *Her dress should be rather tailor-made.*

Bertha, also about seventy. She is dressed just as she was in the prologue, except that her aprons are different, in style or color, but they are still not bib or bungalow aprons, but the old-fashioned kind. She wears spectacles.

Two little girls, about ten.

One little boy. Stephen Bergstresser is the sort of boy I have in mind.

Also, as they are dressed for the convention, Mrs. Menges, Mrs. Hoover, Mrs. Culler, Mrs. Falkenstein and Mrs. Mullen.

~~Miss Jennie is seated in an arm-chair. Round her shoulder is a white knitted shawl, beneath her feet is a foot-stool, across her lap is the gay afghan knitted by Mrs. Kroll.~~

3.

Bertha.

Are you all right?

Jennie Love.

Yes, indeed!

Bertha.

(Looking about) I don't like to look with my own eyes when it is company about. I look with her eyes. (She looks up at the portrait.) My, she was the exact woman! I guess you don't remember how they used to come to make fancy work and everything. My everything had to be just so!

Jennie Love.

Of course I remember - everything! I even remember all the lemonade I drank ^{when} ~~then~~ -

Bertha.

When I forgot my mind! That was a day! (She lifts the corner of her apron and measures the distance from the mantel to the picture.)

Jennie Love

You need n't be so particular this evening, Bertha. It will be late when Doctor Myers comes in from the meeting and she won't be critical.

Bertha.

My, you never would know she was forty years in heathen lands! She looks healthy and she 's just as nice and common like always. She kissed me like I was her sister. My, I wish you could of gone to the meeting! Fifty years since they first came in peach preserving time and it was so hot. But I was there! It spites me that you can't go. Lots would of carried you and glad to do it.

Jennie Love.

I would n't like to be carried. There are too many people over there.

Bertha.

I never saw so many in church.

Jennie Love.

And there are too many strangers. To-morrow we'll hear all about it. Do sit down, Bertha!

never know
him
but

Bertha.

(Sitting on the edge of a chair.) I have it so in my nerves.
(Frequently she looks toward the door, or cocks her ear in that direction.) My, if all the people could come back! There was Dr. Day - I thought he was a grand man. And Mr. Rowe. I have a picture of ~~Mr. Rowe~~ with a little girl on each hand and the snow falling on them. *him*

Jennie Love.

(Dreamily.) The name of one was Evangeline. I can't remember the other. Did you save that picture all these years, Bertha?

Bertha.

Sure! It often wondered me how they could take a picture in heathen lands with snow. (She rearranges the magazines on the table.)

Jennie Love.

It was taken here, in America.

Bertha.

Of course! By and by I thought that out. And I guess the snow was paper snow. And I have a picture of the famine people. I paid a quarter for it. Such bones!

Jennie Love.

Poor things! Do sit down, Bertha.

Bertha.

I will. I tell you I done my duty! I never missed nothing. That I can say when I get to Heaven. I paid my dues to the General Fund and the Synodical Fee and the Biannual Fee and the Fortieth Anniversary Chest and the Specials and the Contingent Fund. Of all the Specials I liked the E. V. Day Memorial best, because I was acquainted with Dr. Day. He was twice by us. He said to me, "Bersa," he said. "My, but those waffles touch the spot!" I told you that many times already, I guess. (As she speaks she looks toward the hall.)

Jennie Love.

I like to hear it. What do you see in the hall, Bertha?

Bertha.

Nothing at all. I liked him and I liked them all that ever stayed with us from the first on. Was n't Miss Doctor Kugler a grand lady? She brought me a bracelet from heathen lands. I guess I ought to put it on for the Fiftieth Anniversary. (She laughs.) But I could n't get it on. Unless I hung it on a string round my neck!

Jennie Love.

I hear them singing!

Bertha.

It wonders me that Greenland's icy mountains ain't worn out. But it's a wonderful piece.

grand

Jennie Love.

To-morrow they'll come in and tell me all about the meeting. They'll have wonderful things to report. Doctor Ellen will be home after while, but I suppose it will be very late. There will be so much for them to talk about. I suppose, Bertha, I ought to go to bed.

Bertha.

Ach, I'd sit a little yet! (She cocks her head.) Your Aunt Susie, she liked them all, every one. She did n't like it if they stayed elsewhere. Mrs. Wildasin and she once near fell out which should have Miss Jessie Brewer.

Jennie Love.

(Laughing.) I had forgotten. Who got her?

Bertha.

(With triumph.) We got her! The others had to take the natives.

Jennie love.

The natives?

Bertha .

Yes. (In a superior tone.) The Presidents and the Vice-Presidents and the Recordings and the Correspondings and the Treasurers and like that. We always had the foreigners like Dr Day and ~~Mr. Rowe~~ and Dr. Kugler and Miss Ellen Myers. We could talk to them. We knew here what was what.

(Bertha almost loses her balance in an effort to look out into the hall.)

Jennie Love.

Surely the meeting must be over! I thought surely Ellen^t would come home and tell me about everything!

Bertha.

They're talking. They're great talkers.

Jennie Love.

(Wistfully.) Yes.

Bertha.

But none like Mrs. Wildasin. My, when she was president, it was a long meeting! And I guess they're adding up their money.

Jennie Love.

To-morrow seems a long time to wait. I think I'll go now,
Bertha. ^{to bed}
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Bertha.

(Sitting back in her chair and folding her hands, as though to make no move to help Miss Jennie.) ~~When you're asleep it doesn't seem long. It's the fourth time the convention met by us.~~ ^{When you're asleep it doesn't seem long. It's the fourth time the convention met by us.}

Jennie Love.

Come, Bertha. (Bertha does not move.) Fifty years - what a long time! Everything's very quiet. I suppose everybody's gone home. I'd like to go to bed. It's not that I'm so tired, but I'm a little depressed. (She slides forward in her chair as if to rise.) Come, Bertha.

Bertha.

Ach, it's not so late!

Jennie Love.

It's late enough to go to bed.

Bertha.

Perhaps you ought n't to go till Dr. Ellen Myers comes. She might think it strange since she is our company. She -

Jennie Love.

Why, no, she would n't think it strange! If anybody understands that a rheumatic old lady ought to be in bed early, it's Ellen.

Bertha.

(Rising.) I thought I heard a noise.

Jennie Love.

It's an automobile or the clock striking ten. Or is it eleven?

Bertha.

(Looking round in a desperate way.) You're sure you would n't like to read a little?

Jennie Love.

Surely not!

Bertha.

Or would you like a little supper. I could make you a little tea or toast or -

Jennie Love.

At this hour? Why, Bertha!

Bertha.

(Going to the table.) Here's Lutheran Woman's Work. I - (Bertha interrupts herself and hurries out to the hall. She is heard talking in a loud voice.) Come in, ladies. Welcome to everybody. I had my own time this last half hour, I can tell you! Walk in, Mrs. Menges. Walk in Mrs. Mullen. Walk in all. (Bertha is here in her element.)

Enter Mrs. Menges, Mrs. Hoover, Mrs. Culler, Mrs. Falkenstein, Mrs. Mullen.

Mrs. Menges.

Good evening, Miss Jennie.

Mrs. Mullen.

Here we are, Miss Jennie, all the Executive Committee. This is our real Fiftieth Anniversary.

Jennie Love.

Oh, I'm so glad to see you! I was feeling a little cast down. I thought nobody was coming. Was n't it foolish? Where's Ellen?

Mrs. Menges.

She's on the way.

Bertha.

Take place everybody. Here, Mrs. Menges. Here Mrs. Culler, Here Mrs. Falkenstein. Here - (to Mrs. Hoover) - ach, I can't call your name!

Mrs. Hoover.

Mrs. Hoover.

Bertha.

Ach, to be sure. He preached often for us.

Mrs. Menges.

Miss Jennie, does it seem a long time?

Jennie Love.

No.

mon bon
We have seven thousand members.

Mrs. Menges.

Jennie Love.

Seven thousand!

Mrs. Mullen.

And we've collected, counting everything, not far from ~~½~~ half a million dollars.

Jennie Love.

* Half a million dollars!

Mrs. Hoover.

(Looking back)
And this was the room in which you made plans for the first convention?

Jennie Love.

Right here. Up there is the portrait of my aunt. She was one of the most active members. She would never let any missionary stay anywhere else.

Bertha.

(Who has been standing listening.) You bet we would n't!
And Mrs. Cronk we had always by us. (Exit Bertha.)

Jennie Love.

The room was just as it is now. We had other wonderful ^wmembers - Mrs. Wildasin and Mrs. Gates were sisters; it would be hard to tell which did the most. And Mrs. Myers, our pastor's wife - where is our Ellen?

Ellen enters.

(Her arms are filled with flowers.) They said I should bring the flowers, Jennie. *They come from the Woman's Society and the young Woman's Society.*

Jennie Love.

For me?

Ellen Myers.

We've heard figures until our heads are whirling. And such compliments for you, Jennie! You are the society; the society is you.

Jennie Love.

Oh, Ellen!

Ellen Myers.

Where is Bertha to take these flowers? Bertha is usually to the fore. I'll call her. (She turns toward the door.) Why what have we here? (There is a sound of giggling.) Here are some children to see Miss Jennie Love.

Jennie Love.

At this hour!

Enter two little girls and a little boy. The little boy carries a large basket of flowers.)

Mrs. Menges.

What does this mean?

Little girl.

(To little boy) You hold that straight! Ready.

Children in concert.

We represent the Light Brigade. We present you with these flowers because we love you.

Little girl.

(Nudging little boy) Give it to her.

Little boy.

Give me time! (He hands the basket over.)

Children in concert.

And because you taught our fathers and mothers ^{and us} in Sunday School.

Jennie Love.

Oh, thank you all!

Little boy.

And you once made me stand in the corner.

Little girl.

That was n't part of it!

Little boy.

Oh, look!

(Bertha has come to the door carrying a large tray, with the same glasses, the same pitcher, the same red-bordered napkins. Everyone turns and looks at her.)

Bertha.

Once I got left, but now I'm here on time. I had an awful time to keep her up.

Little boy.

I ought to drink a great deal because I'm going to be a missionary.

Jennie Love.

I've heard many good things but that's best of all!

(Bertha pours the lemonade, Mrs. Falkenstein and Mrs. Hoover pass it round.)

Mrs. Hoover.

Miss Jennie first!

(All turn and look at Jennie, some with napkins or glasses in their hands. Some are moving and they stop short.)

Miss Jennie.

(Leaning forward.) Almost everything in life brings joy and sorrow mixed. I've loved my school, but sometimes work was hard and sometimes it was disappointing. But in my church I found nothing disappointing.

Mrs. Hoover.

You've been working in the society for fifty years?

Jennie Love.

Yes, and the fifty years seem like a happy dream.

Curtain.