

AN OPEN LETTER.

Grand Lake Range, Queen's County, N. B.

March 10th, 1893.

THE GRODER DYSPESIA CURE CO., Ltd.

GENTLEMEN:

I am 72 years of age and have had Dyspepsia for several years. I have employed numerous physicians and taken many patent medicines, but all were of no use in my case. I began to grow worse. There was severe distress in my stomach; everything I ate, even the lightest food caused me intense agony. My appetite was poor and I could not sleep. I was almost without hope when I saw a testimonial in the newspaper stating what Groder's Syrup had done for others. As a last effort to regain health, I thought that I would buy it. Just before Christmas last my son Fred went to St. John and brought me home a bottle of your remedy. I used with the following results:

I eat as I wish and have no distress from my food; my appetite is first-class, my food suits me now. I sleep as sound as a child, I do all my own work without the aid of a servant and can do a day's washing without feeling much tired whereas I could not do it at all before taking Groder's. I do feel grateful to you, gentlemen, for placing so valuable a remedy upon the market. I give all the credit for present state of good health to your medicine.

I am willing to answer any questions concerning the above, for I firmly believe your remedy will cure other sufferers as it has cured me, I conscientiously make this statement without any inducement or reward knowing it to be one of the best medicines in the market for Dyspepsia.

Respectfully yours,

ELEANOR BURKE

MRS. MARSH'S XMAS PARTY

Mrs. Marsh sat at the old red secretary that had been her great-grandfather's, writing names on two slips of paper in a stiff, angular hand.

She was a good-looking old woman, with no little force of character indicated in her firm chin, her dark and still lustrous eyes, and tightly compressed lips. The day was cold but bright and sunny and Christmas was near at hand.

It had snowed the night before, a light feathery snow, and it still clung to the leafless branches of every tree and shrub hiding their bareness and blackness, and making them wondrously beautiful.

Old Mrs. Marsh was a woman who thought little about the beauties of nature and she never gushed about anything, but when Jane Day her one servant came into the room to ask if she should smash or just bite the potatoes for dinner, Mrs. Marsh had said:

The trees look beautiful to-day, don't they, Jane?

They do, ma'am for a fact, replied Jane. It must look like Paradise over yonder in the woods.

Paradise Jane? I hope there isn't going to be any snow in Paradise. I'm chilly all the time in winter, Where's Letty?

Letty came into the room at that moment. She was a slender, pretty young girl of eighteen, with a delicate pink and white complexion, and eyes like her grandmother's but larger and more velvety.

They had never yet sparkled with the wrath that sometimes made the old lady's eyes what Jane Day called 'killin' black.' It had been a long time since Letty had seen her grandmother seated at the old secretary, for her grandmother had given nearly all of her correspondence to Letty herself.

Therefore Letty said, in some surprise: Writing letters, grandmother?

No! I'm not. Then she laid down her pen and said:

I'm making out a list of persons I want to send some invitations to.

Invitations? I said invitations.

The old lady spoke sharply and her voice had a note of irritation as she said: I'm going to have a party Christmas evening and invite my friends.

She accented the last word strangely, and her still strong and firm voice grew harsh as she added: Yes Letty Marsh I'm going to let some folks in and around Derby know just what I think of 'em. I'll let 'em know that their room's better'n their company at my house and that I don't want anything to do with 'em.

Why grandma?

The old lady went on harshly. There's folks here in Derby that's told stories about me and done all they could to injure and spite me in all sorts of belittlin' ways. I know 'em through and through, and I'll let 'em know that I know 'em too! I'll give 'em something to talk about!

The old lady's faded cheeks had grown rosy, and her black eyes were sparkling behind her spectacles, and she had patted the floor steadily and angrily with one of her small, slipped feet.

Letty stared in silence. She had not seen her grandmother so worked up for a long time.

I've been all the morning making out a list of the names of them I'm going to

invite as well as a list of those I'm not going to invite; and—Letty!

Mrs. Marsh looked sharply at the girl over the top of her glasses.

Well, grandma?

I haven't invited George Parks, and I don't intend inviting him.

Letty's face crimsoned, and she did not look at her grandmother.

No, I suppose not, she said.

No, I haven't, said Mrs. Marsh; it'll be just as good a way as any, of letting him know that I'm not going to have him hanging around you so much. I never did think much of that 'arks family.

She turned to her desk and put the cork in her ink bottle wiped her pen carefully on a bit of chambray skin, and put her writing materials away carefully doing everything in a neat, precise way.

I wish, she said to Letty, who had sat down in a big chair-covered rocking chair, and was pretending to read a paper she had taken up, I wish you'd go into the village after dinner and see if Netty Lake can come to-morrow and write out and address these invitations for me. You write a very neat hand, but Netty does all sorts of fancy writing.

I've heard she's taken to writing cards and invitations and things of that kind to help support herself since her father died. She's a nice girl, and it'll help her along a little and give her a little more spending money for Christmas if I hire her to do this writing for me.

Netty Lake came out to the Marsh house the next morning. She was a bright, tidy-looking young woman, still wearing mourning for her parents, who had left her quite alone in the world and partly dependent on her own exertions or her support.

Letty had gone into Derby to spend the day with one of her girl friends. Letty had been an orphan for years, and had always lived with her Grandmother Marsh.

Now I'll tell you just what I want you to do Netty. I am going to have a Christmas party, and I want you to write the invitations for it, and make 'em just as neat and elegant as you can. You'll find everything you want right there in the secretary. Write one for yourself too Netty.

Oh, thank you, Mrs. Marsh, I'll write mine first for practice, and then show it to you to see if the form suits you.

Very well; that's a good idea. You'll find a list of the names of the persons to be invited on a slip of blue paper in the box of writing.

I must go now and see to my mince-meat. I prefer to make my own. Then it's done to suit me.

She went out into her exquisitely tidy kitchen, and Netty sat down before the old red secretary and wrote a well-worded and neat invitation in a clear, round hand. Then she took it out to the kitchen and read it to Mrs. Marsh.

That'll do very well, the old lady said approvingly. I'm not used to giving parties, and I don't know just what the latest wrinkle in invitations is, but I'm very well pleased with that. You found the list of names?

Yes, I have it.

Then you may go ahead and write the invitations, and if it wouldn't be too much trouble, I'll have you take 'em into Derby with you and mail 'em for me. They ought to have been sent out before, but I never thought of giving this party until yesterday.

No trouble at all. I'll be very glad to mail them for you.

They were all written, sealed, stamped, and tied up in a neat package before noon.

But you ain't going home before dinner Netty? Mrs. Marsh said, when Netty asked for her hat and cloak.

Yes, I must. I have some copying to do for Squire Padgett, and I told him I'd call for it before noon, if I could. I'll mail the invitations on my way to his office, and I'll be sure to come myself. I know we'll have a lovely time. It's very kind of you to go to so much trouble for the pleasure of others, although, of course, it will be a pleasure to you to have your friends around you.

Yes, said Mrs. Marsh, in an abstracted manner; yes, that's so, Netty, and then she added, a little defiantly, but I'm giving this party on purpose to spite certain persons. I know it ain't the right spirit but I can't help it. I've stood a good deal from some that ain't never had no call to abuse me, and I can see right through the hypocrisy of others who pretend to be my friends.

Preparations for the party went actively on, but Letty took little part in them, and it was evident that she had small interest in the event.

She would have looked forward to it with such eagerness and would have been so happy in helping to arrange and plan everything if George Parks had been invited.

He had known Letty all his life, and he was very fond of her, and she had lately come to realize that George was dearer to her than anyone else in the world.

Mrs. Marsh was a warm and true friend to those who basked in the sunshine of her friendship, and she felt her heart glowing with affection for these old and favored friends as she dressed in her best silk and laces to receive them on this Christmas night.

Her house was aglow with warmth and light. The rooms were tastefully decorated with plants and holly and Christmas wreaths.

She had met with no disappointment in her cakes, rolls or salads. All had gone well,

She thought of the pleasure her friends would find in the preparations she had made for their entertainment, and she wished that the uninvited might have a peep into her dining room and thus have a fuller appreciation of what they had missed because of their antagonism to her.

Thoughts of these unbidden persons were uppermost in Mrs. Marsh's mind as she dressed to receive her guests.

She had been too busy all day to think much about anything but her household duties, and there had been little of the Christmas spirit in her activity.

She had planned to give herself a half-hour or more of quiet rest in her room before the guests should arrive.

In this half hour something of the true Christmas spirit came into the heart of Mrs. Marsh.

She had gone to a window on her room, and was looking out into the Christmas night, as fair and peaceful a night as it must have been all those centuries ago when the shepherds watching their flocks, saw that bright star in the east, that herald of peace on earth and good will toward men. As she looked at the Christmas stars and out over the snow-covered fields toward the town, she could see lights twinkling in the homes of the persons she had wilfully offended and put a slight upon. She could see between her house and the village the humble home of Esther Parks.

A home in which she had once been a welcome guest, she thought suddenly of that quarrel between them. It had been, after all, for a trifling cause, and Mrs. Marsh remembered suddenly how they had been girls together. They were old women now, with little time left to make their peace with each other and with God.

And there was old Mrs. Lewis. She remembered now how she had come and stayed with her when Letty's father was born, and they had been such dear friends then.

So many forgotten deeds of kindness were suddenly remembered; so many dead memories were suddenly quickened into life.

A party of young people went by in a sleigh. They were singing an old Christmas carol. Their voices rang out clearly and setly on the frosty air. The old woman at the window heard them distinctly as they sang:

"Now to the Lord sing praises,
All you within this place,
And with true love and brotherhood
Each other now embrace;
The holy tide of Christmas
All others doth efface."

"Glad tidings glad tidings,
For all that are astray,
For Jesus Christ, our Saviour,
Was born on Christmas

She stood at the window several minutes after the singers had gone on down the road; when turned and walked across the room with traces of tears on her face.

I oughtn't to have done it, she said to herself in keen self reproach. I oughtn't to have done such a thing right at Christmas time. It's no time to feel malice. I'd ought to have charity then, if at no other time.

There hasn't been a bit of the holy tide of Christmas in my heart, and there oughtn't to be anything else in the heart of an old woman like me.

I've been hard and bitter toward my enemies always; I ain't known what charity was; I'm a wicked old woman. Poor old Esther Parks, and Lucinda Drake and Hannah Deane, and all the others I've tried to spite will feel that—

The door bell rang sharply, and Mrs. Marsh hurriedly wiped her eyes and went down stairs to welcome her first guests. The rustling of her handsome silk sounded hateful to her, and the Christmas decorations seemed a sort of mockery.

Two persons were standing in the hall below—a young man and an old woman. The old woman was struggling with a woollen muffler wrapped around her bonnet, for the night was very cool. She came forward eagerly, but with a feeble gait, when she saw Mrs. Marsh.

Oh Lucy! she said with outstretched arms.

Why Esther! Esther Parks! cried Mrs. Marsh and her hands clasped those of the other old woman, and their arms went around each other's necks.

I made George fetch me early a-purpose, so I could see you a minute or two before the others came, said old Mrs. Parks brokenly. I was so 'fraid I couldn't come; my rheumatism has been real bad this winter, and I've coughed a good deal but I've saved up my strength and George fetched me in a sleigh. I was bound to come the minute I got your invitation, and—

My invitation, Esther?

Yes Lucy; and I never in all the days of my life was so glad to get anything. You don't know how much I've wanted to make up, and I nearly cried my two eyes out over that invitation. I'd come over right then and see you, only I wanted to save up for to-night, and—

The door bell rang again, and the next minute Mrs. Marsh was saying:

Why Hannah Deane!

Did you think I wouldn't come? cried Mrs. Deane, excitedly, and in a high voice suggestive of tears. Nothing could have kept me away. I've kept away from you too long how Lucy. My husband's with me. He's out blanketing the horses; but I couldn't wait another instant to see you, and tell you how I cried over that blessed invitation of yours.

It made me so sorry for all the petty hateful past, and I wouldn't have missed coming to-night for—here's Mr. and Mrs. Drake, Lucy.

Lucinda Drake! said Mrs. Marsh. O Lucy! and Mrs. Drake could say no more but silently put her arms around Mrs. Marsh and they kissed each other with streaming eyes.

A second shrill, high-pitched old voice suddenly cried out gleefully—

Well I've come, Lucy Marsh! Here I

be, and it's the first time I've been out at night for five years. But I said the minute I got my invite, that I was a-comin', for you'd come more'n half way in asking me to come and I was bound to come the other half and here I be.

I—I am, so glad to see you, Abbe Lyman.

Oh I knowed you wanted me to come, or you wouldn't have ast me. There never was any two-facedness about you Lucy an' I'm going to say right here 'fore everybody that I was a deal the most to blame in that old trouble betwix us.

Oh no, no, said Mrs. Marsh, quickly; it was my fault 'till. But we won't say anything more about it.

But I don't hold any spite, Lucy.

No! I Abbe—not a bit. It's Christmas time you know.

The arrivals followed each other in quick succession.

Mrs. Marsh was too dazed to try to fathom the mystery of it all until Netty Lake came and then she drew her aside to say: Netty, Netty there's been a mistake of some sort. I didn't invite one of these persons here.

Why, Mrs. Marsh!

I didn't Netty. Don't you remember I told you that I was going to have the party to—spite certain ones? Well these are the people I intended s'iting. I can't make it out.

Well Mrs. Marsh I wrote the invitations and sent them to the persons whose names I found on the slip of paper in the box of paper in the secretary and—

Just wait a minute, and Mrs. Marsh hastily left the room. Netty heard her open the secretary and in a moment she came back.

Netty Lake I gave you the wrong list of names, and I destroyed the right one.

Why Mrs. Marsh! Netty looked frightened.

But Netty as it's turned out, I really gave you the right list and burned the one I ought to have burned.

It's all right. Don't you worry. I'll explain matters to these who'll think they've been slighted, and I can have another party or something. I'm so glad it's turned out as it has. Just look at my Letty and George Parks sitting over in that corner? Did you ever see two happier looking youngsters? He is a fine manly-looking young fellow isn't he?

I s'pise I'll have to give a wedding party some of these days.

Don't you ever breathe to anyone that I didn't invite these people here. I'm a thousand times happier than I'd been if the others had come instead.

Here come old Ester Parks and Hannah Deane. I'm going to take them out into the dining-room and show them how nice the table looks, and get them a cup of coffee in advance. Esther always used to say that my coffee was coffee.

At midnight Mrs. Marsh again stood at a window, looking out into the Christmas night.

The kindly good-by's of her guests still sounded pleasantly in her ears.

Her heart was full because of the tender words they had said at parting.

By her side, on a table, were the little gifts some of them had brought her—good will gifts and offerings of peace. All the old enemies were dead, the old enemies forgiven.

The sleight load of young people who had passed the house early in the evening now went by on their homeward way, and Mrs. Marsh lips moved with an unspoken "Amen" as they sang:

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And to the earth be peace;
Good-will henceforth from heaven to men
Begin and never cease."

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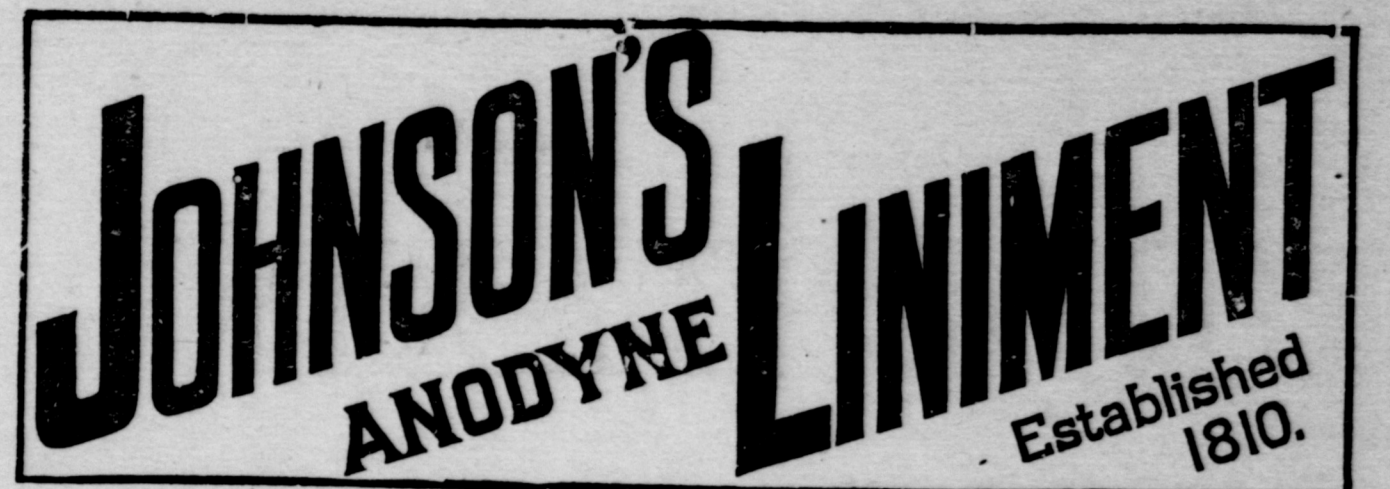
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