

**A SPINSTER'S LEAFLETS: WHEREIN
IS WRITTEN THE HISTORY OF HER
"DOORSTEP BABY" A FANCY
WHICH IN TIME BECAME A FACT
AND CHANGED A LIFE**

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A Spinster's Leaflets: Wherein Is Written the History of Her "Doorstep Baby" a Fancy Which in Time Became a Fact and Changed a Life by Alyn Yates Keith

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BY

ALYN YATES KEITH, *novelist*

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A SEUNSTON'S LEAFLETS

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ELECTROTYPE BY C. J. PETERS & SON

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TO
ONE WHOM THE OLD HOUSE
SHELTERED

THESE LEAFLETS ARE REPRINTED THROUGH THE COURTESY OF THE
NEW YORK EVENING POST
IN WHOSE COLUMNS THEY FIRST APPEARED

A SPINSTER'S LEAFLETS

I

My neighbors will tell you if you inquire of them, and possibly if you do not, that I live quite alone, which is not

Primarily I have my house, which is to me what the shell is to the turtle. It is a very old shell—



strictly true. I speak of it with respect as the Century House, which is not literally true without the preface of a plus sign. Its roof is mossy, and the shingles that protect its sides curl and fringe raggedly at the edges. I have seen the shell of a turtle bend along the thin margin when exposed too long to wet weather.



But if the house is not young neither am I, and we fit each other without a wrinkle.

The sun looks in at my kitchen-porch punctually every morning, without discredit to the almanac over the mantel, and hangs on the horizon with raised eyebrows for a last look at my bedroom window, where the morning-glories make a summer show that it would be hard to surpass. My sitting-room, lifted one step above the kitchen, like a sort of higher life, holds my fireplace, my cat, my corner cupboard, and my books. I name my fireplace first, because fire is to me a symbol of all life. When I draw the curtain of an autumn evening and light my fire, my world is at once peopled.

My cat is a link between the past that lives vigorously in my thoughts and the realm of books wherein the physical life is often lower than the spiritual. My books belong to the world of fancy, of faith, and of hope. But my cats are present realities — for they are in the plural though I named but one — that keep me close to the life of Nature who clothes her children according to her unadulterated taste. Mine are yellow, with a vigorous hue that suggests autumn in its prime. People who admire safrano roses have a way of cavilling at yellow cats, as in the last generation it was the custom to raise frivolous objections to red hair.

My cats are named Kittery and Cattery. The first was suggested by Joe, the little man who brings my daily half-pint of milk. He has just begun school, and geographical names take possession of him. Following

his suggestion I named the mother cat. She was simply That Cat before Joe's day; that is, the day of my obligation to him. She is the progenitress of many families, now scattered; a cat fond of her ease, of her will, and of mice caught for her in traps.

Once I tried to lose her, and hired Joe to carry her five miles away in the milk-wagon, and drop her near a good barn where she could make a living if she would. But she was back before him, with such a look of forgiveness on her hungry face that I took her in and went without milk in my tea. Three weeks afterwards Kittery was my abundant reward. She was a triplet; the others I do not speak of.

Kittery is another kind of cat. She is not only a fine mouser, but she can pounce upon a rat and kill it quicker than an authorized terrier; and she goes out at night, like a nineteenth-century Donna Quixote, to right the wrongs of the neighbors and mount guard over their corn-bins. In the morning, when her watch and ward are over, she comes and taps three times on my window, and I rise and take her in for a nap on the warm foot of my bed, at a little personal inconvenience. It is but a small reward for her scientific services, and a cheap way of showing regard for my townsfolk. I have known scores of human beings who were less neighborly and infinitely less interesting as individuals than she.