

DALLY

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Dally by Maria Louise Pool

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MARIA LOUISE POOL

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BY

MARIA LOUISE POOL

AUTHOR OF "TENTING AT STONY BEACH"



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DALLY

I

THE WIDDER 'BIJAH'S GUEST

WHEN people wished to speak of Mrs. Abijah Jacobs in a way that was at once descriptive and polite, they called her a "widow lady." It was universally felt that the term widow by itself did not sufficiently indicate that the bereaved object was an individual of the human species, and of the female sex. There were some who allowed themselves to say "widow woman," but these were careless in their speech, and not to be considered on this occasion.

In common, everyday talk, however, Mrs. Jacobs was always mentioned as the "Widder 'Bijah," to distinguish her from two other women who had married men by the name

of Jacobs in Ransom, and from whom Providence had wrested their partners.

The Widder 'Bijah was fat and thrifty, and had a shrewd cast to her right eye which gave her an appearance of winking sometimes when she would not have winked for all the world. It was by reason of the appearance of this eye that Mr. H. F. Turner, proprietor of the one store at Ransom, a widower—I am tempted to say a widower gentleman—was impressed with the ineradicable conviction that Mrs. Jacobs encouraged him even at the very funeral of Abijah, on which occasion he acted as one of the bearers. It is probable that nothing will ever convince him that he was not winked at at that time. It is true that when he called, on the strength of that look, a week or two later, the coldness of his reception was not favorable to the belief he had formed. Mrs. Jacobs was hardly civil, and she persevered in that manner on all the occasions when she was obliged to go to his store. Notwithstanding all this, though Mr. Turner did not again call, with true masculine self-appreciation he always had a firm belief that Mrs. Jacobs really was fond of him, but that for some reason she

had made up her mind not to yield to that fondness, and when this woman had made up her mind, all who knew her said "it wa'n't no use." So H. F. Turner turned his thoughts towards some one else who, though a good housekeeper, had not so much of this world's goods.

In the year following the death of Mr. Jacobs his relict had several opportunities to marry again. It appeared to be understood in the neighborhood that the time to console a widow was when she was mourning; it was not wise to wait till she began to "perk up of her own self."

But Mrs. Jacobs refused all offers of consolation. She said she could take care of herself, and she could take care of her farm, and she guessed somebody else would suit better.

She went to every service which was held in the Congregational Church at Ransom. She was always present at the Tuesday evening prayer-meeting, at every "preparatory lecture," at the Sunday-school, even at the choir-meetings, where she sat and heard the sopranos try to toss their voices entirely out of reach of the bass and alto singers. She

invariably contributed ten cents to everything. She bought a ticket every time there was an "apron-party" or a "necktie-party" in the vestry, such entertainments being of frequent necessity in order to eke out the minister's salary. But she never went to those parties. She said she would rather "set 'n' toast her feet to home." So she gave her ticket to some young person to whom it was a treat to see and hear three or four "fellers and girls" speak a dialogue which they had imperfectly learned, and where they were sure to giggle in the wrong place.

She was one who said she was "bound to do good if it killed her." She would allow paupers from the almshouse, who were "longing for a change," to come to her house and make long visits. What she endured with some of them she never told any one. The utmost she was ever heard to say on the subject was after a particularly trying visitation, when she remarked that she had made up her mind that "there was generally a reason why folks come on to the town; it wa'n't all misfortune; there was some deviltry mixed up with it."

Thus it was natural enough that Mrs. Lander, who lived in New York, and who board-