

## What I Heard the East Room Say.

Dear ! dear ! How fine I look all polished up with japoleac and waxine, and my brass knobs and buttons all polished. These new ideas go a long way ahead of what the first people used who took care of me.

I wonder if I have met with my last change. I hope so, for I never looked so fine as I do now by this pleasant fire light. I feel very proud of myself and the women who have fixed me up seem very well satisfied with what they have done. Tonight they have lighted a fire on the hearth and are sitting around the fire picking over Mayflowers. There are four of them, - Flora, Tavia, Charlotte and Edith.

It has been a good many years since those andirons had a fire on them. Polly Brewster used them last in the kitchen, it must be pretty near a hundred years ago. They have got the spit across them, too, and the "Goby kettle" and "Bake kettle" hang in the crain. They are all old friends, and used to have merry times together in the kitchen in those old days, but now they are only ornaments for a library. Funny notions people have in these days.

I have stood here 208 years and have seen wonderful changes. It seems only a little while ago that Mary Bradford, the Governor's granddaughter and her soldier husband who had won his Lieutenant rank fighting in Conn., came home from church as man and wife and walked in at the west door and stood together in front of that fire place. There was very little furniture here then, a settle, a spinning wael, a flax wheel, and two or three straight backed chairs with "rush bottoms," and a candle stick on either end of the mantle. I cannot remember another article unless she may have set the "foot stove" down by the hearth. I guess she did.

My floor was all sanded and white. Mary used to make pretty patterns with the sand. I had no paper on my walls then and no pict-

ures, only a nice new long iron bar with a hook hammered in the end hung behind every window shutter to fasten them at night. Only one of those bars hang on my wall now and that is all rusty. It was thrown away with the others when the fear of Indians left the land but some way this one was left in the attic and now it is brought down again and hung up in its old place to show visitors how they used to fasten the shutters.

How well I remember how one night an old woman came in from the bed room and stood where those girls now sit with the first baby rolled in a blanket with a soft dainty linen cap on its head that I had watched the young mother make from the first, spinning the thread on her flax wheel, then after she had woven the cloth on the big loom that stood in the room up stairs, she sat here in that window and embroidered the sprays and dots on it; and how the proud father named him Ephrum.

I had not much more furniture or ornaments when Ephrum, a pleasant looking man, came home from church through the same door that his father had come through with his bride, Mary Brewster. My first great change came not long after that.

One day when her Uncle Wrestling was here (they called him Deacon) he was sitting right over there and Ephrum was standing here and Mary was spinning at her flax wheel - how I always loved to hear it buzz. ~~She~~ She was saying "It is so lonesome for your Aunt Hannah up there in the woods. She cannot see anything sitting there in her window and she is not strong enough to walk out much from the house you know. Now if she lived here, this is a sightly place and she could sit here in any of these windowns and watch me and my men as we work all over the farm."

And Ephrum was saying, "Your land is better for corn than mine, and you and your folks like fish and clams a good deal better than mine, so it would be handy for you." and it was not long after that when Deacon Wrestling and his wife, Hannah Thomas, of whom it was always said

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that "she was very much of a lady and a great invalid" came here to live.

Then I began to see lively times, for they had a large family and a merry one and my old walls looked down on many a merry making.

One day a new chair was brought in that was a wonder to all the neighbors. It had arms and rockers and our sweet lady Hannah was well pleased with it. She had it set by the window and there it stands now by the same window, and she used to sit in it as long as she lived, and she lived to be a very old lady, too.

I'll never forget when Polly Hall came into the family. She came in with a bundle tied in a handkerchief and a little wooden box pointed black in her hands and she sat right over there. The lady Hannah sat here by the window and she <sup>Polly</sup> was asking Mrs. Brewster to let her spin for her and at the same time thinking in her mind that she would make this comfortable home her own. She was saying to herself, "I will make myself so useful to this afflicted woman that she will never let me go, and I will make myself so gracious to her son that he will take me for his wife." At the same time she was telling lady Hannah that she was all alone in the world, her father, two older brothers having lost their lives in the "Revolution."

"The Revolution," how that carries me back. Stirring times I saw then. How well I remember the night when I was filled with soldiers. They trooped in through that north door and I was filled full as I could hold. They had all had a good supper in the "middle room" and they were talking very excitedly of joining Washington's army in Boston, or with sorrow of those they had left at home on "The Cape."

It was not such a great while after that when the lady Hannah was sitting here in her rocking chair right by this south window where she sat so much with her needle work in her hands and tears in her eyes while her only unmarried daughter <sup>Molly</sup> was at the flax wheel looki

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very sad, also, for the son Thomas was up at the Green where he had been called to be accused of being a Tory and sent out of town and they would have to leave this home that they had made so comfortable.

When Thomas came walking in at the door with a bright smile and elastic step telling them that the home was theirs forever, that the people whom he had helped through the dark days of war would not let him be banished, what rejoicing these old walls saw then.

Well, Polly Hall had her way and lived here till she died. She was 94 years old when she drew her last breath. Her bed stood over there against that north wall with a "candle stand" painted blue by the head of it, and on it was that black box that she brought with her the day she came with the very copper cent in it that was in it that day. It was the last bit of money she had left her. But from that day to the day of her death she had never lacked for anything. 73 years she had her own way. I never missed her one day out of here, and those were the happiest days of my life.

How fine I was when she came in at the West door on that beautiful day, she and Thomas as man and wife. It was on the 4th of May and I have heard her tell her grand children many a time sitting there by the fire with the youngest one in her lap with its feet rolled in her big apron, and all the others clustered around her, that when she came home from church that day the apple trees were all in bloom and the grass waved in the wind.

I had my first wall paper on my walls then, yellow satin with white figures, which was brought from France, and my Wainscot was all painted and I had many more pieces of furniture now. They were always adding new pieces in those days, and there was a carpet on my floor and boxes with "love apples" growing in them and camomile too, on the window sills.

She was a happy wife and could always manage her husband

can see her now when she stood there in the middle of the floor and pound the sleigh bells out of her big yellow fur muff, each rolled and muffled in paper and hear her pleased laugh as she said, "There, you have ridden in the sleigh with the sleigh bells," and see the amused look come into Thomas' eyes when he comprehended how nicely she had managed to get them.

I had seen her come in many times with a twinkle in her blue eyes and with a decided nod of her head. She had dropped a "Spanish Dollar" into the "corn stalk tea pot" which now is on the shelf in the closet there saying to herself, "that will go into one of my sleigh bells. That "corn stalk tea pot", now kept as a relic, many is the good cup of tea that was brewed in that. No one ever came in here all through the war of the Revolution but they were treated with a cup of tea.

Afterwards it used to sit on the floor under that desk there for an ornament. It was there the day that Polly Hall came to spin. Now it is in the closet and they show it very proudly to their visitors. I have watched that tea pot for years and years.

One day Polly came in with her hood and plaid cloak on and emptied out all the dollars and carried them away to be melted into the bells. About that time I heard her many times say to Thomas that everybody had bells but they, to which he would always answer that they were a foolish expense even saying, "If you get a string I will never ride in the sleigh with them." And these girls have those bells hanging here on my walls now over there behind the door, their grandma's bells. She always ended her story when telling it to the children, "and he paid for them and always put them on the horse when we went out with the sleigh and never said a word."

How pleased I was when the tall eight day clock was brought in and stood over there in the corner. How brave it was with its brass

balls. The only way Polly had to tell the time of day before that came was to open the door in the front entry and see how the sun slanted on the threshold. When it shone in full it was noon.

I remember one Sunday when she was tying on her bonnet before the glass that hung between the windows. It had the gilded eagle on its top. Her only son, Elisha, a tall boy, came in with a green snake in his hand which he held down over her head and it bit a little red spot on the end of her nose, how she took off her bonnet and stayed home from church. And the day that Hannah, the oldest daughter, a domineering and austere girl, was going to leave home for a home of her own a half a mile away, how she leaned her head on the corner of the mantle there and cried because she hated so badly to change her home, while her mother and sister Sophy were exchanging pleased glances and "laughing in their sleeves" as Polly used to say when she told it to her grand children, because they were so glad she was going.

And many is the time I have seen Sophy and the tall young man from Maine that she called Ruphus sitting together in the big high backed chair that was called "The Courting Chair" drawn up before that open fire. After she had gone to Maine to live Elisha and his bride Elizabeth came in at that west door after they had been married at church. She was such a handsome girl, tall and slender and only 19.

Time passed smoothly and swiftly and the house was filled always with the laughter of little girls, such a merry lot, so full of fun they were running and skipping through my doors all the time. Then I had another big change. I became a bed room. Polly was now too old to go up stairs so her bed was put up and a home-made wardrobe which was called "a press", and a desk, which was a bureau with a desk top, stood over on the east side, and a long box for her sheets side of that. An arm chair covered with green baize was put on the other side of

the blue painted "candle stand" which stood at the head of the bed. The bed was low posted and was painted green. Hannah Thomas' rocking chair was left in and the table that stood between the windows.

I will never forget when that table was brought in. Polly had taken her work and gone up to sit a while with Mrs. Covell one afternoon when a man drove by on the Boston road with a load of tables. Up to that time there had never been any table in all this big house but the "Thousand legged table," so Polly bought one of this man and she and Mrs. Covell brought it home between them and they came laughing in at that north door with it, a pretty neat looking table with slim legs and short leaves. I had never seen anything like it before.

Now the fire place was closed up and a stove brought in. Such a stove there was, an oven in it, and below the oven were doors that opened into a grate with the fire behind it. Almost every evening "Grandma" opened those doors and sat before the fire poking it now and then with her cane, while she told over the same stories to the group of grand children, or told the same riddles evening after evening, they shouting the answers at the end of each as well pleased as if they had never heard it before, or telling them of her own life and of the Revolution.

But the worst of all that happened to me in this change was that they papered my walls clear down to the floor covering up my nice wainscot, painted all the wood work that was left unpainted white, painting right over the pretty brass knobs and buttons on my closet doors and shutters, making all white. The world had begun to get busy and they could not waste time any longer polishing brass and cleaning paint.

Things went on about the same after this change, year after year nearly the same. The children played in here a great deal of the time and Grandma Polly told stories to them. Some of them had grown to be young ladies and a little boy had been added to the number of

whom they all seemed very proud. Different girls who lived in the family as help used to sleep with Grandma Polly. Never shall I forget the night when Barbara, the help, was lying in bed reading and fell asleep, her book fell tipping over the fluid lamp which set fire to the bed. Things were very lively for a little while and I was very much frightened, but there was no great harm done.

By and by when Polly was 94 years old one morning she did not get up at all and for a whole week she lay there without moving at all except to turn over the leaves of an imaginary Bible. She lay repeating chapter after chapter from her old big Bible. When she reached the bottom of the page she would lay her hand flat as if slipping it under the broad leaf of the Bible and go through the motion of turning the leaf over beginning at the top of the next page to repeat again. Many a time the girls would follow her down the pages of the real Book and never did she fail to turn the page at the right word. Occasionally she would look up and ask a question about some person that these girls had never heard of, but whom she had known in her childhood. They would answer "yes" or "no" as the question seemed to require and she, after saying "I thought so" would resume the imaginary reading of her Bible. And this was not because she was a very religious woman. Many a time I have heard her tell of when Channing's works were first printed and the greater part of the puritan church followed his teaching holding the meeting house themselves and forcing the little handful of good staunch old Othodox who still held to the faith of their ancestors of the Pilgrim church to go out and find a place of worship for themselves in the old unused foundry. How one morning as they were going into church one of the old ladies who was passing to go on up to the old foundry jumped up on the dyke in front of the church and repeated in a very sprightly manner:-

"Straight is the path that leads to death  
 And millions walk together there,  
 But wisdom finds the narrow way,  
 With here and there a worshipper."

and laugh till her sides shook over the incident. Polly was a great laugher. But you see when she was young and all through her early married life she had nothing to read but "Josephus" "Pilgrims Progress," and "The Bible," and she was very fond of reading. It was just one week when she fell asleep and never waked again. A couple of old ladies came in with the two oldest grand daughters and I saw them cut and sew her shroud and prepare her for her burial. Then they carried her out of my sight, and I missed her sadly.

Then everything was taken out of the room, the floor was left bare, maps were hung on my walls, three or four school desks were brought in and I became a school room. Emma, the fourth daughter, was teacher and all those younger than herself and some other children besides, were the scholars. It was in this change that I lost sight of the old tall eight day clock that had been my comfort with its cheerful tick for so many years and it was a very long time before it came back to gladden my heart again with the same cheerful tick.

Now the changes came fast. I became the family living room with a white straw carpet, black hair cloth sofa with carved claw feet and eagles heads at either side of the back at the top, and rolled and carved arms. The piano was brought in and I was proud with tables and chairs. Never had I seen so many at a time before. I saw all the May baskets that the girls hung or had hung to them, all the Christmas trees and all the company that came to the house. There were charade parties often and many a group of young folks sang around the piano. There is one picture which I remember with great distinctness; Mary sitting in the middle of the room mending a crinolin skirt which was hung on a nail driven in the great cross beam in the ceiling (the greater part of the time a crinolin . . . hung from that nail while one girl,

or another was mending it in those days) Emma playing on the piano, Flora in the end of the sofa <sup>2</sup>knitting a brown silk net to cover someones "waterfall" (which was the fashion of wearing the hair then) She used to make nets for all the sisters, Ada at her easel working on a crayon head, Lizzie sitting by one of the two south windows making tatting and the mother Elizabeth sewing in the other with the summer sunshine over her; Eva and Ernest running in and out with funny speeches and wonderful discoveries. They were a happy family. Often Emma read while the rest worked and many an interesting book I have listened to in long winter evenings.

Now, the stove was a tall one in which they <sup>BURNED</sup>burned coal and tables of growing plants stood in my South window all winter, wonderful plants such as I had never beheld in the old days. This was during the time of the Civil War and very exciting times they were, too. First Lizzie, then Mary and then Ada went to the Hospital to take care of the wounded soldiers and very interesting letters they wrote home. I heard them all read aloud, all the great victories talked over and rejoiced over. The death of Lincoln, the capture of Jeff Davis and the surrender of Lee. Not long after the end of the war there began to be additions to my furniture, cases of minerals sent from the Pacific Coast which were very interesting to all the visitors, and I learned that first Lizzie sent them, then Mary also went to that far country. Then came the sad sight of the Father Elisha in his coffin, in the middle of the room, the boy I had so loved and had watched creep on this very floor 70 years back. Seventy years, it seemed but yesterday.

Then the coming home of Lizzie with her three babies, Birdie, Dot and Nellie who was but a wee babe. I can see her sitting over there by the "beau fat" with Nellie at her breast just as she looked when she left, talking as fast as her tongue could move with her desire of seeing home again. For a year I was filled with joyful

scenes-rehearsals of plays and great coming and goings. Then the

house became very quiet and my shutters were closed for days at a time till one day the Mother Elizabeth was brought in here and placed in a coffin and friends and children gathered around her. Then they carried her out the same door I had seen her enter as a bride. Still the house was quiet, my shutters closed and few entered my doors. Life seemed to have gone away from me. Soon my furniture was all taken out and I could hear the piano in a distant room. Then carpenters came and built a glass case in the middle of the floor and I was turned into a museum. These days were very dark and lonely. Now and then a few people would be shown around then of course, windows and doors were trown wide open and I had the pleasure of seeing finely dressed people and hearing interesting conversations. But only at intervals, and that in the summer. All winter my shutters were closed and I never saw anyone unless some one came in to lay something in here that they wished to put out of the way for I was used for a "truck hole" every winter in those dreadful days, and was only brave and of any consequence for a very short time in the summer, even.

Then came the worst time of all. The whole of my family that had been so much to me went away and a strange family occupied the house, but they never came in here. I used to hear the man sleeping in the little bed room just the other side of that north door, used to hear him when I knew he must be drunken, and shudder to think such a man lived beneath this honored roof, used to hear his little children sing every morning when they awoke, dear little children with sweet birdlike voices in the early morning; used to hear him swear at them all through the day, but it came to an end. Emma and Flora and Charlotte, now grown to a young lady, came back. They opened my shutters, rolled the glass case up into the corner, brought in a cook stove and a table and all kinds of cooking utensils, opened that north door. The bed was gone that the dreadful man used to sleep in and a sink and table put

in its place, and behold! I was a kitchen and dining room. Changes I had seen, but this astonished me greatly. Then three little children were added to the family. Dulcie came first, a creeping baby, then Lila and Ned, dear little ones all three of them, and it seemed as if the old days were returning. For a while all was lively. The cook stove was taken out, but the long dining table remained and many people used to enjoy good meals here. Plenty of people came and went in those days and I was very merry and happy. I did not see anything of Ernest. He never came in at all and I heard from a letter I heard Emma read while she and Flora, Eva and Charlotte were sitting at the table after having finished their last meal for the day that he was in Florida. The things he sent from there were not such as used to come from "out West" but good things to eat, - Grape fruit, oranges, sugar cane and guavers. I used to get a peep at some of them and heard a good deal of the talk about their size and fine flavor.

Changes came fast after this and sad gloomy days I had to bear. I was fixed into a museum again and it was very nearly the same old story only now in the summer people drove up in greater quantities some times a Barge load of people would come and most of the visitors now wanted to go all over the house. It seemed to me I was not of any more consequence than was the old house. An artist came and took sketches of different parts of me. People held long conversations about my age. Ernest came home from Florida tall and gaunt and sick and sometimes for a little while Ada would pass through or come in and lay paintings on the Thousand legged table.

Then came my darkest days. I seemed to be only a lumber room. All the pleasure I had for long years was when a sweet sleeping baby was drawn in here in a baby carriage to take its nap. This happened pretty often in warm weather. There seemed to be a good many of them sick babies too. Day after day I would watch them as they re-

covered, getting rosy and fat, then they would disappear. I never saw Emma in all this long dreary time and I got dusty and forlorn. Some times a pretty young girl or two would come in and look around among the curios that still stood in their accustomed places getting dustier every year and their labels being eaten up by slickers or fading with age. Till this beautiful day when they came in and knocked that big glass case all to pieces and carried it off and polished all my brass knobs and made me more grand than I had ever been before. Oh! the joy of it, never to be shut away again, to have the merry old days with the whole family, and the summer girls going in and out and all the dear old furniture forever now as long as I live. There surely can be no other change for me.

But what is this? what is going to happen that may spoil all this newly gained pleasure for me on this cold rainy "Labor Day". The house is full of merry people and they are taking out the furniture and spreading newspapers all over the middle of the floor. When I was young such a store of newspapers was never thought of and now they are just to be thrown away. Now all the boarders have come in and clustered around the walls and the family bring in steaming clams and a lunch basket and a jug of water and sure enough, I am transferred into a sea beach and this is the clam bake that these summer folks had planned for today. Well, it is worth ones while to stand so many years and give so much pleasure to so many people.

Wonders will never cease. What can that glib man be doing to Elisha's old desk. He has screwed a box in the wall, made a hole through it and pulled some strings through and set another box on the floor and put a bright shining standard on the desk with the strings hanging off it and a little black horn hanging on it, too. Well, I need never fear being shut away and lonely again for they come in here and ring a bell and then say "Hello" to that bright standard and say

some numbers, and then if you will believe it, they will talk to

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people all over christendom. It is more wonderful than the Salem witch craft. What would ~~John~~ or Deacon Wrestling or Thomas or Elisha think of this, I wonder. These eyes have lived to behold miracles equal to those of old.

Written by Flora Brewster about 1904-05