

7-28-41

Spinster

I know about fourteen Oneida women who are over forty years old and are still single. But there are numerous Oneida girls who are twenty-five or over who are not married, but they may get married sometime and so I will not classify them as old maids. All these fourteen women have been to school and some have fairly good education. One is about 70 years old and she worked in the Indian schools as nurse. She attended the Hampton Institute then she was sent to New Haven, Conn and attended the nursing school and was graduated in maturity nursing. Then she came home. She is the oldest daughter of a big family. Her father's aim was to help her father. She entered the Indian Service as a school nurse after passing certain examinations. She gave most of

her earnings to her folks. Her father was
able to enlarge his house, and later built
a good size barn. Her father was able to
do this because he was getting financial
help from his daughter. There were other
sisters who were also earning money, but
if they helped it was very little because
they all got married soon after they
came from school. Three of her sisters
married men of their tribes, whom
they met while in the Indian Service,
and one married a white man. But
I think the operator was not interested in her work
to think of romance.
She used to come home to visit her folks
for a month, and during the time
she was home she had several proposals
but she turned them down for different
reasons. She had a chance to marry a
bachelor about as old as she was then
but she did not accept his proposal
because he was not very educated, she
also got proposals from two widowers,
but she did not accept any of them. She
was getting used to working and living
in a comfortable quarters, so she

would not think of living in a small
log cabin, cooking for a man that
could not earn as much as she could
she became independent. Most of the women
of her age were married and keeping house
as she stayed home and visited her
people. When the Oneida Hospital was
completed she was asked to come home
and take full charge. She resigned
in the Indian Service and came home.
She opened up the hospital and received
patients, but the people were not
ready to go to the hospital at that time
she had very few patients. The people
had very little confidence in her. The
hospital was not on a solid financial base.
The missionary was depending on
donations, and money was not com-
ing very fast. She was not receiving
very much for her services, so after
taking care of her grand father and
mother during their sickness, she
resigned her position and was
reinstated in the Indian Service
again. She worked continuously

for about 35 years. She was not nursing
all the time, but she served as ^{nurse} ~~nurse~~
laundress. While she was in the laun-
dry at the government boarding school
her fingers were caught by the mangle
and smashed them. Her right hand
was deformed, and she was out
of the Indian service for over a year
after her hand was well, but deformed.
The government offered her a very easy
job as a school nurse at Carlisle Indian
School, and she stayed there until
the school was abolished, then she
was transferred to another school, then
to Tomah Wis, and her last place was
Neopit, Wisconsin. She retired at
the age of 65, and is now getting a
government pension of \$85⁰⁰ per month.
She is buying the old homestead of
her father, and is living there alone
in a big house. She is well re-
spected, because she has led a
straight christian life. Her life work
has been to help her father and mother
and her sisters. Although she had

several proposals, but she really has missed courtship, because the old Indian fellows never approached her. They got some one to ask her, and she had a good chance to give them a negative reply. One reason she never accepted any man is because she has very high ideals, and she has always associated with educated people and wants to live like any white person. While she has worked hard she really has never had a hard time, unless it was when she was a small girl. I think she is finding life a little lonesome now that she is alone. She devotes her time doing active church work. She has been a great help to her immediate relatives. I know she helped my mother out a lot of times when she was home. There are three spinsters in another family. Their ages are 40, 57, and 64 respectively. The youngest one has had boy friends but never got married, but the other two have never been courted.

even when they were young. One of them has been the slave by for her folks. She was in the government service for a number of years as a cook and baker, and as a laundress, the other ^{one} has been a maid for some family ⁱⁿ Green Bay for a long time, but she now stays home. She goes to Green Bay to do day work for some families. All the three old maids stay at home but one of them is the H.P.A. cook for the Hot Lunch Project. Some people call them "quid'mets" (St. means the maids). They have not contributed much to the community, except as an example of clean lives. They have led quiet and decent lives so no one has any thing to say about them. Another old maid is taking care of her aged mother, and she has a sister who is also an old maid, but she is working in some large city. Most of the spinsters are women who have

devoted their time helping their people. Another
cousin was a teacher. She taught
for many years at the Onaida
Boarding School, but when the
school was abolished she was
offered a position to teach a school
out west, and she did not accept
the position, because it was too
far from home, and her mother
was old and ailing. And after her
mother died she taught at the
Episcopal mission for several
years. Then her brother died and
left four children. Their mother
had died some years before. She
took the children and kept them.
She got mother's pension for all
of them about fifty or sixty dollars a
month, after she was over sixty-five
she gave up teaching, and just de-
voted her time to caring for her nieces
and nephews. They live in the town
of Kaukauna, she has no other income
but what she gets from the state.
She helped her folks too, and at one

8
Time her father was considered a well to do farmer. But her two brothers started in real-estate business and although one was a lawyer they went in debt, and finally they had to mortgage their parents' farm, and then one of them went away to Oklahoma, and the other got into all sorts of trouble, and the spinster sister had to advanced him money to keep out of jail. They could not redeem the mortgage on the place, and they lost their home, so now the spinster is practically destitute excepting for the pension she gets from the state. If she had only stayed in the Indian service she would be getting a retirement pension of about \$80.00 \$85 dollars a month, and would be quite independant, but now she has to be very careful how she spends her money. This spinster has led a very quiet life, and hardly ever attended any of the Oneida celebrations. Her

whole life has been of service to others.

She is my mother's first cousin, so I know quite a lot about her. Her mother told some one that her daughter had a chance to get married one time. The old fellow sent some one to ask her. He was just an ordinary Creida, but she said to her sister and mother, "Shall I accept the proposal?" Her sister said, "are you crazy?" so then she sent word back that she did not want to marry him. That was the only proposal she ever got. She is very devoted to her nephews, and nieces, and seems so motherly, and the children all love her. She and her adopted children are now at the cherry orchard picking cherries. She seems quite contented having her nieces and nephews around her, in fact, I think she is not a bit lonesome. These children keep her so busy that she has no time to get lonesome. The oldest girl is about

sixteen, and is finishing the high school in Kaukauna. She is a very bright girl and helps her old aunt a great deal. In a year or two she will be able to work to support her aunt and brothers, and sister. Some Anceida spinsters have married after they are quite old. I know one old nurse that was married after she was sixty years old, and her sister, who was a teacher also married when old. They both married old widowers. These two sisters are dead now. Most of the Anceida spinsters had engaged in a certain line of work that kept their interest, and were away from Anceida most of the time in their youth. Their folks did not urge them to get married, because they were helping them financially. There was an Anceida spinster that was feeble minded, but she died a year ago. She lived with her father and brother. When her father died she took part of the

11
house for her apartment, and
her brother kept house by him-
self. He was a little unbalanced
too. They stayed there several years
like that. They have few relatives
but she did not want any one to
bother her. She wanted to live alone
one time when her father was still
alive, a young man that was un-
der the influence of liquor went
there, and he asked her father if he
could marry his daughter. The old
man said he would ask her, and
so he did, and she said, "no, I don't
want him. He drinks too much."
The young man said that he just
asked her for fun, and he was
glad she did not accept his pro-
posal. She was rather bright in
some ways, but at times she was
queer. One time she got angry
over something, and she sat
around, and would not do any
work. She would not even comb
her hair. Then one day, some

one reported her to the Court-
house. So they sent a lady to come
and see her. In the meantime
some one told this old maid that
they were going to take her away be-
cause she was so dirty and would
not clean up. She went to work and
cleaned up her house. She had
some curtains put away, and
took that out, and hung them
on the windows. She also cleaned
herself up, and she was a good
worker, and knew how to clean up.
When the lady came from Green
Bay to see how she was she was
surprised to find everything so dif-
ferent from the way she had been
told. She was very agreeable too, in
fact, the official lady could not
find any reason why she should
take her to the poor house or to
any institution. After that the
spinster was left alone, and she
got relief and surplus commodity
from the Welfare office, and when

she got sick there was no one to take care of her and when the government nurse found her she was pretty sick, and they had to force her to go to Tomah Indian Hospital, but she died a few days after she reached the hospital.

We have very few bachelors. I only know of two and they are both over 70 years old. They are both farmers. There are several others some years younger, but they are men that are feeble minded, or backward.