

## INTERVIEW

### "AN OLD LADY SHOWS HER MEDALS"

A LITTLE old lady wearing dark-coloured glasses, and with a spray of red roses pinned to her coat, seated behind a pink birthday cake. . .

Birthday parties are always exciting, sentimental gatherings. Your mind goes back on all sorts of tea parties, from Alice in Wonderland—to your own progressive birthday celebrations.

But this tea party was different. It was a large gathering—nearly a hundred in all—seated along the two T tables; their heads slightly turned to the top guest table, where sat the little old lady behind her pink birthday cake.

Why was it different? It came to you with a kind of shock. Because nearly all those guests were blind—or near blind—and the little old lady herself lived in a deeper darkness than all—for she was both blind and deaf.

Last year they said to her, "Next year, our Centennial year, you will be eighty, and if you are spared to us, we will give you a grand birthday party."

Well, she was spared to enjoy it—and to live out one of the most memorable days in her life; one that will cast a glory on the deepening twilight of her time.

#### To Do Her Honour

Miss Esther Biddle, despite her affliction, was richer that day than any other woman in the land.

All the members of the Blind Social Club had gathered to do her honour. But even a greater distinction awaited her. The Governor-General and his Lady, the Prime Minister's wife, and other notable people came along to have tea with her and tender their good wishes on the attainment of her 80th birthday.

The party progressed with laughter and speeches. How cheerful was this little company of the blind. A few wore coloured caps; uncertain hands reached for cakes or fruit. One woman, totally blind, peeled an apple expertly. They chatted and they laughed together. . .

At the top table, the guest of honour, with the Governor-General seated to her left, and the interpreter spelling a description of the proceedings on to her right hand. She nodded and smiled, following the progress of her party, and when she rose to cut the birthday cake, a spot of excited pink on either cheek, it was the Governor's own hand that guided her. A great and unforgettable day for Esther Biddle. . .

#### What Her Friends Said

How to interview an old lady who could neither see nor hear? What strange, remote world did she live in—shut out from us by both sound and sight? I sought and found three women who were her ears and her eyes. For over forty years they have been her faithful and devoted friends. From them I learnt of Esther Biddle.

There was affection and tenderness in their voices as they spoke, for to them this quiet old lady has always given more than she received. She has helped and inspired them all.

"She is so very grateful," said one, "for any small thing that is done for

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