

down some family pictures that adorned the walls of the wide hall. But his wife had forestalled him. The house, by a few deft changes, had been made as cheerless as the most fastidious boarder could wish.

And so the word went round that Cousin Rebecca Tumlin would be pleased to take boarders. The response was all that she could have desired. The young men — the bachelor storekeepers and their clerks — deserted the rickety old tavern and the smaller boarding-houses, and took up their abode at The Cedars, and soon the house was gay with a company that was profitable if not pleasant.

The advent of boarders — some of them transient traveling-men — opened a new world for Mary Asbury, Cousin Rebecca Tumlin's daughter, and she made the most of it. She followed the example of her father, the colonel, and made herself agreeable to the young men. She made herself especially agreeable to Laban Pierson, the young conductor of the daily train on the little branch railroad that connected Rockville with the outside world. Cousin Rebecca T. held herself severely aloof from her boarders, but her attitude was so serene and graceful,