

The supper call had sounded and the children's answering cries had ceased. Along the ribbon of the single road scurried an overladen donkey. Three lengths of legs bobbed at varying angles from her fat sides. Behind her hurried a nurse, aghast for the hundredth time at the donkey's agility, never demonstrated except at the evening hour.

Halfway between Maple House and The Firs stood two bare-legged boys working their toes into the impalpable dust of the roadway and rubbing the grit into their ankles in a final orgy of dirt before the evening wash. They called derisively to the donkey load of children, bound to bed with the setting sun.

On the veranda of Elm House an old man in shirt sleeves sat whittling on to a mat, especially laid at his feet. Beside the fluted pillars of the high portico he looked very small. The big, still house and the tall elms that crowded the lawn seemed to brood over him as though they knew that he was not only small but young — merely one of the many generations of Eltons they had mothered and sheltered through the long years that make light of a single life.

From the barn behind the house came the slam of the oat-bin and a sudden chorus of eager whinnies. The whinnies were answered from the roadway. The old man looked up. A wagonette appeared over the brow of Red Hill. It was drawn by two lean, well-conditioned bays whose long, quick stride reached out for stables and oats. The wagonette was crowded. The old man answered cries and waving hands and his eyes followed the bays down the road and twinkled as they