

HOME CIRCLE.

RUSSETS.

A late March twilight, with a bitter frost in the air, the new moon just dipping its golden horn behind the maple swamp in the west, and the ground sounding crisply under foot. We had just come in from foddering the cattle—"we" sounds rather singularly when you reflect that it meant Kitty and me, two girls of seventeen and nineteen; but you see there wasn't any one else to do it. Father had been bed-ridden ever since that last attack of paralysis, and we could afford to hire no one to take his place about the farm.

"I don't pity them gals," Neighbour Dyson said, "They might sell the horse and cow."

Neighbour Dyson had generously offered us something less than half-price for them, thinking no doubt that we would be thankful to jump at the chance. But Kitty and I, after taking the matter into consideration, thanked him, and declined politely.

"We couldn't keep house without old Mooley, could we, Addy?" said my sister, "there are so many nice dishes we can make for poor father, if we have plenty of good, rich milk and cream. And the butter that we should have to buy at Neighbour Dyson's city prices would go far to counterbalance the money we should get for Mooley."

"As for the horse," said I, "he eats but a little; and how on earth could we get around the country, even to the post-office, such weather as this, if it wasn't for old Dobbin that we have had ever since I can remember."

So it happened that on this especial March evening we had just come in from attending to the wants of our live stock.

I was in great spirits, playing with pussy, who came to meet us with her plummy tail erect; but Kitty leaned sadly against the wooden mantel and looked into the fire with mournful eyes.

"Kitty," cried I, at last, "what does make you so dull?"

"To-morrow is the third of March," said she, gravely.

"What of that?" I demanded.

"Don't you remember? The interest on the mortgage comes due to-morrow?"

"So it does," said I, my radiant face falling faster than the thermometer on a freezing day. "Thirty-five dollars! And we have nothing to pay it with, except the fifteen dollars that Laura Osgood paid for the old melodeon!"

"Perhaps Willis Avery would wait!" suggested Kitty.

I drew myself up slightly.

"I don't choose to ask him to wait," said I.

Now it happened that Willis Avery, who held the mortgage on our homestead, was the son of a neighbour, and an old play-fellow and a boy-beau of my own, who had gone to the prosperous young city a few miles north of us and commenced business on his own account, and I had a particular aversion to asking aid or help of him in any way. I might be poor, but I was also proud, and Kitty was quite sympathetic enough to understand me.

"But then what are we to do?" said Kitty.

I sat down on the hearth rug, with my chin in my hands, and stared earnestly at the big crackling black log. Pussy crept away and nestled down in the corner, as if she knew by instinct that there was a change of temperature.

"Look here, Kitty," said I, suddenly. "Those russet apples!"

"Well?"

"We can sell them. There are eight barrels at least. Eight barrels at \$2.50 a barrel—"

fifth the price. Apples are a drug in the market."

"Here, I grant you; but not in the city. I will take them to Mapleton and sell them."

"You will, Addy?"

"And why not? Squire Dyson would charge at least twenty per cent. commission, and make a favour of it at that. I can't afford either the price or the patronage. Don't say anything about it to father. He would only fret and raise objections. What must be done, must be, and I am the girl to do it."

"But, Addy, how? All this seems so perfectly wild and visionary to me."

"Well, it needn't; for, believe me, it's the most practical thing in the world. All we have to do is to sort the apples out in barrels, nice and sound—I can easily do it by lantern-light to-night—and to-morrow morning, we'll rise early, harness old Dobbin to the lumber waggon—"

"But how are we to get the heavy barrels up into the waggon?"

"Goosie!" cried I, laughing, "can't I put the barrels up into the waggon while they're empty and fill them at my leisure? And I'll have them sold at Mapleton before you've got the pork and cabbage boiling for dinner."

"But where will you go?" asked Kitty.

"O, I know of lots of places. I went once to town with Obadiah Fairweather, when he sold a lot of cheeses. I've a pretty good idea of the locality of the commission stores, I can tell you."

"After all, Addy," hesitated my conservative little sister, "it isn't a woman's work."

"Why isn't it, I should like to know, so long as a woman can do it? At all events, a woman must pay her debts—so if you'll hurry up the tea I'll be off to the barn."

"And what shall we tell papa?"

"Oh, he'll think I've gone to singing-school with the Dyson girls, and I don't think it's a Christian duty to undeceive him," answered I.

But, notwithstanding the brave face I put upon affairs, my heart quivered a little the next day, as I drove toward Mapleton, with the scarlet stain of sunrise dyeing all the east, and my own cheeks flushed with the keen morning air.

But it wasn't so bad, after all. With pardonable egotism, I supposed that every one would be staring at me; but on the contrary a young woman selling apples might be the commonest sight in the world, so little comment or surprise did it apparently excite. Mr. Holloway, of the firm of Holloway Brothers, produce and commission merchants, didn't want any apples, I speedily learned.

"Just bought a shipload from Albany," said he, as carelessly as if shiploads of apples were as common a purchase as ten cents worth of tape. And I drove on, beginning to feel infinitesimally small.

Mr. Lovejoy could give me a dollar a barrel. "Apples wasn't worth no more at this season of the year!" And I whipped old Dobbin up, determined to carry them home again, sooner than sell at that price.

At the next place where I stopped, a pleasant-looking, middle-aged man came out and critically examined my apples.

"Do they hold out like this all the way down?" he asked.

"I'll warrant them," said I, carelessly.

"How much?" he asked.

"Two dollars and a-half a barrel."

He reflected.

"It's a good price," said he, as if he were talking to his own vest buttons; "but then they look like good apples, and we've a tolerably large western order to fill. I'll see what my partner thinks."

store, and I, happening to glance up, saw the words painted in black letters over the door: "Hull & Avery."

My first impulse was to drive on and leave the chance of a bargain behind me; my next to sit still and await my fate as Providence dealt it out with me. And presently out came Willis Avery himself.

"I think we will take your load, if—Why! breaking short off, "it's Addy Walters!"

I coloured scarlet.

"Yes," said I, as composedly as possible. "Good morning, Mr. Avery. I shall be obliged if you will examine the fruit as speedily as possible, as I am in a hurry."

"Oh, certainly." He looked as if a nipping frost had chilled his enthusiasm in the bud, and I secretly exulted within myself.

Mr. Hull bought the load of apples, and said if I had any more at the same price—and of the same quality, he cautiously added—he would be happy to take them. Willis Avery touched his hat, and I drove away as loftily as Queen Boadicea in her chariot of old.

"Just thirty-five dollars, counting in the melodeon money," cried Kitty, gleefully. "And now Mr. Avery may come as soon as he likes!"

She had scarcely spoken the words before there came a knock at the door, and in walked no less a personage than Mr. Willis Avery himself. I received him with the air of an empress.

"Your money is ready, Mr. Avery."

"I was not thinking of the money, Addy," said he almost reproachfully. "Do you think one's mind runs always on money?"

"Mine does, a good deal," said I, laughing.

"But I had no idea you were reduced to this. I did not know—"

"Mr. Avery, this is scarcely business-like," I interposed.

"Addy," said he abruptly, "I admired your spirit and courage to-day. I always liked you as a girl, but now—"

"Well?" for he hesitated.

"I would do something more, if you would let me. I would love you."

I did not answer. In truth and in fact, I could not!

"Dear Addy, will you let me sign back the old place to your father on our wedding-day?" he asked, earnestly.

And somehow he had got hold of my hand, and somehow, before I knew it, we were engaged!

"This is all very ridiculous of us," said I, "particularly as I had resolved never to marry since we had that quarrel about my dancing with Gerald Ferguson at the Fourth of July picnic."

"I'll promise you never to be jealous again," said Willis Avery.

Kitty was jubilant, when she heard it all.

"Our troubles are at an end," said she, "and all because you would take that load of russet apples to town yourself."

"That doesn't follow," said I, sagely.

But for all my philosophy I did believe a little in fate, and I've always liked russet apples since.

THE ART OF MAKING SOUP.

The hand that can make good soup unfailingly has arrived at a stage in the culinary art not reached by any except a good cook. Therefore, when our correspondent can succeed in having her soups, not sometimes but always, perfect, she need never fear in venturing among the other branches of cookery, because the very knowledge and tact necessary in the one case will be sure to guide her unerringly in the others.