

soft, summer days, when the air, freighted with the odors of growing vegetation and opening blossoms, blew like a caress against the cheek. To the lonely woman its sweetness and power were almost unbearable. Storm and cold, heat and thunderclap she could brace herself against. They seemed a part of the forces she must combat. But not this! This tender, gentle, balmy summer air, stealing in and awakening feelings against which she was powerless. Not only the homesickness with which she was growing familiar, but tenderer, deeper feelings, to which she was a stranger. She drew down the shades, and turning out the lights, went to bed.

Long she lay there awake; and when at last she dropped into uneasy slumber, it was broken by dreams of home and childhood; of the gentle voice of her mother; of the gay shouts and happy laughter of her brothers and sisters.

When morning came she was too weak and ill to rise. All her old energy and spirit seemed to have left her. At noon, with her luncheon, for which she had little appetite, the maid brought her a letter. Mechanically she took it up, thinking it was from Alice or some of her former neighbors. But the writing was unfamiliar,—a great, straggling, masculine hand. Who in the world,—what man,—could be writing to her? She turned to the signature—P. R. ELIOT.

"Dear Martha," it began, "I wonder if you remember 'Pete Eliot,' the harum-scarum young rascal who used to go to school with you in the old red school-house. If you do, I'm afraid you will want to throw this letter down without reading it, for you must have no pleasant recollections connected with such a person. Nevertheless I am going to venture on, for my own sake, if not for yours.

"Well, Martha, I have come home again; to what was my home over

forty years ago. Great Caesar! What changes there have been around it in that time, since I ran away a freckle-faced, red-headed boy, wild to see the world. Father and mother gone, brothers and sisters scattered; old chums married or dead. Most everybody had forgotten good-for-nothing Pete. So I shall not wonder if my absence has been too long for your memory.

"I went down to the old house yesterday, where your brother Bill and I used to have many a romp under the old elms in the back yard, and hang Alice's dolls 'by the neck till dead,' while she screamed out and cried at our cruelty, and Prudence, that little blue-stocking, sat in the boughs above our heads, buried in a book as usual, and deaf to our noise and mischief, unless we climbed up and stole away her book, when she came to life very suddenly.

"Well, those days are past—long past. But I want to see you, Martha. They tell me you lived until recently in the old homestead, and are less changed than almost any one else around here. I shall not tell you all they said as to your life of unselfish devotion and care for the members of your family, lest even such a modest person as you are should become vain.

"So I am coming to call on you, and may be in Springfield almost as soon as this letter. I am sure you will not refuse to see me for the sake of 'auld lang syne,' and the happy days I used to have with your brothers, now scattered and gone. At three o'clock on Wednesday I shall call at the Home where you are.

"Very respectfully yours,

P. R. ELIOT."

Well, well, well! Little Pete Eliot, the most daring, reckless, venturesome boy within a radius of a hundred miles from Martha's home. He could climb higher, run faster, swim farther, and get into more mischief than any other she knew. At school he was