

Mrs. Givins, looking at some on the table.

"I daresay you do feel kinder hot boiling them; but as I say to my girls, what is to be done, has to be done, hot or cold."

"Very true, Mrs. Givins; you and I agree in that."

"Miss Vining, you know a sight about physick, don't you?"

"Not much. I do know a little; why do you ask?"

"There's a young girl down to the Hotel that's awful bad. I could not get a team to go to Constance for the doctor in this hay-time if I gave five dollars, and I thought maybe you'd come down and see what ails her."

"Who is she?" asked Agnes.

"That's just what I can't tell you. She come in the stage yesterday from Montagn. A little before they got here, Bill Willard, (it was him that was driving)—well, he says she got faint and sick, and just went off in a fit. Well, course he could do nothing with her, so he left her with me, and so she's been ever since, never speaking or looking right, and I don't know what to do with her no more than Bill."

"What is she like?" inquired Agnes, interested in the story.

"Well, she looks about nineteen or twenty, and I guess she would be pretty enough if she was fixed up. I didn't tell you she's married, too."

"Married!" exclaimed Agnes. "How do you know if she has not spoken?"

"Easy enough. She's got a wedding-ring on her finger, and a baby four or five months old. I asked Bill if he knew her name, or anything about her; but he said no—she just got into the stage at Montagn, looking scared-like, and never said a word all the way, but just rocked the child and moaned. I didn't depend much on Bill, though, for he was a little struck with the rust at the time."

"A little what, did you say?" inquired Agnes.

"Rather tight," explained Mrs. Givins.

Miss Vining still looked as if she did not understand, and Mrs. Givins added:—

"He'd been treating something too free—had a little too much liquor."

"Oh!" said Agnes, comprehending at last.

"And the child's as sick as the mother," resumed Mrs. Givins. "It cries all the time and frets to be with her, and she can't take it. It's just taken Mary's whole time to attend on them since they come."

Further inquiries from Agnes elicited that the stranger was well-dressed, that she had a trunk with her, that she wore gold ear-rings and a gold chain round her neck, and that her hands looked as if she had never done much work. In conclusion Mrs. Givins begged again that Agnes would come and see her, and, having received a promise to that effect, departed, saying that "dinner wouldn't cook itself, and she didn't suppose her girls would either, if they weren't looked after."

Towards evening Agnes went down to Philipsburg. The heat was intense; every distant object appeared to dance in the hot air, and the chirp of the cicadas, and the rattle of the locusts' wings, sounded unnaturally loud in the stillness. She met no one on the way; the men were all at work in the hayfields, and it would have required either very urgent business or very enticing pleasure to have tempted a Canadian woman into the sun at that time of day.

Not that they were spending the time in idleness—at least all were busy at Mrs. Givins! That lady herself was packing away the results of the morning's work, in the shape of a large supply of pies, in the ample cupboard above the bar-room fireplace, now filled with green boughs and colored paper flowers; and through the open door of the kitchen could be seen her two daughters and the "girl" as actively employed as Mrs. Givins usually kept them, while the only idle one was the invalid, who sat in a rocking-chair by the window of the keeping-room with the infant on her knee. She was a pretty-looking girl of about twenty, well-dressed, well-mannered and intelligent. Agnes' gentle inquiries soon elicited her story. She had "come to herself" in the morning during Mrs. Givins' absence, and was now able to talk. She was travelling from Winchester to Morrisville to see her sister. At Montagn the baby had been sick, and she was inclined to return; but she had an aunt at Cybele who was a good hand with children, and she determined to go so far