

"I'm lost. Young woman, can you tell me where Phillip Crane lives?"

"Oh!" cried Ariadne, impulsively, "you are his Aunt Barbara, aren't you? Oh, I am so glad to see you. But you are nearly a mile out of the way. You should have taken the road to the left of the station instead of that to the right."

"I'm afraid I can't walk much further to-night," said Aunt Barbara, dejectedly. "I've the rheumatiz in my left knee and it's a dreadful job to get around, and—"

"You must not try to-night," said Ariadne, gently. "Come home with me. I am Ariadne Brown. I live in a little farm house close by and keep house for my Uncle Joe. I am engaged to Phillip, you know," with a very pretty little blush, "so it is all the same as if you went to him. And I am quite sure that Uncle Joe and I shall be better company for you than old Mrs. Miller, where Phillip boards. Take my arm, Aunt Barbara, please, and we shall soon be there."

The little farm house kitchen was very cosy after the chill and darkness of the spring twilight. Uncle Joe beamed a warm welcome and Ariadne got the tea ready almost before Aunt Barbara had realized that she had at last reached a haven of rest. And when the simple meal was over and Aunt Barbara sat looking at the girl, she broke out abruptly:

"So you're the young woman that's engaged to my sister's son, are you?"

Ariadne smiled assent.

"Did you know that I was coming to live with him?"

"Yea."

"Humph!" said Aunt Barbara. "Most girls don't want grumpy old women to come between them and their lovers."

"But you won't come between us, Aunt Barbara," said the girl, brightly. "You will be like a mother to me, and I have no memory of my mother," she added, with a sudden moisture suffusing her eyes. "And besides, I want you to help convince him."

"Eh?" said Aunt Barbara.

"He wants to postpone our marriage," said Ariadne, "he thinks he is too feeble to burden me with the care of a husband who can earn nothing to help out the family purse. But I have a plan, Aunt Barbara,—such a plan! There's the Dean farm I could buy for \$1,200, and \$1,000 of the money could go on mortgage. And it is just adapted for raising poultry and small fruits and we could fill it with boarders in summer. Oh, you don't know what a famous cook I am, Aunt Barbara, when I really try. And Phil will gain his strength soon, when once he is free from care, and can spend all his time in the fresh open air. Uncle Joe is to be married to the Widow Butler next month, so he won't want me any more to keep house for him, and you will be there to aid my inexperience, Aunt Barbara. Of course, we shall have to run in debt — just at first, I mean. But if God gives us health and courage, that won't be long. Don't you think my plan is a practicable one? Oh, Aunt Barbara, do you say that you think it can be done?" pleaded the pretty special advocate.

"We'll try," said the old lady, rather huskily, "we'll try what we can do. You are a good, brave girl, my dear. I am glad that my nephew has been fortunate enough to win such a heart of gold as yours is. And I am gladder still that you and he are not afraid of the old woman

who has come to sit down, like an ancient crow, on your hearthstone. We'll go to look at the Dean property the first thing to-morrow morning."

Aunt Barbara approved of the plan and Ariadne bought the house, paying down the \$200, which was her sole little fortune, and executing a bond and mortgage for the remainder of the purchase money. Then she and the old lady set themselves diligently to work to fit it up and make it as homelike as possible. So that when Phillip Crane saw it first it looked a very little paradise in the soft May afternoon.

"Do you think I have been very presumptuous?" said Ariadne, timidly. "But I am so sure, Phillip—so very sure—that we shall succeed."

"Any man would succeed," said Aunt Barbara, "who is blessed with a wife like this girl."

They were married, and on the wedding day the old lady gave her new niece a flat leather case.

"It's the title deed of the house, my dear," said she. "I have bought it for you. And you'll find a thousand dollars in the inner pocket. That's to set your dairy farm going."

"Aunt Barbara!" cried Ariadne and Phillip, both in the same breath.

"Oh, yes, I know," nodded the old woman. "You thought I was as poor as poverty, but I had a little money of my own laid up, though no one ever dreamed of it, and I don't know

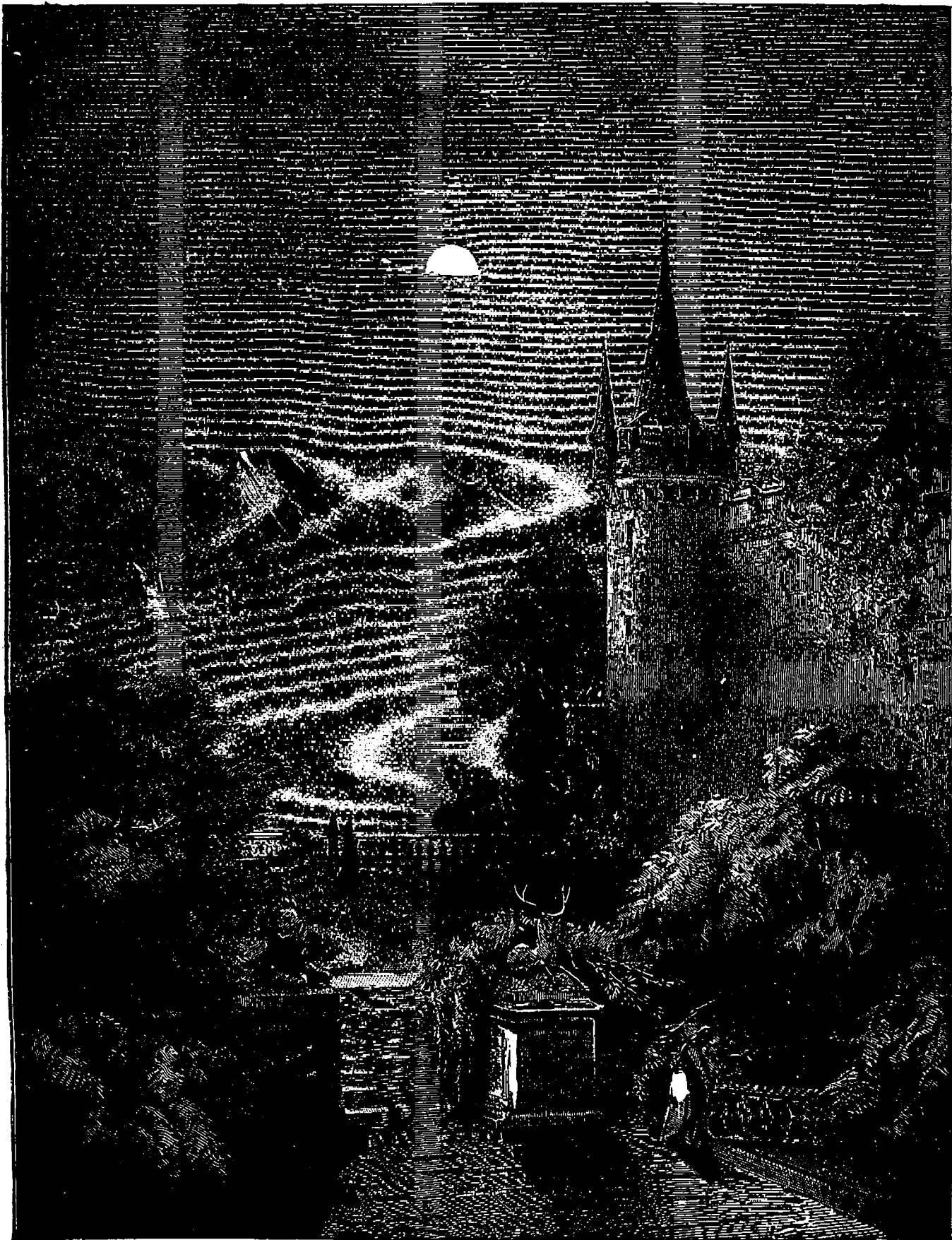
that I can spend it better than by giving it to you young people. There! Don't thank me. I hate being thanked."

"But we may feel thankful in our hearts all the same," said Ariadne, with tears in her eyes. "Oh, Phillip! didn't I tell you that Providence would smooth our way if only we had good courage?"—*Ex.*

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