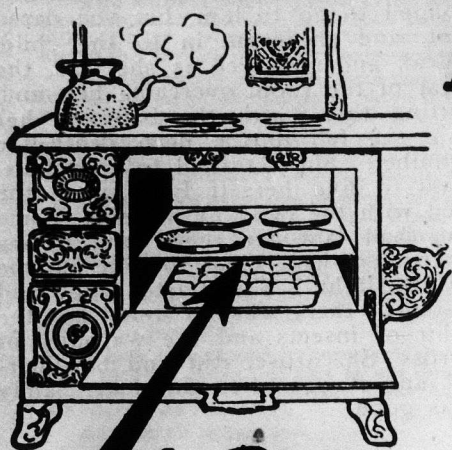


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with secret pain and anxiety her increasing pallor and weakness. The hopes he had at first cherished of Sandy's return died slowly out, but he hardly confessed it, even to himself.

Autumn passed into winter, and winter into spring, and in the meantime, as Molly faded, the little boy thrived and waxed strong. He could now toddle about on his sturdy legs, and his prattle and laughter filled the lonely cabin. His mother watched his development eagerly.

"See, Bob!" she would say, "see how he walks, an' how plain he can talk! What'll Sandy say when he sees him?"

Then she would hold up before the round baby-eyes a distorted, shaggy likeness of Sandy, which he had once exhibited with great pride on his return from Gordonsville, and try to teach the baby lips to pronounce "Dad-dy."

"He'll know him when he comes, Bob; see if he don't. He'll know his own daddy, won't he, precious man? And he'll be here by corn-plantin', Bob, sure."

And Bob, who always entered with a great assumption of cheerfulness into all her plans, would turn away with a sinking heart.

"Ef he's ever a-comin'," he would say to himself, "he'd better come pretty soon, or—" And then something would rise in his throat, and he could never finish the sentence.

The gray-brown woods had changed to tender green and purple, the air teemed with the sounds, and the earth with the tints of early spring. The corn was not only planted, but was already sending up sharp-yellow-green spikes out of the soft red loam, and yet Sandy had not returned.

A strange woman had taken Molly's place in the household, for Molly could no longer go about—could hardly sit at the window, looking down the lonely road or over the distant hills with her eager, hollow eyes. She had never complained, and up to this time had refused to see a physician. And now when one was summoned, he only shook his head in response to Bob's questions, and hinted vaguely at mental causes beyond his reach.

She lay for the most part with closed eyes, and but for the heaving of her breast one might have believed her no longer of the living, so white

and shadow-like had she become. She seldom spoke, but not a night fell that she did not call Bob to her side and whisper with upturned, anxious eyes:

"I reckon he'll come tomorrow, Bob, don't you?"

One evening, after a restless, feverish day, she woke from a brief nap. Her brother was seated by her side, looking sadly into her waxen face. She started up with a strange glitter in her eyes and seized his arm.

"Bob," she whispered, "he's comin'! He's most here! Go and meet him quick, Bob, an' tell him to hurry, to hurry, mind, or I shan't be here!"

The wildness in her face and voice deepened.

"Go, I tell you! Quick! He's comin'!" and she would have sprung from the bed.

"There, there, Molly," said her brother, soothingly, "jess lay right down an' be quiet an' I'll go."

She lay upon the pillow as he placed her, panting and trembling, and he went hastily out, pausing, as he went through the kitchen, to say a few words to the woman who sat at the table feeding the little boy.

"She's a heap wusser," he said, "an' out of her head. Keep a watch over her while I go for the doctor."

He ran quickly down the slope toward where the horse was tethered. As he reached the road he saw a tall form advancing through the dusk with rapid strides. Something in the gait and outline set his heart to throbbing; he stopped and waited. The man came nearer.

"Bob!"

"Sandy!"

The two men clasped hands. "Molly?" said her husband, brokenly. For answer Bob pointed silently toward the cabin, and Sandy passed up the slope before him. As he entered the little kitchen the child stopped eating and stared with wide-open eyes at the stranger.

"Dad-dy! dad-dy!" he babbled.

Sandy saw and heard nothing, but went blindly on into the inner room. There was a glad cry, and Molly was in her husband's arms.

"I knew ye'd come!" she said.

"Yes, darlin', I've come, an' I'll never—" The words died upon his lips, for something in the face upon his breast told him that Molly was listening to another voice than his.

The Hunter's Merry Moon.

Brown October and nut-brown woods,
And nobody sad or sober,
But the partridge, proud of her whirring brood,
And the sunburnt sportsman with gleaming eye,
And the farm boy's snare, secure and sly—
October!

Gay October and gilded woods—
What folly now to be sober!
When the fox-glove's hanging her yellow hoods,
And there's laughter and rustle of silken gowns,
And the country's full of the folks o' towns—
October!

Late October and frost-touched woods—
The children look wondrous sober!
For the squirrel is hiding his stolen goods,
Scolding away in the chestnut tall,
Where the brown burrs gape and the last nuts fall—
October!

—Elaine Goodale.

