

Basil shrank back as if she had struck him a blow, and turned with an imploring air to his sister. "Tell her, Maudie, I can't. Poor little woman, it seems so horribly cruel!" he whispered hoarsely.

Maudie needed no urging, unpleasant as was the task, and slipping her arm round the slight figure of Ella Neal, told her as gently and briefly as she could of the widowhood that was already two years old.

Just then Paul came hurrying from the berry-bush scrub on the opposite hill with two geese over his shoulder. He had seen the little party approaching, and returned home with all speed, going into a state of uproarious glee at the sight of his brother.

His coming drew off attention from Mrs. Neal, whose grief after all was more after the nature of chastened regret than poignant anguish, for she had so long believed her husband dead that the assured certainty of his demise was thus robbed of its sharpest pain.

It was to be a day of surprises, for hardly were the travellers housed, and recounting the trials and adventures of their journey, when Paul, who had been out to milk the cows, came hurrying indoors in a state of great excitement.

"There's a steam-tug coming into the harbour. Do you think it is bringing us any news of the wreck?" he said, his breath coming in panting gasps, whilst a whole world of delightful possibilities flashed