

in the paster and keep stiddy company with the cow all the time we wuz away.

But to resum the tail. Elam complained bitterly of Zeb when we got back; said he believed that he had milked more than his half; 'tennyrate they hadn't got nigh so much milk as usual. And his wife complained to me that the children hadn't enough to drink (they drank it instead of water), and she couldn't make custard pies and Dutch cheese, and didn't have cream enough for shortenin' (who ever hearn of depenin' on cream for shortenin' when you send your milk to the factory?). Ury had always kep' two quarts of milk out of the dairy for their use, but Mis' Craft used it lavish. But when they complained of Zeb I sez in a very dry way:

"Mr. Petrie has always had the name of bein' honest."

"Well," sez they, "we didn't have nigh so much milk as usual."

And I sez in a cool tone: "Like as not."

And Josiah sez in a dretful meanin' axent: "I presoom to say you didn't"; and Josiah added: "I have felt lately as if I wuz liable to have rumatiz come on any time and I've engaged Zeb to milk half right along."

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Oh, how Elam went on and objected to that and throwed the writin's in his face; but Josiah sez, "I don't see how the writin's is goin' to hender me from hirin' who I dum please?"

Well, Josiah said he took it out in solid comfort all he paid Zeb to see Elam squirm and act. Zeb lived right near by so he could watch and see Elam when he come in from his work, and he would git to milkin' jest afterward when Elam would want his supper, but Elam and his wife would leave everything and go out to the barnyard and watch him, and Zeb bein' kinder shiftless, and didn't care how much time he spent, he would keep 'em out there for hours, he would milk so slow and would stop every little while and contoggle up the milkin' stool, pretendin' that it wuz loose-jinted, or he would git up and drive the cow 'round to git a shadier spot to milk, and would keep 'em follerin' him and the cow 'round the barnyard for the longest while, and took solid comfort in plaguin' 'em, and then he and Josiah would laugh and shake their sides about it afterward.

Well, Elam and his wife couldn't afford to lose their time so, and they would send the children out to watch Zeb, one on each side on him, and Zeb made a practice of milkin' in their faces till they give that up. But mad as wet hens they wuz, all on 'em.

Not havin' much to do that summer I got down my big spinnin'-wheel and some rolls and spun up quite a lot of yarn, and I wuz spinnin' away one mornin' when I hearn my pardner and Elam havin' a controversy right under the buttery, and I went in, not knowin' what might take place. There wuz a big grapevine there that we thought a sight on; it bore beautiful sweet grapes and sights of 'em, and bein' in our garden Elam couldn't claim any of 'em. It shaded the winder beautiful. Josiah had made a practice of pounding up bones and enrichin' the vine with 'em, and with dishwater and suds, and he wuz emptyin' a pail of dishwater there, and Elam had follered him and told him "they didn't have half slop enough for the pigs, and he thought he ort to have half of our dishwater." And my pardner yelled out, not bein' able to stand only jest so much: "You tarnal fool, you; don't you want half of Samantha? Don't you want half of her work?"

"Well," sez Elam, "I hain't said anything about it, but seein' we wuz to have half of everything it seems as if she might spin a few hanks of yarn for us; my wife hain't much of a spinner."

"Well, I'll see you in Tunket before she or I will do

a minute's work for you, you old land shark, you!"

But I spoke out from where I wuz. They couldn't see me, but my voice sounded out deep and noble: "Josiah, be calm!"

And he, bein' so excited through his ardent affection for me, turned 'round and told me to "shet up!"

But I didn't lay it up ag'inat him, knowin' that it wuz his devoted love and desire to protect me that made him so fraxious. But I kep' on counsellin' him from day to day to be calm, and more'n half the time he would tell me he shouldn't be calm and I couldn't make him, his tribulations with Elam wuz such.

But I knowed that the year would soon pass away like a tail that wuz told and then we should be red on him. And the days and weeks did go by. Another year stretched out before us; the farm fields lay broad and helpless at our feet, the stock had even increased in numbers, and all to take care on another year, and what wuz to be done? Help wuz scarce. Josiah rid the country to try to find somebody that he could hire. But, as farmers told him, there wuzn't anybody to hire. Lots of men wuz leavin' the'r farms and movin' to town, but Josiah hated to, hated to like a dog.

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Along the last of the year Elam begun to be dretful good to us, tryin' to make us willin' to let the place to him another year. In sugarin' time he gin us, I really believe, pretty nigh half the syrup, though Josiah stuck to it that he watered the sap. But he did uncommon well for him.

And he offered us his half of the mair time and ag'in, and as for the cow, he said of his own accord he thought Josiah ort to milk more'n half; he wuz willin' to have him milk three-quarters of it some of the time. But as the cow didn't give hardly any milk, not much more than a teacupful, I told Josiah that it wuzn't any great gift, and he didn't pay any attention to it. He wuz baitin' us so we both knew, but the bait didn't take; the trap kep' empty. Josiah said that rather than keep Elam another year he would let the farm run to the commons.

And I said I would ruther rig up a gypsy cart, drawn by a hull mair, and tie a hull cow behind and set off to roam the country rather than have Elam there another year. And so we both felt.

But yet what should we do? Josiah couldn't do the work, and wouldn't leave the farm.

Well, just as things looked the darkest Josiah come home one night bringin' a letter from Ury and Philury. Moses had married ag'in; the brilliant Western expectations had petered out; they wuz both homesick and wanted to come back. A letter wuz writ back before Josiah eat a mou'ful, and we sent it that very night. So the next time Elam begun to sort o' sympathize with Josiah, and tell how perfectly impossible it wuz to hire a man for love or money, Josiah told him that a man wuz hired and comin, in time to do the spring's work. Elam wuz fairly stunted and didn't know what to do, and Josiah and I didn't pity him at all, but finally he got a place lumberin' up in the big woods. He had to go two weeks ahead to git the job, but we wuz glad to let him off.

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And it wuz on a fair afternoon in May when Nater and I wuz both dressed up to welcome 'em—she in her new pale green suit, and I in my new chocklate and white gingham, and barred muslin apron—that Josiah got back from the train with 'em.

I wuz standin' on the piazza with welcomin' smiles, and my apron over my head, and he called out just as he driv into the yard:

"Here they be, Samantha, hull and sound, and I am hull and sound," sez he, standin' up in the democrat,