

day, and feel that he regarded her with suspicion and dislike. Could he feel otherwise, when he watched her every movement with such grave eyes, and always was so stern and silent to her? The silence during meals was so hard to Ruth to bear, that she could not eat; she felt inclined to scream out, to do something desperate. Ah! how hard it was to work on and never see or speak to any bright creatures of her own age. Aunt Janet grew more feeble and dependent every day; she whimpered and was miserable if Ruth were long out of her sight. How different it would have been if only Cousin Eli had been kinder! Sometimes when she longed for home and youth and merriment, tears would fill her eyes, and she would retire to have a hearty cry.

Aunt Janet's dim eyes never saw that Ruth drooped; Eli saw it, and was at a loss how to prevent it.

There was not much that Ruth *did* or *was* that Eli did not see. He came and went with anything but his ordinary precision. Sukey laughed and said aloud "the master was in love." Ruth shivered and vaguely wondered with a pitying thought, who could be the object of Cousin Eli's affection.

There was a great deal of work to be done about the house, and Ruth conscientiously fulfilled her duties. She arose early, and made the lazy Sukey bestir herself. Eli frequently stood in silence watching Ruth's busy movements in the dairy. Ruth, too busy to notice him, or too preoccupied, would work on. Sometimes the rising sun would shine on her bent head, and make her hair a mass of ruddy gold. One day she tried to lift a weight too heavy for her. Eli raised it for her. It was the first act of kindness he had shown her, and she turned round on him with a grateful "Thank you, Cousin Eli."

"You must not overstrain yourself," said Eli. His voice was husky. Ruth thought it gruff and stern.

"I'll try not," she said meekly; he turned away silently and went out.

He was home early that day. He told Aunt Janet the hay was ready to load, and that she had better come down and see it. As he spoke he looked at Ruth, too shy to say to her he wanted her to come. Ruth, as usual, as far from Eli as she could get, at the same table, hearing no invitation in his voice, did not look to see it in his face.

"I'll come, Eli," said Aunt Janet, nodding her head. Eli drew near to Ruth.

"Is your work done?" he said. He meant to be kind,—he was trying to break down the barrier which kept Ruth so far from him. How should she know this? To her his question was offensive, his voice as rough and unkind as ever.

"I have never finished," she said sadly. She looked up at him timidly with a quiver in her lips. He coughed in an uneasy manner.

"The work *must* be done," he said, in an apologetic voice.

She thought it hard and unfeeling; she went out into the kitchen. Piles of clean clothes were waiting to be folded; she put her head down in their midst and had a good cry. Never had she felt so strong a longing for a day of rest, a roll and toss up of the hay, a dance with merry girls, a long, listless hour in the yellow sunlight.

The afternoon passed on, the sunny hours dragged away. Aunt Janet was driven home from the fields, and the postman came bringing a letter for Ruth.

Eli's heart leaped for joy, as Ruth once more ran quickly down the path to meet him. He held out his hands to her, and a tender light beamed in his eyes. Ruth was too preoccupied to see this. She held out an open letter in her hand, and her face beamed with gladness, yet Eli noted sadly that the face was thin and pale, and that her eyes were red with weeping.