

when he was gone, eager when he was expected, and morbid when he did not come.

After a little he came seldomer. Debby said nothing, but she grew weaker. Even her father saw the black truth. She was in the last stages of consumption.

"Father didn't know why I wouldn't marry Jack," she said one day to her mother. Her father out in the kitchen, raised his head to listen. Presently her voice came again, husky and broken by pauses—"When I was in Toronto last year at Aunt Laura's, I went to a doctor and he said it was no use—there wasn't any chance. I couldn't bear to tell Jack—I couldn't bear to give him up all at once, and I thought maybe the doctor might be wrong—maybe I'd get better in the spring."

There was a great sob out in the kitchen, but the mother's eyes were tearless. And she had shed all her tears long ago, and now with burning eyeballs and tense nerves lived from day to day waiting for the end.

One day in April, Debby asked for Jack. It was three months since she had seen him. She did not know that the whole neighborhood was a-stir and a-buzz with the news that he was to be married in a little more than a week. "To some girl down the shore," the gossip ran.

Jack came. Debby's father met him. He drew him into the kitchen, closed the door and said:

"Ef ye let her know yer agoin' to be married, I'll kill ye Jack—just so sure 's you stand on that floor. We've kep' it from her up to now."

The young fellow, haggard and trembling, turned and passed into the room where the dying girl lay.

When he came out again the farmer stepped up beside him and

together they walked down the lane to the gate.

"It wuz a year ago," the father began, "that Debby stood out here an' told ye no. We saw her from the winder—me an' ma. Now yer going' to be married an' she's dyin' in there. Do you know why she wouldn't hev ye?"

"Yes," sighed Jack, "but I didn't know till to-day. I thought she didn't like me—I thought some one had come between us."

"She told ye how she found out she had consumption an' ud only be a drag on any man."

"Yes."

"An' did you tell her about bein' married?"

"No," answered Jack, and they parted with no more words.

The week passed. Monday was Jack's wedding-day. Debby went away on Sunday.

"It's good she's gone before to-morrow," said the mother brokenly, and the father nodded his head.

A week later they two sat lonely and sad in their big cheerless kitchen.

"Well, we've done with things on earth," sighed Mrs. Martin. "It's awful to be done with everythin' an' hev to go on livin' and doin' things, same's ever. It's better to be 'dead an' done with, than done with an' not dead.' There's the money we've scrimped an' saved—what's it wuth to us? We scrimped it out o' our blood an' out o' poor Debby."

"How scrimped it out 'n her?" the old man asked.

"We might have took her to furrin' parts, where it's warmer. Folks git better sometimes in them south countries; an' even if they don't git right smart, their folks can keep 'em longer than where it's cold. Seems to me we've murdered her."