

THE SOFT SUMMER NIGHT 11

of it? We love each other, dear, and we are rich. To-morrow night I shall be the richest girl in the world," she sighed tremulously.

"To-morrow night," he whispered. His arm tightened about her, his head dropped until his lips met hers and clung to them until the world was forgotten.

Far away in the night sounded the steady beat of a galloping horse's hoofs. Louder and nearer grew the pounding on the dry roadway until at last the rollicking whistle of the rider could be heard. Standing in the gateway, the silent lovers, their happy young hearts beating as one, listened dreamily to the approach.

"He has been in the village," said she, at length breaking the silence that had followed their passionate kiss. Her slender body trembled slightly in his arms.

"And he is going home drunk, as usual," added the youth sententiously. "Has he annoyed you lately?"

"We must pay no attention to what he says or does," she answered evasively.

"Then he has said or done something?"

"He came to the schoolhouse yesterday morning, dear—just for a moment—and he was not so very rude," she pleaded hurriedly.