

little time in collecting her senses, and in trying to remember what o'clock it was; then seeing Eli home for dinner, was greatly frightened. She bustled back and forth, trying with Sukey's assistance to produce a dinner. Eli meanwhile strode restlessly about the house; "she is getting past her work," he said wrathfully, looking on the dirt and disorder reigning everywhere, in the once model farm-house.

"Dinner is ready," called Aunt Janet.

He went downstairs, and ate heartily of the ill-cooked viands. Presently he said:

"You had better tell that girl to come."

"Your own cousin," murmured Aunt Janet, too low, happily, for Eli to hear.

"If she comes she will have to work, mind," Eli continued in a stern tone, for his thoughts were with those young ladies who had never been tired of pic-nics, hay-cart parties and the like. Such things did not suit him. Ruth must understand she was not permitted to come for such pleasures.

He rose and went slowly away, not quite certain as to whether he had done well in giving the girl permission to come.

And Aunt Janet wrote to Ruth.

"DEAR CHILD,—Come. Don't mind Cousin Eli—if he is a bit rough, he has a good heart. My hands are so stiff I cannot write more, dear Ruth.

"Your loving,

"AUNT JANET."

Ruth came.

Eli returned from work just about sunset. The red-tiled house glowed with deep red light. Eli stood for an instant at the garden gate, looking up the winding walk. It had rained, an April shower, and the trees were shaking down a profusion of gloriously colored drops, amber, green, and crimson, in the sunset gleams. As Eli stood leaning on the gate, a little creature ran down the path, catching the rain-drops on her

hair, red brown and golden, and shaking them away with a delighted laugh.

Eli stared absently at her. He had never seen anything so pretty before. He was shy, and too slow a man to show his best side on the spur of the moment.

"How do you do, Cousin Eli?" the girl began, in a friendly manner, putting out both hands in expectation of a hearty shake.

"So you are Ruth," he said grimly, and he put out his hand and took both hers, and looked in her face as much in awe and surprise as grimness. Ruth was not of quick perceptions; she only saw what was most evident to the eye—and she trembled as Eli spoke to her. The more Eli looked at her, the more he felt such a bright little spirit would fade and droop in his dull home. "You had better go back where you came from," he said gruffly, "it is *work*, not pleasure, in *this* house, I can tell you."

"I can work, cousin Eli," rejoined Ruth, with a sad expression in her face. She turned away and ran quickly back into the house. Eli went slowly into the stables. He was a long time before he came into the house. Sukey had to call him three times before he was ready for his supper. When he went in, he hardly knew the room; the table was prettily decorated with spring flowers; lettuces and radishes were daintily prepared for use. Aunt Janet, no longer depressed and timid, sat smiling with happiness.

"Ruth has done it all," nodded Aunt Janet, "and saved my old bones. Ah! so much she has saved me; and she is tired and gone to bed;" thus she talked on garrulously. Eli snapped up the lettuces with vicious bites; and his supper finished, went out again. He had never felt so uncomfortable for years.

What a sad and strange experience the life was at the farmhouse, to Ruth, who had come from a loving home circle! Strange to meet Eli day after