

woman cautiously. "We're supposed to be machines ; that's what we are !"

"But you must be interested !"

"I don't say but what we're human—it's no sin to be that. It's hard to keep things to ourselves sometimes. When the news came of Mr. Hardy breaking a blood vessel and not being married in consequence, it came very hard, when everyone was telling us reasons that we knew weren't the truth."

"The messages are telephoned to you from Shenfold ?" asked Laura.

"Yes, Ma'am, telephoned ; have you found what you wanted ? There's the telephone again !"

"Not yet."

"It's all there !" said Mrs. Toft as she went, leaving the door at the back of the shop open. This was Laura's chance.

It could only be by stupendous luck that she heard any news of Dick. But if she could get at the contents of a telegram this way, it would save her resorting to even meaner methods.

She leant against the counter, hardly daring to breathe, and looked out, from the stuffy shop, with its smell of bacon and coffee and dried herrings, into the Post-mistress's garden. There the bees hummed in the sweet sultans ; the butterflies danced round the delphiniums. What a day to come back to ! What must Dick be feeling ? Laura listened intently ; she found the sight of lupins, and larkspurs, and hollyhocks distracting, and she shut her eyes ; she wished Mrs. Toft would speak louder. What was she spelling ?

"Dick," spelt Mrs. Toft. "D-i-c-k ? Yes, Dick."

Laura held her breath, "Arrive to-night," said Mrs. Toft ; "that all ?"