

"Thursa cares nothing for him, and I would gladly die to save him pain!" she whispered hoarsely.

She tore off her collar roughly and threw it from her; she took down her hair and brushed it almost savagely; then she went to the open window, and, leaning on the casement, listened to the rustling of the wheat. It no longer sang to her of peace and plenty, but inexorable, merciless as the grave itself, it spoke to her of heart-break and hopes that never come true.

In September Arthur went to England. After he had gone, Martha went about her work with the same quiet cheerfulness. She had always been a kind-hearted neighbour, but now she seemed to delight in deeds of mercy. She still studied with the school-master, who daily admired the bravery with which she hid her heartache. Martha was making a fight, a brave fight, with an unjust world. She would study — she would fit herself yet for some position in life when her parents no longer needed her. Surely, there was some place where a woman would not be disqualified because she was not beautiful.

Arthur had written regularly to her. Looking ahead, she dreaded the time when he would cease to write, though she tried to prepare for it by telling herself over and over again that it must surely come.

Arthur's last letter came in November, and now with Christmas coming nearer, Martha was lonelier than ever for a word from him. The week before Christmas she looked for his letter every day. Christmas