

*The Village Gossips—Kindred Spirits.*

coming!" A loud laugh from all parties was the answer to this; and as the worthies progressed up the lane they got out of Dorothy's hearing, who had, however, had quite enough of the conversation.

"Well," she thought, standing with the bucket in her hand, "John is right enough; I'll never have anything to do with them again; to go and say such things the minute after they've been so smoothed-tongued; but I've learnt a lesson, and I'm glad of it. What could have kept 'em in the lane all this time! They might have been down at the village twice over."

Dorothy didn't know that, just as they left her door, they had met a kindred spirit—one of the company of true gossips—to whom weather, comfort, health, time, duty, husband, children, and home, are mere trifles, compared with the delights of a long talk of scandal. To her they had retailed all that they had told Dorothy, added much which they assured her Dorothy had told them, but of which Dorothy was equally innocent and ignorant.

When she returned to the cottage she found John at the door: the night was growing dark, and the ground was slippery. A misgiving that she might possibly have slidden into the brook had made him determine to go in search of her; but when he saw her safe he returned to his seat, and allowed her to

fetch the wood in. "She won't get any harm that way," he thought.

The evening passed. John was silent, so was Dorothy; but it was an easier matter for John than his wife; she had the usual share of woman's love of talk, and was by no means given to sulk. The children were in bed, and Dixon was knocking the ashes out of his pipe, when his wife said, "John, I promise you I won't listen to gossip again—I won't indeed." John saw by her look that she was in earnest. "I won't *indeed*," she repeated; "I think you're quite right; I might have sent those women away, and I wish I had; but I'll never harbour 'em again, I promise you that."

"Well, then, there's an end on't," said John, "and we're of one mind, as we ought to be."

"I'm sure I didn't mind much what they said; but I know no good comes of talk, and them as'll tattle of one'll tattle of another. I won't be taken so again this way, I promise you, John."

Now, Dorothy had great trouble in keeping in the secret cause of her hearty conversion to John's opinion; but she was ashamed of confessing that his words had been verified in her own ears, almost as soon as he had uttered them; and her family soon showed the wisdom of this resolve.