

They walked through the plantation side by side. The ground was still soft with the winter's rains, but everywhere the sunlight came sweeping in, up the glade and across the many stretching arms of tender blossoming green. The ground was starred with primroses, and in every sheltered nook were violets. A soft west wind blew in their faces as they emerged into the country lane. Below them was the valley, hung with a faint blue mist; all around them the song of birds, the growing sounds of the stirring season. Stephen Hurd came cantering by, and stopped for a moment to speak about some matter connected with the estates.

"My love to Letty," Wilhelmina said graciously, as he rode off. Then she turned to Macheson.

"Stephen Hurd is a little corner in your house," she remarked.

"In our house," he protested. "I should never have considered him if he had not worked out his own salvation. If he had reached me ten minutes later——"

She gripped his arm.

"Don't," she begged.

He laughed.

"Don't ever brood over grisly impossibilities," he said. "The man never breathed who could have kept you from me. Across the hills home, or are your shoes too thin?"

He swung open the gate, and they passed through, only to descend the other side, along the broad green walk strewn with grey rocks and bordered with gorse bushes, aglow with yellow blossom. They skirted the fir plantation, received the respect-