

"Don't do nothin' agin' her pa. She's young yet. Mebbe she'll come 'round herself. Goodness knows it's hard enough when a woman marries to her likin,' let alone when goin' clear agin' the feelin's."

"That's all stuff. She'd like him well enough ef she found out she wuz married to him an' there wan't nothin' else to do!"

"I ain't so sure pa. There's ways o' bein' mighty unhappy."

"You don't like Jack Hanner. It's you been settin' up Debby."

He sprang out from behind the stove, six feet tall in his stockings and grasped his little wife by the arm.

"I ain't," she cried jerking away, "an' you jist shet up an' set down."

"Well, mind you don't, that's all," he answered. "I don't want no supper. I'm goin' to bed."

He paddled up the stairs. His wife heard the boards creak now and then as he bore on them with his heavy stockinged feet. She heard him stirring about his room overhead and then all was still.

Debby came down wearily. She had been crying and her whole figure drooped with sadness.

"Can't ye eat nothin'?" asked the anxious mother, as Debby pushed away her plate. "Let me make you a piece of toast, an' bring yer cup an' saucer to the fire; you're shiverin' back there. It's gettin' colder out, too."

The girl sipped her tea for a while and then she said suddenly, "Oh, I got a letter from Aunt Laura to-day. I'll read it. It went right out of my head when I came in."

"So she wants ye down again this winter," the mother said.

"Yes," folding the letter, "but I don't want to go. Father'll be so down on me now, an' I don't want to leave you."

"It's queer," she went on presently, "what funny notions city-folks have of farmers. They think they have lovely lawns and shade trees and just lie on the grass in the summer, and pick wild flowers in the spring, and go fishing and have pic-nics. And they think they get lots of cream and butter and eggs, and live on ham and chicken and honey, instead of apple sauce and bacon."

"Farmin' wouldn't pay ef folks wa'n't ca'ful, an' it's real pitiful to see 'em right an' left losin' their land, an' all from livin' too high, an' eatin' the profits, steady turnin' them into money."

There were two hundred and fifty acres in the Martin farm, and Robert had thirty thousand dollars out at interest. He had made it out of the timber and out of the land. Every cent was an honest one and was earned by work and sweat-drops. He was old now. His interest in life was flagging as his health decayed. All his hopes had centered around his child—this frail girl with a flush on her cheeks and a brightness in her eyes that meant only one thing, and that, soon.

The neighborhood heard that Debby had refused Jack and the neighborhood disapproved of Debby.

Then the news went around that Debby was sick, "failin' fast," they said one to another, and all understood the truth at once.

Debby's father alone remained in the dark. "She's as well as ever she was," he would say. "A little peaked, but thet's temper an' stayin' in the house. If she'd go out, she'd be all right an' git over that trick o' barkin' so at nights."

Jack came to see them often at first. Debby was constrained when he was near her, feverishly anxious