

geography. And you are an excellent cook and a good housekeeper, and you've managed for Mr. Parsons ever since your mother died."

"Me!" gasped Irene, "all alone?"

"I would come and be your first boarder," said Miss Merritt. My present home is too far to walk, now that the warm weather has set in. I must make some change."

"But I ain't got no furniture," said the girl.

"I will lend you a little towards that," said Miss Merritt. "I can take it out in board afterward. Matting for the floors and cheap pine furniture can't cost much. City boarders care more for fresh milk, plenty of fruit and strict cleanliness than they do for style."

Irene's eyes sparkled.

"Two of the Jersey cows are mine," said she. "And there's an early strawberry pasture on the hillside just beyond the old house, and lots o' blackberry tangles all along the river shore. Do you think we could venture, Miss Merritt?"

"I don't know, why not," said the school teacher reflectively.

"What!" roared old Medad Parsons, when the first load of furniture passed under the willows along the road beyond the doorway: "Irene furnishin' up that old ramshackle shell of a house for boarders? Why, we've got boarders here, hain't we? Four of 'em, for hayin' time. An' who's goin' to cook an' wash an' scrub for me, I'd like to know?"

"Not Irene, I guess," said old Mrs. Simmons, who stood by the gate. "Irene's got tired o' the sort o' way you manage matters, Deacon Parsons."

"But, stuttered the deacon, 'it'll cost me a dollar an' a half a week to get Nancy Nutting here."

"I shouldn't wonder," said Mrs. Simmons.

"I guess," snarled Parsons, "Irene'll find I've got a word to say on this 'ere question."

But Irene had more spirit than he had given her credit for.

"I've got to have clothes," said she,

"and I've got to earn a little money of my own. And I'm goin' to earn it this way."

"You hain't no business in that house nor on that land," snarled the old man, "unless you rent it of me."

"It's my mother's land, not yours," flashed out Irene.

"And I'm your guarddeen until you're twenty-one!"

"Wall, if you want to take it into the law courts, I'm willin'," said Parsons. "I guess you'll find out I'm right. And what's more, I leased that land last week to Squire Tolland's son. He's a notion to go into the tobacco-raisin' business."

"But," gasped Irene, "I've papered the house and painted it and furnished it! And my city boarders are coming next week."

"I can't help that," chuckled Parsons. "You might a took counsel with me. But look-a here, Irene. I don't want to see ye cornered. You can let your boarders come here to this house. It's a deal comfortabler and more sightly than the other one, and the hay hands can hev them little chambers in the barn loft. Thar's room for all of 'em."

"And you will allow me for my work?" eagerly questioned Irene.

"I'll allow ye your board and clothes," said the flinty-hearted old man. "An' that's all ye're wuth."

"No," said Irene firmly. "If I am to be your maid-of-all-work, father, I must have a maid-of-all-work's wages."

"Well, ye won't," indifferently spoke Deacon Parsons, as he put his clay pipe on the window-sill.

And as he watched Irene go out of the room, he muttered to himself:

"I guess I've got her this time."

Quietly and silently, like one smitten by a deadly blow, the girl put on her hat and walked quietly up the dusty road to the old farmhouse where her mother had been born.

The windows were all open, the pretty muslin curtains fluttered in the wind, the cinnamon roses were all in bloom.

In the kitchen the carpenter was