

reason for it. Now as soon as Eli had reached the door, and had given one glance at her which was intended to put an end at once and forever to such a subject for conversation as the present, she gave him a little deprecatory look, and said apologetically, "Ruth is not like Susan or Jennie, Eli?"

Then came the explosion. Heaven knows the train of events called forth by those names.

"*Mrs. Janet Parker!* I will not be married by any young woman, Ruth, Susan, or Jennie or—"

Expression failed him; he glared angrily at Aunt Janet, stood for a moment to see if she dared reply; finding she did not, strode off to his work.

Eli had some foundation for his dislike to "girls," since so many had clearly shown him their design to capture him. No matter how rough his behavior, how cutting his remarks, how disagreeable his conduct, his broad acres excused him for anything. It cannot be disguised that Aunt Janet was a match-maker, and had invited all the pretty, plain, and poor girls she knew, to stay with her, hoping that Eli might offer his home to one of them. She had recently discontinued the habit, under protest from Eli.

It was enough for Eli that Ruth had written to offer to stay at the farm: such an offer condemned her, to his mind, and he had indignantly refused to read the letter. Recollections crowded upon him, of girls saucy, pretty, merry, fashionable! He would keep the farm free from such inroads.

Aunt Janet, much relieved at Eli's quick departure, called Sukey in a shrill voice, to clear away the breakfast things; then took up her knitting and went to bask in the sunlit porch. But the knitting was neglected as Aunt Janet slowly pulled forth a letter (from an under pocket of enormous dimensions), and read it over and over again, as if she loved every word in it.

Such a simple letter!

"DEAR AUNT JANET,—We are very poor at home now, and mother and the girls can easily do the dairy work without me. I have made up my mind to be supporting myself. I think I could be a very good housekeeper, for I am fond of it. I should so like to come and visit you for awhile and help you through the summer season. Then I should have more experience to go among strangers. Uncle Peter wants me to teach school, but I don't know anything. Mother cries about my leaving home, but work is no hardship to me, and especially if it lightens the burden at home. Besides that, I long to see you again, dear godmother; there are not many in the world as fond of me as you are, and I love you ever.

"RUTH."

"And Eli won't hear of it," whimpered the old Aunt, and a tear trickled down her cheek. She wiped it away, but uselessly. "I have no one to love me," she went on.

"Sukey, you lazy girl, the hens are in the kitchen." Stirred into momentary energy, Aunt Janet tottered into the kitchen. Hens were her especial abomination; her rheumatic limbs refused to chase them; her feeble voice was useless to drive them from her sanctuary. Sukey lazily flapping her duster at them, cleared the kitchen. Aunt Janet returned to the porch, relapsed into mournings over Ruth's letter, and ere long fell asleep.

Eli came home to dinner, found Aunt Janet sleeping, hens cawing about the kitchen, and Sukey invisible. He took up the open letter which had fluttered to the ground and carefully read it through. He smiled grimly at the ignorant writing and imperfect spelling and composition, but something earnest and true in it, struck him as rather pleasant. He began to read it again; he was a slow man, and had not quite understood all Ruth meant. Aunt Janet awoke. The poor old lady was some