

Jack, in his quiet way, kept his own counsel until the winter came again, and the usual evening visiting was resumed. Big parties gathered together at White Lees and Kellson's, and it was at one of them that Jack spoke to Mary of what had been in his heart for some time.

"I may seem to be in a hurry," he said, "but I don't want anyone else to come along and take you."

"I would have waited for you, Jack," whispered Mary, "as long as you pleased."

Mrs. Danby and her husband, when spoken to, approved, and so did Ralph when he had got over his first feeling of astonishment. There had never been any love-making going on, as far as he had seen, and he could not understand it. Charlie, when he was enlightened, said he was glad. He admitted he had thought a little bit of Mary himself, and had endeavoured to show it—without satisfactory results.

"I told her one day," he said with comic lugubriousness, "that I was fond of her, and she said I was not to be foolish, and that settled me. I have quite got over the shock she gave me. Well, Sam and I will take up our land in the autumn and my farm will keep my mind occupied. There are other girls about, and if none around here will have me I must import a wife from England. The old country has lots of girls to spare, and a sensible one would prefer life out here. We haven't any theatres or ordinary places of amusement, but we have a bracing air that makes us feel as if life is indeed worth living. The work we do is a joy to us, and our quiet amusement gives us all the relaxation we need. Our life isn't mere existence."

"How the women and girls used to chatter about dress and other idle nonsense in Meadhill," said Sam, "and men, too, possibly. Think of the pale-faced boys, earning poor pay, smoking cigarettes and lounging idly about, if doing nothing worse, and most of them living at home, at the expense of their parents. I can't boast of having