

canst thou have done it? Well, well, it is to be expected that big husbands must make big rents in their *blouses*."

And then the sewing and the singing would be resumed.

Pierre's cottage, amidst its sheltering trees, stood away from the village street, but, no matter how busy Babette might be, her listening ear was quick to catch her husband's footfall, and up she would spring to meet him. For these two the day had now reached its goal: and what pleasant evenings they had! There was so much to say, and plan, and do, and not for themselves alone, for Pierre and Babette literally radiated happiness. The neighbours began instinctively to turn to Pierre for help and advice.

"He is so reliable, *le sage Pierre*," they would say; and Babette was known throughout the village as "*le P'tit Soleil*."

The months passed and spring merged into summer.

Then came one hot, drowsy day, when not a breeze stirred the leaves of the trees, nor demanded homage from the rushes at the water's edge. The rivulet itself, which usually danced along through village and meadows, looked inert and listless; the birds seemed to have fallen asleep over their chirping; the cattle lay either in the shade, almost too indolent to chew the cud, or they sought the water, and there, wading knee-deep, stood motionless, save that now and again a lazy whisk of the tail intimated a desire to be rid of the tiresome flies, the sole active living things under that summer sun.

Babette was glad when at last, one could take her work and sit under the trees. In spite of the heat, she was supremely joyous on this day; her face had never ceased to dimple nor her eyes to laugh, and she was looking forward to the delightful moment when she would give her Pierre the pleasantest possible piece of good news. A hundred times did she picture his face of loving pleasure, and hear his words of ardent tenderness. Ah! there was his footstep; but so much slower than usual: it was this intense heat that made him lag. Why was he making straight for the house instead of coming toward her customary seat? Babette ran from under the shelter of the trees to intercept him—and all the laughter faded from her face.

"Thou art ill, my Pierre! Tell me what ails thee."

For answer, Pierre took his little wife in his arms and drew her indoors. He was white to the lips.

"Thou canst be brave, *cherie*. Germany has declared war against us, and I am called to fight for my country and for thee," he said with simple directness.

For a moment, Babette seemed turned to stone; she neither moved nor spoke, then, a look of dread taking possession of her face, with a long, quivering sob she drooped on her husband's breast like a broken flower.

"*Mignonne* thou wilt be a soldier's brave little wife, and the