

As she plied her hoe leisurely but dexterously, she seemed a vision of health and physical beauty. She was a charming vivacious young lady, and plenty of her friends stood ready to vouch for that. "Jeems" was a sturdy built, but plain-looking young man. No one could criticize his industry, for few could equal his carefulness and dexterity at farm work. Yet his external appearance, owing to neglect of new-fangled frills, was verdant in the extreme. As he labored this morning, the straight, even furrows, the well-groomed and sleek horses, the carefully arranged harness and the workmanlike air of the young man himself were easy to distinguish. He was no slouch in any degree. He worked slowly and steadily, turning his team with a graceful curve at the line fence, and resting occasionally at the other end. If he was aware of his bewitching neighbor's contiguity, he made no sign whatever. It may have been an accident, but just as Melinda came near the fence, his team stopped and failed to obey the signal of reins and voice to turn around upon the next furrow. It was an awkward moment for Jeems as the pair could not help seeing each other, and Miss Jones seemed good-naturedly inclined for company just then. A very pleasant voice saluted him in response to his awkward acknowledgment of her bow.

"Good mornin' *Mister* Parker. You are workin' hard this mornin'!"

"G—good mornin' *Mis'*—*Mis'* L—Lindy. Oh! n—no! I—I—I ain't workin'. No! I ain't—none too hard—I—I ain't. Y—you be—be—be workin' some y—yourself I—I seen lately—"

"Oh, no! *Mister* Parker, I ain't doin' much at all. I like hoein' just fur pastime—fur exercise you know. It's nice to get some sunlight. This be a real fine mornin', ain't it?"

"Yep! *Mis'* L—Lindy. I—I—gosh! Yep it's fine. I—I think, Yep! Them be fine taters there. Gosh! Yep! I ain't hed time to look toward them before, I—I ain't."

"Why, now! *Mr.* Parker, seems to me you always worked too hard. We never see you to parties, or visitin' nowheres.

What have you been doin' all the time? You air a eatin' yourself to death with workin'. You orto see the young folks same as I do."

"Gosh! *Mis'* Lindy, I—I ain't got time. I—I—you know I ain't at home to young folks same as you be. I never hev time, an' I'm—I'm allus tired when night comes anyhow."

"Well, now! I declare! That is too bad, *Mr.* Parker. You *must* change your ways. You really *must* make friends with folks. Won't you? Now, you aren't a long ways off. You orter come over—come over and call on us. You live so close and hain't ever been over. Small wonder you go nowheres, when you don't drop over to see your nearest neighbors. Now, *Mr.* Parker, do take my advice and spruce up; you aren't a little boy any more."

"I guess—I guess *Mis'* Lindy—you're 'bout right. I—I hain't—I hain't figgered on it much. Yep! you're 'bout right, you—you—be."

"I rather think *Mr.* Parker, I ought to give you a regular talkin' to. It's time you had it for you've been behavin' so different from what you ought to been. You can't guess how sorry people be that you ain't 'quainted with 'em, an' you kin make friends purty quick, if you'll only try."

"Wall! *Mis'* Lindy! Maybe I—I hain't doin' right, and perhaps I could try to see folks a leetle. I hain't seen you very offen."

"No, indeed, *Mr.* Parker! you haven't; not since we went to school together. I know you were awful shy in them days, but that's not sayin' you hain't that way yet, be you? Mebbe it were because *Mis'* Parker haven't no girls—same as I was, I hadn't a brother. Remember the time that dog chased us, when we were kids goin' to school? I hain't forgotten how you walloped that dog. I was awful skeered that time, and I never fergot it."

All this sounded very nice to Jeems. He was getting acquainted, and very much encouraged simultaneously. The feeling of diffidence he had hitherto experienced was modified a trifle. He had much more confidence in himself. The horses stood as if non-plussed, but patiently enough. They gazed upon the pair anxiously, as if won-