

the fightin', where's the guns, where's the killin' an' stabbin' an' glory? I would'nt be a woman soger."

The three dolts opened their eyes wider at this outburst, as if to take in the full magnitude of the idea.

"Dave's right," said the father approvingly; "they're only women sogers, after all, but some know how to fight too, I reckon, an' they're only takin' a rest now. The fightin's goin' on in the States. They're havin' a mighty hot time of it, too, an' crowds of boys are leavin' Kingston every day to join in."

Dave's face kindled, and he looked down the Kingston road as far as the horizon, as if he would like to burst the bars of distance and leap headlong into the battles.

"We ought to go, too," said Dab, boldly, and David, still bolder, ventured on the more daring remark:

"This place is too small for such a gang as we be. We could make somethin' fightin' and send it home to mam an' dad, instead o' starvin' here on 'taters and' corn."

There was a gasp from each of the boys at this bold opinion, and an expectation of seeing David laid senseless at their feet; but the father only laughed scornfully and started to his feet.

"Enough o' nonsense," said he, "an' off to yer work! It's well enough to talk, but the idea o' you lads earnin' yer own livin', or standin' up to fight alongside o' men! G'long, ye babies."

The boys accepted this estimate of their abilities with the meekness natural to them, but David grumbled all the afternoon in secret, and managed to communicate his own defiant spirit to his brothers before nightfall. It was impossible that the fever which had seized hold on these young hearts should escape the notice of the mother, but she did not see any evil consequences from it, and it troubled her not at all.

The stray hunter who had once brought important news to Luke, stopped one morning, on his way through the woods, to exchange a word of friendly greeting with Jael.

"Family all together yet," he said, "an' all well?"

"Yes," said Jael.

"Yer very slow in takin' up a good

chance, ma'am. 'Spose the war shet down on a suddint, whar'd ye be?"

"Four strappin' boys," continued he sadly, "growin' up useless in this hole, when they might be earning piles o' money for ye down South fightin' with the Yanks."

Every nerve in Jael's body tingled suddenly with a new, unknown pain, and a strange fear shook her strong body like an ague. Was this the key to the excitement which had seized upon her boys?

"Don't you go puttin' such thoughts into them chicks o' mine," she said, with repressed passion; "don't you do it, master George, or it'll be the worse for ye."

"Oh! it's done," said George laughing, "but I reckon they have'nt got spunk enough to face gun music. I told Luke two weeks ago, he could git two hundred dollars apiece for the boys in Kingston, an' he's a fool if he does'nt take it up."

He went away and left Jael standing bear-headed in the sun, yet chilly as if the winter's snow lay on the ground. What blackness was this coming over her dark life? What new sorrow was threatening her, who had suffered so much? They might have heard her loud cry of agony had they been less wrapped up in the subject of their going into the world, or seen her as she fled across the fields. They were too excited to notice her standing a few yards in their rear, but talked on until the whole story was burned into her heart and Luke himself had pronounced her sentence, when he said gaily:

"Well boys, we'll try it anyhow; to-morrow ye shall start for Kingston, an' if yer courage does'nt fizzle before ye get there, ye shall start for the war in soldiers' clothes in two days."

A shout of rapture from the boys, and the opening verse of a hymn from David, were rudely interrupted by the stern, wild figure which strode in among them silently. All but David and her husband shrank from her.

"Why, Jael," said Luke in surprise, "what's the matter with you, woman, be you gone crazy?"

"Naw," said Jael, flinging out the word like a bullet from a gun, "you and the boys are clean, stark mad though! What is't you would do with'em, Luke?"