

saw the spring,—a shallow well set in stones, with a jar of butter cooling in its white water. She brought a cup, and we drank. 'Delicious,' said Ermine. 'The true, spoiled-egg flavor! Four cups is the minimum allowance, Dora.'

'I reckon it's good for the insides,' said the woman, standing with arms akimbo and staring at us. She was a singular creature, with large black eyes, Roman nose, and a mass of black hair tightly knotted on the top of her head, but pinched and gaunt; her yellow forehead was wrinkled with a fixed frown, and her thin lips drawn down in permanent discontent. Her dress was a shapeless linsey-woolsey gown, and home-made list slippers covered her long, lank feet. 'Be that the fashion?' she asked, pointing to my short, closely fitting walking-dress.

'Yes,' I answered; 'do you like it?'

'Well, it does for you, sis, because you're so little and peaked-like, but it would n't do for me. The other lady, now, don't wear nothing like that; is she even with the style, too?'

'There is such a thing as being above the style, madam,' replied Ermine, bending to dip up glass number two.

'Our figgers is a good deal alike,' pursued the woman; 'I reckon that fashion ud suit me best.'

Willow Erminia glanced at the stick-like hostess. 'You do me honor,' she said, suavely. 'I shall consider myself fortunate, madam, if you will allow me to send you patterns from C—. What are we if not well dressed?'

'You have a fine dog,' I began hastily, fearing lest the great, black eyes should penetrate the sarcasm; 'what is his name?'

'A stupid beast! He's none of mine; belongs to my man.'

'Your husband?'

'Yes, my man. He works in the coal-mine over the hill.'

'You have no children?'

'Not a brat. Glad of it, too.'

'You must be lonely,' I said, glancing around the desolate house. To my surprise suddenly the woman burst into a flood of tears, and sinking down on the floor she rocked from side to side, sobbing, and covering her face with her bony hands.

'What can be the matter with her?' I said in alarm; and, in my agitation, I dipped up some sulphur-water and held it to her lips.

'Take away the nasty smelling stuff,—I hate it!' she cried, pushing the cup angrily from her.