

LE P'TIT SOLEIL

BY REBE MILLS.

This little story, founded on fact, is dedicated to the Women and Children of the Allies, who have given of their Dearest and Best, and in many cases have laid down their own lives for their Country during THE GREAT WAR.

IT was such a happy home ! Babette was positive there was not another like it, and still more positive that there was not another husband in the world like her clever, steady Pierre, strong as Hercules, yet gentle as a woman. Pierre would smile when she gave these opinions, and, taking her rose-like face with its soft brown eyes between his toil-hardened palms, say :

‘ *Mais si, ma mie !* There are many happy homes and many good husbands in the world—ah ! And many good little wives also : but there is only one good little wife who can make a happy home for me. ’

And strange to relate, upon this last point also, Babette was equally positive. It is true, Madame Bougon had said :

“ Wait a little. Troubles will come fast enough, and then we shall see whether turtle-doves have claws. ”

But who paid attention to the croaking of Madame Bougon ? Did not all the world know that her husband was a *mauvais sujet*, and that her sons were the plague of her life ? The poor woman ! Babette could well afford to be generous with her pity.

How quickly the days and weeks sped by ! They always do when folk are busy like Pierre and Babette. Pierre’s work took him out of doors nearly all day, whilst Babette took her here, there, and everywhere. It was wonderful, the amount of work that tiny house entailed on its little mistress. Of course everything had to be as spotless and dainty as—well, as Babette herself. As for the cooking, Babette was not contented unless the *bouillon* was fit to set before M. le Président himself. So, in and out, and round-about she tripped, smiles in her eyes and on her lips ; sometimes the smiles would break into a merry laugh as she fed her chickens, chiding them for ill-mannered fowls, as she watched them grab, and peck, and scuffle. When at last, all was really finished to her satisfaction, there was her own pretty person to be arranged, and then, she would settle herself in the cosy kitchen if the wind was fresh, or, if the spring sunshine was warm enough, in the porch where the tender green of a climbing vine was unfolding, and there her needle would fly in and out to the accompaniment of some lively *chansonnelle* sung in a soft cooing voice. This might suddenly be broken off with :

“ *He, mon gars !* here is a rent as big as a *marmite* ! Now, how