

"I certainly would have availed myself of your very kind offer, had I not only yesterday bought this place from Mr. Hastings on terms so easy that I think we shall be able to manage, even should there be a failure of crops once in a while. I am fortunate in my children; Helen is developing into quite a sensible woman, and Harry is my right-hand helper outside. He is quite delighted with the thought that by a reasonable amount of industry, he may, by the time he is of age, be able to pay for the place."

Miss Todd's eyes brightened as she said, "I am so glad to hear this good news. What a splendid fellow that Philip Hastings is! I wonder that he never married; he doesn't appear to be a woman-hater, and I think he would make an ideal husband. Mrs. Hicks says no man could be more unselfish and attentive to a woman's comfort than he is. She says she believes that he has loved somebody who was fool enough not to love him."

With a heightened color Mrs. Pierce remarked, "Unfortunately, love is not a feeling that can be forced. It is as free and unrestrained as the air we breathe."

"I believe that Mrs. Hicks was right when she said that Mrs. Pierce was the cause of that noble man's remaining single. What simpletons some women are! If a man is good-looking and has a smooth tongue, no matter how black his heart may be, he will have half a dozen girls falling in love with him at a time," thought Miss Todd as she drove home.