

"Oh, I can't! It's just like before the sun comes up in the morning,—the hills on the other side of the river show the bright sky through the trees, the water looks like gold, the houses seem to stand out with light all around them, in a splendid kind of a way. It's sunshine just agoing to come, like Roxy's smile, that isn't quite a smile, you know."

The father laughed, as he might have laughed at baby talk. Mark patted the young girl on the shoulder with:

"A poet in the family, I declare."

"A goose in the family," said Amanda. "A smile that isn't quite a smile is a sensible remark! You'd better go to school to Roxy. She's teaching one idiot now, and I don't know but she's got two." This last with a look at Mark.

As for Mrs. Hanks, she was not quite satisfied when she heard of the arrangement. She thought the colonel should have insisted on Mark's staying at home. But he would come to be somebody yet,—a presiding elder and may be a bishop. She was glad, for her part, that Roxy had taken her advice. It was a good deal better than marrying a Presbyterian, anyhow. Roxy would have a good and talented husband, and a Methodist, with real heart religion.

"Wait till the pie's cut before you say whether they's blackberries, or elderberries, or pisen poke-berries insides," said Jemima.

Twonnet tried to think the best when Roxy told her. But the knowledge that Roxy had of her friend's opinion of Mark was a wedge of estrangement between them. They visited each other, but their intercourse became more and more constrained. Each blamed the other for the cooling of a friendship which they had often vowed should be eternal. In such gradual dissolutions of eternal friendships, each party, feeling herself innocent, is sure that the other must be censurable. They never think of falling out with those deep and irresistible currents in human nature before the force of which we are all helpless.

The whole town was agitated by the news of the engagement. For it was news. What battles and bankruptcies are to a metropolis, such are marriages and deaths to a village. The match-makers were generally pleased; for there was romance in the wild stories of how Colonel Bonamy had quarrelled with his son about going to Texas, but had finally consented to the marriage and the mission. It was generally agreed that the old man was not "nigh so hard-hearted since his wife died." He might get over his infidelity yet, some day—though he did swear dreadfully, you know. Some thought that he meant to run for Congress, and wanted to get Mark out of the way and purchase the favour of the Methodists at the same time.

Mr. Highbury was delighted that his own words had weighed with Whittaker, and Mrs. Highbury rocked her little fat body to and fro,