

not only with Hannah, but with the widow Jones also, Hiram Jenks was a fearfully dangerous rival to your humble servant! Hiram could write Mrs. Jones's business letters as well as myself—and Hiram could milk better than any man or maid in those parts. Hiram could carry Mrs. Jones, chair and all, a quarter of a mile if she chose, and had actually carried her to the foot of the garden. Hiram lifted the clothes-basket for Hannah, filled bucket and boiler, and, in short, was a perfect Ferdinand to this fair Miranda. Hiram had got the prize for a rare lily, and also one for the fattest pig in Delaware County. Hens, chickens, ducks, geese, horses, cows, oxen, cats, dogs, birds, and bees all prospered under Hiram's care. So I was told. I was sick of the fellow's name before I had been twenty-four hours in the house. Hiram could sing—occasionally joined Hannah in the evening hymn. Hiram could play on the flute! One fact I was told in confidence by Mrs. Jones, whispered in a corner, which added the last drop to the cup of jealousy I was thus compelled to quaff: Hiram was a school-teacher in disguise, and all for the love of Hannah! My grizzly locks stood on end with dismay! Hiram had given up a first-class district school, and followed the oxen, to bask in the sunshine of Hannah's smile. Here was a rival indeed! Here was romance! What chance had I? what could poor old Benedick do in the way of disguise and sacrifice? I had a nightmare on the subject, in which Hiram and I figured in a grand duello, armed with scythes, fighting *à l'outrance* in the widow's barn, while Hannah sat on one of the oxen and Mrs. Jones on the other, both laughing at us. It is said that troubles never come singly. This second visit to Wildbrook was decidedly not so happily peaceful as the first. I had not been there a week when there was an invasion of the farm. Two young girls made a raid upon us—two cousins of Hannah's, her nearest relatives, I was told. They were what I call rowdy young ladies—pert, pretentious, and boisterous. Cousins, indeed! That impudent assertion will require clear proof before I can believe it. Cousins far removed, certainly, if cousins at all. One was Adelina, the other Rosabella. They descended upon the farm-house in a maze of skirts, flounces, flowers, frippery, false hair, beads, buckles, and p—nt. Pert, giggling, rattling creatures they were, without one real charm of girlhood. They made broad love to Hiram, and even tried their weapons on old Benedick. Rosabella was a factory-girl somewhere. Adelina came from a "dollar store" somewhere. Hiram and I were thrown closer together by this invasion. He drove me up the mountains in quest of geological specimens, and piloted me to fresh fishing waters. My first antipathy to the fellow abated. I forgot my jealousy, and learned

to do my rival some justice. And the cement of this new friendship was, I am sorry to say, vituperation of the young ladies, Rosabella and Adelina.

"They ain't fit to hold a candle to her. And I suppose you know, Sir, what their errand is?"

"Mischief, I warrant," was my sententious reply.

"Mischief all over," was his answer. "They want to get her away from Wildbrook. They tell her she is a servant-girl here. That's no news. Hannah knows she is a servant-girl: we all know it. They want to get her out of this safe, respectable home, and put her behind a counter in Albany, with half the men in the town to stare at her."

Crack! whack! went the whip, with such force that our steed made a plunge, and we should have upset and rolled down the precipice together—a lamentable end to two of Hannah's adorers—but luckily Hiram could not only milk a cow, he could rein in a horse as well.

This little ebullition having relieved the lad's spirits, he quieted down again, and resumed the conversation.

"I say Hannah's too good for that, Sir."

"Indeed she is. She is as good a girl as ever lived; much too good, too pretty, and too innocent to play the show-piece behind any counter. She is a dear little home bird: she must stay at Wildbrook until some one builds a cozy nest especially for her. He will be a lucky fellow that gets her."

"I guess he will," replied Hiram, with a tremendous amount of suppressed emotion, intently studying a tall mullein on his own private side of the road, but I could see that neck and ears were as red as his head. He seemed all aflame. I couldn't have got up such a blush as that for Hannah—not for the last forty years or so. Heigho!

"I wouldn't take a wife out of such a lot as Rosabella and Adelina belong to—no, not if she had twenty thousand dollars in her pocket!" observed Hiram, with great energy.

"Softly, my friend," I interposed, with the calmness becoming my grizzly locks. "There are ever so many good girls in factories, as we all know, and in 'dollar stores' too, let us hope."

"I beg pardon, Sir; that wasn't my meaning. I wouldn't say a harsh word against any honest woman's calling. That's not my way. But them girls at the farm do aggravate me. When I said a lot of girls like them, I meant girls that are all strings and streamers, and false hair and artificials; girls that haven't got a mite of common-sense, that haven't got any heart in 'em; girls that are too stuck up to be servants to an honorable old lady like Mrs. Jones."

"That's a very poor lot of girls indeed,"

was my reply. "I quite agree with you there. If a young girl has to earn her living, she is better off in a respectable family, under a woman who is kind to her and feels a real interest in her, than in the best factory or the best 'dollar store' in the land. It is a more healthy kind of life for body and soul."

"That's true, I'm sure," exclaimed Hiram, with emphasis. "You couldn't see a healthier-looking girl than Hannah from Maine to Texas. Just look at them two girls alongside of her! Pish!"

"And the best of it is, she has got a healthy heart, my boy. That's an article that is home-made. You can't make a healthy heart without God's blessing on ever so much home work. Mrs. Jones has done more for Hannah in that way than if she had given her a million in money. She has given the child something very like good mother's love."

"That she has, Sir. I'll say that for the widow Jones. It's a sight to see them two together; Hannah nursing her and waiting on her, and thinking for her and working for her, and Mrs. Jones looking so smiling and pleasant at Hannah."

"It's a sight for sore eyes, my friend. Ay, and there they are now, sitting together on the piazza, Hannah reading aloud, and Mrs. Jones knitting. Mrs. Jones is knitting me a pair of socks, Hiram, and Hannah is to mark them—ahem!"

But Hiram's faculties were absorbed by the tableau on the piazza. He did not heed my boast about the stockings. He did not heed the gate-post. We just missed upsetting. My two lady-loves gave a little scream each. They were nearly perfect, but they were women: they would give little screams once in a while. Not too good, you know, for human nature's daily food, etc.

In another hour I was summoned to New York by a telegram. Three months passed away among scenes and people very different from Wildbrook and its inhabitants. Then came a little note from Hannah:

"DEAR SIR,—I am sorry to say this is to tell you that Mrs. Jones has enjoyed very poor health for seven weeks. She would like to have you come to Wildbrook to settle some business for her, if you could find it convenient. She has been dreadful sick some days. My heart aches about her. She is so poor I can lift her like a babe. It makes me feel dreadful bad. Please come very soon. Mrs. Jones sends her kind love. Mr. Jenks"—(scratched out)—"Hiram sends his best respects. So do I. Very respectfully,

"HANNAH BAILEY."

The next day I was at Wildbrook. My old friend was indeed very ill. She had sent for me to make her will. As she had only a thousand or two in money, with a life interest in the property, the paper was soon drawn up. There were a few charitable bequests, fifty dollars to Hiram Jenks with her thanks for his excellent conduct, and then, with a fervent blessing, five hundred dollars to Hannah, "the chief earthly joy and comfort of her last years." She lived only a

week longer, and during that week she succeeded in urging Hannah to be married to Hiram without delay. They had been engaged a couple of months. The dominie was sent for, and the ceremony took place at Mrs. Jones's bedside. How dear little Hannah trembled! Hiram's freckled face was as beautifully expressive of honest natural feeling as if he had been an Apollo—or much more so, probably.

A week later, and we carried the good old lady to her last resting-place, beside her husband, in a little inclosure on the bank of the brook.

Hiram and Hannah removed into Chenango County, where Mr. Jenks is likely to become a prosperous model farmer. He has made one or two clever inventions which have given him a reputation. Hannah rules her husband, a great cheese factory, and two lovely babies. No! that last item must be corrected: stern truth compels me to say the babies rule Hannah. I have just passed a fortnight with them, and am a credible witness. Hannah makes a dear young matron. Hiram grows handsome on love and prosperity. The Widow Jones—that is, Kitty, the oldest girl, bearing the name of our old friend—is a perfect little beauty; Hannah the less would be a beauty but for her sandy hair. Those two damsels are likely to be the last of my lady-loves. Sitting one day in the kitchen watching Mrs. Jenks make a pie for my dinner, and dividing, meanwhile, my tender attentions very impartially between the little Widow Jones on one knee and the little Hannah on the other, it occurred to me to inquire after the cousins.

"How are those young ladies, Rosabella and Adelina?"

Hannah's pretty head drooped. A flush came over her face. Hiram took upon himself to answer:

"Adelina ran away last spring with Smith's son. He has had a couple of other wives already. They are keeping a saloon in Kansas."

"Ay, ay. Sorry to hear it. I hope Rosabella has done better?"

"Rosabella, Sir, has gone to the bad."

## WHILE SHE SLEEPS.

Tired of jest,  
Kissed to rest,  
Fled like a bird to its nest—  
To my breast  
Softly pressed,  
Love is a gentle guest:  
Sleep and rest!

Breathing low,  
Love shall grow  
All its dear charm to know.  
Flowers so  
Hours thro'  
Sleep i' the bud and grow—  
Sleep and grow.