

she said more. He was just putting on his hat to go to his work when she stopped him.

"Father," she said, "I s'pose you ought to know it. John and I ain't going to get married in the fall."

"You don't mean you've broke it off?"

"No, I hav'nt broke it off, father. I hope some day it'll be all right, and that's all I can say about it, father. I tell you this for I think you ought to know."

It was not so easy to stop her nervous, distressed father in his wonderment and conjecturing, however. He lingered, and talked and questioned, but Lois would say no more than she had said, and he went off to work in an anxious bewilderment.

He had been very confidential about his daughter's prospects with the farmer whom he was helping. He had said a good deal about the new house, and how likely the young man was. To day he said nothing, and when he came home he looked very old and dejected.

Lois saw it with an awful sinking at her heart, but she never faltered in her purpose. A corner of her resolute mother's mantle seemed to have fallen upon her gentle, humble little daughter. She never would marry John Elliott until she could go to him well enough provided with womanly gear not to be a burden to him at the outset. There was no anger in her determination, and no pride deserving the name. She had got it fixed in her mind that she could not marry the young man now without injury to him and she loved him too well to do this; that was all.

She had asked him the night before to defer their marriage a year. She gave him no reason; she thought she could not without perhaps having his mother's remarks traced back and trouble being made; then, too, she knew he would not consent to the plan.

The result was inevitable with a young man of John Elliott's turn of mind. He broke the engagement squarely and went home. Next day the carpenters stopped working on the new house. The silence of the hammers smote Lois with a dreadful sense of loneliness all day. Her father did not notice it till Tuesday night. Then he asked Lois, abruptly, "Have they stopp'd work on the house?"

"Yes," said Lois, with a great sob. Then she ran up stairs, threw herself on her bed, and cried bitterly. She could not help it. Still, strangely enough, she was very far from giving up all hope. She had never believed more firmly in her life that the new house would be finished and she and John live in it some day. She was going to work and earn some pretty dresses and some furniture; then John would come back and it would be all right. In spite of her yielding nature there was in her a capability of fine concentration of purpose, which she might not use more than once in her life, perhaps, but which would work wonders then. Whether it would work wonders with a practical, unimaginative, evenly resolute nature like John's, remained to be seen. Some might have questioned if her subtle fineness of strength was in a near enough plane to admit of any struggle.

She had not a doubt about it. John loved her, and by-and-by, when she had earned enough of money, and had her clothes and her furniture, they would be married, and the carpenters would finish the new house.

Her greatest present distress was her father's dejection and her not seeing John Sunday nights, and she made the best of that. It was odd that she did not worry much over poor John's possible unhappiness; but she was so engaged in acting against her own heart for his happiness that she did not think of that consideration.

So she got the district school to teach and passed the summer that way instead of making edging and listening to the carpenter's hammers. The school was half a mile from her home and she had to keep the house tidy and get meals for her father, besides teaching, so she had to work hard. Back and forth she went, passing first the wild-roses and then the golden rod on the country road morning and

night, never faltering. Her pretty face got a strained, earnest look on it, but never a hopeless one. If John had only known! but he worked on in the shop over in Pawlet village, and never came near Lois. If she was in his thoughts, he kept her there so secretly that nobody knew. He went to work on week-days and to meeting on Sundays steadily and just as usual. He never alluded to Lois, or his broken engagement, or his unfinished house to anybody, and silenced his mother with, "I don't want to hear a word about this, mother; you may as well understand it first as last."

She never mentioned the matter to him afterward, though she got a good deal of comfort from talking it over amongst her neighbors. She was not sorry, on the whole, she said, that the match was broken off. She had nothing against Lois Arms; she was a real pretty little thing, and a good girl, too, she guessed; but she always thought John might do better.

Then she was to have been left alone in her neat cottage house, which her husband had bequeathed her, on John's marriage; and although she had not wanted to live with the young couple and sell her house, or have the young couple live with her she did not altogether wish to be left alone. If she had told the whole truth, she would have said that she was jealous of her son, and did not really want him to get married at all.

Lois used to meet John's mother sometimes, and would return her stiff bow wistfully. She never thought of being angry with her. John she never met. She used to glance timidly across the church of a Sunday sometimes, and see him upright and grave in his pew; but he never turned his head her way, and never seemed to see her.

Lois thought all that year till the next spring; and then she had two hundred dollars in money. She had not spent one cent of her salary, but she had saved it jealously. She had not given any to her father; that troubled her most. To see him coming home from his hard, pitiful jobs of wood-cutting and hauling through the winter, his shoulders bent, his thin nervous face with his white beard growing thinner and more anxious, and she with her little board, worried her. But she kept thinking it would be all right soon. She knew his disappointment was wearing on him; but soon it would be over, and this precious money would bring it about.

Lois had it planned just what she should do with the money. Seventy-five dollars would buy her dresses, she thought, and one hundred and twenty-five her furniture. She anticipated a sumptuous house-keeping outfit from that. She was as innocent as a child about the cost of things. Then John would come back to her, and the taps of the hammers on the new house would chime in with the songs of the robins again.

Lois was thinking what day she should go over to the village to buy her dresses and how she should send a little note to John, when one day, shortly after her school closed, her father was brought home with a broken arm. That settled the matter. The dresses were not bought, the note was not written, and the carpenters' hammers remained silent when the robins began to sing. Lois school money paid the rent and the doctor's bill, and she bought food for herself and father. She nursed her father till he was about again, and then she took up her school work and began anew. She went without everything. She wore her poor little shoes out at the toes; in the winter she wrapped her shawl round her little red fingers and went without gloves. She went past the wild roses again, then the golden-rod and asters, then the red maple boughs, then the snow drifts, back and forth between her home and the schoolhouse, with her pretty, enduring, eager face, till spring came again.

A few weeks after her school closed, John Elliott, coming home from the shop at dusk one Saturday night, met a girl on the covered bridge just before he got to his home. She had been standing motionless at the farther entrance till she had seen him enter at other; then she had walked forward toward him rapidly. She extended her hand, with something white in it, when she reached him.

"Mr Elliott," she said, trembling, here's a note for you, if you'll please read it when you get home."

Then he saw it was Lois. "How do you do?" said he, stiffly, and took the note and went on.

When he got home he opened it and read it, holding it under the light on the kitchen shelf, when his mother was out of the room. It did not take long to read it. It was only:

"DEAR JOHN—Will you please come over to my house a little while to-morrow night? I want to see you about something. Lois."

He folded the note then, put it in his pocket, and asked his mother if supper was ready.

The next evening he was so long about getting ready for meeting, and brushed his coat and blacked his boots so punctiliously, that his mother noticed it and wondered. Was he going to see Lois Arms? But he did not go. He only went to meeting and straight home afterward.

If he had only known how Lois was watching for him; though then it was doubtful if he could have gone at once. The limitations of his convictions would always be stronger than his own inclination with him. He could not slacken his own tight reign over himself very easily at his own command. He had made up his mind never to go near Lois again, and he could not break his resolve. He tried, though. Many an evening in the following weeks he dressed himself in his Sunday suit, and even started to go and see Lois; but he never went.

Meanwhile it was too much for Lois. It began to be whispered about the neighborhood that Lois Arms was very poorly—she was going into a decline. John heard nothing of it, however; not till his mother told him one evening about the first of June.

"John," said she—they were sitting at the tea-table—"I'm going to tell you, for I think you'd ought to know it. I've been over to see Lois Arms this afternoon I heard she wasn't well an' I thought I'd ought to; an' I think she's goin' the same way your sister Mary did."

John sat perfectly still staring at his mother.

"She looks awfully. She was layin' on the settee in the sitting-room when I went in. She was all alone. An' that ain't all, John; I know she's a frettin' over you. I sat down there side of her, you know, an' she looked up at me so kind of wishful. I can't help but cryin' now when I think of it."

"You ain't feeling very well, Lois?" says I.

"No," says she and tried to smile. But she couldn't; she burst right out cryin'. How she did cry! She sobbed an' sobbed till I thought she'd kill herself. She shook all over, and there ain't anything to her. I put my face down close to her."

"What's the matter, you poor child?" says I.

"Oh Mis' Elliot!" says she, and she put up her poor little thin arm round my neck an' cried harder.

"Lois," says I, "is it anything about John?"

"Oh," says she—"oh, Mis' Elliot!" again.

"Do you want to see him?" says I.

"She didn't say anything, only just held me tighter and cried harder; but I knew as well's I wanted to. I wish you'd go over there, John; I think you'd ought to. It's accordin' to what you profess. I'll own I wa'n't jest pleased with the idea of it at first; but she's a real good girl, an' she's seemed real smart lately 'bout teachin' school. An' she did make me think so much of your sister Mary, the way she looked. Mary didn't hev anything of that kind on her mind, poor child, I'm thankful to say; but she looked jest like her. I declare I can't bear to think of it."

Mrs. Elliot broke down and cried. John said nothing, but rose and went away from the table, leaving his supper unfinished. Even then he could not bring himself to go and see Lois that night, he had to wait till the next, but he went then.

It was hardly dark. Lois was lying on the settee in the sitting-room when he came in without knocking.

"Lois!"

"Oh, John!"

"How do you do to-night, Lois? I didn't know you were sick till mother told me last night."

"I'm better. Oh, John!"

He pulled a chair up beside her then, and sat down. "See here, Lois, I read your note you gave me, you know; but—I couldn't bring myself to come, after all that had happened, to tell you the truth. I'm sorry enough I couldn't now."

"It's all right, John; never mind."

"Now, Lois, what has all the trouble been about?"

"What trouble?"

"The whole of it from the first. What made you do the way you did, and put off getting married?"

"Don't make me tell you, John."

"Yes, I'm going to make you. I know you're sick, and it seems cruel to bother you, but it's the only way. It ain't in me to go and pretend all's right when it ain't. I can do everything else for you but that, and I can't do that if it's to save your life. You've got to be open with me and tell me."

"John, if I do, will you promise me solemn, that you won't ever tell anybody else?"

"Yes, I'll promise."

"Well, I thought it was'n't doing right by you if I got married that fall. I didn't have anything hardly, not one silk dress, and I couldn't do anything toward furnishing the house. I thought if I should earn some money, it would make it easier for you. I didn't want to begin to be a burden to you right off, John."

"But—Why, I don't know what to make of you, Lois. What put such a thing into your head all of a sudden?"

"I ought to have thought of it before."

"Why didn't you tell me?"

"I couldn't. You wouldn't have let me done it."

"Lois, I never saw a girl like you. Here you've been working hard these two years, an' most killing yourself, an' never letting me know, an' me not knowing what to think."

"John, I've got a beautiful black silk dress, and a blue one, and lots of other things. Then I've got more'n a hundred dollars saved to buy furniture."

"What do you think I care about the dresses and the furniture? I wish they were in Gib a'tar?"

"Don't scold me, John."

"Scold you? There! I guess I won't. Poor Lois! poor girl! You meant all right; but it was all wrong. You've most killed yourself. But it'll be all right now. Shall I set the carpenters to work to-morrow, darling?"

"Oh, John?"

"I'll speak to 'em bright and early, an' you must hurry an' get well. You worryin' about being a burden! Oh, my Lord! Lois, I'll never get over it. You silly, blessed little girl! There's your father coming."

The next morning Lois did not wake very early, she heard, incredulously at first, then in a rapture of conviction, the carpenters' hammers. The robins were singing too.

Then her father called up the suits: "Lois! John's begun work on the new house again!"

Charm of American Women.

The frankness of the American young woman has in it, on the threshold, a certain bewilderment and even embarrassment for the British male person, especially if his collars be too stiffly starched. She has so utter an apparent absence of self-consciousness; her mental equipoise is so serenely stable; her good fellowship, if one may use the term, is so natural that he cannot see his way easily to the solution of the problem. I assume him to be a gentleman, so that his intuition deters him from a misconception of the phenomena that confront him.

She flirts, he finds; she is an adept in flirtation, but it is a flirtation "from the teeth outwards," to use Carlyle's phrase, and he is fain to own to himself, like the fox-hunting farmer who tried unsuccessfully to get drunk on the claret, that he seemed "to get no forrader." But, although the citadel of the fort seems to him strangely impregnable because of the garrison, I have been told by heroic persons who have ventured on the escalade that, if the beleaguerer be he whom fortune favors, it will terminate honorable siege by a gracefully capitulation.

Human nature is human nature all the world over and there is no greater error than the prevalent one among us that domesticity is not a leading virtue of America married couples. That there is too much of hotel life for American families I concede, and I am fully conscious of the system, but that it entails any impairment of the higher domestic virtues I have failed to discover. It is not easy to see how a woman is deteriorated as the companion and friend of a man—as the participator in his aspirations, his troubles, his studies, his higher life—because her conditions release her from duty of devising the details of a dinner, from the irritation of demonaical domestics, from the drudgery of checking the grocer's pass-book and the sad realization that all bakers are liars and mostly robbers as well. —Archibald Forbes in *Souvenirs of Some Continents.*

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