

bling into ashes. He tested the bitterness of life in all its fullness at 35. He left the city that day and went into New England, choosing the most secluded village there. He devoted the small capital that remained to him to starting a small poultry farm and garden. That was a year ago. He had dropped out of the lives of his associates. None was dependent on him. Nobody would care what happened to him. And he resolved never to set pen to paper again for literary use. He kept his vow, too, though at times the old impulse was strong upon him. His neighbors knew him only as a shy, reserved man, probably with a secret in his life. It was no concern of theirs; they accepted him for what he was.

The words of his neighbor brought back to John's mind all the wretchedness of those years of struggle. Know how to wait! And he had waited too long.

The old man came toddling back to him, waving a newspaper.

"Say, Mr. Rochester, there's something about you in the paper, I reckon," he said, handing him the sheet. "They got your photograph on the front page. Hain't done nothing, have ye?"

"No, I don't think so," answered John, taking the newspaper. As the old man had said; his photograph stared out from the front page, and under it was his name.

There was a long article accompanying it. It said that John Rochester, the famous author, had at last been located in Massachusetts, after the world had been honeycombed for him. He learned that his book, "Heart's Desire," had been published and was the hit of the season, both in America and in England. It had been translated into seven languages. And John Rochester was in Massachusetts, all the while, keeping bees and cows. Here followed a long and fanciful sketch of him.

John handed back the newspaper to the old fellow,

"Yes, I plead guilty," he said bitterly. "I wrote a book. And I reckon it's made a rich man of me. I'll put a new roof on my henhouse tomorrow, and you can tell Biggs, the carpenter, so. That's all."

That night was sleepless. The man reviewed all his past life, and over it, as a grinning motto, were the words "too late!" Would that this book had never seen the light! What did his fame avail him now?

The postman, on his morning round, let off a young lady at John's gate.

"I ain't got no mail, Mister Rochester," he called, "but I guess you'll like this party 'most as well. She was inquiring for you particular, Mister Rochester, and so I gave her a lift. I'll be back in half an hour, miss," he added, whipping up his horse and driving away in the shaky postman's cart.

John, emerging from his cottage door, found himself face to face with a charming young woman in a new hat and fashionable dress. For a moment his heart leaped; he hoped it was Leahit. Then he recognized her—one of Lesbia's friends, who had been a good friend of his once, before she had passed out of his life.

"Why, Mr. Rochester!" she exclaimed. "And so you have been found at last. I was—was visiting some friends at Cedars and I came over expressly to see you on my way home, and congratulate you. And now you're coming back to town, are you not? Everybody is crazy to meet you and honor the famous author."

John smile dbitterly.

"I've done with that sort of life," he answered. "No, I'm a rustic for good now. Nothing would drag me back to the city again."

"Well, I'm sorry," said the girl. "I wanted you to meet my friend—such a nice girl, and dying to know you. There wasn't room in the cart for three, so I left her at the corner. Won't you come?"

"No, thank you," said John, grimly.