

THE JUDGE'S SON.

By AUGUSTA LARNED.

"If you don't work lively, Hester, you won't make your tea knots today."

Hester stopped short in her walk, and the buzzing of the big wheel ceased. There was a mass of soft rolls, and the brown vest by her side, with the result of her morning labors in blue stockings.

"Well, mother," said she, quietly turning her face toward the window. "I suppose the sun will rise and set just the same if I don't spin my ten knots a day."

"I suppose you will," said Mrs. Preston. She was a spare old lady, and sitting with her back bent to the shape of the rocking-chair hooped over. Her sharp eyes-stalked out, and her rattle lips and coarse shawl protruded beyond the skirt of her gown.

"And I hate to be driven as if I was a pack-horse," retorted Hester, almost bitterly. "I tell you, mother, I won't wear my life out digging and drudging as you have your own."

"Is, Hester, how you do talk. I never thought it was brought into the world for nothing but to cook three meals of victuals a day, and to tend to the dairy work. Now, you make a fuss because you have a little chore of stocking-yarn to spin; but it ain't so many years since I made all the cloth for the family wear, and did every stitch of my own sewing at night."

"What is the use of having a soul if you've got to slave in that way?" said Hester, as she gave a little sharp jerk, and broke her thread. "You might just as well be a machine and done with it."

"I don't expect you'll do as I have done," responded the old lady with a sigh. "Folks shirk now-a-days to be all right. Your father, when he was younger, was a successful driving man. Folks must keep doing as long as they can stand; and more of his boys and girls ought to do a day's work equal to his'n. I don't s'pose your mean to follow your sister Nancy's lead, for she hasn't been a pretty hard rowl, but I tell you what, Hester, you'll have to run off more than ten knots of stocking-yarn a day if you marry Joel Seabright, for he hasn't got a mite of ambition. He makes me think of my old speckled hen setting out there on sunny eggs. I shouldn't be a mite surprised to hear Joel begin to cack, and I don't see where he gets his white-ness from, for these of the Jews, his brooding, a rag for money catcher, smooth, and plausible as a fly, but with his eye always out for business. I s'pose, Hester, you've 'bout made up your mind to take Joel, for you don't seem to favor any other young man, and has been coming here steady for the last year. Your father says it costs him four quarters of oats, and two or three good square meals every week, and he talks about sending a suit of broad cloth to the judge. You know he will not give his consent, and I tell you again, Hester, if you mean to marry Joel Seabright, you and work had better not fall out."

"Mother," said Hester, with a troubled face, "I'm weary of your, and going over by the board, 'you do Joel justice. It is father's opposition that makes him neglect his business, and takes the spirit out of him. If he could marry me he would become another man."

"Hester," said the old lady, emphasizing her words with her knitting needles, "that's a broad cloth, and you're out in the flesh. You can't make a whistle out of a pig's tail!"

"There's good stuff in Joel," cried Hester, hot color rising, and eyes blazing. "If the whole world was against him I'd stand true. Folks may say what they have a mind to, but give Joel a chance, and he will show that he can support a family, and be a man among men."

"Hilly, hilly!" retorted the old lady, incredulously. "I don't see how you can be so bold as to say that. You've been to the shop and come over here a courting, and Hester gets all his clothes. I feel you, Hester, when I was your age I wouldn't have looked at a young man that fooled around what he ought to have been to work. You're a good thing in its place, when it's got a house and garden spot free of incumbrances, and plenty of straw, and a full meal chest and flour barrel attached to it, but it never was meant to go alone."

Hester hung her head. Her mother had the good hard sense on her side, and she had only the talk of love to offset it. She did not say what she thought, that the chance Joel needed was herself; but she leaned against the chair, and touched her mother's gray hair, and her voice was pleading and eager.

"O, mother," said she, "don't you go against me. I shall never come back begging to the old dear, but when I leave home I want to have all things pleasant, and not give the neighbors a chance to talk. Mother," and suddenly the girl threw her arms around the wrinkled old neck, and said, "I think how it was when you were young; how your heart beat, and your cheeks flushed for justice. You wanted to go to the world's end to see him, and not with another. If you saw his family, you could forgive them, for your heartstrings were so sorely twisted and tied with his, and could not be undone. In those days, mother, you didn't think much about the potato-bin and flour-barrel."

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