A FATHER'S BURDEN.

In a Cumbervale farm kitchen a woman was busily getting supper. A shout floated from the pike looping the base of the hill, and a barefooted girl ran from the rain-barrel to the open door to tell her mother that Steve was at the gate holding up a letter. She put her gourd dipper on the sill and hurried down.

"It's from Lem," she said, returning to her mother, waiting upon the step, "an' it mus' be an awful little one from th' feel."

The son's note deepened the harassed look that often comes to the faces of farm wives at the close of a busy day. She gave it to Ella who slowly spelled it out with her forefinger tracing the words.

Steve had put his horse away and now came through the side gate, Mrs. Judd inquired whether the letter had not come to the post office that morning, and when he had answered "yes," asked him to fetch her husband from the field. The farmer soon came and she handed him the note, saying "Lem's comin' home."

"So he is," he echoed, after reading the note. "It ain't his week's leave yet, is it?"

"No, he wrote he'd be here f'r a week in August. If he came up on th' evening train he'll be here before long."

She shaded her eyes and looked along the visible stretch of pike.

"I do b'lieve he's comin' now," she said. "There's someone walkin' an' Lem 'd have t' walk if he didn't get a lift."

Ella ran down to the road and the father limped after her. He seemed to be carrying a burden. A glance at the house and over the farm would have shown what the burden was.

The mother waited in the doorway, her thin face changing from expectation to apprehension. The three presently came up the path, carrying a satchel and several parcels. Lemuel was a stalwart, handsome fellow. He had discarded the slouch hat, shirting, jeans and cowhide boots, usually worn by the farmers, for more fashionable clothes and a new look substituted the wholesome one which had shone upon his face when he left home the autumn before.

Seeing only gladness in her brother's return, the little girl danced about, unmindful that his half-bashful greeting gave substance to the mother's fears. The father leaned against the rain-barrel, as if he kept himself up with an effort.

Cumbervale folks are backward in questioning even a member of the family upon critical matters. At the supper table no one hinted at the reason for Lemuel's return. This was not because Steve and two other "hands" ate with them, for family affairs are often discussed before the "help." The former made several attempts to relieve the situation. He asked Lemuel how the crops "was roun' about ——' and getting an unwilling reply ventured an inquiry as to whether he "had saw Sam Down's new red waggin in his barn road." Receiving only a brief er do? I hope the confounded letter negative he relapsed into a silent and vigorous use of his knife.

Later in the evening when Judd went out for a last look at the stock, Lemuel stood at the kitchen door while his mother wearily performed the closing tasks of the day. Amid the noises of the city he had often thought of the rasp of the crickets and the gurgle of the frogs as music, but there was now a discord in the summer nocturn. He turned around, and said, "I'm in trouble, mother."

"I knowed it, Lem. You're face told me."

"The contractors in —— blame me for dishonesty, but I'm not guilty, mother."

"I knowed that, too, Lem—I mean I knowed you aint dishonest."

"There's no use worrying you or father with any more of the facts. They're hard enough for me to bear. All I want you to know is that I've lost my place and will be home for awhile. They'll write me a letter if they find out I wasn't to blame, and they will find it out before long."

"I hope they will," looking up wearily from the hearth, from which she was sweeping dust with a turkey wing into a pan. Then she rose painfully, and continued, "Lem, have you noticed that father is——"

Judd's heavy step sounded upon the sill, and the little woman knelt quickly upon the bricks.

"Father,' said Lemuel, when he came in, "I've told mother that I lost my place through no fault of mine, and will stay at home for a while."

The father slowly opened the lantern door blew out the flame, and set the lantern upon the floor. He rose, pressing his side as if he had a stitch. Then he walked over to the blue mantel, hung a key upon a nail driven into it, went to the sink, took a drink from a tin bucket, put the dipper back into it; then turned to his son. Cumbervale folks approach an important discussion by timid stages.

"We'll be vurry glad t' have y'u home again, Lem, but—but I'm afeared you wont feel at home. It aint cityfied here, an' it aint a bit like it used t' be. We're sort—sort o' played out, Lem—me an' mother. We're workin' too hard, I expect. We need help on the farm, but w'en I say that, I don' mean that you'll be asked t' do any work. Y'u needn' be afeared o' that. Y'u never did like farmin', an' y'u've got more above it in th' city. We'll get along somehow, I reckin'."

A sense of his insufficient strength seemed to fall suddenly upon him and he caught the corner of the sink and waited, while the mother stopped her tired wisping with the turkey wing and looked up at her son. He, however, had his eyes and thoughts far away in —— and did not see his father's weakness nor think of his relation to it.

'You're right, father. I never did like farm drudgery, and never will. I can't be contented in it. I must get back to the city, an' I hope this trouble will soon blow over."

"Vurry well, Lem; vurry well. We agreed that you wasn't meant f'r a farmer afore you went t' —— so it's no use talkin' it all over again. Try t' feel contented while y'u have t' be here. We'll let y'u do jes as y'u please.'

He hung his straw hat upon a hook and lighted a candle. His hand trembled warningly in doing both, but only the mother saw this as she rose from the hearth and put the wing upon the mantel.

The matter was not again discussed and no one interfered with Lemuel's freedom. He rambled about the country, sometimes fishing, sometimes hunting. Occasionally he went into the field and did light work, but he showed no interest in the harvest or in the welfare of the farm.

He renewed his acquaintance with Cicely Martin, who was acknowledged to be the "likeliest" girl of the community. The Judd farm adjoined her father's. His calls, however, ceased abruptly, and he found some attraction in the county town three miles away.

Steve watched him sharply. He was a talkative fellow, and enjoyed a joker's license of blunt speech.

"I'm mighty glad y'u've came hum, Lem," was one of his characteristic prods at the table. "Y'u kin notice th' improvement in th' farm a mile away. They was people hereabout as said th' Judd Farm was goin' down, but they aint no danger sence y'u've came back. It'll soon be th' brag farm uv th' vycinity. But there's one thing I'm mighty consarned about, Lem. I'm afeared y'u'll overdo y'urself an' then y'ur father'll hev t' pitch in an' help.'

One of Steve's duties was to ride to town late in the afternoon for the mail and necessary supplies. Upon his way back he often found Lemuel sitting upon the fence looking for him wistfully. One evening when he asked if a letter had come for him, instead of answering "no," as usual, Steve dismounted, led the horse to the fence, and said—

"No, no letter has came an' I hope none ever well. I've gouged y'u at the table afore all th' fo'ks an' y'u've scowled, but it don't make no dff'rence t' me."

Lemuel sprang angrily from the fence."

"Oh, y'u needn't get huffy. I can't hold in no longer, an' I ain't goin' to. You think us fo'ks don' know w'at trouble y'u got into in th' city. Some uv us does, me f'r one."

"You know it?"

"Yes, an' so does y'ur father an' mother an' th' Martins. A man in town told me th' contractors in —— blame y'u f'r givin' the' figgers uv a bid t' another c'ntractor so's he c'u'd give a lower bid an' get th' job, an' that y'u got big money f'r it."

"And you believe I did it," Lemuel said, striding toward him with white face.

"No, I don't Lem; true as I live I don' b'lieve y'u'd do sich a thing. But things looks ag'in y'u an I don' expect y'u'll ever get that letter."

A wagon rattled toward them. Daniel Martin and Cicely were upon the seat and the spring bed was filled with parcels from the town stores. The father bade the "time," but the daughter, who was driving, kept her eyes on the horses.

"I know now why she isn't friendly to me any more,'" Lemuel said, bitterly. "She believes I'm guilty."

"It ain't that at all, Lem. There ain't a man or woman in all this part uv th' valley that 'd b'lieve Ez. Judd's son 'd do sich a thing, an' least uv all Cic'ly Martin. She's th' cleverest girl in all Cumbervale, an' she's ag'in y'u 'cause y'u've no thoughts f'r anything but ——. Lookahere, Lem. This farm has b'en th' Judd Farm ever since th' first deed were wrote on it, an' every evenin' y'u've dawdled on this fence, waitin' f'r a letter that'll never come. It's goin' down as fast as a farm kin, an' it won't be w'orth raisin' mullen stocks on in a month 'r two. W'ere are y'ur eyes, Lem Judd? Jes' unhitch 'em t'morruh from ——, an' look at th' house an' th' barn an' th' land. Get that letter out uv y'ur head an' y'u'll see w'y it's going' down.

He caught Lemuel by the shoulder, turned him around with an easy movement of his brawny arm, and pointing, said,—

"It ain't to odark yet t' see them w'ite stones over there on th' hill. If y'u don' take off y'ur city coat, Lem Judd, an' help to run this farm, there'll be another stone over there afore long, an' th' name on it will be Ezra Judd. P'r'aps y'u'll be in —— then, an' strangers will have t' go onto th' Judd Farm, an' what in nation 'll y'ur mothnever does come. That's all I got to say, an' I don' care f'r th' odds.'

He leaped on his horse and clattered away. Lemuel turned and crossed his arms on the top fence rail. The house and barn were sharply outlined against the evening sky. He had not noticed before that the left gable of the former had sagged and that the latter needed reshingling. The decay that was now visible all over the place was not an illusion of the twilight.

He remembered now that he had often seen the farmers look up the hill and shake their heads as they drove by. He knew now that it must be "common talk," throughout the section that the old Judd place was going down. In fancy he saw large bills, with a display top line, "The Judd Farm for Sale," followed by the picture of a farm-house, and an enumeration of the carriage and plow horses, milch cows and farm implements. He could almost hear the sale crier upon the court house pavement on a Saturday afternoon ringing his bell and soliciting bids from the calculating crowd and the farmers telling one another how the farm had come under the hammer. He tore a sliver from the rail and went home chewing it.

Two evenings later he returned from the creek with his rod and line. The "cork" had bobbed unheeded in the ripples all afternoon, for a subject had floated like it in the current of his thoughts. His mother ran from the kitchen door to meet him. She was very pale and was twisting her apron helplessly in her hands.

"Lem th' men has jus' brung father in from th' upper field. He fainted there. He's on th' bed an' don' know any of us. Would you care t' take one of th' horses an' ride t' town f'r th' doctor?"

He ran to the barn and bridled a horse. His mother's hint of unwillingness to help in this emergency made him urge the animal to its utmost. A mile from the house he met Steve coming home. He rapidly told him what had happened and asked him to go for the doctor so that he might return to his father. The man turned about, whipping the horse.

Returning home Lemuel found his mother bewildered and he assumed the care of his father. Daniel Martin and Cicely, who had been told of Judd's illness by Steve, came in to assist. The daughter was a typical Cumbervale girl and she took charge of Mrs. Judd with the steadiness of a matron.

The doctor who came with Steve was noted throughout the whole section of the valley for his tongue as well as his treatment. When he had brought Judd to consciousness and had given directions for the night, Lemuel discovered that he was skilful in diagnosing other than physical troubles.

"You are young Judd, aren't you?" he asked bluntly.

"Yes, I am."

"Well, I want to tell you that this attack is not very serious, but it's a warning. I'll expect you to see that your father doesn't do a stroke of work until fall. If he does, you will be responsible for the consequences."

With a succession of characteristic sniffs he was off as busily as he had come.

"See here, Lem," Steve said, when he came in after helping the doctor start. "Here's th' mis'able letter. It come this evenin'. If I'd darst I'd a kep' it. Things always does come at th' wo'st time,"

Lemuel read the few typewritten lines and crumbled the paper nervously.

"Are they still ag'in y'u yet, Lem?" Steve asked.

"No; they have discovered who gave away the figures of the bid and want me to come back to my place at once."

"I'm—I'm glad f'r y'u, Lem,' the father feebly said from his pillow. "Me an' mother has never b'lieved you done it. Now, y'u c'n go back t' th' city an' be c'ntented. Y'u'd better write y'ur answer at once so nobody else gets y'ur place.

Lemuel walked slowly toward the bed. His hands were shaking and his face was set.

"Do you want me to go away, father?" he asked.

Judd turned from him and put his arm over his eyes.

"Y'u know, Lem, how much y'u are t' me an' mother," he answered, "an' that y'u're welcome t' stay as long as y'u want. But y'u can't be c'ntented at th' old home any more, an' I won't say a word t' get you t' stay. I c'n be up workin' around t'morruh as ushyal so y'u c'n go without worryin' Me an' mother'll get along somehow, Lem."

Mrs. Judd and Cicely Martin came into the room from the hallway. Ella, who had been standing near, caught the corner of Lemuel's coat, and, looking up into his face asked:

"Are you goin' away again, Lem?"

He took her hand, walked to the bed, and asked, "will you trust the farm in my hands, father?"

The farmer could not answer, but his look was all that was required.

"I'll do my best with it. All you need do is to give me directions and try to get well. We won't mention the city again."

In telling the other "hands" about it, Steve declared that "keepin a tight rein on a hurror was wo'se'n breakin' a colt; and w'en Lem's mother cried an' Judd hisself kivered his face with the bed kivers, I took an' run. An' I seen Cicely Martin shake Lem's han' an' tell him that if ever he done a right thing he done it then."

Those who now drive around the base of the hill and look up to the left, see one of the fine farms that have made Cumbervale famous. When Cicely Martin came over to help Lemuel it took a spurt forward and not a farmer in the vicinity thinks of it now in connection with a sale bill or an auctioneer.

AN AMATEUR DETECTIVE AGENCY.

Sweet Girl—Pa, the house next door was robbed last night.

Pa—Mercy! Next door?

Sweet Girl—Yes, and the burglars have been in two or three houses on this block within a week.

Pa—I know it. I know it. It's terrible! But what can we do?

Sweet Girl—I was thinking it might be a good plan for Mr. Nicefello and me to sit up a few nights and watch for him.

GEMS OF WIT.

The man who tells you he is no fool may be only mistaken.

The barber is the only man who does headwork with his hands.

The mercury never gets warm in its efforts to lower the record.

It was originally intended to have sheet music sung by the choir.

Some men act like hogs and there are others who do not need to act.

The horseless carriage is a novelty, but the cowless milk wagon is a chestnut.

REVENGE.

Have you been reading about the spots on the sun? asked the young man.

No, replied the ex-summer girl, but I'm glad the old thing has a few freckles himself and can see how he likes it.

CHINA'S RULING POWERS.

DOWAGER EMPRESS BOSSES THE SON OF HEAVEN.

Kuang Hsu Shut Up in His Purple Forbidden City with His Bow and Arrows—The Grand Council, the Ministry of War, the Tsung-li-Yamen and the Men Who Constitute Them — Daily Diet of the Brother of the Sun.

There is a young man in Pekin who would be trembling just now in his skin if he were only able to realize properly the danger that is threatened to him and his empire by some of those very kind friends who have come to him dona ferentes. He is the Emperor Kuang Hsu, euphemistically known, among other outrageous titles, as the Son of Heaven and Brother of the Sun. He is the most secluded monarch on earth. When he appears in public, which is very rarely, matting is hung up in front of all the houses, and strips of cloth are stretched across the alleys and side streets through which the imperial procession must pass. He is invariably accompanied by a vast retinue of soldiers and an army of courtiers, and the man who peeps around the corner or has his eye fastened to a hole in the matting is liable to be blinded by a bullet or an arrow. When he is at home he is carefully hidden away in the centre of a big Tartar city, which is in the centre of the Chinese city, at Pekin, and you have to go through three sets of walls—simply an impossible task for a European visitor—before you approach the building in which he is kept, guarded by eunuchs. First, there are the immense walls of the great Tartar city, which are sixty feet thick and as tall as a London flat. These inclose a large area filled up with the houses of Tartars and Government buildings, which run round a space the middle of which is known as the Imperial City. This has a high wall of gray brick about six miles in circumference, and it includes the outside palaces, the pleasure grounds, and the temples of the sacred city. The Emperor is kept inside this, and his exclusive quarters are known as the

PURPLE FORBIDDEN CITY.

The walls of this last pen are rigidly guarded. They inclose the quarters of the Emperor, his family, the ladies of the royal harem, and the thousands of eunuchs who make up the servants, and include buildings for court ceremonies, which are arranged round the sides of a ridge of palaces running from the north to the south. The Emperor himself lives in the northwestern part of the pen, and the Empress Dowager has a palace near by. In another part of the inclosure is the hall of literary abyss, or the imperial library, and in this the Cabinet officers, about whom more anon, hold their sessions. Pekin is a huge city, credited with 1,500,000 inhabitants, but apart from the eunuchs, the toadies, and the women who haunt the Purple Forbidden City, it is doubtful if 5,000 of this vast number have ever set eyes upon the monarch, and among Europeans and Americans it is only the Ambassadors who are permitted to gaze upon his august countenance.

Though he is generally credited with the possession of a very ugly temper, which incites him to smash the bric-a-brack of his apartments when he cannot have his own way, his efforts at ruling go no further than doing what he is told to do. He is kept in order—ancestor worship being a strong point in the Celestian moral code—by the old Empress Dowager, who practically runs the State show, and who is influenced sometimes by whim working through a thin leaven of diluted statesmanlike feeling, and sometimes by that backstairs palace intrigue which works through the favorable medium of her favorite eunuch, Pitsian-li. Kuang Hsu—which means The Illustrious Succession—has been under the old lady's thumb since he was 4 years of age, when he was chosen to succeed T'ung-chi. She supervised his education. She picked out his wives for him, and she makes the ladies of his harem skip today if they don't walk chalk in her presence. Of course she took her own friends when she selected his wives, and she has him so hemmed about with her officials and girls that if he had a will of his own he wouldn't know how to use it. The Empress Dowager, who has bossed the Tsung-li-Yamen for a generation, is now 63 years old. She was the secondary wife of the Emperor Hsien Fung. She was at the head of the Empire during a greater part of the Taeping rebellion. She managed its affairs during its war with France and she has had more then one taste of Russian diplomacy. She is said to have a mind of her own, and all of the Chinese

RESPECT AND FEAR HER.

She is a stickler as to form, and insists that all business hall be done through the young Emperor, though she really directs what he is to do. She is even more secluded than the Emperor, and when she receives her officials and the Cabinet Ministers her practice is to sit behind a screen while they talk at her through it—unless she has something strong to say to them.

The Emperor is 27, lean, undersized and unhealthy. His features are Tartar as contradistinguished from Chinese; the reigning family being, as every one should know, but probably does not, Tartar. He does all his business at night and he sleeps in the daytime. He begins his work about 2 in the morning, after a midnight breakfast, when he receives his Cabinet Ministers, who, on being ushered into his presence, go down on their knees and perform the seven faced "Ko-tou"—that is, bump their heads again and again on the floor. They also remain on their knees while before him. Everything about and connected with Kuang Hsu is regulated by law, even to his meals. According to the old Chinese books there must be placed before him daily thirty pounds of meat in a basin and seven pounds boiled into soup. He has a daily allowance of about a pound of hog's fat and butter, and he has the right to order two sheep, two fowls and two ducks, while his drink for the day is restricted to the milk of eighty cows and the steeping of seventy-five parcels of tea. It is probable that his real diet is different, but these are the regulation provisions, and if he desires anything that is not on the menu the board having charge of the imperial table has to be consulted. It is more than doubtful whether his Majesty realizes his exalted situation and his power. He has been hemmed in and fooled all his life. He knows nothing of modern civilization, and, in spite of the recent war, next to nothing of modern warfare. He has never reviewed, and is not capable of reviewing, his army, and his common amusement is to shoot with a bow and arrow. If he ever had in him the makings of a character they must have been ruined long since by his mode of life and his surroundings.

THE SUPREME BODIES

which, by the grace of the Empress Dowager and the favorite eunuchs have the direction of the country's affairs, are the Grand Council, the Ministry of War, and the Tsung-li-Yamen. The first, which is erroneously confounded with the last, corresponds to our Cabinet, and consists of five members—Prince Kung, the Emperor's uncle, whose principal aim in life now appears to be to thwart the Empress Dowager, with whom he has many stormy scenes; Shih To, better known to us as Prince Li, who has no knowledge of foreign affairs and hates all "foreign barbarians;" Weng Tung-ho, the Emperor's private tutor, who is equally conspicuous for his dislike of the barbarians, though he is credited with having taken to the study of foreign affairs since the troubles with Japan; Kang Yi, an official who gained his high office by presenting the Emperor, for the purposes of the late war, with a large sum of money, which he had no doubt obtained by extortion of one kind or another, and whose appreciation of modern conditions in warfare may be judged by the fact that he prefers bows and arrows to guns, and has ordered that those of his companies which are provided with the murderous rifle shall use clay bullets, so as to save the expense of laden ones; and Chien Ying-pu, President of the Board of Works, who is singularly free from prejudice against foreigners, in spite of the fact that experience has never brought him into proper contact with them. The Ministry of War consists of Prince Kung, President, Prince Chung, Vice-President, Weng, Tung-ho, and Jung Lu. With two of these gentlemen we have already made acquaintance. Prince Ching, I Kuang, was promoted from the third to the second order of princes four years ago. He has held many offices in the capital, among others that of President of the Tsung-li-Yamen, to which he still belongs, and is reported to be a fair-minded man—relatively, that is, for he has never been far from home. Jung Lu is a Manchu, and airs advanced views which are crude. His lengthy connection with the War Department may or may not account for his insistence upon the necessity of showing

A BOLD FRONT

to foreign aggression. The Tsung-li-Yamen consists of Prince Kung, Prince Ching, Weng, Tung-ho, Kang Yi, and Jung Lu, in addition to our estimable old friend, Li Hung Chang and Ching Hsin, a stiff and bigoted nominee of Prince Kung; Ching Li, a very old man from whose mature lips drop words of antiquated wisdom; Hsu Ying-wei, a Cantonese, who was once literary Chancellor in Kansu, but who has remained in Pekin for a good twenty years past; Liao Shaoheng, elder brother of the Governor of Che-Kiang; Chang Yin-huan, who spent twelve years as Minister to the United States, Spain and Peru, and was Special Ambassador at the diamond jubilee, and Wu Ting-fen, the leader of the Reform party. The men most capable of offering good counsel in the present emergency are the two last named, but Chang Yin-huan is of too low a rank to possess any real influence, and it is stated that Wu Ting-fen despairing of any reform while the country's affairs are in the hands of the prejudiced fossils and corrupt servants, recently applied for two months' leave of absence to repair his ancestral tombs—a preliminary to retirement. In the multitude of counsel offered by these various officials there is much guile but little wisdom, and there is much plotting on the part of each member of the three boards against each and every one of his fellows. Periodically the Empress Dowager comes out, rates them soundly from behind her screen, and if they have done something unusually foolish, boxes all their ears. And between one and another of them the unhappy Son of Heaven comes a cropper.

INQUEST ON A HEN.

An analysis of the contents of the gizzard of a hen killed at Opalopolis, N.S.W., revealed one three-penny-bit, one bone overcoat-button, six metal trouser-buttons, two brass-headed tacks, 3-4 in., about 5 dozen metal sprigs (for boots), and sundry opal chips. The old lady suffered no inconvenience, and contributed her daily egg to the breakfast table up to the last.

DANGERS OF MATRIMONY.

Mrs. De Peck—Since I married you I am losing all my good looks.

Mrs. De Peck—Doctors agree that nothing will spoil a woman's beauty quicker than frequent ebullitions of temper.