

the figure in the distance, now looming larger against the speckless sky.

Con stirred in his sleep, and put up two fat arms as she stooped over him. "Mover," he murmured drowsily, and the little mother's face flushed.

"Annie can never be 'mother' to him. What would he do without me? Oh—Con—," and then she was down on her knees beside the old cot which had served as cradle for them all; even for herself, in the time which now seemed to her so long ago, before



woman's years had brought with them woman's joys and sorrows." She buried her face in his carotid hair, and with dry sobs choking in her throat, fought over again the battle which she had been fighting so unavailingly throughout the past week.

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The little mother was standing in the shadowed door-way with one hand shading her eyes, when the rider at length drew rein before the cottage, and flung himself from his horse with a gay greeting.

He pushed back his soft felt hat, and his blue eyes were full of admiration as he seized

both her toil-worn hands. She looked so ridiculously small and dainty, with that sunlit room in the back-ground outlining her form and turning the curling ends of her hair to gold.

"So you were on the look-out for me, Molly," he cried, his sunburnt face glowing with the joy he felt. "I am not late, am I?"

"Late? Did you mean to come to-day? I had forgotten," answered the girl indifferently, without even looking at him.

Sleeping Con might have told of the many, many times the little mother had looked at the clock that day, and of how her eyes had wandered, ever and again, to the blue horizon beyond the tussocks; but Len Harvey knew nothing of that, and the smile died away from his face.

"I said I would come, dear," he began in reproachful and puzzled tones. "Surely you remember, Molly? You promised to tell me—I think I know what you will tell me, my little girl," and his voice softened as he slipped one arm round her slim waist.

Did Con know, as he grunted uneasily in his sleep, and aimlessly slapped at a frolicsome fly sauntering over his wee snub nose that he was deciding the destiny of two lives? The touch of that strong arm about her made the little mother's heart beat quickly, but that baby movement from the room behind seemed to stop it altogether.

Then she pushed Len away and threw back her head indignantly. We can all act when necessity compels us, and Molly was acting bravely now to her audience of one.

"I think you forget yourself, Mr Len Harvey," she said sharply. "And if you know what my answer will be, why don't you get on your horse again and ride away at once?"

The young man flushed.

"That was not the way you spoke to me on Sunday, Molly, coming out of church. Don't you remember? You said——"

Did she remember? Ah! so well that she dared not let him finish. So she laughed—laughed lightly and easily, as she pulled the sweet-scented blossoms from the gorse bush beside her, never heeding the pricks.