

Mary was not giddy. She was as gay as a lark, and full of the spirit of innocent fun, but (thank goodness) not giddy nor foolish.

But, after all, the chief worry of Miss Lou on the approach of this particular Christmas was not about Mary and her beaux. It was about the preparations that the colonel was making on his own responsibility. She saw several extra bags of meal coming in from Roach's Mill, and her heart sank within her at the thought of numberless fox-hounds swarming under the house and in the yard, and roaming around over the plantation. At the first convenient opportunity she broached the subject.

"Mr. Rivers" (she never called him colonel), "I do hope you have n't asked your friends to bring their hound-dogs with them. Why, they'll take the whole place. You've got twelve of your own. What on earth do you want with any more?"

"Why, yes, honey," said the colonel, with a sigh. "Harvey Dennis and Matt Kilpatrick and Tom Collingsworth will fetch their dogs, and I reckon maybe Jack Casswell and Bill Hearn will fetch theirs."

Mrs. Rivers dropped her hands in her lap