

“Just tell her,” said Pettingill, “that if she will give me the daughter she may keep the country.”

“’Ush up, you!” said Euphrasie, blushing; “you too bad.” To her mother, “He is very fond of the country, oh, — much.”

This caught the ear of Pierre Charette, and it recalled him from his mental grain speculation. He turned in his chair and looked at Billette with half-closed eyes. At this moment there was a shuffling of feet and a moving of chairs in the next room. Some of the girls and boys of the village had come in to see Euphrasie. Presently, madame, glowing with hospitality, came into the kitchen for more chairs.

“It is the whole village,” she explained. “And Joi hiding like a thief! Shame upon him! Take these chairs, then, and cease to be a stick. Leave dozing to the gray cat.”

Joi Billette took the chairs, but with no good grace. He was not himself. He placed them around the room mechanically, and stood in the midst of his friends, awkward and ill at ease. Some wanted to laugh at him, while others tried to tease him, but his air of preoccupation restrained them; they