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CHAPTER I

THE CURSE

It was the fifth day of May in the year of our Lord 1817. All the early morning the weather had been threatening. At the noon hour the rain fell in torrents and the lowland meadows were soon transformed into ponds. At sunset the clouds parted and a rift of golden splendor illumined the west, dying away in crimson glory beyond the green verdure of the hills.

A young and comely woman stood leaning against the stile that did duty as gateway to the old farmhouse. Shading her eyes with her hand, she gazed along the roadway that led to the town. She had been alone all day, for it was training day and all the men folks were enjoying a holiday. Raguel, her husband, was an officer of the state militia and had gone away in the early morning, well pleased that his little wife should see him in his gay regimentals.

Only two weeks had elapsed since he had brought Edna, his girl-bride, to dwell in the old farmhouse at the foot of the mountain.

As she scanned the road, instead of the loved form of her young husband, she saw a bent,