

newspaper, cannot fail to sink to the level of her mental pabulum. The depth she shall reach shall be limited only to the grade of temptation circumstance shall provide for her. The Columbian reading-circles are doing very good work," said Mrs. Murphy.

"Are they branches of the Chautauqua?"

"Better than that. One of them will supply just what you need. Through it you can learn what the church is doing in our own day. All the secular knowledge you need will be furnished from a Catholic stand point, and the meetings will make you acquainted with Catholic society."

"But what kind of people belong to it?"

"Your superiors and your equals, Kate. If there is no circle in your neighborhood you might easily form one. Choose a presiding officer of a liberal tone, who is so noble in herself that she is not afraid of knowing all kinds of people."

"I cannot think of any woman who answers that description."

"I tell you, Kate," said Mr. Butler, "that Miss Johns, whom we see in Church, has that air."

"She is not in our circle; she is a teacher or something."

"The sooner you cultivate her, the better. I see she drives home with the Brookes very often, and you know they are your admiration. She looks like a superior woman."

"I heard her say she was teaching now."

"I think I have the pleasure of knowing Miss Johns," said Mrs. Murphy. "She belongs to one of our time-honored Philadelphia families. She is an esteemed friend of Mary's, and teaches in her turn with her at the hall of the society called 'Our Neighbors.' She is wealthy, and has received an unusually thorough education."

"You would not think she was anybody to look at her; she has no style."

"I disagree with you, Kate; I thought her a grand creature the first time I saw her; but I looked at the woman and not at her dress. I suppose her time is given to better things than fashion."

The young people had been called to the parlor soon after Mrs. Butler's arrival. As they rejoined the family, Mr. Murphy inquired:

"Who were your callers, Mary?"

"Edith Biddle and Mr. Brock."

"Do they visit you?" inquired Mr. Butler, in a tone of mingled pique and surprise that were almost too much for Mary's gravity.

By an effort of self-control, Mary replied with becoming seriousness.

"Is not Miss Biddle very proud?" asked Mr. Butler.

"I have never seen any signs of it," replied Margaret.

"She was very cool to Blanche and Imogene, when they were introduced at Bar Harbor."

"Edith told me she had met the girls."

"I do not see how you get into such aristocratic society."

"The secret consists, Kate, in not trying," replied Mr. Dillon; "our friends here are satisfied with their own position, and live in accordance with fixed principles; their behavior wins for them the respect of people of distinction, who esteem them for their common sense."

"Spare our blushes," said Mrs. Murphy.

"I suppose we have formed many acquaintances through the societies that the girls and I belong to. Similarity of taste, interest in the same good works, have been the point of attraction in many instances. Many of our friends are entitled by birth, education and wealth to rank with the most exclusive people in this most conservative city of Philadelphia, but they view these as accidentals, and recognize that at judgment day the gifts of fortune will be considered only as the talents in the gospel. They will be judged according to their use or misuse of them. Mrs. Brooke, to whom you alluded, is one of the wealthiest women in the city. I am told that, with the exception of certain occasions, when she is obliged to return formal calls, her carriage is used principally to economize time in attending to charitable enterprises. She and Miss Johns are companions in most of the good works the Archbishop has under his supervision."

"I declare," cried Mr. Butler; "It is very late. We have passed a delightful evening, and I hope to repeat the experiment very soon."

"You will bring your welcome with you," said Mrs. Murphy.