

'Then I'll take a stand against it, cried Richard, with a glowing and indignant face. 'Take your knife, take your pocket-book, take your marbles,' he said searching his pockets.

At that instant who should issue from behind the barn-door but the doctor himself! 'I have been a willing and yet unwilling listener to this conversation, said the doctor. 'I came to look after my brother's horse, and I am inclined to think it cannot be in safer hands. Don't you think so, Master George?'

Who would covet George's place?—Children's Messenger.

A Question of Silence.

(Mary Barrett Howard, in the 'Northwestern Christian Advocate'.)

Patty Amory, home from boarding-school for the Christmas vacation had been seized with a severe attack of influenza, and all visitors had been denied admittance to the sick room. When her special chum, Marian Wentworth, was at last permitted to see the invalid, she exclaimed in a tone of great relief:

'Patty Amory, you're a fraud! You don't look one bit ill, and we girls thought you must be at death's door—two trained nurses, a doctor three times a day, and none of your friends allowed to see you.'

'Yes, it was too absurd,' acquiesced Patty gayly. 'But it was really quite a sharp attack, Marian, and of course, Grand and Mammy were frightened out of their wits. And now, only fancy, Grand insists that I must have a sea voyage, and we are to spend the rest of the winter in Egypt and Southern Europe. I'm so disappointed, for I'd much rather go back to school.'

'Ungrateful child! Still I can understand how you must hate to lose your place in your classes,' conceded the studious Marian thoughtfully.

'I don't mind that in the least,' declared Patty, ingenuously, 'but I do hate to miss all the fun. I'd be simply inconsolable if I hadn't conceived the bright idea of having you take my place.'

'Patty!' gasped Marian, 'I couldn't possibly.'

'Why not?' Patty demanded. 'Grand has written to Madame D'Arblay and arranged it all, and Madame says she will be charmed to receive you.'

'But, Patty,' Marian remonstrated, 'you know I'm teaching in the public school this year, hoping to earn enough to enter the Art League next fall.'

'Yes, I know,' rejoined Patty, 'but the ideas you will pick up in the city, and the better opportunities you will have there to dispose of your lovely work, will more than make up the loss of the salary. Kate Brown will be delighted to take your place in the school, and in short, I've disposed of every possible objection.'

'But, Patty,' faltered Marian, 'Madame D'Arblay's is such a fashionable school—'

'Are you thinking of your clothes?' interrupted Patty. 'Why, Marian, we girls all say that you have such exquisite taste that those simple frocks of yours turn us green with envy.'

'Nonsense,' laughed Marian, 'don't you suppose I know that it is owing to your friendship that it has become the custom in East Elliott to admire my "artistic method of dressing"?''

Then she added with sudden gravity, 'But, Patty, life in a village is very different from that in a city, and—no one who knows my grandmother can help respecting her, but would strangers care to accept her granddaughter as an equal when they learn that before she got her little pension she earned her living by taking in washing?'

A curious expression passed over Patty's frank face. Her loyal heart had hitherto refused to entertain the suspicion that her friend was ashamed of the noble old woman who had maintained her grandchild by her own unaided exertions ever since the sudden death of Marian's parents had left her alone in the world a helpless baby. Marian had, it is true, another grandmother, a stately woman so proud of her wealth and Mayflower ancestry that when her son, as she termed it, 'disgraced his name by a runaway marriage with poor, pretty Mary Kendall,' she never forgave him to the day of his death, and had never recognized the existence of his child. Marian herself was conscious of the ignoble-

ness of the false pride that made her ashamed of the fact that Mrs. Kendall for many years had maintained them both by toiling early and late over the washtubs, and at times she thought she had conquered her unworthy weakness, but one's besetting sins are hard to overcome, and Marian was destined to discover that 'each day is a day of battle.'

'Well, Marian,' Patty said after a pause, 'that matter rests entirely with you. Grand's recommendation was quite sufficient to satisfy Madame, and if you choose to keep silent in regard to your home life, I'm sure no one will ask you impertinent questions.'

Marian flushed hotly at a nameless something in Patty's voice, but she only said, with downcast eyes:

'Of course, it would be a wonderful opportunity for me, Patty, and—and I would like to meet the girls on equal terms.'

Two days later Mrs. Kendall was scurrying about her neat kitchen busily engaged in putting up a luncheon that seemed sufficient for ten men of 'unbounded stomachs' rather than for one delicate girl, when Marian entered the room equipped for a journey, and radiant in her pretty dark-blue traveling suit.

'O granny,' she cried in dismay, 'you're not putting up a luncheon for me, are you? When we change cars at Albany there will be a dining-car on the train, and it's so contrived to sit and eat things out of a box.'

But Mrs. Kendall went on with her task unmoved.

'I ain't a-goin' to have you pizen yourself eatin' the canned stuff they give folks on them trains, Mary Ann,' she said severely. 'An' look at the way it's snowin'! If folks is brash enough to travel this time o' year, let 'em put their trust in the Lord an' take a good lunch along with 'em, say I.'

Marian sighed resignedly. She knew that argument was useless, but she had set her heart on dining in unaccustomed state, served by an obsequious colored water, and she felt very cross as she struggled up the high steps of the train and staggered along the narrow aisle cumbered with the unwieldy box of luncheon in addition to her heavy suitcase.

'Fer the land sakes, Mary Ann Wentworth!' cried a loud, hearty voice. 'Ef I ain't glad to see you! Come right here an' set along o' me an' Tommy.'

Marian looked disconcerted. Miss Temperance Tinker was an old friend of Mrs. Kendall's, and the two old women possessed many traits in common that made the bond between them an especially strong one, but to Marian Miss Tinker's peculiarities were a source of unmingled annoyance. But on this occasion there was no escape possible, and with as good grace as she could summon she took her place opposite a fat old woman and a chubby little boy. 'Tommy's ben makin' me a visit,' Miss Tinker explained. 'His ma—she's my niece, you know—she brought him, an' now I'm takin' him home. I'd kep' him longer, but it seemed as if die I must if I didn't get out of Otto for a while. Our town has more tribulation to the square inch than any place I ever did see. Of course, a good deal of it can be shouldered off onto Providence, like the smallpox scare last summer, an' the failin' of the grape crop, an' the whole Biddle family bein' struck by lightnin'. But I could stan' bein' pitted, an' havin' my ten acres o' grapes ate up by a bug that never was heard of till our town started into the grape business, an' the Biddle family was not gre't loss, but what I can't stan' is bein' stirred up the whole endurin' time by hearin' about the sin an' wickedness of our prominent feller citizens. Sometimes I think that mebbe it's all true, an' that there ain't no honor nor honesty nor decency left in the world; an' then again I think that if those very folks who do so much talkin' would act up to a piece I learned once, an' tell not abroad another's faults till thou hast cured thine own, that Otto'd be an example 'stead of a scandal an' a by-word the way it is now.'

During this long dissertation Marian's attention had been attracted to a group of four young people, who were the only other passengers. Their appearance suggested that they were more accustomed to the luxury of a parlor car than to the plebeian atmosphere of a common day-coach, but there were no Pullmans on the little branch road, and Marian concluded that they were college boys and girls who had been spending their vacation at one of the beautiful country places for which the neighborhood was famous. She

soon discovered that they were listening to Miss Tinker's conversation with politely disguised amusement, and the girl's cheeks grew hot with embarrassment as Miss Tinker wandered on in her quaint fashion. Fortunately Tommy Green created a diversion by demanding:

'Say, Marian, you want me to read you a story out of my new reader? I read to my papa, an' he says, "Why, Tommy, my son, that's lelegant, lelegant, lelegant".'

Tommy Green was a dear boy who punctuated all his remarks by a most entrancing little giggle, and whose befreckled face beamed with good will toward all mankind. No one could have resisted the confiding air with which he nestled close to Marian's side, and she soon became so engrossed in him that she was oblivious to the fact that Miss Tinker's unending flow of conversation was still a source of amusement to her fellow passengers.

Suddenly, apparently right under Marian's feet, there sounded the crowing of a rooster. She started violently. Where could the creature be hidden? Certainly not in the old-fashioned 'carpet-bag' that constituted Miss Tinker's only luggage, although she noticed that Tommy looked frightened and that Miss Tinker's face had grown very red. The crowing continued, and Marian, glancing across the aisle, saw that three of the young people were in fits of stifled laughter, while the fourth was preternaturally solemn. Then she thought she understood. The young fellow with the handsome, clean-cut face was a ventriloquist, who was amusing himself by thus ridiculing the honest country woman by her side. A fierce passion of loyalty to her own—those whom Lincoln called 'the plain people'—swept over Marian, and her blue eyes flashed angrily into the dark ones opposite. The conductor, who chanced to be passing through the car, was evidently of the same opinion, for he bent over the young man and remonstrated in a loud whisper:

'Now, look here, young feller, you jest let up on that—I was a country boy myself.'

'I've heard ventriloquists before in my day,' the conductor responded stolidly, 'an' you city folks think you're the whole thing.'

Miss Tinker, who was slightly deaf and who had heard nothing of this colloquy, now remarked audibly:

'My soul an' body, what'll I do? This pesky cretur's begun to crow an' I can't stop him. I wish't I hadn't brought him, but Tommy set his heart on takin' my old yellow rooster home with him. I wa'n't a-goin' to pay no express charges, an' I knew't them railroad folks wouldn't let me bring him in here ef they saw him, so I tied him round my waist an' covered him with this long cloak.'

(To be continued.)

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