

STORIES
POETRY

The Inglenook

SKETCHES
TRAVEL

THE REFORMATION OF AMETTE.

By May Kelsey Champion.

As he stopped in the doorway, Tom Dana gazed before him with frank masculine approval, and whistled.

"All this in our humble dwelling! May I ask if you are going out? I suppose you're not got up to look like a magazine illustration all for nothing!" His cousin Annette, in embroidered white linen, a veil of pale blue chiffon tied beneath her chin and a crimson silk automobile coat over her arm, stood on the lower stair landing leisurely drawing on her long gloves.

"You're not a bad figure yourself," she returned, with a glance which included Tom's handsome face, white flannels and tennis-racket. "I never like to run an account. There! I'm ready, Constance, when you are."

"Ready?"

Constance Dana slipped under her brother's arm as he stood leaning against the door-post, and repeated the word inquiringly. Tom was trying to keep in form for the next tournament, and after an hour of lively playing with him since luncheon she felt warm and bagging as to shirt-waist and sagging as to hair.

"Mr. Kendall said he would come by half-past two. Why, didn't I tell you?" Annette exclaimed. "He said last night that he and his sister would like to take us to Sachem's Point in the automobile this afternoon. It was just as everybody was leaving. How careless of me to forget to speak about it! But never mind, Constance! Just change your skirt and shoes, and you'll be all right. There they come! I'll explain, and we'll wait."

"But Sophie Harrison invited us to spend the afternoon with her," Constance said, "and we promised to come early."

Annette looked blank for a moment. "So we did! I forgot all about it."

"Well, there's time for a short ride while I'm getting ready to go to Sophie's, and you could ask Jack and Mary to leave you there."

"All right. If you think that will be the best way." And Annette fluttered down the piazza steps.

Tom took Constance's racket and put it in the closet with his.

"Well, I think—" Then he changed his mind. "I'm much obliged to you for playing every day as you do," he said. "I know it takes a lot of your time just now."

"I don't mind that. It keeps up my own practice, too."

"You play the best game of any girl at the Point," said Tom, with a nod, as he walked off. "Oh,"—and he turned,—"Kyle Harrison and I are going out in the Sound in the launch this afternoon. We'll stop at the Harrisons' pier and bring you home if you'd like. Half-past five? Six?"

"Maybe we'd better say six, Sophie will want us to stay as long as we can."

"All right."

One of Tom Dana's characteristics was punctuality, which his friends commended or decried, according to their own habits. At three minutes to six the "Nautilus" made fast to the Harrisons' pier. At six her whistle sounded. "Where's Annette? Forgot to come?" asked Tom, as Constance appeared alone.

Constance's color rose. "I don't know. She didn't come. Sophie had invited several girls particularly to meet her, too."

"Probably Jack broke down somewhere. It's the regular thing when I go with him," said Kyle.

When they reached home Annette had not returned, nor yet half an hour later, when Tom came bounding down the stairs in response to the dinner

chimes. "Going to keep dinner waiting!" he asked. "I'm about famished."

"We might wait just five or ten minutes," Constance proposed.

Tom sat down in front of the clock. At the end of five minutes he told her it was time to eat. After ten minutes he rose.

Constance laughed and went out to the dining-room. Mr. and Mrs. Dana were in Nova Scotia, and the two were alone. "They must have broken down, don't you think so?" she said, as they took their places at the table.

"Don't know," replied Tom. "If it were anybody but Annette, I should say yes. Have you rung, lady?"

Dinner over, the two went back to the sitting-room. At nine o'clock Constance looked up from her reading.

"I really think, Tom, that you ought to go out to the Kendalls."

"It's a mile and a half," said Tom, and turned his page.

But at half-past nine he rose and went out into the hall. He returned, however, and sat down. "I hear them," he said.

A few minutes later Annette entered breezily.

"Where do you suppose we've been?" she exclaimed, throwing off her coat.

Tom closed his book with an appearance of mind but polite interest.

"You know it's a clear, straight road to Sachem's Point, and before we knew it we were there. Then Mr. Kendall said we would go on a little farther, and took us way to Marlborough Beach. What a beautiful place it is!"

Finding that her enthusiasm failed to kindle a responsive warmth in either Constance or Tom, she paused and folded her veil. "Sophie didn't mind very much my not coming, did she? I really did mean to tell the Kendalls that I could go for only a short ride, but we were talking about other things when I first got in, and afterward I forgot everything but the delight of flying."

"Sophie seemed quite sorry, as she had invited some girls to meet you," said Constance.

"Well, I'll go over and explain to her in the morning. I'm sure she'll think it was all right under the circumstances." Annette looked at the clock. "Almost ten! I'd no idea it was so late." She yawned and gathered up her cloak. "I believe I won't come down again. The wind made me sleepy. Good night!"

"But you don't want something to eat?" asked Constance. "I've had some dinner kept."

"That was good of you, but I don't care for anything," said Annette. "The Kendalls arranged to stop at Sachem's Point on the way back and have dinner."

When Constance came in from the kitchen, after setting away the dishes that had been left in the warming oven, Tom was locking the windows.

"Seems to me Annette ought to take up some system of memory-training," he said, snapping a window-bolt in place. "I'm not sure but I shall suggest it."

"She's our guest," Constance reminded.

"She is. She's our cousin too, and she has an extremely bad habit of forgetting eh consideration due to other people. If she had given you that letter the other day instead of laying it on the clock-shelf for Augusta to find when she dusted, mother would have had her steamer rug. Sunday we had to parade up the church aisle ten minutes late because we waited for her until you went up-stairs and found that she'd decided it was too warm to go. And now here's Sophie!"

The next evening there came through the doorway of Constance's room first impatient exclamation and then Annette in pale pink organdy, her feet in worsted bed-room slippers, a pair of heavy shoes in her hands.

There was to be company down-stairs later, and the two girls were dressing.

"I thought you were always saying that you could depend on Tom!" Annette sat down on the bed and dropped the shoes with a thud. "When he took my slippers to the shoemaker's this morning to have the heels straightened, I asked him to tell the man to be sure to send them back this afternoon."

"Didn't he give the message?"

"I've just been down-stairs, and he says he thinks he must have neglected it. My white ones are soiled, so I'll have to wear these heavy things. How they'll look!"

"You're welcome to try any of mine." Constance put in several hair-pins thoughtfully. She had noticed that Tom apparently had not said that he forgot.

Annette went across to the closet in her stocking feet. "They're all too small," she complained, after two or three trials.

On the morning following this Tom invited Annette to go out in the launch at ten o'clock. At a quarter to eleven Annette came up to the house in disgust, after sitting three-quarters of an hour in the hot sun on the pier. Luncheon brought Tom and apologies. He had met Kyle, and Kyle had wanted him to go to town to look at a horse.

Annette flushed a little. She was not accustomed to neglect.

The next day, when it was learned that the Kendalls had been again to take Annette out, and had seemed surprised at being told that she was lying down, Tom discovered that he had once more neglected to deliver a message to her.

This time Annette herself appeared to notice the choice of words, and shot a curious glance across the table.

Two days afterward the climax came. They were all sitting on the piazza in the morning, the two girls with their sewing and Tom with a magazine, when Augusta brought Annette a letter. She had found it on the clock-shelf in the sitting-room.

"It's from Susan French," Annette said, tearing the envelope. "I haven't heard from her since she announced her engagement." She glanced rapidly down the page. "She wants me to be one of her bridesmaids. Isn't that lovely of her!"

Suddenly Annette's face grew puzzled. Taking up the envelope, she looked at the postmark, front and back. "Why, I don't see how— Just listen!" And she read:

"I must ask you to let me know surely by Friday, for I don't dare wait longer. If I don't hear from you then, I must ask Mr. Leeds's cousin. Write me at once, that I may count you in." Annette looked up. "And this is Saturday! She wrote on Tuesday."

There was an awkward pause. Then Tom spoke.

"I'm quite sure I laid a letter for you on the shelf Wednesday." He turned to Constance. "I think you ought to speak to Augusta about dusting often. That shelf is so high that we don't notice letters when they lie there."

Constance's lips twitched a little, but it was Annette who replied, and there was an angry note in her voice:

"I think it was very careless and inconsiderate—"

Then she stopped suddenly, and a deep flush colored her face.