

Quincy Adams Sawyer

AND MASON'S CORNER POLKS.

A PICTURE OF
NEW ENGLAND HOME LIFE.BY
CHAS. FELTON PIDGIN.

"Waal, I don't b'lieve she'll take it," said Hiram; "she's a mighty smart woman and she's got a money matter, but she's a skin and I don't believe she'll take ten dollars for one week's board and room."

"Well, if she won't take it," remarked Quincy, "Mandy may have the balance of it for her trouble. The man wants the room and he is able to pay for it."

Then Quincy and Ezekiel went into the house for supper.

The next morning Quincy found that Uncle Ike had not forgotten his promise, for he was on hand promptly, dressed for a trip to Eastborough Center. This time they took the carryall and two horses, and Uncle Ike sat on the front with Quincy.

They reached Eastborough Center and found Dr. Tillotson awaiting them. The return home was made quickly, and Uncle Ike took the doctor to the parlor. Then he went to Alice's room, and Quincy heard them descend the stairs. The conversation lasted for a full hour, and Quincy sat in his room, thinking and hoping for the best. Suddenly he was startled from his reverie by a rap upon the door, and Uncle Ike said the doctor was ready. Quincy drove him back to Eastborough Center and on the way the doctor gave him a diagnosis of the case and his proposed treatment. He said it would not be necessary for him to see her, as the three weeks or until the medicine that he had left for her was gone. He would come down again at a day's notice from Quincy.

On his return Mandy told him that Miss Alice was in the parlor and would like to see him, as he entered the room she recognized his footstep, and starting to her feet turned toward him. He advanced to meet her and took both her hands in his.

"How can I thank you, my good friend," said she, "for the interest you have taken in me, and how can I repay you for the money that you have spent?"

Quincy was at first disposed to deny his connection with the matter, but thinking that Uncle Ike must have told of it, he said, "I don't think it is quite fair for Uncle Ike, after promising to keep silent."

"It was not Uncle Ike's fault," broke in Alice, "it was nobody's fault. Nobody but the doctor that told me, and so he spoke freely of your visit to the city, and of what you had said, and of the arrangements that you had made to have the treatment continued as long as it produced satisfactory results. But," continued Alice, "how can I ever repay you this great sum of money that it will cost for my treatment?"

"Do not worry about that, Alice," said he, using her Christian name for the second time, "the money is nothing, I have more than I know what to do with, and it is a pleasure for me to use it in this way, if it will be of any benefit to you. You can repay me at any time. You will get money from your poems and your stories in due time, and I shall not have to suffer if I have to wait a long time for it. God knows, Alice," and her name fell from his lips as though he had always called her by that name, "that if half, or even the whole of my fortune would give you back your sight, I would give it to you willingly. Do you believe me?" And he took her hands again in his.

"I believe you," she said simply.

At that moment Mandy appeared at the door with the familiar cry, "Supper's ready," and Quincy led Alice to her old place at the table and took his seat at her side.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

The Town Meeting.

The next day was Friday. After breakfast Quincy went to his room and looked over the memorandum pad upon which he had taken pleasure in jotting down the various items of his campaign against the singing-master. As he looked at the pad he checked off the items that he had attended to, but suddenly started back with an expression of disgust.

"Confound it," said Quincy, "I neglected to telegraph to those Congressmen when I was at Eastborough Center last Tuesday. I hope I'm not too late." He reflected for a moment. Then said to himself, "No, it's not right; this is the long session, and my friends will be in Washington."

He immediately wrote two letters to his Congressional friends, stating that he had good reasons for having the appointment of Obadiah Strout as postmaster at Mason's Corner, Mass., held up for a week.

"At the end of that time," he wrote, "I will either withdraw my objections or present them in detail, accompanied by affidavits in opposition to the appointment."

Having finished the letters he went downstairs to the kitchen, and as usual, found Hiram engaged in conversation with Mandy.

"You are just the man I want," said he to Hiram, "I would like to have you take these letters to the Mason's Corner postoffice and mail them at once."

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You can tell Mr. Hill that the papers relating to the store are nearly ready, and if he and his son will come here to the house not to make any open inquiries about her health, but from words dropped by Ezekiel and Uncle Ike, he had kept fairly well informed as to the result of her treatment. At dinner Ezekiel remarked that his sister had commenced to take her new medicine, and that he reckoned it must be pretty powerful, for she had said that she didn't wish anything to eat, and didn't want anything sent to her room.

Quincy politely expressed his regrets at her indisposition and trusted that she would soon be able to join them again at meal time.

About three o'clock in the afternoon, Samuel Hill and his father arrived, and Hiram, remembering Quincy's instructions, had found Ezekiel Pettengill, and all came to the room together. It took a comparatively short time to sign, seal and deliver the documents and papers. It was arranged that Samuel Hill and his father should take charge of the grocery store and carry on the business until a week from the following Monday, as Quincy told young Hill that he had some business to attend to the early part of the following week, that would prevent his giving any attention to the store until the latter part of the week.

Quincy treated his principals and witnesses to cigars, and an interchange of ideas was made in relation to the result of the auction sale.

"How does Strout take it?" inquired Quincy.

"He acts as though he thought I was pizen. Every time he sees me he crosses over on 'other side of the street, if we happen to be comin' towards each other."

"Well, I imagine," said Quincy, "that your usefulness to him has departed in some respects, but it's just as well."

"Well," said young Hill, "I can tell you what he said the other night in the grocery store. There was a crowd of his friends there, and he remarked that you, turning to Quincy, 'might own Hill's grocery store, but that wasn't the whole earth. He said that he had no doubt that he would be elected unanimously as tax collector and he was sure of his appointment as postmaster, and if he got it he should start another grocery store on his own hook and make it lively for you.'"

"Well," said Quincy, with a laugh, "competition is the life of trade, and I shan't object if he does go into the business; but if he does, I will guarantee to undersell him on every article, and I will put on a couple of teams and hire a couple of men, and we'll scour Eastborough and Mason's Corner and Monrovia for orders in the morning, and then we'll deliver all the goods by team in the afternoon in regular Boston style."

"I never knew," said young Hill, "that you were so sure of your victory. I know I don't study law, and I may be, after all, that it's my destiny to become a groceryman. Quincy took Ezekiel by the arm, led him to the window and whispered something to him.

Ezekiel laughed, then turned red in the face, then finally said in an undertone, "Waal, I dunno, seems kinder early, but I dunno but it jest as well might be them as any other time. I hain't got nuthin' ter do this afternoon, so I think I'll take a walk up there to see how the land lays."

He said "Good afternoon" to the others and left the room. Quincy then took Samuel Hill by the arm in the same manner as he had done to Ezekiel, led him to the window, and said something to him which wrought a similar effect to that produced upon Ezekiel.

Samuel thought for a moment, and then said: "That ain't a bad idea. I'm satisfied if the other party is. I'm going to drive over this afternoon and sell the old gentleman that matters are all fixed up and I'll find out if there's any objection to the plan. Guess I go now, as I've got to git back tonight."

So he said "Good afternoon" and, accompanied by his father, took his way out of the house.

"Sit down, Hiram," said Quincy, "I want to have a talk with you. Have you settled up that little matter with Mandy?"

"No," said Hiram, "not yet; I've been tryin' to muster up courage, but I hain't been able to up to the present moment."

"I should think," remarked Quincy, "that a man who had carried his campaign on the field with a shower of bullets rushing about him, or who had pushed forward with his country's flag in the face of a similar storm of bullets, ought not to be afraid to ask a young girl to marry him."

"Waal, do yer know," said Hiram, "I'm more afraid of Mandy than I would be of the whole army."

"Well," said Quincy, "I don't see any other way for you except to walk up like a man and meet your fate. Of course if I could do it for you I'd be willing to oblige you."

"No, thank yer," said Hiram, "I kinder reckon that little matter had better be settled between the two principals in the case without callin' in a lawyer."

Quincy leaned over and whispered something to him.

"By crickey," said Hiram, "what put that idea inter yer head?"

"Oh," said Quincy, "since I've had to spend so much time plotting against my enemies, I've got into the habit of thinking out little surprises for my friends."

"All right," said Hiram, "that would be the biggest thing ever happened in Mason's Corner. Well, I rather like it. I shan't be able to do that matter now, at once. One, two, three," said Hiram, "just think of it; well, that's the biggest lark that I've ever been connected with, besides buying the grocery store all holler."

"Well," continued Quincy, "you three gentlemen understand it now, and it matters can be arranged I will do my part, and I promise you all a grand send-off, but not a word of it must be breathed to outside parties, remember. It won't amount to anything unless it's a big surprise."

"All right," said Hiram, "I kinder reckon Sawyer's surprise party will be a bigger one than Strout's was."

"Oh," continued Hiram, "I forgot. Mandy was to see her mother about the room for that man that's comin' down from Boston Monday night, and Mrs. Hawkins says the price of the room is three dollars per week

and the board 50 cents a day. Mandy paid for the room for a week, and Mrs. Hawkins says after she takes out what the board comes to she'll give the balance back to Mandy."

"That's all right," said Quincy, "I've heard from the man in Boston and he'll surely occupy the room for Monday night. Mandy can tell her mother 40 have it all ready."

Next morning about 10 o'clock, Abbott Smith drove over from Eastborough Center, accompanied by his father and Wallace Stackpole. Quincy took his place beside Mr. Stackpole on the rear seat of the carryall, and Abbott drove off as though he intended to return to Eastborough Center, but when he reached the crossroad he went through, then turning back towards Mason's Corner, drove on until he reached Deacon Mason's barn, following the same plan that Ezekiel had on the night of the surprise party.

They found Deacon at home, and all adjourned to the parlor, where Elias Smith stated his business, which was to ask the Deacon to act as Moderator at the town meeting on the following Monday. The Deacon objected at first, but finally consented, after Mr. Smith had explained several matters to him.

"You know," said the Deacon, "my fellow-citizens have tried on several occasions to have me run for selectman, but I reckoned that I was too old to be out so late nights and have to drive home from Eastborough at ten or eleven o'clock at night. Besides I've worked hard in my day, and there's no place I like so well as my own home. I'm alluv sorry to go away in the mornin' and I'm alluv glad ter git home at night, and although I consider that every citizen ought to do everything he can for the public good, I reckon that there's a good many more anxious than I am to serve the town, and I'm not so contented but that I think I know how ter do it better."

Moderator work comes in the daytime as I stand ready to do all I can for my young folks, and I'm turning towards Quincy, "I'll be on hand Monday mornin' and do the best I can to serve public and private interests at the same time."

Wallace Stackpole, while the others were talking, had taken a couple of newspapers from his pocket, and as Deacon Mason finished he looked up and said, "There's an item here in the

"Is the editor in?" asked Quincy.

"No," replied Sylvester, "he never shows up on Saturdays."

"Who is going to report the town meeting?"

"I am," answered Sylvester. "The editor will be on hand, but he told me yesterday that he should depend on me to write the meeting up, because he had a little political work to attend to that would take all his time. He told me he was going over to see Elias Smith on Sunday, so I imagine that Mr. Smith and he are interested on the same side."

"Well, Mr. Chisholm," said Quincy, "you managed that little matter about Miss Mason's engagement so neatly that I have something for you to do for me. I'm going to Boston this afternoon and shall not be back until half-past seven Monday night. I'm going over to see Mr. Parsons when I leave here, and shall arrange with him to pass all our boys with all they want to eat and drink next Monday."

"Well, the boys, as you call them, will be pretty apt to be hungry and thirsty next Monday," laughed Sylvester.

"That's all right," said Quincy, "I'll stand the bill."

"How's Parsons going to know which are our boys?" continued Chisholm. "They ought to have some kind of badge or some kind of a password, or your enemies, as well as your friends, will be eating up your provisions."

"That's just what I want you to attend to," added Quincy. "I'll arrange with Parsons that if anybody gives him the letters B D on the quiet, he is to consider that they are on our side, and mustn't take any money from them, but chalk it up on my score. Now I depend on you, Mr. Chisholm, to give the password to the faithful, and to pay you for your time and trouble just like this."

And he passed a twenty-dollar bill to Sylvester. The latter drew back.

"No, Mr. Sawyer," said he, "I cannot take any money for that service. This work is to be done, for I understand the whole business, to defeat the man who, I think, is treating my money as if it were his own, and I'm willing to work all day and all night without any pay to knock that fellow out. Let's put it that way—I'm working against him, and not for you; and, looking at it that way, of course, there's no reason why

you should pay me anything."

"All right," rejoined Quincy. "I should have no feeling if you took the money, but I can appreciate your sentiments, and will have no feeling because you do not take it. One of these days I may be able to do as great a service for you as you are willing to do for me between now and next Monday."

"They shook hands and parted, and Quincy made his way to the Eagle Hotel, of which Mr. Seth Parsons was the proprietor. Mr. Parsons greeted him heartily and invited him into his private room. Here Quincy told the arrangement that he had made with young Chisholm and gave him the password.

"Don't stint them," said Quincy, "let them have a good time; but don't let anybody know who pays for it. I shall be on on the 10th of next week, express Monday night and I would like to have a nice little dinner for eight or nine people in your private dining-room at eight o'clock. Mr. Tolson Smith knows who my guests are to be, and if I am delayed from any cause, he will tell you who are entitled to go in and eat the dinner."

The next train to Boston was due in ten minutes, and shaking hands with the hotel proprietor, he made his way quickly to the station. As he reached the platform he noticed that Abner Stiles was just driving away; the thought flashed through his mind that somebody from Mason's Corner was going to the city; but that was no uncommon event and the thought passed from him.

He entered the car, and to his surprise, found that it was filled; every seat in sight was taken. He walked forward and espied a seat near the farther end of the car. He noticed that a man, near the window, when he reached it he raised his hat, and leaning forward, said politely, "Is this seat taken?"

"No, sir," replied a pleasant, but somewhat sad voice, and he sank into the seat without further thought as to its occupant.

When they reached the first station beyond Eastborough Center he glanced out of the window, and as he did so he noticed that his companion was Miss Lindy Putnam.

"Why, Miss Putnam," cried he, turning towards her, "how could I be so ungallant as not to recognize you?"

"Well," replied Lindy, "perhaps it's just as well that you didn't; my thoughts were not very pleasant, and I should not have been a very entertaining companion."

"How trouble at home?" he inquired in a low voice.

"Yes," answered Lindy in a choked voice, "since Mr. Putnam died it has been worse than ever. While he lived she had him to talk to; but now she insists on talking to me, and sends for me every time she has a headache, or to do something for her, but really simply to get me in the room so she can talk over the old, old story, and say spiteful and hateful things to me. Dr. Budd ordered some medicine that I could not get at the Center, and so there was no way for me except to go to the city for it. Let me tell you now, Mr. Sawyer, something that I should have been obliged to write to you, if I had not seen you. I shall say it to the city until she dies, for I promised Jones that I would, and I could never break any promise I made to him; but the very moment that she's dead I

shall leave the house and the town forever!"

"Shall you not stay to the funeral?" said Quincy. "What will the townspeople say?"

"I don't care what they say," rejoined Lindy in a sharp tone; "she is not my mother, and I will not stay to the funeral and hypocritically mourn for her, when in my secret heart I shall be glad she is dead."

"Those are harsh words," said Quincy.

"Not one-tenth nor one-hundredth as harsh and unfeeling as those she has used to me," said Lindy. "No, my mind is made up; my trunk is all packed, and she will not be able to lock me in my room this time. I shall leave town by the first train after her death, and Eastborough will never see me nor hear from me again."

"But how about your friends?" asked Quincy. "Supposing that I should find out something that would be of interest to you; supposing that I should get some information that might lead to the discovery of your real parents, how could I find you?"

"Well," replied Lindy, "if you will give me your promise that you will not disclose to anyone what I am going to say, I will tell you how to find me."

"You have my word," replied Quincy.

To be Continued Next Saturday.

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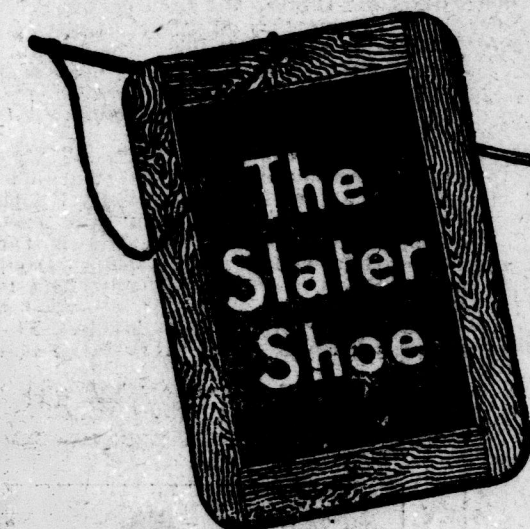
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