

fond of talking when I get to know people a little bit. Raymond told us that you were reading at home to prepare for college, and that you didn't like it. I suppose that is why you are tired of books. I wish I were in your place, I'd give anything to go to a town, and get on with my studies, but I have to stay at home and learn from a governess. Wouldn't it be nice if we could change places? Then we should both be pleased, and get what we liked."

The young fellow gave a laugh of amusement. "I don't think I should care for the governess," he said, "though she seems awfully kind and jolly, if she is the lady who looked after me last night. I've had enough lessons to last me for the rest of my life, and I want to get to work, but my father is bent on having a clever son, and can't make up his mind to be disappointed."

"And aren't you clever? I don't think you look exactly stupid!" said Norah, so innocently, that Rex burst into a hearty laugh.

"Oh, I hope I'm not so bad as that. I am what is called 'intelligent,' don't you know, but I shall never make a scholar, and it is waste of time and money to send me to college. It is not in me. I am not fond of staying in the house and poring over books and papers. I couldn't be a doctor and spend my life in sick rooms; the law would drive me crazy, and I could as soon jump over a mountain, as write two new sermons a week. I want to go abroad—to India or Ceylon, or one of those places, and get into a berth where I can be all day walking about in the open air, and looking after the natives."

"Oh, I see. You don't like to work yourself, but you feel that it is 'in you' to make other people exert themselves! You would like to have a lot of poor coolies under you, and order them about from morning till night—that's what you mean. I think you must be rather lazy," said Norah, nodding her head in such a meaning fashion that the young fellow flushed in embarrassment.

"Indeed, I'm nothing of the kind. I am very energetic—in my own way. There are all sorts of gifts, and everyone knows which has fallen to his share. It's stupid to pretend that you don't. I know I am not intellectual, but I also know that I have a natural gift of management. At school I had the arrangement of all the games and sports, and the fellows would obey me when no one else could do anything with them. I should like to have a crowd of workmen under me—and I'll tell you this! they would do more work, and do it better, and be more contented over it,

than any other workmen in the district!"

"Gracious!" cried Hilary, "how conceited you are. But I believe you are right. It's something in your eyes—I noticed it as soon as I saw you—a sort of commanding look, and a flash every now and then when you aren't quite pleased. They flashed like anything just now, when I said you were lazy! The poor coolies would be frightened out of their senses. But you needn't go abroad unless you like. You could stay at home and keep a school."

"No, thank you. I know too much about it. I don't want the life worried out of me by a lot of boys. I could manage them quite well though, if I chose."

"You couldn't manage me!" Norah brought her black brows together in defiant fashion, but the challenge was not taken up, for Master Rex simply ejaculated, "Oh, girls! I wasn't talking about girls," and laid his head against the cushions in such an indifferent fashion that Norah felt snubbed; and the next question came in a subdued little voice—"Don't you—er—like girls?"

"Ye-es—pretty well—the ones I know. I like my sister, of course, but we have only seen each other in the holidays for the last six years. She is sixteen now, and has to leave school because her chest is delicate, and she has come home to be coddled. She don't like it a bit—leaving school, I mean—so it seems that none of us are contented. She's clever, in music especially; plays both violin and piano uncommonly well for a girl of her age."

"Oh, does she? That's my gift. I play the violin beautifully," cried Norah modestly, and when Rex laughed aloud she grew angry, and protested in snappish manner. "Well, you said yourself that we could not help knowing our own talents. It's quite true, I do play well. Everyone says so. If you don't believe it, I'll get my violin and let you hear."

"I wish you would, please forgive me for laughing. I didn't mean to be rude, but it sounded so curious that I forgot what I was doing. Do play! I should love to hear you."

Norah walked across the room and lifted the beloved violin from its case. Her cheeks were flushed, and she was tingling with the remembrance of that incredulous laugh; but her anger only made her the more resolved to prove the truth of her words. She stood before Rex in the firelight, her slim figure drawn up to its full height, and the first sweep of the bow brought forth a sound so sweet and full, that he started in amazement. The two sisters in the

adjoining room stopped their work to listen, and whispered to one another that they had never heard Norah play so well; and when at last she dropped her arms, and stood waiting for Rex to give his verdict, he could only gasp in astonishment.

"I say, it's wonderful! You can play, and no mistake! What is the piece? I never heard it before. It's beautiful. I like it awfully."

"Oh, nothing. It isn't a piece. I made it up as I went along. It is too dark to see the music, and I love wandering along just as I like. I'll play you some pieces later on when the lamps are lit."

"I say, you know, you are most awfully clever! If you play like that now, you could do as well as any of those professional fellows if you had a chance. And to be able to compose as well! You are a genius—it isn't talent—it's real, true, genuine genius!"

"Oh, do you think so? Do you really, truly think so?" cried Norah pitifully. "Oh, I wish you would say so to father! He won't let us go away to school, and I do so long and pine to have more lessons. I learnt in London ever since I was a tiny little girl, and from a very good master, but the last three years I have had to struggle on by myself. Father is not musical himself, and so he doesn't notice my playing, but if you would tell him what you think—"

"I'll tell him with pleasure; but if he won't allow you to leave home, I don't see what is to be done—unless—look here! I've got an idea. My sister may want to take lessons, and if there were two pupils it might be worth while getting a man down from Preston or Lancaster. Ella couldn't come here, because she can only go out on fine days, but you could come to us, you know. It would make it so much more difficult if the fellow had to drive six miles over the mountains, and we are nearer a station than you are here. I should think it could be managed easily enough. I'll write to the mater about it if you like."

"Will you, really? How lovely of you. Oh, it would be quite too delightful if it could be managed. I'd bless you for ever. Oh, isn't it a good thing you sprained your ankle?" cried Norah in a glow of enthusiasm, and the burst of laughter which followed startled the occupants of the next room by its ring of good fellowship.

"Really," said Hilary, "the strange boy must be nicer than we thought. Let us hurry up, and go and join them."

(To be continued.)

