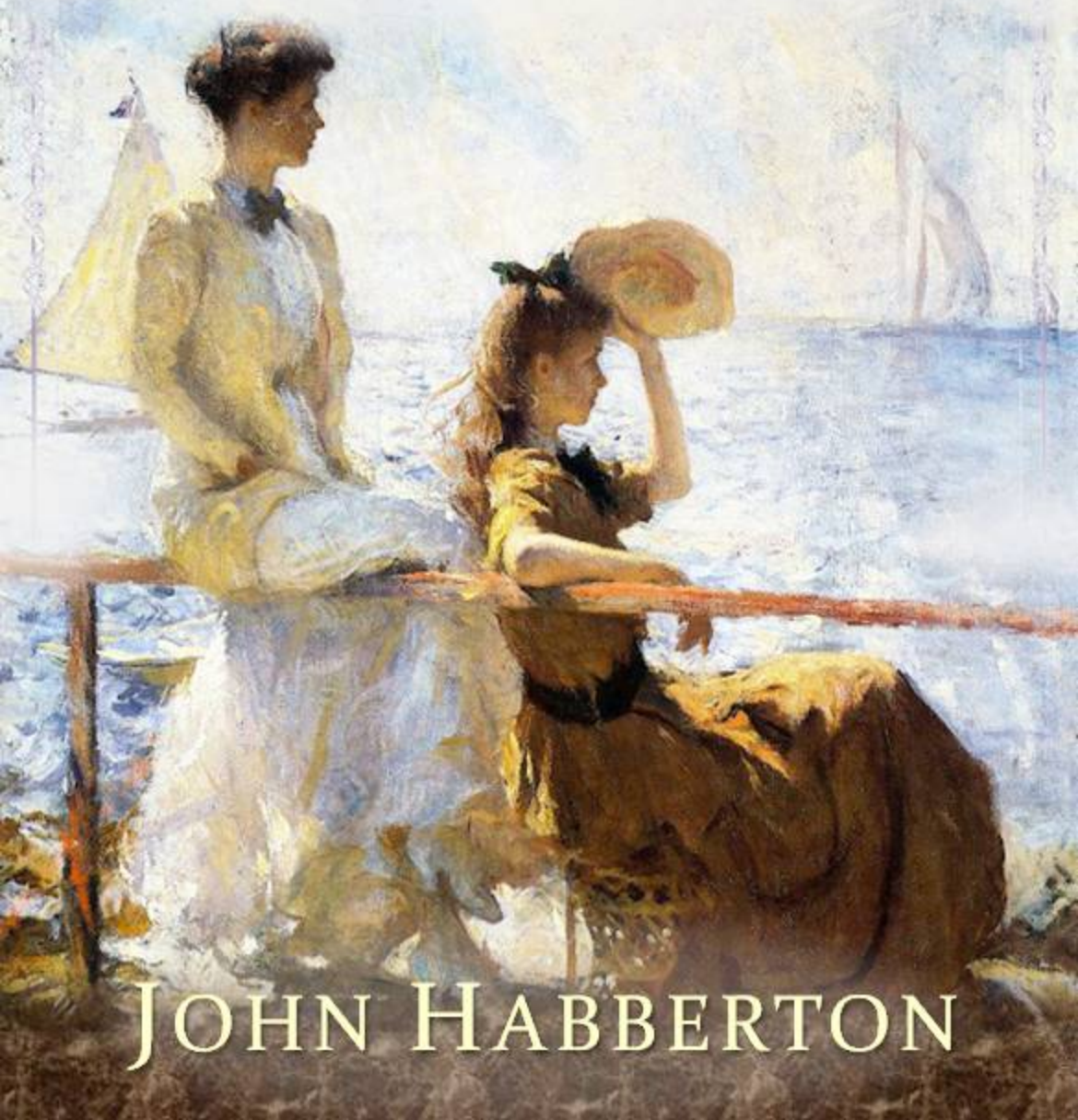
The Chautauquans



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Anglocentria
Aurora, Colorado

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THE CHAUTAUQUANS.

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An Unexpected Start

"Oh, sir!" said Mr. Broad, owner of the Brinston Foundry, as he waited for his mail in the village store, which was also the post-office, and chatted with his pastor. "Your idea of socially uniting all classes in this village, by interesting them permanently in some single subject, is beautiful, but it won't do, Mr. Whitton."

"But why not?" asked the minister, who was a young man and full of enthusiasm.

"Because people will associate themselves and separate themselves according to their personal tastes and the sort of gossip they like."

"What a dreadful future for the world to contemplate!" murmured the minister. "It is too awful to believe!"

"No matter how awful it is or seems," said the manufacturer, "it must be recognized if it is true, as I assure you it is. I am an older man than you—old enough to be your father—almost your grandfather—and I tell you that, as you go along in the course of

your work, that what I have said will force itself upon you at all sorts of times and in all sorts of ways. I used to have, like you, a delightful notion that people of all classes might be interested in one and the same thing—that is, in something of importance, something that would lift them once in a while out of the humdrum of the day's affairs and bring them into sympathy with each other; but the longer I live the more I've found that there is no such subject—that is, none that can be depended upon for daily use."

"I am sure," said the minister, "that all classes unite heartily in the work of the church when a revival is in progress."

"Oh, yes; but they would do the same if a dog-fight was going on, or if someone had committed a highly exciting robbery or murder; they would do it through curiosity; but curiosity isn't interest, much less is it intelligence. Curiosity is the last thing in the world on which to base society, if you expect society to amount to anything."

"Society," said the minister, thoughtfully, "is an aggregation of individuals who have been brought together by mutual interests."

"And who remain together," added the manufacturer, "only so long as their mutual interests continue or present new features for consideration. The interests of society generally are selfish; so are people. As soon as their individual interests are cared for, as soon as each carries his or her point, there is nothing left but curiosity to

hold them together. You know what that amounts to. It is the cause of all the silly gossip that is continually undermining characters and reputations right here among us as well as everywhere else in the world. The interest of people in one another is so small and mean and selfish that sometimes I almost wish that we might have a great war, or a great epidemic, or some other trouble that would compel people to rise above their petty notions and narrow ruts, and take a sincere, intelligent and unselfish interest in their fellow-beings, for a little while at least. I don't imagine they could stand it very long, but human nature really is grand in an emergency."

"I am glad to hear you admit something good about it," the minister remarked, with a sigh of relief.

"I'll cheerfully say everything good about it I can; I'm an enthusiastic believer in its possibilities. I steal a great deal of time from my business and apply it to thinking and in wondering as to how to improve society in this little village of ours, though I suppose people wouldn't believe it if I were to say so. I heartily wish everyone well, but that does not help anyone in the slightest degree to be more wise, more sensible or more sociable. I subscribe to all the lecture courses, buy concert tickets to distribute free among my working-people, and in every other way endeavor to bring people together pleasantly and help them to know and respect one another; but I'm satisfied that most of my work is love's labor lost. Most of the people will talk about a new subject—so long as it is new, but to expect them to take a

continuing interest in it and follow it, as I have to follow my business to make it succeed, or as you have to stick to theology and read up, if you are going to be abreast of the times and not have people get tired of hearing you preach—why, it is simply impossible to expect it of them."

"What is needed," said the minister, "is something of continuous interest; something in which a number of persons, who are acquainted with each other, may be interested at the same time. To be sure of the interest continuing, the subject should be something which takes people away from their ordinary daily affairs; of them they are sure to talk enough—and too much. It is very hard to meet anyone who is not so full of his own affairs that he will unload part of them upon you unless you have the selfishness and tact to switch him off and interest him in some affair of yours. There should be subjects, and there are subjects, in which people of all classes, that have any intelligence at all, might have a common interest."

"I'd like to take your word for it, but really I don't know where or what they are," was the reply. "Politics is the only one I know of upon which everybody will talk—they'll do that only once in two or four years, and they do it so badly as to make you wish that—"

"Mail's open!" said the merchant-postmaster, giving each of the waiting men some letters. "'Twould have opened sooner if I hadn't been confused by hearing you chat. I couldn't help

listening, for I've that old subject upon my own mind. Here comes Miss Dawn—her mother has done a great deal for society in this town, and the daughter is just back from the city—perhaps, if you consult her, you may get ideas that will do you good."

"I don't know about that," muttered Mr. Broad, ungallantly. "I believe women—young and old alike—are more to blame than men for the way society is going. It is they who seem to hate everything that isn't trifling, so that a man who has any respect for himself seldom cares to spend an evening out anywhere, in a mixed company."

All three men raised their hats, as a young woman, apparently about twenty years of age, entered the store and approached the counter. The minister, advancing, said:

"Miss Dawn, we've been discussing a very serious subject, and we think you, with your unusual social advantages, may be able to throw some light upon it. Is there no way in which the people in a town like this may all be brought to take a general, continuous interest in something which will lift them, once in a while, above the humdrum of daily affairs and the weakening influence of the gossip of which each little clique is full?"

The girl answered the minister's serious question and more serious expression with a laugh so merry and long that the young man flushed and looked angry.

"If you had asked me yesterday," she finally replied, "I'm afraid I should have had to feel stupid and uncomfortable, and say,

‘No;’ but today—really, I feel as if I would like to start out as an apostle of a new dispensation—I believe that is the ministerial way of saying it? Last evening, I received from a cousin in the West, a circular describing a new method of home study, which requires only an hour a day, and upon which several classes of people out there have united, and have been brought together for conversation quite frequently. Ever since I read this circular my mind has been full of the idea, and I’ve got my mother excited about it, for she thinks the system is exactly what our village people need.”

“Do tell us what it is?” eagerly asked the minister.

“It is the course of home study prepared by the Council of the Chautauqua Scientific and Literary Circle.”

“Chautauqua?” said the manufacturer. “That’s a camp-meeting, I think.”

“No,” said the girl; “it seems to be an educational association.”

“Umph! Another experiment, I suppose; one that will start with a great flourish of trumpets and end suddenly in sickly silence,” said the manufacturer.

“But it isn’t an experiment,” the young woman replied. “It started very modestly a few years ago, it seems, and instead of failing, it has been improving, until now it numbers forty or fifty thousand students each year, and has graduated many thousands of people, each of whom has studied a prescribed course for four years, and about one-half of whom have met together once a week

or fortnight in what are called local circles, to compare notes and talk over what they have been learning. My cousin is a devout church member—one of the girls who is always trying to do home missionary work; but she writes that the Chautauqua circle in her town has been of more service to the society there, and to good order, and to right living in general, than all the churches in the town combined."

"Why, what on earth do they study to bring about such a result as that?" asked Broad.

"Merely such books as are studied in the academies and colleges; such as I studied in the seminary," said the girl. "Isn't it strange? The result seems to come not so much from what they study as from fixing people's minds for a little part of every day on something which makes them think, and which they can chat about with people who have been reading the same books. Another delightful thing about it is that parents and their larger children often follow the same studies together."

"Mr. Broad," said the minister, "this seems to be the sort of thing that we need; the very thing that we have been longing for while we have been conversing here."

"Perhaps so," was the reply, "but who is going into it? Of course, those who have already been to school and college understand these subjects already; others are not going to take them up on your advice or mine, or even that of our estimable

friend, Miss Dawn, and her mother. People don't take kindly to the efforts of those who go among them with a missionary spirit."

"But, Mr. Broad," said the girl, "those who you say won't go into it because they already have followed the same studies, form one class, and do take an active part in it, my cousin writes me. I don't know how it is with men, but speaking for myself and other girls, I know that we have already successfully forgotten most that we learned in school, and mother admits that she thinks most older women are in the same condition, and father says that what men haven't had to apply in their business or in some other way in their daily life they forget very rapidly, and that they often find their half-grown children looking down on them for their apparent ignorance. At any rate, my cousin writes me that in the circle in her town every class is represented—most of the ministers belong to it, several lawyers, physicians and other college graduates, and people from the best society—for, of course, a western town has its best society as well as ours. They have all of the local base-ball team, too, and some of the Junior Wheelmen's Club."

"You don't mean to say, Miss Dawn, that everybody meets on a common footing in these circles, just as they pretend to do in church?" asked Mr. Broad.

"That is exactly what I do mean," said the girl. "The studies are pursued only at home, in such time as people may be able to give to them; less than an hour a day is required. The only formal conversations upon them takes place in meetings at stated periods;

but one great benefit of the system seems to be that neighbors and acquaintances chancing to meet each other are likely—sometimes at least—to talk of what they have been reading. You see, there is a subject upon which they can talk which is neither the weather, nor the neighbors, nor their own personal affairs. Mustn't it be delightful?"

"Goodness!" exclaimed Mr. Broad. "Let us start a circle right here in Brinston at once. I'll join it and sit up later at night—I'll even neglect my business, if necessary, in order to keep up with the others. Dominic, may we count on you?"

"Oh, to be sure," said the minister. "I have already about twice as much to do as I have time for, but a single hour a day can't make my load noticeably heavier. We shall have Miss Dawn's assistance, of course?"

"I shall join," said the girl, "and bring in my father and mother; they've already promised, and I shall go proselyting around the neighborhood beside. I shall waylay everyone I know, for almost anyone can afford to take part in this study; the books cost but a few dollars a year, and a single set may be used by an entire family, so the expense needn't stand in the way; where it does, mother thinks that those who are well to-do can afford to assist others."

"A capital chance for you to reduce your own surplus, Mr. Broad," suggested the minister. "You might supply all your operatives with books—a set for each family."

"Not I!" said the manufacturer, emphatically. "I don't believe people, as a rule, appreciate a thing unless they earn it for themselves."

"By the way, Miss Dawn, will you allow us to see the description of this wonderful enterprise of which you have been telling us?"

"With pleasure; my cousin was thoughtful enough to send me a number of issues of *The Chautauquan* and a lot of blank applications for membership."

"If you've no objection," said the merchant, "I'll join, too. By the way, here comes a customer of mine that Miss Dawn might like to try her hand on. It's Mrs. Purkis; she has a sickly, lazy husband, a large family and a laborious life, and always looks as if she deserved an early death, a comfortable burial, and an eternity of heaven afterward, for she certainly has had a hard time on earth. Ah, good morning, Mrs. Purkis; we've just started a society for home reading, and we would like you to join."

"What's it about?" asked the woman, whose appearance bore out the impression which the storekeeper's remarks had made. "Is it to read receipts about cookin'?"

"Oh, no," said Miss Dawn.

"Or raisin' children?"

"No; it's—"

"Anythin' about layin' down carpet, or cleanin' paint? I'm sick to death with that sort of thing. One of my gals was worried

into subscribin' to a little monthly paper called *Everythin' About the House*, and it just makes my head ache to read it or to hear anybody else read it. If I've got to read anythin', I want it to be somethin' that don't have anything at all to do with the house or any of the work that I have to do durin' the day; I get enough of that sort of thin' in practice; I don't need no theories about it."

"In our society we'll give you exactly what you want, Mrs. Purkis," said Miss Dawn; "give you something to think about each day when you are tired of cooking and mending and housecleaning and—"

"Then I want it, whatever it is," said the woman. "I'll take your word for it if you can promise that much, for it'll be somethin' like the beginnin' of heaven for me or the takin' of a nap in the afternoon, which, goodness knows, I can't do half as often as I need to—anythin' to get a chance to stop thinkin' about the daily grind once in a while. I don't know, though; I suppose, like everythin' else, this is goin' to cost money. I ain't got any to spare."

"I'll see that you are not put to any great expense about it, Mrs. Purkis," said Miss Dawn, "if you'll persuade your girls to begin it with you. They were so bright in school—we were in the same classes, you know, and I was so sorry they weren't in the high-school with me. Just think how pleasant it will be to have something to chat about in the family, once in a while, during rainy days or long evenings, when none of you have been able to

get out and no one has come in with any news. Home does become so doleful for women sometimes."

"I guess I know it," said the poor woman, and her face showed that she did. "Though," she continued, "I didn't s'pose you rich folks ever found it so. Well, I haven't time to talk about it now, for I'm in a hurry to reach home. Two pounds of sugar, if you please, Mr. Brown."

When the woman had departed with her purchase, the storekeeper said confidentially to the others:

"You may laugh at me, but I'm going to make that woman's husband go into this thing, too; as likely as not it may cure him of his drinking."

"Ha-ha-ha!" roared the manufacturer. "The idea of that good-for-nothing fellow studying, or of study doing him any good! Why, I've given that man work, and I've lent him money, and I've given him advice, and I've done everything that one man could for another, yet he is as worthless as he was the first day I knew him; in fact, he's a great deal worse, for he has been going on in his bad ways several years longer."

"Well," said the merchant, "as there's no one left to give him money any more now, I'll see what effect a little credit will have upon him, provided he takes hold and keeps up with the rest of us."

"This certainly will be a very much astonished town if any such thing comes to pass," said Mr. Broad. "Miss Dawn, if you'll

allow me, I'll enlist in this Chautauqua scheme, under your management, and do all I can to get recruits. Of course, the minister will do likewise; proselyting is exactly in his line, and he has had a great deal of practice."

"You'll be far more effective at it than I, Mr. Broad," said the minister, "if you bring the matter before all the workmen in your mill. You manufacturers have a hold on people that ministers envy, I assure you; there is no one who has a greater influence in a community than the man who pays a lot of people their wages—absolutely no one."

"Except the ladies," said the storekeeper.

Miss Dawn acknowledged the compliment, and was starting to leave the store when a young man entered. As he spoke to her the three men exchanged significant glances, and the manufacturer exclaimed:

"Enlist him, too, Miss Dawn; you'll find Joe Warren a slow fellow to promise anything, so you'll have to keep at him and not let yourself be discouraged."

"What is it?" asked the young man.

"A new scheme—splendid thing—Miss Dawn will tell you all about it. She has captured all three of us hard-headed fellows, but you young men aren't as likely to be interested in anything that means work."

“Any mail for us, Mr. Brown? Thank you. May I walk a little way with you, Miss Dawn, and learn how far Mr. Broad is in earnest?”

The two young people left the store together, and the manufacturer rubbed his hands gleefully as he said:

“Joe ought to remember me at Christmas, for giving him an excuse for walking home with that girl.”

“Do you think he will join?”

“Join? Why, where do you ministers carry your eyes? He’d join anything, even a sewing circle, to be near Alice Dawn. I hope ’twill end in a match, but it takes two to make a bargain, and the Dawns don’t think any man alive is good enough for their daughter.”

2

A SPARRING MATCH

As Joe Warren walked away with Miss Dawn, he was in a condition of mind to promise anything or attempt anything which the young woman might suggest. He had been born and reared in Brinston; he knew each and every old family for a generation back; he was very fond of the society of the gentler sex, and he had concluded, after much thought and observation, that the sex had no more admirable member than Miss Dawn. He was a very cautious young man; he had successfully avoided falling in love on slight excuse, such as a bright smile, or a roguish glance, or an irrepressible curl, or an effective pose of a little hand. There were several girls in Brinston about whom all the young men raved, yet Joe was not especially attracted by any one of them. When Miss Dawn spoke to him, however, and looked at him in her straightforward way, as if she meant all she said, and meant nothing else, the sensation she produced was so unusual that Joe enjoyed it and wished that her glance might fall upon him oftener. Perhaps her bright eyes and

rosy cheeks and fine figure had something to do with it, for Joe certainly admired them.

He thought he knew all about making love; for hadn't he read novels by the dozen—yes, by the score? Occasionally he had tried to make love to Miss Dawn, but always retired from an attempt with the determination never again to make another until he was a great deal wiser. He would give a half-day to the work of preparing an elaborate compliment for her, yet after he had uttered it, and seen that it had no more effect than any other form of civil speech, he mentally called himself bad names by the dozen. She would chat with him freely and delightfully about the ordinary affairs of the day, but the instant he attempted to turn the conversation into a personal vein she eluded it skillfully, and the subject would change back again almost before Joe knew it, in spite of his ablest attempts to guide it to suit himself. Not even the most brilliant of his efforts had ever been rewarded by a sidelong look, a conscious air, a languishing glance, or any other of the tokens by which most young women let men know that their attentions are being appreciated.

The effect of all this was to make Joe sometimes wonder whether he loved the girl as most people love the unattainable—simply because she was unattainable.

"What were the minister and those two forefathers of the hamlet talking about?" he asked, when he and Miss Dawn were fairly away from the store.

"We had been talking of the Chautauqua course of home study," the girl replied. "They had never heard of it; neither had I until yesterday. We've agreed—Mr. Broad and the minister, the postmaster, old Mrs. Purkis—"

"Old Mrs. Purkis!" said Joe, with a laugh.

"Yes. They, she, my parents and I are to start a reading circle here. I do wish you would join and help us."

"Ah, Miss Dawn," said Joe, with a sigh, "don't you know what such things always come to in a little village like this? Where's the use of starting a reading circle when even the club meetings and prayer meetings aren't well attended? I've heard the minister complain, again and again, that scarcely any people could be got out to week evening services, which are supposed to be means of grace."

"Perhaps," suggested the girl, "the readings may prove more interesting to some people than the meetings. They have a compensation to offer which some people may prefer, at present, to that which is to reward constant attendance at prayer meetings."

"But such an odd set to get together, to say nothing of the scarce grown boys and girls," remonstrated Joe. "No one ever knew them to agree to be interested on any one subject for more than two minutes at a time, unless it chanced to be the price of eggs, or the necessity of keeping down the running expenses of the church, or reducing road-taxes. I don't see how it can work."

"Perhaps," suggested the girl, "you would see the matter more clearly if you knew anything about it."

"Ah!" gasped Joe, "quite likely you are right. Please inform me, won't you?"

"With pleasure," Miss Dawn replied, and explained briefly what she had said to the others regarding the purpose and methods of the reading course.

"But what possible interest can it have for you?" he asked. "You graduated at a seminary of very high grade, and learned everything that this course professes to teach. As for me, although I left college three years ago, I haven't yet recovered from my weariness over the dreadful routine of lessons—tired of a lot of things which I don't suppose will ever be of the slightest use to me."

"If you really are sure that they never will be of any use to you, why not join us and try to make them of use to someone else? I wouldn't ask you to do more than I am myself volunteering to do."

"Ah," said Joe, "that is different." Then with the hope of succeeding in a compliment, he said: You should remember that you're a charming young woman, while I'm merely an ordinary man. People will listen delightedly to you and do a great deal for you, whereas I wouldn't interest them at all."

"Oh, Mr. Warren, don't talk nonsense," said the girl. "People who really desire to learn something, aren't going to be particular

as to whom they learn from. They'll be willing to accept information and counsel and encouragement even from a young man who has been only three years out of college, and has forgotten a great deal of what he learned while there."

"But," said Joe, rallying, though with some confusion, until he saw that Miss Dawn did not look mischievous, "the books of which you speak are on the very subjects which I studied at school and college. Why should I read them all over again, as I should be obliged to do if I were to join this new class?"

"For the same reason which I shall have for reading them, I suppose—for that which you have just explained yourself—because you have forgotten so much. I've forgotten most that I learned in the seminary; my father and mother are intelligent people, but they make a similar confession. Besides, where is the use of our discussing the subject and doubting the usefulness of the course, when professional men and educated women are reading it year after year, again and again, for the sole purpose of keeping in mind what they've already studied but forgotten, and keeping abreast of the newer people whom the seminaries and colleges are turning out year by year? The best people need something to think about beside their ordinary daily affairs; they need something in which they can hide themselves away once in a while, after a day of hard work or worry or triviality or anything else that blunts human sensibilities. Besides, the very young need to have some interests in common with their elders."

Joe laughed as he replied:

"You talk like a mature matron, Miss Dawn, instead of a charming young woman. I've always imagined that your time was fully occupied with affairs wholly delightful to you. I'm sure that you're admired by everyone and have an enviable family circle, and you always look happy and contented."

"To look discontented, no matter what may be the provocation, is to commit the unpardonable sin," the young woman replied; "but I do wish you young men could in some way get rid of your silly ideas about girls and the way they spend their time. No girl can always look light-hearted unless she is selfish and shallow, and has her every wish gratified."

"But you," said Joe, still intent upon showing that he had observed Miss Dawn closely, "seem to be interested in everything you see and hear. I've seen you chatting pleasantly with people of all classes. It seems to me that your life is full of interests, and that you do not neglect any of them."

"So far as it is so, I owe it all to good company at home; I find no more inspiring society than my father and my mother."

Joe quickly looked sidewise, to see if the last remark should be construed as a snub; but as the young woman seemed to be innocent of any such intention, he made haste to say:

"I don't for an instant doubt it; but I wish, as that is the case, that I might know them better."

"I am sure," said the girl, "that the fault is only your own if you are not already acquainted with them. No one is fonder than they of the society of men and women younger than themselves."

Joe's heart rose—a little. He felt that the last remark might possibly be construed into an intimation that the daughter might not be averse to his calling frequently. His attempts at compliment and semi-flirtation having ended in failure, he surrendered himself to the guidance of his common sense, and asked:

"If they, too, are going to take this reading course, I shall follow their example, if only for the opportunity of conversing freely with them. But—"

"That," said Miss Dawn, interrupting, "is the most sensible remark I've been able to get from you thus far."

Joe felt indignant, but tried not to betray his feelings as he went on:

"I hope, Miss Dawn, that you're not going to give up all the pleasures of the season for the sake of studying hard once more?"

"Bless me, no; I haven't the slightest intention of doing anything of the kind. I'm going to enjoy all the driving, tennis, boating, bathing, walking and cycling that the season may offer."

"The parties and dances, too?"

"Yes, I suppose so—some of them at least, and endure the remainder."

"Endure?" echoed Joe. "I don't know of anyone who seems to enjoy them more heartily than you."

"Appearances are deceitful sometimes, then. I enjoy them after a fashion. I enjoy some of them very much, but generally there's the same set of faces, the same round of amusements; nothing new, no change of any sort in any of them. There's the same lot of compliments to listen to, and very often there's even the same dresses to look at. You men laugh sometimes at women's apparent interest in dress; but do you realize that at most of the entertainments given, here and elsewhere, the dresses are the only new features there are to see and be interested in? People seem to leave their brains at home when they go to parties—at least, my acquaintances do."

Joe started. He distinctly remembered having chatted with Miss Dawn at several parties that very season. Was it possible that his conversation had been entirely brainless?

"It is so different," the girl continued, " when one takes even a quiet walk about the village, over the familiar streets, past the same old houses that have been looked at a thousand times before. There always is something new to see that brings new thoughts; but parties—oh, dear! After one has been to several hundred they do begin to grow tiresome."

"I assure you that we men don't find them so," said Joe, gallantly. "We can never grow tired of looking at a lot of charming women."

"I suppose I ought to return the compliment, but really I can't do it and tell the truth. I admit there are some men who are quite

interesting to look at. Unfortunately, however, they are those who generally I wish would never open their months, for they are dreadfully stupid company."

Joe began to wish that he had not met Miss Dawn that day. His mirror frequently informed him that he was quite a presentable young man. Was it possible that he was one of those to whom the girl had alluded so slightingly?

"I don't see,' continued the young woman, meditatively, "why men should consider that dress suits and a large assortment of small talk make sufficient equipment for a party. According to the customs of polite society it is the men who begin the conversation, and you really can't imagine how much trouble some women have in trying to divert the smallest of small talk into some channel where it may be lost."

"But what," asked Joe, again becoming indignant, yet trying not to show it, "would you have us talk about? Civil service reform or the transmigration of souls or the new pronunciation of Latin? How long do you suppose we would be able to have any one listen to us?"

"I shouldn't expect you to talk on such subjects—at least, to any greater extent than you talk them among yourselves, but I do insist that, if women are the adorable creatures that men pretend, we deserve something better than the ocean of small talk, which is all we now expect when we go to parties. My father says the reason is that young men nowadays are too lazy to think, and

sometimes I fear he is right. If he is not, then young men must have a very low and insulting opinion of woman's intellect, and I, for one, must protest against being talked to from any such standpoint."

Joe quickly changed his mind about the desirability of knowing Miss Dawn's father better, and he made haste to turn the conversation, for he could not recall a party which he had attended while in a frame of mind which was likely to make him converse brilliantly. He was obliged to admit to himself that at social gatherings he was attracted principally by pretty faces and figures and sprightliness of manner. Yet he could not help laughing to himself as he asked:

"How do you imagine a course of study, such as you have suggested, will make conversation more interesting?"

"I imagine that careful reading of any kind will put thinking habits into some persons who at present never think at all, except about their personal interests. Reading and study increase in some people the power of concentration—so my teacher at the seminary said—and teach them to talk interestingly of what they see and know. Why, any old college professor of my acquaintance is brighter, cheerier company than almost any young man I have met, yet he never talks shop. I know many women who chat delightfully and improvingly when they are together, so I suppose there are some men who can be equally entertaining, but if there are, why don't they show it? Do they think us inferior beings? I

assure you I feel offended whenever I approach a party of men and find them at once letting down their conversation to what they assume is my intellectual level. The only way for us girls to have a real good chat is to have a party once in a while all by ourselves."

"Is it as bad as that—as good, I mean?"

"Yes, and I think a new interest in the town would perhaps bring about an agreeable change. The reading course is cheap; it consumes very little time; so it won't impose too much labor on anyone's intellect. I should imagine that young men—those whom I see lounging whenever I go shopping or to the post-office—could take the four years' course in one, and still have much spare time on their hands. One reason I have talked so earnestly with you on the subject is that you seem to have a great deal of influence among the young men. Do go to recruiting. I ought to say to you that in talking the matter over at home we imagined it might be well to make the course to some extent a social affair—at least to hold the meetings of the local circle, should one be organized, at members' residences. The village, as of course you know, is full of little sets and cliques, each rather jealous or suspicious of all the others, although the members meet each other pleasantly enough at school or church. Isn't it odd?"

"You don't really mean to say, Miss Dawn, that you would have the circle meet in your parlors?"

The home of the Dawns was not expensively furnished, like some others in the town, but it was Brinston custom, for some reason, to allude to it as a model of taste and beauty.

"Imagine some of the cubbish Junior Wheelmen sprawling in your parlor, and old Mrs. Purkis, in her best calico dress, sitting in one of your mother's much admired reception chairs!"

"Poor old woman!" sighed Alice Dawn, "I suppose it would do her a great deal of good; so sit there she shall."

"You seem to be preparing yourself for the missionary field."

"Not at all. My mother has already asked some persons, I am sure, to come to our house and help organize a circle. Mrs. Purkis and anyone else—everyone else who has character enough to begin the course, and persistence enough to continue it, will be welcome, not only at the first meeting, but at all others that may be held at our house."

"What a radical re-organization of society!" murmured the young man. "I suppose we may expect to see Mrs. Purkis and Postmaster Brown dancing together at the Assembly Ball a few months later, and all the fifteen-year-old boys and girls lining the walls and gravely discussing geology and English literature."

"Perhaps," the girl replied, "though I shouldn't wonder if the reading-circle were to deprive the Assembly of some of its shining lights."

"But seriously, isn't it a great risk to take? I wouldn't presume to doubt the wisdom of a woman of your mother's great social

experience, but you must know that the common people are likely to impose upon the better classes when they find an opportunity."

"I don't understand why people are to be regarded as common merely because they don't attach great importance to certain tastes and customs. My father says that many of the common people, so called, are quite as well educated and well behaved as any of their neighbors—as well educated and well behaved as anyone else—for the distinction, as a rule, is merely one of comparative money. They're as sensitive about their reputation and appearance as the most trembling debutante in society. Our fear is not that they may impose upon us, but that they may refuse to come, partly for fear that they may not be well enough dressed. I am going to call upon a number of girls who were at school with me, beg them to take the Chautauqua course, and to come to our house to assist in forming a circle. I am determined that they shan't have any excuse for remaining away if I can talk them out of it by showing a friendly spirit. Why can't you do the same sort of work among the young men of all classes? You have leisure, intelligence, tact and the goodwill of every one. Do make use of all these unusual qualities, for the benefit of the young men and large boys of the town, by showing them how to spend some of their time to better purpose than lounging at clubs and making the air of the main street offensive with tobacco smoke. Won't you do it?"

Would he do it? Oh, wouldn't he! To be asked by Alice Dawn, and in such a tone, accompanied by such an earnest appeal

from her speaking eyes, to help her—to do the same kind of work that she was doing—why he would have promised, had she asked him, to wear rags and sweep the streets. He made haste to reply:

"With all my heart, Miss Dawn. You may depend upon me."

"Thank you; I was sure I might. Here we are at my gate. Do call soon and let us know how you have succeeded."

Joe Warren walked slowly back homeward and asked himself if he really was happy. Certainly he was exultant. In spite of some uncomplimentary remarks, Alice Dawn had manifested confidence in him; she had attributed to him some qualities which he knew all women admired. For the rest, she had looked at him in her own unapproachable way; he did not know why it was, but there seemed to him something ennobling in the glance of that girl's eyes. Why was it? There were other girls in the village who had remarkable eyes, in one way or other—languishing or inviting or roguish or fascinating, but none of them resembled Alice Dawn. Why, then, with the memory of her glance to abide with him, and an excuse to call soon and frequently, should he not feel entirely happy? He muttered the explanation to himself as he sauntered homeward:

"She hasn't an equal among women; she is perfection itself; she is simply an angel; but she is too full of ideas to ever fall in love. There is the mischief that the higher education of women is playing."

3

AN UNUSUAL GATHERING

There hasn't been such a representative gathering in this village before, since the Widow Beanblossom's barn burned down."

The speaker was Mr. Broad, the manufacturer, and he addressed himself to Postmaster Brown, who replied:

"I guess you're right. It even beats the great day at the post-office, when the blizzard kept us from getting any mails from the south and east for three days."

There certainly was a great crowd—the main floor of the Dawn mansion would seat a hundred people, provided they were packed closely together, and on this occasion the parlors were so crowded with women that men could simply stand in the hall and about the doors. The several people who had taken the enterprise in hand and endeavored to get recruits, had not imagined that Mrs. Dawn's invitation would be so generally accepted.

"Brown, the question is," said Mr. Broad, "how many of these people came here tonight through interest in the reading course,

and how many out of mere curiosity, or so as to be able to say that they had visited Mrs. Dawn?"

"Hard to tell," the postmaster replied. "I should say half and half would be about a fair estimate."

To properly dispose and manage the guests for this unusual assemblage, required all the tact of the Dawn family. The first persons to arrive were Broad and his daughters; the manufacturer had brought his family up to punctual habits, and, with them, eight o'clock meant eight o'clock—not five minutes past. The Broad girls were fairly educated, and had good manners; they fell at once into animated chat with their host, but when Postmaster Brown and his two sons arrived, the conversation began to labor under some restraint, for the Broad girls had never regarded the Brown boys as exactly "in society." The young men were entirely respectable, but they worked with their own hands on the little farm which their father owned near the edge of the village, and the Broad girls had decided ideas about people who did their own work. The arrival of a fashionable family or two put new life into the conversation; but ten minutes later the Broads were paralyzed by the entry of old Mrs. Purkis and her two daughters, the three women looking as awkward and embarrassed and uncomfortable as was possible even for people whose daily life seems a continual apology for living at all. Mrs. Dawn went bravely to their rescue, and was assisted by her daughter, who had to tear herself away from the Brown boys, but who first had the forethought to whisper

to some of her more fashionable acquaintances that those boys were really two of the nicest of the fellows whom she had met at school and that they always looked and acted as if they had retained all their old manners and were gaining new.

Mr. Broad nudged the postmaster, and said:

"Brown, how about Purkis himself, eh? You were going to drag him into this enterprise."

"Yes; but I didn't promise to do it all at once, though the fellow did assure me that he would come with his family tonight. I suspect he really did come as far as the door, and then lost his courage. I don't wonder, either, although I gave him credit for a new suit of clothes—pretty cheap ones, I admit—with the understanding that he was to come."

Joe Warren entered a moment or two later, looking less at ease than Miss Dawn had ever seen him. After greeting the hostess he quickly succeeded in drawing Alice aside, and whispered to her:

"I've kept my word, but I'm afraid you'll be sorry."

"Where are they?" asked the girl, looking about the room.

"Oh, they're coming; they'll be here. There are eleven of them, too, not one of whom ever was in this house before."

"Be careful to watch for them, and present each one to mother when he comes, and then to me, unless you see we recognize them and know them when you approach us. We know more people by sight and name than perhaps you imagine. Don't allow any one of

them to feel uncomfortable for an instant. If they're acquaintances of yours, I promise you we will do all in our power to make them feel at ease."

"There are some of them," said Warren, "who I don't believe could feel at ease unless they had the front of a building to lean against."

"They may lean against the wall of the room, and there are also door-casings and window-casings in abundance. After everyone has arrived I am going to take you about and present you to all the girls whom I have invited. I'm sure you won't forget that they're my guests for the evening, although perhaps you haven't been in the habit of meeting them elsewhere since you left school."

"You may count upon me," said Joe, "although I confess it will be a new experience—perhaps very amusing."

"Why amusing?" asked the girl, sharply. "Does being a gentleman deprive one of the ordinary sympathies of human nature?"

"Oh, no," said Joe, somewhat embarrassed, noting with delight that two of the young men whom he had invited were just entering the door.

The couple had not many more opportunities to converse with each other during the evening, for people soon began to arrive rapidly, and fill the room so closely that the fifty extra chairs which Mr. Dawn had borrowed by way of a joke from one of the furniture dealers were all put in requisition. The ladies of the house

exerted themselves to the utmost so to place people that conversation would not flag, and they were so successful that in a very few moments the hum of voices was as loud and continuous as in the most fashionable party in the world. As the throng increased, all the men present, even those of whose manners Joe Warren had doubted, gave up their seats to ladies, and the halls were soon filled with a lot of men, whom Mr. Dawn did his best to make entirely at home.

Meanwhile, Mr. Whitton, the minister, was hurrying toward the house after a prolonged visit to a sick parishioner. As he turned a corner under a lamp he saw a figure which, in spite of clothes of unusual neatness, he could not help recognizing as that of old Purkis; though why the man should be called old he did not know, for he had heard that Purkis was a mere boy when he entered the army at the beginning of the civil war.

"Good evening, Mr. Purkis," he said, stopping and laying his hand on the man's shoulder. "You are going the wrong way. Mr. Brown told me you were going to Dawn's tonight with your wife and daughters."

"Yes," said Purkis, in a listless tone. "I went. I took my women folks there."

"But he expected you to remain there. We're counting on you; we want you to help this enterprise along."

"Don't chaff me, Mr. Whitton. It isn't fair; I can't stand it, and I won't—not tonight, anyhow."

"My dear fellow," said the minister, "I'm not chaffing you. What do you mean? I meant exactly what I said. We do need you to help this enterprise along. We have talked the matter over a great deal, and we know there are a number of men over whom you have considerable influence, and they are just the men whom we want to get into it."

"You're mistaken," said Purkis; "Brown's been foolin' you. I ain't got no influence over any sort of people."

"That's nonsense, Mr. Purkis; you've lots of old associates about this town—men who were in the war with you, and—"

"Yes, and some of them are sorry to meet me in the street because they think they ought to say something, and that I'm not worth saying it to. I know what they think about me; I don't know as I can blame them much, but—"

"Mr. Purkis, you've got a fit of the blues tonight."

"Oh, I'm goin' into the thing, Mr. Whitton. I've promised my wife and the gals, and I'm goin' to stick to it. I'm goin' to read with 'em and help 'em along. I ain't such a fool as I look. I went to school when I was a boy and learned a good deal. I was at the head of the class often and often. 'Tain't no lack of brains that is the matter with me."

"Then stand by your wife and daughters at the meeting tonight. That's the proper place for you. Come along."

So saying, the minister put his arm through that of Purkis, turned the man and walked him toward the house. There was

silence for a moment or two, for Purkis had so long been accustomed to yielding to any influence or will stronger than his own that he did not know how to make resistance, yet he said:

"I don't believe you know, Mr. Whitton, how mean you're bein' to me. Do you know what everybody'll think and say if I go into that house? They've seen me around the town drunk, an' slouchin' an' lazy an' shabby, an' just; as soon as I go into the house you'll see everybody's head go toward everybody else's head an' they'll begin to whisper an'—I can't stand it—not before my wife and daughters."

"Oh, nonsense, Mr. Purkis. You mustn't imagine everybody looks at you and nothing else when there is a whole crowd of people around. Why, man alive, you're too conceited to live if you think your personal appearance attracts so much attention as all that. If you are at all fearful on the subject, though, I promise you that you shall have a quiet, inconspicuous place somewhere in the rear of the rooms. I'll give you my word that I will go with you and see that you're not brought too prominently to the front. But don't go back on your wife and daughters. How do you know but they're feeling uncomfortable? They'd feel a great deal better if they had you beside them."

Purkis did not reply, although the minister was sure two or three times that the man was trying to withdraw his arm and get away.

As the two reached the house and walked up the path toward the door, Purkis gave a violent twitch, saying:

"You must excuse me tonight, Mr. Whitton; really, you must. I'll give you my word that I'll go some other time; tonight I'm all unstrung."

The minister tightened the grip of his arm upon the other, and replied:

"Just the reason why you should be strung up, my dear fellow. Come along; we'll attend to you."

They were now on the broad doorstep; the minister could feel his companion trembling violently. The door was slightly ajar. Whitton placed both hands on Purkis' shoulders, touched the door with his own foot, and in an instant the frightened man was in the hall and having his hand grasped by Mr. Dawn, who said:

"Mr. Purkis I'm ever so glad to see you. I was afraid you wouldn't come. Your wife and daughters are having a pleasant time inside. Go right in and join them."

"Don't let us disturb the company, Mr. Dawn," said the minister, quickly. "Mr. Purkis and I will manage to find room for ourselves some way."

Then he kept his promise and retired the unwilling guest to an inconspicuous corner of the room, although they ran the gauntlet of two or three dozen men while doing so.

"Ladies and gentlemen," said Mr. Dawn, rapping upon a little table at one end of the parlors, "a temporary figure-head is

sometimes necessary in a large gathering of people, and as I haven't been of any other service to the enterprise of which you have all been informed, I have been selected for that position. You all know the purpose for which we have gathered. I suspect my estimable family have talked some of you almost to death on the subject, but they mean well, and I hope you will forgive them; it seems to be the custom in organizing a local circle. What we are to do is more than I am able to inform you, but all are expected to inform themselves speedily and act accordingly, and to hold themselves to the full performance of their duties. The first officer necessary to elect is president, and I will take advantage of my own brief authority and position to nominate our fellow-townsman, Mr. Broad. He is, I believe, the only man in Brinston who is accustomed to managing a large number of people, and I strongly suspect that we, as a reading-class, will need to be managed with a pretty strong hand at first."

"Second the motion," said someone.

"Moved and seconded that Mr. Broad be elected president of this organization."

Mr. Broad rose to his feet and endeavored to excuse himself, but the temporary president declined to listen, and continued:

"All in favor of the motion, say aye." There was a general response. "Contrary, no. Elected. Mr. Broad will please report for duty at once, and take the chair which I vacate."

"Ladies and gentlemen," said Mr. Broad, not entirely at ease, "I think you have made an unwise selection, for there are some people in this town who may have formed the impression, through my manner in business, that I'm an overbearing man and rather hard to get along with. The only reason for this is that I have always gone on the principle that what ought to be done must be done, and I want to warn all of you in advance, as most of you are grown people and have something to do in the world, more or less, that to carry this thing through, each for yourself, you have got to push, press, urge and insist, quite as much as I have to do in my factory. I also assure you, however, to put your minds at ease, that you'll get very little pushing or urging from me; if I'm going to read this course, I shall need all the spare force I have to keep myself up to the mark. I've been reading the circular, and I find that in a large town a circle generally has two or three vice-presidents, in addition to a treasurer, the reasons for which will occur to you as we go along. Following the precedent thus set, I would like to know the pleasure of the meeting as to who shall be first vice-president."

"Mrs. Dawn," shouted Joe Warren.

"Second the motion," several voices.

"Moved and seconded that Mrs. Dawn be elected first vice-president; those in favor, please say aye."

"Aye," responded every one.

"Noes will not be asked for," said the president. "Whom will you put in nomination for second vice-president?"

"Postmaster," said two voices at once.

"A great deal of sense has been displayed by this organization since the great mistake it made in electing its president," said Mr. Broad. "All in favor of Mr. Brown's election, please say aye."

Mr. Brown was elected, at which his sons looked pleased.

"Do we need a third vice-president?" asked the chairman.

"Mr. President," said the minister, arising, "we most assuredly do need a third vice-president. We need a number of people to enter this circle as members, whom I'm not sure the rest of us can successfully reach. I move you, sir, that as third vice-president we elect Mr. James Madison Purkis, and count upon him to bring a lot of his associates into the organization."

"Capital suggestion," said the chairman, frowning at one or two young persons who indulged in giggles and titters.

The motion was put and carried, while the nominee literally tottered. As soon as he could recover from his astonishment he exclaimed:

"Mr. Chairman, I—I—I can't do anything of this kind."

"The gentleman is out of order," blandly remarked the chairman. "Excuses must be made *before* nominations are voted upon. Mr. Purkis is duly elected third vice-president of this association, and must be obeyed and respected accordingly. Will someone nominate a person for secretary and treasurer?"

"Mr. Joseph Warren," said Alice Dawn.

"Good idea!" said the chairman. "Give that young man something to do; he probably won't have to take care of any money."

Joe Warren was duly elected, and then, after some discussion, the formal meeting adjourned, although the participants remained for some time chatting with one another and becoming better acquainted, as some of them afterward said, than they ever had been, while Alice Dawn's sixteen year-old brother made some of his awkward schoolmates feel entirely at home. The postmaster, the manufacturer, the minister, Mrs. Dawn and Alice, gathered after the crowd had almost disappeared, and Mr. Broad rubbed his hands, as he said:

"Well, the little arrangement we made in caucus went through splendidly, didn't it? I'm glad to have something decent to apply political methods to."

Meanwhile the Purkis family was on its way home; Mrs. Purkis clinging to her husband's arm as if she never again could let go of it. The conversation on the way was restricted to remarks by the girls on the personal appearance of some attendants of their own sex. The father had nothing to say, and the mother kept him company in his silence, but when finally the family had retired, the man said to his wife:

"Oh, Maria! I dasn't go out of the house tomorrow mornin' hardly. I'll be afeared to be seen on the street by any of the fellers

that I know. I'll be a-feared to meet the small boys after they have been to school and heard about it like they will be sure to."

"Don't you do nothin' of the sort," said Mrs. Purkis; "I'm proud of you—I never was so proud of you in my life—not even the day that I married you; nothin' that's happened in twenty year has done me so much good as what happened to you tonight."

"But you know I can't be of any use to them folks, Maria. What do you suppose any feller of the kind I know, will say to me if I ask him to go into a thing like that? He'll just tease the life out of me, an' make me mad, an' then I'll get into a fight."

"Them men didn't put you in that place for nothin', Madison," said the wife. "Now you go ahead and do what you're bein' put up to. If you're a-feared to do it for your own sake, try to do it for mine. I ain't a-callin' of no names, but I do think it is time you done a little somethin' for me, particularly as it don't cost you a cent of money, nor any hard work with your hands."

"I have been a mean, good-for-nothin' husband, Maria."

"Not as bad as that, Madison—not as bad as that. You never was where I didn't believe you could pull yourself together and turn out a good deal better if you'd only give your mind to it."

"Do you really mean to say, Maria, that you've still got any faith an' trust in me?"

"Lots of it—lots of it," replied the woman. "That ain't all, it's all I *have* got in the world, except the gals, to have any faith and

trust in. Now don’t go back on me, Madison—don’t go back on me.”

4

TALKING IT OVER

As Joe Warren sat in his room at night, after the organization of the local circle, and looked in his mirror, he did not see the face of a young man who seemed to be entirely at ease with himself. The face he saw was that of one who seemed to be thinking very industriously about something for which he was not finding a satisfactory answer. It was the face of a man in a brown study, and Joe seemed suddenly weary of contemplating it, for he sprang out of his chair and began to pace the floor. He threw his hands behind him and dropped his head, as he said:

"I really wonder what it all will come to? She nominated me for secretary; that certainly looks as if she cares something for me. Yet on the other hand, if she really does care for me, how could she, being a woman—a young woman, and a very smart one, too—give herself away by nominating me before a whole roomful of people, all of whom know both of us? I wonder if she really did it because she thinks I am lazy and ought to have something to

employ my mind and hands? If I thought that I would resign at once. No, I wouldn't either, because that would offend her, and I'd be worse off than I am now. I wonder if she and old Broad have been discussing me? That remark of his about giving me something to do was decidedly ungentlemanly. Confound that man, and all men like him! They don't seem to have a bit of sympathy for young men. I don't believe they ever were young themselves; they must have been mere money-spinners from the time they were boys. I suppose that man traded jack-knives, sold blackberries, hoed corn and did anything and everything else he could do all his life long to make a quarter, and then stuffed the money away and never spent a cent of it on anything to enjoy himself with. I don't doubt it a bit. Probably that is the reason he is rich now. Well, I don't begrudge him his money; he works hard enough for it; but I'll be hanged if I'll be made a laughing-stock by him!

"Still, I'm going to have a chance. I have promised her that I'll look after the young fellows about town to the best of my ability; so I'll have plenty of opportunities to go to her house, nominally to consult her father and mother on the subject. If her interest in the circle continues, as I suppose it will, for there is any amount of grip and hold-fast in that family, I will be sure to see a great deal of her. Confound it! I do wish I knew how much she was in earnest about this affair—about both affairs. I have heard of such things as girls deliberately interesting men in a subject so as

to have the men nearer them; but if she has any interest in me she has a very queer way of showing it—hides it very skillfully, in fact—still, there doesn't seem to be very much doubt about her interest in the circle; so my best plan is to stick to that and work for it with all my might. Yes, Joseph, my boy, that's your best hold. Just you be C. L. S. C. all the while and every time that you meet her or her mother. Work like fury about it and talk about it among the boys and try to bring new fellows in; if she has any doubt about your ability and your solidity of character, that ought to dissipate it. It's your chance; that isn't all—it's your only chance at present, apparently. You can't do anything by paying compliments to her, making soft speeches, making eyes at her, nor anything of the sort. You might as well try it on the planet Venus. I sometimes wonder if there is any natural affection about that girl. I never have heard of her showing any; perhaps it isn't in her; yet her mother seems to be full of warmth, and her father has the same sort of blood, judging by his steady attentions to his wife and the courtesy he always shows her, no matter where one happens to see them together. Well, it takes all sorts of people to make a world; perhaps, if I study that family carefully, as I'll have a good chance now, I may learn a great deal that now I can only wonder about."

Meanwhile, at the home of Mr. Broad, the manufacturer, the same subject was being discussed, but from a different standpoint.

"Eunice," said the elder Miss Broad to one of her sisters, "what do you suppose Alice Dawn meant by nominating Joe

Warren for secretary and treasurer of the circle? I think it was the coolest thing I ever heard in my life."

"I suppose, Kate," said the young woman addressed, who had a great deal of her father's cold sense, "I suppose it was because she thought he would make a good secretary and treasurer."

"But the idea of standing right up in a great crowd like that and naming a young man! I never heard of such a thing in all my life. I think it was—why, I think it was almost indelicate."

"I'm sure I can't see why, if a girl has anything to say and is old enough to be allowed to take part in meetings, she shouldn't do it. Alice Dawn certainly is old enough—twenty-two or twenty-three, if she is a day."

"As if that was the only way to look at it! You know perfectly well what folks will think. There are plenty of people who'll believe that she has lost her head over that fellow, otherwise she couldn't have been so—so—"

"Well?"

"So careless. That's the real state of the case. You certainly couldn't imagine me doing such a thing."

"No, Kate," drawled Eunice, "I don't think I could."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Only that if you'd got up and said anything about Joe Warren, I'm sure you'd have blushed so——"

"Eunice Broad, I'm ashamed of you!"

"You needn't be," said the younger sister, "because I think it's real sensible of you or anyone else to admire Joe Warren; and I wish with all my might that he would come and make love to you like everything and marry you, for I'd like to have him in the family; I think he would make a real nice brother-in-law. There—you're blushing like everything; you see I was right about it; you knew it perfectly well when I said so; you oughtn't to have got angry. It was very unsisterly to act so."

"Eunice," said Kate, in a softer tone, after a moment or two, in which she seemed to be hesitating about something; "do you really think from what you've seen, that that couple are really especially fond of each other?"

"I can't see any reason at all for thinking so. They are very polite to each other; of course, Joe can't help admiring Alice Dawn, for she's a real fine girl—you'll admit that yourself. She is quite handsome, besides, and as to her feelings towards him—well, you know how very few real nice young fellows there are in this town. Joe isn't settled in business yet, and father hasn't any patience with young men who aren't hard at work all the while, but I never heard of Joe saying anything ungentlemanly, or doing anything rude, or of being fond of bad company of any kind. On the other hand, he is polite, thoughtful, and always knows what to say if he meets one—always says something, anyway, that isn't unpleasant and—and—"

"Well, go on. What were you going to say?"

"Oh, you already know well enough, though I suppose you are trying to drag it out of me, that he is the handsomest young fellow in the whole town."

Kate Broad looked satisfied, and changed the subject of conversation by saying:

"But what do you think of this circle? Do you suppose papa will really insist on our taking part in it?"

"I don't see how he can help it, as he is president of the circle; and if he says so, do let's try to be womanly and agree with him from the start. It seems to me that poor man has to fight for everything he wants to have done in this family. We're nice enough people, I'm sure, but, Kate, I begin to think we make a dreadful fuss about anything and everything that father wants done for the sake of improving us in any way just because he has a lot of money, and we can have almost everything that money will buy. We seem to think there is nothing else in the world for us to do but enjoy ourselves. Father is older than we, and has a great deal more sense; he loves us dearly, and I think when he makes a suggestion we might show a great deal more respect than we've been doing heretofore. He is certainly a very indulgent parent, and I don't believe that anyone who knows him in business can imagine how perfectly lovely he is at home."

"But," said Kate, "do you realize what it will come to if we go on with it? Why, there were all sorts of people at the Dawns' tonight. Somehow the Dawns can do that sort of thing and not be

talked about, but I'm sure that I don't want that crowd at our house, if meetings have to be held around at different homes."

"Why," said the other sister, wonderingly, "I did not see any one there particularly dreadful."

"Do you mean to say that you didn't see that dreadful old Mrs. Purkis and those wild, savage, utterly queer-looking girls of hers?"

"Oh, yes, I saw them; but I'm sure they behaved as well as anyone else; in fact, I think they behaved a great deal better than some others. They held their tongues most of the time, when everyone else was jabbering in the most outrageous manner; it was hard to make one's self heard part of the time."

"But the dreadful head of the family, old Purkis himself, was there, and they elected him one of the vice presidents. Gracious! I expected to see father get up with his very best business frown and resign the presidency at once. I'm sure if I had been he, I would have done it on the spur of the moment."

"I heard father say something about the spur of the moment once," said Eunice. "He said he never did anything on the spur of the moment unless he thought it over a great deal first. I said that was a bull; but papa said that a bull was a great deal better than a fool, and he didn't propose to be the latter."

"Well, at any rate, you're getting away from the Purkises, and they are what I want to talk about. Suppose a meeting should be held here. Do you mean to say that you're going to expect me as the host, dear mother being dead, to receive those three or four

dreadful people and tell them I'm glad they've come—which, of course, I shall have to say?"

"Well, if you can't do it, take comfort in the thought that you have a younger sister to assist you in receiving. I shan't be afraid, so long as father is willing to be in the same society with them. If I have any hesitation about it in the meantime, I'll consult him. Men have to meet all sorts of people in the course of business, every day of their lives, and I don't think it will do a great deal of harm to my father's daughters to meet common people once in a while in a meeting of this kind, especially if there can't be any selfishness to meet and combat, as there is in business. I think myself the equal of any girl in this town, but I'm not made of such delicate stuff that I'll be shattered by a momentary encounter with somebody as harmless as the Purkises, common though they are. I suppose you may think me dreadful, but I must say that, while looking at those people tonight, I thought there was quite as much character in their faces as in some others around the room."

"What? That lazy, lounging, shiftless man?"

"I'm not speaking of the father, but the mother and daughters. I really thought I could see how they might amount to a great deal if they had any fair opportunity in the world."

"Eunice Broad, do be quiet! You drive me almost frantic. You ought to have been a boy."

"No, thank you; I prefer being as I am. Plenty of boys have the same feeling as I, probably; but it is scarce among girls, and I

think I may be useful by setting a good example. A little of my father's spirit would do a world of good, distributed around among women, and I'm going to try to do it in my little way. I suppose I shall make any number of blunders, but I'll learn to think about something besides myself."

"For goodness' sake!" exclaimed the older sister, impatiently. "I should think you'd already been drinking in the Chautauqua course, or something of the sort. I never heard a girl talk this way before, although I've seen symptoms of it in you for a long time. I should like to know what started it."

"Ask father, dear; I'm his daughter, you know. I think he is the very nicest man in the world, and I'm not ashamed to imitate him in any way."

"Oh, you're not! I suppose one of these days you'll be starting a foundry, and employing a lot of hands just as he is doing."

"Well, why not, if I'm able to do it? I suspect if I were running a factory of some kind, the feminine workers, at least, would fare a great deal better than many do nowadays. Besides, father may need an assistant in his own business; who knows? He has to work terribly hard, and comes home very tired sometimes; money doesn't save him. Rich people who amount to anything have to work a great deal harder than poor folks—father said so, and ever since he said it I have been noticing it in other cases. I might be very useful to him if I went down to the foundry once in a while, and followed his directions about something. To be sure, I

don't know how to do anything, but I suppose he could teach me. Just think how happy those German farmers, out on the edge of the town look, with their wives and children working in the field right beside them!"

"Eunice Broad, I won't talk another word to you! You're simply, positively, horribly revolutionary—there!"

"But you will let me receive the Purkises for you? Because you know I like to save you trouble."

Miss Kate hurried off to her room, the very footfalls of her shoes expressing indignation.

The next morning Postmaster Brown kept a line of applicants for the principal mail of the day waiting a long while as he interrogated each one at the window as to his opinion of the meeting the night before, and urged those who had not attended to join the class at once. He accompanied his exhortation with a circular and application blank. As a consequence, those who were not in a hurry—who numbered about half of the entire number present—with two or three whose time was of considerable importance, but who already were enthused on the subject of the reading circle, remained in the lobby and indulged in a long chat over the new organization and what it might do. Most of the conversation was about the trivialities of the meeting; how people who had not been in the habit of associating stared at each other, and how they acted toward each other. The better souls strove hard to interest those who were merely curious, to change

curiosity into interest; and they succeeded so well that by evening of the same day Brinston was assured of a reading circle of about seventy-five members.

5

THE PURSUIT OF KNOWLEDGE UNDER DIFFICULTIES

Eozoic—palaeozoic—mesozoic—czenozoic!”

These four words Mrs. Purkis uttered over and over again to herself in a low tone, though very energetically, as she bent over an ironing table, and emphasized the ending of the recitation by a vigorous pound of the iron.

“Eozoic—palaeozoic—mesozoic—caenozoicl” So earnestly were the words pronounced that the speaker seemed to be putting them into mental italics.

“Eozoic—palaeozoic—mesozoic—czenozoic!” After each utterance Mrs. Purkis pursed her lips as if she were summoning all her will power to her aid for some purpose.

“For goodness’ sake, mother!” exclaimed Florinda Purkis, who had been leaning over the stove, making some preparations for dinner. “What is them outlandish words you keep goin’ over and over again? Has there new folks come to town, and is them their names?”

Mrs. Purkis rested on her iron a moment, for it had grown too cool for further use, shot an indignant glance at her daughter, repeated the four mysterious words again, and then said:

"Florinda Purkis, what do you mean by asking me that question? Ain't you studied your lesson yet? Ain't you read that chapter in the geology?"

"Oh, goodness gracious!" snapped the girl. "Is it some of that lesson? I think that is the stupidest stuff that I ever saw in the world."

"Stupid or no stupid, you've agreed to learn it, an' you've got to stick to it now, young woman; I can tell you that. What have you been doin' that you haven't caught up to it?"

"Well," explained the girl in a plaintive voice, "I was goin' to learn the lesson last night, but Lulu Jones lent me this week's Heart's Delight, and there's a splendid story in it about a feller an' a gal. It's in awful fine print, an' there's lots of it, an' by the time I got done my eyes hurt me too much to read anythin' else."

"*Heart's Delight!*" echoed the mother. "Feller an' a gal! That sort of stuff would spile more'n half the women in this hull country if they don't get somethin' else to mix with it. I do wish to goodness there hadn't never been none of it printed. I know if there hadn't been, my life would have been a good deal happier; maybe yourn would have been, too. Here, Arabella, you ain't doin' nothin' but lookin' out the winder an' makin' believe fold down them clothes. You get that book now, sit down here, and read it out

loud; it won't do me no harm to hear it again. Then I'm a-goin' to ask you and your sisters questions about it—such as I can remember—an' make sure that you find out somethin' about it. After this don't you read no more stories while your lessons ain't done. If I can get along without them, I guess you can. Goodness knows I don't find much pleasure anywhere else, except when I read. Eozoic—palaeozoic—mesozoic—caenozoic!"

Arabella, whose ability to stop looking through the window was of the feeblest order, did not reply very promptly. She finally had to be taken in hand by her mother, who took the girl by both shoulders, dropped her forcibly upon a bench, got the book, opened it, put it into Arabella's hand, and exclaimed:

"Now read; an' see you read good an' clear, too. Them names ain't none too easy to remember, even when one's seen 'em spelt."

The reading began in a voice that evidently never had been trained by an elocutionist, and that also was complicated with a persistent fit of the sulks. Whenever a paragraph ended the voice showed reluctance to begin another, but, urged by an occasional threat, the reader finally proceeded with some show of purpose, if not of interest.

"Say, mother," said Florinda, taking advantage of her sister's long and floundering pause over a hard word, "what's the good of all this stuff, anyhow? What do we want to know about rocks that's way down under the ground, and wouldn't do us any good if they wasn't?"

"Well," said Mrs. Purkis, after a moment of deliberation, "I don't know as yet, but I'm goin' to find out. I do know that it can't do us any harm, and that's more than I can say about things we talk about most of the time."

"I'd ruther hear somethin' about folks, instead of these things—folks that I know somethin' about," said Arabella, taking advantage of the conversation to stop reading.

"Yes; and that's just what I don't intend you shall know any more about than I can help," replied the mother. "It's that sort of stuff that's took all the brains out of you for anythin' else. I don't know as I can blame you so much, for I was just the same way myself when I was a gal. My gals shan't go on that way any longer, though, if I can help it. That's one reason I tuck up with this here readin'. You go right straight along with it now. So long as you air a-readin' I can feel easy that your mind ain't a-runnin' on affairs that ain't none of your business."

"Mother," said Florinda, "you don't mean to say that that's the reason that you want father to take up the readin', too?"

"I do mean to say it," said Mrs. Purkis, with a vigorous crash of her iron on the board; "at least, that's one of the reasons. If it hadn't a' been for him standin' around at stores an' corners an' places, listenin' to all the talk of the village about what this person was doin' an' that one was goin' to do, your father might amount to somethin'—amount to a good deal more than he has, anyhow. You gals didn't know yer father in his best days. No matter what

you've heard me say to him here in the house sometimes, when I was losin' my temper for reasons which, maybe, wasn't as bad as I thought, and yet, the Lord knows, they was bad enough—your father, I want you to understand, was a mighty likely young feller in his day, an' might have made piles of money if he'd ever stuck to anythin'; but he'd got in the habit of hangin' around, listenin' an' talkin' about other people's business that wasn't any of his affairs. There ain't nothin' in the world that will make a husband—or a wife, either—good for nothin' quicker'n that. I want you gals to keep out of it."

"Well, I don't think it's very kind, not to let us want to be interested in them that's livin' right around us. Even the minister in church tells folks to do that."

"He don't tell you to do it in the way you've been doin'; you know that well enough without bein' reminded. Nobody ever seen either of you interested enough in anybody that was in trouble to go an' help 'em an' work for 'em. Standin' around an' talkin' about folks an' their bizness ain't showin' no interest in 'em. Now you hurry along fixin' that dinner, Florindy; your father's a-workin' now, an' deserves to be encouraged; an' I don't know of no better encouragement for anybody that's workin' hard than to find a good dinner waitin' when the time comes. If I stop what I'm doin' to tend to that cookin', this work won't be done tonight in time to get the money for it, and then goodness knows where we'll get anythin' to eat tomorrow."

"I'll do it, mother, just as fast as I can," said the daughter who was superintending the culinary operations. "But I do just want to know one thing: How do you get interested at all in this that we're readin' about? What is there about it that makes you enjoy it, anyway?"

"What makes me enjoy it?" said the mother, dropping her iron for a moment and looking sharply at her daughter. "Why, it helps me get out of the bother that I can't make any better by thinkin' about it—all the things that we need an' can't get—till my head is nearly half crazy about it, month in an' month out—yes, year in and year out, as for that. I need somethin' else to think about, just to rest me. If I don't find it in some good way my mind is sure to run on things bad; an' I get to wishin' I hadn't ever been born, an' that I'd married somebody else, an' didn't have any gals, an' didn't have nothin' to do, an' that I could steal a lot of money somewheres, or else steal some clothes, an' things to eat, so's to have somethin' in the house. But when I hear about somethin' I ain't never heard of before, I can drop wonderin' about my bothers; maybe that ain't very high edication, but I know anyhow that it's a great comfort to me. The Lord knows I need it, an' I should think you two gals was old enough to know it too, if you ever looked at your mother an' cared anythin' at all for her. Look around this room just this minnit; what is there to look at that gives me any comfort at all, except the bed over in the corner, an' me

wishin' all the time to get in it—wishin' it at the very time in the mornin' when I don't want to get out of it."

The girls looked, and certainly they saw nothing that the eye could dwell upon with pleasure for any length of time, or, indeed, for a single instant. Some soap dealers' chromos and tobacconists' lithographs that the family had begged or found were on the walls; the furniture was the commonest variety, and all of it much the worse for wear. A dilapidated clock, with one of the hands broken, was ticking away on the mantel; portions of the top of the stove were covered with flat pieces of iron where there should have been stove-lids. Many of the window-panes were broken and had been mended with pieces of cloth or paper pasted across the holes; and the floor was innocent of carpet or any other covering. As the girls looked at all this—it must be said without great interest, for they had seen the room no other way so long as they could remember—a slow succession of hissing sounds from the ironing board attracted Florinda's attention. She looked a moment inquiringly, then sidling toward her sister, whispered:

"Mother's cryin'."

Arabella looked on stupidly, though with some show of interest, for her mother did not often cry. The elder daughter also stared for a little while, and finally walked around the end of the table, put her arm around her mother's shoulders, took the iron from her hand, and with the other arm, pressed the tired woman to her breast; then Mrs. Purkis's tears came in a flood, as she sobbed:

"If this new start don't do somethin' good, I'll be ready to give up. It's just one long fight for life, the wolf at the door all the time, an' no signs of anythin' decenter. I'll stand anythin' now that your father's at work, if he'll only stick to it an' keep good habits, an' hold on to the friends that seem to have been raised up for him in that meetin' an' in this new work that he's inter. I'm doin' all I can to make him stick to it, but you gals—you've got to help me—it takes a mighty long time to change old habits."

"I'm sure father's doin' real well, mother," said Florinda, in quite a gentle tone, still holding the old woman to her breast. "I never see him in the streets any more. He seems to be doin' that work that Mr. Brown gave him an' stickin' to it. Why, I heard someone say the other day, as I was goin' along the street: 'That gal's father 'pears to be doin' unusual well just now.' There wasn't no other gal around, so I'm sure they meant us."

"Goodness gracious! I'm glad to hear it," said the mother, straightening herself up and wiping her eyes. "Wish I'd been there to hear it, for I never heard nothin' like that—not ever since I was married. If he'd just keep up his grip an' keep goin' on that way, maybe folks would have some respec' for us, poor as we be."

"Perhaps that's the reason," said Florinda, "that young stuck-up feller, Joe Warren, lifted his hat to me twice in the street in the past week or two. He never, never took any notice of me before in any way, except to look at me as if I was a kind of animal he had never seen before and he wondered what sort I was anyway."

"What? Joe Warren—lifted his hat! You—in the street—twice?" exclaimed the mother. "Thank the Lord!" Then she took a hot iron from the fire and began to work with great vigor.

"What for?" asked Arabella, with a hard laugh. "You don't think he's got notions of Florindy, do you?"

"No, you fool child, of course I don't. I don't know that I would want him to if he did. I never see him doin' much of anythin'; he just loafs around, like your father used to. He's got education, been to college, but he ain't a-doin' nothin'. I don't see how he's ever goin' to amount to anythin'."

"Then what makes you glad he showed manners to Florindy?"

"Because I want to have my daughters respected," said the mother. "I want somebody to pay 'tention to 'em besides street-loafers and strangers that come along. No matter how poor we be, or how low down we be, an' how mean a house we live in, or how much trouble we have to get along, remember your father and your mother was always decent; an' I don't want nobody but decent people to take notice of you gals. Them that is decent, if they only look as if they knowed you an' have any respect for you, for any reason at all—why, it would do me more good than anythin' that ever happened to me in a long time. Now I just want you gals to remember this. We're goin' to the meetin's of this readin' circle—we're goin' to every one of 'em. If we can't dress up an' look as nice as other folks, we can be clean, anyhow. We can pay 'tention to what's said; an' if nobody ever speaks to us at all an' pays no

’tention to us, just so’s they let us be there—be among them—it’ll do me more good to think about after I get home than you know anythin’ about. I don’t want either of you ever to make any excuses to be away; I don’t want you to try to ring yourself in on other folks that is better than we are or thinks they be, but you be ready to answer any questions that’s put to you about the lessons anywhere. It’s your only chance, I can tell you; folks mayn’t think you’re wise or solemn, but let ’em see you trying to learn somethin’ and think somethin’. We ain’t got no money, we ain’t got no clothes, we ain’t got much good looks——though you two gals wouldn’t be bad looking if you could get your brains into your faces once in a while—and the way to get your brains into your faces is to know somethin’ an’ think about it, even if it ain’t what you particularly like to enjoy. Now, you gals remember what I tell you, and don’t make me have to watch you all the time. You just stick to this readin’; perhaps if you do, your father will get proud of you a little. Perhaps that will help him along a little; goodness knows he needs a good deal of help.”

The reading went on; so did the preparations for dinner. The reading was stopped by numerous questions, but the pot on the stove continued to simmer; finally the dilapidated clock indicated the hour of twelve; the ironing-table was speedily cleared, the plates were placed and the dinner served just in time. The head of the family entered the door to hear one of his daughters reading aloud, and the other daughter, with her mother, listening with

interest; he had never before seen such a spectacle in his own home, and he leaned against the door-frame and listened. When the reading ended he looked at his wife and said:

"Maria, I don't know what all this is goin' to come to, but I do tell you this looks good when I come in. I ain't never seen nothin' like it in the family before, it kind o' braces me up to my share of the work. The boys 'round town do guy me awful; I've got more nicknames already than a bad dog."

"Been at work all day?" asked Mrs. Purkis.

"Yes—yes; of course I have."

"You'd better have dropped dead a stickin' to that than stay alive doin' nothin,' an' goin' on in the old way," remarked Mrs. Purkis.

"I don't think that's very sympathetic for a feller's wife," drawled Purkis, as he dropped on a bench.

"Perhaps it ain't, Madison; yet, if you think a while, I guess you'll agree with me, that it's all true." '

Purkis did think a while, with his elbows on his knees and his hand supporting his cheeks; finally, when the contents of the pot were upon the table, Mrs. Purkis ejaculated:

"Set down."

Purkis rose from the bench, leaned over his wife, put his arms around her, and said:

"Well, Maria, I have thought about it. You're right. If I don't stick it out it will be because it makes a corpse of me before I can

get through. If it does make a corpse of me, Maria, why all I've got to say is you'll have more comfort to put in my coffin than you'd ever have had before."

Mrs. Purkis, rising from the table, returned her husband's embrace and whispered:

"I'll keep you out of yer coffin, if you'll 'tend to the rest of it. Count on me for that. I can change as well as you can, and since I found that I can stick to these here lessons, as well as you can, I don't propose to have no man ever get ahead of me again. Don't you forget that, nuther. Eozoic—palaeozoic—mesozoic—caenozoic. There!"

6

AMONG THE BACKSLIDERS

Enthusiasm doesn't amount to much in this world, does it, mother?" said Alice Dawn, at the breakfast-table one morning.

"My dear girl," was the reply, "what put such a dismal idea into your mind?"

"Oh, the dropping away of so many members of our reading class; it does seem to me that half of them are beginning to make excuses for not following the course and keeping up with the regular order!"

"Enthusiasm," said Mr. Dawn, "that is, the enthusiasm of a crowd, lasts exactly as long as you keep the crowd together. All that can be done to keep it up is to re-assemble the people as often as possible."

"The real trouble, I suppose," said Mrs. Dawn, "is that very few of these people as yet realize that it is the first step which costs. There's a good subject, Henry, for an address at the next meeting."

"I fear," said the head of the family, "that an address on that subject from me wouldn't amount to anything. It ought to be made by someone else—by someone else—by some younger person; the majority of the people who promised to take up this reading course are of the class that never devoted itself consecutively to any one sort of mental labor, and they are finding the work harder than they supposed."

"It's easy enough, I'm sure," said the daughter.

"It seems so to you, because you've been trained to that sort of work at school, and the effects of your school discipline have remained with you. If, now, we could find someone who is still young and who is persistent in the course, that person's example and exhortation might have some effect upon the others. Daughter, I think you might do it better than anyone else."

"But there are so few of the members to whom I feel at liberty to talk freely. I can't go about lecturing to women who are older than I, and there are only about a dozen girls in the set."

"Very well, do what you can, and we'll see if we can't make that lazy Joe Warren do the same among the boys. As for the adults, perhaps your mother and I and the postmaster and Mr. Broad may have some influence there. I'll tell you what—a splendid idea, too—give me credit for it; I'll pay Mrs. Purkis two or three days' wages to go around among the few people there are of her class, and tell her own experience. I chanced to meet her in the street the other day, and asked her whether she was tired of the

work yet, and I do wish you could have seen the way she looked at me! There's an immense amount of character in that woman, plain, awkward, homely and stupid as she seems. I really quite admire her."

"Mother, aren't you growing jealous?" asked Alice.

"I might be, after that speech, if I hadn't seen Mrs. Purkis' new bonnet. Poor thing!"

"Father, do you suppose people really do talk to each other about their readings and their lessons? Do you suppose that the beginning of the course, what little there has been of it, has had any effect in improving the general tone of the town and enlarging the subjects of conversation?"

"Not very much, I fancy, and yet, every little helps. Brown says there have been some very funny discussions in the post-office, even by mischievous boys, on the subject of some of the lessons, and that the members have succeeded in showing their ignorance to an appalling extent. Still, all such talk does good."

Alice Dawn nerved herself for a day of hard work and went out among her nearest acquaintances. She first visited the Broad girls, and learned before she had been five minutes in the house that Kate Broad had found the lessons too tiresome for anything, and for her part she was going to give them up; she wasn't going to go back to school again after she had graduated and got through with all the horrid bother of it. The lessons weren't going to do her any good anyhow; they weren't intended for that sort of people,

she was sure; they were well enough for the Purkises and dreadful people like them, and perhaps for others in the village who had never had any educational advantages, but for her part she wasn't going to waste her time over pokey old books when there were such lots of lovely novels coming out every week, and she didn't get time to read half of them, even when she gave her entire time to it.

"But think of the humiliation of giving up," said Alice, "and for your father's daughter, too; the Broads have always been noted for finishing whatever they began. Beside, we girls need to stand up for our own sex. We'll never hear the end of it if we give up, while a lot of young fellows in town, who haven't any more brains and education than we, are going on. I confess I find the work hard enough, and I should be very glad if I didn't have it to do—that is, for the work's sake; but I'm not going to be outdone by any set of young men, I assure you."

"I suppose, then, Mr. Warren is keeping up with the class," with a ghost of a sneer, accompanied by an indirect look.

"I'm sure I don't know," Alice replied. "I wish you'd ask him, and tease him if he isn't."

"Indeed! Why should I ask him?"

"For the same reason that anyone else should or might, I suppose. I don't see why the question shouldn't be put by any of his acquaintances."

Kate Broad began to think rapidly. Perhaps, after all, Alice Dawn was not much interested in Joe Warren.

"I'll ask him for you, if you like, Kate," said Eunice Broad. "I'll tease the life out of him; nothing would please me better. I haven't any patience at all with good-looking, well-dressed well-to-do, dawdling young men like Joe Warren; and I'd take almost a fiendish delight in tormenting one of them."

Kate Broad eyed Alice Dawn narrowly, but did not see a change of feature to reward her gaze. Evidently there was nothing between the couple. What the discovery had to do with the Chautauqua course of reading was more than she or anyone else could have explained; yet she suddenly changed her manner, and said:

"You're right about it, Alice; we girls ought to stick to the course for the sake of putting those young men to shame, and to encourage younger people to be interested in the same studies as their parents. I take back all I have said about it, and I'll go to work at it again in real good earnest."

"Just like father's daughter," suggested Eunice.

"Yes; and just like my own sister, too. I'm not going to be outdone by you, Miss Eunice."

"'Nobody asked you, sir, she said,'" quoted Eunice with a laugh, as Alice made her adieux and hurried off to bring to bear upon other reluctant girls of her acquaintance the moral influence of the Broad girls and herself; for she knew quite well that

between them they set the style for the town, and that where they went all the others would follow if it were possible.

Her round of visits ended at the Purkises. The family never before had enjoyed an opportunity to greet Miss Dawn within their own doors, and their sense of being honored was equaled only by their discomfort; but the visitor made haste to put them at ease, and to ask, in most sympathetic tones, whether they didn't find the work dreadfully hard.

"Yes, indeed," said Florinda.

"Perfectly awful!" drawled Arabella.

"So do I," said Miss Dawn. "To sit down for an hour a day and fix your mind on a lot of things that you haven't seen and heard much about, and never had much interest in, when there's a dozen other things that you'd rather read, and a good many things that you'd like to do; more still, when you'd like best of all to sit still and not have to fix your mind on anything at all——I tell you it is hard work. I know what it is. Once in a while, when I'm reading a chapter, I feel as if I should like to get up and fly away somewhere; the more I try to fix my mind the more things come into it. It does seem as if the reading-hour was just the time of day when everything comes into my mind—things that can be just as well thought about at other times. Real provoking, isn't it?"

"Just that," said Florinda.

"Awful provokin'!" sighed Arabella.

"It's a comfort, though, isn't it," said the visitor, "after the reading is done for the day, to feel that it is done, and that you know more about something besides what's right about us, and that we have something to think about when we are merely using our hands while our minds are idling? Why, even father, whose head you'd suppose would be full of business all the time, says it is a great comfort to him to drop other thoughts once in a while and ramble about in his mind in the lessons he has read during the day or heard me or mother read aloud the evening before. How does your mother get along at it? I don't see where she can get any time at all."

"Oh, mother's a regular steam engine," said Florinda. "The harder she works the harder she thinks, I believe. I do declare, Miss Dawn, though maybe I ought to be ashamed to say it, that I never knew what a smart mother I had until this thing came up."

"Mother's just wonderful!" drawled Arabella, in corroboration of her sister's statement. "I don't see how there come to be so much to her with all she's got to do. It's wore on me lately the way she sticks to them lessons an' talks about 'em. I was tellin' father about it the other night after he come home, while mother was out somewhere leavin' some clothes she'd done, and—and—I don't know whether I ought to tell it out of the family—"

"Go ahead," said Florinda, "there ain't nothin' in it to be ashamed of."

"Well," continued Arabella, "father he looked at me—an' looked at me; then he looked off toward the stove, an' ef you'll believe me, Miss Dawn, he kind o' cried a little, an' he said: 'Children,' said he, 'nobody has ever appreciated your mother; it's all my fault, too.' An' then he kind o' cried some more. The way he's been goin' at them books ever sense beats all I ever seed from him, or from anybody else either, in this family, except mother."

"It's pleasant to learn how much we have to be proud of in our parents, isn't it? Well, don't let us girls have anybody get ahead of us. Let's remember that there's a host of men in this town who think that women aren't equal to them; the only way to get the notion out of their heads is to show them that they're mistaken. We've a chance now; let's make the best of it. Let's each of us girls go in to beat all the others; that's the only way to put some sense into the heads of young upstarts of men."

"No young man will ever think you ain't his equal, Miss Dawn," said Florinda, with a shy and admiring look.

"Oh, you're mistaken," laughed Alice. "You can't imagine how conceited young men are, but I don't intend to let any of them get the better of me, so far as brains are concerned."

"I never knowed how plucky and sassy that gal could be before," said Florinda, as she gazed through the window at the retreating form of the visitor.

"Why, she talks just as if she was—as if she was like us," said the sister.

"Well," said Florinda, slowly turning away from the window, "lookin' the matter square in the face, I don't see why she isn't just like us. She's a gal, and she's got spirits, and I suppose the fellers do put on uppish airs toward her just like they do to us, though I never thought of it before."

Alice Dawn wished that she might meet Joe Warren, while she was thinking over the conversation in the humble home that she had just left. Perhaps she could meet him if she were to walk through the main street of the village, for she seldom was on that thoroughfare without seeing the young man standing idly about somewhere. The sun was not yet down; there was ample time for her to reach home before dark; so she made excuses to drop into two or three stores, and then slowly walked toward the post-office. True to his custom, Master Joe was standing in front of the building, chatting with two other young men who seemed to have as little to do as he. As he saw Miss Dawn approaching, he detached himself from his acquaintances and joined her.

"Any news today, Miss Dawn, about the movement for the regeneration of society in Brinston?"

"Yes, a great deal," said Alice, with emphasis, and then repeated as much as she could remember of her conversation with the Purkises.

"That's extraordinary," exclaimed the young man. "Don't you think so?"

"I can't say, not being myself a young man; but as a member of the weaker sex I may say for myself that it is one of the most rebuking, stimulating incidents in my life. The idea of those poor people, without anything in the world to make life happy or pleasant, having been incited to interest in improving themselves and in making themselves mentally the equals of those about them! Why, it's one of the grandest revelations of the possibility of education that I ever saw. In school I heard a great deal of that sort of thing, but it never came vividly to my own comprehension until this afternoon. I've always had quite a good opinion of myself—"

"With ample reason, I'm sure," interrupted the young man.

"But," continued the girl, "I'm compelled to feel abashed and somewhat humiliated by the example those young women have set me. I hope the young men of the town are showing an equally admirable spirit."

"I hope so, though I'm not able to speak for them."

"Why not? You're well acquainted with all of them, aren't you? What do you young men talk about when you meet, may I ask, if it isn't an impertinent question?"

"The question is entirely in order; but, really, I don't know how to answer," said Joe. "Of course, you can't expect us to fall to discussing a lot of books."

"Perhaps not; but—I ask merely for information; you know I have no brothers—do young men talk no more interestingly than they look, as they stand about on street corners, and in front of

shops, and at the post-office, and at the railway station? Because if they don't, I should think that their lives must be inexpressibly dismal."

The young man looked somewhat indignant, but succeeded in replying:

"Well, really—I'll—I'll ask how they get on with their readings."

"Good-day; don't forget to let me know."

Joe's face was a study as he gazed down the street after the handsome retreating figure, and he muttered to himself:

"I declare, that girl's got a great deal of spitfire in her! I don't know, after all, whether it's safe for me to be as fond of her as I want to. Suppose the thing should turn out just as I'd like, I don't know whether I'd be entirely happy to have my wife with the Purkis girls on her calling-list. I supposed there was more balance to the heads of the Dawn family than that. Girls smarter than boys! Well, whatever may come of this new experiment, Miss Alice, I can tell you that you'll have to get that idea out of your pretty little head. If you don't—well, I shall have to change my affections to someone else. Heaven save me from a smart wife! Yet I don't suppose I could be happy if I married a fool. I wonder where is the golden mean in womankind? I'll be very careful about committing myself. Girls smarter than boys! I wonder what that girl would think if she knew the work of a regular college course, as I do? I'll show her that she can't be smarter than I—in this particular course,

at any rate. I wonder how far she's gone? I know very well how far I haven't gone; I must pull my wits together and cram as I had to do at school toward the end of the term. I supposed I was over that sort of thing when I graduated, but I'm more afraid of that young woman than I ever was of tutor or professor. To think there is to be four years of it! Well, if things go on as I want them to, something will have to happen: Either I shall marry early in the course, or I shall have to leave town."

7

"WHERE'S THE GOOD?"

By the time the Brinston Circle had completed its second month of reading, the town had unanimously agreed that the individual who, above all others, got the full worth of his time and money out of the course, was Postmaster Brown. There had been no difficulty in coming to this conclusion, because Mr. Brown himself made no end of statements to that effect.

"People come in here for their letters, or to buy something," said the postmaster-storekeeper. "After that's done, they hang around here and want to talk. It always was so; I've always encouraged people to hang around, because a good many people buy something that they mightn't have thought to get, if they'd gone right out. Sometimes, though, the talk has been mighty slow in this store; there's some people who can't open words with you in any way but by talking about the weather, or the change of the moon, or about the rain we've been having or haven't had. If they

can't help it, I don't mind it; I'm willing to take my share of other people's burdens, but I think I've carried all the rain on my shoulders that they'll stand. I don't believe anybody, except Noah, ever knew as much or heard as much about rain as a country storekeeper and postmaster. After the weather, folks generally get to talking about somebody's farm, or somebody's business—none of them are any of the business of the talker at all. People seem to think I get a mighty good living, being as I'm postmaster and storekeeper, too, but I tell you I think I pay for it all by what I have to stand. I like good company as much as anybody, but folks that talk without saying anything, are more disappointing than an empty teacup. Well, nowadays, when such people come in, before they can get out a word about the weather, I get in one about the reading."

"You must have more gift of the gab then than I have," said Mr. Broad, to whom the remarks were addressed, "for I can't for the life of me ask people questions about what they've been reading in books. It doesn't seem to come natural to me somehow; I want to, but I can't put the words together."

"Well, I can't say that I know how to do it, either; but, on the other hand, I don't have to. I generally say: 'Well, how are you getting along with the reading?' and they generally answer: 'Oh, slowly!' Then about three-quarters of them say: 'I don't see what's goin' to be the good of it, anyhow.' Then I let out on them."

"You do, eh? Then suppose you let out on me, for I'm beginning to think that to give away about three-quarters of an hour a day of my time, all of which is worth a great deal of money, and I haven't enough, as it is to look after my own affairs correctly, is doing more than I ought to feel called upon to do for the public benefit. I don't see what use it's going to be to me, except as I'm acting as an example to other people."

"I did not think that of you, Mr. Broad," said the store-keeper.

"I'm glad I told you about it, then; you are a pretty smart fellow, I know, but you can't expect to know about everything without being told. What good is this thing going to be to me, personally, for my own sake?"

"Well, if you want to know I'll tell you, but I'll have to talk pretty plain, and I don't want you to get mad and take your trade away from my store. Every little is a help; yours is a good deal, I don't mind admitting."

"Oh, fire away! Say your worst; you can't frighten me."

"Here goes, then: For one thing, it's going to broaden your mind. You strong, determined, earnest, successful business men are the narrowest-headed set of fellows on the face of God's earth. There!"

The manufacturer frowned and flushed; his glance turned into a glare, but the storekeeper met his eye steadily, and Broad finally said:

"You do know how to take a man at his word. Go right along, though."

"I mean exactly what I said," the post-master continued. "Men who succeed seem to think that success in their own particular line is all that they need; they're so outrageously self-satisfied that they don't know how ignorant they are. For that reason they often make themselves very disagreeable—don't get mad, now—I don't apply that particular portion of my remarks to you personally. You know you and I have always got along well enough, and I'm as quick tempered as anybody else, and being in a position where I'm expected to please everyone, doesn't make me any more patient than is natural."

The manufacturer faced the door of the store, and seemed to be deep in thought.

"Ain't I right?" the store-keeper went on. "Or haven't you thought it out yet? You know perfectly well that after you're done thinking about your business and your home affairs, politics is about the only outside thing you ever give any attention to; you don't attend half as much to that as you ought to—at least, not in the right way. Neither do I, I admit; I'm judging you by myself a good deal. I think for a man with brains in his head, I'm as narrow-minded a man as there is in town, present company excepted." The manufacturer grinned grimly.

"So long as there's two of a kind," said he, "I guess I can stand what else you have to say. Go ahead, I'm curious for you to

explain how reading the probable condition of rocks and water and plants on the earth a few thousand years ago is going to broaden my mind any."

"It is going to compel you to think, with some purpose besides money-making. Any such thought will improve your mind and broaden it. Real thought—I don't mean selfish scheming—strengthens a man's mind in every direction, just as that idiotic game of tennis strengthens the girls' bodies in every way. Learning to think of what you're reading about in geology will make you better able to think about politics, and you can't learn too much of that sort of thing. Someday this district may nominate you for Congress, and you know you're dying to be sent to Washington, but you ought to know that you've got to put more knowledge of politics into your head than is there now, if you ever expect to do anything in Congress, or to get your name into the papers. Folks who haven't always been your neighbors can't be expected to know whether you're sensible or not, except by what you say and do. What do you know, anyhow, but iron-casting and trading real estate?"

"I'll show you, confound you, if ever I reach Washington."

"Your girls," continued the postmaster, "have been through a female seminary, and I suppose they've learned everything that money could teach them, haven't they?"

"If they haven't, they ought to be ashamed of themselves. The bills were big enough while they were there."

"I suppose you can chat with them about anything they learned?"

"I never had an opportunity; they never mention any such subjects to me—didn't even while they were at school."

"Oh, I suppose it never occurred to you to wonder what the reason was, did it?"

Again the manufacturer frowned and flushed. The postmaster went on:

"They probably think that their daddy is a good enough man in a business way; but he doesn't know anything except how to manage business and isn't interested in anything else. That's the way my boys have been thinking about me a good deal of the time; but I've opened their eyes lately. I don't intend that they shall think of me, after I'm gone, as simply somebody that made a home for them, supplied them with clothes, sent them to school, and scolded them when they did wrong. I want to be company for them and to make them regard me as a friend as well as a parent. I know I've been pretty late in beginning, but now that I've got my mind on it I'm going to stick to it and have those two young men think that I'm one of the nicest fellows there is in this town, even if I am a good deal older than they. It's none of my business to tackle you about your family affairs; but don't you really think, as those two young ladies haven't any mother, that their father might see to it that they have first-rate company when there's no one in the house

except the family? I wish I had a couple of daughters to talk to—I'm sure that it would have a broadening effect upon my mind."

"I think the world of those two daughters of mine, Mr. Brown," said the manufacturer; "but, really, women aren't like men; they don't talk on the same subjects nor seem to be interested in them."

"According to what you said a few moments ago, you don't know anything about it. You haven't given them a chance; you haven't been able to meet them on their own ground—such ground as they brought away from college with them. Of course, that isn't the only thing in the world to talk about."

"Well, Brown, I don't know but you're a great deal more than half right. You needn't tell me any more today, though; I guess I've got about as much as I can stand. Here comes Whitton, the minister. I suppose, now, if he were to ask you the same question as I—though, of course, he won't do it—you would answer him in as plain talk as you have been giving me?"

"Why not? He's an honest man, isn't he? He ought to be, as he's a minister."

"Yes, I suppose so; but—sh-h-h-h-h! Here he is now. I'm going to get in ahead of you." Then, as he shook hands with his pastor, he said:

"Dominie, everybody that comes into this post-office has to be asked how they are getting along with the reading. I know,

though, that Brown is bashful in the presence of the clergy, so I'll ask you in his place."

"Those readings," said the minister, "are really a greater tax on my time and mind than I had any idea they possibly could be when we began them. Between writing sermons, visiting the sick, receiving visitors and attending to necessary correspondence, I've very little time for anything. If it weren't for withdrawing from others the force of my example, such as it may be, I'd be very glad, indeed, to give up the work; for, between ourselves, I really don't see what especial use it is to me personally."

The manufacturer grinned gleefully, and almost shouted as he said:

"Now, Brown, go in! Flay him alive, as you did me!"

The minister looked inquiringly; the manufacturer went on:

"I came here and made almost the same remark. Brown's been turning my soul inside out for me, and giving me a look at it."

"I'm always glad to learn," said the minister, "and I cheerfully admit that Mr. Brown's had far more experience in this world than I; so if he can tell me what I am to gain by going on with this course, I shall feel indebted to him."

The store-keeper delicately poised his yardstick, and looked through the window toward the clear sky beyond. He seemed to meditate for a moment or two, and then he said:

"Most ministers that I have known have thought and talked so much about the other world that they put people under the

impression that they didn't know anything in particular about this one. That always has a bad effect upon human nature."

"You must admit, Brother Brown," said the minister, with extreme precision in his tone, "that I have always endeavored to take an interest in whatever seemed for the welfare of the people of my place of residence."

"You certainly have, Mr. Whitton."

"You'll probably admit, also, that I am a hard student?"

"So I should judge from the great quantity of books and other printed matter that reaches you through this office; you get far more than anyone else in the village, I assure you. But, if it's a fair question, how much of all you get and read is about anything except theology, religion and the work of the church?—All subjects, I know, that you are obliged to keep yourself informed about. It does seem to me, though, that human nature is about the biggest subject and the most important one that any minister can read about, and most ministers that I know have got almost all they know about it out of religious books, that only interest themselves in a very, very small part of human nature."

"The most important part, however."

"I agree with you as to anything you can say about the importance or greatness of the human soul and the necessity of studying it; but that's just where the point comes in. These books look at it from only one single standpoint, and it isn't enough. You must go a great deal farther if you want to understand people—to

manage them—to do them good. For instance, you're a very sympathetic man; your sympathy goes a very great way; but there comes a place where it is of no use, unless it is backed up by a good deal of special knowledge. Right there is the place where most ministers fail. Please don't imagine there's anything personal in my remarks."

"Thank you." Again the minister's accent was extremely dignified.

"Don't get angry, Mr. Whitton, but I want to ask you a fair question about your own business, as I may call it. You needn't answer it if you don't want to. A great many people come to you with their troubles, of course—they do to all ministers. Now, if it's a fair question, as I said, how many of these people, how large a proportion of them, young and old, are what you would really call intelligent people, if you met them in any other capacity?"

The minister mused, and finally answered:

"I'm sorry to say a very small proportion."

"Exactly. Here is Broad, now. Did he ever come to you in affliction of any kind, to ask your advice and counsel?"

The pastor and his richest parishioner looked at each other rather uncomfortably as the minister replied:

"I really can't remember that he ever did."

"I supposed not; yet he's come in here frequently for a word of advice about matters that didn't exactly concern his business. Why did he come to me? He didn't think any more of me than of a

lot of other men in town here. I suppose he came in because he thought that from my experience in thinking of every-day affairs, I must have learned something that would make me fit to advise him. Ministers can't afford to let any layman get ahead of them in that way."

"Certainly not; but—"

"But what is the reading of these books for four long years going to do to make you any more useful to—"

"That's exactly the question I should have asked."

"It's going to give you an entirely new set of—of touching points with all the people in this community; giving you one more way, or a dozen more ways, of making people acquainted with you. You know how people regard ministers; they generally expect to be met with a long face, or at least with some solemn words. They always act differently in the presence of the minister from what they do if they meet anyone else; they act more stupidly, too, and they're less at ease. They've a general idea that the minister thinks that all the soul's fit for is to be saved from trouble in the next world. People's notion, as a rule, is that it is a great deal harder to live well than to die well; they're always running up against stumbling blocks when they talk to the minister. Of course, there are exceptions—very pleasant ones—one in this room—but no man is so good that he can't be better. No man shows off so well before other folks, has so good an opinion formed of him, as

the fellow who can talk about something besides his own business."

"Your criticism of men of my profession, as a rule, is just," said the minister; "but I have flattered myself—perhaps I have been overconfident—that I succeeded fairly in avoiding that fault, or all the faults you mention, and have tried to be thoroughly in sympathy with my people."

"Just so; you have. All of us see it; so why should you begin to stop?"

"Stop? I don't quite understand you."

"Why, here is something new in which thirty or forty of us are very much interested, and—"

"I see," said the minister slowly. "Yes, I see clearly."

"Then let's leave," said the manufacturer. "I think for two men of our standing to be lectured within the same half-hour is an outrage and a humiliation. I wish I had the pluck to talk to some of my working people as straightforward as Brown has talked to us."

"I really think, Mr. Brown," said the pastor, "that you ought to study for the ministry. If you could talk to the general public as pointedly as you have to us, you might do a great deal of good."

The two men left the store. The proprietor looked after them, and said to himself:

"No wonder a lot of the younger folks—folks that haven't got much force or go to them—keep asking: 'What's the good?' if two men like those, with strong heads and good sense and habits of

sticking to whatever they begin, are ready to stop. Human nature is pretty weak stuff, after all. Well, all the more reason why it should be strengthened."

8

THE OUTS AGAINST THE INS

In addition to such trouble as the members of the Brinston Circle had with their own disinclination to work, and their doubts as to the final use of the knowledge they were accumulating, there was to be met the exasperating and sometimes discouraging effects of outside criticism. The pestilent class that cannot endure to have others doing what it is not doing itself, was quite as strong and aggressive in Brinston as elsewhere, so almost every member of the circle had to hear criticisms and sometimes taunts from acquaintances.

Not all of Alice Dawn's popularity among the girls of her own age was sufficient to make the reading course popular with the majority of young women in town; even of those who began, a large portion fell away, and, like perverts and apostates everywhere else, became worse than such detractors as were merely ignorant. It required Miss Dawn's best temper and tact to parry the sharp cuts and heavy blows that came from the members

of her own sex—girls with whom she never had had an unpleasant word or experience so long as she devoted herself to what is popularly known as “having a good time.” That the elder members of the Dawn family should interest themselves in “poky” subjects seemed quite natural and proper to the younger people; for what else was there for men and women to do when they were married and too old to dance? They might play cards; there were sets in town of middle-aged people who spent each evening at card-playing, but somehow the Dawns seemed to take no interest in that particular form of amusement, and that they should read books about people who lived two thousand years ago and other stupid things, and talk about them to each other, was natural in the circumstances; but for their daughter to do so, and their mischievous son Frank, too—that was quite another thing.

Joe Warren had to hear such remarks at times, to such an extent that life became a burden to him. It was not in his nature to listen to any criticisms of Miss Dawn without replying at once in the defense; but among the outs were many young women with sharp tongues and brilliant wits. Human minds that have nothing in particular to carry, sometimes make very effective spurts; the consequence was that Master Joseph occasionally heard things and received thrusts so sharp and severe that the wounds rankled for some time afterward. The pain was all the greater, and so was the annoyance, because the young man was half inclined to agree with the fair critic. However good a lot of reading might be to people

who never had learned before, he was very decidedly of the opinion that better use could be found for Miss Dawn's time. His mind was quite full, entirely to his liking, of the young woman's glorious eyes, splendid complexion, fine figure and graceful carriage, and he felt that he could talk fluently on all these subjects and express his conclusions in a very effective manner if he might have the opportunity; but whenever he called, the young woman, as well as her parents, spent a great deal of time in conversation about the circle. They never discouraged his remarks about anything that he had seen or heard that was of general interest; but when opportunity presented itself for speaking of the subject nearest his heart, he received no encouragement whatever. Evenings were not thus spent by other young men and women—at least it did not seem so from Joe's principal sources of information, to wit: novels of the day and some poetry, ancient and modern.

He had to endure a great deal of teasing on his own account, too. He could not go into the room of the Wheelmen's Club, to which he belonged, without being asked whether Socrates rode a safety or an ordinary; and when he wearied of the chaffing, and strolled down to the water's edge for a quiet chat and smoke at the Yacht Club, someone was anxious to learn whether the ships which Homer says carried the champions of Helen's indignant husband to Troy were cutters or centerboards. If he dropped into the shop of the village tobacconist, where he always was sure to

find several young men lounging, he was asked his opinion as to the brand of tobacco which Demosthenes smoked while resting after one of his oratorical efforts, and whether he took his tobacco in a long pipe or a short one. Under this form of pleasantry, Joe frequently lost his temper, to the great delight of his tormentors, and he was not helped to regain it by the thought that the misery probably would endure through four years.

Even the postmaster had to endure a great deal of chaffing from people of every class; his usual imperturbability only stimulated the crowd to reserve their best efforts for him. How much he was sustained by the feeling that sooner or later he could take it out of the most of them in the course of trade he never disclosed, but he was known to say to his own sons on several occasions that if his tormentors knew how little they were tormenting him they would not seem so happy.

But the principal butts of the town jokers and indignant persons were the poor members of the Purkis family. The young men of the town who had been children when the girls were going to school, had always treated Purkis' daughters with insolent familiarity born of contempt for persons of low estate; so now they lost but few opportunities for being annoying. The younger Miss Purkis was splendid game for them, according to the average young man's idea of "game." She didn't know what to do or what to say; she blushed, frowned and looked troubled and frightened; all of which delighted her tormentors about as the miseries of a

maiden martyr being torn to pieces by wild beasts in the arena used to please the juvenile swells of ancient Rome.

With Florinda the young men were not quite so successful. What her mind lacked in education it made up in quickness, and her command of language, when her indignation was aroused, soon compelled a number of her tormentors to hold her in respect and awe. One night she returned home from a short and modest shopping tour in the village, threw upon the table a few edibles which she had purchased, and said to her mother:

"I don't believe this world's any better than it was in the old times when folks used to take a delight in seeing each other killed!"

"Who's been botherin' you, I'd like to know?" said the mother, with an angry start.

"That young snip of a Houghton whose linen I took home today after you'd done it," was the reply. "If it hadn't been for our supper and breakfast depending on the money for it I'd have thrown his things in his face."

"What did he say? I guess your father has got muscle enough—"

"Oh, he wasn't insulting; he was just badgering. He asked impish questions about the readings. What I'd like to know is this: If education can't give a fellow of that sort manners, what's the use of folks like us trying to get any?"

"Daughter," said the old woman, "you know the old sayin', 'You can lead a horse to water but you can't make him drink.' All the colleges in the world can't make a gentleman out of a young feller that's determined on bein' a cub; but just let me get my tongue at that young man; I'll make him ashamed of himself, if he's got any man in him."

"Don't you try, mother; don't you try. I'd rather stand anything myself than have you insulted. You don't know what a smooth, sharp tongue and impudent face that sort of fellow can have."

"I don't eh? Well, I guess I've been a gal myself, in this very town. Nobody knows better than I do, what a mean, contemptible lot of brutes there can be inside of nice suits of clothes. I ain't afraid, though, to lay my wits alongside of his or those of any other young loafer. It was half-way to get rid of his father that I married your father, and I want you to understand, seein' that you've heard me sayin' a good many things here in the house when I haven't been in as good temper as I might, that didn't seem very complimentary to your father—I want you to understand, no matter what he was doin' or not doin' in the way of work, he never let anybody insult his wife! There's two or three men in this town, pretty high up, too, that learned that your father's fist weighed about a ton when he was angry. If here he don't come now! What in goodness's name has come over him, knockin' off work in the

middle of the mornin'? I do hope he ain't goin' to git back into keerless ways again."

Purkis entered the room, and threw his hat across the bed with so much vigor that it struck the side of the house with a sharp blow.

"Be you sick, Madison?"

"No, no; it ain't anythin' like that, but I was gettin' in a lot of Brown's fodder in the field, and, upon my word, if a lot of them young loafers from the village didn't come around there and lean on the fence and badger me with questions."

"What about?"

"What about? Why, what do you suppose? About nothin' except this readin' course. Why, you'd think to hear the way them fellers talk, and the way they've pestered me around the village for the past month or two, that there wasn't anythin' else to talk about."

"Well, I suppose there ain't—that is, nothin' new."

"But you'd think, wouldn't you, that when a man's been down as long as I have, and everybody knows it, that young men that haven't any reason for havin' anythin' against me would be kind of glad to see that I've got a start, and be willin' to say a friendly word once in a while, instead of tryin' to worry the life out of me? Goodness knows it's hard enough to get in fodder, if you don't have anythin' else to worry you. But that ain't the worst of it. I got mad; they finally got so sassy and mean, that I got mad an' jumped

across the fence an' told them they could either shut up or be knocked down; an' that young sprig of Houghton's went right on talkin' as if he didn't think I meant it, so I gave him one whack between the eyes, an' dropped him into a ditch."

"Good for you!" exclaimed Mrs. Purkis, while Florinda clapped her hands with glee. "Madison, I'm proud of you!"

"Yes, that's all very well, but he's a very good customer of Brown's, and buys lots of cartridges for that new-tangled rifle of his, to say nothin' of the special tobacco that Brown buys for him in the city; and he swore that he'd make Brown turn me off or else he'd take his custom away from him."

"Mr. Brown is too decent a man to do anything like that, I know," said the woman.

"That's all you know about business," the husband replied. "He ain't a-goin' to lose a good customer for the sake of befriendin' a feller like me.

"Then I reckon you can find somethin' to do somewhere else, now you've learned how to stick to work, and if you can't, why, I guess that my old arms are strong enough yet to keep the family from starvin'; goodness knows, they've done it enough. I didn't say that to throw anythin' upon you, though. I'm gladder to hear of your knockin' that feller down than if you'd brought home a week's pay unexpected."

Purkis looked at his wife curiously for a moment.

"Go it, old girl—young girl, I mean. By gracious, you look twenty years younger within the last two minutes!"

"I feel twenty years younger, too. Madison, I'm proud of you; you! You—you're just what I thought you was when I married you, an' I don't care who knows it!"

"Well, Maria, seein' there's nobody here but the gals, I guess the knowin' of it isn't goin' very far, though come to think of it, I don't know of anybody I'd rather have know it. I hope you heard what your mother said, Florinda, Arabella!"

The man still stood with his arm about his wife, when a shadow was cast upon them from the window, and, an instant later, Postmaster Brown stood in the doorway, which Purkis, in spite of the coldness of the weather, had carelessly left open. As he entered there was a speedy disentanglement of husband and wife. The visitor remarked:

"Don't mind me—I used to be quite accustomed to that sort of thing—wish I were yet, but I can't reach all the way from here to Heaven. Say, Purkis, young Houghton came into the store a few minutes ago in a high state of excitement."

"Yes, I suppose so," said the man, taking a dejected attitude.

"I made him explain himself," continued the postmaster, "and, by asking a good many questions, got the whole truth out of him. Purkis, I'm astonished at you! You're a—you're a—Purkis, you're a brick. You've done that reading-circle an awful lot of good by taking the conceit out of that young fellow; 'pon my word nothing

has happened in a long time that's done me so much good. Why, I locked up the store right straight away at the risk of losing two or three customers, and came out to look you up to tell you about it. I don't know how to tell you how glad I am. See here; I'm going to raise your pay fifty cents a day, right here, from this very day; that will make you understand how delighted I am, I guess. That husband of yours has got his second wind, Mrs. Purkis; he's going to come out splendid now. We'll get him on the town committee yet; a man that knows how to handle fools is just the man we need at the present time. I'm going to send one of the boys down to keep store for me right after dinner, so I can go out and tell Broad about it; it'll just delight his soul. Shouldn't wonder after that if I could get Broad to give you a first-rate job at the mill that will last you all winter. You know I don't feel sure that I've got anything to do after things freeze up. Fine grit in that father of yours, Miss Florinda;" for the postmaster had just discovered that the girls were standing behind the door, looking on with some amazement. "Fine grit, and no mistake."

"But isn't it mean, Mr. Brown," said the older daughter, "that people've got to be pestered in this way just because they're trying to do somethin' to make themselves better and more sensible?

"Of course it is; but you mustn't mind that sort of thing in this world. Everybody's jealous of folks that's getting ahead of them. Those young loungers are really jealous of your father; that's the reason they went round to tease him. Just remember that. Now

when anybody tries to talk to you in the same way, ‘he laughs best who laughs last.’ Don’t forget that. I suppose some of them will be chaffing Broad pretty soon, if they dared to do it. Well, I don’t know as I ought to have come around and shut up the store; but I don’t give myself that luxury very often, and I do assure you that this has been one. Don’t mind about going back to the lot again before dinner, Purkis. Just stay home and glorify yourself; give your family a chance to admire you. It isn’t often that a fool gets knocked down in this town, and the man who does it ought to be looked at and admired by those who know him. I’ve half a mind to ask you to come up to the store after dinner, to let me show you off to everybody that comes in.”

“S’pose, though, the fellow sues me for assault and battery?” suggested the hero of the occasion.

“Sues you? Assault and battery? Nonsense! Do you suppose he’d be fool enough to get up and explain before a whole crowd of people? Besides, if he does, both Broad and I will go you bail, and be mighty glad of the chance. Good day, all.”

“Father,” said Florinda, “you look as if you had grown an inch in the past ten minutes.”

“Well, I feel as if I had grown a foot,” the man replied. “ It’s been so long since I’ve heard a word of praise for myself about anythin’ whatever that I’m almost out of my head; but”— here he again looked at his wife and threw his arms about her shoulders— “to see this dear woman lookin’ at me in this way, I know that I

am in the right. To see her lookin' at me with the eyes she had twenty years ago! If studyin' the Chautauqua course an' indulgin' in a knockdown once in a while is goin' to have that sort of effect, I'll keep studyin' an' fightin' to the end of my days!"

Mrs. Purkis seemed about to say something, but evidently she changed her mind, for she put both arms around her husband's neck and burst into tears.

The head of the family said:

"Why, Maria, what's makin' you feel so bad?"

The answer was:

"I ain't feelin' bad; I never felt so good in all my life."

9

THE PURKIS CROWD

The men with whom the head of the Purkis family had most associated in recent years, were the torment and despair of the community. Had they been worse, the reputable citizens would have been happier, for then the town might have got rid of them. Thieves could be sent to prison for a long period; brawlers could be put in the town lock-up, and sentenced to expiate their offense by working hard at repairing the local roads—a penalty which prisoners regarded almost worse than death. But the "Purkis crowd," as the villagers had come to call a lot of undesirable citizens, was not given to brawling; and though all of its members were suspected of petty larceny, they stole so slyly that they never had been detected.

Had this set lived in Europe two or three hundred years ago, they would have adopted nomadic ways and called themselves gypsies; had they originated in certain parts of the West, they would have been called "Pikes;" at Brinston they occasionally

contributed of their number to the great army of tramps. They were born with a fair share of sense and other desirable human qualities, but seemed to have an unconquerable aversion to exerting any of them. All were quite as competent as any of their neighbors to earn proper food, clothing and shelter for their families, but rarely was one of them seen doing work of more serious kind than going fishing or hunting.

Exceptions were to be noted when a merchant needed someone to work two or three hours, the pay to be in "store goods." On such occasions a member of the Purkis crowd would earn enough ammunition for a long hunt, and tobacco enough to last a few days. During the time when not working, shooting or fishing, the members of the crowd could all be found at any horse race, shooting match, ball game, fire, coroner's inquest or other affair which men who earned their living seldom found time to attend.

What most enraged the reputable residents, as they talked of the Purkis crowd, was that some of the worthless fellows had been promising when young men. They had all been above the average in good looks, spirits and activity, and had taken the lead in dances, sleigh ride parties, straw-rides and other popular diversions. Most of them had dressed better than young men who afterward made their mark; they bought the largest of silk handkerchiefs, wore startling shirt studs and watch chains, and were redolent of the most expensive new thing in hair oil.

Naturally they were very popular among the girls. A well dressed, lively young man, who always was ready to get out his horse and buggy or to hire a turn-out and take someone out for a drive, was better liked by the fair sex than a sober youth who was always chained to his plow or shop, or to books which were fitting him for a profession. These various qualifications probably explained why each of the crowd married so well that in after years his wife, no matter how worn and shabby, seemed vastly his superior, and earned some sort of living for the family while her husband enjoyed inelegant leisure and haunted the groggeries, of which the town had too many.

All that saved most of these fellows from punishment as vagrants was the fact that they had been soldiers, and some of them had been wounded. The town had sent many men to the army, and the best of the survivors could be depended upon by the worst for protection should severe measures be threatened. It requires more than ordinary provocation to make the most reputable ex-soldier see an old comrade placed among ordinary felons and vagrants.

This was the class that the postmaster, the manufacturer and the minister expected Purkis to interest in the Chautauqua reading course; so it was no wonder that Purkis himself lost temper, one day, when the three most prominent members of the local circle attempted to hold him to account for not bringing in recruits.

"You folks don't know what you're talkin' about," said Purkis. "I've had more cussin's and laughin's at and bad names called me in the last three months than in all my life before. Why, the fellers are so down on me that they won't even borrow a chew of tobacco of me any longer. What do you think of that?"

"That does look serious," the postmaster admitted; while the manufacturer shook his head and declared:

"They're not worth the rope 'twould take to hang them."

"We've got hold of Mr. Purkis," said the minister, "and he is doing well—very well. Why should we despair of getting the others?"

"Because you don't go for them in the right way," Purkis replied. "You'd never have got me, I don't mind tellin' you, if you hadn't got my wife and family first. I couldn't stop now if I wanted to—I wouldn't dare to show my face in the house again. Not that I want to stop. I don't mind tellin' you, gentlemen, countin' that you won't let it go any farther, that since I've been diggin' away at work here for Mr. Brown and at the books at home, my wife an' the girls seem to have took a new notion to me. To be sure, they don't give me any peace; if I ain't at work in one way, they egg me up to doin' it in another way, until it don't seem as if I ever got time to breathe; but they do seem to be kind o' proud of me; an' it's a mighty comfort, I can tell you. If you want to make anythin' of a man that's down in the world, get a grip on him through his family."

The three listeners looked thoughtful. The manufacturer finally remarked:

"Mrs. Purkis is looking better than I've seen her in ten years, Madison."

"I didn't s'pose anybody noticed it but me," the man replied; "but if any of the rest of you see anythin' of the kind, you needn't be afraid to say so. I'll promise not to be jealous."

The store-keeper devised a new bit of work to get Purkis out of the store; then he looked at his associates, and said:

"Well?"

"The fellow is right," Mr. Broad replied; "but how to get hold of the families first is too big a puzzle for me. I don't see how to go about it."

"Don't try," said the postmaster. "You're not made right—not for that sort of work. The women must do it; at least, they must get hold of the mothers and daughters. If you'd pick out a lively boy—or more than one—from that low gang, and try to make something of him, you might help the work along, and do yourself some good, too, unless you've forgotten that once you were a boy. When it comes to the bigger part of a family, though, you'd better send your daughters to do the work."

"My daughters!" exclaimed the manufacturer. "They've more respect for the dirt under their feet than for such folks."

"I shouldn't wonder. Most of us feel the same way."

"Awful!" exclaimed the minister.

"True, though," said Brown. "Still, fathers are supposed to have some influence with their daughters. It oughtn't to be insulting to remind them that some of these women went to school with their mother, and seemed promising girls, too, at that time. I'm not ashamed to say to you two gentlemen that I gave two or three of those very girls a chance to give me the mitten. Twenty or thirty years of disappointment and drudgery have made sad changes, but the original stuff must be there somewhere."

"See here!" exclaimed the manufacturer, starting to his feet and pacing the floor. "We've only got hold of the little end of this Chautauqua business thus far. I supposed it was merely to be reading—a putting of knowledge in the heads of some people who hadn't any, and to polish up some intelligent people whose wits had grown rusty. Little by little it's beginning to seem as if it would mean the reformation of the whole country."

"No; of Brinston," said the postmaster.

"It amounts to the same thing in the end," said the minister. "Mr. Broad is entirely right."

"Of course I am," said the manufacturer, with emphasis. "What we are doing here other circles are attempting elsewhere, and if we all live up to the work we've taken upon ourselves, the result cannot be over-estimated. But think of the amount of work to be done. Whew!" Mr. Broad paused a moment to pass his hand across his forehead as if to wipe away perspiration; then he continued: "I'd rather have to put up a big addition to my foundry

and find good men to work in it. Just look at it for a moment. To say nothing of all the sensible, respectable people who are being helped by this reading course, and the vacant minded crowd that ought to be kept from making fools of themselves, here's this crowd of Purkis's that's been a greater nuisance to the town than all the rogues and tramps put together. Each town in the land has just such a crowd. We've got hold of one man of them, and he is doing well; that shows what would happen to the others if we could get them—as we could, if we would use proper nerve and tact."

"And money," suggested the storekeeper. "If I hadn't paid for their books, and made work for Purkis, so as to give him a fresh start, that family wouldn't be reading now."

"Oh, to be sure," snapped the manufacturer, who had begun to look conservative as soon as he heard the word "money." Then he halted and said: "Any legitimate business can be managed on credit and confidence and bank accommodation, but the instant you try to do anything for the lower classes—"

"The lowest class," interrupted the minister.

"Call it the lowest, then—the minute you try to do anything for that kind of people, you must put your hand into your pocket."

"Suppose you have?" the minister argued. "Why should you worry? It doesn't require much; you have plenty; you can't carry it with you when you die."

"Ha-ha!" laughed the postmaster.

"Go on!" roared Mr. Broad at Brown. "Why don't you get off your old joke, and tell me my money would melt if I could take it into the next world."

"Because it isn't specie," was the reply. "Go on with your speech; it's the best I ever heard you make, and that's saying a great deal. You——"

"Thank you; I don't know that I have anything else to say, though, except that if this matter is going to be as large as it appears to be, that it had better be brought to the attention of the whole circle, instead of the work dropping upon a very few shoulders, as it verily is going to do. If there is any money to be used in the matter it is very plain to see that the postmaster and I will have to contribute the most of it."

"I shall do my share," said the minister, with considerable dignity.

"Of course you will, dominie; I didn't mean to offend you, but I don't see how any minister on the salary that you get can afford to spare any money. I have always told the congregation that your pay ought to be a great deal larger than it is."

"It is plain enough to see," said the postmaster," from what's happened to the Purkises, that the way to get that particular crowd in is to do just what has been done to them. You can see for yourself what it's done for Purkis himself, and I can speak from my own knowledge as to how it has affected his family, for I chanced to go there the other day and have a chat with them.

They're always at the meetings of the circle, and you see how well they behave and how deeply they are interested in the lessons. Now, I say that's one of the strangest and most satisfactory changes that has ever taken place in any family in this town, and we ought to feel encouraged by it to go farther and keep on going so long as there is any family like it to be found and to be influenced. For my part, so far as the money goes it shan't be allowed to stand in the way; you find the people and work on them; I'll supply the money so long as there is any real promise in them. Purkis hasn't cost me any money; come to think of it, he owes me a little bit, but he is working fairly now, and I'm not paying him a bit too much. I have been pluming myself a great deal upon the amount of good I have been doing that family, but really, I don't see that I have been doing anything at all, except what I have been paid for pretty thoroughly, so that I'm not out of pocket a single cent, and all that I meant to spend on him I can just as well apply to somebody else. I can't catch hold of anyone, however, unless they come into this store, for I never dare to be out of it from early morning until late night; I've been trying to devise some extra work so that I could get Purkis to invite some one of the fellows up to help him, and get a chance to talk with them in that way; I don't doubt yet that I'll succeed at it. Now, if I were in Broad's place, and had a great big foundry, and had to hire a lot of men, and had plenty of money in my pocket, there is no knowing what an amount of good I might do. I might not have to

spend a cent of the money after all, either, risking a little in the first place, but it might all come back to me just the same as it has done in this case."

So saying, the postmaster looked critically at the iron-founder, who finally met his gaze, and said:

"Oh, well, I'll make a little rough out-door work for some of them for a little while, if there is anything to be made out of it, and if anybody else will find them for me."

"I'll make that my share of the business," said the minister.

"It will be quite an amount of vineyard labor, too," said the postmaster. "He'll find the souls that need saving, and let Broad do the work. I would really like to see Broad playing missionary; he's just the sort of fellow that I think is naturally cut out for that sort of business, but somehow money and missionary don't seem to go well together."

"You're unusually complimentary tonight, upon my word," said the iron-founder, "but I suppose I shall have to stand it. But why shouldn't this work be brought to the attention of the entire set, and make everybody take part in it?"

"Don't do that," said the postmaster, "unless you want to spoil everything. People of the circle are doing well enough, so far as the reading goes, but there isn't one in ten of them that know how to handle individuals whom they don't think quite as good as themselves, without doing more harm than good. I don't know why it is that there are so many Pharisees in the church of the

present day, and out of the church, too, as to that. That commoner class will stand a good deal of condescension and bullying from a man like Broad, here; they know it is his natural manner, but when it comes to stupid and affected fellow-citizens who turn upon them with the air of conferring a very great benefit, and of also being unusually good to speak to them at all, they get very angry, and I don't blame them; the women are no better than the men in that respect, either."

"And yet," said Broad, "only a little while ago you were saying that we'd have to have our wives and daughters look after these people, or at least, after their families."

"Yes, but I didn't say *everybody's* wives and daughters; people have got to be picked out for the work that they are going to do. I have known one woman, who received a call from herself to do home missionary work, do more mischief, do more work for Satan in the course of one single visit, than everybody else could undo in the next year."

"Hold on, Brown!" said the manufacturer. "If you're going to talk that way, we'll all think you need to get married again, so as to brush up your respect for the sex."

"I respect the sex quite as much as any other man, and I know what I'm talking about. Work in those people's families could be done by women of tact; there aren't very many of them, neither here nor anywhere else. I should like to collect them carefully and

have a good sensible, straightforward talk with them; and then, perhaps, some good would come of it."

It was finally agreed between the three men that they should meet two or three of the more finished women, who were members of the circle, and endeavor to persuade them to work upon the families of some of the Purkis crowd. As the trio separated, however, Broad muttered, loud enough for the others to hear:

"I never had the slightest idea, when this thing began, that there was going to be so much to it. If I had, I don't believe I'd have touched it with a ten-foot pole."

"But you're not going to back out of it now," said the postmaster, "not unless you are more of a coward than I ever thought you'd be."

"Now, see here, Hen Brown, it isn't necessary to do any of that sort of talking to keep me up to the mark. I'm into this thing just as deep as you are; got it just as much at heart, even if I do grumble about it a good deal, but I say again that I never imagined that there was anything like so much to it. It means the regeneration of the whole town."

10

PICKING UP

Before the winter was over those members of the Brinston Circle who had persevered in their reading, discovered to their entire satisfaction that the mental exercise was worth all it cost; they certainly had something new to think of and talk about, not only with each other, but in their homes, and they could not deny that they enjoyed it, although it required work and application.

The oddest and most unexpected effect was noticeable among the half-grown children—boys and girls not old enough to associate with young men and women, and who had at first been feared as probable gossipers about the failings of their parents and other elders. Many of these youngsters were still at school, and apparently had already as much study as they could stand, yet they kept up with the class, listened gravely, and asked intelligent questions. Frank Dawn expressed the sentiments of this element

when he said, at an informal meeting of the Junior Wheelmen, of which he was a member:

"It's a great comfort to have a fellow's father and mother in the same class with him, and find that he can keep up with them, and find that they sometimes have to ask him questions. It makes him feel like a man, and yet don't give him a chance to feel conceited."

And two or three other Junior Wheelmen responded, feelingly:

"You bet it does."

Other people, too, began to tell one another that the members of the Chautauqua Circle seemed to be having a real good time. The people of the village always knew when the meeting had taken place, for those who chanced to be out calling, or going to or returning from any other meeting in the town, were sure to meet little groups going toward their respective homes laughing or in animated conversation, and apparently having as good a time as if they were on their way home from a party. After saying to one another that those Chautauquans seemed to have a real good time, the observers began to talk about it in a half-envious way to the members themselves, and these in turn informed one another of what had been said to them. It was then unanimously agreed that the time had come to make a new effort and see whether the numerical strength of the circle might not be enlarged.

The plan worked far better than had been expected; social gatherings are not especially numerous in any village of two or three thousand people, and some men and women, not all young, were willing to endure the routine of reading for the sake of the pleasant company in which it placed them once a week.

As the circle enlarged, the older members began to feel their responsibilities, and the younger ones to be quite sensitive as to the requirements of the course. The circle listened to no long addresses or essays, but questions were freely asked on the readings for the week, or whatever time had elapsed since the last meeting; and the younger members, particularly those who had already had some educational advantages, so disliked to be obliged to say, “I don’t know,” that they began parallel reading far in advance of the demands of the system.

Among those who unwillingly took this extra labor upon themselves was Joe Warren. In the solitude of his chamber he looked very much aggrieved and did a great deal of muttering; but he had noticed that the Brown boys seemed able to answer questions on almost all subjects, and that Miss Dawn seemed greatly interested in both of them. To be “cut out,” as he expressed it, by either of those boys, would be too humiliating to think of. He always had liked the Brown boys until that Chautauqua Circle was formed; indeed the older, Harry, had been one of his most intimate friends from boyhood, and had somehow, although not a college graduate, attained an amount of information that made Joe Warren

unable to instruct him in anything, apparently, except the dead languages, and in those Joe did not seem desirous of airing such knowledge as he had. He had always wished Harry Brown well; but now, when he saw Miss Dawn's gaze rest upon that young man's face, which Joe couldn't deny was quite manly and intelligent, he found himself wishing that some people hadn't such a provoking faculty for learning a great deal in spite of lacking advantages.

At first he was so provoked, and his pride was so mortified at finding Harry's general intelligence superior to his own, that he thought seriously of leaving the circle for the sake of protecting his own reputation; but the very next evening Miss Dawn chanced to come unattended to the meeting, her father and her mother being otherwise engaged, and Harry Brown had the impudence to offer to see her home. Not only that, but his offer was accepted with every appearance of gratification; so Joe withdrew his mental resignation at once.

What astonished the older members most was the quality of the newer recruits. Each of the original members had endeavored to influence his or her own set, but in spite of them all, the greater number of recruits came from a class in which none of the originators had a place; they were quiet, inconspicuous members of the community, people who seldom caused themselves to be seen or heard anywhere, yet most of whom were noted for owning the houses in which they lived, and managing their affairs so as to

command the respect of every one. The Broad girls pronounced them a set of uninteresting plodders; but their father remarked that out of that very plodding set usually came the people who went farthest and highest in this world; and the young women were unable to deny it.

The few fashionable people who had joined the circle for the sake of exerting what they regarded as their influence, began to feel themselves surpassed in intelligence by others whom they had been in the habit of looking down upon, and the information, though it did not please them at all, had in the end quite a beneficial effect. It not only lessened the conceit of some, but it gave that class a new and accurate estimate of people who differed from them only in respect of money and outward appearance; frequently in appearance alone. Mr. Broad, who couldn't have looked at a saint more than an instant without trying to estimate its probable bank account, told his daughters that some of those quiet mechanics and shopkeepers could buy out two or three of their assuming neighbors. It must be admitted however, in justice to the self-satisfied class, that they were not slow in recognizing the wit and intelligence of those whom hitherto they had scarcely known except by sight, and new acquaintances were formed, gradually at first, and with extreme care and hesitation, which were so pleasing that those who profited by them declared themselves provoked with themselves for not having known their neighbors sooner. Even Mr. Broad, who had prided himself on having accurately

"sized up" every man in his own employ, admitted to himself that some of his commonest looking and quietest workmen knew a great deal more on some subjects than he did.

When it was discovered that Miss Dawn, the Misses Broad, Joe Warren and two or three of the other young men of leisure about the town, did not forego any of the social festivities of autumn and winter for the sake of their new studies, youthful and fashionable criticism of the reading circle broke down entirely. The young men had been most suspicious of the influence of the circle. Like most other young men, they had the stupid idea that education makes young women uninteresting; but they were obliged to admit to one another that if any change had been worked by the Chautauqua idea, it was for the better, for certainly the young women who had been favorites on any account but their looks seemed brighter this winter than ever before; indeed, their vivacity was such as to put a few young men under the impression that there must be some especially inspiriting influence in the Chautauqua reading; so these fellows who had been despaired of for some time by proselyting members, joined the circle, and began to read industriously to make up for lost time.

Another effect of the reading course was brought to general attention by Postmaster Brown, who, one day, informed the minister that there had been quite a change in the usual winter demand for light literature, of which his store was the principal depot. He had sold as many novels as usual, but the quality

demanded was higher, and he had been surprised by orders for a few books of solid nature. The demand for a better class of periodicals, he said, was larger than before in the town, and many high-class magazines were purchased by people who did not at the same time abandon such lighter literature as they always had been reading.

Heart's Delight, the weekly paper in fine print made up entirely of trashy fiction in paragraphs of two or three lines, to which feeling allusion had been made in the Purkis family, was still largely purchased, but the postmaster was astonished once in a while, by having one of the purchasers ask questions in a somewhat shamefaced way about periodicals of higher order.

One of the first subscribers which *Heart's Delight* lost was Miss Kate Broad. She had long declared that the paper contained nothing but nonsense, yet she insisted that it was harmless nonsense, and she admitted—solely to herself—that nowhere else could she find love stories of exactly the order which she enjoyed. In the tales—all of them love tales, of course—which that enterprising paper published, all the lovers were extremely ardent, all maidens were gloriously beautiful, the language was extremely exuberant and the action rapid; and as Miss Broad herself, though quite intelligent, had her father's impetuous nature and no sufficient outlet for it, idle imaginings occupied most of her time, and she found herself largely in sympathy with the characters in stories of this class, even though she laughed at some of them

when the tale was ended. The very quarrels of the lovers in the *Heart's Delight* delighted Miss Broad; she could see how she would quarrel in just such a way if she had just such a lover as the hero of the tale, although he might be the "splendidest" fellow in the world, as he always was—as long as the story lasted. One day Miss Broad went shopping just after reading the first installment of a highly exciting story which appeared in her favorite paper. As Miss Broad entered one of the village stores, Harry Brown came in and passed her going toward the desk of the proprietor. Miss Broad chanced to see in his hand a copy of her pet paper! The shop was quite full of customers, so Miss Broad had to wait; the proprietor was out, so Harry Brown had to wait. The young man seated himself in a chair near the desk, and apparently for lack of anything else to do, began to glance over the new story; Miss Broad, for lack of something better to do, glanced at him occasionally; he sat under a skylight through which the sun shone at an angle that made every change of countenance distinctly visible.

There was nothing wrong in Miss Broad looking at the young man; indeed, she soon informed herself that it was quite right that she should stare at him, as long as she herself was unobserved, for she was learning for the first time how rapidly the human countenance could change, and how many emotions it could reflect in a short time.

Evidently Harry Brown was reading the story with more curiosity than interest, and Miss Broad was inclined to feel personally aggrieved, because his looks frequently expressed contempt and amusement; smiles, quizzical expressions, apparent imitations of some of the characters, followed one another rapidly over his face, until Miss Broad forgot her indignation in her wonder that the human face could be so expressive. Indeed, as she never had noticed it in anyone else, she jumped to the conclusion that Master Harry Brown had a remarkable countenance of his own. It was very strange that she never had noticed it before, although, now that the subject had been brought to her attention, she did remember that at school he had the most intelligent countenance in his class; she one day heard the teacher say so.

Finally, Harry Brown seemed to reach the end of the tale, for he dropped the paper on his knee, threw back his head and indulged in a fit of merriment, which, though silent, was prolonged and earnest. What could he have found in that paper that was so funny? Was it possible that all the strong scenes, wild lovemaking and romantic conversation at the meeting of the hero and heroine over which she—Kate Brown—had lingered with delight only an hour or two before, seemed only amusing to this young man?

Harry Brown seemed suddenly to remember that he had come on business, and as he arose from his chair Miss Broad quickly turned her head away. She had heard him ask one of the clerks when the proprietor would return, and heard the reply that he was

expected every moment. Then the young man seated himself once more, picked up the paper and seemed to be staring at it without reading at all; he appeared to have gone into a brown study. What could there be in that story to compel so much of his attention? She would find out.

There was no possible reason why she should not speak to him, for although they seldom met socially, were they not members of the same church and of the Chautauqua Circle besides? She timed her purchases carefully, watching for the appearance of the proprietor; so, as Harry Brown finished his business and started to leave the store, he was stopped by a pleasant greeting from Miss Broad, who had in the meantime devised a question entirely proper with which to begin the conversation. They left the store together, and when barely upon the sidewalk the girl said:

"You seem greatly interested in light literature, Mr. Brown, judging by the attention you paid to that new story in *Heart's Delight*."

"Bless me!" exclaimed the young man. "Have I been detected at my very first attempt of that kind? I earnestly assure you that I never before looked into that paper."

"What do you think of that sort of story?"

"Think!" exclaimed Harry. Then he was silent for a moment, wrinkling his brows as if wondering exactly what he did think. Finally he replied:

"Well, I don't know that I am competent to judge such literature, for I have never yet been in love; but if lovers talk and act like the people in that story, I must say that the tender passion makes people about as silly as a lot of monkeys. I can't advise you to read it, even through curiosity, though there is nothing harmful about it except to those who take it in earnest; but I must say that I know a fair number of lovers—people who have loved so long that they have married and still are lovers; I've seen them together and heard a great deal of their conversation often, but never by any possibility could they be convicted of such stuff as is talked all through those columns."

"It must be a very curious story," said Miss Broad, faintly.

"No; not even curious. I beg you not to take the pains to read it, for there is nothing at all to it but gush and nonsense. It is laughable only on account of its extreme unreality, but I can't help wondering what can be the condition of mind of people who are brought up on that sort of mental food. That paper has an immense circulation in this town; I have seen it in a great many hands. Of course, it never reaches families of intelligence like yours, but it must give very unreal ideas of life to people who are in need of education in that respect."

"How? Will you give me an idea of how it is unreal?"

"Why, that would be rather hard to do. The hero and the heroine are supposed by the writer to be in the condition I have heard described as 'too full for utterance,' and yet haven't sense

enough to hold their tongues. Their talk is of the wildest, most high-flown, unreal nature, such as once in a while you hear in a play, but would be astonished beyond measure to hear in real life; certainly it can't be that real lovers talk back in that way. Though I haven't any experience with the tender sentiment, I've always been of the impression that the fuller one's heart was of anything the easier it was understood without a great deal of conversation by anyone who loved that person. Heart ought to read heart where there is any true affection, instead of demanding a whole dictionary full of strong expressions and long sentences. I'm sure that if ever I should fall in love, the lady who may kindly honor me with her confidence won't want to hear my tongue going all the time in speeches such as actors make in third-class plays. Certainly, sympathy and congeniality ought to amount to something to people in that delightful condition, but—excuse me—I'm not authority on the subject. I didn't mean to run on about it as I have; you must blame yourself for it, please; you began the subject about the story. I must turn down here. Good-day."

And lifting his hat, Harry Brown took his leave with a bow and a pleasant smile, while Miss Broad walked homeward with a very quick step, a blush on her face and a great wonder, which she kept entirely to herself, that she never before had realized what a fine fellow Harry Brown really was.

Then she went to her room, opened a drawer, took out the copy of Heart's Delight, with its microscopic type, tore it into twenty pieces, threw it into the grate, saw it burn, and then turned away and muttered to herself:

"That's the last—the very last!"

11

AN UNEXPECTED DISTURBANCE

Harry Brown went back to his father's office in a frame of mind which he had not counted upon. He had known the Broad girls only at school; even there he had not been well acquainted with them, though he had a general impression that they differed from most girls in having quick wits and also as being very set in their ways, a quality for which he never mentally held them to account, for their father was known as one of the most obstinate men in the township. He had frequently admired Kate Broad for her strong face, but ever since he had left school he had been too busy with his father's affairs and his own to have any time for sentimental imaginings about girls of any sort.

It was impossible, however, for him to walk beside any young woman without looking at her earnestly as well as respectfully; and although the conversation between him and Kate Broad, after the store was left, had been very short, he had opportunity to notice that on that particular day Miss Broad had a fine complexion and an expressive eye. They had talked about love, a

subject on which he had few ideas which were not entirely conventional and proper. It appeared to him that she seemed greatly interested in the general subject, and he wondered with whom she might already be in love.

None of these wonderings, however, disturbed the flow of his business faculties. He reported to his father the result of his interview with the dry goods dealer, and discussed the figures which had been offered by city dealers. When the subject was exhausted, he remarked in a casual manner:

"Father, that oldest daughter of Broad's seems to be a good deal of a woman."

"Yes," drawled the old man, looking sidewise at his son.

"I got into an odd talk with her coming out of the store," continued the youth. "It was about the first chapters of a silly story in three line paragraphs, coming out in that paper, *Heart's Desire*, that I've often said you ought to be ashamed to sell in the office here."

"Yes, I remember you've been down on it, and that I've told you that it was better than nothing for people who wouldn't read anything better."

"Oh, yes. Well, I don't think she likes it."

"I should like to know why not," said the old man. "She gets it every week."

"Oh, say! There must be some mistake about that."

"No mistake at all; always comes in for it; one of the first persons to call for it, too, when the edition arrives."

The young man looked somewhat astonished and disappointed as he said:

"Then I suspect I've hurt her feelings. She asked me what I thought of it; I happened to pick up a copy while I was in the store."

"Well?"

"I expressed my mind, of course—and said about what I said to you."

"You young idiot," said the old man, "you don't mean to say you told the girl that you thought anybody that read that sort of paper must be a pretty common character? If you did—gracious!——I don't know what will come of the Broad family's trade at this store."

"Oh, nonsense, father. I'm not such a fool as that. I'm glad I'm not, if what you say is true, as, of course, it is. But I never imagined for an instant she'd read that sort of nonsense; so I expressed my mind pretty freely."

"Well, if you did, I guess it doesn't matter to you hereafter what sort of a girl she is—whether she's smart or foolish." Then the postmaster eyed his son narrowly, while the young man looked somewhat astonished and disturbed, changed the subject, and made haste to leave the store.

Change of face, however, did not change the subject of his thoughts. Was it possible that he had been guilty of trampling upon some of Miss Broad's literary tastes, if literary they could be called? It really seemed impossible that a girl of her apparent strength of character should read the paper that he had been making fun of for several years—in fact, ever since he had been old enough to be trusted in his father's store and had looked over at leisure all the periodicals that came in. What could there be in the nonsense in that ridiculous paper, *Heart's Delight*, that could attract a girl of Miss Broad's birth, character and education? The longer be thought of it, the less possible seemed any solution. He admitted to himself that he knew very little about love; all of his knowledge and experience on the subject had come through observation before the death of his mother, who had always been her husband's idol, and who had worshiped her husband in return. It had always seemed to Harry Brown that love was, next to religion, the noblest sentiment on the face of the earth; but, after what he had seen of its practical workings, many love stories seemed to him inexpressibly silly. Could it be that Miss Broad admired the style of the heroes peculiar to *Heart's Delight*, or that she thought the heroines were womanly ideals? It didn't seem possible.

The youth went back to the farm, to attend to the business at hand there, and although this was the selling of a horse, which to a young man seems about the most important transaction possible,

he could not rid his mind of the subject with which he had come to town. Finally, he determined that it was the intensity of the sentiment in the tales that had attracted Kate Broad; all of the Broads were earnest, as was natural with such a father.

Slowly, light began to dawn upon his mind. He was quite willing to admit that intensity was an admirable human quality, especially when it passed from the domain of sentiment into that of action. Probably Miss Broad had been interested in that sentimental nonsense, the intensity of expression of heroes and heroines, because there was so little that was unusual in her own daily life. The more he thought of her, the more natural it seemed to him that, after all, *Heart's Delight* was an excellent means of overflow for superfluous energy and spirit, but what a shame that a girl of her many admirable qualities should be compelled to descend to such contemptible means.

As he thought farther on the matter, he wished most earnestly that someone, some real fine fellow, might come along, discern the many admirable traits of Kate Broad, marry her, and give her a life that would enable her to use all of her mental qualities to the best advantage.

He mentally looked about the town and wondered who the man might be, but found himself greatly embarrassed in endeavoring to make choice. There was Joe Warren, for instance; Joe was a good fellow, but all the boys had sized him up as a man who loved his ease better than anything else. As for the other

young fellows, there didn't seem anything in particular to them. What was a girl of that sort to do? What was she to come to, if she was to remain forever in a little place like Bringston?

The more he thought over her case the worse he worried, until finally the sense of the ludicrous come to his relief and informed him that really he wasn't responsible for the young lady's welfare—that she had a father, and a very clear head of her own beside, that probably Providence had something to say and do in the arrangement of people's affairs in the world, and that he, Harry Brown, was making a donkey of himself, by concerning his mind with things that were none of his business. With this decision he endeavored to take leave of the subject and devote his mind anew to his own affairs, which, like those of most young farmers of the day and of any other day, were quite pressing.

But Miss Broad did not go out of his mind in any such manner. No matter how determinedly he put himself to think about other subjects, that girl's eye and that girl's complexion came back to him, and the longer they remained the more interested he found himself. Beside there was her sister Eunice. Who in the whole town was ever likely to marry her?—that is, who that is *worthy* of her? Harry had for years imagined that Eunice was a more interesting person than her sister; there had come a decided change of opinion today, but still Eunice was a charming girl—bright, quick-witted, decided, determined in manner, and would deserve a

better husband, if she intended ever to marry, than any young man Harry could think for the time, unless, it might be his own brother.

When night came, and the affairs were ended and the two brothers finished their supper and sat down to read and chat, as was their custom, Harry remarked:

"Say, Bub, that young sister of Kate Broad is a good deal of a girl, isn't she?"

"Indeed she is," said the younger brother. "I have thought so for a long time."

"Oh, you have, eh? Well, what do you think of her elder sister?

"Oh, she's a stunner! Awfully smart, got a tremendous will of her own, too, I'll bet; just like her father."

"Well, why shouldn't she have, I should like to know?" Harry asked. "Whose will do you expect a girl to have? Somebody's else?"

The younger brother looked up in astonishment.

"I don't see," said Harry, getting up and pacing the floor, "why a girl shouldn't have a will of her own. How is she supposed to get along in the world if she hasn't? Is she supposed to be nothing at all except a little bit of an insignificant tool of her father and mother, and then just marry and promptly adopt the will of somebody else? I don't think that's womanly, do you? Was our mother that way?"

"No; certainly not."

"Indeed, she wasn't; she never quarreled with father in the world, but she had her own opinions and be respected her for them, and respected them, too."

"Well, all that's true, Harry," said the younger brother, "but really I don't see why you should get so excited about it. What's the matter with you, anyway? I begin to think I have said something very unkind about the Broad girls."

"Nothing, nothing," said Harry, suddenly changing his manner and acting embarrassed.

"It is no use saying that after what you've been saying. Blurt it out, old fellow. I'm your only brother, you know; you can't get another if you try."

"Why, there is really nothing, Bub. I happened to have a chat with Miss Kate Broad today, that's all, and I suppose she is on my mind."

"Oh, she is, eh? Well, just let me tell you she is a good deal to be on anybody's mind; she's her father all over again, and there is a good deal else to her that must have come from a pretty nice mother, I think."

"Oh! Where did you learn so much about her, I should like to know?"

"Great Scott! Harry, what is the matter with you?" said the younger brother. "I can't mention that girl but what you snap me up in some way. Any fellow would think you were in love with her, to see your style."

The elder brother's face twitched in several ways to which it was not accustomed, the younger brother meanwhile eying it curiously, and finally saying:

"Unload your mind now, old fellow; there's something on it. You know you and I are friends—the best friends each other's got except dad. What's it all about? Don't be afraid; I'll promise not to laugh at anything you say, no matter what it is."

"Why, really, Bub," said Harry, beginning again to pace the floor and looking very thoughtful, "I've nothing in particular to tell. I have told you about all there is to it. I—She and I happened to have a chat today coming away from the store, and she has rather been on my mind since; and, of course, they are old acquaintances of ours. We're not friends; we don't go to their house to any extent; they never come to ours, but—we're living in the same town, we're in the same circle of the C. L. S. C. —and they being rather superior people anyhow—why, of course, I got to thinking about her. Well, I couldn't help thinking."

"Couldn't eh? I suppose not. Wonder if you can stand a bit of advice? This is all there is to it: If you go on thinking that way for a day or two the best thing you can do is to make up to that girl."

"Oh, pshaw!" said Harry.

"If you need any help, come for me. I'll make up to her sister. Then things will have to come to the point, one way or the other, eh?"

A great light seemed to dawn on Harry, and he exclaimed:

“Bub, you’re a sly dog! And a genius.”

12

BOYS AND GIRLS

Frank Dawn was a thorough boy, which means he was by turns studious, vacant-minded, thoughtful, tormenting, sympathetic, careless, obliging, obstinate, affectionate, industrious, lazy, neglectful, enthusiastic, apathetic, self-sacrificing and selfish. There were times when his parents thought he was much the finest boy ever born at Brinston or anywhere else. There were other times when those estimable parents lay awake an hour or two later than usual and wondered to which of their ancestors could be attributed the origin of some of the exasperating faults which unexpectedly came to the surface of their only son's character. The wisest of parents, those with the best memories, too, have a faculty for forgetting the peculiarities of their own growing period.

Frank had reached the beginning of the critical age, a period which comes provokingly early in smart boys, and in which they know more, in their own estimation, than their parents have ever

learned or ever can. The consequence was an assumption of superiority which at first was amusing enough to laugh at, but which afterward made him annoying at home and almost insufferable in other society.

"I don't know what to do with that boy," said his father one evening after a wordy contest, which had ended in a drawn battle, the younger contestant retiring to his room with a great show of indignation and much unnecessary slamming of doors. "I don't like to spoil his spirit by making him see how little he knows, but he mustn't be allowed to show contempt for the opinions of his parents. I've a great mind to send him to sea or put him at a trade, where he will learn how to obey orders without question, or be obliged to suffer for his impudence."

"Oh, husband!" exclaimed the boy's mother, who, though quite as indignant as the father with the fault alluded to, suddenly remembered that after all Frank was her only substitute for a baby. "Don't do anything of the kind. If he is to be disciplined without being spoiled, the only person who can do it must be someone who loves him. It must be done by you or me."

"Well, my dear," said the husband, "if I could be hard-hearted enough, I would turn the job over to you, for I confess that I am at my wits' end."

"Are you quite sure about that? Are you sure that you have really begun to use your wits about him?"

"What do you mean by that, my dear?" asked the husband, after a long stare.

"Why, you keep a close eye upon him in a great many ways, but you don't seem to realize that Frank is beginning to be a man, and needs some manly companionship."

"I must say I like that," was the reply, in a tone which showed that the speaker meant the reverse of what he said. "If any man alive gives more of his time to his children than I, tell me where I can find him, so that I may take some lessons. There's scarcely a thing which that young scamp wants that I don't buy for him; I often neglect my own affairs to answer some of his questions that aren't of any importance. I'm so anxious that he shall feel always free to come to me about any of his affairs that I sometimes am rude to other people, to the extent of ignoring their questions and answering his instead, when he has the bad manners to interrupt."

"That's very true, but both of us stop, I think, at just that kind of attention. There's more affectionate indulgence than real intention in it. Suppose that hereafter we make a change, and treat him more like a man and less like a child?"

"It will make him insufferable. He's conceited enough already."

"Then put more responsibilities upon him. That is the way you and I became man and woman, you know. Before I was married I knew exactly how my sisters would keep house and take care of their children, but all that nonsense went out of my head as soon as

I had such duties of my own; the longer I worked, the less seemed to know, and, if I live to be twenty years older, I shan't dare to offer a word of advice to anyone."

"H-m-m. What do you propose as first step?"

"Make Frank your confident about some of your affairs. Make him—"

"He'd at once insist upon my taking instructions from him. You don't seem to realize the dimensions of that boy's confidence in himself, and his impatience of any opinions which had not the honor of originating in his very big head."

"Oh, don't I? Who sees most of him? Where does he spend most of his daylight hours out of school—at your office, or at home? Who is always nearest at hand for him to grumble to or to disagree with? Who has most occasion to give him orders and listen to his reasons for doing things in any way but the one I lay out for him?"

"I'm a brute!" meekly replied the husband. "'Out of sight, out of mind'—the old story. I beg your pardon, and again I acknowledge that I'm a brute and a—"

"That's sufficient," said Mrs. Dawn, first laying her hand on her husband's lips and taking it back with a kiss in it. "I do all I can to train him, and I dearly love to have him with me and try to interest him in my affairs; but I am a woman and he is a boy. He needs more of a man's influence—more of the example and sympathy of someone of his own sex."

"Would you have me take him out of school and take him to the office with me?"

"Not at all. I think, though, that it is time he should know something more about your own ways and work and worries than he learns from such conversation as we chance to have at home on such subjects. Tell him enough about the uncertainties and demands of business to let him understand that you are a very busy man, and are charged with many responsibilities by men whom he probably thinks are abler than you; they have more money, you know, and I suspect that children are as likely as grown people to judge men's brains by their pockets. You never bring your troubles home. I should never know anything of them if I hadn't learned to read your face, and coax you to tell me everything. Quite likely Frank thinks, as many others do, that whatever fortune you have is due to good luck; people always think that way of those who make the least fuss about what they have to do. Of course I know, and always have known, that you are far the smartest man in Brinston—"

"Drop that nonsense, my dear, if you want me to respect your opinions of the subject in question. But don't you see that whatever I may tell Frank will only give him something new in which to think himself superior to the individual whom he sometimes denominates— 'the old man?"

"No; the subjects will be so unfamiliar that he will be appalled by them. The wisest people alive are helpless in the face of

something of which they are ignorant. I am sure I knew everything—or nearly as much as Frank—when you married me. Don't you remember how I used to give you suggestions as to how you ought to conduct your business so as to make more money? You never laughed at me; but after you had told me about some of your affairs, which weren't more wonderful or complicated than those of other business men, I suppose, I was so bewildered that I haven't had anything to say on the subject since, unless you asked my advice, which I am glad to say hasn't been very often. Frank will be the same way; the home affairs with which he is very familiar, he thinks he knows all about, but he will be very modest in the face of the unknown; everybody is."

"There's a great deal of reason in what you have said, my dear," said the husband, after a moment or two of thought.

"Indeed there is, or I shouldn't have said it," the wife replied, with a laugh. "The boy has been taught principles from his cradle almost, but we haven't taught him enough about things and people. He has been growing more rapidly than we have realized, and his conceited and overbearing way comes of his not having enough to think about—not enough that compels him to think, instead of jumping at conclusions. We can give it to him from books; but it seems to me that stuffing a boy or girl with books alone is a makeshift of very lazy people, who think it relieves them of their own responsibilities. 'Twasn't teachers and writers of

books who promised, at that boy's baptism, to bring him up in the way he should go; 'twas you and I."

"My dear, you ought to have studied for the ministry."

"Don't make fun of me, for I feel very much in earnest about this matter. So long as the boy was content to be tied to my apron-strings—which was quite a long time, bless him!—I did all I could for him; but he is too big for that now, and your time has come. I've denied myself anything and everything, whenever he wanted me, and I've tried to make him understand everything about the house in which he has shown any interest; now you do the same with him about the affairs of the man of the house, and he will get rid of this nonsense and become a great deal like his father. Girls grow with less trouble than boys because they are constantly with older members of their own sex as boys are not—not in cities and towns, at least."

"Well," said the nominal head of the house, looking curiously and admiringly at his wife, "I always did say that nobody ever could imagine what brilliance you would indulge in next. I feel as if I had been listening to the wisdom of the ages, and I must say that I can't find a single fault with what you have said; but I can't understand why this is the first time I ever heard any of it. What has put all this into your mind as suddenly as if it were an inspiration?"

"I'm sure I don't know, unless it is that Chautauqua class."

"Oh, now, my dear, be reasonable. I'm ready to admit that the Chautauqua course is brushing up our wits somewhat; but I can't for the life of me see what we have studied that could have given new ideas on the rearing of boys. It couldn't have been geology; to be sure, rocks are hard, and so are boys' heads sometimes; but there the parallel ends. Was it—"

"It was only," interrupted Mrs. Dawn, "that I have steadily noticed that throughout all the lessons Frank has been gaining respect for you. He has found himself far quicker than you with answers to bookish questions, and he has the child-faculty for committing passages to memory and repeating them by rote; but whenever some member of the class has asked questions which the book didn't answer, Frank has generally heard you give a lot of information that came from your general reading in other years. I wish you could see the boy look at you at such times; he looks as if he wanted to ask people if they had ever known so smart a man as his father."

"I shall look around, next time I say anything particularly smart," said the father. "'Twould give me a new sensation to see my son regarding me admiringly!"

"You'll find it as I say. He has it thoroughly in his mind by this time that you have more general knowledge than any man in this town. He will think the same of you in business when he has more opportunity to see you among men. At home he knows you principally as a maker of gardens and a feeder of animals and

chickens, and a repairer of household breaks and as a care-taker in general. At all these things he thinks himself your equal—as he is—for you seldom have time to do anything at home except hurriedly, while he has plenty of time and does the work just as he has seen you do it."

"Well," said Mr. Dawn, walking the floor, and speaking with the tone of a man talking to himself, "I've heard a great many good influences attributed to this Chautauqua movement, but that it should teach boys to respect their fathers rather staggers me. It must be true, if my wife says it, but I shan't be surprised at anything I may hear next of what this course is doing, or has done, or can do."

13

A STARTLED TOWN

While spring was just beginning to work into summer, and all the students of the Chautauqua course were doing their work fairly well, the entire community was startled by the statement which came from no one knew where, that Mrs. Purkis had determined to go that summer to Chautauqua, and attend all the meetings and classes that her time would allow.

This seemed the best joke that Brinston had ever heard of; everybody talked about it from the lowest to the highest. Mrs. Purkis had never been anywhere since her marriage, except once to a town about fifteen miles away, to work out a fine which had been imposed upon her husband for fighting there. How she could go to Chautauqua when scarcely any other member of the class had yet ventured to hope to visit that Mecca of all good students of the course, passed people's comprehension. Possibly she might save enough money to reach there with one of the cheap excursions which are continually made during the summer time in

that direction, but how was she to support herself when she reached there, when several clerks, teachers and non-professional people in the town had studied the subject for a long time for their own sakes and had about given up the possibility of going.

Like every other rumor in the town, the story very soon reached the post-office; but Postmaster Brown, instead of joining in the general laugh or sneer, intimated that if Mrs. Purkis wanted to go to Chautauqua he didn't see who had a better right or to whom it would do more good. The place was free to all who could reach it and could pay their own expenses, and although Mrs. Purkis was wife of a man who hadn't ever got along very well, he, the postmaster, had generally noticed that whatever she got she was able to pay for.

Still, Brown himself, in his innermost soul was greatly puzzled by the announcement, and took occasion to bring up the subject the first time the woman came into his store.

"Yes, Mr. Brown," said she, in reply to his question, "I'm a-goin'. I've made up my mind to it, and I'm a-goin' to see it through. The Lord bein' willin', and no sickness comin' in the family, 'pears to me I see how I can do it."

"You always did have a master head for business, Mrs. Purkis. If you only had your proper chance, you'd have been a great woman in a store or any other place that requires a head-piece."

"If it was anyone else who said that," said the old woman, looking curiously at the postmaster, "I'd think he was tryin' to

make fun of me, but I do believe that you can remember, as some other folks might if they wanted to, that there was a time when I looked after everything as well as anybody else."

"Don't worry, Mrs. Purkis; there are plenty of people who remember it, and they'd be glad enough to tell you so if they had the proper chance to do it. But, talking about going up there, what are your plans, if I may be so bold as to ask?"

"Well, I got hold of a lot of the bright little papers that they print up there during the season—the little paper they call the *Assembly Herald*—and I see that there was always advertisements bein' put in for people that know how to cook, or people that know how to wash. Well, now, if I say it as shouldn't, I can run a cook-stove or a wash-tub as well as any woman livin'."

"Nobody doubts that, Mrs. Purkis."

"Glad to hear you say so. Well, I'm just goin' to save enough money to get there; then I'm goin' to work hard. Them little papers tell how even the folks that works there in the hotels an' the boardin' houses gets lots of time to go an' listen to some of the prayer meetin's an' lectures an' concerts an' things like that. Why, I don't ever hear such things scarcely. It'll feel like heaven to me, Mr. Brown, to be at a place of that kind for a little while no matter how hard I work by daylight."

"Suppose you bring around some of those *Assembly Heralds*, Mrs. Purkis," said the storekeeper, "and let me look through them. Perhaps I can give you a word of advice. I don't think that I ever

put you up to anything that didn't have some money in it in some way, did I?"

"No indeed, you didn't, Mr. Brown. You've been one of the best friends I ever had."

"Pshaw! That's nothing. Bring it in, Mrs. Purkis."

And the storekeeper started to attend to another customer.

In two or three days the entire town, as well as the Chautauqua Circle, was almost paralyzed to learn that Mrs. Purkis was going to Lake Chautauqua that summer to keep a boarding house. People asked one another whether she had gone out of her senses, but when this talk reached the post-office, Mr. Brown promptly informed the people that she not only hadn't gone out of her senses, but had fully come into them, and he didn't doubt that she'd make a very great success, financially and otherwise.

"Most of you folks are too young," he said, "to remember that woman in her prime, but I want you all to understand that when she was a young girl, she belonged to a family that kept house as nicely as anybody in this town; I won't except any of you. I ought to know, for I was a frequent visitor there; so were some other men in this town, who could tell the same story now, if you asked them about it. She talked about going up there as a cook or a washerwoman, and came and told me about it, and I told her she ought to hire a cottage and take boarders; some of us people may be going there, and even if we don't, there are always more people than can be comfortably accommodated, according to the local

paper. Now is the chance for her to see a good deal, and do a good deal, make some money, too, and get a change; I think she's being very sensible about it, and if any of you wish her well and realize what it is for a person to get out of the slough of despond that she and her family have been in for years, on account of her husband's goings on, why, give her a kind word, instead of putting on a grin every time you see her. What sort of Christians are you folks, anyway?"

"But, Mr. Brown," some of the more curious ones said, "how on earth is she to begin the business? How is she to pay for anything in the first place?"

"Well, if everybody is going to ask that sort of question—though I really don't see what business it is of theirs—I don't hesitate to say that I'm backing her up with a certain amount of money. She's going to have a house, and she's going to have one that's comfortable; going to have everything in it for a good start. After that, if she fails, why, come and call me a tool, but don't laugh at her. Have a little human nature about you, if you can't have any of the spirit of God."

This speech or several others strongly resembling it were heard so often at the post-office within a few days, that the town was actually bullied into speaking respectfully of Mrs. Purkis and her new project. When the Dawns heard of it, Mrs. Dawn immediately engaged board for a month of Mrs. Purkis for herself and for her daughter. When the rest of the town heard of that, there

was such a run on the new proprietor that she was obliged to countermand to Postmaster Brown, who had became her business agent, her order for a small cottage and make a request instead for the largest cottage that could be hired as a boarding-house; for as soon as it was known that the Dawns were going, Joe Warren suddenly discovered that his mother and sister would like very much to go up there, and he, of course, would accompany them. Then Mr. Broad said that if Miss Dawn and her mother could stand Mrs. Purkis's cooking and housekeeping, he was sure his daughters could; and as soon as it was learned, too, that the Broads were going, the Brown boys somehow arranged to have their farm taken care of for a fortnight by their hired men, and they also engaged board of Mrs. Purkis. A large number of the remaining members of the C. L. S. C. followed. The consequence was that before the house was opened or even looked at, Mrs. Purkis, assisted by Postmaster Brown, of course, was able to figure up a net profit of about thirty dollars per week over and above all expenses; a sum of money the mere contemplation of which put her into an ecstasy, although one of almost unbelief, for it seemed impossible that it could be true.

From that time forward, as she toiled at the tub or the ironing-board, one or the other of her daughters was compelled to read aloud over and over again the programme for the coming season, this programme being a large sheet of a number of pages, detailing the various schools and classes to be held, and, also, all the

entertainments which are to be given in the great amphitheatre at Chautauqua. It took a great deal of reading to get everything distinctly into the minds of the family, for none of them had ever seen any building larger than the town-hall in Brinston, nor had any of them, indeed, been outside of their own town and seen large gatherings of any kind; so some of the conversations were rather amusing.

"Just think, girls," said the mother, "this amphitheatre that they have their meetings in holds six thousand people. Goodness gracious!"

"That's just twice as many as the biggest tent in the circus held when they came through here; that's what the bills said," remarked Florinda.

"Don't go talkin' about circuses in the same day with Chautauqua, child," said Mrs. Purkis, sharply. "An' there's meetin's in it all day long," she went on, beginnin' half-past seven in the mornin' an' keepin' on until the last one begins at eight o'clock at night, and nobody has to pay a cent to go to any of 'em. Well, I should think that was just a foretaste of heaven for them that can get there."

"Well, I should think folks could easily get too much of meetin's," drawled Arabella, who once had been a week at camp-meeting and failed to enjoy all the exercises. "I s'pose there ain't nothin' but lessons an' preachin' goin' on all the time."

"Nonsense, child. Read with your own eyes, if you haven't heard a word of what your sister's been readin' aloud. Lectures, concerts, exhibitions, tableaus—why, goodness gracious! If it wasn't about Chautauqua an' printed right in the paper that comes from there, I'd think the Chautauqua folks had all got giddy and worldly."

"Well, all I know is, there's lots of preachers' names been read out from them lists that Florindy's been readin' to us," drawled Arabella.

"Well, for goodness' sake, you don't suppose preachers are always solemn, do you? I know some of them just as lively and full of fun as anybody else; besides, there's lots of things in there that ain't for preachers. There's a concert by that company that come through here just a spell ago, and we went and listened outside the town hall winders, because we hadn't money to pay for back seats; we enjoyed it, too—all three of us did. You know perfectly well, Arabella, that you said that it was perfectly splendid; yes, and here's a lecture, too, by that funny man, don't you know, that your father told us about after someone gave him a ticket that he couldn't use for himself. Then there's readin's by the writers of books that everybody's heard about and wants to see, an' music almost without end. I say it seems too good to be true, an' you'll say the same after you've been there a while—you will, as sure as you're my daughter."

"What do folks do who live a good way off and can't afford to go?" asked Florinda, who was infected by her mother's interest.

"I s'pose they go to some of the other places. Chautauqua seems to be a name that covers a good deal; accordin' to the magazine, don't you know, there are forty or fifty other places where they have just such goin's on, more or less of the summer? I do hope that folks that have such advantages know how to appreciate 'em, an' I wish I'd known years sooner that there was anything of the kind in these United States—oh, don't I!"

And Mrs. Purkis, who had been turning aside from the wash-tub, returned to her work with an energy which made foam rise around her hands as if the heat of her enthusiasm had made its way into the water.

"It's good enough, mother, and I'm awful glad we're going," said Florinda; "but I can't see what there is about it to make you so heavenly happy."

"Can't see?" The speaker turned from the tub as she spoke, and the mass of iridescent bubbles slowly subsided as she continued: "Then I'll make you see, I guess. It appears to be a place where there's a good deal besides one's day's work to do an' see an' think about. There hasn't been anythin' like that for me anywhere else in the world ever since I was married. I'm not findin' fault with your father—he's doin' splendid now—but you know what I mean. I don't care how hard I work; I'm used to it that I wouldn't know what to do with myself if there wasn't

always somethin' to do next, but I would like somethin' to look forward to in case I was goin' to have a moment to call my own, and that seems to be the only place I ever heard of where I could do it. That's why I'm so heavenly happy, as you call it, at the idea of goin' there."

Florinda seemed to understand, for she murmured: "Dear mother!"

14

ALONE WITH HIS CONSCIENCE

Only two months more of this," Joe Warren murmured to himself, as he tossed a book across the room as if it were a clinging animal that he was wild to get rid of. "Only two months more, and then I'll burn a set of books with as much joy as a Zealot ever got out of the burning of a heretic. Great guns! How tired I am of them!"

Joe looked unutterable things at the offending book, but looks did not seem adequate to the expression of his feelings; for he rose suddenly from his chair, crossed the room and gave the book a violent kick, following it about the room for the sake of repeating the infliction several times. Finally he threw himself, panting, upon his bed, and remarked:

"There! I feel a great deal better. I do wonder what makes me hate this reading course so intensely? I thought some of my college work was stupid, but 'twas bliss compared with this. I really can't understand why. There's only an hour a day of it, and I flatter myself that what takes the general crowd an hour can be

made out by me in half the time. There's nothing wrong about the books, either; they're quite as well put together as any of my college textbooks, and parts of them are really interesting. I really believe I wouldn't feel so bad if the lessons were a great deal longer; as it is I don't touch them or think of them oftener than once a week; there's nothing in them that I can't master in a little while, so it certainly isn't the work that spoils my temper so much.

"I suppose the real trouble is the amount of worrying I get about the course, from mother and the girls. One would suppose they never studied or read anything before, by the fuss they make about this confounded Chautauqua course. They study at regular hours, just as if they were going to meals or to church; I wish they'd been four years at college, then they wouldn't be so fond of that kind of bondage. As if it weren't simply maddening to see them make such slaves of themselves, they want me to be just like them, and look so unhappy when I don't that it makes me wish that Chautauqua idea had never been heard of. Let those who like to study that way do so, but they might let others alone. People aren't all made alike in this world."

Joe seemed to give some silent thought to this subject, for he began to soliloquize in a few minutes.

"It is too bad though to worry so good a family of women about so small a thing. When my heart is set upon anything they always try to sympathize with me and help me along. The difference is, however, that I generally get up something that's

pleasant and that has some ‘go’ to it—not that there isn’t go enough to the Chautauqua work, in this family. What I mean is that I generally interest myself in something that’s really pleasing. There’s boating, now, everybody likes that—all the women-folks, I mean, after they get used to it. To be sure, mother and the girls all did look very pale for a whole season whenever I persuaded them to go out with me; but they seem to like it well enough now. I got them to put off lots of sewing and give up some of their stupid women’s meetings so as to go with me; but I’m sure that it did them lots of good in the end. Sis said the sewing had to be done all the same, when the trips were over, and some extra calls had to be made to explain the ‘cutting’ of the meetings; but, well—”

There seemed to be some obstacle in the way of Joe’s train of reasoning, for he slowly arose from the bed and began to wrinkle and pinch his forehead; a moment or two later he got upon his feet and paced the floor.

“They do anything and everything to oblige me, putting themselves to considerable trouble by doing so; and in this one thing, which is almost the only one in which they’ve made demands upon me, I’m as disobliging as if I were a boor instead of the only man in the family—a man who calls himself a gentleman. Joe Warren, you’re a hypocrite! A contemptible hypocrite! I’ve heard before that I was being spoiled by being the only man in the family, and I’ve taken it as a joke. I wonder if folks meant it?

Pleasant thing to think about—a lot of people seeing my faults and talking about them, probably, while I've been imagining myself everything I ought to be and a model for the other young men of the town. Well, I am a pretty decent fellow—better than the average; I don't drink or swear or gamble or lie, and I flatter myself that I always have my manners about me, and that ought to amount to something."

This assurance did not seem entirely satisfactory, for the soliloquy continued:

"It's no use, young man; you can't lie to yourself this morning, no matter how much and well you've done it before. All the virtues you've been pluming yourself upon were born in you; you can't point to a single one that you've acquired yourself; I dare you to do it. You took up this Chautauqua work reluctantly; you wouldn't have done it at all if it hadn't been for Alice Dawn. All you've done in it has been for the sake of Alice Dawn—or yourself, which means the same thing. Would you have done it for the sake of your mother and sisters alone? Honest, now? No, you wouldn't—you know you wouldn't; you'd have made some excuse, and those dear women, who loved you before Alice Dawn was out of short dresses, would have wrapped themselves around your finger and tried to persuade one another that, perhaps, the dear boy was right, after all, just as I've heard them doing lots of times when they didn't suppose I was within hearing distance.

"Confound Alice Dawn! No, I don't mean exactly that; but what has she ever done for me or anyone else that I should be more regardful of her wishes than those of my own flesh and blood? Nothing. She's looked pretty, and I've fallen in love with her—not that anyone could help it, or wouldn't show good sense in doing it; but the idea of my letting anyone get from me more attention and respect and self-sacrifice than I give my very own! Joe Warren, you're worse than a hypocrite; you're a contemptible cub!"

This assurance did not settle the matter. A great many people consider themselves even with their consciences when they have acknowledged a fault, but something born in Joe, or specially sent to him, or growing out of the train of thought in which he had become involved, carried him farther, and made him say:

"There's got to be a change—a big one—so big a one that I scarcely know where to begin it. First, I'm going to take the same hours for study that mother and the girls have, and I'm not going to allow anything—boating, fishing, tennis, wheeling, or even a chance to walk with Alice Dawn, keep me away from it. I'm not going to do it with the air of a man bearing a cross, either; I'm going to make myself like the work, for its own sake if possible, but first for the sake of those who love me. Mother and the girls speak so admirably of Dawn and some of the other members of the circle who make the lessons more interesting by adding to the general stock of knowledge on the subject. I'm going to stop the

habit of putting off anything and everything else, as well as the lessons. Old Prex used to say something about that at college and I thought him very unjust, for I made about as good a record as anyone else in the class rooms when the final test came. Oh, what a fool I have been! I've not even determined on anything to do as a life work—been putting it off, and off, and off, on one excuse and another, just because there is money enough in the family for us to live on in our quiet way. What a blind donkey I have been! Mother and sisters have seen it—old Prex saw it, the fellows at college saw it, for I lost my place in the class crew by putting off training too long. Everybody else has seen it, too, I suppose."

Joe would have seen a face he never saw before could he have caught his own reflection in the mirror as he paced the room, looking as dejected and ashamed as a sneak thief caught in the act. Suddenly, though, he stopped short and looked startled—even alert, as he exclaimed:

"Great Scott! Perhaps she has seen it! It may be that is the cause of some of the strange looks she has given me, and of my inability to get along more than just so far with her. I've been the most conceited fool that ever lived. Umph! I wonder whether girls ever change their minds about a fellow—girls of that kind, I mean!"

The step with which Joe crossed the floor a few times was like that of an animal getting ready to spring; when it ended, Joe said to himself:

"There's to be an entirely different young man go from this room tomorrow morning—and all because of a row with himself over a Chautauqua lesson. Whoop her up for Chautauqua!"

15

WHAT SHALL THE HARVEST BE?

No one in Brinston was more solicitous for the success of the Chautauqua movement than Pastor Whitton. It was his duty, as a hard-working member of a profession which has for its end and aim the uplifting of humanity, to study closely and honestly all means having the same end in view, no matter how slightly they might contribute to the general result. He had been present at the birth of many promising societies organized for the purpose of helping poor humanity over some of its stumbling blocks, and he had afterward been in at the death of most of them. He had learned to distrust all improving and reformatory influences which were dependent upon resolutions, no matter how unanimous or enthusiastic, or even upon legal enactments. “Humanity must work for itself,” was his frequent reply to well-meaning people who came to him with new schemes for the regeneration of mankind. He did not object to any efforts being made by persons who had already made good use of their

existing opportunities, but experience had taught him to suspect almost all new movements as attempts to open royal roads for those who were too lazy to move along the highway which was good enough for those who really achieved success. With these principles and a memory full of plans that had failed in their purpose to make people wiser and better through means which seemed very easy and attractive, Pastor Whitton had observed the Brinston circle and its members very closely from the beginning.

Like all other conscientious pastors, he had long before charged himself with several times as much work as was within the power of any man to accomplish, yet made it a matter of duty to read each of the Chautauqua text-books in turn, at the times appointed, not only that he might not be lacking in example, but that he might discover. when opportunity allowed, how far the other readers were really interesting themselves in something beside the mere pleasure of gathering once a week and listening to what the better informed members were prompted to say. He was persistent in questions as to who was dropping out or seeming to abate in interest; and although he seldom was able to attend a meeting, he did all in his power to urge those who had abundant leisure to keep up with the work. He shamed some good-natured yet lazy-minded adults into continuing when they were on the point of giving up; he bullied some of the young men and persuaded some of the young women, and all the while he kept in

mind the uncomplimentary remarks which the postmaster had made about the manner of ministers in talking to people on subjects other than religion. He was obliged by experience to admit—only to himself —that the postmaster had been right, and only some other pastor could realize how much mental effort was put into the few and simple remarks he made in his strife to maintain interest in the work of the class, and to avoid an air of authority in matters in which he had no greater right than that of counselor.

Of one thing he was sure—he became so before the class had been at work three months—and that was that the work of the circle had abated to a gratifying extent the rage for gossip with which Brinston, like all other villages, was chronically affected. There was still too much of it, and of the annoying, exasperating and sometimes shameful effects of irresponsible, idle talk. As for that, any of it would have been too much; yet Pastor Whitton found fewer lies to nail, fewer reputations causelessly aspersed, than in any preceding three months of his experience in the village. If this pleasing result was noticeable when not a quarter of the village families were represented in the circle, it must be that the indirect influence of the members was unexpectedly larger, or—horrible thought!—perhaps the reason he heard so little idle talk was that a majority of the members of the circle were also members of his own church.

This thought was so dreadful that the pastor could not bear it alone, so he hurried to the post office to share it with Mr. Brown. That official listened to the case, which was presented somewhat in the form of a problem; but instead of expressing sorrow at the only possible conclusion, or offering sympathy to the troubled minister, he bluntly exclaimed:

"I'm glad of it! I don't know of any church in town in which I'd rather see the good work begin. I don't think it can be wrong to feel that way; you know the early Christians began by trying to convert their own race— 'beginning first at Jerusalem,' you know the passage reads. You needn't think our church has had a monopoly of that sort of thing, though; I've learned by long listening to talk that drifts into this post-office that all creeds are alike in one respect—they all lie about their neighbors in the same way. I think I would have sold out this business long ago, resigned the office and gone out to my farm to live and enjoy life if it weren't for the good I'm able to do in switching off lies before they have gone far enough to do much harm. I oughtn't to call them lies, either. I don't suppose one in ten of them was ever intended to reach the size in which I found it. It got there all the same, though. I used to wonder, after I'd chased some rascally yarn to its death, how the thing ever came to be born, but I found out as soon as I became an enforced listener. Why, I've heard a story told in half a dozen different ways in a single half-hour right in this very room; a story that would have knocked a decent young

person's reputation endwise if it hadn't been killed right then and there. But there's no sense in telling you all this, and you a minister with both eyes open."

"No," sighed the pastor; "but I can't help wondering what people have in view when they start stories, or even repeat them, when they have no reason to believe them true."

"What they have in view? Not anything. Folks who talk about other folks never do have anything in view any way, except to pass away time without having to do any thinking, and with the chance to gratify idle curiosity. Such folks seldom mean anything out of the way; they wouldn't hurt a fly, bless you—not all at once; but they're for all the world like little children, who little by little will tear their best dolls to pieces to see what they're made of. 'Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do,' eh? Still, if the Chautauqua work is lessening that sort of mischief in town, all the other pastors ought to know it at once."

"It's rather a delicate subject on which to approach any of the brethren in the other churches," said the pastor. "I don't care to admit that I've had to fight a great deal of that sort of thing in my own charge."

"You aren't called upon to do so," said the postmaster, "for all of them know it already. You needn't fear to imply that there's plenty of it in their own churches, either, for they know that, too. What you can tell them, though, is that gossip and back-biting have fallen off a great deal since a few dozen people found

something to occupy their minds, and that you're awfully ashamed of yourself for not noticing sooner that most of the Chautauqua Circle are from your church. You may say I'm in sackcloth about it, too, if you like; and that if they'll forgive our stupidity and send in a lot of recruits they'll be heaping coals of fire upon our heads and be getting rid of their own torments at the same time. That's the way to handle the subject; go at it as if you meant business and were all well-meaning Christians together, instead of putting on the heavenly twang and doing some sparring that isn't good for anything but to use up breath and good nature."

"It's a great pity that you can't do all my talking for me, Brother Brown," said the pastor, with a trace of ice in his tone.

"I beg your pardon, dominie," said the postmaster, hastily. "I must learn to attend to my business and let other men's alone. I really suppose, when I come to think of it, that the talk of two or three postmasters, if you should chance to hear it, would sound so peculiar that you couldn't help thinking you could improve it. Talk to the other pastors in your own way; you'd do it anyhow, you know. But do get them to come in and help take the denominationalism out of our circle. As I said before, they'll do it quick enough if they see a chance of putting down gossip a little bit. If it weren't for fear of interfering with your business again, I'd ask you if there weren't some more inducements of a moral kind that you could offer."

"There certainly is one. It is the great improvement in the boys and girls who are studying with the circle. All of them whom I know are changing for the better so rapidly that I am finding myself astonished whenever I meet them. I don't understand it; there is nothing in the lessons which seems specially calculated to produce such a result."

"It all comes of their being in the company of older people and treated as equals—at least, for one evening a week. Any boy will be on his good behavior to any extent for the sake of being tolerated by a bigger boy, even when the bigger boy is mentally and morally his inferior. The younger people in the circle feel that they're on their honor while they're with the grown people, and it's the first experience that any of them have had of being listened to patiently and respectfully when they've anything to say. I see the difference in them myself, in some ways; the class of reading-matter that the boys and girls are calling for is a great deal higher than that of a few months ago. The youngsters are ambitious to prove that they can look about as far into a given subject as some of their elders. I don't mean that the demand for flashy novels has ended, or that the boys have gone back on the papers that give the record of baseball and horse-racing; but I do say that they show more respect for periodicals which print substantial and thoughtful matter, like historical essays and historical romances, along with the lighter adventure and love stories."

"There's certainly a great deal to be encouraged about, then," said the preacher, "and there seems promise of an abundant harvest."

"Well, I should say so—and so soon after planting, too! It's one of those crops that you begin to harvest almost as soon as the seed is sown. It all depends upon keeping at work, of course, and chasing up the lazy ones; but I've never seen anything but religion that yielded so much with so little labor, and that brought so much from places where one had no right to expect anything of any consequence. Look at those Purkises! Why, they've been preached at from every pulpit in this town for years without being hit hard enough to do them any good beyond what the old woman may have hidden in her heart; now the prospects are that the head of the family will soon be able to retire his wife from the wash-tub and give her a chance to rest before she dies. Look at the two or three of his old crowd that he coaxed in. I admit that they're not ornaments of society and don't promise to become so, but they certainly are rapidly becoming harmless, for the first time since I had the misfortune to know them by face and name. Look at three or four whole families sitting together in the same circle, studying the same book, and, therefore, interested all together in something that isn't a matter of dollars and cents or of bread and butter. Why, I wouldn't have believed it possible if I hadn't seen it. I and my boys have stuck together very closely since their mother died; I've had to try to be two parents in one; but the oddity of it, as it

seemed to other people, showed me how little parents and children have in common, as a rule. Look at Broad!" Here the postmaster looked cautiously around to see that the manufacturer was not, perchance, coming in. "Square man, of course, and got a big head full of brains, but always so much smarter than other folks as to be just overbearing enough to be a great deal disliked. Now Broad sits in the class looking as modest and appreciative as any of the youngsters; if he keeps on he'll be a model of Christian graces before he gets through. I tell you, dominie, that nothing ever happened in this town, revivals of religion not excepted, that promised so good a harvest as this little circle that came into existence through a chance chat in this store a few months ago."

"Don't call it chance, then,' said the pastor.

"You're quite right; I take it back," said the postmaster. "I suppose, though, it isn't sinful to say that it shows what chances are lying around within reach for those who've got the will to pick them up and improve them."

16

APRIL FOOL

The first of April had long been one of Brinston's most carefully celebrated holidays. Independence Day was the occasion of more noise, and Christmas called for a greater outlay of money, but for painstaking preparation and for variety of unexpected sensations, All Fools' Day easily distanced all others. It may not be necessary to add that most of the intentional work was done by the juvenile members of the community; still, there are grown people whose memories are short about this sort of thing.

Among the boys, Frank Dawn had for years been the leader in devising ways of tormenting the adult members of the community. Leadership has its penalties among boys as well as among older people, and one of the most inexorable is that the leader must continue to excel himself as well as keep in advance of others. Frank was fully alive to this requirement, and had learned by experience that preparations and plans could not begin too soon.

Indeed, the sun had not gone down on the last day of fool-making that occurred before this narrative opens, when Frank had thought out some entirely fresh and startling tricks to play upon certain individuals. New peculiarities of human nature had been discovered which required new devices; besides, some of the natives had become so wary of all the simple capers that they had to be treated as carefully as the veteran trout whose jaw is fringed with the hooks of his adolescent period.

There was Mr. Broad, for instance. Some of the more superstitious boys really believed that he was in league with Satan, and knew all the wiles of the wicked, for he could see through almost anything devised for the purpose of catching him off his guard and spoiling his temper. Old Purkis, too, though seemingly stupid about everything that might work to his lasting interest, succeeded in eluding almost all the nets spread for his feet.

Joe Warren had been a boy within a very few years, and had been to college besides; an experience which all the village boys regarded as being full of opportunities for a finishing course in mischief; yet it was worthwhile to expend a great deal of thought and even some money for the sake of “fooling” Joseph, particularly in the presence of young women; for he did turn so very red and become so gloriously angry.

A fortnight before the eventful day there was a special meeting of trusty boys called by Frank Dawn, in his semi-official capacity. Not all the Brinston boys could be taken into confidence

at such times; there were some who meant well, but were "leaky;" others had grudges of their own to settle, and would unscrupulously appropriate to private purposes the best ideas of the general body. To avoid such mistakes the meeting was held in the center of an open field about a mile from the town, where there could be no listeners; the last gathering for a similar purpose had been called at a barn, without lights, and some of the boys not included in the invitation, had listened at the cracks and afterward warned the intended victims, with the result that one boy was compelled to pay a tribute of trousers-seat to a big dog, while another, who sat up all night so as to put vinegar in the milk pail of a crusty old bachelor who was served just before dawn, had a whole wash tub of water dumped upon him from a piazza roof and then had his best derby hat crushed by the fall of the tub itself. Such irregularities were unanimously reprobated by all boys who believed in fair play—that is, fair play among boys.

There was a full attendance. Boys who could not get time to go on an errand, or split kindling wood, or beat a carpet for a house-cleaning mother, let no personal engagement keep them from the meeting. To reach the rendezvous some of the delegates had to make a wide detour through swampy ground, in which, owing to the earliness of the season, there was not a single bullfrog to club nor a turtle to pepper with stones, but they got there all the same. One lame boy, who generally was late at school because he waited for chances to ride, his bad leg being so weak, boasted that

he had been so careful that his route covered three miles and seventeen fences, several of which were of barbed wire. Still another arose from a sick-bed rather than fail in his duty, and his devotion to duty was appropriately recognized when he made his appearance.

As the later arrivals approached, they saw Frank Dawn standing a little apart from the others, with his hands behind his back and an expression of deep thought upon his face.

"Look at the style of him!" whispered one of Frank's admirers to another. "Ain't he got 'em bad?"

"You're right he has," was the reply. "Genius is just blazing behind that brow; if it isn't, call me too late for supper."

"Ah, here, Frank!" finally shouted another, although he was loath to interrupt a train of thought which must promise bliss to the boys and misery to someone else.

"Oh," said Frank, rousing himself. Then he thought a while longer, but finally approached his followers, and asked: "Well, what have you got?"

Several boys began at once to unload their mind of tricks which had been thought out with more or less care, and all of which could be depended upon to keep the village temper from stagnating.

"Here—here—this will never do," Frank exclaimed: "don't all shoot together. Speak one at a time, beginning with the smallest."

Order was restored at once, for what boy was ever in haste to acknowledge himself smaller than any other boy? There was some careful estimating, each fellow for himself, in the next two or three minutes; then a very small boy unfolded a plan for taking the sign

FOUNDRY

from one of Mr. Broad's mills and placing it over the door of a German baker whose cake counter was largely supported by school-boys.

"We'll kill two birds with one stone in that way," said this designer of the trick, "for that Dutchman's cakes are as hard as cast-iron. They've give me a pain."

"Next!" said Frank, after the murmur of approval had subsided.

A boy promptly offered a suggestion, accompanied by a working design, of slyly replacing the teacher's ruler with an imitation made of molasses candy. He had experimented a great deal before succeeding in "pulling" the candy to the proper color, pressing it smooth and adding the lines and figures with which the original was decorated, but he believed that the sample, which he had brought to the meeting suspended by a thread drawn through a hole in the end, would convince the crowd of the practicability of the plan. He had even taken the pains to test it, as to its endurance of heat, and had demonstrated that at the ordinary temperature of

the schoolroom it might be laid on the teacher's table half an hour before the "last bell," so no one would be present to know who did it. It would retain its appearance perfectly, but on being picked up it would raise with it whatever paper it might be lying upon; it would also be soft enough to stick to the teacher's hand.

"You'll be a great scientist when you grow up," Frank predicted, while one of the larger boys proceeded with his teeth to analyze an end of the sample and was called to order by the designer.

By this time enthusiasm had taken possession of the crowd, and the members did not stand on the order of their size, but fought with their voices for the privilege of speaking first, the stronger voices winning. Before half of the boys had spoken, one excitable fellow went into an ecstasy of exultation, dancing about wildly and swinging his arms aloft as he shouted:

"'Twill be the bulliest April Fool Day that ever was!"

After all had spoken, some contributing several forms of deviltry each, and all had been as appreciative as could be asked, Frank Dawn, who had laughed as merrily as anyone at everything that was particularly good—or bad—pursed up his lips, contracted his brows and looked rather pale, as he said:

"It's a stunning lot, fellows; it's far ahead of anything and everything we ever did before, and we've had lots of fun laughing them over— haven't we?"

"Well, rather!" one of the larger boys roared.

"Good!" said Frank, with an effort, as if he were trying to swallow something. "Now, I want to make a suggestion: Suppose we let it stop at that?"

There was dead silence for a moment; a boy, who said afterward that one might have heard a pin drop, was corrected by the remark that you could have heard a million pins drop. Then there arose a deep murmur of dissent, while one boy asked a minister's son if he supposed Frank Dawn was under conviction, and if, in case he was, it wasn't dirt mean to worm all the good tricks out of those who weren't. Finally one of the crowd asked:

"What's the matter with you, Frank, anyhow?"

"Fellows," was the reply, "I'm just as fond of fun as any of you, as you all know; the whole lot of you may play any tricks you like on me on the First of April and I won't get mad. But this thing of tormenting grown folks, and picking out the very ones that we think will be most worried by them—why, I simply can't go into it. I've been trying to ever since I came out here, but it's no use. If I take part in it I'll feel as mean as a sneak thief. You all know well enough that I'm not afraid of anything that may happen to us from any of our mischief, but I am a good deal afraid of myself."

"He is under conviction, sure," said one of the boys; "and," he continued, "it didn't strike him just now, either, for he didn't give us a single one of his own notions, though he's been saying for months that he had a lot."

"Hold on, Jack!" Frank exclaimed. "I'm as fond of fun as I ever was. I'm not under conviction, either, if you mean that I am more religious than I was. But for a few months I've been treated like a man by some of these people we've always taken pains to worry, and I don't like to pay them by acting as if I were a monkey."

"Who's treated you like a man, I'd like to know?" growled a big fellow of whom Frank had some fear, for, when displeased, he had a bad temper and an ugly tongue.

"Broad has, for one; so has Joe Warren, and even old Purkis."

"What have they done—given you cigars or listened to your notions about politics? Mebbe Broad and Purkis have invited you to call upon their daughters?"

Frank flushed; he had become old enough to begin to be particular about his personal appearance, and to feel pleased when any young woman recognized him as something more than a mere boy. He replied:

"No; they've done nothing but treat me as their equal in the Chautauqua class, and I'm not ashamed to own that I'm very proud of it. I want them to go on doing so, and to learn to respect me, and I can't be double-faced and worry them while I feel that way."

"Well, that's the most Miss Nancy-ish nonsense I ever heard tell of!" said the big boy.

"There's no nonsense about it," replied Frank, with a great deal of spirit and some anger. "Here you other fellows, speak up, and don't make me do all the talking. Two-thirds of you are in the class with me, and have been treated as well as I, and I believe you think as I do about it. If you're not cowards you'll say so, too."

As all boys are cowardly enough to fear to be called cowards, several in the crowd admitted that Frank was right. Those who were not in the class sided with the big boy who protested, but as they found themselves in the minority they did not say much. Frank continued:

"I move a compromise: Let's have all the fun that's possible among ourselves on April Fool Day, but draw the line at grown people. If any of you don't agree with me, you know perfectly well that I won't tell on you if you get into trouble. Any fellow who says I will is a liar."

The big boy who had made the first protest clenched his fists, but as he looked around he changed his mind. Boys generally take sides in a fight, and there was a large majority against him.

"If any of you doubt what I say about us boys in the class being treated as men," Frank continued, "visit the class at the next meeting and judge for yourselves."

The two factions separated for consultation and finally conferred with each other. It was agreed, though under protest from the big boy, that action on the new tricks proposed should be deferred for a year, and that meantime the minority should visit the

class and see for themselves whether Frank and his adherents were not mistaken. Then the meeting adjourned, and the delegates returned to the town in a body, the lame boy declaring that as for him, he thought this world a pretty mean place for boys.

When the morning of the First of April dawned, Mr. Broad arose early, as was his custom on that day, and inspected his property. His signs were all in place; no percussion-caps were in the key-holes of the locks, nor was there any indication that the chimneys had been stuffed with wet rags. Later, he found no bogus orders in his morning mail. Mr. Purkis found no strings stretched across the path from his door to the street; no counterfeit dollar baked in a brick specially introduced in the sidewalk in front of the house. He told his wife that he wondered what new caper those fiends of boys were going to try upon him, but he wondered in vain; for he did not even receive a spurious invitation to meet a boon companion at a saloon—an old trick, but one which never failed to work.

Joe Warren was on needles all day, but his coat tails remained unadorned, and although he passed several boys while he was walking with one of the Broad girls, he heard no disquieting and untruthful remarks about his personal appearance. There was a general feeling of apprehension in the town until the evening was far advanced, and some of the natives who had suffered at other times, gathered at the post-office to discuss the situation. When the fire-bell rang there was a general disinclination to turn out, but the

alarm proved genuine. Late in the evening Mr. Dawn went home, and said:

"There's been more April fooling in town today than ever before."

"Where? How?" asked Frank, raising his eyes from a book.

"Why the boys have done absolutely nothing. How did it happen, Frank?"

"Oh, Chautauqua," was the reply, as the boy closed the book and went to bed.

17

A HAPPY SLAVE

Mrs. Purkis leaned over her kneading-board one bright July morning at Chautauqua, and looked out across the smiling lake to the green hills beyond. It was a favorite outlook of hers, yet, as she took in the scene anew, she seemed as pleased and surprised as on that first eventful morning, after reaching the town in the darkness of the night before, when the surroundings of her temporary new home burst upon her. But time was money. She had a house full of boarders, and summer boarders always have tremendous appetites, especially for bread and butter; that batch of bread must be baked in time to cool, so that it would slice decently at dinner-time; so Mrs. Purkis fell again to kneading vigorously. As she worked she sang loudly and with much energy, keeping time with her knuckles in the great puff of dough before her:

"I've reached—a land of corn—and wine.
And all—its riches free—ly mine;

Here shines—undimmed one blissful day,
For all—my night has passed—away."

As the verse ended, she turned the mass of dough on the board, dusted it anew with flour, turned it again, and again began kneading and singing, this time in softer tone, as if the song were something sweet and tender that needed a great deal of caressing. Even the bread must have been conscious of a change of feeling in the singer, for, although the kneading hands still beat time upon the yielding dough, the impressions were less vigorous. The verse ended, Mrs. Purkis hummed the chorus, and then sang the same lines over again. When she stopped, Florinda, who also was busily engaged in the kitchen, said:

"It does me worlds of good to hear you sing, mother, and most of all to hear you sing that way. Seems to me I haven't heard it before, not since Arabella stopped being a baby."

"What's that, gal?" asked the mother, stopping work for a moment and turning round. "Why, 'pears to me I've always sung a powerful lot. It was the only comfort I had sometimes for months together, when your father was—when he wasn't doin' as well as he is now, an' you two gals wasn't much but torments. Singin's all that's stood 'tween me an' breaking down just thousan's an' thousan's of times."

"Yes, mother, I know," replied the girl, gently; "but I was talking about the way you was doing it just now. Your voice

sounded as if you was singing to something you loved very much—something as nice and sweet and good as a little baby."

"Well," said the mother, as she began again to work the dough, "it's too big a thing to call a baby, I s'pose, but I was feelin' very tender' an' lovin' to somethin' just then. It was this heavenly Chautauqua."

"I don't see what there is heavenly about it," said Arabella, who just then came in from a store with a large basket, under which she bent awkwardly and painfully. "There's just as much work to do here as there was back in Brinston; seems to me there's a good deal more."

"Work?" echoed the mother. "Of course there is; there's work everywhere except in the gutter. What makes me happy, an' makes me feel it's a heavenly place, is the lots that I get for my work."

"Don't get no more than you would if you kept boardin'-house in Brinston," said Arabella sulkily.

"I'm not talkin' about that kind of getting, child," said the mother, looking as if she wondered whether rebuke or instruction was what her daughter most needed. "Keepin' boarders is a heap harder work than takin' in washin' an' ironin', an' I'd drop dead of it sometimes, I think, if 'twasn't for the glorious fresh cool air up here. It's work from mornin' till night, an' I don't get to see an' hear half the things that goes on in the Auditorium after dark, an' that I'm dyin' to see an' hear, but if I didn't get to see nothin' at all I think I'd be happy. The idea of bein' where everybody's decent,

an' there ain't any rum-shops or bad characters to maybe get hold of your father again when he comes up, an' nobody to insult you gals, an' nobody to look down on anybody else, anyhow. Why, sakes alive! I never heard of such a place before, an' I never s'posed there could be anythin' like it this side of heaven."

"I think, myself, it's a pretty nice place," Florinda admitted. "To be sure, I get so tired every day with the house-work and the particularness of the boarders about lots of things that never troubled us any to speak of when we was at home, that I feel like flying out of my skin. I don't know, though, but what it's a good thing to learn something about manners among people that can afford to have any; perhaps we can afford some ourselves after we get back home. What I begun to say was, that I got so tired every day that I feel when I go to bed at night that I won't ever be able to get up again, and that if I was working for anyone but my own mother, I'd strike anyway! Somehow, though, I feel as good as new every morning, and everybody treats me decenter than anybody ever did in Brinston, though all our boarders come from that very town. How you're treated in this world makes a good deal of difference about how you feel."

"That's so," drawled Arabella.

"Oh, you've found *that* out, have you?" said the mother, looking from one girl to the other. "Then I've got another reason for blessin' the day we came to this place, an'—" Here she went at the dough again with the energy of one who must make up lost

time— “hand me them bakin’ pans, Arabella—an’ I’ll work my finger-ends off without missin’ ’em if I may be allowed to go on. Yes, indeed.” And again she broke into song—this time with a wild air of exultation:

“I’ve reached—the land of corn—and wine.
And all—its riches free—ly mine;
Here shines—undimmed one bliss—ful day;
For all—my night has passed—away.”

“Why don’t you ever sing the other verses, mother, instead of going that first one over and over again?” Florinda asked, as her mother emphasized the last beat of the last measure by bringing the whole nest of baking pans down upon the table with a triumphant crash.

“Because I haven’t got that far yet, child,” was the reply. “There’s glory enough in the first verse to keep me goin’ for a good deal more time yet. My soul’s let loose here, no matter how much my poor body is chained down to the daily grind. I’m so thankful that I don’t know how to tell it, even to you two, who are my own flesh and blood. I know that I’m an old worn out woman, but, thank the Lord, I’ve stopped thinkin’ about it, as it don’t seem that I’m the same person anymore.”

“There, Florinda! What did I tell you only yesterday?” asked Arabella. “I told you that mother was lookin’ years younger, all of a sudden, than I ever seen her in my life.”

Mrs. Purkis had just cut from the mass enough dough for one of the pans, and was about to mould it upon the board, but, as her daughter's remark fell upon her ears, she turned so quickly in her surprise that the dough and knife fell to the floor. A soft, pleased smile slowly filled her face, and finally she said:

"Arabella, child! You've been the baby a good many years, an' I've been a-feared sometimes that you wouldn't ever be anything else, but I take it back now. Your senses have come to you at last, or I'm no judge."

"Why, I noticed it in you, too, mother," Florinda made haste to remark. "I saw it so plain that the other night, after everybody else in the house had gone to bed, I sat up an hour and wrote a long letter to father about it."

The smile on the mother's face grew brighter and had some new lines come into it—brightness and lines made by two eyes that filled and overflowed. She looked at one girl and then at the other; she crossed to Arabella, put her arm around her, drew her toward her sister, about whose waist the other arm was placed, then Mrs. Purkis dropped into a chair and dragged her children into her lap as she murmured:

"My babies—my darlings! It does seem as if the Lord was goin' to let me be young again for you, an' for your father's sake. If you only knew how old an' worn out I've felt for years an' years, you'd forgive me for speakin' cross to you an' neglectin' you, as I know I've often done. I can tell you, though, that your

needin' of me has been all that's kept me alive sometimes; it didn't seem that I could be any more good to your father—not until a few months back. But he's begun to respect me again, or to show it, which comes to the same thing, an' my two gals see that I ain't what I was, an'—"

The farther expression of the renewed woman's feelings was evidently done by a mighty hug, for in a moment Florinda gasped:

"You won't have any daughters left, mother, if you do that again."

As for Arabella, she raised her clumsy fingers to her mother's cheek with a caress that the hand had forgotten—and the cheek, too, for many years. The mother pressed the hand with her own, as she had done thousands of times when the child's hand was much smaller and her own much softer; then she pinched each girl's cheek and raised both from her lap as she arose exclaiming:

"The boarders'll have to eat baker's bread for dinner unless I stop making a goose of myself. It's all too good to be true; if I should go an' die today just you tell your father that it was from gettin' more happiness than I could hold."

"You mustn't think we ain't happy, too, mother," said Arabella. "I know I grumble a good deal, but it's only while the work's goin' on. I do have a real good time nearly every day, one way or another. Why, if it wasn't for anything but to hear the music in the Auditorium every day, I'd be willin' to stay here an' work forever. An' I'm improvin' greatly in my lessons; the teacher

says so." (Arabella's studies were confined to the banjo, the instrument having been paid for by the Broad girls, who thought it the funniest thing in the world that a member of that very common family should show taste for music of any kind, and who selected the instrument as being about as barbarous as the would-be performer.)

"Well, I'm gettin' on better than I expected with my Greek," said the mother.

The girls exchanged glances, almost smiles; for their mother's efforts, still only partially successful, to master Greek alphabet, were amusing even to their uneducated senses. They had foreseen the effect, should the boarders know of their mother's efforts, so they had persuaded her to keep the study a profound secret from everyone.

"What makes you like that outlandish language so much, mother?" ventured Florinda. "It's awfully hard for you, and there's so many other things you could have got on fast with, after the splendid way you went through the year's course. There's so many things that one gets a chance to study here, even if not in the classes, and everybody seems so willing to help you."

"I suppose it's somethin' wonderful to me, an' always was," said Mrs. Purkis, as she moulded the last loaf and covered all the pans with a warm cloth. "When I was a gal an' earned a Testament in school by recitin' verses from memory for tickets, an' givin' twenty tickets for a book—'twas the first book I ever owned all by

myself, an' I began readin' it right from the first page, where it says: 'Translated from the Original Greek.' Then in church the minister used to explain what some Greek words meant, and he did seem so awful smart! Gracious! It made me feel as if that minister come from a higher world. Afterwards I found out that they taught Greek in the colleges, an' that some of the meanest fellers, as well as the best, could learn it if they had any head-piece. That kind o' took Greek down in my mind for a while, an' yet the very knowin' of such things seemed to set any sort of college feller higher up in the people's opinions than anybody else. I always did want to be as smart as the smartest; I wanted to know somethin' about what they did anyway, to see how it would feel; so when we got here, an' I found the old Greek book that somebody in the house last year left behind, I made up my mind I'd get somethin' out of it if tryin' could do it. I've only been at it a little more than two weeks, an' yet I can spell out some of the short words without turnin' back to the alphabet to find out what the letters are. I've read a good deal about the Greeks, off an' on, in books from time to time; they was the first folks in the world that had head-piece enough for anythin' an' ev'rythin', an' though they hadn't much in the way of land an' money when they began, they never stopped tryin' an' in the course of time they got to be the smartest folks in the world. I've got a feelin' for 'em; I know just how they felt when they was keen to do ev'rythin' an' hadn't nothin' to do it with; an' just to say the alphabet over 'pears to take me back to 'em when they was

poor an' strugglin'. I s'pose it's ridiculous for me to try to get the hang of what smart men have to go to college to learn, but I'm goin' to keep on tryin' so long as the Lord lets me live. P'r'aps if I keep on comin' here year after year I can go into the Greek class in the course of time. Poor Greeks! They didn't have no Chautauqua to help 'em along; but I have, bless the Lord!

"'I've reached—the land of corn—and wine,
And all—its riches free—ly mine;
Here shines—undimmed one bliss—ful day,
For all—my sins have, passed—a way.'

"Florinda, open that oven door an' let the glory out— Pshaw! I mean let me put these pans of bread in."

18

GETTING DOWN TO BED ROCK

The only member of the Brinston class who seemed to regard unfavorably the plan of supplementing at Chautauqua itself the work of the year was Mr. Broad. He had agreed to it to the extent of allowing his daughters to go there, but when he came to think the matter over and talk about it to some of his hard-headed friends, he blamed himself for undue haste. He had not been much about the world, not even about his own country, so he was dependent upon acquaintances for a great deal of information; some of these acquaintances, belonging to the guild that spends most of its time “on the road” and knows little except by hearsay, had told him that Chautauqua was only another name for a long-protracted camp-meeting. Mr. Broad had known the wrong side of camp-meetings very well in his younger days, so he started for Chautauqua in haste one afternoon to bring his daughters home. It was all right for Dawn, of course, if he chose, to have his daughter there; his wife was there, and he expected to spend much time there himself, but no prolonged camp-meeting

was a proper place for two girls like his, who were none too fond of study and a great deal too fond of gossip. There might be many opportunities for special study there. Mr. Broad did not doubt that there were, for Mr. Whitton, his pastor, had assured him that all of the instructors were members of the faculties of the best colleges in the land; still, he had not forgotten the wisdom of the old saying that "you may lead a horse to the water, but you can't make him drink." Then there was the programme of the entertainment; he saw by the copy which his daughters sent him that there was something amusing or entertaining to be seen and enjoyed at frequent intervals throughout the day. Who, he asked himself, was going to study when there was so much opportunity for mental dissipation?

So to Chautauqua he went, with a great deal of doubt and suspicion in his heart, and he took the precaution to engage three chairs for the train that should return Brinston-ward two days later. As his own train neared the lake, he began to look about him inquiringly and to ask questions of people on the train. When he boarded the boat which conveyed passengers from the railway station to the various villages on the shores of Lake Chautauqua, he felt somewhat fatigued by his long ride; as he was not a total abstainer he sought the bar of the steamer. Failing to find it, he made inquiry of one of the deck hands.

"Guess you'll have to put up with coffee," was the reply. "Nothin' stronger sold on these boats."

Mr. Broad strolled forward and hid his disappointment in the smoke of a cigar, as he murmured to himself:

"That doesn't sound much like the approach to a camp-meeting, anyway."

In about half an hour he informed himself that the village the boat was approaching was the handsomest he had ever seen from the deck of a steamboat. There is not in sight a single bit of bare, unsightly ground, or an ugly mill, or even an unpainted barn, such as disfigured the suburbs of towns in general. Buildings abounded; indeed, they seemed to be about as close together as if there had been a great real estate boom in the not remote past that had caused all the vacant lots to be bought up and improved. Brinston was a pretty town; Broad thought he ought to know, for he had for successive years been president of the local improvement society, which bullied careless natives into painting or whitewashing old buildings and into planting trees, but in the village before him all the trees appeared to have been planted at about the same time, and there didn't seem to be any barns or shops. If, now, Chautauqua might be a place like that! But no, he sighed to himself, all summer camps of serious minded people were about as shabby to the eye as the mean end of Brinston.

As the boat moved nearer, Mr. Broad made up his mind that this must be one of the summer villages which he heard co-operative clubs had formed; it must be a young club and a lively one, too, for he saw scores of row boats moored near shore, and

scores more on the water. Then he saw several men and boys on bicycles, dashing over roads pleasingly laid out; next he heard a brass band.

"This is splendid!" said Mr. Broad to himself. "I wish all Brinston could see this. Don't seem to be any expensive houses or places, either; nothing is more than neat. Still, if everything in the town buildings were neat, there'd be nothing to complain of."

He looked about for someone who could tell him the name of this model town, but, to his surprise, he had the deck almost to himself. It had been crowded a few moments before. Then light dawned upon him, and he muttered:

"Broad, you're a fool! The crowd's gone below to get off. This is Chautauqua. Well, I wouldn't have believed it!"

He hired a small boy to guide him to the best hotel, for he saw signs indicating that entertainment for travelers was abundantly provided. The boy led him to a large hotel whose grounds swept down to the lake, and in the office of which women and children were more numerous than men. Again he was moved to ask the way to the bar, and again he was disappointed. He afterward told Postmaster Brown that he did not suppose that a man who did not consume half a pint of liquor a year could be made to feel so uncomfortable and disreputable twice in the same half-hour.

But time was money, so Mr. Broad hurried out to see the town. Attracted by a great buzz of conversation, he ascended the slope in front of the hotel to what seemed a big shed—the only

unsightly edifice within range of his eye. When he reached it he stopped suddenly and started backward, for he found himself at the rail of the Auditorium, and below him, in a great semi-circle, were seated fully five thousand people, while others were pouring in through all the aisles, many of them carrying books and some bearing camp chairs or stools.

"What's up?" he asked of another man, who had approached with the air of one familiar with the place. The man leaned upon the rail and replied:

"Lecture!"

Then he pointed to the day's programme affixed to a column near them, and Mr. Broad saw that the people were waiting for a lecture, which he had occasion to remember very well.

"We had that very man and lecture in our town only a year and a half ago," said he, "and the chairman of the committee—that was me—who had selected him had the pleasure of paying about two-thirds of the fee out of his own pocket. Why, there weren't forty people in the hall."

"Weren't, eh?" said the person addressed. "Well, some towns are that way. In this place though, everybody has brains; they wouldn't come if they hadn't."

There was something assuring in this, though the speech was not complimentary to Brinston. In a moment there was a stir on the platform and then in the audience, followed by a loud clapping of hands.

"He's been here before, and you can see what they think of him. A good half of the people in the audience have been here before, too, and they're the kind that have good memories. A full half of all the people in this town are under this roof at this very minute, and you can see lots more of them coming all the time!"

It was true, and Mr. Broad wondered greatly.

He did not listen very attentively to the lecture for it awoke painful memories in one of the most sensitive parts of his organization—his pocket. He found occupation and interest, however, in studying the audience. He was obliged to admit to himself that it was a good collection of faces. There were very few people as well-dressed as those who had attended the same lecture at Brinston; there were many who looked as if they had not often the price of a lecture to spare, but all were listening attentively. Something about the crowd seemed unlike lecture audiences in general, and the observer at last discovered that there was not a fringe of young men looking to see what young women were in attendance. He wondered if his own daughters were there; he had determined to look the place over before going to their boarding-house, yet he longed to see their faces, now that he and they were in the same town. To find two faces among five or six thousand was no easy matter, but by systematic work the father finally discovered his daughters. Contrary to his expectation, they were not looking about the audience to see what other young women were wearing, and who had come with whom; both were looking

at the lecturer, and between them—Mr. Broad could scarcely believe his eyes—sat Florinda Purkis!

"Who are all the people with books in their hands?" he asked the man beside him. "Excuse me this once, and I'll promise not to bother you with any more questions."

"They're students," was the reply. "Some are from the college and the others from the twenty or more schools scattered all over the town. They teach pretty much everything here, and the beauty of it is, that nearly all the students are grown folks without a bit of nonsense about them. They learn as much in a month here as boys and girls in college get out of a whole term. They work so hard for a few hours every day that they need something like this to break the strain. Of course, there are some folks here who don't use their brains much, but they're to be pitied, for it's no place for a fool. You seem to be a stranger here. You've heard this lecture before; so have I; suppose I show you around a little, if you think it would interest you?"

"I'd be very much obliged," said Mr. Broad. "I thought I knew a great deal about it when I came, but my ideas are a good deal shaken up."

"Umph! Most people's are. There's some things that a man can't know much about until he sees them, and Chautauqua is one of them."

Then Mr. Broad's new acquaintance strolled about, showing the manufacturer the various schools and explaining their scope;

showed him the temple, and told how the small boys and girls of the town were kept quiet for an hour or two a day, and sent away with some new ideas in their heads and the impression that they had been having rather a good time; showed him the hall of philosophy, where something was going on at most hours of the day; told him of how many different audiences the auditorium held between early morn and late eve; told him of the restrictions against nuisances, and showed him the great fence which enclosed the place so jealously that no one could even enter the grounds without passing inspection by a gate-keeper who was expert in sizing-up human nature.

"The best safeguard, though," said he, "is that there's nothing, nobody, here to attract undesirable characters. There's no place for them to stay. You'll find every boarding-house is crowded with people who engaged their rooms months ago, and the big hotel is fixed in the same way. A man can't get a drink for love or money; a party of young people can't even get up a dance here. We don't say that everything we forbid is wrong, but we do say that by drawing the lines very close we keep away every class but that which we want. A great many transient visitors come here for a day at a time to enjoy the entertainments we give in the Auditorium, but there's nothing about them that we need be afraid of. We don't give anything in the slightest degree attractive to undesirable people, or even to those who are very gay, though you can hear more hearty laughter here, any day of the season, than I

ever heard in a seaside village or other summer resort. Keep your ears open and see if you don't agree with me."

"This thing costs a tremendous amount of money," said Broad, who was mentally estimating the expense of everything he saw and heard of. "How do you get it?"

"By a system of fees that are so light that nobody ever feels his own share of them. It's a big contract; it costs more and more every year; but the money is always forthcoming, and it will continue to come, even if the place grows to ten times its present size. There's no likelihood of its doing that, though; for in order to give the same sort of opportunities to Chautauquans everywhere, we have started similar gathering places in other States until there are about fifty, each of them growing in attendance every year, and having the best teachers and entertainments that money can buy."

Mr. Broad had forgotten for an hour the purpose of his coming. He was filled with admiration, and he wanted to say an encouraging word to his man, who seemed to have the institution in a warm place in his heart; so he exclaimed:

"This is the greatest thing I ever heard of, and I've heard a great deal. I'm a man of affairs myself, sir, and I tell you that you may rest assured that it is one of the great things of the world. Allow me to give you my business card, sir; you'll find, if you make inquiries, that I always mean what I say. I repeat, sir, that this is one of the great things of the world."

"Glad you think so," said the volunteer guide, glancing at the card. "The President of the United States said the same thing a few days ago; indeed, every President, since this place was started, has said about the same thing."

Then Broad wished he had not put on quite so important an air, but his new acquaintance quickly turned the subject, and said:

"Here's an illustration of how the place works on strangers. See those two young women coming toward us? Pshaw! There's a crowd stopping right in front of them. It's no matter as to the particular couple, though; they're like a good many others. They came here two or three weeks ago, and made themselves noticed by the critical way which they showed toward everything and everybody. Our people are quiet enough and don't expect to be admired, but they're quick enough to notice any sneers or other signs of disapproval. Well, everything here seemed so funny, or something, I don't know what, that those young women's noses were turned up most of the time, except when some of the entertainments were going on. I suppose, to do them justice, they'd been used to a great deal of company, while here the people have something to do most of the time. Well, they got acquainted with one of my daughters—she's a pleasant looking girl and as bright as they make them, though I do say it, and she's as busy as a bee in the clover-blossom season. She didn't do any preaching and proselyting—I'm down on that sort of thing—I believe in teaching by example—but finally these girls couldn't help being interested

in what she was doing. Well, sir, within a week the girls had taken up so many studies that my daughter had to beg them to go slow. Even now they're two of the brightest and hardest students here. Ah—here they are! I wish I knew them, and I'd introduce you."

The young women alluded to stopped suddenly, as if something had frightened them; then both stepped up to Mr. Broad, and with one voice exclaimed:

"Why, father!"

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Mr. Broad's volunteer guide, looking around as if in search of something to hide behind. "I don't know how I could have made such a blunder, I knew their names—I noticed your name on your card, but I never thought—"

"Oh, father," exclaimed the elder Miss Broad, "this is the most wonderful place that ever was!"

"There seems to be unanimity of opinion in your family on that subject," said the embarrassed man to Mr. Broad. "Well, as you seem to be in very good hands now, I'll ask you to excuse me while I drop down home. Good day."

"That's a remarkably clever fellow," said Mr. Broad, as the man's broad shoulders disappeared in the throng of people who were going in every direction from the Auditorium.

"Indeed he is," one of the girls replied. "He is one of the makers of Chautauqua."

"What! Why, he didn't act as if he was anyone in particular. If I had had any share in the getting up of a thing like this, I would

see that everybody I met should know it. I don't intend to hide my light under a bushel."

"His isn't hidden, either," said the daughter. "Everyone who ever heard of Chautauqua has heard of him. But, father, what put you up to coming here?"

"I came here, my child," said Mr. Broad, with deliberate accents, "because I was an old fool. Don't be frightened, though; I'm cured."

19

COMPARING NOTES

When Mr. Dawn heard that his old friend Broad had gone to Chautauqua, he promptly announced that he had business in that part of the State and might drop in at Chautauqua while he was away. As his wife and daughter were away, and he had to unload his mind upon somebody, he hurried down to the post-office and then waited patiently until a whole storeful of customers was disposed of, before he asked Brown whether he didn't envy him his chance of seeing Broad in the presence of something new.

"Indeed I do," was the reply. "If my two boys were home, or even one of them, I'd willingly lose some business by running up there with you. Broad is a good fellow and a square man; people in this town won't know all his good qualities until he's dead; but I don't know anybody who's in greater need of some new ideas from people whom he isn't used to facing down. If he doesn't find them up there I miss my guess. I'm keeping pretty closely informed about what's going on at Chautauqua; my boys send me

the *Assembly Herald* every day, and I make it my business to read it through, even if I have to neglect the daily papers. Gracious! How I do envy both of you your chances! I didn't suppose, up to this time, that any place, not a large city, was visited by so many people who amount to a good deal."

"Maybe Broad won't be able to meet many of them," suggested the visitor.

"Don't you believe it. Broad won't doubt for a moment that he's as big a man as anybody there, and by the time he finds out his mistake he'll have got pretty well acquainted. The boys write me that it's one of those places where everybody comes to know everybody else pretty quickly; the old members make it their business to make people acquainted so that they feel at home. If there wasn't anything else to be gained by the trip, I should be glad that the boys went for the sake of the acquaintances they have already made. They may never meet them again, but it's done them a lot of good to see new faces and be put to their own best wits. Life in small towns has its advantages; it suits me so well that I'm satisfied to live and die here; but I've seen something of the world and the boys, haven't."

Mr. Dawn found, on arriving at Chautauqua, that his old neighbor was at the hotel, the Purkis boarding-house being full to overflowing. He was very glad to see his own family, and was greatly interested in their reports of what they had seen and done; but he made an early excuse to hurry to the hotel. No search was

necessary to find Broad; the magnate of Brinston was occupying two chairs on the piazza and unburdening his mind on the state of the country, his only hearer being a quiet-looking man whom Dawn was sure he had seen somewhere before. Broad looked so natural—so like the new-comer expected to find him, that Dawn stood aside to enjoy the familiar spectacle and listen to the opinions he had heard many, many times before. He was soon discovered, however, and while the two acquaintances exchanged greetings, the man who had been listening arose from his chair and sauntered away.

"Well, Broad," said Dawn, after answering a few questions about things at home, " when you do chance to become acquainted with a distinguished man you needn't be so stuck up that you can't introduce a respectable friend."

"Eh? What are you driving at?"

"Why, the man you just frightened away by not having the manners to introduce your friend."

"Why, I didn't know him myself. We were both sitting smoking, and chanced to drop into a chat about politics."

"Didn't you know him? Why, man alive, who have you always said was the only member of your party with brains enough to make a proper President of the United States?"

"What!" shouted the manufacturer; then he dropped into a chair, offered Dawn a cigar and a light, leaned over and murmured: "Dawn, I've been doing that sort of thing ever since I

came here. I like the place so well that I can't tear myself away, but I'll be the common laughing-stock if I don't learn to keep my mouth shut. So I've been trying to set that man right on national politics! And he heard me through, and didn't once tell me how little I knew! Well, I always did say that he was a gentleman as well as a statesman."

Mr. Dawn kept a straight face, but he made a mental note to write the postmaster by the very first mail. Finally he asked:

"Well, what do you think of the place and everything in it? You've been here fully forty-eight hours, so, of course, you know it all!"

"Dawn," said Broad, laying a large hand on his neighbor's knee, "it's the greatest thing on the face of the world—you may take my word for that, but I don't know anything about it."

Dawn laughed; it was the first time in his life that he had known his neighbor to confess ignorance of anything.

"Don't laugh!" Broad exclaimed. "You'll feel the same way when you've been here as long as I have. I really didn't suppose there were as many smart men in these United States as I have met in two days in this little place away out of the world in the woods between two lakes."

"Umph! How do you find the place otherwise? As much like a big camp-meeting as you expected?"

"Camp-meeting? No; nothing like it in any particular, except that all the people profess to be religious, as a good many folks at

camp-meeting don't. Why, Dawn, I haven't seen a loafer since I've been here—religious loafer or any other kind. You know how it is at camp-meetings; there's always mixed up with the sincere people, a lot of folks who just stand around and wait for the awakening of the spirit, or something else, they scarcely know what, except they know it isn't to be themselves, if they have to do the waking. Well, there's so few people of that kind here that they're curiosities—yes, sir, actually curiosities. Of course, there are any number of transient visitors, just like me, who are looking on to see what it's all about, but everybody else is hard at work at something or other—generally on more different things than I ever could study at a time in school. You must go into some of the classes here, and see for yourself; I'm afraid if I were to tell you how they impressed me you'd think I'd lost my head. I tell you, sir, I always thought our local circle was one of the wonders of the world—a lot of men, women and half-grown children studying together; but here—why, there's nobody in Brinston who looks as if he had gone through so much for the sake of learning something as some of these people. We never had any idea of taking in any of the farming people around the country near us, but lots of the students here are farmers and their wives, and you can see by the very ends of their fingers that they never got here without doing an awful lot of extra work at home, and that they're thinking a good deal of the time about the work they haven't done or have left in younger hands and on weaker shoulders. I've seen a good many

people suffer in one way and another, since I became a man, and I've been very sorry for them, but I never knew how deeply my heart could be touched until I came here and saw what was going on in some people's faces. It makes me feel ashamed of myself in a good many ways. I don't want to pry into other people's affairs, as I find myself doing without meaning it, for there's lots of folks here who appear to carry a good deal of heart in their faces. I suppose it's because there's a good deal more than can be accommodated inside. Besides, I can't help feeling mean when I see folks who don't look as if they had any natural head piece, going right along and learning a great deal more than I know, or show any likelihood of knowing. I can stand it to find a college president or cabinet officer knowing more than I; but when it comes to a common looking farmer or his common looking wife, I tell you it's tough."

As Broad paused a moment, Dawn looked at him curiously, and shook his head wonderingly. Broad continued:

"I find by scraping acquaintance with some of these people and asking them questions, that every one of them got their first notion of catching up with the world by going into local circles just like ours, in different parts of the country. Some of them graduated years ago, and haven't stopped studying yet; they come here year after year, start a new study or two each time in the summer schools the town is full of, and plod along at them during the rest of the year at home. Why, Dawn, this society of which our

circle is a member is going to make a generation of Elihu Burritts—you remember him?—the learned blacksmith who got the better part of his education while he was working with his hands, and continued studying all his life? He never forgot anything that he learned after he grew up, and these people promise to be just like him. I've asked a lot of them about it, and they say that that's the cheeringest thing in the world in their study—that what they learn, now that they are men and women, sticks to them, instead of flying away to meet most of whatever they learned when they were young ones in school.

"As for the women—well, I don't mind saying to you in strict confidence—for goodness' sake don't ever let it get out in Brinston—that except for my wife that was, and your wife, and my girls and yours, I haven't ever had much respect for women's brains. The sex has lots of good points, but it never seemed to me that brains was one of them. Well, sir, just you go around some morning and stand within hearing distance of one of the meetings of the Women's Club. Nobody you see going in or coming out looks like anybody in particular, but those women talk about pretty much everything that's interesting; a good many of them talk, and all of them do it well. Why, sir, if it wasn't for the voices and dresses, you might think the speakers were men—yes, sir, men, they're so sensible. I've asked my girls about it, expecting to see their noses turn up, they being in the habit of thinking small things of anybody and everybody who don't wear pretty good clothes,

which some of these women don't, but they're as surprised as I am—and just about as jealous, too."

Dawn listened respectfully, although greatly amused. When at last Broad lapsed into silence, and looked as if there was a great deal more on his mind, his neighbor asked:

"Well, what do you propose to do about it?"

"Do? Why, do you imagine for a minute that I'm going to have a lot of common folks get ahead of me? No, sir! Of course, I don't mean that common folks are the only ones that's studying, for there's just as many of the other kind. But what I'm driving at is this: If these mechanics and farmers, who haven't any more time to spare than I have, and nowhere near as much money, are succeeding by this method in getting a lot of knowledge in place of the mere lot of opinions that they've been satisfied with for all their lives, why—"

"Ah! You've discovered the difference between knowledge and mere opinions, have you?" said Dawn.

"Yes, I have," was the reply, accompanied by a shame-faced flush, "and I wish you wouldn't put on airs because you happened to learn it before me. Pshaw! What were we talking about? Oh, yes; if these people can pick up so much of the learning that makes some folks a good deal smarter than their neighbors, I propose to do it, too. I don't like it a bit, much as I enjoy Chautauqua, to find a lot of folks together talking about something as if

they understood it, while all I can do is to stand still and listen. I'm no fool, and I don't like to appear like one."

Dawn listened and looked at his neighbor with extreme interest, and at last he said, although ashamed of himself immediately afterward:

"Broad, until this moment I always supposed you knew everything—or thought you did."

"I always thought," retorted Broad, "that you were too much of a man to hit a fellow when he was down. If I hadn't supposed you had the instincts of a gentleman, I wouldn't have put my heart on my sleeve before you."

Then it was Dawn's turn to flush.

20

HUSBANDS AND WIVES

Before Mrs. Purkis had been a month at Chautauqua she became noticeably thoughtful and abstracted; so much so that Mrs. Dawn, who was observing her closely, and with much womanly tenderness and sympathy, became troubled about her.

"Alice," said Mrs. Dawn to her daughter, "that poor woman is killing herself with work at home and over books."

"I suppose," the girl replied, "that she is trying to get enough of heaven in two months to last her through the ten that must follow. Poor thing!"

"Don't take the trouble to pity her, my dear; she's happier than words can tell. My only fear is that so much work and exaltation combined will be too much for her, and make her break down physically. She will remain happy, no matter how sick she may get, but I want to prevent her breaking down and falling ill, if only that she may continue to make and save money."

"Are the beds as well made as usual?" asked Mrs. Dawn's husband, who overheard the conversation.

"Oh, yes."

"Meals as well cooked and served?"

"Quite as well."

"Better," added Alice. "Mother and I and the Broad girls were talking about the housekeeping only a few days ago, and we agreed that it improved steadily. It was fair from the start; better than servants ever did for us when mother chanced to be away and before I learned to manage the house."

"Umph! Does Mrs. Purkis lose her temper and say ugly things to any of the boarders?"

"Never."

"Hasn't complained that there's very little money in boarders?"

"No."

"Then she isn't breaking down. It's far more likely there's something on her mind."

"It's the Greek lessons, mother, without doubt," said Alice. "When I was at the seminary I used to notice that the four girls who constituted the whole Greek class were the solemnest-looking quartette in school; they looked as grave and vacant-minded as a cage of owls I once saw at Central Park, in New York, though they were the life of the school before they took up Greek."

"Then 'tisn't Greek that's troubling her," said Mrs. Dawn, "for though she seems in a brown study at times she's never vacant-minded. I know that the trouble can't be financial, for she told me, the last time I paid her, that she didn't know but her prices were too high, for she was almost frightened at the amount of money she was laying by."

"Perhaps she is troubled about her soul," suggested the husband. "Has there been an old-fashioned Methodist revival meeting here?"

"No; all the religious services are undenominational. Mrs. Purkis attends many of them, but they make her happy—not miserable. She's singing cheerful hymns almost every hour of the day."

"Well, my dear," said the head of the family, "if a woman is in good bodily and spiritual health, and isn't troubled about money matters, or overworked enough to be cross, there's but one thing else that can lie heavily on her mind. I flatter myself that you can guess what it is, if you try."

"I give it up," said Mrs. Dawn, after puzzling her wits a moment. "What is it?"

"Modesty forbids me to say," the husband replied.

"I do believe father means that Mrs. Purkis is thinking about her husband," said Alice.

"I declare!" exclaimed Mrs. Dawn. "Quite likely that is it. To be sure, I can't for the life of me imagine anything interesting about that stupid, insignificant fellow."

"It isn't at all necessary that you should, my dear, for you're not married to him. But if you were, and had suddenly found everything about you more delightful than you'd ever known before, you'd probably wish him with you, to help you enjoy it."

"Father talks as if such people had as fine feelings as anyone else," remarked Alice, with an amused laugh.

"Father is right about it, too, little girl," said Dawn, "and—to quote an injunction which your brother has picked up in the street and used a great deal at home— 'Don't you forget it!' If you do, you'll never be fair to human nature in general."

"But, father," protested the daughter, "the idea of Mrs. Purkis—"

"Just so; because Mrs. Purkis is old and homely and awkward and badly dressed, and has always been poor and the wife of a shiftless man, and has two rather stupid, shame-faced daughters, you think she hasn't any of the natural feelings of a woman. You're immensely mistaken; that husband of hers is all she has, except her girls, and I'll warrant that she's thinking of him most of the time and wishing he was here with her."

Alice laughed, but her mother's cheek flushed as her eyes looked approvingly on her own husband, who continued:

"Daughter, dear, you know that poor old woman only by appearances; you've no knowledge of what there may be in her blood waiting for a chance to come out. I don't imagine you and your mother will ever care to have her assist at your receptions at home, but dress and grace and manners aren't all of woman's life. Some of us men in Brinston have a great deal more respect for her than for some acquaintances of our own wives. She has always been a hard worker; that means that she's inherited some very good blood from someone. There are hundreds of thousands just such women in the United States—more probably than in all the rest of the world, for all classes have been mixed in marriage here, and you never can tell when something very good will come out of unpromising stock. More than one President of the United States has come out of families as 'low down' as the Purkises. I don't imagine, Madison, her husband, will ever reach the chair of the man for whom he was named, but don't forget that one women as poor and inconspicuous as Mrs. Purkis, once taught reading and writing after marriage to her husband, who afterwards became President of the United States. Such people, or such of them as have the stuff in them, remind me of the ragged pasture which Darwin once wrote about. There had been no trees on it within the memory of man, and all the cattle of the village grazed on it; but when part of it was fenced there suddenly sprang up hundreds of remarkably sturdy young oaks. Darwin, as puzzled as anyone, began to investigate. He scratched about with pick and shovel in

the unfenced portion of the pasture, and found the soil was full of oak roots and crowns. No sooner did a tiny leaf make its way to the surface than it was nibbled off or trampled down, but when the destroying influence was removed, and nature had its way, those roots began to make up for lost time. Mrs. Purkis is just such a case. Our Chautauqua Circle at home gave some of her long-suppressed impulses a chance, and what she sees and hears here is continuing the good work. I see all classes of people here, and all of them improving themselves; but those who are getting the most good out of it all are people like Mrs. Purkis—those who have the growing impulse but have long been kept down by the circumstances of their daily lives. Of course, those who haven't the impulse born in them, or in whom it hasn't been placed by example or other means, will not accomplish anything. You'll remember that many intelligent people dropped out of the Brinston Circle as soon as the charm of novelty was gone, but the remainder will yet prove themselves the best stock in the town."

"What a long lecture!" exclaimed Alice.

"Yes, and as sensible as it is long," said the girl's mother. "Poor Mrs. Purkis! I suppose she does want to see her husband."

Mr. and Mrs. Dawn were right. Mrs. Purkis was planning to get her husband to Chautauqua. She felt that she could afford to send for him and support him, but she dreaded the result of his losing the habit of work, which she did not believe had become sufficiently "fixed" to safely endure a break. She had tried

unsuccessfully to devise ways of making him useful in the house; then she had gone to nearly everyone who employed male help in the village. Finally she succeeded in finding someone who wanted a man to do some hard work at small pay. Then she wrote her husband and Postmaster Brown, and two days later Madison Purkis was in the bosom of his family, and much amazed at his new surroundings.

"You and the girls all in clean, white dresses!" he exclaimed. "Running about as good-looking a house as there is in Brinston; your hair fixed up nice; carpets on the floors; first-class victuals and plenty of 'em? Great Scott!"

"That isn't all, Madison," said the wife. "There's none of our old kind in the town; ev'rybody treats ev'rybody else respectably, because there ain't s'posed to be but one kind of folk here. You'll be 'Mr.' to ev'rybody that you get acquainted with. Gracious! My ears are just achin' to hear you spoke to that way! Hold your head up now, Madison; you don't need to put on any airs, but be sure not to let yourself seem to be commoner than anybody else. Mebbe you can't talk as well as some that you meet, but you can do the next best thing; you can keep your mouth shut, an' then nobody'll take you for a fool. Don't bother yourself to express your own idees; this is a place to get idees; the folks that started this place an' run it are supplyin' idees all day long faster'n you an' I together can take 'em in. Now, if you want to go off an engage a boat, there's a woman you used to be sweet on who wouldn't mind

bein' took out rowin' on the lake between supper and concert time. After dinner I want to go out with you an show you what sort of a place this town is. You can't go to work today, so I want you to know how much there is here that's worth workin' for."

Arm in arm the couple strolled about the town, which from any point of view looks like a park, the alternate squares being covered with large trees under which the sod is level and the grass green—a park which, nevertheless, is more thickly populated in summer than any other village of its size in the world. From any street crossing they could see the beautiful lake; nowhere did they lack the shade and breeze so comforting in mid-summer. There were no "bad streets," no corner loafers, no rum-shops, no nuisances. They stopped at the great amphitheatre and heard a lecture so full of fun that they and everybody else laughed a great deal. Then they strolled to the tennis courts, looked at the playing awhile, and went on to the ball grounds. Purkis got into trouble on his return to Brinston, all on account of that trip; for when he told a crowd of the village boys that he had seen an exciting game with at least two thousand spectators, yet didn't hear any swearing or betting, he had to call on Mr. Dawn, Joe Warren and the Brown boys to prove his veracity. During the tour of the town Purkis was silence itself; his wife was the reverse. While supper was being prepared and served, Purkis strolled about once more, and was self-contained while he ate his own supper. He escorted his wife to the boat, and, as he pulled away, he became himself again, for

among the institutions which were popular at Chautauqua, oars were entirely within his comprehension, for he had done much rowing and fishing at home. He rapidly looked right and left as he rowed, for the water near shore was full of boats rowed by men, women and children, but when well out toward the middle of the lake his eyes rested upon his wife. He rowed more slowly and finally stopped his oars. Could that pleasant-faced woman, with glow in her cheeks and light in her eyes, be the tired wife, old wife, who had left Brinston less than a month before? She looked happy; she looked almost young. When she chanced to turn her head toward him she smiled and asked:

"What are you thinkin' about, Madison?"

"Twenty years or more ago, sis," said the oarsman.

"Bless you!" murmured the woman.

"You look 'most as young as you did then—an' a lot nicer," said the husband.

"If you'd seen yourself when you was pullin' out from shore you'd have been too stuck up to live," the wife replied.

"Maria," said the oarsman, "don't begin to make fun of me. I haven't been here long enough to feel used to it."

"I'm not makin' fun, Madison; it's true."

"Must be somethin' peculiar about Chautauqua air, then," said the husband.

"Was it Chautauqua air, I'd like to know, that put you up to makin' that pretty speech to me a minute or two ago?"

"Why, no; leastways, I meant just what I said. It might have been the air, though."

"I wish I knew, Madison, because—" Then Mrs. Purkis looked aside a moment, smiled, looked across the lake, up the slope of the hills to the sky, and resumed: "If it was, I wish I could stay here forever."

"So do I—that is, if you're going on looking younger and happier, as you've been doing ever since we got into the boat, an' make me think of old times again."

"It's a great place, Madison."

"I'm ready to take your word for it, sis; I feel like somebody else, though I haven't been here but a few hours. I don't know why it is; I haven't spoken to hardly anybody, and nobody's spoken to me, except the folks that came from Brinston; but somehow they don't look and talk exactly like they did at home—not to me, anyhow."

"I hope you won't change your mind when tomorrow comes and you have to go to work, Madison."

"No danger. I should think work would 'pear like play in a place like this."

"'Twon't, though; I've tried it, an' I know. But there's a good deal of difference; it's no matter how tired you get, if you know there'll be something to enjoy after it's all done for the day, and there always is that to expect here."

"I'll take your word for it, sis, and I'll do two days' work in one, and never grumble a bit, as long as the place goes on making my wife her old self again. I'll work all day just for the pay of lookin' at you in the evenin'."

"Madison! Do you know you're talkin' kind o' silly?"

"Am, eh? You didn't look at it that way when I said about the same thing, more'n twenty years ago."

"No; nor I don't now. It only seems as if it must be foolish for folks as old as us to be talkin' that way."

"We're not as old as the Dawns—not by several years—yet they always act and look as if they was as fond of each other as they ever was when they were younger."

"Yes," assented Mrs. Purkis, as she fell to musing. Her husband eyed her keenly for several minutes, rowing slowly while he looked; then he queried:

"Well?"

"They're different from us, Madison. They haven't had all the spirits taken out of 'em by hard work an' disappointment an' worry."

"Well, sis," said the husband, after a little musing of his own, "if love don't mean anything but young spirits, it's an infernal humbug, and anybody that takes to it is to be pitied. I haven't ever been the man I should, though I've been tryin' awful hard these past few months; but there never was a time when my worst trouble wasn't that I wasn't showin' proper love for you, and that

when I did try to be my best self in that way again you didn't seem to have any patience with me. I've always wanted to get a good move on me, and take better care of you, and give you a better house to live in an' better clothes to wear, an' I know I'd have got along better at it a great deal of the time if it hadn't seemed as if you didn't care for me anymore, except accordin' as to what I brought home. It helps a husband along, sis, even when he doesn't deserve it, to have a feeling that his wife cares somethin' for him."

"Madison, goodness knows I haven't had much else to care about. I do believe you've been blind."

"Well, sis, I don't think so, though mebbe I have. I hain't been hard of hearin', though, an' I don't remember your sayin' anythin' in a long time that sounded as if—I'm not sayin' that I deserved to hear anythin' of the kind, though. I'm only sayin' that 'twould have been a great help."

"Madison, I always did love you; I'm sure I'd have died if I didn't, much as I loved the gals, too, although they was awful tryin' a good deal of the time."

"I'll take your word for it, sis, but I was too thick-headed to see it. I've been workin' like a slave the past few months; sometimes I've felt as if I'd drop down dead. But I've stuck to it. There's been a good many reasons—the havin' more to eat an' wear, and bein' treated better by folks generally, an' seein' my wife a mite less troubled sometimes; but the great thing of all that kept me up to the work was what you said the night of that first

Chautauqua meetin' in Brinston, or along about that time. You said: 'Madison, I'm proud of you;' that was what put me on my feet so I couldn't be knocked off again. Gosh!"

Words seemed unequal to the further expression of Mr. Purkis's sentiments, so he bent over the oars and gave so mighty a pull that his wife was nearly thrown backward out of the boat. He maintained the stroke until his wife, who was regarding him worshipfully, remarked softly:

"Don't split that shore of the lake open with the boat, Madison. Turn around and go out to the middle again; there's too many other boats along here. I want to talk to you where nobody can listen—and where nobody can see."

The love-talk of middle-aged married people does not look well on paper; as for that, neither does any other love talk that is genuine. Like prayer, it must be in seclusion to be at its best. As the Purkis boat was slowly pulled homeward it passed a skiff in which were Joe Warren and Alice Dawn.

"Upon my word!" exclaimed Joe, "I've seen atmospheric effects work wonders when there was reflection from water to help them, but tonight they beat all—they are making Mr. and Mrs. Purkis absolutely handsome."

"They are handsome," said the girl, who had been looking at them curiously for several moments. Then she recalled some of her father's remarks of a day or two before, and continued: "Their better nature has come to the surface, thanks to Chautauqua."

21

THROUGH OTHER PEOPLE'S EYES

There must have been something unusual in the faces as well as the hearts of Mr. and Mrs. Purkis during their boating on the lake, for Joe Warren, who was out with Alice Dawn and was very proud of his own rowing, several times caught himself lagging and even so careless as to "recover" his oars without "feathering." He was astonished at himself, and indignant, also; how could he have become interested in the personality or doings of anyone else while he was in the presence of Alice Dawn? Within sound of her voice? Then it occurred to him that he had not heard that voice for several minutes, so he looked inquiringly toward its owner, and saw that she, too, seemed interested in the middle-aged couple in the boat not far away.

Then Alice Dawn caught his eye and remarked, with a little confusion:

"I must have been dreaming."

"I don't wonder," Joe replied. "It is strange enough to make one wonder whether he really is awake."

"What is?"

"That couple—the two most uninteresting people I ever saw at Brinston, or anywhere else. I can't believe my eyes; there must be some glamor in the air, or a mirage that is playing tricks with them."

The girl looked inquiringly at Joe for what seemed to him a very long time; he never had seen her look that way before, and her expression puzzled him. He told himself that, had she been any other woman, he would have pronounced that look positively stupid. Then he called him a severe name or two, for his own stupidity in imagining Alice Dawn anything inconsistent with the highest womanly intelligence. At last the silence was broken by the girl inquiring:

"Tell me what you see. How do they really look? Younger, or merrier, or what?"

"No younger, certainly," murmured Joe, rowing somewhat closer to the couple, and glancing toward them without turning his head. "They're not merry, either; I'm sure they couldn't appear more serious. And yet they appear happy—and something more; I scarcely know how to name it. If it weren't ridiculous, I'd say they appear like people who in some way have been suddenly ennobled. Please don't laugh at me; I know it's a silly thing to say, in this prosaic age."

"Nothing that is true can be silly, so I shan't laugh."

"That means that you agree with me. But isn't it wonderful? If 'twere your father and mother, now, it would appear a matter of course. They often look as if they had come out of a temple, such as we read about in old times, where great mysteries changed people out of resemblance to their former selves. Your parents never cease to resemble themselves, but they do often look as if they had been admitted to the Holy of Holies, and as if each had been priest to the other."

The girl looked askance at her companion, then she blushed and answered:

"I shall have to warn father and mother against carrying their hearts in their faces. They will be greatly surprised to learn that their lives have been open to the public gaze."

"Perhaps they have not," Joe suggested.

"Not everyone chances to look beneath the surface of people's faces; I assure you it is not a habit of mine. I've been carefully warned all my life against impertinent curiosity about the lives and thoughts of others. But some people's individuality forces itself upon one at times—just like that of Mr. and Mrs. Purkis this afternoon."

Miss Dawn fell into a reverie, as her eyes followed the couple in the other boat. What was it that made those two very common and rather objectionable people look so startlingly and nobly unlike themselves? As she had not heard a word of their conversation, it was impossible for her to know the truth. Could it

be the influence of the place? Oh, no—she had heard this influence much talked of, and knew of it herself to a certain and pleasing extent. Probably to people like the Purkises, whose lives had fallen in rather rude places, the influence might be still more welcome and beneficent. But there was nothing new about it; she herself had heard Mrs. Purkis talk of it a dozen times—had herself talked with the old woman and congratulated her and seen her eyes fill joyously and heard her sing "Beulah Land" by the hour, but none of this had made the face of the boarding-house keeper like it was this afternoon on the lake. Maybe there was some glamor in the air, or some mirage, as Joe had suggested.

Then she recalled what her father had said only a few hours before about that same Purkis couple, and how odd it had seemed to her. That some people long married were very fond of each other she knew was quite true; had she not for years been worshiping her own parents for the continually renewing influence she saw in their lives? She knew other couples—only two or three, in whom the same influence seemed to be present—at times, at least. But all of these, like her own family, were people of high and stable character; could it be that this mystery of love could or would take possession of people so unspeakably common as the boardinghouse keeper and her husband?

Mrs. Purkis was a woman of a great deal of character; this Miss Dawn had heard from time to time and had been obliged to see for herself, though with the limited vision which girls not

much past twenty bring to such subjects. But she knew the woman's history, and she had known Purkis by sight since her own childhood; known him first as a rather handsome though shabby fellow, not unlike some pictures of brigands in a story-book about Spain, which was one of the literary darlings of her childhood. She had seen the man grow commoner and shabbier year by year; she had been shown the outside of his home, as part of an object-lesson in improvidence, by one of her Sunday-school teachers, and more than once had the man himself been pointed at as an illustration of the bad effects of drink. She knew he had changed some since the beginning of the Chautauqua movement in Brinston, but no mere mental reformation could have made him what he was that afternoon, sitting in a boat with his wife, and unconscious of being noticed by anyone else. A year of study may do wonders, but not in that way or to that extent. Alice Dawn herself had seen a great deal of the effects of study on many kinds of natures, and some were wonderful, but they did not put into people's faces what was filling the countenances of the commonest couple of Brinston's inhabitants. What could it be?

Joe Warren saw that the young woman was closely regarding the Purkises, so he continued to propel his boat gently and within observing distance of that of the older couple. He himself was curious about the commonplace boardinghouse keeper and her more commonplace husband, but it was not strange that his interest was not so close as that of his companion. He could

observe and study the Purkis family at almost any time, but there were only a few opportunities for observing Alice Dawn when he had not something else to do. Besides, the young woman was so largely endowed that her face changed notably with her surroundings. In a merry party she was the gayest of the gay; at the table, where he met her three times a day, she was active in conversation; while studying she was entirely absorbed in her books, and at the lectures, concerts and meetings at the Amphitheatre and elsewhere, she gave her entire attention to whatever she was seeing or hearing. In each case she seemed to have a special face appropriate to the occasion; so to look at her was as delightful as to contemplate several different young women, each one perfect in her way. If she had a fault in Joe's eyes, it was that she gave herself so thoroughly to whatever she was doing that she had no time to give to the young man who longed to become her leading object of interest.

Joe had accompanied her to several entertainments soon after the arrival of the Brinston delegation at the lake, and tried to make himself agreeable, but several times he was sure he detected a look of impatience, and when finally she ignored two or three of his remarks which he was sure contained nothing disrespectful, he informed himself that, after all, perhaps she went for the sake of the entertainment and not of the escort. Although escorts were not at all necessary at Chautauqua by day or night, this was a staggering blow to the young man's pride, for like most youths of

his age, he had been of the impression that young people's sole use of any public gathering was as a place to talk. Alice Dawn seemed to go for the sake of listening to what was on the programme—not to the young man who accompanied her. After struggling with this thought a little while, Joe had retired from escort duty, and contented himself with sitting where he could study the young woman's face. The experience did him good, for Miss Dawn's face, like that of any other honest young person, faithfully reflected its owner's mind, and Joe had the consolation of noting what specially pleased her or from what she dissented, and he afterward used his information so skillfully in conversation that he flattered himself that he was making fair progress in the leading purpose of his life.

But what was her face saying this afternoon, as she sat in his boat, in an attitude more earnest than graceful, and contemplated that old couple until she seemed to have forgotten Joe's existence? It must be something more than curiosity—something unusual, for nothing had ever before made her neglectful of the minor manners of life, some of which required that a young woman should not forget the existence of anyone who was trying to entertain her in any way. Her eyes were open so wide, and her gaze was so fixed that had she been anyone else Joe would have said that she was staring. It was a new face, and, as it belonged to Alice Dawn, it was interesting. But what did it mean? He could not say it was pretty as some she had shown, but there was something very

interesting in it. Was it human sympathy—the feeling of a great, noble nature for lower ones, which had suddenly, and, perhaps, only for an instant come to the light? No; it was too serious for that. There was inquiry in it. What was she asking herself? It wasn't any mere wonder; she was not one of the weak-minded young women who could wonder so long about anyone's else affairs.

Finally, Joe looked for his answer to the Purkises themselves. They still were looking happy—entirely contented, at least; and the longer he looked the more evident it appeared that they were greatly interested in each other. He was not near enough to overhear their conversation, nor would he have listened if he could; but it was not hard to imagine that what they might be talking about was what gave them so much satisfaction. Probably it was the change in the family's financial condition; he had heard the ladies discussing the Purkis financial outlook, based upon the profits of the boarding-house; and the elder Miss Broad, who was her father's housekeeper at home, agreed with Mrs. Dawn, who was herself a model housekeeper and could estimate expenses to a penny, that the old lady would retire at the end of the season with several hundred dollars clear profit. That was enough to uplift anyone who had always been in the depths of poverty; he himself remembered how much more manly he felt when he came of age, a year or two before, and exchanged a school boy's allowance for the income of his share of his father's estate.

Still, that could not be all. Self-satisfaction is a comforting sensation, but it could scarcely explain the look with which Mr. and Mrs. Purkis were regarding each other. It was not so much self-comfort as satisfaction with each other; and this being so, why was it? That the woman had done a good season's work and made a great deal of money—for a Purkis—probably delighted her semi-reformed but constitutionally indolent spouse; but why should she appear so entirely pleased with him, and why should he look as if he knew it, and was quite of the opinion that it was all right and that he deserved whatever good his wife might think of him?

Joe Warren had not seen husband and wife together in his own home in many years, for his father had died while the only son was a little boy. Suddenly it occurred to him, however, that the couple who had consumed so much of his time this afternoon, and far too much of Miss Dawn's, were in love with each other—actually in love, and heartily glad to again be in each other's presence, and to look into each other's faces. Joe was ready to laugh—the idea seemed to him so droll; but a glance at his companion arrested him. He believed that a laugh would rudely startle her at that moment. What if she had come to the same conclusion? Could that be what was making the girl's face so sober? He did not see why it should; there was no reason why a man and his wife should not be fond of each other. To be sure, it was very ridiculous and a little disgusting in an old, common couple like the Purkises; still, general rules were of general application, he supposed.

Again he looked at Miss Dawn; there were tears in her eyes, which startled him; yet there was a flush on her face, and a look which was almost ecstatic. What queer creatures women are, anyway! He was sure he hadn't done anything to make her cry; neither had he done anything to make her look happy—he devoutly wished he had. He thought the occasion required him to say something, but what to say he could not imagine. He noticed that most of the other boats were going shoreward; he and his middle-aged fellow-townsman were the only oarsmen afloat in the middle of the lake.

"Suppose we go in, Miss Dawn?" he suggested.

The girl started, looked around and murmured: "Yes; do. I'd no idea we had been out so long. I promised mother that I would be back early so we could get good seats at the lecture."

Joe pulled away, and in five minutes was nearing shore. He had looked steadily at his companion all the way, but not once had he been able to catch her eye. As he helped her from the boat he held her hand an instant longer than was absolutely necessary. Their eyes met, and the girl flushed and murmured:

"'Twas a delightful row. I'm very, very much obliged. You'll excuse me if I hurry to mother? Good-evening."

And away went Alice Dawn, like the young deer to whom hurrying girls have long been compared, while Joe Warren sauntered slowly toward the boarding-house and wondered why on earth the girl should have thought it necessary to dash off alone,

while it was still broad daylight, while the two of them were living under the same roof, and when she must have known, in the ordinary course of events, that there was nowhere else that he was likely to go.

22

THE RETURN OF THE SPIES

When Mr. Broad returned to his native village, his acquaintances made as much fuss over him as if he had been to Europe, instead of to a little town in his own State. Those who had fallen away from the circle had fondly expected and believed that the hard-headed manufacturer would find everything so unpractical, judged by his own standards, that he would condemn it all and justify them for giving up the reading course. This set was soon made to feel uncomfortable, for Mr. Broad said that Chautauqua itself was all right, but that even if it wasn't, he didn't see what that could have to do with a course of study which was needed by everyone in the town, and which, could it be made compulsory, would make Brinston so smart that it wouldn't know itself at sight.

"Nearly all the folks at Chautauqua belong to circles throughout the country, and most of the remainder are going to join circles when they reach their homes. That means that they all are people who have brains, or who know their need of brains,

which is the next best thing. What is the result? Why, you are sure of intelligent company, no matter who you sit by at table, or at a concert or a lecture, or anywhere else on the grounds. That is a great deal more than anybody can say for this town of ours."

The inquirers turned away abashed, but members of the circle, with their families, were greatly delighted by what they heard.

"Go out there," urged Broad. "Economize on something else, if you have to, but go out there and take your families with you, if it's only to give them a single look at a town which is like what all other towns will be when the millennium comes in—the time when everybody will be too decent and have too much of their own proper affairs to attend to, to have any time to meddle with their neighbors' business, or to make trouble in any way. I suppose human nature there is about the same as it is everywhere else; for the people did not look at all unlike human beings elsewhere—some smart, some dull, some good-looking and some as plain as anything you can find. But you don't have to be on guard against anybody; you don't have to fear that anyone is going to try to take advantage of you—unless it's getting into that big Auditorium ahead of you, so as to get the best seats for the best entertainments, which I suppose is no more than men and women will do in the kingdom of heaven and not be blamed for it."

Mr. Broad made these remarks at the post office the day after his return to his home, and, as people were coming and going all the while, the returned traveler re-uttered his sentiments, with

some embellishments and enlargements, through several hours of the day, finding willing listeners all the while. Among those who listened longest was Mr. Whitton, pastor of the church which fully half of the members of the local circle attended. His memory was good enough, and his rich parishioner told little that the minister had not heard before, yet he continued to listen with eager ear. He did not shrink from any of his duties; he thanked God daily that he lived and was able to work at the congenial task of making the world better; he admitted that the place for such work was where there were many people who were slow to improve themselves, unless continually urged, and that Brinston was just such a place. Still, he did at times have a longing, which was almost frantic in its intensity, to rest and refresh himself a little while in the society of persons who did not specially need his attention. Ministers' meetings were very well in their way, and he had sometimes found mental refreshment in other meetings of well-meaning people; but there was not at any of them a chance for a moment's escape from the sense of responsibility and the desire to work. He had almost wished himself a Catholic, for once a year his somewhat suspected and highly esteemed brother-worker, the Catholic priest stationed at Brinston, went into "retreat" at some place appointed by his bishop, and was greatly refreshed and strengthened. Why, thought Mr. Whitton often, as he clasped his aching head and tried to catch needed sleep that eluded him, did not other denominations prepare similar resting-places for their weary workers?

As he stood and listened that morning to the description of Chautauqua, he wished he could go to this place where everybody seemed already to have all the spiritual awakening and stimulation he needed, and could rest and be a little stimulated himself. But such thinking was idle; no preacher at Brinston ever had a vacation, nor would one do him any good if it were granted, for his salary was too small to be drawn upon for traveling expenses.

Suddenly, while he thought and longed, his eye was caught by Mr. Broad, who, with unabated enthusiasm, exclaimed:

"You ought to go out there, dominie. 'Twould do you a world of good."

"Quite likely," replied the preacher, while the manufacturer went on with his story, a new hearer having arrived. The postmaster, who chanced not to have a customer to attend to at that particular moment, leaned on the counter and regarded the narrator quizzically, and the instant the bystanders began talking to each other of what they had heard, he went to the back of the store, and shouted to Broad to drop back there a moment.

"Look here!" he said, shaking his fist in the face of the manufacturer. "Don't they teach manners out at Chautauqua? Because, if they do, you didn't improve your opportunity."

"What's the matter now?" Broad demanded.

"If you hadn't any better manners, don't you think you ought to have had heart enough not to tell the preacher he ought to go out there? Couldn't you see by his face, all the while you were talking,

that he was just aching to go? Don't you know perfectly well that you might as well have recommended a trip around the globe, so far as his ability to pay for it is concerned?"

Broad's countenance fell, and he called himself an uncomplimentary name, speaking loud enough for the postmaster to hear.

"That's right," said Brown; "stick to it, and call yourself similar names, until you get over that sort of blundering. Of course, the poor fellow must go to Chautauqua now, if I supply all the money that the trip will cost, and—"

"No, you won't!" exclaimed Broad, now all himself again, and returning abruptly to the front of the store. He talked a little longer, but with the air of a man thinking about something else; then he said, with a skillful affectation of carelessness:

"Dominie, I want to tell you again that you ought to go out to Chautauqua. You're the very man who would enjoy it thoroughly and get a great deal of good out of it. I'm so sure of it, that if you'll promise to go, I'll put you in the way of making your traveling expenses, and I'll see that your pulpit is filled while you're gone."

The astonished minister seemed to lose the power of speech, but the postmaster prodded his shoulder with a vigorous forefinger, and whispered:

"Take him up—quick! He doesn't break out that way very often, and he ought to be encouraged."

"I promise," gasped the minister.

"Good!" said Broad, "and the quicker you are ready to start, the better. If you'll get home and make your arrangements, I'll drop in, in the course of an hour or two, and arrange the business part of it with you. You needn't fear it will take much of your time; I merely want you to do something there for me that I wanted myself to do while there, but couldn't."

The minister started off, looking as if he was going somewhere conquering and to conquer, even though he hadn't the slightest idea of where or how.

"Dominie!" shouted Broad. The minister stopped and looked back. "Of course, I meant to include your wife in the bargain. Be sure you take her with you; she'll enjoy it quite as well as you, and meet a lot of people she always will remember. I wish my wife had been alive and gone there with me; it made me feel lonesomer than ever, to see how happy the husbands and wives seemed with each other out there."

The listeners, who had been amazed at the manufacturer's sudden outburst of generosity, wondered all the more as the minister again started for the door, for there was a tear in each of Mr. Broad's eyes. He was not a heartless man—the most discontented of his workmen had never thought that of him; but whatever his private griefs may have been, he had succeeded until now in entirely concealing them from public gaze. Even now he quickly recovered his self-control, drew his hand across his face,

turned on his heel toward the postmaster, slid on his elbow along the counter until his face nearly touched Brown's, glared defiantly a moment, and then hoarsely whispered:

"You'll have to supply all the money for the trip, will you? Confound you! Anybody would think, to hear you talk, that you were the only man in the town that had any money that he was willing to give away for deserving purposes."

"I own up that I'm not," said the postmaster, though without anything apologetic in his manner; "and I'll own up again and again, as often as you do anything like this. That isn't all; I believe a good deal more now in the influence of Chautauqua, than I did from all you said put together. You're a first rate talker; I don't know a better one in town; but there's some ways in which money talks louder than words."

Broad continued to free his mind at the post office until the ringing of his own factory bell announced six o'clock; this being the customary supper-signal throughout Brinston, the post office emptied until only Brown and Broad remained. Both men remained silent several moments; finally the postmaster remarked:

"If you hadn't been obliged to do so much talking today I'd like to ask you if you had seen anything of my boys, while you were out there, and how they seemed to be getting along. It's cost a deal to keep them and the farm going at the same time; I don't begrudge it, but I'd like to know if they're doing something to justify it."

"Umph!" grunted Broad, turning his back to the counter and closely scrutinizing the brand of a box of plug-tobacco, though he never chewed. "I guess you needn't trouble yourself about the cost. They're arranging pretty smartly to get it back, with quite a considerable besides."

"Is that so? I didn't know there was any manual labor department out there, where students could help make up their expenses."

"Didn't, eh? Well, there is; there's several. For instance, there's waiting at the table, at the hotels and boarding-houses. Then there's waiting on young women."

"What on earth do you mean, Mr. Broad?"

"I mean what I say, Mr. Brown."

"Then I wish you'd say enough more to make your meaning plain. I don't understand you at all."

The manufacturer turned his head carefully, as if afraid of turning it too far, then he looked suspiciously out of the corners of his eyes, as if he was studying the heart of his most deadly enemy. Finally he asked:

"Don't you know that your two boys are paying attention to my two girls?"

"No, I don't; but if it is so, I do know one thing, and that is that your girls are to be congratulated. There's no finer young men in this town, even if it is their father who says it."

"I'm not saying that you're wrong," Broad replied; "but I think, in the circumstances, that you might go farther and say more."

"Eh?"

"Don't I talk loud enough? Aren't there any congratulations due anybody—my girls, confound your conceited soul!"

"I heartily beg your pardon, Mr. Broad. It gives me great pleasure to say that my boys have displayed excellent taste and done great credit to their father's teachings, which always have been that boys should not be content except with the very best of whatever they liked."

"Umph! That's a roundabout way of saying it."

"Broad," said the postmaster, "I don't know a finer couple of sisters in this whole town, or anywhere in the country round. That means everything, for nobody is better acquainted than I, or has studied people more closely."

"Well, I'm glad to see that you've got so sensible opinion to show for it. But we might as well understand one another. My girls have got very little money of their own—only what their mother's separate estate divided, and what they've saved out of the allowance I've given them since they came of age. I'm pretty well fixed, but that doesn't mean that I can take a lot of money out of my business and give it away. Besides, no business is absolutely safe in this country. Something may turn up to make me a poor

man before I die, and throw a dependent old man on my daughters."

"Well, Broad," said the postmaster, looking as thoughtful as if he were weighing the probabilities and studying as to what he ought to do in certain circumstances, "all such things are possible; but if worst were to come to worst, and my boys should marry your girls, and the bottom should drop out of your business, why, you may depend upon this: I'll make some sort of a place in the store here for you, so you can earn your board, and not have to feel yourself dependent. In fact, I'd do it, anyway, even if no family ties should be made. I'd do it for old acquaintance's sake."

"Confound your impudence!" roared the manufacturer. "Don't you know perfectly well that I wasn't driving at anything of that kind?"

"Confound your impudence!" roared the postmaster, in reply. "Don't you know perfectly well that my boys are too well-born and bred to fall in love with the money of a girl's father? Their own father has money enough for both of them; if they need more than they're perfectly competent to earn—which isn't at all likely."

"Brown," said the manufacturer, "I take it all back; but you oughtn't to be hard on me for being a little suspicious. Young men nowadays—"

"Oh, hang 'nowadays.' Young men didn't try to marry money in your day and mine, of course—oh, no!"

Broad looked uncomfortable, for he had made quite a reputation, in his own day, for pursuing local heiresses. Brown made haste to change the subject. He remarked:

"Broad, if things turn out right, I don't think the young people are the only ones to be congratulated. Two old widowers that we're acquainted with will have a chance to grow young again in the very pleasantest way I know of. I've long been looking forward to the time when the boys should marry; I never spoke to them about it, knowing that young men seldom need to be egged on to that sort of thing, but a family without a woman in it is pretty lonesome at times."

"I shouldn't wonder," said Broad. "As for me, I've always mourned that I was denied a son."

"Well, if things are going as you seem to think, you'll get a couple of sons without having had to bring them up. You always did get a good deal out of me in a trade, Broad."

"Umph! Dare to say that you won't get equal value in this case, and I'll forbid the bans."

"We'll call it square, old man, and hope that the young people won't make any blunders to make it crooked."

"Amen!" said Broad. "Well, I suppose I may as well go to my lonely supper-table."

"I've one of the same kind," said the postmaster. "Suppose you come with me to mine? We must begin to get better

acquainted with each other outside of business, if we're to be dragged by our young ones into a family partnership."

"It's a bargain," said Broad.

The store was locked, the two old men, as they were called by everyone but themselves, went off arm-in-arm, and people remarked, two hours later, that never before had the post-office failed to be open when the evening mail came in.

23

A GREAT DEAL OF RECOGNITION

Recognition Day at Chautauqua corresponds in outward purpose with Commencement Day at college, but it means a great deal more. Young men and women leaving college are just beginning life; Chautauqua students generally are adults who have had considerable experience in the world, and a distinct purpose in study.

They have already had a great deal of discipline and a great deal that is still to be discovered by the college graduate, and is worth much more, as knowledge, than all that young people carry from college with them. The ceremonies of Recognition Day are appropriate to the sentiments and purposes which underlie the course of study, and they differ from those of college commencement in no way more significant than that the participants exhibit extreme interest in them and are heartily sorry when they conclude.

Mr. Broad had heard of Recognition Day while he was at Chautauqua, and at first he was inclined to turn up his nose at it

and consign it to the limbo of the useless. Before he started for home, however, he changed his mind. He had been disabused of so many of his original impressions of Chautauqua that he had reached the place where he meekly listened to what was told him, and believed it, as being the opinion of clear-headed men who knew a great deal more about the subject than he did. Consequently when his daughters wrote him the date of Recognition Day, and said that Brinston Circle was going to make as large a showing as possible in the procession and other ceremonies, he yielded to a desire to go once more to Chautauqua and take part in the exercises himself. He succeeded in persuading himself that it would be his duty; for was he not president of the local circle? He could not graduate for three years to come, but he could do the next best thing, which was to assist others to graduate in fine style, before as large a crowd as possible.

When he announced that he was going, his fellow-townsman, Mr. Dawn, discovered that he, too, could be present, he having found business which called him to that part of the State. As it never occurred to Broad that there was anything in his own enthusiasm and doings that could make another man willing to give up his business for two or three days and spend two or three ten-dollar bills, he welcomed Dawn's companionship and suggested that they should make the occasion memorable for Brinston by getting up an excursion for as many of the circle as

might choose to go, getting the lowest railway rates possible, and themselves paying part of the cost of the tickets.

They confided the plan to the postmaster, who put a portion of his own pocketbook into it, the final result being that nearly all the circle went out to Chautauqua to take part in the ceremonies of the great day; and their president took such good care of them that he wrote Joe Warren in advance to engage the best possible quarters for all and charge any extra expense to him.

There were many prominent people at Chautauqua that day—men and women known throughout the land for their wisdom, goodness and other gifts; for the beauty of the Chautauqua system is that those who know most are desirous of increasing their attainments, and the Chautauqua course and the Chautauqua summer schools offer better opportunities to men and women whose lives already are busy than any college on the continent. Fifty other Chautauqua gatherings were being held throughout the land, and their attendants numbered hundreds of thousands, yet on Recognition Day the original Chautauqua alone held more than ten thousand people within its limits, which did not equal one square mile, and all of them had come to do honor to the graduates of the year, or to strengthen themselves against the day when they themselves should be recognized. Grave college presidents were there, and society queens from various American realms; men prominent in business and political circles, with some of their humblest subordinates; men and women who, years before, had

graduated from well-known colleges, and beside them other men and women who had come from lonely farms and humble shops, gaining their precious outing by year-long sacrifices. It was the most truly American assemblage in America, except that none of the dangerous classes were represented. A man or woman ceases to belong to any dangerous class when in the possession of the determination to improve mentally, morally and spiritually.

But of all people there, the most exultant whom the Brinston contingent saw, was Mrs. Purkis. She arose early; for sleep was impossible she told her daughters and husband.

"I don't see what there is for any of us to get excited about," said Arabella. "We ain't going to be recognized—not for years. It makes me just ache to think what we've got to go through first. I don't see what we've got to be excited about today, if the recognizin' don't do us no good."

"You don't, eh? Well, I can tell you. There's lots in that class that gets through today that's just like we was before that circle was started in Brinston. Most of 'em's women, an' they look like what I used to feel—look just as if they hadn't anybody to take care of 'em—and as if they'd give anythin' in the world for somethin' that was makin' 'em more than they was bein'. They got it when they went to studyin' the Chautauqua way, an' got in with other folks that was studyin' the same books in the same way, an' would give 'em a friendly human word once in a while. I've met some of 'em at the woman's meetin's, an' was so sure I knowed

just how they felt that I made bold to speak to' 'em an' draw 'em out a little, an' I found out I was right. They've learned a good deal more than they found in books, too; lots of them has learned that there ain't any difference in men's brains and women's brains when both has the same chance to get along, and they ain't a-goin' to forget it. That's one thing that's goin' to be recognized, whether Chautauqua means it or not."

"What is?"

"Why, that women are just as good as men, child, an' that a woman don't need to be led by the nose by a man just because she's married to him. I b'lieve as much as anybody in husbands an' wives stickin' close together, an' I'm better satisfied with my husband than any other woman alive, I b'lieve, but I won't ever again have to feel that it's a mistake to think anything unless he thinks it first. Woman's brains is goin' to be recognized today; that's why I'm way up between the clouds and heaven."

When the grand procession of members of the Chautauqua Scientific and Literary Circle was forming, according to classes, with several hundred members of each of the undergraduate classes, Mrs. Purkis did not allow her enthusiasm to get the better of her modesty. She and her daughters took places at the extreme rear of the youngest class, and it required the united exertions of Mrs. and Miss Dawn and the Broad girls, to bring the Purkis family to the center, where the members of the Brinston Circle were clustered together. She scarcely dared to look at Mr. Broad,

for that very morning she had seen him talking—actually talking with Chancellor Vincent himself, a man whom she regarded as much the greatest man in the United States—a sentiment in which she was joined by many thousands of other Chautauquans.

Mr. Broad, in turn, scarcely dared look at her; he was as glad as anyone that the old woman was so much better off, mentally and otherwise, than she ever had been up to a year before, yet her manner was so exultant and defiant that he scarcely could keep from laughing whenever he looked at her. He confidentially informed Mr. Dawn that if that old woman went on as she had begun, she would want to manage the whole town when she reached home.

"The town might be in worse hands," was Dawn's reply, upon which Broad, who was perpetual candidate for the village presidency, retired within himself a moment to wonder whether Dawn meant anything personal. Somehow Mr. Broad was in a critical mood that morning; he had his doubts as to the value of the many symbolic portions of the ceremonies; he never had belonged to a secret society, so great was his abhorrence of everything intended to be typical of anything else; and here every part of the ceremony of Recognition Day seemed to have a far-reaching meaning.

There was but one cloud on Mrs. Purkis' sky; her husband was not likely to get away from his work to take part in the exercises. Somehow her husband had become very near and dear

to her within the past few months. The class stood in line an hour or more in the shade of the trees, waiting for the ceremonies in the "Hall of Philosophy"—Chautauqua's Mecca—to conclude, and for the graduating class to emerge from the "Golden Gates." At last, however, the signal to move was given, and the great procession, with banners waving, moved in the direction of the martial music which was heard not far away; then it halted, and the ranks were opened to form an avenue for the graduates.

"It's all child's play," growled Broad to Dawn. "I hear they sprinkle flowers in the pathway of those graduates up there in the Hall in the Grove, and now we're standing here in the sun so as to give them the Chautauqua salute, which is nothing but waving a white handkerchief, when they come along. I wish they'd come and have it over with."

"Here they come!" shouted Frank Dawn.

"Father, get your handkerchief ready," whispered the elder Miss Broad.

The manufacturer ungraciously complied, mumbling a great deal about the nonsense of it all; but suddenly he chanced to see Mrs. Purkis in the rank facing him, her head thrust forward so that she could see up the avenue, and her face literally transfigured. An expression of wonder chased the scowl from his face, and he unconsciously raised his hat in respect; then he whispered to Dawn:

"Look! Look!"

Mr. Dawn followed the direction of his neighbor's eyes, looked a moment, and said:

"Can you call anything child's play that can work such a change as that?"

"No! No!" gasped Broad. "Will I ever stop learning, at this place, what a woodenheaded fool I am?"

But soon there was something besides Mrs. Purkis to look at—transfigured lives as well as faces. Could those be the graduates—the newly "recognized"—those serious, plain, self-contained looking people who were coming down the avenue between living walls and waving kerchiefs? There were scarcely any young people among them, though beside one old woman, who seemed to be four-score, walked a beautiful girl, and not far behind them came a father, a son and a grandson, hand in hand. Broad knew human faces; he could read the stories behind them, and it seemed to him as if the world had never before had so many heroes as he saw that day.

He waved his handkerchief wildly; it was with difficulty that he restrained himself from breaking into the procession and asking some of those people if they knew how wonderful they were. His eyes filled, but he did not seem to know it until he saw, through a break in the column, Mrs. Purkis with tears streaming down her cheeks. Then he broke through the graduates, grasped the old woman's hand, and exclaimed:

"Heaven is very good to us before our time, Mrs. Purkis. I never expected to see anything like this until Resurrection Day!"

"'Pears to me about the same kind of an affair, Mr. Broad," was the reply.

Then the two stood and chatted as earnestly and familiarly as if they were old and dear friends. Together they studied the faces of the older classes as one after another joined the procession, and when the time came for the youngest class of all, to which the Brinston Circle belonged, to again form ranks and march, Alice Dawn whispered to Joe Warren:

"Do look at Mr. Broad! He's touching his hat to Mrs. Purkis. I do believe he is asking if he may march beside her in the procession."

"I really don't see why he shouldn't," Joe replied. "I don't know any woman here from Brinston—present company excepted, and present company's mother—whom a man who is a man should rather march beside. Do you?"

The answer was a look that made Joe's heart dance for joy.

The youngest class was the last to enter the Amphitheatre, where the oration which concluded the services was to be delivered, and the seats of the class were not where the graduates could be seen; so Mr. Broad got out again and pressed his way among the spectators to a place where he could study again those wonderful faces. The oration was a fine one, but the manufacturer heard but little of it; his mind was too full of wonder and thought.

To this day he talks of that day, and of the new light which had illumined the human nature of which he had previously supposed he knew everything.

During the remainder of the day Mr. Broad devoted himself to getting acquainted with those graduates. His daughters were unable to find him, so was Joe Warren, who had a host of questions to ask for the members of the excursion party. At a late hour of the evening, however, his daughters, accompanied by the Brown boys, found him on the hotel piazza, freeing his mind to some men who, having long been prominent in the Chautauqua movement, had heard such stories before, yet never wearied of them. With great difficulty he was drawn away.

"We've been looking for you everywhere for ever so long," said the elder Miss Broad.

"Indeed we have," said her sister.

"It's a shame that I've neglected my family so long, after having seen so little of them for a couple of months," was the reply, "but, really, I must be excused for anything I've done or haven't done today. But what is it?"

There was a moment of silence; then the elder Miss Broad took the arm of her escort and said:

"This is Recognition Day, father."

"The information comes rather late," said Broad, "but I'll admit that you're right. What about it?"

"Only this: We want to be recognized—Harry and I."

"So do we," said the younger Miss Broad.

"We meant to ask you ourselves, but we've been unable to find you," Harry Brown explained.

"Well," said the father, "I don't know how the day could end more to my satisfaction."

24

HOME AGAIN

The Brinston excursion party had plenty to talk about on the way home from Chautauqua; people who never before had been regarded as conversationalists had quite as much to tell and to ask as any of their companions; and as each had seen and heard much that had escaped the others, the buzz of chat in the railway car was equal to that of a well-attended sewing-circle. Naturally the members of the several families who had spent the entire season at Chautauqua were oftenest appealed to; so it came to pass that Mrs. Purkis, for the first time since she had married, found herself frequently called upon for information. She was quite equal to the occasion; as keeper of a boarding house she had made it her duty to fully inform herself about everything that went on at Chautauqua.

But reminiscences could not consume all the hours of a long railway journey; so the Brinston people began to devise new ways of passing the time. Somebody suggested a game about which Joe Warren knew very well, having managed it at the boarding-house

at Chautauqua; but somehow Joe could not be found. One of the tormenting class that always is thinking of something dreadful—the class that is represented even in churches, so Chautauqua circles cannot hope entirely to escape it—suggested that he had fallen between the cars and been run over.

"What is the matter, my child?" asked Mr. Dawn, a moment later, as he noticed that his daughter was hiding her face and crying.

"Do you suppose that anything so dreadful has happened?"

"No."

"But suppose it should be true?"

"Don't suppose anything of the sort. Why, child, I'm afraid you've studied too hard this summer, and lost control of yourself. I never saw you in such an apprehensive state of mind."

"I—it isn't study, father; I'm as well as ever, but I do wish I knew the truth. It would be so awful if anything of the kind had happened. He has been very kind to me—to mother and me— all through the season."

"Well, my dear girl," said Dawn, putting his arm around his daughter, "if you'll promise solemnly to dry your eyes at once, and not run the risk of making a spectacle of yourself, I'll have him looked up right away. Here, Frank; you go through the train forward, while I go aft. Let's see what has become of Joe Warren; the ladies want him to start some game that he knows about. I

think it very likely that you'll find him in the smoking-car, sucking away at a cigarette."

"He has stopped smoking," said Alice, faintly.

"Oh! Well, young men do tell such yarns sometimes—to girls. Be sure, though, to search the smoking car, Frank."

Several moments later, Mr. Dawn returned, with a broad smile in possession of his face. He sat down beside his daughter, and said:

"He's entirely safe, but in the circumstances I thought best not to disturb him. Say, Alice, which of the Purkis girls is he making love to?"

"Father! How can you be so foolish! What do you mean?"

"Come with me and I'll show you; the train is just slowing at a station. If there isn't a love affair behind it, he is the most remarkable young man of my acquaintance."

The girl wondered, as her father led her along. At last, in a car in the rear, she saw Joe and Mrs. Purkis sitting together, and apparently interested in a book which Mrs. Purkis held.

"Excuse us for disturbing you," said Dawn, when the couple noticed his presence, "but there's a special demand for you in our car, Warren. Will you excuse him a few moments, Mrs. Purkis?"

"Yes," said the old woman, who seemed embarrassed about something. "I'm about through for today."

The two men went forward. Alice Dawn sat down by Mrs. Purkis, who said:

"I'm kinder sorry you an' your father came back. There was so much laughing, back at Chautauqua, about me tryin' to learn Greek that I made up my mind nobody ever should hear anything about it again."

"Why, Mrs. Purkis, I'm sure everybody wished you well at it."

"Mebbe so; but if they did, they took a mighty queer way of showin' it. I didn't' do no listenin', but I couldn't help overhearin' the laughin' about it sometimes. My gals told me to get over it by laughin', too, but I couldn't. I had two or three hard cryin' spells about it. One day, Joe Warren came through the back of the house comin' up from the lake, an' he saw me cryin', an' he said:

"'Why, Mrs. Purkis, what's the matter?'

"Well, I up an' told him, though I ain't given to tellin' any of my troubles to men folks. He heard me all through, an' then he said, as kindly as if he had been my own son:

"'Is that all?'

"'It's enough,' said I.

"'I wouldn't have thought it about some of the people in this house,' said he, 'but so far as the Greek's concerned, you just stick to it, laugh or no laugh, and when you want any help you come to me. I stood very well in Greek when I was at college; I'm afraid I'm a little rusty now, but 'twill do me good to have an excuse to freshen up.'

"That wasn't all. Talk is cheap, but he was as good as his word. Ev'ry day after that, when he come home in the afternoon from the class where he studied somethin' else, he always come around the kitchen-way an' asked me how I was gettin' along. Pretty soon he insisted on goin' over my lessons with me ev'ry day, an' seein' that I got started right in each of 'em. I didn't mean to bother him on the trip home, but he come to me an' reminded me that our last talk was about a very knotty point that I couldn't quite unravel, an' that as neither of us had anything particular to do, an' nobody in the car seemed to be particularly needin' us just then, that we might get a car or two back, out of our own crowd, and have it out with that lesson. You needn't think he was ashamed to be seen teachin' me; 'twas me that was kinder touchy about bein' seen with a Greek book in my hands, after what had been said an' done. But goodness! You look as glad for me as if you might be my own daughter."

"Indeed I am glad, Mrs. Purkis; more so than I can tell you, but I'm also very much surprised. I didn't imagine Mr. Warren was that sort of man."

"Didn't, eh? Well, maybe he wasn't until he came out to Chautauqua. I'm sure that home in Brinston he sometimes looked at me as if he wondered how such folks as me could really be livin' in the same world with folks like him. I do assure you, it almost took my breath away when I saw there was another side of him."

Alice Dawn started to go into a reverie, but was aroused by Mrs. Purkis, who remarked:

"He's comin' back. Don't let on that I told you."

"Miss Dawn," said Joe, "we're going to have a half-hour stop and some very fine scenery in a few moments. Can't I coax you out of the train?"

"'Twon't require any coaxing," said the girl, with a smile which Joe informed himself was the rarest and most radiant he ever had seen, even upon Alice Dawn's face.

The scenery was indeed fine—so much so that fully half of the people in the train got out to enjoy it. Joe professed to see a specially good point of observation two or three hundred yards from the track; it certainly had the merit of having no other excursionists upon it.

"How glorious!" murmured the girl. "I daren't try to say anything new about sunsets, but this one seems like a glimpse of the better world."

Joe sighed. "I feel as if I were leaving behind me a great many glimpses of the better world," said he. "I never before was so sorry to leave any place as I am at going away from Chautauqua."

"There's no place like home," said the girl.

"That is a good old sentiment, but there are some places where one is constantly reminded of what home lacks. Chautauqua was one of them."

"Why, Mr. Warren, what a thing for you to say—you, with a home such as any other man would envy you!"

"I love it dearly, but it needs an additional occupant—one whom I've long been trying to get, yet never have dared to ask."

"Indeed? I shouldn't have thought you lacking in daring."

"I'm not; but when a man is in love with the best and sweetest and noblest girl in the world, and has long made her the principal study of his life, there must come a time when he doubts his own merits, and wonders whether she can possibly see anything in him that would justify her in accepting him."

"And there's only one way for him to find out, I suppose," said the girl, giving him a quick, roguish glance, and then averting her head.

The young man seized her hand, thought terribly hard, for what seemed an hour, for words suitable to the occasion, and at last succeeded in saying:

"Will you?"

A shriek arose from the locomotive, and the girl quickly answered:

"Yes, if it won't make us lose the train."

It was hours after, when the train made another long stop, and Joe Warren invited Miss Dawn to stroll a little way in the fresh air, that the interview was resumed and the customary seal placed upon the contract. Then the young man had to wait several

days more for an opportunity to tell Miss Dawn how remarkably fortunate he thought himself.

"Although," he said with a laugh, "if I'd had the faintest idea that you would have helped me along so kindly, I should have been made happy months before."

"Oh, no, you wouldn't—not by me. Incredible though it may seem, I never thought you very much of a man until quite recently."

"What a mercy that I didn't know it! May I ask when you were graciously pleased to change your mind?"

The girl went backward among her thoughts and mused so long that Joe remarked:

"I thought you said it was quite recently."

"Yes," said Miss Dawn, returning with a start. "At least, it was a very short time ago that the change was completed. It was just after I saw you helping Mrs. Purkis with her Greek lesson. Oh, Joe!"

"I'm sure there was nothing so remarkable about that. Anyone might have done it who knew anything about Greek. Could any other college chap have won you in that easy fashion? Upon my word, you have a remarkable faculty for making a man feel insignificant, even after lifting him up to the seventh heaven."

"'Twasn't for that lesson alone. She told me what you had been to her through all the season, and I made up my mind at once

that you were a real great-hearted man, and that I'd been entirely wrong in thinking that—"

"That?"

"Oh, that you were very much like all other young men—that you didn't amount to anything above the usual."

"Thanks for your frankness. Allow me to admit that your original impression was not far from correct. But do you know what has been my principal discouragement while trying to persuade you to think well of me? It was the feeling that you were so entirely self-sufficient, in the nobler sense, that you never would become any man's wife."

"Upon my word!" exclaimed the girl, regarding her companion with wonder and a little apprehension. "I didn't imagine I was so transparent that my very thoughts could be read."

"I seem to have been right in my surmise, then, but I'm not conceited enough to think that I alone caused you to change your opinion of man and matrimony. May I ask what it was that assisted me?"

Again Miss Dawn's mind went backward, and she fell into a reverie which was so becoming to her that at first her companion did not care to break it. Gradually, however, curiosity caused him to arise, lean over her chair, take her hand, and whisper:

"If 'twas so lovely as seems, from the way it makes you look, won't you share it with me?"

"You did share it with me," was the reply that came almost in a whisper. "Do you remember that evening on the lake, when both of us were so interested in Mr. and Mrs. Purkis?"

"Do I? I never can forget it."

"Nor I. Until then I had believed that happy marriages were the exceptions to the rule, and that only noble natures should marry. I knew that my parents were very happy with each other, but I knew of a great deal of misery elsewhere; some of my old school-mates had already succeeded in marrying and becoming miserable. But when I saw that common couple looking so very happy, after all they had gone through—looking, as you said at the time, as if they had been suddenly ennobled, I learned suddenly a great deal that I never shall forget."

"I shall always devoutly thank Heaven, then, for creating the Purkises, and for sending them to Chautauqua, and for there being a Chautauqua for them and us to go to," said Joe. "But why did you hurry off, as soon as we got ashore, as if your dutiful and respectful escort had suddenly changed to a demon, and you were trying to escape from him?"

"Because," was the reply, as the little hand withdrew from Joe's and helped its mate to cover its owner's eyes, "I'd suddenly seen part of my heart so clearly that I feared you saw it, too."

Then Joe knelt, gently drew the girl's hands apart, and covered her eyes with his lips.

About this time, Mr. Broad and a dozen others were discussing the Circle's past, and forecasting its future, as they lounged at the post-office.

"It has been as useful to the town as a revival of religion; eh, dominie?"

"That's putting it rather strongly," was the reply; "but I must admit that it has reformed some people that have resisted revival influences, and done an immense deal of good of a kind which religion alone should not be expected to do."

"If the whole town could be made to see it as we do!" said Broad. The postmaster interrupted by saying:

"The whole town won't, until the milennium begins. Let's be thankful that there are forty or fifty of us thoroughly interested and at work. If we don't give up, other people will have to see, in the course of time, the good effects of our work."

"There's a great deal to be seen already," said Broad.

"Indeed there is," said the minister. "A tired preacher has been taking a long rest, for the first time in the history of the town."

"And a certain public-spirited citizen," said Broad, "has learned that he hadn't already learned everything worth knowing. I trust that I won't be called upon to name him."

"A number of our people have spent more or less time at a place which most folks didn't expect to find on this side of the River Jordan," said Dawn.

"The general run of young people in the town have changed their reading-matter for the better, and don't seem to be a bit unhappy about it," remarked the postmaster.

"Yes, and the bad boys aren't half as bad as they used to be," said Broad, "though I really can't see how that has come about."

"For particulars, consult small boys—mine among the number," suggested Dawn.

"One whole family has been lifted out of the mud," said Purkis, with shaking voice. "I won't mention any names, and I'm not certain yet how it all came about, but what's been done for them shows what can be done for lots of others."

"People worth knowing are better known than ever before," the minister remarked, "and the most retiring natures, which generally are the best, have been brought together, which is the highest success that good society ever achieves."

"Some young folks have been brought together, too," drawled Harry Brown, "to their entire satisfaction. I don't see how it could have come about if it hadn't been for our Chautauqua circle. Speaking for the male half of these young people, I'd like to know who's got more out of the year's work than they."

"Their parents," said the postmaster.

"Right you are!" exclaimed Broad, emphasizing his assent by bringing his hand heavily down between the postmaster's shoulders. "Dominie, what are you laughing at?"

"Only this," was the reply. "Chautauqua offered us nothing but a course of study, and such information as that study would bring us. Everything that we have been congratulating ourselves upon has come in addition to what we were offered and promised. I wish the rest of the world might know our story."

* * * * * *

Well, here the story is for those who may care for it.

THE END