

The Bloomfield Times.

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Remember, Boys Make Men.

BY MARY E. TUCKER.

WHEN you see a ragged urchin
Standing wistful in the street,
With torn hat and kneeless trousers,
Dirty face and bare red feet,
Pass not by the child unheeding;
Smile upon him. Mark me, when
He's grown he'll not forget it;
For remember, boys make men.

When the buoyant youthful spirits
Overflow in boyish freak,
Chide your child in gentle accents;
Do not in your anger speak.
You must sow in youthful bosoms
Seeds of tender mercy; then
Plants will grow and bear good fruitage
When the erring boys are men.

Have you never seen a grand sire,
With his eyes aglow with joy,
Bring to mind some act of kindness—
Something said to him, a boy?
Or relate some slight or coldness,
With a brow all clouded, when
He said they were too thoughtless
To remember boys made men.

Let us try to add some pleasure
To the life of every boy,
For each child needs tender interest
In its sorrow and its joy.
Call your boys home by its brightness;
They avoid a gloomy den,
And seek for comfort elsewhere;
And, remember, boys make men.

Chester Vale's Housekeeper.

THE RED ROOM, as they always called the south parlor at Roxeter Hall, had not been lighted yet, save by the blaze that leaped crackled, and sent up ruby jets of splendor from the deep, open grate sunk in one side of its crimson-draped walls.

Upon a low seat before the fire sat—the only occupant of the apartment—Syra Lodell, the adopted heiress, people said, of Lionel Masterton, the owner of Roxeter Hall. The firelight showed a graceful, undulant shape, a dark wreath of braids brought low on the pearly cheek, the clasp of white fingers on her knee, and the slow tapping of a very little foot on the hearth.

Lip and eye were thoughtful in their expression; the one curled and the other flashed briefly as a step sounded on the outside, and presently a stately-looking gentleman came in with the remark:

"I was looking for you, Syra."

"Were you, sir?"

"I thought I should find you here; you always like this room, and it suits you. You look like a picture set in a crimson frame to-night, Syra."

Syra's white lids drooped so that he could not see the expression that darkened again under them. Syra was not accustomed to such speeches, and they suited her as from him than from most people; but she did not speak.

"I trust you have by this time reconsidered your hasty decision of last night, Syra," he said, after a pause; "that you have concluded to become mistress where you have hitherto been only—"

"Allow me to supply the word at which you hesitate, Mr. Masterton. A dependent you would say," Syra said, with such quiet self-possession as almost to divert the shaft of its sarcasm.

"My dear child, not that, certainly not; the woman a man means to marry can never stand to him in the relation of a dependent. I have never looked upon you in that light. I always meant to marry you, Syra."

The girl gave a start of involuntary hauteur, and frowned slightly.

"There are rights which no state of dependency can alienate from a woman. The right of choosing whom she will marry is one of them," she said, trying to speak quietly, but a passionate red suffused her cheek.

Mr. Masterton laughed. "And you do not choose to marry me?"

"Precisely," she said, growing pale again.

"What will you do then? Foolish child, who have you ever seen that you would choose in preference to me? I am older than you; but that disparity is more than balanced by the advantages. What do you find in me to object to, my dear?"

"I object to nothing, sir, saving the intentions you say you have always had toward me. It was not generous to load me with benefits, and then to try to make of them chains to force my inclinations."

He laughed again as at the pretty playful humors of a petted child.

"Don't be foolish, Syra; no one wishes to force your inclinations. It would indeed be rather late in the day for me to begin, since I never in my life denied you anything, did I, Syra?"

Syra showed how much she had been induged by her next words.

"It was because you felt too much above me to do so," she said, with temper. "You would not oppose your might to such weakness as mine. Even now you laugh at me in your strength, and think that I mean nothing when I say I would not be your wife if you were a king."

His straight black brows contracted slightly as the daring girl spoke; but he only laughed in his provoking way.

"Well, well," he said, "you must have still another day to meditate upon the advantages of being mistress of Roxeter Hall. I can afford to wait for your answer, child, because I know what it must be in the end; and I acknowledge that all these pretty, haughty airs of yours amuse me vastly. They will become Mrs. Lionel Masterton quite as well as they do my little Syra."

She made a passionate gesture.

"Do you not understand, sir, that I have not for you such love as a man desires in a wife? I never thought of marrying till you asked me a week ago the question you have repeated with such pertinacity every day since. I have been taught to look up to you as a parent. I tell you it is impossible to change the nature of that regard."

"I take upon myself the possibility of changing it to the most proper wifely affection," he said, lightly. "As my wife, you shall forget that you were ever anything else."

"I shall never be your wife, sir. Oh, I am very sure of that. I love you and am grateful to you for your kindness to an otherwise friendless child, but every instinct of my nature revolts from becoming your wife."

His brow knit again.

"You are talking supreme nonsense, Syra; and, child as you are, you ought to know it," he said, with more impatience than he had yet displayed. "But come to the drawing-room, will you not? Olivia is there alone, and may think we neglect her," he added, with sudden change of manner.

Syra followed him, and, the drawing-room reached, sat there untalkative, in spite of the efforts of the others to draw her into conversation. But her air was thoughtful and troubled—nothing more. Syra never pouted, spoiled child though she was.

"Olivia," said Lionel Masterton to his sister, desisting at last from his efforts to entertain Syra, "I haven't answered Chester Vale yet. I've been waiting for you to ascertain Mrs. Wharton's address. Have you obtained it?"

"Oh, yes, and the situation will be just the thing for her. She writes to inquire for such a position as the one at Chester's would be, and I think you cannot do better than write to him and her by the same mail. Mrs. Wharton would be a treasure in any man's house, and I am sure she will like Chester. It's curious what an incorrigible old bachelor he is."

Syra lifted her eyes during this speech, and once or twice was about to mention that she had heard from Mrs. Wharton since Olivia, but some thought restrained her; and as Lionel Masterton left the room, saying he would go to the library and attend to that matter at once, her glance followed him to the door with an expression of aroused and eager attention.

Mrs. Wharton was an old family friend of the Mastertons, now in impoverished circumstances, who had written to Miss Olivia to inquire for a situation as housekeeper in some gentleman's family, where she would be likely to receive the consideration due to her former circumstances, and be treated more as an equal than a servant. Miss Olivia did not know that Syra had received a letter since she had, in which Mrs. Wharton announced the fact of her having secured already such a place as she wished.

Syra quietly resolved to keep that infor-

mation to herself for reasons that had suddenly suggested themselves to her, and went away early to her own apartment to ponder upon some scheme, the details of which she had yet to arrange.

Near midnight, when all had retired, as she supposed, she descended, and noiselessly sought the library. A smile, half defiance, half roguery, curving her red lips as she espied the letters on the table, waiting for the morning to be dispatched to their destination.

Just glancing at the superscription of Chester Vale's letter, she laid it down again and took up Mrs. Wharton's. She smiled as she discovered that, with his usual carelessness, Mr. Masterton had so negligently sealed this letter that she could easily open it, which she proceeded to do, removing the contents and depositing in their place a blank piece of paper, and resealing it more effectually than Mr. Masterton had done.

This done she effected her escape to her own apartment again without attracting attention.

"Mr. Masterton has often asked me of late what I should do if I did not marry him," she murmured to herself as she moved actively about her chamber. "I will show him. Of course I know that Roxeter Hall cannot be my home after I have refused to become the wife of its master. That is the alternative he means to force upon me in the end, and he shall find that child, as he persists in considering me, capable of anticipating even him."

When Lionel Masterton went down to a late breakfast the following morning, for he was not an early riser, he found his sister, who was of an indolent habit likewise but had been waiting some time in the dining-room this morning, fretting because Syra had not yet come down—Syra, who was usually up with the lark. Breakfast waited yet a little longer, and then Lionel sent a servant to see if Miss Syra had risen, and to tell her the breakfast waited.

The servant returned immediately to say that the young lady's couch did not seem to have been occupied the night before, and that she herself was not in the room then, though it bore a somewhat littered appearance, as though she had but just left it. In short, Syra had vanished in a most inexplicable manner from Roxeter Hall, leaving behind her only the briefest of good-byes in the shape of the following note, over which Lionel Masterton bent his black brows grimly:

"DEAR GUARDY—I'm off, hoping that when we next meet we may both be in full possession of those senses which one of us seems bereft of at present (I do not say which). Have no anxiety regarding me. If I find I cannot take care of myself I will let you know. Affectionately,
SYRA LODELL."

"The reckless child! I wonder what she has taken into her head now," he muttered in mingled anger and anxiety. "I have a mind to wait and see who will find their senses first, she or I. It will not be long before she will be ready enough to confess that she cannot take care of herself; the lesson may do her good, and save me future trouble in taming this modern Katharine."

He waited outwardly careless, but inwardly anxious, for no news came of Syra; and when, finally, too uneasy concerning her to wait longer, he instituted such investigations as were at his command, he still was unable to hear anything of her, and he and Olivia fell at last into a half-sulky despair at being so baffled by such a slip of a girl as that.

Chester Vale wrote toward the end of the month to express his complete satisfaction with Mrs. Wharton, the new housekeeper they had sent him, and who had been with him already long enough to convince him that her equal could not be found.

Both Olivia and Lionel read amazedly, Mrs. Wharton having written within a week only to regret that she had already engaged her services elsewhere, before learning of Chester Vale's desire to obtain them. Could there be two Mrs. Whartons?

Curious to solve this puzzle, Olivia wrote to Mrs. Wharton's address as her letter had given it, and Mr. Masterton to Chester Vale. Replies came swiftly; Olivia's correspondent in high indignation at her name-sake, and Chester Vale vastly amused and contented with the Mrs. Wharton whose services he had been so fortunate as to secure. She suited him quite as well as the others Mrs. Wharton could possibly have done, probably better.

Beyond that he expressed no interest, but he felt some, or else he would not have sent for Mrs. Wharton to his parlor the

evening he received the letter, questioning her about her knowledge of the Mastertons, for, having brought a letter from Lionel himself, she must of course know them.

Mrs. Wharton—this Mrs. Wharton declared distinctly, and with some emphasis, that she did know the Mastertons well, and that the letter she brought had been written by Mr. Masterton, of course. Who else could it have been written by?

She expressed herself plainly enough, but Chester Vale did not feel altogether satisfied that she had told the whole truth, though he could not for the life of him conceive why she should withhold any part of it.

Mrs. Wharton, Chester Vale's housekeeper, would have looked much younger and prettier if it had not been for the disfiguring caps she wore which come quite over her face and covered her hair completely. She had an unusually young, fresh face, and really a fine figure for a woman of her years and sorrows. Her dress was of the most sombre description, and her manner quiet, her eyes nearly always downcast. These were enough of themselves to establish the fact that she must at some period of her life have been a remarkably beautiful woman. They were large, dark and lustrous still, beyond any that Chester Vale had ever seen, and if by chance he encountered them—which rarely happened—he was vaguely conscious of a curious thrill all through him that he could in no way account for. Mrs. Wharton was not talkative, but what she said, she said well, and in a voice that effected Chester Vale very much as her eyes did. She was retiring and sedate, wore glasses most of the time, and did not seem to be very anxious to sit with Mr. Vale when he requested her of an evening to do so.

Chester Vale was a good-looking though somewhat elderly bachelor—rich, too—and there were plenty of pretty girls in the village who would have gladly entertained him to the best of their ability as many evenings in the week as he chose. But he did not choose.

He seemed to like a book better at his own bachelor fireside, or even a fragmentary chat with Mrs. Wharton, who spoke mostly in monosyllables, and evidently felt ill at ease in conversation with him.

She kept his house, though as it had never been kept since the lifetime of his mother. Such order neatness and decorum had not reigned there for some time.

The servants, who had proved refractory beyond measure under all other rule, fell gently into their places now, and the whole domestic machinery moved smoothly.

"Mrs. Wharton," said Chester Vale, one evening, as he finished the perusal of a letter he had just received, "will you be good enough to see that a room is put in entire readiness for a guest whom I expect to-morrow? and, you must pardon me for reminding you of a matter which I dare say you have heard enough about already. It is Mr. Masterton whom I am expecting to-morrow, and he declares quite emphatically in his letter that he knows but one Mrs. Wharton, and that you cannot be that one. I suspect that he is coming more to see you, indeed, than me. He is of an inquisitive turn, and it is the first visit he ever vouchsafed me."

Mrs. Wharton had certainly grown pale while he talked, and her knitting lay idly upon her knee, as though her fingers were too tremulous to display their usual swiftness in its management.

Mr. Chester looked puzzled.

"I beg to assure you," he went on, "my dear madam, that I have done or said nothing whatever to encourage this inquisitorial trip of Mr. Masterton's. I don't care whether you're Mrs. Wharton or not, you're my housekeeper, and I am sure I never had so good a one in my life, and, though I confess to some natural curiosity as to what Mr. Masterton will say, I don't care a straw beyond that. As I said before, you're a good housekeeper, that's enough for me."

Mrs. Wharton gathered up her knitting, and rose to leave the room. She had not spoken before, but now she said, quietly:

"Mr. Masterton will scarcely deny to my face that he knows me well."

Chester Vale looked after her as she quitted the room, with a more puzzled expression than ever, saying to himself:

"It's a queer affair any way. She's not a woman any one would easily forget—and Masterton least of all. Hallo, what's this?"

He stooped and took from the floor near where Mrs. Wharton had been sitting, a portmanteau. A dainty little thing it was—mother-of-pearl with gold mountings,

and a name traced on a golden scroll; just as he was reading which the door re-opened and Mrs. Wharton came hurriedly in toward him.

Her eyes sought the floor first, then were lifted to his hand. With a low cry she snatched the portmanteau from him, and was hurrying away again, but he caught her hand and held it with a grasp there was no escaping.

With her face from him, she murmured some confused apology for her abruptness, but he, still holding her hand in that firm unyielding pressure, led her across the room to the tall pier-glass, and, without speaking, pointed to the vision its depths revealed.

A vision, indeed?

After leaving him the housekeeper had gone to her chamber and removed the neckerchief she usually wore, and untied the strings of her cap before she missed the portmanteau, and came running back frantic with haste.

The cap had fallen back in her hurry, the absence of the muffling neckerchief exposed a round and snow-white neck, over which flowed long, dark ringlets escaping from the untied cap.

The housekeeper looked and began to tremble. The very earth seemed to shake under her, and tears swelling under her white eyelids rolled slowly down her cheeks.

Chester Vale seemed as agitated as she. His breath came short and quick, and his eyes shone luminously.

He dropped her hand when he saw she was trembling, but she did not go at once. Turning partly toward him, without lifting her eyes, she said:

"I have nothing to say in self-justification. I was going away before Mr. Masterton should arrive. I do not ask you to pardon the seeming unwomanliness of what I have done, but I am not entirely so culpable as you may perhaps think. Don't blame me too severely."

"How do you know that I blame you at all?" he asked.

"You cannot help it. I saw what a rash and unmaidenly step I had taken very soon after my arrival here; but I trusted to the impenetrability of my disguise, and I wished to stay. The excitement and novelty of my position fascinated me, and so I kept putting off going away. But I should have gone in the morning, sir, and you would never have known—"

"That I had been entertaining an angel unawares," he said, abruptly. "Well, as you say, you have taken a very rash and unmaidenly step. You have wronged yourself in coming here as you have; but you will have wronged me more if you go away now."

"You, sir?" lifting her lustrous eyes an instant and dropping them before the glance of his.

"Me, because you deprive me of a housekeeper whose equal I shall never find again. How do you expect to compensate me for such a loss?"

She looked puzzled, his manner was so serious and earnest.

"Is there any way, sir?" she asked, smiling.

"One."

He extended his arms, saying, "Make it unnecessary for me to procure another housekeeper by remaining as my wife."

She understood him suddenly and eluded his clasp, while the rich color mantled her beautiful face. It was Syra herself who stood poised an instant on the threshold with bashful, backward glances, and then fled away to her room.

When Lionel Masterton came the next day, and asked almost as soon as he was in the house to see Mrs. Wharton, Chester Vale went out of the room and came back with Syra.

"You!" Lionel said, receding a step, and growing pale with sudden anger.

"Speak to him," pleaded Syra of Mr. Chester. "Don't let him be so angry with me."

"Don't blame her too much Masterton," Mr. Chester said approaching him. "She would never have consented to be your wife, and she will not now consent to be mine without your approval. You won't refuse us that, old friend?"

He certainly would have refused if he had seen any prospect of winning her himself. But he did not. It was sufficiently evident that she loved Mr. Chester, and she had given such evidence of firmness already that he clearly saw that he must consent, and did so with as good a grace as he could.

He never quite forgave Syra, however, for disappointing his pet scheme with regard to her till he had been married himself some years.