

Queed looked surprised. "I have one small one -- a steamer trunk, as it is called."

Klinker explained what he meant, and the Doctor feared that his wardrobe contained no such article.

"Ne'mmind. I can fit you up with a pair. Left Hand Tom's they used to be, him that died of the scarlet fever Thanksgiving. And say, Doc!"

"Well?"

"Here's the first thing I'll teach you. Never mister your sparring-partner."

The Doc thought this out, laboriously, and presently said: "Very well, William."

"Call me Buck, the same as all the boys."

Klinker came toward him holding out an object made of red velveteen about the size of a pocket handkerchief.

"Put these where you can find them to-morrow. You can have 'em. Left Hand Tom's gone where he don't need 'em any more."

"What are they? What does one do with them?"

"They're your trunks. You wear 'em."

"Where? On -- what portion, I mean?"

"They're like little pants," said Klinker.

The two men walked home together over the frozen streets. Queed was taciturn and depressed. He was annoyed by Klinker's presence and irritated by his conversation; he wanted nothing in the world so much as to be let alone. But honest Buck Klinker remained unresponsive to his mood. All the way to Mrs. Paynter's he told his new pupil grisly stories of men he had known who had thought that they could work all day and all night, and never take any exercise. Buck kindly offered to show the Doc their graves.

VIII

Formal Invitation to Fifi to share Queed's Dining-Room (provided it is very cold upstairs); and First Outrage upon the Sacred Schedule of Hours.

QUEED supped in an impenetrable silence. The swelling rednesses both above and below his left eye attracted the curious attention of the boarders, but he ignored their glances, and even Klinker forbore to address him. The meal done, he ascended to his sacred chamber, but not alas, to remain.

For a full week, the Scriptorium had been uninhabitable by night, the hands of authors growing too numb there to write. On this night, conditions were worse than ever; the usual valiant essay was defeated with more than the usual ease. Queed fared back to his dining-room, as was now becoming his melancholy habit. And to-night the necessity was exceptionally trying, for he found that the intrusive daughter of the landlady had yet once again spread her mathematics there before him.

Nor could Fifi this time claim misunderstanding and accident. She fully expected the coming of Mr. Queed, and had been nervously awaiting it. The state of mind thus induced was not in the least favorable to doing algebra successfully or pleasurably. No amount of bodily comfort could compensate Fifi for having to have it. But her mother had ruled the situation to-night with a strong hand and a flat foot. The bedroom was *entirely too cold* for Fifi. She must, positively *must*, go down to the warm and comfortable dining-room, -- do you hear me, Fifi? As for Mr. Queed -- well, if he made himself objectionable, Sharlee would simply have to give him another good talking to.

Yet Fifi involuntarily cowered as she looked up and murmured: "Oh — good evening!"

Mr. Queed bowed. In the way of conveying displeasure, he had in all probability the most expressive face in America.

He passed around to his regular place, disposed his books and papers, and placed his *Silence* sign in a fairly conspicuous position. This followed his usual custom. Yet his manner of making his arrangements to-night wanted something of his ordinary aggressive confidence. In fact, his promise to give an hour a day to exercise lay on his heart like lead, and the lumps on his eye, large though they were, did not in the least represent the dimensions of the fall he had received at the hands of Mr. Pat.

Fifi was looking a little more fragile than when we saw her last, a little more thin-cheeked, a shade more ethereal-eyed. Her cough was quite bad to-night, and this increased her nervousness. How could she *help* from disturbing him with that dry tickling going on right along in her throat? It had been a trying day, when everything seemed to go wrong from the beginning. She had waked up feeling very listless and tired; had been late for school; had been kept in for Cicero. In the afternoon she had been going to a tea given to her class at the school, but her mother said her cold was too bad for her to go, and besides she really felt too tired. She had n't eaten any supper, and had been quite cross with her mother in their talk about the dining-room, which was the worst thing that had happened at all. And now at nine o'clock she wanted to go to bed, but her algebra would not, *would not* come right, and life was horrible, and she was unfit to live it anyway, and she wished she was . . .

"You are crying," stated a calm young voice across the table.

Brought up with a cool round turn, greatly mortified, Fifi thought that the best way to meet the emergency was just to say nothing.

"What is the matter?" demanded the professorial tones.

"Oh, nothing," she said, winking back the tears and trying to smile, apologetically — "just silly reasons. I — I've spent an hour and ten minutes on a problem here, and it won't come right. I'm — sorry I disturbed you."

There was a brief silence. Mr. Queed cleared his throat. "You cannot solve your problem?"

"I have n't *yet*," she sniffed bravely, "but of course I will *soon*. Oh, I understand it very well. . . ."

She kept her eyes stoutly fixed upon her book, which indicated that not for worlds would she interrupt him further. Nevertheless she felt his large spectacles upon her. And presently he astonished her by saying, resignedly — doubtless he had decided that thus could the virginal calm be most surely and swiftly restored:—

"Bring me your book. I will solve your problem."

"Oh!" said Fifi, choking down a cough. And then, "Do you know all about algebra, too?"

It seemed that Mr. Queed in his younger days had once made quite a specialty of mathematics, both lower, like Fifi's, and also far higher. The child's polite demurs were firmly overridden. Soon she was established in a chair at his side, the book open on the table between them.

"Indicate the problem," said Mr. Queed.

Fifi indicated it: No. 71 of the collection of stickers known as *Miscellaneous Review*. It read as follows:

71. A laborer, having built 105 rods of stone fence, found that if he had built 2 rods less a day he would have been 6 days longer in completing the job. How many rods a day did he build?

Queed read this through once and announced: "He built seven rods a day."

Fifi stared. "Why — how in the world, Mr. Queed —"

"Let us see if I am right. Proceed. Read me what you have written down."

"Let x equal the number of rods he built each day," began Fifi bravely.

"Proceed."

"Then 105 divided by x equals number of days consumed. And 105 divided by $x-2$ equals number of days consumed, if he had built 2 rods less a day."

"Of course."

"And $(105 \div x - 2) + 6 =$ number of days consumed if it had taken him six days longer."

"Nothing of the sort."

Fifi coughed. "I don't see why, exactly."

"When the text says 'six days longer,' it means longer than what?"

"Why — longer than ever."

"Doubtless. But you must state it in terms of the problem."

"In terms of the problem," murmured Fifi, her red-brown head bowed over the bewildering book — "in terms of the problem."

"Of course," said her teacher, "there is but one thing which longer can mean; that is longer than the original rate of progress. Yet you add the six to the time required under the new rate of progress."

"I — I'm really afraid I don't quite see. I'm dreadfully stupid, I know —"

"Take it this way then. You have set down here two facts. One fact is the number of days necessary under the old rate of progress; the other is the number of days necessary under the new rate. Now what is the difference between them?"

"Why — is n't that just what I don't know?"

"I can't say what you don't know. This is something that I know very well."

"But you know everything," she murmured.

Without seeking to deny this, Queed said: "It tells you right there in the book."

"I don't see it," said Fifi, nervously looking high and low, not only in the book but all over the room.

The young man fell back on the inductive method: "What is that six then?"

"Oh! Now I see. It's the difference in the number of days consumed — is n't it?"

"Naturally. Now put down your equation. No, no! The greater the rate of progress, the fewer the number of days. Do not attempt to subtract the greater from the less."

Now Fifi figured swimmingly:

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{105}{x-2} - \frac{105}{x} &= 6 \\ 105x - 105x + 210 &= 6x^2 - 12x \\ 6x^2 - 12x &= 210 \\ 6x^2 - 12x - 210 &= 0 \\ x^2 - 2x - 35 &= 0 \\ (x-7)(x+5) &= 0 \\ x &= 7 \text{ or } -5 \end{aligned}$$

She smiled straight into his eyes, sweetly and fearlessly. "Seven! Just what you said! Oh, if I could only do them like you! I'm ever and ever so much obliged, Mr. Queed — and now I can go to bed."

Mr. Queed avoided Fifi's smile; he obviously deliberated.

"If you have any more of these terrible difficulties," he said slowly, "it is n't necessary for you to sit there all evening and cry over them. You . . . may ask me to show you."

"Oh, *could* I really! Thank you ever so much. But no, I won't be here, you see. I did n't mean to come to-night — truly, Mr. Queed — I know I bother you *so* — only Mother made me."

"Your mother made you? Why?"

"Well — it's right cold upstairs, you know," said Fifi, gathering up her books, "and she thought it might not be very good for my cough. . . ."

Queed glanced impatiently at the girl's delicate face. A frown deepened on his brow; he cleared his throat with annoyance.

"Oh, I am willing," he said testily, "for you to bring your work here whenever it is very cold upstairs."

"Oh, how good you are, Mr. Queed!" cried Fifi, staggered by his nobility. "But of course I can't think of bothering —"

"I should not have asked you," he interrupted her, irritably, "if I had not been willing for you to come."

But for all boarders, their comfort and convenience, Fifi had the great respect which all of us feel for the source of our livelihood; and, stammering grateful thanks, she again assured him that she could not make such a nuisance of herself. However, of course Mr. Queed had his way, as he always did.

This point definitely settled, he picked up his pencil, which was his way of saying, "And now, for heaven's sake — good-night!" But Fifi, her heart much softened toward him, stood her ground, the pile of school-books tucked under her arm.

"Mr. Queed — I — wonder if you won't let me get something to put on your forehead? That bruise is so dreadful —"

"Oh, no! No! It's of no consequence whatever."

"But I don't think you can have noticed how bad it is. Please let me, Mr. Queed. Just a little dab of arnica or witch-hazel —"

"My forehead does very well as it is, I assure you."

Fifi turned reluctantly. "Indeed something on it would make it get well so *much* faster. I wish you would —"

Ah! There was a thought. As long as he had this bruise people would be bothering him about it. It was a world where a man could n't even get a black eye without a thousand busybodies commenting on it.

"If you are certain that its healing will be hastened —"

"Positive!" cried Fifi happily, and vanished without more speech.

One Hour a Day to be given to Bodily Exercise. . . . How long, O Lord, how long!

Fifi returned directly with white cloths, scissors, and two large bottles.

"I won't take hardly a minute — you see! Listen, Mr. Queed. One of these bottles heals fairly well and does n't hurt at all worth mentioning. That's witch-hazel. The other heals very well and fast, but stings — well, a lot; and that's turpentine. Which will you take?"

"The turpentine," said Mr. Queed in a martyr's voice.

Fifi's hands were very deft. In less than no time, she made a little lint pad, soaked it in the pungent turpentine, applied it to the unsightly swelling, and bound it firmly to the young man's head with a snowy band. In all of Mr. Queed's life, this was the first time that a woman had ministered to him. To himself, he involuntarily confessed that the touch of the girl's hands upon his forehead was not so annoying as you might have expected.

Fifi drew off and surveyed her work sympathetically yet professionally. The effect of the white cloth riding aslant over the round glasses and academic countenance was wonderfully rakish and devil-may-care.

"Do you feel the sting much so far?"

"A trifle," said the Doctor.

"It works up fast to a kind of — climax, as I remember, and then slowly dies away. The climax will be pretty bad — I'm so sorry! But when it's at its worst just say to yourself, 'This is doing me lots and lots of good,' and then you won't mind so much."

"I will follow the directions," said he, squirming in his chair.

"Thank you for letting me do it, and for the algebra, and — good-night."

"Good-night."

He immediately abandoned all pretense of working. To him it seemed that the climax of the turpentine had come instantly; there was no more working up about it than there was about a live red coal. The mordant tooth bit into his blood; he rose and tramped the floor, muttering savagely

to himself. But he would not pluck the hateful thing off, no, no — for that would have been an admission that he was wrong in putting it on; and he was never wrong.

So Bylash, reading one of Miss Jibby's works in the parlor, and pausing for a drink of water at the end of a glorious chapter, found him tramping and muttering. His flying look dared Bylash to address him, and Bylash prudently took the dare. But he poured his drink slowly, stealing curious glances and endeavoring to catch the drift of the little Doctor's murmurings.

In this attempt he utterly failed, because why? Obviously because the Doctor cursed exclusively in the Greek and Latin languages.

In five minutes, Queed was upon his work again. Not that the turpentine was yet dying slowly away, as Fifi had predicted that it would. On the contrary it burned like the fiery furnace of Shadrach and Abednego. But *One Hour a Day to be given to Bodily Exercise!* . . . Oh, every second must be made to count now, whether one's head was breaking into flame or not.

Whatever his faults or foibles, Mr. Queed was captain of his soul. But the fates were against him to-night. In half an hour, when the sting — they called this conflagration a sting! — was beginning to get endurable and the pencil to move steadily, the door opened and in strode Professor Nicolovius; he, it seemed, wanted matches. Why under heaven, if a man wanted matches, could n't he buy a thousand boxes and store them in his room?

The old professor apologized blandly for his intrusion, but seemed in no hurry to make the obvious reparation. He drew a match along the bottom of the mantle-shelf, eyeing the back of the little Doctor's head as he did so, and slowly lit a cigar.

"I'm sorry to see that you've met with an accident, Mr. Queed. Is there anything, perhaps, that I might do?"

"Nothing at all, thanks," said Queed, so indignantly that Nicolovius dropped the subject at once.

The star-boarder of Mrs. Paynter's might have been fifty-five or he might have been seventy, and his clothes had long been the secret envy of Mr. Bylash. He leaned against the mantel at his ease, blowing blue smoke.

"You find this a fairly pleasant place to sit of an evening, I daresay!" he purred, presently.

The back of the young man's head was uncompromisingly stern. "I might as well try to write in the middle of Centre Street."

"So?" said Nicolovius, not catching his drift. "I should have thought that —"

"The interruptions," said Queed, "are constant."

The old professor laughed. "Upon my word, I don't blame you for saying that. The gross communism of a boarding-house . . . it does gall one at times! So far as I am concerned, I relieve you of it at once. Good-night."

The afternoon before Nicolovius had happened to walk part of the way downtown with Mr. Queed, and had been favored with a fair amount of his stately conversation. He shut the door now somewhat puzzled by the young man's marked curtness; but then Nicolovius knew nothing about the turpentine.

The broken evening wore on, with progress slower than the laborer's in Problem 71, when he decided to build two rods less a day. At eleven, Miss Miller, who had been to the theatre, breezed in; she wanted a drink of water. At 11.45 — Queed's open watch kept accurate tally — there came Trainer Klinker, who, having sought his pupil vainly in the Scriptorium, retraced his steps to rout him out below. At sight of the tall bottle in Klinker's hand Queed shrank, fearing that Fifi had sent him with a second dose of turpentine. But the bottle turned out to contain merely a rare unguent just obtained by Klinker from his friend Smithy, the physical instructor at the Y. M. C. A., and deemed surprisingly effective for the development of the academic bicep.

At last there was blessed quiet, and he could write again. The city slept; the last boarder was abed; the turpentine

had become a peace out of pain; only the ticking of the clock filtered into the perfect calm of the dining-room. The little Doctor of Mrs. Paynter's stood face to face with his love, embraced his heart's desire. He looked into the heart of Science and she gave freely to her lord and master. Sprawled there over the Turkey-red cloth, which was not unhaunted by the ghosts of dead dinners, he became chastely and divinely happy. His mind floated away into the empyrean; he saw visions of a far more perfect Society; dreamed dreams of the ascending spiral whose law others had groped at, but he would be the first to formulate; caught and fondled the secret of the whole great Design; reduced it to a rule-of-thumb to do his bidding; bestrode the whole world like a great Colossus. . . .

From which flight he descended with a thud to observe that it was quarter of two o'clock, and the dining-room was cold with the dying down of the Latrobe, and the excellent reading-lamp in the death-throes of going out.

He went upstairs in the dark, annoyed with himself for having overstayed his bedtime. Long experimentation had shown him that the minimum of sleep he could get along with to advantage was six and one-half hours nightly. This meant bed at 1.30 exactly, and he hardly varied it five minutes in a year. To his marrow he was systematic; he was as definite as an adding-machine, as practical as a cash register. But even now, on this exceptional night, he did not go straight to bed. Something still remained to be accomplished: an outrage upon his sacred Schedule.

In the first halcyon days at Mrs. Paynter's, before the board question ever came up at all, the iron-clad Schedule of Hours under which he was composing his great work had stood like this:

8.20	Breakfast
8.40	Evolutionary Sociology
1.30	Dinner
2	Evolutionary Sociology
7	Supper
7.20 to 1.30	Evolutionary Sociology

But the course of true love never yet ran smooth, and this schedule was too ideal to stand. First the *Post* had come along and nicked a clean hour out of it, and now his Body had unexpectedly risen and claimed yet another hour. And, beyond even this . . . some devilish whim had betrayed him to-night into offering his time for the service and uses of the landlady's daughter in the puling matter of algebra.

No . . . *no!* He would not put that in. The girl could not be so selfish as to take advantage of his over-generous impulse. She *must* understand that his time belonged to the ages and the race, not to the momentary perplexities of a high school dunce. . . . At the worst it would be only five minutes here and there — say ten minutes a week; forty minutes a month. No, no! He would not put that in.

But the hour of Bodily Exercise could not be so evaded. It must go in. On land or sea there was no help for that. For thirty days henceforward at the least — and a voice within him whispered that it would be for much longer — his Schedule must stand like this:

8.20	Breakfast
8.40	Evolutionary Sociology
1.30	Dinner
2	Evolutionary Sociology
4.45 to 5.15	Open-Air Pedestrianism
5.15 to 6.15	The <i>Post</i>
6.15 to 6.45	Klinker's Exercises for all Parts of the Body
7	Supper
7.20	Evolutionary Sociology

Hand clasped in his hair, Queed stared long at this wreckage with a sense of foreboding and utter despondency. Doubtless Mr. Pat, who was at that moment peacefully pulling a pipe over his last galleys at the *Post* office, would have been astonished to learn what havoc his accursed fleas had wrought with the just expectations of posterity.