

needs companionship. For the rest, I will write down some diet that is suitable for him and not too expensive. You clothe him very comfortably and nicely, I notice. I need not write anything about that. He has one thing very much in his favor—his mother.'

The doctor's kindness seemed to break me down, and I began to cry. I was very strung up, as you may imagine. 'I play with him all the time I am at home,' I said.

'Yes, yes!' The doctor gave me a pat on the shoulder. 'I am sure.'

He wrote down about the foods and treatment, and folded up the paper and put it into an envelope and handed it to me.

'Do you know,' he said, 'I wish you'd bring the little chap again in a few weeks. I don't mean that I suspect anything wrong. It is only to know how he gets on. I shall need to see him only for a few minutes; just a friendly visit, not to reckon as a consultation.'

'Thank you very much,' I said. 'Your kindness has comforted me greatly. I will bring him.'

I put my ten dollars on the table. He simply laughed at me.

'Now, Mrs. Marchant,' he protested, 'try to put yourself in my place—as a crusty old bachelor, who can't spend a quarter of his income. Do you think I should like spending that money of yours? Save me from the distress of taking it. I ask you as a favor. Now, don't be a silly woman!' I had begun to cry again. 'Carry it for Mummy; old chap. Ladies never have proper pockets, like we men have.' He put the coins in Harry's pocket; and when I tried to object he almost bundled us out of the room.

'Write or telephone when you'll come again,' he said; 'and pay particular attention to the last direction on my list. It is the most important of all, and the one that I trust you least in, Mrs. Marchant. Good-bye, and be sure you come again. Write or telephone when it's convenient.'

When we arrived home and I read the directions, the last one was this:

'Take great care of his mother, and do not let her overdo self-sacrifice. Her health and good spirits are essential to him.'

What a good man! What a very good man!

Harry received a Noah's Ark and a drawing slate by express early this morning. Of course they came from the doctor, and I am writing and thanking him. My pride advised me to enclose the fee; but my respect for him would not allow me to do so. I felt that it would hurt him, and I told him how I felt.

This letter is all about Harry and me; but you will understand how I feel. Do you know, I waltzed round the room by myself after Harry had gone to bed! Our dancing days were good, Edie; but living for a little boy who loves you is better, Dear. 'The only son of his mother, and she a widow!' I feel rich, and jingle my wealth—a doctor's fee!

Your affectionate friend,

ELSA MARCHANT.

My dear Edith: I laughed when I read your suggestion that the great doctor was smitten by my beautiful eyes! I am glad that some one remembers I was accounted 'pretty and fascinating.' Kind old flatterer! You don't know what a faded, shabby thing I am! I—and my 'beautiful eyes'—went to Dr. Harding in my rusty weeds, nearly two years old. I had never been able to afford a new dress. I spent most of the rejected fee in buying materials, and made one for myself. It is blue serge, and very plain, and I have a plain blue hat to match. The velvet was some old stuff turned, and I put it on myself. You always said that simple things suited me, and really I think I look rather nice. My appearance moved the landlady to say, 'Why, you're only a young creature after all!' I wore my finery for the first time to take Harry for the friendly visit to Dr. Harding; and do you know, I told him! It was Harry's fault.

'My mummy looks booful in her noo dress!' he said; and the doctor laughed—and so did I.

'That dress is a doctor's fee, Harry,' I said, before I knew what I was saying. I went most dreadfully red; but the doctor covered my confusion.

'Do you know,' he said, 'it is very nice of you to say that. Now let's have a look at Henry Saville Marchant! Come here, young giant!' He calls Harry the giant because he is such a wee little shrimp.

The friendly few minutes were a professional three-quarters of an hour; but Dr. Harding nearly jumped down my throat when I muttered something about the 'fee.'

'The boy is all right,' he said, 'and well able to plague his mother's life out. It is his mother that I'm anxious about.'

And then he cross-examined me again, and even sounded me.

'Well,' he pronounced, 'there's really nothing wrong; but I don't like those faints.' I have fainted once or twice lately, and he wormed a confession out of me. 'You're overworked, and want a rest. The painting in the early morning is too much for you.' I have had a few little commissions lately for painting cards, and he wormed that out, too.

'Don't you think it's better for me than seeing Harry want?' I asked, and he couldn't say anything but 'Umph!' to that.

The next day he wrote offering to send Harry to his sister in the country for a few weeks. I wrote back and said that I couldn't spare him; but the doctor called at my poor little rooms in the evening.

'Now, Mrs. Marchant,' he said, 'you aren't the sort of mother to refuse to spare your boy for a week or two, for his good, and for yours—and that's his good, too. So I know that it's a question of ways and means. You think he hasn't clothes enough, eh?'

I tried to tell lies; but I can't tell lies to Dr. Harding. So I had to own it.

'It's your pride versus Harry's health!' he pronounced. 'Well, which wins?'

In the end he took the boy himself. He made me promise not to work in the evenings, and gave me some tickets for plays and concerts. I heard 'Lohengrin' after all these years!

One proof of Dr. Harding's kindness strikes me especially. I have a card or a note every single morning to say that Harry is well. When the doctor was there he wrote himself; now his sister writes.

I feel overwhelmed by my debt of gratitude; but I console myself in thinking that he is repaid by his pleasure in doing good.

Now about yourself, Dear—

Your loving friend,

ELSA MARCHANT.

My dear Edith: I am very worried. It is my 'beautiful eyes!' When I look in the glass they are dull eyes to what they were; but they are brighter than they looked a few months ago, and if I had a little more color I think I could pass for younger than my thirty-one. Anyhow, such as I am, he likes me. He has not said so, but I very surely know.

Why should the regard of such a magnificent man worry me? you'll ask. Well, Dear, I am not in love with him. That's just all. I like him, I trust him, I admire him. That's not enough. I married once—and never again, unless I love a man with a love absolutely beyond my control. I vowed it over and over. And yet, if he asks me—it would mean so much to Harry!

Harry came back with new clothes, new toys, new life. I saved up to take him to a circus that first evening, so that he should not feel that he had returned to a dull home. Oh, Edie, how cruel it is when you can't do things to make your child happy! And, if I married Dr. Harding, Harry could have everything!

If I disliked Dr. Harding, I believe I could do it for Harry's sake; but I don't dislike him at all, I like him. That seems to make it more dreadful, more mean and disloyal, more hurtful to myself; I can't bear to do it!

I don't know why I haven't fallen in love with him. He's a better man than my poor Jack, and he would be better to me; but I was in love with Jack when I married him, and I am not in love with my good, good doctor.