

65 'Well, he just told the boys and girls things and gave them homework and asked them questions.'

'A man isn't smart<sup>1</sup> enough.'

'Sure he is. My father knows as much as my teacher.'

'He can't. A man can't know as much as a teacher.'

70 'He knows almost as much, I betcha<sup>2</sup>.'

Margie wasn't prepared to dispute<sup>3</sup> that. She said, 'I wouldn't want a strange man in my house to teach me.'

75 Tommy screamed with laughter. 'You don't know much, Margie. The teachers didn't live in the house. They had a special building and all the kids went there.'

'And all the kids learned the same thing?'

'Sure, if they were the same age.'

80 'But my mother says a teacher has to be adjusted to fit<sup>4</sup> the mind of each boy and girl it teaches and that each kid has to be taught differently.'

'Just the same they didn't do it that way then. If you don't like it, you don't have to read the book.'

'I didn't say I didn't like it,' Margie said quickly. She wanted to read about those funny schools.

85 They weren't even half finished when Margie's mother called, 'Margie! School!'

Margie looked up. 'Not yet, Mamma.'

1. Intelligent, clever.

2. I bet you (colloquial American).

3. Argue.

4. Adapt to.

90 'Now!' said Mrs Jones. 'And it's probably time for Tommy, too.'

Margie said to Tommy, 'Can I read the book some more with you after school?'

'Maybe,' he said nonchalantly. He walked away whistling<sup>1</sup>, the dusty<sup>2</sup> old book tucked beneath<sup>3</sup> his arm.

95 Margie went into the schoolroom. It was right next to her bedroom, and the mechanical teacher was on and waiting for her. It was always on at the same time every day except Saturday and Sunday, because her mother said little girls learned better if they learned at regular hours.

100 The screen was lit up, and it said: 'Today's arithmetic lesson is on the addition of proper fractions<sup>4</sup>. Please insert yesterday's homework in the proper slot.'

105 Margie did so with a sigh<sup>5</sup>. She was thinking about the old schools they had when her grandfather's grandfather was a little boy. All the kids from the whole neighborhood came, laughing and shouting in the schoolyard<sup>6</sup>, sitting together in the schoolroom, going home together at the end of the day. They learned the same things, so they could help one another on the homework and talk about it.

And the teachers were people...

110 The mechanical teacher was flashing on the screen: 'When we add fractions  $1/2$  and  $1/4$  -'

1. En sifflotant.

2. Poussiéreux.

3. Put under.

4. Fractions inférieures à l'unité.

5. Soupir.

6. Cour de récréation.

Margie was thinking about how the kids must have loved it in the old days. She was thinking about the fun they had.