

VIOLA'S MEDAL.

(Lotta Corrine Shepard.)

"O mother, the Woman's Christian Temperance Union is to have a silver medal contest and Mrs Stone wants me to speak. Do say I may! I know I can win the medal. The children in this town can't recite very well." Viola Hunt was out of breath when she had delivered this speech for she had run all the way home from the Loyal Temperance Legion meeting.

"If it will not interfere with your school work you may take part," replied her mother, "but you must not get so boastful and sure of success. Remember: 'Let him who thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.'"

Mrs Stone said I just must be in the contest," Viola continued with shining eyes. "We are to be trained after school hours, but you will train me, won't you, mother. You can do it better than any of them."

The recitations were soon assigned and the children earnestly at work. Viola, who had had the advantages of training in a city school and whose mother had taught her at home to recite well, felt not a little superior to the other contestants with their sing-song style of reciting, which was only partially eliminated by the careful efforts of the L.T.L. leader.

A few days before the contest a county officer arrived to make the final arrangements, and being a friend of Mrs Hunt, was entertained at the Hunt home. Viola had gone back to school after the noon meal and Mrs Hunt and her guest sat at the table chatting.

"My dear," said Miss Beach, "how old is Viola?"

"She will be twelve the twentieth of this month," replied Mrs Hunt.

"That's too bad," rejoined Miss Beach regretfully. "The rule is," she continued, "that contestants must be of nearly the same age, and the others are all older than that. We must have Viola in the class for she is the redeeming feature but it will be impossible to allow her to compete for the medal. I am afraid it will be a very great disappointment to the poor child."

Mrs Hunt looked thoughtful in her turn. "Suppose Viola is unwilling to speak when she knows she can not have the medal; still it would hardly

be fair to allow the audience to think she was beaten when she was not a contestant—it is a problem."

"Yes, it is a problem, and one Viola will have to solve for us," decided the county officer.

When Viola returned from school a little later her mother met her at the door. "Come in, dear. Mother has something to tell you," she commenced, a little doubtful of her success in winning Viola over to her point of view. "You speak your piece very nicely—"

"Yes, mother," broke in Viola. "When Miss Beach heard us recite today she did not correct me at all, and she did the others a lot."

"Yes, dear, we are all pleased with you and feel sure you will do well, but, Viola, Miss Beach tells me the contestants must be nearly the same age, and you know the others are two or three years older than you are." Viola opened her blue eyes in amazement for a moment, then exclaimed, "What difference does that make?"

"Enough difference to bar you out of the contest, for rules are rules, and we must obey them," her mother said in the quiet, firm tone that Viola knew usually closed an argument. Her eyes grew wrathful, and she started to protest. Then as she realised that she must give up entirely all hope of the shining silver medal Mrs Stone had shown them, a storm of tears blinded her. Mrs Hunt, her arm around her little girl and a moisture in her own eyes, proceeded, "I know, Viola, this is a bitter disappointment to you, but listen! Miss Beach says you are the only redeeming feature of the class, and she wants you to go on and speak, and she will —"

Seeing her importance to the success of the affair and hugging her last hope, with eyes now dry and flashing, Viola cried out determinedly, "I won't speak if I can't have the medal." Mrs Hunt, recognising in the child her own tenacious will, went on gently. "And she will announce to the audience that the mistake was only recently discovered, and while you are not competing for the prize, yet the number was too good to be left off the programme. How does that sound?"

"Why didn't Mrs Stone tell me I was too young, and I wouldn't have

bothered with the thing?" demanded Viola.

"Because, dear, she did not know there were any rules as to age. Now be mother's sensible daughter, and go on and speak your piece as nicely as you can, and everyone will know who spoke best, no matter who gets the medal. You will gain more in the end than that bit of silver by swallowing your disappointment and not being unladylike and obstinate. Believe mother, for she has learned these things." Viola stood weighing the matter in her own logical mind, and at length replied, cheerfully, "All right, mother, I'll do it."

"Mother is very proud of you," with a kiss.

The contesting class filed down the aisle, five boys and five girls, five Sunday suits and shiny, squeaky shoes and five dainty gowns. At the end of the line was Viola Hunt, rosy-checked, and smiling her sweetest, showing no sign of the pride that had been mastered.

When nine children had spoken, Miss Beach announced: "The next number is not part of the contest. Viola Hunt was admitted to the class because the age rule was not understood. Contestants must be about the same age, but owing to her complete preparation we insisted on her remaining on the programme. 'The Cry of To-day'—Viola Hunt."

Vividly Viola depicted the Chicago fire, a destructive flood, and a great earthquake. She reminded her audience that all this suffering had been met by generous aid from the entire nation. Taking a step forward, eyes flashing and every nerve and muscle lending force to her words, she exclaimed:

"Men and brothers! men and voters!

there's a fire that burns to-day;

There's a flood that's sweeping manhood, truth, and honour fast away;

There's a demon fierce and wrathful, shaking as an earthquake could, The foundations of the State and planting vice where virtue stood; There's a war-cry being sounded, and America's brave sons

Flocking to her tottering standard, all her noble-hearted ones—"

The little speaker continued picturing effectively the sorrow and despair caused by drink, and appealing to the