

What! Dencio?

"Pick that up," ordered Domingo.

"What! Dencio?" retorted Cirilo.

"I will report you to the principal."

"What do I care, I am not Dencio," sneered Cirilo.

Clarita, who was passing by heard the argument. She gently picked the piece of paper up and threw it in the garbage can. She was on her way to her room when a group of mischievous children began annoying her. They began calling her Dencia, and Dencio mockingly.

The teacher who was looking out of the window admired the calmness Clarita showed in taking in the jokes and insults of her classmates. He was wondering why it did not anger her a bit when everybody hated to be called by that name. He fully knew that to call someone by that name was the easiest way to make enemies in that school, or in any other school in Tondo. Clarita's attitude was indeed unusual. The teacher called her aside.

"The children were mocking you this morning, weren't they?"

"Yes, sir, and they did that because I threw in the garbage can a piece of paper one of them refused to pick up."

"Were you not in anyway hurt when they called you Dencio and Dencia?"

"Why should I be hurt, sir. Most people may not like that man, but if they know him the way I do perhaps they will be more sensible. There were incidents that made me admire him."

"What, for example."

"Once I heard him scolding a boy who was playing with fire near a nipa house. He was threatening to give the boy to a policeman if he would not stop playing with fire. Would a bad man, sir, think of that?"

"I never knew he was as thoughtful as that. Really, fire hazards would be lessen if all the citizens would do their share. Was that all why you admire him?"

"A truck load of furniture was being unloaded near our house. It happened that this man, whom everybody seems to hate, was gayly passing by. Someone jokingly invited him to help. Without further coaxing he was there carrying the heaviest piece of furniture. This he did without expecting anything in return.

"Indeed, if only all the people are as helpful . . ."

"But, sir, I like him more because he is very entertaining." Just see him carry the lantern at the head of a band. The way he walks—the manner he sways his arm to the tune of the music—the sway of his body when he makes a turn are all very amusing. And what is more, hear him declaim in the dialect. Even the best Tagalog declaimer has nothing on him. I really admire this man, sir. It does not matter a bit whether they call me by that name or not."

The teacher was very much amused to hear Clarita speak well of Dencio. He was so impressed that he brought the matter to the class and taught his pupils a lesson they never forgot.

Satisfied with the explanation, the Chief ordered to take the man to the municipal jail.

When father and mother came, the Chief of Police told them what had happened. He praised the two boys for their cleverness in outwitting the burglar.

(Next month: JOE AT THE MAGIC POOL)

HELPS FOR STUDY AND ENJOYMENT

Why did Joe stop on the way one afternoon?

What lesson did Joe learn

from the man whose money was stolen?

Did that lesson do Joe any good? How?

How did the two boys prevent the burglar from entering the house?