

HOW JOE LOST A BAD REPUTATION.

FOR OUR BOYS.

JOE THORNTON was the worst boy in school, and everybody said it. He was twelve years old now; a strong, good-looking lad, that could not read intelligibly, because his mind was bent on mischief the whole day through. With the winter teacher, a man, he just kept within bounds; but every summer he had a *brush*, as he called it, with the woman teacher, and kept her in an anxious, excited state throughout the term. This summer the presiding genius of the red school-house had a kind face, and so tender a heart that she had never once thought of its capabilities of becoming steely, when circumstances might cause it to harden. Joe always had a name for his teacher. The winter schoolmaster had been Long Shanks; the lady who had taught the summer previous was Maypole, and the little girl who smiled down upon them this summer was Rosebud. As this was her first school, Joe confided to the boys that he should postpone breaking her in for a while; so, for a few days, she was left to the illusion that the group of little children around her was made up of so many cherubs, and then he began to lay plans for a siege.

His base of operating at first always consisted in defying the rules; so his first offense was staying outside half an hour or so, after school had called at recess. Now, the summer before, he had not only remained outside, but he had pelted the school-house wall as well; so you see he meant to be a little forbearing, after all.

Well, what did Rosebud do but detain him as many minutes after the others were dismissed as he had remained absent.

Under ordinary circumstances Joe would have just marched out and paid no attention to the teacher's command. But the little schoolmistress stood quietly by the door and looked at him; and though he was well aware that, physically, he was much the stronger, there was in her eyes a look of power that he did not resist. But when once set free he gave a whoop upon the school-house steps, and told the boys when he joined them that Rosebud and he had got to have a brush, and that was just what it was coming to.

On his way to school Joe passed a little, grimy smithy, where the village horses were shod. The proprietor of this establishment, Jack Jones, and he were old acquaintances. The next morning, when Joe passed for school, Jack stood in the door, looking as sooty as his shop. He was a huge fellow, sinewy and powerful, and looked as though he might have been made at his own forge; and yet in this steely case throbbed a heart soft and warm and exceedingly tender. Rosebud, in passing that way once or twice, had looked into his shop with seeming interest, because it was work, and Jack had fancied that he caught the same look in her face that had belonged to a little daughter of his, who had rested now seven years under the daisies.

"Joe," said Jack, "John Town told me last night that you was goin' to lick the teacher."

Joe straightened up and looked important. "Wal,

yes, Jack, I do think of commencin' operations, a little, in that line. She's the delicatest little thing, and it won't do to be very savage, and it won't do to have her bossin' of a feller 'round, nuther, you know."

"See here, Joe," said Jack, "I don't believe you ever had a fust class whippin' in your life, and I'll tell you what I'll do. You teeh a hair of that little gal's head and I'll give you a sound maulin', as sure's my name's Jack Jones," and Jack brought down his sledge hammer of a fist with emphasis on to his leathern apron.

Joe put his thumb up to his nose and marched on. He did not care much for Jack's threat; he felt so sure he could keep out of his way, and he *did* mean to give the young schoolmistress a scare, and this was the way he would do it: he would break rules again, and she would call him out, but he wouldn't go. He felt pretty sure she was gritty enough to undertake to whip him; then he would catch the stick, break it, throw it over her head, assume so offensive an attitude, in short, that she would be glad to retire to her desk and leave him master of the field. This was to be the programme. It was all to be done without bloodshed, and let Jack Jones catch him if he could.

So a little while after school had taken up that morning he commenced throwing spit-balls; but Rosebud, who was attending to a class, seemed entirely oblivious. When she had finished she walked up the aisle to do sums. She was at work a little back of his seat, when pop went a ball, and hit Tony Smith on the chin.

At the instant, from some mysterious fold of Rosebud's dress, flew a long, tough, willowy blue-beach, and gave several quick slashes around the shoulders of Joe's linen coat before he seemed to comprehend the position. Then he sprang up and caught at the stick. But the blows came thicker and faster, first at one point, then at another, until the whole stick was worn up, and he had not succeeded in catching it once. Joe was defeated, but not conquered, and he would get the better of her yet, as sure as fate he told the boys at recess. So all day long, while his wounds smarted, he pondered some new method of assault; and, no doubt, Rosebud would have been equal to the occasion had nothing supervened. But as Joe went home that night with head bent, still studying at his problem, he was caught by Jack, who held him as if in one of his own iron vises. He carried him into his shop and laid him across his anvil block.

"Hand me the hammer," said Jack to his man, who was at work at the bellows, that puffed and snorted, and threw the angry sparks up, snapping and crackling. Jack turned the boy over on the block, held both his hands in one of his, placed his knee upon him, and raised his free arm.

"Hold—hold on, Jack," blubbered Joe. "I—I didn't do it. I never teched 'er. But she gin me a awful wallupin'."

Jack hesitated.

"I've hearn long enough that Joe Thornton was the wust boy in school, and was travelin' on 's fast's he could to the gallows. He'd better die a respectable death here,