

YOUNG FOLKS' CORNER.

HOW?

"How shall I a habit break? As you did that habit make. As you gathered, you must lose; As you yielded, now refuse. Thread by thread the strain we twist Till they bind us neck and wrist; Thread by thread the patient hand Must unweave ere free we stand. As we builded stone by stone, We must toil, unhelped, alone, Till the wall is overthrown. —John Boyle O'Reilly.

Poor-House Bob.

J. L. Harbour in Golden Days. A good many years ago I taught a small village school in a thinly-settled county on the prairies of Illinois.

The school-house was as much unlike even the country school-house of the present day as it could well be. Most of the houses in the neighborhood were primitive structures, but comfortable within. They had great wide fireplaces, into which they went such huge back-logs as I have not seen for many years.

My school-house was of rough logs chinked with mud. There was a small window at the side of the door, and one on either side of the house. A fire-place almost as wide as the house filled the other end of the room. The floor was that provided by Nature; the seats were mostly of slabs, so clumsily and carelessly made that, as the boys used to say, they tumbled over if you "even looked at them," and of course there was no lack of boys who diligently and gladly improved every opportunity that offered for upsetting the seats and the pupils who sat on them.

On cold and stormy days we would pile the oak and hickory logs high in the old fireplace, and bid defiance to wind and snow, poor as the house was.

A good many men who have achieved fame and fortune were boys in jeans and homespun in that old log school-house.

I did not begin teaching until late in November, and on the third day of school it stormed furiously all day, so that the attendance was very small, most of the boys and girls having to come two and three miles over snow-covered roads.

I did not expect any new scholars, but one came a few minutes after school had been called to order. It was so cold, and there were so few scholars, that I had given them permission to come as close to the fire as they pleased, and they were sitting a dozen or more of them—in a half circle before the roaring flames, when the door opened softly, and there came into the room a small, poorly-dressed, homely boy of about fourteen years, with a thin, old, old face. He did not have any overcoat, his boots were ragged and were not mates, his trousers were old and thin, and his coat was out at the elbows. He was blue and shivering with the cold; in his hand he carried an old, dog-eared blue spelling book and a cracked slate.

"How do you do?" he said, with a smile, as he closed the door behind him.

"Good morning," I replied. "Come to the fire and get warm. Make room for him, some of you boys here."

But none of the boys seemed inclined to move, and I heard Bent Sifer whisper to Harvey Drake:

"I ain't going to move none for Poor-house Bob."

"I ain't either," replied Harvey. "Poor-house porpers ain't no business coming to school, anyhow."

"Benton Sifer," I said, "you and Harvey go back to your seats. Your faces are fairly red with the heat, and you ought to be willing to give new comers a chance to get warm."

"The boys sullenly obeyed, and I said to the new scholar:

"Here, my boy, come and take this seat. What is your name?"

"Bob," he said.

"What else?" I asked.

"Bob Crale's my real name, but folks round here call me Poor-house Bob, 'cause I live to the porch-house."

"Well," I said, "I shall not call you that, no matter where you live. Are you going to come to school right along?"

"Will if I kin."

"And why can't you?"

"Well, some days I have too much work to do to come to school. But pap he coaxed me to let me come to day, and the keeper of the poor-house says he thinks I kin come such as half the time."

At recess-time Bob told me more about himself.

"My mother died four years ago," he said, "an' pap an' me would of got along 'right, only pap got a shock o' palsy, 'n' he kin't have no use o' his right hand an' leg, 'n' never kin use 'em agin'—never! I thought I could make a livin' for both of us, an' we did, along some way or 'nother for most two years, but pap got so bad I didn't da'nt leave him to work, an' finally we jes' had to do it—we had to tuk to the pore-house."

Bob told me this in a spirit of deep humiliation, which gave place to a look and tone of self-resolve as he added:

"But I tell you, when I go in to stay in the pore-house! I gn up to it at last, 'cause pap had to be cared for better!" I could care for him an' he ain't never been willin' for me to leave him. Then too," he added, proudly, "we ain't 'porpers' after all, for I work the pore-farm. You ask Mr. Deane, the keeper. He'll tell you that I earn out keep there, 'n' I work hard there, an' folks that says we're 'porpers' lies!"

"There, there!" I said, "don't use that word."

"Well, it's so, anyhow!" he persisted. "I'm gettin' pretty big now, an' if folks don't stop callin' me Pore-house Bob, somebody will get hurt, see if they don't."

Somebody did get hurt, and that right shortly. I had had time for me to bring in another hickory back-log, and when I returned two boys were rolling and tumbling about on the ground floor, upsetting benches and desks. Just as I entered the room the water-pail went over drenching them both.

The boys were Bob and Bent Sifer, and they were engaged in a hand-to-hand encounter, with the odds in favor of Bob, for he was "on top" when I seized him by the collar and Bent by the shoulder, and brought them both to their feet with a jerk that made their teeth clink together.

"He begun it," said Bent, sullenly.

"He called me 'Porper Bob,'" protested Bob, "an' I said I'd lick the feller that called me that. I said so over 'n over agin'."

"See here, boys," I said sharply that night after school, when all my pupils but Bob and Bent had gone home, "this won't do."

"It won't do for him to call me names," said Bob sullenly.

"Who's a-calling names," retorted Bent. "You'd be if you da't to, and the—" "Hush, hush!" I said.

And the dialogue ended then and there between Bob and Bent.

What I said and did need not be recorded here. Bob and Bent did not again come to blows that winter, although they clashed in other ways. The poor-house

was as good as any other house in the neighborhood, and all the families were poor enough, but it was considered a deep and lasting disgrace to become an inmate of the "pore-house."

Although, as I took occasion to find out, Bob's story was quite true, and he stayed at the porch-house only that he might be with and care for his invalid father, and notwithstanding the fact that he worked like a drudge on the poor farm, there were not lacking unkindly disposed boys and girls who regarded him with great disfavor because he stayed under the porch-house roof. In their eyes there could be no extenuating circumstances for such disgrace, and Bob was daily made to feel that he was a social outcast in the aristocratic community in which he lived.

I was surprised to know that some of the parents entertained the same feeling toward Bob.

One day old Peter Shafer, one of the trustees of the school district, overtook me on my way home from school, and invited me to "tumble in an' hev a ride."

So I "tumbled in" to the rattling old wagon, and presently Mr. Shafer said:

"I hear Pore-house Bob's a-comin' 'reg'lar to school now."

"Yes, as regularly as he can," I said; "he comes a part of every day."

"Wall, I reckon the boy ort to hev some education, but it's kinder gallin' to some of us to hev our children 'sociating with pore-house trash."

"Indeed, Mr. Shafer," I said, warmly, "Bob is a well-behaved boy, and he is not a pauper in the popular sense of the term."

"He lives in the pore-house, an' lives on what the taxes pervides, don't he?"

"He pays his way," I said. "The keeper of the pore farm told me himself that Bob mo'te than paid in hard work the expense he and his father were to the county."

"Wall, folks that lives to the pore-house is gin'rally called porpers," said Mr. Shafer, doggedly, "and I reckon it's a good name for 'em. I don't think it's hardly fair that they kin go to school, an' get with an' hev the same privileges as decent folks' children. I never see nothin' good come of a pore-house porper yet."

Nothing I could do or say could create a kindly feeling for poor Bob among his schoolmates, and his own good conduct counted for nothing.

He was a sensitive boy, and felt his position so keenly that he had come daily in prevailing on him to remain in the school; but he learned so fast, and was in many ways such a promising boy, that I was determined to keep him in school if possible.

Among my relatives living back in my Massachusetts home was an uncle, who was a man of considerable wealth and something of a philanthropist. I owed my own education to his generosity, and I often sent him letters telling him of my school and of my life in the west. One day he sent me a letter, a part of which ran as follows:

"I still have a scholarship left in Sawyer's college, and I have been thinking that I could not put it to better use than to let some of these bright boys in your school earn it, if they have the spirit to do so. I don't intend giving it to anybody. Whoever gets it must work for it."

"There is, as you know, a preparatory grade in the college, so that pupils who can even read and write and spell fairly well can go, and my scholarship includes the preparatory department. I will see to it that the boy will have a chance to earn his board while in school and something more than his board during vacations."

"When I was a boy in a country school spelling matches were all the rage and the best speller was usually the best in his other studies. So you can settle who shall have the scholarship by a grand stand-up-and-spell-down spelling match on the last day of school. The one that stands up longest shall have the scholarship."

I read this letter to the school one afternoon when all of the trustees and several other visitors were present.

It created a great sensation, and nothing else was talked of for a long time. As many as a dozen boys declared their intention of competing for the scholarship. Sawyer's college was for boys and young men only; so that the girls of the school could not compete.

Benton Sifer, Billy Shafer (a son of old Peter Shafer) and Harvey Drake were the best scholars in the school, and I felt quite confident that the scholarship would fall to one of them if they competed for it; and that they intended entering the contest, each determined to win, was soon made manifest.

It seemed to me that each of them must soon know the spelling-book "by heart," at the rate they studied it, writing and re-writing the words on their slates, and clamoring for spelling matches almost every evening.

We had a great many spelling-schools in the little old school-house that winter, and a spelling contest in school every Friday afternoon. The boys went to all the spelling schools they could hear of in other districts, and gained the reputation of being able to "spell down" any school in the county.

In the eagerness and excitement of the time they almost ceased their persecution of poor Bob Crale, and when they did twist their tongues referred in some way to the spelling contest.

"You'd better try it," I heard Billy Shafer say, tauntingly, one day. "The college would be proud of a poor-house!"

I stepped forward in time to check further speech from Billy and an onslaught on Bob's part. He turned toward me, white with passion, with a grim, dogged look on his freckled face.

He was a fairly good speller, but in other studies the three boys named were very fierce as the term drew to a close.

When the great day came the little school house could not contain all who came to witness the contest.

It was a warm, sunny afternoon in early April, so warm that we could have the windows open, and a crowd stood around every window and at the open door.

Billy Shafer and Harvey Drake "chose up." Every scholar in the school who could spell at all was chosen. They took their places in two rows, facing each other, and were to "spell across" until one side had "spelled down" the other.

Then all were to rise again, and the final contest was to be made. As each pupil failed to spell a word, he sat down, and the one standing last would be declared the winner.

Harvey and Billy had chosen sides, and

we were about to begin to spell, when I noticed that Bob Crale had not been chosen.

"Wait a moment," I said. "Here is Bob Crale; one of you choose him."

"We've even sides now," said Billy. "I chose last; you can have him," said Harvey.

"It don't make any difference if the sides are even now," I said, sharply. "I intend that Bob shall spell. Here Bob," I added, "go on Harvey's side."

"I guess you ain't gained much," said Billy to Harvey, in a half whisper, emboldened by the presence of his father, who still thought that "porpers" hadn't ort to go to school with decent folks."

Then the spelling began.

In about an hour Harvey's side had spelled the other side down, Billy missing purposely, I think, that the great contest might the sooner begin.

There was perfect stillness in the room when sixty boys of the school stood in a row ready for the final contest.

Bob had missed "tyrannous" in the first contest, spelling it with but one "n," and several of the boys had uttered maliciously when he sat down. They tittered again when he took his place with the others for the final contest.

He was the thinnest, palest, poorest-clad boy of them all, and I wondered that he stood up with the others in the final contest, but was glad that he had the pluck to do so when defeat seemed so sure. The other boys had stood up long after he had sat down in the preceding trial.

For fifteen minutes not a word was missed. Then four boys missed "paralysis." Then two boys missed "paralytic."

Four more failed to spell a word that I do not remember, two more failed on "phytochimy," and Bob spelled it correctly, to the evident surprise of the other boys as well as my own.

Bent Dean and Lou Beard missed "synergy," and Bob, pale and trembling, spelled it correctly. The excitement increased.

A moment later I pronounced the word "cylinder" to Harvey Drake. Without a moment's hesitation, he spelled it with two "y's."

"Next," I said.

"Didn't spell it right?" he asked.

"Spell it again," I said.

"O-y-l-l-n-d-e-r," he said; and I passed the word to Peter Sifer.

He hesitated, seemed confused and excited, then confidently spelled it—with an "s."

"Next," I said.

And Bob, pale to the lips, but with perfect steadiness and clearness of tone, spelled it right.

He and Billy Shafer were now left. They stood face to face, both resolved to win.

A flush of anger spread over the grim features of Peter Shafer.

"Beat him Billy!" he cried out, harshly. "Don't let no pore-house porper spell you down!"

This ill-advised speech won Bob sympathizers and put him on his mettle.

Mr. Deane, keeper of the poor-house, retaliated for Bob.

"Mind your p's and q's, Bob," he said, "and show 'em that paupers ain't of a necessary fool."

For forty minutes the boys spelled slowly, steadily and with extreme caution. Bob amazed me and the school.

Final y gave the word "pererration" to Billy.

He hesitated, bit his lips in perplexity, and began to spell. He spelled the first syllable and stopped.

"Spell it right, boy!" cried his father.

"P-e-r-r-a-t-i-o-n," he said so slowly and distinctly that all heard beyond the possibility of mistake.

"I am sorry, Billy," I said, "but that is not right. Can you spell it Bob?"

"P-e-r-r-a-t-i-o-n," he said.

And a great shout went up from the crowd while I was shaking both of Bob's trembling hands.

"I wan't a bit surprised," said Mr. Deane to me, afterward. "If you could have seen the way that boy studied his old speller nights! He'd sit there by the fire-place for hours at a time, and me and my wife and his father would take turn about pronouncing to him. He keeps saying he can't go anyhow, 'cause he can't leave his father, but I'm 'fraid his father won't need him long; and a body can't feel so awful bad, when they know how the poor man suffers. He told me a dozen times he'd be ready to go if Bob could only get that scholarship, and I reckon he'll be ready now."

The poor, crippled old father was quite ready to go when the messenger of death called him, two weeks later.

Bob went back with me, and in the fall entered the preparatory department of the college.

If I were to give his real name, now, some of my readers would recognize it as the name of a man who has held many offices of trust and honor in a western state, and who is now a good and rich man, although he was once only "pore-house Bob."

Questions in Science of Government.

1. What is the object of government? 2. What is needed that men may live together in peace, and what is the office of government with respect to this end? 3. Is civil society of human or divine origin? 4. Is the state a voluntary society or the result of a social compact? 5. What is meant by a social compact? 6. What is the fundamental idea of the state? 7. Define an absolute monarchy, a limited monarchy, democracy, a republic, and give examples. 8. What are the three departments of government? 9. Where is the legislative power of the government of the United States vested? 10. How is the house of representatives composed, and who may vote for representatives? 11. What limitation is there to the number of representatives? 12. Why are senators chosen by the legislatures of the states? 13. Who presides in the senate when the president of that body is to be tried? 14. How are the speaker and the officers of the house of representatives chosen? 15. What is meant by impeachment, and where is the power of such an act vested? 16. Where is the power to declare war vested? 17. What persons are eligible to the office of president? 18. How may the president be removed from office? 19. Where is the judicial power of the United States vested? 20. What are the three national courts, and of what does each consist?

A Game of Bluff. A gentleman took a dummy in one of the clothing stores on High street for a burglar last night. He watched it for some time, and, becoming tired of watching, he remarked: 'If you have got grit enough to stand there, knowing that I am looking at you, I will not inform the police.'—Norfolk Virginian.

The Old Silver Spoon. How fresh in my mind are the days of my sickness. When I tossed me in pain, all fevered and sore; The burning the name, the sinking and weakness; And even the old spoon that my medicine bore.

The old silver spoon, the family medicine bore. The sick-chamber spoon that my medicine bore.

How fresh were my fever-perched lips to receive it, How nauseous the stuff that it bore to my tongue, And the pain at my inward, oh, naught could relieve it, Thought tears of disgust from my eyeballs it wrung.

The old silver spoon, the medicine spoon, How awful the stuff that it left on my tongue! Such is the effect of nauseous, gripping medicines which make the sick room a memory of horror. Dr. Pierce's Pleasant Purgative Pellets, on the contrary, are small, sugar-coated, easy to take, purely vegetable and perfectly effective. 25 cents a vial.

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