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THE LAST CASE OF CORPORAL PUNISHMENT.

BY F. E. C. ROBBINS.

The old grammar school master looked rather thin and white that morning as he sat dividing his attention between his breakfast and the morning paper, and apparently getting little satisfaction from either.

"Well, it seems that they have done it!" he broke out, at last.

"Who have done what, papa?" asked his daughter Minnie.

For answer Mr. Gilson read aloud, in a tone of deep disgust, a paragraph from the report of the school committee meeting of the night before:

"After considerable discussion, the committee voted to adopt the rule, which had been introduced at the last meeting and laid upon the table, prohibiting corporal punishment in the schools of this city."

"Oh, well, I wouldn't worry about it," said his wife, soothingly. "You'll get along somehow. There must be other ways of governing a school."

"Of course there are other ways, and I have used them. I hope you don't think that I have been carrying on my school by brute force. The fact is, I don't need the rod, but once in a while a boy does. It may save him from something worse. Why, looking back over my experience of thirty years in the Cushman Grammar-school, I can recall case after case where a good whipping has worked wonders. For instance, when the present mayor of this city was in school—"

"Come, my dear, your breakfast is getting cold," interrupted Mrs. Gilson.

"The truth is," he resumed, after a few minutes' silence, "this thing is aimed at me. They think I am an old fogy and they want to get rid of me. Well, perhaps they had better have their way," and Mr. Gilson rose gloomily from the table and prepared to go to his school.

"I think that those committeemen are just as mean as they can be!" declared Minnie, when her father had left the house. "Old fashioned or not, papa is the best teacher that Cushman ever had, or is likely to have, and they ought to appreciate him."

"Your father wouldn't take things to heart so if he were well," said her mother. "That gripe is hanging round him yet, and he really isn't fit to be in school. No wonder he looks on the dark side of everything."

Mr. Gilson certainly looked on the dark side of school life that day. Right in his own room of ninth-grade pupils there seemed to be a conspiracy to set at defiance all the traditions of good government that had grown up there for years. And for once in his life the master could not cope with the situation.

"I suppose they are celebrating the abolition of corporal punishment," he said to himself. "They may be a little premature, for I have received no notice of the committee's action. But I never yet punished a pupil because I didn't know what else to do, and I shall hardly begin today. If I didn't feel so weak, and if my head wouldn't ache so, I could bring order out of this chaos in two minutes."

"Master Parker, I am surprised at you!" he said, alone.

There was occasion for surprise, for no one could remember when Guy Parker had been spoken to before by way of rebuke. Out of school Guy was brimful of fun and greatly

liked by his mates. In school he was "a perfect gentleman," as Mr. Gilson had more than once assured Guy's father, the chairman of the school committee.

But today Guy seemed to be tampering with his reputation as the best boy in school.

"Master Parker, that is the third time that I have seen you pass a note," said Mr. Gilson, sternly. "It must not happen again!" And with patience almost exhausted he turned his attention to a division that was making sorry work of a reading lesson.

"You don't know what an anodyne is?" he said, sharply, to the overgrown boy who just then had the floor. "Haven't I told you always to look up the meaning of words before you come to the recitation?"

"I did look it up, but I forgot. Oh, I remember now! It's something to a sausage pan."

"What do you mean by that, sir?" thundered the teacher, while another giggle went round the room.

"That is what the book says, anyway!" muttered the boy, producing his pocket dictionary. Then, after a more careful scrutiny, he hastened to correct himself: "No, I meant it's something to assuage pain."

That will do. You may be seated," said Mr. Gilson, in no mood to join in the laugh that followed.

"Master Gray, was a note just passed to you? I thought so. Hand it back to the person from whom you received it. Master Jackson, do the same. Master Parker, the same."

"If you please, sir," said Guy, "there is no one for me to pass it to. I wrote it myself."

"Very well. Bring it to me."

With an air of bravado quite out of character, Guy came forward with the note.

"You may go to the office, Master Parker," said Mr. Gilson, trying to speak calmly. "I will see you after I have finished my recitations."

But the last vestige of coolness left the old teacher as he glanced at the scrap of paper that Guy had laid upon the desk, and saw what had been scrawled upon it.

Old Gilly would like to lick somebody only he dares not.

He sprang from his chair and hastened after the departing culprit, and three minutes later another case of corporal punishment had been added to the record of the Cushman Grammar School.

Whatever Guy Parker's sufferings on that occasion may have been, they could hardly have equaled those of his teacher. As Mr. Gilson set out for home at the close of a miserable day, it seemed to him that he had completely spoiled the record of which he had been so proud. Never before had he lost control of himself before his school, or whipped a pupil in anger, or defied the expressed wishes of his superiors. And the boy who had suffered at his hands was the one of all the school that had most deserved forgiveness for a single lapse from good conduct.

For the first time the teacher was ready to acknowledge to himself that flogging was essentially a brutal measure, to which a teacher should be ashamed to resort.

But the fact that Guy's father was chairman of the school committee did not disturb Mr. Gilson in the least. In his present mood he was almost ready to hope that the committee would call him to account for what he had done, in which case he would surely resign. And thus would come to an inglorious ending his thirty years of work in the school.

He was somewhat surprised, however, after reaching home, to receive a message requesting him to appear before the committee that very evening.

"It's a shame for you to be obliged to go out at night!" said his wife, anxiously. "I wonder what that committee can want of you."

"I can tell you better after I get back," replied Mr. Gilson, grimly.

When he entered the school committee's room in the city building he found all the members present, and the chairman at once proceeded to the matter in hand.

"Mr. Gilson," he said, "you have taught in our city for many years, without a break."

At this Mr. Gilson bowed assent.

"And the time has come at last when the committee feel that they are willing to dispense with your services"—the old teacher caught his breath, but he looked the speaker straight in the eye—"for a few weeks," said the chairman, completing his sentence.

"The fact is," he continued, with a smile, "you need rest and an opportunity to recover health and strength; and we are going to give it to you, and force it upon you if necessary. The school was never in better condition, but we cannot afford to take any risks with our best teacher, whom we should find it so hard to replace. So we have unanimously voted you a leave of absence, with pay, for the next two months, and we expect you to devote the time to the business of getting well and strong."

"By the way," he added, quiet irrelevantly, "there seems to be something going on in the hall above. Let's go up and see what it is."

And at that the committee, without the



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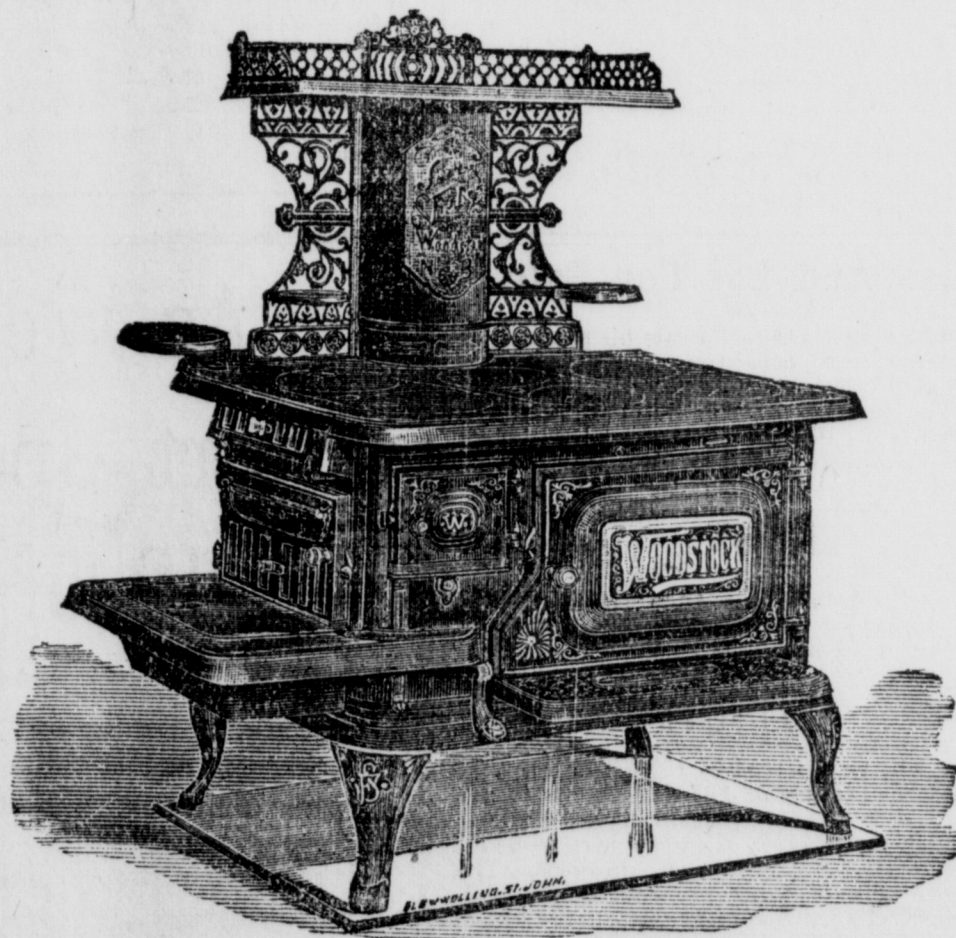
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formality of an adjournment, started for the assembly hall, taking the astonished Mr. Gilson along with them.

He was dimly conscious of a large company of people, young and middle-aged, of a hearty round of applause as he entered the room, and presently, of the fact that he was standing upon the platform, facing the mayor of the city who seemed to be making a speech. And after some minutes he began to realize what the mayor was saying.

"I suppose that some of us old fellows would hardly recognize the school if we were to go back to it. Methods change and new ideas come to the front. I hear that even the good old custom of flogging a boy when he goes wrong has been done away with."

"But some things do not go out of fashion. The qualities of mind and heart that have inspired your teaching stand the test of time and cannot be improved upon. And it is in grateful recognition of these that we, your pupils, present and past, have assembled here to-night."

"Mr. Gilson, we have heard it whispered that the school committee intend to give you a well-earned leave of absence from your duties, and it would please us much if you would consent to spend the time as, in a sense, our guest. We ask you to accept this purse, which contains enough for a little trip across the water for yourself and family, and to visit to some of the countries that we used to try to tell you about, in the geography class."

"We wish you a pleasant journey, a safe return, and many more years of splendid service in the Cushman Grammar School."

The morning paper gave the mayor's speech in full, and it also reported the remarks of other gentlemen present. But one little speech, made later in the evening, escaped the attention of the newspaper man.

"Mr. Gilson," said Guy Parker, seizing an opportunity for a quiet word with his teacher, "I hope you'll forget how we all carried on in school to-day. We were so full of what was going to happen that we just couldn't hold in. And about that note. You see, I've heard so many people lately bragging about your having flogged them when they went to school that it made me feel envious."

"And all at once it came over me to-day that it would be quite an honor if I could say that I was the last boy that ever was whipped in the Cushman Grammar-School. So I up and wrote that note, hoping that you would capture it. I thought that that would do the business, if anything would. You won't lay it up against me, will you, sir?"

The old teacher, as he looked down into the frank, merry face, forgot all the pain that the boy had caused him.

"It's all right, Guy," he said, with a smile. "And I think you may rest assured that the honor, such as it is, will never be taken away from you."

The Kilmaroo.

The man in the train was carrying something in a closed box. Every now and then he would open the lid cautiously peep in and then close the lid mysteriously. His actions soon excited the curiosity of a naturalist who sat on the seat by him. Unable to conceal his inquisitiveness, the naturalist touched him on the shoulder and said:

"I beg pardon sir, but I am curious to know what you have in that box. What is it?"

"Oh, I don't want to tell; it will get all over the compartment."

"Is it a savage animal?"

"Yes kills everything."

Then the man peeped in again.

Growing still more curious, the naturalist begged him to tell its name.

"It's a kilmaroo from the center of Africa. Very savage beast; eats men and—"

"And what do you feed it on?" interrupted the naturalist.

"Snakes, sir—snakes."

"And where do you get snakes enough to feed such monster!" asked the eager naturalist.

"Well sir my brother drinks a good deal. He has delirium tremens, and when he sees snakes, we just catch 'em and—"

"But those are imaginary snakes," argued the naturalist. "How can you feed a savage on imaginary snakes?"

"Well the fact is," said the man, opening the box and blowing into it—"don't say a word—but—between you and me—this is an imaginary kilmaroo."

Hard on the Drummers.

Once upon a time a litter of kittens came to the home of little six-year-old Susie. As is usual at such times, the old mother cat was very much in evidence. One day, after the kittens were old enough to run around the house, little Susie was playing with one of them and was overheard saying as she fondled it:

"Kitty, I know who your mother is, an' I know who your brothers an' sisters is, but, kitty, I don't know who your father is—I spect your father must be a traveling man."

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