CURING THE COWARD

Teacher Engaged in Real Character-Making When She Taught William to Fight His Battles

In response to a summons, Johnny and William stood in the office of the school principal.

Johnny was a fighter. Russian, Indian and Canadian blood flowed in his veins and he was the adopted son of a Greek. This combination of race and environment could scarcely produce a tame temperament. So little Johnny loved the thumping of fists and the rolling of his antagonist and himself in the dirt.

William was not even a self-defender. When attacked at school he usually ran to shelter under his teacher's authority; when not in school, to any convenient protection. Pure Swedish blood coursed through William's arterial system, but any Augustus Adolphus instincts which were his by rightful racial inheritance were being crushed out by the discipline of an unduly pious father.

Johnny, undersized, alert, faced his school principal with the assurance that comes from fighting for self in life's struggles. William, overgrown, phlegmatic, stood in the attitude of one accustomed to dodging blows rather than to parrying them or striking back.

Miss Farrar sat looking at the two concrete factors in a problem which had been troubling her for some time. She had thought out a solution based on a theory which she believed sound and which she also believed would give a true result that would be lasting. An event, in which the two boys were the principal actors, seen by her at the noon recess, had given her the conditions for testing her solution.

"William," she apostrophized mentally, "you have always been a baby but you are getting the look of a coward. I don't like the change in your eyes and your hands have sneaking movements. You will be striking in the back next.

"Johnny, you are a funny little bully! You are becoming insolent. I fear you are even getting brutal. You need to be conquered by one of your own victims. What you need, William, you baby elephant, is to be taught that God helps him who helps himself. And it seems to be up to me to give you both what you need."

The principal stood up and gave the little boys a long look. Miss Farrar's long looks had a reputation among the pupils in the school. "Come with me," she said quietly.

Johnny went with a swagger, winking knowingly at shuffling William but the silent ordeal in the office had been trying. William's tears were ready to trickle down his freckled face and even Johnny's dark cheeks showed red.

Entering an empty recitation room Miss Farrar said suddenly, "Who licked in the scrap to-day?"

"Me," piped Johnny striking a bantam-cock attitude.

"Is that so, William?" asked Miss Farrar, turning to the lad.

"Yes, Miss Farrar," blubbered William. "I never touched him and I told him it was on the school grounds and he must not fight but he hit like as he always is."

"Why didn't you pitch in and lick him? You are bigger than he is," said the principal.

"Why," stammered the astonished William, "my father he says he will lick me awful if I fight. He always says that it is only bad and wicked boys like Johnny as fights."

Pride illumined Johnny's little dark face at this tribute to his fame and prowess.

"Then you are going to keep on letting Johnny tease you and knock you around, are you?" queried the principal.

"O Miss Farrar!" sniffed William. "My father he all time says do like the Bible says about soft answers. When Johnny calls me cry baby, I say soft, 'Go chase yourself up around a tree once.' And to-day when he called me 'Swede,' I say soft to him, 'You're one by-gosh Indian like what lives down on the beach and eats rotten fish.' Then Johnny runs after me and swats me."

"Did he hit back, Johnny?" asked Miss Farrar.

"Naw," answered Johnny. "He jest bellered, 'I'll tell teacher!' "

"Boys," said the principal, "the only way that I see to square things up between you two is a real fight. So far, Johnny, you have done the fighting and, William, you have done the crying. Sometimes the only way for boys to settle their quarrels is to fight it out. I believe in fair fight where both take part. The reason I have brought you here is that you may have plenty of room. You are to fight until one of you is whipped. I am going to be umpire to see that there is fair play.

"Johnny, you stand on this side of the line and William on that side."

Johnny, eager for a fray, threw the lock of hair out of his left eye with a toss of his head, stepped into the "ring" and assumed an attitude both offensive and defensive.

William, fear in his eyes, shrank back. "O Miss Farrar!" he boohooed. "My father he all time says do——"

"Stop!" said the principal sternly. "Your father has nothing to do with this."

Miss Farrar's blue eyes grew steely.

"William," she said, "you are a big baby! For two years your teachers and I have taken your part against other boys smaller than you. We will do this no longer. You must learn to take your own part, fight your own battles. Stop crying. If you do not know how to fight, I'll show you how.

"Brace up. Be a man. Take your place. I'm going to make special rules for this fight. One is, Johnny, you are not to hit William until he hits you a pretty hard blow. Then you can pitch in. Neither of you must hit below the belt or on the face. All ready. Your first blow, William."

"I can't!" bawled William.

The fighting blood of Scottish ancestors began to revolt in the principal's heart. Conquering a desire to shake the coward, she said:

"Shut your fists this way. No, tight. It's your knuckles that hurt. Now think that you are driving a stake in the ground or splitting wood and draw back and hit Johnny as hard as you can on the chest."

William wiped away the tears on his left coat sleeve and holding out his right arm limply, approached Johnny as though he were a sleeping bulldog or a stick of dynamite and touched him on the chest with the back of his hand.

Johnny giggled.

"Good!" exclaimed the self-appointed pugilist trainer. "But keep your fist doubled up and hit very hard—like this." The principal struck a sample blow on William's broad chest. "Just to stir him up," she thought.

It worked. With a last gasping sob, William adjusted his fist and warily approached the indifferent, amused Johnny and planted something like a blow on the small area of the fighter's chest. The young pugilist, taken by surprise, staggered.

This was first blood to brawny William. His eye brightened, his big hulking shoulders straightened, the primal man began to waken. Then the battle was on. Fists flew out with more rapidity than skill. Johnny, the experienced, kept his head, used his eyes and made his blows count. William, drunk with the joy of his new-found power, struck blindly but each blow increased in force. Perspiration instead of tears soon streamed down his face.

At the end of eight minutes just as Johnny seemed to be getting the worst of it, the umpire called, "Time!"

"Rest a few minutes," she said.

William, now a young animal, with something of the man's sense of power of defence and offence awakened, was restive under the enforced interruption. Johnny looked with some fear and considerable respect at the aroused Swede, but as yet his thin dark face showed no sign of yielding.

"I'm willing to lay a stake of a month's salary that my solution will turn out to be correct," thought the principal as she noted the changes in the two human factors in her problem.

"Well, William," she said, "you can fight for yourself."

"Yes, Miss Farrar, I tank I can lick him if I try once again." William almost grinned.

The next round was a battle royal. Step by step the Swede backed the Russian-Indian into a corner until at last he panted, "Let's stop!" His eyes told the story.

"Time!" called the umpire.

"Are you beaten, Johnny?" she asked.

"Well, William, he has learned to fight some and I'm kind of tired," he gasped.

His backward trail across the room was marked by drops of blood from his skinned knuckles.

The umpire ached to bind up the hands so pitifully small and to bathe the dripping faces of both boys. Hers must be the Spartan's part, so the kindly impulses were trampled down. The laughter that had been dangerously near the surface more than once during the active solution of her problem was choked back and Miss Farrar looked seriously at the steaming little primitives who with heaving chests stood eyeing each other.

"How is it, William? Have you had enough?"

"He ain't said I've licked him yet," answered the lad.

The third round was soon over. William closed with his antagonist clumsily but effectually. There was a short, fierce struggle, then down they both went on the floor, William on top, pinning his old tormentor flat. "Say you're licked once! Holler 'nough' yet!" he panted.

No answer from Johnny but a claw-like hand wriggled loose and got hold of William's hair.

"Shame!" called the umpire.

The son of Sweden bore hard on his fallen foe, showing no sign of mercy to his enemy.

"Make him let me up," at last gasped the under lad.

"Holler 'nough!' Holler you're licked already yet!" grunted William, pressing a little harder on Johnny's breathing apparatus.

"Aw, go on! Ain't you got me down?" The defiance was in Johnny's words. There was little in his voice.

"Has William whipped you, Johnny?" asked the principal.

"Y-e-s," came in broken tones from the conquered tyrant and bully of the primary grades.

"Very well," said the umpire. "The fight is ended. Rise, William the Conqueror."

They were two grimy, sweaty, gory boys that stood up. Black hair and ash-colored hair were dripping wet. Shirts were torn open at the neck, ties were off and coats were ripped. But William, a new light on his face, had never looked so manly; and Johnny's braggart insolence had disappeared. The tears that were running down his face the principal pretended not to see.

"Now boys," she announced, "this should end your quarrelling. Everything is all square and settled, so shake hands like men, for you are friends now." This conventional act was performed with some reluctance, due to shyness perhaps, but it was done with solemnity if not with dignity.

After buttoning their collars and arranging their ties, Miss Farrar said cheerfully, "Go wash your faces and comb your hair and make yourselves look like nice third-grade boys."

It was just before dismissal. The third graders, with hands clasped in a devout attitude on the desks in front of them and with a Raphael-angel expression on their faces, sat waiting for the welcome signal, when the principal come into the room with two damp-haired, red-faced, sheepish-looking boys.

"Miss Huntley," she said to the teacher, "William will be able to fight his own battles hereafter. He will come to you with no more complaints about being teased."

When the jubilant third graders had filed into the freedom of outdoors, Miss Huntley turned to the principal with a look of curiosity.

"Do tell me, what were you doing in room nine this afternoon? You're looking utterly fagged, but I know you don't believe in using the rod and I think you wouldn't use the thumbscrews or the water cure. What were you doing with Johnny and William?"

"Making character," answered the principal.

Topics in Season.

A set of good tools will often pay for itself in one job on the farm.

If you must use locks, use good ones. Not much protection in a cheap lock.

Plenty of water internally, externally and eternally—all possible if you heed the slogan: "Running water and a bathroom in every farm home."

A remedy for erosion: To prevent erosion on sandy hillsides, throw up ridges of earth running across the hillside, when plowing. A few such ridges, erected at intervals of twelve or fifteen yards, will help to prevent the soil from being washed down the hill by heavy rains.

Steep slopes, poor soil, sandy land, unusual corners, gullied and wooded tract—all these afford opportunity for growing timber profitably. Certain kinds of trees, like the locust, build up poor soil through the nitrogen-gathering bacteria in the root nodules. Small gullies can be stopped up by closely packed brush and tree-tops. Large, open gullies are checked only by planting over the entire gully basin, supplemented by low brush dams across the large units of the gully.

A suggestion box was placed at the entrance to a farm, and a board was put up inviting criticism of methods, stock and business. The idea of having a suggestion box inside a store is not new, but this was. Many novel ideas were dropped in the box; not the least helpful was one reading: "Why don't you advertise and hold a sale of potatoes?" The idea was a good one, and the farmer used it, with the result that many potatoes were sold. The person who made the suggestion told his friends, with the result that many became purchasers.

> It is the overflowing fountain, not the one that is half full or just full, that makes the valley below green and glad. It is abounding health, health that is bubbling over, superabundant energy, that counts. This is the health that makes mere living a joy.

Children of Armenia.

Thousands of Armenian children are homeless and starving, waiting for us to decide whether they are to live or die.

I Wonder.

I wonder if I have the right
To let myself forget to care
How children shiver in the night
Where all is dark and cold and bare.

My little ones are freed from dread
And sheltered safely from the storm;
Their eyes are bright, their cheeks are red,
Their laughter glad, their clothing warm.

But other little ones must weep,
And face new dread with each new day,
Where Hunger's fangs bite very deep
And Want sits like a ghost in gray.

If children who are hungry sigh;
If others who are cold complain;
No guilt lies on my conscience—I
Have never wronged them for my gain.

But, knowing how they weep at night,
Where all is dark and cold and bare,
I wonder if I have the right
To let myself forget to care?

—S. E. Kiser.

$60 a year, $5 a month, will keep an Armenian child from starvation. If you do not feel like adopting an orphan for yourself, get some of your friends to join you in the financial undertaking.

Send contributions to Treasurer Canadian Armenian Relief, Mr. D. A. Cameron, Canadian Bank of Commerce, Toronto.

Disinfect Dairy Barns.

The spring renovation in the dairy barn should include a good spraying with disinfectant after the dust and cobwebs have been removed if such things are present. Let as much sunshine in as possible as it helps to clean up the stanchions. Dark and damp corners are good disease-breeding places and where the sunshine cannot reach, the spray dope should be used most liberally.

As the season advances and the queen is laying to her full capacity, a single brood chamber will not have sufficient space for maximum production of brood. As soon as the hive becomes well populated with bees, the brood chamber should be enlarged by adding a second storey without a queen excluder.

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL

APRIL 24.

Poverty and Wealth. Isaiah 5: 8-10; Amos 8: 4-7; St. Luke 16: 19-25. Golden Text—St. Luke 12: 34.

Connecting Links—Where social and economic conditions are such that men who work hard and long do not earn enough to keep themselves and their families in comfort, to feed and clothe and educate their children, there is evidently something wrong. This is especially true in a land like our own, a land of abundant resources. It is folly, in this country of free people and free democratic institutions to blame the few who have gathered wealth or to talk revolution. The remedy lies with ourselves, in careful, patient effort to discover the causes of inequality and injustice and poverty, and when discovered to remove them. Is not one of the chief causes of poverty and unemployment the crowding of multitudes of people into the cities, when our fields, our forests, our fisheries, and our mines cannot find enough laborers? Does not the remedy for Canada, in very large part, lie in more and still more production, and, therefore, in the engaging of more and still more workmen in our great productive industries? And it will lie with our government to provide by law that there shall be a fair and an adequate recompense to every honest worker, and restraint or compulsion of some sort for both the idle loafer and the busybody.

Isa. 5: 8-10. Woe unto them. The prophet, living more than seven hundred years before the birth of Christ, sees the injustice of his time and is filled with a passion for reform. Especially is he disturbed by the fact that the land seems to be passing out of the hands of its original owners, the free men of Israel, into the possession of a few great nobles or rich men. Henceforth they who had been their own masters, owners and cultivators of the land, become practically slaves, or leave their poor homes to find a precarious living in the shops and markets of the city.

Isaiah foresees trouble coming upon the rich land-grabbers, whose insatiable lust for more would seem to indicate that they wished to dwell alone in the midst of the earth. A foreign enemy, the Assyrian, will soon invade the country, and their fine houses shall be left desolate, and their vineyards and corn fields waste and unproductive. Then ten acres of vineyard shall yield one bath, that is only eight or nine gallons, and the seed of an homer shall yield an ephah that is one-tenth only of what was sown. For an ephah contained about nine gallons by dry measure, and an homer was ten times as much.

Amos 8: 4-7. Hear this. Amos, like Isaiah, denounces the spirit of greed which was so prevalent in his time, the immoderate and unscrupulous seeking of gain, and the preying upon the poor. It seemed, indeed, as if they would destroy poor men out of the land, so greedy were the rich landlords and traders for more and more.

New Moon and Sabbath were holy days set apart for rest and worship. These traders are impatient of the holy days, eager to return to their dishonest traffic. They defraud the people who buy by making the ephah, or bushel measure, small, and the shekel (=about ½ oz.), with which they weighed the silver bits which were offered in payment, too great. For a paltry debt, a bit of silver, or the price of a pair of sandals, a poor man or his children might be sold into slavery. Moreover, Amos charges these same avaricious merchants with selling to the poor "the refuse of the wheat," unfit for human food.

Amos believes that such ill-gotten wealth can bring no real good to its possessors. The justice of God is challenged by it, and God never forgets.

St. Luke 16: 19-25. A certain rich man. It is not the rich man's wealth that is condemned in the parable—it is his callous indifference to the need of the poor sufferer at his gate. The very dogs had more compassion than he.

The contrast is strikingly set between the rich man faring sumptuously and the beggar full of sores. Can these men be brothers, sons of the same Heavenly Father? Can there be any love between them? Has the rich man shown a real brotherly feeling by throwing a penny to the beggar as he passes him by? What would Jesus Christ have done? Would He have taken the beggar into His home, and fed and nursed him to health, and helped him to a place of independence and comfort?

Carried by the Angels. The parable suggests the lesson that the wrongs and injustices of this life may be set right in the world to come. But it suggests with equal directness and force that the time for men to begin honestly and unselfishly, trying to set things right is here and now. The rich man neglected his opportunity and was lost. A man lay hungry, thirsty, and sick at his gate, and he did not minister to him.

The Bible does not teach that evil lies in the making or in the possession of wealth. Rather does it commend industry, and thrift, and rightful gain. What it condemns is wrong ways of making wealth, and the wrong and selfish use of the power that wealth gives.

Application.

Many diseases which were once thought incurable are now often treated with such skill that the patients recover. A distinguished medical man said recently that the term incurable ought never to be applied to any disease. So it is in regard to social diseases; we have too long regarded poverty as something which is inevitable. It is not so, and one of the tasks awaiting an earnest church is to show that poverty is no more inevitable than were many physical diseases which are now disappearing. Much of the poverty in Christ's day was due to men's selfishness. Most poverty among us is due to the same cause.

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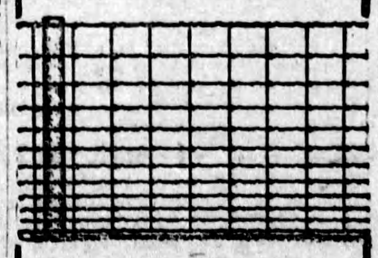

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