

THE WINSTALLS

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A TALE OF LOVE AND MONEY

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CHAPTER XV.

ECHOES OF THE NEGRO PRAYER MEETING.

At Mr. Winstall's breakfast table next morning Miss Snowball and Miss Sunflower had lost all resemblance to the black demons of the night before. The fantastic names which they had assumed stuck to them, however, more or less, during Miss Pearce's stay. Mr. Winstall congratulated them on their return to their normal appearance of white folks.

"By the way," Mr. Winstall said, "Whose invention was it to assume such a disguise? Yours, I have no doubt, Miss Snowball."

"Well, wasn't it a handsome disguise?" said Miss Snowball. "Or if not handsome, it was at least effective. How frightened you were when you found us dragging Lucy away."

"Yes, my first thought was that you were two black imps," said Mr. Winstall, "and that you were dragging Lucy to your tortments. But how did you get into the house unobserved? I surmised that Lucinda must have had a hand in this business too. I did not think that Lucinda would consort with witches, or imps, or furies, or demons. Did you all combine to play me a trick?"

"We got in somehow," said Miss Pearce, willing to shield Miss Winstall. "Being imps or demons, you know we can come and go at will, through any house we please, however you may try to keep us out by bolts and bars."

Grace now changed the conversation by making a special request of her father. She wanted her school vacation prolonged until Miss Pearce would leave next week. As soon as she and Alfred came home from the country, she asked leave for a day; and as day by day she and Miss Pearce grew more intimate, the leave had been extended until now. She wanted now a final extension until Miss Pearce would be gone.

Mr. Winstall readily agreed to all these requests.

He had peculiar views about education which he put into practice in the case of his own children. He was intensely opposed to cramming. He held that children were simply stupefied in that way. And he held that they were crammed with far too many subjects. He believed also that technical examinations, such as are held in the schools, are no test of real proficiency. It was his conviction, too, that children are kept at school too long, and would really learn more, especially of useful things, if they were put to business or trades while quite young, but not confined for more than a few hours each day.

To give effect to these views, Mr. Winstall and a few others of similar ideas, sent their children to a school which they supported the selves, and in which their views were carried out. In this school the parents chose the subjects which they wished their children taught, but the teachers were to be constantly on the outlook for special aptitudes in their pupils that they might be given special training, if on consultation with the parents such was deemed advisable. There were no examinations in the school, no certificates, and no graduation. There

were no stated vacations either. The parents gave their children such vacations as they pleased.

Such in brief was the singular method of education. It would certainly fall short of the results of the usual method in some respects, but those who upheld it believed it turned out children of more robust physique, and more originality of mind and character. There was a better chance, too, they claimed of children discovering and following the avocations in life for which they were best fitted, instead of being turned out, ground and polished to one pattern, like so many rows of pins.

Grace's request for an extended holiday brought up the subject this morning, and Mr. Winstall briefly explained the system to Miss Pearce. Asked what she thought of the system, she replied—

"I feel that in the main you are right. In my country as well as yours, we have the evil of cramming—I would say cramming. Many of the subjects are of no practical use. And the style of examination destroys, or tends to destroy, all originality of mind. Of course I could not pronounce on your system in its details, but I wish some such method had been in vogue when I was at school. Here I am now, unfit to do anything well, because a special line was not chosen for me early. I feel I could have done something if I had had a chance of the right thing. But I was pushed up the technical slide till I lost very much both of my power and ambition for anything. The higher branches I especially dislike."

"What you say reminds me," said Mr. Winstall, "of a squib that appeared in one of our serio comic papers some time ago. It purported to be a boy's protest against the higher education, and even civilization generally. Grace, can you remember that poem? I think you committed it at the time."

"I'm sure I don't remember it now, papa," she said. "But I can get the paper in a moment."

Having secured the paper, she read as follows:

A Boy's Indictment of Civilization.

Oh, this horrid education,
And the so-called civilization
Of our time,
It's a cruel fad atrocious,
It's a wicked frowd ferocious,
That hardly merits to be put in decent time.

It surely is a crime,
In skool to pass our prime;
Or so it seems to me.

It's all a soar vexashun,
And a mighty botherashun,
To be krammed with education
In a kuntry that is free.

And then the hard taxashun

To keep this education
All a goin in the skools;
With so much confounded larnin
Stuck in boys as shud be farmin,
No wonder that there are so many fools.

And the skool marm, she loquashus,
And the master's so audashus,

They put me in a fever and a fry;
But I'd stop her shrill loquacity,
And curb his bold audacity,
To keep the educashun
Of this educated nashun
From a gittin up so tairnal high.

But we take examinashun
In most awl things in creashun.
And many things outside,
There's history, a botherashun,
And mathemateks, a vexashun,
And verbs with endless iterashun,
And other nasty stuff beside.

Yes, we take examinashun,
Whatever be our tallent or our stashun,
With so many marks and passes.
When boys as shud be free and yellin
Are loaded up with grammar and with spellin,
Are you surprised they sometimes turn out asses

Sometimes I greatly wonder,
And sometimes I greatly scunder
At the false and flippant ways of men.
It seems there grate ambishun
To attane to some posishun
Where they can simply weeld a pen.

Oh, this sickening adorashun
That is paid throughout our nashun,
To superfishel stile,
Better be more sagashus,
Be true and more corageous,
And be a man the while.

But I don't like botherashun,
And etarnel disputashun
About my klose,
The modern way's uneasy,
For I like to be light and breisy,
And I like to be free and easy,
As mama to her kost well noes.

To me it wouldn't matter
If my fashionable hatter
Were to move to Jeriko;
And my nobby, nobby tailor,
If he likes may be a sailer
And navigat the Po.

And I tell you I farely holler
When my starched and stifaned koller
Holds me tite about the throte,
Like a pig why cant I waller,
Or move like a graistful swaller,
Without koller, pants, or kote?

And I hate the site of brushes,
Whether shoe, or teeth, or such as,
They give me still the blews;
And I tell yoo it does sadden me,
And often it does madden me,
To kleen my shoes.

And then the silly noshun,
To be allers soapin, soapin,
And a scourin of your skin;
To be for ever skrubbin,
I think is dedly sin.

Oh, this horrid education,
And the modernivilizashun
Of our time.

It's a cruel fad atrocious,
It's a wicked frowd ferocious,
That hardly merits to be put in decent time.

Miss Pearce laughed heartily, and said "Them's my sentiments."

"I think the main fault of our usual educational methods," said Mr. Winstall, "is that they don't recognize our special aptitude and talents; and so life to many becomes a drudgery because, before we can choose for ourselves, we are put to some vocation for which we have not the talent. Yet I believe we have all a talent for something."

"Yes, and sometimes," said Miss Pearce, "We get into very ridiculous positions—positions of honor even, which we had never dreamed of occupying. There was a very amusing case of that kind in the city of Limerick some generations ago."

"Pray tell us about that," said Mr. Winstall, who was more serious on this subject of education than on most others.

"Well, you know," said Miss Pearce, "my cousin is married to a Limerick man—a Mr. Wallace. It was he who told me the story, when I was on a visit there last year, and he vouched for its truth."

"Oh, that's all right," said Mr. Winstall,