

There were anxious young novices, drilling  
their spelling books into the brain,  
Loud-puffing each half-whispered letter,  
like an engine just starting its train ;

There was one fiercely muscular fellow, who  
scowled at the sums on his slate,  
And leered at the innocent figures a look of  
unspeakable hate,

And set his white teeth close together, and  
gave his thin lips a short twist,  
As to say, " I could whip you, confound  
you ! could such things be done with  
the fist ! "

There were two knowing girls in the corner,  
each one with some beauty possessed,  
In a whisper discussing the problem, which  
one the young master likes best ;

A class in the front, with their readers, were  
telling, with difficult pains,  
How perished brave Marco Bozzaris while  
bleeding at all of his veins ;

And a boy on the floor to be punished, a  
statue of idleness stood,  
Making faces at all of the others, and en-  
joying the scene all he could.

## II.

Around were the walls gray and dingy,  
which every old school-sanctum hath,  
And many a break on their surface, where  
grinned wood grating of lath,

A patch of thick plaster, just over the  
school-master's rickety chair,  
Seemed threat'ningly o'er him suspended,  
like Damocles' sword, by a hair.

There were tracks on the desks where the  
knife-blades had wandered in search of  
their prey ;  
Their tops were as duskily spattered as if  
they drank ink every day.

The square stove it puffed and it crackled,  
and broke out in red-flaming sores ;  
Till the great iron quadruped trembled like  
a dog fierce to rush out-o'-doors.

White snow-flakes looked in at the windows,  
the gale pressed its lips to the cracks ;  
And the children's hot faces were streaming,

the while they were freezing their  
backs.

## III.

Now Marco Bozzaris had fallen, and all of  
his sufferings were o'er,  
And the class to their seats were retreating,  
when footsteps were heard at the door ;

And five of the good district fathers march-  
ed into the room in a row,  
And stood themselves up by the hot fire,  
and shook off their white cloaks of  
snow ;

And the spokesman, a grave squire of  
sixty, with countenance solemnly sad,  
Spoke thus, while the children all listened,  
with all of the ears that they had ;  
" We've come here, school-master, intendin'  
to cast an inquirin' eye 'round,  
Concernin' complaints that's been entered,  
an' fault that has lately been found ;  
To paze off the width of your doin's an'  
witness what you've been about,  
An' see if it's payin' to keep you, or whether  
we'd best turn ye out.

" The first thing I'm bid for to mention is,  
when the class gets up to read ;  
You give 'em too tight of a 'reinin' an'  
touch 'em up more than they need ;  
You're nicer than wise in the matter of  
holdin' the book in one han',  
An' you turn a stray *g* in their doin's an'  
tack an odd *d* on their *an'* ;  
There ain't no great good comes of speakin'  
the words so *polite*, as I see,  
Providin' you know what the facts is, an'  
tell 'em off jest as they be,  
An' then there's that readin' in concert, is  
censured from first unto last ;  
It kicks up a heap of a racket, when folks  
is a travelin' past,  
Whatever is done as to readin', providin'  
things go to *my* say,  
Sha'n't hang on no new-fangled hinges, but  
swing in the old-fashioned way."

And the other four good district fathers  
gave quick the consent that was due,  
And nodded obliquely, and muttered,  
" *Them 'ere is my sentiments tew.*"

" Then, as to your spellin' : I've hearn  
tell, by 'them as has looked into this,