

Altered Personality

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HE was the old schoolmaster—not extravagant in his ideas or tastes, yet the pink of perfection in cleanliness and neatness. The small amount of remaining grey hair was combed and brushed, each particular hair doing double duty in trying to cover the would-be baldness.

The iron-grey beard was slick and smooth; the coat, whether new or old, was brushed and buttoned up. When he wanted to know the time he unbuttoned the two lower buttons, showing his neat vest, gold watch and chain. After looking at the time he again buttoned up his coat.

He began the day with mathematics and ended with literature, which perhaps accounted for his seldom getting to the school till after nine, nor leaving till after four—in fact, we have seen it nearly six before he finally left the school-house, and then he was surrounded by pupils.

In the morning he was dignified, calm and collected, and called all the young ladies Miss. In the literary class in the afternoon they were Annie or Nellie, Mary or Jane.

When he taught arithmetic, algebra, or euclid, he took the ruler and chalk much as a surgeon takes his instruments to perform a surgical operation, and proceeded to hammer the information into the heads of his pupils. It was a long, long hour, and he and his pupils were ready and anxious for recess. The grammar class was little better, and many times the coat was unbuttoned and buttoned up, and often the watch looked at, and the time never told, only that the time was so long. History, geography and languages also “dragged their slow length along,” the hammering-in process continuing. But it is nearly three, and all seem in a hurry to begin the literature class.

The old schoolmaster sits down, smacks his lips, and perhaps picks up a copy of Scott’s “Lady of the Lake”—not that he needed a text-book. He knew it all by heart. He begins to talk. One pupil asks a question, another answers it; before long many have told little stories in their own way, and told them well, whereas had it been suggested that they were to tell