

TWO WAYS OF GOVERNING.

ONCE upon a time there came to a town in Felicia, Superintendent Wiseman to take charge of the schools. At the preliminary teachers' meeting, among other things he said. "A careful examination of the records of last year shows that the attendance and punctuality are not what you and I want them to be. While I know the superintendent and teachers strove nobly, yet we, since we have their work to assist us, should accomplish more than they. Upon mature deliberation I feel justified in saying that long experience teaches me that in our Texas schools not *one* case of tardiness in *ten*, and not *one* of absence in *five* is necessary. That means, teachers, I expect you to see that the Felicia schools this year reduce their absence and tardiness in the ratio shown above. Perhaps the parents need educating on this point, yet if you win the children, if you have influence enough to make them see the matter in the right light, you will win the struggle. I leave the ways and means to you, only do not forget that I am always ready to listen to your plans and give you the benefit of what experience has taught me."

Now there were present at the meeting two new teachers, Miss Firmlover and Miss Weaksnapper. Both were normal graduates, both had taught three years, both were twenty-three years old, both were blessed with a moderate share of good looks, and both felt anxious to succeed in their new field of work. The first day of school dawned clear and bright.

Miss Firmlover reached school at 8:05, twenty minutes before the required time. She wore a pretty new gingham dress, in which dark red was the prevailing color; her dark hair was as carefully dressed as if she had been going to an elegant reception; a lovely rose was her only ornament; no, not so, for how could I forget the happy smile and the cheerful gleam of her eye. She took from a basket, a vase, a silk drapery scarf, a photograph of a lovely child, and some flowers. As she moved from desk to desk, dusting here and there, putting up all the windows to let in the crisp autumn air, arranging her desk, the room began to assume a home-like air. How pretty the flowers looked in the vase, and how much the bright scarf improved the tone of the whole room. When the signal sounded for the pupils to enter, each boy and girl who crossed the threshold of the seventh grade received a smile and a nod of welcome, as if the teacher had known him always. Looks of satisfaction began to creep into the eyes of the children, and one irresponsible whispered to his chum, "you bet she's a daisy."

Miss Firmlover made her pupils a nice little talk, at the close of which she asked how many had been neither absent nor tardy during the previous session. Two pupils rose. How brightly she smiled at them, and then she went on: "Our superintendent wishes to be very careful to have our attendance as good as we can possibly make it. Do you know, Charlie, how many days you attend school in the year?" "One hundred and eighty," answered Charlie.

"Yes, but how many solar days?" She showed them how to figure it out, and soon they learned that they could spend in school only ninety real days; that is, for every day they were in school they were out of school three days. She showed them how much a day lost meant, and she did it in such a kind way that every pupil knew she meant it, and yet no one thought of her as scolding. "I am very anxious to have Superintendent Wiseman pleased with our room, and somehow I feel sure each one of you is going to help me to win his favor. How pleased I should be to have our room stand as high as any in the building in point of attendance."

The last thing she said at the close of school was: "How many of you will promise me that you will be sure to be here before the last bell rings to-morrow morning? If you are sick or obliged to be absent, please send me word, so I shan't be uneasy about you. I've

something special to tell you in the morning." It had been such a happy day that everyone made the promise, and left school feeling that the year was to be bright and prosperous. Four boys hung bashfully around to offer to carry Miss Firmlover's books; six girls made excuses to walk home with her. When Superintendent Wiseman met the merry group it did not take more than a passing glance for him to see that one of his new teachers had struck a responsive chord in the hearts of her pupils.

The next morning every seventh grade pupil was found to be present except one, and this one was found to be sick. In large letters Miss Firmlover wrote on the board: "September 22. All on time. All present except Mattie Linn, who is sick."

"Now," with a smile, she said, "I want you pupils to help me keep the attendance roll. I shall report to you every day, and when the superintendent comes in to know how we are getting on I'm going to call on Harold or Gertrude or someone else to tell him. We'll show him it is a partnership affair with us. I'm sorry Mattie is sick, but so glad we have not one tardy and only one absent. It will make me happy all day, for to confess a bit of a secret to you, boys and girls, a tardy scholar always spoils the whole day for me; it makes me so sad I just can't get over it for a long time.

"That reminds me of what I was going to tell you this morning. It is a story that begins in the good old-fashioned way, 'Once upon a time.' Well, once upon a time, many, many years ago, a gallant knight rode up to a blacksmith's shop; it was 8 o'clock, but the smithy was not opened. As the knight strode impatiently too and fro the smith appeared, doffed his cap, and begged his lordship's pardon for being five minutes late." But I have not the time to tell you the story, nor can I reproduce it with the skill and grace she told it; 'twas the old rhyme, you know:

For want of a nail the shoe was lost,
For want of the shoe the horse was lost,
For want of a horse the rider was lost,
For want of a rider the battle was lost,
For want of a battle the kingdom was lost,
And all for the want of a horse shoe nail.

She held the breathless attention of the class; when she closed you could have heard a pin fall in the room, and her words sounded positively solemn as she added: "See, my dear boys and girls, what came from the fact that one man was late in arriving at his post of duty. Only five minutes late, and yet what a calamity it brought upon his country."

Maybe you think she then pointed the "moral that adorned the tale," but she didn't. No, she was too wise for that. The regular programme was taken up, and nothing more was said of the story till ten minutes before school closed, when she asked a thoughtful boy what he meant by character; his definition soon led to a discussion, which under the teacher's guidance soon showed how character was built and the importance of good habits. You see how nicely she then brought in punctuality and the reason for the story told in the morning, but you cannot see how earnestly she looked into the eyes of her pupils as she told them how the tardiness of a single one would grieve her, as she showed that a teacher's duty was to help pupils build up a symmetrical character, that this was her aim.

Then she took from her desk some letters cut from gilt paper: "I have here," she said, "a golden sign. See what it says: No tardy pupils in this room this year. Who will help me put it up this afternoon?" Forty hands went up. "Thank you, I'll ask George and Lena, please." (They were the two who had, as she found from the register, caused most of the tardiness the year before.) "Now, how many will help me to keep this sign up all the year? Think before you promise, for it's a serious thing to make a promise. Wait a minute. I'll not ask you to raise your hands, but to bring me in to-morrow a written promise that you will do everything in your power to help me keep this golden

banner on our walls. Remember, if I am tardy or any pupil is tardy, down comes the proud emblem."

Miss Weaksnapper reached school at 8:15. She wore a tan cloth dress that cost six times as much as a gingham; she had never liked the dress, it didn't fit well. Brother Jack told her she looked horrid in it, so she was going to wear it to school to get rid of the "old thing." Her bangs had some curl left in them since Sunday; but, of course, she couldn't take time to fix her hair specially nice just for school.

As she entered the sixth grade room it looked so bare that she gave a half sigh as she hung up her hat. The janitor had failed to raise more than one window and she didn't think about the difference fresh air would make in a whole day's work. Seeing the fifth grade teacher in the hall she went out to have a talk as to who were the good and who the bad pupils last year. By the time the bell rang she had a decided aversion to Fred Grimes and Lee Jones; indeed, she felt the grade was a hard set, both boys and girls; unconsciously she assumed a defensive attitude. As the pupils entered she stood at the door, her pretty figure drawn up rigidly as a commanding officer, while her face wore a "Don't-try-any-of-your-pranks-on-me" air.

Miss Weaksnapper had read the week before in an educational journal, "Always begin your year's work by a bright interesting talk to your pupils." This was her speech, delivered in the most perfunctory style: "Children, I am glad to see you this morning. I hope we shall have a pleasant year together. [That sounds well, doesn't it? But you just ought to have heard the *tone* in which it was said.] If you are good children I shall love you dearly; I have been told that there are some very bad boys in this grade. [Oh, what a mistake that was, my little woman!] I will now read the rules and these boys as well as the rest of you will see what you are expected to do."

Here followed all the rules laid down in the catalogue. Then, "I must also tell you that our superintendent is very particular about the matter of absence and tardiness. He has instructed all the teachers to be very strict on this point, hence I tell you now, so you may have fair warning, that any pupil who is tardy or absent without an excuse that is perfectly satisfactory must lose his recess for three days. I hope, however, I shall not have to punish any of you."

Then followed an average school day. Lee and Fred felt that they had been pronounced guilty without a trial, and this did not tend to make them feel any more kindly towards the teacher. By the close of the school the air in the room was foul, Miss Weaksnapper had a fearful headache, and the children were as restless as so many Brownies. What a sigh of relief she gave as the gong sounded for dismissal. None of her children waited for her and she was glad they did not, for she longed to be alone, to rest, to wonder why it was that she had so much more work, so much more trouble than any other teacher.

The next day Robbie Blake, a boy who was disposed to be right but whose mother was proud of her Irish blood, was absent from Grade 6. "Does any one know why this boy is absent?" asked Miss Weaksnapper, "Yes'em" cried the bad boy, Fred Grimes; "his Ma kept him at home to chop wood, and she said if you kept Bob in at recess 'cause she kept him at home, there'd be a big fuss in the fourth ward."

The poor teacher was utterly discouraged and wondered what kind of people her patrons must be. For that day she had nothing more to say on the absent or tardy question, but all her working and even her sleeping thoughts were haunted by the question: "What shall I do with Robbie Blake when he comes back? What can I do with Fred Grimes and Lee Jones?"

Don't you feel sorry for her? She might have had those boys for her supporters, and yet on the first day she made them leaders of the opposition, an opposition that gained in strength each day. -Mrs. Pennybacker, Texas School Journal,