

A School Meeting on Christmas Eve.

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Riding with a friend of my boyhood recently in my native County of Durham, we came, towards evening, to a hill-top from which we had a magnificent view. Sloping gradually southward to Lake Ontario, a dozen miles away, lay the fertile Township of Darlington, a panorama of beauty dotted with hundreds of fine farm houses; with many substantial churches and school-houses, sometimes standing alone, sometimes in pairs, symbolizing the harmony that should exist between religion and education; and with numerous villages crowning the hills or brightening the valleys, the whole coming to a focus in the busy town of Bowmanville away by the lake side.

"What a change in thirty years, Andrew!" said I.

"Yes," he replied, "but the changes yonder have not been so great as right around us here."

"Quite true," said I. "Thirty years ago this district around us, and for miles northward, was the great Pine Ridge, a wilderness with only a few scattered log houses and shanties on its outskirts. Now most of it is cleared and settled. I remember well the time a little log school-house was built, where that neat brick building now stands. The people had to make great sacrifices in those days to get even the log building, but they determined to get an education for their children, so they formed a union section extending for several miles and including parts of three townships—Darlington, Clarke and Manvers—and erected their log school-house. I was present at the meeting called to choose the first teacher, and it was one of the most exciting and amusing nights of my life."

"I would like an account of it," said my friend.

"Very well," said I, and as we rode along in the pleasant evening I recalled and described my first visit to the neighborhood through which we were passing.

Twenty-eight years ago last Christmas Eve I was doing up my "chores," before supper, when a neighbor of ours, Frank Stinson, who had been elected chairman of the School Board in the new section, came over to ask me to go with him that evening to take the minutes of the "School meetin'" for him. I agreed to go, and about seven o'clock we started. We took a foot-path through the wild pine woods and had a charming walk. I can hear now the weird music of the wind among the pine tops and see the wondrous shadows made in the bright moonlight on the soft snow, and the sparkling of the large unmelted snow crystals that glittered on the boughs of the young hemlocks.

The meeting was held in Davy Sinclair's house. It was a large log house. When we arrived we found the big room of the house well filled with "bush-men" and farmers eagerly discussing the momentous business of the hour. The appointment of the first teacher in a new district is no slight matter. This meeting was the culmination of the efforts of the whole district for months—since they began to build their school-house. There were two candidates in the field, Sarah Crandall and Peter McIntosh. Miss Crandall belonged to the district. She had a very limited education. She had no certificate to teach, but she had gone to the High School in Bowmanville for a few weeks and was therefore revered for her "larnin'" in the neighborhood. Mr. McIntosh was a foppish young exquisite who had been to the Normal School in Toronto, but who looked as if the Normal School had not developed him so much as those other departments of culture, the jewelry store, the tailor's shop, and the barber's shop.

Each candidate had friends. The feeling ran higher because there were only two candidates, and when we entered their merits and demerits were being discussed in a most animated way by several distinct groups, some standing in front of the wide open fire and others seated around the room.

"Yer late," said Davy Sinclair, in a good-natured way, as we entered the room.

"A little," replied Mr. Stinson, "but you seem to hev wasted no time."

"No; we hev been thinkin' 'bout the bizness of the meetin'."

"Purty loud thinkin', I guess," said Mr. Stinson; "we heard you thinkin' way down in the woods."

"We wuz jist gittin' steam up," said Jim McCafferty, a bustling Irishman, the leader of the Crandall party, "and I move that Frank takes the chair, so't we kin git till bizness or some bilers will

ence and had been to the Normal School and had high recommends."

"He's Scotch, I understand, Mr. Sinclair," said Jim McCafferty.

"I believe his father was," replied Davy.

"Ye see how clannish thim Scotch always is," said Jim hoping to arouse the prejudices of the Irish voters in favor of Miss Crandall, apparently oblivious to the fact that he was appealing to clannishness in Irishmen, while condemning it in Scotchmen.

"Davy hez daughters," he continued, appealing



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bust." The motion was seconded and duly carried. I was appointed secretary on the nomination of the chairman, who recommended me as "well schooled." The chairman explained the business of the meeting in a long, dry, tedious speech, although everyone present knew the business perfectly, and had in reality decided how to vote. However, everybody listened attentively, as if the chairman's "openin' remarks" were a most important part of the proceedings. When he finished he said, "The meetin' is now open for nominations."

Jim McCafferty was on his feet in an instant. "I nominate Sarah Crandall," said he, excitedly. "She's a girl in the naberrud; she's one av ourselves like; she'll be taichin' no newfangled airs or nonsense till our childher, and she'll taich fur little wages, and to my thinkin' that same is no small matter." He made his brief speech forcibly, emphasizing it with vigorous gestures and he was rewarded by enthusiastic applause from the most demonstrative part of the audience.

Davy Sinclair, in a more deliberate way, proposed Mr. McIntosh as "a young man who had experi-

to another prejudice, "that thinks themselves too good for the young men of the naberrud, and they would hould their heads up very high if they could get a city fellow into the family."

"Let my daughters alone," said Davy, warmly; "I'd be long sorry if they'd ever have such bad luck as to have anything to do with you. You mind Miss Crandall. Her sister has been a long time on the shelf, and maybe she might take you; no one else would, I'm thinking."