

The fifty-six books and the one hundred and twelve hands formed an instant's combination. There was a rapid flutter of leaves. The little girl in the front seat tiptoed up to Mr. O'Quinn and handed him her book, print painstakingly toward him. Then she tiptoed to an empty seat at the back of the room and took the book from it. She passed Pat on the way and he, with no pretense of concealment, tripped her so adroitly that she fell in a blushing heap against little, correct, pompadoured Michael Vincent. The latter virtuously ignored the incident.

"Take out your book, Pat," Miss Perry commanded it sweetly, ignoring it also.

Pat looked at his father and, extracting encouragement from his haughty mien, drew his book with a jerk from his desk, pulling onto the floor in indiscriminate chaos pencils, pens, and papers. He slammed it onto his desk, and then with an air superbly degage he collected the scattered articles and put them back one at a time. After this he leisurely found the page and the position he considered the most comfortable. This brought his body across the width of his desk and the upper corner of his book into the neck of the little girl in front of him. She turned and frowned on him. Then indignantly she craned forward out of his reach. Miss Perry waited carefully. Mr. O'Quinn contemplated his son.

The children sang the song through in their earnest, sweet voices, their faces sobered to suit the occasion. Pat kept up a droning monotone through it all, trailing in the rear of his mates by an exact two beats. Miss Perry said nothing, but she waited ostentatiously at the end of each verse for Pat to finish. Mr. O'Quinn contemplated his son.

The hymn sung, the song books disappeared again. The little girl who had given Mr. O'Quinn her book, making this time a wide detour that put her out of Pat's reach, tiptoed up to him and whisperingly relieved him of it. Miss Perry took up a volume of poems that lay on her desk.

It was one of her new-fangled notions to read a poem to the children every day, and afterward they talked it over. They had taken Longfellow and Whittier in this way. They were on Lowell, and Miss Perry hoped to complete Bryant and Emerson before the year was out. She liked poetry work particularly. She was convinced that it was bound to have on the children of poverty an uplifting influence. The children liked it, too. They knew nothing about uplifting influences, but they knew it was "easy," and they did not have to take examinations in it.

Miss Perry read the poem on the dandelion, but she first told the children that each one of them must remember and quote from it some line that he liked.

When she began to read, Pat with an elaborate air of unconcern put his head on his desk and appeared to fall into a swift and unnatural torpor. Miss Perry stopped. "Come to position, Pat," she said tranquilly.

Pat lifted his head. He gave one glance at his father, scowling in lordly possession of the platform. The glance encouraged him. "I don't like poetry," he announced loudly.

"I think you'll like this," Miss Perry informed him politely; "come to position." Pat dragged himself to a spineless reproduction of the attitude of the other children. He dropped his under jaw, half closed his eyes, and listened to the poem with an excruciating expression of ennui. Mr. O'Quinn contemplated his son.

After she had finished her reading Miss Perry called for questions, for comments for favorite lines. Inspired, perhaps, by the presence of a stranger, the children responded generally, and with considerable animation. Even Michael Vincent's enigmatic choice, "nor wrinkled the lean brow," cast no perceptible gloom on the occasion. In return, Miss Perry told the class the lines she liked and why she liked them. She made many references to the bunch of dandelions in the squat ginger jar on her desk.



In one powerful hand he clutched the limp remnant of Pat.

"Now, Pat," Miss Perry concluded pleasantly, "what did you think of it?" Pat stole another glance at the lowering visage on the platform. "I think it was r-r-rotten," he promulgated calmly.

The silence of the instant that followed was death-like. Then Mr. O'Quinn turned to the teacher. "Youse haven't anny such t'ing as a club laying around here loose-like, have youse, miss?" he asked briskly.

There was no thickness in his utterance now. His tones were as clear as a bell.

"I haven't a rattan in the school-room at present," she explained. "I don't keep one because I have no use for one. I don't believe in corporal punishment." She paused and her voice sank a little. "I can borrow one though," she added gently.

"O'd be obliged to youse for the lend of wan," Mr. O'Quinn pronounced inflexibly.

"Dottie," Miss Perry requested in her most dulcet tones, "go in Miss Hall's room and ask her if she will kindly lend Miss Perry her rattan." Still tiptoeing, her face very serious, Dottie went.

There was dead silence. The class sat so still that the clock's ticking could be plainly heard. Miss Perry looked politely non-committal. Mr. O'Quinn looked grimly determined. Pat looked puzzled, but gradually and noiselessly he pulled his feet out of the aisle, put them together, and conjured from somewhere a ramrod for his back. Dottie returned apace. She started toward Miss Perry with the rattan, a sinewy looking wand about a yard in length.

"Give it to Mr. O'Quinn," the latter said blandly.

Mr. O'Quinn examined the temper of his blade. It bent sinuously under the urge of his thick fingers.

"It's a young club," he muttered, "but it'll do, Oi'm thinkin'. Come on out of there, ye young divule," he called louder, waving his hand in Pat's direction.

Pat's face had been rapidly losing its look of bravado. He burst suddenly into tears. "I won't do it again, father," he promised futilely.

"Come on out of this," Mr. O'Quinn thundered. And Pat came slowly "out." In fact, he may be said to have crept as he came down the aisle, and he snivelled as he moved.

His father seized him by the shoulder and looked inquiringly about him. "In the dressing room," Miss Perry assisted him. She added a directing motion of her hand.

Mr. O'Quinn dragged his son into the dressing room and shut the door. An amateur pandemonium ensued. Miss Perry said nothing. The class listened in silence. There was the steady sound of blows: some that whistled through the air and apparently missed Pat's writhing figure, and

ed that his shoulders were shaking. A theory gained ground, when they discussed the matter at recess that day, that he was too afraid of Mr. O'Quinn to stay and see him.

That gentleman emerged from the dressing room after a while, his blue eyes no longer lowering, but jovial in expression. In one powerful hand he clutched the limp remnant of the cocksure Pat, and in the other the collection of splinters that had been the rattan. The former displayed to the class, when at his father's command and dictation he faced it and apologized in much detail for the way he had treated his teacher, a tear stained and dirt grimed face. The children listened breathlessly, and the effect of the episode was not destroyed when, with a resumption of his grand manner, Mr. O'Quinn harangued the class in regard to their duties as pupils of Miss Perry, as future voters of Precinct 14, and as embryo aldermen for the city of Boston. Miss Perry was not confused when he alluded to her as "the purtiest young jool of a teacher in the length and breadth of the whole war-r-rd."

"And as fer whalin'," he concluded, "if there's anny whalin' to be done here sure Oi'm her man and glad to do it, son or no son." That last phrase seemed to please him. "Son or no son," he repeated, glowering fiercely at the class. But he did not glower when he turned to Miss Perry. His blue eyes twinkled, and suddenly one of them screwed up into an elephantine wink.

Toughness Explained.

The other day a gentleman entered a certain restaurant and ordered a chicken. The chicken was evidently tough, for when the waiter came in he beheld the gentleman in a state of wrath.

"Waiter," said he, "this chicken is abominably tough."

"Very sorry, sir; but, you see, that chicken always was a peculiar bird. Why, when we came to kill it we couldn't catch it. It flew on the housetop. Eventually we had to shoot it."

"Ah, by Jove! that accounts for it. You must have shot the weathercock by mistake!"

The Christ Child.

"Oh, Brother Christ, come play with me,
And you shall share my Christmas-tree.

"Oh, little Brother Christ, you may
Have all these gifts of mine today;

And what you will, you may take home,
If you will come—if you will come."

And so the little Christ Child came
To him who called upon his name.

The guttering Christmas candles' light
Flickered and flared across the night;

Above the waiting heavens were starred,
But past them came the little Lord.

The broken gift, the gilded ball,
The tinsel star—He loved them all;

And overhead the angel train
Waited the Christ Child all in vain.

—By Laura Spencer Portor.