

THE SMITING OF THE AMALEKITE.

BY MARY SELDEN M'COBB.

(Concluded.)

"Now I don't like fighting as a general rule," said Mr. John Courtenay. "A good square tussle is all very well—like foot-ball, for example." Mr. John Courtenay thrust out from the shoulder with an expressive gesture. That's all fun. But to pick quarrels with the fellows, especially if they're smaller than you, is mean and low. To be forever doubling up your fists is poor business. But there are times and seasons. Thomas, my boy, when a regular knock-me-down, out-and-out fight is the only way out of it. And then, as I before remarked, one must do the little job like a gentleman and a scholar. Now here's this bully of a Flint. You say he torments the teacher, who, as I understand, is not remarkable for beauty of feature.

"He is turning the whole school upside down," admitted Tom, solemnly. "Lots of the boys are getting to act just like him."

"Evidently words will have no effect on this Flint, eh?"

"I've said, 'Come, now, don't!' dozens of times. You might as well chatter to a hyena," said Tom.

"Very well, then. You've reduced this matter to the lowest terms, so to speak. You can't stand by and see a woman abused, Tom Randolph. You must whip Jabez Flint, and see what effect that will have on his manners."

"He licks me," said Tom, with a suspicious snifle.

"Humph!" ejaculated Mr. Courtenay.

There was a pause. Tom nursed his bruised knee, and Mr. John Courtenay meditated. At last the latter spoke.

"The pleasure of Mr. Thomas Randolph's company is requested at three o'clock tomorrow afternoon in the 'chamber' over the harness-room by his and yours respectfully, John Courtenay. Good-night, valiant but unscientific warrior. More anon."

Mr. Courtenay departed, shutting the door between his room and Tom's.

Tom could hardly sleep for wondering what mystery should be revealed in the vaulted room in the barn. Promptly at the appointed hour he was on hand. So was Mr. John Courtenay. Out of the "chamber" over the harness-room they did not come till the shadows of night filled the big barn to overflowing.

Not once, not twice, but many and many an hour, did the secret sessions take place. At first Tom came from these interviews very hot, very red, and with barely enough breath to support life. Gradually he became more composed. His heart beat less violently. He carried himself erect, and panted less.

At school he watched Jabez Flint narrowly, but he did not interfere even when that disagreeable person was at his worst. Whenever Jabez tried to pick a quarrel, Tom kept out of his way, and every day Tom and Mr. John Courtenay sought the seclusion of the barn.

A whole month passed by. Miss Means worked hard, but made little headway. Fortunately her evenings were restful, with Jimmy making happy plans as to what he would do at the School for the Blind, and Tom's popping in for a game of checkers, which Jimmy could play as well as anybody. And Tom had a most cheery way of expecting an improvement in the town school.

"There's a good day coming, Lizzie. Just you hold on, and keep chirky," he used to say; and the hard-worked little woman half believed there would be a change, though how it should be done she could not divine.

"I'll come round and walk through the wood with you to-morrow, Lizzie," he said one evening. He had heard things which led him to suspect that something was in the wind.

The two, however, met with no mishap. The wood was lonely, but Miss Means heard a cuckoo calling, and that meant spring. Tom and she stood still to listen to the far-away, hopeful note. They reached the school-room. Tom opened the door, but shut it hastily. His face was all ablaze.

"Please, Lizzie, you're not to go in," he said, firmly. "Just walk over to our house, and wait till I send for you."

He looked so manly, standing straight and brave in the sunshine, and the teacher

had grown so weak and nervous that she made no resistance.

Tom went into the school-room. The scholars were laughing and hooting. The din was deafening. In the teacher's desk—I hate to tell it, but it was true—in the teacher's desk, fastened securely, was Jabez Flint's red calf, dressed out in a big bonnet and shawl, propped up with its forefeet on the table. A big placard on its back read, "Means to an end!"

There was no wit in the would-be joke. The whole thing was an outrage.

Tom stood in the doorway. One boy after another caught sight of him, and stopped talking. At last Jabez Flint saw him. There was something about Tom which made Jabez look again. For two seconds there was a breathless hush. Tom spoke very quietly, though he was at a white heat with indignation.

"Just you come out into the yard, Jabez Flint, and we'll find a 'means to an end.'" Jabez made a rush forward, but Tom was gone.

The whole school tumbled out-of-doors. The girls huddled together. The boys involuntarily formed a ring, within which were Jabez Flint and Tom Randolph. Everybody felt that this was to be no common battle, no vulgar fight, but a contest between order and lawlessness, between good and evil. Now and then a boy cried, "Go it, Jabe!" or "At him, Tom!" but even those exhortations gradually ceased, as it became clear that the usual method of fighting in Sou'west by Sou' was not to be observed.

Jabez made a furious plunge at Tom, but missed him. Round and round the circle Tom went, followed by his antagonist. But Tom was agile, and Jabez was clumsy. Tom's lips were tightly shut, and he breathed through his nostrils. Jabez's underjaw was dropped, and he breathed in puffs and pants. He was red with rage. Tom was absolutely cool. Round and round went the two; but Jabez could not lay a finger on Tom. The big, lubberly fellow was "losing his wind." Every lurch weakened him.

Suddenly Tom made a flying leap, and closed with his opponent. Every neck was craned forward. Tom was slight, and a head shorter than Jabez. The latter could have felled him with one blow. But no blow came. Tom's arms clasped Jabez's tight. In a twinkling his leg had curved itself under Jabez's knee. There was a swift jerk, and the great heavy fellow was thrown flat on the ground.

Tom was up and away in a second. Jabez clutched wildly at the empty air. A ringing cheer went up from the on-lookers. That brought Jabez clambering to his feet, as furious as a young bull.

Again the chase began. Tom wary and alert, Jabez blundering and breathless. Once more the sudden, unexpected spring, the elastic grapple, the quick twist of the leg. Again Jabez measured his length on the ground. He lay, glaring sullenly upward. Every bit of daring and insolence had gone out of him.

"Will you try it again?" asked Tom.

"Try it, Jabe; try it, darlin'," taunted the boys.

"Hold your tongues," said Tom, sharply.

No one spoke after that. As for Jabez, he rose slowly, stumbling to his feet. He gave one look around the circle, turned on his heel, and, like a whipped cur, slunk away. They all watched his retreating figure till it passed over the hill and out of sight. Then Tom turned to the boys.

"If ever another of you fellows bothers Lizzie, he'll get a similar dose," said he, briefly.

No one could restrain the boys now. They shouted and cheered and yelled. The girls squealed a shrill "hurrah," and waved aprons and handkerchiefs. Some one led the obnoxious calf away by its rope. Some one else ran for Miss Means. When she appeared, there was a fresh burst of applause. One girl took her bonnet. A boy set her chair. To cap the climax, at noon-time a rumor was afloat. The news flew like wildfire.

"He's gone! Jabez Flint's off on a v'yage, along o' Cap'n Hights!"

"Hurrah!" piped the boys, and tossed their caps in glee.

Miss Means actually stood up straight, forgot she was middle-aged, and laughed like a girl. Blind Jimmy was brought over to the school, and treated like a prince.

Mr. John Courtenay shook hands with Tom on his return from school.

"It took you four weeks to learn that twist under the knee, didn't it?" he said.

Down the village street came Deacon Pratt. He leaned over the minister's gate, and eyed Tom through his silver-bowed spectacles. If ever a deacon did such an undignified thing as to chuckle, that is what Deacon Pratt did.

"I understand, Thomas," said he—"I understand that you have smitten the Amalekite hip and thigh."

"I have, sir," replied the minister's son, modestly.—Harper's Young People.

MRS. DALE'S MISSION VINE.

Mrs. Dale was unmistakably poor. She lived in a little humble cottage, and took in washing to pay the taxes on it. It seemed sometimes as if she could not make both ends meet, and I must confess that it was hard work for her to keep out of debt. She belonged to the little mission band of the village church, and wanted to do her part. But how? In the little garden back of the cottage she raised vegetables for the use of her own family—herself and her two young daughters. There were potatoes and corn and tomatoes and back of these, over an old trellis, grew a grape-vine.

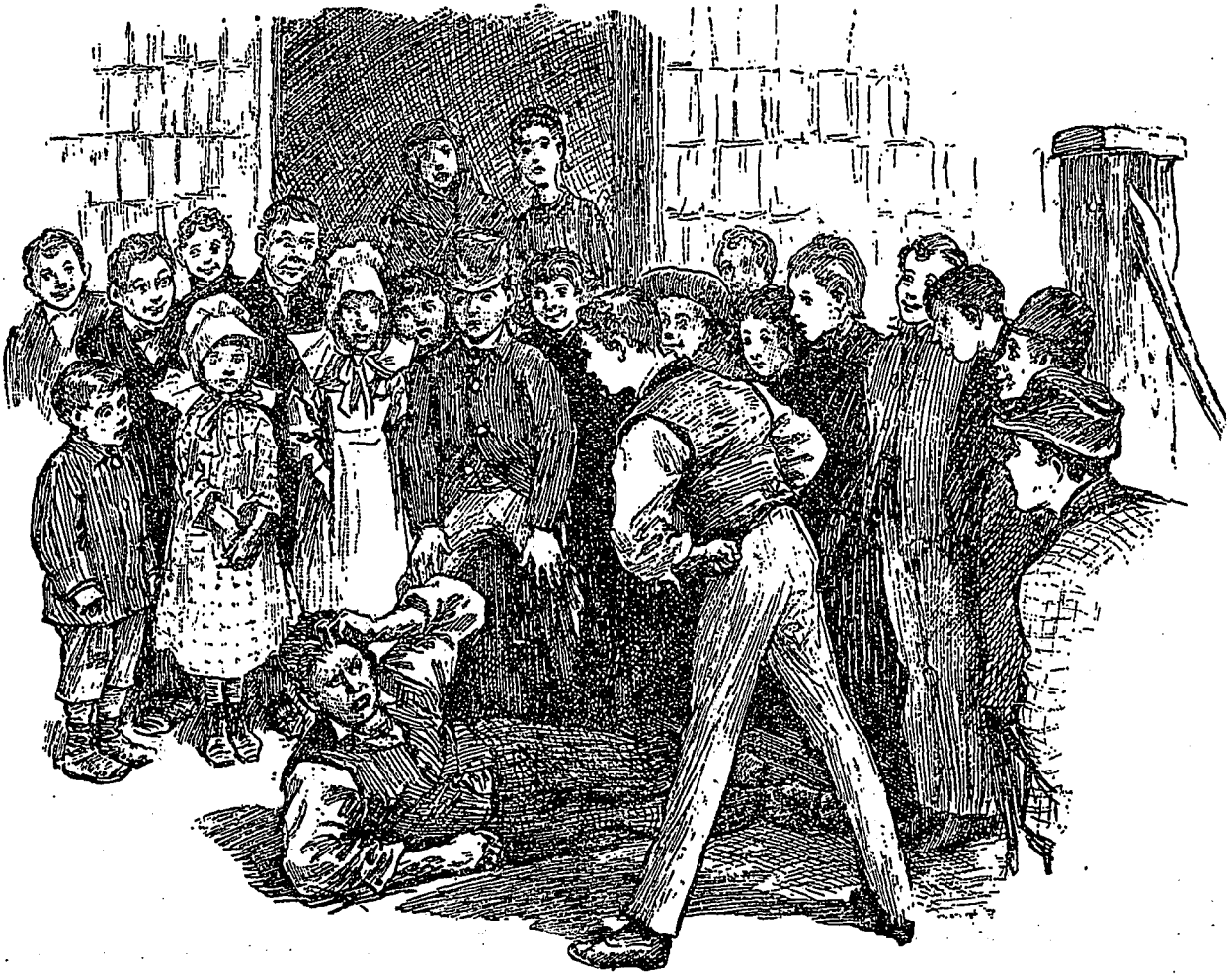
"What can I spare for missions?" This was the question that was troubling her. The vegetables were a necessity to herself and her children; she could not spare them. Suddenly a light broke upon her mind. "I know," she said, clapping her hands, "I can give my grape-vine; I will give it to missions."

And so in one sense the grape-vine was consecrated. The vine hung full of great stems of luscious grapes, slowly but surely purpling in the September sunshine. Irene and Laura Dale often looked longingly at the graceful vine, and felt very strongly tempted to pick "just a grape or two." But their mother said quite decidedly, "No, my dears, you can go without grapes for Christ's sake. I must make my harvest offering a worthy one."

Towards the last of September the grapes were all ripe. Mrs. Dale bought twenty small baskets from the grocer, and with the help of her little daughters, filled them with grapes to be sold; and the result was ten dollars for missions. Mrs. R—, a wealthy member of the society, had contributed five dollars, but after Mrs. Dale's offering had been received she added twenty dollars to her gift.

A few days passed, and there came one which brought great joy to the Dales.

"There," said a ruddy-faced farmer, rolling a great barrel of beautiful apples into the widow's home, "I heard from my wife how you wouldn't touch one of the Lord's grapes; God bless you! But here's your apples. And I've got some pears for you, too. I'm a farmer, Mrs. Dale, and my wife's a mighty good woman, if she has been a little stingy on the mission question. She'll never be stingy any more, Mrs. Dale, neither to missions nor to you; may God bless you!"—Missionary Reporter.



"AGAIN JABEZ MEASURED HIS LENGTH ON THE GROUND."