



to disguise the handwriting, she knew it was Bill Stark's.

Bill had waited around outside the schoolhouse last night, until she had finished sweeping, then he had crawled in a window, for the door had been locked, and scrawled the words upon the blackboard. Hope of ever gaining the good will of her rough flock of children left Pearl. She sat down in a seat and buried her face in her arms upon a haggled desk top.

But the little schoolma'am did not weep long; she was far too practical a person for that. After she had wiped the tears from her eyes and studied her face for suspicious marks before the little cracked mirror and glanced at her watch, she began pacing about the school-room, her high-laced Western boots making a very firm sound upon the floor.

After a while she paused at an east window. Disaster stared her in the face. She must make Bill Stark confess and apologize for writing the words upon the board, or give up her school in disgrace. Long minutes passed while she stood there brooding over the breathing, living prairies that lost themselves in distance, touched only here and there with the fingers of civilization. It must have taken spirit and many heartaches to have reclaimed this from the wild. With a serious face, Pearl turned to her desk. Let Bill do what he might, she would stay

you." Pearl, the color leaving her long rows of seats. Bill and Saline sat cheeks, caught hold of a desk for support. on rear end seats on opposite sides of the Although there had been an effort made room. Steeling herself with an effort, Pearl stepped around in front of her desk and pointing at the words scrawled upon the blackboard, asked: "Will the pupil who sneaked in the schoolhouse last night and wrote those words on the board come and erase them? He may, the little schoolma'am added with emphasis, "apologize to me for his conduct."

All the children turned to look at Bill' whose face had the stain of sunset upon it. Feeling her eyes upon him, he did not move, but gazed out the window with a brazenly transparent assumption of indifference.

'Very well," said Pearl, taking up a book from on top of her desk. shall not be dismissed, until the guilty pupil erases what he has written and apologizes to the school.

Feeling trapped and depressed, the young teacher went shakily to a window and looked out, turning her back to the school, but keeping watch from the tail of her eye over her charges,
What had been only a breeze when she

had come to school an hour ago was now a Nebraska gale. Thistles were rolling and the sunflowers were bending and snapping in the wind. The air was full of dust.

As Pearl turned from the window, she caught one of Bill Stark's small brothers in the act of severing one of the little Baxter girl's braids of hair with his jack knife. Pearl commanded him to take his book and stand in the corner. When her pupils came straggling in, all With many doubtful glances at his of them very tardy, they found the much-brother Bill, the offending boy obeyed.



A thick steel Boche sniper's post in what was once a Boche trench; the top of the structure has been blown off. Such armour as this does not stay the Canadian advance.

despised little teacher sitting at her desk, looking very capable in the trim pink dress she wore and trying very hard to

Pearl's school was composed of three families, the McKnights, the Baxters, and the three Stark boys, the eldest being Bill-fifteen pupils in all. Bill was the oldest boy in school and Saline Baxter the oldest girl, being fifteen. Saline hated Pearl because she wore pretty clothes and sometimes corrected her when she used rough language. Saline imagined herself in love with Bill. Sometimes Pearl thought she disliked the girl more than she did Bill.

She rang the bell, not mentioning the fact that they were all late, and the day's routine of study was commenced in an atmosphere of expectancy. Pearl saw Bill and Saline exchanging glances. She had not erased the words that Bill had written on the blackboard, and all but the smaller children in the school had read them and knew that Bill was the

Bill was the center of attraction and idol of the hour. All eyes were upon him, but he sat in apparent indifference looking out the window, his big thumbs in the pockets of the old vest he always wore. That Bill was now enjoying the glory of his daring deeds was very much in evidence. The faces of these neglected children, so devoid of feeling, cut their wistful little teacher to the heart. Why did they hate her so much? She simply could not understand it.

She ran her eyes up and down the two

Bill seemed to be engrossed in a piece of carving he was doing upon the top of his desk with his jack knife. After this incident, the hush of death fell over the schoolroom, broken only when Pearl called forward a class that recited in a vague mechanical fashion which grated on the little teacher's nerves.

One of the little Baxter girls held up her hand. She wanted a drink of water. The old tin water pail that sat upon a bench in the corner of the schoolroom was empty; Pearl had neglected to fill it this

Now she was puzzled. She knew that an epidemic of dryness would sweep over the school, now that the subject had been suggested. She disliked to leave the children to go after the water herself, and Bill was the only one among the pupils who could draw up the water from the cistern.

Pearl comforted the dry one, but it was of no avail. Inside of five minutes Saline, her frizzled hair standing on end and the artificial curl on her freckled forehead bobbing up and down like a corkscrew, with half a dozen others, were waving their hands wildly

Facing the situation, Pearl tried to speak carelessly: "Bill, you may get a pail of water." Bill, who was looking out the window, did not turn his head, although the little teacher knew he had heard her. Slate pencils were poised in mid-air. All the children thought that "Sorrel-top" would try to whip Bill, or make him stand in the corner with his brother. Instead, she went back to the



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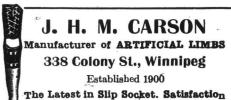
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