

THE SMITING OF THE AMALEKITE.

BY MARY SELDEN M'COBB.

The real name of the small settlement is South Betts. There is Betts, North Betts, Betts Centre, and Betts Corner. Then, tucked down in a narrow opening, with the ocean in front and stony farms nearly as barren as the sea in the rear, lies South Betts. Most of the natives are fisher-folk, and being conscientious in regard to the points of the compass, they insist on calling their Betts "Sou'west by Sou'."

They have many queer customs in Sou'west by Sou'. Perhaps that is one reason why no one thought it absurd that the town school should this year begin its summer term in February.

"We divide the year into two quarters," argued Cap'n Dodd, whose strong point was not mathematics. "Taxes will be monstrous hefty 'count of buildin' the railro'd to Sou'west by Sou'. Mighty small funds come June. So I say stop the winter quarter in January, and start in fresh in February. Just shove the summer quarter ahead while there's cash on hand. That'll be cheaper, too, for we hire a woman summer term."

Deacon Pratt, the other member of the school committee, asked a question. He put one long leg over the other, and shackled his bony hands round his sharp knee. "Was the winter master call'ating to stay till spring?"

"No, no," answered Cap'n Dodd. "There wasn't mention made of when he should end. He boards round, you know, an' jest now he's to Cap'n Hight's. Reckon board's pretty slim there. He'll be ready to go, I guess, will George Nichols. I know a first-rate lady teacher. I'll clinch it with her, if you say so."

It was agreed. Mr. Nichols, the master, departed. Whether willingly or because his salary suddenly stopped, history does not relate. Miss Elizabeth Means came to Sou'west by Sou' to take the vacant place.

The scholars called her "Lizzie." That was one of the peculiar fashions at Sou'west by Sou'. The pupils always called their teacher by his or her Christian name. They meant no disrespect. They knew no better. Even Tom Randolph, the minister's son, said "Lizzie." But the name sounded very different coming from his lips than when Jabez Flint shouted it in his rough manner.

For alas! Jabez Flint was coming to school since the summer term began in February. During the real summer Jabez worked in the fields, or went off on a fishing cruise. No woman had ever encountered him as a pupil before. And Jabez was a terror! He never tormented or bullied any boy of his own size, but he was larger than most of the lads. He had given much trouble to various winter masters, actually driving off one wretched man who was blest with more brains than muscle, and forcing him to steal away from town by night in the middle of a term.

No wonder the boys and girls spoke under their breath, "Jabe Flint's coming to school to a woman!"

Miss Means had opened the morning session, and was trying to arrange her classes. There came from the corner where Jabez sat the sound as of one talking half aloud. The new teacher stopped perplexed. "Did any one address me?" she inquired, courteously.

Jabez eyed her. A small, middle-aged woman, with stooping shoulders, the scar of an old burn on her right cheek, and frightened-looking eyes. Jabez took her measure and spoke accordingly.

"No, nobody was 'addressing' you, Lizzie," he said, impertinently. "Go on with your own job."

A titter went round the school. The smaller boys giggled conspicuously, if so be they might propitiate their foe. All but Tom Randolph. Tom was a gentleman to his fingers' ends, which twitched nervously at Jabez's insolent tone.

The morning was confused and most unsatisfactory. Miss Means did her best to keep order, but Jabez Flint baffled her efforts. He shuffled with his feet, snapped his finger joints, made uncouth noises in his throat, and behaved like a boor.

"Don't, Jabe, don't!" expostulated Tom Randolph, but he might as well have requested the north wind to stop blustering. He could only hold Miss Means's gloves for her while she put on her cloak at noon.

"Thank you," she said, gratefully, and Tom's heart throbbed with pity.

For a week matters went from bad to worse at school. The teacher's face was white and worn and anxious. More than half the scholars sided with Tom in his righteous indignation, but they also had a tremendous fear of Jabez Flint. Tom was only fifteen. What could he do against big strapping Jabez?

They all found just what pluck by itself was worth, when one morning Miss Means raised the lid of her desk, and, right in her face, out jumped three gray mice, which Jabez had slyly put inside.

There was a hubbub. The girls screamed and hopped wildly on the settees and benches. More than one boy followed their example.

Tom's Randolph blood boiled. He marched up to Jabez Flint. Jabez glowered down at him, but Tom spoke out loud and clear.

"A mighty brave fellow you are to scare a woman!" said Tom, and Jabez's wits were not so dull but that he recognized the sneer.

Now dwelling under the minister's roof was a certain young man from the city of New York, Mr. John Courtenay by name. Mr. John Courtenay was about to enter the Columbia College. That is to say, he would enter if the Rev. Mr. Randolph succeeded in coaxing a certain amount of Greek and Latin into his brains during the coming spring and summer. But Greek or no Greek, Tom Randolph regarded Mr. John Courtenay as a most superior being. This homage was graciously accepted, and repaid by much kindness and good comradeship.

Looking out of the window, Mr. John Courtenay spied the boy coming from the barn with a basket in his hand. Tom limped as if his left leg were lame. On being hailed he raised his face, and lo! there was a black bruise under one eye.

Mr. John Courtenay ran down stairs and opened the front door. "What are you doing with those eggs?" he asked.

"Carrying them to Lizzie," said Tom.

"What's the matter, youngster? Who tore your sleeve? Where did you pick up that eye?"

Both Tom's eyes flashed. "Jabez Flint licked me," he cried. "It's a shame! She's a woman, but she knows a heap more than George Nichols for all that. She's a mighty good teacher, and I won't stand Jabez Flint plaguing her. It isn't only because she's a woman, but because"—here Tom hesitated, glancing round, and lowered his voice—"she's so—mortal homely," he ended, confidentially. "If she was young and lively and handsome, she could manage for herself. But she's old and crooked, and she knows algebra like a book, sir. And Jabe Flint's a cad, and I told him so."

"Oh, you did, did you?"

"He put some mice in Lizzie's desk, and I went for him. He went for me, too," confessed Tom, ruefully, and his black eye repeated the mournful tale.

He limped off down the road. If he could do no more, he would at least carry the eggs to "Lizzie" who "boarded herself." And not only herself, but a little blind nephew.

Tom always found a cordial welcome from Jimmy Means when he came, as he often did, to the two small upper rooms where Jimmy and his aunt lived. Blind Jimmy knew Tom's footstep.

"But you're walking uneven, Tom," he said, instantly. "What has made you lame?"

Miss Means looked perturbed, as if she guessed how and why Tom's bruises had come. But Tom was equal to the occasion.

"I do believe you can hear the trees grow, Jimmy, and the clouds rub against each other up in the sky," he said, gayly. "Say, Lizzie, you promised to help me with 'Good-morrow-neighbor-with-your-hundred-geese' sum. I wish they wouldn't try to make arithmetic entertaining. Why can't they say, 'as many more and half as many more,' without dragging in the poultry? And here are some eggs my hen says she laid on purpose for you."

It was a merry party on which the kerosene lamp shone. If Jimmy was blind, those quick ears of his did double duty, and he enjoyed every bit of fun that was going. And had not his aunt, by scrimping and pinching herself, laid up nearly enough

money to send her boy to the school for the blind, when he could learn to read with his deft fingers? Jimmy knew about the money. He knew nothing about the scrimping.

Tom knew a good deal, and had guessed more. Miss Means had confided to him that if she could only manage to save a certain sum of money before July, Jimmy could go to the school next autumn.

"That is why I must teach this term at Sou'west by Sou'," explained the harassed teacher. "I'm sometimes afraid I shall have to give it up, and then Jimmy would lose a whole year. Do you think I'd better speak about Jabez Flint to the committee, Tom?"

Tom was proud to be consulted, but he had a genuine horror of what he called "blabbing." To be sure, he had told Mr. John Courtenay about Flint; but that was different, as Mr. John Courtenay was not one having authority.

"I guess I wouldn't tell, Lizzie," said Tom. "Wait and see if we can't manage Jabe ourselves."

This conversation had taken place when Tom was walking home with Miss Means. He often walked from school with her, for the path led for nearly an eighth of a mile through a lonely pine wood; and one day Jabez Flint had hidden behind a tree, and suddenly leaped out, with a whoop which had startled the solitary woman nearly out of her senses.

Tom had heard of this. "If we've got to jump, it's easier to do it in couples, Lizzie," he had said, politely; and when Jabez found that his victim had an escort, he ceased his startling attentions.

Matters did not mend at school. One day Jabez was absent. Peace and quiet reigned. All the small boys could relax their vigilance, sure that no one would sit down on the point of an unsuspected pin, and relieved from all fear of pinches and covert knocks.

The lessons were delightful that one blessed day. Miss Means looked so bright and happy; and she told the scholars wonderful stories about the stars, and marvelous tales about the way the coal in the stove had stored up heat for thousands and thousands of years, and she made the geography lesson perfectly charming by descriptions of Sir John Franklin's Arctic explorations and Dr. Livingstone's journeys in Africa.

But the calm was brief. Jabez Flint reappeared, and the old confusion with him. The amount of trouble and distress this one bad fellow could make was appalling.

At last matters reached a climax. The stove in the school-room smoked furiously one morning, and Tom volunteered to climb upon the roof and investigate. He was sure that Jabez was at the bottom of the difficulty by the way Jabez shook his fist at him when he made his offer. Sure enough, the chimney had been stuffed with brush and rags. No wonder it refused to "draw." Tom managed to clear away the rubbish, and at noon he received his wages in the shape of as severe a thrashing as the toughest and stoutest-hearted would care to stand.

The Rev. Mr. Randolph could coax no information from his son as to the reason of his dilapidated condition, neither did Tom breathe a word as to the why and wherefore when his mother tenderly applied Pond's Extract to his sprained wrist.

But Mr. John Courtenay, having recently been a boy himself, was wise. When Tom crawled into bed being as limp and stiff as jelly—were you ever limp and stiff at the same time? It is quite possible—Mr. John Courtenay sat himself on the small table opposite the bed, thrust his hands into his trousers pockets, and fixed his eyes on the hapless victim of Jabez Flint's tyranny.

"Hm!" mused Mr. Courtenay.

"Thrashing number what, Tom?"

Tom groaned.

"I will offer a morsel of advice," proceeded Mr. Courtenay, blandly. "You may take it or leave it, as you think best, old boy."

Tom groaned again, but pricked up his ears.

"I will simply remark," continued Mr. Courtenay, "that if you are going to fight, you had better do it, not like an ignoramus, but like a gentleman and a scholar."

Tom sat up in bed and stared.

(To be Continued.)

THE NICKEL THAT BURNED IN JOE'S POCKET.

"Do you want a boy to help you, Deacon Jones?" asked Joe White one day.

"Can you give good weight to my customers and take good care of my pennies?" "Yes, sir," answered Joe, and forthwith he took his place in the market, weighed the fish and kept the room in order.

"A whole day for fun, fire-works and crackers to-morrow!" exclaimed Joe, as he buttoned his white apron about him the day before the national holiday. A great trout was flung down on the counter.

"Here's a royal trout, Joe. I caught it myself. You may have it for ten cents. Just hand over the money, for I'm in a hurry to buy my fire-crackers," said Ned Long, one of Joe's mates.

The deacon was out, but Joe had made purchases for him before, so the dime was spun across to Ned, who was off like a shot. Just then Mrs. Martin appeared. "I want a nice trout for my dinner to-morrow. This one will do; how much is it?"

"A quarter, ma'am," and the fish was transferred to the lady's basket and the silver piece to the money drawer.

But here Joe paused. "Ten cents was very cheap for that fish. If I tell the deacon it cost fifteen he'll be satisfied, and I shall have five cents to invest in fire-crackers."

The deacon was pleased with Joe's bargain, and when the market was closed each went his way for the night. But the nickel in Joe's pocket burned like a coal; he could eat no supper and was cross and unhappy. At last he could stand it no longer, but walking rapidly, tapped at the door of Deacon Jones's cottage.

A stand was drawn out and before the open Bible sat the old man. Joe's heart almost failed him, but he told his story and with tears of sorrow laid the coin in the deacon's hand. Turning over the leaves of the Bible the old man read: "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whose confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." You have my forgiveness, Joe; now go home and confess to the Lord, but remember you must forsake as well as confess. And keep this little coin as long as you live to remind you of this first temptation.—*New York Mail.*

A FAITHFUL DOG.

A workingman recently had a handsome Newfoundland which he had reared from a puppy, and to which he was much attached.

The dog returned his owner's affection, and was extremely fond of following him to his day's work. The master did not encourage this, but sometimes the Newfoundland would creep along stealthily in the rear until he was too far from home to be sent back, and then would come to the front with every sign of delight in his own cleverness.

One morning he had followed in this way to a house where his master was at work upon a roof. To keep the dog from straying away the man put down his coat and his dinner-pail, and said:

"There, old fellow, you followed me without leave, and now you may stay and watch my things."

The dog lay down as he was directed, and the master went to his work. In the course of the forenoon the man fell from the scaffold and was killed. His body was carried to his home, where his wife was lying ill, but no one could induce the dog to leave his post beside the coat and dinner-pail. For two days he remained, refusing to eat, and showing his teeth whenever any attempt was made to remove the things of which he had been left in charge.

At the end of that time, the wife of the dead man, herself too ill to leave her bed, suggested that the dog would, perhaps, obey her little son, a boy of two years and a half, just old enough to talk plain.

The boy was taken to the place, and, moved by the loss of his father and the excitement of the moment, ran to the dog, put his arms about his shaggy neck and burst into tears.

The dog seemed to understand that this was no ordinary fit of weeping. He licked the child's hands soothingly, and when the boy took up his father's coat and pail, the faithful creature followed submissively at his heels, as if he recognized the little one as his master.—*Indian Witness.*