

pected to teach the thing and to us our marks in it, whether for themes or even for the final examination looming toward us at the end of the year, mattered very little. But the case of the majority of the students was very different. They expected, most of them, to fill positions as superintendents, principals, teachers and even professors, and possibly their diplomas—but surely their ability to pass a creditable examination would be influenced by their knowledge or ignorance of the natural sciences. All these things they thought about while Archibald read to us his musty lectures, and laid waste four and a half precious hours a week.

Things were at this pass when a peripatetic lecturer named Thornycroft bloomed out one day on the bulletin board with announcements of an extension lecture on "Embryonic Traits." It was one of those popular illuminated and illuminating things which the board of trustees arranged for us from time to time. "Prexy" returned from a two months' absence just in time to preside, and the thing was a great success.

It was one of a course of three to be delivered at varying intervals and it dawned upon one of the interfering "eds" to write "Prexy" a petition to engage Thornycroft to take our zoology class for the rest of the year. There was no definite criticism of Archibald, but the implication was there. We were all delighted at the prospect; we all signed the petition and awaited results. "Prexy" had always been strong on public sentiment and "the pulse of the student body." He used to harangue the other men about the authority of vox populi. He who never stayed with us long enough to hear it.

It was two or three weeks after this that the routine of our daily lives was upset by John's arrival in the afternoon, while Elizabeth and I were wrestling with the "Life and Times of Leonardi da Vinci." John hardly ever came to see me in the afternoon, and his face, as Margaret ushered him into the little drawing-room, was so grave that Elizabeth prepared to beat a retreat.

"I want to talk to you both," he began, when we had established him in the Morris chair. "I have sent for Billy Blight; he'll be here presently. There's something very serious in the air."

"Has Billy broken out again?" I questioned. John shook his head.

"More serious, far," he answered, and just at that moment Billy's boots resounded in our hall.

"What's up?" he questioned, with instant concern when he saw our gravity.

"I'm afraid Pearson's chance is up," John answered. "I've seen it coming on for two or three weeks—ever since 'Prexy' came back. But now I'm afraid it's certain."

"His chance?" repeated Elizabeth.

"I mean his promotion—his increase—everything. I'm going to tell you three—two of you the wildest youngsters in the college, and the third the wisest and dearest—a grave faculty secret. My reason is that we four are perhaps the best friends the Pearsons have, and they'll be needing friendship, I'm afraid. You know about that petition to the president. Well, he acted upon it, and

Thornycroft has consented on condition that he be given full professorship next year and be made head of the science department. Now Pearson has never had a definite agreement with the president or the trustees. He was acting entirely on his own responsibility when he made so sure of it. There is no reason under the sun why Thornycroft's proposition should not be accepted. He is better known than Pearson. His titles will read well in the catalogue."

"But haven't you," I asked, "all of you who appreciate Mr. Pearson, haven't you remonstrated with 'Prexy'?"

"He ought to have his face pushed," contributed Billy.

"Surely, surely," answered John. "We've said all that's possible, but the president, when he is riding his vox populi, vox dei hobby is not amenable to arguments. It looks very much as if the thing would go through."

"And the 'Castle in Spain,'" wailed Elizabeth. "The darling 'Castle in Spain.'"

"Will stay in Spain I fear," said John as he rose and put on his overcoat. "I

must get back to a lecture. It's not the first time the vox populi has incited murder."

For some time after John left us Elizabeth, Billy, and I sat in despair. We were sitting dejectedly over the tea and cake which Margaret's hospitality had provided when there entered the one person in the world whom we were least prepared to face.

"Mrs. Pearson, Miss Marian," Margaret announced, and before we could gather our scattered wits she was looking at us out of her friendly, unsuspecting eyes, and seating herself, cozily assured of welcome.

"It is luck finding you here," she assured Billy. "I was going to write you a line to-night. For you three dear children—and John, of course, Marian—must come to Spain on Saturday week for the laying of the corner-stone. The 'castle' is actually going up."

"My God," murmured Billy.

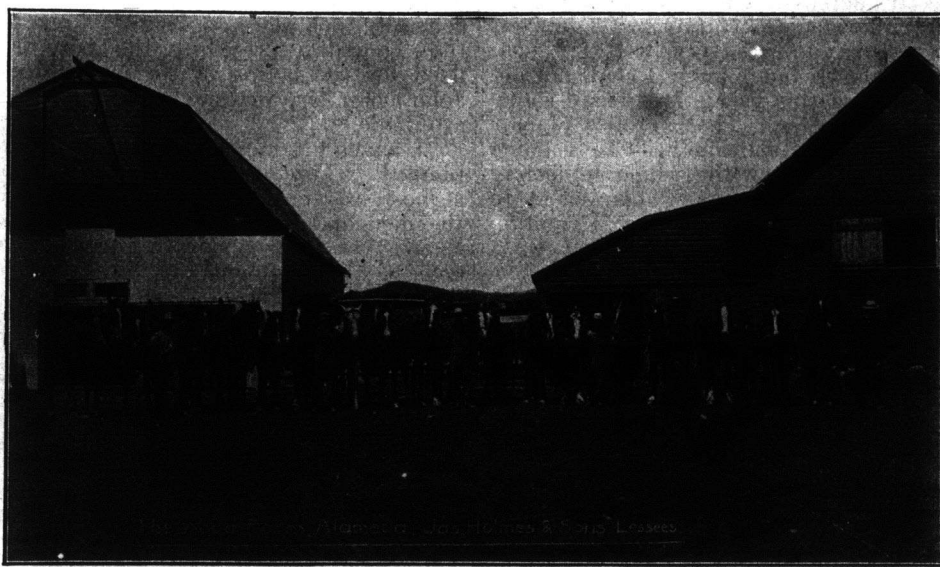
"Stop your profanity, sir," she chided. "I can't imagine what your parents or guardians were thinking of to let you acquire it."

My throat was actually stiff, but in the dusk I managed to squeeze it and to force myself into some kind of articulation. "Of course we'll all be in Spain when the corner-stone is laid," I mumbled.

"You've got a cold, dear," she broke in, promptly. "I'll have a word or two with Margaret about you as I go out. You know I hate to think of any of the students being sick here in town. That's going to be one of my great joys in the 'castle.' I shall always have a convalescent or two sitting out over the portcullis and getting well in the sunshine. The moat will be full of formaldehyde. A yellow flag shall float over the battlements; the drawbridge will be always up and the iron-studded oak doors covered thick with scarlet-fever plasters."

Elizabeth achieved something which in the darkness passed for a laugh.

"And now I'm going. I just dropped in to make sure of you for the corner-stone. The babies will be wondering where I am. And if Robert reached home



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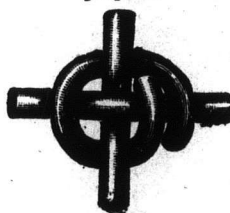
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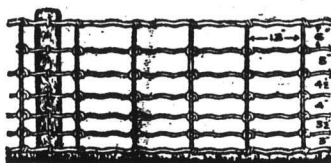
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