

AN OLD-TIME SCHOOL CLOSING

By E. G. G.

THERE was excitement in the neighbourhood, for in the school-house at the cross-roads was to be held, that day, the yearly examination of the fifty pupils who had attended school during the winter months.

The girls had curled their hair and put on muslin gowns; the boys, fresh from a bath in the creek and a home-made hair-cut, looked their best.

The teachers of the county always visited each other's "closing" to obtain fresh hints on the cultivation of the young idea. So, when the hour of opening arrived, the platform was filled with teachers, while every seat was crowded by the parents of the children.

The dunce's cap and stool, as well as the birch rod, were put away in the darkness of a small closet, while the maps and candle-holders were adorned with lilacs and maple boughs. A bowl of June roses stood on the desk, while Miss Mowat (who was the best disciplinarian in the county) was arrayed in her Sunday dress of black alpaca.

The examinations, which were oral, were seasons of delight, as various games of skill were held which sharpened the juvenile wits as many modern methods do not pretend. There was the spelling-match in which Melinda Higgins "spelled down" the school and was honoured by words of praise from the inspector.

Next came the mental arithmetic competition, in which the fox-and-hare problem figured. May Chalmers who was renowned for possessing a "head for figures," easily won — to the chagrin of her rival, Susie Hicks.

The grammar class had an exciting contest, when nouns and pronouns, verbs and adverbs, prepositions and conjunctions, were allotted their lawful places in the paragraph.

I remember being called to the board to bound Russia. It was as difficult then for a small girl as it is now for the capacious brain of the modern statesman. Seized with stage fright, I began to cry and was condemned to defeat by the stern voice "Go to your seat."

One of the teachers played the Good Samaritan, dried my tears with a red handkerchief and presented me with a huge bull's-eye and a copper. No modern bon-bons are so sweet as that red and white treasure and no bill, of however large a denomination, is half so valuable as that one "sou" to the defeated little girl who had failed to bound Russia.

The copy-books were displayed as specimens of penmanship, and, though not much could be truthfully said concerning them, there was one boy, Alfred Green, who was pronounced a genius. Such flourishes in his capitals, such long and graceful tails at the end of the sentences, such wonderful figures of birds and reptiles were woven into the woof of his writing that the visitors were amazed at the greatness of his skill. He always took the prize for writing and we were proud to have it so, for he was the popular boy of the school.

The most interesting examination, however, was the one in history. Our text-book was the synopsis found in the "Fifth Book of Lessons." After many questions had been asked by the inspector, a flaxen-haired girl of ten was called to the platform and asked to give the names of the Roman emperors and their characteristics. She rolled the huge names glibly from her small tongue — Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius — until arriving at Nero she was commanded to give an account of his persecution of the Christians and of his own tragic end.

The small, illuminated cards of

merit, daintily inscribed, were all we needed as rewards and they were more artistic than many of the daubs so common to-day.

The facial expressions and gestures of the friends were both amusing and inspiring while the drilling of the classes was in progress. Portly Mrs. McKim, who was a pillar in the Methodist Society, emitted ecstatic little whoops, which sounded like "Glory!" when her kith or kin prevailed. Joshua Higgins, a staunch Tory of the old school, blew his nose and struck the bench with his doubled fist when his great son Peter, six feet in his stockings, was beaten by "that

THE YELLOW GOD

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you she very awkward customer, think p'raps you done better stop there and marry her. Well, she gone now, thank Heaven! seem to drop in sea, and hope she stay there."

"Jeeki," said Alan, recovering himself, "listen to me: this is all infernal nonsense, we have gone through a great deal and the nerves of both of us are overstrained. We think we saw what we did not see, and if you dare to say a single word of it to your mistress I'll break your neck. Do you understand?"

"Yes, Major, think so. All 'fernal nonsense, nerves strained, didn't see what we see, say nothing of what did see to Mrs. Major, if either do say anything, t'other one break his neck. That all right, quite understand. Anything else, Major?"

"Yes, Jeeki. We have had some wonderful adventures, but they are past and done with, and the less we talk, or even think about them the better, for there is a lot that would be rather difficult to explain, and if explained would scarce be believed."

"Yes, Major, for instance, very difficult explain Mrs. Barbara how Asika so fond of you if you only tell her, 'Go away, go away!' all the time, like old saint-gentleman to pretty girl in picture. P'raps she smell rat."

"Stop your ribald talk," said Alan in a stern voice. "It would be better if, instead of making jokes, you gave thanks to Providence for bringing both of us alive and well out of very dreadful dangers. Now I am going to dress for dinner," and with an anxious glance seaward in the gathering darkness, he turned and went.

Jeeki stood alone upon the empty deck, wagging his great head to and fro and soliloquising thus:

"Wonder if Major see what under lady Asika's feet when she stand out there over nasty deep. Think not or he say something. That noble lord not look nice. No, private view for Jeeki only, free ticket and nothing to pay, and me hope it no come back when I go to bed. Major know nothing about it, so he not see, but Jeeki know a lot. Hope that Aylward not write any letters home, or if he write, hope no one post them. Ghost bad enough, but murder, oh my!"

He paused a while, then went on: "Jeeki do big sacrifice to Bonsa when he reach Yarleys, get lamb in back kitchen at night, or if ghost come any more calf in wood outside. Not steal it, pay for it himself. Then think Jeeki turn Roman Catholic; confess his sins. They say them priest chaps not split, and after they got his sins they tackle Asika, and Bonsas, too," and he uttered a series of penitent groans, turning slowly round and round to be sure that nothing was behind him.

little upstart of a Grit" in the mental arithmetic contest. But these ebullitions of the old Adam cooled when the long tables were spread and fairly creaked under the weight of the good things provided.

When ham and home-made bread and sweet butter-frosted plum cake and pies of every kind were consumed — when cheers had been given for Miss Mowat and "God Save the Queen" sung by strong, clear voices — the jarring notes of dissent and envy died away and we went home under the stars, tired and content that we were Canadians, under the rule of "the best Queen that ever lived."

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Just then the full moon appeared out of a bank of clouds, and as it rose higher, flooding the world with light, Jeeki's spirits rose also."

"Asika never come in moonshine," he said, "that not the game, against rule, and after all, what Jeeki done bad? He very good fellow really. Aylward great villain, serve him jolly well right if Asika spifficate him, that not Jeeki's fault. What Jeeki do, he do to save master and missus who he love. Care nothing for hisself, ready die any day. Keep it dark to save them, too, 'cause they no like the story. If once they know, it always leave taste in mouth, same as bad oyster. Also Jeeki manage very well, take Major safe Asikiland ('cause Little Bonsa make him), give him very interesting time there, get him plenty gold, nurse him when he sick, noble Mungana, bring him out again, find Miss Barbara, catch hated rival and bamboozle all Asiki army, bring happy pair to coast and marry them, arrange first-class honeymoon on ship — Jeeki do all these things, and lots more he could tell; if he vain and not poor humble nigger."

Once more he paused a while, lost in the contemplation of his own modesty and virtues, then continued:

"This very ungrateful world. Major there, he not say, 'Thank you, Jeeki, Jeeki, you great, wonderful man. Brave Jeeki, artful Jeeki! Jeeki smart as paint who make all world believe just what he like, and one too many for Asika herself.' No, no, he say nothing like that. He say 'Thank Providence, not 'Jeeki,' as though Providence do all them things. White folk think they clever, but great fools really, don't know nothink. Providence all very well in his way — p'raps, but Providence not patch on Jeeki."

"Hullo, moon get behind cloud and there second bell; think Jeeki go down and wait dinner, lonely up here, and sure Asika never stand 'lectric light."

(THE END.)

DOWN WITH THE KNIFE.

(Hamilton Times.)

UNFORTUNATELY, the weapon-carrying habit is not entirely confined to foreigners. Too frequently men familiar with Anglo-Saxon institutions illegally carry lethal weapons. That is to be regretted, and the habit is to be reprobated and discouraged by all good citizens. But the newcomers of hot-blooded races, and of habits of society where respect for the institutions of the law has not exercised the same influence on the individual, are dangerously prone to crimes which are the result of a combination of too-ready weapons and unrestrained passion.