

STORIES
POETRY

The Inglenook

SKETCHES
TRAVEL

HOW A HERO WAS DISCOVERED.

In two more days school would be over for three long months. A group of boys of all ages and sizes stood in front of the weather-beaten country schoolhouse, discussing the prospects for vacation fun.

"I'm going to the city for a month," said Ted Baldwin, "and then my cousins are coming home with me to spend the other two months. Their school doesn't close as early as ours. Hello! There's Duncan! Pietro. I suppose he's going to spend his vacation building a hospital for toads and stray cats. 'Fore I'd be such a Nancy as he is!"

"Oh, say, come now, Ted! He's not such a bad sort. I wish somebody would tell why we fellows are forever tormenting him." It was Rex Norton who took the little Italian's part. Rex was "small for his age," the neighbors said; but his ready smile made up for his lack of height, and he carried perpetual sunshine with him.

Ted did not attempt to answer for himself or his mates, but stood watching the short but sturdy figure as it climbed up the long hill.

"Hurry up, Petyey," called one of the boys, "You'll be late. Teacher's clock won't wait for Italy."

Pietro gave him a glance that was half-smiling, half-distrustful, and hurried on towards the door, as if he feared a trick of some sort were about to be played on him.

But the boys were again absorbed in their planning. In fact, they become so interested that they were in danger of being late themselves, and Miss Glidden finally had to ring the desk bell outside the door to attract their attention.

When the children were all in their places, Miss Glidden read the morning lessons and led them in a song. Then she requested them to take out their "history readers." The lesson today was about Abraham Lincoln, and when it was finished their teacher asked them to tell what quality they admired most in the man of whom they all loved to read.

The boys gave many reasons—all but Pietro. He sat staring straight ahead with his great black eyes, and was as silent as if he were voiceless. At last Miss Glidden spoke to him. "Pietro," she said, "tell us why you admire Mr. Lincoln."

Pietro fidgeted uncomfortably—he was sure the boys would laugh at him. Then looking straight into Miss Glidden's face, he answered: "Because he didn't like to fight."

Yes, it was just as he thought. The boys were all laughing now; and Patrick Kelly whispered to his neighbor, Ward Elkins: "Wouldn't fight! What do you think of that! But it's just like the little Eytalian. He's a regular coward. Do you mind how he ran away when we killed that snake the other day?" Then he saw Miss Glidden's eyes upon him, and he straightened up.

"Yes, Pietro," said the teacher, "Mr. Lincoln, although he was president during a long and terrible war, was a man of peace, and would have been very glad indeed if the country would have settled her dispute without those terrible years of suffering and bloodshed. Now, will you tell us why it is nobler sometimes not to fight?"

But Pietro was overcome with confusion and sat silently staring at her with his solemn big eyes; so she gave them an answer of her own.

"There is often a better way of gaining a victory than by the use of weapons of warfare, or with fists," she said, "and our great President believed in that way. The boy who is constantly seeking a fight is more often a bully than a brave."

Freddy Brown glanced slyly across at Patrick on the next bench, and Patrick, for some reason which the boys seemed to understand, looked foolish and uncomfortable.

"Now," continued Miss Glidden, "we must go on with the regular lessons. But to-morrow I am going to ask you to tell me about some heroes who showed their bravery in another way than by fighting. I wonder how many we can think of. Perhaps our hero of to-day will be the first on the list."

When school was dismissed that afternoon, Ray Cullen called the boys together and proposed that they should go swimming down in the "big basin." The "big basin" was an oddly-shaped bayou, which had been hollowed out by the river when it changed its course once upon a time. The water in the basin was nearly always warm, and there was just enough of combined sunshine and shadow to make it an ideal place for swimming.

Pietro had started off alone toward home. Rex caught sight of him, and was seized with one of his sudden generous impulses. "Come along, Pietro," he called through his hands, "down to the river."

"Oh, let him alone!" exclaimed Pat. "We don't want him."

"Yes, we do," retorted Rex, quickly. For once he had forgotten to be afraid of the big boy. "Any way, I do. Come on, Pietro," he called again, and Pietro turned and went with them, wondering what had happened to make them so friendly.

It was a perfect day and the boys were soon shouting and splashing about in great glee. In the midst of their fun Rex made a discovery.

A cow had escaped from the pasture near by, and was wandering along the river toward a place which the boys called the "danger hole." The water had an unsettled look there, and people said that if any one were to enter it he would be sucked down, never to rise again.

"That's one of Comstoeck's cows," Rex exclaimed. "I'm going down to head her off. If she gets into that hole, she'll be drowned."

"Oh, you're forever hunting up some uncomfortable duty. Stay up here where it's pleasant."

But Rex did not heed. He was already gliding down the "basin," with long, steady strokes. Pietro was close behind him. Mr. Duncan was an excellent swimmer, and he had taught the little adopted waif so well that the Italian boy had few equals, though not many of the older boys had found it out.

Rex stopped down stream, just ahead of the navigating cow, and started her back up the bank. But suddenly she took a perverse notion into her cowish brain, and struck out straight for the middle of the stream, with Rex in close pursuit. When she felt the strong force of the current, however, instinct told her it was time to turn back. With a struggling leap she veered around and started toward the shore.

Poor Rex was directly in the way of Bossy's hoofs, and a moment later he was striving to get his breath and wondering what made his right arm feel so queer. He tried to swim out of the current, but that arm refused to work, and while he managed to keep himself afloat he felt that he was drifting

aside, and straight toward the dreaded danger-hole.

But he had forgotten Pietro. The Italian boy had gone in toward the shore when the chase began. Now he saw that something was the matter, and he began swimming out and down the stream as fast as his swift, sure strokes would carry him.

Rex was at the very edge of the dreadful hole; in another moment he would be drawn into it. The boys in the basin were shouting vehement calls, but they seemed afraid to come to his rescue. Pietro was very near now. Swiftly he shot ahead, and throwing his left arm about Rex, he began slowly to work his way out, while Rex helped as best he could with his uninjured arm. He was a plucky lad, and did not hinder his rescuer by becoming panic-stricken, as many boys would have done.

In a few minutes the boys were safe. They allowed themselves to float along with the current until they were past the danger point, and then worked gradually across to the shore. Their comrades had come to their senses by this time, and were hastening to meet them. The boys gathered about the two adventurers and escorted them back to the bank of the basin. They said little about Pietro's share in the affair; but they called him "old fellow," and Pietro knew what that meant.

The next morning Miss Glidden, true to her promise, asked for names for her hero list. Little Dick Warren's hand went up like a flash, but before she had time to call upon him twenty lusty voices shouted "Pietro Beltrami!"

Miss Glidden looked very much surprised; so when the uproar was over they had to tell her all about it. And Ted put the finishing touch to the story by exclaiming: "Yes, and if that red cow had been in there, he would have gone back and dragged her out, too!"

Of course they all laughed then; but it was a jolly, friendly laugh, and Pietro was glad, because it made Miss Glidden forget to praise him before the school. He knew the boys never would call him a coward again, even though he would not fight nor kill snakes, and that was sufficient.—Selected.

Once to every man and nation comes the moment to decide,

In the strife of truth with falsehood for the good or evil side.

Some great cause, God's new Messiah, offers each the bloom or blight;

Parts the goats upon the left hand and the sheep upon the right;

And the choice goes ay forever 'twixt the darkness and the light.

—James Russell Lowell.

To tread softly on mercy's errand where the silent sufferer lies upon his couch of pain; to revive hope within the heart of the discouraged by the subtle alchemy of cheer; to start the low embers of some cheerless hearth, and to make them radiant with warmth and light; to clothe the naked, and to feed the poor; to leave some token of remembrance with those who long since have thought themselves forgotten; to smile with gladness upon such to whom the world has been cold; to take the hand of the struggling youth, and fill them with courage, to sit in the evening twilight with the angel, lest they grow lonely; to plant a few flowers within the garden of the sorrowful; to leave a tender sympathy with those who have known of grief—to do this in the name of the Nazarene is to find the secret of a happy Christmas-tide.