

Which was the Strong Teacher?

Having noted the nickel figure two on the door, I entered the room quietly, and unannounced—which, perhaps, was not quite fair.

As it happened, I was especially inopportune. Miss Primall was evidently in the midst of a curtain lecture.

I was just in time to catch an ominous "Thirty minutes after school," before she was aware of my presence.

"You may take out your books. One!—two!"

I thought I heard the tap of a ruler as accompaniment, but no; it was just Miss Primall's military precision of voice, admirably seasoned by twenty years' experience.

Forty little hands drew as many books from their respective places and laid them, noiselessly, with the exactness of well regulated machines, in the centre of each desk, while forty pairs of anxious round eyes were fixed with painful intentness on the severe, rigid figure before them.

Forty—did I say? No; the thirty-ninth, a wee maid in the far corner of the room, having pushed her reader to the upper corner of her desk, and being made aware of her transgression by the piercing reproach of her teacher's eyes, reached a fat little hand to correct herself.

The book fell on the floor, and was recovered after a scramble, intermingled with blushes, and a few tears.

"Forty minutes wasted, Miriam," was the grim comment. "A minute for every child you have kept waiting."

I spent half an hour in the room, enduring the sense of suffocation which assailed me, through stronger motives of curiosity. I went forth a wiser and sadder being, leaving the little beings of a still more active organism to a further two hours of the process, after which, I felt sure, their mental wardrobe would be properly starched and ironed to send home to the parental roof.

Miss Primall confided in me that children were very trying. It was only by the motto of eternal vigilance that she accomplished anything. They were so exuberant—so full of life.

"Why if I should allow it—if I gave them a single indulgence, they would run all over me! I am ashamed to have you find the room in such confusion."

"Albert!" sharply, "Don't let me see you look off your book again."

"The frost, perhaps, (it was October) gives one such a live feeling," I suggested mildly.

"Well, maybe," dubiously, "but there is no excuse for it."

Just what was inexcusable, I did not quite decide.

"Are you troubled with whispering?" I ventured rather guiltily, for I had seen none.

"Whispering!" she echoed, horrified. "They get a demerit if they even turn around."

"A Class, in reading! One! Two! Three!"

"Must you go?" as they obeyed the signals, rising like ranks of miniature soldiers, and I, also, arose to go.

"Come in again,"—and so I left them reading about the "frisky squirrel," with all the animation of bisque talking dolls.

Mr. R.—, the principal, met me in the hall.

"So you have been visiting our model room," he exclaimed. "A very fine teacher! An unusual teacher, I might say. We were most fortunate in securing her."

"Indeed she is an unusual teacher—I trust,"—I added to myself.

The theme was evidently a pet one. He rolled it like a choice morsel under his tongue.

"They went in there regular harum-scarums—into everything. A very weak teacher last year! Miss Primall soon had them in marching order. You don't see any more of that now."

"Another primary room? Oh! Oh! yes. The first grade. But I'd really rather you wouldn't visit it this morning. It will be such a disappointment after the work you have been seeing. A young teacher, you know—enthusiastic and pleasant, but full of notions. She has some good qualities though, and I think she'll improve in time. But her order is dreadful! There simply isn't any."

However, I went in. I was not surprised to hear her called "Miss Love."

If ever a name fitted!—but you should have been there to see for yourself. There was a small tidal wave of rapture just as I entered, which entirely ignored my presence.

"Oh! see—see! There comes its wings?" shrilled an ecstatic little voice, forgetful of all convention.

"It is our very first moth from the cocoon," explained Miss Love, turning a smiling face to show me the rough brown cradle from which the trembling visitor was slowly freeing its drooping wings.

"The children are so happy over it."

"But we won't frighten our little friend with our big voices, will we?" she said softly. And the tender hush that fell upon the shining baby faces was sweet to see.

"Let us sing our cocoon song to the pretty moth," and as she spoke she wrote "Moth" in large letters on the board.

How softly, without any suggestion, the clear voices crooned the lullaby!