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SOME SCHOOL EXPERIENCES

A.—WHEN HEART MEETS HEART

On looking back over the teachers of my school days I think those who helped me most in my own teaching were those I disliked most at the time. We cannot always define the quality that gives a teacher power over her class, but on looking back we can sometimes find where a teacher failed to gain the good will of his pupils and so determine to avoid the same errors.

I remember one teacher in particular who lost the respect and sympathy of her class from want of understanding the nature of her pupils. I was about thirteen years old when I came under the influence of this teacher and I can remember yet the feeling with which the class entered the new grade. We had left in a sense our school days behind us, or we thought we had. We were now to be treated as students and we threw ourselves into our work with a great deal of zest and enthusiasm. For the first few weeks of the term we had a teacher of wide experience who seemed to understand the nature of the pupils with whom she had to deal. We began to view the old school subjects in a different light. History became a living reality still going on and not a number of dates and names; the countries we studied about in the geography began to have an existence for us outside the map and the reading lessons had a fresh interest in the light thrown on them by judicious questions. The teacher went on the assumption that we knew how to behave ourselves and she was not disappointed in the conduct of her class.

After a few weeks, however, this teacher left and another came to take her place who was a complete contrast. This teacher looked upon us as a class of rather big school children to be governed as children not able to govern themselves. She never seemed to think that we wanted to learn, were in fact eager to do so, but was under the impression that our knowledge would have to be driven into us against our will, and this she proceeded to do with praiseworthy energy. I have still a vivid picture of her stalking up and down the aisles calling for order, a long pointer in her hand with which—crowning indignity of all—she sometimes rapped our knuckles. The result of this treatment was a feeling of antagonism on the part of the pupils and a number of them combined to make that teacher's life as miserable as only a teacher's can be who has the ill-will of her class. We never consulted her in any of our plans, nor confided in her in any way. Instead of becoming our friend, as she might have done, we regarded her as our mortal enemy and the