

How Red Hair Won at District Eight

By Leland S. Trivelpiece

PEARL Trumley paused a moment on the porch of District Eight's log schoolhouse, and shifted the unsightly big dinner pail to the other hand. Her pale cheeks were flushed from her brisk walk across the fields, but her blue eyes held a hint of wistfulness in them, as she turned to look off over the prairies.

Longing for a glorious, adventurous winter, Pearl had come out to northwestern Nebraska from her home in Chicago to teach school. Her uncle had written her many letters urging her to come. He had told her about District Eight's schoolhouse built from logs taken from the famous old Fort McPherson, and of the wide wind-swept prairies.

"It will be the making of a pale-faced city girl like you," he wrote. "It will make the roses bloom in your cheeks to skip across the fields in the mornings." Each letter closed with this assurance: "Don't be afraid to try it, little girl, for you've got red hair and I'll bet on it every time. It's the kind that counts."

So Pearl had come out to the wild West to become a school ma'am. But this morning, as Pearl stood on the schoolhouse steps, she felt homesick and discouraged. Even though the predicted roses had come into her cheeks, her red hair had failed.

The playgrounds around the schoolhouse were not inspiring. Upon the fire-guard that had been plowed last year, sunflowers and Russian thistles had

the teacher at District Eight when he comes, and Bill won't do a thing. The kid's a coward at heart, just like his father is."

But in spite of this, the morning that Bill had walked into Pearl's school, she had been surprised and startled. He was attired in an old pair of greasy chaps, a red handkerchief was tied around his neck, and his hat was set on the back of his head. Without removing his hat, he strode up to Pearl's desk and, putting his hands on his hips looked her over with undisguised disgust. Bill had big bulging black eyes and a prize fighter's jaw.

"I didn't wear my gun," he growled, "but these are the togs I've laid out to wear to school."

Pearl's sense of humor was startled by the ridiculous figure that Bill made standing there, and she burst out laughing.

Bill turned red in the face, but stood his ground. "I'll study anything but history," he said his voice savage; "but there ain't a schoolma'am ever lived that can make me read about what some darn fool done a hundred years ago."

By her indiscretion in laughing at him, Pearl had insulted the pride of Bill's sixteen years, and he had made up his mind to run "Sorrel-top" or "Red-head," as he nicknamed Pearl, out of school. Pearl had not told her uncle, for she felt that she was to blame, and so day by day the bad state of affairs had become more acute.

Bill came to school only to make the



All that remains of a small station near Lens. Ground recently captured by Canadians.

grown lustily. To the north of the schoolhouse stood the coal sheds and rickety old horse barn, old buildings that looked as if they were slowly creeping back among the tall sunflowers to hide their ugliness.

To the east and west, nothing but sunburned stubble fields were visible. The monotony was broken only by yellow straw stacks here and there. To the south, the land sloped to the railroad tracks, just across which one could see a mirage that looked like a big lake of water—a phantom that mocked Pearl's eyes, for she was fond of rowing on the lakes at home.

The wind blew a lock of hair loose on her forehead. Pearl frowned and tried to tuck it up under her Tam o'Shanter. It was going to blow to-day, another Nebraska gale. Russian thistles would roll across the fields like lost sheep; tomorrow perhaps the wind would change and they would all come rolling back again.

Pearl was thinking of what her father had said when he bid her good-by: "If you get homesick and discouraged out there, babe, just you come right home." With tears in her eyes, Pearl had given him her promise; but she had determined to make good.

Before Bill Stark began attending school, Pearl had thought that she almost understood these rough children of the plains. Then Bill Stark, the evil-tempered and unruly cowboy, who imagined himself a Western bad man, and had already scared two teachers out of school, cast his unwelcome shadow in the door.

Pearl's uncle had told her not to be afraid of Bill. "Just let him know you're

little teacher's life more unbearable. He kept the school in a constant uproar, by prompting his brothers in all sorts of mischief; such as, catching live mice and putting them in the crayon box on the school ma'am's desk, and curling dead rattlesnakes up on the porch step by the schoolhouse door in lifelike positions. Bill remained true to his resolve not to study history, and he had added grammar to the list. Indeed, for the last few weeks, Bill had neither studied himself or let anyone else study.

A week ago Pearl, thoroughly exasperated, had given one of Bill's small brothers a whipping when he refused to come forward to his class. It had been the case of red hair getting the better of the little schoolma'am's judgment, and since then she had bitterly regretted the act, for the whole school had turned from her in resentment, and it lacked only a spark to cause an open rebellion.

Thinking of all this, Pearl opened the schoolhouse door and went inside. She smiled in a preoccupied manner, as she set her big dinner pail on a shelf, a board across a corner of the room. Her uncle's motherly old housekeeper was a firm believer in the full dinner pail. Then she caught a glimpse of her face in the little cracked mirror that hung on the wall. A moment she stood there winking her eyes to keep back the tears, then she drew a long breath. "And you've got red hair," she said, speaking aloud to her reflection.

As Pearl turned from hanging up her wraps, she happened to glance at the blackboard. Someone had scrawled these words there with the blunt end of a crayon: "Darn you red head we hate

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