

libellous imputation against a dishonest woman.

"Please don't tell the policeman."

"Not tell the policeman? But I will, though! It's a prison job, all the world over."

"Oh, Mrs. Brown, please, please!"

But she pushed him out in her passion, and slammed the door again, and Harry heard the key grind as she turned the lock.

There was nothing for it but to go back to school, and Harry could hardly drag his legs after him.

We noticed how gloom he looked that evening. His hand shook, he had a frightened expression, he turned white at tea when the door bell rang. We thought he was going to have the measles. He never got anything on the dormitory. He just got into bed and buried himself under the sheet, and we neither heard nor saw anything more of him till the next morning.

CHAPTER III

The Tuesday that followed was one of July's best efforts at summer heat. Afternoon school sorely tested the energy of Mr. Fields. Boys may slacken the mental tension and indulge to some extent the drowsy languor that oppresses the intellect in the afternoons of the dog-days. But masters have to battle against the inclination towards slumbring relaxation, if anything like a fair table of work is to be exacted from the boys.

Mr. Fields was taking his class in the spacious dining-hall, with every window open to its widest extent, including the great folding windows which gave passage into the garden.

Mr. Fields nerved himself with an effort little short of heroic. The lesson was Latin prose with the second class, and Dawson was at his worst. As he was top of the class, what must the rest have been?

The Master doled out the green books of exercises on the Latin primer to the boys. He took up his own well-worn copy, and the lesson began.

"Now, then, boys, our old friend the compound sentence. 'Cats have claws' as the board-school boy wrote in his famous essay; and compound sentences have clauses. You can all say my memorial line for the adverbial clauses."

Chorus of, "Conse-Fi, Causal-Tem Conditional, Concessi, Compar."

"All right! Now, then, page 92 conditional clauses. Four kinds, introduced by Si."

It was old ground, often trodden before. The boys could say the examples given, and the master led them with others of the same kind. But the oppressive heat "obfuscated their intelligence," as the master remarked, and sorely taxed his patience.

"If you lose the books which I give you you will pay the penalty. Which of the four kinds of conditional sentence is that, Dawson?"

"Number 2, sir."

"Quite right. Now, boys, what case is which?"

General Chorus, "Genitive! Ablative! Nominative! Accusative! Dative!"

"Just so! And nobody says Vocative! What a shame! Why should poor old the Vocative be always snubbed? You are unkind! You said genitive, Dawson, and if I ask you why you said genitive, you'll huddle and sculk, and babble, and squeak, to invent a reason. You do all alike, you all load your handkerchiefs up to the muzzles, and blaze at me with case, since I have a better case than any, to suit your stupidity. Nonvocativegen, dated a little of all sorts, and some of it's sure to be right."

Various species of sappy laughter inundated through the class. The boys liked to encourage Mr. Field's little jokes.

Then the lesson proceeded with solid endeavor on the master's part to interest the attention and illumine the mental obscurity. Presently he jumped up, and going to the black-board, he said:

"Let me try a new plan. I feel like Lord Byron. 'I stood at Venice on the Bridge of Signs.' Why not? Si valet, hinc est, Si feceris, etc., Si venias, gaudeam, Si venisses, gavisus essem. Four clear and distinct kinds—four arches of a bridge. Let me draw them the Bridge of Si-s!"

He drew a curved line across the board and four arches under it, and numbered them 1, 2, 3, 4.

"Now look, boys! If you go to Rome, you will see the forum—which arch does that come under?"

The boys were all looking at the blackboard with some glow of interest, when the momentary silence was startled by a shrill, piping voice:

"Please, sir, mother wants two penny-worth of dripping, to make a pigeon-pie."

Every head was turned in the direction of that voice, and a genuine riot of laughter burst in a the boys. They saw a diminutive John standing at the open folding windows, with a basket in his hand.

"Eh? what?" said the master, when the turmoil had abated. "Dripping, did you say? Yes, rather so!" (passing his handkerchief over his brow. "But you have come to the wrong department—it's not for sale here, first turn to the left, try at the back door.")

The mention of pigeon-pie made Dawson turn white. There might yet be time to save the gulls. His terror of Mother Scrubbard's threats had so far sealed his tongue. It was now or never. He gulped down his fears, and said with nervous energy:

"Please, sir, don't let him have the dripping!"

"Why not, boy? He is going to pay for it. Why should you deny him such a simple luxury?"

"They are the sea-gulls, sir. Mother Scrubbard's got them—she thinks they are pigeons!"

"Oho! That's good! She is going to make sea-gulls into a pigeon-pie, is she?"