

**"His Greatest Need is Self-Respect."**

Tommy Murphy was unquestionably a bad boy.

He had been born in a low home, of the most material of parents, and had been utterly destitute of that indefinite commodity termed "early training." And yet, no one thought of this when he came to school. He only brought his own individual world with him as we all do, but somehow, his world failed of the recognition which was given to others. He was branded as a "mean boy;" ugly, stubborn, and rude, and between his world and that better world which he had never seen— from objective rather than subjective reasons—there hung a dense curtain of frowns, harsh words, and pedagogical compulsions and leather straps which his faith was, as yet, too feeble to penetrate. Of course, he was neither bright nor studious. He could not have been bright from the facts of his birth, and he had never been given any motive for being studious, except that lowest of all motives—fear of punishment—and, unfortunately for his teachers, Tommy was not a coward.

And so his school days passed on. He was retained as long as possible in one grade, and was then reluctantly passed on to the next, his "yellow passport" of ignominy going with him, until his eleventh year, when his teacher told me that she was obliged to "strap the boy once in four or five weeks to keep him decent." She said it was all she could do. I had no reason to doubt her assertion, though I could not refrain from pitying the boy and wishing that she were as addicted to the study of practical school-room psychology as she was to the use of "straps."

But, fortunately, for Tommy at this time, a new teacher was appointed to take charge of his room. She was small and frail looking, but possessed of that combination of wisdom, sympathy and tact, which knows no fear in the school-room.

Of course, she was informed from many sources of the notorious "case" which she would soon be called upon to "manage." Each of his preceding teachers considered it her duty to inform Miss L—— in detail of his misdemeanors during her particular reign and closing the account with a remark like this;—

"I do not want you to think that I wish to injure Tommy, but I thought it was no more than right that you should know what to expect, so as to be prepared."

Ah, that "yellow passport!" Who can estimate the number of children's lives that have been blighted by those same words, so sweetly spoken? For it is but rarely that they fall into Wisdom's ears.

But Miss L—— smiled and said, "We shall see. I trust he is human." And then came the first day of

the new term. Tommy more than maintained his reputation, for, as he said to the boys, "She ain't big enough to lick a feller like me. I'd fight first and I guess she knows it."

But she had been studying him. He certainly did look ugly—low forehead, overhanging brows, deep set eyes and round, stubborn head—but the more she studied him the more thoroughly she became convinced that the greater part of that look came from habitual expression, rather than from the gifts of nature, and she fell to wondering how that face would look if it should wear the light of happiness upon it.

He was making spit balls. She was looking at him, but at that particular time she cared more for the boy than she did for the balls,

"Poor fellow," she thought, "he has been strapped at school and beaten at home, until from the world's thinking no good of him, he has come to think no good of himself. It seems to me his greatest need is self-respect."

Just then Tommy looked up. He caught the expression of her face.

There was no frown there—no expression of weakness either, as though she were afraid to attack him. But somehow, he wasn't quite used to that kind of a look, and it rather dampened his ardor for spit balls. They slid into his desk and did not appear again that day.

In the afternoon she placed the spelling words toward the top of the board. Several children raised their hands, when the study period was over, to erase them.

"They are rather too high for you," she said quietly, "I think we shall have to depend upon Tommy to do that for us."

Master Tommy was bending a pin for the toe of his shoe at that particular time, and had not one word of his lesson, but he was so surprised to hear his name spoken in such a way, that he dropped the pin. "Depend upon him!" No one had ever depended upon him before, in all his short life!

And then she began to interest him in his work. She began in his own world, with ant hills and oriole's nests, and gradually pushed aside the curtains which had concealed from his sight that better way of life. She gave him new motives and kept his mind well filled with new thoughts.

She was constantly curbing his nature, but she did not once draw the reins so tight that he knew it. She was always his friend, and reposed all the confidence in him that she could, never going so far as to give him the chance to betray any trust. To be sure, he fre-