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### How The Cross-Roads School Discovered a Hero.

By Kathelyn Mortimer.

In two more days school would be over for three long months. A group of boys of all ages and sizes stood in front of the weather-beaten country school-house, discussing the prospects for vacation fun.

'I'm going to the city for a month,' said Ted Baldwin, 'and then my cousins are coming home with me to spend the other two months. Their school doesn't close as early as ours. Hello! There's Duncan's Pietro. I suppose he's going to spend his vacation building a hospital for toads and stray cats. 'Fore I'd be such a Nancy as he is!'

'Oh, say, now, Ted! He's not such a bad sort. I wish somebody would tell why we fellows are forever tormenting him.' It was Rex Norton who took the little Italian's part. Rex was 'small of his age,' and neighbors said; but his ready smile made up for his lack of height, and he carried perpetual sunshine with him.

Ted did not attempt to answer for himself or his mates, but stood watching the short but sturdy figure as it climbed up the long hill.

'Hurry up, Petey,' called one of the boys. 'You'll be late. Teacher's clock won't wait for Italy.'

Pietro gave him a glance that was half smiling, half-distrustful, and hurried on toward the door, as if he feared a trick of some sort were about to be played upon him.

But the boys were again absorbed in their planning. In fact, they became so interested that they were in danger of being late themselves, and Miss Gildden finally had to ring the desk-bell outside the door to attract their attention.

When the children were all in their places, Miss Gildden read the morning lesson and led them in a song. Then she requested them to take out their 'history readers.' The lesson to-day was about Abraham Lincoln, and when it was finished their teacher asked them to tell what quality they admired most in the man of whom they all loved to read.

The boys gave many reasons—all but Pietro. He sat staring straight ahead with his great black eyes, and was as silent as if he were voiceless. At last Miss Gildden spoke to him. 'Pietro,' she said, 'tell us why you admire Mr. Lincoln.'

Pietro fidgeted uncomfortably—he was sure the boys would laugh at him. Then looking straight into Miss Gildden's face, he answered: 'Because he didn't like to fight.'

Yes, it was just as he thought. The boys were all laughing now; and Patrick Kelly whispered to his neighbor, Ward Elkins: 'Wouldn't fight! What do you think of that! But it's just like the little Eytalian. He's a regular coward. Do you mind how he ran away when we killed that snake the other day?' Then he saw Miss Gildden's eye upon him, and he straightened up.

'Yes, Pietro,' said the teacher, 'Mr. Lincoln, although he was President during a long and terrible war, was a man of peace, and would have been very glad indeed if the country could have settled her dispute without those terrible years of suffering and bloodshed. Now, will you not tell us why it is nobler sometimes not to fight?'

But Pietro was overcome with confusion, and sat silently staring at her with his solemn big eyes; so she gave them an answer of her own:

'There is often a better way of gaining a victory than by the use of weapons of warfare, or with fists,' she said, and our great President believed in that way. The boy who is constantly seeking a fight is more often a bully than a brave.'

Freddy Brown glanced slyly across at Patrick, on the next bench, and Patrick, for some reason which the boys seemed to understand, looked foolish and uncomfortable.

'Now,' continued Miss Gildden, 'we must go on with the regular lessons. But to-morrow I am going to ask you to tell me about some heroes who showed their bravery in another way than by fighting. I wonder how many we can think of. Perhaps our hero of to-day will be the first on the list.'

When school was dismissed that afternoon, Ray Cullen called the boys together and proposed that they should go swimming down in the 'big basin.'

The 'big basin' was an oddly-shaped bayon, which had been hollowed out by the river when it changed its course once upon a time. The water in the basin was nearly always combined sunshine and shadow to make it an ideal place for swimming.

Pietro had started off alone toward home. Rex caught sight of him, and was seized with one of his sudden generous impulses. 'Come along Pietro,' he called through his hands, 'down to the river.'

Oh, let him alone! exclaimed Pat. 'We don't want him.'

'Yes, we do,' retorted Rex, quickly. For once he had forgotten to be afraid of the big boy. 'Any way, I do. Come on, Pietro,' he called again, and Pietro turned and went with them, wondering what had happened to make them so friendly.

It was a perfect day, and the boys were soon shouting and splashing about in great glee. In the midst of their fun Rex made a discovery.

A cow had escaped from the pasture near by, and was wandering alone the river toward a place which the boys called the 'danger hole.' The water had an unsettled look there, and people said that if any one were to enter it he would be sucked down, never to rise again.

'That's one of Comstock's cows,' Rex exclaimed. 'I'm going down to head her off. If she gets into that hole, she'll be drowned.'

'Oh, your forever hating up some uncomfortable dnty. Stay up here where it's pleasant.'

But Rex did not heed. He was already gliding down the 'basin,' with long, steady strokes. Pietro was closed behind him. Mr. Duncan was an excellent swimmer, and he had taught the little adopted wail so well that the Italian boy had few equals, though not many of the other boys found it out.

Rex stopped down stream, just a head of the navigating cow, and started her back up the bank. But suddenly she took a perverse notion into her cowish brain, and struck out straight for the middle of the stream, with Rex in close pursuit. When she felt the strong force of the current, however, instinct told her it was time to turn back. With a struggling leap she veered around and started toward the shore.

Poor Rex was directly in the way of Bossy's hoofs, and a moment later he was striving to get his breath and wondering what made his right arm so queer. He tried to swim out of the current, but that arm refused to work, and while he managed to keep himself afloat he felt that he was drifting aside, and straight toward the dreaded danger-hole.

But he had forgotten Pietro. The Italian boy had gone toward the shore when the chase began. Now he saw that something was the matter, and he began swimming out and down the stream as fast as his swift, sure strokes would carry him.

Rex was at the very edge of the dreadful hole; in another moment he would be drawn into it. The boys in the basin were shouting vehement calls, but they seemed afraid to come to his rescue. Pietro was very near now. Swiftly he shot ahead, and throwing his left arm about Rex, he began slowly to work his way out, while Rex helped as best he could with his uninjured arm. He was plucky lad and did not hinder his rescuer by becoming panic-stricken, as many boys would have done.

In a few moments the boys were safe. They allowed themselves to float along with the current until they were past the danger point, and then worked gradually across to the shore. Their comrades had come to their senses by this time, and were hastening to meet them.

The boys gathered about the two adventurers and escorted them back to the bank or the basin. They said little about Pietro's share in the affair; but they called him 'old fellow,' and Pietro knew what that meant.

The next morning Miss Gildden, true to her promise, ask for names of her hero list. Little Dick Warren's hand went up like a flash, but before she had time to call upon him twenty lusty voices shouted 'Pietro Beltrami!'

Miss Gildden looked very much surprised; so when the uproar was over they had to tell her all about it. And Ted put the finishing touch to the story by exclaiming: 'Yes, and if that red cow had

been in there, he would have gone back and dragged her out, too!'

Of course they all laughed then; but it was a jolly, friendly laugh, and Pietro was glad, because it made Miss Gildden forget to praise him before the school. He knew the boys would never call him a coward again, even though he would not fight nor kill snakes, and that was sufficient.—Epworth Herald.

### Polly's Inquisitiveness.

By Susan Teall Perry.

'I put the packages under the farther corner of my bed so Polly won't find them,' said Polly's mother to her aunt, as they sat down to a late luncheon. 'She has so much inquisitiveness that she would be sure to open them if she found them, and I do so like to surprise the children on their birthday anniversaries.'

Now Polly sat behind the portieres and heard every word that her mother said. Polly's mother always had the birthday presents put by her children's plates at the breakfast table on the birthday mornings. Immediately Polly began to wonder what her mother had bought for her. It would be a long, long time to wait until to-morrow morning to know. What did her mamma mean by saying she had so much inquisitiveness? It was a long word, and what did it mean? Not anything in her favor, Polly concluded. It must be something that meant curious, for the maid had said that every day that Polly was 'the most curious child' she had ever seen, just because she wanted to see what was in a box that the maid had sent by express.

There was very little that Polly did not want to see and to know, and she was always hearing things that were not meant for her ears, or prying into things that were none of her affairs. It was a very bad fault, and Polly's mother felt very sorry, and tried to have her little girl correct it.

Polly's mother and her aunt went out again after luncheon, and then Polly went up to her mother's room. She was not going to look inside the packages, of course, but she thought she would just like to see what shapes they were. She stooped down and looked under the bed, but she could not see them very well, so she got her papa's cane with a crook in the handle, and poked them into sight. When they were within reach, she felt such a desire to open them that she began to peep into the corner of one package. Before she knew it, she had seen the contents of that package.

There was three of them, and it was not long before she had seen what was in each of them. Then she pushed them back with the cane. But she did not feel happy. It was not half so nice as being surprised in the morning. No fun in knowing just what was to be put on the table for her. Polly was so unlike herself that evening that all the family thought she was going to be ill, and on her birthday, two. She had always been so happy on such occasions before.

When bed time came, Polly was glad to go to bed, when she had said her prayers and her dear mamma had kissed her good night, and left her, she began to feel very wicked. 'I know now what inquisitiveness means,' she thought to herself. 'No wonder mamma does not want me to have that fault, and has to hide my presents; she can not trust me.'

Polly could not sleep, and when she heard mamma coming upstairs, she called her to come to her little white bed. Then she put her arms around her mamma's neck and began to sob. Mamma was frightened. What did it mean?

Then Polly said, 'I'm not going to be surprised to-morrow, dear mamma, for I've had inquisitiveness in me to-day, and got papa's cane and poked out my packages of birthday presents under your bed, and I've seen them, and, oh, dear, dear, I wish I did not have that awful inquisitiveness, in me.'

Then Polly cried hard, but she felt better, as all little children do when they tell their faults and troubles to their good, loving mamma.

But mamma said, 'My dear Polly, I am sorry, but if you have had a lesson that will help you cure your fault, I will not mind.'

Of course the gifts were not a surprise for Polly,