



SOME VAGRANT THOUGHTS BY THE WAY

The children started to school last Monday, and as they tripped down the street you watched them through the window, and somehow or other a lump came up into your throat and the tears into your eyes. You were not sorry, of course, that the children were going to school to get the education that is to fit them for citizenship. But the mere sight of the little ones tripping off to school reminded you that it had been a long time since you went to school, and that reminded you also that you were growing old.

O, not so awfully old, of course, but a little older. You still feel as young as ever, and you are quite sure that you could still jump a five-rail fence with one hand on the top rail if you really tried your best, and those streaks of gray in your hair are merely the result of that sick spell you had three years ago last spring. Of course you are not old—just entering the prime of life. And yet, after all, it is such a long, long time since you tucked your books under your arm and hastened off to school.

Let's see, what was that first teacher's name? Waters? Yes, that's it. George Waters. And it was in the little old frame schoolhouse, too. The first whipping in school? O, we remember it so well that it couldn't have been so many years ago, after all, and that's proof that we are not growing old. He told us, we mustn't stop to skate on the pond in the common near the school house, but hasten home. And it just so happened that we forgot and did stop to skate. Or did we forget? Maybe we didn't and just stopped anyhow, feeling quite sure that teacher wouldn't find it out. At any rate, we stopped to skate, and teacher did see us, and next morning! Well, we feel quite young now, because it was only a day or two ago that it happened, for we can feel it yet. They didn't have any discussions about "corporal punishment" in the schools in those days. They just lit in and whaled us good, didn't they? And if father thought the teacher had not done a good job at it he kindly completed it for him—put on the finishing touches, so to speak.

Wonder where George Waters is, anyhow? We remember taking a solemn vow the morning after that skating experience that some day or other, when we were grown up and physically able to do it, we were going to inveigle George Waters off into some dark alley and do things to him, and do 'em plenty. We haven't grown up yet, so, of course, George Waters is safe. But just as soon as we do grow up—well, let George Waters take due warning.

As you watched at the window you recalled that it was considerably more than two or three blocks to that little old frame school house. It was not heated by steam, and no expert in ventilation had been consulted when it was erected. The old stove in the center of the little room was so tall it reached half way to the ceiling, and when the weather was cold those who sat next to it roasted while those over next to the wall shivered like the quaking asp. Br-r-r-rrr! How cold it used to get in those days. Remember the old trick mother used to play on Master Jack Frost? Just before

you began to comb your hair preparatory to starting off for the school house a mile or two away, she would drap a couple of eggs into a pan of boiling water, and by the time you had the tangles out of your hair and your red woolen comforter tied around your throat and ears those eggs would be boiled hard. Then you'd shove your arm through the handle of your lunch bucket, grab a hot egg in each hand, jam your hands into your pockets and start. Those eggs would keep your hands warm until you got to school, then you'd put them—the eggs, not your hands—into the bucket and there they'd be at noon. Great scheme, wasn't it? Occasionally she would change things a bit and have a couple of red-hot baked potatoes instead of the eggs.

Did you ever stop to think that your children are going to miss something when they grow up and have children of their own? With their steam-heated, scientifically ventilated and easily accessible schoolhouses, how are they going to gather their children about their knees and tell them of the hard sledding papa and mamma had when they were school children? That's about one-half the pleasure our fathers and mothers had—telling us youngsters how much we ought to appreciate our educational advantages and explaining the tough time they had trying to learn the "three R's." And we've had a lot of pleasure telling our children about the same thing, haven't we? Now what are our children going to do when they feel the necessity of encouraging their children in their school work?

O, Jeeminy! There's another thing our children, with all their superior school advantages, will miss. The "last day 'o school" when we were children meant something more than the beginning of a long summer vacation—it meant "teacher's treat!" Yum, yum! Why is it they can't make candy these days that is as good as the candy they made when we were children? Let's see, how many years ago was it that George Waters initiated us into the delights of the last day of school? It must have been—O, pshaw! It was just the other day, wasn't it? If it had been so awfully long we couldn't remember it so well. Of course not! There wasn't much studying done the forenoon of that last day. Everybody, including George Waters, was choke full of expectancy and nervous excitement. At noon we bolted the contents of the lunch baskets, being extra careful not to smear the jam and apple butter on our clothes. Of course we had on our best bib and tucker that day! The noon hour was unusually long, and it seemed longer than it really was, for every parent in the district was to be there. It was to be the final recitation day, you remember.*

Finally the bell rang. It was a measely little old handbell, you remember—not one of those big brazen things that a hired janitor rings with a rope. In we flocked, and after George Waters had made a beautiful little talk, and Mr. Willard, chairman of the board of directors had told us how much better our school facilities

were than they were in his day, the real joys began.

"Dug" Freeman was the first up, and the way he recited "The Seminole's Defiance" was something wonderful. Remember it?

"Blaze with your serried columns,
I will not bend the knee;
The shackles ne'er again shall bind
The arm which now is free!"

Gee, but it was beautiful! We never stopped then to think that, of course, no Indian ever got off anything like that. We didn't know Indians then as well as we do now.

Then "Jim" Holmes stepped forth and recited "Marco Bozzaris," and we thought it was about the finest ever. As we recall it now he gave a sample of trembling fear that wouldn't be much of a credit to old Marco. Why, we remember it just as well!

"At midnight in his guarded tent
The Turk lay dreaming of the hour
When Greece her knees in supppliance
bent
And trembled at his power."

Who said we were growing old? Why, it was only day before yesterday that it happened. We can yet hear the echo of "Jim's" voice as he lifted its quavering accents and piped: "Strike till the last armed foe expires! Strike for your altars and your fires! Strike for the green graves of your sires!
God and your native land!"

Then Lelia Ingalls tripped forward and recited "The lips that touch liquor shall never touch mine," and she was followed by Nannie Maguire who recited an awfully funny piece about a "little maiden who had a brand new bonnet, with a ribbon and a feather and a bit of lace upon it." Thus it went for an hour. You could call the roll if you wanted to, for you remember them all. It was only yesterday, or the day before, that it all happened.

Then George Waters stepped outside and came back in, and in each hand he carried a bucket. Each bucket was filled with candy, and each pupil—we called 'em "scholars" in those days—was allowed to take a handful from each bucket. Just think of it. Two kinds of candy! O, but it was fine! And—

Goodness gracious! We forgot all about going to work.

One more glance in the direction the little ones have gone, a quick gulp, and surreptitious wiping of your eyes, and the day's work is begun.

Brain Leaks

As the father is bent so is the son inclined.

You have to reach down before you can lift up.

It does not require much of a search to find fault.

The greatest successes are often founded on failures.

Love is blind, but it never wastes time in consulting an oculist.

If heaven were a reward instead of a gift mighty few of us would stand a show.

Solitary confinement in a dark dungeon is too good for the man who robs childhood of its playtime in order to enrich himself.

IN THE GAME

Once there was a man who thought Uncle Russell Sage ought to stop work. He spoke to him about it. "Why get together any more money, Mr. Sage? You can't eat it; you can't drink it. What good will it do you?" "Ever play marbles?" Uncle Russell asked.

"Yes, when I was a boy."

"Couldn't eat 'em, could you? Couldn't drink 'em, could you? No use to you, were they? What did you play marbles for?"—Harper's Weekly.

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