

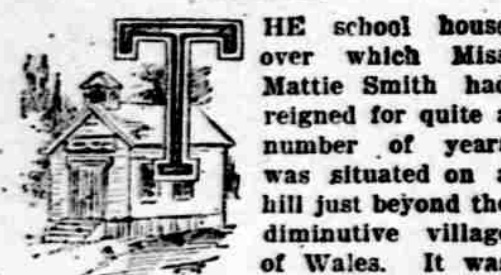
The Columbus Journal.

VOLUME XXVI.—NUMBER 29.

COLUMBUS, NEBRASKA, WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 30, 1895.

WHOLE NUMBER 1,329.

THE LITTLE SCHOOL.



THE school house over which Miss Mattie Smith had reigned for quite a number of years was situated on a hill just beyond the village of Wales.

place. Miss Mattie, however, had never seen any snakes and didn't believe there were any. She had no objections whatever to the situation, but the house itself was old. Whenever Miss Mattie met a school trustee she was bound to tell him right decidedly that she must have a new school house, one with a cellar for the coal and room for her desk away from the draught.

But in the spring time the draught from the door was very welcome, and Miss Mattie was grateful for the air she could get as she sat at her desk, hearing the spelling lesson.

"Here, here," drawled Miss Mattie's pet, Nan Foster. Then Nan came to a pause and fiddled nervously with the pockets of her apron.

"Well," queried the teacher.

"I know what it means," declared the little girl. "I know so well that I didn't have to look in the dictionary, but I can't say it to save my life."

"It means a boy," volunteered a very small girl, glancing dreamily out of the school room window.

"Oh, yes, of course. I know it means a boy," said Nan, hastily. "A boy who—oh, dear, I can't say it."

Miss Mattie put a sudden end to the difficulty by furnishing the dictionary.

"Your mother is a very good woman, I am sure," returned Miss Mattie carelessly. "You mustn't mind what the school children say."

Snits's face flushed to the very roots of his white hair. "Oh, I don't mind," he said, with his eyes upon the platform, "I ain't that," and still he lingered.

Now, perhaps, it came to Miss Mattie's mind that this little white-haired Dutch boy considered it her duty to stop the school children's chattering about Ben Windsor's discarded apparel. If so, it was very foolish of him. He hadn't lived long in the village of Wales or he would know better than to expect such a thing of her. Why, she hadn't even attempted to hush that audible whisper directed towards her own high heeled slippers. A faint red came into her cheeks, too, and she inquired a trifle sharply, "Is there anything else you have to say, Johnny Smelter?"

The little Dutch boy's head was bowed very low, as he murmured: "Can I run for the prize if I wear Ben Windsor's pants?"

Miss Mattie burst into a ringing laugh; she couldn't help it. It was so exasperatingly funny. But even as she laughed, she felt her conscience prick her for poor little Snits, fumbling and pulling at the baggy trousers, laughing, he minded very, very much, wearing that other boy's trousers.

"I know one thing," remarked the teacher's pet, throwing her proud little head in the air. "If I was Snits I wouldn't go to school if I had to wear people's old pants. His mother ought to go to the store and buy him a pair with her wash money."

"I won't play with him while he wears Ben Windsor's pants," said Charley Stills, virtuously.

Miss Mattie's pet, who had unveiled her eyes, cast an eloquent glance into the teacher's face. "Snits is a hero, ain't he, Miss Mattie?" she asked.

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"Mebbe they's both dead," said Sammy Linger, huskily.

At a safe distance from the opening a boy was crouching, with his hands upon his knees. "Some'n's a-comin'," he announced in a fearful whisper.

The something that first showed up at the opening was a round, dimpled rat-tailed fender, and Ben Windsor caught his little sister in his arms and kissed her wildly. Following after Fanny came Snits. Watching Snits drawing himself through the hole, one understood how very small the hole was. The little Dutch boy's fair face was whiter than usual, almost as white as his hair, and his blue eyes looked quite dark as he got upon his feet and wavered bashfully, whirling by the rat that third something, which, had it appeared first, would have caused a scateration in the crowd. "It skeered her," but it hadn't hurt her yet," he announced, soberly. The third something was a dead rat. Then Miss Mattie's pet, who had unveiled her eyes, cast an eloquent glance into the teacher's face. "Snits is a hero, ain't he, Miss Mattie?" she asked.

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