

## Enter the Superintendent

MISS HALE was interrupted in her opening exercises, 9.00-9.05, by the messenger from Room 8, second floor. Opening exercises at the Johnston school consisted of interruptions, attendance taking, and excuses, and in fact rarely terminated at 9.05.

Goldie Rosenberg—absent again—"Who lives near Goldie?—Solly, please take an attendance notice to her mother at noontime."—That child never will catch up. "Well, Henry?"

"Miss Hale, I live nearer'n Solly lives."

"He doesn't neither. I live on—"

"Solly will take it this time" . . . Abe Fenn out—and examination coming. "What is it, Thyrra?"

"Abe's ma gave me such a note"—

Abe Fenn he hav very bade tootake  
he come by school seafteenoon.

Conrad Selewschy, reëntered. Mark R. "All well again, Conrad? That's good. Did your doctor give you a paper for me? Then you are required to see the school doctor."

Dismay for Conrad. Signaling from Olga. "He doesn't want to go. I'll take him, Miss Hale."

"Miss Hale, I know where—"

"I know where, too—"

Miss Hale's reproving eyebrows. "It's only to say you've been out sick. Olga, you may show Conrad the office," with slow distinctness to the little girl who watched her lips so closely.

Arrival of strange boy (cautious face of diverse possibilities) transferred from Tremont School. Mark A. Membership 50. Seats 48. Present 49, with new boy. "Take Abe Fenn's seat until afternoon. Johnnie Balskowsky, have you your excuse for absence yesterday?"

Meekly Johnnie proffered a bit of wrapping paper:  
Madam Hale I could not to leave him  
out the rain it could harm him.

Mrs. Balskowsky.

"Oh, Johnnie, don't you remember the duck's little red rubbers? Where were yours, Johnnie?"

"I ain't got none."

"Say, 'I have none, Miss Hale.'"

"I have none, Miss Hale."

Messenger from the office: "You should send Sadie Keminsky's sister to the principal."

"I ought to give that child some instruction in politeness—but it's seven minutes past nine—and the principal reiterating at teachers' meetings, 'Begin with the cadence of the bell'—Elsie, go to the office, please . . . "Sam"—left to stand ignominiously by the door, six times tardy—

"It stands," pronounced Sam, presenting his affidavit:

Mrs. E. Hale, will you please excuse Sam because the milk man brought the milk late.

Parents Kaufman.

Six T's in the report! And the superintendent had said: "Arouse the interest of the child so that he just can't bear to miss that five minutes of your presence. I know a teacher who reads a nice little story"—Um, much he knows about it. Hasn't taught school for forty years—"Sam, now this isn't going to do. I must send you to the principal"—The principal says she can't do anything—the mother has nine children and helps tend shop—

Adolph had finished writing his tables and was wriggling. Tina had finished hers and sat with her hands folded on the front edge of her desk—

It was here that the emergency messenger from Room 8 broke in stolidly, "Miss Hale, Miss O'Hearn says like this, the superintendent he's on the third floor now."

"Tell Miss O'Hearn I'm much obliged. Tina, come here, dear. Run into Room 16 and tell Miss Riordan that the district superintendent is on the third floor—and Tina—tell all of the teachers on this floor . . . Sam, take your seat. I'll see you at noon."

The superintendent for the Johnston School, District 4, Miss Hale knew for a suave, rather distinguished looking man, with a school-visiting manner as much as to say, "Well, here we are, an earnest little class under an admirable teacher, part of a great, free school system, in an utterly nice world." He was a personage you couldn't have come in to find Sam with his nose in the corner for being six times tardy, nor to hear the admirable teacher saying in emphatic accents, "Gustav, turn around in your seat and attend to your own business." While the district superintendent was in the building lessons were unimportant, examinations did not matter—nothing mattered but the harmonies. And little Miss Hale bethought herself, what more opportune time for a lesson in good manners? Should Miss Gertrude McMasters, the principal, on her visiting round, observe a lack of correspondence between the blackboard program and the clock, she would not this time call one to account. Miss McMaster's anxiety, like Miss Hale's, when the district superintendent was officially inspecting the Johnston, concerned harmony. A politeness lesson suited to practical needs. This was no time to instruct little boys in cap-tipping, nor to remind children to excuse themselves if they had to pass in front of rather than behind a person—which might result in ill disguised ruses to pass in front of the visiting superintendent. A politeness lesson it was which stressed proper behavior before company, with a warning that company might even then be on the way and the manners of every child in Room 14 be subjected to a glorious or inglorious test. So impressive was the young teacher's laudation of company manners that each pupil, and the teacher also, took out the best of such manners in his or her possession and laid them at his right hand on his desk ready to don at the first turn of the doorknob. And spontaneous was the ill suppressed groan when the opening of the door, which threw Room 14 into superior order, disclosed only Conrad Selewschy returning from the school doctor.

Miss Hale forecast it during the number lessons. The superintendent would come in with a beaming glance at the room—every child bolt upright—and pronounce "Miss Hale" cordially, shake hands punctiliously, and "Well, are we all happy to-day?"—"Oh, yes, thank you."—"Good morning, children."—"Good morning, Mr. Hendricks," part of the politeness lesson. Perhaps to a child or two a question or two; perhaps a word of commendation; and smoothly retraced steps. And Miss Hale would sigh, "That's over," and go on with her work heartened that Room 14 was found running nicely in its groove, and her page in the Doomsday Book yet white and fair. And at recess the teachers would meet in little

clusters in the halls and question in undertones: "Where is he now? . . . Has he visited you yet? . . . What were you having? . . . Pshaw, you don't mind Happy Hendricks do you? . . . Dear, I wish he'd come and be through with it." She did not genuinely like the superintendent, for pretense is a bit contemptible even when rumor says that district superintendent Hendricks is having his troubles with the politicians "to keep his job," and it is rather jolly of him to go on with his pose that way. But she liked him in contrast with the previous fe-fi-fo-fum district superintendent, now happily transferred to the helpless teachers of District 7; and she was proud that he looked like any recognized professional man. She marked him in an invisible, unofficial, but very real Doomsday Book a mark of which he need not be ashamed. Mrs. Snodgrass, veteran, ruled that a superintendent who did not interfere with the day's work, nor unnerve the teacher so that she had to be restrung over night, nor stir up the principal into spending the following week in the scared teacher's room, ought to be marked a hundred by the teaching corps.

So it appeared that the mark of both Miss Hale and the district superintendent depended upon whether the spirit of perversity entered the head of one of the forty-nine erect exhibits during that polite five minutes of inspection or at a more fitting time. And this morning the perverse imp lit down in room 14 and hit upon the unsuspected Arthur, who looked so like a brownie and behaved so like a lamb. Perhaps the deferred turning of the doorknob, dragging from 9.09 to 11.24, with the intervening lapse of recess, gave the imp an advantage. For when actually was staged the entry of the superintendent upon the beautiful order of the room and the pleased surprise of the young teacher—"Good morning, children."—"Good morning, Mr. Hendricks."—and during the tranquil continuation of the reading lesson, smart little Adolph nigh to bursting under the approving nod of the superintendent, the possessed Arthur whispered. More than this, he whispered to Gustav, of hair-trigger instability.

Gustav glared upon Arthur; in a subdued and prudent whisper advised him to "shut up"; even restrained his hand from rising in appeal to Miss Hale for protection against the pest. But when the reverend presence of the superintendent had vanished smoothly through the door Gustav's sense of outraged company manners found expression. "He start talking to me. Said he didn't care for Mr. Hendricks. I told him to behave and he wouldn't. Said he didn't care for—"

Had the superintendent noticed the sorry behavior of Arthur and marked her down accordingly in the Doomsday Book? Young Miss Hale had not been aware of the whispering, but she had not been aware of anything definite until afterwards, and then only that she was standing tense and prim and still smiling. The sort of smile, she recognized, that she had once read in Emerson no brave man would be guilty of twice. But this last recognition was an undertow. The agitation of her mind centered around the disgraced Arthur, who had whispered before the superintendent. Sufficient proof of the limited disciplinary ability of his teacher. At the luncheon hour she told her woe to Miss O'Hearn.

Miss O'Hearn laughed. "You're lucky it was Happy Hendricks. Girls, do you remember that time that I planted Michael—one of the Raffertys—you've all had

them, haven't you?"—unanimous groans—"right outside my door just in time for Fe-fo-fi-fum? You know he was one of those who said, 'There *are* no bad boys.' He struck first grade that morning and hung his hat up, trying to dodge the office and 'Gertie,' and catch us off guard. Otilie Anderson telegraphed, but seeing as she had only a tot for a messenger 'He's here' miscarried—Say, I had a session with 'Gertie.' The Johnston criticized! Enough said."

It was Mrs. Snodgrass's cue to retell, between her infectious gusts of laughter, how the primary messenger in the old days, bearing the cipher, "Johnnie's sick," had fallen into the hands of the real, head superintendent himself, and been directed by that reputed witty gentleman, "Go back and tell your teacher that Johnnie has recovered." Even Miss Morgan laughed. When Miss Morgan laughed the sound was a bit cynical and her mouth went a little awry. Little humor or poetry were in Miss Morgan's precinct; but reading, writing, 'rithmetic and grammar, t's crossed and i's dotted, and no "fooling," anathema for all shirking and slouching. Miss Morgan stood for efficiency.

But the conversation reverted to the district superintendent, staccato, double and multiple file: "Has he gone?" . . . "Did you know he was in the building?" . . . "Reading. My B Class. Such dummies, though I shouldn't say it." . . . "I'd like to know what help he is," from Miss Lowenthal, in her second year's assignment.—"What an idea!" faint snort from Mrs. Snodgrass. "Doesn't do any harm, does he?"—"Is he paid eight thousand a year for doing nothing?"—"For not doing any harm, honey. It's worth it."—"I have to work for my money." . . . "You! You're only a teacher." . . . "Ladies, I think we ought not to discuss our superior officer so disrespectfully." . . . "He's a gentleman—I mean—he's a little unusual—looking—for a school man," stammered Miss Hale . . . "They're a seedy lot, I agree." . . . "He hasn't any educational ideas, but who of them has?" . . . "Shepherd has," said Miss Daniels . . . "He *is* rather rattling the dry bones over in District 11, isn't he?" . . . "What does he do?" Miss Hale wondered . . . "Haven't you heard, child? Comes in just like folks, takes the class, demonstrates his ideas—yes, he has ideas—discusses them with you—doesn't make much of order—stays the whole morning in a room" . . . "And you don't die?" . . . "Die! They're crazy about him. If you don't like his way he waits. Thinks you'll wake up after a while. Honestly, girls, they say he's an inspiration."

"O-h—"

"Not a rubber stamp" . . . "Sounds like Froebel—or Pestalozzi—Say, you don't suppose those old chaps would get any where to-day" . . . "You're quite right, my dear, you're quite right" . . . "You don't think he might ever be transferred to District 4?" . . . "He won't last that long, honey. The parents are complaining that the children are not bringing home enough homework. He says children ought to play outside of school hours. Oh, he has a lot of new fangled notions and he believes in working them out with the teacher, converting the teachers to his methods or they converting him to theirs." . . . "Say, he won't last long. Roughing up the system that way." . . . "Catch Happy Hendricks starting anything. He's a superintendent, not a martyr" . . .

LEONORA PEASE.