



PINKEY
PERKINS
"JUST A BOY"

BY
CAPTAIN
HAROLD HAMMOND, U.S.A.

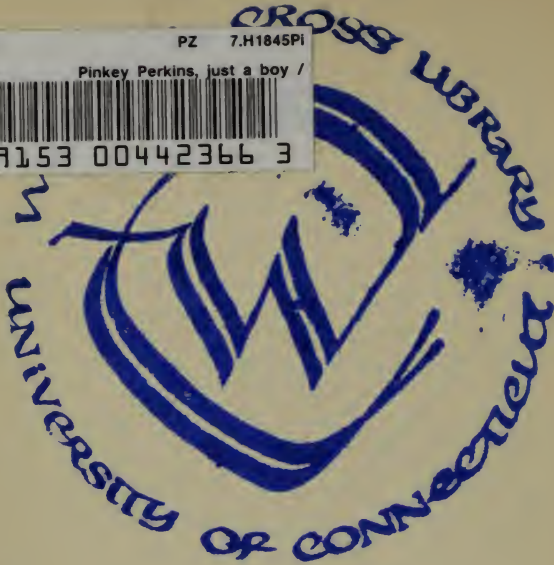
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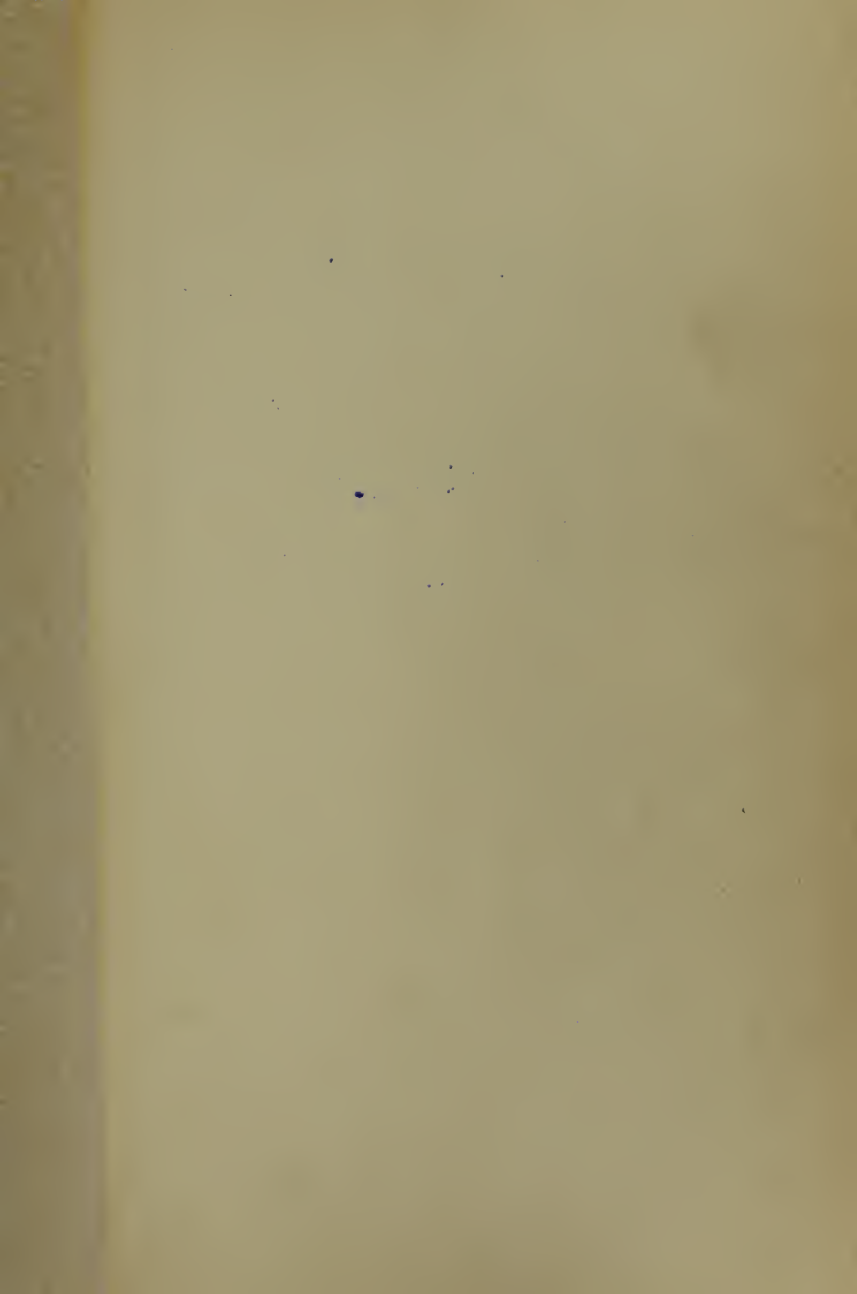
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PINKEY PERKINS
JUST A BOY



OLD HOSTETTERS CARRYING OFF THE BOYS' NUTS

PINKEY PERKINS

JUST A BOY

BY

Captain Harold Hammond, U.S.A.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY
GEORGE VARIAN



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TO
The "Pinkeys" of America

THIS VOLUME IS FRATERNALLY
INSCRIBED

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. HIS HEART'S DESIRE	3
II. HOW HE GOT EVEN	36
III. BEATEN AT HIS OWN GAME	67
IV. DELIVERING AN ADDRESS	109
V. HOW PINKEY HASTENED THE CLOSE OF THE SCHOOL TERM	135
VI. HOW PINKEY CELEBRATED THE GLORIOUS FOURTH	176
VII. HOW PINKEY WENT NUTTING	215
VIII. HOW PINKEY TRIUMPHED BY DIPLOMACY .	240
IX. HOW PINKEY TREATED THE PUBLIC . . .	277
X. HOW PINKEY SETTLED AN OLD SCORE . .	306

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	PAGE
OLD HOSTETTERS CARRYING OFF THE BOYS' NUTS	
<i>Frontispiece</i>	
"HE REMAINED TO GAZE LONG AT THE COVETED PRIZE"	9
"PINKEY SAW A BOY PICK UP A FOUNTAIN-PEN"	14
PINKEY GETS THE PEN	21
PINKEY GETS THE VALENTINE	25
"'MISS HARRIET WARREN,' SHE READ"	29
"HARRIET WARREN WAS AT ONCE SURROUNDED"	32
"PINKEY WAS STARTLED BY THE WORD 'PINKERTON'"	37
"RUTHLESSLY WAS THE 'NICKEL LIBRARY' TORN FROM HIM"	39
"HE WAS SAWING AWAY AS IF THE FATE OF NATIONS DEPENDED UPON HIS EFFORTS"	49
"TO CLIMB IN AND EMPTY HIS BOX WAS BUT THE WORK OF A MOMENT"	59
"SHE RAISED THE LID OF THE DESK, WHEN —!"	62

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	PAGE
"IMMEDIATELY THE SCHOOL WAS IN A TURMOIL"	65
PINKEY HAS AN IDEA — AND ACTS UPON IT	72
RED FEATHER DISCOVERS THE THREAD —	74
AND UNWINDS IT	77
"IS ANYBODY GOING TO SEE YOU HOME TO-NIGHT?"	87
"APRIL FOOL!"	97
PINKEY ADMIRES HIS PATENT-LEATHERS	118
"RECITING HIS ADDRESS OVER AND OVER, AND MAKING HIS GESTURES IN THE DARKNESS"	120
"PINKEY SLID FROM HIS PERCH ON THE HAIRCLOTH CHAIR"	127
PINKEY DISCOVERS HIS OVERSHOES	129
"BOTH WERE MUCH THE WORSE FOR THEIR TUMBLE"	140
"THERE WAS PUTTY, DOWN ON HIS KNEES, BRUSHING AWAY AT THE DIRT STAINS ON PINKEY'S CLOTHING"	150
"HE GREW MORE AND MORE DISGUSTED EVERY TIME HE SAW PUTTY ESCORT HATTIE WARREN ACROSS THE PLATFORM"	157
"IN THE STAMPEDE WHICH FOLLOWED, THE MEMBER OF THE SCHOOL BOARD CLEARED AT ONE LEAP THE ROW OF DESKS BETWEEN HIM AND THE OUTSIDE AISLE"	171

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	PAGE
“LIFE FOR THEM CONTAINED NO MORE BLISSFUL MOMENTS THAN THESE”	199
“WHAT WERE YOU KIDS DOING ON THAT ENGINE A FEW MINUTES AGO?”	203
“THEY OBSERVED THE NATION’S BIRTHDAY”	211
“THEY HAD AT LAST CONSULTED JOHNNY GORDON”	222
“HE SAW THE NOTE DELIVERED”	252
“LIFE HAD NEVER SEEMED SO EMPTY”	256
“PUT UP OR SHUT UP”	271
“THEN THOU ART MY LONG LOST BROTHER”	283
“TAKE OFF YOUR HAT AND LET ME SEE YOUR HEAD”	289
“BUT WHERE ON EARTH DID YOU GET ALL THOSE TICKETS?”	303
“PINKEY FINALLY STOPPED AND TINKLED THE BELL”	319



PINKEY PERKINS
JUST A BOY

PINKEY PERKINS

“JUST A BOY”

I

HIS HEART'S DESIRE

“VALENTINE DAY” was fast approaching, and “Pinkey” Perkins was daily growing more and more despondent. He was deeply in love, and how to secure a suitable offering to lay on the altar of his devotion was what puzzled him. His own finances aggregated exactly sixteen cents, and he shrank from enlisting his mother’s aid, because of his hesitation in admitting to any one the infatuation he had fostered for weeks.

PINKEY PERKINS

This infatuation was something comparatively new and dated back to a party during the Christmas holidays, when Pinkey's impressionable heart had been set all a-flutter by very marked attentions being paid him, and a marked preference being exhibited in his favor by a charming lass about his own age.

On that occasion, Pinkey, who heretofore had looked upon girls in general with more or less of a patronizing eye, as objects of toleration rather than admiration, had been brought to downright defeat and subjection by artful feminine wiles, both strange and entrancing. He had been singled out by Hattie Warren, the prettiest girl at the party, as the boy on whom she should bestow her especial approval.

Twice in one game of Post-Office, she had named Pinkey as the one upon whom she had "letters" to bestow, and it had been Pinkey on whom she had called to play the

HIS HEART'S DESIRE

active part in the payment of the customary penalty imposed in a game of "forfeits."

Pinkey had reciprocated these attentions bravely, though it caused him extensive chafings by his boy friends, and had very nearly asked her to "see her home" after the party, but as he stood in the hall with the other boys, waiting for the girls to come down-stairs, the words froze on his lips as his new lodestar passed him, and it was with a new and heavy anguish at his heart that he saw her pass out of the house and join a party of homeward-bound girls, who had either left behind faint-hearted swains, like Pinkey, or overzealous ones, who were wiser and sadder after having received the "mit-ten."

Since that time, Pinkey had had no opportunity to indulge in more than inactive admiration, and had waited impatiently for Valentine Day, in hopes that he might then

PINKEY PERKINS

be able to show his devotion in a substantial and appropriate way. And now that the time was drawing near and he saw no satisfactory way of showing his feelings in regard to his Affinity, he was in a very depressed state of mind and heart.

Pinkey could not bear to think of some other youthful admirer sending his Affinity a bigger and a costlier valentine than he did — or, in fact, sending her any valentine at all.

If another suitor did send her one, she would very likely learn his name by finding his initials discreetly concealed in some obvious place on the valentine, or by some broad hint spoken in her presence. Pinkey was very formal in his ideas of propriety, and heartily disapproved of such methods as being contrary to the rules of valentine etiquette.

If he should send her a valentine, he had no objection to her finding out who had sent

HIS HEART'S DESIRE

it, but he desired that the information should reach her in some way perfectly independent of his efforts and connivance.

Pinkey's school-teacher, Miss Vance, — or "Red Feather," as she was universally known among her pupils, — had consented, after days of persuasion by the girls, to allow a "valentine-box" in school on that important day. The pupils could deposit their anonymous love-tokens in the box at any time during recreation hours, and there would be a distribution of the same just before dismissal time, both at noon and at four o'clock.

It was on this occasion that Pinkey hoped to show the affection he cherished for his Affinity, by sending her a valentine which should be, beyond question, the most elegant of all.

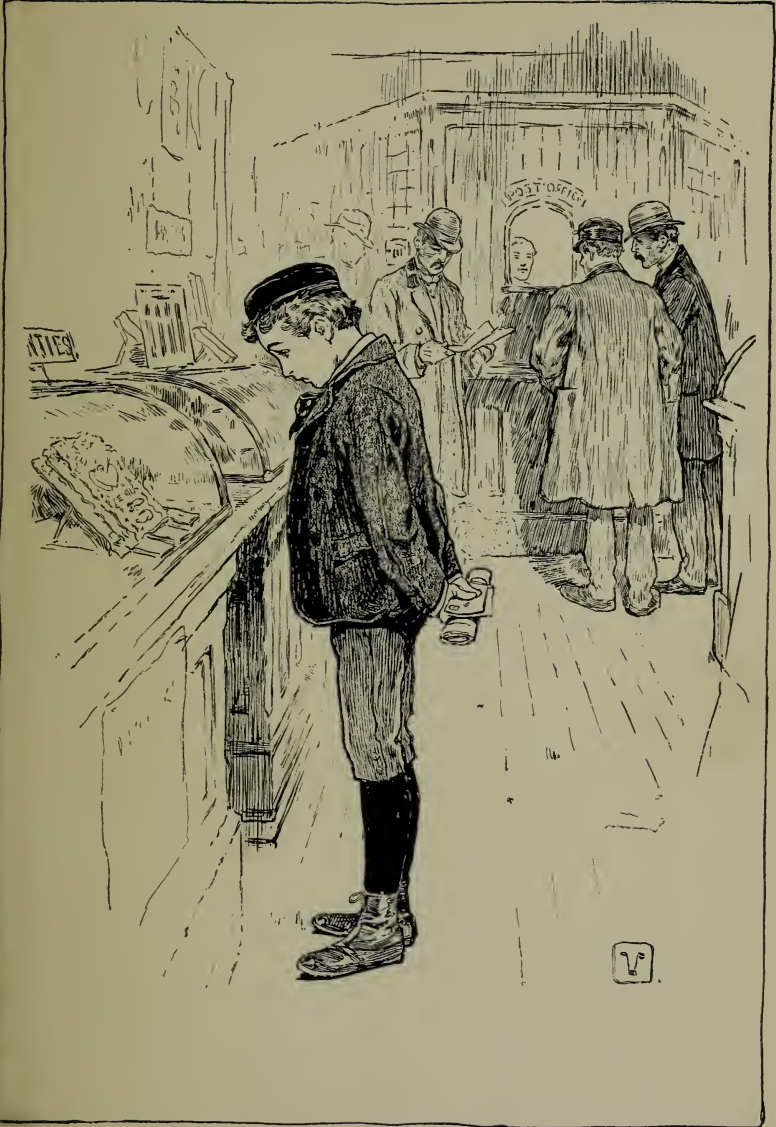
The prettiest valentines in town were to be found at the "Post Office Book Store," owned and conducted by Mrs. Betts, a widow

PINKEY PERKINS

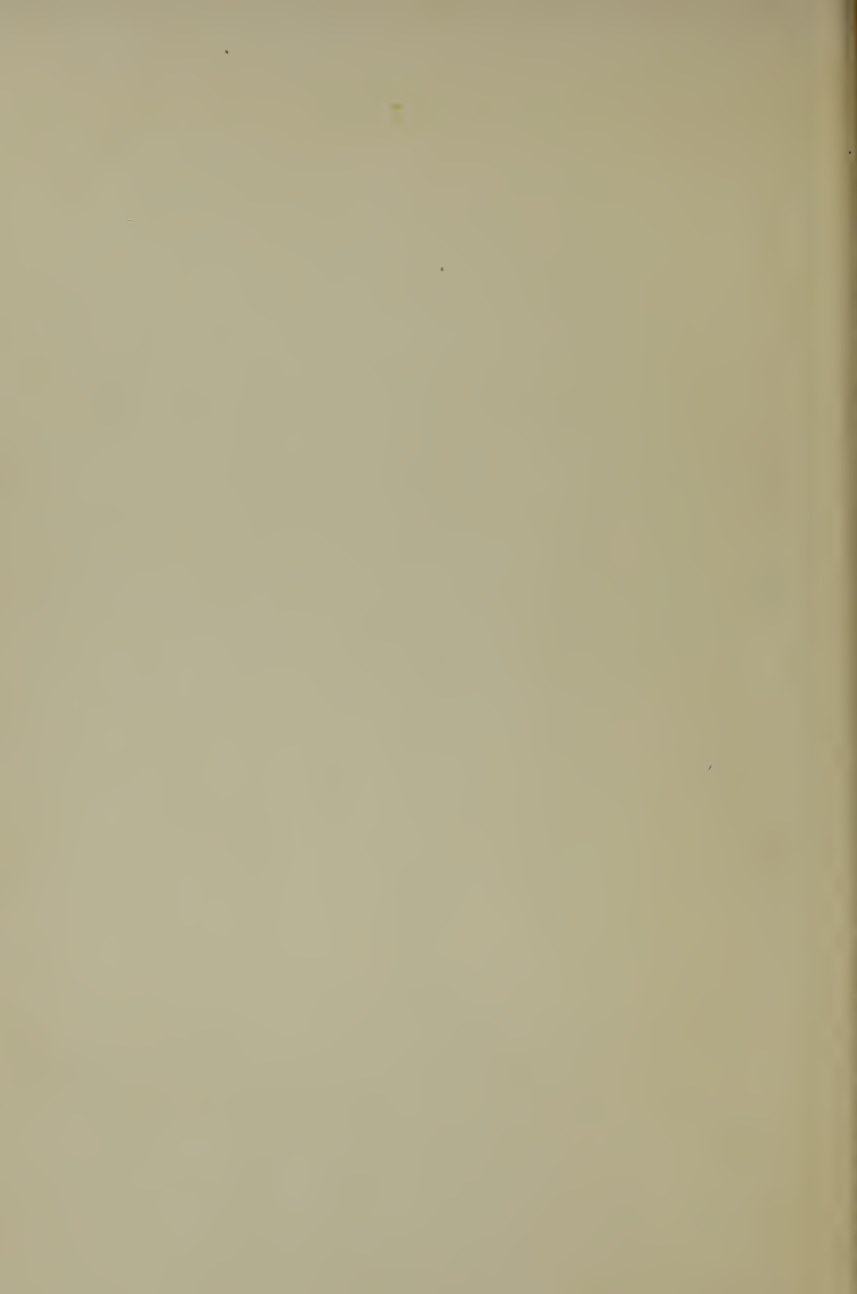
to whom an economical postmaster rented a part of the large room used as post-office.

The valentine upon which Pinkey had set his heart was a large, fancy, lace-paper creation, over a foot square and nearly two inches thick. It was composed of several layers, held apart by narrow accordion-like paper strips. In the center were two large embossed hearts, one overlapping the other and both pierced by arrows fired from the bows of half a dozen cupids distributed around the border. At each corner and at the top and bottom were profusely decorated scrolls, on which were printed, "I adore thee," "Wilt thou be mine?" and other touching phrases. The light upper part was hinged to the heavier back, on which, in fancy type, were these lines:

"If you but knew the pleasure
And the joy 'twould bring to me
If my own and onliest treasure
Forever you would be,



“ HE REMAINED TO GAZE LONG AT THE COVETED PRIZE ”



HIS HEART'S DESIRE

All your doubt and vain misgiving
Would be changed to love like mine,
And our lives would be worth living,
For you'd be my VALENTINE."

This valentine was easily the handsomest one in town, and, besides, it expressed Pinkey's sentiments so perfectly that it drove him to the depths of despair to think that he could not buy it for his Affinity. It cost a whole dollar, and having, as he did, but sixteen cents, and lacking the assurance to ask credit for the remainder, he felt doomed to disappointment.

If Pinkey had been in the bookstore once to see that valentine, he had been there twenty times. He came ostensibly to inquire for the mail, but invariably remained to gaze long and fondly into the show-case at the coveted prize, and to picture to himself the joy it would bring to the heart of his Affinity to receive it. Not even to "Bunny" Morris, his bosom friend, did he confide his burning

PINKEY PERKINS

desire to buy it. He felt it would not be doing right to *her* if he should trespass on the sacred ground of his infatuation by talking about it.

Do not think that Pinkey was the only one who saw and admired the valentine. Others of his age, and perhaps older, had longed to buy it; but the price was beyond the reach of all.

Whenever any one of Pinkey's schoolfellows came into the store while he was there, he would edge aimlessly away from the show-case toward the counter where the comic valentines were displayed. Three times, to his knowledge, within the week preceding Valentine Day, his Affinity had stopped before the show-case where reposed the large lace offering and had openly admired it. Pinkey was, of course, apparently oblivious to all this, but who can say that his Affinity's hopes were not realized as her comments fell on alert ears? Once Pinkey had heard

HIS HEART'S DESIRE

her actually price it, and his heart gave one great bound, then stood still. If she *should* purchase it, would she send it to him? Oh, what joy! But suppose Eddie Lewis, his hated rival for her affections, should be the favored one! That thought almost suffocated him.

Going home from school on the afternoon before Valentine Day, Pinkey, as usual, stopped at the post-office to inquire for the mail and to take one last look at the unattainable. He had given up all hopes of purchasing the large valentine, and had decided, as the only remaining solution for his problem, to invest his slender means in one of the smaller and, for him, very unsatisfactory substitutes.

There were several people in the store, most of them children bent on the same errand as Pinkey. He looked at all the valentines whose prices were within the limits of his funds, and at last selected one that

PINKEY PERKINS

seemed to him the best he could do for the money.

As he stood there, waiting to make his purchase, he saw a boy, older and larger



“PINKEY SAW A BOY PICK UP A FOUNTAIN-PEN”

than himself, pick up from the floor a fountain-pen which had fallen from a card on which several were displayed, glance furtively about him, and then drop it into his

HIS HEART'S DESIRE

overcoat pocket and deliberately walk out of the door. Mrs. Betts had her back turned at the time, and so knew nothing of the occurrence.

Pinkey was much disturbed by what he had seen. His first impulse was to tell Mrs. Betts; but, before he had a chance to do so, he dropped that suggestion of his conscience as being decidedly unwise. Pinkey had no desire to become a party to the deed by keeping mum; but he was only a boy, and he did have a wholesome regard for his own bodily welfare. He knew that if he told on the culprit the latter would "lay for" him, as Pinkey said to himself, and he also knew only too well how he should fare in the result.

While he was studying over the matter another idea struck him, which, while it involved a deal of uncertainty, would, if it succeeded, accomplish the same result and at the same time be of benefit to himself. Pinkey pondered long and hard over the

PINKEY PERKINS

matter. He counted his pennies over and over, and at length decided to try his scheme, though at the least it meant the postponement of his purchase until noon the next day, and in case of failure might prevent it altogether.

So, without even spending the one penny he had set aside for a "comic" to send to Red Feather, he left the bookstore and went home.

Next morning he felt rather guilty as he went with the crowd to school, being one of a very few who were not carrying one or more jealously guarded envelopes to be deposited in the box.

"Where's your valentine, Pinkey?" asked Putty Black, significantly, exhibiting two small embossed envelopes. "Ain't you goin' to send none to your girl?"

"Humph," sneered Pinkey, "'f I couldn't send a girl a valentine that *was* a valentine, I wouldn't send her none at all," and he

HIS HEART'S DESIRE

pointed contemptuously at the two Putty was carrying.

Putty knew from experience that when Pinkey was in his present frame of mind he would bear a lot of letting alone, so he gradually detached himself from Pinkey's society, with as good a grace as possible, and sought more congenial companions.

When Pinkey reached the schoolhouse he immediately instituted a search for the boy with the fountain-pen. It was Pinkey's intention to procure the pen, if possible, and return it to Mrs. Betts, having in view its restoration to the rightful owner as well as the possibility of reward — which reward, Pinkey hoped, might take the form of the long-wished-for valentine. If it did not, he would endeavor, by neat diplomacy, to secure the return of his purchase-money, at any rate.

Pinkey soon located a group of boys in the basement, and rightfully surmised they were

PINKEY PERKINS

“ trading.” He approached the group, and there, sure enough, among the participants in the arguments attending exchange, was the boy he was seeking. He was engaged in a discussion of the relative values of the fountain-pen, in its present empty state, and a four-bladed, bone-handled, “ I X L ” knife. The owner of the knife argued that “ I X L ” was a solemn guarantee of “ razor-steel,” while the boy with the pen declared that “ X L N T ” were the mystic letters that denoted that quality.

Not desiring to betray special interest in the pen, Pinkey devoted a few moments of his attention to other bargains that were being driven with all the arts known to the juvenile tradesman. Some boys were “ dropping knives.” “ Whole blade or no trade,” and “ Red leather, trade forever,” were the usual iron-clad agreements that made the exchange binding. *

Presently Pinkey turned his attention to

HIS HEART'S DESIRE

the unsettled argument concerning the knife and pen. It was plain that harmony of opinion was out of the question, and Pinkey felt this a good opportunity to make the effort to procure the pen.

“ What’ll you take for her, Jimmy? ” he inquired, assuming an indifferent air.

Jimmy didn’t know just exactly what he desired most, and asked Pinkey what he had to trade.

“ Ain’t got nothin’ much here to trade, but I’ll give you ten cents for her if you want to sell ’er.”

This put new life into the transaction — cash, owing to its chronic scarcity, being invariably above par. But Jimmy must not appear anxious and ruin his chances for a rise.

“ Aw,” he argued, “ she’s worth more’n that. She’s worth a quarter, anyhow.”

“ Ain’t got a quarter; give you twelve cents,” said Pinkey, knowing he must bar-

PINKEY PERKINS

gain closely, and not daring to name his limit too rapidly.

“Naw; gimme twenty cents — that’s cheap,” pleaded Jimmy.

Pinkey protested that the pen would not write as it was, and that it might be no good even if it *was* filled.

This was a damaging possibility; so, after the necessary final arguments, Pinkey finally secured the coveted pen for the munificent sum of fifteen cents and a jew’s-harp “to boot.” After he had concluded his bargain he retired from the market, and no amount of temptation could induce him to part with the pen.

The morning seemed interminable as Pinkey restlessly awaited the dismissal time, when he could return the pen to Mrs. Betts. When noon at last came, and Red Feather was distributing the valentines, Pinkey, without even waiting to see if there were any for him, hurried off to the post-office, tightly

HIS HEART'S DESIRE

clutching in his hand the fountain-pen. He was filled with a mixture of satisfaction at the success that had so far attended his



PINKEY GETS THE PEN

efforts, and concern as to the ultimate outcome.

Rushing in the door, he fairly thrust the pen into the hands of the astonished Mrs. Betts, saying: "I saw a boy pick this pen

PINKEY PERKINS

up off the floor yesterday and carry it away with him, and to-day I traded him out of it and brought it back." It was some moments before Mrs. Betts could definitely grasp the meaning of Pinkey's burst of speech. When she did recover from her surprise, she began to question him as to the boy's identity, but Pinkey stoutly declined to divulge it. He gave as his reason that the boy was bigger than he and would "lick" him the first time he caught him out.

In spite of Pinkey's reticence, Mrs. Betts knew him too well to attach any suspicion whatever to him. She pressed him with reasons why he should tell her for her own protection, and he was finally persuaded to whisper in her ear the boy's name.

(It may be stated here that this information caused her to be on the lookout whenever Jimmy was in the store, and resulted in eventually bringing him to the bar of parental justice.)

HIS HEART'S DESIRE

Not desiring to allow such apparently artless honesty to go unencouraged, Mrs. Betts began to look about for some tangible reward. While doing so, she remembered how, during the holidays nearly two months previous, Pinkey's sole desire in life had been to receive an air-gun outfit for Christmas. Day after day he had come in and fondled the precious rifle and hoped it might fall to his lot; but his hopes had not been realized, and he had been heartbroken for weeks afterward. So she decided that the air-gun would be about the most acceptable gift she could bestow.

Taking from the shelf the bright-colored box containing the entire outfit, — gun, target, arrows, and all, — she turned to Pinkey, saying: “ Pinkey, here is the air-gun you wanted so badly last Christmas. I want you to accept it from me as a remembrance for returning the pen.”

When Pinkey heard this he was between

PINKEY PERKINS

two fires. His former desire for the air-gun, which could now be his, returned with all its old-time fervor, and yet his more recent longing for the valentine was unabated. A dozen times, during the five minutes he had been in the store, his eyes had wandered irresistibly to the show-case where it still lay unpurchased.

Twice, while Mrs. Betts was wrapping the box in heavy paper for him to carry home, he attempted to ask that the valentine be substituted for the air-gun, and twice the words refused to come. As she placed the box in Pinkey's arms, he gave one hopeless look at the valentine, muttered some unintelligible thanks, and started for the door.

But love for his Affinity finally prevailed, and, turning resolutely about, he marched back to the counter and laid the box down, saying: "Mrs. Betts, if you'll let me, I'd like to trade this air-gun for that big valen-

HIS HEART'S DESIRE

tine over there in the show-case. It don't cost near as much as this, but I'd lots rather have it."



PINKEY GETS THE VALENTINE

To say that Mrs. Betts was surprised would be putting it mildly; but since Pinkey was the one to be satisfied, she was perfectly willing that he should choose what suited him best, especially as the valentine, from her

PINKEY PERKINS

point of view, was much the less valuable article.

When the exchange was effected, Pinkey was surprised to find how happy he felt, and he ran all the way home to show the valentine to his mother. He was bursting with exuberance and must unburden himself to some one, so he naturally chose her. He told her how he had longed for the valentine, but hated to ask her for the money to buy it, fearing she would think him foolish to want to send such an expensive one. He told her all about the fountain-pen and the air-gun, and how he had induced Mrs. Betts to exchange the latter for the valentine.

He was too happy to detect a misty look in his mother's eyes as he concluded his story by asking her to address the valentine for him — "because," he bashfully admitted, "she'd know my writin'."

Pinkey could scarcely eat his dinner, so anxious was he to get back to school and

HIS HEART'S DESIRE

deposit his valentine in the box before anybody saw him. It was such a large affair that, if it were once seen, it would attract immediate attention and be recognized later.

As his Affinity entered the room, just before the study-hours began, Pinkey thought he noted a serious expression on her face. He had not remained to see whether she received a valentine at noon, and down deep in his heart he hoped she had not, and that this might be the cause of her despondency.

Throughout the long afternoon she seemed very much depressed, and not once, to Pinkey's knowledge, did she even glance in his direction. But her solemnity could not temper his elation as he thought of the great, beautiful valentine peacefully reposing at the bottom of the box.

When school was dismissed, and Red Feather, with unbending dignity, began distributing the valentines, Pinkey felt his heart beating away like a steam-hammer. At last

PINKEY PERKINS

his name was called, and he marched boldly up to the platform to receive the tightly sealed missive bearing his name. He opened the envelope at once, and found, to his disgust, that he had received a "comic," a terrible caricature of an artist, no doubt suggested to the donor by Pinkey's habit of drawing pictures on his slate.

This raised his ire to the boiling-point. He was thinking deep threats of revenge, if he ever found out who sent it, when his name was called a second time.

This time he received a real valentine. It was a very small edition of the kind he had mailed to his Affinity! He studied the address critically. It had been printed by an unpractised hand, and at first he could obtain no clue whatever to the sender. Then he recognized the "K." Nobody on earth but his Affinity could make a "K" like that. Instantly he forgot his "comic" and the thoughts it had aroused in him, and a feeling



V

“ ‘MISS HARRIET WARREN,’ SHE READ ”

HIS HEART'S DESIRE

of peace and general good-will pervaded his entire being.

When Red Feather announced that the last valentine had been distributed, Pinkey's heart sank in him like a stone. What had become of the offering for his Affinity? He turned and whispered savagely to Bunny Morris, who was standing beside him and the only person there whom he would dare take into his confidence: "Go up 'n' tell her to look in the box again. Tell her to look good 'cause you know there's another 'n' in there."

Bunny did as he was bid. Red Feather searched the box carefully, and there, snugly filling the whole bottom, was the large, flat package which, in the shadows, she had overlooked.

" 'Miss Harriet Warren,' " she read; and as Pinkey saw his Affinity's face brighten as she looked squarely at him and blushinglly approached the platform, he felt repaid one

PINKEY PERKINS

hundred times over for the sacrifice of the air-gun.

Hattie Warren was at once surrounded by



“HARRIET WARREN WAS AT ONCE SURROUNDED”

all the girls in the room, whose curiosity, getting the better of their envy, stimulated the desire to inspect at close range the valentine they all had admired in the show-case.

HIS HEART'S DESIRE

“ Who sent it? ” “ Who sent it? ” was the cry that came from all sides.

“ Look at the wrapper,” suggested one. “ Whose writing is it? ” They looked, but it was familiar to no one.

“ Look on the inside of the box,” “ Look on the back of it,” were some of the further suggestions from the curious ones.

After inspecting it all over, one of the girls detected some letters and figures on the back of the valentine, written diagonally across one corner. These were at once investigated, as possibly furnishing a clue to the giver's identity.

“ E. L.,” shouted one of the girls. “ Eddie Lewis sent it, and it cost a dollar! ”

This announcement staggered Pinkey. He thought it must be a joke, until one after another verified the telltale letters. He could in no way account for the initials of his rival being on the back of the valentine, for it had not been out of his possession after he re-

PINKEY PERKINS

ceived it until he placed it in the box. He was beside himself with indignation and perplexity. He hoped Eddie Lewis would speak up and deny sending it; but, instead of so doing, Eddie assumed a knowing, mysterious look, and said nothing.

All this was too much for Bunny Morris's sense of justice; and, without thinking of the consequences or waiting to see what Pinkey was going to do, he blurted out: "Pinkey Perkins sent that valentine. Eddie Lewis didn't have anything to do with it."

Every one looked at Eddie, to see what he would do. Instead of defending himself against Bunny's accusation, as they expected, he shifted uneasily from one foot to the other, and said, evasively, "I never *said* I sent it." A minute later, when attention became centered on Pinkey, Eddie silently opened the door and left the room.

Pinkey tried to look unconcerned, but he made a dismal failure. He tried to assume

HIS HEART'S DESIRE

a vexed air, but he only grinned and blushed to the roots of his hair.

But what could the letters "E. L." signify, if not Eddie Lewis? No one else in school had the same initials. As a last resort, Red Feather, who was by this time ready to depart from the noisy throng, was consulted. She saw through the mystery at once.

" "E. L.," " said she, " is the cost-mark. It isn't anybody's initials."

If there were any possible remaining doubts as to who sent the valentine, Pinkey forever dispelled them by chasing Bunny Morris madly around the room, and out of the door into the yard, shouting as he ran, " Bunny Morris, if you ever tell on me again, I'll — "

The threat was lost in the distance.

II

HOW HE GOT EVEN

PINKEY PERKINS'S heart was full of bitterness. He was the most ill-treated boy in school, and he knew it. Just because he had been caught reading "Deadwood Dick's Diggings" behind his geography he had been kept in after school. It was Friday afternoon, and, instead of getting out early, here he was, kept back to be punished.

"Sig" Clemens had lent Pinkey this blood-curdling tale during the noon hour, and with businesslike method he had exacted Pinkey's favorite agate "taw" for security, pending the safe return of the story.

Deadwood Dick had just rescued, single-handed, the beautiful heroine from an awful

HOW HE GOT EVEN

death at the hands of her redskin captors. Pinkey was lost in admiration of the won-



“PINKEY WAS STARTLED BY THE WORD ‘PINKERTON’”

derful prowess of this daring “King of the Plains.”

Miss Vance, the angular, red-haired teacher, popularly known as “Red Feather,” had noticed Pinkey’s unusual application to

PINKEY PERKINS

his geography, and had casually sauntered around the room to investigate the cause.

Suddenly, at his very elbow, Pinkey was startled by the word "Pinkerton!" Pinkerton was the name his teacher called him, and the one by which his father generally addressed him previous to an interview in the woodshed.

Pinkey jumped as if he had been shot. So absorbed was he in Deadwood Dick's marvelous bravery, and so oblivious was he to all around him, that he thought the "unerring rifle had again spoken," and that he, Pinkey, had "bitten the dust."

Ruthlessly was the "nickel library" torn from him and destroyed before his very eyes. He knew he would never get his taw back—he had no big brother, and Sig was too big for him to "lick."

Twice before, during that week, Pinkey had been kept in and compelled to write "incomprehensibility" one hundred times on

HOW HE GOT EVEN

his slate as punishment. This afternoon, shortly before dismissal time, he cleaned off his slate. Taking his speller from his desk,



“RUTHLESSLY WAS THE ‘NICKEL LIBRARY’ TORN FROM HIM”

and placing it in front of him to allay suspicion, he began to write. Forty times did he write “incomprehensibility” with neatness and precision, until he had covered two sides of his double slate.

PINKEY PERKINS

Surely this was taking time by the forelock.

Bunny Morris, who was suspected of being implicated in the "hooking" of two confiscated apples from the teacher's desk during recess, had also been kept in, with the hope that he might turn State's evidence.

School was dismissed, and the two companions in bondage sat waiting to be sentenced — to be told how many "incomprehensibilities" their latest misdeeds were to cost them. With not a little pride, Pinkey held up his slate, showing Bunny the forty long words on the inside of it, and then held up both hands, fingers widely spread, four times, to convey the number written. Outside, Pinkey was meek and sober, but inside he was gloating over his provident foresight. Bunny was envious, and even had ideas of "peaching," were he not fearful of the consequences.

"Pinkerton," said the teacher, "you may

HOW HE GOT EVEN

write, carefully and neatly, on your slate, one hundred times, and bring to me for inspection, the words 'House of Representatives.' "

For a moment Pinkey was stunned. He could not believe fate had been so unkind. Nothing could compare with this indignity. Inside Pinkey instantly became a seething volcano. He looked at Bunny, and Bunny tittered behind his hand. He resolved then and there to "fix" *him* as soon as he got a chance.

What was there to do? Nothing. He could only curb his anger and hope for a time when he could get even with Red Feather.

Sullenly he erased his neatly written but now useless words. Sullenly he wrote "House of Representatives" until he wished—oh, how he wished!—he could fight somebody, something, anybody, anything! His anger boiled as he wrote, and his hatred of Red Feather almost choked him.

PINKEY PERKINS

Outside he could hear the "choosing up" for the baseball game; and there he was, compelled to sit and write, fairly bursting with the insults that had been heaped upon him.

Long before he had completed his task, Bunny had departed, leaving him scratching away. After ample time for reflection, while picking up from the floor a chalk-boxful of fine paper scraps, Bunny had still stoutly declared his innocence, and Miss Vance, seeing that nothing of value could be coaxed or threatened out of him, had allowed him to depart. The game outside had ended, and nothing but the ticking of the clock and the scratching of Pinkey's energetic pencil broke the absolute silence.

Surely he must find some outlet for the rage that was consuming him, or he would burst. He tried letting it run off the point of his pencil by making a hideous, squeaking noise as he wrote.

HOW HE GOT EVEN

“Pinkerton,” said Miss Vance, without raising her eyes as she sat writing at her desk — “Pinkerton, every time you make your pencil squeak, you will have to write your text twenty times in addition.”

“Can’t help squeakin’ it,” muttered Pinkey, under his breath, but loud enough to be heard.

“That will do; you *must* help it,” replied the teacher, still not raising her eyes from her work.

The calm, unruffled voice only acted as a stimulant for his anger, but there was no way to turn. He must submit.

Suddenly, when he had about-finished, and entirely without intention on his part, his pencil gave forth one of those high-keyed shrieks that rattle the teeth and chill the marrow in the bones. “Pinkerton,” said the monster behind the desk, “you may write your text forty times in addition.”

The camel’s back was broken. Pinkey

PINKEY PERKINS

slammed his slate on his desk and rushed madly for the door. Miss Vance, being taken unawares, was unable to stop him, and he gained the exit by a small margin and rushed hatless from the schoolhouse. He heard Red Feather's voice calling after him: "Pinkerton! Pinkerton Perkins! come back here this minute. Pinkerton, do you hear me? Come back, I say!"

But no mere words could turn him now. He had made his dash for liberty and had won, and it was too soon to think of the consequences.

When he reached the corner turnstile, he stopped running and stood still long enough to — I am ashamed to say it — turn around and shake his fist at the tall figure in the doorway.

He now set out for the open lot behind the tannery, hoping not to be too late to keep an appointment to "fight out" a bumble-bees' nest there. The place was deserted.

HOW HE GOT EVEN

Several dead bees, three broken shingle paddles, and a crooked stick told him of the excitement he had missed.

Now that Pinkey had had time partly to cool off, he began to figure on his future movements to make them net him the least results. One thing was sure. Red Feather would go to his mother and tell her the whole story — her side of it, of course. This he resolved to prevent, if possible. By approaching the schoolhouse and keeping under cover, he discovered that the door was still open. He was not too late; Red Feather was still there.

Crossing the street to the churchyard, he made a short cut to the street his teacher would take to his home. He was sorely tempted to stop and join in a game of “keeps” which two of his friends were playing in the road. But he had more important business than marbles on hand just then; and, besides, he had no taw.

PINKEY PERKINS

“ Where’s your hat, Pinkey? ” called Joe Cooper from the road.

“ None o’ your business! Guess a feller can go without a hat if he wants to, can’t he? ”

When he reached the next corner he turned in the direction of his home. After looking all about him, he drew from his pocket a stick of blackboard crayon and, stooping down, wrote in bold letters on the sidewalk, “ If you tell my father, you will wish you hadn’t.” A little farther on he wrote, “ Tattle-tale,” and again, “ You will be sorry if you tell on me.”

Then, by a circuitous route, he reached home the back way. Climbing the barn-yard fence, he went to the woodshed and did something he had never been known to do before — voluntarily began sawing wood! His mother heard the feverish sawing, and, on looking out of her window, she saw to her astonishment that it was Pinkey. There he

HOW HE GOT EVEN

was, hatless, coatless, sleeves rolled up, one foot on a big stick of wood to enable him to get the other on the piece he was sawing.

Something was up — she did not know what, but something unusual. Such voluntary bursts of energy on Pinkey's part were always omens of trouble.

For nearly an hour Pinkey sawed constantly and faithfully. His mother did not attempt to find out the reason. That would appear in time. While she sat sewing and reflecting on this unusual performance of Pinkey's, the door-bell rang, and a moment later Miss Vance was shown in. In her hand she held Pinkey's hat as evidence of his hasty departure.

“Mrs. Perkins,” she launched forth, “I've come to tell you about Pinkerton.” With this introduction, she gave a recital of all the details she had come to tell. She told how she had caught him reading a “piece of highly sensational literature” during

PINKEY PERKINS

study hours; how she had kept him in and given him a text to write one hundred times as punishment; how he had “persisted in repeatedly scratching his slate so that his pencil would give forth a loud, disagreeable, squeaky noise,” until, finally, she had ordered him to write his text forty times in addition, “whereupon, without reason or permission, he jumped from his desk and ran bareheaded from the schoolhouse. On reaching the turnstile,” she concluded, “he turned and made a threatening gesture at me with his fist, and I have not laid eyes on him since.”

Mrs. Perkins listened patiently, making few comments. She apologized to Miss Vance because her son had done such a thing, and asserted that Pinkerton was not a bad boy, but hard to govern at times, being a little headstrong.

Just as Miss Vance was on the point of leaving, Mr. Perkins came home, and for his



“ HE WAS SAWING AWAY AS IF THE FATE OF NATIONS DEPENDS UPON
HIS EFFORTS ”

HOW HE GOT EVEN

benefit she repeated the story, adding a few touches omitted from her former recital.

Mr. Perkins quietly promised he would "settle with the young man," and the teacher departed. On being told that Pinkey was in the wood-shed, the thought flashed through his mind that Pinkey had been very considerate to go there and wait. He had heard sawing going on, but had not connected Pinkey with it in any way, so he was not prepared for the sight that met his eyes. Apparently oblivious to all about him, intent on a large stick of hard wood, was Pinkey, hatless, coatless, red-faced, and perspiring. He was sawing away as if the fate of the nation depended upon his efforts.

But Pinkey knew just when his father left the house, and the purpose for which he left it. It was not the fate of the nation that concerned Pinkey. It was his own.

"Pinkerton!"

That settled it. His wood-sawing had all

PINKEY PERKINS

been for naught. That word had just the right inflection and emphasis to shatter all his hopes.

Pinkey started and looked up with feigned surprise at seeing his father at the door.

“Pinkerton, did you read a ‘five-cent library’ in school to-day behind your geography?” demanded the father.

“Part o’ one,” replied Pinkey.

“Where did you get it?”

“Sig Clemens.”

“What did you give for it?”

“Gave him my taw to keep till I give the story back.”

“Did you make your pencil squeak to annoy the teacher when you were writing on your slate?”

“Some,” replied the laconic Pinkey.

“Why did you run out of the school-house?”

“Couldn’t help squeakin’ it the last time,” declared Pinkey.

HOW HE GOT EVEN

“ Did you squeak it on purpose after she told you not to? ”

“ No, sir, ” asserted Pinkey, emphatically.

Mr. Perkins knew that Pinkey, though a mischievous boy, could always be depended upon to tell the truth.

“ Why didn't you go back when she called after you? ”

“ Knew she'd whip me if I did. ”

“ Didn't you know you would be found out and would be whipped at home? ”

“ Didn't think o' that. ”

“ Tell me all that happened this afternoon in school after your teacher found you reading the story. ”

Pinkey imagined he detected a favorable tone in his father's voice, and decided that he could not suffer from presenting his side of the case “ good and strong. ” So, mopping his brow with the back of his wrist, he told of pawning his taw for the story. Sig had said it was a good story, and that if it

PINKEY PERKINS

was anybody else but Pinkey he would not lend it at all. He told his father how the teacher had torn it up and put it in the waste-basket without asking whose it was, or where he had gotten it, and of his being kept in after school. Without seeing the humorous side of it, he told of writing the word "incomprehensibility" forty times so he could get out sooner, and how he had been told to write "House of Representatives" instead.

And, last of all, when he had stopped squeaking his pencil, it had squeaked accidentally on nearly the last word. When he was told to write his text forty times more for something that he could not help, he could not bear it any longer, so he "just got up and ran."

He did not mention the writing on the sidewalk, since his father had not. Poor Pinkey! he did not know that Miss Vance had gone out of her usual path on her way

HOW HE GOT EVEN

home, and so had failed to see any of his terrifying messages.

Could Pinkey have seen the smile that flitted across his father's face as he finished his tale, he would have known that his punishment had, at least, been commuted. But he had begun to arrange the wood he had sawed in a neat, corded pile, and did not see it.

“Who told you to saw wood this afternoon?” asked the father.

“Nobody,” answered Pinkey; “just felt like sawin’.”

His father stood for a minute, silently regarding the energetic figure piling and arranging the wood; then, without a word, turned and walked toward the house.

Pinkey had won out, and he knew it.

Instantly he lost all interest in the work that a moment before had been so absorbing. Sawing and piling wood, instead of being a delightful and voluntary occupation, became

PINKEY PERKINS

unbearable drudgery. His back began to ache. His arms were tired. He was convinced that, with proper economy, there was plenty of wood to last over Sunday. But though Pinkey had lost his valor, he had not lost his discretion. He felt that his exertion had done not a little toward getting him off without a whipping, so he busied himself at the wood-shed, sawing a little to keep up appearances, until he was called in to supper.

During the time that Pinkey's muscular energies had been devoted to sawing wood, his mental powers had been busily engaged trying to evolve a scheme to get even with Red Feather. Even though he had escaped a part of the punishment he had expected, he knew there was trouble awaiting him on Monday morning at school. He could expect no forgetfulness or forgiveness from that quarter.

At supper, Pinkey was unusually silent

HOW HE GOT EVEN

and uncommunicative. He did not volunteer any further information regarding the afternoon's proceedings; and as his father did not probe further into the matter, he felt that the incident was closed on the paternal side. But a war-cloud still hung over the schoolhouse.

That night Pinkey lay awake long after the house was quiet, pondering over many ways of getting even. Scheme after scheme suggested itself, but each was discarded as unsatisfactory.

“If I could only hook her ruler,” thought he, “and keep it till she promised not to lick anybody for a month.” But that was out of the question. He thought of tying a string across the walk where she would trip over it. This scheme was passed as being dangerous. Pinkey did not thirst for bodily injury now.

Suddenly he thought of the new mouse-trap baited and set in the storeroom. His

PINKEY PERKINS

father had brought it home only two days before, but it had already caught three mice, which Pinkey had drowned. He resolved, if any more were caught in the next two days, that instead of drowning them he would transfer them to a cigar-box, steal into the schoolhouse on Sunday, release them in the teacher's desk, and await developments Monday morning.

By Sunday he had accumulated four mice in his cigar-box, and had hidden them in the barn, feeding them well to keep them alive and active.

After supper he quietly absented himself from the house, and, after securing his box, he took a roundabout way to the schoolhouse. In the gathering twilight, he approached the building, and after one look around, to make sure no one was in sight, he set his box on the window-ledge, climbed up, and opened the window. To climb in and empty his box in the teacher's little hinge-top desk was but

HOW HE GOT EVEN

the work of a moment, and before his absence from home had been noticed he had returned.



“TO CLIMB IN AND EMPTY HIS BOX WAS BUT THE WORK OF A MOMENT”

So far his plans had worked admirably.

Monday morning came, and as Pinkey entered the schoolhouse yard his feelings were

PINKEY PERKINS

those of suspense mixed with many misgivings for the success of his scheme.

The bell rang; the pupils entered and took their seats. As soon as the opening exercises were over, Miss Vance announced that one of the pupils had been guilty of scandalous conduct on Friday last, and that she was unable to overlook such a misdemeanor.

“Pinkerton Perkins,” said she, in her severest tone, “come this way.”

Pinkey shuffled reluctantly to the front.

“Pinkerton, I want you to apologize before the whole school for your conduct last Friday afternoon,” commanded Red Feather.

“Didn’t do nothing to apologize for,” returned Pinkey.

“I want you to say you are sorry for your actions.”

“Ain’t sorry for nothing.”

“Pinkerton, unless you say you are sorry for what you did, I shall have to chastise you.”

HOW HE GOT EVEN

Pinkey stood mute. He was only hoping that by some lucky chance that lid would be raised before he had his punishment.

“ Pinkerton, are you going to say you are sorry? ” This in Miss Vance’s sternest manner.

No answer from her obstinate pupil.

“ Give me your hand! ” she said finally.

Pinkey’s only move was to put both hands behind him.

Miss Vance generally punished her pupils by whipping them on the palm of the hand with a hardwood ruler. Without further ado, she grasped Pinkey by the wrist and half-dragged, half-led him to her desk, where she kept her ruler.

Fate was with Pinkey this time. The ruler was not there. It must be inside.

Still grasping the unwilling wrist, she raised the lid of the desk, when —! A shrill, piercing shriek rent the air, and, with skirts frantically snatched from the floor and held

PINKEY PERKINS

tightly about her, Red Feather mounted her desk chair and again gave forth a yet louder scream as one of the mice struggled to dis-



“SHE RAISED THE LID OF THE DESK, WHEN —!”

engage itself from the folds of her skirt, where it had blindly jumped the instant she gathered herself for her leap.

Immediately the school was in a turmoil:

HOW HE GOT EVEN

girls standing on their seats, some screaming, some crying; and a dozen boys chasing four frightened mice from platform to corner, and from corner to window. Bunny Morris yelled, "Git the broom!" and half a dozen boys rushed madly for the closet door. But Pinkey had anticipated them and secured the broom. He succeeded in knocking two boys sprawling in his efforts to reach a mouse. He finally succeeded in killing one of the mice with his broom, one escaped by a hole under the platform, and two reached the closet and disappeared.

To get order out of such chaos was impossible. Miss Vance was nearly prostrated by her fright and by her embarrassment for the weakness she had displayed in not setting a better example for the school.

Not until it was all over did she realize what a spectacle she had made of herself, and so unnerved was she that she could only sit and tremble. To attempt to continue

PINKEY PERKINS

school after such a disturbance was out of the question. Besides, the girls were scared beyond possibility of study, and the boys showed no signs of settling down.

There was nothing to do but to dismiss school and allow the excitement to wear off. She attempted to arise and announce that school was dismissed until after the morning recess, but she found herself unable to stand, and made the announcement in a quavering voice, sitting.

How the mice got into the desk was never investigated. Miss Vance felt that her conduct had not been fitting or commendable, and never referred to the episode.

Pinkey's apology was never made, nor was his delayed punishment ever administered. The two subjects were too intimately associated with that of mice to be referred to again.



Varian

“ IMMEDIATELY THE SCHOOL WAS IN A TURMOIL ”

III

BEATEN AT HIS OWN GAME

OF the many red-letter days on the juvenile calendar, April Fool Day is one of the reddest. Its celebration is begun long before the day itself arrives, and is continued long after it is past.

Much good-natured fun is indulged in, and no one is immune from attack; and the more dignified the victim, the more keen the pleasure exhibited at his discomfiture.

For a week before that important day, the pupils of Pinkey Perkins's age in the public school had been observing its advent by all the arts known to Young America.

During this period, it was decidedly unwise to gratify one's natural impulse to kick the discarded hat, temptingly placed in one's

PINKEY PERKINS

path, or attempt to pick from the sidewalk the alluring pocketbook. If, in an unguarded moment, these desires did prevail, the encounter with the ever-present brick or the sudden disappearance of the pocketbook was made doubly embarrassing by derisive laughter and shouts of "April fool" coming from a near-by shed or from behind a near-by tree.

The prodigal generosity exhibited at school was remarkable, and suspicion regarding the motive therefor was equally alert. Offers of candy, even if honestly made, were declined with firmness. Even the seductive note sometimes remained unopened by the recipient, through fear of "April fool" being the sole contents.

The old-time defensive couplet:

"April Fool's a-comin' ;
You're the biggest fool a-runnin'!"

often indulged in by the unwary victim, could not dampen the ardor of the enthusiastic

BEATEN AT HIS OWN GAME

joker. That rhyme and its equally poetic companion-piece, to be brought into play later:

“ April Fool’s past,
You’re the biggest fool at last,”

had long since ceased to be a balm for the wounded pride. To use either of them as a defence for being “ fooled ” was merely an admission of irritation on the part of the unwary victim.

Pinkey had been studying all the week previous to April Fool Day how he was going to “ fool ” Miss Vance, or “ Red Feather,” the teacher, and still not lay himself open to being called seriously to account for his act. Just at present he cherished no special enmity toward Red Feather, and had no desire to make his joke more trying for her than could reasonably be expected on such an occasion.

It would not do to adopt any of the com-

PINKEY PERKINS

monplace methods in vogue among the pupils. He wished to make her bring the joke down on herself, and, if possible, to make his part an entirely passive one.

Only once had he made any effort to carry out his plan, and that was not really premeditated. One day, as Red Feather was entering the turnstile at the corner of the schoolhouse yard, returning to school from dinner, Pinkey had shouted to a crowd of his companions: "Look at that balloon," and, although several of the latter forgot themselves long enough to look skyward, and to be immediately greeted by delighted shouts of "April Fool" from all sides, Red Feather gave no evidence of having heard the startling demand, and pursued her unerring way to the schoolhouse.

If at first Pinkey had been desirous of exercising great diplomacy in his effort to fool Red Feather, that desire was now doubled in view of the announcement of an

BEATEN AT HIS OWN GAME

event scheduled to take place on the night of April First.

Red Feather, to the utter surprise of her pupils, had actually invited her whole room, about twenty-five in number, to a party at her home on that evening. No one knew whether she was celebrating the day or had merely chosen it because it was convenient for her to have the party at that time.

Had not Pinkey already made his boasts that he would fool Red Feather, it is doubtful if he would have attempted to carry out his original intention after the invitation to the party had been given. He did not wish to do anything that would result in his absence, either on the grounds of wounded dignity, or yet as a parental disciplinary measure.

Pinkey was looking forward to the festive occasion with great anticipations. At first it was his intention to ask his Affinity if he might take her to the party; but opportunity

PINKEY PERKINS

after opportunity came and went, and, try as he would to nerve himself for the ordeal, his courage always failed him at the crucial



PINKEY HAS AN IDEA —



AND ACTS UPON IT

moment. At last he decided that she would probably wish to go with some of her girl friends, and then he would ask her to let him escort her home.

BEATEN AT HIS OWN GAME

April Fool Day finally came, and with it all the accompanying excitement.

If any one so much as heeded in the slightest any ordinary warning, such as: "You're losing your handkerchief," the act was greeted with howls of delight.

Farmers driving past the schoolhouse were startled by the cry, "Whip behind, mister, whip behind!" and on looking back to see the cause for the warning, would be showered with the joyous exclamation coming from a dozen throats, "April Fool!" Imaginary balloons and flocks of birds were continually in the air, and it required remarkable presence of mind not to heed the sudden cry to look at them.

Pinkey came very near getting into trouble once. He called a boy half-way across the schoolhouse yard, ostensibly to unfold to him some wonderful scheme, and then, as the boy, flattered at being thus publicly taken into Pinkey's confidence, bent his head to

PINKEY PERKINS

hear the whispered words, he shouted " April Fool " in his ear and ran away laughing.

But when the bell rang, the merriment



RED FEATHER DISCOVERS THE THREAD —

subsided, until here and there a smothered titter was all that could be seen or heard of the recent hilarity; and after roll-call and

BEATEN AT HIS OWN GAME

the marching and singing were over, school settled down to its usual routine.

When the A class in geography was called to the front and the members assumed their regulation positions in line, toes on a certain crack in the floor, Pinkey was very much excited within.

At these recitations Red Feather usually surveyed the class with critical eye, and if she detected any slovenliness in dress, she took sharp measures to make sure that it did not occur again. Nothing could be more embarrassing to a boy than to have Red Feather take from her desk the small hand-mirror and a hair-brush, kept there for the purpose, and calmly pass them to him with instructions to stand on the platform and brush his hair until she told him to stop.

On occasions, she had even been known to send her pupils home to make improvements in their appearance that only a change of apparel could accomplish.

PINKEY PERKINS

But the watchful eye of Pinkey's mother seldom overlooked any defects in her son's dress, and Red Feather never had cause to take him to task on that score, unless it was for damages incurred after leaving home for school.

This morning, as the teacher's practised glance ranged from one end of the class to the other, her attention was at once attracted to Pinkey; for hanging from his coat near the shoulder was a long white "raveling."

"Pinkerton Perkins," she announced, "I'm surprised at your coming up here to recite with a raveling like that on your coat. It shows very plainly that you failed to brush your coat properly before coming to school."

So saying, she approached the chastened Pinkey, and, with the eyes of the whole class fixed upon her, proceeded with deft thumb and forefinger to pluck from his coat the telltale evidence of his neglect.

Reaching out, she took hold of the ravel-

BEATEN AT HIS OWN GAME

ing. Imagine her surprise when she found that she had hold of one end of a piece of



AND UNWINDS IT

white thread of indefinite length, which she was unwinding from a spool in Pinkey's inside coat pocket.

PINKEY PERKINS

Before he realized where he was or what he was doing, Bunny Morris cried, "April F——," then caught himself in time to smother with his hand the remainder of the exclamation.

Red Feather pulled out several feet of the thread before she stopped, for she felt that she must not give in that she had been caught in the cleverly laid trap, and, with increasing confusion, mechanically drew more and more thread from Pinkey's coat, until she saw that her task was endless.

Then, still holding the thread in her fingers, she stood regarding the placid face of Pinkey, who, alone of all the pupils, retained his composure. With him it was a moment involving too much uncertainty to show any sign of the exultation that filled his heart. The other pupils, pleased beyond words, even had words been permissible, nudged one another, and giggled behind their hands.

"Pinkerton," said Red Feather at last,

BEATEN AT HIS OWN GAME

“ what won't you be up to next? ” and then added unnecessarily, “ Did you do that intentionally? ”

“ Do what? ” queried Pinkey, blandly.

“ You know very well ‘ what,’ ” said Red Feather, growing incensed at his calmness. “ Did you put that thread on your coat to get me to try to pull it off? ”

“ Couldn't help it if you wanted to try to pull it off,” replied the exasperating Pinkey, avoiding the issue.

Red Feather saw that even if she did force him to an admission that he had intentionally fooled her, she could gain nothing thereby, and by dwelling longer on the subject she would merely be showing how much she felt it. She also realized that she herself had made his effort a success by not exercising more caution at such a dangerous time as April First.

But such a misdemeanor could not be sanctioned by being overlooked, so she or-

PINKEY PERKINS

dered Pinkey to wind up the thread she had unwound, and, as soon as the recitation was over, stationed him on the platform, in one corner, with instructions to transfer the thread from the spool to a slate-pencil and back again, continuing this operation until recess. But this undignified employment could not mar Pinkey's joy at having fooled Red Feather so successfully, and at getting out of it so easily.

For laughing at Pinkey's grimaces, made while Red Feather was not looking, two other boys, one of them Eddie Lewis, Pinkey's rival for the affections of his Affinity, were soundly punished, the first by being whipped on the palm of the hand with the much dreaded hardwood ruler, and Eddie Lewis by being subjected to an ignominious old-fashioned spanking. Red Feather's temper had been aroused by her experience with the counterfeit raveling, and, while she could not justly administer to Pinkey a

BEATEN AT HIS OWN GAME

severe punishment for merely furnishing the means to fool herself, she was not in a frame of mind to treat lightly any undue levity on the part of her pupils.

Considering all things, Pinkey felt that his fooling of Red Feather had been a decided success. He had not fared as badly as had the two who had laughed at him, and, furthermore, neither of them was sufficiently versed in the manly art to take him to task for getting them into trouble.

When recess came and he had completed his sentence in the corner, Pinkey joined gaily in the general endeavor to fool anybody and everybody, whenever opportunity afforded.

Recess that morning, as well as the noon hour and the afternoon recess, were boisterous repetitions of the morning playtime; but in view of Red Feather's petulant state of mind and of the party to take place that evening, the fooling in the schoolroom was

PINKEY PERKINS

slight, and was carried on in a very quiet way.

On the way from school to the post-office, whither most pupils' steps were invariably directed after dismissal, Pinkey and several of his companions walked behind the girls, and tried to fool them by pretending to exhibit to each other various articles belonging to the girls.

Pinkey's Affinity had been one of few who did not go to the post-office, so Pinkey felt that he could enter into the teasing of the other girls without fear of incurring *her* disfavor. Had she been in the group, Pinkey's energies would have been discreetly directed toward shielding her from molestation, and on her account he would have been more or less of a guardian angel for them all, instead of being the ringleader of what the girls called "a lot of smarties."

The post-office was a new field of operations, for who, be they young or old, can

BEATEN AT HIS OWN GAME

remain indifferent to the information that there is a letter in their box? This form of amusement continued until the not over-indulgent postmaster put a stop to their exclamations by firmly suggesting that they had bothered him enough and had better transfer themselves and their noise to a less restricted space outdoors.

After leaving the post-office, the crowd broke up into little groups, each homeward bound in a different direction, and later each group separated into individuals, as their successive homes or near-by corners were reached.

As soon as supper was over, Pinkey began preparations for the party. How he wished he had the pair of patent-leather shoes that were so temptingly displayed in the window of the shoe-store. He felt that, if he only possessed them, he could wish for nothing in the way of elegant apparel. But he must content himself with calfskin for a while

PINKEY PERKINS

longer, which contentment was forced, to say the least.

Bunny Morris "came by" for him, and together they went to the party. On the way they continued to observe the custom of the day by ringing all the convenient door-bells, and then running as fast as their legs would carry them, to some point where, in safety, they could observe and enjoy the perplexity of those who answered the rings.

They were among the last to reach Red Feather's home, and when they arrived the party was in full sway. Red Feather was on her best behavior, and in her most amiable mood. She greeted them as she had all the others, as though her chief joy in life was to make her pupils happy.

Her little red curls, from which she derived her nickname, bobbed with seeming approval and good-will at all the jokes she heard, and she encouraged her guests in all their games with a spirit that melted many

BEATEN AT HIS OWN GAME

a heart heretofore well-nigh frozen toward her.

It did not seem that this could be the same person who at times had been, as it seemed to them, almost inhuman in her rigid discipline.

As soon as he arrived, Pinkey sought out his Affinity, and, without making his efforts too apparent, contrived to remain in her vicinity most of the evening. Whenever, in the numerous games of Post-Office, Clap In and Clap Out, Forfeits, and others that required an individual preference to be shown, Pinkey fearlessly named Hattie Warren as his unqualified choice.

And why should he not do so? he reasoned. Had she not sent him a valentine on Valentine Day, and did she not know that he had sent her the prettiest one in town? Had he not written her name and his on his slate, one above the other, and proven by cancellation that her attitude toward him was ex-

PINKEY PERKINS

pressed by the word "courtship," while his infatuation could be satisfied by nothing short of "marriage."

Once he had been so bold as to write this indisputable, foreordained evidence on a piece of paper, and place it in her desk, and the fact that she had not shown any displeasure gave him assurance of her approval of the solemn decree of Fate. He managed to be by her side when the time came for the refreshments to be served, and to sit by her while the plates of ice-cream and cake were consumed by the pupils, arranged in orderly manner around the room.

While this formality was in progress, Pinkey seized the opportunity, when all were too busy to notice him, to say to his Affinity the words that had heretofore been stifled by his modesty. Screwing up his courage to the highest notch, and with his eyes glassily fixed on the plate in his lap, he managed to articulate: "Is anybody going to see you



“ IS ANYBODY GOING TO SEE YOU HOME TO-NIGHT ? ”

BEATEN AT HIS OWN GAME

home to-night?" He feared Eddie Lewis might have anticipated him in asking her.

His Affinity blushed, and replied with apparent unconcern: "I don't know. Why?"

"Oh, I just wondered," replied Pinkey, vaguely, unconsciously crossing and recrossing his feet in his nervousness.

"Please tell me why," purred his Affinity, leaning confidently near to him.

"'Cause, if you haven't promised anybody else, *I'd* like to." There! he had said it at last — the speech he had been trying to say for three days.

He could scarcely retain his seat, so confused had he become while taking his heroic plunge.

"I guess nobody else is going to, but —"

Pinkey could wait to hear no more. He must do something strenuous to hide the rapture that threatened to choke him. Hastily placing his plate on his chair, he rushed madly across the room, caught Bunny Morris

PINKEY PERKINS

by the feet and dragged him, plate, spoon, chair, and all into a heap in the middle of the room. Luckily, the ice-cream and cake had already disappeared. Then he cavorted around the room in frenzied joy, shouting:

“Come on! let’s play something.”

But Red Feather now informed them that she had other plans for the remainder of the evening; and, after all traces of the repast had been removed, she explained her program.

“Now, girls and boys,” she said, when they had gathered around her, “I have hidden peanuts here and there all over these three rooms down-stairs, behind cushions, on top of the picture-frames, and in all sorts of nooks and corners, one and two in a place. Now I’m going to give each of you one of these little bags, and when I say ‘Ready!’ you are to commence searching for peanuts. At the end of three minutes I will ring this little bell, and you must all return to me

BEATEN AT HIS OWN GAME

immediately. The one who has found the most peanuts will be awarded first prize, and the one who has found the least will get the 'booby' prize.'

After distributing the little colored paper bags, she spoke the starting-word. Immediately the house was in an uproar. Boys and girls rushed hither and thither, now and then increasing the din as two or three solitary peanuts were unearthed from their out-of-the-way hiding-places.

Now it happened that Red Feather, in preparing for this diversion, had purchased more peanuts than she afterward found it convenient to use. So, after distributing what she considered a sufficient quantity, she had placed the bag containing the remainder in one of the pigeonholes of her writing-desk, intending to remove it later on, but had forgotten to do so.

It also happened that Pinkey, in his mad search for the hidden nuts, caught sight of

PINKEY PERKINS

the twisted end of the bag, and, with a yell of delight, drew it forth and emptied part of the contents in the bag Red Feather had given him, filling it. The few that remained he put in his pocket.

Just then the bell rang, and they all assembled around Red Feather to see who had won the prizes.

Needless to say, Pinkey had more than any one else; and, deeply to his regret, his Affinity had the least. He wished he might give her part or all of his, but that, of course, was out of the question.

“Why, Pinkerton!” inquired Red Feather, “where did you find all these nuts? I didn’t know there were so many hidden.”

“Found some behind books, and some in the big jar on the mantel in the front room. The rest I found in the desk over in the corner.”

Then Red Feather remembered that she had not removed the bag from her desk as

BEATEN AT HIS OWN GAME

she had intended, and it was these peanuts, in all probability, that had given Pinkey more than any of the others. She did not know exactly what to do. To say that they were not included would at once raise the argument that they were in one of the designated rooms and should therefore count. Besides, it was possible that Pinkey had enough to win without it, though it was not probable. To give the prize to any one else would at once raise the old cry that she was "partial."

Then a plan suggested itself to her that seemed to be the most satisfactory way to avoid giving Pinkey the first prize. That was to give it to Hattie Warren as the booby prize, and to give Pinkey the prize that would have fallen to her.

Of course it is not to be charged against Red Feather that she would so recognize a frivolous custom of childhood as to allow the remembrance of the raveling on Pinkey's

PINKEY PERKINS

coat to influence her in any way in her decision to substitute one prize for the other.

So, without further ado, Pinkey was presented with a large pasteboard box, securely wrapped up and tied with heavy red cord, and his Affinity with a similar package, only much smaller.

Immediately both were surrounded by the others and urged to open their packages. Pinkey was puffed with pride at his good luck, and did not hesitate to chaff his less fortunate companions.

“ You fellows don’t know how to look for things,” he was saying, as he tugged at the knot, “ you don’t know how to use your eyes. That sack was — anybody got a knife? — that sack was right there all the time where ’f it had been a snake ’twould ’ve bitten you. If you don’t keep your eyes open, how can you ever expect to find anything? ”

By this time he had slipped the string over the corner of the box and had removed the

BEATEN AT HIS OWN GAME

lid. He placed his package on the centre-table, so everybody could see, and began to remove a quantity of tissue-paper with which it seemed filled. Soon he reached a very small box carefully tucked away in the centre of the crumpled mass. As he saw the size of the box, his elation was somewhat dimmed, but still he felt it must be something valuable to be so thoroughly packed. By this time the excitement was at fever-heat, and as the breathless crowd pressed about him, Pinkey became so excited that he could hardly untie the ribbon that surrounded the little box.

At last he got it off, and, with trembling fingers, removed the covering, when, to his utter horror, he found, tied to a piece of white cardboard, a triple-jointed peanut, dressed as a doll. On its head was a dunce-cap, and printed on the card in large black letters were the words, "APRIL FOOL!"

Pinkey was speechless, stunned with dis-

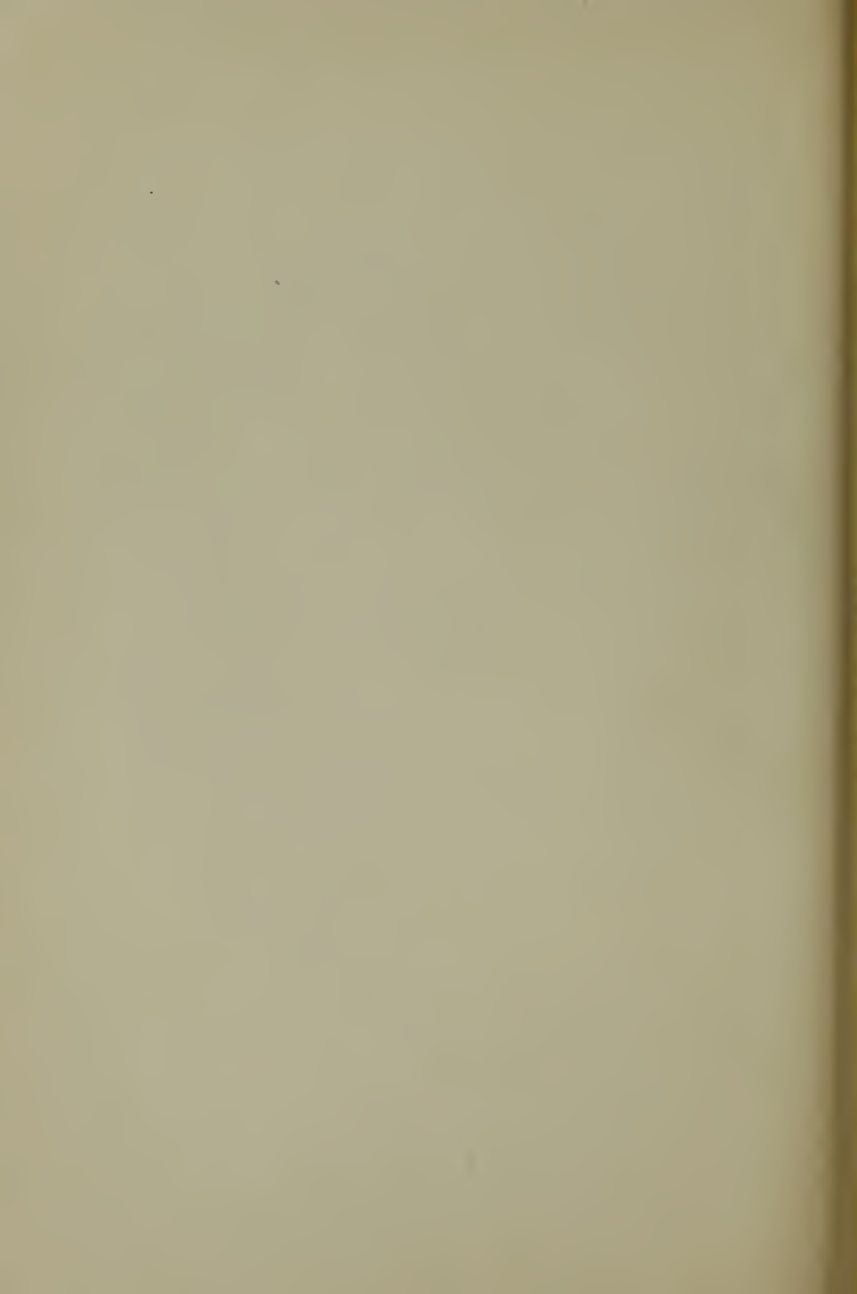
PINKEY PERKINS

may, as he held up the hateful object which he had taken from the box. He tried to smile, but his effort produced merely a sickly grin. The merciless beings about him were beside themselves when they saw his "prize," and danced around the table like a lot of Indians, shouting "April Fool, April Fool," at the top of their voices, while Red Feather, with a subdued twinkle in her eye, looked on from a near-by doorway.

Pinkey's pride had received an irreparable blow, and he could not bear to remain and be derided so unmercifully. So, leaving his box and the diminutive effigy on the table, he marched straight into the hall; took his hat from the hook, and without a word of good night to Red Feather went into the yard, to nurse his mangled conceit in silence while waiting for his Affinity to start home. He was without the one grain of comfort that would have been his had he known that his Affinity had received as her prize a beautiful



"APRIL FOOL!"



BEATEN AT HIS OWN GAME

gold pen with a pearl handle, all nicely fitted in a plush-lined case.

The party broke up directly after the award of the prizes, and as soon as the boys could get their hats they gathered around the front door, waiting for the girls to come down-stairs.

It was a time of great uncertainty for most of them, for the success of the attempts they were about to make was by no means assured.

“ Who *you* goin’ to take home, Bunny? ” inquired Pinkey, coming up to the edge of the crowd, where the apprehensive Bunny was waiting until the one he loved should appear.

“ Dunno e’zactly, ” replied Bunny; “ who’re you? ”

“ Hattie Warren said nobody had asked her, so I guess I will, ” said Pinkey, assuming an indifferent air and speaking in a tone that most of his late tormentors could hear. He

PINKEY PERKINS

was doing his best now to treat lightly the recent blow he had sustained.

Before he could press Bunny any closer as to his intentions, a dainty figure appeared in the doorway, passed through the crowd of waiting boys, and proceeded alone half-way to the front gate, when Bunny, who shrank from asking to accompany her until she was well away from the crowd, ran down the walk and overtook her. Apparently his presence was welcome, for they turned the corner and passed out of sight together.

The other girls followed quickly, singly, in pairs, and in trios. Some apparently expected and willingly granted the timid request, invariably expressed in the same words: "May I see you home?" Others clung so tightly together that their premeditated intention to decline any proffered offers of would-be escorts was plainly evident in every action.

Others sent fond aspirations flying from

BEATEN AT HIS OWN GAME

hopeful hearts by giving the "mitten" to those who dared make the effort. But the cruelest blow of all was to see the object of one's affections borne proudly away on the arm of some hated rival, after having been curtly refused that same pleasure.

Many of the boys, who had rehearsed the speech over and over, until they could say it naturally and without choking in the middle of it, lost heart at the decisive moment, and stood mutely by and watched the idols of their hearts come out of the house, pass on down the walk, and catch up with some of the other girls, while they inwardly chided themselves for their weakness.

When Pinkey's Affinity appeared, he marched boldly up and offered her his arm, which she took in a delightfully confiding way, and, as he proudly strutted along by her side, he felt that there were some things in life besides being cruelly ridiculed, and that, whatever troubles he had experienced,

PINKEY PERKINS

life had never been quite so full of pure unadulterated bliss as at this particular moment.

But his happiness was doomed to be short-lived. As he and his Affinity reached the gate and turned toward her home, an approaching figure loomed up under the corner street-lamp that caused Pinkey's heart to sicken and his knees to almost give way beneath him. It was her father, and he was coming to take her home!

Pinkey stopped short and waited his approach, every step sounding a death-knell to his joy.

"Oh, here comes my papa!" shouted his Affinity, running to meet her father, forgetful of the fact that it must be a sorry moment for Pinkey.

"Come on, Pinkey," said Mr. Warren, in a good-humored tone. "I think we both ought to get my daughter home without any trouble."

BEATEN AT HIS OWN GAME

It was a bitter pill for Pinkey. He dared not abandon his original purpose to escort his Affinity home, yet he did not relish the rôle of assistant escort.

So he joined his Affinity and her father, and walked along on one side of her, keeping as near as possible to the edge of the sidewalk and maintaining absolute silence, while his Affinity, holding to her father's hand, prattled on joyfully, telling him all about the party, showing him her prize, and telling him about the one Pinkey had received.

“ Getting even with you, Pinkey, for carrying thread in your pocket,” said Mr. Warren, suspecting Pinkey's disappointment and trying to be agreeable. “ Turn about is fair play.”

But Pinkey could not be roused from the depths into which he had been plunged since the second blow he had suffered. He just trudged along in dogged silence, endeavoring to extract a few drops of consolation from

PINKEY PERKINS

the thought that his Affinity must have felt his fooling Red Feather of sufficient importance to tell her father.

To add to Pinkey's discomfiture, all the boys who, on account of rebuffs or timidity, had no girls and were proceeding from the party in a body, crossed the street and began to taunt and jeer at him as they pursued their parallel course toward the public square. They dared to do collectively what none of them would have dreamed of doing single-handed. "'F you need any more help, just call on us," said one. "What'd you do with the big prize-package?" taunted another. "Goin' to send down for it to-morrow?" "Peanuts on a card, five cents a yard," extemporized Putty Black, and immediately the whole crowd took it up in chorus.

Pinkey had never been in such a rage in his life. He was bubbling over with wrath, yet helpless to resent it. He could not reply to their mockeries while he was with his

BEATEN AT HIS OWN GAME

Affinity, and, besides, that would only be an admission of his state of mind, and their pleasure would be correspondingly multiplied.

In addition to the embarrassment occasioned by the presence of Mr. Warren, and the tumult of anger that was consuming him, Pinkey saw a new terror arise as he pictured himself crossing the public square in his present company, and followed by the merciless band of soulless boys.

That was too much. He had borne as much as could rightfully be expected of a saint, and could not see his way clear to fulfilling the position of figurehead any longer. So, when they reached the corner near his own home and only one block from the square, Pinkey decided that he could stand it no longer, and with a mumbled excuse that his mother had told him "to get home early," he said "Good night" and detached himself from the society of his Affinity and her father, and the

PINKEY PERKINS

next instant was engaged in a vigorous clod bombardment of his late persecutors. When the latter saw this move on Pinkey's part, they took to their heels in all directions, each fearing that he might be singled out as the object of Pinkey's wrath.

Pinkey gave chase, but they all had the start of him, and he only succeeded in overtaking one boy, smaller than himself, who pleaded innocence on the grounds that he "didn't holler once."

"What'd you run for, then," said Pinkey, "'f you didn't holler?" And, with the assurance that it was on account of his size alone that he was allowed to go unharmed, Pinkey released his victim with the information that he had better be out of sight by the time Pinkey counted ten. After seeing the fleeing figure disappear and letting drive his clod in the general direction of its disappearance, as soon as the promised ten was counted, Pinkey went gloomily home.

BEATEN AT HIS OWN GAME

To his mother's inquiries whether or not he had had a good time, Pinkey announced that he had enjoyed himself more on other occasions.

He displayed a marked aversion to going into details, and his mother, noticing this reticence, and, in a general way, divining the probable cause, did not probe the matter, but suggested that he go to bed, a suggestion with which Pinkey was glad to comply.

Half an hour later, as, with elbows on his knees and his doubled-up fists dug into his cheeks, Pinkey sat on the edge of his bed, still thinking it all over, he decided that April Fool Day had not been such a success after all. He had reviewed all the events that had transpired since morning, and each had been the subject of much serious consideration.

As for Red Feather and the prize she had given him, he thought perhaps he had received only what he deserved after fooling her in the morning.

What rankled deepest in his heart was the humiliation he had suffered at not being permitted to take his Affinity home alone, and at being finally compelled to abandon his purpose. That was worse than the ridicule, for he could and would get square for that.

But he had learned one lesson that he would always remember: never again would he allow his Affinity to go to a party with other girls and then expect to take her home. He resolved that in the future he would write her a formal note asking the pleasure of her company *to* the party as well as *from* it. Never again, if he could help it, would he run the risk of an occurrence such as he had experienced that night.

IV

DELIVERING AN ADDRESS

CHILDREN'S DAY at the church was drawing near, and each day Pinkey Perkins was becoming more and more impressed with a sense of his personal importance. He had been selected to deliver the "Welcome Address to the Fathers and Mothers" on that occasion. When he had been informed of the fact in the beginning, he had not looked on it with favor. Heretofore his oratorical efforts had been confined to the schoolroom, and he lacked the necessary confidence to attempt such a courageous feat. But his mother had been assured by the lady who consulted her on the subject, that the committee had carefully considered

PINKEY PERKINS

all the boys available for the honor, and had decided that of all these Pinkey was the one to make the address.

When Pinkey heard this, and also of the failure to qualify of one or two other boys whom parental prestige in the church had entitled to prior consideration, he resolved to accept and to put forth his best efforts to succeed.

As soon as the task had been turned over to him he had set about practising with a will. It was with a pardonable air of superiority that Pinkey, on occasions, when invited to join in some after-school game of "scrub" or take part in an attack on some newly discovered bumblebees' nest, would reply, with a sort of bored air: "I wish I could, but I've got to go and rehearse."

Pinkey's rehearsing proved to be the greatest boon imaginable. He made it a point to miss no occasion to remind his companions of the distinction that had been thrust upon

him. Many an errand did he avoid and many a chore did he postpone or leave undone entirely, pleading the necessity of devoting the time to his address, either in committing it to memory or in practice.

True, there were others who had "to go and rehearse," but not in the way that Pinkey did. While they devoted their time to singing and went to practise collectively, he went alone to Miss Lyon, his Sunday-school teacher. That lady, being a teacher of elocution, had taken the task of drilling Pinkey in the most effective delivery for his first public oration.

"Humph! You needn't feel so smart," retorted Bunny Morris one day when Pinkey had referred rather loftily to "my address"; "you're not the only one who has to practise."

It happened that Bunny was one of eight who were to sing in chorus on Children's Day, and, although he would not admit it, the

PINKEY PERKINS

fact that Pinkey had been selected to make the "Welcome Address" rankled in Bunny's bosom.

When Bunny had made this stinging remark, Pinkey merely replied in his condescending way: "I don't 'practise.' I rehearse."

"You're second choice, anyway; Putty Black was asked first," replied the envious Bunny, hotly.

"Putty Black couldn't learn that address in a year, 'n' neither could you. He was only asked 'cause Mr. Black runs the Sunday School."

School was "taking up" when this argument started, and very probably a serious rupture between bosom friends was avoided by that fact. As long as Pinkey and Bunny were on a basis of equality in all things, contentment reigned between them, but when this equality was disturbed, trouble usually followed.

DELIVERING AN ADDRESS

Pinkey had really entered on his work with great earnestness, and a week before the eventful Sunday he had committed the whole of his address to memory and could recite it perfectly. Morning, noon, and night he went about the house, delivering portions of his speech for the edification of all who chanced to be within hearing. At night he went through it all two or three times before he went to bed, and then said it over to himself until he got sleepy.

The statement that Pinkey knew his address "perfectly," however, must be slightly modified. Sometimes, in rehearsing, he would have difficulty with certain portions of it, and that difficulty came about in this way:

Once in two weeks Miss Vance, Pinkey's school-teacher, required one-half of her pupils to "recite a piece," either prose or poetry. For Pinkey's part in one of these bi-weekly punishments, as they were looked

PINKEY PERKINS

upon by the pupils, she had assigned him "The Supposed Speech of John Adams." Pinkey had surprised her by acquitting himself with credit on the occasion, for he had spent hours and days of careful preparation on it—"just to make her think it was easy," as he expressed it.

For some time, Red Feather, as she was known among the pupils, had not made Pinkey's school-life one solid bed of roses. Since one memorable Monday morning, when she had found four able-bodied mice secreted in her desk, she had always felt certain that he was responsible for their presence. From that day, the examples hardest to work, the States hardest to bound, and the words hardest to parse, according to Pinkey's standard, had fallen to his lot. It was to this "partiality" that Pinkey attributed his assignment of the "Supposed Speech."

Now, the author of the "Welcome Address," when in search of suitable material

DELIVERING AN ADDRESS

for that literary effort, had evidently used as a reference-work "Great Speeches of Great Men," wherein was printed "The Supposed Speech of John Adams." Owing to this fact, several portions of the "Supposed Speech," either word for word or slightly modified, had found their way into the "Address." Oratorical flights were scattered all through it, such as "Let not those beneath these vaulted roofs, within these hallowed walls, upon this memorable occasion, forget the incontestable vital truth that it is the young blood, the young mind, that we look to for our support," and so forth — sentiments calculated to thrill an audience, but more appropriate to John Adams's speech than to a Children's Day address.

In rehearsing, Pinkey found it hard not to confuse the two orations. In fact, neither was to him much more than a series of high-sounding phrases, intended more to impress the ear than to enlighten the mind. This is

PINKEY PERKINS

why it is necessary to modify the statement that Pinkey knew his address perfectly a week before the date appointed for its delivery.

As a reward for his diligence, Pinkey's mother had at last promised him what had long been his heart's desire—a pair of patent-leather shoes that laced up the front and had sharp-pointed toes incased in fancy-edged tips. Pinkey had long felt that if he could but possess that pair of shoes, his emancipation from buttons and buckles would be complete.

Besides, since his unfortunate experience on the way home from Red Feather's party, he felt that he had been continually losing ground with his Affinity, and he hoped that the possession of a pair of patent-leather shoes might turn her in his favor.

Eddie Lewis, his arch-rival for her affections, had been paying her marked attention of late, and to Pinkey it seemed that she

DELIVERING AN ADDRESS

regarded these attentions as more or less acceptable.

His Affinity was to sing in the chorus on Children's Day, and it was a thorn in Pinkey's side that his after-school rehearsals could not be so timed that he might effect an accidental meeting with her occasionally, and walk home with her from the church, where the chorus went to practise with the organ. And what pained him more than all else was the fact that Eddie, who was also one of the choristers, and who lived in the same part of town as his Affinity, should be the one who did go most of the way home with her on these occasions. Eddie was too conservative an admirer to show that his attentions were more than accidental, and to this end invariably parted company with the object of his admiration at the corner where their homeward paths diverged.

Pinkey felt that the important moment when his Affinity must choose once and for

PINKEY PERKINS

all between him and Eddie would be when he should appear on the rostrum and, by his manly bearing and glowing oratory, win everlasting approval or disapproval. Con-



PINKEY ADMIRES HIS PATENT-LEATHERS

sequently, he set great store by the promised shoes, which he felt would be not a small factor in making his appearance all that could be desired and thereby serve as an aid

in fanning back to life the waning affections of his Affinity.

Saturday evening came at last, and, to Pinkey's delight, he was allowed to go downtown with his father and try on the coveted shoes, and to carry them home. He insisted on putting them on again when he got home, just to show his mother how well they fitted him and how far superior they were to anything he or any of the boys had ever had before, and how high the heels were and how bright and shiny the toes. And Pinkey was plebeian enough to be doubly proud of them on account of the squeak that accompanied each step. Before he went to bed, he carefully wrapped them up again and replaced them in their box, in order that no speck of dust might get on them and mar the luster that he depended on to melt the heart of his Affinity.

As he lay in bed that night, reciting his address over and over, and making his ges-

PINKEY PERKINS

tures in the darkness, he pictured the envy of the others as they saw him in his new



“RECITING HIS ADDRESS OVER AND OVER, AND MAKING HIS GESTURES IN THE DARKNESS”

shoes mount the platform to declaim his welcome. He had said nothing to any one about the shoes his mother had promised

DELIVERING AN ADDRESS

him, — not even to Bunny, — and he looked forward with unholy anticipation to the envy they would arouse among his less fortunate companions.

When Pinkey awoke next morning, it was raining; but no rain could dampen his spirits on such an occasion as this. He wore his ordinary “ Sunday shoes ” to Sunday School that morning, desiring not to show his patent-leathers until the time came for his address.

It was only by supreme effort that he resisted the temptation to confide to some of his friends that he had a new pair of shoes, but he knew that the effect would be all the more desirable if he waited, so he kept back the interesting news and returned home from Sunday School with his secret still intact.

On account of the rain and mud, Mrs. Perkins suggested that it might be better not to wear the new shoes to the exercises; but Pinkey could not think of such a blow to his plans, and his mother had not the heart

PINKEY PERKINS

to wound his pride by insisting on her suggestion, and, besides, she feared he might not do so well with his speech if he were plunged into disappointment after all his anticipations.

“Pinkey,” said his mother, after putting the last finishing touches to his toilet, “since you *must* wear your new shoes in all this rain and mud, I want you to put on these high overshoes of mine, to keep your shoes clean.”

To this compromise Pinkey reluctantly assented, but later found his action to be a wise one, as he encountered the muddy crossings on the way to church, against which his own rubbers would have been but little protection.

Pinkey’s heart swelled with pride as he strutted along between his father and mother on the way to the church. But as he saw the people entering the building, several of whom spoke encouraging words to him about

DELIVERING AN ADDRESS

his forthcoming address, he began to feel a little shaky about the knees, and noticed his heart beating faster than he liked. He kept trying to swallow a lump of suppressed excitement that would go neither up nor down.

If Pinkey gave these symptoms more than a passing thought, he attributed them to his inward exultation and not to any manifestation of stage-fright — a malady of which, up to that time, he had never known the existence.

Pinkey left his parents at their pew and marched on up the carpeted aisle, looking neither to right nor left. He mounted the rostrum and took his seat on one of the uncomfortable, high-backed, haircloth chairs which, since time immemorial, had occupied space at either end of the equally uncomfortable, though not so high-backed, haircloth sofa on the platform. The top of the seat was rounded in form, and Pinkey found

PINKEY PERKINS

it hard to retain his position and his composure at the same time.

As the time drew near for the exercises to begin, Pinkey became more and more nervous. The church became full to overflowing, despite the bad weather, and, look where he would, Pinkey found hundreds of eyes gazing at him. He envied those in the chorus, because they each had seven others to assist in the singing, but he must get up and do his part all alone.

Presently the minister appeared and attempted to put the children at their ease by shaking hands with each one in an affable sort of way and uttering a few words of encouragement.

The members of the chorus were seated on a long bench on one side of the rostrum, and were partly hidden by the banks of flowers, while Pinkey sat alone on the other side, out in full view of the congregation, where he could get only an occasional, uncertain view

DELIVERING AN ADDRESS

of the others. His Affinity was there, but he could not muster up the courage to look at her.

He tried to look unconcerned, but he knew the utter failure he was making. Once he saw Putty Black grin and whisper something behind his hand to the girl next to him, and then they both looked at Pinkey and tittered.

Pinkey decided then and there to "lick" Putty Black the very first time he "caught him out." This intention was signified by a hidden gesture, very expressive, but much out of place on a church rostrum. He cordially disliked Putty, anyway, and to be laughed at by him made him boil with inward rage.

By and by the last bell stopped ringing and the exercises began. By the time the chorus had sung the "Welcome Carol," and the minister had made the opening prayer, Pinkey had partly regained his composure. But the minister's reference to the "bright young

PINKEY PERKINS

faces ” around him, and the pleasure he felt and that he was sure every member of the congregation must feel “ on such an occasion,” made the pitapat of Pinkey’s heart seem to him loud enough to drown all other sounds.

After a few other appropriate remarks, during which Pinkey’s discomfort became more and more marked, the minister announced his “ pleasure in presenting to the congregation the orator of the day,” who would welcome the fathers and mothers on this joyous occasion — “ Master Pinkerton Perkins.”

Pinkey slid from his perch on the hair-cloth chair as the minister seated himself on the mate to it at the other end of the sofa.

With quaking knees, he walked to the front. When he stopped, his legs trembled so violently that he felt sure every one in the congregation must notice his nervousness.

He could distinguish nothing. All before

DELIVERING AN ADDRESS

him was an indistinct blur. Beyond, at the rear of the auditorium, he could make out a hazy, arched opening. That, he knew, was



“ PINKEY SLID FROM HIS PERCH ON THE HAIRCLOTH CHAIR ”

the door. He looked for his mother, but his eyes would focus on nothing, and the intense stillness that pervaded the whole room only added to the suffering he was undergoing.

PINKEY PERKINS

Then he began. Automatically the words came, but his voice sounded hollow and strange. His throat was parched, and it was with difficulty that he could get his breath. The roaring in his ears made his voice sound as though it came from far in the distance. The perspiration stood in beads on his forehead, and he felt hot and cold by turns. Still on he went, though it seemed that each word must be his last.

About midway of his speech, in order to allow the full import of his words to awe his hearers, Pinkey had been taught to strike an attitude and pause for effect. Reaching that point, he paused, right hand uplifted, left foot advanced. As he put his foot forward, a nauseating wave of mortification swept over him. *Now* he knew why Putty Black had whispered to the girl next to him. *Now* he knew why they had both tittered as they looked at him. Gradually he bent his head and looked down until his gaze met his



PINKEY DISCOVERS HIS OVERSHOES

DELIVERING AN ADDRESS

feet. The sight that greeted his eyes sickened him.

He had forgotten to take off his mother's overshoes!

The shock of this realization, combined with his stage-fright, rendered Pinkey utterly helpless. He stood as one petrified, speechless, before the assembled throng. He stared glassily at his overshoes; they seemed fascinating in their hideousness. A stir in the congregation awakened him to the fact that he had been standing mute, retaining his emphatic pose, he knew not how long.

He tried to continue his address, but the words had taken wings. Miss Lyon attempted to prompt him, but all her efforts proved futile. He could not take up the broken thread.

Yet he dare not quit the platform with his speech unfinished and go down to ignominious failure before the eyes of the congrega-

PINKEY PERKINS

tion, of his father, his mother, and, above all, his Affinity, thereby adding defeat to his chagrin. But what could he do?

Then came a brilliant thought. "The Supposed Speech of John Adams!" Since the two speeches were so similar, why would not that do instead of the one he could not remember? Surely that was a happy solution for his predicament.

Without further delay, he began: "Sink or swim! live or die! survive or perish! I give *my* hand and *my* heart to this vote! It is true that, in the beginning, we aimed not at Independence; but there's a Divinity that shapes our ends —" and so on, without hesitation, clear to the end.

Delivering his schoolroom speech, he regained his schoolroom composure, and as he spoke he gathered courage. His voice became natural and his lost faculties, one by one, returned. His knees became firm again, and his heart became normal. What had

DELIVERING AN ADDRESS

been but a hazy blur became a sea of faces, and all within the church began to take definite form.

As Pinkey concluded, he made a sweeping bow, once more possessed of all his customary assurance.

Spontaneously the congregation burst into applause, such as the old walls had never heard on any occasion. Every one had seen his overshoes, and had been moved to sympathy when they saw his embarrassment on discovering them. That he had departed from his original address, which he had plainly forgotten, and delivered another entirely out of keeping with his subject and the occasion, only increased their admiration for his determination and grit.

With his head erect, Pinkey faced about and returned to his chair. As he did so he gave a look of triumph at his Affinity, and received in return a look that told him, plainer than words, that, overshoes or no

PINKEY PERKINS

overshoes, he had won her unqualified approval.

When he reached his place, he knelt down, calmly removed the overshoes, and, with his heart swelling with pride at the ringing applause, resumed his seat on the haircloth chair.

V

HOW PINKEY HASTENED THE CLOSE OF THE SCHOOL TERM

PINKEY PERKINS and his schoolmates were building their towering castles of things to be done as soon as vacation time should come.

Each day seemed longer than the preceding one, and the date set for the "Last Day of School" seemed ages distant, though in reality it was but two weeks off.

Every morning, when "Red Feather" asked if any one had a suggestion to make as to the opening song, a dozen pupils were sure to be on their feet in an instant, holding up as many frantically waving, finger-snapping hands, and, no matter which one

PINKEY PERKINS

obtained the necessary recognition entitling him or her to speak, the request was invariably for the same song: "Vacation Time Is Coming, the Happiest of the Year."

To the anticipative pupils, there seemed to be something delightfully prophetic and suggestive in that song, telling of the good times to come, and with a will they repeatedly joined in their favorite song and its rousing chorus:

"Come lay aside your labors, and drive all cares away;
We've had our time of study, and now 'tis time for play.
We'll fill the lovely summer with joy and pleasures dear;
Vacation time is coming — the happiest of the year."

There were plans on foot for a grand celebration on the last day of school, and, though Pinkey was looking forward to vacation with as much, and probably more, anticipation than most of his companions, it is certain that his ardor concerning the final exercises was not very warm.

In addition to the usual speeches and essays

THE CLOSE OF THE SCHOOL TERM

there was to be a dialogue on that occasion, and Pinkey was not in the best of humor over the part he had. Red Feather had seen fit to assign to him a minor rôle, and he felt it keenly that any one else should have more to say or do than he.

But more than this flagrant "partiality" on the part of Red Feather, he resented the fact that the most enviable part in the dialogue had been assigned to "Putty" Black. Red Feather had named him to take the part of escort for Hattie Warren, Pinkey's Affinity, in the numerous trips back and forth across the platform, which was to do duty as a stage.

After his oration at the church on Children's Day, Pinkey had resolved, once and for all, that he had made his last appearance as a public speaker, be it in school or elsewhere, but, in spite of his resolution, here he was, less than two weeks after that memorable occasion, rehearsing his part in a

PINKEY PERKINS

dialogue. He could see no way out of it, and, besides, if he did not do that, he would have to write an essay or deliver an oration, which would be worse.

It is true that on the occasion of Pinkey's Welcome Address he had won emphatic applause from his audience, and it would seem that he should have been satisfied with such generous results. But ever since that day Pinkey had felt that there had been a large amount of charity mixed with the hearty approval that had stamped his efforts, and he wished that he might have a more important part in the dialogue, and thereby have a chance to retrieve his lost prestige.

That Welcome Address was still a very sore subject with Pinkey, and to mention it in his presence was equivalent to a challenge. Though Pinkey never mentioned the subject to any one, he stood ready and willing to do his best to punish any one who mentioned it to him. To be addressed by the suggestive

THE CLOSE OF THE SCHOOL TERM

name of John Adams enraged him, and the hateful epithet "Overshoes" made him boil. Much as he disliked to quarrel with his play-fellows in general, there was one boy in school whom Pinkey was hoping and praying would do something or say something that would bring matters between them to a focus, and that boy was his hated rival, Putty Black.

Pinkey could not keep his anger down whenever he thought of how Putty had laughed at him that Sunday, and had made whispered remarks about him behind his hand. There was no excuse that Pinkey could see for any boy, be he friend or foe, to sit exultantly by and gloat over the fact that a fellow being was about to disgrace himself before the world, when a single word or gesture would avert disaster.

And now, since the parts in the dialogue had been assigned, he had a double grudge against Putty.

PINKEY PERKINS

For several days after that eventful Sunday, Putty had kept rather shy of Pinkey, fearing that the latter might not yet have



“BOTH WERE MUCH THE WORSE FOR THEIR TUMBLE”

forgotten being laughed at on the occasion of his Address, as he sat uneasily on his haircloth chair, blissfully forgetful of the

THE CLOSE OF THE SCHOOL TERM

hideous overshoes hiding from view his new patent-leathers.

One Monday morning, about three weeks after Children's Day, Pinkey and Putty became involved in a wordy war over a game of leap-frog. Pinkey claimed that just as he went to jump Putty had "let down," thereby sending Pinkey sprawling in a muddy place in the yard. In his fall he had carried Putty down with him, and both were much the worse for their tumble. This disagreement soon assumed a most threatening aspect, and, to make matters worse, Putty unwisely suggested that Pinkey could probably jump better if he only had on his mother's overshoes.

At the mention of "overshoes," and especially coming as it did from Putty, Pinkey became fighting mad in an instant.

"Don't you say 'overshoes' to me, you girlie boy you," said Pinkey, bristling up to Putty sideways. "I've just been waitin' a

PINKEY PERKINS

chance to settle with you ever since that Sunday when you laughed at me and whispered to Bess Knapp about my mother's overshoes."

As soon as Putty saw how enraged Pinkey was, and that he meant business, he realized the error he had made.

"I wuzn't laughin' at you," replied Putty uneasily; "I just said somethin' to her and she laughed."

"Yes, I *know* you said somethin' to her, — you told her to look at my overshoes, *that's* what you said to her."

"How d'you know what I said?"

"That's all right how I know. You'll laugh on the other side of your face when I get through with you."

A crowd began to gather about the prospective combatants, which occurrence prevented any backing down on either side, had such a step been contemplated.

"Well, what 'f I did laugh, — what you

THE CLOSE OF THE SCHOOL TERM

goin' to do about it?" replied Putty doggedly. He was cornered and must make a show of bravado. The overshoes were not nearly as amusing to him now as they had been once, and, notwithstanding his bragging talk, he plainly regretted ever having been so thoughtless as to laugh at them.

"I'll show you what I'm goin' to do about it. I'm goin' to lick you good and plenty, and let you see how awful funny it is; that's what I'm goin' to do."

But neither made any movement toward a commencement of the fray.

"Stand back and giv'em elbow-room," shouted one of the interested spectators. It was against the code of rules governing fisticuffs that the actual settlement of a difference should ever begin until the preliminary exchange of threats and boasts had attracted an audience sufficiently large and eager to make "elbow-room" necessary.

Sufficient space was finally cleared, but

PINKEY PERKINS

still the two belligerents only stood and glared at each other.

Bunny Morris, not desiring that the promised battle should come to naught, sought to bring matters to a climax by placing a small piece of wood on one of Pinkey's shoulders.

"Knock 'er off," shouted the enthusiastic onlookers. "Go on, Putty, 'n' knock 'er off."

"Yes, I just *dare* you to knock it off," taunted Pinkey.

"Humph, talk's cheap, but if you don't look out I will knock it a-sailin', 'n' you with it."

Pinkey closed his eyes tightly for an instant, saying, "Now knock it off, if you dare. I'm not lookin' out."

Putty hesitated at this literal interpretation of his statement.

Then Pinkey took the step that never failed to precipitate matters; began the recitation of the doggerel defaming one who takes a dare:

THE CLOSE OF THE SCHOOL TERM

“ Anybody that 'll take a dare
Will kill a sheep and steal — ”

He got no further. Off came the chip in an instant, and the two combatants clinched. They swayed from right to left, backward and forward, neither gaining any advantage until Putty succeeded in locking his heel behind Pinkey's and in pushing him over backward, the two coming down in a heap on the ground as the breathless onlookers surged forward on all sides to get a closer view of the struggling squirming mass in their midst.

Then came the struggle for supremacy, but it did not last long. Pinkey was the stronger of the two, and, though he had landed on his back, with Putty on top of him, he was able to follow up the slight advantage gained when Putty's hold loosened in the fall, and after a few heroic efforts he brought up in a sitting posture on the stomach of his wriggling antagonist.

PINKEY PERKINS

After securing himself from being overthrown, by planting a knee on each of Putty's arms, Pinkey said with an air of victory: "You *will* laugh at me, will you? Now you take it back and holler 'nuf,' 'fore I put a black eye on you."

It was quite the fashion among the boys of Pinkey's age, when indulging in fistic encounters, to aim their muscular resentment at the eyes of their opponents, hoping thereby to leave, for a time, the imprint of their pugilistic science in the shape of discolored optics.

Before Pinkey could properly insist on his formal demands for surrender, there was a sudden scattering of the onlookers, followed by the appearance on the scene of Red Feather, bareheaded and severe, and armed with the ever-present hardwood ruler.

This put a stop to the fight, and before Pinkey could succeed in his effort to leave his mark on his prostrate foe, he was ruth-

THE CLOSE OF THE SCHOOL TERM

lessly dragged to his feet and given two or three teeth-chattering shakes. Red Feather then commanded Putty to arise, and when he had done so she marched the two culprits off to the schoolhouse, holding each one by the coat-collar in a vise-like grip. Once or twice Pinkey settled back against the power that was silently urging him onward, but each time a vigorous shake reminded him how futile was his objection.

As the silent procession wended its way to the schoolhouse, Pinkey's principal regret was his failure to leave Putty a black eye as a memento of the occasion, and as the trio neared the building Red Feather heard Pinkey mutter something which, to her, sounded like a threat to "fix him yet."

"What is that you are saying, Pinkerton?" demanded Red Feather.

"Wasn't talking out loud."

"You were mumbling something. What was it?"

PINKEY PERKINS

“ Nothing.”

“ Yes, it was something; answer my question,” giving him a shake.

But Pinkey remained mute, preferring to let her form her own conclusions and to take his punishments all at once.

“ What were you boys fighting about? ” questioned Red Feather, when she had safely landed her charges within the schoolhouse and had excluded from the room the curious ones who had gathered near to witness the inquisition.

“ Pinkey Perkins picked a fight with me 'cause he said I laughed at him in church one time,” whimpered Putty.

“ You did laugh at me, too, instead of — ”

“ That will do, Pinkerton,” interposed Red Feather; “ when I desire any information of that character, I'll question you; it is enough you were fighting, and you both know that fighting is against the rules. There can be no excuse for such disobedience.”

THE CLOSE OF THE SCHOOL TERM

“ Well, what’s a feller to do when — ”

“ Pinkerton! ”

“ If I can’t p’tect myself against a feller who laughs at me when I’m makin’ an address,” continued Pinkey, regardless of Red Feather’s warning, “ I won’t speak any more pieces here, nor any place else.”

“ Pinkerton, be careful,” warned Red Feather, giving him another shake; “ remember to whom you are talking, and what you are saying, and that you are to be in the dialogue on the last day of school.”

“ I don’t care,” asserted Pinkey. “ I won’t let Putty Black nor anybody else run over me and not pay ’em back for it. And I won’t be in the old dialogue, neither.”

Pinkey was apt to be rash in his statements when in anger, and Red Feather’s serenity at such times only served to invigorate his wrath.

As a punishment for fighting, Red Feather condemned Pinkey and Putty to brush the

PINKEY PERKINS



“THERE WAS PUTTY, DOWN ON HIS KNEES, BRUSHING AWAY
AT THE DIRT STAINS ON PINKEY’S CLOTHING”

dirt from each other’s clothes, and to occupy
the same seat the remainder of the forenoon.
As the pupils reëntered the schoolroom after

THE CLOSE OF THE SCHOOL TERM

recess, they were much entertained at the newest of Red Feather's original punishments.

There was Putty, down on his knees, whisk-broom in hand, brushing away at the dirt stains on Pinkey's disordered clothing, while the latter stood with his hands behind him, solemnly regarding the transom over the door, apparently oblivious of the giggles and grimaces on all sides. Red Feather, from her desk-chair, serenely surveyed the cleaning process, with evident satisfaction.

When Putty had finished the ignominious task which had been assigned him, Red Feather bade him arise and transfer to Pinkey the whisk-broom, which he had been wielding so zealously. When Putty got into trouble, it was his aim to get out of it as soon as possible, and as easily, even though he lost caste with his companions in so doing.

But not so Pinkey. He had a code from which he refused to depart, and that was:

PINKEY PERKINS

never to submit to any method of punishment for an infraction of the rules, if such submission would cause him any loss of self-respect. He had never reasoned it out in just those words, but that was what it amounted to.

Thus it was that when Putty offered the whisk-broom to Pinkey, the latter did not move his hands from their position behind his back.

“Pinkerton,” said Red Feather, “take the whisk-broom and do as you are told.”

Pinkey shook his head.

“Pinkerton, do you hear me? Now don’t make it necessary for me to speak again.”

Still no reply from Pinkey, either physical or verbal.

Red Feather’s temper now began to rise rapidly. She took the broom from Putty’s hand with a vicious jerk and placed it under Pinkey’s placid arm, whence it slid gently to the platform.

THE CLOSE OF THE SCHOOL TERM

“Pinkerton!” stormed Red Feather,
“pick up that brush.”

Pinkey picked it up.

“Now brush off Harry’s clothes as I told you.”

Pinkey calmly laid the broom on Red Feather’s desk with an air of conclusion that told her plainer than words that nothing was farther from his mind than to act as valet for his late adversary.

“Pinkerton, are you going to do as I bid you, or shall I be obliged to chastise you?”

“I’ll take a lickin’ first,” replied Pinkey, firmly.

With grim courage he accepted the whipping he had chosen, receiving the punishment on the palms of his hands through the medium of a hardwood ruler. When it was all over he marched proudly to his seat, with joy in his heart sufficient to offset the burning of his hands. He had stuck to his resolve not to clean off Putty’s clothes, and Red Feather

PINKEY PERKINS

had been unable to make him cry when she whipped him.

Nothing was said about requiring Pinkey and Putty to sit together, and Pinkey was allowed to retain his seat, while Putty, after brushing and adjusting, with the assistance of Red Feather, his own disarranged clothing, resumed his own seat. He had gotten off more easily than Pinkey, reckoning from one standpoint, but his mental depression told him that by his meek compliance with Red Feather's demands he had lost standing with his fellow pupils, while Pinkey, by the firm stand he had taken, had gained correspondingly.

In accordance with the established custom, Pinkey had kept accurate account of the number of blows Red Feather had applied with the ruler, and, when he returned to his seat, wrote on his slate in bold characters: "27 licks," and proudly exhibited the record to those about him. It was considered a

THE CLOSE OF THE SCHOOL TERM

mark of distinction to bear a whipping without flinching, and it was no small gratification to emphasize the matter by showing that the torture undergone was of creditable magnitude.

Affairs at school now settled back to their usual state once more, and nothing out of the ordinary occurred to mar the anticipations of the slowly but surely approaching vacation. Though nothing more was said, either by Pinkey or Red Feather, regarding Pinkey's avowal not to take part in the exercises on the last day, Pinkey had not forgotten it, by any means, and, notwithstanding the fact that he attended rehearsals regularly, the resolution grew stronger within him every time he saw Putty proudly escort Hattie Warren across the platform.

It made him fairly boil to think of his Affinity actually holding on to Putty's arm before the whole school and the visitors who would be there that day, and pretending that

PINKEY PERKINS

of all the company he was her choice. The only redeeming feature was that it might have been worse. Putty Black was bad enough, but had Eddie Lewis been the one whose part it was to pay special attention to his Affinity, the situation would have been beyond endurance.

But how to accomplish his end, that was what worried him. As for his own part, he could easily get out of that by playing hookey, even though it did entail a subsequent interview with his father in the wood-shed. But his heart was set on stopping the whole dialogue, and, if possible, to do it without betraying his identity as a party to the affair.

He thought of fastening the door on the inside during the noon-hour on the Last Day, and then climbing out of the window, but that would only mean work for the janitor, and possibly a slight delay in the exercises. He thought of inciting mutiny among the actors, but he could not hope for coöperation

THE CLOSE OF THE SCHOOL TERM

in such an act on the part of those who were looking forward with unconcealed delight to the time when they should take their parts in the dialogue.

After considering and passing as inadvisable or impossible a number of schemes, Pinkey at last hit upon one which he hoped might succeed.

In the schoolroom were two old-fashioned coal-stoves, each having a long line of stove-pipe running overhead to the one central chimney of the building. Since they had ceased to be of need, they had been used as receptacles for all waste paper and odds and ends that had accumulated, until both were full to bursting.

It was upon these stoves and their contents that Pinkey depended to make his scheme a success.

In Bunny Morris he found a willing accomplice and enthusiastic ally, and who was even more ready than usual to do his part.

PINKEY PERKINS

Bunny was not in the dialogue at all, which fact nettled him greatly, and, what irritated him still more, he was down on the program for an essay entitled, "Why I Love My School Work." Needless to say, this subject had been assigned him by Red Feather, who, to tell the truth, had written the greater part of the paper for him and had rigidly censored the remainder. Her intention was that the essay should be a sort of advertisement for her; a relation of her virtues to the parents and relatives of the pupils, who would attend the final exercises.

The scheme that Pinkey had worked out involved a great deal of risk and uncertainty, and its execution would probably mean a reckoning at the bar of parental justice later on, but he and Bunny decided that, if their escape from dialogue and essay could be accomplished, they would allow the future to take care of itself.

When school convened that last afternoon,

THE CLOSE OF THE SCHOOL TERM

everything was in readiness for carrying out the lengthy program Red Feather had prepared. All books, slates, and other school material had been taken home at noon, and nothing remained to mar the success of the occasion or to suggest the long and tedious term now so nearly completed.

Visitors came in goodly numbers, and the pupils whose seats were near the front of the room received instructions to sit elsewhere, the guests being assigned to these seats.

Pinkey's mother came, which fact did not fill Pinkey with the proper delight, and he envied Bunny, who had no relatives present.

Red Feather, her little dangling curls showing unusual and careful midday attention, was faultlessly arrayed in her best black alpaca. She busied herself in seeing to the comfort of her guests, and in bestowing here and there frequent and unexpected caresses on her assembling pupils.

One of the guests was a member of the

PINKEY PERKINS

School Board, and in addition there were others present who had sufficient influence to work either benefit or harm to Red Feather at the coming meeting of the board, when teachers would be selected and salaries fixed for the coming year.

All the children were decked out in their Sunday best, and the room assumed an air quite in keeping with the spirit of the occasion.

Pinkey and Bunny, in no less degree than the others, betrayed the exercise of unusual care in their toilet, and Pinkey even wore the new pair of patent-leathers he had christened with such inglorious results on Children's Day.

The school bell tolled its last commands for many weeks to come, and pupils and guests arranged themselves about the room as directed. Pinkey and Bunny, who usually sat on the front row and on opposite sides of the room, selected seats in the back part of the

THE CLOSE OF THE SCHOOL TERM

room, convenient for the carrying out of their plan.

“ Vacation Time Is Coming ” was given a last rousing good-by, with a repetition of the chorus as an encore. Then the member of the School Board, at Red Feather’s request, made a long, rambling address, which, to the impatient pupils, meant only a waste of valuable time.

First on the regular program was a very parrot-like attempt at a recitation of “Thanatopsis,” by a little girl perhaps eleven years old. She became confused, then frightened; and, finally, her memory failing her altogether, she broke down completely and took her seat amid a flood of tears which even the generous and sympathetic applause and the soothing caresses of Red Feather could not stop.

The next number on the program was an essay by Eddie Lewis, entitled, “ Honesty — The Best Policy.” At the conclusion of this

PINKEY PERKINS

paper, those who were to take part in the dialogue were to assemble on the platform and make their preparations behind the large calico curtain which was to do duty as a theatre curtain by being drawn to and fro as occasion demanded.

Eddie dwelt long and forcibly on various and sundry reasons why one should always be religiously honest in thought, word, and deed, closing with a sweeping denunciation of all who would not gladly suffer martyrdom, if need be, to uphold the principle he extolled.

During the reading of the essay, Pinkey gave Bunny the signal that it must be now or never, and with hearts loudly thumping, yet without a sign of weakness, they awaited the burst of applause which must necessarily follow Eddie's literary and oratorical effort. As luck would have it, Red Feather had vacated her seat on the platform and had taken one of the front seats, facing the platform.

THE CLOSE OF THE SCHOOL TERM

After what seemed to Pinkey and Bunny a very long time, Eddie concluded with a stiff, hinge-like bow, and with the bow came a loud, approving volley of hand-clapping, during which all eyes were fixed on Eddie.

Pinkey gave Bunny the signal. It was time to act, and to act quickly. While the noise was at its loudest, and without attracting the slightest attention, they lighted the matches they had been holding in readiness. Bunny was quite close to one of the stoves, and it was an easy matter for him to reach out and touch his match to the piece of carefully arranged paper protruding from the stove door. Then he quietly arose and took a different seat, as he had done twice since the exercises began. As the applause subsided, he was gazing blandly out of the half-open window, with an expression of the most angelic innocence on his face.

Pinkey, as soon as he struck his match, arose from his seat and started for the plat-

PINKEY PERKINS

form, carefully shielding from view the burning match in the concavity of his hand. As he passed the desks on his side of the room and reached the stove, he paused for an instant, ostensibly to pick up the handkerchief he had dropped, but really to ignite the paper in the bottom part of the stove.

Then he walked on up the aisle and disappeared behind the large calico curtain.

As the fire in the stoves gathered headway, the smoke began to pour into the room from the openings in the doors and from every crack and joint. Red Feather and those seated in the front part of the room heard a commotion among the pupils, and on looking around were dumfounded at what they saw. Red Feather at once arose, much excited, and tried to think of something to do or say; but, for once in her life, speech forsook her.

Once started, the smoke was rolling from every outlet in the stoves as from two miniature volcanoes. The stoves being full and the

THE CLOSE OF THE SCHOOL TERM

dampers carefully closed, the contents could not blaze freely, but the volume of smoke which poured into the room increased momentarily.

Red Feather ran to one of the stoves and opened the door, but that only permitted more of the pent-up smoke to rush out into her face and bring tears to her eyes.

“ Who started these fires? ” she shouted as she shut the door again. “ Speak up. Who lit this paper? ” But she received no response to her demands.

As the smoke grew thicker and began to spread in obscuring skeins throughout the room, the fumes of smouldering wool and leather smote the nostrils of those near the stoves. Pinkey had thoughtfully placed some old rags and an old shoe in each stove to aid the smoke in its purpose. Some one opened the hall door, hoping the smoke might blow out; but there was not the faintest breeze stirring, and the attempt at ventilation was

PINKEY PERKINS

fruitless. Several of the pupils began to cough, and those who had not done so in the beginning left their seats and retreated toward the platform, where the visitors were gathered. Bunny, with no parental eye to check him, escaped into the hall and out into the yard. Vacation for him had begun at last.

A few stern fathers and anxious mothers asked their children if they knew how the fires originated, but all stoutly asserted their innocence. Pinkey remained behind the curtain, not desiring to be questioned by his mother.

Finally the member of the School Board, acting as self-appointed regulator of the disturbance, said to the much-worried Red Feather: "Just calm yourself, Miss Vance. Leave everything to me. I will extinguish the fires and endeavor to rid the room of smoke." He was as much at loss as to how he was going to accomplish his task as any one else.

THE CLOSE OF THE SCHOOL TERM

Boldly he marched through the thickening maze, coughing and wiping his eyes. On reaching the stove, he saw that the only thing to do was to open the dampers and let the fire burn itself out. After burning his fingers in opening the damper in the door, he noticed that the damper in the pipe also needed adjusting, and mounted one of the desks in order to reach the pipe.

Just as his tall, lean figure loomed up above the lowering clouds of smoke, Bunny Morris came rushing madly in the door shouting in genuine panic-stricken tones: "There's powder in that stove! It'll bust in a minute!"

After leaving the schoolhouse he had suddenly remembered that this was the first time there had been a fire in the stoves since April Fool's Day, when Pinkey had told him that he knew some one had hidden a can of powder in the stove, because he had seen it there. In reality, Pinkey himself had placed a small can of baking-powder in one of the stoves,

PINKEY PERKINS

and had told Bunny of the " Powder," hoping to " fool " him.

But Bunny had been too wary to investigate any rumors that day, so Pinkey had later returned the can to the pantry at home; and during the weeks that followed nothing more had been said or thought about powder.

So it was that Bunny's alarm was decidedly real as he tore breathlessly into the room to warn the occupants against the explosion of what he really believed to be gunpowder.

In the stampede which followed, the member of the School Board cleared at one leap the row of desks between him and the outside aisle, and joined in the frantic exodus from the room. A dozen throats took up the cry, " The stoves'll blow up! The stoves'll blow up! " repeating it in their headlong scramble for safety.

Mothers embraced their daughters and carried them from the room and into the yard. With the exception of the member of



“ IN THE STAMPEDE WHICH FOLLOWED, THE MEMBER OF THE SCHOOL BOARD
CLEARED AT ONE LEAP THE ROW OF DESKS BETWEEN HIM AND THE OUTSIDE
AISLE ”

the School Board, who escaped early in the excitement, the few men present devoted their efforts to quieting the frightened ones. It was plain to them that had there been powder in the stoves, they would have known it before this; but no words of theirs could stop the rush.

For a few moments, Pinkey was more frightened at the result of his joke than was any one else. He had visions of an awful explosion, and his heart sank within him as he thought of the consequences. But when he remembered the baking-powder the cause of Bunny's alarm was evident, and he felt a wave of relief come over him as the terrible possibilities vanished. His presence of mind returned, and he viewed with the utmost pride the outcome of his scheme, the great success of which was due to Bunny's needless heroism.

On all sides Pinkey heard glowing words of praise for Bunny's bravery, and now he saw

a chance to distinguish *himself*. Rushing into the hall, he secured the two buckets of drinking-water that were there and which in the excitement had been entirely forgotten. With great effort, and consequent damage to the clothing of those who jostled him, he re-entered the room, and going first to one stove and then to the other, dashed a bucketful into each, completely extinguishing the fires.

He, too, could be a hero.

As the last of the occupants were leaving the smoke-filled room, teachers from the adjoining rooms ran excitedly into the hall to see what could be the cause of such unusual noise and confusion; and had it not been for the cooler heads, who explained the whole matter and assured them that it would be foolish to do so, every room in the building would have been dismissed forthwith. But when convinced that there was no danger of an explosion, they returned, entirely reassured; and, with the exception of Red

THE CLOSE OF THE SCHOOL TERM

Feather's room, which was still filled with smoke, the exercises were continued.

It was rather a shamefaced crowd that gathered in the yard, after it was all over, to discuss the excitement before dispersing. Some were still unconvinced that danger was past, and thought that the entire school should be dismissed; but wise counsel prevailed and overruled their proposition.

Pinkey, realizing how necessary it was to his present glory and future welfare that the rumor of powder in the stove be not investigated, managed to get near to Bunny before the latter had been questioned. Without going into any details or explanation, he said to Bunny, in an undertone that conveyed volumes to that young man's mind: "Now — you — skip! School's out for this year."

And Bunny took the hint.

VI

HOW PINKEY CELEBRATED THE GLORIOUS FOURTH

WHEN the glamour of the first few days of vacation had worn off, "Pinkey" Perkins was seized with a commendable desire to earn money. Fourth of July was coming, and Pinkey's ideas as to what would be an appropriate sum to expend in celebrating the day differed materially from those he could reasonably expect his father to entertain. Besides, he felt that it would be a very creditable move to branch out and earn something for himself, to have a source of income entirely independent of parental philanthropy.

For a time, Pinkey found employment in feeding the corn-sheller at the mill near his

HOW PINKEY CELEBRATED

home, receiving the munificent sum of ten cents for every wagon-load that he fed, ear by ear, into the insatiable machine.

But corn-shelling was a most uncertain occupation. Some days he would earn as much as thirty cents, and again days would pass when not a single load would be brought to the mill. Still, he must always be on the lookout lest "Putty" Black or Joe Cooper or some other competitor, equally alert to lay up finances against the coming of the "Fourth," would be on hand to earn the coveted dime.

Everything went satisfactorily, however, until one Sunday, when somebody entered the basement of the mill when the place was deserted, and wantonly turned the faucets in a couple of barrels of engine-oil, allowing several gallons to run out on the ground. Although Pinkey knew nothing of the depredation until he went to the mill the next day, the mill-owner insisted that he was more

PINKEY PERKINS

familiar with the place than any one else, and asserted his belief that Pinkey had been a party to the act.

In consequence, he refused to pay Pinkey fifty cents due him for corn shelled during the previous ten days.

All protests of innocence and arguments against the injustice proving fruitless, Pinkey forthwith gave up corn-shelling as an unprofitable business, and decided to seek employment that would not expose him to such dire possibilities. Pinkey always acted fairly toward others, and expected fair treatment in return.

A few days after the unfortunate experience at the mill, the boy who had been employed by Mrs. Betts in the Post Office Book Store moved away from town, and Pinkey at once applied for and secured the position thus left vacant. He was to receive the princely sum of sixty cents a week, which amount would provide him with sufficient firecrack-

HOW PINKEY CELEBRATED

ers, torpedoes, pinwheels, and Roman candles properly to celebrate the Fourth, and leave a fair-sized surplus for other things.

Pinkey's principal duties were to sweep out the store in the morning and to deliver to the business houses on and near the public square the daily papers, which arrived on the noon train from the metropolis, two hundred miles away.

In his new situation, Pinkey felt a pardonable importance. It delighted him to note that his daily visit was always an event of moment to those who waited for the latest news from the outside world.

It is true that Enterprise could boast of two home papers, but they were weeklies and the only news they contained from beyond the county limits was shipped in by express, in stereotyped plates, the day before publication.

"Bunny" Morris frequently accompanied Pinkey on his deliveries, just to bask in the

PINKEY PERKINS

reflected importance of such a distinctive occupation.

The feeling of gratified ambition which was inspired in Bunny's breast on these news-dispensing trips, as he entered the bank or the forbidden offices in the court-house, was most pleasing. It was only equalled on occasions when there was going to be an auction, and he was the lucky one to get the chance of announcing it.

At such times, the fortunate one, surrounded by a throng of jealous compatriots, would strut around the square, vigorously ringing a hand-bell and shouting, in intervals of silence: "Auction on the south side of the Squa-i-a-r!" Occasionally he would permit one or more of his followers to join him in making the announcement, but never under any consideration would he surrender for a moment his position as bell-ringer.

But such opportunities came to Bunny very infrequently, and he envied Pinkey his po-

HOW PINKEY CELEBRATED

sition, which, aside from being a financial boon, brought him constantly before the public. As a consequence, Bunny, too, was seized with the money-making fever, and at once set about seeking a "situation," as he was wont to term it. He went from place to place, without any decided opinions as to the special character of the service he would perform, or as to what the weekly consideration should be.

His one aim was to get the situation; what he could earn would be just that much clear gain.

After many fruitless and promiscuous endeavors to obtain the much desired employment, Bunny finally applied for and secured the position of telegraph messenger at the railroad station, where all telegrams were received. For each message delivered beyond the public square he was to receive ten cents; all others he must deliver free. The situation was not a very remunerative one, but it car-

PINKEY PERKINS

ried with it certain emoluments which meant more than the salary. It entitled him to admission behind the gate in the railroad office, forbidden ground heretofore untrodden by juvenile feet.

With even greater delight than ringing the auction bell did Bunny love to impress the importance of his position on the crowd of idle boys always about the station, by announcing with a very consequential air that he "must go in and get to work." In reality, there was not a thing for him to do, but he knew with what burning envy his auditors watched him as he passed through the wooden gate which bore the forbidding "NO ADMITTANCE" sign, on behind the counter, and, if he chose, clear into that holy of holies — the ticket-office.

The best that his jealous companions could do was to go around to the other side of the station and look through the window at him.

Pinkey and Bunny had made their plans

HOW PINKEY CELEBRATED

for a great celebration of the Fourth, and, for once in their lives, they were going to have enough material. Before they obtained employment their outlook had not been very rosy, and the mutual fund which they had accumulated since vacation began, to be expended in firecrackers, torpedoes, pinwheels, and Roman candles, was quite out of proportion to their desires.

But the financial outlook was now no longer serious, and they were assured of all that they had dreamed of in the line of pyrotechnics, with plenty of funds remaining to meet any and every other possible desire.

Enterprise had decided to observe the Fourth in grand style. According to the bills, there were to be a balloon ascension and parachute jump, a barbecue, two bands to furnish the music, and a wonderful display of fireworks at night. What more delightful prospects could any one desire than the pleasures offered by such a combination?

PINKEY PERKINS

The post-office would be closed on the Fourth, and Pinkey would be free all day. But about two weeks before the Fourth, when several bill-posters arrived in town and spread broadcast over barns, fences, shops, and empty buildings the colored bills announcing that, in addition to the advertised celebration, there would be a circus in town on that day, Pinkey and Bunny were in a perfect whirlwind of excitement, and wondered how they were ever going to see everything.

Now it happened that, late in the month of June, the city marshal of Enterprise resigned his duties to accept the more remunerative position of deputy sheriff, and the reins of the important office thus left vacant were taken up by one Jeremiah Satrap Singles, a very self-respecting person, so far as real labor was concerned, and a passed master in the duties of constable.

On assuming his new duties, Jeremiah resolved that if diligence in their performance

HOW PINKEY CELEBRATED

could carry any weight at the coming fall elections, he would make of himself in the meantime as strong a candidate to succeed himself as possible.

He rummaged among the musty records of his office and found many ancient ordinances, which previous marshals had found it better to ignore than weakly to enforce.

Among these resurrected laws was one called the "Curfew Act," which had been approved by the Town Board of Enterprise ten years previous, and long before the time that this dignified body chose to be known as the "City Council."

This act forbade all children under fifteen years of age being on the streets after eight o'clock in the evening, unless accompanied by parent, guardian, or other authorized companion. The requirements of this ordinance, the new marshal decided to enforce to the letter, and due notice of the same was published in the papers and tacked to the awning-

PINKEY PERKINS

posts around the square and on the trees that lined the principal streets.

In a small town like Enterprise, and in the summer-time especially, eight o'clock is rather early for boys to suspend operations for the day, and anything that tends to force them to do so is apt to arouse a spirit of resentment.

Such was the case when Jeremiah, or "Old Tin Star," as the boys saw fit to call him, issued his edict concerning early hours.

Pinkey was the originator of the scheme to show disapprobation of the action, and to carry out his plans he needed about a dozen of his companions, and he had no difficulty in procuring accomplices.

It had been the custom among the boys, in the cool of the evening, to indulge in spirited games of "Tally-ho," the pursued and the pursuers racing from one end of the town to the other, along the streets, dodging up the alleys, tearing through yards and

HOW PINKEY CELEBRATED

open lots, their shouts grating severely on forgetful ears. It was chiefly at this game of "Tally-ho" that the Arm of the Law aimed the enforcement of the Curfew Act.

Shortly before eight o'clock, Pinkey and his band would assemble at some appointed place near the square, and then, after definite instructions had been given, would separate into two or three groups, each under a leader, and proceed with the scheme to harass their victim.

In a few minutes the fun would begin. One group would start the game by shouting "Tally-'o" several times at some street corner near the square, then, after a pretense of running, would hide in the bushes or behind the hedge of some near-by yard.

Hearing the shouts, the pompous Police Force, consolidated in the rotund person of Jeremiah, would cumbrously detach himself from the goods-box on which he was resting, and sally forth on a stealthy trot in quest of

PINKEY PERKINS

the youthful rioters, hoping to intercept the pursuing party at the corner from which the shouts had come.

About the time he reached the corner, he would be surprised by more "Tally-'o's" coming from another corner, a couple of blocks distant. Thinking his chances of prey might be greater in that direction, he would again start off to take up position at his new base of operations.

When about half-way to the scene of the latest disturbance, the fleeting cry of "Tally-'o" and the sound of hurrying feet would again greet his ears, coming from the very spot he had left but a few moments before.

Back he would turn, half in dismay, half in rage, hoping by some hook or crook to capture the offenders or their supposed pursuers.

Now two hundred and thirty pounds of avoirdupois is not an easy bulk for a man forty-five years of age to propel with any

HOW PINKEY CELEBRATED

great or sustained velocity, so the corpulent guardian of the peace invariably found himself in a short time completely exhausted and boiling hot, both inwardly and outwardly, but also unsuccessful.

This feud between boys and marshal flourished, and, after the latter declined to chase longer the phantom "Tally-'o's," it took on other phases, but the outcome of each was always the same, and found Jeremiah just a little the worse for wear, and at the same time empty-handed.

On one occasion, a string which had been tied from a fence-post to a tree and about four inches above the sidewalk, caught the toe of the homeward-bound Singles and sent him sprawling, or rolling, rather, on the walk.

As he fell, two boys, hidden in the adjoining yard, choked, gurgled, and tried to stifle their mirth with their hands, but, finding this impossible, jumped up and ran for dear life, across lots, over fences, through gardens, and

PINKEY PERKINS

all sorts of out-of-the-way places, seeking some spot where they would be safe from their imaginary pursuer, who, in reality, was once more setting himself to rights, all the while giving vent to his wrath in expressive, though inelegant, words.

Two or three inoffensive violators of the Curfew Act were caught and admonished, but those of the organized band were always successful in evading their unwieldy foe.

Another law which had heretofore been but feebly enforced, but which was not receiving the close attention of Jeremiah, was one which can be found on the records of any small town, relating to loafing about the railroad station, habitually known as the "depot," or riding on the cars and engines.

Since Bunny had attained his position at the telegraph-office, he and Pinkey had succeeded in making friends with the engineers to such an extent that they enjoyed the privilege of riding about the yards while switch-

HOW PINKEY CELEBRATED

ing was in progress, and frequently they rode all the way to the coal-mine, whither the engine went almost daily to get the previous day's output for shipment.

Enterprise being the terminus of the branch line from the metropolis, the train that arrived in the evening remained overnight and departed again the next morning.

Notwithstanding the edict of the new marshal, the boys continued their riding; for Bunny felt that, employed as he was in the railroad office, he should be immune from molestation. In fact, he felt a sort of partnership in the entire railroad system now, and secretly wondered how the company had ever prospered without his services. Pinkey, of course, was entitled to anything that Bunny was.

For a few days before the Fourth, however, Pinkey did not go to the "depot." His fondness for that locality had become known to his parents, and he was at once ordered to

PINKEY PERKINS

stay away; and Pinkey feared that if he disregarded such emphatic instructions something might happen to interfere with the plans he and Bunny had made to go down early to see the circus-train arrive on the morning of the great day.

Fourth of July dawned bright and clear, to the booming of cannon firecrackers and other ear-splitting noises invented to show patriotism.

True to their prearranged plan, Pinkey and Bunny met at the schoolhouse corner, at a strangely early hour for them.

Like many others of their age, and older, they had not indulged in very heavy sleep that night, fearing that they might not awaken at the appointed time, and unwilling to leave the responsibility of waking them in other hands.

But as it was, they were none too early; for, while still several blocks from the station, they heard a warning whistle at the crossing

HOW PINKEY CELEBRATED

a mile from town, and at once broke into a run, arriving tired and panting, but on time to the dot, just as the long train pulled up to the platform.

Pinkey was the first to ferret out the elephant-car, and he availed himself of the right of discovery by ascending the ladder at the end of the car and dispensing to the eager crowd about him fragments of information gained by peeping through a convenient opening near the top of the car.

His declaration that there were " three big ones and a baby one and four camels " in the car almost lost him his point of view, so frantic were some of his compatriots to supplant him and verify his exciting reports.

When Pinkey had viewed to his content the interior of the car, and had dwelt sufficiently on the wonders therein, he slowly descended the ladder. Immediately there was a scramble, which nearly resulted in a fight, over who should go up next. An attaché of the circus

PINKEY PERKINS

settled the dispute, however, by appearing on the scene and dispersing the entire crowd.

Then came the unloading of the gilded chariots, animal-cages, band-wagons, and all the circus belongings, and the removal of the same to the show-grounds in a vacant lot near by.

The wildest sort of guesses were made as to the probable contents of this or that box-like cage, adorned on the outside with gaudy paintings of unknown animals, but which in reality were filled with ropes, canvas, and tent-pins.

Rumors of the most startling character were heard on all sides. One of the employees had told one of the boys that the trimmings on the cages and band-wagons were all gold-plated. Some one else had heard that the two Sellers boys, who played in the Enterprise Silver Cornet Band, were actually going to ride in the band-wagon in the parade and play with the circus band.

HOW PINKEY CELEBRATED

When, at last, the tents had taken definite shape, and all the visible animals and the cages containing the others had been taken inside (away from the gaze of the multitude), Pinkey and Bunny reluctantly decided to allow the circus to shift for itself for a time and go home to breakfast.

Aside from obeying the dictates of their stomachs in this move, they were complying with parental instructions, not caring to take any risks so early in the day, which, perchance, might result in encountering a check to their hopes.

Pinkey could hardly eat his breakfast, so desirous was he of acquainting his parents with the wonders he had seen. As soon as he had finished, he again effected a prearranged meeting with Bunny, and together the busy pair at once returned to their neglected circus.

But there was little to be seen at the show-grounds at that hour, so the boys decided to

PINKEY PERKINS

vary the program by going over to the station and enjoying a ride on the engine and going out to the coal-mines, provided the engine made its usual trip that morning.

Keeping a sharp lookout, lest Jeremiah be somewhere in sight, the boys climbed up on the engine and, as was their custom, wished Mr. Plummer, the engineer, universally known as "Dad," and his fireman, a very polite "Good morning," and then remained discreetly silent.

They had long since learned not to ask permission to ride, — as that courted a refusal, — but had found it much better just to clamber aboard, maintain a respectful silence, and, to the best of their ability, keep out of the way.

And never did they miss a chance to be of any slight assistance in the way of filling the water-jug for the fireman, or handing a wrench or piece of waste to the engineer when he was out on the ground, oiling up.

HOW PINKEY CELEBRATED

They never felt secure, however, until the fireman told them to get up and sit on part of his cushion, where they would be well out of the way. This position they knew to be permanent until it was time for the train to pull out.

Thus seated, they would shrink themselves into as small a space as possible, and remain perfectly quiet and subdued, rarely speaking even to each other.

On the morning in question, after switching in the yard had been in progress for a while, Pinkey and Bunny, from their perch on the fireman's seat, saw one of the brakemen give the familiar signal, in reply to which they saw "Dad" reach up and give the whistle-lever two short jerks and heard the warning "toot — toot" from the whistle above the cab.

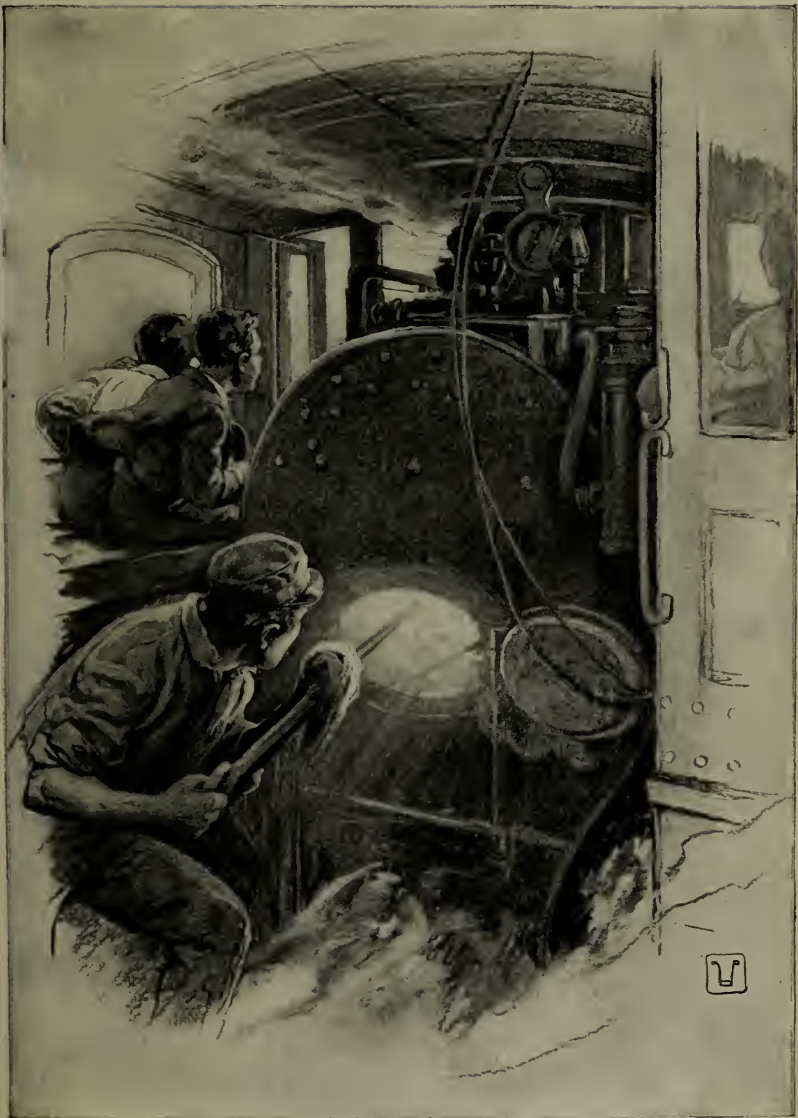
The two boys nudged each other eloquently and moved a little closer to the window in the front end of the cab, for they knew they

PINKEY PERKINS

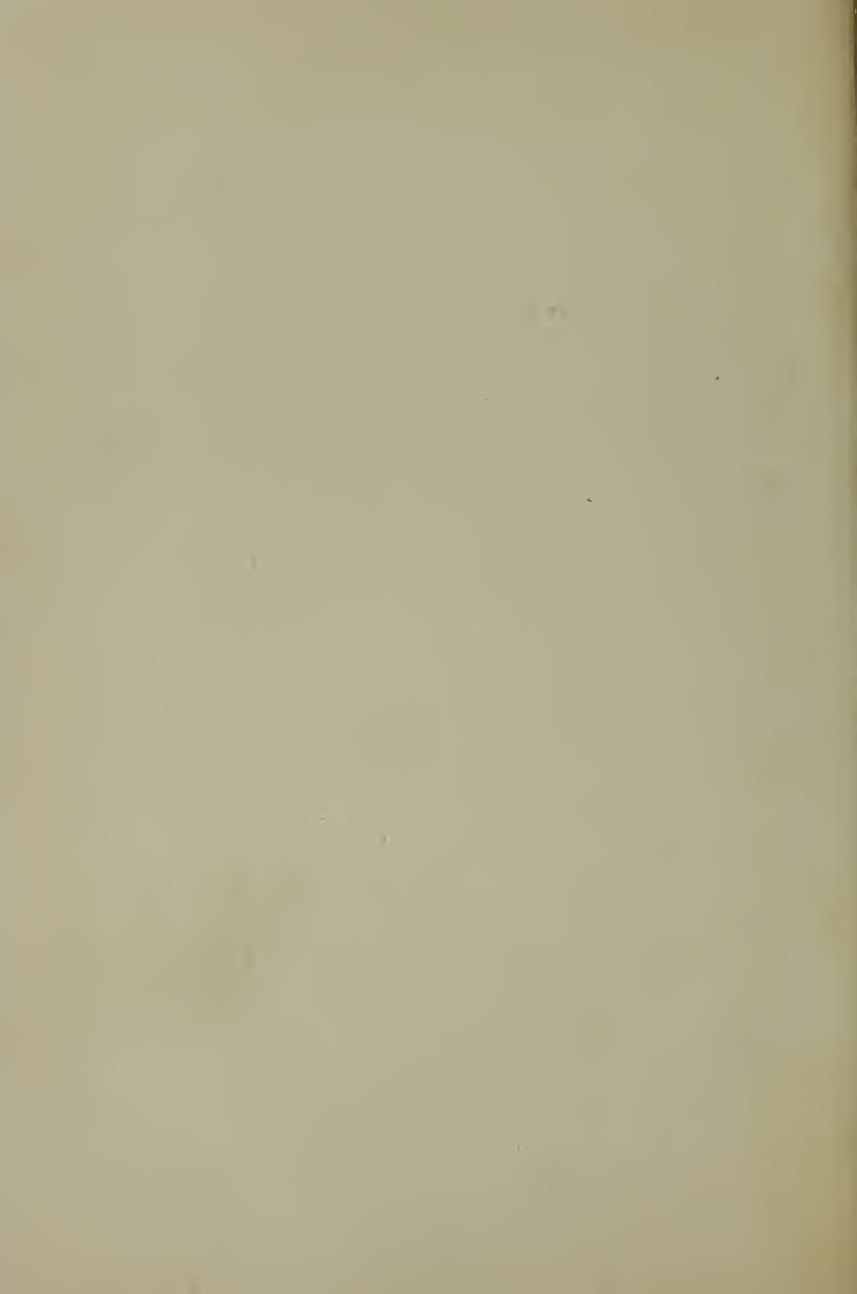
were bound for the coal-mine. Life for them contained no more blissful moments than these, when they were permitted to sit in the swaying cab and look out on the track ahead and watch the two lines of steel being devoured by the monster beneath them.

When they returned from the mine, about an hour later, and the cars of coal were coupled to the waiting train, their morning's ride came to an end. The train was all made up and only awaited the signal to depart, so the two boys dismounted from the engine, intending to return to the show-grounds and see how preparations for the morning parade were progressing.

As Pinkey's feet reached the ground and he turned to walk away from the engine, his heart seemed to leap into his throat. There, not thirty yards away, seated with some other men on a pile of railroad ties in the shade of a wheat elevator, was Jeremiah Satrap Singles, his badge of office shining forth as a



“LIFE FOR THEM CONTAINED NO MORE BLISSFUL MOMENTS THAN THESE”



HOW PINKEY CELEBRATED

formidable reminder of the authority vested in the wearer.

“ Gee, Bunny, there’s Old Tin Star! D’you s’pose he saw us gettin’ off the engine? ” said Pinkey, fearing to look again in the direction of the pile of ties.

“ Oh, cracky! I hope not, Pinkey, ” replied Bunny, much disturbed. “ ’F he did, it’s all up with us, an’ he’ll fine us three dollars and costs, an’ put us in jail, too, maybe. ”

“ And we’d miss the p’rade and the circus and the fireworks, too, Bunny. ”

“ What d’you s’pose we’d better do — run? ”

“ I dunno’s there’s any good in runnin’, ’cause if he wants us he’ll get us ’fore long, anyway. There’s only one way to find out if he saw us, and that is to give him a chance to catch us. If he saw us runnin’, he’d know in a minute we’re runnin’ from him. ”

“ What you goin’ to do, Pinkey, — go up an’ tell him we wuz ridin’? ”

“ What d’you take me for, anyway? ’Course I’m not goin’ to tell him. Just you stay here and I’ll find out if he saw us or not.”

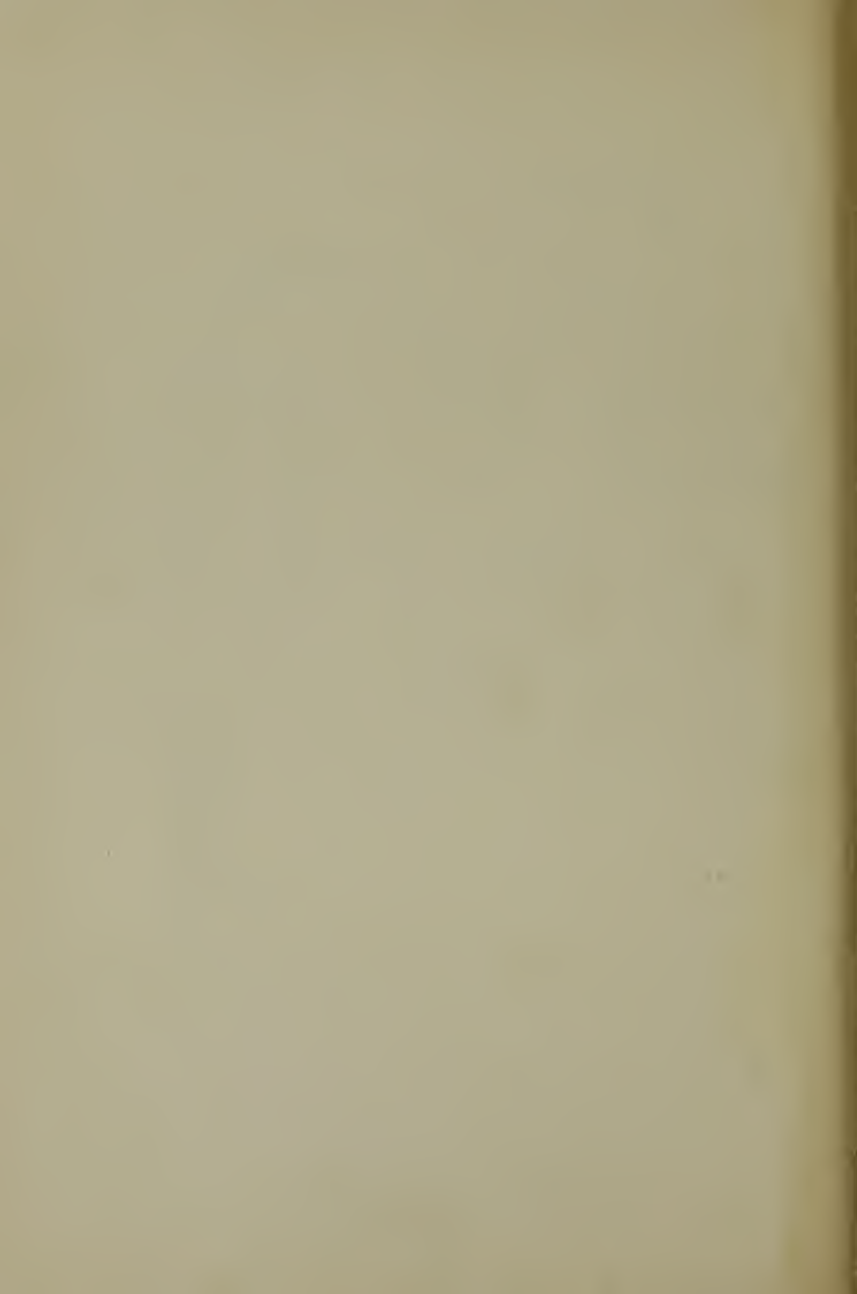
Without explaining to Bunny what his plans were, Pinkey walked deliberately over to the group of which the marshal was the central figure, and, going straight up to him, asked in polite and respectful tones: “ Mr. Singles, could you please tell me what time it is? ”

Mr. Singles did not reply for a minute, but fastened a severe gaze on Pinkey, much to that individual’s inner disturbance. Then he slowly took his watch from his vest pocket, glanced down at it for an instant, and, as he snapped the case shut again, said in a most foreboding tone: “ It’s just twenty - three minutes to nine. What were you kids doing on that engine a few minutes ago? ”

That settled it. There was no hope for them now. For a moment Pinkey stood silent



“WHAT WERE YOU KIDS DOING ON THAT ENGINE A FEW MINUTES
AGO?”



and thoughtful, then he managed to eject the one word: "Riding."

"Well, you boys have been doing too much riding around here, and as soon as I can swear out a warrant for you I'll have you up before the Justice of the Peace. I'm going to see if I can't stop this continual railroad-ing by you youngsters."

Pinkey did not know that had Jeremiah desired to arrest him and Bunny just then, he did not need a warrant. Nor did he appreciate that, just at that moment, the preparations for the circus parade were as interesting to the marshal as to any one else.

"I'm too busy now to attend to your case," continued the comfortable Singles; "but as soon as I go up town I'll see to it."

All this might be in real earnest or it might be said just to scare them, but Pinkey was not for taking any chances. For the first time in his life he realized the grim majesty of the law in all its terror, and he decided that the

PINKEY PERKINS

greater distance that he and Bunny maintained between themselves and Mr. Singles, the better for them.

There was nothing to do but beat a retreat and inform Bunny of the fix they were in. He backed slowly away from the severe bulk on the pile of ties, until he reached the end of the elevator, then he vanished from sight around the corner and ran, beckoning Bunny to meet him down by the crossing. Bunny knew by Pinkey's manner that there was trouble in the air, and his spirits drooped more and more as Pinkey told him what the marshal had said.

After getting several blocks away from the railroad yards, they stopped to discuss matters and to decide on their future movements.

“What are we ever goin' to do?” asked Bunny, solemnly. “It'll cost us 'most five dollars apiece if we get took up.”

“We're not goin' to get took up,” said Pinkey, resolutely. “We're goin' to the

HOW PINKEY CELEBRATED

country just as fast as we can get there. What's the use of stayin' here, just *waitin'* to get arrested? "

" An' miss the p'rade, an' the b'loon ascension an' fireworks, an' everything," moaned Bunny.

" What fun is there stayin' around town when Old Tin Star is liable to light on you any minute and put you in jail? No, siree; I'm goin' to take *my* fireworks and skip just as quick as I know how."

To Pinkey and Bunny "the country" meant the farm about two miles south of town where one of Pinkey's uncles lived, and where, during the holidays and on Saturdays, the two boys were frequent and welcome guests.

Bunny was soon convinced of the soundness of Pinkey's arguments, and the pair at once began their preparations for departure.

Their store of supplies was secreted in the woodshed at Pinkey's home, and thither they

PINKEY PERKINS

went as soon as their decision was made. While Bunny was stowing the fireworks in an empty bag, Pinkey scribbled a note on a scrap of paper, and slipped around the house and pinned it to the side door. There was no one at home, and he was not detected in leaving his message.

The note was decidedly brief, but it carried sufficient information to serve its purpose. It read:

“Gone to country. If Mr. Singles asks you where we are, tell him you don’t know.

“P. & B.”

Then they set out, making a wide circuit of the town to avoid detection and possible questioning. When their way was clear to the southward, they gave the main road a wide berth, keeping to the open fields. They imagined that Mr. Singles would probably inquire for them of every person he met, so

HOW PINKEY CELEBRATED

they avoided the human race in general, trudging doggedly on, weighed down by the heavy load of ill luck that had blighted their hopes.

Presently the sound of music came faintly to their ears, and they knew that the parade was in progress. A cold chill settled on their hearts as every step took them farther and farther away from all that was dear to them.

When they arrived at their destination, they found the place deserted, the whole family having gone to town for the celebration. But they were safe from pursuit, and with the sense of safety came the resolution to enjoy their celebration, even though exiled from all mankind.

After resting in the shade for a few minutes, they began to look about for a good place to set off their fireworks. At last they decided that the woods pasture was the most satisfactory place, for there they would be

PINKEY PERKINS

in no danger of setting anything on fire, and they would also be far enough off the beaten track to run no risk of detection by passers-by. So to the woods pasture they went with their store of fireworks, and there in the shade of the large oak-trees they observed the Nation's Birthday with all the juvenile rites the situation would permit. Their sole audience was composed of the astonished animals, who, from a safe distance, observed the strange performance with open-eyed wonder.

Toward noon their stock of daytime fireworks began to dwindle, and they decided to leave the remainder until afternoon, and go to the house and see what could be found in the way of dinner. With that customary faith in mankind found in many localities, the house had been left unlocked, and Pinkey and Bunny lost no time in making an inspection of the pantry. They found plenty of cold chicken, bread, pie, and doughnuts, and



“THEY OBSERVED THE NATION’S BIRTHDAY”



HOW PINKEY CELEBRATED

in the cellar delicious sweet milk and butter. After refreshing themselves bountifully, the boys adjourned to the yard to enjoy a rest after their long strenuous morning.

Both fell asleep, and it was mid-afternoon before Pinkey awoke. He wakened Bunny, and again the pair set out for the woods pasture, to enjoy the few remaining fire-crackers, pinwheels, and torpedoes they had hidden before they came to the house.

When these were all gone, they enjoyed themselves going swimming in the pond near by and in playing circus, taking alternately the parts of ringmaster and clown, these two personages being, without question, the most important of any pictured on the bills.

Pinkey's uncle came home early in the evening to attend to the stock, and found Pinkey and Bunny waiting until it should grow dark enough to set off several Roman candles and the half-dozen sky-rockets they had brought with them.

PINKEY PERKINS

When the boys explained to him the cause of their absence from town, they were disappointed that he did not appear concerned about their plight, or even surprised at finding them there.

When they had unburdened themselves, he told them they need not be alarmed any further; that Pinkey's father had learned from Mr. Singles the cause for the note on the door and their hurried departure, and had promised for them that they would ride no more on the engine. Mr. Singles had consented to let them off this time only on that condition, and if they wished to return home with that understanding, they were at liberty to do so as soon as they saw fit.

That night Pinkey and Bunny attended the circus, as they had planned in the beginning, and enjoyed it all the more, for it had about it the air of being the restoration to rightful owners of some lost and valued treasure.

VII

HOW PINKEY WENT NUTTING

AS the cool days and cooler nights of autumn began to come, with gradually increasing frequency, the leaves began to lose their summer freshness and to take on the rich golden brown, suggestive of the approach of the nutting season. To the normal, healthy boy, no season of the year has an equal charm, for it is then that he experiences the joy of providing something for the future, laying up stores to be enjoyed during the coming winter by those who, in this one respect, at least, are entirely dependent on him and his energies for their enjoyment.

This was the time for which Pinkey Perkins and his side-partner, Bunny Morris, had

PINKEY PERKINS

been waiting several weeks. Long before there were any signs of frost sufficient to loosen the nuts from the branches, the boys had made their plans and preparations for several excursions into the woods in quest of nuts of different kinds. In their impatience, they had been unable to wait until walnuts were ripe, and had already made one excursion to some trees near the limits of the town and had gathered a few of the green nuts, not so much for the nuts themselves as for the indelible stains they would leave on the fingers. These stains, which wouldn't come off "till they wore off," were an asset of which they were duly proud, no other boys having as yet thought of going nutting, and their hearts were properly gratified at the envy created by the exhibition of these stains in school.

In addition to the several minor trips planned by the boys, there was one to which they were looking forward with more than

HOW PINKEY WENT NUTTING

ordinary interest. They had obtained the necessary permission to ride "Old Polly," the Perkins's family horse, take their lunch, and stay all day.

Old Polly was the essence of gentleness, and would carry all the passengers that could clamber on board her ample back, and it was on her that the boys depended for their personal transportation, as well as for all the nuts they might gather. That would be far better than walking a mile or more, having but a short time to devote to gathering nuts, and then trudging homeward again with a few nuts in the sacks on their backs, their fatigue increasing with the number of nuts secured.

Morning after morning, as soon as he woke up, did Pinkey look out of the window to see if there were any of the long-looked-for signs of Jack Frost, for whose coming alone the excursion was waiting. But it seemed that this hoary forerunner of winter was

PINKEY PERKINS

more than usually tardy in making his appearance.

Finally, one Saturday, late in October, Pinkey awoke to find the ground covered with a heavy white frost, and he knew that the time he and Bunny had so long anticipated had arrived. He dressed himself with unusual haste and hurried down-stairs to do his Saturday chores before breakfast, so that nothing would be left undone to hinder their departure, immediately that meal should be over.

Luckily, he had prepared for such a contingency, and had enough wood stored in the shed to last over Sunday, so his work was gratefully light, and, after bringing from the shed to the kitchen a sufficient quantity for the day, and attending to old Polly's wants, he was all ready for breakfast.

During the meal Bunny appeared, much excited, to inquire if they were actually to go that morning, and, on being informed em-

HOW PINKEY WENT NUTTING

phatically in the affirmative, he hurried home to procure a midday lunch and a bag in which to bring home his share of the day's spoils.

It required a deal of maternal firmness to induce Pinkey to finish his meal, so desirous was he to be off. He felt that every minute he spent in eating was just that much time lost. He could eat breakfast any day, but a nutting expedition was an event whose allotted time was not to be encroached upon.

As soon as breakfast was over, Pinkey at once set about making his preparations for departure. While he was bridling old Polly, Bunny reappeared, armed with a flour-sack, and his lunch done up in a paper. This latter necessity Mrs. Perkins placed in the small basket which contained the lunch she had prepared for Pinkey. She realized that, after such a light breakfast, followed by a hard half-day's work, they would both be possessed of prodigious appetites, and had amply provided for their wants. In addition, Pin-

PINKEY PERKINS

key chose to take some potatoes, which he intended to roast in the fire they would have.

Only one thing marred the pleasure Pinkey felt as he and Bunny spread their flour-sacks on old Polly's back and led her up to the fence in order to mount. The fact that he must use the harness bridle, having blinds on it, wounded his pride not a little. He had owned a riding-bridle once, but only for a brief period, having sold as old iron several castings that had lain around the workshop for several years, and with the proceeds he had purchased a riding-bridle.

After one brief ride, his new possession had been discovered, and he had been required to return it to the store and persuade the proprietor to receive it back in exchange for the bartered castings, which latter articles he ignominiously loaded into a wheelbarrow and returned to the workshop. Since that time, Pinkey had used the blind-bridle when-

HOW PINKEY WENT NUTTING

ever he rode, though it cost him many a pang of regret.

In planning their trip, Pinkey and Bunny had investigated the crop reports from several different quarters, with a view to getting the most satisfactory results possible from their labors. After receiving discouraging intelligence from many sources, they had at last consulted Johnny Gordon, son of Farmer Gordon, who lived about a mile and a half east of Enterprise. Johnny had generously informed them that they could get all the hickory-nuts they wanted if they would come out to his grove. He said that the trees were full and he did not want near all of them, and they might as well have some of them as not.

“ But you’ll have to look out for paw,” he warned, “ ’cause if he catches you in there he’ll tan you sure.”

Farmer Gordon, popularly known as “ Old Hostettters,” was conceded by everybody to

PINKEY PERKINS

be a paragon of meanness, being one of those small-souled individuals with a grudge against mankind and who rejoice anew at



“THEY HAD AT LAST CONSULTED JOHNNY GORDON”

every enemy made. He was not a poor man by any means, but so tenaciously did he hold on to his money that his appearance and his continual references to his poverty would

HOW PINKEY WENT NUTTING

lead one unacquainted with him to believe him in dire need of the necessities of life.

Notwithstanding these well-known traits, Pinkey and Bunny decided to accept Johnny's offer and run the risk of encountering Old Hostetters in their endeavor to procure part of their winter's supply of nuts from his grove. In case they were successful, they would feel doubly repaid, and their pleasure would be all the more acute when they told the other boys where they had got their nuts.

Once started, Pinkey turned old Polly's head eastward, and as soon as they were out of sight of the house succeeded in urging her into a "lope," much to the discomfiture of Bunny, who was seated behind, holding the lunch-basket.

Pinkey was too much of a strategist to lay his course to the grove in a direct line, for that would take them within sight of Farmer Gordon's house, and, besides, he might be

coming to town about this time, and his suspicions would probably be aroused if he saw them and their flour-sacks going toward his farm. When they had reached a cross-road, about a quarter of a mile from their destination, Pinkey turned old Polly to the right, and then by a circuitous route they made their approach from the rear. After letting down some bars and opening a couple of gates, they arrived at the fence which enclosed Farmer Gordon's grove. They tied old Polly so she could graze, deposited their lunch-basket in a safe place, and climbed over into the grove. There were nuts a-plenty, and they lost no time in getting to work.

They met their first discouragement when they attempted to climb the trees; all were too large and rough, and the limbs were too high to reach. Things began to look serious for them, until Pinkey saw a simple way out of the difficulty. With Bunny's assistance, he removed a couple of rails from the fence,

HOW PINKEY WENT NUTTING

and by leaning them against the tree they made a slanting support, up which the boys could climb until they could reach the lower limbs of the tree. Once they were in the tree, it was but a short time until the frost-bitten nuts were showering to the ground.

“ There’s nothin’ like knowin’ where to go when you want a thing, is there, Bunny? ” said Pinkey in a self-congratulatory tone. “ Tell you what, it’s a good thing I thought of askin’ Johnny. ” Bunny had not been as enthusiastic as Pinkey over accepting Johnny’s invitation, and, with his heart swelling with pride at the success they were having, Pinkey desired to remind Bunny who was responsible for it all.

“ Yes, but, Pinkey, you must remember we didn’t ask Old Hostetters about comin’ in here, ” observed Bunny, “ and he’d have a lot to say about who gets nuts off his farm, if he saw ’em. ”

“ Yes, but don’t you worry about Old

PINKEY PERKINS

Hostetters seein' us; he's always in town on Saturdays, and like as not he's gone already and we'll be gone before he gets ready to come back."

"Just the same, I'll feel a lot better when these nuts are all hulled and sacked, and we're sittin' on 'em and clear out o' this."

But Pinkey refused to allow his spirits to be dampened by Bunny's pessimism.

Like beavers they worked, climbing tree after tree with the aid of their fence-rails, until by noon the ground under the trees was covered with the results of their labors. Their hands were bruised and their clothes were torn, but these discomforts mattered not; they had ample returns to show for it all.

Dinner-time came, and the boys decided to take care of old Polly and eat their own lunch before they began to "hull." Pinkey proposed that, while he rode the horse to water at the creek near by, Bunny should

HOW PINKEY WENT NUTTING

begin digging a furnace in the hillside, in which to build the fire.

“ We’ve got plenty to eat without cookin’ potatoes,” argued Bunny, “ and I think we’d better not make a smoke, either. I don’t feel any too comf’table here.”

Pinkey derided him for his fear of Old Hostetters, and declared that half the fun of a trip of this kind was in making a furnace, building a fire, and roasting potatoes in the ashes, and, besides, it would not take long.

As usual, Pinkey’s arguments prevailed against Bunny’s protests, and Bunny, though still unconvinced of the advisability of so doing, finally agreed to the potato-roasting and began to dig the furnace. This operation consisted in digging a fair-sized square hole straight into the hillside for about two feet for the furnace proper, and then, for a chimney, digging a small cylindrical opening straight down and connecting with the back part of the furnace. When this was com-

PINKEY PERKINS

pleted, and the boys had started their fire and the smoke began rolling out of the chimney, Bunny agreed down deep in his heart that there was nothing like it. As a smoke-producer, their furnace was a great success, but as a medium of roasting potatoes it was a decided failure, and to any one less enthusiastic than the two boys, the results would have been impossible. But they bravely ate the half-burned, half-raw potatoes, and declared that they were the best part of their lunch.

As soon as their meal was over, they at once set about gathering into piles and hulling the nuts they had shaken from the trees.

“Don’t believe we’ll ever get all these in those two flour-sacks,” said Bunny, regarding the pile of unhulled nuts before him.

“Well, if we don’t, we’ll hide ’em and come back and get ’em some other time,” replied Pinkey. “There’s no use workin’ ourselves to death shakin’ and hullin’ nuts and

HOW PINKEY WENT NUTTING

then leavin' part of them for Old Hostetters.'"

But their fears were unfounded, and by the time they had gathered and hulled all the nuts that were on the ground, they found that there were, by far, more hulls than nuts, and that they yet lacked about a fourth of a sackful to make the day a complete success.

"No use havin' any half-way business about this," said Pinkey; "let's fill 'em clear up to show we could ha' got more if we'd had any place to put 'em, and then maybe we can come again next Saturday."

Bunny agreed, and again, tired and sore as they were, both boys ascended a large hickory-tree and began to shake. After working in silence for a few minutes, both suddenly stopped shaking and exchanged glances. They listened, and again they heard the noise that had first attracted their attention.

PINKEY PERKINS

“ What’s that? ” said Pinkey, though he knew perfectly well what the noise was.

“ Dog a-barkin’,” replied Bunny; “ let’s git.”

“ Where is he? Can you see ’im? ”

“ No, but he’s gettin’ closer, bark’s gettin’ louder.”

It was plain both were growing very uneasy.

“ Let’s keep still,” said Pinkey, “ and maybe he’ll go on by. Hope there’s nobody with him, don’t you, Bunny? ”

“ I dunno; if he wuz alone, and saw us, he might keep us up here, and there wouldn’t be anybody to call ’im off.”

“ Yes, but if Mr. Gordon was with him, he might see us and he might not like us to be here.” Pinkey was growing remarkably respectful all of a sudden.

“ Might not like it! He’d whale us till we couldn’t ride home if he caught us in here. Gee, Pinkey, I wish we hadn’t come.”

HOW PINKEY WENT NUTTING

“ Johnny said we could get all the nuts we wanted, if we came out,” insisted Pinkey weakly, though he remembered that Johnny had warned them.

“ Yes, but Johnny ain’t Old Hostettters, not by a long shot, and like as not he’d whale Johnny, too, for tellin’ us we might get ’em. This is what we get for roastin’ potatoes, instead o’ eatin’ our lunch and skinnin’ out for home.”

Pinkey accepted this rebuke without comment, only showing his uneasiness by coming down to the lower limb, where Bunny had moved when he made his first suggestion to “ git.” He realized that he was probably responsible for the fix they were in, and felt that he deserved Bunny’s criticism.

By this time it was too late to come down, had they decided to do so. The dog was under the tree, nosing around the two sacks of nuts and the remnants of the lunch.

“ That’s his dog,” wailed Bunny, “ and

PINKEY PERKINS

most likely he'll be here himself in a minute.'"

Presently the dog discovered the two boys in the tree, and again set up a loud barking. Old Hostetters was not far behind, and through the trees the prisoners could see him slowly approaching. He was returning from one of his frequent trips to town, and was making a short-cut home through the fields.

He did not see the boys at first, and looked about to see what could be the cause for such excitement on the part of his dog. Then, as he raised his head and saw the cause of it all, a malicious grin overspread his face, and he picked up a short stout stick from the ground, with an instinctive desire to use it on the intruders.

"Treed 'em, did ye, Tige?" he said, shaking the stick at Pinkey, who had dared look at him for one fleeting instant. "Bully fer you. We'll teach these smart town kids to come out here and steal nuts, won't we, Tige."

HOW PINKEY WENT NUTTING

How do you like your roost, eh? ” This last to Pinkey and Bunny.

Both boys were too scared to make any reply, and, besides, there was nothing for them to say.

“ Don’t think much uv it, eh? Purty rough settin’ you’ll find it ’fore mornin’.” He looked about, and his eye discovered the furnace in which the boys had roasted their potatoes. “ Been havin’ a fire, too; might have burned up a lot o’ timber,” and he walked over and gave the remaining embers a vicious kick. “ Town kids are pretty scarce o’ gumption, anyway; and if they ain’t even been tearin’ down my fence,” he added, as he took the two rails from the tree and returned them to their place, thereby robbing the boys of their means of descent.

Then he came back to the tree again, and for the first time noticed the two sacks of nuts lying on the ground.

“ Hello, been here all day, I guess; got

PINKEY PERKINS

two sacks uv 'em, too, all hulled and ready to carry off. Good thing we happened along, Tige; got here jist in the nick o' time. These'll bring six bits up town."

"We gathered and hulled all them, and they're ours," shouted Pinkey from the tree, his courage returning somewhat as he saw Old Hostetters preparing to make off with the sacks, and the vision of returning home without even his flour-sack to show for his day's work making him boil with anger.

"They are, are they? Well, we'll see about that, young man. This'll be the last time you ever steal nuts in *this* grove." Old Hostetters called his dog. "Here, Tige, you watch 'em while I tote these nuts to the house. We'll show 'em how to rob a poor farmer and set his woods afire, the little scamps. Watch 'em, Tige."

Old Hostetters was too lazy to work when he could get a thing done some other way, so, instead of carrying the nuts to the house

HOW PINKEY WENT NUTTING

himself, he brought his old blind mare into service. She was grazing near by, which fact was evidenced by the sonorous "tonk-a-tonk" of the cow-bell attached to her neck, as a guard against her getting lost.

Helpless in their rage, Pinkey and Bunny saw Old Hostetters heartlessly load their hard-earned sacks of nuts on the old mare's back and lead her clanking away to the house. He paid no more attention to them when he left than if they had not been there. As far as appearances went, he had entirely forgotten them.

But Tige had not forgotten them. Old Hostetters had said "Watch 'em," and "Watch 'em" he did. He settled himself comfortably under the trees, placed his head between his fore feet, and seemed settled for an indefinite time. Just to remind his prey that he was not asleep, and to make sure in his own mind that they had not escaped, he would occasionally deign to roll his eyes up-

PINKEY PERKINS

ward, and, when satisfied that all was well, would drop them again and resume his air of indifference.

An hour passed and Tige still retained his attitude of vigilant comfort, while Pinkey and Bunny sat in the tree, cramped and helpless, boiling with rage. Once or twice Bunny felt a burning desire to remind Pinkey who was responsible for this inglorious ending to their day's work, and he endeavored to lead up to the subject by mentioning the potatoes they had roasted, but Pinkey sat glum as an oyster, and did not appear to hear the remarks.

It was a sad and silent pair they made as they sat in the tree, with no visible prospects of ever getting down unless some one came to their rescue. They had given up all hope of Old Hostetters relenting, and as time went on, their outlook became more and more unpleasant.

There is no telling how long this situation

HOW PINKEY WENT NUTTING

would have continued, had not a providential rabbit wandered within range of Tige's vision and tested his constancy. The temptation was too much, and he immediately deserted his uninteresting charges for the excitement of the chase.

No sooner had he got beyond hearing distance than the two prisoners half-slid, half-fell to the ground and ran for the fence. They did not even stop to get their lunch-basket. Hurriedly they bridled old Polly, scrambled on her back, and beat a hasty and unconditional retreat. They did not stop urging old Polly to exert superequine efforts to land them out of danger until they had reached the crossroads again, and were fairly well along toward the town limits.

Instead of riding proudly across the public square and showing any boys they might meet what marvelous success had been theirs, Pinkey and Bunny pursued a most roundabout course after they got within the

PINKEY PERKINS

danger limit of being questioned about their trip. Much to their relief they encountered no one who exhibited any curiosity concerning it, and they were thankful to reach home without the sting of ridicule being added to their woes.

It was with a dejected, heart-broken air that the two boys dismounted at the Perkins's stable that evening and silently led old Polly to her stall. No words could express their feelings, and even silence seemed bitter.

They explained to their parents the cause of their failure to bring home any nuts, and received the sympathy they had expected from that quarter, but they did not fare so well when their story became known at school.

They bore their teasing as well as could be expected, but the indignity they had suffered sank deep into their hearts, and they looked forward with the keenest delight to the possibility that some day they might be in

HOW PINKEY WENT NUTTING

a position to turn the tables on their persecutor, and they entered into a solemn compact that they would "have revenge on Old Hostetters if it took ten years to get it."

VIII

HOW PINKEY TRIUMPHED BY DIPLOMACY

PINKEY PERKINS had thought in the past that he had drained the cup of bitterness to the dregs, but his past troubles were mere ripples compared to the waves of depression which now submerged him. Hattie Warren, the only girl in the world whom he ever had loved or ever could love, had "given him the mitten." Of course, he had had "girls" before, but with no other girl had he ever been really in love.

"Bunny" Morris's mother was getting up a birthday party for him, and it was to be a surprise. Everybody in school knew about it, of course, except Bunny, who, in spite of

HOW PINKEY TRIUMPHED

all the mysterious references to "next Friday night," uttered in his presence, remained suspiciously stupid and indifferent.

For days Pinkey had looked forward to the joy he was to experience in escorting his Affinity to the party. To be sure, he had said nothing to her of his aspirations; that must be done by sending her a formal note, "requesting the pleasure" of her company, and so forth. He still had vivid recollections of his experiences on the way home from Red Feather's party on the first of April previous, and the resolution he had made on that occasion was to be carried out to the letter.

For two or three days he had kept paper and envelopes secreted in his desk, awaiting the time when the invitations should be distributed and he could write to his Affinity. He could not, with propriety, send her his note before he received his invitation, for although he was certain he would get one, to

PINKEY PERKINS

anticipate its receipt would be out of the proper order of things.

Pinkey had very fixed ideas regarding social etiquette, and he looked with the same cordial disapproval on any boy who would so utterly disregard the refinements of propriety in such a matter as this, as he would were he to intentionally divulge his identity in the sending of valentines, the hanging of May-baskets, or other delicate attentions, essentially anonymous. So as much as he desired to take Hattie Warren to Bunny's party, he must await the proper time to make his desires known.

Do not think that Pinkey had the field all to himself. He had a rival for the affections of his Affinity in Eddie Lewis, a boy for whom, due to several good and sufficient reasons, Pinkey cherished a most loyal hatred. Recently he had thought that Eddie was gaining ground, but he believed now that the tide of affection had changed, and that the

HOW PINKEY TRIUMPHED

change was in his favor. He had had his hair cut by the barber, which was no small factor in the scales of popularity; he was the owner of a hand-car on which his Affinity had once consented to ride; and, what was the best indication of all, he had walked clear home from Sunday School with her two Sundays in succession. In view of all these arguments, Pinkey felt justified in the belief that his star was bright with promise. He made a careful search of his memory to see if he could find treasured there any reason why his advances should not be considered favorably, and aside from the fast disappearing fear of Eddie's supremacy, he felt sure of his ground.

On the way to school Tuesday morning, Pinkey learned that the invitations were "out." He felt a pang of regret that Mrs. Morris had not given him the invitations to distribute, but, on second thought, his mind was set at rest on that score, when he re-

PINKEY PERKINS

membered that it was no doubt because he and Bunny were together so much of the time that he would have had difficulty in making the distribution without divulging the entire scheme to Bunny.

Mrs. Morris, being influenced in her choice of a messenger only by the desire that he be some one who would carry out her instructions carefully, had hailed Putty Black as he was passing on the way to school, and had given him the invitations to distribute. She had allowed Bunny to go to school that morning before the first bell rang, in order that he might not see her arranging the invitations for delivery.

“Be careful Bunny doesn’t see you with them,” she warned, as she gave Putty the shoe-box containing the envelopes.

“Yes’m, I’ll be careful,” said Putty, as he hurried off, proud of his part in the proceedings.

On the way, he passed several of the boys

HOW PINKEY TRIUMPHED

and girls for whom there were invitations, and set several uneasy minds at rest by giving the neatly addressed envelopes to their owners. Going across the public square, he met Eddie Lewis and gave him his invitation. Eddie joined him, and together the pair proceeded schoolward.

“ Let’s see who all’s a-goin’,” said Eddie, taking the box and scanning the addresses.

“ There’s twenty-nine invited,” said Putty, proud of his knowledge, “ fourteen boys and fifteen girls.”

“ That’s so Bunny can take Bess Knapp home, I’ll bet,” sneered Putty; “ I’d laugh if she wouldn’t let him.”

Thus discussing the party and who would take who, and whether or not Bunny knew about it, the two wandered leisurely along, dispensing an occasional envelope as a lucky one was encountered.

As Putty and Eddie entered the corner turnstile, they saw Pinkey coming to school.

PINKEY PERKINS

Pinkey had been on the lookout for Putty and his box of invitations, and momentarily expected to be called and given his. There must be one for him, since it was part of the program that all who were going to the party should meet at Pinkey's house and descend on Bunny in a body. But Putty said nothing about an invitation, and Pinkey would have died rather than ask if there was one for him.

Fearing to appear concerned at the seeming slight, Pinkey studiously avoided Putty all during the morning playtime, and, when the last bell rang, he went into the school-house last. All of the pupils who had received invitations were very mysterious about it, and made a show of secrecy "for fear of letting Bunny know," yet there seemed to be a very unconscious display of similar envelopes on many desks. Pinkey's heart sickened as he passed the desk where sat his Affinity, and saw the envelope containing

HOW PINKEY TRIUMPHED

her invitation lying on the desk before her. Pinkey pondered long and hard over the matter of his not receiving an invitation, and reviewed carefully the happenings of the past few weeks, to ascertain what he might have done to so incur the displeasure of Bunny's mother. But he could think of nothing that would cause her to deal him such a blow; and she had always been so pleasant to him, too.

Recess came and went, but no invitation. Pinkey's pride alone kept him from showing how badly he felt, but his indignation almost got the better of him several times as he was forced to reply, "Not that I know of," when asked if he was invited to the party. He tried to think that Mrs. Morris had kept his invitation to give to him in person, because she feared Bunny might see him receive the envelope, but he got small consolation from such a remote possibility.

PINKEY PERKINS

By noon Pinkey was absolutely miserable, for by this time he had no doubt but that he had been cruelly slighted. He tried to be jolly on the way home from school, but his laugh was a very dry one, and things usually enjoyed were boring and tiresome. To his mother's questions at dinner as to why he had no appetite, his only reply was that he "just didn't seem hungry." He would not confess to her the disappointment that was gnawing away at his heart.

As he entered the schoolhouse yard after dinner, Putty Black came running across from the ball-ground to meet him.

"Here's a note for Pinkey," called Putty. "Don't let Bunny Morris see it," and, with some lame excuse about not having a chance to deliver it before, he ran back to the game of "scrub" he had left when he saw Pinkey coming.

Instantly all the clouds cleared away, and Pinkey was himself once more. After hur-

HOW PINKEY TRIUMPHED

riedly scanning the note, to make sure he was not the victim of some new outrage, he entered boisterously into a game of cross-tag, carrying the theatre of operations well over the "dead-line" into the girls' side of the yard. One of the girls said that Pinkey was "trying to show off before Hattie Warren," who, with others, was skipping the rope near by, "salt and pepper" style. Another girl, who knew more about recent happenings than did Pinkey, remarked in a significant way that it was "all the good it would do him." Pinkey did not hear either remark, and was blissfully ignorant of the hidden meanings of the knowing looks and words on all sides.

As soon as school opened and the pupils settled down to work, Pinkey barricaded his desk with his geography, brought forth his paper and envelopes, and began the note to his Affinity. Three times he wrote and three times he tore his paper into small bits and

PINKEY PERKINS

put the scraps in his pocket. He took this latter precaution, because Red Feather had, on occasions, put together the small pieces into which notes had been torn and left on the desks, and had copied the restored notes on the blackboard. By this means, she hoped to discourage a custom which was, in her eyes, a very serious menace to school discipline.

Finally Pinkey succeeded in composing a note, the construction of which seemed to him properly formal. It ran: "Pinkerton Perkins very Truly desires the Happiness of escorting Miss Warren to the party next friday Night at Bunny Morrises house. Please anser soon. Every body is to start from my house."

After having read and re-read his note and convincing himself of its clearness and elegance of expression, Pinkey hid it in his geography and waited for dismissal-time to come. He had no idea of delivering the note

HOW PINKEY TRIUMPHED

to his Affinity in person; that was too commonplace a proceeding even to consider. He intended that everything should be done strictly in accordance with his ideas of formality.

As soon as school was out, he bribed a smaller boy to deliver the note to his Affinity at her home. Pinkey had many times delivered notes for the young society men of Enterprise, so he knew that in sending the note in this manner he was doing things strictly according to rule.

After dispatching the messenger on his important mission, Pinkey, to make sure that there was no hitch in the proceedings, faithfully shadowed him by going cross-lots, until, from a distant shed, he saw the note delivered into the proper hands. Many were the emotions which coursed through his breast as he waited for the door to again open and he should see the reply placed in his envoy's hands.

PINKEY PERKINS

He waited what seemed an age before the fierce beating of his heart experienced a



“HE SAW THE NOTE DELIVERED”

sudden increase in intensity as he saw the fateful missive handed to the small boy and the latter started on his return mission. At

HOW PINKEY TRIUMPHED

once he left his hiding-place and lost no time in effecting a meeting with his messenger. After having received his reply, he looked at the tightly sealed envelope and somehow feared to open it. It seemed cold and threatening in its aspect, and he was filled with conflicting emotions as he thought of the widely different messages it might contain, and what each would mean to him.

When considering a question of unusual importance, it was a habit of Pinkey's to retreat to the wood-shed at home and think it all over, so he at once turned his steps homeward, and ten minutes later, with heart thumping and fingers trembling, he could have been seen perched high on a pile of wood, opening his note. Slowly he unfolded the carefully written paper and read the contents. The shock he experienced as he did so made his blood run cold. Again and again he read the fatal note, but still he could not believe his hopes had been so

PINKEY PERKINS

blighted. Yet there in black and white were the hateful words; there could be no mistake. There was no attempt at an explanation of his Affinity's strange reply save the few words necessary to give her decision, which she had done in the following words: "Harriet Warren regrets she cannot accept Mr. Perkins' kind request. My company for next friday evening is engaged."

Pinkey's first impulse was to tear the paper into bits, but on second thought he decided not to do so. A feeling of exquisite anguish and calm resignation to fate had begun to steal over him, and to exert a wonderfully soothing effect on his wrath. A cold chill caused him to shudder and sent a strange, creepy sensation through his frame. He had a feeling of being left alone in the world, unjustly wronged by the One on whom he had based all his hopes of future happiness.

He looked at the note, and thought what those few words must mean to him and to

HOW PINKEY TRIUMPHED

his future. But She had written it, and, since he had resolved to love Her and Her only until death, he decided to keep even this, as it might prove to be the one solitary memento to cheer his desolate life. Sadly he replaced the note in the envelope, folded it in his handkerchief, and carefully put it away in his pocket. Then, with his chin in his hands and his elbows on his knees, he began to consider what the future had in store for him. Life had never seemed so empty, and he dreaded the thought of ever seeing any of his old friends again. One thing was settled: never again would he be attracted by feminine society. The one girl in all the world had given him the mitten, without any word of excuse, and he would never trust one of them again.

Now that all the happiness had gone out of his life, he would devote himself to the endeavor to make others happy. Strange to say, he felt no hatred toward the author of

PINKEY PERKINS

all this sorrow that lay on his heart. Perhaps she would be happier if he should leave



“LIFE HAD NEVER SEEMED SO EMPTY ”

her and never enter her life again. But he could not think of leaving all that was near and dear to him even to please the one who

HOW PINKEY TRIUMPHED

had caused him such sorrow. He decided to hold his ground, and show her that her opinion of him was an incorrect one, and that he was really worthy of her love. He would study hard in school, and later he would graduate and go to college, and sometime he would become a great man and all Enterprise would be proud of him. Then he would come back to the little town and visit the scenes of his boyhood.

And then, one day he would meet her alone in some leafy lane, and with tears in her eyes she would tell him how sorry she was that she had blighted his life, and how unhappy she had been all these years since she had wronged him. Then he would take from his pocket the yellow, time-worn note which had so changed his life, and would silently place it in her hands.

At the thought that he had cherished it all these years, she would weep anew over it, and would ask him if there was yet any way in

PINKEY PERKINS

which she could make him happy. Then he would tell her that it was too late; that his life had been cheerless for so many years, that he must now live it out to the end as she had decreed in the past.

Thus he would end the interview and leave her standing there, sad, grief-stricken and repentant that she had brought everlasting desolation into two lives by one rash act of her childhood. He would not be moved to compassion by her dewy eyes or imploring looks, but would walk away with a firm step and go back to the lonely life to which she had banished him years before.

Having thus settled his future so clearly in his mind, Pinkey felt at peace with all the world, the chastening effect of his recent determination to suffer now being at its height. He felt a superiority over those who had never experienced any real trouble in their lives, and decided to keep his trouble locked in his breast and to confide in no

HOW PINKEY TRIUMPHED

one. He would not even bother his mother with his sorrow; he could and would bear it alone.

So effectually did he work on his own feelings, at supper he was actually cheerful, as far as appearances were concerned, and had fully regained his appetite. Just at present, he was enjoying his sorrow to the full extent.

The next three days were trying ones for Pinkey. Every boy and girl in school knew that Hattie Warren was going to the party with Eddie Lewis, and they also knew that she had refused to go with Pinkey. When Pinkey had learned that his Affinity was to go with Eddie, his calm acceptance of the inevitable came near to deserting him, but he managed to say nothing of what he felt. No one mentioned to him the fact of his having received a refusal from Hattie Warren, nor of her having accepted an invitation to go with Eddie. They knew how serious

PINKEY PERKINS

a matter it was to Pinkey, and how effectually he would resent such a reference.

Pinkey tried to act the same as usual, and took part in all the games with even greater vim than was his wont. Whenever his Affinity was near, he was especially vigorous in his play, usually endeavoring to upset some boy near her and then run away shouting at the top of his voice, but never a glance in her direction, however, betrayed his knowledge of her presence.

During these three long days, not a word passed between Pinkey and his Affinity. He tried to think that he wanted to forget her and that he wished she might forget him, but he knew that her image should be with him always, and down deep in his heart he hoped that she cherished the same feeling toward him.

One afternoon, during this intense estrangement, while passing along the street, Pinkey found himself and his Affinity ap-

HOW PINKEY TRIUMPHED

proaching each other from opposite directions, and it seemed that a face-to-face encounter was inevitable. She was with her mother, which fact did not detract from Pinkey's desire to avoid the meeting. He dare not turn about and go back, thereby admitting his embarrassment, yet he did not relish the idea of passing stolidly by the only girl he ever could love and receiving from her only a cold, impersonal glance, as though he were some one she had never seen before. He could not speak to her and run the risk of receiving only a toss of the head and a tilt of the nose as a reply.

All these things were what Pinkey pictured would happen, and he did not know that his Affinity was as hungry for a reconciliation as he was, and that she was only wishing for a chance to set herself aright in his eyes. However, under the circumstances, she was no more desirous of the impending meeting than was Pinkey.

PINKEY PERKINS

For a few seconds Pinkey thought hard and fast, then he stopped suddenly, raised his two fore fingers to his mouth, and gave forth a shrill, piercing whistle, apparently to attract the attention of some boy on the parallel street a block away. After appearing to receive recognition of his signal, he made a few gestures with his arm, and shouted at the top of his voice to the imaginary boy: "Wait a jiffy; I've got some-thing to show you," and precipitously vaulted the fence beside him and disappeared from view. His action had relieved another mind quite as much as it had his own.

Friday night came, and, with the exception of Eddie Lewis and Hattie Warren, all who were going to the party assembled at Pinkey's house. At the appointed time they divided, by common consent, into congenial pairs, and, with a greater display of silence and discretion than is usual among children of their age, started for Bunny's house in a

HOW PINKEY TRIUMPHED

body. After approaching the house on tip-toe, they burst violently in the front door, to find Bunny attired in his Sunday best, wrestling with Least Common Multiple and Greatest Common Divisor. It was not Bunny's custom to study on Friday night, or on any other, in fact, but he felt that if he were busy, the illusion that he had been taken unawares would be all the more perfect. After declaring himself to be properly surprised and greatly delighted, Bunny was subjected to a vigorous pounding on the back, one blow being delivered for each year he had lived, and several being administered "to grow on." He was then presented with various and sundry handkerchiefs, vases, neckties, bottles of perfume, and other articles of like nature, too numerous to mention.

Speaking literally, the party was a howling success. In spite of his recent sorrow, Pinkey was the life of everything. He or-

PINKEY PERKINS

ganized games of Post-Office, Clap In and Clap Out, and Forfeits, acting both as postmaster in the former and auctioneer in the latter. His energy to make every one enjoy the evening was admirable, and his attitude toward Hattie Warren was such as to make her very unhappy. He had carefully considered what would be the most effective attitude to take toward her, in view of his decision to bear his sorrow bravely, and had finally decided that, if he appeared entirely unconcerned, and showed no malice toward her over having received the note she had written, he would be carrying out his adopted plan of action to the letter. It was along these lines that Pinkey governed his actions during the evening, and he had reasoned better than he knew.

Had he ignored her, it would have shown her that he resented her refusal to go with him, while, had he shown her undue attention, it would have been a sign of weakness.

HOW PINKEY TRIUMPHED

But to have him do neither made her think beyond doubt that she had done wrong in not waiting for his request to take her to the party, instead of accepting the first one she had received.

By Monday Pinkey's air of resignation to fate had gradually begun to desert him, and a feeling of bitterness to take possession. Bunny did not realize on what dangerous ground even he was treading when he asked Pinkey that morning: "What made you let Eddie Lewis take Hattie Warren to my party?"

To this unwise question Pinkey replied viciously: "I didn't let 'im. S'pose I'm runnin' Hattie Warren? Ask her if you want to know."

"What'd she say when she give you the mitten?" urged Bunny.

"That's for me to know and for you to find out," said Pinkey, and he turned and

PINKEY PERKINS

went into the schoolhouse. Had any one but Bunny broached the subject, the story might have been different.

At a loss for any better way to publicly announce his dislike for Eddie and his erst-while Affinity, Pinkey, after the morning session began, drew on his slate a caricature of a boy and girl, walking along hand in hand, and printed beneath in bold letters: " E. L. & H. W."

Just as he held up his drawing so that those behind him could see it, Red Feather's watchful eye detected him, and, as a consequence, he spent his recess glowering at her and writing " incomprehensibility " over and over again on his slate where the picture had been.

After recess, Bunny, by sign language, made frantic efforts to transmit to Pinkey some message. Pinkey could not understand, and made motions for him to write it on paper and throw it over. Bunny acted on

HOW PINKEY TRIUMPHED

Pinkey's suggestion, and, after scribbling a few minutes, folded the note tightly, and, when a favorable opportunity occurred, shot it across the room to Pinkey.

Pinkey opened the note carefully, lest Red Feather should see him, and held it beneath his desk while he read it. He did not take his eyes from the note until he had read it all, but, from the way he occasionally twisted his head sideways, Bunny could tell that he was mad. After reading it a second time, he folded it again and laid it carefully on his desk. There was a set expression on his face that boded ill for somebody.

He did not indicate to Bunny what ideas were in his mind, but Bunny was quite sure that he was busy with some revengeful scheme.

Pinkey kept his eye on Red Feather, who was busy listening to the recitation of the " B " class in grammar. Presently, when the recitation was finished, he saw Red

PINKEY PERKINS

Feather looking in his direction, and that was just what he had been waiting for. Hastily picking Bunny's note from his desk, he began slowly tearing it to pieces, all the time looking down at his desk.

Without saying a word, Red Feather arose from her chair and stalked majestically down the aisle to Pinkey's desk and held out her hand, and Pinkey, with apparent reluctance, dropped the pieces into her open palm. Then, maintaining her impressive silence, she returned to the platform.

For about five minutes she busied herself at her desk, then arose and went to the blackboard. Picking up a piece of crayon, she wrote: "E—— L—— told me at recess and made me promise not to tell anybody that he give P—— B—— two crockeries and a chinie middler not to give you your note to come to my party till after he had asked H—— W—— to take her. And he give him a nigger shooter too. Dont you tell any-

HOW PINKEY TRIUMPHED

body but if I was you I would get even with them two if it took hair.”

As was her custom, Red Feather made no comments. It was her theory that, when notes were found and copied on the blackboard, the humiliation of those concerned was the best punishment. She generally wrote the names just as they occurred in the notes, and on this occasion she felt herself bowed down with generosity over having written only the initials instead of the names they must necessarily stand for.

Pinkey was overjoyed at the outcome of his master-stroke of diplomacy, in the success of which Red Feather had so unwittingly assisted him. Every one in the room looked at Pinkey, and he found it difficult to retain the air of injured innocence he had worn ever since he had been compelled to give the torn-up note to Red Feather.

Pinkey was aware of an occasional appealing glance from his Affinity, but he steeled

PINKEY PERKINS

his heart against so much as letting her know he had seen her efforts to get him to look at her. He knew the shot had struck home, and that things would right themselves in time, but at present he wished the truth to have its effect alone.

While Pinkey was elated over the shape matters had taken, Bunny was very much disturbed over the publicity given to the note, for he feared Eddie Lewis would "lay for" him, and later events proved his fears to be well grounded. When school was dismissed at noon, Bunny had scarcely gotten out of the schoolhouse before Eddie took him to task for "tattling to Pinkey." A wordy war ensued and a crowd gathered. When Pinkey reached the door, he heard the altercation and instantly divined the cause.

Rushing into the crowd and elbowing his way to the front, he shouted: "Lookee here, Ed Lewis, why don't you pick on somebody your size? If there's anybody to fight in



V

“PUT UP OR SHUT UP”

HOW PINKEY TRIUMPHED

this matter, it's me. *I* let Red Feather get that note on purpose, and if you want to take it out o' me, just you try it on. Come on, now, put up or shut up."

This was an unexpected turn of affairs for Eddie, and he endeavored to back down as gracefully as possible from his wrathful pedestal.

"Aw, I wuz jist a-funnin'," he explained; "I jist wanted to see what Bunny'd say. We wuzn't goin' to fight, wuz we, Bunny?"

Bunny said he didn't know, and agreed that he "wasn't trying to pick a fight."

This ended the controversy. The crowd reluctantly dispersed, each boy relating just where he was when the quarrel began, just what Eddie had said, just what Bunny had said, and how Pinkey had taken Bunny's part.

When Pinkey came to school that afternoon, he was manifestly pleased with himself. He had been vindicated in the eyes of

PINKEY PERKINS

his Affinity for being negligent in asking her to take her to the party, and he had settled with Eddie by making him back down after he had challenged Bunny. When school "took up," and Pinkey had to pass the seat where sat his Affinity, he looked straight ahead, entirely oblivious of a look for which he would have given his soul a week before.

After the opening exercises, Pinkey started to get his arithmetic lesson. When he opened his book, his eyes almost started from his head. There, between the pages of the book, marking the day's lesson, was a note addressed to him in the handwriting of his Affinity. Regardless of Red Feather, and of every one else, he feverishly opened the envelope and devoured the contents of the note within. Just as he had finished, he was hurled from the seventh heaven of bliss to the depths of despair, as the word "Pinkerton!" smote his ear. Red Feather stood beside him.

HOW PINKEY TRIUMPHED

“ Give me that note,” she demanded.

Pinkey attempted to destroy it, but Red Feather was too quick for him, and jerked it from his hand before he could damage it. Pinkey was on the verge of open rebellion as he pictured the humiliation of his Affinity when the contents of that note were written on the blackboard. He started to follow Red Feather to the platform, but on second thought he saw the futility of such a move. He could only sit and think dire threats of revenge, as Red Feather seated herself and began to read the note. She did read it, too, not once, but several times. Here is what she read:

“ FRIEND PINKEY:—I am sorry I rote what I did last tuesday. when Eddie Lewis asked me I was mad because you didnt asked me first. I thought you thought you could ask me any time and I would go with you. I went with him just for spite. I am

PINKEY PERKINS

glad Red feather found Bunnies note and rote it on the board. Now I know why you didnt ask me before Eddie did.

“ I hope you are not mad at Me. I am not.

“ your true Friend;

“ HARRIET WARREN.

“ P. S. I am glad you didnt let Eddie whip Bunnie.

“ P. S. (2) I am going to sunday school sunday.”

We must give Red Feather credit for remembering she was once a little girl herself, and had had her love-affairs, too. Be it said in her praise that she carefully replaced the note in the envelope, walked back to Pinkey's desk, and, with a look of tenderness in her eyes that he had never seen there before, restored to him intact the precious epistle.

IX

HOW PINKEY TREATED THE PUBLIC

PINKEY PERKINS was hurrying from school to the Opera House. The "Colson Comedy Company" had arrived in town that afternoon, to remain two days, and Pinkey felt his services might be in demand.

"What you a-hurryin' so for, Pinkey?" puffed Bunny Morris, coming up behind him on a run.

"Goin' to get a job peddlin' bills for the show t'night, — come on," and Pinkey broke into a run, followed by the ever faithful Bunny.

Arrived at the Opera House, Pinkey, as spokesman for the pair, made their desires known to the manager. That worthy in-

PINKEY PERKINS

formed them that there were four boys already distributing bills, and their services were not needed.

Undaunted by this disappointment, Pinkey asked if there was " anything else they could do to get in." The manager replied that there was not, and told them not to " pester " him any more. He and the other members of the " Company " were busy arranging the stage, and had no time to be bothered by the ambitious boys.

But they would not leave. They remained on the stage, offering a helping hand here and there, and getting in the way generally, hoping that, by remaining present and in evidence, they might be of enough assistance to gain the coveted " Pass this Boy " for the evening's performance. If the passes were forthcoming, they hoped to obtain later the necessary permission from home.

The stage was finally set, and everything was in readiness for the play that night.

HOW PINKEY TREATED THE PUBLIC

Pinkey and Bunny contrived to keep within the manager's notice, that he might not overlook them and make it necessary to ask him for passes. Their manœuvres availed them nothing, however, so Pinkey finally mustered up courage enough to say to the manager: "Bunny Morris 'n' me could come to the show t'night, if we had a pass."

"You haven't done anything to earn a pass," replied the manager, getting vexed; "now run away, and don't bother around here any more."

"We've worked, helpin' shift scenery," persisted Pinkey, unwilling to give up.

Then a new thought flashed through the manager's mind. Here was a chance to have some fun at the boys' expense.

"If you kids want to see the show to-night," said he, "you can go on the stage and take parts. We were going to leave out two of the characters, but you can help us make the cast complete."

PINKEY PERKINS

The two boys exchanged glances. Could it be that at last they were to have their one ambition realized, that they were to become real actors?

“ Were you ever on the stage before? ” queried the manager critically.

The other members of the “ Company ” assembled in the wings to witness the fun.

Pinkey said he had delivered the “ Welcome Address ” at the church on “ Children’s Day,” and Bunny said he had sung in the chorus on the same occasion.

“ Oh, well, then,” said the manager, winking at one of the actors, “ you’ll both do excellently, — you’re just the boys we want. Now, we’ll have to rehearse so you can get your lines for to-night.”

So saying, he called Pinkey and Bunny to the center of the stage and explained the situation to them.

“ Now, remember,” said he, “ you are two brothers who, in your youth, separated to

HOW PINKEY TREATED THE PUBLIC

seek your fortunes. You have not seen each other for twenty-two years. You ” — indicating Pinkey — “ have been in prison all that time for a crime you did not commit, and you ” — indicating Bunny — “ have searched the world over all these years to find your brother.” Both boys were too intent on their parts to notice the discrepancies between their actual and their supposed ages.

Finally, after further detailed instructions, they began to rehearse. With serious faces and tragic strides, they repeatedly met in the middle of the stage and went through their act.

“ Ah! ” exclaims Bunny, “ methinks I see a familiar look in those eyes. Dost know me, stranger? ”

“ Nay, nay, friend,” replies Pinkey solemnly, “ I know thee not. For twenty-two long years have I lived behind a dungeon’s bars, an innocent man.”

PINKEY PERKINS

“ Ah, ha ! ” cries Bunny, “ I thought it, I thought it! Hast thou a strawberry mark on thy left shoulder ? ”

“ I have, ” says the realistic Pinkey, in a very dramatic way, to the convulsive delight of the onlookers.

“ Then thou art my long lost brother, ” shouts Bunny, endeavoring to clasp the doubting Pinkey in a fond embrace.

Pinkey holds him at arm’s length. “ Come not near me. I call no man ‘ brother ’ until he sing to me a lay of our childhood. Ah, that voice! How well do I remember it! ”

Whereupon Bunny bursts forth with the words of the “ Welcome Carol ” he had joined in singing on “ Children’s Day. ” This satisfies the skeptical Pinkey, and the two rush headlong into each other’s arms.

Here the curtain was supposed to fall.

Time after time did they rehearse, until the manager told them they did beautifully.



" THEN THOU ART MY LONG LOST BROTHER "

V

HOW PINKEY TREATED THE PUBLIC

Then they hurried away with pride in their hearts, under instructions to return in time to go through their parts a few more times before the curtain went up.

On the way home, after discussing the matter with Bunny, Pinkey decided that, in order to make his portrayal of the character of ex-convict all the more realistic, he should have his hair clipped short. For a long time he had nourished an unquenchable desire to have his hair clipped, but never could obtain parental sanction to his longing. But he felt that there could be no objection when it was done in the cause of histrionic realism.

Pinkey knew a boy who was learning the barber's trade and was in the habit of cutting hair free of charge, and to him he went to be shorn.

His only request to the barber was to "clip 'er as close as the machine'll cut," and when he dismounted from the chair, it was

PINKEY PERKINS

plain that a novice had done his best to comply with a customer's wishes.

Bursting with importance, Pinkey hurried home from the barber-shop to acquaint his mother with his new stroke of fortune, and to urge the necessity of returning to rehearse again, immediately after supper.

His elation was short-lived. The greeting he received, as he entered the sitting-room, was far from reassuring.

“ Pinkerton Perkins! ” gasped his mother, “ what *have* you been up to now, and who cut your hair? ”

“ I'm goin' to act in the show at the Opery House t'night,” he answered excitedly, “ 'n' I'm to be a convict, so I got my hair clipped, like convicts always do.”

Mrs. Perkins could not find suitable words to express her feelings in the matter, so she remanded Pinkey to his room, to await his father's arrival. No amount of explanation or persuasion on Pinkey's part could bring

HOW PINKEY TREATED THE PUBLIC

his mother to take his view of the proceeding, or to listen to his reasons for all he had done.

“ They can’t *have* the show without me and Bunny,” he pleaded, as his final argument.

“ You’ll have show enough, when your father comes home,” warned the mother; “ the i-d-e-a of you getting your head shaved like that! ”

Heavy-hearted and apprehensive, mumbling something about “ not shaved, only clipped,” Pinkey went up to his room and sat down on the edge of his bed to await developments. His stage career seemed blighted before it had even begun, and the outlook that had been so rosy now chilled him with its bleakness. He knew a punishment awaited him when his father came home. He also knew that, for him, no curtain would rise and no footlights glare *that* night. He looked in his mirror and dreaded

the meeting with his father. Oh! that hair could be grown as fast as it could be removed!

Half an hour later Pinkey heard unmistakable footfalls on the sidewalk, and a few moments later, after some unintelligible conversation between his father and mother, the word "Pinkerton!" coming from below, smote his ear with boding emphasis. Slowly and deliberately, his hat pulled down tight on his head, he descended the stairs and confronted his father.

"Take off your hat and let me see your head," demanded the father. Pinkey silently uncovered his bristling head and waited.

"Who told you you might have that done?" asked the father, with difficulty concealing a smile.

"Nobody. I was to be a convict in the show t'night, and I had Johnny Fox cut my hair like one."

"You'll be a convict here to-night, if I'm



"TAKE OFF YOUR HAT AND LET ME SEE YOUR HEAD"

not mistaken, — come with me.” And Pinkey reluctantly followed his father to the wood-shed.

Mr. Perkins was hardly in the proper frame of mind to discipline his son, but disobedience could not be winked at, even when, to Pinkey, the circumstances seemed to warrant it. With a slender switch, chosen more for moral effect than for real punishment, he began his unpleasant duty. Instantly, he was aware that all was not right. In the dim light of the wood-shed he had failed to detect an unusual bulkiness in certain portions of Pinkey’s anatomy, which, had he noticed it, would have created suspicion in his mind.

“ Pinkerton,” he demanded, “ what have you got in your trousers? ”

“ *Globe-Democrats*, sir,” faltered Pinkey, much chagrined at being found out, and fearful of the consequences. While up-stairs, waiting for his father to come home, he had

PINKEY PERKINS

lined the more exposed parts of his clothing with accumulated daily papers, as a guard against the stings of the coming punishment.

Parental dignity was all that saved Mr. Perkins from compromising his rôle of stern father. With difficulty did he control himself long enough to order Pinkey to the house and to bed immediately. Then, as Pinkey made a hasty exit, his father, unable longer to retain his composure, gave way to the laughter that was consuming him.

Pinkey did not know that the supper which he ate in bed that night, instead of being smuggled to him by the hired girl, as he supposed, had been authorized by a lenient father and prepared by a generous mother.

At breakfast next morning Pinkey was unusually quiet. He felt much better when it was over and the subjects of show, hair, and *Globe-Democrats* had not been touched upon, for this told him that those pages had been

HOW PINKEY TREATED THE PUBLIC

turned, and that he was starting anew once more.

As he went to school, Pinkey grew very much elated over the envy he inspired as jealous ones were allowed to run their hands over his head backwards, "just to see how rough it was."

"Tell you what, you fellers don't know how nice 'n' cool it is, either," he said patronizingly to the long-haired ones, "'n' you don't have to be combin' it all the time."

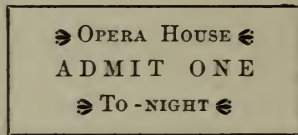
In front of the post-office he met Bunny, and, while strolling schoolward, he proceeded to question him about the show. Bunny was very reticent, but finally he admitted that he had attempted to obtain recognition at the Opera House the night before, and had failed. He said the man "just asked him if he had a strawberry-mark on his left shoulder, and then laughed, and told him to skip on out of the way."

"But say, Pinkey," he confided, "you

PINKEY PERKINS

know them tickets we found in the ticket-office last fall, after that home talent show, and was a-goin' to use 'em for tickets to our circus? Well, them's the same as people was a-gettin' in on last night, jist e'zactly. They're sellin' tickets in here," — indicating the corner drug-store, — "let's look and see for certain."

The two boys went into the store, and there in the show-case they saw several piles of tickets, upon each of which was printed merely:



They were exactly the same as the ones Pinky had at home, being examples of the typographical limit beyond which the *Citizen* office dare not venture.

"Bet you we go to that show t'night,"

HOW PINKEY TREATED THE PUBLIC

said Pinkey knowingly. "I got all them tickets yet, 'n' as long as the show people wouldn't get any money out o' us anyway, there's no harm in us usin' 'em."

"You bet," agreed Bunny, "'n' they said they'd let us in last night, too."

At noon, when Pinkey asked if he might go to the show that night, in case he and Bunny could get in free, he was actually disappointed when he was informed that his father had been presented with three tickets that morning, and would take him and Bunny, if they wanted to go so badly, but that there would be no more "acting" indulged in by them.

When Pinkey saw that he had lost his opportunity to use his own tickets, his mind evolved another scheme on a much grander scale, which scheme he proceeded to perfect during the afternoon.

When school was out, he laid his plans before Bunny, who, as usual, bent his ideas

PINKEY PERKINS

to suit Pinkey's. In accordance with the course they had mapped out, they made all possible haste to reach the Opera House in time to get the employment they had sought the day before. The manager was surprised to see them again after their previous experience, and admired their persistence when they told him why they had come a second time.

Much to their delight, they were successful in their endeavors, and each was soon armed with a large pile of hand-bills for distribution. As soon as they had left the Opera House, Pinkey turned his bills over to Bunny, agreeing to meet him ten minutes later, down by the woollen mill. Hurrying home by the back way, he stealthily entered the house, secured his tickets, and was out again and gone before his presence was discovered. At the appointed time he effected the meeting with Bunny, and forthwith the two boys began a house to house distribution

HOW PINKEY TREATED THE PUBLIC

of hand-bills advertising a performance of "The Silver King," and of complimentary admission tickets to the same. Boldly they distributed their tickets over that quarter of the town where lived a class of people to whom the theatre was an unknown quantity. Women whose husbands were in the mine, and whose children were still at their looms in the mill, were made glad by receiving a ticket for every one in the family.

By supper-time Pinkey and Bunny had distributed over two hundred tickets, merely saying, as they hurried from house to house: "Here's some bills we're distributing for the show to-night, and some complimentary tickets for it, so's there'll be sure and be a good house."

When they had exhausted their supply of tickets, they went to another part of the town and finished distributing their bills.

"Tell you what," said Pinkey, as he and Bunny were returning to the Opera House

PINKEY PERKINS

for the unnecessary passes, "those people was glad to get them tickets, wasn't they, Bunny? 'N' when that man who made us act the monkey yesterday sees all these people and then counts the money he gets from the drug-store, he'll be about as mad as they are glad. And I'm glad we give 'em to the people we did, too, 'cause none o' the families we give tickets to could afford to buy tickets."

"You bet," echoed Bunny; "he won't lose nothin', 'cept in his mind, but he'll think he's made a lot he never gits. I guess we'll fool him as bad t'night as he did us yesterday."

On their way home they gave away their passes to a couple of older boys, thereby winning allegiance which might sometime be useful.

As Pinkey, the image of propriety, sat between his father and Bunny that evening, conspicuous by his closely clipped head, and watched the crowd pour into the Opera

HOW PINKEY TREATED THE PUBLIC

House, he actually became alarmed at the enormity of his afternoon's doings. He wondered what could be done with him and Bunny; could they be arrested? What if some one should be refused admittance, and tell on them! Before the play began, Pinkey and Bunny were both genuinely frightened, but when the people were about all in and the curtain rose, they regained their composure and became intensely interested in the show.

All went well until during the intermission between the third and fourth acts, when Pinkey noticed a commotion at the door. He saw the druggist come in, much excited, followed by the doorkeeper with his hands full of tickets, and both rush hurriedly up to the stage door and disappear. A few minutes later they returned and went outside again, accompanied by the "Silver King," ordinarily the manager, and the villain, who, before the play began, had sold tickets in the

PINKEY PERKINS

little office near the door. When the curtain had fallen a few minutes previous, he was languishing in chains, but now he appeared surprisingly alert.

There was trouble somewhere, and Pinkey knew that he was responsible. Bunny was scared, too, and looked appealingly at Pinkey, whom he trusted to get him safely out of it. Presently the "Silver King" and the villain returned, looking much perplexed, and greatly to the peace of mind of the two boys the play proceeded.

During the fourth act, the doorkeeper and the druggist came in again, and the latter went to a couple of men in the audience and whispered something to them. One of the men whispered something in reply, and then all three looked toward Pinkey, and Pinkey unconsciously edged closer to his father. Then he saw the druggist nod in his direction, while talking to the doorkeeper.

When the druggist pointed out the two

HOW PINKEY TREATED THE PUBLIC

boys as the parties responsible for the packed house, the doorkeeper instantly recognized them. He went up on the stage and told the "Silver King" about what he had learned, and asked him what to do.

The manager said it was too late to do anything. The people were there and the play was nearly over. They could not collect any admission fee now, and the play must be finished on account of those who had paid.

What puzzled every one was where the boys got all their tickets. The druggist could account for all he had had, and, besides, they now had on hand two hundred more than had been printed. After thinking it all over, the manager decided that there was nothing for him to do but make the best of the situation and take it philosophically.

When the play was over, Pinkey and Bunny, each holding one of Mr. Perkins's hands in a nervous grasp, felt their hearts sink as they saw the manager, the door-

PINKEY PERKINS

keeper, and the druggist all waiting for them at the door. As they reached the opening, the manager stopped them, saying: " Well, you boys scored one on all of us this time, and I can't blame you very much. But where on earth did you get all those tickets? "

Pinkey and Bunny were reluctant about talking before Pinkey's father, but, after the druggist had told him of their two-edged generosity that afternoon and they saw that he joined with the others in taking the proper view of the matter, they felt reassured. They told of getting the tickets the fall before, of the failure of their circus to materialize, and of their using them that day to give a lot of poor people a chance to see the play, as well as to raise the manager's hopes, as he had theirs the day before, and then allow him to suffer corresponding disappointment.

No one could attach any real blame to the boys for their action, though the manager admitted it was a severe blow to him to have



Varian

"BUT WHERE ON EARTH DID YOU GET ALL THOSE TICKETS?"

HOW PINKEY TREATED THE PUBLIC

his anticipated receipts more than cut in half.

As they left the hall, Pinkey and Bunny, while perceptibly eased, were still doubtful that all danger was passed. Next morning, however, after the train bearing the "Colson Comedy Company" had departed, and they had passed the drug-store unmolested on their way to school, they at last felt secure from trouble, and dared to accept openly the notoriety their afternoon's work had brought them.

X

HOW PINKEY SETTLED AN OLD SCORE

WHEN the warm days of summer began to come and to exert their peculiar, soothing influence on mankind, the annual epidemic of swimming broke out among the boys of Enterprise. As usual, the outbreak was violent and exceedingly contagious. No matter on what errand a boy might be bent, or what the penalty might be for slighting it, a shrill whistle, accompanied by the mystic sign of two fingers held high in the air, was sufficient cause for him to be seized with a severe attack of the disease. Thus tempted, any boy would fall, would desert the most important matter, and nothing short of an

AN OLD SCORE SETTLED

hour or two in the water could bring relief and restore him to neglected duty.

On school days, the boys went swimming in the small ponds near the town, but on Saturdays there was a juvenile exodus from the town to Crane Creek, a small stream about two miles east. While the ponds, as a rule, were little more than shallow pools, dammed up as a water-supply for stock, and were not ideal spots for swimming, at Crane Creek conditions were different; there they had water deep enough to dive in, and a spring-board from which the older boys turned somersaults into the water. For the enjoyment of those not possessed of sufficient courage to take part in such acrobatic feats, there was a mud-slide on the bank. This slide, after being thoroughly drenched with water, became a veritable toboggan, down which the smaller boys loved to slide with lightning speed into the shallow water.

This swimming-hole at Crane Creek had

PINKEY PERKINS

an irresistible attraction for Pinkey Perkins, and he looked forward to his Saturdays with more than ordinary impatience. He was just learning to swim, and, although he could only paddle around "dog fashion," he felt more genuine delight in his new accomplishment than in any he had ever attained.

One Saturday morning, during the swimming plague, Pinkey received some very explicit instructions regarding the pulling of some weeds in the garden at home. There may be occupations upon which Pinkey would have looked with a more cordial dislike than that of pulling weeds, but, as far as his experience went, nothing could compare with it, especially on Saturday. He had an engagement that very morning at Crane Creek, and had promised Bunny Morris that he would "come by" for him as soon as he had finished his usual Saturday morning's chores.

The weed-pulling engagement, however, blighted his swimming anticipations, and he

AN OLD SCORE SETTLED

felt the disappointment keenly. Bunny came up to see what was the reason Pinkey had failed him.

“ What you a-doin’, Pinkey; ain’t you goin’ swimmin’ this morning? ” called Bunny from the back fence. Bunny rarely made his approach by the street gate, preferring to take the shorter way cross-lots, and, besides, he always knew that if Pinkey were at home he would usually be found in the back yard.

“ What does it look like I’m doin’ — goin’ to a circus? ” growled Pinkey without looking up. “ ’Pears to me you ought to be able to see what I’m doin’, ” and he tugged viciously at a handful of weeds.

“ But ain’t you goin’ swimmin’ at all? ” persisted Bunny, ignoring Pinkey’s ill-humored reply.

“ No, I ain’t goin’ swimmin’ at all, — not till I get good and ready. These weeds have got to be pulled, and I might as well pull ’em now as any time.”

PINKEY PERKINS

“ I’m goin’, and so’s everybody else, and it seems mighty funny to me the way you’ve changed your mind so since yesterday. Guess you ain’t pullin’ weeds jist ’cause you need the exercise,” and with a significant toss of his head he bounded off to join a crowd *en route* to the swimming-hole.

Pinkey worked sullenly at his work for an hour or more, and as he worked his heart hardened against the world. He felt abandoned and persecuted, a martyr to the cause of parental discipline. Two or three other boys came by and saw him at his task, and to each he signified his preference of remaining at home and pulling weeds to going clear to Crane Creek for the empty pleasure of swimming. To none of them did he give a hint of the bitterness that was in his heart.

At last he decided he could stand it no longer. He looked at the space he had cleared, and then at the larger area yet un-

AN OLD SCORE SETTLED

touched. His backache became worse, and he feared he was developing alarming symptoms of sunstroke. He had heard of people dying of sunstroke, and he knew that if his father were at home he would not require him to remain there in that hot garden and run that terrible risk for the sake of getting rid of a few weeds.

Without consulting his mother on the subject, he arrived at the conclusion that he had accomplished as much in the time he had been working as could reasonably be expected of him, and that in his present serious condition it would be folly for him to continue.

As a result of his mental deliberations, he forthwith abandoned his weed-pulling, and, after a brief survey of the field, to assure himself that all was clear, he quietly departed by way of the back fence and headed cross-lots for Crane Creek. As he disappeared around the corner of the barn, Pinkey imagined he heard his mother's thimble tapping

PINKEY PERKINS

on the window-pane, but he did not stop to verify his suspicions.

Pinkey's morning employment had made his departure too late for him to encounter any of the other boys, swimming bound, so he was forced to take up his line of travel alone. The spell of his ill fortune at being required to remain at home when he had planned to go with the other boys, was still hanging over him, and the fact that, when he had left, it had been necessary to absent himself without permission, did not make the outlook any more rosy as he pictured what the consequences might be on his return.

All things considered, Pinkey's frame of mind was not of the most amiable sort as he plodded his solitary way toward Crane Creek. He did not feel the jubilation he had anticipated before he started, for it had seemed then that there could be no greater joy on earth than going swimming. But this mental depression, he felt sure, would dis-

AN OLD SCORE SETTLED

appear as soon as he reached his destination and was once more among his fellow beings, enjoying his holiday with them.

It happened that Pinkey's route, chosen more for economy of distance than for quality of road, led across the property of Farmer Gordon. As Pinkey neared the hickory grove in which he and Bunny had experienced such a sad ending to a day's nutting the fall before, the whole occurrence returned vividly to his mind. As a rule, Pinkey's grudges were short-lived, but the memory of the outrage he and Bunny had suffered that day still rankled in his bosom.

It was the first time Pinkey had been so near the scene of his misfortune since the day of its occurrence, and the effect of his close proximity was to bring to the surface all the deep-rooted desire for revenge he had fostered for so many months.

When Pinkey reached the corner of the fence surrounding the grove, and was bend-

PINKEY PERKINS

ing his course to reach the creek by the shortest line, he noticed, about one hundred yards from the fence and inside the grove, a pile of freshly dug earth. On looking more closely, he saw a man bending over the mouth of a new well, from which he was drawing a bucket filled with mud and dirt. After emptying the bucket, the man lowered it into the well again, spoke a few words to some one in the well, picked up a small tin-pail, and started for the house, about a quarter of a mile away, obviously to get some drinking-water.

By intuition, Pinkey felt that Farmer Gordon, "Old Hostetters" he was called by every one, was in that well, which feeling he proposed to investigate. He watched the departing figure of the man who had drawn the bucket from the well until he was lost to view among the trees, then he crept silently over the fence and stealthily approached the well.

AN OLD SCORE SETTLED

Looking over the edge, cautiously, he found his suspicions verified. There, twenty feet below, was Old Hostetters, slowly spading in the soft muddy clay and filling the bucket. He had long needed a well in his woods pasture, or grove, and, being a man whose inclinations led him to possess an absolute hatred of separation from money once in his possession, he was doing most of the work himself, employing merely a helper to hoist the dirt from the well.

As soon as Pinkey had taken one look into the well, he moved noiselessly away and looked all about him. No one was in sight or hearing. Surely this was a most opportune time to settle old scores. If he only had a bucketful of water, that he might drench the unsuspecting Hostetters, whom he now realized was entirely at his mercy. But there was no bucket about, except the one in the well, so he gave up that idea immediately. Then Pinkey looked about for something to

drop into the well, but that did not seem to be the proper kind of revenge, either, as it might involve bodily injury to Old Hostetters, and he did not crave such a dangerous method of getting even now.

Yet here was the chance of a lifetime, an opportunity that would never occur again, and he must not fail to improve it. The ladder which Old Hostetters used in entering and leaving the well was lying on the ground beside the pile of earth, and Pinkey thought of stealing that. But it was too heavy for him to drag very far, and, besides, the helper could get Old Hostetters out of the well in some other manner, even if the ladder were taken away.

Suddenly a brilliant thought flashed through Pinkey's mind, and he lost no time in putting it into execution. He looked about him for the old blind mare, the same one on whose back, several months before, Old Hostetters had loaded the two sacks of nuts he

and Bunny had gathered, and had led away to the house, leaving them perched high in the hickory-tree, closely guarded by the old dog Tige.

Soon Pinkey discovered the old mare quite a distance away, standing sleepily in a fence corner. Giving the well a wide berth, he quietly approached her, using all sorts of coaxing inducements to make her stand still, fearing she might get scared at his approach. But his precautions were unnecessary, and she did not seem to notice his coming, and stood perfectly still while he detached from her neck the cow-bell which she wore to prevent her becoming lost.

Then, with the bell in his hand, Pinkey began an indirect approach to the well, at the same time slowly ringing the bell in an aimless, halting sort of way. As he came nearer and nearer the well, he strained his ears for sounds coming therefrom. While yet several yards away, he was overjoyed to hear

a muffled "Whoa! Whoa, there, *Kate!!* Whoa, *BACK!!! KATE!!!*" come from the depths of the well.

Pinkey finally stopped and faintly tinkled the bell as a horse would standing almost still. After remaining quiet for a minute, he again began his grazing "tonk-a-tonk," still gradually approaching the well.

Again, to his unspeakable delight, he heard, "Whoa! Whoa, there!! *Gee! GEE!! GEE!!!* YOU old FOOL! HELP! *HELP!!* WHOA, *BACK!!!*"

Again Pinkey stopped. He was almost moved to compassion by the piteous wails of the helpless and frantic Hostetters. Then the vision of an old mare, with two sacks of nuts on her back, led by this same Hostetters, and clanking this same bell, came to his mind, and he remained firm. He was only human, and he must have satisfaction.

At the first clank of the bell, as Pinkey, for the third time, took up his deliberate, zig-



"PINKEY FINALLY STOPPED AND TINKLED THE BELL"

AN OLD SCORE SETTLED

zag approach, Old Hostetters fairly shrieked, " *WHOA*, THERE! YOU OLD FOOL!! Whoa, *HAW!* Whoa, H-A-W U-P!! BACK! BACK!! Whoa, *BACK!!!* Whoa, now! Stand still! HELP! JIM!! *JIM!!!* "

Pinkey was now quite close to the well, and, just to heighten the reality, he kicked a few dry clods into the well. These brought forth only agonized groans from Old Hostetters, who was by this time so nearly petrified with fright that he could not articulate distinctly.

Suddenly, as a shower of clods came down on him, he gave one heartrending yell: " *JIM! JIM! RUN! SHE'S A-FALLIN' IN ON ME!!!* " Jim was his helper. Then, as a possible refuge from the equine avalanche which he felt every instant must be inevitable, he began with superhuman strength to dig a niche in the wall of the well.

As Pinkey looked toward the house he saw

PINKEY PERKINS

Jim sauntering along, carrying a pail of water. He decided it was high time for him to vacate the premises. As a parting shot he went to the mouth of the well, once more deluged the terrorized Hostetters with dirt and clods, let go the bell, and ran for the fence. As it clattered against the sides of the well and fell harmlessly to the bottom, a shriek came from the well that was music to Pinkey's ears.

When Jim reached the well, he was totally unprepared for the wealth of abusive language surging up from the irate man at the bottom. He knew nothing of the tragedy so lately enacted on that spot, and could not imagine what Old Hostetters could be raving so about. His questions failed to elicit any coherent replies from his employer, who, instead of explaining the situation, only grew more and more abusive at Jim's professed ignorance, and stormed about in his restricted space, threatening Jim with more

AN OLD SCORE SETTLED

different kinds of simultaneous death than even the proverbial cat could endure.

By and by, when Old Hostetters held up the cow-bell in one hand and shook his free fist at Jim, the latter realized that some one had played a cruel joke on the old man, but he could not repress a loud roar of laughter as he tried to conceive the events which had led up to such a state of mind.

In response to Hostetters's expressed desire, Jim lowered the ladder into the well, and the captive came up, still sputtering with rage. Jim again asserted his innocence, and at length, after producing the bucket of water as evidence of his absence, succeeded in convincing Old Hostetters that the identity of the strange assailant was as much of a mystery to him as it was to Old Hostetters himself.

Pinkey, as soon as he had climbed the fence, ran for dear life toward town. No

PINKEY PERKINS

swimming for him *that* day. He felt sure that Old Hostetters would go to the creek and endeavor to learn from the boys there the names of any who had lately come from the direction of his farm. Also, on account of the nutting experience, he feared that, if Old Hostetters saw him in the crowd, he would at once pounce upon him, anyway, just on suspicion that he was the guilty party. For the same reason, he was much concerned regarding Bunny's safety, and regretted that he could not warn him of his danger.

But he was light-hearted and happy, and refused to allow the remote chances of Bunny getting into trouble to cast a shadow over his joy. He had settled with Old Hostetters, and had paid him back somewhat in his own coin. All his bitterness of heart caused by the weed-pulling had disappeared, and he was enough of a philosopher to look on the imposition of a disagreeable Saturday morn-

AN OLD SCORE SETTLED

ing's task as a most fortunate occurrence, for the game had certainly been worth the candle.

When Mr. Perkins came home at noon for his dinner, there was Pinkey, down on his knees in the garden, pulling weeds as though his life depended upon it. After thinking over his morning's doings at Farmer Gordon's grove, he had become more or less alarmed at the enormity of the way in which he had taken his revenge, and he decided that he would feel much easier and more secure from molestation there in his own yard than he would anywhere else. He dreaded lest the story of the occurrence had reached town, and that he might have been seen coming from that direction.

But his fears were without foundation, and his father was totally unaware of the circumstances responsible for Pinkey's wonderful obedience, and he felt greatly gratified that his son was still at his task. Mrs. Per-

PINKEY PERKINS

kins did not have the heart to tell her husband that Pinkey had absented himself from his work for more than two hours, for she sympathized with him in losing part of his holiday. She had no idea where he had gone and what he had been doing during his absence; she only knew that when she looked out late in the morning, Pinkey was back at work again.

After dinner, Pinkey was permitted to postpone the remainder of his weed-pulling until another time, and, as soon as he could do so, he sought out Bunny. After swearing him to secrecy by all the solemn rites of boyhood, he told him how he had settled with Old Hostetters. Nor did he fail to remind Bunny that, if it had not been for his job in the garden, the grudge might never have been settled.

“Gee, Pinkey,” said Bunny, when he had listened gleefully to Pinkey’s graphic recital, “if I thought I could git a chance like

AN OLD SCORE SETTLED

that I'd be willin' to pull every weed in town."

"Yes," agreed Pinkey, "there is some good in everything, even weeds, if you just know how to get it out."

THE END.

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