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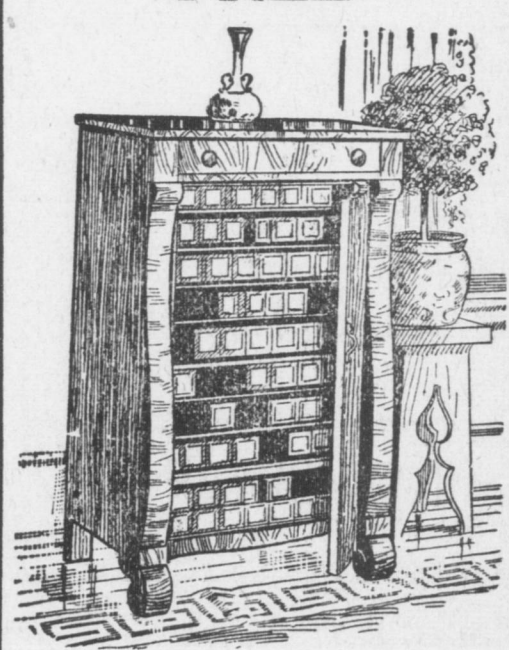
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Learning In The Fists

By RICHARD MENKLEY

As a little fellow I wasn't very strong. I had the measles and the scarlet fever and all kinds of children's diseases. Any boy of my age could lick me very easily.

When I was about eighteen years old a feller come round givin' boxin' lessons. I went to see him give a lesson—it was in a barn—and I was mighty tickled the way he polished off some o' the big fellers that he was teachin'. He wasn't big himself, though he was wiry; there wasn't any knotty muscles standin' out on his arms and legs; they was jist good ordinary arms and legs. As for length, I reckon he measured about five feet six in his stockin's.

It was all in the way he done it. A feller who could throw a hundred pounds o' hay up into a loft on the end o' a pitchfork would make a lunge at him that if it had hit him square without gloves would 'a' made jelly of him. But the little man wasn't there to be hit. Before the big one could git back into position he got a blow on the jaw.

I persuaded dad to give me the money to take boxin' lessons, and after a dozen lessons I was the best boxer in the county. What made me stuck on it was that I was a little feller with no great muscle, and after I'd learned to box I was cock o' the walk. None o' the big ones who took lessons could down me. The reason for this was that I was mighty spry, and I could tell by watchin' the other feller's eye jist what he was goin' to do next.

One day dad says to me, says he: "Josh, you've got a lot of learnin' in yer fists. I reckon you'd better git some in yer head. There's a young woman opened a schule over to the crossroads; you better larn somethin' about readin', writin' and 'rithmetic."

I thort I was too old to go to schule, but when I got there I found the scholars was mighty mixed. There was scholars all the way from twelve to twenty-four years old. The schulemarm was a young thing weighin' about a hundred pounds and not more'n eighteen years old. The first few days things went mighty quiet, but after the novelty wore off some o' the big fellers begun to get tired o' behavin' themselves and showed a disposition to do purty much as they pleased. When teacher told 'em to stop talkin' to each other durin' schule hours they'd stop for awhile, but it wasn't long before they were at it again.

John Whittaker began ticklin' Sam Talfer with a feather, Sam sittin' in the desk in front of John. Teacher told John to stop. He did, but in a few minutes begun ag'in. This time when teacher told him to stop he kept right on.

I held up my hand, lettin' on I wanted to speak.

"What is it, Josh?" asked teacher. "Please, teacher, kin John Whittaker and me take a recess?"

She looked at me, and John looked at me, and we all understood one another.

"If you wish to be excused you may go out," she said to me.

"How about me?" asked John.

"You may be excused too."

John and I went outside, and as soon as we got there he says to me, says he, "Reckon you want some'n o' me." And I says, says I: "Reckon I do. I want you to agree to behave yourself in schule. What d' ye mean, a great hulk like you settin' yourself up agin a little gal like that?" "It's none o' your business," he says. "I'll make it my business," I says, and before he knew what had happened he was sprawlin' on the ground.

He got up and come for me like a mad bull. But what could he do? I was never where he struck at, and when I aimed a blow at him he was always there. The second punch I give him was in the nose, and the blood bothered him. The third was in his left eye and closed it up. There wasn't anything tender about him, and I was obliged to take him under the jaw with all my might to put him out o' the fight.

While we was at it I caught sight o' the winders of the schulehouse, and they was full o' the scholars. I reckon teacher couldn't keep 'em at their lessons while there was somethin' so much more interestin' goin' on outside. Some o' the older scholars came out to watch the proceedin's and stood around wonderin' how such a little shaver could knock about a great hulk of a feller jist as if he was a bag o' sand. When I tuk John under the jaw I knocked it out o' plumb. He got up slow, but he didn't come for me ag'in. Holdin' on to his cheek, he went off to a doctor to get it put in place ag'in.

The rest of us went back to our schule work. Nobody made any disturbance. Oncet two fellers started to whisper, but I jist throwed a glance their way, and it had the same effect as if I'd throwed a stone. They stopped right away.

When schule let out teacher she beckoned me to lag behind, and I did. She tuk my hand and squeezed it, but she didn't say nothin'. I reckon she feels so much she couldn't talk.

"Don't you worry about the scholars' behavior," I said. "They won't get cuttin' up no more."

"I don't think they will," she said, "so long as I have such a sergeant-at-arms to keep order."

John Whittaker didn't come back to schule any more, and the other big fellers didn't make any disturbance. I didn't get much 'arnin'. I reckon it was 'cause I had to watch the scholars. Anyway, it wasn't teacher's fault.

Some Climate!

It is a natural law in California, especially in the southern part of the state, that folks grow young instead of old. Every time a rose fades in this sweet land its color finds its way into the cheeks of some visitor from the east who has come here to seek the health which only a clime like this can give.—Los Angeles Times.

"A Heart Bowed Down," Etc.

A teacher in a Boston public school received an examination from a little girl of ten years, who wrote beneath the questions she had answered: "If some of these questions are wrongly answered it will be because I have troubles of which the great world neither knows nor cares, therefore excuse wrong answers."—Exchange.

KINDNESS.

When we consider the results it brings I wonder why it is we are not all kinder than we are. How easily it is done! How instantaneously it acts! How infallibly it is remembered!—Drummond.

Heard on the highway.

We ought to be mighty glad when heaven comes down to see us, but that's the time some folks run away. Folks miss happiness by sittin' still an' waitin' for it to come an' pay the rent an' cancel the mortgage. But happiness is no free gift, an' it ain't on the bargain counter.—Atlanta Constitution.

Too Sore to Shake.

"Did you take the mixture I gave you?"
"To tell you the truth, I did not, doctor."
"Why not?"
"Well, I fancy you made a little mistake. You gave me ague mixture. It says, 'Shake before taking,' and my complaint is rheumatism."—Pall Mall Gasette.