

second reader room. The trustees were coming that day to visit the school.

Emmy Lou wondered what trustees were. She asked Hattie. Hattie explained. "They are men in black clothes. You aren't move in your seat. They are something like ministers," Hattie knew everything.

"Will they come here, in our room?" asked Emmy Lou. It was terrible to be at the front desk. Emmy Lou remembered the music man. He still pointed his bow at her on Fridays.

"Of course," said Hattie; "comp'ny always comes to our room."

Which was true, for dear teacher's room was different. Dear teacher's room seemed always ready, and the principal brought company to it accordingly.

It was after recess they came—the principal, the trustees (there was just one trustee), and a visiting gentleman.

There was a hush as they filed in. Hattie was right. It was like ministers. The principal was in black, with a white tie. He always was. And the trustee was in black. He rubbed his hands and bowed to the second reader class, sitting very straight and awed. And the visiting gentleman was in black, with a shiny black hat.

The trustee was a big man, and his face was red, and when urged by the principal to address the second reader class, his face grew redder.

The trustee waved his hand toward the visiting gentleman. "Mr. Hammel, children, the Hon. Samuel S. Hammel, a citizen with whose name you are all, I am sure, familiar." And then the trustee, mopping his face, got behind the visiting gentleman and the principal.

The visiting gentleman stood forth. He was a short, little man—a little round man, whose feet were so far back beneath a preponderating circumference of waist line, that he looked like nothing so much as one of Uncle Charlie's pouter pigeons.

He was a smiling-and-bowing little man, and he held out his fat hand playfully, and in it a shining white box.

Dear teacher seemed taller and very far off. She looked as she did the day she told the class they were to have a medal. Emmy Lou watched dear teacher anxiously. Something told her dear teacher was troubled.

The visiting gentleman began to speak. He called the second reader class "dear children," and "mothers of a coming generation," and "molders of the future welfare."

The second reader class sat very still. There seemed to be something paralyzing to their infant faculties, mental and physical, in learning they were "mothers" and "molders." But Emmy Lou breathed freer to have it applied impartially and not to the front seat.

Their "country, the pillars of state, everything," it seemed, depended on the way in which these mothers learned their second readers. "As mothers and molders, they must learn now in youth to read, to number, to spell—exactly—to spell!" And the visiting gentleman nodded meaningly, tapped the white box and looked smilingly about. The mothers moved uneasily. The smile they avoided. But they wondered what was in the box.

The visiting gentleman lifted the lid, and displayed a glittering, shining something on a bed of pink cotton.

Then, as if struck by a happy thought, he turned to the blackboard. He looked about for chalk. The principal supplied him. Fashioned by his fat, white hand, these words sprawled themselves upon the blackboard:

"The best speller in this room is to receive this medal." There was silence. Then the second reader class moved. It breathed a long breath.

A whisper went around the room while dear teacher and the gentleman were conferring. Rumor said Kitty McKeoghany started it. Certainly Kitty, in her desk across the aisle from Hattie, in the sight of all, tossed her black head knowingly.

The whisper concerned the visiting gentleman. "He is running for trustee," said the whisper.

Emmy Lou wondered. Hattie seemed to understand. "He puts his name up on tree-boxes and fences," she whispered to Emmy Lou, "and that's running for trustee."

The rumor was succeeded by another.

"He's running against the trustee that's not here today."

No wonder Kitty McKeoghany was head. The extent of Kitty's knowledge was boundless.

The third confidence was freighted with strange import. It came straight from Kitty to Hattie, who told it to Emmy Lou.

"When he's trustee he means the school board shall take his pork house for the new school."

Even Emmy Lou knew the pork house which had built itself unpleasantly near the neighborhood.

Just then the second reader class was summoned to the bench. As the line took its place a hush fell. Emmy Lou, at its foot, looked up its length and wondered how it would seem to be Kitty McKeoghany at the head.

The three gentlemen were looking at Kitty, too. Kitty tossed her head. Kitty was used to being looked at because of being head.

The low words of the gentleman reached the foot of the line. "The head one, that's McKeoghany's little girl." It was the trustee telling the visiting gentleman. Emmy Lou did not wonder that Kitty was being pointed out. Kitty was head. But Emmy Lou did not know that it was because Kitty was Mr. Michael McKeoghany's little girl that she was being pointed out as well as because she was head, for Mr. Michael McKeoghany was the political boss of a district known as Limerick, and by the vote of Limerick a man running for office could stand or fall.

Now there were many things unknown to Emmy Lou, about which Kitty, being the little girl of Mr. Michael McKeoghany, could have enlightened her.

Kitty could have told her that the yard of the absent trustee ran back to the pork house. Also that the trustee present was part owner of that offending building. And further that Emmy Lou's Uncle Charlie, leading an irate neighborhood to battle, had compelled the withdrawal of the obnoxious business.

But to Emmy Lou only one thing was clear. Kitty was being pointed out by the principal and the trustee to the visiting gentleman because she was head.

Dear teacher took the book. She stood on the platform apart from the gentlemen, and gave out the words distinctly but very quietly.

Emmy Lou spelled it right and went up one. The little Emmy Lou thought it was because dear teacher was afraid the poor spellers were going to miss. She made up her mind that she would not miss.

Dear teacher began with the words on the first page, and went forward. Emmy Lou could tell the next word to come each time, for she knew her second reader by heart as far as the class had gone.

She stood up when her time came and spelled her word. Her word was "wrong." She spelled it right.

Dear teacher looked pleased. There was a time when Emmy Lou had been given to leaving off the introductory "w" as superfluous.

On the next round a little girl above Emmy Lou missed on "enough." To her phonetic understanding a "u" and two "fs" were equivalent to an "ough."

Emmy Lou spelled it right and went up one. The little girl went to her seat. She was no longer in the race. She was in tears.

Presently a little girl far up the line arose to spell.

"Right, to do right," said dear teacher.

"W-r-i-t-e, right," said the little girl, promptly.

"R-i-t-e, right," said the next little girl.

The third stood up with triumph preassured. In spelling, the complicated is the surest, reasoned this little girl.

"W-r-i-g-h-t, right," spelled the certain little girl; then burst into tears.

The mothers of the future grew demoralized. The pillars of state of English orthography at least seemed destined to totter. The spelling grew wild.

"R-i-t, right."

"W-r-i-t, right."

Then in the desperation of sheer hopelessness came "w-r-i-t-e, right," again.

There were tears all along the line. At their wits' end,

the mothers, dissolving as they rose in turn, shook their heads hopelessly.

Emmy Lou stood up. She knew just where the word was in a column of three on page 14. She could see it. She looked up at dear teacher, quiet and pale on the platform.

"R," said Emmy Lou, steady, "i-g-h-t, right."

A long line of weeping mothers went to their seats, and Emmy Lou moved up past the middle of the bench.

The words were now more complicated. The nerves of the mothers had been shaken by this last strain. Little girls dropped out rapidly. The foot moved on up toward the head, until there came a pink spot on dear teacher's either cheek. For some reason dear teacher's head began to hold itself finely erect again.

"Beaux," said dear teacher.

The little girl next the head stood up. She missed. She burst into audible weeping. Nerves were giving out along the line. It went wildly down. Emmy Lou was the last. Emmy Lou stood up. It was the first word on a column on page 22. Emmy Lou could see it. She looked at dear teacher.

"E," said Emmy Lou, "e-a-u-x, beaux."

The intervening mothers had gone to their seats, and Kitty and Emmy Lou were left.

Kitty spelled triumphantly. Emmy Lou spelled steadily. Even dear teacher's voice showed a touch of the strain.

She gave out half a dozen words. Then "receive," said dear teacher.

It was Kitty's turn. Kitty stood up, dear teacher's back was to the blackboard. The trustee and the visiting gentleman were also facing the class. Kitty's eyes, as she stood up, were on the board.

"The best speller in this room is to receive this medal!" was the assurance on the board.

Kitty tossed her little head. "R-e, re, c-i-e-v-e, ceive, receive," spelled Kitty, her eyes on the blackboard.

"Wrong."

Emmy Lou stood up. It was the second word in a column on a picture page. Emmy Lou could see it. She looked at dear teacher.

"R-e, re; c-e-i-v-e, ceive," said Emmy Lou.

One person beside Kitty had noted the blackboard. Already the principal was passing an eraser across the words of the visiting gentleman.

Dear teacher's cheeks were pink as Emmy Lou's as she led Emmy Lou to receive the medal. And her head was finely erect. She held Emmy Lou's hand thru it all.

The visiting gentleman's manner was a little stony. It had quite lost its playfulness. He looked almost gloomily on the mother, who had upheld the pillars of state and the future generally.

It was a beautiful medal. It was a five-pointed star. It said "Reward of Merit."

The visiting gentleman lifted it from its bed of pink cotton.

"You must get a ribbon for it," said dear teacher.

Emmy Lou slipped her hand from dear teacher's. She went to the front desk. She got her second reader, and brought forth a folded packet from behind the criss-cross stitches holding the cover.

Then she came back. She put the paper in dear teacher's hand.

"There's a ribbon," said Emmy Lou.

They were at dinner when Emmy Lou got home. On a blue ribbon around her neck dangled a new medal. In her hand she carried a shiny box.

Even Uncle Charlie felt there must be some mistake. Aunt Louise got her hat to hurry Emmy Lou right back to school.

At the gate they met dear teacher's carriage, taking dear teacher home. She stopped.

Aunt Cordelia came out, and Aunt Katie. Uncle Charlie, just going, stopped to hear.

"Spelling match!" said Aunt Louise.

"Not our Emmy Lou?" said Aunt Katie.

"The precious baby," said Aunt Cordelia.

"Hammel," said Uncle Charlie, "McKeoghany," and Uncle Charlie smote his thigh.

FRANK H. SPEARMAN'S RAILROAD STORIES

II.—CONDUCTOR PAT FRANCIS: HOW THE YELLOW STONE EXCURSION ESCAPED ITS PURSUER.

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THESE had been some talk at headquarters about our conductors. It was intimated and freely from the auditing department that the men of the punch were not dividing fairly with the company.

To this effect the general manager wrote Bucks, superintendent of the mountain division. Bucks filed the letter away in the stove. Another communication fared no better. But there were some new people at headquarters; they had a record to make, and they proposed to write it on our backs. Bucks got another letter; he threw it in the stove.

Pat Barlie often and often said he recommended no man to drink whisky; he only recommended the whisky. I recommend no rising railroad man to burn the third letter on the same subject from his general manager; I merely recommend Bucks. He was at that time running West End. They had tried running the West End without Bucks a while; then they had tried again running it with him. In both instances it was different.

But the next time the general manager was out in his "special" he spoke to Bucks on the subject as if the mention were a virgin touch. Bucks muttered something about the general character of the trainmen and the decent lives and habits of the passenger conductors, and finished with an incidental expression of confidence in the men; that was about all.

But the headquarters people, who were largely Boston, had ways and means all their own; and falling to interest Bucks in their lobby, they took a tack like this.

To begin with, the night was bad. "A holy fright," Pat Francis called it, and Pat had seen most of the bad nights in the mountains for twenty-two years steady. It was snowing and raining and sleeting that night, all at once; and blowing—it blew the oil out of the guide-cups. From the platform of the Wickiup—nobody in the gorge would call it a depot—from the Wickiup platform at Medicine Bend, No. 1 seemed to roll into division that night one reeking sheet of alkali ice—soda and frost solid from lamp to lamp.

She was late, too, with a pair of the best engines that ever climbed a mountain heading her. She had lost time

every mile of the way from the plains, and she was ordered west with another double-head and a pusher all the way over the Horseback. It was because there was a Yellowstone excursion aboard. The Columbian Pacific connection was on that account especially desired; and that night at 12 o'clock, mountain time, with No. 1 especially late into the bend, and the track especially bad, and the pull especially heavy, it looked—that Columbus Pacific connection—especially doubtful, except over in the dispatcher's office, where they were being pounded to make it by the excursion bureau.

Bucks was down that night. There were many bad nights in the mountains, but Bucks never missed any of them by going to bed. On bad nights, Bucks, like a switchman's pipe, was always out. He—Bucks—personally appeared at the Wickiup to see that things went. The men liked him because he was always ready to do anything he asked them to do. There was an esprit, a morale—whatever you call it—and a loyalty to Bucks personally, which made our men take the chances that pay checks don't cover.

So, altho the Columbian Pacific connection looked especially doubtful that night, nevertheless there was Bucks, under a slouching Stetson and an Irish frieze that caught all the water coming its way, standing at the drivers of the head engine, while Jack Moore, in leather heel to jaw, went into the slush under her to touch up an eccentric with a reputation for cussedness in a pinch. And a minute later Bucks was walking back to figure with the out conductor, Pat Francis, how to make schedule across to Wild Hat, tho, as they talked, each man knew the other was not thinking at all of how to make schedule, but thinking—tho never a word out loud of it, and hell to face all the way up the gorge on top of it—of how with flesh and blood and steel to beat schedule that night and land the uncertain connection, in spite of wind and weather and the bureau's fears and the dispatcher's growls.

And all this for what? To dump a hundred or two Brooklyn people into the Yellowstone twenty-four hours earlier than they otherwise would have been dumped, tho without doubt they would have been just that much better off loading twenty-four hours longer away from their newspapers and ferries and street cars. Pat Francis listened grimly. A short, stocky fellow, Pat Francis. Not fat, but firm as a Bessemer bar, and with considerably quicker play in his joints. He listened grimly, for he thought he could domino every play Bucks could make when it came to tricks for

saving time on the Wild Hat run. Yet it heartened even Pat Francis, uncompromising and grim, to have his superintendent there in the storm helping out the work for a particularly beastly pull.

As Bucks broke away and started for the door of the Wickiup, Morris Barker—the conductor who had just brought the train in—saluted, walking out. With his coat buttoned snug, in the comfortable insolence of a man going home, Morris stepped to the edge of the platform to exchange confidences with Pat Francis.

"Pat, there's a half-fare back in the Portland sleeper. I heard McIntyre say at McCloud that some of Alfabet Smith's men are working up here. Anyway there's a cattleman in a canvas coat in the chair car, smooth face, red tie, to look out for. He got on at Harding and tried a short fare on me. I sized him up for a spotter."

"Why didn't you chuck him off?" growled Pat Francis. "He put up after a while—and you bet that fare goes in with an embroidered report. Well, good luck, Patsy."

Pat Francis raised his lamp thru the fog and rain at the engineers. Jack Moore coughed suddenly and twice, with his hollow whistle. The hind engine saluted hoarsely; from the rear the pusher piped shrill, and Bucks in the doorway watched the panting train pull taut up the bend in the swirling snow. And he knew as he watched that nothing worth considering would get away from Pat Francis—not a scheme nor a cut-off nor a minute, nor a revamped coupon ticket. Pat, before quitting at Benton, Pat up the gorge and over the Horseback, was pretty sure to catch everything inside the vestibules.

He swung up on the platform of the baggage car as the train moved out, and shook the snow off his cap as he opened the door. He set his lamp on an up-end trunk, took off his overcoat and hung it up. In the front end of the car a pack of hunting dogs yelped a dismal chorus. Old John Parker, the baggageman, was checking up a pile of trunks that rose tier on tier to the roof of the car. John Parker wore a pair of disreputable iron spectacles. His hair, scant where it wasn't extinct, tumbled about his head loose at both ends. His gray beard was a good bit stronger in the fly than in the hoist and it blew in the wind thin as a coach whip; but old John had behind his dirty spectacles a pair of eyes just as fine as steel. Francis opened his train box and asked the baggageman why he didn't kill those dogs, and getting no answer—for John Parker was checking hard and stopped only