

of the petting, instead of taking it all. I am very happy to-day, and thank you all for coming to help fill the day with joy.'

THE RED-HEADED AFFINITY

'There's that awful red-headed boy in a fight!' The sharp voice belonged to the sharp-faced teacher of the fifth grade, who happened to be on duty at the noon recess. She hurried to the struggling boys, and, with the assistance of another teacher, managed to pull them apart.

'Young man,' she addressed the owner of the red hair, 'this is not the first fight you've had on these grounds, but I certainly hope it will be the last.' She marched the panting boys to the principal's office.

In the meantime a red head had appeared at an upstairs window. One glance from a pair of intelligent brown eyes took in the situation, and the head disappeared.

'Yes, I saw him, with my own eyes, rush at the other boy, grab him by the collar and fling him down!' The sharp voice was pitched so as to enter the principal's ear and penetrate to his rather kind heart, arousing it to execute a righteous judgment on the red-headed culprit.

'Be seated, boys. What grade are you in?' The red-headed boy looked up.

'Indeed, I'm sorry to say he is still in mine.' The sharp voice had emphasised 'still.'

'Did you attack this boy first?'

'With my hands, yes, sir.'

'Why do you say "with your hands"?''

'Because he attacked me first, with his tongue.'

The principal looked at the other boy, who grinned and flushed.

There was a tap on the door. 'Come in!' called the principal, and a tall young woman with red hair and brown eyes entered. She looked sympathetically into the eyes of both boys, causing them both to blush with shame.

The red-headed boy blushed because he remembered the fight he had the previous year, and how this red-headed teacher from another grade had walked all the way home with him; how she had told him that God had made both their heads red; how He had numbered each of those red hairs; how that it did not just happen to be red, but that God had permitted it to be that color, and that it was wrong to fight about it, because it was like reproaching his Heavenly Father for making it red.

'Have a seat, Miss McClain; I'm glad you have come. Now,' to the black, drooping head, 'how did you attack him first with your tongue?'

Both boys' faces got redder. After an embarrassing silence, the red head was thrown back and a pair of honest blue eyes looked at the principal.

'He don't want to tell you because Miss McClain is here. Please, Miss McClain, go out. Then you can come back when we holler "come,"'

The blue eyes looked beseechingly into the brown ones. The principal raised his eyebrows; the thin lips of the sharp-faced teacher curled contemptuously; Miss McClain laughed merrily.

'Excuse me, professor; but perhaps you don't understand. Why, it's something about red heads. You see, Pat is so sensitive on the subject that he can't realise that I'm not at all so. Don't mind me, Earnest; just speak the truth.' But the boy only looked more ashamed of himself.

Miss McClain smiled knowingly at the principal. 'He called him a red-headed, freckled-faced Irishman, I expect. Was that it, Pat?'

'Ask him.' Pat Dillon nodded his red head towards Earnest's black one.

Earnest raised his black eyes, full of tears of shame, to his teacher's intellectual face; and the look in her eyes brought him to his feet.

'Professor,' he stammered. 'I—that's exactly what I said, only—that wasn't all. I said that his mother nearly whipped him last night because she saw a light through the transom and thought he was still reading after she had told him to put out his light and go to bed, but she found it was only the light from his head. I—I didn't know how low down it was until—until Miss McClain came in.'

Miss McClain's eyes rewarded him. She was proud of her pupil.

Pat was on his feet before Earnest had finished.

'It was my fault! I promised Miss McClain last year that I would stop and spell "God made it red" before I fought about it, and I forgot to-day; but it is the first red-headed fight I've had since I promised her.' And they all believed it.

The principal rose and shook hands with the boys.

'Now shake hands with each other! That's right.

Pat, my boy, I believe this is to be your last fight on account of your hair. Now, I want you to study your hardest, so I can promote you to Miss McClain's room. I think there you would soon learn to appreciate red hair.'

'Earnest, your teacher is justly proud of you. You may both go.'

'Oh, I do hope you can promote him, professor! Ever since I first noticed him in school we've had a queer sort of understanding. A sort of red-headed affinity, I suppose. I'm sure we could make the most of each other.'

'I sincerely hope he will be promoted,' snapped his teacher.

Pat Dillon was promoted at Christmas, and from the day he entered Miss McClain's room, and looked into her eyes, he became a different boy. He was from the beginning her messenger, because when she looked up to select some one a pair of eager blue eyes begged to be of service.

The principal watched with interest the developing of the red-headed boy by the tactful, intelligent, red-headed teacher.

'Miss McClain has the best-behaved grade in school. I've taught it twice,' declared one senior to another whom she met in the hall on her way to fill Miss McClain's vacant seat.

'I'm certainly glad to hear it, for I'm awfully nervous about teaching boys and girls of from ten to thirteen; they are simply at an abominable age; I'm not surprised that she has these violent headaches to come on suddenly.'

'Don't you worry. If you want any information, just ask that red-headed boy; he's a treasure.'

The nervous senior found the report to be true, and everything had gone on smoothly until the arithmetic class was called, and eight pupils were at the board, when suddenly the fire alarm rang.

'The fire drill!' exclaimed the senior, excitedly.

'Fire, fire!' shouted a voice in the street below.

The senior sprang from her seat and rushed from the platform. Pat raced down the aisle, caught her in his arms, and hurried her back to Miss McClain's desk.

Interest in Pat's manoeuvres had saved the grade from panic.

Holding the struggling, half-hysterical senior, Pat gave the necessary number of sharp, commanding taps. The grade responded mechanically, but when the little girl who led the line looked into the smoky hall and saw white-faced teachers struggling desperately to control themselves and the crooked lines of crying girls and excited boys, she hesitated.

'Earnest, lead the line!' commanded Pat. 'And every one hold on to the one in front!'

From the foot of the stairs the principal saw Miss McClain's grade holding their lawful place next the wall. A line too compact to be broken, they came on past him, and in their rear came a red-headed boy dragging an unconscious senior.

In the morning paper was the principal's account of how Pat Dillon, in the absence of his teacher, had preserved the honor of the sixth grade. Miss McClain read it, and was proud of her red-headed affinity.

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