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Strange But True

By F. H. MacArthur

**Chapter III
SCHOOL DAYS**

The little red school which I attended as a boy was typical of most country schools half a century ago. Cross the threshold of any one of them and what would you see? Dust-laden floors, a big pot-bellied stove standing in the centre of the room and puffing like a steam engine trying to make a steep grade. Too, you'd see knife-scarred desks, seats and walls, the work wrought by a couple of generations of wood carvers who should have been about their learning.

Do I remember my first day at school? You just bet I do. I'll never forget it, because during recess I landed a fair sized stone on the head of an eighth-grader who had tried to kiss me. Horror of horrors!

I left the scene of the accident on winged feet. The teacher on learning this sent a couple of the larger boys to bring me back. I gave them a merry chase before they captured and dragged me back to school where the teacher stood framed in the door awaiting our arrival.

"Come in!" he commanded, a ghost of a smile spreading across his moon-shaped face.

"Is Maggie hurt bad?" I asked shaking with fear. "No, I won't come in, sir, you'll beat me."

"Not if you promise to throw no more stones at girls," said the master.

I promised—and took my seat—the one next to the back row where the big boys had their noise-making gadget hidden between the walls. The gadget consisted of old sleigh bells and irons tied together by a piece of string whose end went through a knot hole. Every time one of the boys left the room they'd give the string a yank and then you'd think Santa Claus was steering his reindeers right up to the schoolhouse door.

This always annoyed the teacher. But it gave the pupils a real thrill because they'd laugh and play while he tore around the entrance looking for the bells and the villain who'd rang them.

The big boys I refer to were the pupils who attended school only during the winter months when work on the farms was slack. They were not out to learn, only to have a good time, plague the teacher, and make life miserable for us small boys.

Like the graves of a household they are now scattered far and wide, yet in fancy I can still see them playing their impish pranks right under the nose of the master. When one of their number

was dragged from his desk by the burly teacher and made to stand in a corner facing the wall, the others brought out their bean shooters and peppered the culprit with showers of dried beans till the whole school resounded to the rat-tat-tat of bouncing beans. The sound was very much like a machine gun in action—rat-tat-tat. Stop: Rat-tat-tat.

Only male teachers taught in our school on those days and believe me, they had to be good physically—to cope with some of the 20-year olds who made up that invincible group known as the "big boys."

Teacher had a faculty for continuing punishments suitable to the nature of the offence. For example when Neil Walker let loose a flock of sheep ticks gleaned from his brother's sheep at shearing time and sprinkled them generously on the locks of the girls who sat in front of him, the teacher retaliated with 12 strokes of the cat's nine tails—six strokes on each hand.

It must have hurt cruelly but Neil never batted an eye. He had plenty of courage, so we thought.

Pupils who told lies—and that took in most of us—had to recite verses every Friday. Some of the boys made their own and they were pretty good too, yet hardly fit to print.

If your recitation was up to standard you were permitted to go home right after delivering it. But if it fell into what some editors call "drivel rot" you stayed after school and wrestled for a whole hour with "math."

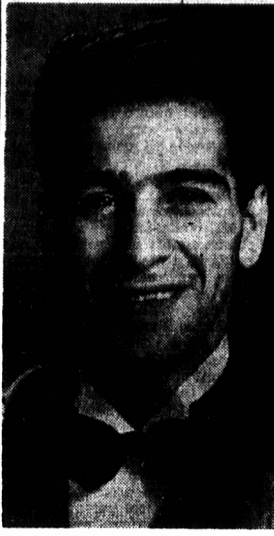
My first book was called the Primer. It was 5 x 4" with paper covers and cheap binding. Between its covers were pictures, little folks' poems, "lessons and maxims for children," and certain words to be spelled were underlined.

The arrival of the school inspector was a dreaded moment for the teacher and pupils alike. If Queen Elizabeth were to walk into the room where I am writing this piece she would not seem half so important to me as did the inspector who came to look over our school work a couple of times a year. His arrival by horse and buggy was announced by a peeping Tom who held a place of advantage near the door and could see all that went on outside the building through a large opening just below the window sill.

The bad news travelled via the grapevine system to all parts of the big schoolroom. Then a heavy silence reigned, broken by the heavier footsteps and a man-sized knock on the weather-beaten door. The teacher, looking a little pale, we thought, rose from his desk, walked across the room and the great man stepped across its threshold without even a smile on his face to allay our fears.

How could anything we might do seem proper in the sight of

Dalhousie Graduate



Above is Sol Tawee, son of Mr. and Mrs. N. S. Tawee, Charlottetown, who received a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology at Dalhousie University. He attended West Kent School and Prince of Wales College before entering Dalhousie University.

this august person, the school inspector?

First, his eyes swept the room, the pupils, the maps on the walls, and finally the teacher himself. Then he got right down to business. Lessons were heard, our longhand viewed with comments that hit us hard between the eyes for the inspector was a great penman in his own right and couldn't understand why we were such awful scribblers.

The very size of the man was enough to put the fear of the Lord into the hearts of the small boys. If the big boys were affected in the same way they never showed it. But we all had one thought in common when the inspector came, namely, we kept our mouths shut and listened.

"Get a new map of the world and destroy those filthy slate rags," he barked at the teacher. "Why, I declare some of them stink to high heaven! And don't let the boys spit on their slates and then dry them with their coat sleeves as I see some of them doing right now."

"Yes sir," said the teacher meekly. "I'll attend to these matters right away," but he didn't. Having delivered himself of these warnings the great man left the building, puffing under the weight of his 300 pounds, and that was that.

(To be Continued)

York And Vicinity

Mrs. Dewar Swan was hostess for the York W. I. meeting recently with a good attendance.

Mr. and Mrs. Frank Watts spent Oct. 27, in the City.

Mrs. Herbert Lewis, York, is the guest of Mrs. Bill McLaren Brackley.

Mrs. Albert Proud York, is the guest of her daughter, Mrs. Gordon Carr, Oyster Bed Bridge.

Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Vessey and two daughters, Hazel and Lorna were the guests of Mr. and Mrs. Vernon Hughes, Harrington.

Mr. and Mrs. Archie Vessey, York, are the guests of their daughter Mrs. Heber Proffitt.

Rev and Mrs. Wagner, O'Leary, and baby, were guests of Rev. and Mrs. J. M. Sproule, York Mansie.

Misses Gerald Robinson, Donald, Crockett, Lowell Watts and Billie Lewis left on Oct. 29th, for the Amherst Fair.

Mr. and Mrs. Claude Craswell, Winsloe, and daughter, Marie, recently visited in York.

Mrs. Elmer Brown was hostess to the missionary meeting Oct. 27, with a good attendance.

Mr. Claude Lewis, George Proud and Ross Lewis left for Amherst on Oct. 29.

Misses Leith and Elmer Brown, York, attended the funeral of the late Mrs. Walter Heertz East Royally, on Thursday.

Mr. Arthur Brown, York, was kept busy recently trucking cattle to the fair at Amherst, for Lewis Brothers, York.

Mrs. Charlie Horne spent Friday evening in York, the guest of Mr. and Mrs. Gordon Crockett.

Mr. and Mrs. Leith Brown and daughter Aletha, York attended the dinner party held at the Charlottetown Hotel. Mrs. George Watts, York also attended the Rural Beautification Society dinner.

The Evening Auxiliary held a Halloween party in York hall Thursday evening and was enjoyed by all.

Miss Joyce MacSwain, City, is the guest of Miss Marguerite Vessey, York.

Mr. and Mrs. Ira Lewis attended the Amherst Fair, also Mr. and Mrs. Claude Lewis.

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