

CHAPTER XXXVIII

THE FIRST TERM OF TEACHING

"But, Grandfather, you have written two chapters and haven't said a word about teaching school. Did you really teach?" Oh, yes, dearies, Grandfather taught all right enough, but just has been hesitant about explaining how embarrassing it was for a youth of twenty to point out to the older female pupils what, so to speak, perfectly dumb mistakes these angelic looking creatures did make in Latin and in English. Can you not see that that might be embarrassing? It really was.

To add to Grandfather's embarrassment, there were persistent and sly but somewhat pointed questions as to Grandfather's age, all of which he gingerly side-stepped until he learned that rumor had settled the matter that he was known to be just sweet sixteen. Well, at any rate, the truth was better than that and Grandfather proudly confessed up to his twenty years. Since some of his pupils had to confess to more years than that, the situation was, so to speak, complex.

But Grandfather recalled how Professor Haskins at University of Wisconsin, when twenty, had reduced the rampant Sophs to submission; he tried Professor Haskins' plan and it worked. If any of you ever face that situation, there are just three simple factors to the program:

- (1) Give the students a lot to do and keep right after them to see that they do it.
- (2) Always be better prepared in the lessons than the pupils are.
- (3) If a bright boy makes a smart remark today, smile and enjoy the joke, but see to it that before many

suns have set the smart boy has proved some king to be his own grandfather or in some other way has shown the class that he is in reality the star "dumb bunny". A wise-cracker cannot stand the chagrin of being shown to be dumb, and as soon as the funny boys recognize it to be dangerous to put their fingers against the buzz-saw, by common consent the teacher is allowed to direct the humorous remarks of the class.

Grandfather had a very pleasant time teaching - in fact, found that he enjoyed teaching a great deal better than he had expected to and when the year approached a close and the principal desired him to return for another year, Grandfather was pleased.

Mr. Mathie with only Miss Merk had run the high school the first term. Grandfather had come as second assistant to help out. His salary was \$50 a month, out of which must be paid board, clothes, car fare and all incidentals. This sounds incredibly small remuneration, but as a matter of fact \$50 was a normal wage for one beginning high school teaching, and \$50 then would buy much more than the same amount will today.

If he were to return, Grandfather wished \$75 per month. This appeared to Mr. Mathie reasonable, so Grandfather told Miss Merk that he was to get \$75 a month and advised her to apply for the same. Miss Merk said that she had come two years before for \$50 and next year had asked for \$60. The Board of Education had offered her \$55. That had made her angry. She returned but wouldn't accept a \$5.00 raise, so had taught for \$50. She would ask for \$60 again, but would ask for no more.

At a meeting of the Board of Education, replying to an inquiry made by some member, the superintendent stated that both Miss Merk and Mr. Parlin were graduates of the University of Wisconsin and both were

satisfactory teachers. Then said one Board member in his wisdom: "They ought to be paid the same. Since one thinks the service worth \$60 and the other thinks it worth \$75, I move we offer both of them \$66.

This appeared as wise as Solomon's decision and was carried un-
animously. Miss Merk gleefully signed her contract. Grandfather moved on to West DePere where he could get better remuneration and the Board made the strange discovery that for the same work it was necessary to pay men more than women.