

THE HIGH POINT SCOUT

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A ONE-DAY HOOKEY (By NADY CATES.)

"Say, Tom, I'm in a pretty pickle," was Shinney's brief salutation, as he crossed the yard of the little white school and met his chum at the steps. "I ain't got my arithmetic agin. Dad-lim-it, that old hatchet-face of a teacher, Boggs, 'signed us ten pages to han' in."

"I ain't got mine nuther," replied Tom, displaying his opened arithmetic book, containing a single sheet of rough tablet paper whereon could be seen a few pencil marks. "I worked on the first example about two hours last night and then I threw up the job."

"I feel more like fightin' than workin' these old examples," Shinney snorted. As a rule Shinney worked his arithmetic for he was a pretty good "scholar;" but these warm, Spring days and the Spring Fever were causing him to be a bit delinquent in his studies; games and acrobatic stunts appealed to him more.

Just then there appeared upon the school ground a short, fat but rather bully-looking fellow, who stood about three inches higher than Shinney. He had rather rough-looking hands and muddy shoes.

"Yonder comes Tom Hunter," whispered Tom to his companion, as he nudged Shinney in the side.

Shinney looked up and frowned. Then he threw his worm-eaten books upon the steps and started off at a brisk pace to meet Tam.

"Say here, I got a score to settle with you, Tam Hunter!" Shinney

stopped the boy by blocking his path.

"Aw, I ain't got no time to fool with you, Shinney Dale; I've got to study my lessons. Crawl out o' the way!" The bully shoved Shinney aside with a growl.

But Shinney caught him by his coat collar. "You'll take time. You pull off that slimy, old sweater o' yourn and roll up your sleeves, commanded the attacker. "They's gonna be a fight right here. I want to know what you been tryin' to sport Mary Payne for? Don't you know she's my cheese? And what did you give her that big valentine for?"

"'Cause I wanted to—you get that?" retorted Tam. At the same instant he hurled his big fist at the left ear of Shinney and the slim, little fellow fell to the ground.

But Shinney soon arose to his feet again. The blow on the ear had enraged him somewhat, bringing into existance a bulldog's strength. He lowered his head like a charging bull and made a leap at Tam. He hit the fat one squarely in the stomach and he also fell to the ground; but he didn't arise as quickly as Shinney. He layed there panting for breath.

When Tam arose to his feet again, Shinney had one of his big, fat hands between his bony fingers squeezing very tenaciously. Tam squealed like a dying pig.

"Say your prayers," ordered Shinney. Tam mumbled out a short prayer, while a crowd of boys, which had by now formed around the fight, laughed and jeered mockingly.

"Now, say Uncle." Shinney looked very severe.

Tam hesitated. He would say anything but that.

"Say Uncle; you hear?"

"Ding, dong, ding, dong, ding, dong." These were the summons that came from the little school tower. The fight immediately stopped and all the boys entered the schoolhouse.

As Shinney was entering the big, double door, he felt a soft hand touch him on his back and a sweet voice whisper, "Shinney, isn't that arithmetic hard?"

He turned and faced Mary Payne. "You bet," he smiled. "I ain't got mine."

"Nor me either. What shall we do?"

Shinney scratched his head doubtfully. He suddenly exclaimed, "G'osh!" If you ain't got yours, we won't have no lesson. I ain't gonna have no teacher quarreling with you."

"But Shinney, how are you going to prevent it?"

"That's alright. Just you watch. You know I sit by the fireplace."

"But I don't want you to play any trick and get a whipping on my account, Shinney!"

"That's alright; he can't lick me—not that tobacco stick."

Before going to his seat, which was directly opposite the fireplace, Shinney glided to the rear of the one-room schoolhouse and drew half a dozen long straws from a broom. Then he took his seat, as usual, and began to study or rather pretend to.

Now it was the habit of the tall, longlegged schoolmaster to stand before the fireplace with his long legs stretched wide apart and his hands under his long "Jim-swingin'" coat tail in the early morning while the students were studying.

This morning, when old Boggs was standing before the fireplace in his usual fashion tapping his long, split tail nervously, Shinney took advantage of the opportunity to rid himself and his playmates—Mary Payne mostly—of a day of schooling. He bundled the six straws together and

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