

THE EARLY SCHOOLS OF INDIANA.

FROM PAPERS OF D. D. BANTA—FOURTH INSTALMENT.

"Barring Out"; The Tables Turned on the Autocrat of the Rod—Instances of a Rude Custom Once General.

Among the school customs of early days which have entirely disappeared was that described as "turning out" or "barring out" the teacher—a sport that was never indulged in in Indiana at any other than Christmas time.

The ostensible object in barring out a teacher was to compel him to treat his school. It was a sort of legalized rebellion of the scholars against the master's authority, accompanied by a forced levy with which to purchase the particular article that was to compose the treat, or else to furnish the treat outright himself. Usually the deposed monarch furnished the money and the rebels bought the treat."

The "treat" here in Indiana, as far as I have seen, always consisted of something to eat or drink. In western Pennsylvania, according to Breckinridge's "Recollections of the West," the object was to compel a vacation. In all cases the barring out was made the occasion of more or less revelry and disorder. According to a statement made in the "Life of Thomas Jefferson Fisher," a Kentucky preacher, barring out was observed "on the first holiday that came, or at the end of the session," I find no evidence of its observance in this State at the end of the session, although some teachers were in the habit of making presents to their scholars at that time. Such presents were always voluntarily made, however, and as far as my observations went, always consisted of something else than articles of food or drink.

I find but two instances recorded of the use of whisky in this State with which to treat the school. One of these was in a school in Jefferson county, and the other in Morgan. The episode in the last-named county is reported to have occurred at Christ-

mas of the cold winter of 1825-'26. When the teacher reached the schoolhouse on that extraordinarily cold morning he found the door barred and all the big boys inside. Of course the pedagogue wanted in, but the boys declared that it would take a "treat" to open the door that morning. Accordingly, Mr. Conduitt, the teacher, went to the nearest "grocery" and purchased about a gallon of whisky, with which he returned and again applied for admittance. The door was at once unbarred and the man with the jug admitted, whereupon a season of "high jinks" followed. The master dealt out the liquor liberally, it would seem, for some of the boys, becoming "too full for utterance," had to be "sent home in disgrace." One of these boys, it is recorded, "went home swaggering, happy as a lark, loaded to the muzzle with a ceaseless fire of talk, but his father quietly took down the big gad and gave the boy a dressing that he remembers to the present."

The following account of a "turning out" will prove of interest in this connection. It occurred in Nashville, in this State. "The custom," says the historian, "was so universal that the scholars demanded their right to it, and were upheld by their parents. Christmas came, and Mr. Gould was informed that he must treat. The scholars refused to come to order when called and the teacher refused to treat. After a short time the larger boys forcibly captured the teacher, bound him hand and foot, and carried him down to Greasy creek to be severely ducked in cold water unless he surrendered and treated. Several men of the town accompanied this novel expedition. The stubborn teacher was carried out into the stream by the larger boys, who took off their shoes and rolled up their pants and waded out. A parley was held, but the teacher was obstinate and was on the point of being unceremoniously baptised, when W. S. Roberts interceded, and after some sharp words, pro and con, secured from the teacher the promise to treat on candy and apples. He was then released, and the cavalcade marched up to the store, where all were given a taste of the above-named delicacies.

Stubborn teachers did not always come out as well as did this Brown county man. The school boys of a certain district in Posey county, having determined to compel their teacher to treat, "upon his refusal he was promptly sat upon by the boys, who

soon overcame him and carried him down to the creek and broke the ice. The alternative was once more given him, but he was stubborn and held out. Without ceremony he was plunged beneath the icy water, and, yet holding out, his tormenters placed chunks of ice on his bare bosom, and but for the arrival of outsiders who rescued him, serious consequences would doubtless have been the result." It is more than probable in this case that the victim had been a hard master, and his pupils took advantage of their opportunity to get revenge. Jacob Powers, a Hancock county teacher, fared worse. He had recently had a tooth extracted, and, despite his warning as to the risk, was plunged in the cold waters of a creek. The result was lock-jaw, from which he died.

While the teachers, as a general rule, resisted the demand to their uttermost, there were others, however, who fell in with the humor of the occasion and found as much fun in it as the boys themselves. Indeed, if the teacher resisted in good earnest, even to the point of being ducked in the ice-cold water, he was, nevertheless, "expected to forgive his enemies," and I do not remember to have come across an instance of a teacher ever being accused of subsequently holding malice against any one who had wronged him in a Christmas frolic.

It must be said that those teachers who looked on the bright side of the custom, and gave in after a brief show of resistance, usually came out the best. On one occasion the big boys of one William Surface's school barred the school door against him. On reaching the schoolhouse he was, of course, refused entrance except on the usual condition. But the teacher declined answering their oral demands, because he said, "some dispute might arise as to what was said." If they had terms to propose they must present them in writing. This seemed reasonable, and so the boys put their demand on paper, which, together with pen and ink, was handed to the diplomat on the outside. Beneath the boys' scrawl he wrote, "I except to the above proposition—William Surface," and passed the writing back. The boys were satisfied, and at once opened the door. "You had better read with care what I have written," said the master to the scholars, when safe within. "It is one thing to accept a proposition and quite another to except to it." The boys, now crestfallen, ac-

knowledgeed their mistake, but the teacher, after "improving the occasion by warning them against the evil of carelessness in the business transactions of life," generously treated, and was thereafter loved better than ever before.

A teacher by the name of Groves, who taught in a district close up to the Marion county line, found himself barred out one Christmas morning. Living in "the schoolmaster's cabin" hard by, he called in his wife to assist him. The weather was extremely cold, and it occurred to him that if he could drown out the fire he could freeze out the rebellion, and so, ascending the roof to the top of the chimney, his wife handed up buckets of water, which he poured down on the school fire. But it was all in vain. The boys, raking the coals out upon the broad hearth, defied him. His next thought was to smoke them out, and to that end he laid boards over the chimney top. But the boys had thought of that and provided themselves with a long pole with which to remove the boards. Not to be outdone, Groves replaced the boards over the chimney and calling upon his wife, who seems to have entered with spirit into all his plans, she gallantly mounted to the comb of the roof and took her seat on the boards to hold them down while her husband stationed himself at the door below. But the boys tried the pole again, and with such vigor that they overthrew the master's dame, who, at the risk of her life and limb, came tumbling to the ground. Picking herself up, she retired to her own domicile, leaving her lord to fight the battle out as best he could. As the girls and smaller children arrived he sent them to his own cabin, where his wife agreed to keep watch and ward over them. One by one the garrison became captive to the vigilant master, who stood guard at the door, and was sent to the other house. By the time for dismissing in the afternoon every rebellious boy had been taken in and the school was in full blast in the master's cabin.

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