THE SPIRIT OF THE OLD SCHOOL HOUSE

The Whimsical Narrative of a Home-Week Vision by Albert St. Clair

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The old Brick School House where we sought
The knowledge patient teachers taught,
The Class Rooms where we slowly earned
Whatever wisdom that we learned,
That school is gone, without a trace
Of anything to mark its place.

The Hill of Wintergreen is leveled,
That mound where scholars romped and revelled,
Where spicy, rich red berries grew
With green leaves sprinkle, too:
Not faith, but magnum, moved away
That Mountain where we used to play!

Yet it is only fifty years,
As time is measured by the spheres:
Just fifty circles Earth has run
In lonely grandeur round the Sun,
And now the School so much endeared
To all of us has disappeared!

We calmly accept the ruthless state
Our change in these progressive days:
With leagues of wilderness all Nearby,
Of idle lands dormant of crops,
In all our continent scarcely a
That hideous stump which we loved again
yesterday!

I sought the "Graded School" and found
All that remains of it — the ground!
The enterprising [illegible] razed!
Have moved it [illegible] east!!
No doubt, [illegible] decided
To leave [illegible] behind!

I [illegible] the [illegible]
Where [illegible]
A Century [illegible]
Since I had [illegible]
The years [illegible]

Lament the [illegible]
No wonder, [illegible]
Bygone
To tell me it had [illegible]
No sign of [illegible]
To gratify my [illegible]

Where now are all the [illegible]
With rifles, [illegible]
The [illegible]
Who came to [illegible]
How many with their [illegible]
Have answered "[illegible]"
Called of the fateful [illegible]
Excuses neither [illegible]

(No "lady" marks upon the roll)
If that old Spectre [illegible]
I whisper names of [illegible]
But few of them can [illegible]
The most mischievious [illegible]
Are resting in the [illegible]
At home in snug and [illegible] rooms
That heathen folk [illegible] as tombs;
The Asiatic residents [illegible],
Quite moral, so sedate and grave!

I lingered at the old School site
Till day verged slowly into night:
The brilliant student and the dunce
Had thronged those classic precincts once:
Our School had taught them in its day,
A guiding factor on the way:
The pilot of a generation
Which shaped a future for the Nation:
Its work well done, at last it must
Be scattered as the desert dust!
Its teachers were among the sages
Who formulate the lore of ages:
They made the history which others
Teach children of the modern mothers:

But now the School is as a page
Torn from the archives of the Age!

As teachers illustrate their words
With diagrams of nouns and verbs,
Or figures sketched in chalk to show
What scholars chiefly need to know:
As students cipher given sums,
Until the proper answer comes,
On boards of black with crayons white,
To show the methods that are right,
Exemplifying to the School
Then rub the figures out — and find
The precepts graven on the mind:
Much as the figures were erased
Our Village School House was effaced!

And so affairs of mankind move,
All in their own peculiar groove:
The workers, when the work is thru,
Give way, the old ones for the new:
The elder man completes his part,
And Age leaves off for Youth to start:
So Destiny prefigures all
As on the Common School House wall,
The future of the coming race
That soon assumes commanding place
To own and operate the Earth
Thru all the surface of its girth!
The problem solved and then wiped out,
Development is brought about:
Old Schools are all eradicated
And Progress is accelerated!

The teachers with their solemn faces
Suppressing good and gentle graces:
(As in the absolute didactics
That ruled by stern, repressive tactics)
Are gone, but in the lessons taught
They left a legacy of thot!
That essence of their labor clings
To us, for thots are [illegible] things!
All that exists was first divined
And shaped in God's creative mind:
So all the handiwork of man
Must be constructed from a plan
Conceived and fashioned forth in thot
Before the substance can be wrought.

[illegible] devices, forges, finely
The elements [illegible]
By unseen [illegible] the changes,
Creates, destroys and rearranges:
All things must serve [illegible] purpose, the
The purport of it none may know!

Our Village School was swept away,
Yet there are replicas to-day:
By memory they are enshrined
In cherished niches of the mind;
Grandfathers and grandmothers too,
Look back to it in fond review:
Where any of us still exist
The "Graded School House" will be missed.

About the old, familiar place,
I mused with melancholy grace:
I felt the touch of youth once more
As fragrance from the years of yore:
A thirst for good old-fashioned ways,
The ebb and flow of moods and teases,
As strong emotions stirred my senses:
A hunger for the absent classes,
The aching sadness that benumbs,
Yet, as nepenthe, lulls the brain
But hurts the heart with subtle pain!

Departed, in the twilight cool
I lingered near the vanished School
The children of my schoolmates
[illegible]
With [illegible] glances turned me cast:
Unnoticed as my early day
Grown up with children growing
[illegible]!

As in another world, when
I stood a [illegible] wanderer,
The [illegible] wheel,
Sent some [illegible] to sing
Along the [illegible] strength [illegible]
[illegible]
With [illegible] of [illegible] sounds!
As if the [illegible] my youth,
While, [illegible] the [illegible]
While [illegible] years [illegible]
A moment [illegible]
Or [illegible] the [illegible]
Some [illegible]
With [illegible]
An [illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible]
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