

PART OF THE PREFACE TO THE
FIRST EDITION.

I MAY as well confess, what it would be affectation to conceal, that I am more than pleased with the generous reception accorded to this story as a serial in the columns of *Hearth and Home*. It has been in my mind since I was a Hoosier boy to do something toward describing life in the back-country districts of the Western States. It used to be a matter of no little jealousy with us, I remember, that the manners, customs, thoughts, and feelings of New England country people filled so large a place in books, while our life, not less interesting, not less romantic, and certainly not less filled with humorous and grotesque material, had no place in literature. It was as though we were shut out of good society. And, with the single exception of Alice Cary, perhaps, our Western writers did not dare speak of the West otherwise than as the unreal world to which Cooper's lively imagination had given birth.

I had some anxiety lest Western readers should take offence at my selecting what must always seem an exceptional phase of life to those who have grown up in the more refined regions of the West. But nowhere has the School-master been received more kindly than in his own country and among his own people.

Some of those who have spoken generous words of the School-master and his friends have suggested that the story is an autobiography. But it is not, save in the sense in which every work of art is an autobiography: in that it is the result of the experience and observation of the writer. Readers will therefore bear in mind that not Ralph nor Bud nor Brother Sodom nor Dr. Small represents the writer, nor do I appear, as Talleyrand said of Madame de Staël, "disguised as a woman," in the person of Hannah or Mirandy. Some of the incidents have been drawn from life; none of them, I believe, from my own. I should like to be considered a member of the Church of the Best Licks, however.

It has been in my mind to append some remarks, philological and otherwise, upon the dialect, but Professor Lowell's admirable and erudite preface to the Biglow Papers must be the despair of every one who aspires to write on Americanisms. To Mr. Lowell belongs the distinction of being the only

one of our most eminent authors and the only one of our most eminent scholars who has given careful attention to American dialects. But while I have not ventured to discuss the provincialisms of the Indiana backwoods, I have been careful to preserve the true *usus loquendi* of each locution.

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By F. OPPER, ALLEGRA EGGLESTON
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The Hoosier School-Master.

CHAPTER I.

A PRIVATE LESSON FROM A BULLDOG.

"WANT to be a school-master, do you? You? Well, what would *you* do in Flat Crick deestrick, *I'd* like to know? Why, the boys have driv off the last two, and licked the one afore them like blazes. You might teach a summer school, when nothin' but children come. But I 'low it takes a right smart *man* to be school-master in Flat Crick in the winter. They'd pitch you out of doors, sonny, neck and heels, afore Christmas."

The young man, who had walked ten miles to get the school in this district, and who had been mentally reviewing his learning at every step he took, trembling lest the committee should find that he did not know enough, was not a little taken aback at this greeting from "old Jack Means," who was the first trustee that he lighted on. The impression made by these ominous remarks was emphasized