

The Perils of Teaching Grammar

The following is from the January 6 1856 *Mountain County Herald*, a Winsted newspaper that predated the *Winsted Evening Citizen*, which made its debut in 1888. This piece of humor was taken from *The Missouri Democrat*.

“Mister Editor: I have been sendin my darter Nancy to a schoolmaster in this neighborhood. Last Friday I went over to the school just to see how Nancy was gittin along. I see things I didn’t like by no means. The schoolmaster was larnin her things entirely out of the line of edycation, and, as I think, improper. I set awhile in the school-house and heerd one class say their lesson. They was a spellin, and I thot spelled quite exceedingly. Then cum Nancy’s turn to say her lesson. She said it very spry. I was shockt! And determined she should leave that school. I have heerd that grammer was an oncommon fine study, but I don’t want any grammer about my house. The lesson that Nancy sed was nothing but the foolishhest kind uv talk, the ridicles luv talk you ever seed. She got up, and the first thing she sed was ‘I luv!’ I looked rite at her hard for doing so improper, but she went rite on and sed, ‘thou lovest, he luv,’ and I reckon you never heerd such a riggermyrole in your life – luv, luv, luv, and nothing but luv. She said one time, ‘I did luv.’

Sez I, ‘who did you luv?’ Then the scholars laffed, but I wasn’t to be put off, and I sed, ‘Who did you luv, Nancy? I want to know, who did you luv? The schoolmaster, Mr. McQuillister, put in, and he sed would explane when Nancy finished the lesson. This sorter pacified me, and Nancy went on with awful luv talk. It got wus and wus every word. She sed, ‘I might, could or would luv.’

I stopped her again, and sed I reckon I wud see about that, and told her to walk out of that house. The schoolmaster tried to interfere, but I wouldn’t let him say a word. He sed I was a fool, and I nockt him down and made him holler in short order. I taukt the strate thing to him. I told him Ide show him how he’d learn my darter grammer.

I got the nabors together, and we sent Mr. McQuillester off in a hurry, and I reckon tharl be no more grammer teechin in these parts soon. If you know of any rather oldish man in your regen that doant teech grammer, we wood be glad if you wood send him on. But in footure we will be keerful how we employ men. Yung schoolmasters won’t do, especially if they teacher grammer. It is a bad thing for morils.

Yours til deth.

Thomas Jefferson Sole