TALES TOLD OUT OF SCHOOL

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Tales Told Out of School by Edward S. Ellis

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EDWARD S. ELLIS

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1899

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TO HON. ALFRED REED,

TRENTON, N. J.

I have neglected the courtesy of asking permission to dedicate these "Tales Told Out of School" to you, and your first knowledge, therefore, of the liberty thus taken will be when you look upon this

printed page.

But you and I have been friends from earliest boyhood, and, as you once said, it is such friendships and those born of comradeship in danger, that endure to the end. We shared the same seat in the little stone school-house; we were companions in study, in play, and in mischief. You were always generous and manly and brave. I never knew you to do a mean thing, and throughout our life-long intimacy we never had a quarrel.

You have been for a score of years an honored Justice of the Supreme Court of New Jersey and now hold the exalted office of Vice-Chancellor of your native State. Through these exacting duties, faithfully performed, you have remained my true and trusted friend, ever ready to respond with wise counsel, and happy to extend the helping hand in any and every way in your power.

I feel less misgiving, therefore, than I should, in taking this liberty. I confess that I feared you would withhold your permission, but the mischief has been done and I am sure that any reproof uttered will be robbed of all sting.

Let me add that the following pages, while narrating more than one incident that you will recognize, contain no reference in the remotest degree to your own personality. Only in the last paragraph of the tribute to that remarkable man, Edward Gilbert, do I appeal to your appreciation of his nobility of character. Most of these reminiscences, however, will be new to you; for while I was teaching, you were winning honors at the bar and on the bench; but I may say that only in one or two cases is

there the slightest variation from truth.

My desire to avoid wounding the feelings of persons still living has led me, here and there, to hide identities more carefully perhaps than was necessary.

I know your appreciation of wit, of the pathetic and of the heroic side of life, and I believe you will see in some of these incidents,

"Footprints, that perhaps another, Sailing o'er life's solemn main, A forlorn and shipwrecked brother, Seeing, shall take heart again."

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INTRODUCTION

I have no doubt that those who do me the honor to feel an interest in these reminiscences of school life will wish to know whether they are truth or fiction, and if partly both, the respective ratio of the two.

Speaking, therefore, as a mathematician, I have to say that about ninety per cent. is simple, unvarnished truth. The remaining one-tenth would not have been fiction, but for the propriety of veiling certain incidents, lest unhappily the feelings of some one might have been wounded. This is particularly true of two of the sketches. Of the remainder, the only fiction lies in the proper names. Some time ago, a friend wrote me giving proof that he had identified every person and incident named. This was rather disquieting, but I hope no harm was done.

I was vice-principal at the age of seventeen, of one of the largest public schools in my State, and taught in a night school where nearly every young man was considerably older than myself. To me no pleasure can surpass that of instructing a class of bright boys and girls,—all eager to learn, all hanging on your words, every face aglow with the delight a child feels when a new truth breaks in all its fulness upon his conscious-

