

The Family Circle

A FELLOW'S MOTHER

'A fellow's mother,' said Fred the wise,
With rosy cheeks and merry eyes,
'Knows what to do if a fellow gets hurt
By a thump or a bruise, or a fall in the dirt.

'A fellow's mother has bags and strings,
Rags and buttons and lots of things;
No matter how busy she is, she'll stop
To see how well you can spin your top.

'She does not care—not much I mean,
If a fellow's face is not always clean;
And if your trousers are torn at the knee,
She can put in a patch that you would never see.

'A fellow's mother, she is never mad,
But only feels sorry if you are bad;
And I tell you this, if you only are true,
She'll always forgive you, whatever you do.

'Of this I am sure,' said Fred the wise,
With a manly look in his laughing eyes;
'I'll mind my mother, quick, every day—
A fellow's a baby who does not obey.'

SUCH AS HE HATH

Bilkins was in a hurry—he was always in a hurry. Just now, as he had nothing to do, his rush was greater than ever. For Bilkins was just out of college, had just secured a job on the *Picayune* as a junior reporter, and the little fellow was mortally afraid he would miss something, or something would miss him, or that he would lose a scoop. His terror was constant.

As Bilkins wandered nervously up and down Canal street, he thought being a journalist a most strenuous life. For just now Bilkins called himself 'journalist'; this title would tone down later to 'reporter,' then 'scribbler,' then 'hack,' then—

Suddenly the youth walked face to face with an old woman, tattered, weather-beaten, bent, holding in her arms a rather large youngster—a boy.

'Help me,' groaned the woman in Bilkins' face. The eyes of the 'journalist' ceased searching the streets for stray dukes and burning skyscrapers. 'What's the matter?' inquired Bilkins.

'My boy's arm is broke—and—' The old woman closed her eyes, opened them a little blindly, then she turned abruptly and sat down on a step by the curb. 'I've walked up here from Avery's Island,' she said after a moment.

The child's face was very white and its eyes were shut. 'Why didn't you ride?' asked Bilkins with great penetration.

'No money.'

'It's eight miles down there.'

'Yes,' gasped the woman. 'I wanted you to show me the way to the charity hospital.' She struggled to her feet again, the child still inert.

Bilkins thrust his hands in his pockets—and found them empty. He cast a swift glance around the street. Nothing seemed about to happen. By a swift calculation Bilkins decided that he could trust Canal street to run itself while he was away.

'Here,' said Bilkins, 'let me take that child. If you have walked eight miles with the kid you are tired.'

The woman turned her burden over to the 'journalist,' and the two set off down Canal, turned down Rampart into Gravier for the hospital. The young fellow was fearfully afraid some of his acquaintances would see him.

As they walked along Bilkins asked questions, and the woman answered with the loquacity of the ignorant.

The woman was an Austrian, a Mrs. Nikola Slebzak, the widow of an 'oyster shucker' at Avery Island. Her little Nikola had fallen from the top of the oyster-box, where he was playing, and had broken his arm. She couldn't afford the doctor at the island, so she had to come to New Orleans. She told her story statistically, much as if she had been counting oysters. She said nothing about the walk, her weariness, how her feet were blistered, her present hunger; but the 'journalist' filled in those gaps himself. The child moved against Bilkins' lapel and groaned.

The mother held out her weary arm instantly.

Bilkins shook his head. 'He's all right,' he said.

The whole thing appealed to Bilkins, who was young. He wanted to give this old woman something, to at least send her back on the cars. His charity even thought of her work as 'oyster shucker,' and he wished he could better that.

'Oyster shucker,' thought Bilkins, 'what an awful nickname for a person's employment!' The thought that he was a 'journalist' crossed his mind.

They reached the hospital. The old woman was distracted about the child, who, aroused from its stupor,

screamed with pain. She said 'Thankye' to Bilkins at the door, and straightway forgot him.

But Bilkins did not forget. The incident somehow stirred the boy. He was sorry for this woman. He wanted to help her. He could fairly feel the weight of that child for eight long, heart-breaking miles, the blisters on the mother's feet, her aching back, and straining arms. The more he thought of it the hotter arose the desire to help her.

Imbued with this notion, he regained Canal, found the street had behaved itself properly in his absence, then sat down on the curb and began to write in his notebook. If Bilkins had walked those eight miles with the child himself he could not have described it more graphically, more simply, more touchingly. He drew the very picture of the woman, her brown, weather-stained, wrinkled face, bent form, shabby, frayed clothes, and in her arms the heavy inert child, and—last pitiful touch—her utter destitution.

Bilkins arose, patted his manuscript in his pocket, then resumed his patrol for wandering dukes, flying assassins, distraught heroines, burning buildings. Nothing happened.

An hour later Bilkins was in the *Picayune* office to make his first report.

'Anything?' inquired the city editor gruffly.

Bilkins shook his head somewhat shamefacedly. 'Do you mean,' asked the city editor, 'that you have let all the thousand and one bits of life float around you all morning there on Canal, and you didn't have sense enough to pick out one single little interesting thing?'

Bilkins flushed. Suddenly he remembered the old woman's story. He fumbled that out of his pocket and silently handed it over.

The city editor looked it over, lifted his eyes once to Bilkins' red face. 'It'll do,' he snapped all in one word, and Bilkins backed out of the door.

'I think that kid'll write some day,' said the city editor to his assistant; 'blessed if he didn't make me—me—feel like chipping in a quarter to help an old woman out.'

Bilkins' article appeared on the second page of next morning's *Picayune*. The old Austrian woman never did know why she received, in the care of the hospital, about twenty dollars in little gifts ranging from five cents to five dollars. She thought that the New Orleans people were very kind—and she was right.

ACTS OF KINDNESS AND THOUGHTFULNESS

Did you ever think that a kind word put out at interest brings back an enormous percentage of love and appreciation? That though a loving thought may not seem to be appreciated, it has yet made you better and braver because of it? That the little acts of kindness and thoughtfulness day by day are really greater than one immense act of goodness once a year? That to be always polite to the people at home is better and more refined than having 'company manners'? That to learn to talk pleasantly about nothing in particular is a great art, and prevents you saying things that you may regret? That to judge anybody by his personal appearance stamps you as not only ignorant, but vulgar?

A BOY'S BRAVERY

The story of a little Boer boy who refused to betray his friends, even on the threat of death, is told by Major Seely, M.P. It happened during the Boer war.

'I was asked,' said Major Seely, 'to get some volunteers and try to capture a commandant at a place some twenty miles away. I got the men readily, and we set out. It was rather a desperate enterprise, but we got there all right. I can see the little place yet, the valley and the farmhouse, and I can hear the clatter of the horses' hoofs. The Boer general had got away, but where had he gone? It was even a question of the general catching us, and not we catching the general. We rode down to the farmhouse, and there we saw a good-looking Boer boy and some yeomen. I asked the boy if the commandant had been there, and he said in Dutch, taken by surprise, "Yes." "Where has he gone?" I said, and the boy became suspicious. He answered, "I don't know."

'I decided then to do a thing for which I hope I may be forgiven, because my men's lives were in danger. I threatened the boy with death if he would not disclose the whereabouts of the general. He still refused, and I put him against a wall, and said I would have him shot. At the same time I whispered to my men, "For heaven's sake, don't shoot." The boy still refused, although I could see he believed I was going to have him shot. I ordered the men to "Aim." Every rifle was levelled at the boy.

'Now,' I said, 'before I give the word, which way has the general gone?' I remember the look in the boy's face—a look such as I have never seen but once. He was transfixed before me. Something greater almost than anything human shone from his eyes. He threw back his head and said in Dutch, "I will not say." There was nothing for it but to shake hands with the boy and go away.'

FRESH DISCOVERY OF AN OLD TRUTH

Helen's enjoyment of the party given in honor of her ninth birthday was nearly spoiled by the ill-tempered out-