

The 'Old Mogul's' Fresh-Air Fund.

(By William Futey Gibbons, in 'The Youth's Companion'.)

It all happened through the fault of the clerks in the railway office; Mary Lizzie was sure of that. If they had not teased her, she never would have seen the president of the North Mountain Railway Company, and of course she would never have insulted him. But now she was disgraced, and was being sent, in charge of the messenger from the railway office, to Mr. Parker, the pastor of the mission church where she attended Sunday-school.

The messenger was doing his best to impress upon her that she might be thankful she was not on her way to the police-station instead. She did not believe a word he was saying, but she would have greatly preferred being sent to jail to being sent to the minister's. She did not know much about ministers, while she knew a great deal about policemen.

She would have darted away from the messenger if he had been older; but he was little more than a boy, and she knew he could catch her, and she wanted no more tales to be told to Mr. Parker.

For some minutes after the messenger had arrived with her at Mr. Parker's she cried so that, although she tried to talk, the minister had no notion what had happened. When he had dismissed the messenger and had comforted her, he asked her to begin again at the beginning and tell him everything.

'You see, it was about Mr. Wicks,' said Mary Lizzie. 'The doctor says he'll die if he don't get out of the city.'

'Yes, I know all about Mr. Wicks,' said the minister, groaning inwardly. He had exhausted both the resources and the patience of every charitable supporter of the mission on such cases as that of Mr. Wicks.

'I went out collecting for Mr. Wicks, so's he could go to the country. I was doing beautiful while I stuck to the tenements. I wish I'd never gone to the old railway offices!' she said, beginning to cry again. 'We had it all fixed up so nice! Miss Royal was going to take me in with her, and our folks was going to take the two youngest of the Wicks boys; then the oldest was going in with the Letfish family. Of course Janet would have to go with her father to take care of him.'

The minister explained gently to Mary Lizzie that it would take a great deal more money to send even Mr. Wicks and Janet to the country than the amount she showed him tied in the corner of her handkerchief. 'But tell me what you did at the railway office,' he said.

'It was their dinner-hour, I guess, when I got there, for the men were having a daisy time. They were just mean to me, that's what they were! It was my fault, I suppose; but they egged me on, and I sassed 'em back. They wouldn't give me a cent—only one man who give me that quarter; that was the most I got. All the rest said they was just starting to Bar 'Arbor or Tucksido on their vacations. They asked me how it came I wasn't spending the summer with the Vanderbilts, and when I wouldn't answer 'em they called me the Duchess of Cady Street.'

Mary Lizzie stopped, wrapped her hands nervously in her faded skirt, and went on:

'That made me mad, and I told 'em I

was no Dutcher than they was. While I was sassing 'em, they all went to work pretty quick. A little, low, fat man had come in, but I didn't see him first. When they wouldn't answer me any more, I turned to leave, and run plump into him. "Barret," he says, as sharp as could be, "what's all this mean?" "I just come in, sir," says the man. But it wasn't true, for he has one of the worst of all to tease me. "I'll tell you what," says I, and then I told him what I was collecting for, and they hadn't but one give anything.'

'Who was the man who came in?'

'Why, Colonel Bair.'

'You don't mean you asked Colonel Bair to contribute for Mr. Wicks!' exclaimed the minister, remembering vividly a certain experience of his own with Colonel Bair, at

had to keep house for him, and he was sick now for fourteen months, and the family earning next to nothing, and they couldn't help themselves. And I told him how we was going to fix it to take care of the children so Janet and her father could go to the country, and wouldn't he please help?'

'And he said, why didn't the churches 'tend to such things? And I told him about the nurse's fund and the free kindergarten, and how Dr. Cregan went to see the sick people that was too poor to pay, and all the the rest you did for the people here at the church. I told him I knowed if you could you'd send Mr. Wicks, but you just couldn't, 'cause I knowed you'd paid for Mrs. Homer yourself. I know you did, Mr. Parker, for she said she'd just bet you did.'

'And he said, why didn't I ask somebody



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the end of which he found himself in the corridor of the great office building feeling that he had done a disgraceful deed in asking assistance for a sick man.

'Yes, I did; but I didn't know it was Colonel Bair when I asked him.'

'Can you remember every every word you said, and all that he said?'

'I told him that Mr. Wicks had been the driver for some rich man for a long while, and now he was sick, and the man was so mean he wouldn't help him a bit.'

'Didn't you know that Mr. Wicks was Colonel Bair's driver until he was taken sick?'

'No, was he? I thought Colonel Bair acted pretty mad! He squirmed round in his chair and said who sent me there? And I said nobody. And he said wasn't I lying, and looked at me real sharp, and I said no, I was 'straight. And I told him I made the plan all up myself.'

'Then he said, supposing the man had good wages all these years, and hadn't saved anything, was the railway company a charity organization? And I said I didn't know what the railway company was, but the man had buried his wife, and his daughter, my age,

else? and I said there wasn't any use to ask the "Old Mogul." And he said, did I know who he was? and I said no. And he kind o' smiled as if he was proud to hear me say that, and said, why wasn't it no use to ask the Old Mogul? and I said everybody said he never give money to anybody. And he said didn't every body say the Old Mogul was too smart to be taken in? and I said no; they said he was too stingy. And I thought some of the men in the outside office would fall off their chairs; but nobody looked round.'

'What did he say to that?' asked the minister, smiling.

'He looked awful black, and growled out, "They do, eh? Say I'm an old skinflint, I reckon! Who said that?" And I was awful scairt, for then I knowed he was the Old Mogul. And I says, slowly, "Why, everybody says so."

'He kind o' sunk down in his chair for a minute, and then he grabbed up his pen and scratched away in a little book as if he was going to carve the paper up. Then he called out, "Barrett, look in the directory and find where the Rev. Mr. Parker lives, and take this child to him." And he tore off the letter as if he was tearing a piece of cloth,