

Te Story Page.

Miss Five Cents.

(ISABELLE HORTON, in "Northwestern Advocate.")

"Oh, Miss Five Cents!" "Hello, Miss Five Cents!" "Wait a minute!"

A girl whose merry dark eyes belied the nun-like severity of her black dress, turned a smiling face in the direction from which came the saucy voices, in no wise disconcerted by the unconventionality of their address.

"Oh, Karl, is it you? Good morning-Nannie. How is your sister, today, Frank?"

A clamorous group gathered around her, the boldest grasping her hands or her dress. "Ain't you coming to my house?" was the general query.

"Not today, little folks. I have a meeting at the church."

Her quick eyes had wandered beyond the group about her, and spied a tanned face and a pair of blue eyes regarding her furtively from the shadow of a passage way running back between the buildings. The children's quick eyes followed her questioning glance.

"Ah—that's Frida Olson; she lives in the court."

"Well, then she must be a neighbor of yours. Have you invited her to our Sunday school class?"

"She don't want her." "She wouldn't come, anyway."

"She's an awful mean girl!" "She's an awful bad girl."

"She's a thief; she stole some cold potatoes right from our back door."

"Dear, dear, we must surely have her in our class, and see if we can't help her to do better, mustn't we?" The children's faces looked dubious, approval, but they vouchsafed no reply. The deaconess, for such her small bonnet with its white silken ties proclaimed her—was moving on with her clamorous escort when an old tin can whirled into the midst of the group, barely missing her, and struck the back of Karl's rough jacket, leaving a muddy stain.

"Ah, that's Frida. She did that," and with a crimson impulse the entire band dashed down the passage after the small Philistine who had by this Paphian arrow demonstrated her contempt for them and their opinions. The deaconess, left alone as suddenly as she had been surrounded, hesitated, doubtful whether it was not her duty to follow and see that no harm befell the child, but a glance at her watch decided her.

"She'll take care of herself; she is evidently used to it; I don't believe they would hurt her anyway," and she passed on her way.

Frida flew down the passage with the raft at her heels. It led into a small court surrounded by old tenements, one of the more pretensions of which rose to the height of three or four stories and was criss-crossed by crazy wooden stairways. Up one flight of these Frida rushed, and from the rude veranda into which it opened, he paused to hurl defiance at her pursuers. Leaning over the wooden railing she thrust out her tongue in a highly insulting manner at the rabble below.

"You threw that can!" "Come down; I'll dust ye to!" "Come down and I'll give it back to ye!" were some of the least offensive challenges, to which Frida answered never a word.

"Frida, come here; I want you," called a fretful voice from inside, and Frida turned and slowly entered the house. A woman lay upon a disordered bed, which alone occupied a quarter of the entire space of the little room.

"Bring me water, Frida," and the child went to the hydrant and returned with a brown, cracked teacup, which she offered to the sick woman. She raised herself up on her elbow and held it to her hot lips eagerly, but after the first swallow put it away with a disappointed air. "Ach, it is water, put it away," and rolling her thin, soiled pillow under her head, she lay down again with a groan.

Her face was flushed and quivering, and the child could only look at her in helpless perplexity. She also had her trouble.

"Mother," she said, "when are you going to get well? I'm just as hungry as I can be."

"Oh, mein Gott! I know not," burst from the woman's quivering lips, and she pressed her hands over her eyes. "You must something find; I can no help."

"But I can't find anything; mother; not in the court, nor clear over into Dalzie street. I can't find even a piece of bread," and Frida's own eyes were filling with tears and her lip quivered.

The woman started to her feet, but reeled dizzily back onto the bed. "Oh, mein Gott! mein Gott! in himmel! I must work," she groaned, and the child, frightened now as well as hungry, burst into loud sobs. But quickly checking them, sat down in the door, the tears still rolling down her cheeks.

Presently, as the shadows in the court began to deepen, she aroused herself and listened. The Fogarty children, who lived below, her special enemies, were away. She fancied she could hear their voices out in the street. She stole cautiously down the stairs, stopping at every sound. At the bottom she looked eagerly around, but not as much as a crust could she spy. It was a potato snatched from that same floor that morning, which had brought upon her

the sudden descent of her enemies with the cry of thief, but she was so very very hungry that she cared little for that. She skulked around the court, her eager eyes searching every nook and corner for the coveted morsel, and finally slipped right through the long dark passage and stood again in the street. The children had evidently forgotten the quarrel of the afternoon, and let her pass with only an indifferent glance. She had gone a block or more, when she suddenly found herself face to face with the woman who had been the innocent and immediate cause of the quarrel—"Miss Five Cents."

Her first impulse was to dart out of sight again, but her need, together with some idea suggested by the queer name, inspired her with a sudden boldness, and she walked directly up to the woman and said:—"Please will you give me five cents?"

The deaconess paused and looked into her face, still smiling, then she put out her gloved hand and took the little cold, dirty fingers in a warm clasp and said: "Show me where you live, little one. Have you a mother?"

"Mother's sick," returned the child soberly, and led the woman back toward the court. It was Frida's hour of triumph when she led "Miss Five Cents" through the group of children who clamored in vain for her to wait, and she could not repress a backward glance as they climbed the steep stairs together.

"Here's a lady, mother. It's Miss Five Cents" was her introduction.

"The deaconess took the sick woman's hand, sat down by her side and soon had the whole sad story. She had moved into the court but a few weeks before, expecting to support herself and her child by washing, but hard work and a sudden cold had prostrated her more than a week ago, since which time their small resources were exhausted, and without care or medicine she was growing worse rather than better.

"When I have some food den I get well, but I no eat," she explained apologetically, adding with some bitterness, "I tink Gott does not remember us any more."

The visitor did not see fit to argue the point, just then. She rose and put back her chair hastily, saying: "I'll be back in a few minutes, Mrs. Olson," and was gone.

Half an hour later she was climbing the stairs again with a heavy basket.

"I've brought you something to eat," she said breathlessly. "Mrs. Fogarty in the flat below, has just got home from her work, and I'm going to ask her to let me broil you a bit of steak on her fire. Mrs. Fogarty and I are old friends."

Frida gave a gasp of dismay, but the mother was too faint and ill to protest, and the visitor hurried out again.

Soon after Mrs. Olson had another caller. It was Mrs. Fogarty, red-faced and strong-armed, bearing a steaming tray, the odors from which roused the woman with a sense of eager hunger. "Oh, give me something quick," she demanded.

"The saints preserve us! Why didn't ye let folks know ye was sick? I'd give ye a sup from our table any day. It ain't much we have for sure, but we kin always divide with them as has less. Fer meself, I'm out to me work be five ivery mornin', scrubbin' the te-ay-ter, an' I niver knowed that ye was n't out yerself jist the same. An' it's starvin' yerself ye war. Sure, an' if the dayconess hadn't come in, I'd niver knowed it till ye was stone dead."

"What's you call her?" said the sick woman, looking up with a cup of steaming tea, poised in a shaking hand. "Dat woman—Frida calls her a queer name; she calls her Miss Five Cents."

"Five cents, nothin'. That's the name the childer give her in fun—the spalpeens. Her name is Nichol, an' a nickel is five cents, ain't it? I'd break her necks if they called me names loike that; but she jist laughs an' thinks it's fun. My youngsters all set great store by the dayconess."

Meantime the deaconess herself had hurried out on her way home. But in the dark passage a little form suddenly pressed close to her and two thin arms were up-stretched in the darkness. "I want to come to your Sunday school, Miss Five Cents."

There was a little touch on the child's forehead. "So you shall, dear; I'll call for you my self. Run home now and get your supper while it's nice and hot."—Sel.

A Lost Scolding.

One morning Benji happened to reach the schoolhouse very early. The place was as still as a meeting-house in the middle of the week. Benji was not afraid exactly, but he felt rather lonesome and timid; for the little white school-house was hidden from the village by a grove.

To keep up his spirits Benji began to play ball by himself. The ball he pulled from his pocket was a great wonder to all the school children. It was of rubber, almost as light as a soap-bubble, and was a beautiful bright red in color. Such a ball had never been seen by the Sharon boys until this one came to Benji from a cousin in the city.

He began by tossing and catching it, then he made it

bound on the hard, smooth ground; but it was rather stupid to be playing alone. Then he tried to make the school-house help him in his fun; and he threw the ball against the wall, and up on the roof, catching it as it bounded back. This was much livelier, and he had entirely forgotten to feel lonesome, when the ball suddenly disappeared. There was a soft little thud inside the school room, and a crash that in the quiet place sounded as loud as a peal of thunder. One of the windows was down from the top, and the little red ball had found its way through the narrow opening.

Benji's first fear was that he had lost his ball, and then that some damage had been done in the school room. He stood on tiptoe and peeped through the window. On the teacher's desk was a vase lying on its side. The flowers that had been in it were scattered about, and the water was trickling in among the neatly piled books. Benji was really frightened now. He tried the door, but it was fastened; and he was too small a boy to climb through a window. He thought of running home to get out of sight of the mischief he had done, but how could he face the scolding that would come. But no one had seen the ball thrown. Perhaps Miss Berry would never find out who it was. Then the boy shut his hands together into two tight little fists, and ran down the village as fast as his feet could carry him. He met two or three boys going to school, but he did not stop when they shouted.

Miss Berry was shutting the gate behind her when a breathless little boy almost tumbled against her, crying: "Oh, teacher, I spilled water all over your desk. Please hurry, and perhaps the books won't be spoiled."

When she learned what had happened, she hurried on to rescue the books, leaving Benji to follow more slowly. She had not scolded. "But she will when she has seen the books, and has time to 'tend to me,' he thought ruefully.

As he entered the school room there was a group about the desk, watching Miss Berry wipe off her books and putting them on a window-sill to dry.

"I know who did it," a little girl called out, suddenly diving into a corner where she had caught sight of the bright ball. "This is Benji Adams' ball, and he threw it in the window and tipped the vase over!"

She was triumphant over her discovery; but Miss Berry smiled at Benji over the heads of her other scholars, and said: "Yes, I know who did it—it was an honorable and truthful little boy, who came straight to me with the story of his accident. There has been no harm done, Benji. Most of the water dripped to the floor, and the few books that are wet will dry and be as good as ever."

And that was all the scolding Benji received.—M. B. Beck, in Presbyterian Banner.

Bad Breeding.

Of all forms of bad breeding, the pert, smart manner affected by boys and girls of a certain age, is the most offensive and impertinent. One of these so-called smart boys was once employed in the office of the treasurer of a Western railway. He was usually alone in the office between the hours of eight and nine in the morning, and it was his duty to answer the questions of all callers as clearly and politely as possible.

One morning a plainly-dressed old gentleman walked quietly in, and asked for the cashier.

"He's out," said the boy, without looking up from the paper he was reading.

"Do you know where he is?"

"No."

"When will he be in?"

"Bout nine o'clock."

"It's nearly that now, isn't it? I haven't Western time."

"There's the clock," said the boy smartly, pointing to the clock on the wall.

"Oh, yes! thank you," said the gentleman. "Ten minutes to nine. Can I wait here for him?"

"I s'pose, though it isn't a public hotel."

The boy thought this was smart, and he chuckled over it. He did not offer the gentleman a chair, nor lay down the paper he held.

"I would like to write a note while I wait," said the caller; "will you please get me a piece of paper and an envelope?"

The boy did so, and as he handed them to the gentleman, he coolly said:

"Anything else?"

"Yes," was the reply. "I would like to know the name of such a smart boy as you are."

The boy felt flattered by the word "smart," and wishing to show the full extent of his smartness, replied:

"I'm one of John Thompson's kids, William by name, and I answer to the call of 'Billy.' But here comes the boss."

The "boss" came in, and seeing the stranger, cried out: "Why, Mr. Smith, how do you do? I'm delighted to see you. We—"

But John Thompson's kid heard no more. He was looking for his hat. Mr. Smith was the president of the rail-