The Story Page

The Rebellion of "Front No. 3."

A TEMPERANCE STORY.

[Frank Walcott Hutt, in The National Advocate.]

The big hotel swarmed with guests, and Front No. 3 certainly had enough to keep him busy. At least, it seemed to him as if the clerk's bell was never quiet. People were continually coming and going, thronging the corridors, and keeping everybody connected with the house running and hurrying about with trunks, valises, bags, messages, and errands of all sorts. Front No. 3 had his share. He was the new bell boy, but he promised to be of the right sort, as he proved to be alert and quick to learn.

Senator Robinson, the idol of the district, was coming to town, and he was booked for a banquet and a speech-making in Parlor A that very night, and everybody from far and near had been invited to attend and meet the great man. It seemed as if the big register would not hold all the names of those who made application for rooms. When the clerk began reluctantly turning people away, Front No. 3 knew that the only vacant rooms left in the hotel were those that had been reserved for the occupancy of the senator and his friends.

The morning had almost passed when a cheer went up from the crowd that had gathered outside the doors, and as a large, genial-faced man entered, everybody at once became aware that the senator had arrived. The new boy did not stare, much as he would like to, but ran to his side in an instant, to take charge of the hand luggage, —a privilege that the other fellows would almost have fought for had they not happened to be in various parts of the hotel on as many errands at the time.

"Show the senator his rooms, Front," was the word.

The boy obeyed with alacrity, and the elevator man performed his little part with all due dignity. Showing every required courtesy and service, Front No. 3 safely bestowed the distinguished guest in his room, and was backing in the direction of the door, where the senator stopped him.

"Boy, bring up a bottle of whiskey, some water and glasses."

The shoulders of Front No. 3 straightened almost imperceptibly, and his eyes grew suddenly tense. He had not planned for anything quite like this. He had thought the waiters would be called upon for anything of that sort. But here was a guest, a great man in the eyes of the people of the district and state, asking a temperance boy for whiskey, and poor little Front No. 3 was stunned a little and dared to hesitate.

The senator noticed the momentary silence, and, glancing up from a letter he held in his hand, said, a bit impatiently:

"Well, that's all."

The bell boy found his voice, and "dared to be a Daniel" yet again:

"I'm sorry, sir."

"Well, sorry for what? What's the matter—no whiskey in the house? Or what's the trouble? Out with it."

Few boys could prevent themselves from trembling in their shoes with a difficulty of this sort presented them and in such a presence. Front No. 3 trembled and looked sadly confused, but he managed to lift his eyes as he bravely said:

"The trouble is, sir, I've made a promise, and I can't break it if I lose my place—no not for the President of the United States."

It was the senator's turn to be somewhat astonished now, though he laid aside his letter and gazed at the boy with more of curiosity than displeasure in his face.

"Why, boy, what do you mean? What are you here for in this hotel? Have you been here long? I ought to be very angry with you, and send a complaint to the office. But—well, there, I'm accustomed to have folks speak up when they have a grievance. I'm waiting."

"I confess I am a new boy, sir, and I never expected to be called upon to order intoxicating liquors, or I never should have tried for the place. But I suppose it's all up with me now. I can't take your order down stairs, sir."

"Tell me why," temporized the senator, with something like amusement on his face.

Front No. 3 almost broke down at this question, but he answered, half sobbingly:

"My father died in delirium tremens, and I have a brother in prison for drinking and gambling, so that I am doing my best to help support my mother. I go to Sunday-school, where I have made a promise never to taste, touch, nor handle strong drink of any sort."

"Well, I don't believe you ever will, my boy," replied the senator, encouragingly, "if you always exhibit the sort of courage you are showing now. It is unusual, and, to be honest with you, I haven't anything like animosity toward you for taking such a manly stand. I'm always glad to meet such a boy, but I certainly never expected to meet one here. Some one ought to have told you that you would be called upon to order drinks for guests, because most people would not be likely to take your refusal. Still, I am always willing to learn from any one, and, by the way, you have suddenly reminded me of something that once took place in my own life that I had very nearly forgotten. I do not drink myself, but when my friends call they generally expect liquor of some sort. They must do without to-day. So if you will just order some water and glasses, you may consider yourself the winner."

To say that the "winner" was over-come would be putting it rather mildly. He ejaculated, "Oh, thank you, Senator Robinson!" and was moving away, when—

"Hold on!" called the senator. "You won't be able to stay here, you know, with the principles you hold. I know where just such a boy as yourself is badly needed. Give me your address, and I'll not forget."

When the little rebel, who had won so startling a victory, went to the office and surrendered his position it was only to accept, later on, an enviable position of trust in a hospital of the senator's own founding. The senator looked out for him, and Front No. 3 is a temperance physician and surgeon to-day, owing all his success to the steady adherence to the same principles that caused him not to forget his pledge under any circumstances whatever.

A Manly Boy.

It was a crowded railway station, and a raw December day. Every few minutes the street cars emptied their loads at the door, and guests of cold wind came in with the crowd. All were laden with bag, basket, box or bundle. Shivering groups stood about the great round stove in the centre of the room. A small boy called "Tillygram and broken needle," which last meant the Brooklyn Eagle. Another boy shouted, "Cough candy and lozenges, five cents a paper."

Every few minutes a stream of people flowed out through the door near which a young man stood and yelled, "Rapid transit for East New York!"

The gate was kept open but a moment, and closed again when enough persons had passed through to fill the two cars upon each train. Those so unfortunate as to be farthest from the door must wait until next time. Among those unfortunate ones was an old Swedish woman, in the heavy shoes and short frock of her native Northland. She had heavy bundles, and, though she had a place so near the door that many pushed against her, could not seem to get out. Her burden was too heavy for her to hold as she stood, and when the rush came and she seized one package from the floor by her side, she dropped the other, and, in trying to get it, some one crowded and pushed her aside. The bundle was in the way; an impatient foot kicked it beyond her reach, and before she could recover it again the door was shut. The kind old face looked pitifully troubled.

Suddenly, as she bowed her old gray head to lift the abused bundle from the floor, a bright, boyish face came between her and her treasure, and a pair of strong young hands lifted it to her arms. Surprise and delight struggled in the old, wrinkled countenance, and a loud laugh came from two boys whose faces were pressed against the window outside the gate.

"See there, Harry, see Fred, that's what he dashed back for!"

"No; you don't say so? I thought he went for peanuts."

"No; but to pick up an old woman's bundle!"

"Isn't he a goose?"

"Yes; what business has she to be right in the way with her budgets? I gave it a good kick."

"Here comes the train. Shall we wait for him, Harry?" And they pounded on the window.

"Come along, Fred. Come along! You'll be left again."

"Never mind, boys; I'm going to see her through."

And they went. And Harry repeated to Dick, as they seated themselves in the train, "Isn't he a goose?"

"No," was the indignant answer; "he's a man, and I know another fellow who's a goose, and that's me, and Fred makes me ashamed of myself."

"Pooh! You didn't mean anything. You only gave it a push."

"I know it; but I feel as mean as if Fred had caught me picking her pocket."

The train whirled away. The next one came. "Rapid transit for East New York; all aboard!" shouted the man at the door.

The gate was opened. There was another rush. In the crowd was an old Swedish woman, but by her side was Fred Monroe. He carried the heavy burden; he put his lithe young figure between her and the press. With the same air he would have shown to his mother, he "saw her through." And when the gate shut I turned to my book with a grateful warmth at my heart that, amid much that is rude, chivalry still lives as the crowning charm of a manly boy.—The Silver Cross.

The New Scholar.

When Gracie got to Sunday School on that afternoon her teacher had not come yet. But the other girls were there, with their heads close together, talking busily. As soon as they saw Gracie they told her what had happened.

"Do you see that dreadful-looking, ragged girl down by the door?" May began at once. "Well, what do you suppose Mr. Hart did? He came here to us and asked us if we wouldn't let her be in our class. The idea!"

"What did you tell him?" asked Gracie.

"Lucy told him that our class had plenty of scholars and we'd rather not. But I should think he'd know better. I should think he could see that we didn't suit together."

Gracie looked at her little neighbors, with their nice starched frocks and smooth hair and clean faces, and then at the girl by the door; they did not suit well together, it was true. But Gracie's face was grave.

"I don't believe Mr. Hart can find any class for her here," said Lucy. "She ought to go to another Sunday School."

"Oh, no!" cried Gracie. Then she stopped. But the others were all looking at her, and she had to go on. "You couldn't send anybody away from Sunday School, could you, any more than if it was heaven?"

Not one of the other little girls had any answer ready for this. And, taking courage from their silence, Gracie added:

"Miss Barbara wouldn't like it, I know; nor God either."

"I believe I'll go tell Mr. Hart we've changed our minds," said Lucy. "Shall I?"

"Yes, do," said May.

And in about one minute more the strange little scholar was becoming welcomed into that class as if she were a princess royal.

As their teacher, Miss Barbara, came up the aisle, Mr. Hart stopped her and told her all about it. This was why, when Sunday school was all over, Miss Barbara called after the children, and kept them for just a moment under the shade of the big tree by the churchyard gate.

"Girls," she said, smiling down upon them, "I believe if Jesus Christ were to speak to my class this afternoon, he would say, 'I was a stranger and ye took me in.'"—Sally Campbell, in Mayflower.

Only One Step.

BY CHRISTINE C. SMITH.

Ada Meredith was walking slowly along the city street, busy with troubling thoughts, when a cheery "good morning" brought her to the knowledge that her Sunday School teacher was at her side.

"Oh, Miss Goodsell, I'm so glad you've got home. I have been wanting to see you for the last fortnight."

"It is pleasant to know I have been missed," returned the elder woman, smiling. "Anything special that you want to see me about?"

"Yes," said the girl; "I am worried almost to death." There was a quiver in the voice, but she went on, "I want a good talk with you. You always know how to straighten out things."

"Come right home with me," said Miss Goodsell, sympathetically, and soon the two turned out of the bustling street into a quiet, elm-shaded avenue. They stopped at the door of a stately, old-fashioned house, and were let in by a servant.

"Now," said the teacher, settling herself comfortably opposite her friend, "what is the trouble?"

"It is the everlasting question of dollars and cents," replied the girl, impatiently. "It must be lovely to have a home like this, without a care of how the money is coming. But I did not come here to envy you," she added with a laugh. "I am willing to work if I only knew what to do. You see, it is just this way; since father died there isn't much surplus money. With mother's embroidery we can barely scrub along—that's all. Well, I don't know whether I ought to keep on at the high school, it is my last year, you know, or go into Mr. Carpenter's store. Nellie Upham is to be married in October, and Mr. Carpenter says I can have her place if I want it. Of course the pay isn't large, but it would help a little. Then on the other hand, if I keep on at school I shall stand a better chance to get a position as a teacher, and so earn more in the long run. And what to do I don't know. Of course, I would rather go to school but I don't mean to let my inclination influence me. If only the Lord would tell me what to do, I would do it, whether I wanted to or not; I would, truly, Miss Goodsell. I've thought and thought, and prayed and prayed, and I can't see my way any clearer now than I could at the start. And so I've come to you, though I suppose I ought not to bother you with my troubles."