

The Family Circle

A LITTLE MAN

I've jes bin thinkin,' sittin' here, how fortunate I am, That God made you a little miss an' me a little man. I wouldn't like ter be a girl, I'd rather be a boy, To run an' jump, an' swim, an' fish—the sports o' life enjoy.

You can't have any fun at all, like me an' Dan an' Joe.

All you can do is stay at home ter wash, er cook, er sew.

Yer can't ride Billy bareback, er yer can't climb up a tree,

The best that you can ever do is sit an' look at me.

You take a music lesson while I chop up the wood, To make er fire on which ter cook the household's daily food.

You've always got ter ride ter church, while I walk all ther way,

You sit an' read a magazine, while I rake up the hay.

An' these is only half the things that I can eas'ly do,

Ter keep the mill a goin'—not sit all day like you.

I'm always handy 'round the house, an' so are most all boys,

While chatterin' girls pretend thet we are makin' all the noise.

But still somehow when all is said, I'm glad yer what yer are,

Because with all yer uselessness yer still my little star,

Some day, perhaps, when we grows up, I'll teach yer how ter be

Of use to all the folks aroun', especially ter me.

Fer then instead of loafin' yer can keep my house an' sew,

An' train the children 'how to walk the path they oughter go.

I guess 'tis this that makes me think how fortunate I am,

That God made you a little miss an' me a little man.

—'Catholic Standard and Times.'

THE HERO OF THE BRIGADE

Mike was the pet of the fire brigade men. He was only ten, quite a little boy, in fact, but he liked to be considered a man. His father had belonged to the fire brigade, and he died from the wounds inflicted while endeavoring to save the inmates of a burning house. His mother had died from the shock, and had left behind her little baby boy Mike, when he was only a few days old.

Another fireman's wife had taken the tiny fellow to nurse with her own children, and he had been called Michael, after his father. As he grew up he loved to go to drill with the brigade men, and to watch them cleaning the brass of the big fire-engines and escapes. He would run, fetch, and carry for the reward of hearing some story about people rescued from burning houses, and so on. If any boy were liable to be spoiled, that boy would have been Mike, but it seemed impossible to spoil him. He was always obedient to his foster parents and teachers and unselfish toward the children when he played with them.

Mike's ambition was to go on the fire-engines with the men when they were called to action. He had often pleaded to be allowed to go, but in vain.

One night as he lay dreaming a strange light seemed to fill the room through the window from outside. Then the cries and shouts of men and women from the street below filled his ears. Something was on fire! For a moment his brain grew dizzy, and he felt afraid, for he knew that the fire must be near. Then he jumped up and looked out of the window.

The fire station was built with two great wings from the main building, and between them was a large courtyard. In this courtyard Mike could see a throng of people looking up toward the house, their faces lit by some light which came from above—whence he could not tell. With trembling hands he pushed up the window and looked up. The flames came from the roof of the very building he was in. The fire was quite close to him!

When the people saw Mike at the window they gave a great shout.

The little fellow looked down on the great seething mass of faces, and then above and around at the huge flames leaping and jumping higher and higher. They seemed to be closing in all around him. He wondered how it was he had been left there alone, when a child's cry of fear made him turn round to see little Willie, a child of three, come through his bedroom door. As the door was opened a volume of dense smoke poured in, and beyond Mike could see the angry red flames that curled up and up. For a moment the smoke blinded him; then he rushed forward and slammed the door to, clasping the little sobbing boy in his arms.

'I'se so fwighted,' Willie whimpered.

'Hush! hush!' said Mike soothingly, to the little fellow, who was motherless like himself, and a great favorite. 'Mike will take care of you.'

This he said with great courage, but feeling as if he were telling a story, for he was perplexed and bewildered, and saw no way of escape.

He took Willie to the window and called and shouted to the people below. They called and shouted in return, and in the din and roar of voices Mike could scarcely hear what they said. It seemed as if they were bidding him have courage, that the fire-escapes were all in use on the other wing of the building, and that help was coming.

He tried to be brave for Willie's sake, who was quite happy now he was no longer alone. He clapped his hands with glee as he saw the flames leaping up, and laughed in childish mirth as he watched the people below.

'What are they all doing, Mike?' he asked.

And Mike, who saw the smoke slowly creeping in under the bedroom door, and heard the hissing and crackling of the burning wood, laughed too, watching all the time for the promised help to come.

Then he saw the firemen take a large blanket and hold it under the window where he stood, and which was three stories high. He knew what that meant well enough; he had not lived in a fire station all his life for nothing. It meant that he was to leap from the window into the blanket, which would be lowered as he reached it.

For himself he was not afraid, but for Willie. He was such a little chap and could never be persuaded to jump. He could not throw him into the blanket, for he was small himself, and knew instinctively that his strength would not be equal to the task of aiming straight.

With a cry, almost of agony, and with a tightening of his arms around Willie's baby form, he hurled himself into space below.

Cheer after cheer arose from the anxious spectators, but Mike heeded them not, for he was quite stunned by the fall. When he came to it was to find himself and Willie in a warm room with a cozy fire, while his foster mother was bending over him and trying to get him to drink some cordial.

'Brave boy!' she whispered, and Mike's heart leaped at the words.

Then she explained to him how he had been left behind in the hurry and confusion of the fire alarm. She had taken her two children away, meaning to return for him and Willie. But the fire had gained ground so rapidly that she had been unable to do as she wished.

'But you are safe now, my darling, and little Willie, too. You saved his life, Mike?'

'Oh, no!' cried Mike, flushing all over.

'Yes,' she returned, 'if you had not carried him in your arms he would have dropped to the ground through fright, and have been dashed to pieces, and you risked your life by carrying him, too. Every one says so.'

But Mike would not have it. 'There was nothing else to do,' he answered, simply, and said the same when he was grown up and a fireman, with more than one medal from the Royal Humane Society for saving lives at the risk of his own. 'Little Folks.'

THE NOVELIST'S JOKE

Alexander Dumas was one day the guest of Dr. Gistal, a leading practitioner in Marseilles. After dinner, while the coffee was being handed round, the host requested the great novelist to enrich his album with one of his witty improvisations.

'Certainly,' replied Dumas with a smile; and drawing out a pencil, he wrote under the eyes of his entertainer, the following lines:

Since Dr. Gistal came to our town,

To cure diseases casual and hereditary,

The hospital has been pulled down—

'You flatter!' exclaimed the doctor, mightily pleased; but the poet went on:

And we have made a larger cemetery.