

MOTHER TO THE RESCUE.

When the boys filed into Gerald Bennett's room after having almost broken down the door with knocks and deafened his ears with class yells, to each of which was added the usual complimentary clause, "What's the matter with Bennett? He's all right," the astonished boy scarcely knew what to do or say first. He stood looking from one to another in dazed fashion, and finally found voice to say, "Why, hello, boys! Glad to see you. Catch on to some seats and make yourselves comfortable"; then he flurried about sweeping sweaters, tennis rackets, caps, etc., from chairs, and when chairs and bed and trunk had been appropriated by the unexpected guests, pushing back books and papers to make room on the table. Not until they had fallen upon him with rhythmical blows, counted as they fell, did he realise that his birthday was the occasion of the boisterous surprise. When he had gained his breath after the last "sixteen and one to go on" he managed to say, "Why, boys, I call this white of you to remember a fellow this way. My folks have always made such a lot of my birthdays that I was just a bit down in the mouth because I couldn't go home for it. Gee! what's all this?"

The boys were spilling the contents of boxes, paper bags, and pockets over the table, floor, and bed—peanuts, apples, pop-corn, "wienies," candy—a miscellaneous assortment of stuff sufficient to supply nightmares to the crowd.

"And this isn't the whole show, either," announced Gus Randal as he burst into the room, scooped books and other paraphernalia from the table, and chucked them into the closet to make room for an ice-cream freezer. "Bob'll be here in a minute with the dishes and the beer."

The beer! Gerald turned first red and then white, and a shiver went down his spine. A sudden pall of blackness seemed to blot out all the bright light of comradeship that had so unexpectedly flashed upon him. He had been rather lonely the first few months of school. Naturally shy, he had not made friends easily, and some way he had come to feel that he should never be popular with the boys, and that dread disease homesickness was beginning its inroads.

Then this wonderful surprise! The boys did like him. They had found out and remembered his birthday in this generous fashion—but beer! His thoughts flew back to the little pledge card bearing his boyish signature which his mother kept in her Bible. What should he do? What should he say? How say it? Oh, it was too cruel! The boys would surely be offended if he protested, they would leave him to himself, lonelier than ever. "A self-righteous crank" they would call him—or worse still, a weak "goody-goody," "a coward afraid of a harmless glass of beer." Of course he knew that he was right and they were wrong, but it was useless to try to convince that gang of irresponsible boys. All these thoughts flashed with lightning swiftness through his mind in the few minutes that seemed like ages before Bob Marshall kicked open the door and set down a basket of dishes and a big pail in which long-necked bottles nestled in a bed of crushed ice.

They were setting the table now, and were so busy that no one noticed the agony of doubt and dismay that held their host silent and inactive. Suddenly his decision was made. It would be nonsense for him to try to convert the whole crowd all at once to his way of thinking, and if he refused to have the beer opened in his room they would think him a priggish cad. He would make no fuss, but let them go on, and then, in an off-hand, casual way, quietly turn down his own glass. They might laugh at his abstinence, but they would not be hurt or angry. They would still be his friends. In vain did his conscience whisper, "Coward! Coward." In vain did the words of his mother's white ribbon pledge, "or allow my premises to be used—," re-echo in his mind. "Circumstances alter cases" responded the sophist tempter. After all, these boys were the only ones who had remembered his birthday. Not a word had come from home, not even from his mother, and he had been all day just a little grieved about it.

Everything was ready; they were calling for him to take his place as host. He flung scruples aside, and braced himself for the ordeal.

Another knock at the door, and he opened to an express messenger who set a big box inside, remarking as he handed him the book to sign,

"Mistake in delivery somehow. Ought to have been here this morning. Marked 'urgent and perishable,' so we thought best to deliver it even if it was past hours."

"From home!" cried Gerald delightedly, as he tore off the wrappers from the stout box. "I thought it strange mother had forgotten me." And he lifted into view a big white cake. Wrapped in tissue by its side were the sixteen tall bright candles, and a note, which read:

"With every candle goes a loving memory of the year for which I stands. May the next year bring as joyous thoughts of my true loyal boy as have those years just passed. If you can ask in some of your friends to share the cake with you, mother will be glad."

"What do you think of that, boys?" cried Gerald, reading the last sentence aloud. "You see you were not uninvited after all."

Uprose the every ready shout: "What's the matter with mother? She's all right! Who's all right? Mother! Mother! She's all right, all right!"

There came a sudden stiffening of Gerald's backbone. Instantly he knew what to say. As soon as the cheer had died away, his voice responded with a ring in it that commanded attention.

"I say, fellows, mother wears the white ribbon. I signed the pledge when I was only a kid. She always keeps it in her Bible. Do you think I ought to put beer on the same table with her birthday cake?"

A chorus of voices answered:

"No!" "Sure not!" "No!" "Chuck it, boys, chuck it!" "Fool stunt to get it, anyway." "Ditch it, I say."

And while Gerald put the candles in place, ready hands seized the obnoxious beer pail and set it in the corridor, closing the door upon it with a bang.

"Mother to the rescue as usual," thought Gerald, happily, as he plunged the knife into the heart of the luscious cake.—Mrs E. B. Gittings, Boulder, Col.

IMPORTANT.

Will Unions kindly notice that all communications for "White Ribbon" should be addressed to Mrs Peryman, Port Chalmers.