

The Mischevous Offspring.

WHAT HE THINKS ABOUT OLD SOLDIERS.

"Say, come in here while I give you a piece of advice," said the groceryman to the bad boy, as the youth entered the grocery one cold morning, with an old veteran from the Soldiers' Home, who went up to the coal stove and rubbed his hands, and turning to the old veteran the groceryman added, "No, sir, you can't have any plug tobacco, unless you have the money to plank right down on the counter, and I had rather you wouldn't come here to trade anyway, because you look hard, and smell frowy, and my customers don't like to mix with you."

"You and pa are a pretty crowd to go back on the soldiers, ain't you? How long is it since you were humping yourselves around this town trying to hire a substitute to go to war for you? Then a soldier who volunteered was the noblest work of God, and you helped pass resolutions to the effect that the country owed a debt of gratitude to them that never could be paid. Every dollar that pa has got except what he won playing poker before he reformed, he got out of soldiers, when he was sutler of a regiment. Every mouthful I eat now is at the price of a soldier's wages, who spent his money with pa for brandy-peaches and sardines. Pa wasn't ashamed of soldiers then, when they got drunk on brandy-peaches he sold them, and at that time a soldier would have been welcome to a plug of tobacco out of your store, and now you turn an old wounded veteran out-doors because he hasn't got five cents to buy a plug of tobacco."

"There, there," said the groceryman, becoming ashamed of himself. "You don't understand your pa's situation or mine, you see."

"Yes, I see," said the bad boy. "I see it all just as plain as can be, and it is my turn to talk, and I am going to talk. The time is passed when you need the soldier. When you wanted him to stand between you and the bayonets of the enemies, he was a thoroughbred, and you smiled when he came in the store, and asked him to have a cigar. When he was wounded you hustled around and got together sanitary stores, such as sauerkraut and playing cards, and sent them to him by the fastest express, and you prayed for him, and when he had whipped the enemy you welcomed him home with open arms, and said there was nothing too good for him ever after. He should always be remembered, his children should be cared for and educated, and all that. Now he is old, and his children have died or grown up and gone West, and you do not welcome him any more. He comes in here on his wooden leg, and all you think of is whether he has got any of his pension money left. His old eyes are so weak he cannot see the sneer with which your drafted patriot, who sent a substitute to war, looks at him as he asks you for a plug of tobacco and agrees to pay for it when he draws his next pension, and he goes out with a pain in his great big heart, such as you will never feel unless you have some cod-fish spoil on your hands. Bah! You patriots make me tired."

"You are pretty hard on us," and the groceryman acted hurt. "The government paid the soldiers, and gives them pensions, and all that, and they ought to know better than to go and get drunk."

"Paid them," said the bad boy indignantly, "What is four dollars a month pension to a man who has lost his arm, or who has bullet holes all over him? If a train runs over a man's leg, the railroad is in luck if it does not have to pay ten thousand dollars. What does the soldier get? He gets left half the time. I am opposed to people getting drunk, but as long as pa and some of the best people in town get drunk when they feel like it, why is it worse for an old soldier, who has no other way to have fun and feel rich, to get drunk. If you had to live at the Soldiers' Home, and work on the road or do farm work, for your board, you would get as full as a goose every time you came to town. Outside of the Home grounds the old soldier feels free. He looks at the bright sunshine, inhales God's free air, walks upright towards town, and just as his old wound begins to ache, he sees a beer sign, and instead of the words, 'can that is born of woman is of few days and full of misery,' coming to his mind, he thinks of the words of the

constitution, 'all men are born free and equal, endowed with certain inalienable rights, among which are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness,' and he goes in and orders a schooner of beer, like a white man. The saloon is the only place on God's green earth where the old wounded veteran is free and equal, and he makes the most of it. When he gets full, he is the prey of foolish boys, who have fun jeering him, and they snowball him, and say, 'look at the old drunkard.' If he lays down on the railroad track and is killed by the cars, you read in the paper of 'another veteran killed.' Your only anxiety is as to whether he is the same cuss you trusted for the tobacco last summer, and the soldier is buried without a tear. Now, I have had it drove into me by the conversation of people older than me, by newspapers, and by resolutions that have been passed before I was born, that a soldier is one of the salt of the earth. You may say the idea is outlawed, and that when you have got through having use for a soldier that he becomes a thing unworthy to be recognized, but as long as I live a man who fought to save his country can have a share of what I have got, and I will help him home when he is full of benzine, and whip any boy that throws snowballs at him, or calls him names, if you and pa and the whole gang goes back on me, and don't you forget it. The faded blue overcoat of the veteran, looks better to me, if I am bad, than the swallow-tail coat of the dude, the diamonds of the millionaire, or the sneers of the damned fools who have no souls. You can all class me with barn burners, and cruel sons of rich people who have no hearts, but the smile of pleasure on the face of an old veteran when I speak kindly to him, and the tear of joy that comes from the broken heart and plows its way down the furrows of his cheek, as he searches in his pocket for a red bandana handkerchief, makes me feel as though I owned a brewery."

"Say, hold on, Henery," said the groceryman, as his eyes became dim. "You go out and call that old veteran back and tell him he is a friend of mine. By gum, I never felt so much like a private in my life. You are right. The old soldiers are not to blame for taking a little too much benzine, and if we had no homes of our own and were looked upon by a lot of people as though they thought it was time we died and were got out of the way, we would get billing drunk, and paint the town red. Why, when these same soldiers enlisted, and were quartered in town, or were passing through on their way to the front, we used to think it was darned smart when they got on a tear and made thing howl, and would have lynched a policeman that tried to arrest the boys. I had forgot that these were the same boys, these old fellows that go limping around. Henery, you have learned me a lesson, and I shall be proud hereafter to see you kind to an old soldier, even if he is drunk, and if your pa says any more about your bringing disgrace on your family by being seen with old soldiers, I will hit him in the ear and twit him of being a sutler in the army."

"Well, that's all right," said the bad boy, as he started to go. "But don't you ever act sassy again when an old soldier comes in here to get warm, and if he wants a plug of tobacco and hasn't got the money to pay for it, let him have it just as though he owned a block of buildings, and if he forgets to pay for it, I will bring in coal or saw wood for you to pay for it," and Henery went out whistling. "We'll all get blind drunk when Johnny comes marching home," and then he explained that the song was very popular a few years ago, when people were so glad to have the soldiers come that some of the best citizens got drunk.—Peck's Sun.

The After Midnight Elbow Dig.

It was after midnight, writes Bill Arp in the Atlanta Constitution. About the time a deep sleep falleth upon a man, but not upon a woman, for Mrs. Arp's ears are always awake it seems to me. I felt a gentle dig in my side from an elbow, and a whispered voice said: "William, William, don't you hear that?" "What is it?" said I. "Somebody is in the front piazza," said she. "Don't you hear him rocking in the rocking chair?" And sure enough I did. The chair would rock awhile, and then stop, and then rock again. "Is the gun loaded?" she said. "They are robbers, but don't shoot, don't make a noise, can't you peep out of the window? Mercy on us, what do they want to rob us for. Maybe they come to steal one of the children. Slip in the little room and see if Carl is in his bed. Don't stumble over a chair; maybe somebody is under the bed." The rocker took a new start, and I had another dig in my side. "It is the wind," said I. "No, it is not," said she. "There is no wind; the window is up and the curtain don't move. They are robbers, I tell you. Hadn't you better give them some money and tell them to go?" "I haven't any money," said I. "It is all gone." "Lord have mercy on us," she said. "Will-

iam, get your gun and be ready." I gently slipped out of bed and tiptoed to the window and cautiously peeped out, and there was the pointer puppy sitting straight up in my wife's rocking chair, and ever and anon he would lean forward and backward, and put it in motion. I whispered to Mrs. Arp to come and see the fore-legged robber, which she did, and in due time all was calm and serene.

Last night there was another sensation in the back piazza, and it was sure enough feet this time, for they made a racket on the floor and moved around lively and the elbow digs in my side came thick and fast. It took me a minute to get fairly awake, and after listening awhile, I exclaimed in audible language. "Goats, Carl's goats," and I gathered a broom and mauled 'em down the back stairs. "I told you, my dear," said I, "that those goats would give us trouble; but I can stand it if you can."

Carl and Jessie had been begging for goats a good while, and I was hostile, very hostile to goats, for I knew how much devilment they would do; but the little fellows slipped up on the weak side of their mother, and she finally hinted that children were children, that old people had their dotage, and children had their goatage and that her little brother had goats and so the goats were bought and Ralph worked two days making a wagon and contrived some harness out of bridle-reins and plow lines and it took all hands to gear them up and at the first crack of the whip they bounced three feet in the air and kept on bouncing and jerked Carl a rod and got loose and run away and turned the wagon upside down and they kept on leaping and jumping until they got all the harness broken up and got away. It beat a monkey show. We laughed until we cried, but the little chaps have reorganized on a more substantial basis, and there is another exhibition to come off soon.

Wit and Humor.

What in a woman is called "curiosity" in a man is grandiloquently magnified into the "spirit of inquiry."

"Dear Susie," wrote a Newport young man to his girl, "the new store put up in our office is named 'Susie.' How I will hug it on real cold days."

Paper napkins are sold ten for a cent in Berlin. Evidently the Dutchmen actually use the things to wipe their mouths on, and not to look at with tender, solicitous admiration, as is the habit in this country.

"Won't you try this glass?" asked her escort, handing her his lorgnette. Hastily covering the suspicious looking object with her handkerchief, she placed it to her lips, took a long pull and then handed it back in great disgust, saying: "Why there ain't a drop in it!"

A scientific journal explains "why a man can't fly." In a great many cases it is because he is grabbed by the minions of the law before he can escape with the funds of the bank. But there are times however, when he succeeds in flying.

When Hermann was last in Texas he did his card tricks, and then tried in vain to find some one to play poker with. One man said to him, "If I knew as much about cards as you do, I wouldn't waste time in the show business; I would obtain a residence in the State and run for the Texas Legislature."

The language of flowers offers a sweet and pleasant method of letting a fellow down easy. A young Philadelphian had a bouquet made for his charmer which conveyed the sentiment, "I love you—be my bride!" It is believed that the nosegay reached its address, dress, and it was accurately interpreted by the lady, as this morning she called at the same store and asked the florists to make her a bouquet meaning, "No, you mutton-head idiot."

The youth of to-day who is thinking about entering upon some profession that will most rapidly lead to fame and fortune must be greatly perplexed whether to decide in favor of becoming a prize fighter, a base ball pitcher or a champion rower. And there is danger that while thus hesitating he may be persuaded to throw his talents away on the law, medicine or literature, and become a mere nobody.

A certain country clergyman used to tell a good story of his going to a new parish and asking a parishoner what his occupation was. "I am a village rat catcher," the man replied "and what are you?" The clergyman answered that he was the village parson, whereupon the rat catcher was good enough to observe that he supposed "we must all got a living somehow."

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