

# HUMAN NATURE AT BEST

*(Even in the brutal sport of boxing where the object is to batter the opponent to helplessness if possible, hitting when the other fellow is down is regarded as a despicable "foul." Something of that feeling moved Old John when he reacted as he did in the following story clipped from the Readers Digest).*

After a two hour run our dogs had treed an opossum in a cotton wood, and Old John, our Negro guide, climbed after it, his stick and flashlight ready. He soon spotted the animal, but to our amazement turned off his light and climbed back down.

"Why didn't you knock the 'possum down, John? Don't you feel well?"

"No suh, feelings is right good tonight. But that 'possum there is short one leg which he done chewed off to get out of a trap. It ain't according to God's own law to bleed any such stout heart a-singin' with freedom."

— Michael N. Pearshall

*And here is another also from the Reader's Digest:*

While I was driving alone to see the doctor, our old Cadillac blew a tire. I was on crutches at the time, and as I eased the spare out of the trunk a car pulled up and a man jumped and took over. I learned that he was on his way to work and remarked, "You don't have time to help me."

"I don't have time NOT to help you," he said, "why, I wouldn't be able to do a job all day thinking about passing you up."

— C. R. Williamson

*And here is a heart warming story from Fulton Ousler's "Modern Parables." It is a true story.*

## *Lady with Roses*

When Bill Brede was a small boy, he sold newspapers at the southeast corner of Lexington Avenue and Forty-second Street. A newsboy had to fight to keep his corner, be able to lick any tough guy who wanted to take over. By the time Bill was ten years old, he was on the way to becoming a cynic; already he had taken enough hard knocks for a lifetime.

First, Mother died and then Father, leaving seven orphans; five brothers and sisters had to be placed in institutions. Relatives took Bill, but they were poor too, so he had to earn his keep standing on the curbstone, come heat wave or blizzard, yelling headlines to a hostile world, and he had to sell three papers to make one cent profit.

One late spring afternoon, a trolley car came to a halt at the corner and Bill sold newspapers to several passengers through the open window. Just as the car was pulling away, a fat, red-faced man standing on the rear plat-

form yelled: "Two papers, son," and Bill tossed his papers safely to the customer. But the fat man began to guffaw as he held out a nickel teasingly in his fingers while the street car slowly gathered speed. With his heavy bundle under one arm, Bill ran after the car, calling, "Throw me the money!"

"Jump on board and I'll give you a nickel," yelled the man cupping one hand and shaking the nickel with the other.

Even with his heavy load, Bill tried to hop on, but he missed and fell, sprawling on the cobblestones in a swirl of horses' hoofs, cabs, buggies, and delivery wagons. As he scrambled to his feet, he suddenly heard above the din of traffic a woman's voice. Halted beside him was a shiny black horse and carriage; the coachman with gleaming top hat and braided uniform had reined in a prancing pair of bays.

Seated in the open victoria and leaning toward him was a beautiful lady, roses in her arms, tears in her eyes, and unladylike language in her mouth:

"That blankety-blankety good-for nothing skunk! I saw the whole thing. Listen, kid, you stand on that corner and wait for us. We'll be back. Mike" — she whirled to the coachman — "get going and paste the blankety-blank-blank out of that blankety-blankety-blankety guy." Wiping away tears with dirty hands, Bill waited on the corner. His soul was filled with awe, for he had recognized the lady with

the roses and sulphuric language. She was the Ethel Merman of her day. Broadway's bright particular star — the madcap, lovable, buoyant May Irwin, then playing in a show called, *As in a Looking Glass*.

Ten minutes later the fine horse and carriage bearing May Irwin and Mike, her coachman, came back. The actress beckoned the boy to get into the victoria and sit beside her.

"Now, Mike," she said, "go on and tell him what you did."

"I hung one on him," said Mike fiercely, "I blackened both his eyes and hit him in the solar plexus. And I brought you something back."

Into Bill Brede's grimy palm Mike laid a five-cent piece.

"Now, kid," said May Irwin, "there is something else I want to tell you. Don't ever let guys like that make you hate the human race. There are lot of dirty devils in this world — but most people are just like you and me. And we are all right! Ain't we, kid?"

'On top of the nickel she placed a rose and a one-dollar bill.

Not until years later did it occur to Bill Brede that there hadn't been enough time for Mike, the coachman, to have performed those feats of valor in punishing the wicked. He could never even have overtaken the streetcar. So he had simply driven around the block and straight into the heart of a friendless boy. And that imaginative

deception was a part of a deep kindness.

Bill knew rough going. He had little formal education. Yet he rose to be an editor, winning distinction in the hard profession of journalism. Today he and all those brothers and sisters are together again.

"I think God kept us out of trouble," Bill said. "And the hard knocks were good for us. I'm grateful for them and for May Irwin with her roses, her tears, and her swear words that kept me from growing up to hate the world and myself."

*We offer these stories as a refreshing change from the sordid news we get daily these days which lead many to wonder if the old virtues are dying. Lawlessness and dishonesty are not the normal order of things even in this sinful world of ours. That is why they figure so prominently in the news. For every illegal act we hear or read about there are many worthy ones of which the world learns little or nothing at all. We hope these stories will help to reaffirm our faith in the innate goodness of human nature.*

— Ed.



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