

The Family Circle

GETTING INFORMATION OUT OF PA

My pa, he didn't go to town
Last evening after tea,
But got a book an' settled down
As comf'y as could be.
I'll tell you I was offul glad
To have my pa about.
To answer all the things I had
Been tryin' to find out.

And so I asked him why the world
Is round instead of square,
And why the piggies' tails are curled
And why don't fish breathe air?
And why the moon don't hit a star,
And why the dark is black,
And jest how many birds there are,
And will the wind come back?

And why does water stay in wells,
And why don't kittens hum,
And what's the roar I hear in shells,
And when will Christmas come?
And why the grass is always green,
Instead of sometimes blue?
And why a bean will grow a bean,
And not an apple, too?

And why a horse can't learn to moo,
And why a cow can't neigh?
And do the fairies live on dew,
And what makes hair grow gray?
And then pa got up an', Gee!
The offul words he said,
I hadn't done a thing, but he
Jest sent me off to bed.

GROWLER

It was a brave thing for Tommy to do; but, then, Tommy was a brave little fellow, though he didn't look it, with his yellow hair all about his dear baby face.

Tommy was a stranger in the town. He had come with his mamma to board in a pretty cottage near the great one where the Chambers family spent their summers.

Tommy had always wanted a dog—a regular-built, big-jawed bulldog. And when he was awakened that first morning in the cottage by a tremendous roar he jumped out of bed and ran to the window.

Sure enough, there, in the very next yard, was a big white bulldog, with a broad, ugly mouth and a jaw that looked as if it had been smashed.

Tommy was delighted; but it must be confessed that through his delight went little shivers of fear. While he was getting dressed he talked about his dog neighbor, and all through breakfast he could think of nothing else. His mamma did not permit him to eat doughnuts; but he asked her, in a very low voice, if he could have one to take over to the bulldog. She smiled and laid one upon his plate.

There was a wire fence between the two gardens. Tommy and his mother went at once to the gate.

'May we come in and call upon your fine white bulldog?' Tommy's mother asked of the gardener.

'Sure, ma'am, ye may come in. But th' further ye keep from that creature th' better off ye'll be—ye an' the boy. No one goes near Growler. Th' cook pushes his bones an' water up with a rake. He's bin on his chain for a month now; but he's gettin' worse an' worse.'

The old gardener shook his head toward the big dog, who stood pulling at his chain. The dog knew that something unkind had been said about himself. This made him angry. He gave a terrific growl and tried to get at the gardener. Tommy stood very close to his mother and reached up for her hand.

'Poor creature!' said Tommy's mother. 'It will ruin any dog's temper to keep him chained.'

'Sure, Growler's temper was ruined entirely long before he was born,' said the gardener. 'Keep th' little fellow back, mum; Growler's cross to boys.'

'Perhaps bad boys have teased him?'

'That they have, ma'am. Durin' th' winter th' caretaker of th' cottage didn't mind his business well, an' one day some of th' village boys managed t' throw a coat over Growler's head an' tie a tin can to his stump of a tail. Since then he's been pertickeler hard on boys. But he won't be long. We're just keepin' him till young Mr. Graham comes here from college. He'll put an end t' such ugliness. He's a good shot—is young Mr. Graham.'

'Has any one tried being kind to him?' asked Tommy's mother.

The gardener didn't answer this question. 'You'd better look sharp after the boy,' he said, and turned again to weeding his flower-beds.

The dog grew quiet. Tommy's mother did not know whether to go or stay. Tommy pulled her hand and held up the doughnut. 'I think he'd like it,' he said. 'It smells so good.'

'Well, wait a minute and you may toss it to him.' They went a little nearer. 'Poor dog! good-old fellow!' said Tommy's mother.

Growler could hardly believe his ears. Some one speaking kindly to him!

'Poor doggie!' came Tommy's sweet little voice. 'Dear old fellow!'

Over and over they said the words as they stepped a little and a little nearer. Tommy held out the doughnut. Growler saw that it was something good. Maybe he smelled it. Then, when Tommy tossed it over to him, he jumped on his hinder legs and caught it in his mouth, and swallowed it with a gulp.

'I don't believe he tasted how good it was,' said Tommy.

His mamma laughed.

They called him 'good dog' and 'dear old fellow' a good many times. They then went away, and Growler stood looking after them, wishing they had stayed or taken him with them. He wasn't cross that morning. He kept thinking of those two dear people and hoping they would come back. But they didn't come. He was tired of being chained. He wanted to run and stretch his legs. In the afternoon he became cross again, and the gardener shook his fist at him as the poor fellow pulled and snapped at his chain. But the very next morning, 'Hello, Growler, old fellow!' was called out to him, and there they were again! Growler trembled with joy. He really wagged his stump of a tail, and when Tommy threw the doughnut to him he swallowed it quicker than before.

'See him smile!' cried Tommy. 'He's surely smiling.'

'Sure, ye won't smile if the chain breaks!!' cried the old gardener, and Tommy came close to his mother and reached up after her dear hand. Strange how a mother's hand helps to make a little boy brave sometimes!

But the third morning Growler was so glad to see them that Tommy actually went up near enough to let him take the doughnut out of his hand. My! how he ran back to his mother the next minute, though!

After that the three became firm friends. Young Mr. Graham came home from college. He was told all about the matter by the gardener, who begged that Growler be shot before he should do harm to the little boy.

But young Mr. Graham wanted to know more about the matter. He talked with Tommy's mother, and they all went together the next morning to make a call at the kennel.

Growler was not very glad to see his new caller; but after a little they became friends. The young man unlocked the chain and led the poor creature out upon the lawn, patted his head kindly and told him to run about.

Growler could hardly believe his eyes or his ears. He was wild with delight. He ran and jumped and barked and rolled over like a wild dog. And every minute or two he came up to thank his friends by smiling with his big mouth and wagging his stump of a tail with all his might.

Young Mr. Graham gave him a good scrub with his own strong hands. He rubbed and brushed and combed him from nose to tail, and—what do you think? Why, when college opened in the fall Growler was taken to college, where he became the pet of the football eleven, of which Mr. Graham was one. And he had a beautiful blanket with a big letter on it, and was made the mascot of the team.

Wasn't it fine? And it all came about because Tommy was brave and his mamma was kind.

BOUND TO GRUMBLE

A man who was given to grumbling at everything and on every occasion was attacked by inflammatory rheumatism, and was carefully nursed by his wife, who was very devoted to him in spite of his fault-finding disposition. His suffering caused her to burst into tears sometimes as she sat at his bedside. One day a friend of the invalid came in and asked him how he was getting on.

'Badly, badly!' he exclaimed; 'and it's all my wife's fault.'

'Is it possible?' asked the friend in surprise. 'Yes. The doctor told me that damp places were bad for me; and there that woman sits and cries just to make the air moist in the room.'