

The Family Circle

CLIMBING THE HILL

Happy-go-Lucky and Faint-of-Heart

Set off on a journey with Only-Try;

And each was ready to do his part,

While the sunny hours went merrily by.

But when the shadows were growing long,

And the crickets chirping their even-song,

Up rose like a barrier steep and strong

A rocky hillside nigh.

Said Happy-go-Lucky, 'Suppose we wait,

And somebody passing may give us a ride?'

'We shall break our necks if we climb so late!'

Poor Faint-of-Heart in a panic cried.

But Only-Try, with a resolute eye,

Looked up at the hill and the sunset sky.

'There is plenty of time,' said Only-Try,

'And the moon is full beside.'

So Only-Try, without stay or stop,

Went clambering up over rock and root,

Till he stood at last on the hill's green top,

In a beautiful clearing, with flowers and fruit,

But the other two are waiting still,

For nobody lives, or ever will,

That can reach the top of the smallest hill

By sitting down at the foot!

THE NICKEL'S STORY

The nickel is a small American coin of the value of five cents, or about 2½d of our money. Here is an account of its wanderings:-

I was first sent to a great bank, and I was proud of my rich home; but word came that I was wanted in the small trade, and I was shipped off to a country town. There I fell into the hands of a man going to a large city. When he arrived at the city he called a small boy, and told him that he would give me to him if the small boy would carry his valise across the street. The small boy stiffened up, and, with a leer, said: 'Hey! what d-yce take me for? I don't carry no valise for no ol' nickel.'

Before I recovered from the shock a man with a torn coat, frayed trousers, and badly-torn shoes told the gentleman that he would carry his valise. Now, I thought, I can do some good to the poor. The poor man took me and straightway went, not to a bakery, but to a saloon, and bought some nasty-smelling stuff, which he carried away in a can. Maybe he intended to carry it home to wash the bedsteads, so as to kill all disease germs. I was put in a drawer with many other nickels, all of whom said that they had been brought there and exchanged for the same kind of bed-wash, or for rolls of tobacco that must have been rotten, for the people immediately set fire to it and it burned with a horrible smell.

When I got out of that disagreeable place I was given to a street-car man, who took me to the company's office, where I was thrown upon a pile of nickels that a boy was wrapping up in equal-sized packages. The boy began to curse us, and wonder why nickels were ever made to be such a bother to him. After that a little girl got possession of me, and went right off to the candy store and bought gum with me. She said she did it because the gum would last longer than candy, and she could get only a little bit of good candy anyhow for a nickel. She thought her mamma was real mean to give her only a nickel.

Then a man took me home and gave me to the baby, who came near swallowing me. The baby's mother put me in the baby's bank, but the next day she shook me out of it with some other coins and took us to a bargain counter, where she paid two prices for something she did not need, but her neighbor, Mrs. Somebody, told her it was just lovely, and everybody who was anybody was using it.

It seemed that I was of very little account anywhere. I had lost the great opinion I had had of myself, and with it almost all my hopes of ever giving pleasure to any one, when one day I found myself in the pocket of a great man. There were silver coins and gold pieces and a snug roll of bills with me, and at last I felt that I had found my proper place. The great man wore fine clothes, and he had a richly-furnished house and a down-town office. He always gave ten cents for his cigars, and when he treated a friend he called for a Scotch high-ball and a smoke for two. In paying he would peel off a bill from the roll, and give a portion of the change to the

polite waiter who served them in the little private apartment of the White House Exchange. He gave a dime to the bootblack, and another to the colored man who brushed his coat and hat at the barber's shop.

The great man was a prominent citizen, and I found out that he was a Christian, for, when Sunday came, he went to church. There was a special collection announced for that Sunday, and when the box was passed around the great man fumbled in his pocket, and, singling me out from among the more worthy coins, he put me in the box as his tribute to his God. Of course, I felt proud, but as the box passed along it came to a poor woman who was plainly but decently dressed. She opened a slender and well-used purse, and between her fingers, which were worn and hardened by toil, I could see that her little store of money consisted of a nickel and a quarter. I could hear her sigh that she had so little to give, but I was glad that I would have the company of another nickel, when, to my surprise, she dropped the quarter in the box, and it fell right on top of me. I peeped out from under the edge of the quarter, and I saw that the great man was not ashamed, and I was glad to lie there hidden while I thought how time had turned things around in this world, and how some people ought to be in some other people's place.

A MODEL SON

A good old gentleman, who was strongly opposed to tobacco smoking and alcoholic liquor drinking, met a lady friend in a Christchurch tramcar, recently, and their conversation was as follows:-

'Have you any children, madam?'

'Yes, sir; a son.'

'Ah, indeed. Does he smoke?'

'No, sir, he has never as much as touched a cigarette.'

'So much the better, madam; the use of tobacco is a poisonous habit. Does he frequent the clubs?'

'He has never put his foot in one.'

'Allow me to congratulate you. Does he come home late?'

'Never. He goes to bed directly after dinner.'

'A model young man. How old is he?'

'Two months!'

The good old gentleman bade the lady good-morning, and left the car without a smile.

MEANING OF HOME

Home means more than the threshold whither are brought and where are gathered the fruits of our daily toil. Home means more than the roof-tree supporting the rafters under which we securely rest. It means more than the dwelling places where those of one family eat and drink and chat and sleep. It means more than the abode of comfort, more than the citadel of private life. Home means the fireside. It is from around the fireside, as from the parent nest, that young love first flutters forth on life; and as the birds at eve come home to roost, so 'tis to the fireside of one's childhood that the fondest memories of age turn back. Many and many a time the wanderer in far off lands, weary of limb and sore of heart will have forgotten the scorching sand of the desert, or the seething fever of the swamps, or the bitter waste of salt sea waves, and as in his heavy sleep he remembers no more the callousness or the cruelty of the strangers around him, a dream that will have dawned on his soul, a dream that shows to him again with the light of the flickering flame, the circle of happy faces round the fireside, till a mist of holy tears will have clouded his eyes and a wave of holy love will have lifted up his heart, bringing his wild, wilful, wayward spirit near to home, and, therefore, nearer to God.

WHAT THE FACE TOLD

Two young girls in the parlor of a celebrated photographer were waiting, somewhat impatiently, their turn for a sitting. They had consulted the mirror and each other, had straightened every bow and ornament, had skillfully brushed the abundant hair into its most becoming waves and tendrils, yet still they were obliged to wait. When the studio door was finally opened and two middle-aged ladies emerged the eyes of the girls ran swiftly over the face and figure of the one who had evidently been before the camera.

'Dear me! All this time wasted on her!' whispered one pair of rosy lips. 'When I get to be as old and as homely as that, I'll not bother with having pictures taken, I can tell you.'

But the artist was even then expressing to a friend his satisfaction with his sitter. 'I like to take that kind of a picture—a face that is full of charac-