

The Family Circle

AT THE DINNER-TABLE

He sat at the dinner-table
With a discontented frown;
The potatoes and steak were underdone
And the bread was baked too brown.
The pie was heavy, the pudding too sweet,
And the meat was much too fat;
The soup so greasy, too, and salt,
'Twas hardly fit for the cat.

'I wish you could taste the bread and pie
I've seen my mother make;
They are something like, and 'twould do you good
Just to look at a slice of her cake.'
Said the smiling wife: 'I'll improve with age—
Just now I'm but a beginner;
But your mother has come to visit us,
And to-day she cooked the dinner.'

THE CHESTNUT GIRL

'Please, sir, will you buy my chestnuts?'
'Chestnuts! No!' replied Ralph Moore, looking
carelessly down on the upturned face, whose large
brown eyes, shadowed by tangled curls of flaxen hair,
were appealing pitifully to his own. 'What do I want
of chestnuts?'

'Please, sir, do buy' em,' pleaded the little one,
reassured by the rough kindness of his tone. 'Nobody
seems to care for them, and—'

'Are you very much in want of money?'
'Indeed we are,' sobbed the child; mother sent me
out and—'

'Nay, little one, don't cry,' said Ralph, smoothing
her tangled hair. 'I don't want your chestnuts, but
here's a quarter for you if it will do you any good.'

He did not stay to hear the delighted thanks of
the child poured out through a rainbow of tears, but
strode on his way, muttering between his teeth: 'That
cuts off my supply of cigars for the next twenty-four
hours. I don't care, though, for the brown-eyed ob-
ject really did cry as if she hadn't a friend in the
world. Dear me! I wish I were rich enough to help
every poor creature out of the slough of despond.'

While Ralph Moore was indulging in these reflec-
tions, the dark-orbed little damsel whom he had com-
forted was dashing down the street with rapid foot-
steps, utterly regardless of the basket of unsold nuts
that still dangled upon her arm. Down an obscure
alley she darted and up a wooden staircase to a room
where a pale, neat-looking woman was sewing as busi-
ly as if the breath of life depended upon every stitch,
and two little ones were playing in the sunshine that
supplied the absent fire. 'Mary, back already? Surely
you have not sold your chestnuts so soon!'

'Oh, mother, see!' ejaculated the breathless child.
'A gentleman gave me a quarter! Only think, mother,
a whole quarter!'

If Ralph Moore could only have seen the rapture
which his small silver gift had brought into that pov-
erty-stricken home, he would have grudged still less his
privation of cigars.

Years came and went. The little chestnut girl
passed entirely out of Ralph's memory, but Mary Lee
never forgot the stranger who had given her the silver
quarter.

The crimson window curtains were closely drawn to
shut out the storm and blast of the bleak December
night. A fire was glowing cheerily in the grate, and
the dinner table was in a glitter with cut glass, rare
china, and polished silver. Everything was waiting for
the presence of Mr. Audley.

'What can it be that detains papa?' said Mrs.
Audley, a fair, handsome matron of about forty, as she
glanced at her tiny watch.

'There's a man within the study come on business,'
said Robert Audley, a pretty boy of twelve years, who
was reading by the fire.

'I'll call him again,' said Mrs. Audley, stepping
to the door. But as she opened it the gaslight fell
on the face of a humble-looking man in threadbare
garments, who was leaving the house, while her hus-
band stood in the doorway of his study, apparently
relieved to be rid of his visitor.

'Charles,' said Mrs. Audley, 'who is that man, and
what does he want?'

'His name is Moore, I believe, love, and he came
to see if I could give him the vacant position in the
bank.'

'And you will?' she eagerly asked.

'Don't know, Mary, I must think about it.'

'Charles, give him the situation.'

'Why, my dear?'

'Because I ask it of you as a favor, and you have
said a hundred times you would never deny me any-
thing.'

'And I will keep my promise, Mary,' said her hus-
band, with an affectionate kiss. 'I'll write the fellow
a note this very evening.'

An hour later, when the children were snugly tuck-
ed in bed, Mrs. Audley told her husband why she was
interested in the fate of a man whose face she had not
forgotten in twenty years.

'That's right, my little wife,' said her husband,
when the simple tale was finished. 'Never forget one
who has been kind to you in the days when you needed
kindness most.'

Ralph Moore was sitting that self-same night in his
poor lodgings, beside his wife's sick bed, when a liver-
ied servant brought a note from the rich and prosper-
ous banker.

'Good news, Bertha,' he exclaimed joyously, as he
read the words. 'We will not starve. Mr. Audley
has promised me the position.'

'You have dropped something from the note, Ralph,'
said Mrs. Moore, pointing to a slip of paper on the
floor. It was a fifty-dollar bill, neatly folded in a piece
of paper, on which was written:

'In grateful remembrance of the silver quarter that
a kind stranger bestowed on a little chestnut girl
twenty years ago.'

A MERRY HEART

Why do you wear a harassed and troubled look?
Are you really in trouble, or are you allowing the
little worries of life to grind furrows in your face?
Take a glance at yourself in the mirror and reform—
that is, reshape your face into the lines of comfort
and good cheer which it ought to wear. Take an
honest inventory of your troubles, and decide whether
or not they are really worth advertising in your
countenance. It may seem a little thing to you whe-
ther or not you wear a smiling face, but it is not a
little thing. A serene look advises the tired and trou-
bled men and women whom you meet that there is
peace and joy in at least one heart. And there may
be among them some who had begun to doubt if
peace or joy existed at all. 'A merry heart doeth
good like a medicine.'

A GOOD SUBSTITUTE

Jimmy had his weak points, as an example of the
result of modern educational methods, but his brain
was of excellent quality.

When the teacher looked at him and inquired cold-
ly, 'What is a synonym, James?' he was ready
with his answer.

'It's a word that you can use when you don't
know how to spell the one you thought of first,' he
replied cheerfully.

AN ANTIDOTE

Col. John H. George, of Concord, N.H., was an
aggressive Democrat and a popular speaker. Once
while waiting at a railroad station he met a farmer
who was an old acquaintance. The farmer said,
'How is it that you retain your youthful appearance?'
to which Col. George replied facetiously, 'I drink New
England rum and vote the Democratic ticket.'

'Yes, I see: one pizen neutralizes t'other,' said the
farmer.

THE FORCE OF EXAMPLE

'General,' said a stranger, 'don't you remember
how you saved my life at the battle of the Wilder-
ness?'

The General at once became interested, and he cal-
led a group of comrades over to listen, saying: 'I
saved this man's life once. How was it done, old
comrade?'

'It was, this way,' was the response. 'We were
on a hill, and the enemy advanced steadily towards
our entrenchments. A veritable hail of fire swept our
position. Suddenly you turned—here the auditors were
absorbed and excited—and ran, and I ran after you.
I think if you hadn't shown the example, I would
have been killed that day.'