

# The Family Circle

## THE RECITER

Once there was a little boy, whose name was Robert Reece,  
And every Friday-afternoon had to recite a piece;  
So many poems thus he learnt that soon he had a store  
Of recitations in his head, and still kept learning more.  
Now this is what happened. He was called upon one week,  
And totally forgot the piece he was about to speak;  
His brain he cudgelled—not a word remained within his head,  
And so he spoke at random, and this is what he said:  
'My beautiful! my beautiful! who standest proudly by';  
'It was the schooner "Hesperus"—the breaking waves dashed high,'  
'Why is the Forum crowded?' 'What means this stir in Rome?'  
'Under a spreading chestnut tree,' 'there is no place like home.'  
'When Freedom from her mountain height cried' 'Twinkle little star';  
'Shoot if you must this old gray head,' 'King Henry of Navarre.'  
'Roll on thou deep and dark blue,' 'castled crags of Drachenfels,'  
'My name is Norval, on the Grampian Hills,' 'Ring out wild bells.'  
'If you're waking call me early,' 'To be or not to be,'  
'The curfew must not ring to-night,' 'Oh, woodman, spare that tree.'  
'Charge, Chester, charge,' 'On, Stanley, on,' 'and let who will be clever,'  
'The boy stood on the burning deck,' 'but I go on for ever.'  
His elocution was superb, his voice and gestures fine,  
His schoolmates all applauded as he finished the last line.  
'I see it doesn't matter,' Robert thought, 'what words I say,  
So long as I declaim with oratorical display.'  
—'Glasgow Observer.'

## NELLIE

Nellie was a little Polar dog, and it was her fate to be sentenced to death because of the scarcity of food one dreadful winter in Alaska. 'It was decided that little Nellie should be killed for the other dogs to eat,' writes her master in the 'Youth's Companion,' 'and my crown of woe was that it was I who was selected to do the work—for the alleged reason that I, being a surgeon, "was used to blood."'

The other men had gone to bed, and I was alone with my little dog. The rest of the team had gone a little way out from the fire, and were lying in the snow, asleep. Nellie was at my feet, and when I spoke her name she wagged her tail and came over to rub her soft wool on my knee; she was far too weak to climb up on my lap now. When she looked up in my face, as if to ask why we were suffering so, the horror of my silence, while she was being condemned, came upon me, and to escape the rush of blood to my head I walked from the fire and out into the night and snow. When I returned she was gone, and I breathed a sigh of relief. Perhaps she had already lain down somewhere and died, and so I might be saved the sickening alternative. But my knees were giving way, and I slid down to the log again, and soon was lost in a half-sleep and half-coma from my weakened condition.

'How long I was stretched out there I do not know, but I was awakened by a sharp little bark that I knew well. It was my little dog. She had returned, and my first thought was that now I should have to choose between my pet and my comrades—perhaps the lives of all of us, even of the sick girl.'

When I finally looked up, at the continued whine and the affectionate rubbing against my knee, there stood the little dog, and in her mouth she held a big fish. I could not believe my eyes, and feared that I had got to the point of seeing in my mind things that had no existence. But there it was, a big white fish; and when I caught hold of it, it was still unfrozen, as if it had just come from the water, and Nellie's fur was wet and already freezing in little icicles about her body. So she had got the fish out of the water.'

'I thought, of course, that was all there was to

it, but I had grasped at the chance I had to offer in the morning for not carrying out the agreement—she had brought the fish, which we would give to the dogs. I laid the fish down on the log and began to break off the icicles from her coat, when she started away, and, when she was out of the firelight, began to whine. So I followed her into the night, taking with me one candle and some matches.

'Finally we reached a spot which she seemed to be looking for. She stopped, and I heard a plunge into the water. I lighted the candle, and as soon as my eyes were accustomed to the light I saw the little dog at my feet with another fish in her mouth. So there were more where the first came from. I went closer, and could see distinctly a hole apparently cut out of the solid ice. It was not more than ten feet across in any direction; it was evidently shallow, and its clear, cold waters were literally filled to overflowing with fish. They seemed to be all of a size, white fish, weighing not less than three or four pounds each. I could see many of them.

'I almost ran back to the camp, calling the boys as I stumbled along. Soon we were all back at the hole. It was one of the so-called "lungs" of the lake—air holes in the ice that open up in every body of Alaskan water, small or large, whenever the temperature goes thirty or more degrees below zero.

'In the next two days we had taken out of that hole two hundred and nineteen fish. Dogs and men feasted to the full, the dogs taking theirs raw and we men taking turns cooking and eating. We took along plenty of fish when we finally moved on, and got into the hospital camp of the Northwest Mounted Police all right, and with our little patient in good shape.

Nellie has been stolen many times since that night by newcomers in the Alaska country who had heard about her, and one time the thieves got nearly two hundred miles down the river before they met anybody; but that was as far as they got. A committee was formed in half an hour, half a dozen dog teams were "hooked" up, and within an hour the thieves, under escort, were on their way back up the river.

'Nellie still belongs to me, and is the special ward of the Yukon mining camps.'

## GOOD MANNERS

Refined and graceful manners are worthy of the most careful cultivation. A true gentleman is gentle and true at all times. That refinement which behaves according to rule with unscrupulous exactness at courtly entertainments, but suffers its possessor to act rudely toward the most obscure neighbor or servant, is an artificial grace which can be put on for the occasion and laid aside at convenience. Gentility which is genuine is inseparable from the personality. It has its seat in the character. It beautifies the entire being, and shines with undimmed lustre under all circumstances.

## TO THE POINT

The postal authorities of the United States, as well as those of Great Britain, for a great many years experienced great difficulty with the word 'only' on postal cards. The efforts to avoid clumsiness and ambiguity taxed the ingenuity of the post office people to the utmost.

The Post Office Department made six attempts to find a brief, elegant, and unambiguous legend for the card.

An early postal card was inscribed: 'Nothing but the address can be placed on this side,' which was neither true nor elegant.

'Nothing but the address to be on this side' was more to the point. But as it looked bad to the authorities, they next evolved this legend: 'Write only the address on this side.' This was objected to on the ground that it barred the use of a typewriting machine. 'Write the address only on this side, the message on the other,' came next, and was promptly criticised as being both clumsy and ambiguous. Then the word 'only' was dropped, but without much improvement.

Finally Uncle Sam's official gave up the struggle to be original. The card then adopted and now in use bears this inscription: 'The space below is for the address only.'

## WAIT FOR THE MUD TO DRY

Father Graham, as everybody in the village called him, was one of the old-fashioned gentlemen of whom