

The Family Circle

NED'S TWENTY-SIX SERVANTS

'I wish I had somebody,' sighed doleful Ned,
 'To spell my hard lessons for me;
 I try and try—but the words are so long
 I never can learn them,' said he.

'Why call on your servants,' laughed big sister Nan;
 'They'll do all your spelling for you.
 Just tell them to take their right places, and then
 The spelling is done—it is true!'

'My servants!' and Ned's two blue eyes opened wide,
 'I—I've never had even one.'

'You have twenty-six,' said his sister, 'in all,'
 And she just bubbled over with fun.

'All you've got to do (as I told you before,
 And I am quite sure that you heard)
 Is to tell each wee servant, "Run quick to your place."
 And, presto! they've spelled you the word.'

'The servants are a, b, c, d, e, and f,
 And all the rest down to z;
 They not only help you, they do all the work
 In spelling the word—don't you see!'

THE TRACK-WALKER'S DAUGHTER

A frown was on Margaret Carew's face. It should not have been there, for she was only sixteen years of age, and had her whole life before her; she was well and strong, and the quickest of the girls at figures over in the schoolhouse. But the frown was there, and she looked off to the smoke curling from the weather-beaten and somewhat dejected cabin of the miners dotting the mountain-side, and wondered why her father must be a track-walker, when some other girl's father—here she stopped and drew a long breath as she picked up the basket resting on the ground beside her and began making her way along the uneven road that led to the track up the mountain-side. A few steps taken, Margaret stood and gazed up at Mount Hope, snow-capped and radiant in the morning sunshine, and something of its strength and calm entered into her heart.

'I just won't rebel!—and father so brave,' she murmured resolutely. 'He's getting stronger every day, and it isn't as if we hadn't the mountains and this glorious air.'

But, alas, for Margaret's resolve! A minute later, the sight of Mr. Burton, superintendent of the Ouray Mine, who passed her riding on his black horse, brought the frown back to her face.

'What business has one man to ride, and another man just as good—and father is as good as Mr. Burton—to walk, walk, walk through the days!' she cried bitterly.

In this vein did Margaret's thoughts run all the way up the mountain-side to the little section-house near the railroad, where she was bearing her father's dinner to him. Every day in the week, save Saturday, Mr. Carew carried his dinner along in a pail, but on Saturday it was Margaret's pleasure that her father should have a hot dinner. Usually the self-imposed duty was an agreeable one, for Margaret thoroughly enjoyed the bracing walk, and the little visit at the end with her father. He was always so appreciative of the little surprises the basket held for him; and very often he had a souvenir for his daughter in the form of a bit of agate or a specimen of unique ore the miners had given him. But this morning Margaret was out of tune; a sore spot in her sensitive nature had been touched—and not even the knowledge that her father was a college graduate and 'back home' had held a high position comforted her. There were times when Margaret felt proud thinking of how her father had in following his physician's advice to go West in search of health, bravely accepted the humble position of track-walker, because it offered a living for others, and perhaps health for himself and her. Sometimes Margaret said to herself:

'He's the best father a daughter ever had, and I'm going to try to be the best daughter.' Usually Margaret was brave and patient and cheery, as was her father.

It was a few minutes before 12 o'clock when Margaret entered the section-house where her father kept his tools, and

where he now anxiously awaited her coming, as he sat with his right foot bandaged, and resting on a soap-box.

After Mr. Carew had explained that he had sprained his ankle he added:

'I'm glad you've come earlier, Margie; you'll have time to catch Peter Noonan at Summit Station if you start right away. The Durango train leaves Rico at once, and Peter would better go over the tracks before she comes.'

Margaret lingered a minute to make sure that her father's ankle was as well cared for as possible under the circumstances, and to spread his dinner before him; then she set off on her errand. For a short distance the tracks lay along a comparatively level stretch, and then began to ascend Summit Hill; and as Margaret made her way over the roadbed she could not help thinking how many, many times her father had travelled backward and forward over the same route, and always with his eyes open for the slightest thing that might possibly cause an accident.

'I must be on the lookout, too,' Margaret said to herself; and the next moment gave a cry of alarm as the top of the curve was reached, she looked down at the unexpected sight which met her eyes on the other side. Here, indeed, was that which threatened delay, if not danger, to the Durango train. A rock and mud slide had come down from Summit Hill and stopped square on the railroad track. Margaret hurriedly drew near the scene; here the rails were covered with a soft slush of mud and water, thirty feet or more long and several feet deep. At first Margaret thought it would be impossible for her to gain the other side, and Summit station, but she knew that her father would have recognised no such word as fail in a like situation, and neither would she.

Struggling and staggering, finding a foothold on this piece of rock or that, Margaret persevered till, mud-stained from head to foot, she at last reached the other side. The remainder of the way to the station, around a second and lesser curve, was then traversed, and a report of the slide conveyed to Peter Noonan. In a very short time a gang of men were at work, while the flagged train waited.

'I am glad you could do it, daughter,' the father said, when hearing from the men how an accident had been averted.

'I was glad, too, I could do it, father, dear,' answered Margaret. 'And it was just because you have always told me to keep straight ahead when hard things came.'

Mr. Carew laughed. 'That's the way hard things are done, Maggie.' And he shut his lips tightly. Only he and his God knew how hard some of the things were that had been asked of him.

Another man had been placed as track-walker before Mr. Carew was again able to use his sprained ankle. But the men had not been slow in making known Maggie Carew's scramble over the landslide, and Mr. Burton had listened with twinkling eyes.

'Yes, yes,' he said. And when Mr. Carew was ready for the place, there was a place ready for him in Mr. Burton's office.

A PRETTY ANECDOTE

A pretty anecdote of a family of robins is told by the famous American poet, James Russell Lowell. 'I once had a chance to do a kindness to a household of robins, which they received with very friendly condescension. I had my eye for some time past on a nest, and was puzzled by a constant fluttering of what seemed full-grown wings in it whenever I drew near. At last I climbed the tree, in spite of the angry protests from the old birds against my intrusion. The mystery had a very simple solution. In building the nest, a long piece of packthread had been somewhat loosely woven in; three of the young had contrived to tangle themselves in it, and had become full grown without being able to launch themselves into the air. One was unharmed; another had so tightly twisted the cord about its shank that one foot was curled up and seemed paralysed; the third, in its struggles to escape, had so much harmed himself that I thought it humane to put an end to its misery. When I took out my knife to cut their hempen bonds the heads of the family seemed to divine my friendly interest. They perched quietly within reach of my hand, and watched me in my work. This, owing to the fluttering terror of the prisoners, was an affair of some delicacy; but ere long I was rewarded by seeing one of them fly away to a neighboring tree, while the cripple, making a parachute of his wings, came lightly to the ground, and hopped off as well as he could on one leg, obsequiously waited upon by his elders. A week later I had