

The Family Circle

THE REASON WHY

'When I was in the party,'
Said Betty (aged just four),
'A little girl fell off her chair
Right down upon the floor;
And all the other little girls
Began to laugh, but me—
I didn't laugh a single bit,'
Said Betty, seriously.

'Why not?' her mother asked her,
Full of delight to find
That Betty—bless her little heart!—
Had been so sweetly kind,
'Why didn't you laugh, darling?
Or don't you care to tell?'
'I didn't laugh a single bit,
'Cause it was me that fell.'

WHEN PHYLLIS SANG

'She's so timid!'

'I like a girl to have some spirit.'

Comments came thick and fast from the group of schoolgirls who stood under the elm tree on the corner watching the new girl pass quickly down the street.

'I wouldn't be surprised to learn that a good deal of spirit lies beneath Phyllis Corrigan's retiring manner,' chimed in a clear, firm voice.

'You always do find something to like in everyone,' Katie, spoke up another girl.

'We'll all find something to like in Phyllis when we know her better, Janet,' Katie replied. 'There's one thing she can do. She can sing. Miss Sarah has asked Phyllis to sing at the musical.'

'Hearing is believing; it doesn't seem possible that Miss Shyness can ever summon up enough courage to sing alone before the school,' Janet declared. 'Are you coming, girls?'

Meanwhile, Phyllis, going on her way alone, was having a hard battle to keep back tears. 'They don't like me. They don't mean to count me in. I might be a strange animal, the way they look at me and hold themselves aloof,' she was saying to herself.

'Phyllis! Wait a minute, please.' Katie came hurrying after her, smiling and breathless. 'How fast you walk! I don't wonder you always have a beautiful color in your cheeks, taking such strenuous exercise. I wanted to tell you how glad I am you are going to sing at our musical.'

'You don't know how glad I am to sing. I love to sing.' And now all trace of bitterness had left Phyllis's voice, and her eyes reflected the smile lighting Katie's face. 'Could you—we are near my home—do you mind coming in? Mammy would love to meet one of my schoolmates, and I'll show you the song I've thought of singing.'

Katie accompanied Phyllis indoors. Later, upon leaving, she was more convinced than ever that Phyllis's retiring manner covered a character of much strength and firmness. One thing that led Katie to believe this was Phyllis's answer, when asked if she did not feel diffident at singing in public.

'Yes, always,' Phyllis said quickly. 'But I do not like to refuse an invitation to sing if I think the invitation sincere. My teacher has told me that if I persistently ignore my dislike to use my voice my nervousness will in time doubtless disappear. And I feel she is right, for as soon as I have sung the first few notes I lose all distrust of myself and have no fear.'

The academy was all activity and excitement on a certain afternoon when the older pupils were to give a musical for the benefit of the fresh air fund. The assembly hall on the second floor, decorated with flowers and palms and draped with flags, was filled to its utmost capacity when Miss Sarah Grant opened the programme with a piano solo. After this, one performer followed another, and was applauded and encored. Finally, it came to Phyllis's turn.

Phyllis appeared on the platform, a slight, girlish figure, her eyes, dark and shining, scanning the audience half-fearfully. Katie, in the fifth row, smiled up at her, and the accompanist struck the first notes of the song. At first, Phyllis's voice

wavered uncertainly, then rallied, and soon filled the room with its sweetness. A burst of applause greeted the singer, and then a smell of smoke permeated the room, and many in the audience arose and looked anxiously around. The children occupying the front rows of chairs felt the uneasiness in the air, and some of them stood up. At this moment a puff of smoke came up from a register in one corner of the room, and instantly a terrified voice screamed:

'Fire! Fire!'

Simultaneously, Miss Grant appeared on the platform, and calling for order, declared there was no fire. Another puff of smoke seemed to give the lie to her statement, and there was a mad rush for the door. A panic was imminent when suddenly there rang out above the uproar a clear, full voice singing:

'Rally round the flag, boys, rally once again—'

The audience turned, and seeing Phyllis standing on the platform smiling and singing as if there was nothing to be frightened about, was somewhat reassured, and the struggling at the door ceased.

'Join the chorus,' Phyllis waved an invitation.

Without a tremor the sweet, firm voice went on, and the spirit of the singer made itself so felt that many voices actually did join in the chorus. When it was over, Miss Grant explained that the janitor had been burning rubbish in the furnace, adding:

'At no time was there real danger save that of a panic on the stairway; and this Phyllis, by her prompt action, averted,' and she smiled appreciatively upon Phyllis.

Then she added earnestly:

'Had you not accustomed yourself to singing in public you could hardly have done what you did, dear. It always pays to study the art of self-control.'

BETWEEN OURSELVES

The girls who win their way into the inmost recesses of others' hearts are not usually the most brilliant and gifted, but those who have sympathy, patience, self-forgetfulness, and that indefinable faculty of eliciting the better nature of others. Most of us know girls who have appealed to us in this way. We have many friends who are more beautiful and gifted, but there is not one of them whose companionship we enjoy better than that of the girl who perhaps never makes a witty or profound remark, but whose simple quality of human goodness makes up for every other deficiency. And if there came a time of real stress when we felt that we needed the support of real friendship, we should choose above all to go to this sweet girl, certain that we should find intelligent sympathy, a charitable construction of our position and difficulties and readiness to assist us beyond what we ought to take. Beauty of spirit is more than beauty of face and form, and remarkable intellectual qualities are not to be compared with unaffected human goodness and sympathy.

EDISON AND HIS MOTHER

I was always a careless boy (says Edison in his biography), and, with a mother of different mental calibre, I should probably have turned out badly. But her firmness, her sweetness, her goodness, were potent powers to keep me in the right path. I remember I used never to be able to get along at school. I don't know now what it was, but I was always at the foot of the class. I used to feel that the teachers never used to sympathise with me, and that my father thought that I was stupid, and at last I almost decided that I must really be a dunce. My mother was always kind, always sympathetic, and she never misunderstood or misjudged me. But I was afraid to tell her all my difficulties at school, for fear she, too, might lose her confidence in me. One day I overheard the teacher tell the inspector that I was 'addled,' and it would not be worth while keeping me in school any longer. I was so hurt by this last straw that I burst out crying, and went home and told my mother about it. Then I found out what a good thing a good mother was. She came out as my strong defender. Mother-love was aroused: mother-pride wounded, to the quick. She brought me back to the school and angrily told the teacher that he didn't know what he was talking about, that I had more brains than he himself, and a lot more talk like that. In fact, she was the most enthusiastic champion a boy ever had, and I determined right then that I would be worthy of her, and show her that her confidence was not misplaced. My mother was the making of me. She was so true, so sure of me; and I felt that I had someone to live for, someone I must not disappoint. The memory of her will always be a blessing to me.