

The Family Circle

THE SONG OF THE BUTTON

With fingers awkward and big
(Long past the hour for bed)
A mere man handles a needle keen
Which it's taken him hours to thread—
Work! Work! Work!
For work he is truly a glutton.
'Tis his first attempt—yet he does not shirk—
He is trying to sew on a button.

With fingers weary and worn
(The dawn is rising red),
A mere man toils in a piteous way
Still plying his needles and thread—
Prick! Prick! Prick!
And he murmurs (I think) 'Tut! tut!' on
The needle invading his fingernail's quick,
As it comes with a jerk through the button.

With fingers ragged and sore
(The sun shines bright o'erhead),
A mere man wearily puts away
His troublesome needle and thread—
Stitch! Stitch! Stitch!
He has struggled with eyes half shut on,
But his spirits are yards above concert pitch—
By jove, he has sewed on a button!

—Exchange.

A RASH JUDGMENT

I am a lonely fellow, with nothing to do but roam about the streets and criticise my neighbors. By neighbors I mean any and all of those persons whom I may meet in a day's walk. As to real neighbors, no doubt I have some; but as I am by nature retiring, and by force of circumstances a newcomer in N., I know very little about them.

The other morning I started out for my usual walk. Just ahead of me clattered a young lady very richly and tastefully attired. I say 'clattered,' for I do not know how better to describe the noise she made with her high heels on the resounding pavement. She carried her head high, and on top of it was perched an expensive affair—I don't know what to call it decorated with feathers. I said to myself: 'If that creature arrays herself so expensively in the morning, when, from the quickness of her movements, she is going out probably for a few moments on some necessary errand, how will she be dressed for the afternoon promenade, the evening dinner, the opera, the theatre, or some grand ball? Of what use is she in the world, trotting along on her high heels, with her head in the air, and her thoughts on the new gown she is going to have fitted at the dressmaker's?'

While thus reflecting, I felt my arm jostled rudely, and turned to remonstrate.

'Here! What do you mean?' I asked testily; but the next instant I regretted my tone, for saw the man was blind.

'I beg your pardon, my friend!' said I.

'Not at all, sir,' was the rejoinder. 'I am out of my own neighborhood and not familiar with the streets here.'

We were standing on a corner; the blind man prodding the pavement with his stick, and turning his sightless eyes about uneasily, as though uncertain what to do. The young lady had paused also to open her parasol, a pretty thing, but somewhat refractory. She turned at the old man's speech, regarding him with a quick glance from bright blue eyes.

'Curiosity!' I thought. 'All women are dowered with it; from the highest to the lowest.'

She passed on, and I stood for a moment irresolute, wondering whether it might not be a kindness, nay—almost duty—to ask the afflicted man where he lived and set him on his way. But I resisted the impulse; I was not responsible for him; he should have known better than to have ventured alone into a strange neighborhood; those who had charge of him should not have permitted it. Besides, there were the police.

Twirling my cane, I proceeded on my way. In front of me the young woman had just reached the opposite curb. Suddenly she turned about, glanced at the corner where the blind man was still stranded, and retraced her steps. 'Probably she has forgotten some gewgaw or other,' thought I, and continued

on my way. But the blind man was on my conscience, and, after I had gone a few steps farther, I turned once more to see what had become of him. To my surprise, the young woman was talking to him. They came toward me, she with a neatly-gloved hand on his arm. He could not see me, she did not observe me. When they had passed I followed somewhat closely; for I began to feel interested. Could there possibly be any connection between that shabby old man and the handsomely attired young lady, habitue of a world to him evidently unknown? Hardly; and yet, I admit that, though not a woman, I was quite curious, and rather pleased to learn from the tone of her voice that her companion was somewhat deaf as well as blind. Thereby I was enabled to hear their conversation without attracting their observation.

'You tell me you are lost?' she was saying in a remarkably sweet voice. 'Where do you live, sir?'

'In X street, miss.'

'That is rather distant,' she observed, after reflection.

'How do you come to be so far out of your way?'

'I do not know. I was to meet my daughter. She had gone to take back some sewing—she is a seamstress—and I missed her. I had come out for a walk, the day is so fine.'

'Very well. I will take you home.'

'It will not inconvenience you, miss?'

'Not at all. I had planned to do some shopping, but it does not matter.'

'You are very kind, miss.'

'Not at all; it is a pleasure. You live with your daughter?'

'Yes; she is a widow. There are two children. I make fruit baskets, and they help. She is an excellent seamstress, and has plenty of work.'

'That is good. And you get on well?'

'Very well.'

'And the children? Do they go to school?'

'Oh, regularly!'

'I should like to know them. It is a blessing for you to be surrounded with children; you have more reason to be thankful than many who are not blind.'

'Oh, yes, miss! You are right. There is often real happiness for the blind.'

I fell back, fearing to be detected in my espionage. I heard no more, but could see that the talk went pleasantly on. At last they paused in front of a large building. A woman and two little boys were standing in the doorway.

'Here he is!' they cried, as the pair approached.

I lingered on the sidewalk, pretending to pull the point of my cane from the crack between two stones. There were cheerful words and some laughter, and then the young, fashionably dressed good Samaritan hurried away, glancing at her watch as she went. She did not cast her eyes toward me, but I said in an undertone: 'God bless her, and God forgive my rash judgment of her!' She was in a hurry, and she went out of her way—she whom, in the uncharitableness of my heart, I had called a frivolous creature without sense or feeling—to conduct a poor, strayed blind man to his home; to console him with sweet, kind words; to fill his thoughts with hope and contentment; while I who flatter myself on being a philosopher, not to say a Christian, without anything in the world to do but amuse myself, on whom the time often hangs heavily, had not the human sympathy, the generosity of soul; to offer the service which I could so readily have performed.

I had no desire to walk any longer that morning; my life and its emptiness looked very poor to me. I resolved never again to judge by appearances, and went slowly homeward to ponder on the parable of the mote and the beam.—Ave Maria.

THE HEART OF A FRIEND

Broken friendship, like china, may be repaired, but the break will always show. And it is a bit of real truth and wisdom. Friendship is a precious thing—too precious a treasure to be carelessly broken or thrown away. The world handles the word 'friend' lightly; its real, true, deeper meaning is forgotten, and the acquaintance of an hour or the chance comers is designated by the term, which in itself bears a wealth of meaning. Your friend is the one who appreciates you—your faults as well as your virtues—who understands and sympathises with your defeats and victories, your aims and ideals, your joys and temptations, your hopes and disappointments, as no one else does or can. It is to your friend to whom you turn for counsel, for comfort, for praise. He may not be as learned as some or as wise as others, but it suffices that he understands you; and even his quiet listening gives strength and renewed courage. Blessed is the man or woman into whose life has