

The Family Circle

"I DIDN'T THINK"

If all the troubles in the world
Were traced back to their start,
We'd find not one in ten began
From want of willing heart.
But there's a sly woe-working elf
Who lurks about youth's brink,
And sure dismay he brings away—
The elf 'I didn't think.'

He seems so sorry when he's caught,
His mien is all contrite,
He so regrets the woe he's wrought,
And wants to make things right.
But wishes do not heal a wound,
Or weld a broken link,
The heart aches on, the link is gone—
All through 'I didn't think.'

I half believe that ugly sprite,
Bold, wicked 'I don't care,'
In life's long run less harm has done
Because he is so rare.
And one can be so stern with him,
Can make the monster shrink;
But lack-a-day, what can we say
To whining 'Didn't think.'

This most unpleasant imp of strife
Pursues us everywhere.
There's scarcely one whole day of life
He does not cause us care.
Small woes and great he brings the world,
Strong ships are forced to sink,
And trains from iron tracks are hurled
By stupid 'Didn't think.'

When brain is comrade to the heart,
And heart from soul draws grace,
'I didn't think' will quick depart
For lack of resting place.
If from that great unselfish stream,
The Golden, we drink,
We'll keep God's laws and have no cause
To say, 'I didn't think.'

Mrs. E. W. WILCOX.

THE GIRL WHO STARED

'There she is, staring at me again! It's positively uncomfortable. I wonder what she can want?'

Gladys made a little movement of impatience. For several weeks now as she climbed into the street-car which was to take her to school, she had been aware that a plainly-dressed, heavy-featured girl had looked up eagerly. As Gladys chatted with the schoolmates who joined her block by block, the sensation that she was subject to close scrutiny was uncomfortably present. Occasionally she turned her head quickly enough to catch the eye of the girl behind her, and on such occasions the watchful eyes at once looked down. But as a rule it was not more than a minute before she again felt herself the object of observation.

'I really feel as if her eyes were gimlets and were boring holes in my back,' Gladys complained in an exaggerated, school-girl fashion. 'I never knew of anything so impertinent and horrid. Some day I'll give her a lesson. You see if I don't!'

And the time came when she carried out her threat. She was feeling unusually snappish that morning, for she had sat up late writing a composition, and the results were not such as to satisfy herself. Her head ached and her nerves were unsteady. To add to her other irritations, the girl who stared sat directly behind her, and Gladys realised more forcibly than ever the gimlet-like quality in her gaze, of which she had before complained.

All at once her patience left her, and she turned sharply. 'I beg your pardon,' she said, 'but is there anything I can do for you?' She had meant the question to be crushing. She was rather surprised when the girl lifted a pair of mild, unabashed eyes.

'I guess you noticed I was looking at you,' said the girl. 'I don't wonder, for it is the living truth that I can't keep my eyes off you. The fact is,' she paused, catching her breath sharply, 'you're just the image of my sister that died.'

'Oh!' exclaimed Gladys. Those who knew her well would have detected an apologetic dismay in the monosyllable. But the other girl did not seem to notice it any more than she had noticed the hauteur of Gladys's opening question.

'You wouldn't suppose it to look at me, but she was as pretty as a picture. Her hair curled up on her neck just the way yours does, and her lashes were curly, too. It's been just a treat for me to watch you morning after morning. I hated to have Saturday come, because I missed you so. And there was one day—it was two weeks ago Wednesday—when you didn't take my car.'

'I was sick,' Gladys stammered. The color had mounted to the roots of her hair. She was ashamed to meet the other's eyes.

'I thought you were; you looked so pale the next day. Susie was like that. Some days she had so much color, just as you have to-day, and then again she would be pale, like a little white lily. But I guess folks who look like her can't help being sweet.'

Gladys gasped. She could not resist the thought that some of her friends could enlighten her new acquaintance on this particular point.

'I've told mother about you,' the other girl continued. 'She always asks about you when I get home at night. She likes to know what you wear and all that. Some day she wants to come down on the car with me to see if you really look so much like Susie, as I say. She'd have come before, only I'm afraid it'll make her cry when she sees you. I used to cry myself at first, just because I wanted you to look around and smile.'

'Next time,' Gladys promised, in a voice far from steady, 'I will look around and smile.' Then she signalled the conductor and left the car. She had not carried out her original intention and taught a lesson to the girl who stared, but she herself had learned something she was not likely to forget.

THE LAMENTABLE CRITICAL HABIT

Do not drift into the critical habit. Have an opinion, and a sensible one, about everything, but when you come to judge people, remember that you see very little of what they are, unless you live with them. Find the kindly, lovable nature, look for the beautiful self-sacrifice made daily by some, and teach yourself, day in and day out, to look for the best in everything. It is the everyday joys and sorrows that go to make up life. It is not the one great sorrow nor the one intense joy: it is the accumulation of the little ones that constitute living, so do not be critical of the little faults, and do be quick to find the little virtues and praise them. So much that is good in people dies for want of encouragement. Have an opinion, and a well-thought-out one, about everything that comes into your life, but do not have too many opinions about people; their hearts are not open books, and if you must be judged some day, give them the kindest judgment now.

SOME HOWLERS

The *Westminster Gazette* recently gave a prize for the best collection of 'howlers.' Here are some of the prize-winners:—

What was the Black Death?—The Black Death was Terrible.

Who was Julius Caesar?—Julius Caesar was the first great man of his kind.

What is the masculine of 'vixen'?—Vixen is the female of vicar.

Why are the days longer in summer than in winter?—Because heat expands everything.

How did Ahab meet his death?—A certain man draw a bow at a vulture, but hit Ahab.

Who was Joan of Arc?—Noah's wife.

FOURTEEN MISTAKES OF LIFE

Some thoughtful person has condensed the important mistakes of life, and decides that there are just fourteen of them.

Most people believe there is no limit to the mistakes of life; that they are like drops in the ocean, or the sands of the seashore, in number. But here are the fourteen great mistakes.

It is a great mistake to set up our own standard of right and wrong, and judge people accordingly.

To measure the enjoyment of others by our own.

To expect uniformity of opinion in the world.

To look for judgment and experience in youth.

To endeavor to mould all dispositions alike.

To yield to immaterial trifles.

To look for perfection in our own actions.