

The Family Circle

GRANDMOTHER'S LESSON.

The supper is over; the hearth is swept;
And in the wood fire's glow
The children cluster to hear a tale
Of that time so long ago.

'Life is a stocking,' grandma says,
'And yours is just begun;
But I am knitting the toe of mine,
And my work is almost done.

'With merry hearts we begin to knit,
And the ribbing is almost play;
Some are gay-colored, and some are white,
And some are ashen grey.

'But most are made of many a hue,
With many a stitch set wrong.
And many a row be sadly ripped
Ere the whole be fair and strong.

'There are long plain spaces without a break
That in youth is hard to bear,
And many a weary tear is dropped
As we fashion the heel with care.

'But the saddest, happiest time is that
We court, and yet would shun,
When our Heavenly Father breaks the thread
And says that our work is done.'

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The children come to say 'Good-night,'
With tears in their bright young eyes,
While in Grandma's lap with broken thread,
The finished stocking lies.

MARJORIE'S VICTORY.

'Uncle Howard,' asked Marjorie, looking up from the book she was reading, 'what is a coincidence?'

'Let me see,' replied Uncle Howard, trying to think how to make a simple definition. 'When two things happen at the same time that have nothing to do with each other, but seem to have a great deal to do with each other, we call it a coincidence.'

Seeing that Marjorie still looked puzzled, he started to explain further, when a telephone message called him away. As he took down his hat in the hall, however, he paused long enough to say, 'I'll look out for a first-rate coincidence to show you, Marjorie, and then you'll understand better.'

The next day happened to be Friday, and because there was no one to drive Marjorie to school, and because she was not able to walk so far, she was obliged to remain at home.

Mamma and Uncle Howard were very sorry, and they all thought of the two shining gold pieces in Marjorie's bank that meant two whole years without an absence, and of the third coat was to have joined them so soon; for Great-Aunt Morton, who lived in the big house on the hill, had laughingly told Marjorie the very first day she went to school that she should have a five-dollar gold piece at the end of each year that she was neither absent nor tardy.

But the gold-piece was as nothing compared with the broken record, and Marjorie sobbed aloud for a few minutes; then, like the brave little girl that she was, she dried her tears, got out her paint-box, and began coloring up some sunbonnet babies for the other children.

When she went to school on Monday morning everybody was talking about the fire that had occurred the day before, and to her relief, nobody said anything to her about her absence. She said to herself that she just could not have stood it, if anybody had.

Two weeks later the monthly report-cards were

given out. Marjorie received hers with a sad heart, as she thought of the broken record. She did not even open the envelope until Gertrude Harris had turned off on her own street and she was alone.

But as she glanced over the card, something within her gave a great leap. Could she believe her own eyes? There were no marks in the absence column! The teacher must have made a mistake.

Mamma and Uncle Howard looked the card over, and said they were glad Marjorie had gone from 'G' to 'G plus' in her reading, but neither of them thought of the omission.

Then came a great temptation to Marjorie. If she should say nothing about the mistake, the record would remain as it was, and the teacher and pupils would forget by next year, and Great-Aunt Morton need never know. So the report-card was returned to the teacher without anything being said.

All the next week Marjorie struggled with the temptation. She seemed unlike herself.

Friday came again, the last day of school. Marjorie could stand it no longer. Summoning all her courage, she came back into the schoolroom at recess, after the others were all out, and sobbed out her story to her teacher.

'So you thought I made a mistake, did you?' asked the teacher. 'I'm so glad you told me, because I can assure you that you are the one who has made the mistake. That day was a very cold one, you remember, and something broke about the furnace early in the morning, so we couldn't have school that day. We sent word to all whom we could reach easily, and dismissed the others as soon as they came. You live so far away we could not notify you. I'm sorry this has troubled you so much; you should have told your mother or me sooner.'

Marjorie ran-round to Great-Aunt Morton's after school with her report-card, and then fairly flew home to tell her story to mamma and Uncle Howard.

'That's what I call the happiest kind of a coincidence,' said Uncle Howard, as he heard the five-dollar piece rattle down with its mates. 'Now you know the meaning of the word.'

'I call it a great victory,' said mamma, thinking of something quite different. But Marjorie understood both.

THE DILATORY CORRESPONDENT.

A story was recently told by an American author residing in London. At an evening gathering of a company of bright men, the conversation turned upon neglect to answer letters promptly, when he related his experience.

The literary man received one morning a letter from an intimate friend in America, announcing briefly the sudden death of his wife, to whom he was devotedly attached. The letter was read with deep sympathy, and was put aside in a pigeon-hole of the author's desk, to be answered by the first trans-Atlantic mail.

Like other men who earn their living by their pens, this author disliked private correspondence, and had formed the habit of holding letters for some time before answering them.

The letter of the heart-broken husband was not one that could be easily answered. The next ocean mail did not have the author's reply. He waited another week and tried to begin a letter, but was interrupted by a caller. A fortnight afterward he reproached himself for his heartless procrastination, and made a fresh start; but the opening sentences did not suit him, and he tore up the sheet.

A month passed, and the letter was still unanswered. He thought of his friend very often, but he could not force himself to write the usual expressions of condolence and sympathy. Six months went by, and the letter was still at the bottom of the file.

At last he was overwhelmed with a feeling of shame for having treated his friend with such coldness and indifference. He answered the letter. He filled five or six sheets with tender reminiscences of the