

The Family Circle

LITTLE BROTHER.

Your dimpled face, when you were three,
From faded portrait smiles at me.
A curling topknot crowns your brow,
Open and honest then as now.
Jacket you wear in old-time taste,
And trousers pleated at the waist,
Lovingly fashioned by the care
Of her whose name is now a prayer.

Gone is the small boy pictured here—
You outgrew curls and garments queer.
Too soon your boisterous youth was o'er;
Too soon man's heavy load you bore.
Now vainly your stern face I scan
To find the child within the man,
Until you smile, then I surprise
My little brother in your eyes.

PETER'S JOKE.

All through school Peter had by various winks and signs made it known to his particular chum, Jerry Cullen, that he had something of importance to communicate. And as soon as recess came he hurried Jerry to a corner of the grounds where they might talk without interruption.

'Say,' exclaimed Peter, eagerly, 'I've got the finest joke. I thought of it last night.'

Jerry's eyes grew big. 'Tell a fellow, Pete,' he coaxed.

'Well, you know our new girl—Christine is her name, and she hasn't been in America long, and is awful easy. I heard her mooning around wishing she'd get a letter from home, so I planned we'd tell her there was one for her at the post office, and for her to go and get it; we'll say there wasn't enough stamps on it, see?'

'She'll be fooled sure and good,' cried Jerry, hopping from one foot to the other, 'but what'll she do when she gets there?'

'Oh, it'll be great—the postmaster won't understand, and Christine won't either, and it will be a fine mix-up. Then, too, she just hates to go out at night, she's afraid of death of witches.'

'Well, I guess she'll go for a letter all right,' said Jerry. Then he added, 'When we're through with her we'll join the boys at the big oak, they've got lots of barrels for the fire.'

'All right,' returned the other.

Christine was taking some cookies from the oven when the two boys rushed in.

'Say, Chris,' cried Peter, 'there's a letter for you at the post office; it needs some more postage, that's why you haven't had it. You better go get it this afternoon or they'll burn it up.'

Here Peter winked at Jerry, who grimaced back at him. The girl started and almost dropped the dish she held.

'A letter, you say? Ah, it has come; I have waited, oh, such a long time; now it comes and I am so glad.'

Peter felt a sense of shame creeping over him; he almost wished he had not thought of this fine joke. Jerry was grinning sheepishly. 'Look out for the witches, Christine,' said he; 'there'll be lots about.'

The girl looked at him doubtfully. 'Oh, but there is no witch could keep from me my home letter,' she said. Then as Mrs. Logan came into the kitchen she asked permission to go to the village for her letter.

'Why, of course you can go, Christine,' returned her mistress. Then she looked at Peter, whose face had grown very red.

'How did you happen to go to the post office today, son?' she asked.

'Oh, I—we, that is, we just happened in,' stammered Peter. His joke was not turning out to be very funny after all.

Christine looked happy and excited. She gave the boys a lot of cookies she had made.

'I meant them for supper, but you bring me such good news you must have some now,' said she, with a broad smile.

The boys felt that the cakes would choke them. Peter was tempted to tell, but he was afraid Jerry would laugh at him. Christine was soon ready to start. She nodded and waved good-bye as she trudged along the dusty road. It was a long walk to the village, but Christine had no idea of taking the trolley.

The boys were just getting ready to join their mates at the big oak when the 'phone rang. Mrs. Logan answered it.

'Peter,' she said, as she hung up the receiver, 'I am sorry, but I am obliged to go to Aunt Mary's, as she isn't well and needs me. Now that Christine has gone out you will have to stay in until she returns, for I may not be back for some time, and I cannot leave without someone staying here.'

Peter's face grew blank. Here was a fine end to all his plans for scaring Christine.

'I may not even be back for tea,' continued his mother, 'but Christine will be home in time for that meal. I am very sorry, dear, but it can't be helped. You can go out for a little while after tea.'

But Peter's face did not grow any brighter. He knew his father never allowed him to stay out at night. He wished, oh, how he wished, he had never thought of this silly old joke.

How long the afternoon seemed. Jerry soon left and there was nothing to do. He didn't want to read and it was so lonely. He wished—that is, he almost wished—he could be a girl for a little while and cry.

He was standing disconsolately by the window when he saw Christine coming. He turned away, for he didn't feel like meeting her. But Christine came right up to him and she looked, oh, so happy.

'I got my letter,' she exclaimed, 'but there was plenty of stamps. The man, he did not understand when I told him about that; it was directed not quite right; that is why it had not come yet. I got it sooner by going and I did not have to pay any money.'

Peter was astonished, but all the same he was glad, too. That night, when Mrs. Logan came home, having left Aunt Mary better, she said to Peter:

'I am so glad Christine got her letter, for, Peter, I was afraid for just a moment that you were playing a very unkind joke.'

Peter hung his head: for a little while he didn't say anything, then he looked up bravely and told mamma all about it. And when he had promised that he would apologise to Christine, and that never again would he play unkind or cruel jokes on any one, he said:

'Wasn't it fortunate that there was a letter for Christine after all?'

'Indeed it was,' returned mamma, 'fortunate for Christine, but, most of all, fortunate for you, Peter boy.'

YOUR LEVEL BEST.

One of Mark Twain's humorous poems deals with a young man who was chiefly remarkable for the fact for whatever he undertook to do, 'he did his level best.' No matter what the undertaking was, great or small, important or insignificant, 'he did his level best.' He was wise. It pays to be thorough.

The young man was hired to patch a fence by one of the petty office-holders of the place. 'Don't put any unnecessary work on it,' the man said; 'and being out of sight behind the shrubbery, it won't matter what it looks like. It isn't worth more than a dollar; if you'll do it for that, go ahead.'

The young man spent the best part of the day on the job. When he came for his pay his employer went out to look at the 'patch.' It was not only substantially done, but with the utmost neatness and care.

'I told you I didn't care how it looked, didn't I?' said the owner, angrily. 'Now you'll be wanting three-quarters of a day's pay—'