

The Family Circle

CAN YOU TELL?

So many things I want to know:
What holds the moon in place?
Why does the sun neglect at night
To show us his face?

Why don't he come from out the clouds
At night instead of day?
For then it is we need him most;
Tell me, some one, I pray.

Where is the reservoir so large
That holds the rain and snow?
How can it rest upon the clouds?
Does anybody know

And why is it we don't all fall
From off this earthly ground,
When we are turned quite upside down
As we go rolling round?

And many more such questions yet
I'll ask you, if you please;
But take your time, for I shall wait
Till you have answered these.

BERTHA'S GRANDPA

'Grandpa, I'm going to Cathie's for supper. You don't mind, do you?'

'Mind, dear! Why should I? I hope you'll have a pleasant time.'

Bertha's arms tightened about his neck. She was very fond of her grandfather; fonder of him than of any one in the world. She thought affectionately how sweet it was of him never to make any objection to her enjoying herself with her young friends. 'But, then, he has his books,' Bertha thought, as she tripped away. It was fortunate that books were such satisfying companions to Bertha's grandfather, since he had to depend on them so much.

Cathie's mother was going out to supper and four of the girls were to have it all to themselves. 'So your grandfather was willing to spare you,' she said, smiling at the last arrival. 'I thought he might feel too lonely if you were away.'

'Oh, grandpa doesn't care, so long as he has his books,' Bertha laughed.

'Doesn't he? He was very social a year ago. I suppose it was your grandmother's death that changed him. It used to be a very full table at that house—seven—yes, eight of them. It must seem strange to him to sit down alone.'

Bertha turned away. She was glad when the door shut behind Mrs. Warner and her reminiscences. Of course grandpa didn't mind sitting down to a solitary meal. He did it often enough to get used to it. Or could it be that he did mind—that as he ate his lonely supper his thoughts went back to happier days, and the shadows of the gathering night lay heavy on his heart?

'What on earth's the matter with you?' cried Cathie's voice at her elbow. 'You look as if you'd lost your last friend.'

'I don't know as I should have left grandpa,' Bertha announced dolefully. 'He'll have to eat alone.'

'Why, Bertha, you often do. You were at Kitty's to dinner Wednesday, and the picnic on Tuesday, and Monday there was that lawn social, and—'

Bertha stopped her. 'I know I've done it often, and perhaps that's the very reason I shouldn't have done it to-night.' Somehow, turn where she would, the same picture was before her eyes—the table in the big dining-room and a lonely old man eating his solitary meal.

Perhaps Cathie saw it too. Suddenly she burst out with a suggestion:

'Girls, I have an idea. Let's take our supper and carry it down to Bertha's, so her grandfather won't have to eat alone.'

The motion was carried in the informal but highly practical way characteristic of girls. Meg seized the platter containing the cold meat; Milly possessed herself of the hot biscuits and honey; Cathie made Bertha responsible for the cake, and herself took charge of the chocolate pot. And so in a merry procession they marched down the street, greeting with peals of laughter the wondering glances of occasional passers-by.

Bertha's grandfather was not on the porch. 'He's gone in to supper, I guess,' Bertha said. She hurried into the dining-room to prepare him for his guests, but stopped with a start.

Her grandfather did not seem to be eating. He was staring vacantly across the table at the empty chair. But the thing that brought Bertha's heart into her mouth was the fact that the opposite plate had been filled and that a steaming cup of tea stood by it.

'Why, grandpa,' she faltered, 'did you forget? Did you expect me back to supper?'

'Why, no, dear,' said her grandfather, apologetically. 'It was just a fancy of mine. Somehow, it does not seem quite so lonely to see that plate and cup of tea across the table. It looks,' said the old man, dropping his voice, 'as if your grandmother might come in any moment.'

Standing behind his chair, Bertha fought a battle for self-control. There was a quaver in her voice when she spoke at last, in spite of an assumed sprightliness. 'Grandpa, we girls decided to come over here for our supper. We brought along what Cathie had, and everything will be ready in a minute.'

Then the girls flocked in, laughing, each with her load, and there was a pleasant hurry getting out extra plates and silver and napkins. But in five minutes everything was ready, and in spite of the fact that an unaccountable lump was continually rising in the throat of the lady of the house, it was the merriest meal eaten under that roof for many a day. And after supper grandfather appeared to be in no haste to return to his books, but seemingly was quite satisfied to sit and listen smilingly to the girlish chatter, punctuated by gay laughter.

'It is like the good old times,' he said to Bertha when bedtime came, 'having company to supper.'

Bertha put her arms around his neck and kissed him. 'And like the good new times, too,' she promised him. 'Wait and see.'

NOVEL-READING

Novels which have too absorbing an effect on anyone are certainly bad for that person, whether they are really bad in themselves or not. If you find yourself neglecting your work or more serious reading it's time to take yourself in hand. Stop right there. Put the story in the fire or return it to the owner. That's the only way to cure that particular obsession. It is often questioned whether the prevalent taste for the silly society novel is not responsible in a large degree for the parasite ideal; the ideal of idleness and physical beauty which so many women have set up for themselves. To be useful, to give an equivalent in service and love for all that one gets ought to be the aim of every one of us. Instead, nine out of every ten women seem to think the great thing is to sit idly on the front porch and keep their hands soft and white. Novels in which the aristocratic idea of ladyhood is upheld as desirable, and the worker depicted as rough and vulgar, belong to a type to be avoided. You'll get no help of any kind from reading them. Another variety which ought to be tabooed is the one in which important relations of life are treated flippantly or cynically. Then there is the novel in which there is a lot of maudlin sentiment, which often misleads the young and inexperienced.

NOBODY'S RESIDENCE

The skipper of a certain little vessel relates the following story, though the laugh is decidedly against him.

When anything goes wrong aboard his boat the skipper likes to get to the bottom of the affair, if, as he puts it, 'it takes me a month of Sundays to do it.'

One morning, while lying in port, a trifling accident occurred in the usual mysterious manner. No one was to blame.

The skipper tackled each member of the crew, until he came to the cabin boy.

'Now, young shaver,' he remarked, 'maybe I'll get the truth from you. Who did it?'

'Nobody, sir,' responded the youth, who scarcely deemed it wise to blame any of his superiors.

'Indeed!' ejaculated the skipper. 'Mr. Nobody again? You seem to know the fellow well! I should like to have a look at him myself. I am going ashore now. You can come with me, and if you don't point out the house where this Mr. Nobody lives, you'll get the finest rope's ending you ever got in your life!'

The outlook was anything but pleasing, and the cabin boy was the reverse of cheerful as he led the skipper up one street and down another. The skipper was enjoying the lad's discomfiture, when suddenly the boy pulled up and nodded to a house across the way.

'But that's an empty house!' said the skipper.

'Yes, sir,' was the reply. 'Nobody lives there.'

The rope's ending was averted.

WOULD FOREGO CONSOLATION

Social good humor is often difficult to attain, but there are instances in plenty when it was triumphant. At a certain dinner at which the late John Fiske was present (says the *New York Times*), a number of stories were told illustrating extraordinary social tact and courtesy.

Mr. Fiske alluded to that celebrated incident wherein a French king, entertaining some of his court at his own table, gracefully broke a costly wineglass after a guest had been so unfortunate as to break one by dropping it.

Strangely enough, Mr. Fiske had hardly finished telling the story when a glass fell from the table between himself and his hostess, a woman famed for saying the right word