

The Family Circle

WHERE'S MOTHER?

Bursting in from school or play,
This is what the children say:
Trooping, crowding, big and small,
On the threshold, in the hall—
Joining in the constant cry,
Ever as the days go by,
‘Where’s mother?’

From the weary bed of pain
This same question comes again:
From the boy with sparkling eyes
Bearing home his earliest prize;
From the bronzed and bearded son,
Perils past and honors won;
‘Where’s mother?’

Burdened with our lonely task,
One day we may vainly ask
For the comfort of her face,
For the rest of her embrace;
Let us love her while we may,
Well for us that we can say
‘Where’s mother?’

Mother with untiring hands
At the post of duty stands,
Patient, seeking not her own,
Anxious for the good alone
Of the children as they cry,
Ever as the days go by,
‘Where’s mother?’

A VALUABLE VISITOR

Mrs. Alexander's parrot had come visiting. He was as drab as a Quaker, a solemn fellow with rolling eyes and a black tongue, which, in Marie's opinion, detracted from his charms. He had the reputation of being a valuable talker, but his visit had lasted a week before he spoke a word. Then his remarks were in the nature of a surprise.

Marie had just come in from school. She had laid her books on the table and heaved a portentous sigh. Some mothers would have been alarmed and made anxious inquiries as to the reason for her depression. But Marie's mother was so accustomed to these nerve-racking sighs, and to the tales of woe Marie brought home from school, that she only went on sewing in serene silence.

Marie's lips parted. But before she had a chance to speak, the grey parrot had taken the words out of her mouth. ‘Oh, dear, dear, dear!’ he exclaimed, in a crescendo of tragic inflection. ‘Oh, dear, dear, dear!’ Then he sighed, and the sigh was such an excellent imitation of Marie's that Marie herself started and drew back.

‘What a strange parrot!’ she exclaimed, eyeing resentfully the gray little figure on the wooden perch. ‘I thought parrots said “Polly wants a cracker,” and things like that.’

‘I think,’ said Marie's mother, turning the hem of her napkin with care, ‘that they are very likely to repeat what they hear.’

Marie had no reply to make to this. But later in the day when her brother Fred brought word that Elizabeth Hardy could not come that evening to make toffee, according to the plan of the week before, Marie had another reminder of the parrot's peculiarity. ‘That's always the way,’ cried Marie. ‘I can never carry out my plans. Something always goes wrong. Oh—’

‘Dear, dear, dear!’ said the parrot. ‘Oh, dear, dear, dear!’ And he sighed as if his last lingering hope had been cruelly dissipated.

For the next few days the parrot talked a good deal, but it was all along the same line. His doleful

reiteration of the exclamation, ‘Oh, dear, dear, dear!’ got on Marie's nerves. As soon as she entered the house, he welcomed her with a long-drawn sigh. ‘I should think that bird would drive Mrs. Alexander crazy,’ she said at last, rather peevishly, ‘with his everlasting “Oh, dear!”’

‘It is a bad habit,’ Marie's mother acknowledged. ‘But I'm rather afraid that he formed it here.’

‘Oh, mother!’ Marie wailed. ‘Do I really make such a nuisance of myself? It can't be.’ Her tone was so despairing that involuntarily her mother smiled, though at once her face sobered again.

‘I'm afraid, my dear, that the habit has taken a stronger hold of you than you think. It is very easy to fall into the way of sighing and uttering fretful ejaculations when things go wrong. But when one goes so far as to attract the attention of a parrot, it certainly is high time to stop.’

For another week, Polly continued to sigh at intervals and exclaim, ‘Oh, dear!’ Then apparently he lost interest in the accomplishment, and one morning electrified the household by starting in to whistle ‘Dixie.’ Marie's delight touched her mother, who understood the reason behind it.

‘She is making a brave fight against that silly habit,’ thought her mother as she heard Marie humming a lively tune, in the effort to teach it to Polly. ‘And if the parrot helps her to break it off entirely, he has been a valuable visitor.’

ONE WAY OF LOOKING AT IT

One evening at seven o'clock a man with a wife and eleven children, many of them grown up, appeared at the entrance to an entertainment hall, bought two tickets, and demanded that the entire family should be admitted. The doorkeeper declined to admit the family with two tickets only.

‘But all these are my children,’ said the man.

‘Of course,’ said the doorkeeper; ‘but some of them are too old to be admitted free.’

‘Too old? What's that to do with it? Don't it say on your bills that children under twelve are admitted free with parents?’

‘Yes.’

‘Well, I've only got eleven children, and if eleven children aren't under twelve I'm beat.’

WHERE WAS THE WATER?

A small boy was watching a chemist analyze some water one day.

‘What are you doing with that water?’ he asked.

‘Analyzing it,’ replied the chemist.

‘And what's that?’ persisted the boy.

‘Finding out what it is composed of,’ explained the chemist.

‘And what is it composed of?’ queried the lad.

‘Two-thirds of hydrogen and one-third oxygen,’ said the chemist.

The youngster looked in surprise at the chemist.

Ain't there no water in it?

GOOD TWO MILES

After a hard day's work at the manoeuvres a battalion of Territorials were marching wearily along a seemingly interminable country road, when they met a man on horseback.

‘I say,’ said the officer in command, ‘how far is it to the next town?’

‘About two miles,’ was the reply.

For another hour the soldiers tramped, and then met another stranger.

‘How far is to the next town?’ he was asked.

‘A good two miles, I should say,’ was the answer.

Another hour passed, and a third horseman was encountered.

‘How far?’ he repeated, in response to the same question. ‘Oh, not far—only about two miles.’

‘Well,’ sighed the optimistic officer, ‘thank goodness we are holding our own, anyhow.’