The Family Circle

MOTHER'S HAIRPINS

The doorbell broke the other day,
Pop couldn't make it ring;
Said he, 'I'll have to get a man
To fix the tiresome thing.'
My mother said: 'Oh, don't do that,
Think what you would have to pay.'
And then she took her hairpin out
And fixed it right away.

We lost the back-door key last week,
'Twas when the door was locked;
Pop fumed around and said things till
The neighbors were all shocked.
Then ma she got a hairpin out
An' poked, an' pretty quick
She had the bolt turned in the lock—
The hairpin did the trick.

There's nothing much that ma can't do
With hairpins, seems as like;
One day she'll fix pop's busted watch
And next will be my bike.
If we wus poor I'll bet that she
Could make hard luck take wings,
A-going round the city with
A hairpin fixing things.

THE LESSON OF THE BROOM

The duster dropped from Muriel's hand to the window-sill, and she gave herself up to dreaming, for once regardless of the fact that, when the dusting was accomplished, the beds were to be, and, after that, luncheon to be prepared for her mother and for the children coming in from school.

Presently she murmured: 'I envy Florence earning fifteen dollars a week as stenographer and Katy making, no one knows how much, giving music lessons, and Margaret earning enough to buy all her lovely clothes teaching china painting. I believe I'm the only girl of our set doing housework. If only mother were strong. It seems sometimes as if I can't endure this sort of thing much longer. But I must remember how uncomplaining mother is and how patiently father goes over his figure at the office ,and how Jack and Jenny repay me in kisses and caresses and—'

'Brooms! Brooms! Brooms!'

The call, in a resonant, masculine voice, interrupted Muriel's dreaming. She passed to the sideboard, opened a drawer, took out a purse, made her way to the front door and from there to the gate, where she waited, an attractive girlish figure in her neatly-fitting dress of striped pink gingham, a pink sweeping cap covering but not wholly concealing her soft, wavy, brown hair.

The broom man walked down the middle of the road, slightly ahead of his horse and waggon, the latter filled with brooms of all kinds and sizes. Muriel watched the broom man and thought him good to look at in the September sunshine with his tall, erect, broad-shouldered figure and his well-shaped head.

'Good morning, missie.' The broom man paused in front of the gate and his horse paused and Muriel came tripping out to the waggon.

'Good morning,' she said. 'I've watched for you every day this week; mother thought it was about time for you to come.'

'Your ma's right, missie. I make four visits a year down this street. Your ma was sick when I was here in July. I hope she's better.'

'Much better than she was then, but still not really well yet,' Muriel answered. 'First, I will look at a long, soft broom for the hardwood floors,' she added, in her businesslike way.

'Here you have it, missie.' The broom man drew out a broom from the stand on the waggon. 'This is the best broom for hard floors—don't raise a dust, you know, or scratch. Brooms are a good deal like folks; you have to have the right broom for the right place, just as you have to have the right man for the right place, when you want to get the best out of either.' The broom man laughed and showed two rows of even, white teeth. 'Take me for instance; I'm a good deal like this besom, best fitted for rough work, while your pa,—well, I guess he wouldn't last long at rough work, but for handling a pen, he's all right.'

Muriel smiled, thinking of her father's white, slender, well-shaped hands, and said: 'Now, I will look at a short handbrush; mother thinks that kind so nice for sweeping corners and to use with the dust-pan on the stairs.

The broom man nodded his head. 'I've seen folks use a whisk broom on hardwood steps and scratch 'em; there it is again, you've got to have the right broom for the right place.'

When the short hand-brush had been selected and the two purchases had been paid for, the broom man reached under the seat of his waggon and drew out a tiny feather duster which he placed in Muriel's hands, with the words:

'With my compliments to your ma, missie; and I hope she'll soon be herself again. I'm giving these to my regular customers. You'll find it handy for delicate dusting like brushing specks of dust off the ornaments on the mantel, and that. You can use it where you can't use the long broom, or the short one; it will fill a place where they can't, just as I suppose you fill a place in your ma's house that nobody else could fill. And,' the broom man threw back his head and laughed his laugh that was good to hear. 'There you have it again, missie; there's a whole lot to brooms just as there is to folks.'

'Well, new brooms sweep clean, for one thing,' Muriel smiled. 'Thank you,' she added, as she flitted away.

Standing beside her mother's couch in the pleasant south room, with the dainty luncheon she had prepared, Muriel observed smilingly:

'The broom man came this morning, mother, and I brought the two you said we were to have. He was real nice and gave us a tiny feather duster for "delicate dusting," he said. He said, too,' Muriel smiled reminiscently as she placed the tray on the table and plumped up the cushion behind her mother, 'that brooms are a good deal like folks; you have to have the right one in the right place to get the best results.'

'As I have been blest in having you, dear.' The mother looked up and her eyes filled with love and gratitude. 'What would have become of me if you had felt it was not your right place to be with me? Do you know, Muriel, I almost think I should have given up the struggle long ago if it had not been for you? But now, I feel the worst is over for both of us, and it will not be long before I shall again be well enough for things and you will be free to do the things you wish.'

'Oh, mother, I want only to do what is need of me,' Muriel cried lovingly, as she bent and left a kiss on the thin, white cheek below.

A PLEASANT LITTLE STORY

When the conductor came to collect the young lady's fare she discovered that she had left her pocket-book at the office where she works as stenographer. It is a predicament not uncommon with city dwellers, but the rest of the story as told takes a new and agreeable turn.

'Why, I'm afraid I haven't any money with me,' she said, looking very much embarrassed.

The conductor said nothing, but stood there and waited.

'I guess I'll have to get off,' said the girl. 'I have left my pocketbook at the office.'

'Here, lady,' said a boyish voice coming from across the aisle. 'I've got a sixpence I'll lend you.'

She looked at the boy and took the sixpence. 'Thank you,' she said. 'I'll pay you back if you'll give me your name.'