

The Family Circle

LITTLE AT FIRST

A little stream had lost its way
Amid the grass and fern;
A passing stranger scoop'd a well
Where weary men might turn;
He wall'd it in and hung with care
A ladle at the brink.
He thought not of the deed he did,
But judged that all might drink.
He passed again and lo! the well,
By summer never dried,
Had cool'd ten thousand parching tongues,
And saved a life beside.

A nameless man, amid a crowd
That throng the daily mart,
Let fall a word of hope and love,
Unstudied from the heart,
A whisper on the tumult thrown,
A transitory breath.
It raised a brother from the dust,
It saved a soul from death.
O germ, O fount, O word of love,
O thought at random cast!
Ye were but little at the first,
But mighty at the last.

HOW A BOY HELPED TO SAVE THE DAY

A great naval battle was in progress between the Dutch and the English, and the former were fast getting the better of it. They had shot off the masts of the English flagship; and its Admiral, Sir John Marlborough, plainly saw that, unless something was done very speedily, the colors of old England would certainly have to be lowered.

Some distance away, several English ships were stationed in reserve, and the time had come to call them into action. But the code of signals previously arranged was now impracticable, and there was but one way to communicate to them the fact that they were wanted—wanted very much and very quickly. (The dense smoke prevented the officers from seeing the disaster to the flagship.) This way was to send a written message. But who would take it? Between the ships there was a stretch of water, perilously long for even the most practised swimmer, and the bullets were literally raining down. Whoever undertook the dangerous errand was almost sure to be a victim of the enemy's fire, or to become exhausted and sink into the hungry sea. Yet, forlorn as the hope was, there was no other.

Sir John, with an anxious heart, wrote the order, and said:

'Now, then, my men, who will volunteer to carry this? It is a grave undertaking, and the chances of a safe return narrow. Who will risk his life for England?'

'I, sir!'—And I!'—'And I!' came at once from the lips of many brave men, as they stepped forward, without a moment's hesitation, at the call of duty.

But at that moment a childish voice was heard. One of the cabin-boys—a very little fellow—called out: 'I think I am the one to go, if you please, Admiral. I can swim quite as well as if I were big; and if I never come back, it will not matter very much, because I am not grown up.'

The men stared, and many eyes grew suddenly dim.

The Admiral considered for a moment, then said: 'Here is the dispatch, my lad; and God be with you!'

The boy took it between his teeth, slid over the ship's side into the water, and struck out for the reserve vessels with all his might. Everyone on board the flagship watched him until he looked no larger than a cork borne up by the waves. He was making progress;

no bullet touched him; and in time, very tired, but also very triumphant, he was lifted on to the deck of one of the reserve ships, and handed his dispatch to its commander, who at once went to the relief of the crippled flagship, and helped to end the fight and save the day.

That night, at sunset, the little cabin-boy was called before the Admiral to be publicly and sincerely thanked and rewarded.

'You are indeed a brave lad,' said the Admiral; 'and I believe that you will one day have a flagship of your own.'

He was a true prophet. The little bearer of dispatches—Cloudy Shovel, as he was then called—became Sir Cloudesley Shovel, an English Admiral whose distinguished bravery is known wherever his language is spoken.—*Ave Maria.*

LUCK PROVERBS

The proverbs on luck are numerous and expressive in all languages. In English we say, 'It is better to be born lucky than rich.' The Arabs convey the same idea in the apt proverb, 'Throw him into the Nile and he will come up with a fish in his mouth,' while the German says, 'If he flung a penny on the roof a dollar would come back to him.' A Spanish proverb says, 'God send you luck, my son, and little wit will serve you.' There is a Latin adage, 'Fortune favors fools,' and it is to this Touchstone alludes in his reply to Jacques, 'Call me not a fool till heaven hath sent me fortune.' The Germans say, 'Jack gets on by his stupidity' and 'Fortune and women are fond of fools.' There is also a Latin proverb which shows that the converse of this holds good: 'Fortune makes a fool of him whom she too much favors.' Some unlucky Englishman is responsible for the saying: 'If my father had made me a hatter, men would have been born without heads,' but this can scarcely be called original, as an unfortunate Arab, ages ago, declared, 'If I were to trade in winding sheets, no one would die.' 'Misfortunes seldom come singly,' has many equivalents in all languages. The Spaniards say, 'Welcome, misfortune, if thou comest alone,' and 'Whither goest thou, misfortune? To where there is more?'

HE DID NOT FORGET HIS MANNERS

A lady was holding forth on the decadence of manners and courtesy from men to women. She ended by saying: 'The only time that I can remember during the last twenty years that a man has offered me his seat in a public conveyance was the other day, when I entered a tramcar capable of seating fifteen a side, and found it empty, except for a solitary man very drunk, who insisted on rising so that I could sit down, and continued to stand during the remainder of the journey, clinging to a strap.'

HOW A BOY MEASURED A TREE

He is not a boy in a book. He seldom says anything remarkable. He eats oatmeal in large quantities and tears his trousers and goes through the toes of his boots and loses his cap and slams the doors and chases the cat, just like any other boy. But he is remarkable, for he asks few questions and does much thinking. If he does not understand, he whistles—an excellent habit on most occasions.

There was much whistling in our yard one summer. It seemed to be an all-summer performance. Near the end of the season, however, our boy announced the height of our tall maple to be thirty-three feet.

'Why, how do you know?' was the general question.

'Measured it.'

'How?'

'Footrule and yardstick.'

'You didn't climb that tall tree?' his mother asked, anxiously.

'No'm; I just found the length of the shadow and measured that.'

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