

The Family Circle

THE TOOTHBRUSH SPEAKS

Look at me well, dear children;
I measure only a span,
But yet am a mighty giant,
Whose name is the Toothbrush Man.

I go to war with the dentist,
With only one little brush;
Though he has great big forceps,
That pull, and grind, and crush.

I flourish my little bristles,
And drive old toothache out,
With his swollen jaw, and old file and saw,
To make you shiver and shout.

The rude little boy who neglects me
May laugh, but his teeth will not;
And the vain little girl who forgets me
Will never forget she forgot.

—Daily Sketch.

JERRY'S COURAGE

Jerry Thomas was naturally timid. Everybody knew that. Thunder made him tremble and he couldn't help it. To him the terrific power of an electric storm was awe-inspiring and his own helplessness was so manifest that he felt a mere atom in a vast sea of power.

As he grew older he conquered his fear by forcing himself to argue in his own mind: 'God made the storm. He made it for a purpose and will direct it. I have nothing to fear.' But even that would not always prevent the unreasoning terror that would fill his heart. When a mad dog was reported to be lurking in the neighborhood he was afraid to go for the milk in the morning and he dreamed of the creature at night. He never liked to get near the locomotive at the station, and if an automobile whizzed too close to him on the road it made him feel strangely faint.

The boys at school called him 'Fraid Cat,' and more than once he had been tormented with dangling caterpillars and worms and mice, of which only girls are expected to be afraid.

'As afraid as Jerry Thomas,' was a common expression at school, and although it made him flush angrily sometimes, he never fought it out with his fists as some of the rest would have done. In his heart he felt—he hoped—that did a great peril menace anyone he loved he would prove himself equal to the emergency. Maybe he could, even if that somebody was a stranger!

Jerry had got to eleven years old and when the long summer vacation came he felt it no more than right he should help his mother, who was a widow and a seamstress. There was one thing no one had ever accused Jerry of and that was of being afraid to work. He could plod even if he were not brave in the face of terrifying experiences.

He would hoe in their little garden in the hot sun until his hands were blistered. He would get up in the cold, dark winter mornings and shovel walks, or run errands patiently all day while his schoolmates were shouting and playing on the athletic field past which he had to go.

After he got the job of driving the grocery waggon and delivering parcels, he had little time to wonder about anything, for he was busy all day long. The grocery horse was a steady old fellow. He would stand without hitching and never was known to shy at anything.

The last Saturday night the grocer had raised his pay a whole dollar a week, saying as he did so, 'I can get plenty of boys for four dollars a week, but I'm going to give you five because you haven't made a single mistake in delivering this week, and several people have

spoken about your promptness in getting their orders to them on time. It is these attentions to details that make a boy worth more, and so I am glad to give you extra pay!'

And Jerry's eyes glistened with happiness when he told his mother. He was thinking of it now as he drove down Elm street. Perhaps that was his talent. If he couldn't be brave, he could be faithful. That might make up a little for his timidity—cowardice, the boys called it.

Just below Elm street the railway suddenly emerges from between sloping banks and crosses Park street on its way to the station. Jerry always stood up and looked both ways before he crossed the track. The boys had poked fun at him several times when they saw him do it, but Jerry knew that should the horse be killed or the waggon injured, he never could replace it, and his mother would have an added burden.

This particular day Ned Brown, Tom Evans, and Rob Sanders had jumped into the back of the empty waggon as it passed the ball field. It was dinner time, and they could ride down town with Jerry as well as not.

As Jerry came to the railway crossing, his first impulse was to drive straight across the tracks so the boys should have no fault to poke fun at him, but in his heart he was afraid to do so.

He rose to his feet and looked up the cut. He paid no heed to the mocking cry from his passengers—'Fraid Cat Thomas. 'Fraid Thomas Cat. Meow!—Meow!'

Around the bend scarcely a dozen rods away was the oncoming engine of the 11 o'clock express—an hour late, and in the cut on the tracks the twin babies of young Mrs. Darrow, the married daughter of his employer.

Without a moment's hesitation he tossed the reins, calling to Bob Sanders as he leaped over the wheel to watch the horse.

With the speed of work-hardened muscles he darted up the cut, straight in the path of the great throbbing locomotive. Would he be in time? Already the great mass of moving steel and iron was making the ground beneath him tremble. The babies stood stock still, as if strangely fascinated. He was almost there. A moment more and he would make it! The train was almost upon them when, spent and gasping, in each hand he seized a little child and dragged them from the track just as the train thundered past. The engineer in his cab turned faint at the terrible narrowness of the escape.

The children's mother, suddenly missing her babies, and hurrying to find them, had come in sight of the whole scene too late to give any assistance.

In the terrible anxiety and the sudden relief over the rescue of her darlings she turned strangely dizzy and went down in a crumpled heap on the grass. It was thus Jerry found her when his strength, which somehow left him for a moment, came back, and he pulled the frightened twins up the bank.

By that time Ned and Tom and Rob were there, but it was Jerry who said authoritatively:

'Ned, take these kids home and stay with 'em till somebody comes. Tom, get that empty milk bottle in the waggon, fill it with water at the horses' trough, and bring it here. Bob, you loosen her collar while I rub her wrists.'

Then there was a crowd of people suddenly come from out of the everywhere and Jerry wondered why they were all making such a fuss over him and not over the babies' mother, who was now opening her eyes as Tom awkwardly poured water on her head and face.

When the medal for distinguished heroism in life-saving was received in Carterville and publicly presented to Jerry Thomas there were none who cheered more heartily than Ned, Tom, and Rob, and to the lasting credit of the whole school, through their principal, Professor Powers, they expressed their pride in the bravery of their companion who was not afraid to face death for his fellow-beings.

Jerry is away at the Business College now, having finished his course at Carterville. The grocer, whose little girl grandchildren he saved, has no son of his own,