

The Family Circle

LITTLE THINGS

A crumb will feed a tiny bird,
A thought prevent an angry word,
A seed brings forth full many a flower,
A drop of rain foretells a shower.

A straw the wild wind's course reveals,
A kind word oft an old grudge heals,
A beacon-light saves many a life,
A slight will often kindle strife.

A humble hand may alms bestow,
A godly life make heaven below,
A little child confounds the wise,
A lark sings nearest to the skies.

A sunbeam makes the earth rejoice,
A flower will teach, without a voice,
A brave man's arm will right the wrong,
A simple prayer will make us strong.

AN ADVENTURE WITH A LION

Sometimes man hunts the lion, and sometimes the lion hunts man. With few exceptions, the result of either hunt is death for hunted or hunter. The following adventure, related by a traveller who had the temerity to travel through a half-wild country on a bicycle, appears to be one of the exceptions:—

On a mellow moonlight evening a cyclist was riding along a lonely road in the northern part of Mashonaland. As he rode, enjoying the sombre beauty of the African evening, he suddenly became conscious of a soft, stealthy, heavy tread on the road behind him. It seemed like the jog-trot of some heavy, cushion-footed animal following him.

Turning round, he was scared very badly to find himself looking into the glaring eyes of a large lion. The puzzled animal acted very strangely, now raising his head, now lowering it, and all the time sniffing the air in a most perplexed manner.

Here was a surprise for the lion. He could not make out what kind of animal it was that could roll, walk, and sit still all at the same time; an animal with a red eye on each side and a brighter one in front. He hesitated to pounce upon such an outlandish being—a being whose blood smelled so oily.

Surely no cyclist, since the Romans invented wheels, ever 'scorched' with more honesty and single-mindedness of purpose. But although he pedalled and pedalled, although he perspired and panted, his effort to get away did not seem to place any more territory between him and the lion, for that animal, like Mark Twain's coyote, kept up his annoyingly calm jog-trot and never seemed to tire.

The poor rider was finally so exhausted from terror and exertion that he decided to have the matter over with right away. Suddenly slowing down, he jumped from his wheel and, facing abruptly about, thrust the brilliant headlight full into the face of the lion.

This was too much for the beast. It was this fright that broke the lion's nerve, for at this fresh evidence of mystery on the part of the strange rider-animal, who broke himself into halves and then cast his big eye in any direction he pleased, the monarch of the forest turned tail, and with a wild rush retreated in a very hyena-like manner into the jungle, evidently thanking his stars for his miraculous escape from that awful being. Thereupon the bicyclist, with new strength returning and devoutly blessing his acetylene lamp, proceeded on his way to civilisation.

SOME WELL-KNOWN QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Why does the owl come out at night? Why does the moth fly around the candle? Why must we always

develop photographs in a red light? Why does wood rot away? Why do telegraph lines hum?

The owl comes out only at night because the food on which the owl feeds is to be found during those hours. Mice and other small creatures are active during the night, and the owl, with its peculiar noiseless flight, due to its soft plumage, comes out and devours them.

The moth flies around the candle because the moth loves light and turns towards it; a baby would do the same thing if it were allowed. People follow the same instinct when they seek the sunny side of the street, and flowers when they turn toward the light. There are other creatures which just naturally seek darkness as the foolish moth does the candle.

Why have we to develop photographs in a red light? We know that white light is really a mixture of light of all sorts of colors—red, yellow, green, blue, and so on. Some of these lights of various colors have one kind of power and some another. Now the kind of light that has the power of causing chemical changes, which is the light we photograph by, is mainly violet light. We can see in a way by red light, but red light has practically no influence on photographic plates. We may say that photographic plates cannot see red light, and so we can use red light to develop them by without fearing that the photograph of our faces or the walls of the room will be printed on the plates.

It seems there are kinds of wood that will not rot away even though they are kept in water. The ancient city of Venice is actually built on wooden piles buried in the shallow sea, and these have lasted for many centuries already. This wood does not rot because the things that make wood rot cannot attack it. Sometimes wood is soaked with creosote, and the particular property of creosote which makes it so valuable is that it is poisonous to microbes. Wood will not rot if it is charged with something that kills microbes, or if it is made of stuff so hard and tough that even microbes cannot digest it; or if, as in the case of Venice, it is good wood, and also protected from microbes by being kept in salt water.

Why do the telegraph lines hum?

Anything that is stretched is apt to be thrown into vibration by the force of the air blowing against it. If it vibrates so fast as to produce the air waves that our ears can hear, then that is what we call sound. This is what happens to the telegraph wires when they hum; and if we put our hand on the telegraph pole we shall feel that the wires vibrate strongly enough to set the whole pole trembling too. But when the air is quite still the telegraph wires do not hum.

HAD TO FOLLOW

One day a young Maori from the back country dropped in at a country livery stable and said he needed a job. He looked promising, so he was set at work greasing the axles of a buggy.

In a remarkably short space of time he reported the task finished.

'Look here,' said his new boss, 'do you mean to say you've greased all four of them wheels already?'

'Well,' rejoined the new man, 'I've greased the two front ones.'

'And why haven't you greased the two hind ones?'

'Well,' said the new man again, 'so long's the two front ones goes all right, the two hind ones will have to follow.'

PROVING THAT SORROWS ARE RELATIVE

A good lady, who always has an eye and ear for childish troubles, stopped one day on her way to a luncheon, because she saw a stout little boy who was standing near the kerb and crying loudly. She undertook to comfort the distressed youngster.

She bent down, patted the tow-colored head, gazed into the tear-stained face, and made as if to wipe away the traces of grief.

'Why, what is the matter, my dear child?' asked she, solicitously.