

The Family Circle

THE REAR GUARD

He strolls in to Mass at the 'Sanctus,'
Or maybe a moment before;
And, lest he should bother his neighbors,
He drops on one knee at the door.

Good seats near the altar are vacant,
In fact there is room and to spare;
But why should he push himself forward?
He'd be so conspicuous there!

He doesn't look up at the altar,
But keeps his gaze bent on the floor;
We notice him yawning a little,
As though it all were a bore.

He squats for the last Benediction,
And then, ere the service is through,
We look for him there in the background
And find he has melted from view.

So strange! Now we thought we saw him
Last night at the vaudeville show;
It seemed to us then he was fighting
To get in the very front row.

He must have been there before seven—
Oh, surely some minutes before;
He headed the line that was waiting
Outside of the gallery door.

And when the door opened, good gracious!
How active he was in the race
Upstairs, and then over the benches
And down to the very front place.

My! how he applauded the singing,
And laughed at the jokes that were cracked—
His eyes never left the footlights,
Transfixed till the very last act.

This can't be the same man this morning,
The slowest and dullest of chaps;
We must have seen some other fellow
Last evening—his brother, perhaps.

'Catholic Standard and Times.'

JEAN PIERRE'S GOOD FORTUNE

The day was warm and the sermon long; yet such was the eloquence of the preacher that the large congregation which filled the church of St. Thomas gave no sign of impatience or fatigue. One stout old gentleman, however, was a solitary exception. Seated in a distant corner, the words of the text had, indeed, reached his ear; but his attention had wandered from the pulpit to the red and blue dots which danced in through the stained windows, thence to the motley crowd which surrounded him, and lastly to a small urchin who stood leaning against one of the pillars.

This boy was the picture of poverty, from the crown of his rimless hat to his hobnailed boots—boots which would have fitted one twice his size. But the crowning feature of his attire was his coat, which was one mass of patches, each of a different hue; and the onlooker fell to wondering whether anything of the original material yet remained. The lad himself, seemed totally unconscious of the oddity of his appearance, and stood listening to the sermon with such rapt attention that the stout old gentleman felt tacitly rebuked, and finally made an earnest effort to catch the purport of the preacher's words.

The sermon, however, was drawing to its close; and a few minutes later the congregation had broken up and was streaming out of church, the stout old gentleman himself being caught up in the vortex and deposited outside, in the Rue de Bac. As he started, walking briskly toward the Seine, he again caught sight of the strange little figure which had attracted his notice in church. To his surprise, he saw the ragged urchin stop before a beggar and drop a penny into his hat. The next minute the boy had sped onward, until, meeting a second beggar, he again drew a copper from his pocket. This time the gentleman was unable to restrain his curiosity.

'Look here, youngster! What is your name?'

'Jean Pierre, monsieur.'

'Well, Jean Pierre, you don't look overburdened with this world's goods, yet here you are throwing away your money right and left.'

The urchin thus addressed hesitated only a second. The Paris street boy is not shy, and the old gentleman did not look so very formidable.

'You see, Monsieur, this is how it is. I want a new coat very badly, and mother can't afford to buy me one; and the preacher told us just now that what we gave to the poor God would return to us many times over; so I thought that for my two pennies God would perhaps give me a coat. They were my two pennies, Monsieur; I earned them this morning by carrying a lady's parcel.'

The old gentleman had stood an amused and interested listener to this quaint explanation. As he met the boy's artless gaze his face softened.

'You will get your coat, youngster, never fear; and to lose no time, we will go and choose one this very minute. Come along!'

And this oddly assorted couple set off down the street, peering eagerly into every shop that seemed likely to contain the coveted article.

Half an hour later a casual passer-by might have seen a delighted urchin tearing down the street with a large brown paper parcel under his arm; while a stout gentleman stood gazing after him, with a smile on his face and a warm feeling at his heart, such as he had not known for many a long day.

Jean Pierre's good fortune did not end here; for some weeks later, through the old gentleman's interest, he obtained a situation as errand boy in a large warehouse. Great was his delight when for the first time he saw himself decked out in his dark blue livery, with his shining brass buttons. His first thought was for his kind patron; and emboldened by the splendor of his attire, he marched straight up to the great house and pulled the bell. His delight was further increased when the old gentleman failed to recognise him at first, then thumped him on the back, vowing he had never seen such a change—never!—and admired him to his heart's content.

'Live up to your buttons, my boy! Keep straight, please your employers, and you will get on in life.'

The old gentleman's parting admonition became a true prophecy; for several years later Jean Pierre rose to be manager of the very same warehouse he had entered as an errand boy.—Ave Maria.

ENTERTAINING HIS HOSTS

An English woman of decidedly snobbish instincts, but socially entrenched behind great, and new, riches, once engaged the late Corney Grain to give an entertainment at her country house. She left instructions that the entertainer, when he arrived, was to dine with the servants. The butler, who knew better, apologized, but Corney was a man not easily disconcerted, says Jerome K. Jerome in a recent sketch. He dined well, and after dinner rose and addressed the assembled company:

'Well, now, my good friends,' said he, 'if we have all finished, and if you are all agreeable, I shall be pleased to present to you my little show.'

The servants cheered. The piano was dispensed with, and Corney contrived to amuse his audience very well for half an hour without it.

At 10 o'clock came down a message. Would Mr. Corney Grain kindly come up into the drawing room? Corney went. The company in the drawing room were waiting, seated.

'We are quite ready, Mr. Grain,' remarked the hostess.

'Ready for what?' demanded Corney, courteously.

'For your entertainment,' answered the hostess.

'But I've given it already,' explained Corney, 'and my engagement was for one performance only.'

'Given it? Where? When?'

'An hour ago, down-stairs.'

'But this is nonsense!' exclaimed the hostess.

'It seemed to me somewhat extraordinary,' Corney replied, 'but it has always been my privilege to dine with the company. I am asked to entertain. I took it you had arranged a little treat for the servants.'

DOTTIE TALKS TO HER DOLLS

Now listen to your mamma, dollies, and I'll tell you a few good rules to observe, so that you will grow up good and useful members of 'ciety.