

The Family Circle

A LAUGH

A laugh is just like sunshine,
It freshens all the day,
It tips the peak of life with light,
And drives the clouds away;
The soul grows glad that hears it,
And feels its courage strong—
A laugh is just like sunshine
For cheery folk along.

A laugh is just like music,
It lingers in the heart,
And where its melody is heard
The ills of life depart;
And the happy thoughts come crowding,
Its joyful notes to greet—
A laugh is just like music
For making living sweet!

TWO PET CROWS

That birds are capable of exercising the faculty of memory, even if they are not able to reason, is shown by the actions of two crows away out in San Francisco. A grocer doing business on Mission street in San Francisco had two large and handsome crows. He caused a large cage to be fitted up for these feathered pets in one of his front show windows; in fact, the crow home occupied most of the space of the large window, so that they had abundant wing room to flit hither and thither at will.

These birds had been obtained by the grocer when they were very young—mere fledglings—and he had raised them. They were mates, male and female, and responded to the names of Jack and Jill. They were unusually ebony-hued, and their plumage was very glossy. At all hours of the day a crowd, especially of women and children, was gathered in front of the show window watching these jolly birds.

As the grocer always fed the pets and cared for them, they grew very fond of him. He often turned them loose in the store, when they would fly about, perching on his shoulders and head, cawing joyfully all the time. In other ways the crows showed their affection for their owner.

At the time of the earthquake and great fire the windows were smashed by the shock, and the birds made their escape. They were terror-stricken, flying wildly about. Of course, the grocer was too much engrossed with his own losses and troubles to pay any heed whatever to his winged pets. Later the awful fire swept over the place, destroying everything.

The birds disappeared, and the grocer very naturally supposed they had perished in the flames. Days, weeks, and months passed, and finally the grocer ceased to think about his lost birds. In the meantime he had built a temporary wooden building on the old site, and resumed his former business. However, he occasionally thought of his old pets, and lamented their fate.

Late one evening, while the grocer sat working at his desk, judge of his great surprise, and no less joy, when in flew the two crows just as if they had fallen suddenly from the skies! Both birds sailed into the room, made several circles, cawing cheerily, and finally perched one on each shoulder of their old master. They joyously flapped their wings, and seemed perfectly delighted to be again at home. They were in excellent condition, plump, and their plumage sleek and glossy, as in the old days.

When the grocer figured up the time, he found that the birds had been absent about sixteen months. How they had escaped from the burning city, where they had been all the time, and why they had suddenly concluded to return are mysteries in the bird world. Probably they had flown to the mountains and forests and joined other wild crows. Evidently they had grown 'homesick,' and, like the cat, 'came back'; but they had no difficulty in locating their old quarters.

The grocer has fitted up his show window and duly installed Jack and Jill, to their great delight. The grocer has jocularly labelled the big cage and its occupants 'Fire.' Larger crowds than ever now throng outside the window to read the sign and watch the happy pair.

THE VIRTUE OF CHEERFULNESS

No matter what else you may accomplish in life, or however rich you may become, if you do not keep sweet, if you allow yourself to sour, to become a pessimist, your life will be unproductive and you will be a comparative failure. Resolve that whatever comes, or does not come to you, whether you succeed in your particular undertaking or fail, whether you make money or lose it, you will keep sweet, cheerful, hopeful, helpful, optimistic. Every day we see pessimistic, doleful people going through the world—people who have ruined their capacity for enjoyment because they allowed their losses, their sorrows, their fears, their failures, to take all the sweetness out of their lives. It does not matter so very much, after all, whether you make a fortune or not; but it does matter very much whether you keep sweet, have a clean record and live a balanced life. Some of the greatest men and women in all history were total failures as money-makers, but they were notable successes in nobility and balance of character, cleanliness of life, mental poise, stability of purpose, and sweet of disposition.

EXAGGERATED DUTY

The Japanese make much of the duty of children to parents. In some of their popular stories they exaggerate the wholesome virtue until it becomes absurd. There is a group of such tales called 'The Four-and-Twenty Paragons of Filial Piety,' some of which Mr. Basil Hall Chamberlain collects in 'Things Japanese.'

One is the story of the paragon whose cruel stepmother was very fond of fish. In spite of her harsh treatment, he lay naked on a frozen lake until his body melted a hole in the ice. He caught two fish that came up to breathe, and set them before his stepmother. Another paragon lay uncovered at night in order that the mosquitoes should fasten on him alone and allow his parents to slumber undisturbed.

Still another, who was extremely poor, determined to sacrifice his own child in order to save food to support his aged mother. He was rewarded by heaven with the discovery of a vessel filled with gold, on which the whole family lived happily ever after. A fourth gave her father a chance to escape while she clung to the jaws of the tiger which was about to devour him.

The drollest story of all is of Rovaishi. This paragon, although seventy years old, used to dress in baby's clothes and sprawl about the floor. His object was piously to delude his parents, who were more than ninety years of age, into the idea that they could not be very old, after all, seeing that they had an infant son.

A SWEET VOICE

'O, father, I wish I could sing! It's so nice to give pleasure to people. Florence sang at the club to-day, and we all enjoyed it so much. She sings every night to her father, too. I'd give anything if I could, but there's no use wishing; there isn't any music in me.'

'Is that so?' asked her father, taking her wistful face between his hands. 'Well, perhaps you can't sing; but don't tell me your voice has no music in it. To me it's full of music.'

'Why, father, how can you say so?'

'Almost every evening,' answered the father, 'when I come home the first thing I hear is a merry laugh, and it rests me, no matter how tired I am. Yesterday I heard that voice say: "Don't cry, Buddie; sister will mend it for you." Sometimes I hear it reading to grandmother. Last week I heard it telling Mary, "I'm sorry your head aches; I'll do the dishes to-night."'

'That is the kind of music I like best. Don't tell me my little daughter hasn't a sweet voice!'

A PAINFUL POSSIBILITY

When the teacher called the class for geography she noticed that Eben Wilkins, her dullest pupil, wore a particularly cheerful smile.

'You look as if you knew your lesson to-day,' she said encouragingly.

'Yes'm, I do,' he answered, briskly. 'The answer to the first question is "north," and the next is "Alaska," and the next is "United States," and the next is—'

'But that is not the way to learn your lesson, Eben,' and the teacher struggled for a properly severe expression. 'You must skip about. That is what I shall do in asking the questions.'