

# The Family Circle

## HOW TO FORGET

If you were busy being kind,  
Before you knew it, you would find  
You'd soon forget to think 'twas true  
That some one was unkind to you.

If you were busy being glad,  
And cheering people who are sad,  
Although your heart might ache a bit,  
You'd soon forget to notice it.

If you were busy being good,  
And doing just the best you could,  
You'd not have time to blame some man,  
Who's doing just the best he can.

If you were busy being true  
To what you know you ought to do,  
You'd be so busy you'd forget  
The blunders of the folks you've met.

If you were busy being right,  
You'd find yourself too busy quite  
To criticise your neighbor long,  
Because he's busy being wrong.

## THE KINGS' CAKE

In former times it was customary, on the Feast of the Epiphany, to bake a rich cake, which was called the Cake of the Three Kings. On these occasions the family would assemble around the board; and the father, after cutting the cake into as many pieces as there were persons present, would set aside what was called 'God's portion,' to be given to the poor. The youngest child had the privilege of designating the member of the company who should hold the title of King of the Feast. The King would then choose a Queen, and the rest of the evening would be passed in pleasant games, singing, and story-telling. Apropos of this ancient custom, the following story is related.

The Feast of the Three Kings was being celebrated in a humble cottage in England. The snow fell like a thick white cloud over the valley; the wind blew fiercely, driving it into the hollows. In every cottage a portion had been put aside for the homeless, hungry ones roaming that bitter night from house to house in search of anything reserved for the poor.

In the cottage of which we have spoken, the home of Olgard, the sheep-herder, his daughter Editha was preparing the evening meal. When all was ready, Olgard seated herself at the head of the table, cut the cake, and put aside 'God's portion' for the first one who should ask for it.

Just as they began the repast, some one knocked at the door.

'Who is there?' inquired Olgard.

Kind-hearted Editha, without waiting for a reply, had already arisen at the first knock; and in a moment returned, leading by the hand a man covered with snow and trembling with cold.

The master rose and welcomed him.

'It is a bitter night, my friend,' he said. 'We thank the good God who has sent you to us for food and shelter! Yonder by the huge fire of logs you can warm yourself. Then you shall share our evening meal; a slice of the King's Cake is ready for you.'

'Thank you, friend; and may Jesus and Mary reward you!' murmured the visitor, in a low, musical voice.

After warming his numbed limbs at the friendly blaze, the stranger advanced to the table, taking his seat a little apart, at the foot, where a small bench had been placed for him.

Suddenly some one exclaimed:

'But who shall be King?'

'Dunstan,' said the shepherd, addressing his youngest boy, 'whom do you choose?'

The child glanced around the group of relatives and herdsman; then he pointed shyly to the stranger.

'Yes, yes, now you are King!' cried the family in chorus.

'Poor King!' said Editha compassionately. 'I am glad for you. Will you not give us a share in your good fortune?' she added playfully, wishing to put the mendicant at his ease.

'I will gladly give you a share of my kingdom,' replied the visitor, with a grave smile. 'You shall be my Queen!'

'How good of you!' answered Editha. 'My King, it behoves me, then, to attend to your needs. Your clothes are in tatters; I shall have to renew them.'

Rising from the table, she left the room, to which she presently returned, her arms full of clothing.

'Here, sire,' she said, with a charming smile—'here is a warm cloak, which will shield you from the cold and the snow. Your doublet is worn out; I have brought you another. Take them, my King! I give them to you with all my heart.'

The mendicant looked at her gratefully, unable to speak. But he bowed his head low, while large tears glistened in his fine eyes.

In his secret soul, Olgard was not entirely pleased at his daughter's generosity; but she looked so beautiful and radiant that he could not bring himself to check her.

The evening passed very pleasantly. The longer the stranger sat with them, the more his companions realised that he had not always been a beggar, but had probably fallen, through no fault of his own, from some higher estate than that in which he was now being entertained. When he would have departed, after the feast was over, the sheep-herder said:

'Nay! nay! Rest here by the fire, my good man. I will throw a couple of skins on the floor—one for thee to lie upon, and one to cover thee.'

'I thank thee, friend!' rejoined the mendicant. 'Otherwise, I might have perished in the storm.'

But when he looked around to thank his fair young hostess also, she had stolen away.

Although the family of the shepherd were up by candlelight next morning, the stranger had departed. But their wonder at his silent disappearance was soon merged into excitement by learning, through trusty runners, that Alfred, their King, had been surrounded and defeated in Sherwood Forest by his enemies, the Danes; and had fled in disguise, no one knew whither. The disastrous news was for a few days the sole topic of conversation throughout the country, till it was succeeded by information that the King, in the guise of a harper, had penetrated the camp of the Danes, which he had reconnoitered so satisfactorily that, having once more gathered his followers about him, he had fought a decisive battle, thoroughly routing his enemies. The news was true, and peace again reigned in the kingdom.

Then one day two fine equipages halted in front of Olgard's cottage. A handsome man, splendidly attired, descended from one of them, followed by an equerry, and accosted Editha as follows:

'Do you remember these, O kind and generous maiden?—at the same time pointing to some garments: the aide-de-camp who accompanied him held in his arms.

'Yes, I remember them,' said Editha.

'And me—do you still remember me?'

'Ah, yes!' once more answered the young girl. 'I have never forgotten you.'

As she spoke her voice trembled, her cheek flushed, and her eyes fell before the kindly gaze of the gallant stranger.

'Editha,' he continued, taking her hand, 'once you crowned me King—crowned me with the gold of your sympathy, the jewelled tears of your generosity and kindness. And on that memorable night, in the spirit of the feast, I chose you for my Queen. But it was not in jest that I did so. Fairest and best of all