

# The Family Circle

## THE CAT EXPLAINS

You ask the reason, little friends,  
Why cats don't wash their faces,  
Before they eat, as children do,  
In all good Christian places.

Well, years ago, a famous cat,  
The pangs of hunger feeling,  
Had chanced to catch a fine young mouse,  
Who said, as he ceased squealing:

All genteel folks their faces wash  
Before they think of eating!  
And, wishing to be thought well-bred,  
Puss heeded his entreating.

But when she raised her paw to wash,  
Chance for escape affording,  
The sly young mouse then said good-bye,  
Without respect to wording.

A feline council met that day,  
And passed, in solemn meeting,  
A law forbidding any cat  
To wash till after eating.

—Our Dumb Animals.

## WHEN ESTHER PAID HER FARE

Esther Harley looked in her pocket-book with a deep sigh.

'Only a few nickels left,' she said, 'and not the least sign of a situation yet. I would walk home, but it is already growing dark, and mother would worry about me.'

She signalled the car that came pounding along the street. It was an open car, already nearly full. There was one vacant seat near the forward part of the car. As Esther took her seat she realised for the first time how tired she was. She had gone from office to office in the city all day long, but no one had need of an expert stenographer. Business was dull, they told her, and stenographers were being discharged instead of sought for. What would be the outcome? She must find a situation very soon, or her last money would be spent, and her mother—dear mother, so sweet and so weak and so frail—how could she bear to think of poverty and suffering coming to her mother?

Clang! clang! clang! rang the gong as the conductor registered the fares. Esther looked up suddenly. The conductor had passed her seat and was already near the rear of the car.

'My, but you did that neat!' said the girl who sat next to Esther. Her voice was loud and harsh, and her hat and dress matched it.

'Never moved a muscle of your face when the conductor said "Fares, please." He gave you a queer look, but you were as innocent as a baby, and he went along.'

'But I didn't mean—' began Esther quickly. 'The old company got beat for once,' growled a burly man who sat on the other side of Esther; 'they would grind us all to powder if they could.'

Esther made no reply. She looked up and came suddenly in contact with a pair of keen eyes of a middle-aged man who sat at the end of the seat behind her. If she signalled to the conductor, he would stop the car, and there would be awkward explanations.

Then she began to think upon the matter, and the little invisible tempters that are always hovering around came out of their hiding-places and merrily joined in the conflict. 'Keep the nickel,' they argued. 'It's the conductor's business to collect fares. If he has missed one, you are not to blame.' Then suddenly a great revulsion of shame swept over her, and Esther's thoughts were with her mother—her mother, who would rather bear any privation than have her daughter touched by the slightest suspicion of deception or dishonor.

'Carson, Carson!' shouted the conductor. Esther lifted her hand, and the conductor rang the bell for the stop at Carson street. The car slowed down. Esther was already on the running board, and the moment the car stopped she stepped off and ran toward the conductor, who stood on the rear platform. She held up the nickel in her hand, and said with a smile:

'You didn't get my fare.'  
'Thank you, miss,' said the conductor heartily. For some reason he seemed very glad to get that nickel, as if his faith in the integrity of human nature had been revived a bit.

'Little fool!' exclaimed the girl on the forward seat. Esther had left.

'She'll learn better in time,' growled the big man. But the man with the keen grey eyes leaned forward into the shadows and tried to get a glimpse of Esther's face as she passed beneath the electric light.

Down Carson street Esther walked slowly and turned into Carson place. It was on the outskirts of the city, almost like a country lane, and at the end of it was a tiny cottage, with some vines growing over the porch.

She paused a moment in the doorway, and then entered the room where her mother was at work preparing their supper. Not a trace of her weariness or despondency remained.

'No, mother, not to-day,' she said cheerfully, in response to Mrs. Harley's anxious question. 'But to-morrow certainly Esther Harley, expert stenographer, will find plenty of office doors open and business men just waiting for her to come in.'

But she was far from feeling so confident when she started out on her daily quest the next morning. One, two, three, four times she applied, but no stenographers were needed. The elevator seemed stifling as she came down to the street from the topmost storey of a lofty office building. Even the dusty street looked refreshing. She looked up to catch a glimpse of the narrow stretch of blue sky above her, and as her gaze followed along the walls of a tall building, she read the sign:

### 'THE LUCIAN OVERMAN CO.'

Could she—would she dare to make an application at that great corporation?

'I'll try it,' decided Esther; 'it will be no worse to fail there than at these other places.'

And very little time it took to decide the matter. The outer office of the Lucian Overman Company was in charge of an alert young woman, who replied to Esther's question:

'Yes, we have need of one or two stenographers, but there are a dozen applications already filed. Mr. Overman is very particular. If you are in a hurry for a place, you better not wait.'

'In a hurry!' thought Esther sadly, turning to go out.

The door of the inner office was open, so that the man sitting at the desk there could see into the other room.

'Miss Ryder, pass those papers in here.'

He stopped suddenly. 'Walter,' he said to the office boy, 'speak to that girl who is just going out.'

'Excuse me, miss,' said a voice at Esther's side just as she was stepping into the elevator, 'but will you come back into the office for a moment?'

Wonderingly Esther followed the boy back past the alert young woman into the inner office. A middle-aged man with grey eyes sat at the desk.

'This is—?' he hesitated.

'Esther Harley.'

'You were on the Harmon Hill car last evening?'

'Yes, sir,' answered Esther.

'And got off at Carson street?'

'Yes, sir.'

'And—the grey eyes twinkled a little here—' went back and paid the fare which the conductor failed to collect?'

'I did, sir,' said Esther, with a touch of dignity, while her cheeks suddenly flushed. Was he going to make fun of her, too?

'And you are looking for a situation as a stenographer?' he continued.

'I have been trying my best for several weeks.'

'Can you take dictations at the machine?'

'I have done it quite a good deal.'

'Sit down there at that typewriter and I will dictate a letter to you.'

Esther took her seat before the machine, and the other began:

'Miss Esther Harley.'

Esther looked up in surprise, but he went on quietly: 'My dear Miss Harley,—I take this method of informing you that I have decided to take you into my employment, at least temporarily. The reason that I give you this opportunity is that I witnessed an act of yours last evening which showed me that you have a keen sense of the requirements of strict honesty in little things even in dealing with a great corporation. In my experience with applications I have often found a painful lack of such sensitiveness to right and wrong. Your work will begin to-morrow morning at eight o'clock, and if you prove efficient as a stenographer, your position will be permanent.'

'Very sincerely yours,  
'Lucian Overman.'

'Oh, Mr. Overman,' began Esther impulsively, 'how can I thank you?'

'Let me see the sheet you have just written,' said Mr. Overman quietly.

Esther handed it to him.

'Not a misspelled word,' he said, after looking it over carefully. 'I am hopeful that you will succeed, Miss Harley. I shall be glad to see you to-morrow morning.'

And as Esther stood waiting on the curb, even the clanging gongs of the street cars seemed by some miracle to have become sweetly musical.

## CHEERFULNESS

Cheerfulness can become a habit, and a habit sometimes helps us over rough places. 'A cheerful heart seeth cheerful things.' A lady and gentleman were in a timber yard situated by a dirty, foul-smelling river. The lady said: 'How good the pine boards smell!' 'Pine boards!' exclaimed the gentleman, 'just smell this foul river!'