

The Family Circle

WHEN MA'S AWAY

It's awful lonesome when she's gone—
It doesn't seem the same
As home, you'd know the place as well
By any other name;
The clock ticks so much louder then—
We don't have much to say;
It's awful lonesome at our house
When ma's away!

It's awful lonesome—why, the cat,
It never comes around;
And as for Towser, our old dog,
He never can be found.
I s'pose they miss her 'most as much
As ever we do—say,
It's awful lonesome at our house
When ma's away!

It's awful lonesome round the house
Nights! O, how the wind moans!
It makes me and Ned skeery-like
Clear 'way down to our bones!
But pap, he sleeps and snores, so he
Ain't lonesome then! but, say,
Us boys, somehow, we can't sleep nights
When ma's away!

It's awful lonesome when she's gone!
We always know, though, yes,
She's coming back again, and so
We bear the lonesomeness;
But if some day she shouldn't come,
If God should keep her—say!
Could we, then, bear the lonesomeness
With ma away?

THE TESTING OF MARGARET

Apparently Margaret Sunderland possessed everything that goes to make life exceedingly happy: good looks, a sweet disposition, a beautiful home, and a large circle of friends all contributed in making her life most enjoyable; yet her friends were often puzzled by the careworn and sad expression which was frequently seen on her face. But the solution was very simple.

Margaret's mother died when she was a child, and about five years before our story opens her father had married again. Margaret's step-mother was a Protestant, while Margaret was a Catholic, and although the two were the most agreeable and closest companions, they patterned their lives after very different ideals. Mrs. Sunderland was a worldly-minded society woman, and at the present time her chief ambition was to find a wealthy and suitable husband for her pretty step-daughter, a match that would bring the 'Sunderland' name into prominence in the society columns of the newspapers.

One afternoon Margaret was in the library reading, when Mrs. Sunderland came hurriedly in, excitement and delight plainly visible in her face.

'Margaret,' she said, 'I've just been talking to Mrs. Ashton. She has invited us to a dinner party on Friday night, which she is giving in honor of that delightful Mr. Phillips, the author about whom we have heard so much. She is especially anxious that you meet him; he is a young bachelor, and is reported to be immensely wealthy.'

'If he is the Mr. Phillips who wrote "Adventures in Spain," I should like to meet him,' said Margaret, carelessly.

'And, by the way, Margaret,' said Mrs. Sunderland, moving toward the door, 'Mrs. Ashton says his ancestors came over in the Mayflower, and his father was a Methodist minister, so, for "Phillips' sake," don't mention you're a Catholic, that's a dear girl! I'm so anxious to have you make a favorable impression!'

'Very well, I will remember,' said Margaret quietly.

Friday evening Margaret paid particular attention to her toilet, for she felt a curious desire to meet this author, concerning whom she had heard so many interesting things.

Most of the guests had arrived when Mrs. Sunderland and she reached the Ashtons' home, and in a few minutes Mrs. Ashton was introducing a tall, handsome young man to Margaret, and saying laughingly, 'Mr. Phillips, you are to take Miss Sunderland in to dinner, and Margaret, I want you to prove to Mr. Phillips that American girls are twice as nice as the Spanish "senoritas" he thinks are so charming.'

In a few minutes Margaret was chatting with Mr. Phillips as if they were old friends. He was in the midst of an interesting account of one of his journeys through Italy when the signal was given to march to the dining-room.

Dinner was being served, and Margaret was just preparing to enjoy some delicious looking turkey, when a remark from across the table arrested her attention.

'Oh, no,' the person across the table was saying, 'I never thought of to-day being Friday, the thirteenth, or I would have cancelled the engagement!'

Margaret's heart gave a bound; to-day was Friday, and she was just about to eat meat. She was quietly contenting herself with bread and salad, when Mr. Phillips' quick eyes detected that she was eating scarcely anything.

'Miss Sunderland,' he exclaimed in his clear, pleasant voice, which could be easily heard the entire length of the table, 'you have not touched your meat! Don't you like turkey?'

'Why, Margaret,' said Mrs. Ashton, in a surprised tone, 'I thought you were very fond of turkey! What is the trouble with it?'

Poor Margaret, with the eyes of everyone centred upon her, felt the blood surging up into her face in great hot waves. For one minute she felt tempted to make some trivial excuse; then, despising her weakness, she answered quietly, 'Nothing is the matter, Mrs. Ashton, but I am a Catholic, and do not eat meat on Friday.'

An embarrassed silence followed her reply, and then everyone resumed the conversation without further comment. But Margaret, sitting there with burning cheeks, could feel the frowning disapproval on her step-mother's face, and the absolute silence of Mr. Phillips, while strangely enough this thought kept running through her mind: 'His ancestors came over in the Mayflower.'

Finally the dinner came to an end, and for the rest of the evening Margaret did not once have an opportunity of speaking to Mr. Phillips. Keenly sensitive, she imagined that he purposely avoided her.

'I never dreamed that a man could be so narrow-minded,' she mused, bitterly grieved; 'he has avoided me since the moment I said I was a Catholic!' And pleading a headache, she made her excuse to the hostess and stole quietly away, hoping no one would miss her. But as she descended the stairs from the cloakroom, she saw Mr. Phillips standing at the bottom waiting for her.

'Miss Sunderland,' he said gravely, 'I deeply regret that my stupidity should have caused you any embarrassment this evening; yet I cannot refrain from telling you what edification you gave me. For a long time I have admired and studied the Catholic religion, and I am coming to the final conviction that it is the one true faith. To-night you have strengthened that conviction. May I be permitted to call on you to-morrow? I look forward to a long talk.'

And Margaret, with a happy smile on her face, held out her hand to him, and said frankly, 'I will be delighted to have you come!'

A GENTLE TONGUE

Charity of speech is as divine a thing as charity of action. To judge no one harshly, to misconceive no man's motives, to believe things are as they seem to be until they are proved otherwise, to temper judgment with mercy—surely this is quite as good as to build up churches, establish asylums, and found colleges. Unkind words do as much harm as unkind deeds. Many a heart has been stabbed to death by a few little words. There is a charity which consists in withholding words, in keeping back harsh judgments, in abstaining from speech, if to speak is to condemn. Such charity hears the tale of slander, but does not repeat it; listens in silence, but forbears comment; then locks the unpleasant secret up in the very depths of the heart. Silence can still rumor. It is speech that keeps a story alive and lends it vigor.

ONLY THE COMMON GARDEN VARIETY

After he had waited outside for ten long minutes, the door was opened on the chain, and a woman's face appeared at the aperture.

'Good-morning, madam,' began the street hawker in his suavest tones. 'I have here a little article of universal utility. It is called the Marvellous Mice Exterminator, and the price—'

'No use,' interrupted the woman, firmly. 'We have no marvellous mice in this house—only the ordinary kind.'

Then the door was shut, and the hawker was once more alone.

A DIPLOMATIST

James's wife had a rather hard time, as a rule, to coax money out of him for new clothes, although he always wanted to see her well groomed. She wanted a new dress, and she wanted it badly, so she resorted to diplomacy. At breakfast she said:

'James, I have decided to do without a new dress, and with the money it would cost I shall have mother here for a nice long visit.'

James turned on her excitedly. 'What—wear that old brown thing another season? I guess not!' he exclaimed vehemently. 'You go right down to your tailor's to-day and order something handsome. Remember, please, that as my wife you have a certain position to maintain!'

The wife bowed her head in submission. On her lips played a peculiar smile.

CURRAN'S ADVICE

A farmer attending a fair, with a hundred pounds in his pocket, took the precaution of depositing it in the hands of the landlord of the publichouse at which he stayed.