

The Family Circle

THE MOTHERS' STRIKE

Such a dream I had! So dreadful!
That I never heard the like;
For I dreamt that on a sudden
The mammas agreed to strike.

'We are tired,' I heard them murmur,
'Tired of working night and day,
And not always hearing, "Thank you!"
Such long hours and such poor pay!'

So they would not mend the jackets,
Nor the holes in stockings small,
No one ran to kiss the bruises
When poor Tommy got a fall.

No one bound up wounded fingers,
No one glued the broken toys,
No one answered all the questions
Of the eager little boys.

No one tied the little bonnets,
No one brushed the little curls,
No one basted dolly dresses
For the busy little girls.

No one heard their little troubles,
No one held them on her lap,
No one sewed on truant's buttons,
No one hunted Johnny's cap.

And there were no bed-time stories,
And no loving hands to tuck
Blankets soft round little sleepers;
For their mothers all had struck.

O, so lonesome and so dreadful
And so queer it all did seem!
Aren't you glad, dear little children,
It was nothing but a dream.

ANOTHER STORY

There was once a family of little larks who lived with their mother in a nest in a cornfield. When the corn was ripe the mother lark watched very carefully to see if there were any signs of the reapers coming, for she knew that when they came their sharp knives would cut down the nest and hurt the baby larks. So every day, when she went out for food, she told the little larks to look and listen very closely to everything that went on, and to tell her all they saw and heard when she came home.

One day when she came home the little larks were much frightened.

'Oh, mother, dear mother,' they said, 'you must move us away to-night! The farmer was in the field to-day, and he said, "The corn is ready to cut; we must call in the neighbors to help." And then he told his son to go out to-night and ask all the neighbors to come and reap the corn to-morrow.'

The mother lark laughed. 'Don't be frightened,' she said; 'if he waits for his neighbors to reap the corn we shall have plenty of time to move; tell me what he says to-morrow.'

The next night the little larks were quite trembling with fear. The moment their mother got home they cried out: 'Mother, you must surely move us to-night! The farmer came to-day and said: "The corn is getting too ripe; we cannot wait for our neighbors; we must ask our relatives to help us." And then he called his son and told him to ask all the uncles and cousins to come to-morrow and cut the corn. Shall we not move to-night?'

'Don't worry,' said the mother lark. 'The uncles and cousins have plenty of reaping of their own to do; we'll not move yet.'

The third night when the mother lark came home the baby larks said: 'Mother, dear, the farmer came

to the field to-day, and when he looked at the corn he was angry; he said: "This will never do! The corn is getting too ripe; it's no use waiting for our relatives, we shall have to cut this corn ourselves." And then he called his son and said, "Go out to-night and hire reapers, and to-morrow we will begin to cut."'

'Well,' said the mother lark, 'that is another story. When a man begins to do his own business, instead of asking some one else to do it, things get done. I will move you out to-night.'

AT CLOSE QUARTERS

The experience of the sailors who went out to capture a whale and found a tiger seemed funny enough to themselves when they discussed it afterward, although there was nothing amusing in their situation at the time, save the unexpectedness. Two days had been spent watering ship at a spring on the banks of the New River, which is a day's sail from Anjer, a neat little roadstead in the island of Java; and on the morning of the third day the captain of the New Bedford whaler concluded he would make an excursion a few miles up the river. Accordingly his boat was fitted out with some provisions, and there was a gun for each man, with plenty of ammunition. The captain took his rifle, the only weapon of its kind on board. A young whaler with a record as a good shot—a tiger at twenty feet being his most famous achievement—was ordered into the boat as the look-out man and sharp-shooter. What followed after they set sail is best told in his own words as he has written them in *Forest and Stream*:—

'The wind was fair, and we proceeded up the river at a good pace. It was a narrow, sluggish stream, its banks bordered with virgin forests, and no sign of human habitation. The trees were full of birds and monkeys, and they kept up a racket which was novel and interesting to us. Then, too, the captain was in excellent humor, full of yarns of his voyages and adventures, and the time passed rapidly. At noon we ate our lunch and took in sail, and began our return journey, estimating that we had gone up the river about fifteen miles.

'The wind was now dead ahead, and we got our oars for a fifteen-mile pull, a mere trifle for well-seasoned whale-men. Bending to the ash, we made the boat spin along at a lively gait, and were some five miles away from the turning point when suddenly the captain exclaimed:

"My goodness! Look at that tiger!" And sure enough, lying well out on an overhanging branch of a tree under which we must pass, lay a magnificent tiger, evidently watching its chance to spring into our boat.

'To say that the captain was flustered conveys but a faint idea of his mental condition, but as for my shipmates, they were a sight to behold. Perhaps my experience at Anjer helped to steady my nerves, for while the captain was still in a funk I said confidently:

"Captain, let me have your rifle, and I feel sure I can knock that fellow off his perch."

'The captain handed me the rifle, and in an instant I drew a bead, and just as the captain was saying, "Now, Jack, don't miss him," I fired. I felt shaky myself, for I knew if I missed him the chances were that when he made his spring he would land in our frail boat, and that would be the end of boat, captain, and crew.

'But the bullet went to the mark. Like an arrow from a bow, the beautiful creature shot through the air. We felt the wind of his form as he passed only a few inches over our heads, and with a fearful splash went below the surface of the water. The instant he struck the captain roared like a lion:

"Now pull, boys, pull! Let's get out of this hole!"

'We did pull better perhaps than we ever did on going on to a whale; and the gait we made in going back to the ship held the record for the rest of the voyage. Long after, sometimes when the captain would get excited in pulling for a fleeing whale, he would sing out, "Pull, boys, pull! There's a tiger up that tree!"'