

Mother Joe

HE had four children and a baby in arms. The names and ages of the children were respectively Anna Maria, aged 7; Minnie Kate, aged 6; Albert, aged 4½; Maud Harriet, aged 3, and the baby, Sarah Ellen, just turned 1 year.

He himself rejoiced in the name of Joseph Webber, and believed himself to be about 8, but his mother was never quite sure. They all lived at the top of a narrow, tumble-down house, and Mrs. Webber always spoke of herself as a "widder." Her first husband had died "in 'ole Hengland," the second here.

Mrs. Webber got her living by charring, and as long as she was sober always managed to secure enough work, but she was an improvident, thriftless woman, and any extra money she might secure either went for drink or was spent on indigestible food, such as tinned salmon, and pineapple or shell fish, which often made the poor baby ill for weeks later. She took little interest in her family, save now and then for a fit of maudlin sentiment over her orphans, but on the other hand was seldom violent except after an extra heavy bout of drinking, when the children carefully kept out of the way, being taken in and given shelter by kindly neighbors.

Her one idea of responsibility was to try to lock her family in before starting off for her work, "to keep 'em out of mischief," as she said, "for she wasn't goin' to have her Jimmy's children, rest his soul, brought up on the streets an' kapin' low company!"

But since Joe had been 5 years old he had nearly always evaded this maternal forethought, which was not difficult, as his mother slept heavily, and before she could open her eyes and



"YER JEST TRUSJ JOE."

struggle to her feet in the morning the children were all up and away, taking with them enough money from her purse to pay for their dinner.

In vain she swore and thrashed them at nights when she remembered; it was no use, and the same little scene was enacted every morning. The first thing Joe did on ushering his little brood into the open air was to take them to a covered passage leading into a little blind alley; here they sat down and shared the bread and "serape," or sometimes the bread without the serape, which he had prepared. The baby had its milk, and then they finished up their repast with a drink of water—alas, never a wash.

After this the serious work of the day began for little Mother Joe. How to get the girls to school, and with the least amount of friction; that was always the puzzling question. When they were younger threats always served him, but now they were long legged and nimble and shrill, and he had to resort to bribes and cunning.

"It's nigh yer time, ain't it, Minnikite?" he remarked blandly, this particular morning, as he wiped the baby's mouth with his sleeve, "and I know yer'll want to be pucksball and beat that Eddie Cox with her reg'lar 'tendance."

Minnikite leant back and smiled at him with long wicked green eyes, and then she slowly put out her tongue.

"I appens to know," he continued, with weary patience, and dusting the baby's head as he spoke, "that there's a noo law pest 'bout children's bein' sent prison for not goin' to school reg'lar."

"What price, boys?" asked Anna Maria, with her head on one side.

"I allus go when I can," he replied, fitting on the cap where it was meant, "and you know I goes every time Mrs. Beet 'as no washin' and can mind the bilybly."

"Well, ma ses she'll wallop yer ter death nex' time the 'spector comes arter 'er 'bout you. So now."

"Well, sadly, 'there'll be no one to mind yer if she does."

"Yah! oo wants mindin'? Go and put yer 'ead in a bag and keep it there! Come along, Annermiria, let's go fer a walk in the park. We'll 'ave a good ole time, won't we?"

"Yer won't get a bit fer yer dinner if yer do. But don't upset yerselves; there'll be more for Albert an' Maudie, 'Arriet and me!"

"Yah! bury yerself!" was the polite retort, as the young ladies disappeared round the corner. But Joe did not really feel uneasy, as he was convinced they had no real intention of stopping away from school.

"I won't let ma beat you. I'll bite 'er legs if she do!" a little voice said by his side. He looked down gratefully. It was Maudie Harriet.

"Yer allus was a good little un," he said; then added, with precocious knowledge, "but, then, they gen'rally is good when they's kiddies. It's when they gets older they gets so rough. I mind Minnikite and Annermiria jest like lambs."

"Like me?" asked Albert, looking up from his mud ples.

"Now, yer're jest a fat puddin' 'ead. Put yer cap on at once or I'll soon milke yer mind!"

The baby began to whimper, and he folded her close in his arms and kissed the little shriveled face. "Shoo, go ter sleep, Sairey Ellen," he whispered softly, "it's a long time 'fore yer'll grow up and git rough and saucy."

Some hours later and the children sat shivering at the top of the drafty stairs for their mother to come home and unlock the door.

"She's lite to-night," Anna Maria said, leaning over the broken down rail. But even as she spoke a heavy step came up the stairs. The children listened anxiously, and Joe at last observed:

"She 'asn't 'ed much. Guess we'll be 'er orphans to-night."

In a few moments a woman's heavy, bloated face appeared, followed by an unwhie-y body.

"Lite ter-night," she said, rather thickly, feeling for her key. "O, well, turn over noo leaf ter-morrer."

When she had lit a lamp on the table, she sat down on the one sound chair and began to cry.

"Gimme me bilybly," she said at last; "me little orphan bilybly—me Jimmy's chille."

She fell to kissing it, and it woke with a feeble, peevish cry.

With an oath she pushed it from her, and Joe just caught it as it almost fell from her lap.

"Take it," she said, "there'll be better company ter-morrer."

He walked up and down until the child slept again with its tiny head against his neck, while the woman snored heavily in her chair. The early winter light was just filtering through the unshuttered window when Joe awoke and sat up. His mother had not slept in the bed. He blinked his eyes and looked towards the chair, but it was empty. With a little cry he sprang out of bed and rushed towards the door, but she had outwitted him this time, and it was locked.

That morning went slowly by, while the children fought and wrangled and the baby wailed and would not be comforted. Towards evening Joe was leaning out of the window showing the baby some sparrows fighting on an opposite roof, when there was a shrill scream behind him. He turned, and, to his horror, saw Albert standing shrieking, with a lighted newspaper in his hand.

"Let go, yer fool!" he shouted. The child let go his hold, and the lighted paper fluttered against some rotten clothing hanging against the wall, and the next moment the whole room seemed full of smoke and flames. Joe sprang to the door and kicked with all his might, but it would not yield to his puny efforts, and the smoke stifled him. There was no water in the room, and the woodwork had already caught and begun to crackle. He ran to the window and gazed out. By the side of the window on one side there was about four feet of broken stone ledge about a foot and a half wide; on the other side it had crumbled away.

"Git out of the winder on to this!" he shouted to Minnikite. She climbed on to the stone work as best she could and clung to the side like a little rat. Anna Maria followed, and Albert holding Maudie between them. There was no room for more.

A crowd had gathered below, and a man was trying frantically to kick down the stout oak door, which old Eli Mathews, the only other then inmate of the house, always locked when he went out. Joe watched him with a sickening fear in his heart and moistened his lips. The heat of the fire inside was scorching him, and black smoke came belching out above his head.

"I'm fallin'!" shouted Minnikite, shrill with agony. "I'm fallin'. O, Joe! Joe!"

The crowd heard her, and yelled hoarsely: "Hold on! The ladders are coming! Don't move! Hold the little one up!"

Albert and Maudie crouched huddled up together on the ledge, and kept their eyes fixed in almost despairing trust on Joe's face. Their breath came and went in quick, convulsive sobs.

"O, Joe! O—Joe!"

"It's all right," he said steadily.

He had the baby in his arms, with a shawl well wrapped over its head to keep out the smoke. Next moment there was a yell from the crowd below.

"The hook an' ladder! Here it comes!"

"O, Gawd!" said Joe, between his closed teeth. "O, Gawd!"

But even as he spoke there came a blinding burst of smoke and flame, followed by one shrill scream of agony, when he could see distinctly again the whole ledge had broken away, and disappeared into the crowd below. He drew in his breath. The baby's shawl was already ablaze, and one of his legs had been scorched black in the fire. He clambered on to the sill while the crowd shrieked to him in despair.

"O, Gawd," said Joe. "If yer can, will yer ketch us? O, Gawd! O, Gawd!" and he hugged the baby closer.

"Leastwy it's better'n burnin'," he whispered, and jumped.

But he with whom not "a sparrow falls to the ground without their father," had given his angels charge over them to keep them in all their ways, and they brought them to him. —Chicago Tribune.

LIFE IN THE SEA.

The Curious Things that Thrive in an Aquarium.

Mr. Spencer, the superintendent of the New York Aquarium, a few days ago was busying himself by picking a lot of sand fleas from a dipper and dropping them into a jar of anemones. As they fell into the water they straightened themselves out and then slowly dropped to the bottom, kicking as they fell. A few of them alighted on the body of an anemone, which promptly closed up. One, unfortunately, found himself, when he had settled, on the tentacles of one of the anemones. These began to serve the purpose for which they were bestowed upon the anemone, and the flea, or scud, suddenly found himself inside the capacious maw of the anemone, and the life was soon squeezed out of him.

"All is grist that comes to our mill," quoted Mr. Spencer. "These were on a lot of mussels which came in a little while ago I thought I would save them. There is life everywhere in the water. Look at this!" He held up a dozen mussels, held together by what appeared to be a vegetable growth. "That is an animal growth, known as sertularia," said he. "In this bunch you will find all sorts of animal life. There are scuds, or sand fleas, and rock crabs. Look!" He held up one of the valves of a mussel shell. On it was a sea anemone. "Notice that reddish coating, part of which has flaked off. Look at it closely. Doesn't it look like lace-work? That is the bryozoa coral, the lowest form of mollusk coral. You will find life on nearly everything that comes from the sea. Here's one of the rock crabs." He took out of the nest of mussels a little crab, about the size of one's finger nail, and dropped it into a jar of water. —New York Tribune.

"LOST MONDAY."

Popular Fete in Belgium the Origin of Which is a Mystery.

The first Monday after Epiphany is a fete day throughout Belgium. "Lost Monday" it is called here; exactly why no one seems able to explain. The origin of the fete is lost in the legends of the middle ages, but the modern acceptance of the day is certainly lost to no one here. Like Mardi Gras, Lost Monday is a day of general merrymaking; every cafe and restaurant in Brussels keeps "open house," and free fare is on hand for all patrons of the establishment, and as a matter of fact for many others as well who are not regular patrons.

On Black Monday, then, as it is ironically called by some of King Leopold's subjects not overenchanted with the day, the streets of Brussels are given over to the people, and the adventurous foreigner who, ignorant of the country's customs, ventures out is apt to find that the Belgian populace is no respecter of persons. On this day the shopkeepers, sighing behind their counters, find themselves compelled to hand over to their customers' servants a forced contribution, amounting to a certain percentage of the year's purchases, while the bakers, too, have a contribution to offer in the shape of cakes specially made for the occasion, and offered as gifts to their clientele.

In this manner, says the Brussels correspondent of the New York Times, the unique fete is perpetuated, though the calendar does not note in any particular manner the first Monday after Epiphany.

Spring Humors

Come to most people and cause many troubles,—pimples, boils and other eruptions, besides loss of appetite, that tired feeling, fits of biliousness, indigestion and headache.

The sooner one gets rid of them the better, and the way to get rid of them and to build up the system that has suffered from them is to take

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A Different Species.

"I thought you said Brown was a regular bibliomaniac."

"Not on your life. I said he was a bibulous maniac." — Baltimore News.

Since writing for the April Century "The Evolution of American Census Taking," which gives interesting details of the magnitude and intricacies of the "decennial snap-shot of the nation," the Honorable W. R. Merriam has resigned the office of director of the census, to become vice president of the International mercantile agency.

Harmless Intoxication.

"Confound these literary clubs, I say. My wife's crazy over Browning."

"So's mine. But I'm not raising any objections. Browning's dead." — Washington Times.

Mothers will find Mrs. Winstow's Soothing Syrup the best remedy to use for their children during the teething period.

Same Old Complaint.

Old Emdee—Well, how do you like your profession?

Young Emdee—Profession's O. K. It's the practice I'm kicking about. — Iowa and Country.

Beware of Ointments for Catarrh That Contain Mercury.

As mercury will surely destroy the sense of smell and completely derange the whole system when entering it through the mucous surfaces. Such articles should never be used except on prescriptions from reputable physicians, as the damage they will do is ten fold to the good you can possibly derive from them. Hall's Catarrh Cure, manufactured by F. J. Cheney & Co., Toledo, O., contains no mercury, and is taken internally, acting directly upon the blood and mucous surfaces of the system. In buying Hall's Catarrh Cure be sure you get the genuine. It is taken internally, and made in Toledo, Ohio, by F. J. Cheney & Co. Testimonials free. Sold by Druggists, price 75c. per bottle. "Hall's Family Pills are the best."

Worse Than That.

"He wrote a girl a love-letter once, and it's costing him a pretty penny now."

"Breach of promise suit?"

"No, alimony." — Philadelphia Press.

For forty year's Piso's Cure for Consumption has cured coughs and colds. At druggists. Price 25 cents.

Her Plan.

"I've been two weeks trying to get my husband to give me \$50 to buy a new dress," complained Mrs. Gazzam to Mrs. Wiffles.

"I never do that."

"What do you do?"

"I have my dress charged and leave my husband to fight it out with the collector." — Harper's Bazaar.

The Appreciation.

The Author (after the first performance)—Well, what do you think of my play?

Feminine Friend—It was just lovely! Who designed the heavenly dresses? — Brooklyn Life.

Fate's Injustice.

Nocash (disconsolately)—The rich are getting richer and the poor poorer. Friend—What's wrong now?

Nocash—Miss Fullpurse has refused me and is going to marry Mr. Coupon. —New York Weekly.

Will Smash Him Then.

"He has challenged you," said his friends. "Why don't you fight him?"

"It isn't the right time of the moon yet," exclaimed the enraged man, grinding his teeth horribly. — Chicago Tribune.

Just Sifted the Scorbler.

And the soul of the wicked one was next condemned to fall through space at the rate of a mile a minute for 10,000 years. "Say," he shouted as he passed the 10,000th ghostly mile post, "this beats any riding I ever tried!" — Automobile Magazine.

You Can Get Allen's Foot Ease FREE. Write Allen S. Olmsted, LeRoy, N. Y., for a free sample of Allen's Foot Ease. It cures chafes, blisters, sweating, damp, swollen, itching feet. It makes new or tight shoes easy. A certain cure for Corns and Bunions. All druggists sell it. 25c. Don't accept any substitute.

One Form of Argument.

A Denver justice comes to the support of the New York crusade against wheeling baby carriages on the sidewalks by saying that if God meant babies to go on wheels he would have put wheels on them.

FITS Permanently Cured. No fits or nervousness after first day's use of Dr. King's Great Nerve Restorer. Send for FREE 25c. trial bottle and treatise. Dr. R. H. Knorr, Ltd., 631 Arch St., Philadelphia, Pa.

Ocean Liners of 1880.

By the breaking up of the Serbia and the Alaska there disappeared two of the three famous Atlantic liners whose appearance twenty years ago was regarded as the opening up of a new and most important page in the history of Atlantic steaming.

Somewhat of a Dampener.

Mrs. Simpson—Just see what mother has sent us—a lovely big turkey for our Christmas dinner! It came by express this morning.

Simpson (joyfully)—Bless her heart! That's just like her.

Mrs. Simpson—And she sent us a note saying she would be here to help us eat it.

Simpson (not quite so joyfully)—The dickens! That's just like her, too! —New York Times.

Our Aristocracy.

"She claims, I believe, to be descended from a king."

"Yes. Before her grandfather struck it rich he was known as the poker king of White Hoss Flats."

The Ecclesiastical Tender.

Gambler—In what denomination do you want your money?

Uncle Rube—Wa'al, I'm a Methodist myself, so ye might as well make 'em that. —Princeton Tigger.

At the Horse Show.

McBrier—Did yer ever see a horse jump foive feet over a fence?

McSwatt—O'fve seen 'em jump four feet over. I didn't know that a horse had foive feet.

Wisdom of Age.

Bess (sweet sixteen)—Did you notice what a knightly air Mr. Dashing has? Aunt Mary—Yes—sort of an up-all-nightly air, as it were. —Chicago News.

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