

"Indeed," said one of the triangles, acidly. "If you get any fatter than you are now, I'm sure I don't know what you'll be."

"I know," said the jolly circle, mildly.

"What!" cried the triangle, contemptuously.

"Fatter," said the jolly circle, and then roared with laughter, as the triangles pretended not to hear.

"We silly people are of use in the world, even if people do get out of patience with us," said the jolly circle, confidentially to me. "I consider that I am a sort of discipline to the triangle family. They wouldn't be half so perfect if it wasn't for me."

"That's comforting," I said, "for I'm a silly person myself. Now I see what I was born for. Well, it won't be hard for me to live up to my vocation."

"Sometimes people call me a 'flat' or a 'smarty,'" said the circle. "But we don't mind, do we?"

"Not at all," said I, much amused. "I have a better time than you have, I believe, for when I get especially hilarious, I'm 'sent home,' and that gives me an opportunity of examining the shop windows, and saves me the trouble of a trip to town in the afternoon."

"The triangle considers herself above me because she has two right angles," said the spiteful circle, unwilling to remain silent. "She swears by the 32nd proposition of the 1st book, and I never can convince her that the 31st of the 3rd book is correct. Now then, if you draw a diameter in me, can't you prove that the angle in each of my semi-circles is a right angle, and haven't I, therefore, two right angles just as Miss Triangle has?"

"Certainly," said I, glad to be asked for once something that I knew.

"There, now," said the spiteful circle, triumphantly. "She has studied geometry, and she knows."

"Well, I don't have to know because she knows," said the triangle, coldly.

"Now, isn't that just like a woman, disagreeable to the last?" asked the circle, scornfully; but (being a woman myself) I was obliged to differ.

Just here a pathetic, stammering voice came from one of the arcs who had sprawled uncomfortably on his back, and now looked around, vacantly. "O, where's the rest of me?" it moaned, piteously. "I've lost all the other part of myself. I'm not all here. I know I'm not all here. O, where's all my circumference?"

I was very sorry for him, and promised to restore his other half to him, if I saw it wobbling about anywhere. Then a triangle, inscribed within a circle, besought me to take it out, and the circle, in its turn, cried out that the triangle was crowding his circumference all to pieces, and sticking into him, besides.

All this time the dead bird lay still beside me, its glazed eyes seeming to look up at my face reproachfully.

But suddenly a silence fell upon the occupants of the board, and a strange, expectant stillness settled over everything.

Then came a terrible clap of thunder laughing wickedly over the roof, a sudden flash of lightning smiling horribly in at the windows, and the wild rush of a multitude of rain drops against the panes. The walls rocked, the floor trembled, the whole building seemed about to fall, the pencils and rubbers flung themselves off the desks in a perfect agony of terror, and a strange thrill passed through the dead bird beside my hand.

I looked at the black-board, and the sight that I saw there fairly turned me dizzy, and yet made me smile.

The circles had started in a wild rush across the board, and were rolling frantically over and over; the straight lines were after them in as hurried a march as their dignity would allow; the arcs, (pitiful indeed it was to see them) unable either to walk or tumble, rolled helplessly from end to end, like boats on a troubled sea. The parallel-grams stared at me, rigid with terror. The triangles, mad with fright, hopped about wildly, first on one point, then on another, performing these feats so rapidly that they had the effect of a most unrighteous jig, which tickled me immensely, and I thought I heard the Jolly Circle chuckle as he hustled himself along. The triangle inscribed in the circle moaned out in terror that her head was dizzy, although which part of her she called her head, I'm sure I don't know. The spiteful circle, seeing the maiden lady triangle twirling violently on one point, called out as he passed her: "Hello! Had a drop too much, haven't you? Seem to be sort of off your base, hey, old lady!"

Again the thunder rolled and the lightning flashed, and the torrents of rain fell. Straight lines, triangles, circles, arcs, parallel lines and quadrilaterals flung themselves together in one wild mass. There was a mighty crash of circumferences against one another, a sharp clashing of straight lines, and a grating noise as the triangles collided; but up from the desk, with a flash of lightning illuminating its quivering wings, and a burst of exulting song rising clearly above the thunder and the clattering of the rain drops, the dead bird rose higher—higher—as if new life had come to it.

A third clap—and with one horrible grind the roof fell in, the walls came together, the floor dropped, but not before I had seen the bird fly out, straight through the white ceiling, on strong, glad wings, into the fresh air.

And I—where was I! I was in the back seat of the Principal's room, far from all others, so that I could carry on no conversation with them (which was *his* arrangement you may be sure, and not *mine*). Puzzling over the 8th Proposition of the 3rd Book of Geometry, I had fallen asleep and dreamed, and what now awakened me was the familiar order:—

"Miss Never-do-right, if you cannot sit up straight, as your class mates do, you may leave the room," which I did, with outward dolefulness and secret joy, but as I passed, two prim triangles stared at me sternly from the board, as if to remind me that if I had been off my base (so to speak) they hadn't been off *theirs*.

This is a parable. If you cannot solve it, do not blame the author, but consider your own stupidity. If the writer of it has written in an unintelligible fashion, she has only followed in the footsteps of one who is now dead and gone, and who never yet has been thoroughly understood by anyone. We have been advised by our English teacher to study the best authors. I have studied Browning to the best of my ability, and I have decided that he is the one whose style I shall copy, for then I may write anything I like, and it will not matter whether I'm understood or not.

And having delivered this up to the clutches of the critical public, I now close, hoping that henceforth I shall be famous forever.

Yours,

MISS NEVER-DO-RIGHT.