

## ✿ The Story Page ✿

### The Reflex Influence of a Farther Lights Circle.

By GRACE DICKERSON.

"Well, I do think this is the dullest town I ever was in," exclaimed Elizabeth as she closed the screen door and entered the cool living room with the morning mail. "Oh, it's the dearest place in the world for us girls to come to, with you, Aunt Alice, to have a lark and learn to cook and keep house; but I mean for the people who live here. Why, they look as if they didn't know anything of what is going on in the world, and didn't care."

"Yes," echoed Lucy, "they are perfectly impossible. I know there's only one man in town who reads a daily paper."

"Well, it would give me softening of the brain to stay here a year," and Elizabeth picked up a copy of "The Crisis."

"What took you so long going to the postoffice?" asked Lucy.

"Why, I stopped to take those sheets and things to old Silas and Eben Bates. I'm glad I got them finished. You wouldn't believe how pleased and grateful they were. I knew they'd take them, even though they are too proud to ask for anything. Poor old fellows! It is forlorn for them to live there alone, and they look as if no one cared anything about them. They really are in desperate need of ever so many things."

"Oh, is it so?" asked Mrs. Phillips, a little absently, looking up from her letters. "I must try to find a few things for them."

"I wish those baby clothes I ordered for Sarah Foster would come," continued Elizabeth. "I stopped there, too, and it's perfectly dreadful. That little baby has only two tags of slips to its name."

"Well, why don't some of the people here do for her then?" asked Lucy.

"I suppose because they are too slow and stupid to find out the need."

The girls picked up their books again, and Mrs. Phillips wrote busily at the secretary in the quiet of the quaint old room. The scent of fresh hay came over the broad meadow, which sloped down to the river, and the only sound was that of distant cow bells.

Suddenly, Elizabeth's book dropped in her lap as she exclaimed: "Lucy, I've got an idea! I'm going to wake up this deadly old place for once. I'm going to give them a lecture."

"Oh, Elizabeth, you are so energetic," growled Lucy. "Can't you ever rest? You really tire me."

"Why, I've been resting for weeks, ever since we all came back from Europe, but I'm afraid if I give away completely I may imbibed the spirit of the place and never recover. I think it's beginning to affect you," she added with a twinkle in her eye.

"Well, that was a famous dinner I cooked yesterday, you can't gainsay that," retorted Lucy.

"Yes, that's true; and you didn't drop the fish on the floor trying to get it to the platter, as I did," laughed Elizabeth. "But, anyway, I'm going to give a lecture on the Philippines. I have those new books here, and I can find material enough in them, and I'll make Ted rent some slides, and when he comes up on Friday he can bring his lantern, and we'll have the thing illustrated by stereopticon. Why, people's eyes will fairly pop out of their heads!"

Lucy was inclined to look upon the suggestion as a joke, and Mrs. Phillips seemed a trifle shocked at the idea of her niece delivering a lecture even in that tiny hamlet. However, Elizabeth's enthusiasm carried everything before it—even her brother's objection to managing the lantern for her—and the lecture was written and given. It proved to be most entertaining and informing, and awakened an amount of enthusiasm from the sleepy townsfolk, quite astonishing.

"It only shows," said Elizabeth, "how starved the poor things are, and what possibilities are here if some one would take a little pains."

Aunt Alice and Lucy were not to be outdone, and before long another evening was planned, and proved equally enjoyable. Mrs. Phillips gave a talk on some of the foreign countries she had visited, and Lucy contributed the musical part of the programme.

"Well," she sighed, as they were talking it all over before going to bed, "I do hope Elizabeth you are satisfied now. We certainly have succeeded in giving the town a good deal of pleasure and a thorough waking up. Still, I suppose they'll relapse into the same comatose state as soon as we depart."

"Yes," assented Elizabeth, as she smoothed out her Roman sash, "that's just what is worrying me. These people won't make any effort for themselves. The minister's wife was talking to me the other day and she said they got awfully discouraged sometimes over the young people. 'If we could only get them interested in something else besides

themselves and get them to do for others,' she said. Do you know, I believe I'll ask her to let me organize a Farther Lights Circle. I suppose they are usually started for the sake of the heathen in foreign lands instead of for the heathen here but never mind," she laughed, "I'm going to do it. It won't reform the town at once, but it will be a beginning, and it will do those girls more good than anything else."

"That's the best suggestion you've made yet," said Lucy quite unexpectedly, "and I'll help you to carry it out. Oh, I'm not really so pessimistic as I sound."

"No," replied Elizabeth, "I discovered that long ago. You and I can show them and we'll help them plan their programmes and think up ways for them to earn money and you see if the study of missions and the knowledge of the world's need doesn't make a great difference in the minds and hearts of those girls."

So it was settled, and did it pay, and were their hopes realized? Why, the way they grew and worked for those around them, and for the heathen in this and far off lands, and the energy they displayed in earning money would astonish you; but, as Kipling says, "that's another story." Standard.

### ✿ The Chipmunk ✿

The first chipmunk in March is as sure a token of the spring as the first blue-bird or the first robin, and it is quite as welcome. Some genial but searching influence has found him out there in his burrow deep under the ground, and waked him up and enticed him to come forth again into the light of day.

The red squirrel has been more or less active all winter, his track has dotted the surface of every new fallen snow throughout the season. But the chipmunk retired from view early in December, and has passed the rigorous months in his nest, in strict seclusion, beside his hoard of nuts, some feet underground.

Hence when he emerges in March and is seen upon his little journeys along the fences, or perched upon a log or rock near his hole in the woods it is another sign that spring is at hand. His store of nuts may or may not be all consumed; it is certain that he is no sluggard-to sleep away those first bright, warm days.

Before the first crisis is out of the ground you may look for the first chipmunk. When I hear the little downy woodpecker begin his summer drumming, then I know the chipmunk is due. He cannot sleep after that challenge of the woodpecker reaches his ear.

The chipmunk is quite a solitary creature; I have never known more than one to occupy the same den. Apparently no two can agree to live together.

What a clean, pert, dapper, nervous little fellow he is! How fast his heart beats as he stands on the wall by the roadside, and with hands spread out upon his breast, he regards you intently! A movement of your arm and he darts into the wall with a saucy "chip-r-r!" which has the effect of slamming the door behind him.

On some still day in autumn the nutty days, the woods will often be pre-empted by an undertone of sound, produced by their multitudinous clucking as they sit near their dens. It is one of the characteristic sounds of fall.

The chipmunk has many enemies, such as cats, weasels, black snakes, hawks and owls. One season one had his den in the side of the bank near my study. As I stood regarding his goings and comings one October morning, I saw him when a few yards away from his hole, turn and retreat with all speed. As he darted beneath the sod a shriek swooped down and hovered a moment on the wing just over the hole where he had disappeared. I doubt if the shriek would have killed him, but it certainly gave him a good fright.

It was amusing to watch this chipmunk carry nuts and other food into his den. He had made a well defined path from his door out through the weeds and dry leaves into the territories where his feeding ground lay. The path was a crooked one; it dipped under weeds, under some large loosely piled stones, under a pile of chestnut posts, and then followed the remains of a old-wall.

Going and coming his motions were clock-work. He always went by spurts and sudden sallies. He was never for one moment off his guard. He would appear at the mouth of his den, look quickly about take a few leaps to a tussock of grass, pause a breath, with one foot raised then slip quietly a few yards over some dry leaves.

He would pause again by a stump beside a path, rush across the path to the pile of loose stone, go under the first and over the second gain the pile of posts, make his way through that survey his course half a moment from the other side, fit, and then dart on to some other cover and presently beyond my range, where I think he gathered a corn, as there were no other nut bearing trees than oaks near.

In four or five minutes I would see him coming back, always keeping rigidly to the course he took, passing at the same spots, darting over or under the same objects, clearing at a bound the same pile of leaves. There was no vari-

ation in his manner of proceeding all the time I observed him.

He was alert, cautious, and exceedingly methodical. He had found safety in a certain course, and he did not at any time deviate a hair's breadth from it. Something seemed to say to him all the time "Beware! beware!" The nervous impetuous ways of these creatures are no doubt the result of the life of fear which they lead.

My chipmunk had no companion. He lived by himself in true hermit fashion as is usually the case with this squirrel. Provident creature that he is, one would suppose that he would long ago have discovered that and therefore may be economized by two or three nesting together.

One of the enemies of the chipmunk as I discovered lately is the weasel. I was sitting in the woods one autumn day when I heard a small cry and a rustling amid the branches of a tree a few rods beyond me. Looking thither I saw a chipmunk fall through the air and catch on a limb twenty or more feet from the ground. He appeared to have dropped from near the top of the tree.

He secured his hold upon the small branch that had luckily intercepted his fall, and sat perfectly still. In a moment more I saw a weasel—one of the smaller red varieties—come crawling the trunk of the tree and begin exploring the branches on a level with the chipmunk.

I saw in a moment what had happened. The weasel had driven the squirrel from his retreat to the rocks and stones beneath, and had pressed him so closely that he had taken refuge in the top of a tree.

But weasels can climb trees too, and this one had tracked the frightened chipmunk to the topmost branch, where he had tried to seize him. Then the squirrel had, in terror, let go his hold, scrambled and fallen through the air, till he struck the branches just described.

Now his bloodthirsty enemy was looking for him again, apparently relying upon his sense of smell to guide him to the game.

How did the weasel know the squirrel had not fallen clear to the ground? He certainly did know, for when he reached the same tier of branches he began exploring them. The chipmunk sat transfixed with fear, frozen with terror not twelve feet away, and yet the weasel saw it not.

Round and round, up and down he went on the branches exploring them over and over. How he hurried! lest the trail get cold. How subtle and cruel and fiendish he looked, his snake-like movements, his tenacity, his speed.

The weasel seemed baffled; he knew his game was near—as to that he could not be deceived—but he could not strike the spot. The branch upon the extreme end of which the squirrel sat, ran out and up from the tree seven or eight feet, and then turning a sharp elbow swept down and up at right angles with its first course.

The weasel would pause each time at this elbow and turn back. It seemed as if he knew that particular branch held his prey, and yet its crookedness each time threw him out. He would not give it up, but went over his course time after time, time after time.

One can fancy the feelings of the chipmunk, sitting there in plain view a few feet away watching its deadly enemy hunting for the clue. How its little heart must have fairly stood still each time the fatal branch was struck.

Probably as a last resort it would again have let go its hold and fallen to the ground, where it might have eluded its enemy a while longer.

In the course of five or six minutes the weasel gave over the search, ran hurriedly down the tree to the ground and disappeared. He must find a breakfast elsewhere.

The chipmunk remained motionless for a long time; then he stirred a little as if hope was reviving. Then he looked nervously about him; then he had recovered himself so far as to change his position.

Presently he began to move cautiously along the branch to the bowl of the tree; then after a few moments delay he plucked up courage to descend to the ground, where I hope no weasel has disturbed him since.—Youth's Companion.

### ✿ The Bobbin-Mill ✿

Charlie Crosthwaite lived at the Bobbin-mill. Now, the Bobbin-mill was at the head of a long, twisting, narrow lane, deeply cut with ruts made by carts going to the mill. By the side of the road was a jolly little mountain stream that splashed and prattled and sparkled and helped to turn the great creaking wheel that turned the machinery.

Charlie used to watch the men chop up the wood into proper shapes, and then make them into reels or bobbins, as they called them. He liked the click-clack of the old machinery and the nice tidy little reels made out of the wood.

Charlie generally played behind the mill, where there was a waterfall. Fancy having a real, true waterfall to play by! And at the side of the fall was a deep pool, and a lovely cave. This was a splendid place to play robbers, and pirates, and savages, and all sorts of fine things.

Charlie's mother used to say sometimes: