

CHARACTERS.



WHEN let us have a game," said Phyllis, "as all your voices are out of singing order; a good round game."

"'Characters' is a first-rate game," suggested Aunt Louie.

"Not too intellectual, let us hope, for the dull," cried Harry.

"Nor yet too stupid, let us hope, for the average intellect," said Cecil.

"It is quite an average game, I assure you. Choose the name of some author or noted person, or indeed any name will serve. Let each of us take a letter composing that name, and that will be the initial letter of the character whom we may wish to personate. Identify yourself, for the moment, with the character you choose, and be ready to give some account of your character, your deeds and your position, and say whether you belong to the past or the present."

"Oh, for a biographical history by my side," murmured Harry.

"I shall disgrace myself!" moaned Eva. "I shall attach myself to Aunt Louie," declared Carrie, "and she shall extract me out of all difficulties."

"How do we begin?" asked Phyllis. "An intelligent person must leave the room," said Aunt Louie, while we choose our name, and the 'characters' we personate."

"If only intelligence leaves the room, then may I rest at ease," muttered Harry from the depths of an armchair.

"Mother dear, you go out, and we will puzzle you," said Carrie.

"That is easily done," said mother, as she left the room.

"Shall we take Austen, our laureate, for our initials?" I suggested.

"Very good," replied Aunt Louie. "Only six characters can be in it."

"I am Alfred the great," cried father.

"I am Urania!" cried auntie.

"I am Swift, Doctor Swift," said Carrie, "though I don't know much about him."

"I fancy I can do Trilby," said Harry, cheerfully.

"I can only think of Imogen, Shakespeare's Imogen," said I.

"And I am Napoleon," cried Cecil.

"So, Phyllis, call mother in, and let us begin. Stick to your characters, my friends; give some clue, but not too much."

"Begin with me," said father.

"I am a king. Although I am also an 'intelligent person' (quoting Aunt Louie), I could not read until I was twelve years of age, and then it was only through a bribe.

I became, however, very learned, and let me add, for the sake of any idle young people who may be here, that I used to carry a book in my bosom that I might employ spare moments in reading. I am also musical, and once used my harp in an enemy's camp that I might see the state of the army."

"Did you not contrive to measure time by means of a candle?" asked mother, smiling.

"I think I have you."

"Well, that was one of my contrivances," admitted father.

"And, oh, Alfred, did you not let the cakes burn?"

"And who are you?" asked mother, of Aunt Louie.

"I am ever gazing at the heavens. I am a student."

"When did you live?"

"I cannot tell you. I am lost in the mists of antiquity."

"Are you a man or a woman?"

"A woman."

"Then 'I guess,' as the Americans say, that you are Urania," said Mother.

"A good guess," answered Aunt Louie; "we have not puzzled you yet."

"And you, Carrie, who may you be?"

"I am a clergyman, very fond of writing. I am considered witty, I can certainly be insolent. I write satires."

"When did you live?"

"I was born in Ireland, though I am an Englishman, in the seventeenth century. I flourished in Queen Anne's reign. I am an author, but I can't remember what I have written very well, and to tell you the truth

there is only one book of mine that I can understand!"

"And that story, Carrie?"

"Oh, just a childish book of travels."

"Did you write for the *Tattler*?"

"Yes."

"Did you write *The Tale of a Tub*, and *Gulliver's Travels*?"

"Yes."

"Ah! Dean Swift."

"Well, Harry. Who are you?"

"I'm a girl, and I have feet!"

"You are Trilby. Well, I have A U S T—so far—and you, Phyllis, who may you be?"

"A very sweet woman—far too good to be wife to my careless husband. I am a fictitious character, but I hope that there are many like me in the world of women."

"Who imagined you?"

"Shakespeare."

"There are so many lovely women in Shakespeare, that I am puzzled as to which you are. But I want an I, so I will ask this question: did they pretend that you were dead, and did they bury you, and sing over you—

"Fear no more the heat of the sun,
Nor the furious winter rages?"

Are you Imogen?"

"You are right. Now only one more initial, Cecil will give it."

"Who are you, Cecil?"

"A great soldier—and a great conqueror."

"English?"

"No."

"Did you conquer England?"

"Of course not—who could?"

"Where were your chief conquests?"

"In Europe."

"Had you any right on your side?"

"Oh, no, I was only a usurper."

"When did you live?"

"Well, nearly all Europe was under my control, more or less, in 1808."

"Just so, and we defeated you at Waterloo! Napoleon!"

"And a capital game it is for rubbing up one's wits," cried father.

CLARA THWAITES.

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

STUDY AND STUDIO.

ALPHA BETA.—We consider your verses very pretty and graceful, and should certainly endorse your literary friend's encouragement to you to persevere. The specimens are far above the average sent us for criticism. I. "The Primrose" we should prefer

"Then I told her woodland stories
In the sweetest way I knew."

or even "In the only way I knew" to the latter version. This is better than bringing in the idea that the primrose actually spoke in words to the child. That poem is, on the whole, your most successful effort. "A Widow" would be better if you could avoid the forced emphasis in

"But my boat came not back again."

The line is not musical with all its monosyllables. In the last verse of "Youthful Autumn" there is also a forced emphasis on "misséd." Such errors you would easily avoid. What we should chiefly urge upon you is to be on your guard against the merely pretty or over-sentimental style, e.g., in dilating on the golden hair and fair pallor of the dying child of the city. The "Widow" is more self-restrained, and in that respect good. "To Sleep" shows evidences of the study of Tennyson, whose lily in "The Princess" "folds all her sweetness up." But this trace of a poet's influence is usually found in the work of literary beginners. We wish you all success.

AN EXILE.—We cannot judge how far your little story is original, as you say it is taken from the German. The working out is fairly good. You spend too much time at the outset on trivial details and speeches:—"How long are you going to be?" "Does it look nice?" and so forth, while at the end, important ones, such as the engagement of both heroines, are crowded into a few lines. The end is very abrupt and sounds unfinished. We might single out for criticism the repeated expression, which is not that of a lady, "I wonder if I shall get engaged?" also the suggestion of a wreath of flowers worn on the head at a dance, now quite out of date; also occasional tautology, e.g., "living," on page 2. But the composition is quite up to the average of that which we have to criticise, and we should think you would do well to improve your style by every means in your power. Abbott's little book *How to Write Clearly* is invaluable. You should only write on one side of the paper.

H. E. D. P.—We have inserted your request, but were doubtful whether you wished your name and address published.—1. See our answer to A. K. Gattrell. We may also mention the Queen Margaret Correspondence Classes, Glasgow (apply Hon. Sec., 31, Lansdowne Crescent, Glasgow).—2. The National Home Reading Union, Surrey House, Victoria Embankment, is an excellent Reading Society. If you possess all the volumes of *The Girl's Own Paper*, as we are pleased to hear you do, you will find numerous addresses of amateur reading societies under "Study and Studio."

DAISY.—We have read your verses with very much interest and sympathy, and consider that they do you credit. There is occasionally a misplaced accent, e.g., "Are they purified?" and a false rhyme, e.g., "loneliness" to "quest"; but they certainly are an admirable exercise in composition for you as well as a resource. "Lily's Weaving" is the best. Perhaps your experience as a factory girl has suggested your thoughts. We can hardly encourage you to think of having them printed, as there are so many writers of verse; but we should advise you to persevere, storing your mind at the same time with the beautiful thoughts of great writers—

"There are in this loud, stunning tide
Of human care and crime,
With whom the melodies abide
Of th' everlasting chime;
Who carry music in their heart
Through dusky lane and wrangling mart,
Plying their daily task with busier feet,
Because their secret souls a boy strain repeat."

IRIS.—1. We should advise you to write a postcard to the publishers of *Dorothy Arden*, and inquire.—2. The Rev. A. J. Church's various tales of ancient history are very interesting. Harrison Ainsworth, Henty, Mrs. Charles, Miss Manning, and many others have written historical stories. Have you read *Falaxy*, the *Eugenevet Potter*, by C. L. Brightwell; or *The Prince and the Pauper*, by Mark Twain; or *In the Days of Mozart*, by Lily Watson? You do not tell us your age.