

MOTHER WAS PECULIAR!

By Kathryn Blackburn Peck

To the accompaniment of loud, angry, and profane words, two chickens came flying over the fence that divided our yard from the neighbour's garden. The chickens were flying, but not under their own power; their necks had been thoroughly wrung.

We children had been playing hide-and-seek. Now we froze in wide-eyed horror and listened in wordless awe to the colourful language of our neighbour, Mr. Blank, as he viewed the damage Mother's prize White Rocks had wrought to a row of his tender young lettuce.

Recovering from our stunned silence, we wasted no time racing into the kitchen to inform Mother of this most shocking occurrence.

Four excited, angry children, talking all at once, described the situation most dramatically and adequately and waited to see what Mother would do. Would she rush out and shout angrily across the fence to Mr. Blank, as Mrs. Picket, on the other side of his house, often did? Or would she cry, and call Papa, and let him deliver the retaliation that surely was due our hot-tempered neighbour?

Mother did neither. Sad-faced (for these were expensive, pure-bred stock) but calmly, she viewed the still flapping chickens. "Bring the axe," she instructed my brother. "And heat a big kettle of water," she told Big Sister.

Soon the delicious aroma of stewing chicken permeated the house. No loss without some small gain was the general feeling as our young appetites began to look forward to supper time. Would it be chicken and dumplings or chicken pie, I wondered.

It was to be chicken pie, I soon discovered; two of them, in fact. I watched as Mother cut her own special leaf design into the top crusts, fitted them carefully over the casseroles of savory chicken, and set them into the oven to brown golden and flaky.

I watched as she put a lemon cake together with a creamy filling, and frosted the whole with fluffy white icing and cocoanut. M-m-m! Almost like a birthday or a Sunday school picnic, thought I, as I licked the bowl.

When the chicken pies were done, Mother told the older girls to set the table, as she had to run over to Mr. Blank's for a moment.

"To Mr. Blank's! What on earth for?" was the incredulous question we all cried out simultaneously.

"To take him one of the chicken pies, and a piece of cake, and to tell him I am sorry my chickens damaged his lettuce," replied Mother, matter-of-factly.

"But, Mother!" I cried, indignantly, "that mean old man! He called all of us and all of our chickens such terrible names! Why, he said —"

"Hush, dear. Never mind what he said. Mr. Blank is a lonely, unhappy old man—and he is not a Christian. We should feel sorry for him and be very kind to him, for he is our neighbour and our responsibility. Our chickens did destroy some of his lettuce, and the least we can do is show him we are sorry, and try to repay the damage."

Anxiously I watched from behind the snowball bush. What would happen to Mother? A man capable of wringing chickens' necks in anger might do just about anything. I picked up a large stick. Just holding it gave me a sense of security. I knew the others were watching from the dining room window. Trembling, we waited.

But there was nothing timid in Mother's manner as she went swiftly, shoulders erect, to Mr. Blank's front door, bearing the napkin-covered tray. I can still see her white apron strings blowing, and feel the knot of fear in my throat as she knocked on the door and presented her

peace offering to the terrible-tempered Mr. Blank.

Poor Mr. Blank. He whose vocabulary never lacked epithets with which to express his anger now had not a word at his command! Even an outraged child could feel a tinge of pity for him as he stood there in the doorway, embarrassed, ashamed, and wordless in the face of Mother's sincere and kindly overture.

Remembering Mother as she lived and as she died, I realize that she never stepped out of character; she was always and only herself in any circumstance or situation. Her belief in God and the unshakable quality of His Word was profoundly simple. If Jesus said, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you"—then He meant just that, and a follower of His must obey the injunction quite literally.

I have often laughingly said that Mother lived by the "Three G's." "Living the Christian life takes a certain amount of gumption," she often said, "and all the grit you can scrape up, and then, when God adds His wonderful grace, anybody can get along just fine."

One day at recess I overheard my teacher discussing Mother with another teacher. "She teaches Sunday school, does all kinds of church work, takes her religion so seriously. Writes, too; poetry, I think—you know the kind that rhymes and means something."

The other teacher shook her head. "She must be a very peculiar woman," she said.

Come to think of it, I guess Mother was a peculiar woman. I would like to be more like her!

Herald of Holiness.

A CHILD'S PRAYER

A little boy was kneeling at his bedside saying his prayer through the prompting of his grandmother. "Now I lay me down to sleep. I pray Thee Lord, my soul to keep." He reached the place where he was to say, "If I should die before I wake," and he halted. His grandmother prompted him but he could not go on. He jumped up and ran downstairs. He soon returned and finished his prayer.

When the little white-gowned form was tucked in bed, the grandmother questioned him about the interruption in his prayer. The little boy said, "I was thinking about what I was saying, Grandmother; that's why I had to stop. You see, I'd upset Ted's toys and stood all his wooden soldiers on their heads, just to see how he'd tear around in the morning. But if I should die 'fore I wake, why, I didn't want him to find 'em that way; so I had to go down and fix 'em right."

"If I should die" puts a difference on the face of many things. —Selected.

PRAYER CHANGES PEOPLE

A young preacher had just settled in his first pastorate in Philadelphia when he was visited one evening by one of the laymen in his church.

The man said bluntly to him, "You are not a strong preacher. In the usual order of things you will fail here, but a little group of us have agreed to gather every Sunday morning to pray for you."

The young man saw that group of people grow to more than one thousand praying weekly for their pastor.

The minister was J. Wilbur Chapman, who grew to become one of the greatest preachers America has ever known.—Baptist Examiner

Prayer is the most important thing in my life. If I should neglect prayer for a single day, I should lose a great deal of the fire of faith. —Martin Luther.