

KNITTING THE STOCKING.

THE supper is o'er, the hearth is swept,
And in the wood fire's glow,
The children cluster to hear a tale
Of that time so long ago.

When grandma's hair was golden brown,
And the warm blood came and went
O'er the face that could scarce have been
Sweeter then
Than now in its rich content.

The face is wrinkled and careworn now,
And the golden hair is grey;
But the light that shone in the young girl's
Eyes
Never has gone away.

And her needles catch the firelight
As in and out they go,
With the clicking music that grandma loves,
Shaping the stocking toe.

And the waiting children love it, too,
For they know the stocking song
Brings many a tale to grandma's mind
Which they will have ere long.

But it brings no story of olden time
To grandma's heart to-night—
Only a refrain, quaint and short,
Is sung by the needles bright:

"Life is a stocking," grandma says,
"And yours has just begun;
But I am knitting the toe of mine,
And my work is almost done.

"With merry hearts we begin to work
And the ribbing is almost play:
Some are grey-coloured, and some are white;
And some are ashen grey.

"But most are made of many hues,
With many a stitch set wrong;
And many a row to be ripped
Ere the whole is fair and strong.

"There are long, plain spaces without a break,
That in life are hard to bear;
And many a weary tear is dropped
As we fashion the heel with care.

"But the saddest, happiest time is that
We count, and yet would ahun,
When our Heavenly Father breaks the thread,
And says that our work is done."

The children came to say "good-night,"
With tears in their bright young eyes,
While in grandma's lap, with broken thread,
The finished stocking lies.

JUST FOR FUN.



IT was rather a favourite excuse with Willie Goodwin, whenever he was deep in mischief, or had to plead guilty when accused of some boyish scrape, that it was done just for fun.

Many a time he resolved to try to be more orderly and let boyish pranks alone, but the next prospect of fun would banish all his good resolutions, until the penalty recalled them again. He was nearly fifteen when the tragedy I am about to tell you sobered him for life. He was a middle-aged man when he told me the story, but even then he could not speak without emotion of his last piece of "fun."

"We had been out for a walk," he told me, "Frankie Ford, Tom Lee, and I, and we were coming home at twilight when we met Sammy Willets, who was rather a favourite butt for teasing with all the boys. He was a very timid, rather sickly boy, of about fourteen, peevish and easily irritated, and, the rougher, stronger boys said, a coward. As soon as we saw him coming, the spirit of mischief seemed to possess us all, and each one planned how to tease the poor timid boy.

"Let's hide and jump at him," one suggested.

"Let's tell him his house is on fire, and see him run," cried another.

"I'll tell you what we'll do," I said. "We'll coax him down to Rutland's barn for a game of romps, and shut him up!"

"Rutland's barn was a large barn standing alone, at some distance from any other building.

"Although it was twilight, the summer evenings were long, and Sammy was not surprised to be told we were going to Rutland's barn for an hour of play before bed-time. He was quite willing to join us, and we were soon in the old barn, making it ring with our shouts and laughter.

"The hour passed rapidly, and it was getting quite dark when we sent Sammy into the hay-loft on some errand, ran out ourselves, and drew the big doors after us. It was hard work to fasten them with the rusty iron latch, but we accomplished this, too, and then ran off.

"Just as we were at the edge of the field we heard one fearful scream, but we only hurried on, laughing at the thought of Sammy's discomfiture.

"I must say, in our defense, that passing one night in the old barn would have been no great misfortune to any of us. We were all hardy country boys, full of life and health, free from superstition or morbid fears, and we could none of us realize what the dark loneliness was to a timid, sickly boy, with rather a weak mind.

"It must have been after midnight when we were roused at home by a violent knocking at the door. My father spoke from the window, asking what was wanted, and I heard our neighbour, Mr. Willets, asking anxiously,

"Is Sammy here?"

"No. Is he not at home?"

"He has not been home since sunset. I am very much worried, because he is not well."

"I'll ask Willie if he has seen him."

"In another moment father was by my bed, and I told him where they would find Sammy. Never shall I forget the father's cry of horror:

"It will kill him. My poor, timid boy. He is afraid of the dark, and the doctor has told us we must humor him, because he is not strong enough to bear fright. Will you come with me, Mr. Goodwin?"

"I was dressing as rapidly as I could, and was by my father's side when he lighted a lantern and joined Mr. Willets.

"Let me go," I begged. "I never meant to hurt him. I wouldn't mind staying there all night a bit, and I did not think it would really hurt him. O, sir, do you think it will kill him? It was all a joke—just for fun."

"God forgive you, boy," he answered me in a choked voice. "I am afraid it will be dear fun for us all. Sammy, my poor boy! Who will tell his mother if harm has come to him? Our only one—our poor, sickly boy!"

"So he lamented as we hurried across the fields, every word increasing my terror and remorse. It was my proposal, and I felt myself the only guilty one, though the others had helped me to carry out the cruel joke that seemed any thing but fun now. We reached the barn at last, and undid the heavy fastenings of the door. Mr. Willets called his boy by name every moment, but no answer came.

It seemed to me hours before the heavy doors swung back. One of them would not open wide, and looking for the cause, we found poor Sammy, white and senseless, lying on the floor behind it. His father lifted him up.

"He is not dead," he said. "Can we get water?"

"I hurried to the well and brought water, but the boy was too far gone for that. O, the long distance it seemed to Mr. Willets, and beyond that to the doctor's, where I ran at once! Never shall I forget the face of Sammy's mother as she took the boy's face in her hands and looked into it. It was so white and still, I dared scarcely believe he really lived as I hurried to the doctor's. He did live, recovering his health after a long, dangerous illness; but his mind was gone forever. Some fright in those lonely hours of darkness gave a shock to the weak mind that was never cured, and he lived only to be an idiot.

"It is some years now since we laid him in his quiet grave, the victim of a boyish prank. I tell you it was the last piece of mischief I ever did 'just for fun.'"

THE SLED UNDER THE HAY-STACK.

BEFORE us was the wide, level marsh. The mowers had been there, and the hay had been piled up into brown, bushy hay-cocks. Under some of these hay-cocks were sleds that the farmer might readily haul off his harvest when the marsh was frozen. Preparations had been made for the future.

When you see boys or girls busy at their studies, saving their pennies, and above all cultivating habits of purity, temperance, and prayer, then they are getting ready for their future and putting the sled under the hay-stack. Ought not every one to think of and prepare for the future? And in life ought we not to be making ready for death? Thanks, farmer-friend, for your lesson of the sled under the hay-stack.

THE DRUNKARD.

HAVE you seen the drunkard reeling along the street with a slouchy look and rum-red eyes? He has spent all his wages for that which is destroying his body, and which will at last damn his soul. He is going home to make his wretched family still more wretched. He is the servant of a hard master; and his wages are rags, ruination, and remorse. His reward for good service in the ranks of King Alcohol is bruises and a broken head.

Yes, no doubt you have seen him. Every boy has seen the drunkard stagger past; or nearly every town and village in the land has its drunkards. All of these drunkards that you have and all that you have not seen were once, like yourselves, boys with never a thought in their pure souls of growing up into the most debasing of all God's creatures, drunkards.

There was a time in the life of each when he took the first dram; and this was the very time when he crossed the danger-line and vent over into the enemy's country. How much better it would have been if they each had seen the danger right then and there, and beat a hasty retreat over into the ranks of the cold-water army, where they would have been safe.

There is no safety for a boy who

does not want to become a staggering sot but in the total-abstinence plan. This is the Bible plan: "Touch not, taste not, handle not the unclean thing."

SMALL CHANGE.

THE first thing in a shoe is the last. WHAT is that that has a mouth yet never speaks and a bed in which it never sleeps?—A river.

THE London *Freeman* says that the native Christians of Madagascar have given more than a million dollars during the past ten years for the spread of the Gospel.

THE *Christian Register* asserts that there is nothing which helps us so much to feel that our own lives have been worth living as the humble but grateful consciousness that we have helped some other soul fulfil its destiny.

THE *Religious Herald* thinks that it looks as if the strategic point in the warfare for the world's conversion to Christ is the heart of woman. That won, and the family is won; and when up goes the family, down goes heathenism.

HOUSEKEEPER, (showing party of American visitors round old baronial mansion): "And this, ladies and gentlemen, is the ancient banquetting hall, erected by the third Baron in the reign of—" Miss McShoddy (interrupting): "My! it's an elegant feedin'-room, ain't it pa?"

THE Walla Walla *Watchman* says:—"In Westphalia, Germany, a list of the notorious drunkards is published by the police, and the dealers are forbidden to sell them liquor. It seems a little hard on the saloon-keepers to deprive them of a customer just as soon as he is educated up to a profitable basis."

WHY HOBSON OBJECTED.—"Hobson," said Muggins, "they tell me you've taken your boy away from the graded school. What's that for?" "Cause," said Hobson, "the master aint fit to teach 'im." "Oh," said Muggins, "I've heard he's a very good master." "Well," replied Hobson, apologetically, "all I know is he wanted to teach my boy to spell 'tators with a 'p.'"

MRS. CARLYLE'S diary shows that when the Princess of Wales was engaged to the future King of England she was a poor, but graceful girl, who always wore long cloaks. Once when she visited Windsor the Queen said: "I think you always wear a jacket; how is that?" "Oh," said little Alexandra, "I wear it because it is so economical. You can wear it with any sort of gown; and you know I have always had to make my own gowns. I have never had a lady's maid, and my sister and I make our own clothes; I even make my own bonnets."

HERE is a coloured man's estimate of the effect of whiskey drinking upon domestic happiness. At a temperance meeting recently held in North Carolina, among the speakers there was an old darkey who is reported to have said: "When I sees a man goin' home wid a gallon of wiskey and a half-pound of meat, dat's temperance lecture 'nuff for me, and I sees it ebery day; I knows dat ebery ting in his house is on de same scale—gallon of misery to ebery half-pound of comfort."