The Barren Tree.

THERE stood in a beautiful garden
A tall and stately tree;
Crowned with its shining leafage,
It was wondrous fair to see;
But the tree was always fruitless;
Never a blossom grew
On its long and beautiful branches
The whole bright season through.

The lord of the garden saw it,
And he said, when the leaves were sere;
"Cut down this tree so worthless,
And plant another here.
My garden is not for beauty
Alone, but for fruit as well;
And no barren tree must cumber
The place in which I dwell."

The gardener heard in sorrow,
For he loved the barren tree
As we love some things above us
That are only fair to see.
"Leave it one season longer—
Only one more, I pray."
He pleaded; but the master
Was firm, and answered, "Nay."

Then the gardener dug about it,
And cut the roots apart,
And the fear of the fate before it
Struck home to the poor tree's heart.
Faithful and true to his master,
Yet loving the tree so well,
The gardener toiled in sorrow
Till the stormy evening fell.

"To-morrow," he said, "I will finish
The task that I have begun."
But the morrow was wild with tempest,
And the work remained undone.
And through all the long, bleak winter
There stood the desolate tree,
With the cold, white snow about it,
A sorrowful thing to see.

At last, the sweet spring weather
Made glad the hearts of men,
And the tree in the lord's fair garden
Put forth their leaves again.
"I will finish my task to-morrow,"
The busy gardener said,
And thought, with a thrill of sorrow,
That the beautiful tree was dead.

The lord came into his garden
At an early hour next day,
And then to the task unfinished
The gardener led the way.
And lo! all white with blossoms,
Fairer than ever to see,
In its promise of coming fruitage
There stood the beautiful tree!

"It is well," said the lord of the garden,
And he and the gardener knew
That out of his loss and trial
Its promise of fruitfulness grew.
It is so with some lives that cumber
For a time the Lord's domain;
Out of trial and mighty sorrow
There cometh a countless gain,
And fruit for the Master's pleasure
Is born of loss and pain.

WHERE IVORY COMES FROM—ITS USE.

MAMMOTH tusks of ivory occasionally come to this country from Siberia, but as these have been lying exposed for centuries, and probably for many thousands of years, and often buried in ice, the "nature" has gone out of them, and they are not fit for the cutler's use. The teeth of the walrus and hippopotamus are used in considerable quantity, and being of suitable size, are used whole for making expensive carved handles.

Ivory of the best quality comes from the west coast of Africa under the names of Cameroon, Angola and Gaboon ivory. This is brought down from the interior, and retains a large proportion of the fat or gelatine from the fact, probably, that it is more recently from the animal. In this state it is called "green ivory." It is more translucent and not so white as the Egyptian and other kinds, called "white" ivory, that have been lying a longer time and in a more sandy region, and exposed to the heat of the sun until the animal matter has disappeared.

The excellence of the "green" ivory consists in its greater toughness and in its growing whiter by age, instead of yellow, as in the case with the whiter varieties. Yet buyers of cutlery, through ignorance of these qualities, usually prefer the whiter kinds, which, on that account, are more in demand for the Sheffield trade, and have more than doubled in price since 1879.

The sales of ivory occur every three months at London and Liverpool, and sales are also held to a limited extent and at irregular intervals at Rotterdam. At Liverpool only ivory of the best quality and from the west coast of Africa is offered. Buyers from Germany and France and agents of American consumers attend these sales, and it is estimated that about one quarter of the whole amount goes to Sheffield, another quarter to London, and the other half to Germany, France and the United States.—*Chambers's Journal.*

THE ODD OCCIDENTAL OWL.

AMONG all the birds of America there are none better deserving to receive the protection of the laws than the little prairie owls of the Pacific slope. They may generally be seen sitting on a heap of sand thrown up by the prairie dog in digging his hole. This hole is appropriated by the owl for his house, and as you ride past he never fails to salute you with a very polite bow, and in the style of a real gentleman. The female may often be seen with her half-grown brood sitting at the entrance of an invisible prairie dog hole. Should you come too near she makes her obeisance and retires with her little ones as gracefully as might a fashionable lady. Because of the positive good he does in the destruction of many harmful insects and reptiles, and especially the scorpion, he should have protection. In Southern California and the warmer parts of Utah and Arizona, every summer evening brings forth numbers of scorpions. They get into the gardens and infest the paths and walks about dooryard and gardens; and but for the appetite and industry of the owl they would become an intolerable nuisance in these hot climates for three or four months of the year. At such seasons our little owl comes quietly about the house at dusk, every night, and picks up the scorpions by scores. Usually he has some place near by, as the cornice of the house or some broad beam in the barn, where he deposits his load and eats what he desires. He devours only the soft part of the body of the scorpion, leaving the head, claws and tail of the reptile, until there may often be found a quart or more of such remains at the place he has chosen for his nightly banquet.—*Forest and Stream.*

ACROSS THE RUSSIAN FRONTIER.

GEORGE KENNAN contributes to the May *Century* an illustrated description of his trip across the Russian frontier, and the following extract shows what the author and the artist found when they reached the boundary. A picture of such a scene as the one described here forms the frontispiece of the number.—

"We sprang out of the tarantas and saw, standing by the roadside, a square pillar, ten or twelve feet in height, of stuccoed or plastered brick, bearing on one side the coat of arms of the European province of Perm, and on the other that of the Asiatic province of Tobolsk. It was the boundary post of Siberia. No other spot between St. Petersburg and the Pacific is more full of painful suggestions, and none has for the traveller a more melancholy interest than the little opening in the forest where stands this grief-consecrated pillar. Here hundreds of thousands of exiled human beings—men, women, and children; princes, nobles, and peasants—have bidden good-bye forever to friends, country, and home.

"No other boundary post in the world has witnessed so much human suffering, or been passed by such a multitude of heartbroken people. More than 170,000 exiles have travelled this road since 1878, and more than half a million since the beginning of the present century.

"As the boundary post is situated about half-way between the last European and the first Siberian étape, it has always been customary to allow exile parties to stop here for rest, and for a last good-bye to home and country. The Russian peasant, even when a criminal, is deeply attached to his native land; and heartrending scenes have been witnessed around the boundary pillar when such a party, overtaken, perhaps, by frost and snow in the early autumn, stopped here for a last farewell. Some gave way to unrestrained grief; some comforted the weeping; some knelt, and pressed their faces to the loved soil of their native country, and collected a little earth to take with them into exile; and a few pressed their lips to the European side of the cold brick pillar, as if kissing good-bye forever to all that it symbolized.

"At last the stern order, 'Stroisa!' ['Form ranks!'] from the under officer of the convoy, put an end to the rest and the leave-taking, and toward the 'March!' the gray-coated troop of exiles and convicts crossed themselves hastily altogether, and, with a confused jingling of chains and leg-fetters, moved slowly away past the boundary post into Siberia."

How Easy It Is.

How easy it is to spoil a day!
The thoughtless word of a cherished friend,
The selfish act of a child at play,
The strength of a will that will not bend,
The slight of a comrade, the scorn of a foe,
The smile that is full of bitter things—
They all can tarnish its golden glow,
And take the grace from its airy wings.

How easy it is to spoil a day
By the force of a thought we did not check;
Little by little we mould the clay,
And little flaws may the vessel wreck.
The careless waste of a white-winged hour,
That held the blessings we long had sought,
The sudden failure of wealth or power,
And, lo! the day with ill is wrought.

How easy it is to spoil a life—
And many are spoiled ere well begun—
In home light darkened by sin and strife,
Or downward course of a cherished one;
By toil that robs the form of its grace,
And undermines till health gives way;
By the peevish temper, the frowning face,
The hopes that go, and the cares that stay.

A day is too long to be spent in vain;
Some good should come as the hours go by;
Some tangled maze may be made more plain,
Some lowered glance may be raised on high,
And life is too short to spoil like this,
If only a prelude it may be sweet;
Let us bind together our thread of bliss,
And nourish the flowers around our feet.

ORIGIN OF "WATCH-NIGHT."

IT was a fashion among the early Methodists to spend the closing hours of the old year in religious services, and this custom is still kept up, more generally, perhaps, among the English Methodists than with us. The custom originated in Bristol at the close of the year 1740. The Kingswood colliers, many of whom were very bad men, had been in the habit of spending the last hours of every old year in dissipation. Some of them were converted under the ministry of the Wesleys and of Whitefield. Among them was one James Rogers, who had been a great fiddler and leader in dissipation among his neighbours. On his conversion he burned his fiddle and began to lead a new life. As the year came to a close he proposed that, instead of keeping a midnight revelry as heretofore, he and his neighbours should have a midnight season of prayer. To this they agreed, and at half-past eight the people gathered and continued in praise and prayer until the year had closed. After this for a long time, "watch-night," as it was called, was observed monthly. Every sensible person will admit that this was a much better way "to see the old year out and the new year in" than the former custom of revelry and drunkenness. Every man ought to begin the year sober and to keep sober until the year ends, and then begin and continue the other years in the same way. This is a sure preventive of drunkenness.—*S. S. Classmate.*