

There he stood in the dewy morn,  
A spectre gaunt and grim,  
And the naughty birds who had robbed the corn  
Now fled at the sight of him

Fast they fled on their pinions swift,  
For they thought that close behind  
They could hear the scarecrow's rustle and creak,  
Borne on the whispering wind.  
And they never once looked back—poor fools!—  
Or they might have seen him stand  
Quite still except for the fluttering rags  
On the arms that had no hand,

The time went on, and the birds forgot  
The pang of their first great terror,  
And back they came in a hungry troop  
To see if they'd been in error.  
But no—for the tattered ghost was still  
Watching among the corn,  
With his warning arms spread stiffly out,  
So grim, yet so forlorn.

Then one wise bird, as the rest drew back,  
Twittered and chirped with a laugh,  
"Look here, my friends, I'm older than you,  
And I'm not to be caught with chaff.  
See how this dreadful ghost of ours  
Bends to each breath of air,  
Yet never seems to be heeding us  
As we flutter here and there.

"Come!" and with one swift flight he perched  
Full on the scarecrow's head.  
While his comrades stood with half-spread wings  
In a hush of awe and dread.  
Then in a moment the scene was changed  
To the clamour of hungry strife,  
For the birds had learned that their corn-field ghost  
Was a thing devoid of life.

And I said to myself, as I passed that way ;  
"Here is a lesson for me.  
Our faults are the birds which steal the corn  
That should fill life's granary.  
Our good resolves, like the scarecrows, stand  
To frighten the faults away ;  
But alas! for the winged things return,  
And often they win the day."

And why is this? the answer comes  
With a deep, sad pathos rife.  
Our resolutions lose their power  
Because they have *no real life*.