

Childrens' Department.

THE ROBIN'S SONG.

BY MARGARETTE W. SNODGRASS.

"Do you think she will pull through it, doctor?" She was a nervous little woman, and her pale face looked more anxious than usual as she watched the doctor's contracting brows. It seemed as if life and death hung in his answer.

"There is nothing in the nature of her injury to prevent her recovery, madam," answered the physician; then he paused.

"What is it then, doctor? I know there is something else, for she is not improving at all," and the mother stood all in a tremor of anxiety.

"It is simply her restless, unhappy condition of mind," said the doctor slowly. "It is hard to effect a cure while she is so depressed. If anything could be done—but I know you have tried everything."

Mrs. Maxwell watched him from the door, then turned back with a heavy sigh. She had given her daughter everything that she thought heart could wish, but here was something money could not buy, and the want of it might prevent her recovery.

She did not know where she might go for help: it never occurred to her to ask God to bestow this gift of a restful, contented mind upon her child. How could she, when she had never learned to ask Him for herself?

Meanwhile Effie lay on her couch, in her beautiful room, with a sad, hopeless look on her young face that was most pitiful to see. What mattered it to her that the room was elegant in all its appointments? that she had only to express a wish and have whatever she desired brought to her? She was a prisoner, and a very wretched one too. Only the week before, as she was riding, her pony had started and thrown her, injuring her knee.

The injury was not so severe in itself, but the time of recovery would necessarily be slow. "Six weeks or so upon the little couch," the doctor had said; "a little imprudence might cause the loss of the joint entirely."

From the time that the words were spoken, Effie had fretted and worried. She was sure she would never be able to walk again, and she was continually vexing those around her by her murmurings and tears.

Little did she care that it was Children's Day.

The chiming of the church bells seemed to annoy her, and even the bouquet of flowers brought to her by her mother scarcely attracted her attention.

"It doesn't make any difference to me what day it is," she said distastefully. "One day is just about the same as another, now. Oh, dear!"

Just at that moment a bird perched on the window-sill, and looked cautiously in. It was a robin, with its bright eyes and ruddy breast; and Effie almost held her breath lest she should disturb it, it came so near.

Then all at once it began to pour forth its mellow, warbling song. It was a wonderful song, and it thrilled her and interested her as nothing had done since the accident. It seemed to carry a whole spring-tide into the room, and to herald all good and lovely things, and Effie, as she listened, felt her heart bound with gladness; she scarcely knew why, and did not stop

to question. What a free happy life it had, this little bird! Then she thought of the words of Jesus about the fowls of the air, who neither sow nor reap, and yet the heavenly Father feedeth them. "Are ye not of much more value?" Surely if God cared for this little bird to make it sing, He would take care of her, and send her what was best. (Was not that what she had always been taught as she had studied the verses in Sunday-School?)

The robin's song was the opening anthem to that morning's service, and Effie followed it with some very plain thoughts, and some heart-searching which did her good.

"I have been thinking only of the dark side," she said to herself; "I haven't been at all thankful for all the pleasant surroundings and the comforts I have to make my trial easy. God has given me everything, and I—I have been giving Him murmurings for my thanks."

The robin had gone, but the sweetness of his song lingered in her heart; it had brought her something to keep.

"I have had such a lovely time, mamma!" she exclaimed, when her mother entered the room; and then she told her all about the robin, all about the thought which had come to her, and all about her own murmurings, and how wrong she felt them to be.

Mrs. Maxwell was touched. How often had she too murmured when things had not gone as she wished them! How often had she too fretted and worried about what she should have left in God's hands! If Effie could begin anew, why should not she?

"And how is the patient doing now?" asked the old doctor, as he met Mrs. Maxwell in the street a few days afterwards.

"Finely," answered the little mother, the pale face radiant with smiles. "She has become so bright and happy that she seems to carry everything before her, sickness and all."

"What is the secret of such a sudden change?" he asked, smiling in turn.

And Effie's mother looked happy and serious too, as she repeated what her little girl had told her—the lesson of love and trust that had come to them both that Sunday morning in the notes of the robin's song.

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THE LEGEND OF THE TWO SACKS.

There is an ancient legend that tells of an old man who was in the habit of traveling from place to place, with a sack hanging behind his back and another in front of him.

What do you think these sacks were for? Well, I will tell you.

In the one behind him he tossed

all the kind deeds of his friends, where they were quite hid from view; and he soon forgot all about them.

In the one hanging around his neck, under his chin, he popped all the sins which the people he knew committed; and these he was in the habit of turning over and looking at as he walked along, day by day.

One day, to his surprise, he met a man wearing, just like himself, a sack in front and one behind. He went up to him and began feeling his sack.

"What have you got here, my friend?" he asked, giving the sack in front a good poke.

"Stop, don't do that!" cried the other, "you'll spoil my good things."

"What things?" asked number one.

"Why my good deeds," answered number two. "I keep them all in front of me, where I can always see them, and take them out and air them."

See, here is the half-crown I put in the plate last Sunday; and the shawl I gave to the beggar girl; and the mittens I gave to the crippled boy; and the penny I gave to the organ grinder; and here is even the benevolent smile I bestowed on the crossing-sweeper at my door; and"—

"And what's in the sack behind you?" asked the first traveler, who thought his companion's good deeds would never come to an end.

"Tut, tut," said number two, "there is nothing I care to look at in there! That sack holds what I call my little mistakes."

"It seems to me that your sack of mistakes is fuller than the other," said number one.

Number two frowned. He had never thought that, though he had put what he called his "mistakes" out of his sight, every one else could see them still. An angry reply was on his lips, when happily a third traveler—also carrying two sacks, as they were—overtook them.

The first two men at once pounced on the stranger.

"What cargo do you carry in your sack?" cried one.

"Let's see your goods," said the other.

"With all my heart," quoth the stranger; "for I have a good y assortment, and I like to show them." "This sack," said he, pointing to the one hanging in front of him, "is full of the good deeds of others."

"Your sack looks nearly touching the ground. It must be a pretty heavy weight to carry," observed number one.

"There you are mistaken," replied the stranger; "the weight is only such as sails are to a ship, or wings are to an eagle. It helps me onwards."

"Well, your sack behind can be of little good to you," said number two, "for it appears to be empty; and I see it has a great hole in the bottom of it."

"I did it on purpose said the stranger; "for all the evil I hear of people I put in there, and it falls through, and is lost. So you see I have no weight to drag me down backwards."

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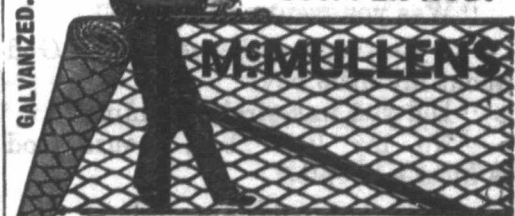
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