

ting out of the way, as a civilly disposed skunk should, he spitefully bespatters the wayfarer with a sort of voluntary malignancy, and then takes to his heels,—an example which his mortified victim is certain to imitate.

Uncle Benny, undismayed in the midst of the general family stampede, made out to rally the two boys to poor Bill's rescue. They made him strip off his clothes and squat down under the pump, where they gave him a copious shower-bath. Then, getting him into a tub of water, he underwent a thorough scrubbing with soap, especially his hair, which seemed to have received a large portion of the disagreeable shock. These ablutions did some good, of course, in the way of purification; but they were far from fully repairing damages. As to his clothes, his father said the only thing to be done with them was to bury them in the ground for at least two weeks, and this he did. He professed to know all about skunks, and so the cloths went two feet under ground.

Not one of the family could get a mouthful during the remainder of that day, as there was a general complaint of being sick at the stomach. Even in their sleep that night several of them dreamed of smelling brimstone. Some neighbors who dropped in a few days afterwards wondered whether the family had n't been dining on the worst kind of sour-crust. As to poor Bill, every one gave him a wide berth for weeks, and many were the jokes at his expense. He kept exceedingly shy of the pigeon, as it was now dangerous ground, and called up the most unpleasant memories.

"I'll kill him the next time!" exclaimed Bill a day or two after his shower-bath under the pump.

"Ah," replied Uncle Benny, "nobody seems to have a good word for the skunk. Every man's hand is against him, just as it is against the snakes, and now he has grown to be a scarce article all over the country. It is true that none of us want so dangerous a playfellow, but, then, even the skunk was not created in vain. He has a mission in this world, like ourselves. He is one of the many friends the farmer has without knowing it. If you do not trouble him, he will seldom trouble you."

"I don't think so, Uncle Benny," replied Bill, drawing a long-breath.

"Well," added the old man, "when next you meet one, don't offer to shake hands with him, and you will be safe."

But this little accident taught Bill Spangler caution; and ever afterwards, when going about the premises, he could not help keeping a sharp lookout for essence-peddlers in the shape of suspicious animals with pretty white stripes down the back.

Besides the gold-fish there was another curious pet upon the farm. This was a young crow, which one day fell near the kitchen door, having its wing wounded by a shot. The general spite against the crow would have led most young persons to kill it on the spot; but in this case the girls took charge of it, and coddled it up with extreme care until the wing had healed, by which time it had become almost as tame as the cat, and showed no disposition to fly away. It was a queer sight to observe the crow stalking about the yard among the chickens and pigeons, claiming his share of the good things going round. The pigeons were prodigiously afraid of him, and generally kept at a respectful distance. But though the chickens did not seem to fear him, yet they evidently considered him an intruder, and picked off a feather or two whenever he came within striking distance.

If no great ornament to the premises, yet he proved really useful. He would stalk into the garden, with daily regularity, and took upon himself the whole business of exterminating the squash-bugs, beetles, grubs, and other destructive insects, until all had disappeared. The family never raised such abundant crops of cucumbers and melons as they did while the crow thus stood sentinel over the garden. To the small birds about the premises he was a regular scarecrow; all except the king-bird being very much afraid of him, though he never condescended to attack them. But the king-bird seemed to have an unconquerable spite against him, and would often pounce down upon his back, attacking him so vigorously as to compel him to fly off and hide under a currant-bush in the garden, or in the tall grass around the fish-pond. With boys and girls he was wonderfully intimate. In warm weather he generally roosted under the woodshed, and in winter the girls brought him into the kitchen, where he had a regular roost in the chimney corner; and he would walk up and mount upon it with a quiet gravity that every one was amused at witnessing. The two house-cats invariably got up and moved off to another corner, whenever they saw the crow marching up to his roost. "But such is the character of our common crow. He is naturally a most intelligent bird, and, when kindly treated, can be domesticated without any difficulty.

This taming of the wounded crow was one of Uncle Benny's devices for cultivating the affections, and teaching the boys a habit of kindness towards inferior creatures. He was always on the lookout for opportunities for impressing upon them the duty of forbearance from cruelty or violence to such. He one day caught Tony throwing stones at a couple of toads in the garden, and forthwith ordered him to stop. But Tony replied that they were of no use, and ought to be killed,—he did n't like