

THE STORKS OF DELFT.

THE bells clang I dread in every spire
The watchman cried: "Fire! fire!
fire! fire!"
Ho! men of Delft, the city flames,
Run from your labours and your games.
Ho! rich and poor, haste for your lives,
Snatch your dear children and your wives,
The bedrid, aged, sick, and blind,
The idiot and insane of mind;
Then think of household goods and gear,
Rich tapestries and flagons dear,
And plate wherewith your town makes cheer.
Run, burghers, for the flames are red,
They hiss and crackle overhead,
And high above each lane and street,
Hangs our brave city's winding sheet."
And thus it chanced in Delft of fame
Lived many storks that went and came,
Free from all harm, protected, blessed,
Because they cleared the city's pest—
Toads, frogs, and noisome creatures foul.
So wise a bird some gave a soul,
And scarce a man but reared a thatch
Whercon the little storks might hatch.
Now, on that fatal third of May,
When lurid clouds obscured the day,
With nesting birds just out of shell,
A strange and piteous thing befell.
Soft, downy, formless wing and head
They lay within the natal bed.
The parent birds quick saw their doom,
Mid stifling smoke and sullen boom
Of falling roof and splintering wall,
And groan, and curse, and anguish call.
Mid awaying crowds and rushing feet,
And furnace-blasts of withering heat,
And flying sparks like living things,
That bore destruction on their wings,
And first they sought in haste to bear
Their nurslings through the heated air;
But no, their strength would not suffice;
They struggle, but they cannot rise,
And, panting back upon the nest,
They hide their young with wing and breast,
And calmly wait the fiery wave
To lay them in a common grave.
The flying crowds with wonder saw
A sight to fill the soul with awe,
Those birds that chose not life, but death,
To shield their young with latest breath;
Mounting in love a funeral pyre
They gave their bosoms to the fire.
And thus, perchance, the storks that day
Taught some poor craven heart the way
To stay his feet for those in need,
To help the weak, the sick to heed,
Remembering those old words, how writ:
"Who saves his life shall forfeit it."
Amid the records of the town
This tale is truly written down.
In letters of the purest gold
Such noble story well were told,
Of birds heroic in their death,
Teaching Christ's truth with failing breath,
And glazing eye, and fluttering wing—
Those storks of Delft whereof I sing.

YOUNG LADIES AND DRESS.

A LADY who had taught for over thirty years once gave the writer some very interesting information. "When a new scholar was introduced," she said, "I always looked first at her dress. If that was plain, neat and tidy, I was pretty confident that I had good material to work with. For the first two or three years of my teaching, I was in the habit of scrutinizing the features, and the formation of the heads, but these came at last to be quite secondary considerations. Our school was so expensive that none but daughters of the wealthy could possibly enter it; so when a young lady came to the class room in a plain dress, I was sure that it was on account of her idea of the fitness of things. This argued common sense. Common sense is always in direct antagonism to vanity, and where there is no vanity there is seldom self-consciousness. So, you see, a plain dress came to mean a great deal to me. I learned never to expect anything from a girl whose school dress was silk or velvet. I shall always retain the impression made upon me by a quiet little body in a blue flannel dress, and

the plainest of plain trimmings. She came from one of the first families in wealth and culture, and was the most unobtrusive child I ever knew, as well as the most brilliant. When she told me graduation day that she had decided to study for a physician, I was not in the least surprised, and I was sure she would succeed, as she certainly has in the most marvellous manner. She carried off every honour, and though the girls in "purple and fine linen" sneered at her plain attire, and lack of style, there was not one who could ever compete with her."

Certainly, on the whole, the deductions of this teacher are correct. It takes time to array one's self in elaborate garments, and the girl whose mind is occupied with loops and trimmings and general furbelows cannot, for a philosophical reason, have room for much else. Then there is a reason deeper than this, even. The girl whose tastes are in the line of dress and display has not an intellectual development. She may be imitative and intuitive to a degree, but she will always, or generally, be superficial in her learning and shallow in character.

A very good story in this connection is told of a prominent musician in New York. A young lady went to him for a course of "finishing off" lessons. "Let's see what you can do," said the teacher, and placed before her a simple air of Mozart's. She played a few bars, and was interrupted. "Take of your rings," said the great man. A few bars more, and another interruption. "Take of your bracelets." A little farther on she was stopped again. "Your sleeves are too long. I want to see your wrists." The pupil pinned up her sleeves with a face on fire. At last she succeeded in finishing the selection.

"Do you want me to teach you?" the instructor asked, as she took her hands from the keys.

"Yes, sir."

"Very well. Come to me to-morrow at this hour, without any jewelry, and in some sort of a dress that you can breathe in. I don't know at all how you have played this aria because of the rattling of gewgaws, and the distressing noise you have made in getting your breath. I am afraid you haven't the instinct of a musician. A musician thinks first of his art, and last of appearances, but it seems to me you think first, last and always of how you look."

Now this may seem rough and very uncalled for to some, but he was an honest soul and a grand musician. His words proved true. This young lady had not the musical instinct, and after a fair trial was dismissed. Her teacher proved that her practice had been superficial, and all that she had done had been spoiled by vanity and self-consciousness.

A school-girl who dressed very plainly, but in good taste, was once asked why she did not "rig up" more.

"Because," she said, "I haven't time to fuss about clothes and learn too, and then I should like to have something new to wear when I am older. Velvets and brocades, and diamonds and pearls, and all those fine things will be new to me by and by, and there is nothing left for you girls to anticipate."

Certainly a very wise and satisfactory answer.—ELEANOR KIRK, in *Congregationalist*.

THE DOG OF NIAGARA.

It has always been supposed that no living being could be swept over Niagara Falls and survive the terrible plunge. The feat, however, was successfully performed by a dog a few days ago. The name of this noble animal is unknown, and it is only too probable that he will be mentioned in history merely as the Dog of Niagara. He first attracted attention while he was in the rapids above the falls, and as he struggled with the current which was swiftly sweeping along, it was supposed he had only a few moments to live. He was seen to plunge over the falls, and then, to the amazement of those who had watched his descent, he emerged from a cloud of spray that rises at the foot of the cataract and climbed upon a cake of floating ice. The news that a dog had gone over the falls and was still alive, spread rapidly, and in a few moments the bank was lined with people. The dog floated down the river on his cake of ice, but he had very little confidence in its seaworthy qualities, and howled loudly for help. Of course no one could help him, for it would have been impossible to reach him with a boat, and had a rope been thrown to him as he passed under Suspension Bridge, it is hardly probable that he could have caught it. Some distance below the bridge the river forms a terrible whirlpool, and when the dog and his cake of ice reached the whirlpool they were carried around at a frightful speed. Presently the cake of ice broke in two, and the dog was thrown into the water. He struggled bravely for a few moments, and then disappeared under the waves, and never rose again. When it is remembered that when the dog reached the foot of the falls, hundreds of tons of water must have fallen upon him, and beaten him down toward the bottom of the river, it seems almost incredible that he should have been able to rise to the surface and to reach his cake of ice. Had he escaped the whirlpool and reached the shore, he would have been the most famous of living dogs.—*Harper's Young People*.

THE SERPENT'S HEAD.

ONE half of the world does not know how the other half lives, and, for the matter of that, perhaps it's none of their business. But a walk along the bleak Toronto Esplanade would give a terrible hint as to how a few at least in this city keep themselves warm. An old grey-headed woman thinly clad, might be seen with her bare hands, that looked like the stiff claws of some bird of prey, groping about in the loose snow for an occasional lump of coal. She had the look of a half-famished Indian on the look-out for game on a deserted hunting ground, or the expression of a starving man. She had been out all the morning, the cold wind from the bay whiffing her grey hair and threadbare clothes, and yet she had only got a few quarts of coal.

A glance at her face told why she was there. Liquor had left its trace in her filmy eyes, her bloated features, and in the still fresh bruise upon her cheek. She is old now, but once she was young and hopeful, perhaps good-looking, and only for the head of the

serpent might have been a happy grand mother, in a comfortable house, instead of the degraded wretch she is to-day, hunting with half-frozen fingers for coal amid the Esplanade snow.

She was not alone, there were others besides her—little miserable children, weeping with the cold, groping about, but still afraid to go home till they had filled their little baskets. What must homes be which are warmed by fuel gathered as this is, and what must the meals be which are cooked by such fires? Here is a chance for all to employ their imagination, for how few will go and see for themselves?

LETTER TO THE CHILDREN ABOUT CHINA.

THE following is one of the monthly letters issued to the Sunday-schools by the Mission Rooms of the Methodist Episcopal Church. It is written by the Rev. V. C. Hart, a returned missionary from China, who expects to return to China this year.

Parkdale, Ont., Dec. 12, 1883.

Dear Sunday-school Friends,—The two hundred millions of children in China are beginning to receive the morning light of the gospel.

In 1842 very few Chinese boys and girls had seen a missionary, looked upon a Bible or a Christian book. Since then millions have listened to the gospel from the lips of missionaries, handled the Scriptures, seen and read tracts, papers, magazines, geographies. Sunday-school papers beautifully illustrated, and pictorial books, have gone into thousands of homes, and very many thousands of black-eyed boys and girls have chattered and laughed over the strange stories and wonderful pictures. A short ten years ago there were scarcely any Sunday-schools in the vast empire; now there are scores, and in some of them as many as 250 boys and girls.

The children are generally our best friends. I was once preaching in a distant city, full of scoffers and ignorant heathen. A motley crowd followed wherever I went, men inflamed with wine railed at me, the women wondered what the "strange devil" wanted, and coddled their little ones in their arms. Out of the crowd came a shrill voice in Chinese, "Have you John's Gospel?" I looked from whence it came, and lo, there was the dwarfed form of a lad who a few years before was in our Sunday-school. He could quote passage after passage from the N. T. greatly to my astonishment and amusement of the crowd. One of our small Sunday-school boys went into his day-school, his heathen teacher ordered him to bow to the Confucius tablet, he replied, "I am a Christian." We are now gathering the boys and girls of the heathen into our schools all over China where there are missions. They are learning our beautiful hymns and songs, and reading our children's magazines. The grand work of saving these 200 millions of heathen children is committed in some measure to you, dear children of America.

V. C. HART.

"JOHNSY," said a mother to her little boy, "you must not interrupt me when I am talking with ladies. You must wait till we stop, and then you can talk." "But you never stop," replied the boy.