

grim with a vow upon him—comes from far to do penance at the cross of Banbury, and that if any one should deeply need some boon, and have the courage to wait alone at the cross from the hour of midnight till St. Hilda's clock strikes two each night till he shall come, he will mightily entreat that the boon may be obtained, and 'the prayer of a righteous man availeth much.' Wilt thou dare to go, dearest mistress, and entreat for the life of him you love?"

"I will go, dear maid," answered her mistress, kissing the kneeling girl, "and do you take my watch upon you, for love's sake;" and drawing around her a fur cloak and hood, the pale and worn maiden—with a heart so strong in love—betook herself night after night to the trysting place beside the cross.

'It was upon the seventh watch, as the clock struck the hour of midnight, that Matilda, as she approached from one side of the cross, observed a bent and aged figure to approach slowly from the other.

"Father," said the girl, kneeling before the aged man, "art thou he who dost come here under a vow, and deignest to pray for the boon of any one who shall watch alone for thy coming? For see, father, I have waited these seven nights for thee!"

"I am he, daughter," replied the holy man; "what is thy boon?"

"I ask the life of one most dear to me," answered the girl.

"Arise, dear daughter, I will pray for that life. Farewell, and may heaven bless thee!"

From that night Edward began to amend, and when Old Christmas came again, the sweet bells of the little church of St. Hilda's, which was attached to the castle, rang out gay peals to tell of the marriage of Edward and Matilda. One cloud only darkened that happy day: Edward's father and mother refused their consent to the marriage, and cast Edward from them as one who should never be forgiven.

'Crowds were flocking together to witness the ceremony, and shouts of rejoicing were rending the air, when a lady was observed to ride towards the bridal procession, clad in ermine and gold, mounted upon a milk-white steed, and followed by a small company of people.

"The Queen, the Queen," rang out from far and near, "God bless the Queen; God save the Queen!"

"Children," said the gracious sovereign, as she reached the bride and bridegroom; "informed by my gallant page, Nevil of Banbury, of your constancy and courage, I come to bring you the only blessing that has been to-day denied to you. Sad is the heart of the Prince of Peace when he sees nation at war with nation—but sadder still is he when he sees the children of one kingdom at strife between themselves. Therefore I rejoice that this day I have obtained for you the forgiveness of the Lord and Lady of Broughton Castle, who come now, in answer to my prayer, to grace your marriage by their presence." Upon this the parents of Edward rode forward, and extended the right hand of fellowship to the bridal pair and to the parents of the bride; and from that day forward peace and love reigned supreme where strife and discord had so long held sway.

'Many fair children were the result of that happy marriage; and the proud nurse—the maid of whom I have spoken, the favorite of her mistress—was wont to sing to the bonny bairns this rhyme:

"Come, ride across country to Banbury Cross,
To welcome the Queen upon her white horse;

Ring bells of St. Hilda's, 'Make friends and love foes,'

The Queen chimes love's music wherever she goes."

'When I was a little lad my great grand-dame used to sing that verse to me to this tune,' said the old shepherd, and he piped out the rhyme in a quivering voice; 'but I am told that the children nowadays have changed the words a bit.'

'Why,' cried Nelly, much excited, 'it's—

"Ride a cock-horse to Banbury Cross,
To see a fine lady get on a white horse;
Rings on her fingers and bells on her toes,
She shall have music wherever she goes."

'Aye, aye! that's it,' said the old man, 'but it's not so nice as the old way to my mind. But now, see, the storm has passed away and I must trot on.' So away he went with his flock of sheep and his faithful dog, and the party of picnickers returned home to Banbury.'

Feed the Birds.

Thoughtless people have not the slightest idea of the suffering of wild birds during the frosty weather, or when the ground is covered with snow. The little ones of the household should be encouraged to remember the poor birds, so dependent during the winter upon such assistance. Remains of cold boiled potatoes, broken small, will be picked up eagerly; a handful of rolled oats will be a perfect feast, and cooked rice, barley, peas, etc., left from a meal, are all much appreciated by all of them. The pleasure of watching the birds is very great—especially to children, whose natural love towards all dumb creatures is intensified by the knowledge that they are befriending them, and perhaps saving them from a cruel death. Those living in a city flat have, perhaps, not the same opportunity of studying the wonderful variety of birds, but even a town sparrow would be glad of a few crumbs and tit-bits put out on the window sill.—Exchange.

The Story of Crosby Hall.

(Lizzie T. Hussey, in 'Union Signal'.)

For several weeks our whole family had been agitating the momentous question of where to spend the summer. We had searched all the newspapers for desirable places, both country and seaside, but none seemed to meet our requirements. It was necessary that we should be near the city, as the bread-winners of our number must be in town each day. Therefore it was with delight that we welcomed the announcement made by Uncle Jack. 'Congratulate me,' he said; 'I have found a summer home for us at last. You remember my old college chum, Harold Brown. Well, he has had an old-fashioned country house lately come into his hands, and has offered it to me for the summer at a low price. It is less than ten miles from here and is the very place we have been searching for.'

Further investigations served to corroborate the favorable impression made by Uncle Jack, and the first of July found us pleasantly settled at Crosby Hall, as it was called. It was a roomy old mansion, built in the Colonial style of architecture, a short distance back from the highway. A half dozen rods in the rear was a small lake, which promised many pleasant hours on its surface.

A few days after our arrival a heavy rain set in, and as it was Sunday our family party was a large one. As the afternoon waned we grew weary of reading and writing letters, so

welcomed Bert's proposal that we make an exploring expedition in the great unfinished attic. We had been in the 'sky-parlor' some time, finding little save empty boxes and spiders, when Nan, whose bump of curiosity was exceedingly well developed, venturing far back under the sloping eaves, gave a cry of surprise. 'See what I've found—a tin box full of old papers and letters. How interesting and romantic they look!'

As we crowded round Nan and began to examine her treasure, Bert held up a roll of paper and read the inscription with a grand flourish: 'The Story of Crosby Hall.'

'This very house!' cried Nan. Read it at once.'

So Bert untied the faded blue ribbon and read the following:

Crosby Hall, August, 1852.

I am Marjorie Crosby, the only daughter of Squire Crosby of Crosby Hall, and I am going to write down the record of my spoiled life for others to read, hoping as they learn of all the sorrow and pain caused by one little act, they may profit by another's sad experience and live good and happy lives.

This house was built in Revolutionary times by a pirate, who kept it for a store-house for his booty, but before he had lived here long he was discovered and put in prison. The place was sold at auction and my father bought it. Many alterations were made and the house as it is to-day is roomy and pleasant. There are twenty rooms, besides a long dance hall running the whole length of the house.

Oh, the happy, joyous hours I have spent in this dear old home after all! And now I am going away—forever! It is only when we have lost what is dearest to us that we come to know its true value; then vain regrets for the past are ever present in our thoughts.

But to resume my story. My brother Edgar and I were the only children. Our mother had died when we were small, so father had had the chief care of us ever since, although a kind old housekeeper had looked after us more or less. At sixteen Edgar went away to college, while I, then only fourteen, was placed in a boarding school. Our visits home during the vacations were seasons of rejoicing and merry-making by our father. During the Christmas holidays, especially, the old house was full of guests, and always on the last day of the old year father gave a great party, inviting the people for miles around. On such occasions the wine flowed abundantly. The cellar which had been used by the pirate to hide his treasures was now converted into a fine wine cellar, full of casks of the best old wines. Nearly everyone drinks wine in these days as freely as water.

The winter after my graduation my father gave a great ball in honor of my engagement to Philip Rogers, a young man who was in my brother's class in college, and whom I had met for the first time two years previous during the holiday vacation. The friendship then formed had soon ripened into love, and the ball to be given at Crosby Hall on New Year's Eve was to be the grandest and most elaborate ever given in all the country-side, as the match was one greatly pleasing to my father. Neither money nor time were spared to make it a success.

Everything went happily until about midnight—just as the Old Year was dying, and then—would that those fatal hours were blotted forever from the calendar of my life! But no, it must be told. The great clock had just struck twelve, and we were all merry in good-wishing and drinking to the health of the new-born year. Philip stood by my side, smiling