

OUR YOUNG FOLKS.

THE BIRDS SHALL TELL THE SECRET.

YOU have often heard, dear children, the old proverb—

"Never a thread so fine is spun,
But will be seen in light of the sun;"

and the pretty poem, "Die Sonne bringt es an dem Tag" (The sun shall bring it to light), found in many collections.

Doubtless, the doers of many shameful deeds are as yet unknown and many a guilty soul escapes in this life the direct punishment which certainly awaits him in the next. But it is also true that guilty secrets are often brought to light in such a wonderful manner as to compel men to acknowledge, "This is the finger of God."

An example of this kind I shall now relate to you. It occurred about seventy years ago, in the small town of Wermelskirch in Bergischen. My grandfather was then living there. At that time there were no railroads, and in place of the three good highways which now connect all the neighboring towns and villages, there were only very bad roads, in winter almost impassable. Postal arrangements were also much wanting. All letters for Wermelskirch must be sent for to the little town of Lennep, two hours' journey distant; and a messenger was therefore despatched several times a week from Wermelskirch to Lennep, to carry letters there, and bring others back. The road led through a forest, which at all times, but especially in time of war, had a bad reputation, as often harmless travellers had been there attacked, robbed, and even murdered.

It was October in the year 1804. The letter-carrier had set out one morning on the road to Lennep. He did not return at the usual hour. Late in the afternoon, the long-trusted, faithful messenger was still missing; and many persons, waiting for letters, looked anxiously along the street with expressions of uneasiness or vexation.

Suddenly a report began to be circulated that the postman, robbed of his wallet, was lying murdered in the wood! And not long after, the corpse of the much-respected man was actually brought into the town. The police hurried off to track the murderers, and in all the streets people came together to talk over the shocking affair.

In the town was a tavern, where every evening a few of the neighbors used to meet and discuss the news of the day over a glass of beer or wine. This evening the house was unusually filled. Persons who seldom or never visited it looked in, for each one wished to hear what others had heard regarding the murder, and the bustle continued for many hours.

About nine o'clock, two strangers entered the public room, asked the landlord if he could give them lodging for the night, and when he agreed, requested to have some supper, which the landlady quickly produced. She brought potatoes and field-fares. Many of you, my little readers, may not know this bird. The field-fare is of the thrush species. It is a bird of passage, which every spring comes in immense numbers from the south of Europe to Germany, and flies further north

to Norway and Sweden, there building nests and rearing the young ones. In autumn they return southwards, choosing especially the districts of country where their favorite food, the juniper-berries, is to be found. On their return flight the birds are caught in thousands; and many of your parents will remember how excellent they taste when cooked.

As the hostess placed the dish of roasted field-fares on the table before her stranger guests, she distinctly heard one of the men whisper to the other, with a low laugh, "These, at any rate, will not tell about it!" At the same moment she noticed some spots of blood on the blue smock-frock of the other man. She left the room, called her husband aside, and told him what she had heard and observed. He went for the police, and the men were at once arrested.

Many letters, inclosing money, of which the postman had been robbed, were found in their possession, and many marks of blood on their clothes. Finding all denial useless, they confessed before the magistrates their dreadful crime. When one of them was asked the meaning of his having said, "These birds will not tell about it," he replied that the murdered man had exclaimed when dying, "Do not think you shall escape. God sees this, and he can make the very birds of the air tell of it!"

On the spot where the murder was committed, under an old beech-tree, a stone cross was placed as a monument to preserve the memory of the faithful postman, and of the remarkable manner in which his death was made known. When I once passed that way with my grandfather, he paused at the cross, and told me the story.

"Be sure your sin will find you out" (Num. xxxii. 23). "Can any hide himself in secret places, that I shall not find him? saith the Lord" (Jer. xxiii. 24). "There is no darkness, nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves" (Job xxiv. 22).

CHURCH BELLS.

THE silence of a Sabbath morning was broken by a peal of church bells. The clear tones resounded over the whole city, and seemed to call upon all who heard them, "Come!—come!—come!—come!"

Not many persons paid attention to the summons, though they certainly understood it. We, however, listened to what they said in excuse for themselves, and also to what their conscience thought of it. Here is what we overheard:—

Bells. "Come!—come!"

Hearers. "We are feeling unwell to-day."

Conscience. "Is it not remarkable how many sick people there are every Sunday? Many a one who is on Saturday quite fresh and well, feels unable on Sunday to go out; and, behold! early on Monday morning the illness is gone! It is certainly a singular circumstance that the whole town seems visited on Sunday by a weekly epidemic of headache, coughs, colds, etc."

Bells. "Come!—come!"

Hearers. "The weather is bad to-day."

Conscience. "Yes, the weather is always bad on Sundays: either too hot, or too cold, too wet, or too windy. Sunday heat is so op-

pressive; Sunday cold so piercing, that no one can go out to church. But in the afternoon or evening, if any amusement is going on,* these discomforts disappear, and the weather becomes good enough."

Bells. "Come!—come!"

Hearers. "We have visitors with us to-day."

Conscience. "Is it not written: The stranger that is within thy gates shall remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy?"

Bells. "Come!—come!"

Hearers. "Our clothes are too shabby."

Conscience. "The Bible in many places speaks about our drawing near to God, but says nothing of the style and quality of garments in which we must appear before him. The church is not a court reception-room. In old times the rich and poor came together, for the Lord is the Maker of them all."

Bells. "Come!—come!"

Hearers. "We are better than many who run to the churches."

Conscience. "It may be true indeed that you are better than this or that other person, but are you therefore perfect? Will the Lord be satisfied with that appeal in the day when he shall render to every man according to his works? You will find something on this subject in the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican."

Bells. "Come!—come!"

Hearers. "We have no seats in the church."

Conscience. "It would be well, certainly, to have a pew of your own for public worship; but in general there is too much room, and you can sit as you please. What poor places at a concert, or in the theatre, men are contented with!"

And so the bells went on calling, "Come!—come!" and some people listened, obeyed, thanked God for the privilege, and resolved to attend public worship always in future. Others held fast by their excuses, and their conscience fell asleep. Yet, ere it was quite silent, it whispered one word more,— "What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"—H. L. L.

THREE HINTS WORTH TAKING.

NEVER attempt to do anything that is not right. Just so surely as you do, you will get into trouble. Sin always brings sorrow sooner or later. If you even suspect that anything is wicked, do it not until you are sure that your suspicions are groundless.

2. When you attempt anything that is right, go through with it. Be not easily discouraged. Form habits of perseverance. Yield not to sloth, and sleep, and fickleness. To resist all these will not be easy, but you will feel that you have done right when you get through.

3. Do not waste your money. Perhaps you have very little. Then take the more care of it. Besides helping to spread the Gospel, buy some good books and read them well. A good book is one of the best things in the world. If you cannot buy as many as you need, borrow from others and return them safe and sound. Never let a book lie where it may be injured.

Do the best you can where you are, and when that is done you will see an opening for something better.