

superstitious people, these men—who are neither more nor less than clever conjurers and rogues—get a good living by imposing upon the simple men and women. They dress in strange attire, sometimes in a cloak of bird's feathers, with a bird's head, legs, and claws, or in a beaver's skin; at other times they will put on horrible masks, or paint their bodies with hideous designs. But when a "medicine" man makes a mistake, or is found out in any of his tricks, he is severely punished, and often killed.

—S. S. Advocate.

## SPRING.

As little children gather round their mother,  
And beg her a familiar tale to tell,—  
One that is dearer far than any other,  
Because so often heard and known so well;

And as they watch her, prompting should she falter,  
And any variations quickly see,  
And cry: "Don't tell it so, don't change  
and alter,  
We want it just the way it used to be,"—

So do we come to thee, O Nature—Mother,  
And never tire of listening to thy tales.  
Tell us thy springtime story now, no other;  
That hath a wondrous charm, which never fails.

Tell it with all the old-time strength and glory,  
Fill it with many a happy song and shout;  
Don't miss one bird or blossom in the story,  
Don't leave one daffodil or daisy out.

Tell us each shade in all the tree's soft greening,  
Don't skip one blade of grass, one bee, one wren,—  
Each little thing has grown so full of meaning,  
In the dear story we would hear again.

O Mother Nature! thou art old and hoary,  
And wonderful and strange things thou canst tell;  
But we, like children, love the springtime story,  
And think it best, because we know it well.

—Jessie Chandlers.

## "A OFFSCOURING."

"Well, yes, ma'am, I have stole!"  
"Why, John!"  
"You asked me, didn't you?"  
"Yes, I asked you," the mission teacher replied, a sad, almost disgusted expression upon her sweet young face.  
"What did you ask me for, if you didn't want me to tell you? I could a lied," the boy went on in a stolid sort of way, and yet with a ring of feeling in his voice.  
"No, you couldn't, Johnny," the teacher answered with a smile, "because you promised me that you would always tell the truth to me."  
"Well, I didn't go back on it, did I?"  
"No, Johnny. Have you any objection to telling me how often you have taken things that didn't belong to you?"  
"Mebbe I can't remember them all, the boy replied. "I never lifted anything particular. Once when the old woman where I hang out got sick and cried a blue streak for oranges, and nobody had the money to get them, I asked the old cove that kept the grocery store to trust me for a couple tin next day. He wouldn't do it, and that night I stole six from him."  
"Why, Johnny!"  
"Why didn't he let me have 'em then?" the boy went on doggedly. "I'd paid, 'cause I said I would. Anyhow, the old woman got well off them oranges."

"Then you are not sorry you took them?" the teacher inquired.

"Well, the old woman had to have them oranges, and somebody had to get them for her."

The teacher's face was very grave, and as her companion looked up he saw the tears in her eye, a sight which had a curious effect upon him.

"Don't make me tell you any more, please, ma'am," he said, dropping his eyes, while his face flushed scarlet. "I ain't nothing but a offscouring anyhow, and it ain't no good to fret about what I do. I was kinder dragged into this place, else I'd never bother you."

"What name did you call yourself?" the teacher inquired. "I didn't understand you."

"Granny Leeds always said I was an offscouring, and so I am."

"What is an offscouring, Johnny?"  
"Oh! the leavings of something that ain't no good."

"Granny Leeds, as you call her, was very much mistaken about yourself, Johnny," the teacher replied. "You are not an offscouring, but one of God's own children, and He is giving you a chance to make something of yourself. How much do you think the things are worth that you have taken, in all, Johnny?"

"The oranges were worth 4 cents apiece when I took them; that's 24; and then two loaves of bread I lifted for two fellows that froze their feet last winter, and a mackerel to make the bread go down. It's awful tough to eat bread without nothing on it; and then a base ball was worth 50 cents, and all them things would make near hand to a dollar. I don't remember anything else."

"Well, Johnny, I shall give you a dollar, and I want you to go to those places and pay for all the things."

"Then I'll have to own up," the boy interrupted.

"Wouldn't you feel better to confess, Johnny?" the young lady inquired, not a little troubled at the effect of her words.

For a moment the boy seemed lost in thought, and then lifting a frank face to his companion, said:

"I ain't never felt perticler bad about any of them things, 'cept the base ball, and that I could a' done without, but if you say so, Miss Lee, I'll give the whole thing away, only as I ain't lifted anything lately, and don't mean to again, they would suspicion me and make me out a thief when I ain't no such thing. Don't you think it would do, ma'am, if I dropped the money in them places so they'd be sure to find it? If you don't think so I'll blow the whole thing if it takes me to the island."

"What will you do, Johnny, if somebody needs bread and oranges and you haven't got any money to buy them with?"

"That's a sticker, ma'am. I donno."  
"And it wouldn't be strange if something of that kind were to happen any day."

"No, ma'am. There is something putty generally to pay the folks I know."

"Well, Johnny, I will tell you what to do," she replied. "Here is my card, and when any of your acquaintances are in trouble I wish you would come directly to me; and if anything is amiss with you at any time, be sure and send a messenger. You had better come up to-morrow, anyway, Johnny, for I want to give you some warm clothes, and

then it will be easy for you to find the place next time."

Johnny hung his head. The kindness had overpowered him, and not a word could he speak.

"I didn't mean to hurt you, Johnny," the tender-hearted teacher hurried to say. "You are willing I should help you, are you not?"

"I guess you had better let me git now, Miss Lee," the boy replied rather huskily; "you could knock me down with an eye winker. You needn't worry about my remembering all you have said; but just now I'm all broke up."

"And I can trust you, Johnny?" the lady inquired.

"It's a go, ma'am," the boy answered, simply.

Miss Lee tucked a \$1 bill in his hand, and Johnny hurried out of the building.

It took considerable tact and skill, as well as time, for the boy to satisfactorily manage the business which his teacher had provided. "The money for. For instance, the grocer from whom he had "lifted" the oranges had sold out to another, and Johnny was obliged to hunt him up. He was at last found, poor and ill, and the boy without a moment's hesitation confessed the theft and produced the money.

"I guess I can make it 30 cents," he said, "and that'll be a little interest. If I wouldn't like to give \$5 then you may shoot me for a crow."

The ex-grocer was so surprised at Johnny's confession and subsequent generosity that he shook the boy's hand heartily, and invited him to step in again soon, which the lad as heartily promised to do.

By nightfall these "back debts," as Johnny naively called them, were settled, and then, after a scanty meal, the boy started out with evening papers.

About a quarter to 8 he had sold out, and then as fast as his feet could carry him he hurried to the neighbourhood of the Academy of Music to watch the people go into the building. It was opera night, and this was one of Johnny's greatest pleasures, and so, with his back to the lamp-post, he gave himself up to the delight of watching the throng. Johnny wondered what it would be like to drive around in luxurious carriages, and have plenty of money to spend on fine clothes. He thought of the bread and herring he had eaten for his supper, and tried to imagine what it would be like to have turkey and cranberry sauce every day. Every Christmas Johnny had turkey and cranberry sauce for his dinner, and he knew by experience how nice they were. He had ridden in an ambulance with a friend of his—a newsboy, who had been run over by an express waggon, and this was the nearest approach to a carriage ride he had ever enjoyed.

He wondered, as he watched these happy, gaily-dressed people, why it was that some people had all they wanted while others were cold and hungry, and sometimes starved to death. This was not the first time that Johnny had been perplexed with such thoughts, but they had never made him feel quite so uncomfortable as on this occasion. He called to mind the warm underclothing and tidy jacket and pants which Miss Lee had given him that day, and tried to comfort himself with the thought that there was one person in the world who cared for him.

There had been a heavy fall of snow that day, and as Johnny, still absorbed

with his thoughts, started to cross the street, he saw something sparkle in the snow at the side of the crossing. There had been a rush of carriages, and a few had not been able to pull up to the curb. As he picked it up he saw it was an ornament in the shape of a cross and studded with diamonds.

Johnny knew they were shiners, as he called them, as soon as he looked at them, so with his heart in his throat he tucked the precious jewel in his pocket, still holding it firmly in his hand. Johnny's ambition was to start a coffee and cake establishment where the newsboys could be entertained at low rates. For more than a year he had nursed this object, and here was a chance to carry it into execution. There were nine stones in the cross. Disposing of one at a time to avoid suspicion, here was money enough to last him years and years, he told himself. It puzzled him to know where he could keep the shiners, for there wasn't a soul among his acquaintances whom he dare trust with a secret. Not until he had crept into his poverty-stricken bed, with his treasure carefully hidden among the straw, did the thought occur that he ought to try and find an owner for it. Then followed a hard battle between the natural honesty of the lad and his very natural desire for creature comforts.

The person who could wear a gold thing like that "chock full of shiners," he said to himself, must have money enough to buy more shiners. Here he was, cold and hungry, with no prospect before him but to be always hungry, it not always cold; and here were these "shiners" which would set him up in business and give him a chance to help the boys. Why should he find the owner of the cross when he had nothing and the owner had everything? This fight continued until it was time for the lad to start for the morning papers. All through the busiest part of the forenoon the battle still raged, and the newsboy's thoughts were so occupied with his new-found riches that he almost forgot to attend to his customers. About half-past 10, as he passed City Hall park, he noticed a gentleman, and as he heard the words "diamond cross" spoken, Johnny slackened his pace and listened.

"The diamonds were all of the first water," the gentleman said: "it was a gift to my wife from her father, and she is terribly cut up by the loss. I don't suppose we shall ever find it."

"You will advertise it, won't you?" his companion inquired.

"Oh, of course," the gentleman replied, "but more than likely it has fallen into dishonest hands, and unless the reward is equal to the value of the diamonds we shall never see them."

When the gentlemen separated, the one who was interested in the diamonds entered the City Hall, and after a little inquiry, Johnny discovered that this gentleman held a very honourable office in the city department. After reading this out the lad took a turn round the park to think it over again.

"Granny Leeds said I was an offscouring, and Miss Lee says I ain't," he argued to himself. "If I keep these shiners, granny'll be right and Miss Lee'll be wrong. She said the Lord was giving me a chance to make something of myself. Well, now, the question is, am I or am I not an offscouring. If I keep these shiners I am, if I give them up, I ain't. Well, I ain't," and with these words on his lips, Johnny started for