

The Crow.

(By E. E. Herick, in the 'Congregationalist and Christian World'.)

O much defamed, disparaged bird,
One friend thou hast among thy foes,
Whose heart with joy sincere is stirred,
When on the edge of Winter's snows
Thy horst 'caw, caw,' again is heard.

Those whom thy greeting song repels
Hear not the far-off melodies
Which its prophetic voice foretells,
Nor know that in a dark disguise
A soul of beauty often dwells.

To me the blackest crow is dear,
For Summer rides upon his wings,
His trumpet wakes the sleeping year,
And every lark and thrush that sings
I seem in his harsh call to hear.

'The Winding Stair.'

I want to tell you something about the spider's web. Perhaps you say, 'Oh, I hate spiders. they make me shudder.' I know they are not favorites with children, and in some countries they have good reason to be afraid of them, but they need have no fear in this country. Probably you have borrowed your dislike of spiders from your mothers. Kind as mothers are to their children they are merciless in regard to spiders. This is easily explained. They want their rooms to be sweet and clean, and consequently if a spider has been able to spin its web, why, then it is a reflection of their cleanliness, and this, of course, no woman could endure.

Notwithstanding all that good housewives can do to exterminate spiders we know enough of their work to realize some of its ingenuity, and perhaps, some of its beauty.

I wonder if you ever watched a spider spin its web! First of all, how does it obtain the one silky thread with which it spins? Ah! here is a wonderful thing which is worth all your attention.

It is with spiders just as it is with the silk moth caterpillars, Mrs. Spider always spins the web. The stuff out of which it is made exists within her body in a fluid state. If you look at a spider closely you will find a sort of star-like figure on it which is really made up of a number of tubes. Then if you take a microscope you will see that each of these tubes bristles at the end with very tiny points. Through every one of these the fluid is forced, and when it comes into the air it dries and is capable of being drawn out into the fine threads you see. The single thread, that is, has been formed of a multitude of the united strands which have issued from the spinnerets. We wonder at the fineness of a single thread, but what are we to say when we find it is really made as thick as it is by hundreds of strands!

But it is more to the web than to the thread that I want to draw your attention. When you have an opportunity just watch the spider at work. You will see how that she first squeezes a drop of liquid silk from the tubes and then draws it into a long thread which she cautiously lets herself down foremost and with her hind legs makes the thread more perfect. This stiffens as it dries. Then she wings herself to the opposite side of the wall, and there again fixes her thread. After this she lays as many threads as she wants in one direction and then proceeds to cross them until the web is complete.

But now what is this wonderful web for? Why, it is just to catch the feet of the unwary! Behind the web, and quite out of sight, Mrs. Spider calmly awaits the coming of her victim, and she has constructed her snare that the slightest vibration of one of the strings is felt by her, so that if a fly so much as touches it she knows, and then with a sudden rush along the threads she pounces down upon her victim, whose feet have become entangled in trying to escape, and all hope is gone. Her poison fangs are in its body in a moment, and it is dead.

It is thus, you see, a dangerous thing to tread upon her 'winding stair,' for whosoever goes up 'ne'er comes down again.' If, therefore, the fly was wise he would not listen to her call—'walk into my parlor,' he would crush down his desire to see the 'many pretty things' there said to be displayed, and keep

far enough away. For as the wise king said of folly—'She crieth to the simple, let him turn in hither, but he knoweth not that the dead are there, and that her guests are in the depths of horror.'

Thus does the spider's web woven on the walls of our houses utter a warning, and the warning is this—'Don't listen to every voice which says "come into my parlor." However enticing and beautiful the parlor may be beyond the winding stairs, don't tread upon a single step for the stairs are the steps which lead to ruin.'

When your companions say—'Never mind what your mother says, let us have some fun,' don't listen, it is a step on the winding stair.

When you are asked to give up your Band of Hope principles and practices, don't listen. Sixty thousand of the youths of England every year ascend the winding stairs and never come down again. I say again, don't listen, don't be enticed.

When you are asked to buy a 'dirty' paper, or read a filthy book, don't listen. Reading such will stir up evil thoughts in your mind, and you cannot tell the end. I say again, don't listen, remember the winding stair. And in this, you will have to be careful even in your selection of the books you may take out of libraries.

When you are asked to bet just a penny, or put a shilling on a horse, don't listen. Betting and gambling is like climbing the winding stair. If you once begin you can never be what you ought to be.

Alas! that it should be so. Mothers may sweep down spiders' webs from the walls, but there are winding stairs in many and many a home over which they can only weep. Take your warning from the webs and keep clear of them all.—Uncle Harry, in 'Church Family Newspaper.'

A Fresh Air Patient.

Dennis Mahoney sat in his small, hard chair, with his crutch by his side, and looked at the doctor. He liked the doctor. He felt, though he couldn't explain why, that the doctor had a kind heart under his outside gruffness. And however rough his voice might be, his hand was as gentle as a mother's and much more skilful. But neither the doctor's kindness nor his skill had been able to put good health into Dennis' weakly little body, nor soundness into the lame leg that prevented him from running round and playing with other boys, and which some one had cruelly told him he would 'never get over.'

'What the boy needs,' said the doctor to Mrs. Mahoney, 'what he must have, indeed, is pure, fresh country air, pure, rich country milk, and pure, blue country sky and plenty of them all.'

Mrs. Mahoney, having just quitted her wash-tub, wiped her arms on her apron, and looked with a queer sort of a smile at the doctor.

'Perhaps,' she said, dryly, 'ye've got the Good Samaritan in yer pocket that's goin' to give him all that. Sure, he won't come out of my wash-tub.'

'You ought to know by this time,' said the doctor, in a tone as dry as her own, 'that I am not given to prescribing impossible remedies.'

'To do ye justice,' interpolated Mrs. Mahoney, 'when ye do, ye brings 'em wid ye. But this time—'

'Don't be foolish, Mrs. Mahoney,' said the doctor severely, 'this time is going to be no exception. Can you have him ready to take my prescription (or what it calls for) at ten o'clock day-after-to-morrow morning?'

Mrs. Mahoney looked at him long enough to make sure that he was in earnest, and then wiped her eyes where she had wiped her arms. 'Sure, doether,' she began brokenly, 'ye're the kindest—'

'I've not time to listen to unnecessary talk,' returned the doctor gruffly. 'Remember, will you? that I shall call for him at ten o'clock sharp the day-after-to-morrow—that is Thursday. He is going to the country; and he is going to stay there till he is better, if it takes all summer. And if you must buy him a cap or a coat, or something there's the money;' and laying a crisp bank-bill on the table, the doctor hurried off to escape any more 'unnecessary talk.'

So it came about that Dennis joined a fresh-air party, being especially commended by the doctor to the deaconess in charge. It was the first time that the boy had ever been outside the city precincts, and his idea of the country was as vague as the outlines of a ship in a thick fog. Consequently the journey on the train was an endless wonder to Dennis. So was the landscape—the fields, trees, cattle and houses that slid by him so fast that he could not see half of them. So was the large pleasant 'home' in its fields and gardens, where his journey ended. In his wildest dreams he had never imagined anything so strange and beautiful.

And the bread and milk were so good! and the bed so white and soft! and every one—not only the dear deaconess, but every one—was so kind to him! At first he sat on the piazza and watched the children at their games, and every now and then they called to him to make him feel that he was, as they said, a 'part of the show.' By and by he began to walk a little himself; there was always some one to lean on and to guide him. He saw pigs fed and cows milked; he rode in the farm waggon and rolled in the hay field. He did so many new and interesting things that he thought it would take at least a month to tell his mother all about it when he got home.

Due notice was given of his coming, and Mrs. Mahoney's impatient mother-heart made her get up at midnight and do her day's washing, so that she could meet him at the station. 'It'll be so fine to see him looking better,' she said, 'that I can't wait for him to bring him.'

But when she saw him get out of the train, fat, rosy, brown, and actually without his crutch (she had not expected that), she covered her face and began to weep as if her heart were broken.

'Why, mother!' said Dennis, wonderingly, 'ain't ye glad to see me all well again?'

'Glad!' she exclaimed, 'troth and I am that! I'm so glad that I'm like to burst! And if iver I get a hould of that doether again, I'll—'

But what terrible threat was hidden in that unfinished sentence must needs be left to the imagination; for just there her voice broke down again, and her tears fell faster than before. So she could only sob out brief thanks to the deaconess, and walk away with her recovered Dennis—oh, the joy of it!—walking beside her.—The 'Mission News.'

Behind it All.

Behind words lie deeds, behind deeds qualities, behind qualities intentions, and the distinction between one man and another is the innermost ambition and the chosen attitude of the soul. The final judgment lies with God, who knows all things, and God judges us by the heart.—John Watson, D.D.

TAKING TIME BY THE FORELOCK.

It would certainly be a surprise to some of our 'Pictorial' boys could they see our April order book and notice how large a list of orders we get on file by the 25th of one month for the following month's supply. It shows how more and more the boys realize that if they want to work up a good business, it won't do to wait till they see the current issue in the hands of subscribers or on the news stand and then send in their order. That's all very well for a starter, but for real business, you want to be in at the first. However, if you've not sent in YOUR order yet, you can't do it sooner now, so send in at once and we'll give it prompt attention.

THE NEW COMPETITION.

Don't forget that the new competition starts with this April issue. Besides premiums or cash commissions, YOU may, by working up the largest sales for April, May and June, secure one of these fine prizes: (1) A WATERMAN FOUNTAIN PEN; (2) A Pocket Tool Case (eleven tools); (3) A Coat Pocket Electric Flash Light. (See further particulars in Easter 'Pictorial'.) Or you may come at the top of your own province and get a nice book. Those who start in early get the lead, and it's easier to keep the lead from the start than to drop back and make a big spurt at the last. Let us hear from you. A postcard asking for a package of 'Pictorials' to start your sales on will bring them promptly, also our premium list and other helps.

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