



The Family Circle.

THE MOCKING-BIRD AND THE DONKEY.

(From the Spanish of the Mexican Poet Jos Rosas.)

BY WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT

A mock-bird in a village
Had somehow gained the skill
To imitate the voices
Of animals at will.

And singing in his prison,
Once, at the close of day,
He gave with great precision
The donkey's heavy bray.

Well pleased, the mock-bird's master
Sent to the neighbors round,
And bade them come together
To hear that curious sound.

They came, and all were talking
In praise of what they heard,
And one delighted lady
Would fain have bought the bird.

A donkey listened sadly,
And said: "Confess I must
That these are shallow people,
And terribly unjust.

"I'm bigger than the mock-bird,
And better bray than he,
Yet not a soul has uttered
A word in praise of me."
—St. Nicholas.

THE PARSON'S EXPERIMENT.

A district visitor relates in the *Sunday Magazine* the following incident concerning a clergyman who believes in the practical application of the law of love in preference to the law of the police court. The writer says:—

For clearness sake we will call our friend Mr. B., and mention that he is a married man with a family. One afternoon his son, a little fellow about eight years of age, asked him for a shilling wherewith he wished to buy something by way of a birthday gift to a school-mate. The shilling was given him, and he immediately set out in joyous haste to make his purchase, little dreaming of the adventure that awaited him. He had not gone very far when the shilling fell out of his hand and rolled down the grating of an area. As it happened in a respectable neighborhood, this in itself was not a particularly alarming occurrence to an intelligent, well-mannered boy. Ringing the bell of the house to which the area pertained, he politely explained matters to the servant who answered the door, and she at once descended to recover the shilling for him. She easily found it, and was just handing it up when, lo and behold, a burly figure stepped in between her and the boy, and a rough voice exclaimed, "That's my shilling; let's have it."

"No, sir, it is my shilling," said the boy. "Why, what do you mean, you young varmint?" answered the intruder, affecting surprise and virtuous indignation; "I've just dropped it; my mates there sed me," and as he spoke he pointed to a man and two women of tramping appearance, who stood waiting for him a little in advance. "Come, let's have it," he repeated, and suiting the action to the word, he snatched the coin from the still upraised hand of the astonished servant and hastened to join his companions. To the child whose money he had thus seized, this ready-witted, prompt-acting spoiler must have seemed a fearsome-looking creature. He was big and rough of build, and determined of look; and his face as well as his clothing was dust-begrimed and travel-stained. A sheaf of split cane hanging slantwise across his shoulders stamped him as of the chair-caning profession, to which trade his two companions also belonged. Though fully impressed with the unpromising appearance of this man, the little fellow mustering up his courage, boldly followed him up, and with tears demanded restitution of his shilling. He was met, however, with fiercely uttered threats, under which he was quickly fain to retreat, weeping as he went for the loss of his money. On his road home he met a policeman, whose aid he invoked, but the official servant of the law took no notice of his complaint.

Of this last point he made a special grievance when, on reaching home, he proceeded to relate the woeful story of his misadventures to his father. The parent, to the child's

astonishment, replied to him on this head, that he was very glad the policeman had not taken any notice of him; that he did not believe in policemen meddling with wrong-doers, at least, until every means which Christians should use had been tried. It would not be the best way to send the man to prison. "But we won't let the matter drop," he quickly added, seeing his son's look of disappointment, "you must have your shilling back, if possible, for several reasons; so come with me, and see if we can find this man."

So saying, he put on his hat, took his child by the hand, and set out on what most people would have probably considered a wild-goose chase. But there was method in his apparent madness. He knew the ways of life prevailing among such itinerants as chair-caners, and from that knowledge reasoned—correctly, as the event proved—that the worthy trio concerned in "conveying" the shilling, concluding from there being no immediate pursuit that they had safely "bounced" the child out of the money, would not go far without proceeding to "melt" it in drink; and thus gave him a chance of catching them up. He was prepared to recognize them from his son's description of their dress and appearance, and he sighted them just as they were coming out of a public-house, wiping their mouths as they came.

Still holding his child by the hand, our parson friend stepped forward, and, confronting the astonished chair-caner, said—"You have taken a shilling from my little boy, here; give it back to him, please." The chair-mending gang consisted of two men and two women, of the ordinary hard-featured, slouching, drabby tramp look. The man, about forty years of age, weather-beaten, somewhat bloated, with grizzly beard, and altogether unpromising look, was evidently taken aback by such moderate language being addressed to him in so firm a tone. That such an accusation and demand should be put in simple, quietly spoken words, was an altogether novel experience to him; and it was some little time before he could screw his own courage to the blustering point, and deny the charge with the explosion of expletives, which he deemed necessary to such an occasion.

"Pray don't add lying to dishonesty, my man; that is making bad very much worse; you have taken the shilling, and made a little boy very miserable," came the reply to this outburst of denial. "I can see what the boy says is true in both your faces. I don't want to harm you,—I only want to do you good. You'll be a worse man for to-day's work if you don't give him back that shilling."

"I haven't his shilling, and you'd better mind what you're saying, or I'll make you prove your words," answered the chair-caner, still trying though less successfully than at first, to assume a tone of virtuous indignation.

"Which is true, my boy or you, can be easily proved, I think, if you will kindly come with me to the house where the shilling was dropped. Will you come? I'm not going to make a police case of it,—I only want back the shilling."

"Come! of course I'll come," answered the man with a swaggering confidence of tone that might have staggered a less shrewd or experienced observer than our friend.

The woman accompanying the chair-caner was his wife, and at this point, in a most excited manner, she put in her word.

"Don't go, Bill," she exclaimed in genuine alarm, and with clenched fist, and in somewhat close quarters, was proceeding to pour out the vials of her wrath upon the pertinacious parson, when she was stopped by an angry and emphatic, "You shut up," from her husband.

"Don't blame your wife for believing in you. She doubtless has good cause," said our friend unaffectedly. "But we had better have it to ourselves—come along;" and the man, apparently nothing daunted, defiantly flung down his bundle of canes at his wife's feet, and at once set out with him: the crowd that had of course gathered around them while they had been speaking, following a little way at their heels. His agreeing to go back had been mere "bounce" upon the chair-caner's part, but the resolute action of Mr. B. convincing him that he was dealing with a man who was not to be "bounced," he once more changed his plan of defence. They had not gone many yards when, suddenly coming to a standstill, he exclaimed—and now there was a touch of genuine feeling in his voice—"Has it come to this, that I am called on to prove myself an honest man? I'll not go. I'm a poor man, but I'm honest, as honest as you are. What should I go for?"

"It may be so," was the answer: "we all have our weak points. I sin in one way, and, maybe, you sin in another; and we ought never to be ashamed to confess it. It's a cold day. You might be short of money. It's easy to keep your hands off other people's shillings when you have plenty of your own. I assure you I want to do you

no harm; I want to prevent you doing yourself harm. If you have really been an honest man till now, and have now suddenly yielded to temptation, that is all the greater reason why I should not let you go till you have returned the shilling. Come, now, you must give it back."

"Or else you'll charge me, I suppose?" said the man questioningly.

"Certainly not," answered our friend with an earnestness of repudiation that put the chair-caner "all abroad," as to whatever manner of man he could be that had got hold of him. One who "stuck to him like a leech" for the restoration of misappropriated money, and yet thus threw away his most powerful weapon (for such, according to his idea, was a threat to "charge" him), was to him a startling anomaly. "It's because I believe in you that I talk to you, rather than give the case to the police."

"I would not on any account give you into the hands of the police," went on the parson, seeing that his man was for the moment struck dumb. "You have children to feed, I dare say, as I have, and I would not rob them and your wife of your labour; they need it, I am sure. I am not following you up like this for the sake of the shilling, but for your sake, your character's sake, your soul's sake. I would give you money if I knew you needed it, but to let you go away with a shilling dishonestly come by would not be kind. It would be doing you an irreparable injury. Sin, my man, goes from little to great. If you had got clear with that shilling, you would in all likelihood be tempted at some future time to do something worse. No, my man, you must get back your character as an honest man by giving up that shilling. It's yourself I want to get back, not the shilling." There was an encouraging pause. Then he continued, "You have yielded to temptation, and unless you repent and make restitution you can never think well of yourself again. Come, now, give me back the money; cast it from you as you would a curse." The chair-caner stood confused and silent, but evidently moved and impressed.

To Mr. B. it was clear that he had at length found the good thing in the man. He felt it, and, guessing, at the cause of the accused man's still-continued silence and hesitancy, he came to his relief by saying, "Is it that you haven't got the shilling left; that you have spent it, I mean?"

"Yes, sir," he answered, with eyes cast down, and in a voice scarcely above a whisper, "that is how I'm held. We have had a drop of rum apiece."

"Well, I can quite believe you there," said Mr. B., "and of course you can't give up what you no longer possess. Still, for your own sake, you must make good the shilling. You say you are an honest man; and I will take your word for it. Will you take mine that I am one too, and let us treat each other as honest men? Here is my card"—handing out a card from his case—"give me yours—you have a card with your business on, I dare say, and I will trust to your sending me the shilling by post when you have one to spare." This card was handed out, and the exchange duly made. So the offer was accepted, and on this understanding the chair-caner was at length allowed to go on his way, with a "Good day," certainly a sadder, and, as the event proved, a wiser man from his encounter with Mr. B. The card showed the residence of the man to be ten miles away.

When Mr. B. returned home and related his adventure, even "those of his own house" were against him. They "wondered" how he could be so foolish; put it that the proper and obvious and common-sense thing for him to have done was either to have let the shilling go, or to have given the man into custody; and "really had no patience with him," when his boy related the exchange of cards. Outsiders—for passers-by stopped at the crowd and heard what was going on and told the story—for the most part laughed the latter idea to scorn when they heard of it; and as day after day passed without bringing him any news of the chair-caner, he was genially bantered about the evident absurdity of his notions that good was to be found in everybody, even in a thief, if we could only be wise and patient enough to get at him. But his own sight of the better side of the shilling-stealer's nature, and the success of his appeal to it, was in nowise shaken by the hardness of belief in others. He knew better than most others how long it might take so poor a man to make up even a spare shilling, and making due allowance on this head, he held lovingly, loyally, and hopefully to his own higher view. At length his faith had its reward. After a lapse of some weeks a letter from the chair-caner arrived, enclosing a shilling's worth of stamps. With all its imperfections of penmanship and orthography upon its head, we think this letter is one of which any Christian, who had been the means of drawing it forth, might be proud, and we may say for our friend that he is proud of it, numbering it among the more val-

uable of the honorable trophies of his work. The letter is short, and in its simplicity will best speak for itself:—

"B—.

DEAR SIR,—I Enclose you one shilling worth . of . stamps . and I Humbly beg your Pardon . for What I did . Hoping you Will forgive me . and God . Likewise it Was all through . Drink .

I Remain your Humble Servant,
WILLIAM D.—

No. 2, L—Terrace, F—
Road, B—.

It was some years after the occurrence of this little adventure that we heard of it, and felt curious to know how it might have affected the mind and actions of the chair-caner. Through the medium of some of the craft resident in our own district we made his acquaintance, and finding that though rather gruff, he was an honest, straightforward, sensible fellow, we ventured to broach the subject of his encounter with Mr. B.

"Ah," he said, "that gentleman did a good day's work that day; if there was more like him in the world there would be less of the kind that I'd have been by this time if he'd a done by me as most would a' done. It was as true as I stand here, that I had never before touched a penny that wasn't my own. The man didn't breathe that could have said a word agen my good name, or my father's afore me; and if I'd have been charged, and my character spoilt, I shouldn't have cared what I had done after, and I'd have been certain to have gone to the bad. But you see he didn't charge me. Instead of shoving me deeper into the mire, he lifts me out of the ditch, and puts me in the right road again. And what he done for me that day ain't been thrown away on me, though I say it as shouldn't. I've known what it is to be short of bread since then, but never to feel inclined to give way to temptation to be dishonest; and though I don't make any particular profession, thinking over what he said to me has made me more like what I know he would like me to be than I should have been. Though I didn't think so at the time, it was a blessed job for me that he overtook me that day. The poison was beginning to work as you may say, for when he come up I was just saying how much easier it was to pick up money the way I'd just been doing than by tramping about looking for work. As the gentleman said, if I had got off with that shilling, there is no saying what it would have led to. However, he did find me, and go where he will there will always be one man that will have good cause to say, God bless him."

THE TURNING-POINT.

A good minister had grown weary over his books and so threw them all aside for a brisk walk in the open air. Nothing rests body and mind like this.

As Dr. B— was passing the corner of the park, he observed a lad with a valise in his hand, just turning into the street. He paused a moment as if uncertain which course to take. A moment's glance showed to the clergyman that the lad was from the country. Such ruddy cheeks and vigorous muscles did not grow in the shade of a city home. It flashed through the good man's mind, that this boy was leaving his early home as he had done some forty years ago; and in imagination he recalled that parting scene with a feeling of gentle sadness that made him at once feel an interest in the boy before him.

"Please, sir, will you direct me to Le Roy street?" he asked respectfully. The clergyman gave the desired direction, and then added—

"You have come from a home in the country to find a situation in the city, have you, my boy?"

There was something so kindly in the tone that it went at once to the boy's heart. A moment before he had felt so utterly alone!

"My father died a month ago," he said, "and my mother has got a place for me at my cousin's store."

"Well, my boy, I trust you have a good mother; I can usually tell by a boy's looks what kind of a mother he has. Remember all her good counsels, and be especially careful how you spend your Sabbaths. If you begin by going out to walk for your health or pleasure, you will end in the liquor-saloon, and all the haunts of wickedness. Anchor yourself in the Church and the Sabbath-school. Here is the address of mine, if you would like to attend it. Our superintendent loves boys, and so do I. Remember that the way you spend your first Sabbath in the city will very likely be the turning-point of your life. Good-bye, and may God give you His blessing always."

The good man gave his hand heartily to the stranger-lad as he bade him good-bye.

"I'll walk the length of this city through to find that man's church and Sunday-school," said Robbie to himself, as he walked rapidly on, his heart cheered and strengthened by that little act of sympathy.