

A Swan Song.

BY META E. B. THORNE.

"WHERE is our Mabel, our beautiful darling?"
Wild ran the cry over crag and o'er lea.
Ah, they have traced her, by fairy-like foot-prints,
Down to the shore of the treacherous sea.
There, where the tide in its ebb left uncovered
Long sloping stretches of silvery sand,
Stands little Mabel, with wind-rippled tresses,
Stands she, alas! widely severed from land.

"How did she reach it?" The tide had receded
Far back of yon rock a short hour ago;
Searching for pebbles and delicate sea-shells,
The child wandered thither; no fear did she know.
High on its summit, safe, she thought, from danger,
She perched like a bird blithely liting in glee,
Heedless, until the dark waves rushing round her,
Threatened to bear her far out to the sea.

What shall she do? Ah, who now can save her?
No boat at hand, and no strong arm is near.
A few frightened women and children gaze dumbly—
Mother and friends fairly helpless with fear.
Then rushes forward Alina, her sister,
None can restrain her, no voice does she heed;
Over the white beach and into the ocean
She plunges intent on some glorious deed.

She reaches the rock, but each moment the billows
More madly breaks round it as in sweeps the tide;
Weary and breathless she looks o'er the surges
Vainly; all hope of return seems denied.
"Mabel!" she whispers, as close to her bosom
The little one nestles in confident love,
"Jesus can help us to win our way homeward,
Or he can bear us to safety above.

See how in anguish dear mother is weeping!
Can we not show her we do not despair?
What can we say?" Then a pure, childish treble
Rose like a song-bird, high, clear, on the air;
"In every high and stormy gale
My anchor holds within the veil
On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand,
All other ground is sinking sand."

Two voices joined ere the first strain was ended,
Rich, pure, and strong in their undaunted faith.
Calmly brave eyes looked across the mad waters,
Bringing so swiftly and surely their death.
Higher and higher the billows are rising,
Foaming and raging as eager for prey;
One last glance shoreward, and then upward gazing,
Once more sweet voices ring out o'er the bay:—
"On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand,
All other ground is sinking sand."

Then comes a billow, white-crested, swift rushing,
Breaks o'er the rock. Straining eyes on the shore
Eagerly watching those slight, girlish figures,
Look for them vainly—they see them no more.
Higher the tide still flows in, every billow
Sweeping on toward the crags and the lea;
Will they be dashed on the rocks, or be carried
By the return tide far out to the sea.

What is it yonder? Two white, upturned faces
Tossed by the waters now hither, now there!
Hark to the agonized cry of the mother:
"My children! My children!" Oh, voice of despair!
Surges that beat on the rough rocks so madly,
Bear them as tenderly here as ye may!
Just at the feet of the grief-stricken mother:
Two rigid forms are cast rudely that day.

Mabel, safe clasped in the arms of her sister,
Now gently cared for, half opens her eyes;
'Gainst jagged rocks roughly dashed, bruised and wounded,
Alina's brave soul has gone home to the skies,
Gone with the song on her lips but half-finished,
Gone from the dear ones with hearts anguish riven;
Strong faith is merged in the more perfect vision—
Hope finds fruition eternal in heaven.

WHAT we call trouble is only His key that draws
our heartstrings truer, and brings them up sweet
and even to the heavenly pitch. Don't mind the
strain; believe in the *note* every time. His finger
touches and sounds it. If you are glad for one
minute in the day, that is His minute; the minute
He means and works for.

The White Signal.

It is told of Charles George Gordon, that, when
in the Soudan, one half-hour each morning there
lay before his tent door a white handkerchief.
"And," says the one writing of it, "the whole
camp knew the significance of that small token,
and most religiously was it respected. No foot
dared to enter the tent so guarded. No message,
however pressing, was carried in; whatever it was
—of life or death—it had to wait until the signal
was withdrawn. Everyone knew that God and
Gordon were alone there together."

What a reproof this is to those who live from
"hand to mouth," as regards prayer! If the
morning holds a quiet hour; if the ones comprising
our little world keep away from us, and give us a
chance; if the wants do not press in too clamour-
ously; and, above all, if we can do it unobstru-
sively—in a way that tells none what we are about
—we withdraw and hold communication with the
One our faith holds to, condensing or expanding
the time as circumstances seem to warrant.

Is this not true? Is not this a fair representa-
tion of the way most of us draw our heavenly
store for the day's need? Now, not until we sys-
tematize, and not until we come out boldly and
say, "I must have this daily supply of grace, and
I will;" not until we place the day's duties back
of us resolutely at some stated hour, and say to
them, "Wait," can we hope to scale the higher
walls where the sun rests continually, and the soul
finds benediction waiting at each day's end.—*The
Moravian.*

The Throstle at Work.

YES, even while I write, it is hard at work in
that holly-tree there, not many yards from my study
window. For some days past it has been very busy
getting together materials for a nest. I saw it
carry the first few twigs and pieces of withered
grass into the tree, and now the nest must be
nearly completed. I do not intend climbing the
tree to look at it, for two reasons: first, because a
holly-tree is not an agreeable tree to climb; and
second, if the throstle saw me up the tree it would
probably forsake the nest. The nest will contain
four or five beautiful eggs; and if the coarse, cruel
boys get to know this, they will try to steal them;
and there are even coarse, cruel men who would do
the same thing. But I have resolved to defend
that nest with all the strength I possess. It is
very seldom the throstle builds so near the habitation
of man, and I will show it that its confidence in this
instance has not been misplaced. If any one wishes
to rob that nest, they will first have to settle the
matter with me. In collecting the materials for it,
bit by bit, hundreds of journeys have been performed,
and after all the trouble that has been expended in
putting the nest together, it would be a cruel thing
to pull it to pieces, for the sake of the few eggs
that are in it. While, to rob it after the eggs have
changed into soft, downy, warm little birdies,
would be an act of heartless barbarity, such as, I
hope, no reader of HOME AND SCHOOL is capable of.
If God notices the fall of a bird to the ground, he
notices its keen anguish as it flutters, shrieking
wildly, over its ruined home; and he notices also
the boy who causes all this misery.

Surely the throstle, of all birds, should remain
unmolested. Were its clear, delightful notes hushed
to silence, how much duller would this bright
season be! Amid all the beautiful sights and
sounds of joyous springtime, what object sends so
much gladness as the throstle perched on the sum-
mit of the tree in the morning light, singing with
all its strength, like the glorified spirit of Spring!

"High on a bare, conspicuous spray,
That none may doubt who chants the lay."

After the terrors of the long winter, how soothing is
the sweet bird-music which now comes pouring in
upon us from every tree and bush and hedgerow!
We have been taught to believe that all things
serve a Divine purpose, from the brightest arch-
angel before the throne down to the tiniest dew-
drop that reflects the glory of the rising sun. Dr.
Bonar's lines are well known—

"Thou usest all thy works,
The weakest things that be;
Each has a service of its own,
For all things wait on thee.
Thou usest tree and flower,
The rivers vast and small;
The eagle great, the little bird
That sits upon the wall."

May we not regard the singing birds as the natural
angels of God, sent forth to minister to us in our
sadness, and to tell us that our Father remembers
us still! While I am writing these lines, the old,
but ever fresh, melodious notes are borne to me on
the quiet evening air, from a neighboring tree.
Thank God for the song of the throstle! May we
have grace to carry its music with us into all our
future life!

Cigarette Smoking.

THE boy who buys cigarettes is sure to injure
himself.

Now, I will take the most favourable case of all,
and the rarest. Suppose a boy has a lot of good
cigarettes, and smokes a few of them every day.
Is there any injury in that?

I can tell you—for I have had such boys for
patients. Such smoking, even in so-called modera-
tion—as if there were such a thing as moderation
in stimulants for the young!—will do three things
for him: 1. It will run his pulse up to one hundred
or more per minute. 2. It will reduce his weight
below the healthy standard. 3. It will reduce his
strength and general vitality, as well as appear in
his pale complexion and his diminished appetite.

If this is true of boys smoking under the least
injurious conditions, how much truer is it in the
more frequent case where bad and adulterated to-
bacco, and excessive smoking, combine in their
attack upon the delicate tissues of the growing lad?
The physiologist will tell you that the effect of
stimulants in general is to check the changes in
tissue. In a growing animal of any kind this
means to check the growth.

The dog fancier is said to give whiskey to the
puppy when he wishes to stunt its growth. I do
not know whether he has taught puppies to smoke,
but it would be a good way to keep them from
growing.

It is no use, of course, to point out the trials and
troubles of learning to smoke. No youngster but
is cheerfully willing to brave them, for nothing
gives him so much a sense of "manliness," as he
imagines it, as the mastery of this accomplishment.

In conclusion. Cigarette smoking is one of the
worst habits, physically, that a boy can form. It
injures the heart and the digestion, and it tends to
check the growth. It gives a lad false and silly
notions, and does not bring him into good com-
pany. I am not one of those who think that severe
measures are often necessary in the management of
children that receive a careful and affectionate
training. But if, in some cases, nothing else will
do, it is well to consider that a "switch in time
saves nine."

ALL actual heroes are essential men, and all men
are possible heroes.