



What "Sing a Song of Sixpence" Means.

You all know this rhyme, but have you ever heard what it really means?

The four-and-twenty blackbirds represent the twenty-four hours. The bottom of the pie is the world, while the top crust is the sky that over-arches it. The opening of the pie is the day-dawn, when the birds begin to sing, and surely such a sight is fit for a King.

The King, who is represented sitting in his parlor counting out his money, is the sun, while the gold pieces that slip through his fingers, as he counts them, are the golden sunbeams.

The Queen who sits in the dark kitchen is the moon, and the honey with which she regales herself is the moonlight.

The industrious maid, who is in the garden at work before her King—the sun—has risen, is the day-dawn, and the clothes she hangs out are the clouds. The bird who so tragically ends the song by "nipping off her nose" is the sunset. So we have the whole day, if not in a nut-shell, in a pie.

The Tin Bank.

Speaking of banks, I'm bound to say
That a bank of tin is far the best,
And I know of one that has stood for years
In a pleasant home away out West;
It has stood for years on the mantelpiece,
Between the clock and the Wedgewood plate—
A wonderful bank, as you'll concede
When you've heard the things I'll now relate.

This bank was made of McKinley tin,
Well soldered up at sides and back;
But it didn't resemble tin at all,
For they'd painted it over an iron black,
And that it really was a bank
Twas an easy thing to see and say,
For above the door in gorgeous red
Appeared the letters B-A-N-K!

This bank has been so well devised
And wrought so cunningly, that when
You put your money in at the hole
It couldn't get out of that hole again!
Some where about that stanch, snug thing
A secret spring was hid away,
But where it was or how it worked—
Excuse me, please, but I will not say.

Thither, with dimpled cheeks aglow,
Came pretty children oftentimes,
And, standing up on stool or chair,
Put in their dimes and pennies;
Once Uncle Hank came home from town
After a cycle of grand events,
And put in a round, blue ivory thing
He said was good for fifty cents!

The bank went clinkety-clinkety-clink,
And larger grew the precious sum
Which grandma said she hoped would prove
A precious boon to heathendom!
But there were those—I call no names—
Who did not fancy any plan
That did not in some wise involve
The candy and banana man.

Listen: Once when the wind went "Yooooooooo!"
And the raven croaked in the tangled tangle—
When, with a wall, the screech-owl flew
Out of her lair in the haunted barn—
There came three burglars down the road—
Three burglars skilled in the arts of sin,
And they cried, "What's this! Ah! Oh!"
And straightway tackled the bank of tin.

They burgled from half-past ten P. M.
Till the village bell struck four o'clock;
They hunted and searched, and guessed and tried—
But the little tin bank would not unlock—
They couldn't discover the secret spring!
So, when the barn-yard rooster crowed,
They up with their tools and stole away
With the bitter remark that they'd be blown!

Next morning came a sweet-faced child
And reached her dimpled hand to take
A nickel to give to the heathen poor
And a nickel to send for her stomach's sake.
She pressed the hidden secret spring,
And lo! the bank flew open then
With a cheery creak that seemed to say,
"I am glad to see you—come again!"

If you were I, and if I were you,
What would we keep our money in?
In a down-town bank of British steel,
Or an at-home bank of McKinley tin?
Some want silver and some want gold,
But the little tin bank that wants the two
And is run on the double standard plan—
Why, that is the bank for me and you.

—Eugene Field.

The Child-Dyke.

In Holland the ground is so flat and low that two or three times the sea has rushed in over parts of it and destroyed whole towns. In one of these floods, about 200 years ago, more than 20,000 people were drowned. In some of the towns that were flooded not a creature survived. In other parts hundreds of people were out in boats, trying to save as many lives as possible; and on a little bit of an island what do you think they found? Why, an old cradle, with a baby asleep in it, and an old cat curled up at her feet, all safe and sound.

Where the little voyagers came from, and to whom they belonged, no one could tell; but in memory of them this little island was called

"Kinder-dyke" (child dyke), and it goes by that name to this day; and this story of a remarkable instance of God's providence is told to thousands of little people all over Holland.—Selected.

Little Foxes.

Among my tender vines I spy
A little fox named "By and By,"
Then set upon him quick, I say,
The swift young hunter, "Right Away."

Around each tender vine I plant
I find a little fox, "I Can't!"
Then fast as ever hunter ran,
Chase him with bold and brave, "I Can."

"No Use in Trying" lags and whines,
This fox among my tender vines;
Then drive him low and drive him high
With this good hunter, named "I'll Try."

Among the vines in my small lot
Creeps in the young fox, "I Forget!"
Then hunt him out and to his den
With "I Will Not Forget again."

A little fox is hidden there
Among the vines, named "I Don't Care!"
Then let "I'm Sorry," hunter true,
Chase him afar from vine and you.

Great Men and Cats.

A current paragraph tells us that Prof. Huxley's notorious fondness for cats was a fad which he shared with Cardinal Mazarin, Cardinal Richelieu, Charles Stewart Parnell, and other eminent public men. The name of Isaac Newton should not be omitted from the list of cat lovers, nor that of Mahomet. The prophet, it will be remembered, had so great a regard for the comfort of his pet cat that once when he found her asleep on his robe he would not awaken her, but, cutting out that part of his robe upon which she lay, removed the other mutilated part carefully and left tabby undisturbed.

Robert Southey was an ardent lover of cats. Have you ever read the letter he wrote to his friend Bedford, announcing the death of one of his pets? "Alas, Grosvenor," he wrote, "this day poor Rumpel was dead, after as long and happy a life as a cat could wish for, if cats form wishes on that subject. His full titles were: The Most Noble the Archduke Rumpelstutzchen, Marquis Maobum, Earl Tomlemagne, Baron Raticide, Waowhler, and Skraatch. There should be a court-mourning in Catland, and if the Dragon (your pet cat) wear a black ribbon round his neck or a band of crape a la militaire round one of his fore paws it will be but a becoming mark of respect." Then the poet-laureate adds, "I believe we are each and all, servants included, more sorry for his loss, or, rather, more affected by it, than any of us would like to confess."

Byron was fond of cats; in his establishment at Ravenna he had five of them. Daniel Maclise's famous portrait of Harriet Martineau represents that estimable woman sitting in front of a fireplace and turning her face to receive the caress of her pet cat that is crawling to a resting place upon her mistress' shoulder.

The Lost Kiss.

I put by the half-written poem,
While the pen idly trailed in my hand,
Writes on, "Had I words to complete it,
Who'd read it, and who'd understand?"

But the little bare feet on the stairway,
And the faint, smothered laugh in the hall,
And the eerie low lip in the silence
Cry up to me over it all.

So I gathered it up where was broken
The tear-faded thread of my theme,
Telling how as one night I sat writing,
A fairy broke in on my dream—

A little inquisitive fairy,
My own little girl with the gold
Of the sun in her hair and the dewy
Blue eyes of the fairies of old.

'Twas the dear girl that I scolded,
'For was it a moment like this,'
I said, "when she knew I was busy,
To come romping in for a kiss—"

Come romping up from her mother
And clamoring there on my knee
For one little kiss for my dolly,
And one little uzzel for me!"

God pity the heart that repelled her
And the cold hand that turned her away,
And take from the lips that denied her
This answerless prayer of to-day.

Take, Lord, from my memory forever
That pitiful sob of despair
And the pater and trip of the little bare feet
And the one piercing cry on the stair.

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While the pen idly trailed in my hand,
Writes on, "Had I words to complete it,
Who'd read it, or who'd understand?"

But the little bare feet on the stairway,
And the faint, smothered laugh in the hall,
And the eerie low lip in the silence
Cry up to me over it all.

—James Whitcombe Riley.

Business and Theology.

The congregation of a church in Scotland finding itself unable to pay the salary of its minister, a soap firm offered to pay five hundred dollars a year for five years, on condition that its advertisement be hung in front of the gallery of the church. The offer was accepted. And now the congregation can learn how to be morally and physically clean at the same time.—New York Tribune.

THE QUIET HOUR.

The Plan and the Teaching of Christ.

(Continued from page 412.)

Once more. Consider more fully the astounding claims put forth by Jesus of Nazareth, already alluded to. Recall His absolutely unparalleled self-assertion. He affirms His pre-existence—"Before Abraham was I am." He associates Himself with the eternal glory of the Heavenly Father in past eternity—"Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was."

He claims coequal honor with the Almighty—"All men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father"; coequal knowledge—"No man knoweth the Son but the Father, neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son"; coequal power—"All power is given to Me in heaven and earth." He speaks with an authority as absolute as that which promulgated the moral law on Sinai—"It was said to them of old time, but I say unto you." All other prophets and teachers sent from God used in their loftiest utterances the formula, "Thus saith the Lord"; but this man says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you," thus implicitly placing Himself on a line of equality, not with Moses, not with Abraham, but with the Lord God Himself.

And what was the most prominent subject of His teaching? Was it justice, or benevolence, or meekness, or purity, or patience, or charity? No; his chief subject was Himself. He preached Himself; and the disciples were sent out to preach Christ. Hear His words: "I am the way, the truth, and the life"; "I am the bread of life"; "I am the good shepherd"; "I am the door"; "I am the true vine"; "I am the resurrection and the life"; "Without Me ye can do nothing"; "He that abideth in Me and I in Him, the same bringeth forth much fruit"; "He that believeth on Me hath eternal life."

Take notice also of His imperious claim to the souls of men, to rule them with unchallenged and absolute authority, to enter into and take possession of the deepest sanctities of their being, to stand first in their affections, even before father or mother, husband, wife, or child. Could there be a more absolute claim to equality with God than this? But he makes the claim unequivocally and in terms. When the Jews charged Him with making Himself God though He was but a man, He did not deny it. When He stood on trial before Caiaphas, He was charged with blasphemy in making Himself the Son of God. Did He repudiate with horror and indignation such a charge, as He should have done if it were not true? Nay; He was silent, and allowed Himself to be condemned to death upon that charge and that only. Again, before Pilate's tribunal, He was charged with the same horrible sin; "He ought to die," they cried, "because He made Himself the Son of God." Did He here deny the charge? Nay; He owned the truth of the fact on which they based the charge—"Thou sayest it," he answered, when the Roman judge demanded, "Art Thou the Son of God?"

Now, two things are here worthy of careful consideration. The first is that these amazing claims of Jesus so interpenetrate all the Gospels, and all parts of the Gospels, that there is no possible alternative between accepting them as authentic in substance and rejecting the whole narrative as legendary. The fact that He made these claims is not dependent upon the genuineness and authenticity of any particular passage or passages. It would still remain though one should accept the now discredited theory of the destructive critics and reject entirely the Gospel of St. John. It would not be invalidated though all the alleged legendary elements of the synoptic Gospels were cut out of the record. In fact, this peculiarity of the person and the words of Jesus is inseparable from any possible view of Him as an historical personage, as much so as oxygen is from the air we breathe.

The other notable fact which should be considered in this connection is that notwithstanding this self-assertion, which in any other teacher would excite contempt, or ridicule, or indignation, He still occupies the highest place in the esteem and admiration of mankind, even when these His claims are not acknowledged, and still stands out as the peerless model of meekness and humility. Channing declares that the charge of an extravagant, self-deluding enthusiasm is the last to be fastened on Jesus. And yet, if these claims of His to Divine honor and power and worship be not just, how can he be vindicated from the charge of blasphemous presumption or self-deluding enthusiasm? The dilemma is inevitable: either He is what He professed to be, the Christ, the Son of God, or else He is a man who can no longer be followed as an exemplar or trusted as a teacher. But let any inquirer consider that dilemma in the light of His unparalleled moral teaching and His peerless life and character, and then say which is the more reasonable conclusion: that such a man, such a teacher, such a sublime and royal personage was after all a mad dreamer; or that His claims were founded on truth, that He was all He declared Himself to be, that we are here in the presence of a superhuman character, a superhuman life, and superhuman wisdom, and that this man of Nazareth is indeed the Christ, the Son of the living God. —From "Christ and Modern Unbelief."