

## The Absence of Little Wesley.

BY JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY.

Since little Wesley went, the place seems  
all so strange and still—  
Why I miss his yell o' "Gran'pap!" as I'd  
miss the whipporwill!  
And to think I ust to scold him fer his ever-  
lastin' noise,  
When I on'y rickollect him as the best o'  
little boys!  
I wish a hunderd times a day 'at he'd come  
trompin' in,  
And all the noise he ever made was twic't as  
loud ag'in!—  
It 'ud seem like some soft music played on  
some fine instrument,  
'Longside o' this loud lonesomeness, sence  
little Wesley went!

Of course the clock don't tick no louder than  
it ust to do—  
Yit now they's time it 'pears like 'ud bu'st  
itself in two!  
And, let a rooster, suddent-like, crow som'ers  
clos't around,  
And seems 's of, mighty nigh it, it 'ud lift me  
off the ground!  
And same with all the cattle when they bawl  
around the bars,  
In the red o' airly mornin'. or the dusk and  
dew and stars,  
When the neighbours' boys 'at passes never  
stop, but jest go on,  
A-whistlin' kind o' to theirs'v's—sence little  
Wesley's gone!

And then, o' nights when Mother's settin' up  
oncommon late,  
A-bilin' pears er somepin, and I set and  
smoke and wait,  
Tel the moon out through the wiuder don't  
look bigger 'n a dime,  
And things keeps gittin' stiller—stiller—  
stiller all the time,—  
I've ketch'd mysef a-wishin' like—as I  
clumb on the cheer  
To wind the clock, as I hev done fer more'n  
fifty year—  
A-wishin' 'at the time hed come fer us to go  
to bed,  
With our last prayers, and our last tears,  
sence little Wesley's dead!

—The Century.

## Homing Pigeons.

BY REV. W. V. KELLEY, D.D.

MANY years ago Father Taylor, the  
inspired genius of the Mariners' Bethel,  
arose in a prayer-meeting in the old  
West Church in Boston, and began to  
talk in a quiet way about doves. One  
who heard him says, "He hadn't talked  
many minutes before that old meeting-  
house seemed to be full of doves; and  
then somehow pretty soon he made us  
all feel like doves waiting to be fed  
from God's hand." Among the mys-  
teries of things animate and inanimate,  
few are more wonderful and suggestive  
than the carrier-dove, or homing pigeon.

Every bird is a marvel. The mir-  
acle of wings puzzles and defies the  
earth-bound creature, man. The bird  
floats superior, still unexplained and  
unmatched, describing its ancient chal-  
lenge in circles on the blue dome above  
us. The frigate-bird, with its slight  
body hung between prodigious pinions  
fifteen feet in span, outstrips the tor-  
nado, and finds the hurricane, which  
breaks frigates like egg-shells, a mere  
frolic; with incredible wing-sweep  
covers eighty leagues of ocean in an  
hour, and spouses on the storm, un-  
wearied, superb, victorious.

Man envies this power of flight. Egypt betrayed the desire in that strange and significant conception, the Sphinx, composite of a human head, a lion's body, and a bird's wings, indicative of man's wish to add to his thought-power the strength of the tawny brute-king and the bird's gift of aerial transit. Well, it is believed that the human creature *has* wings. Greece figured the scul by her winged Psyche. Dreams that are not all a dream give us the sense of wings concealed or prescience of wings to come. It was not on us that the degrading sentence was pronounced, "Upon thy belly shalt thou go and dust shalt thou eat." Mounting faculties are felt in us, flutters which have charter to a large, liberal and lofty franchise. We have no occasion to be jealous of the bird.

The bird is a creature that moves in and on an element that is invisible, from the tangible, hard earth into the viewless air; from the visible up into the unseen, living and breathing and having its being in that realm. The atmosphere, you cannot see it; take a telescope, and you cannot; take a microscope, and it is all the same. But the invisible is not therefore unreal; wings find something in it substantial enough to rest on, lean on, and rise upon. The bird finds it practicable to advance through the unseen and live there. So do we. For us, also, the invisible is actual, veritable, substantial.

The homing pigeon challenges admiring wonder by its fine fidelity and mysterious faculty for finding its way. Loose it anywhere, and it starts instantly homeward. Carry it however far away and toss it up, it spirals to a great height in the air, sails around a moment or two, chooses its course and sets out for home, making sometimes a hundred miles an hour, and a flight a thousand miles long. How it knows the way is inexplicable. Not by landmarks, for it may be loosed far out at sea, beyond possible sight of any object that could give direction, coming back safe and straight. This knowledge is strange enough to fill us with awe. It is as if that little flying craft of the upper ocean, with trim, slender hull, and wide spread of canvas, had machinery on board for winding in its clew, as the *Great Eastern* might take up, haul aboard, and coil away an Atlantic cable from mid-ocean shoreward, so coming in at last to the headlands of Heart's Content.

This swift, unerring navigator of the air, where does he keep his sextant? What observations does he take of sun by day or pole-star by night? Whose logarithms does the little mathematician use in ciphering out latitude and longitude on the aerial sea? Where is the binnacle which hides the needle that gives him his bearings? By what chart does he know the where-away of the unseen port? The Sphinx has no more answerless riddle. No man guesses the bird's enigma. The in-

struments of its strange feat are not among the visible organs; science is baffled at the hiding of this power. "The secret of the Lord is with them" to whom it is given, and who "fear him" so much that they would not disobey the instinct or the revelation he has given them; it is a secret not to be explained, conveyed, or transferred. Take in your hands one of the homing pigeons when it flutters in at the dove-cote, stroke the panting breast that holds the true home-loving heart, and ask, "How did you know the way home?" It could only say, if it should speak, "I cannot tell. Ask God!"

"O wise little birds how do ye know  
The way to go?"  
"We but obey  
One who calleth us far away,  
And maketh the way appear"

Then to this answer of the doves let your heart make response, "Dear little birds, he calleth me who calleth ye." Heinrich Heine, having passed through flippant skepticism, atheism, and pantheism, repented of them all, and at last wrote himself down a Christian. Attributing his late enlightenment entirely to reading the Bible, he gave this account of what happened him: "A sort of heavenly home-sickness fell upon me and drove me forth."

The homing instinct is in the soul of man, and, moreover, the God of doves has not left the human spirit without faculty for finding its way to the home which it longs for. Remember the beautiful words of the priest to Evangeline, seeking in vain for many a day and many weary miles her lost lover:

"Patience," the priest would say; "have faith and thy prayers will be answered! Look at this delicate flower that lifts its head from the meadow.  
See how its leaves all point to the north as true as the magnet:  
It is the compass flower that the finger of God hath suspended  
Here on its fragile stalk, to direct the traveler's journey  
Over the sea-like, pathless, limitless waste of the desert.  
Such in the soul of man is Faith. The blossoms of passion,  
Gay and luxurious flowers, are brighter and fuller of fragrance,  
But they beguile us and lead us astray, and their odor is deadly.  
Only this humble plant can guide us here and hereafter,  
Crown us with asphodel flowers that are wet with dews of Nepenthe."

"In all thy ways acknowledge him and he shall direct thy paths." "Thine ears shall hear a voice behind thee, saying, 'This is the way, walk ye in it.'" "Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eye-lids look straight before thee." A man of eminence has told us how, when in childhood, he raised a stone to crush a tortoise; at the moment of the lifted arm something said, whether from within or from without he could not tell, "No, you must not. It is wrong!" What is it plucks the boy by the sleeve, holds his arm back, and makes him drop the stone harmless to the ground? "A

power not ourselves that makes for righteousness," say the philosophic phrase-inventors. It is a saving of breath, and perhaps of souls, to say, God. Man circles round, like a pigeon bewildered in the air, till he takes the way of Christ homeward through penitence, forgiveness, adoption and obedience, and as he settles to it, sings—

"This is the way I long have sought,  
And mourned because I found it not."

## Origin of "Mr." and "Mrs."

THE history of these everyday titles, "Mr." and "Mrs.," which are now the common property of everyone, is not without interest, though in some of its steps it is a little obscure. In the earlier times of our history, the ordinary man was simply "William" or "John"—that is to say, he had merely a Christian name, without any kind of "handle" before it or surname after it. Some means of distinguishing one John or one William from another John or another William became necessary. Nicknames derived from a man's trade, or from his dwelling-place, or from some personal peculiarity, were tacked on to the Christian name, and plain John became plain John Smith. As yet there were no "misters" in the land. Some John Smith accumulated more wealth than the bulk of his fellows—became, perhaps, a land proprietor, or an employer of hired labour. Then he began to be called—in the Norman-French of the day—the "maistre" of this place or of that of these workmen or of those. In time the "maistre"—or "maister," as it soon became—got tacked on before his name, and he became Maister Smith, and his wife was Maistress Smith. It is only within comparatively modern times that the term came to be considered an almost indispensable adjunct to every one's name when mentioned in ordinary conversation or writing. Maistress Smith soon became Mistress Smith. Exactly how and when the term got corrupted cannot be said. Maister Smith, however, remained Maister Smith long after his wife became Mistress Smith.—*New Orleans Times-Democrat.*

## Waking the Branches.

Now is the time of year for tempting the little sleeping branches to wake up somewhat earlier than usual. Carefully cut a few from maples, willows—even from stiff and leafless garden shrubs, however drear and wintry they may appear. Put them in water, which should be changed every day; give them sunshine and shelter, place them in-doors, and watch for the waking! Soon you will see swelling buds, then the blossoms, and, later, the green leaves, if you have pear or cherry branches, or cuttings from flowering almond bushes, or from Forsythia or *pyrus Japonica*. In this way young city-folk may enjoy the sweet spring blooming even before it comes to their country cousins.—*St. Nicholas, for May.*