

The Bird That Wouldn't Sing.

A little bird upon his nest,
In pretty plumage gaily drest,
Made up his mind, one summer's day,
He would not sing his roundelay,
Oh, he was such a lazy thing!
He wouldn't sing.
While other birds around him sung,
He sat aloft, and held his tongue.
The zephyrs came and shook the tree,
And there as rude as they could be;
But, though they ruffled up his crest,
They could not drive him from his nest.
Oh, he was such a naughty thing!
He wouldn't sing.
While other birds around him sung,
He sat aloft, and held his tongue.
His little mate, so trim and neat,
Flew off and brought him bread to eat,
Which made the other birds declare
He should not have his bill of fare.
For since he was a lazy thing
Who couldn't sing,
And wouldn't sing,
They wouldn't stay and see him shirk,
And let another do his work.
They twitted him; they flouted him;
And then at last they routed him,
And chased him all along the sky,
Until he'd hardly strength to fly,
And then the naughty little thing
Who couldn't sing,
And wouldn't sing,
Trilled forth, like an obedient bird,
The sweetest song you ever heard.
So loud and long the clarious note,
He very nearly cracked his throat;
Nor, since he had been forced to sing,
He meant to over do the thing.
Oh, wasn't he a haughty bird!
Upon my word,
'Twas quite absurd!
And still he sings at the tree top,
As if he never meant to stop.

THE WORK-HOUSE BOY.

The Cochran boys had just given feed to the stock, and were at work over books and slate at the dining-room table. The door in the kitchen was open, and at times the dying fire would throw a sudden glow over the great bare room and the shining tin on the wall. Every time the light flashed out, a big, uncouth body which was curled upon the hearth moved and grunted unasily.

"Look at Sukey!" cried Harry.

"Yi, Sukey!" shouted Will, throwing a book at the object on the hearth. But whatever it was, it did not move.

"He don't mind flumps. Got too many at the work-house," said Will.

"Better go on with your sums, Willie," said the gentle voice in the pantry, where Helen was stirring up the bread.

The boys began to whisper, glancing at the motionless figure on the hearth.

A month or two before, Mr. Cochran, finding that he needed a boy to carry wood, feed the pigs, and help in the stables, and gone to the county poor-house and taken therefrom an orphan lad some sixteen years of age.

"He's no Solomon, as you may see," he said to his wife. "But he can do the work well enough. It is a charity to bring him out of that wretched den and give him enough to eat. Don't let the boys tease him."

But it was not so easy to control the boys. When they saw the lank, ungainly lad, with a ragged woman's shawl about his shivering body, they dubbed him "Sukey" on the spot, and thereafter they never lost a chance to torture him. They dropped their voices to a whisper now, lest Helen, their sister, should hear them.

"He's mortally afraid of fire," said Harry, rising softly. "Now hear him yell."

He crept into the kitchen, thrust a stick into the fire, and when it was lighted, held it close to the lad's nose. The poor creature gave a wild shriek, sprang to his feet, and danced wildly about the room as Henry pursued him with the red brand.

Helen came out, her hands all covered with flour. She was a little, low-voiced girl, with a quiet, but firm step. She took the stick out of Harry's hand, and, as he slunk back to his lessons, went up to the boy.

"Joseph! Joseph!" she said, soothingly, "it's only fun. The stick can't hurt you. See, here are some cookies."

Joseph took the cookies, and followed Helen into the pantry, munching them and casting vindictive glances in at the boys.

"I'll burn 'em!" he chuckled. "I'll burn 'em!"

One evening not long after this, the farmer and his wife sat on the porch, watching Joseph's queer antics in the poultry yard. He was dancing and talking to the chickens as if they were human beings.

"You did not tell me that boy was an idiot," said Mrs. Cochran to her husband, "or I never should have consented to have him in the house. There is something malignant in his eye."

"Nonsense!" replied the farmer. "He's perfectly harmless. If you had seen the beastly den out of which I took him, you never would have the heart to drive him back to it. I am afraid our boys torment the poor creature."

"Will and Harry are as good-hearted boys as live!" said their mother, energetically. "Just look at Will—how tender he always is with the baby! And didn't Hal risk his life when his friend Joe fell into the water?"

Mr. Cochran smoked his pipe and made no reply, though he determined that he would keep a close watch on his boys; for he was really a man of tender feelings.

"They don't know how their teasing hurts that poor wretch," he said to himself. "He's only a grown-up baby."

But the boys kept their pranks carefully hidden. Before their parents, they were kind enough to Sukey, but out of their sight, they beset him with terrors by day and by night. Lions roared at him from dark corners; fiery devils blazed on the wall over his bed; gibber-

ing ghosts in white sheets moved about his lonely garret.

Helen stood between the lad and his tormentors; but she did not guess at the extent of their mischief. One day she met Sukey coming from the barn, carrying a dark lantern and a buffalo-hide, with which Will had masqueraded the night before. The boy was pale, wet with perspiration and trembling violently.

"What is the matter, Joe?" she asked.

"It's that Harry and Bill!" he muttered. "I've found 'em out! I'll pay 'em! I'll fix the whole lot of 'em!"

Helen quieted him as usual, and lectured the boys apart. Will was disposed to be ashamed, until Harry reminded him that "she was only a girl," and that "all girls were chicken-hearted."

"So he threatened to fix us, eh?" continued Harry. "Come here, you Sukey! See that horse-pond? Into it you go tonight. Can you swim?"

"No, sir.

"All the worse for you, for in you go!" Joe looked after his tormentors in abject terror. Whenever the boys met him that day, they muttered "horse-pond" under their breath.

If they had had an idea of the agony which the poor half-witted being underwent, they would have despised themselves, being at heart manly boys.

In the afternoon Joseph disappeared, but returned, and was in the kitchen before the bell rang, hanging over the stove while old Jane, the cook, served the meat. He watched her keenly as she poured out the coffee, and when she carried it in, followed her to the dining-room, where he crouched in one corner.

"What's Sukey doing here?" cried Will.

"Get out of this! You can spend your time measuring the pond winder."

"What do you mean, William?" said his father.

"It's only a joke, sir. Joe understands."

"Let the poor boy alone. He is doing no harm. Some coffee, my dear."

Joseph stood by the window, watching Mrs. Cochran pour out the coffee. He tilted his body from heel to toe, and his jaws moved as if he were talking. But he made no sound until Will and Harry were helped to coffee, when he cracked his thumbs and chuckled.

"Mother," said Will, "this coffee has a queer taste. There's something gritty in it."

"Nonsense! Jane always makes it alike. You're as captious about your eating as a dyspeptic woman."

Will raised the cup again to his lips, but set it down with a grimace.

At that moment Mrs. Cochran passed a cup to Helen. "Isn't it as good as usual, Nell?" she asked.

"A little bitter, mamma," Helen replied, and was lifting her cup up again to drink it, when Joe sprang forward and struck it down.

"You shan't drink it! I don't mean to fix you!" he shrieked.

Mr. Cochran caught him by the shoulder. "What have you done?" he asked, sternly.

The boy struggled madly to free himself, laughing and sobbing both at once.

"Poison! poison! They'll die like the rats last week! Hi-yi!"

Mr. Cochran flung him off as though he had been a venomous serpent.

"Murderer! He shall hang for this!" he cried.

Joe stood still a moment. Then the meaning of the words reached his dull brain, and he turned and fled from the house without a word.

Some time elapsed before the Cochrans, in their terror and confusion, remembered that none of them had yet drunk enough of the coffee to harm them. It was found, however, that it had enough arsenic in it—that had been used in the barn to poison rats—to kill twenty men.

Your kindness to the poor mad creature has saved our lives," her father said to Helen.

In their alarm they had forgotten Joe. At this moment there was a knock at the kitchen door, and Squire Hall, one of the neighbors, put in his head.

"Cochran—look, a-here! I—don't want to frighten your wife—but—that boy of yours—"

"What is it? What's he doing now?"

"He's got through doing anything. He's dead!"

"Dead!"

They all crowded out.

"Well—within a breath of it," continued the squire. "Here come the men with him. Jones and me was on the road, when we saw the poor critter throw himself headlong into the pond yonder. The turpikers and us fished him out. But he's jest about one. I run ahead to break it to ye."

There was only a breath between poor Joe and death. The men laid him down on the grass under the apple-tree. He breathed faintly and at long intervals.

Now that his face was at rest, they all saw how immature and childish it was. Mrs. Cochran remembered for the first time, that the work-house boy was an orphan—never had known a mother's gentle touch, or looked in a loving face.

Little Helen knelt down and took his head in her arms.

"Poor Joe! Poor Joe!" she said. He opened his eyes and looked about wildly, but when he saw her he smiled.

"That's Miss Helen. She's bin good to me," he muttered, nodding; and then he cried out: "They'll hang me! But I couldn't bear it no longer—no longer!"

"Nobody shall hurt you, Joe," said Helen, tenderly.

His wondering eyes rested on her again, softened and filled with tears.

"You's the only one that's ever spoke kind to me in this world," he said slowly. Then the silence about grew deeper; a bird twittered overhead, and the boy lay dead on the grass.

"Poor Joe! he hadn't a chance in this world," said the squire, turning away. "Your good words seem to have been a

kind of help to him, Nellie. A person never knows how far kindness or unkindness is going to act on human beings," he continued, feeling that he ought to draw some sort of a moral from this sudden death.

But Will and Harry did not need any such lesson when they looked upon the dead face at their feet. They had not thought to be cruel; they had not thought at all. They had trampled on poor Joe's feelings as though he had no feeling, and now the result of their last cruel act was before them. It seemed to them almost as if they were murderers.

The shadow of that childish dead face went with these two boys in after years, and could never be forgotten.—*Youth's Companion.*

CHARITY AT HOME.

The Forbes girls had been at a reception, and were just stepping into their carriage when they saw Nellie Bigelow coming up the street.

"Drive on home, Thomas; we will walk. Oh, Nellie!—such an age since we saw you! You must go shopping with us!"

The three had been school-girls together, and had never forgotten their old friendships, although, now they seldom met. Jenny and Dora Forbes were leaders in a fashionable circle while Nellie was a teacher in one of the public schools.

The delicate silk-and-velvet costumes of the two first contrasted oddly with Nellie's coarse waterproof suit. But the Forbes girls seemed never to think of that, though Nellie, with all her good sense, thought of it, and struggled bravely not to care.

At the corner a wretched deformed lad tried to sell them some papers.

Dora's cheeks flushed and her eyes filled. "You poor child!" she said, handing him some money. "See, girls! this is certainly no imposter."

Jenny also gave him some money, but Nellie stood motionless.

"Do you think we were deceived? Perhaps you don't approve of giving alms on the street?" they said eagerly, appealing to her for advice just as when they were at school.

"I have no right to an opinion," said Nellie.

The sisters exchanged significant glances.

"They think it is meanness in me," thought Nellie, bitterly.

They went into Sharpless's. Nellie bought some flannel, taking out a well-filled purse to pay for it. While she still held it, a white-haired old lady, a friend of the Forbeses, approached them.

"Ah, girls, just in time to help in a good work! Those poor people burned out last night,—forty families. I have a subscription-paper here; how much will you give?"

"Don't put our names down. Just say 'Cash,'" said Jenny; and the warm-hearted, generous girls emptied their purses.

"And—your young friend?" said the motherly old lady, glancing at Nellie's full pocket-book.

"I cannot make a contribution," she said stiffly.

"Not a large one—we don't ask everybody to give like these dear girls—but a trifle."

"I cannot give anything to-day," said Nellie, turning away. As she walked to the door, she heard Dora say in an indignant whisper,—

"Nonsense! nobody is so poor that they can't give something if they choose."

There was an embarrassed silence for a few minutes as they walked up the street together. But Dora and Jenny soon forgot the incident, and were as gay and affectionate as before.

"What are you going to do to-morrow, Nellie?" said Dora. "It is a legal holiday, and of course your school must be closed. I wish you would come and spend the day with us. We are going to drive out on the Wissahickon in the afternoon, and have tea and a dance in the Sybil boat-house in the evening. The boys are members of the club, you know, and it is their plan. They have been busy decorating the boat-house all this week. Augustine is to furnish the supper, and mamma is to chaperone us. You positively must come, Nell."

"There will not be more than a dozen," began Jenny, eagerly, "and no—no dressing," hesitating; "just plain walking-dresses. Say you will come, Nellie."

Nellie was only eighteen. And a drive all the afternoon in the park, with a dance, and perhaps Dora's handsome cadet brother as a partner! It was long since she had any glimpse of pleasure. And then—it would not cost anything. How could she resist?

"I think I can go," she said, her eyes sparkling. "I will determine this evening, and send you a note by mail."

As the girls left her, she noticed how people glanced at them with a smile of pleasure. With their airy dresses, sweet, innocent faces and light-hearted voices, the dull street brightened as they passed. Nellie was young and pretty as they, yet nobody looked after her with pleasure.

"I give nothing away—not even smiles," she thought, as she walked wearily home. In her purse was her quarter's salary. There was not a penny of it which was not appropriated—so much for groceries, so much for the boys' clothes and shoes, not a penny left to give away.

The Bigelows were wholly dependent on Nellie's earnings and her father's salary as book-keeper, and the supply was scant. She saw many a poor creature in need of help, and it galled her intolerably that she had nothing to give.

"What was it that Dora had said?" she mused, as she walked along. "Nobody so poor that they cannot give something if they choose."

The words rung in her ears as she went into the bare little dining-room where the family was seated at supper. It was not a hilarious assemblage. Mr. Bigelow

was a thin old man, who talked in monosyllables to his children. His shabby coat was buttoned with an air of impregnable dignity. Nellie remembered as in a dream, that when her mother was alive she had seen him joke and laugh heartily. But since her mother had gone, he had grown lifeless, silent and old. His children, even Nellie, shrank from his cold blue eye.

When her mother lived the tea-table had been bright and merry—no matter how poor the fare. Now Thad and Joe were squabbling in whispers over the dry bread and stewed apples, while Alice gumbled outright.

"You got your pay to-day, Nell. We might have something better than starvation diet."

Nellie winced as if she had been struck. How hopelessly rough and vulgar Alice and the boys were growing! Surely it was not her fault. She worked hard for them all day, and when she came home in the evening with her nervous headache, they betook themselves to the street for companions.

"Where are you going to-morrow, boys?" she said, gently. "It's a holiday, you know."

"You bet we know!" They nudged each other and giggled. "Big goings on to-morrow. Never you mind."

"What will you do, Alice?"

"Follow the parades, I reckon," tossing her head.

Her mother's daughter tramping about the streets in a crowd of half drunken men! Nellie looked at the boys with a searching gaze. They had honest, manly faces, but hard and defiant lines were already coming into them.

She sat silent a long time. The drive on the Wissahickon and the dance! It was not easy to shut the door on that dream of delight. At last she looked up cheerfully.

"What do you say, children, to a picnic? Early start, big basket, boat to Rockland, fishing,—all kinds of fun."

"Nelly!"

"Do you mean it?"

The children started up. "We never did such a thing!" cried Alice. "I never was further out of town than the water-works in my life!"

"Oh, Ally, that cannot be true!"

"Yes, it is true. You don't take any care of me, or you would know. Nobody does—since mamma died." The child's lips tremble.

"I will take care of you, now, little sister," said Nellie, putting her arm around her. "Well, what do you say, boys?"

Thad and Joe looked at each other. "We made a sort of engagement," said Thad; "but we'd rather go with you, and we will go," he added, resolutely.

Mr. Bigelow had left the table and wandered aimlessly to the window. Nellie ran after him and caught his hand. It was like caressing a wooden statue.

"Papa,—you will go with us?"

"I, Nelly, on a party of pleasure?"

He stared down at her. The color actually rose into his withered cheek. "You don't think I could, my child? You do not want a poor old man like me?"

Something in his look revealed to Nellie the truth,—the utter loneliness of the old man's life, the hungry craving for love and companionship, she had never given him. She held his hand in hers a moment, stroking it, and then kissed it. She could not speak.

"I will go, my child."

Her father's voice was strangely altered. He went into his own room, and did not come out again.

Nellie was busy until late in the night. There was a tongue to boil, and a certain kind of cookies to bake. The boys hovered over her, happy, meddling at every turn, but singularly gentle and affectionate.

"Mother used to make these kind of cakes. Aren't they nice?"

Alice had her sleeves rolled up and her apron on. Never was anybody more busy or more important. Nellie joked and laughed, and made more fun out of the packing of a basket than was ever made since time began. But her heart was sore within her. What a trifle was needed to make these children happy, and to bind them to home! How solitary and cheerless her father's life had been these many years! A little outspoken love, a little cheerfulness, was all that was needed, and she had been blind to it all these years!

The picnic was a very simple matter. People who can afford pleasure every day would have laughed at it. They went out to the park in the horse cars. Then they sailed up the broad, bright river to Rockland. Then Mr. Bigelow found a dark pool, and rigged his old rods, and taught the boys how to fish. They found out he had been a famous fisherman in his day. He told wonderful stories of old exploits, brought up old jokes, and was not a little vain of the boys' shouts of applause.

The children actually never heard their father talk before. They felt they knew him for the first time. Thad was moved to confide his scrapes with the Latin teacher to him, and little Joe fell asleep with his head on his knee.

"Don't take him away, Nellie," said the old man, when she would have removed him. "If only my children would come closer to me in this way! Perhaps they will."

Nellie left Alice to preside over the dinner. She spread it on a big rock. Her father and the boys kindled a fire, and Mr. Bigelow cooked the three fish they had caught.

You never heard such jokes and laughing—you never saw people with such ravenous appetites! After dinner Thad, who had a very sweet little pipe of a voice, sang some songs; and then Mr. Bigelow asked them if they knew "The Bay of Biscay, oh!" and sang it.

It was moonlight when they came home, floating down the river between the dark, wooded banks. Nellie sat with

Alice clinging to her. "You are the best sister in the world!" said the child.

Her father took her hand in his. "It has been one of the happiest days of my life, Nellie. I thought my children cared nothing for me, but I shall never be alone again."

Years have passed since that day. Thad and Joe are now sturdy young fellows, and engaged in business. Alice is a gentle, bright-faced girl. Nellie is a happy wife and mother. Her old father sits by her fireside, and her children are his pets and darlings. There has not been an hour in which she has not striven in little ways to make others happy. But she never forgets that first day when she learned the lesson of self-sacrifice, nor the tone of her father's voice as he said, "I shall never be alone again."

The Peanut.

Boys and girls are interested in peanuts, judging from what may be seen often in the steam cars. No cow thinks more of her cud than does the average young American of these handy sweetmeats. A gentleman of South Boston sends to the *Press* of that city some account of that popular nut: "The question has often been asked how and when did peanuts first appear in this country? About forty years ago, the writer was in Wilmington, North Carolina, and became acquainted with a gentleman, who in speaking of peanuts, said that he believed he was the first person who introduced them into North Carolina; that when quite a young man, he went on board a vessel that had put into Wilmington in distress, and he saw for the first time some nuts in bags, and they told him they came from Africa, and were known as pea or ground nuts. They gave him a few handfuls, which he planted, and as they increased, they were scattered around and became a staple article of culture. Certain it is, that at the time referred to, the cultivation of peanuts was almost wholly confined to the southern part of North Carolina. The production has rapidly increased, and they are now raised in large quantities in most of the Southern and many of the Western States, and are now considered as one of our prominent and staple articles of agricultural products. During the civil war, the Southern people made a very nice kind of oil from the peanuts and we have been told that in the warm countries east of us, when the olive-oil crop fails, this oil is made to take its place."

Oleomargarine.

A spasmodic attack of oleomargarine upon the brain has again afflicted the wise man of the *American Agriculturist*. He laments the supineness of our dairymen in allowing this compound of "waste fat" to flich away their markets customers. Ever since this product was first made in this country the *Agriculturist's* wise man has periodically permitted his willing to be heard over the length and breadth of the land, upon this fruitful theme. He has abused the article and abused all those who refused to abuse it with him. He says that "leaders in dairy conventions have glorified and advertised the stuff, and professors have essayed upon it, and proved in the very teeth of its natural opponents that it was really as good, if not better, than genuine butter." That the wise man's statement in this behalf is true to a certain extent, and cannot be doubted by any one who has attended our dairy conventions for several years past. In view of such facts, perhaps it would be wise for the wise man to show his authority for condemning the product. The leaders and professors spoken of are themselves manufacturers of genuine butter, and, according to the wise man, "natural opponents" of oleomargarine. How, then, can heretofore his condemnation with the glorification received by the article directly from the hands of its "natural opponents?"

But with one masterly sweep of his powerful pen he brushes aside the leaders and professors of the dairymen, who actually produce genuine butter and who should be first to complain, and enters his protest behalf of what he is pleased to term "the innocent consumers," whatever that may be. He talks learnedly of "rendered fat and sour milk," but fails utterly to mention the fact that the oleomargarine factory of the present day is cleaner, as a rule, than the average dairy where genuine butter is made. He forgets, also, that the laws of this State compel every manufacturer and vendor of the article to brand it with its true name that nobody may be deceived. He loses sight of the further fact that nine-tenths of the consumers of this horrible product cannot distinguish its difference from genuine except as to the price, which them an important advantage.

Neither leaders nor professors nor any other sane man will pretend the oleomargarine is as good as genuine butter, nor can they deny that when probably manufactured, as it now generally is, it is an excellent substitute for butter to those whose means will not permit the purchase of "gilt edge." This matter of protecting the innocent consumer and making cheap capital for himself is no new instrument for the wise man to play upon, and he has grown quite proficient from long practice.

To Clean Kid Gloves.

Buy one quart of benzine (cost 10 cents), pour half a teacupful into an earthen dish, put in the gloves and squeeze with the hand until they are thoroughly cleaned. Wring them freely does not injure the gloves, neither does it shrink them. After they are cleaned, straighten them to shape lay upon a clean cloth and put into a current of air to dry them and also to deodorize them.