

THE TEMPTATION.

There was something on Billy's mind. All morning he had lain around on the grass, resting his face on his hands in a meditative mood. He was certainly planning one of his big hunts in the woods where he would slay such monsters as are accustomed to fall under the sword of a five-year-old boy. Perhaps this was his intention.

As soon as dinner was finished, Billy sauntered around the house and quietly opening the gate entered the flower garden. He knew exactly where he was going, because just the day before he had spied the little bird's nest swinging on the bough of the lilac bush. It was empty then, but today there lay within it a beautiful, speckled egg.

Merrily flitting about from one odorous bush to another, a tiny bird guarded her home and dreamed of days to come when she would fill the hungry mouths of her young with worms. So singing away she rocked to and fro, not knowing that she had built her nest where its contents would tempt the passerby.

When Billy reached up and pulled the limb down he looked a moment at the precious little gift that would soon belong to him, and then thought of his Mother's words when she had warned him never to bother the birds and their nests. But she would never know that he had disobeyed, so he sneakingly took the egg from its place.

Regardless of the flutter and chirp from the nearby bush as the mother bird tried to keep him away, Billy began contemplating what he was going to do with his possession. He stood still and thought. Mother would scold if she found out what he had done; and the treasure would never do him any good if he were to hide it.

Right here the forces of right and wrong in his conscience began battling and they fought hard and long. Certainly it was not wrong, because he wanted it, and it was only one little egg; while on the other hand it was wrong because he knew that he had crushed the little bird's heart by destroying her home.

Suddenly the object slipped from his hand and lay broken at his feet. Now what would he do with himself? He did not mean to do it, no he did not! With a pitying look toward the deserted nest he thought how cruel he had been and wondered if God still loved him for his deed. He did not know, but he did resolve that never again was he going to rob a little bird's nest.

C. P.

HOW VERGARA MET HIS DEATH.

Vergara stalked in the kitchen and dropped into a chair. "Well," he said in an exhausted voice, "I reckon my horses are safe now and I don't think they can get any of them." "I hope so," his wife replied. "Go to bed now and get a good rest and don't worry, for you are so tired," she added lovingly. "All right," he responded and went into the house to obey. Soundly, indeed, he slept that night. He awoke next morning early, but feeling troubled. "I wonder if anything has happened," he soliloquized; "I feel wonderfully queer."

He dressed quickly and went down stairs and out to see his horses. As he neared the barn he missed the usual neigh, so he broke into a run. Lo! many were missing. The great roan, the handsome bay, the slender graceful sorrel, all were missing and on counting he found thirteen others gone. He knew where they were. The Mexican horse-thieves had out-witted him any way and had stolen them.

He hurried to the house, called his wife, snatched up his pistol, his heavy coat and cartridges. As he finished his collection his wife made her appearance. "What's the matter?" she exclaimed. "Betsy! they have carried off my finest horses, sixteen of them and I'm going right after them now!"

"Oh, John! that's absurd, you can't go alone." "Yes, I can and I am, the rascals have got to give them back." He was almost in a fit of frenzy. "But," protested his wife, "you can't go, you shall not go!" She tried to force him into a seat, but he brushed past her and hastily started off. Sorrowful and half terrified she shrieked, "Come back, John, please come back!" "Good-bye, Betsy," he returned with a wave of his hand.

She went up on top of the house to watch him as far as she could. She saw him approach a burly, keen, black-eyed man and place his pistol to his heart. "Give me my horses," he cried hoarsely. A second later he was surrounded by howling Mexican demons. Receiving several blows on the head he sank unconscious and was borne roughly to prison.

Later in the day he recovered to find his wife gently bathing his wounds. "Soft," she cried, "I am going to get up a band of rangers to save you. They won't let me stay here long with you." She bade him good-bye and was gone. That evening at dusk he heard a heavy thud outside his door, and presently two men stepped in, one bound his hands and the other one led him outside. He found himself in the same crowd of Mexicans. "We'll fix you, you medler," cried one, "and teach

you to interfere with others' business," another jeered. He closed his eyes to shut out the awful sea of faces before him and was immediately blindfolded. "What would they do?" he wondered. He did not have to wait long to find out. "March!" came the order and he felt the rope tighten round his neck. He followed his leader and came with a crash against a tree trunk, frightfully crushing his nose. He shrieked, but his voice was drowned by the laughter of the crowd.

The next thing he knew the rope was placed round his body and again he was ordered to follow. This time he fell and was dragged along the rocky ground at a rapid rate. In a moment the rope slackened. He was told to stand and stretch forth his hand. Fearful and very limp he did so, and would have withdrawn it, but it was grasped in a clamp and steadily burned. Howling for mercy and screaming with pain he jumped in every direction possible, but to no avail. The torture was unendurable, but he could get no relief. The men only laughed and jeered at him. "You brutes, you cowards," he cried, "you'll pay for this."

"Will we?" came from a voice treacherously near, "let's see," and his blindfold was jerked off.

Arranged before him stood three men with guns aimed directly at him. "Ready!" ordered the leader and Vergara fell to the earth dead.

The promised band of rangers was too late.

C. Y.

"SUNSET."

The evening sun was sinking fast,
As I reached a familiar path;
It was sinking 'neath the hill
As the woods grew strangely still.

Suddenly a passing cloud
Enveloped it in nightly shroud,
But it sped on its journey past,
Leaving not the shadow it had cast.

Then the sun's large disk rolled round,
Illuminating woods and sound,
Casting out a reddish hue
As its course it did pursue.

The sky was yellow tinted gold,
Like the fairy tales of old,
And sunlight rays across the way
Seemed lovelier than of other days.

I looked again and lo
The sun's face did downward go,
Larger, still, it grew and sank
Beneath the hill and hanging bank.
As the last departing ray
On the highest tree-top lay,
I could hear the night-bird's song
Pealing out so shrill and long.
"Whip-poor-will" it seemed to say,
Louder than the songs of day,
As I left my station there,
Breathing out an evening prayer.

R. C.

A COMPLAINT FROM AENEAS.

As several shades were seated around a comfortable fire, warming their chilly hands and telling stories that only shades can tell, they saw coming towards them a tall, stately man clad in a Roman toga. Several of the company recognized him as Aeneas, a brother shade. To the uninitiated I may say that the scene of this story is laid in Hades just a few months after the present European war began.

Aeneas, after joining the group and warming himself for a few moments, hastened to take an active part in the discussion. Gradually he brought the conversation around from idle talk to a discussion of the war situation. After remaining silent for a few minutes Aeneas hastened to speak on the subject. Owing to the fact that no reliable reporter was present and that there is a strict censorship over news from Hades, no authentic account of his speech is available. But he said in part:

"Brother shades, we have lived here in tranquil existence for many centuries. By the laws of nature, so merciful and yet so harsh, our number increases gradually from year to year. Our population has not increased so fast until the last few months, but that we could adopt the immigrants to our customs before they had time to advocate reforms in our political and social systems. With our limited taxation we have been able to provide for our limited needs without putting a burden upon anyone. The Charon Navigation Company has been able to run for years with boats that have seen centuries of service. This company, as many of you know, is run by funds taken from the public treasure. But lately all this has changed. The rulers of Europe, through divine command, have taken it upon themselves to increase the flow of immigrants to Hades. Only today Charon was telling me that we would be forced to purchase more boats to accommodate the rapidly increasing multitude. We must support these people because they do not have means for self-support. All this expense must be taken from our public treasure. Do the Kings of Europe think that only their rights should be respected? We, who are compelled to live with these people for centuries and support them, should have some rights in this matter. Therefore I move and second it that Virgil and Dante be requested to draw up a document pleading justice for us in this important affair."

R. B.