

## THE WHITE SPARROW.

BY JANE WEAVER.

No more common complaint is to be heard now-a-days, from the lips of housewives, than that of the laziness and unthrifty habits of domestic servants. Mothers and grandmothers are often wont to tell the young housekeeper that matters were otherwise in *their* days. Yet it has sometimes occurred to us, whether the fault may not lie as much in the degenerate habits of the masters and mistresses of the present generation, as from any fault peculiar to their dependants. Were the lady of the house more frequently to rise at five or six in the morning, as in the "good old days of lang syne," perchance she would not so often have to complain that rooms were carelessly swept, that work was left undone, or fires lighted too late.

In most country parts of Germany there passes current amongst the people this proverb—

"He who would thrive  
Must the white sparrow see."

And the following is the history of its origin.

There was a certain farmer, with whom every thing seemed to grow worse from year to year. His cattle died one by one—the produce of his land was not half of that which it ought to be—in fact, all his property was, to use a familiar expression, "going to the dogs." Scarcely a week passed by that either the tax-gatherer or the pawnbroker did not come to his window, and, addressing him with a courteous bow, said, "I am really very sorry, Mr. Backwards, to be obliged to put you to inconvenience, but I am compelled to do my duty." His old friends also tried their best to do *their* duty by him—they advised, they entreated, and they helped him, but all in vain; and one after another gave him up in despair, declaring with a sigh that "as for poor Backwards, there was no use in trying to help him—he was *past* being helped."

He had one friend, however, whose heart was in the right place, and who was not only a good man, but a very prudent and clear-sighted man. This friend thought he would not give Mr. Backwards up altogether, without making one more attempt to save him; so one day, he led the conversation, as though accidentally, to the subject of sparrows, related many anecdotes of these

birds, and observed how much they had multiplied of late, and how very cunning and voracious they had become.

Backwards shook his head gravely in answer to this observation, and said, "They were indeed most destructive creatures—for his part, he had not the least doubt that it was entirely owing to them his harvest had been of late years so very unproductive."

To this conjecture, the good friend made no rejoinder; but after a moment's pause he continued the conversation by inquiring, "Neighbor, have you ever seen a white sparrow?"

"No," replied he; "the sparrows which alight in my fields are all quite grey."

"That is very probable," rejoined his friend, "the habits of the white sparrow are peculiar to itself. Only one comes into the world every year, and being so different from its fellows, the other sparrows take a dislike to it, and peck at it when it appears amongst them. For this reason it seeks its food early in the morning, before the rest of the feathered tribe are astir, and then goes back to its nest for the rest of the day."

"That is very strange!" exclaimed Backwards. "I must really try and get a sight of that sparrow, and if possible I will catch it too."

On the morning which followed this conversation, the farmer rose with the sun, and sallied forth into his fields; he walked round his farm—searched his farm-yard in every corner, examined the roofs of his garners, and the trees of his orchard, to see whether he could discover any traces of the wonderful white sparrow. But the white sparrow, to the great disappointment of the farmer, would not show itself, or stir from its imaginary nest. What vexed the farmer, however, still more was, that although the sun stood high in the heavens by the time he had completed his rounds, not one of the farm-laborers were astir—they, too, seemed resolved not to leave their nests. Meanwhile, the cattle in their stalls were bellowing with hunger, and not a soul was near to give them their fodder.

He was reflecting on the disadvantages of this state of things, when suddenly he perceived a lad coming out of the house carrying a sack of wheat on his shoulders. The boy seemed to be

in great haste to get out of the precincts of the farm; and Backwards soon perceived that his steps were not bent toward the mill, but toward a public house, where Caspar had unhappily a long score to pay. He hastened after the astonished youth, who believed his master to be still in the enjoyment of his morning nap, and quickly relieved him of his burden.

The farmer next bent his steps to the cow-house, and peeping in to see whether the white sparrow had perchance taken refuge there, he discovered to his dismay that the milkmaid was handing a liberal portion of milk through the window to her neighbor to mix with her morning cup of coffee.

"A pretty sort of housekeeping this is!" thought the farmer to himself, as he hastened to his wife's apartment and roused her from her slumbers. "As sure as my name is Backwards!" he exclaimed, in a somewhat angry tone, "there must be an end of these lazy habits: everything is going wrong for the want of some one to look after them! So far as I am concerned, at all events," thought the good farmer to himself, "I will rise every day at the same hour I rose this morning, and then I shall soon get my farm cleared of those who do not

intend to do their duty properly. Besides, who knows but some fine morning or other I may succeed in catching the white sparrow?"

Days and weeks passed on. The farmer adhered to his resolution; but he soon forgot the white sparrow, and only looked after his cattle and his corn-fields. Soon everything around him wore a flourishing aspect, and men began to observe that Backwards now well deserved to be called Forwards. In due course of time, his old friend again came to spend the day with him, and inquired in a humorous tone, "Well, my good fellow, how are you getting on now? have you yet succeeded in catching a glimpse of the white sparrow?"

The farmer only replied to this question by a smile; and then, holding out his hand to his old friend, he said, "God bless you, Herder! you have saved me and my family from ruin."

Often, in after years, when Backwards was a prosperous man, respected by his neighbors, and beloved by his well-ordered household, he was wont to relate this history of his early life; and thus by degrees the saying passed into a proverb,

"He who would thrive must see the white sparrow."

## OUR HOME NEST.

BY SYLVIA A. LAWSON.

SWEETLY the morning's breath doth steal,  
O'er all its wealth of green,  
And the fairy bells of the flowers feel  
The touch of the rosy queen.  
And the dew-drops hang like gems of light  
On every quivering stem,  
Where the fairies in the soft moonlight,  
Wore night's fair diadem.  
  
The roses climb o'er the snowy walls,  
And the bird in the nest near by,  
Sings sweetly in the calm nightfall,  
When winds breathe not a sigh,  
And the woodbine strings her purple bells,  
To tinkle with whispering leaves,  
When the zephyr comes from the wooded dell,  
And sadly but sweetly grieves.  
  
The moss on its lowly roof is green,  
And the rain when it pattering comes,  
Sings of the quiet and peace within  
Our fairy white cottage home.  
And a little bright stream sings a merry song,  
When the Summer days are here,  
And flows with a saddened tone along,  
When the green leaves all are sear.

And when winds of Autumn sob and grieve  
Their fitful lives away,  
And weep in sadness o'er the leaves,  
Through all the darkened day,  
We sit beside the fire-side hearth,  
And talk of other years,  
Our hearts have known no withering dearth,  
Our eyes no burning tears.  
  
And when the snow-wreaths pile the meadow,  
Deep with their fleecy flowers,  
Upon our hearts there steals no shadow,  
No gloom upon the hours.  
But high we pile the hearth with taggots,  
And the blazing, cheerful light  
Warms our hearts toward every wanderer,  
Who hath not a home as bright.  
  
Love hath made our home an Eden,  
And our hearts forever young,  
O'er us Care with footsteps leaden,  
Never hath his shadows flung.  
Sweetly glide our lives in gladness,  
And our feet but seldom roam,  
From the calm and quiet lightness,  
That doth guard our cottage home.