

THE
LOST SPOON.

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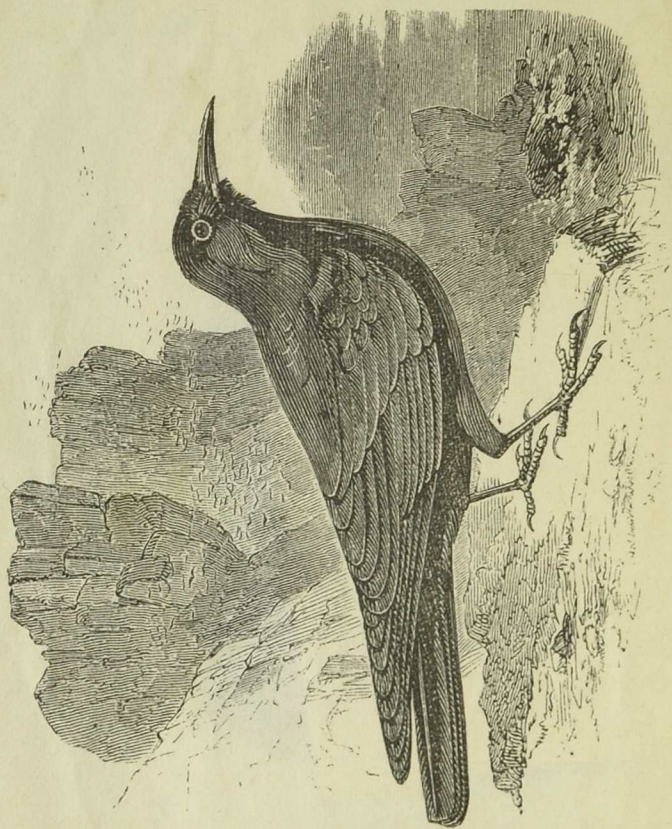
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LONDON:
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77, GREAT QUEEN STREET, LINCOLN'S INN FIELDS;
4, ROYAL EXCHANGE;
16, HANOVER STREET, HANOVER SQUARE;
AND BY ALL BOOKSELLERS.

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STORIES FOR THE NURSERY.

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THE LOST SPOON.

JOHN WEBB was one day walking with another boy near the sea shore, when he saw a number of birds flying high in the air. They were quite black all over, and nearly as large as rooks ; and they made a cawing noise, very like that which you have heard a flock of rooks make in the evening. Some of them, he saw, were carrying sticks in their mouths, and flying into the cracks of a high rock which was near ; so the two boys supposed that they were building their nests ; and John said he would come again one day when there were young birds in the nests, and carry home two, and keep them.

When he had reached home he got some pieces of wood, and built a little house against the garden wall. He made a window on each side of the house with bars of wood, and in front he made a door which opened and shut, and was fastened with a latch. Inside he placed two sticks across for the birds to perch on ; but he did not make any tables or chairs, for they would have been of no use.

One day, when his house was finished, he went away to the high rock, and climbed up, until he came to some nests ; but he could not find any young birds, though there were green eggs spotted with black in several of them. So he went home, and after he had waited a few days he went to the rock again. By this time the eggs were hatched and there were young birds in

the nests. He took out two of these, and carried them home in a basket which he had brought with him, and placed them on a piece of old carpet in a corner of the house that he had made for them.

They had no feathers yet, so that they could not fly, nor did they know how to feed themselves; but John took great care of them, and fed them himself many times a day with small pieces of meat and soaked bread. By-and-by their feathers began to grow, and they were able to hop about their house, and pick up food for themselves; and John hoped that they would soon be able to run about the garden.

He happened to look out of the window one morning, and saw in the garden two jackdaws hopping about the path, and sometimes looking into the windows of the house; and thinking they were his

birds, he called out, "Look! my jackdaws have opened the door of their house, and have got out into the garden!" Out he ran in great haste, and as he came near, up got both the birds and flew away. John now thought that he had lost his favourites; but looking down at the house, he saw that the door was still fastened; so, carefully opening it, he found his birds quite safe; and when they saw him, they cawed loudly, thinking, I suppose, that he had brought them something to eat.

Then he looked around, and saw the two birds who had flown away perched on the top of the church tower, not far off. He fancied that they were the brothers or sisters of his birds. I do not know whether they were or not; but if they were, it was very kind of them to come and see the poor birds who were

shut up. Don't you think so? They used to come down very often after that, and sometimes brought other jackdaws with them; but they never stayed long, and always flew away as soon as any one came near.

Once, when John was going out to spend the day, he asked his mother to feed his birds for him while he was away; so, at dinner-time his mother took them down some food; but no sooner had she opened the door, than out darted one of the birds and tried to fly away. But as this was the first time he had ever tried to fly, he forgot to look where he was going, and entangled his wings in the branches of a tree which grew over the house, and, before he could clear himself, he was caught and put back again. I dare say he was much disappointed at not being able to get away; however,

when Mrs. Webb came again with some food in the evening, off he darted, the minute the door was opened, and did not stop flying until he had reached the top of the church tower.

John was much vexed, when he returned, to hear of the loss of his jackdaw; and he determined to prevent the other from flying away also, by cutting its wings. You will think, perhaps, that this was a cruel thing to do: but he did not really cut the poor bird's wings, he only cut off the ends of some of the feathers with a pair of scissors; and it did not hurt the bird any more than you are hurt by having your hair cut. The jackdaw, indeed, was better off in consequence, for he was now allowed to run and hop about wherever he pleased in the garden; and he soon grew so tame, that he would come when he heard any one

call "Jack," and look up, as if asking for something to eat. Sometimes he went into the kitchen, and would hop on the tables and chairs, and peck at the butter and meat when no one was looking. He was not often allowed to stay here, for several times pieces of meat were lost, and it was thought that he stole them. By-and-by he grew very saucy, and would peck at people's heels, and did other mischief which was not found out until after he was gone.

John had a younger brother, called George, who, one fine morning, asked his mother if he might take his bread-and-milk into the garden, and eat it sitting on the step of the door. Just as he had finished his breakfast he heard a drum and fife in the street, so, putting down his basin and spoon on the step, he ran to see what was going on. Presently

his mother called him, and asked him what he had done with his spoon? for she said it was not in the basin. George said that he had left the spoon in the basin; though his mother thought at first that he might have taken it with him into the street, and lost it; or that it might have been stolen from him while he was looking at the dogs that had been dancing in the street to the sound of the drum and fife. But George was quite sure that he had not taken the spoon with him, and recollected exactly the place where he had laid it; and, as his mother never knew him tell a falsehood, she believed that he was telling the truth now. Still the spoon could not be found, and nobody knew anything about it; so they thought the jackdaw must have stolen it, though what he could want to do with a silver spoon it was hard to say. They

looked behind the scraper, and searched his house ; but no spoon was to be seen. John thought, that if he put another spoon on the step, and watched the jackdaw, perhaps he would take that too, and then, if he saw where the bird hid that, he should find both together. So he laid another spoon on the step, and stood behind the door watching till he was tired ; but the jackdaw seemed not to take any notice of it. At last, beginning to feel cold, he ran away for a minute, to fetch his hat, and when he came back, lo ! the spoon was gone, and Jack was strutting about the garden, just as if nothing had happened ! And now, instead of one spoon being lost, there were two.

When you have had your hair cut, you know, it soon grows long again. Now, it was just the same with the jack-

daw's wings. New feathers grew out under the old ones ; but as he hopped about just as usual, no one thought of Jack's ever attempting to fly ; but one day little George came running in, crying, "Jack is on the top of the garden wall !" Away went his brother in great haste, and reached the garden only in time to see his bird flying from a tree in the next garden towards the church. He flew rather heavily, certainly, for his wings were not quite grown out ; however, he managed to reach the church porch ; then he scrambled up to the roof, and at last flew up to the tower. There he stayed until it was dark ; but what became of him afterwards I never heard : most likely he flew away in the morning to the high rock from which he was brought : at all events he never came back to see his old master again.

Next day John set to work with his tools, and pulled down the house that he had taken so much trouble to build for his jackdaws ; George standing by and looking on. When they came to the last piece of wood which was fixed against the wall what should they see behind it but two silver tea-spoons, a thimble, two brass buttons, a piece of sealing-wax, and a pill-box !

George was sent in to beg his mother to come out and see Jack's hiding-place and all that was in it. His brother stayed to take care of the treasures, lest the sly jackdaw should come back to fetch them. Neither of the boys could make out what Jack meant to do with any of these things. He never fed himself with a spoon ; he could not wear a thimble, even if he wanted to sew ; his feathers stayed on very well without

buttons; he could not write letters, and therefore had no use for sealing-wax; and as for the pill-box, it was empty. The only thing that George could think of was, that he meant to keep a shop. What do *you* think about it?

You can have no doubt about one thing, that John was very silly in thinking the birds would be better pleased with his wooden house than with their airy home on the cliffs. He is wiser now than he was then, for he knows that birds'-nesting is not only a silly amusement, but that nothing can be more cruel than for the strong to make sport of the weak.

