

THE PARROT, AN ENGLISH FOLKTALE

Sabine Bearing _Gould, Household Tales, 1866

There was once a grocer who had a beautiful parrot with green feathers, and it hung in a cage at his shop door.

It was a very shrewd, sensible bird, and very observing. But it was a female, and as such could not hold its tongue, but proclaimed aloud all that it knew, announcing to everyone who entered the shop the little circumstances which had fallen under its observation.

One day the parrot observed its master sanding the sugar. Presently in came a woman and asked for some brown sugar.

"Sand in the sugar! Sand in the sugar!" vociferated the bird, and the customer pocketed her money and rushed out of the shop.

The indignant grocer rushed to the cage and shook it well.

"You abominable bird, if you tell tales again, I will wring your neck!" And again he shook the cage till the poor creature was all ruffled, and a cloud of its feathers was flying about the shop.

Next day it saw its master mixing cocoa powder with brick dust. Presently in came a customer for cocoa powder.

"Brick dust in the cocoa!" cried the parrot, eagerly and repeatedly, till the astonished customer believed it, and went away without his cocoa.

A repetition of the shaking of the cage ensued, with a warning that such another instance of tale-telling should certainly be punished with death. The parrot made internal resolutions never to speak again.

Presently, however, it observed its master making shop butter of lard colored with a little turmeric. In came a lady and asked for butter.

"Nice fresh butter, ma'am, fresh from the dairy," said the shopman

"Lard in the butter! Lard in the butter!" said the parrot.

"You scoundrel, you!" exclaimed the shopman, rushing at the cage.

Opening it, drawing forth the luckless bird, and wringing its neck, he cast it into the ash pit. But Polly was not quite dead, and after lying quiet for a few minutes, she lifted up her head and saw a dead cat in the pit.

"Halloo!" called the parrot. "What is the matter with you, Tom?"

No answer, for the vital spark of heavenly flame had quitted the mortal frame of the poor cat.

"Dead!" sighed the parrot. "Poor Tom! He too must have been afflicted with the love of truth. Ah me!"

She sat up and tried her wings. "They are sound. Great is truth in my own country, but in this dingy England it is at a discount, and lies are at a premium."

Then spreading her wings, Polly flew away. But whether she ever reached her own land, where truth was regarded with veneration, I have not heard.

No, she flew twice round the world in search of it, and could not find it.

I wonder whether she has found it now!
