

93 THE WHIPPOORWILL AND I

In the hushed hours of night, when the air is quite still,
I hear the strange cry of the lone whippoorwill,
Who chants, without ceasing, that wonderful trill,
Of which the sole burden is still, "Whip-poor-Will."

And why should I whip him? Strange visitant, say,
Has he been playing truant this long summer day?
I listened a moment; more clear and more shrill
Rang the voice of the bird, as he cried, "Whip-poor-Will."

But what has poor Will done? I ask you once more;
I'll whip him, don't fear, if you'll tell me what for.
I paused for an answer; o'er valley and hill
Rang the voice of the bird, as he cried, "Whip-poor-Will."

Has he come to your dwelling, by night or by day,
And snatched the young birds from their warm nest away?
I paused for an answer; o'er valley and hill
Rang the voice of the bird, as he cried, "Whip-poor-Will."

Well, well, I can hear you, don't have any fears,
I can hear what is constantly dinned in my ears.
The obstinate bird, with his wonderful trill,
Still made but one answer, and that, "Whip-poor-Will."

But what *has* poor Will done? I prithee explain;
I'm out of all patience, don't mock me again.
The obstinate bird, with his wonderful trill,
Still made but one answer, and that, "Whip-poor-Will."

Well, have your own way, then; but if you won't tell,
I'll shut down the window, and bid you farewell;
But of one thing be sure, *I won't whip him until*
You give me some reason for whipping poor Will.

I listened a moment, as if for reply,
But nothing was heard but the bird's mocking cry.
I caught the faint echo from valley and hill;
It breathed the same burden, that strange "Whip-poor-Will."

Sources:

True Flag, November 26, 1853.

True Flag, August 26, 1854.

Grand'ther Baldwin's Thanksgiving, 1875.

Alger Street, 1964.