

And six little singing-boys — dear little souls! —
In nice clean faces, and nice white stoles,
Came, in order due, two by two,
Marching that grand refectory through! 30

A nice little boy held a golden ewer,
Embossed and filled with water, as pure
As any that flows between Rheims and Namur,
Which a nice little boy stood ready to catch
In a fine golden hand-basin made to match. 35

Two nice little boys, rather more grown,
Carried lavender-water and eau de Cologne,
And a nice little boy had a nice cake of soap,
Worthy of washing the hands of the Pope.

One little boy more a napkin bore, 40
Of the best white diaper, fringed with pink,
And a Cardinal's hat, marked in "permanent ink."

The great Lord Cardinal turns at the sight
Of these nice little boys dressed all in white;

From his finger he draws his costly turquoise; 45
And, not thinking at all about little Jackdaws,
Deposits it straight by the side of his plate,
While the nice little boys on his eminence wait;
Till, when nobody's dreaming of any such thing,
That little Jackdaw hops off with the ring! 50

There's a cry and a shout, and a deuce of a rout,
And nobody seems to know what they're about,
But the monks have their pockets all turned inside out;
The friars are kneeling, and hunting, and feeling
The carpet, the floor, and the walls, and the ceiling. 55
The Cardinal drew off each plum-coloured shoe,
And left his red stockings exposed to the view;

He peeps, and he feels in the toes and the heels;
They turn up the dishes, they turn up the plates,
They take up the poker and poke out the grates, 60

They turn up the rugs — they examine the mugs —
But no! — no such thing — they can't find the RING!
And the abbot declared that, when nobody twigged it,
Some rascal or other had popped in and prigged it!

The Cardinal rose with a dignified look, 65
He called for his candle, his bell, and his book;

In holy anger and pious grief,
He solemnly cursed that rascally thief;
He cursed him at board, he cursed him in bed;
From the sole of his foot to the crown of his head; 70

He cursed him in sleeping, that every night
He should dream of the devil, and wake in a fright;
He cursed him in eating, he cursed him in drinking,
He cursed him in coughing, in sneezing, in winking;
He cursed him in sitting, in standing, in lying, 75
He cursed him in walking, in riding, in flying,
He cursed him in living, he cursed him in dying!

Never was heard such a terrible curse!
But what gave rise to no little surprise,
Nobody seemed one penny the worse! 80

The day was gone, the night came on,
The monks and the friars they searched till dawn;
When the sacristan saw, on crumpled claw,
Come limping a poor little lame Jackdaw!
No longer gay, as on yesterday; 85
His feathers all seemed to be turned the wrong way;
His pinions drooped — he could hardly stand —
His head was as bald as the palm of your hand;

His eye so dim, so wasted each limb,
That, heedless of grammar, they all cried, "THAT's HIM! 90
That's the scamp that has done this scandalous thing!
That's the thief that has got my Lord Cardinal's ring!"
The poor little Jackdaw, when the monks he saw,
Feebly gave vent to the ghost of a caw;
And turned his bald head, as much as to say, 95
"Pray be so good as to walk this way!"
Slower and slower he limped on before,
Till they came to the back of the belfry door,
Where the first thing they saw, 'midst the sticks and the straw,
Was the RING in the nest of that little Jackdaw! 100

Then the great Lord Cardinal called for his book,
And off that terrible curse he took;
The mute expression served in lieu of confession,
And, being thus coupled with full restitution,
The Jackdaw got plenary absolution; 105
When those words were heard, that poor little bird
Was so changed in a moment, 'twas really absurd,
He grew sleek and fat; in addition to that,
A fresh crop of feathers came thick as a mat!

His tail waggled more even than before; 110
But no longer it wagged with an impudent air,
No longer it perched on the Cardinal's chair.
He hopped now about with a gait devout;
At matins, at vespers, he never was out;
And, so far from any more pilfering deeds, 115
He always seemed telling the confessor's beads.
If any one lied, or if any one swore,
Or slumbered in prayer-time and happened to snore,
That good Jackdaw would give a great "caw!"

As much as to say, "Don't do so any more!" 120
While many remarked, as his manners they saw,
That they never had known such a pious Jackdaw!
 He long lived the pride of that country-side,
 And at last in the odour of sanctity died;
When, as words were too faint his merits to paint, 125
The conclave determined to make him a saint;
And on newly-made saints and popes, as you know,
It's the custom, at Rome, new names to bestow,
So they canonised him by the name of Jim Crow!

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