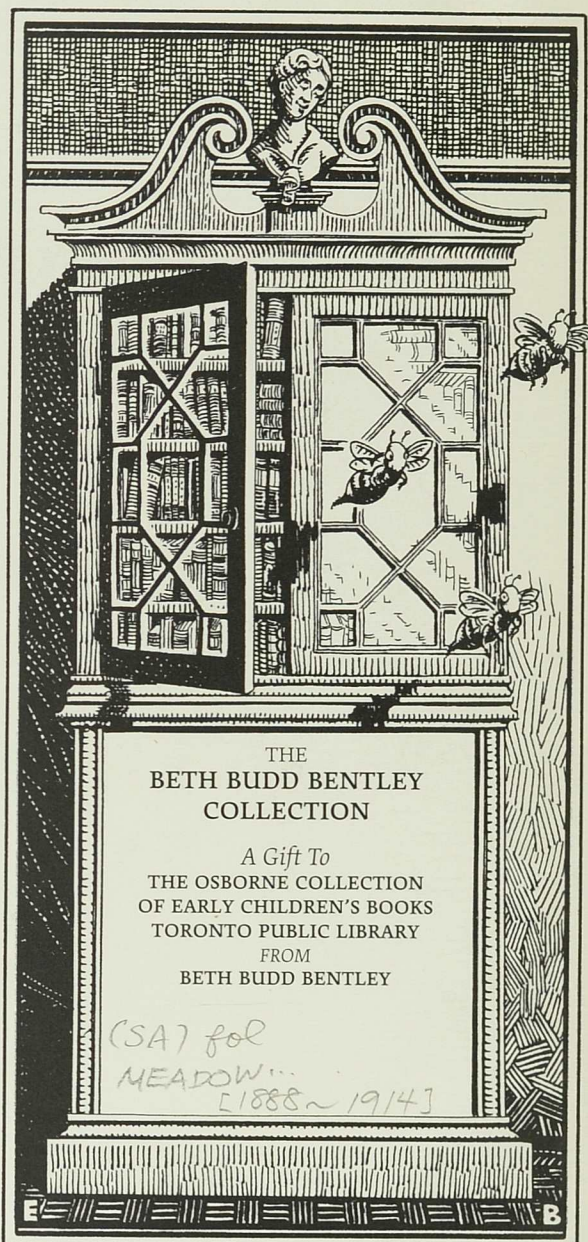


MEADOW PETS





This bookplate, designed by Eric Beddows, was commissioned by The Friends of the Osborne and Lillian H. Smith Collections in honour of Beth Budd Bentley.

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Meadow Pets.

*O*H! 'tis pleasant in the sunshine
On the meadows green and fair;
Where our pretty pets are playing
In the balmy summer air.

Baby lambs look up to greet us,
Nestling to their mothers' side,
And there's Neddy, almost saying,
"Aren't you longing for a ride?"

Oh, our meadow pets are many,
They are friends we love to see,
As we watch them in the sunshine
They are happy, so are we.

F. G. S.





SMUT AND RUFUS AT HOME.

Meadow Pets



ERNEST NISTER LONDON.
E. P. DUTTON & CO. NEW YORK.



Owls.

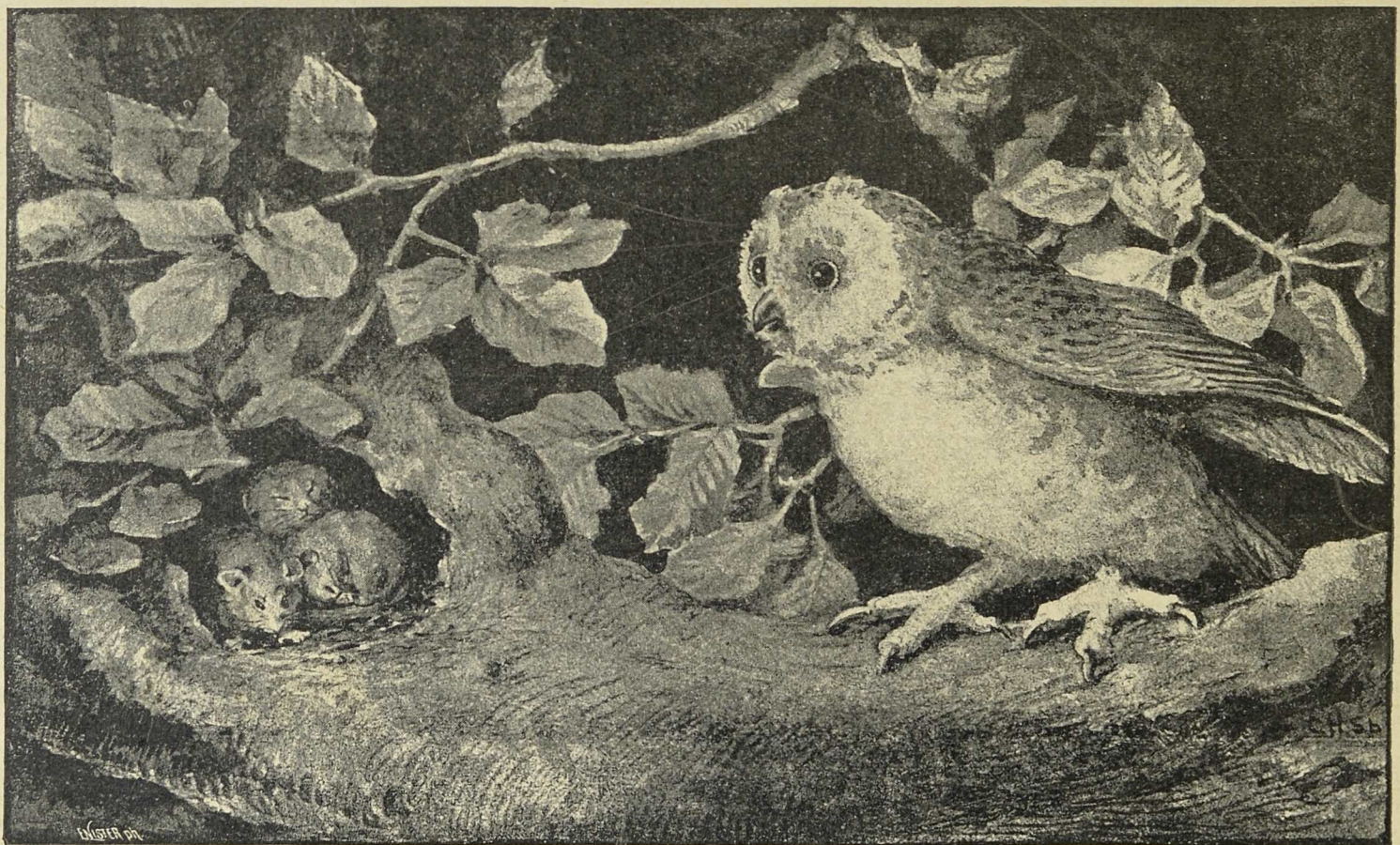
FUNNY solemn sleepy things,
Blinking eyes and folded wings,
Owls, I'm sure, would take first prize
At a show, for looking wise!

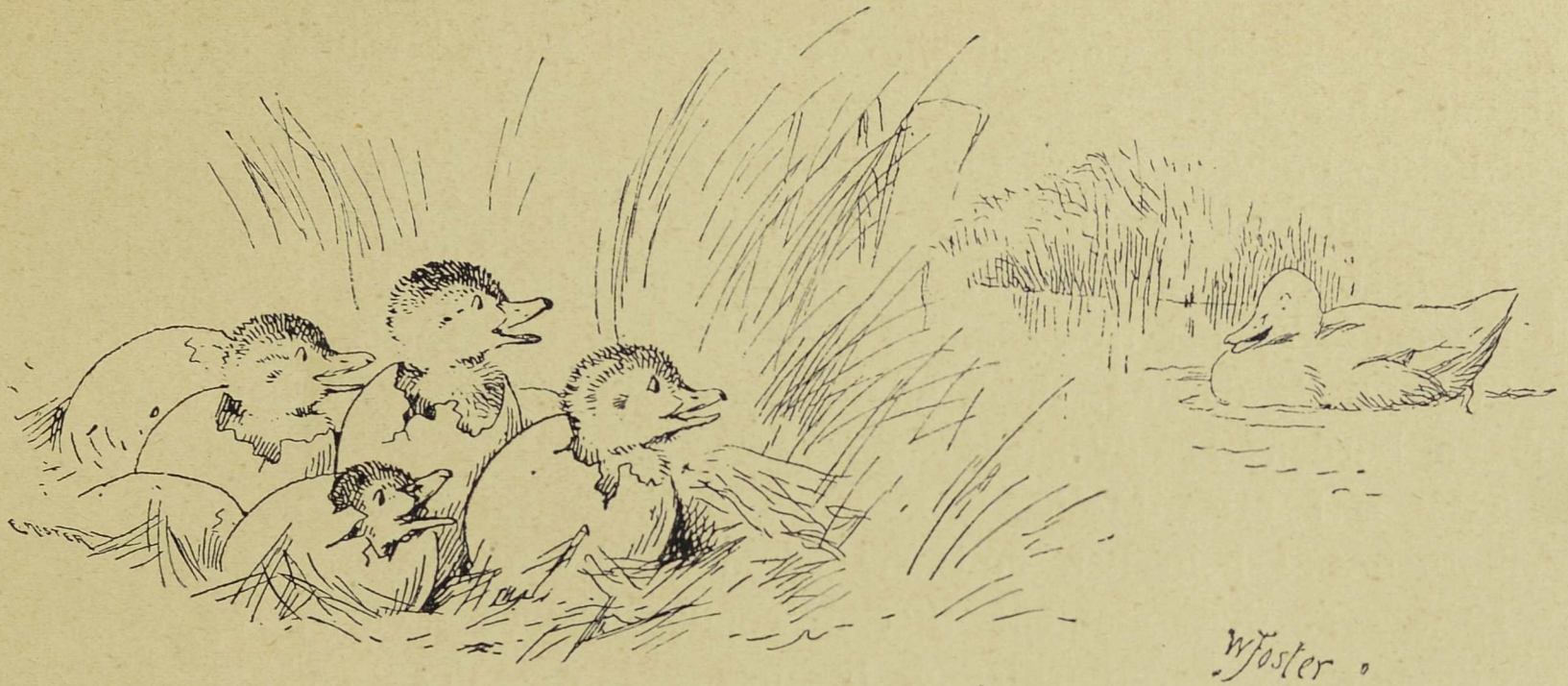
Though they sit and stare all day
At you in their sleepy way,
When to bed at night you go,
They are wide-awake you know.

They are not like you or me,
In the darkness they can see;
In the barn they sit, for that's
Where they catch the mice and rats.

They keep watch there till 'tis morn
For those thieves who steal the corn;
So, though sleepy they may be,
Owls are useful things, you see.

C. B.





Polly and Molly.

POLLY was a very unhappy little girl, or at least she *thought* she was.

Usually she was as merry and light-hearted a little maiden as you could meet in a day's march, in spite of the fact that she had a lame leg, and could not help mother quite as much as the rest of the family.

Polly's mother and brothers and sisters took care that the little girl should not feel herself a burden in the family, where there were many mouths to feed and no father to work for their daily bread. But one unfortunate day poor little Polly had overheard a conversation between two of the neighbours, and this had made her very sad indeed.

"I'm sorry to my heart for Widow Brown," one had said, "she must have a hard struggle to provide for all those children, and to be burdened with a cripple like Polly."

Polly heard no more, for she limped away, her little heart filled with grief and tears of sorrow streaming down her face. She crept away to her favourite haunt, the brook-meadow, and, flinging herself down upon her face, sobbed as though her heart would break.

Now the meadow hedge bordered the Vicarage garden, and Miss Molly, the Vicar's little daughter, had a portion of this railed off as a sort of little poultry-yard, and here she kept her own special brood of ducks, because it was so handy for the brook. She was feeding her pets when Polly arrived upon the scene, and although she could not see the little girl because of

the thick hedge, she guessed who it was, and hurried round by the gate to find out what the matter could be.

"Polly, Polly, what *is* the matter?" she asked, sitting down beside the sobbing child and drawing the little rough head upon her lap.

At first Polly would not speak, but presently Molly persuaded her to tell the cause of her trouble, and then the two little girls cried together.

"Oh! Polly darling, don't mind," said Molly, "your mother doesn't think you're a burden; Daddy says she loves you the best of all her children."

"But oh! Miss Molly, it is hard to think I'll never be able to work for mother and help her, and she is so good and kind to me."

It was at that moment that a wonderful idea occurred to Molly; but she did not speak immediately, because she was not *quite* sure of herself; but she did not hesitate long—

"Polly," she said, speaking very quickly and turning very red. "It's your birthday next week, I know it is because we were both born on the same day and we were both called Mary after my mother, only your mother calls you Polly, and mine calls me Molly. Well, I'm going to give you Bella for a birthday present, and I'll ask Daddy to let you keep her in my little yard. If you save her eggs and let her hatch them, you can make ever so much money, for she's a prize duck, you know."

Polly did know. Molly had talked so much about Bella and was so proud of her that Polly well knew what a sacrifice she was making in giving her away, and at first she refused to accept her.

But once having made up her mind Molly was firm. Polly was to have Bella for a birthday present—and so she did.

As Bella still continued to make her home in the Vicarage garden, Molly did not miss her, and indeed she became, if anything, happier than before, because as Polly visited her duck constantly, Molly, who was an only child, had a companion and playmate.

From the first Polly and Molly had decided to keep the great news a secret from Polly's mother, until the time the little girl should begin to reap the benefits of her property; but it was a hard task for Polly.

As the time passed on Mrs. Bella made herself a nest amongst the reeds on the banks of the brook and there she laid ten beautiful pale green eggs. Oh! what an anxious time it was for Polly then.

“Do you think they’ll *ever* be hatched?” she asked Molly half a dozen times a day. And Molly answered earnestly:

“Oh! *yes*, Polly, some of them are sure to turn out all right.”



In the end nine fine little ducklings cracked their shells and popped their little downy heads out into the wide world.

Oh! what a proud day it was for Bella, Molly and Polly when the little ones took their first swim.

"Miss Molly, I'll *never* be able to repay you," said Polly, with a little catch in her breath. "To think those darlings might have been yours."

"But I'm so happy they're yours I don't want you to pay me," said kind little Molly.

All this time Polly's mother knew nothing about her little girl's treasures, but it so happened that the very day the ducklings took their first swim Polly went home and found her mother in tears.

"Don't heed me, dearie," she said in answer to her little girl's question, "I'm a bit down-hearted, for I'm behind with the rent and it bothers me; but things will come right in the end, don't you worry, pet."

Then Polly hugged her secret to her heart and could have cried aloud with joy.

When the day came for Bella's ducklings to be sold, both Polly and Molly shed a few tears. Two ducklings were to be left, partly to console Bella and partly that they might grow into big ducks, and form the commencement of "Polly's poultry farm," which the two little girls had made up their minds Polly was one day to possess.

But the seven ducklings had been bought by the Squire, so Polly knew they would have a comfortable home and plenty of good food.

Who can tell Polly's feelings as she slipped a little gold coin into her mother's hand and with tears of joy told the story of her secret?

"Mother, you'll be able to pay the rent now," she whispered, "and I shan't be a burden."

"A burden, my precious, you never were that to me," said the good woman. "But now I must put on my best bonnet and go up and thank that dear good Miss Molly."

Bella and her two remaining ducklings thrived under Polly's care, and lived to hatch other broods of ducklings, which were sold for such a good price that a little patch of ground was rented for Polly, and there she reared many families of ducks and geese, and turkeys and hens. So that she never was a burden to anyone, but lived to be a happy and useful little woman.

L. L. Weedon.



Faithful Friends.

RALPH the shepherd boy, and his dog Trusty are great friends. They are always together, and each feels equally responsible for the safety of Farmer Johnston's fine fat sheep. They help one another loyally to take care of them, and are very proud of their charges, who, as you may see in the picture, are splendid animals, and no more stupid than sheep usually are. Their business is to grow wool and make mutton, not to think and be sensible; so the shepherd and his dog have to be sensible for them, and guard them from every danger—as the two faithful friends fully understand.

But dangers seem very far away on this beautiful summer morning as they rest on the grass. Trusty is asleep—or very nearly so—and Ralph's thoughts are far off as he listens to the skylarks singing overhead, and pictures to himself all the great things he will do when he is a man as big as Farmer Johnston.

He means to have a flock of sheep of his own then, and Trusty will help him to take care of them; he forgets that he is an orphan boy with nothing but his weekly wages to start him in life, and that Trusty will be old and past work long before he can have saved enough to buy a single sheep; he forgets everything but that it is a glorious morning, and that he is young, and the world is all before him.

All up and down the grassy slope the sheep are feeding, for the picture is not big enough to show us more than a very small part of the farmer's fine flock; and there are many innocent foolish-faced lambs among them, full of fun and frolic. The road runs at the bottom of the field, white and dusty in the sunshine; and just over the brow of the hill behind Ralph stands the comfortable farmhouse in the midst of its barns and outbuildings.

No, there is certainly nothing to be afraid of here. Boy and dog may both go to sleep if they please, for no danger can possibly threaten them so near home.

They do not see that small dark dot far away down the dusty road; far away at first, but rushing rapidly nearer. It is a lean, savage-looking dog, running at the top of his speed, his head down, his red eyes glaring.

Ah! Ralph sees him, and springs to his feet with a cry of dismay; for this is no honest dog like Trusty, but a mere wild beast bent on worrying sheep and biting boys. It is Squire Tolhurst's run-away Fury, a brute who would have been shot long ago but that hitherto he has had the wit to hide by day in the densest thickets, only coming out at night to worry defenceless flocks. More than one enraged farmer had sworn to kill him, and though he has never been seen within ten miles of this place, Ralph has heard many a tale of his strength and ferocity.

And already he had leapt over the gate, and is making straight for the sheep, who—as yet unconscious of their danger—go on nibbling lazily.

And Ralph has only a small stick to defend himself and the flock!

But he does not stay to think of that; he is away down the slope: "Trusty! Trusty!" he cries, and the dog—wide awake in a moment—bounds after him. He, too, sees Fury, and goes for him tooth and nail like the brave dog he is.

With a savage growl, Fury flings himself upon them; but even as he springs there is a sudden sharp report, a blue smoke behind the hedge, and he falls back—dead!

Farmer Johnston has shot him, and saved the faithful friends and the flock.

But he has been only just in time.

Evelyn Fletcher.



FAITHFUL FRIENDS.

My Puppy.

*T*HOUGH he's only three months old,
He is just as good as gold,
Always does what he is told—

My Puppy.

Fat and round and soft is he,
And as knowing as can be;
Fond of sugar, and of me—

My Puppy.



He is learning
 how to bark,
Always ready
 for a lark,
Loves a scamper
 in the park—
 My Puppy.

When he bites,
 it's all his play—
Licks the place,
 as if to say,
"Sorry dear!"
 then runs away—
 My Puppy.
 F. G. S.



Cabbage for Supper.

THE snow had come early, much too early the Bunny Rabbits thought as they came out of their burrow to search for some supper. They lived in a copse at the bottom of the Hill Meadow and as they peeped through the brambles and withered fern which sheltered their snug little home, they could see the roofs of Croft Farm.

“There are winter greens in the garden there,” remarked Bunny, pointing his whiskers that way.

“But there’s a dog and a gardener!” answered Mrs. Bunny, “and the snow is so deep.”

And here she held up one of her cold little paws and shook it sadly.

“Still, we must try!” said her husband. “There is nothing here, and I know of a hole in the wire where we can get in.”

So when it was growing quite dusky and dim they set off and reached the wire fence which protected the farm garden. Soon they found the hole through which they squeezed their fat, furry little bodies. All was still and quiet, for the gardener had gone home to his tea, and the dog had crept indoors and was lying by the kitchen fire. So the two rabbits pattered along under the bare gooseberry bushes and past the asparagus bed, and then, to their joy, they saw the rows of winter cabbage, the crinkled leaves dark-green among the snow. Then most industriously they nibbled and munched and munched and nibbled, and were enjoying themselves very much when a slight sound made them look up, and to their horror they saw two green and golden eyes glaring at them from behind a currant bush. With a little shirk they both flew off with Tib, the farm cat, behind them. Oh! it was a terrible race, but, fortunately as they reached the hole, Tib made a spring, and catching his paw on the wire fell headlong, and ere he could recover himself the rabbits were through and scuttling along to their home.

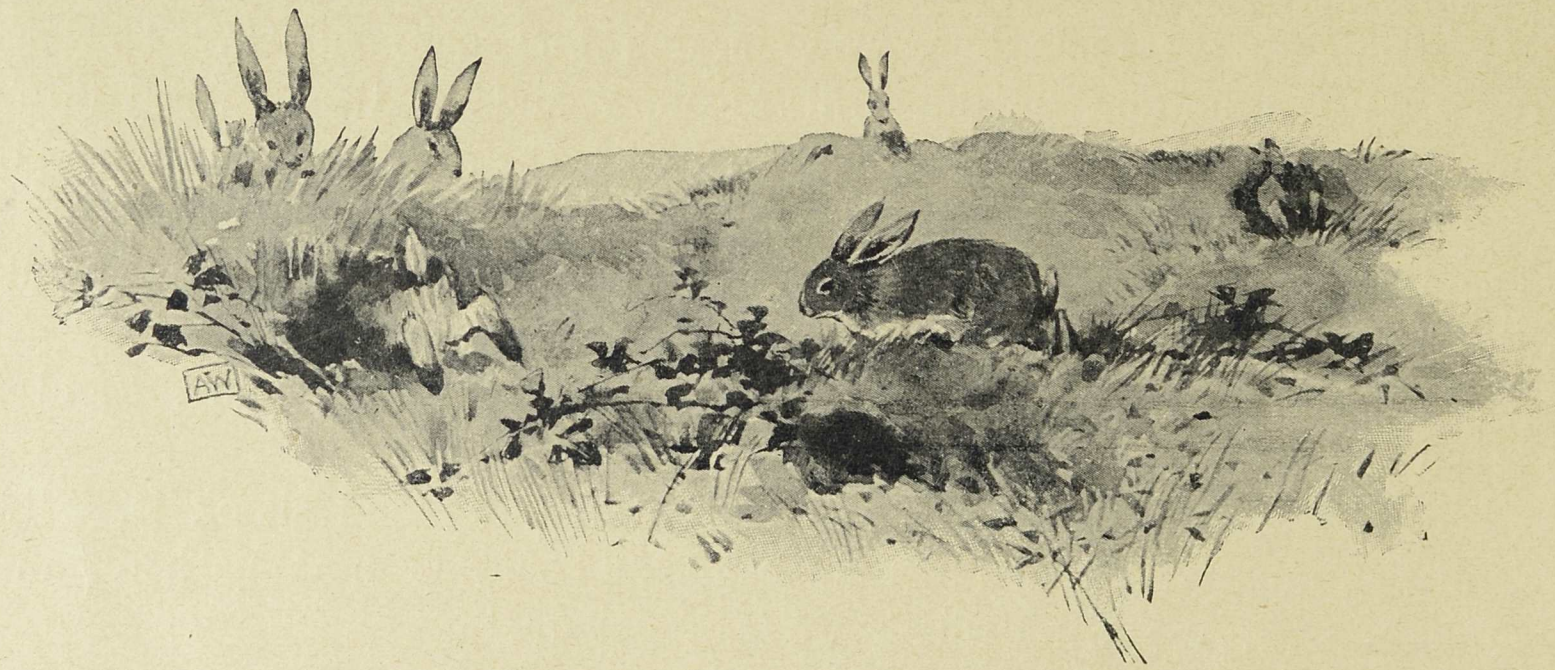
"Oh!" panted Mrs. Bunny when they were safe in their burrow, "oh! I never thought of the cat!"

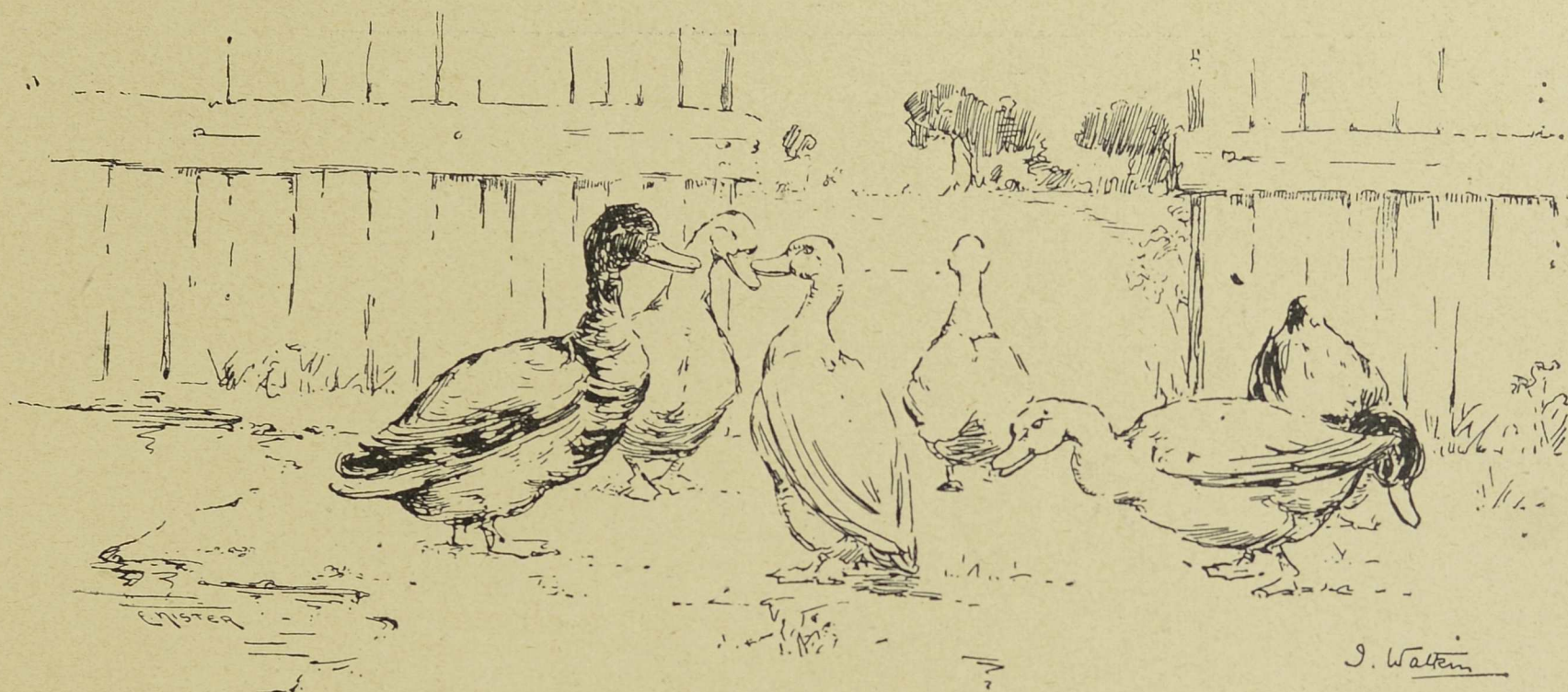
"Never mind," said her husband, "we have had a good supper; and now let us get to bed, and we will go again to-morrow."

But there, I am afraid he was disappointed, for next morning when Farmer Stevens went down his garden, he shook his head over his cabbages.

"Those tiresome rabbits have been through again," he muttered. "There must be a hole in the wire, and I will see that it is mended at once."

M. A. Hoyer.





Dobbin and the Ducks

THE ducks were going to market. The gander had overheard the farmer's wife telling the dairymaid, and the gander had told his wife, and Mrs. Goose, who considered the ducks quacked too much and wanted keeping in their place, told the turkeys and the turkeys told the hens, and the hens soon cackled out the news to the ducks themselves.

At first the ducks wouldn't believe it. "Sage and onions!" quacked Mrs. Youngduck, which is duck language for 'stuff and nonsense'; "sage and onions, they couldn't do without us."

Nevertheless they felt a trifle uncomfortable, and when Dobbin came into the yard and no one was near, Mrs. Youngduck waddled up to him and quacked softly—"Dobbin dear, *is* it true that we are going to be sold?"

"Quite true," answered Dobbin, rather cheerfully if the truth must be told, for he didn't care for the ducks. They were apt to rush between his legs and squabble for the grain he dropped from his nose-bag in a very rude and upsetting manner. "I heard the farmer tell John to harness Beauty and me to the farm cart for he had a load of sheep and ducks to send to market, besides a number of other things."

"Oh! Dobbin dear, what shall we do?" quacked poor duckie. "We don't *want* to go to market. Just fancy if Mr. Youngduck and I were to be sold separately. There's no knowing what will happen. I know I'm very plump—I wish I were not. Oh! Dobbin, *do* help us. Think if you and Beauty were going to be separated."

Dobbin was a kindhearted horse, and he felt touched by poor duckie's appeal. He didn't see his way to helping her though, and presently she and the rest of



CRISTEN

EBS Montefiore

IN THE FARMYARD.

the ducks were caught, put into a basket and popped into the cart. All the way to market they quacked their loudest, and every quack sounded to Dobbin like a cry for help.

When they came to the market-town the horses were unharnessed and taken to a stable, whilst the sheep and ducks and the other goods were displayed for sale in the market.

Everything sold well that day except the poultry. As the farmer had no good offer for his ducks they were still unsold when the end of the day came. Dobbin and Beauty were harnessed to the cart ready for the return journey, and the ducks were about to be put into the cart, when a woman came up and made a bid for them. The price was not quite so high as the farmer had expected, but he hesitated a moment and was about to decide to sell them, when Mrs. Youngduck set up a piteous quacking, "Save me, Dobbin, save me!"

Then a most extraordinary thing happened. Dobbin, usually the most steady-going horse in the district, reared and plunged, and finally took to his heels and bolted down the middle of the street.

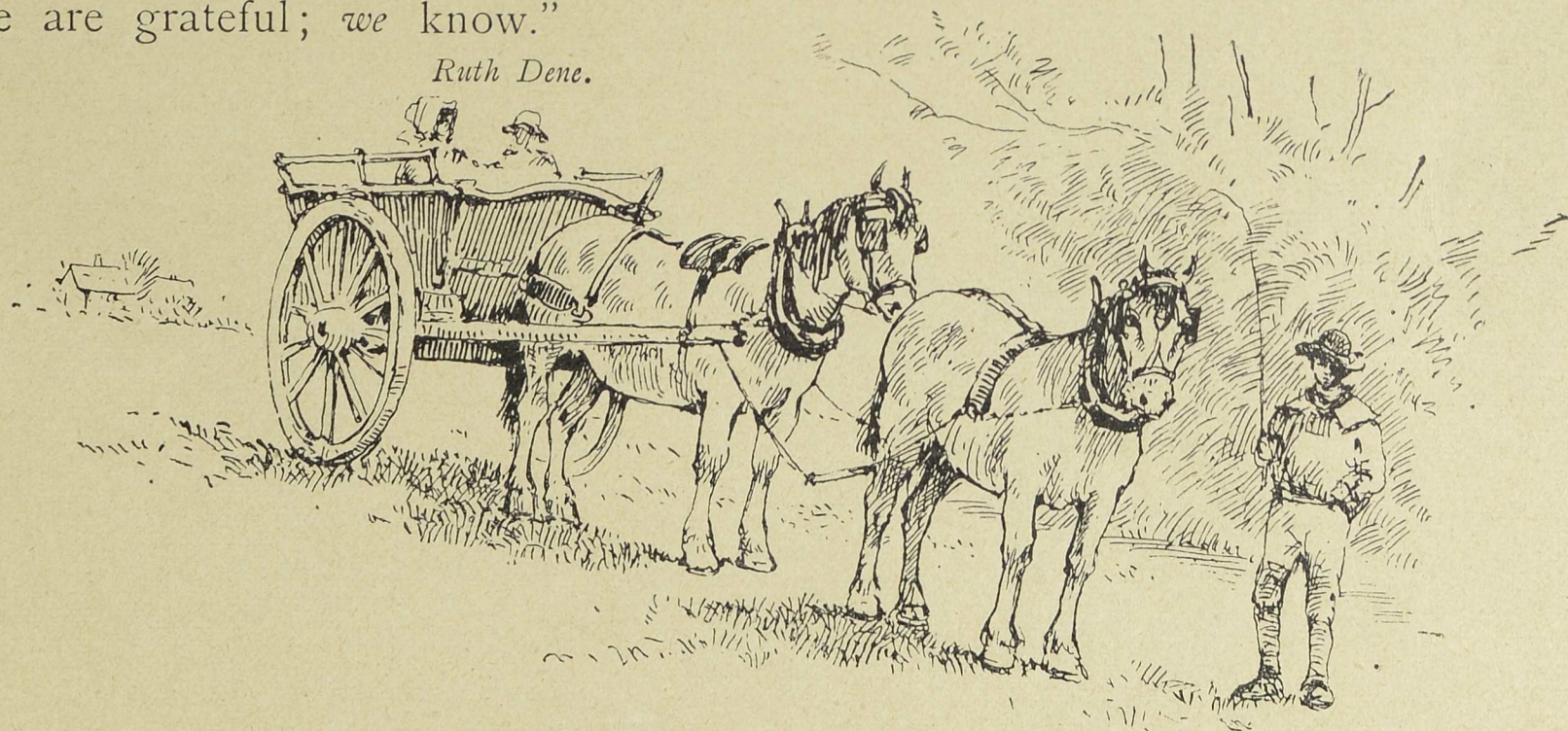
The folks scattered to right and left whilst the astonished farmer pursued his cart and horses.

Dobbin soon allowed himself to be caught; but the woman who had made a bid for the ducks had disappeared, and so they were put back into the cart and taken home again.

"I can't think what made you behave so badly, Dobbin old fellow," said the farmer, as he watered the horses at night.

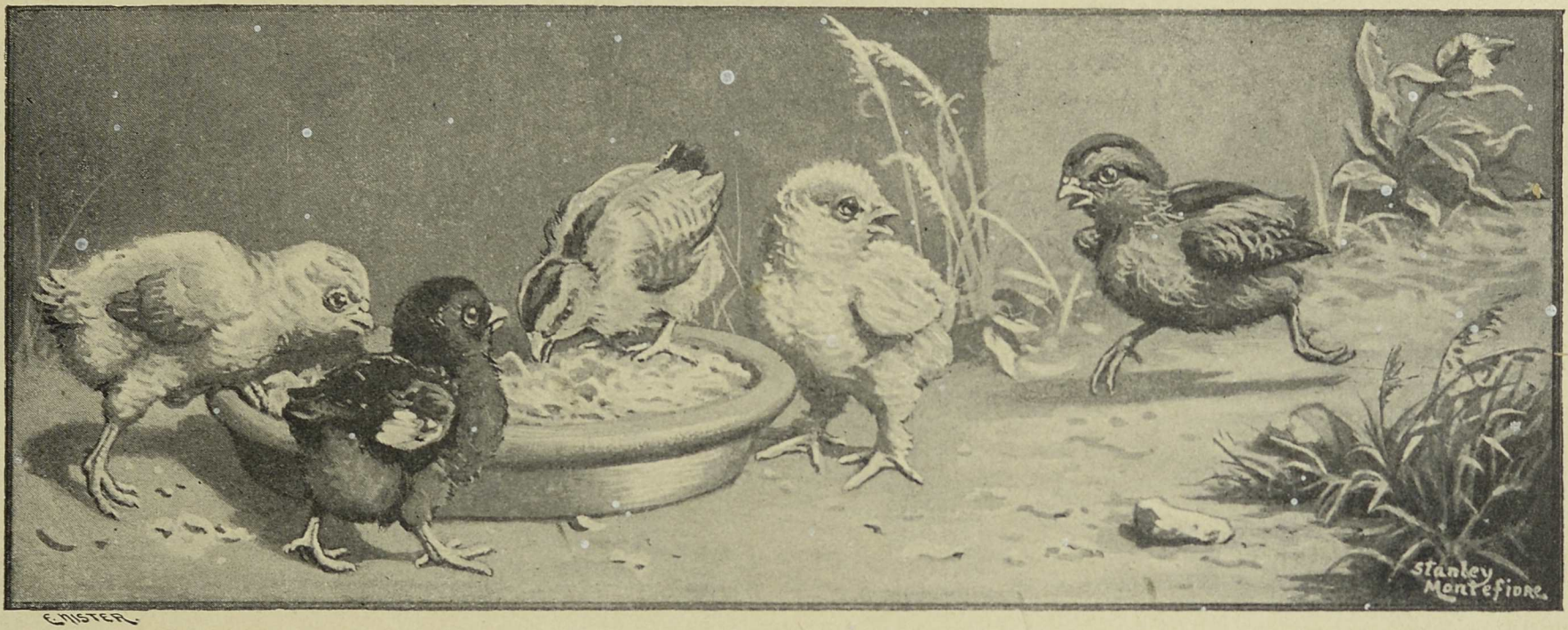
Dobbin looked up from the trough towards the ducks, and Mrs. Youngduck quacked—"Dobbin dear, we are grateful; *we* know."

Ruth Dene.





A VISITOR.



The Visit.

*A*T Cowslip Farm one summer day
Young Froggy thought that he
Would leave his pond, some calls to pay
And some old friends to see.

His green and yellow coat he wore,
Which made him look quite gay,
He'd often been out there before
So didn't lose his way.

The first friend that he called to see
Was Cock-a-doodle-doo;
"I've just dropped in to-day," said he,
"To ask pray how are you?"

"We're pleased to see you at our place,"
Said Bidy with delight,
"But please don't come too near, in case
You give my chicks a fright!"

C. B.



Greely Fair.

I WONDÉR if you have ever been at Greely? It is in Derbyshire, you know, where the forget-me-nots bloom so gay, and the harts' tongue fern grows wild; and the birds, if you heard them—well they sing more gaily there than at any other village in England.

And at the top of the village green lived Larry Brailsford, the doctor's little son. To-day, being the Fair, he was to have a holiday, and his new governess was going to take him—not nurse, for Larry was a big boy now, you must understand. He was six years old and *never* walked out with a nurse.

“It is ten minutes to eleven,” called out Mrs. Brailsford. “Come, Larry, make haste, Miss Leetham is ready. There's a clean pocket-handkerchief for you. Be a good boy and don't get into any mischief if you can help it,” and, giving him a kiss, Mrs. Brailsford dropped some coppers into her son's hand and bade him adieu.

“Oh! it is jolly,” sang out the lad as he skipped along the road; “don't you wish you were a boy, Miss Leetham?”

“I am very content to be as I am,” laughed she.

Already they had entered the field where the Fair was being held. Once through the turnstiles Larry ran passing Dinnie Jones, his great friend. Now Dinnie Jones, who chanced to be arrayed in a lemon-coloured jersey and mottled trousers, was the tinker's youngest son, the acknowledged rip of the village—and Larry Brailsford's staunchest friend.

"Hullo!" Dinnie greeted him, "where are you off to now?"

"To the donkeys," called out Larry.

"I'll come too. Say . . . won't you treat a fellow?"

"Yes."

"Right," said Dinnie. "Here's two beauties," he cried, pointing towards Jim and Bess, who stood patiently awaiting to be hired. "I know 'em. Jim is an awful slow-coach, but a high flier now and then. And Bess, I believe she is great grand-daughter to Dick Turpin's very mare!"

"Ah!" cried Larry, greatly impressed.

"Mount," said Dinnie, nodding to the man in charge.

Larry demurred. "I don't think I'll have the pommel," he said, walking over to Jim.

"Oh! well," said Dinnie, "I'm not a girl. Perhaps you want to hold on?"

So Larry took Jim, and Dinnie took Bess.

"Now we'll see who is first at the winning post," sang out Dinnie.

"Where?"

"Right ahead, ahoy! steady! Don't drop off, Larry," the urchin continued.

"Whose going to drop off?" shouted Larry, at the slur cast upon his horsemanship. "Why I could . . . oh! I'm . . . He stopped short, for Jim, having espied a friend of his at the other end of the field, broke into a trot, leaving her sober mate and Dinnie in the rear. Larry held on to the pommel like grim death.

Now I think Jim's acquaintance wanted nothing to do with him, for directly she saw Jim approaching she gave a self-satisfied little whinnie, and, kicking up her heels to show she didn't care a snap, away she bolted scampering through the Fair like mad.

This sad want of manners quite set Jim's back up, and he determined to show Florence Jane—as the donkey was called—that he wasn't going to be trifled with any longer. So the faster Florence Jane flew, the more determined was Jim to keep pace with her.

On, on through the Fair they went, till they came to the end of the field which was guarded by a barrier and which Florence Jane snapped like a piece of matchwood—Jim following close by. Right past Creepy Hollow, and plump into farmer Dale's pound they went, snorting, panting, whistling—for Jim, when his temper was up, was by no means a thoroughbred.

"I'll let you know if you bolt away from me like that," snorted Jim, in donkey fashion.

"Fudge!" was all Florence Jane retorted.

"I followed you here, Madam," fumed Jim, looking about awkwardly to see where he was.

"And I bolted in here to get out of your way," answered Florence Jane truthfully.

"Hullo! cried a voice from behind. "What on earth have you put yourself in a pound for?"

"I haven't put myself in anywhere!" called out our brave little hero, now beginning to cry. "This old dunce of a donkey bolted after that other little wretch (here Florence Jane stamped her hoofs) and it was all that I could do to hold on."

"And all that I could do to follow," laughed Dunny.

"Well, come on. I'll see you safely back;" and, mounting Florence Jane, Dunny took hold of Black Bess, leading her by the bridle, and quietly he led them back to the Fair, Larry riding crestfallen Jim in a very subdued fashion.

"Will his master whack him?"

"Rather! This is the fourteenth time he has bolted, and it's going to be his last. Jim's to be sold for a pound to the first bidder. I heard him say so."

"A pound!" gasped Larry—thinking instantly of that fine little go-cart at home, that cart which came to him on his birthday, and was awaiting a donkey to pull it. "A pound," said Larry again, thinking very earnestly that it was through his not being able to ride that Jim had lost his character.

"Dunny!"

"Yes, Larry."

"If you think... If you're sure a pound would buy Jim.... try!"

And when Jim walked quietly into the Fair and stood before his owner, Larry said, "Don't whip him, please. I've had a very pleasant ride, thank you. You say a pound will buy him. Just send to my father please—Dr. Brailsford—he will give you the money—good-day!"

And when Larry rode home, and told his father what had happened, the doctor laughed, and called his son "A budding little horse dealer."

Mary Boyle.



AT THE FAIR.

The Lost Nose-Bag.

"*I*M sorry, Jim," said Mrs. Tubb, "very sorry, but if the nose-bag cannot be found to-day you must go—you are always forgetting things, and always losing things."

"Yes m'm," said Jim, soberly.

"And you must look after that dog of yours," and Mrs. Tubb shook her head at Trumper—"I really think he will have to go anyhow—he's such a bad dog—"

"Yes m'm," said Jim again, but he had to swallow very hard to get rid of the big lump in his throat. He walked down the path feeling very sad, and Trumper, who ought to have felt sadder still, bolted after him trying to look dismal, but not managing it very well, for his tail would stick out straight instead of hanging between his legs.

"Trumper," said Jim, "where did you put that bag? I'm almost sure I saw you worrying it yesterday." Trumper ran to the stable door and barked loudly. "I'm forgetting the horses, am I?" said Jim, smiling and patting Trumper, "clever dog, good dog—" Trumper's tail wagged very hard, he felt quite happy again, so happy that he had decided he would chase the chickens, but as Jim appeared at the stable door at that moment riding one horse and leading the other, Trumper stared at the sky in the most innocent way instead, and followed meekly down to the pond. "Oh Bessie, why don't I remember things?" said Jim, as the horses splashed in the cool water. "I do try, but somehow it don't seem much good trying." Trumper pricked up his ears and began to bark. "Time to go home, you mean, I 'spose?" said Jim; "what a clever dog!"

But at that moment the clever dog bolted down the road as fast as his legs could carry him, and though Jim shouted "Trumper, to heel," and "Hi! you Trumper," until he was nearly hoarse, Trumper ran on and on.

"Now we're done for," said Jim, "he'll bring back a rabbit at least, maybe a partridge or a pheasant; I may as well go home and say 'Good-bye' to Mrs. Tubb." Jim stroked the horses, kissed Bessie's neck, and went sadly back to the Farm.

In the stable he saw something white in the farthest corner.



A COOL SPOT.

"Trumper," called his Master, severely, "what have you got?" He tied up the horses and stood staring at Trumper trying to summon up courage to go to him.

"Trumper, you bad dog, bring it here!" called Jim.

Trumper was busy, and Trumper had to be dragged out of the dark corner still holding fast the something in his mouth.

But it wasn't a partridge or a pheasant or a rabbit; it was the lost nose-bag!

"Well," said Jim, "you are—I don't know what you are—" and Jim tossed the bag up in the air.

"So you've found the bag, Jim?" called Mrs. Tubb. She was standing at the farmhouse door.

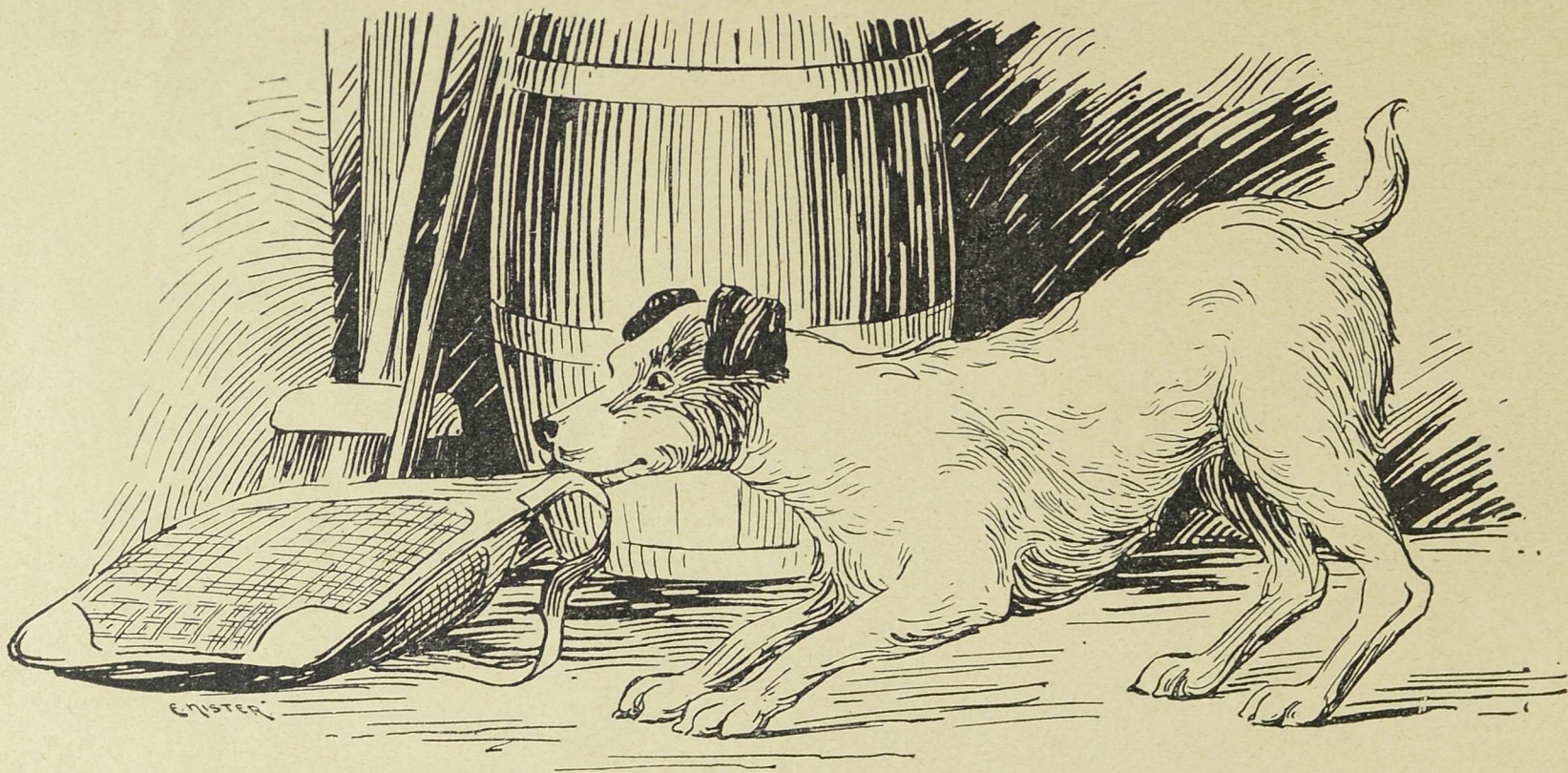
"Yes m'm," said Jim; then he looked at Trumper, ran up the path and, before he had time to think, began to speak quickly—

"Oh mum, Trumper found it, and Trumper reminded me to fetch the horses and told me it was time to go home, and oh mum, I can't get on without Trumper; couldn't you give us both another trial?"

"Well, perhaps," said Mrs. Tubb, smiling; for never before had Jim made such a long speech—"I think perhaps—what do you say, Jim?"

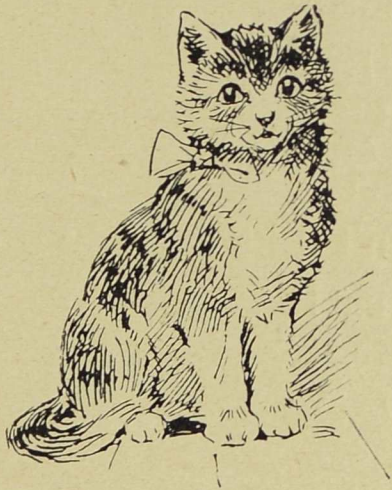
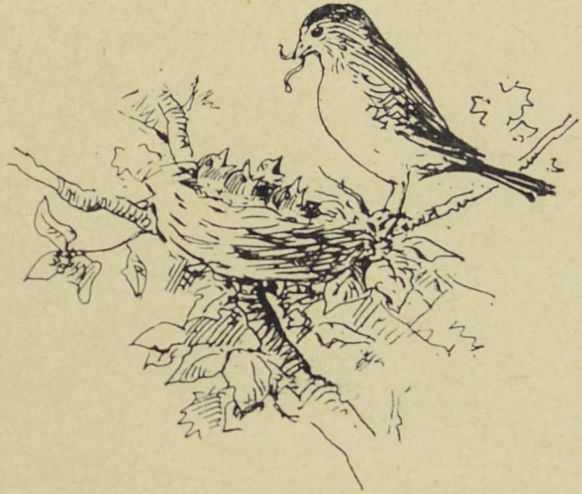
"Yes m'm, please m'm," said Jim, and he walked down the path, whistling.

Maggie Browne.



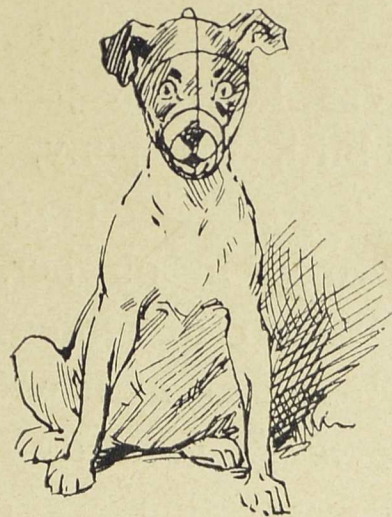
I'd Like to Be.

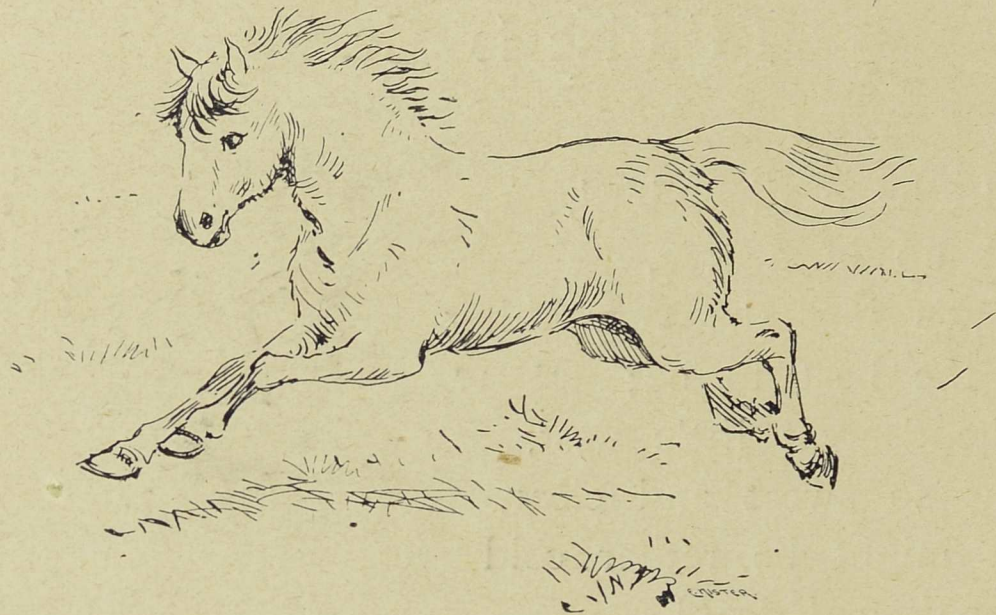
I'D like to be a dicky-bird,
And sit up in a tree,
I'm sure that's just the very thing
I'd like the best to be;
I'd build the dearest little nest,
And sing so sweet and clear,
And yet—it might be rather cold
In winter-time I fear!



I'd like to be a pussy-cat,
And sit beside the fire;
To be a little fluffy puss
I really do aspire.
I'd have no lessons, then, to do,
Now wouldn't that be nice?
And yet—I think I shouldn't like
To have to catch the mice!

I'd like to be a doggy then,
A little terrier bright;
Oh! that is just the very thing
To suit me, really, quite.
I'd jump, and bark, and run about
Without my coat or hat—
I *couldn't* wear a muzzle, though—
I never thought of that!





I'd like to be a pony, then,
And gallop on the moor;
I wonder how I never came
To think of that before!
I'd race along so very fast,
Oh! wouldn't it be sweet?
And yet—I think I shouldn't like
The grass and hay to eat!

But when, that night,
 a little maid
Was fast asleep in bed,
The bird, the pony,
 dog, and cat
Peeped in on her, and said:
"To be so discontented must
Most sad and wretched be:
We wouldn't be a little girl
For all that we could see!"

Constance M. Lowe.





Billy Duck.

BILLY DUCK was a conceited duck, there was no doubt about it.

You see he had been hatched by a hen mother. Tommy, the farmer's little boy, had slipped a duck's egg into old Biddy Speckles' nest, where twelve hen's eggs lay, just to see what would come of it, and a little duckling had come of it, much to Biddy's astonishment. But just because he was different to the rest of her brood, Biddy made a pet of him.

One day Biddy took her brood down the meadow towards the brook. As soon as Billy saw the water in he went, and, in spite of his mother's cackles of alarm, enjoyed himself to his heart's content.

It was not long before Biddy discovered that her favourite child was a little duck, but she took care not to tell him: she was afraid he would go away and leave her altogether.

However, Billy Duck grew up into a beautiful snow-white duck, and then



FRIENDS.

the farmer's wife took him away from the old hen, and told the poultry boy to keep him with the other ducks.

But before he left his mother he had discovered that he was not a chick, and he asked his mother what he was.

"Do you think I am a swan, mother?" he asked. "Goosey Gander says the farmer has bought two swans, and they are the most beautiful birds on the farm."

"Perhaps you are, dearie," said the kind old hen, because she did not like to tell him he was only a duck.

So when Billy was taken away from his mother, he waddled down to the stream, and, seeing two graceful swans sailing upon the surface, in he went and paddled up and down beside them.

The other ducks would have welcomed him gladly, but Billy would have nothing to say to them.

"Go away," he said rudely, "we swans can't have anything to say to a set of common ducks."

"Common ducks indeed," quacked one. "What are you, I should like to know?"

"A swan," said the silly duck, and the other ducks broke out into quacks of disdain and then left him.

It was all very well for a time, Billy Duck swam up and down with the swans, but when he saw the ducks being fed and waddled ashore to get his share, they drove him away, and when the swans were fed they wouldn't allow him to feed with them, so that he soon felt hungry and miserable. It was worse when night came, for the ducks wouldn't have him in their pen and the swans wouldn't have him with them.

The next day he found his way back to his old hen mother and told her all about it. "My dear," said she, "take my advice and make friends with the ducks."

"Then I'm *not* a swan?" he asked, meekly.

"No, you're a duck," replied the old hen, "and I ought to have told you so, but I didn't want to hurt your feelings."

So Billy Duck went back a wiser if a sadder bird and humbly begged pardon of his relations. They were good-natured birds and soon forgave him, and now there isn't a happier duck on the farm pond than Billy.

Lucy Lawrence.



THE THREE FRIENDS.



Three Good Friends.

PEOPLE used to look surprised at first, when Mrs. Croft of Long Farm spoke of her little niece Bertha Croft, and the two dogs Bootles and Bandy, as the "three good friends." But Bertha and the dogs were inseparable companions, and became so well known in the village that everyone spoke of them in the same way.

Bertha was born in India, and was so small, pale and weak when she was first sent home to the charge of her aunt, that she was not allowed to do lessons of any sort. She was to live out of doors all through the long, warm, summer days which were just beginning, and grow strong and rosy as a little English girl ought to be. So, at six years old, Bertha could neither read nor write: she knew her letters certainly, but that was all.

From the very first she and the dogs were firm friends, and let Bertha go where she would, Bootles and Bandy went too. Bandy had at this time quite outgrown his name, for the bowed legs, which had seemed too weak to support his fat little body as a puppy, were now straight and strong, and the names of the two dogs had been shortened to Boo and Ban.

Towards the end of the summer Mrs. Croft brought from the town a large beautiful book full of pictures and stories which she gave to Bertha. "You three friends have been idle quite long enough," she said, "and I

think it is time for the two-legged friend to make acquaintance with the three R's."

"Who are they, Auntie?" asked Bertha, turning over the leaves.

"Why, Reading, Writing, and 'Rithmetic; the village children would tell you that," replied Mrs. Croft.

Bertha shook her head—"Boo and Ban won't like me to sit indoors and learn lessons," she said.

"Oh, you needn't sit indoors, you can begin with reading. You know your letters, Bertha, and now you are growing strong; it is sad for a girl of six not to be able to read. Look, these stories are all in little words. I'll come and sit out with you a while every morning and teach you a few at a time."

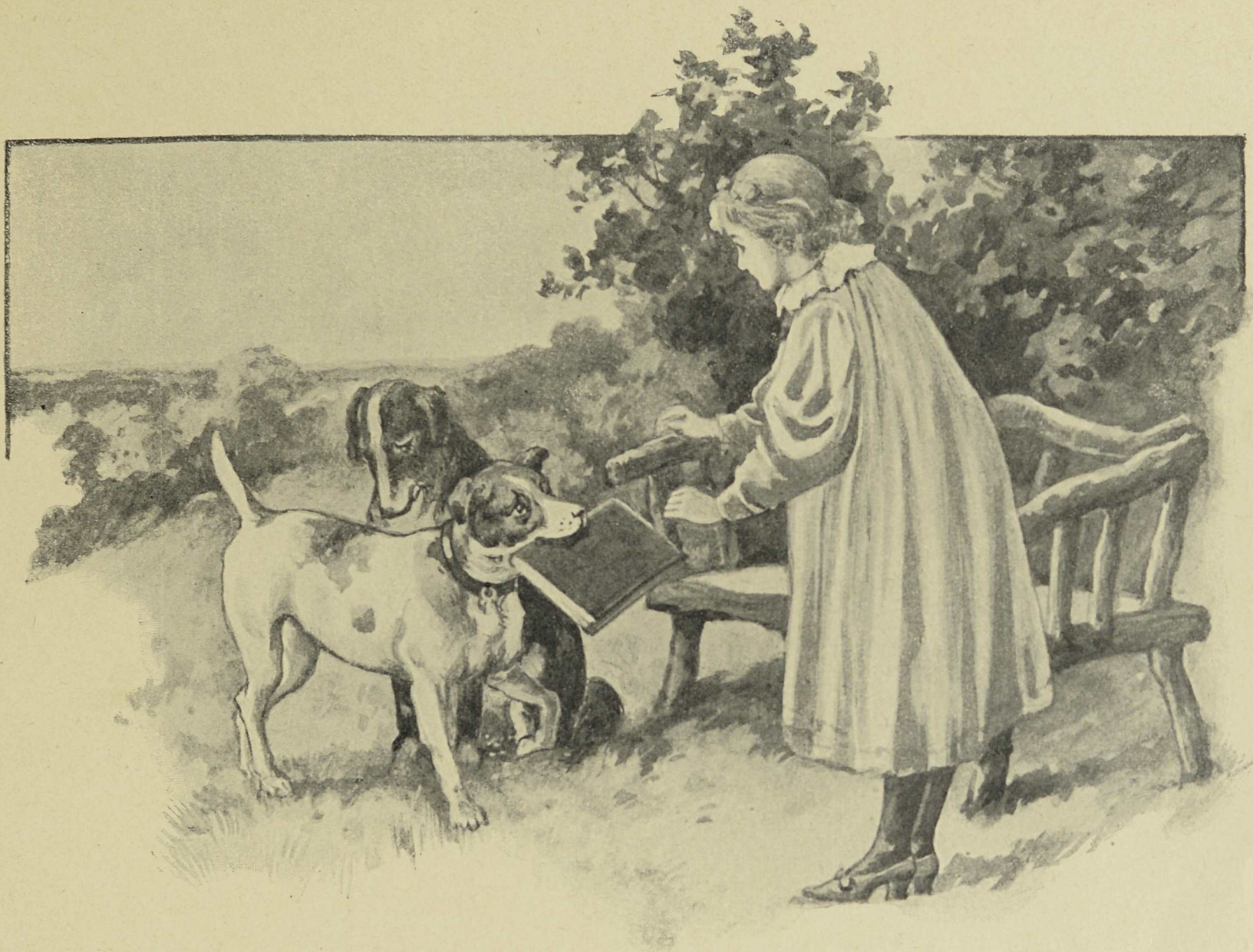
"May Boo and Ban stay with me?"

"Oh yes, I know you three won't be happy apart," replied Mrs. Croft with her cheery laugh.

Every fine morning after that found Bertha seated on the wooden seat with her book on her knee, and a dog on each side of her, till Mrs. Croft was ready to come out; she was a quick child and really wished to be able to read. "It will be nice to sit in the garden or by the fire and read stories to Boo and Ban," she thought; so she set to work with a will, and it was not long before she was able to spell over the short tales in her book to her two companions. In his heart Boo was very much bored, and would turn his head politely aside to hide a yawn now and then; but Ban kept his eyes intently fixed on his mistress's face, and cocked first one ear and then the other, knowingly, as he listened, and Bertha felt sure he took it all in.

One morning a strange thing happened. Bertha was called away by her aunt to fit on a new frock; and leaving her book on the seat, she gave strict orders to the dogs to stay where they were till she returned. Ban laid his nose over his paws and took a nap—but a naughty idea came into Boo's head. He did not care for stories—and he thought if he could hide that book as he did bones, Bertha could not bother him with it any more; so picking up the book in his strong teeth he trotted off with guilty haste, and burying it in a favourite hiding-hole in the yard, he returned to his post, just before Bertha came back.

The little girl missed her book at once and began to search for it,



talking to the dogs all the time. Boo fussed about and poked into bushes quite as diligently as Ban. He, at any rate, knew very well what his mistress was searching for. All at once Bertha remembered a little story she had read of a dog finding lost property, so she ran indoors and got another book; this she held up to them, and said "Find!". Boo hung his head, but Ban, who had not been so fast asleep as he appeared, at once rushed away—he understood his comrade's trick fast enough, and in a minute or two he came rushing back dragging the book along with him—and laid it at Bertha's feet, barking joyfully.

"Good Ban," said Bertha, while Boo growled sulkily at seeing his cunningly laid plan spoilt, and he was properly punished by having to sit still while his mistress read the story of the clever dog that had taught her to find her book.

Helen Marion Burnside.



The Messengers.

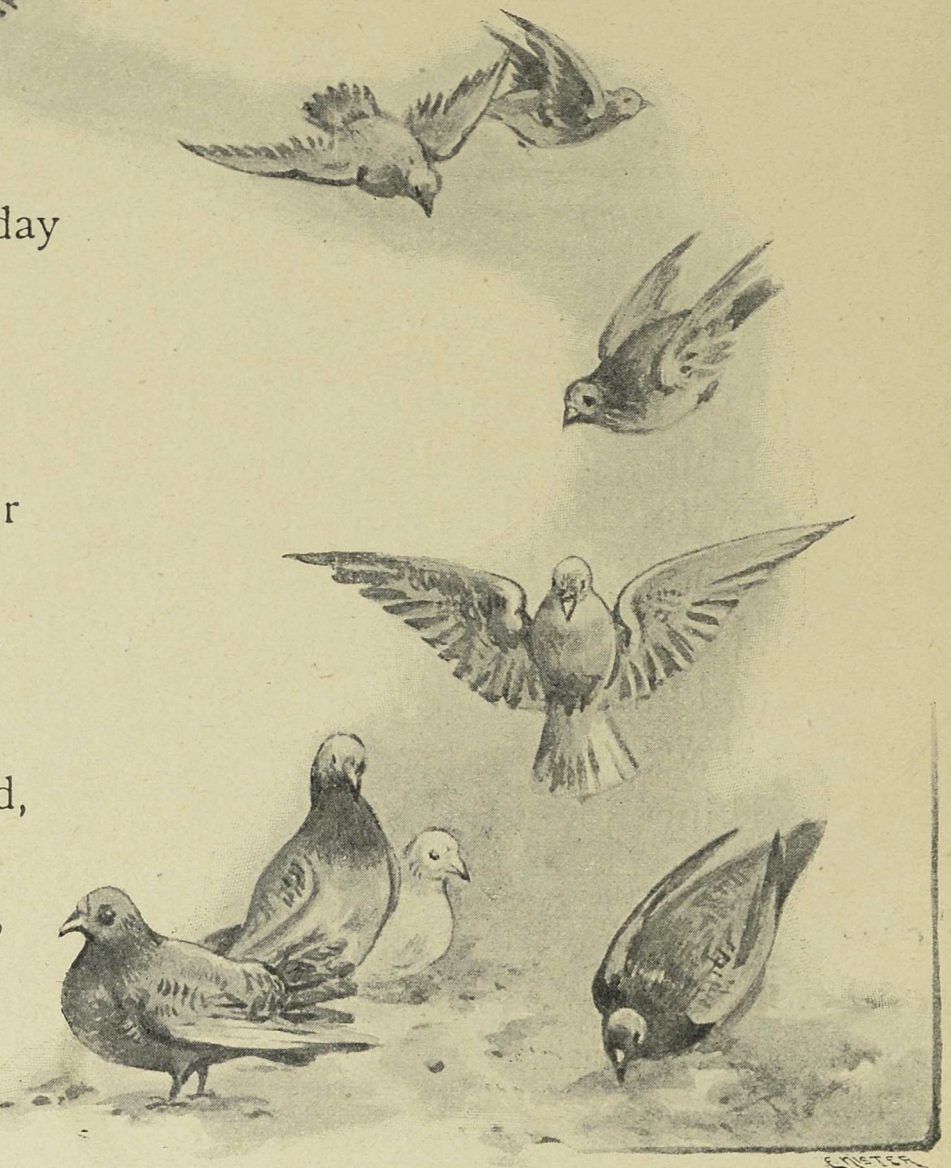
“*P*RETTY feathered messengers
Flying far and wide,
Tell me how you safely reach
Home with none to guide?”

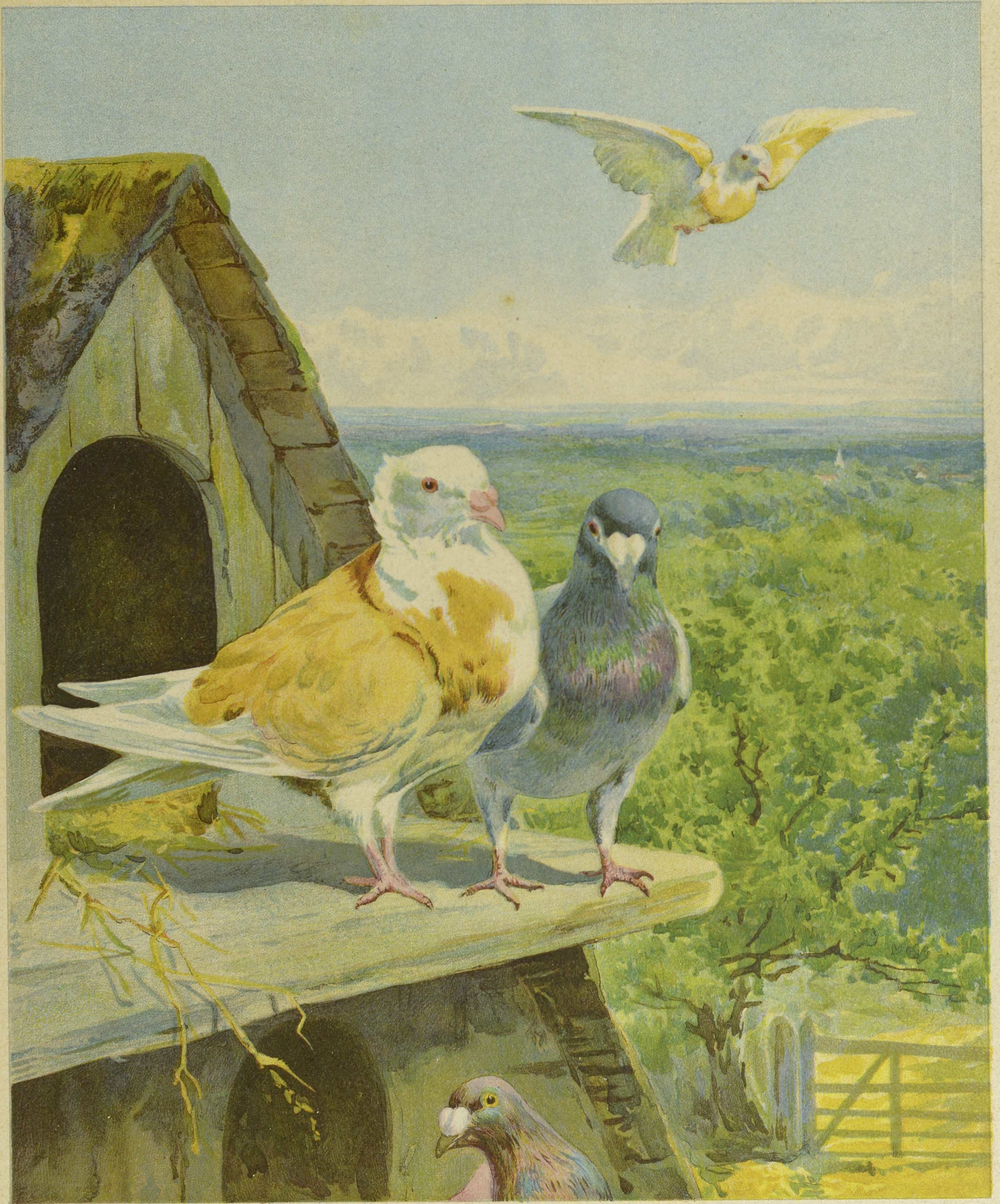
“Speeding through the summer day
On your happy wing,
Till at last you reach your nest,
With the news you bring.”

“Circling round and round in air
Till the way you find,
Flying then straight home again,
Faster than the wind!”

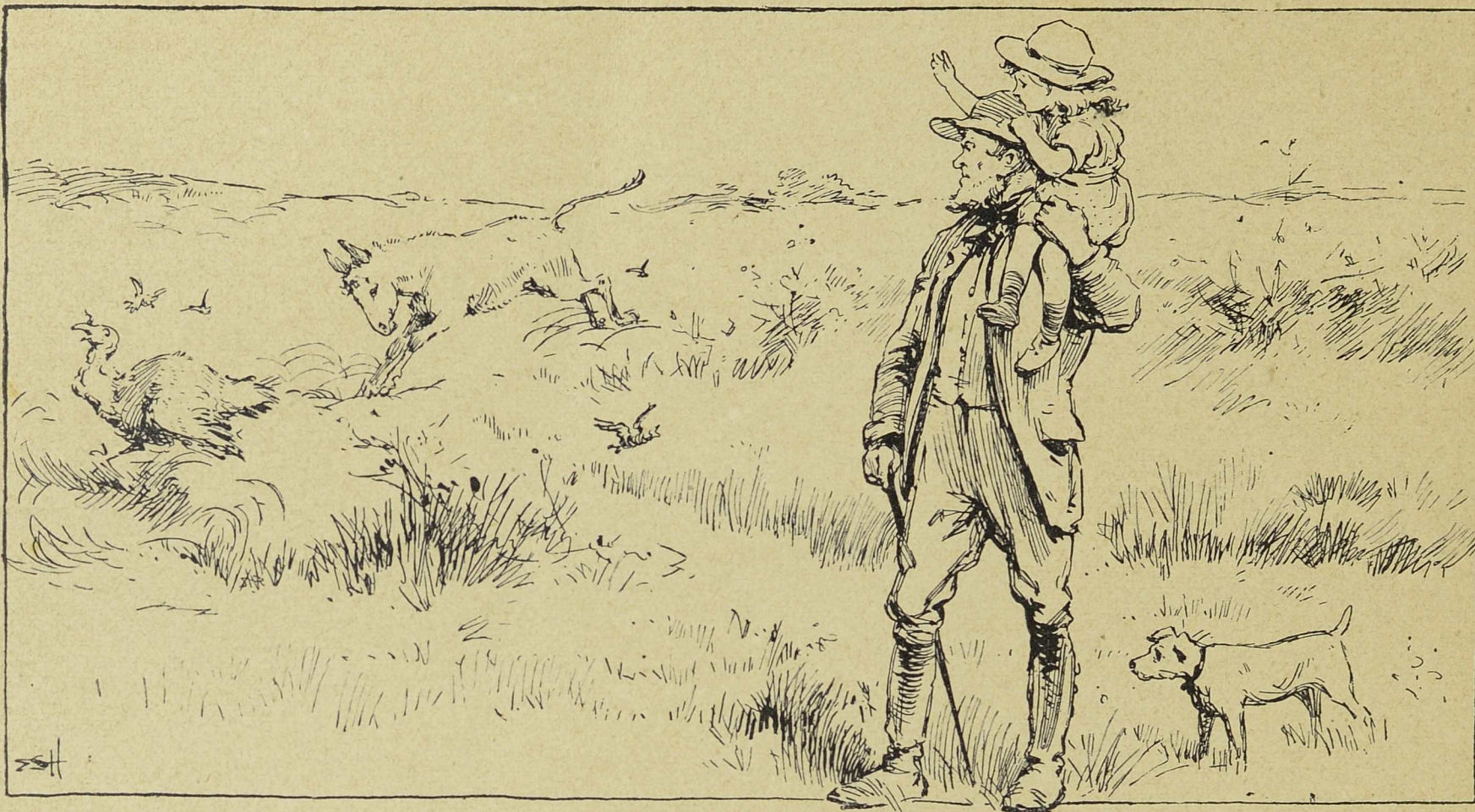
“This is why!” the Pigeons said,
“Far though we may roam,
It is love that guides our flight,
For our nest is home!”

C. B.





PRETTY PIGEONS.



Greycoat the Donkey.

GREYCOAT was a very sorrowful little donkey, for it seemed to him that he had been badly treated. First of all he had been hugged and cried over by the children to whom he belonged, and then he had been led away by Jim the stable-boy and made to stand amongst a number of strange animals, whilst people came and looked at him and made rude remarks. Finally he had been handed over to a big, red-faced man who had led him away and put him in a strange field in company with a number of cocks and hens and turkeys.

"Do you know where my children are?" he said, mournfully, to a big turkey-cock who was pecking about close up to him.

"Gobble, gobble," answered the turkey-cock, rudely, "gobble, gobble—do you think I care anything about your children?"

"Well you might at least answer civilly," said Greycoat. "Perhaps you have never been taken away from your home and put in a strange place with a lot of rude fowls."

"Rude fowls!" screamed the turkey. "Do you know you are talking to the King of the Farmyard, you common donkey?"

Then Greycoat lost his temper completely and ran at the turkey. Off he went, his feathers all ruffled out, gobbling and screaming as loud as he could.

This started the rest of the poultry and there *was* a noise. Greycoat's new master could not think what the matter could be. He was coming towards the field and on his shoulder he carried his little girl, for whom he had bought the donkey.

He set her down when he saw what was happening. "I'll give him a thrashing," he said; "why, the man who sold him told me he was quiet as a lamb, used to children and only being sold because the family were going abroad."

"Oh! *don't* thrash him, Daddy," pleaded little Molly. "Perhaps he doesn't mean to be naughty." She held out a piece of carrot to Greycoat who trotted up to her and rubbed his soft nose against her cheek.

"You're not one of *my* children; but you're a nice little girl," he tried to say.

"Well I never!" said the red-faced man. "He's as meek as can be with you; perhaps he doesn't like the poultry."

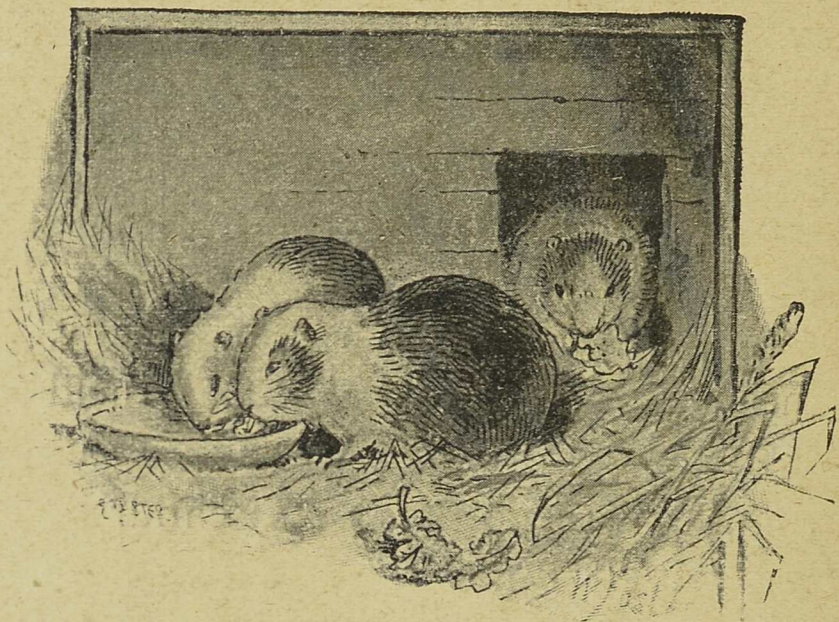
So Greycoat was put into another field, with a friendly pony and some sheep, and as Molly spent a great deal of her time with him, he soon became more reconciled with his lot. He never forgot his old friends; but he learned to love Molly very dearly, and as she was afraid of the big turkey and would not go near him, Greycoat was never troubled with him again, and became a very happy little donkey.

Ruth Dene.



Guinea Pigs.

*W*E'RE little fat round guinea-pigs,
Our house is this nice hutch,
The children bring us leaves to eat,
And love us very much;
Our coats are brown
 and black and white,
And soft as silk to touch.



The children stroke our coats and say
No pets with us can match,
Then, with their little fingers, they
Sometimes lift up the latch;
But when we're once let out to play
We're very hard to catch!



They come and feed us every day
And never once forget;
We sleep on nice clean straw at night,
Away from cold and wet;
And every piggy feels 'tis good
To be a children's pet.

It's nice, if you're a guinea-pig,
To think they love you so;
Now, having told our story, please,
We'll say good-bye and go;
We can't say more, because this is
The only *tail* we know.

F. Gray Severne.

