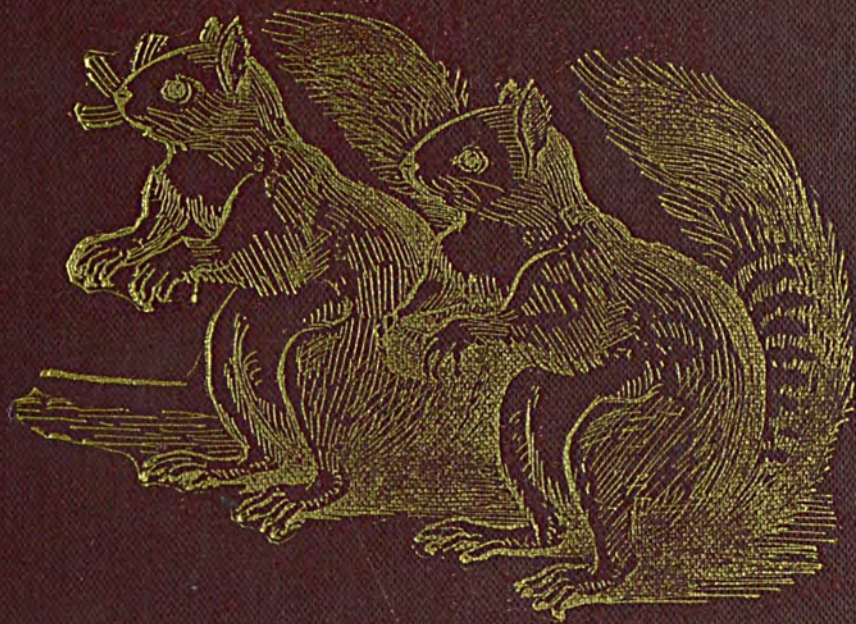


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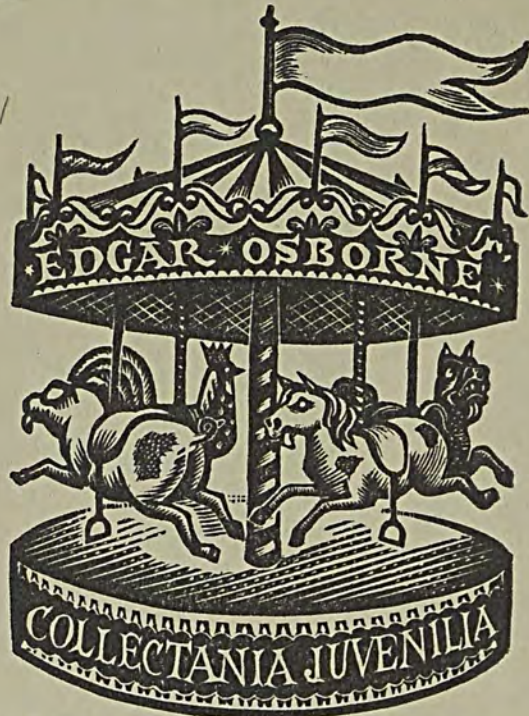
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STORIES.



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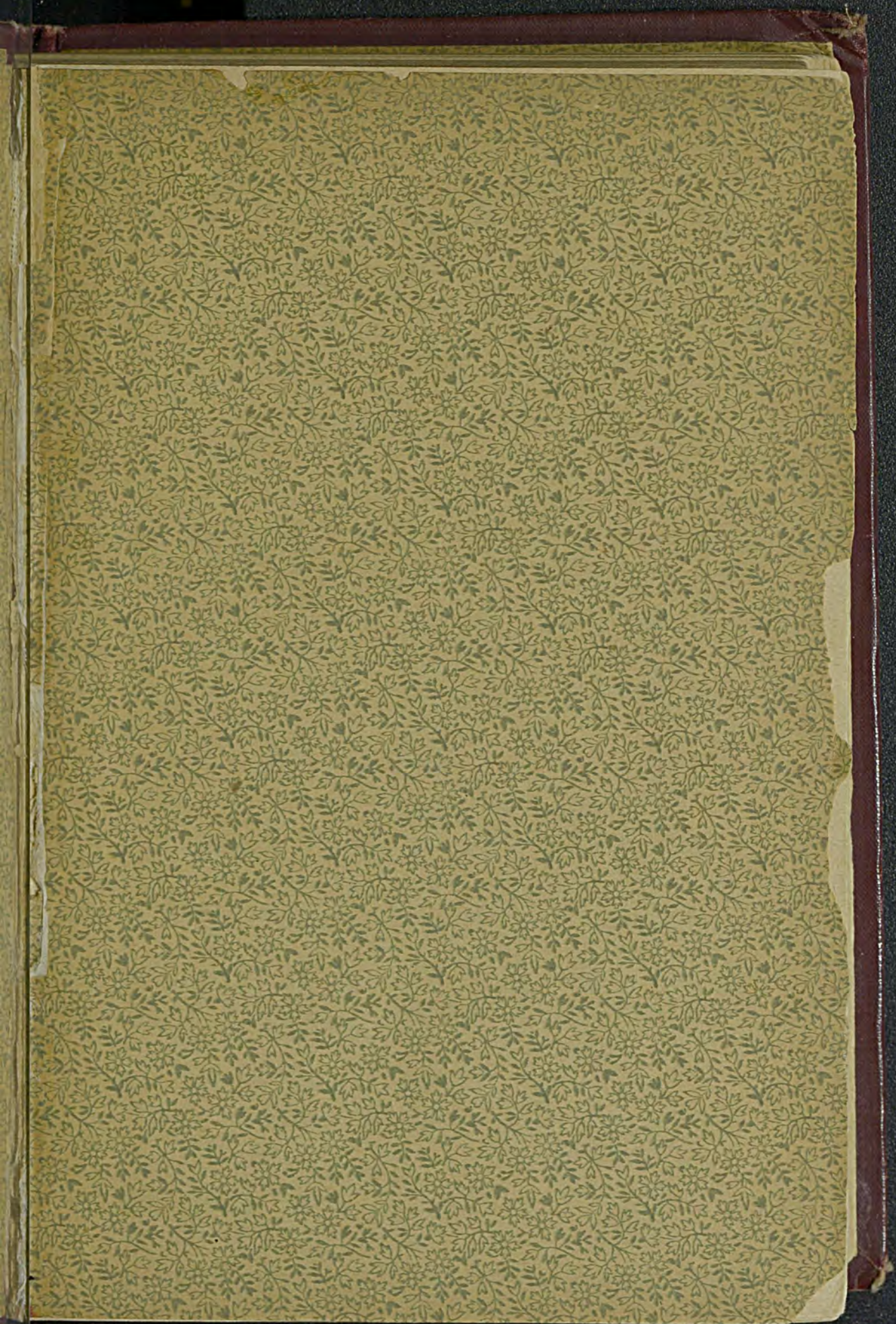
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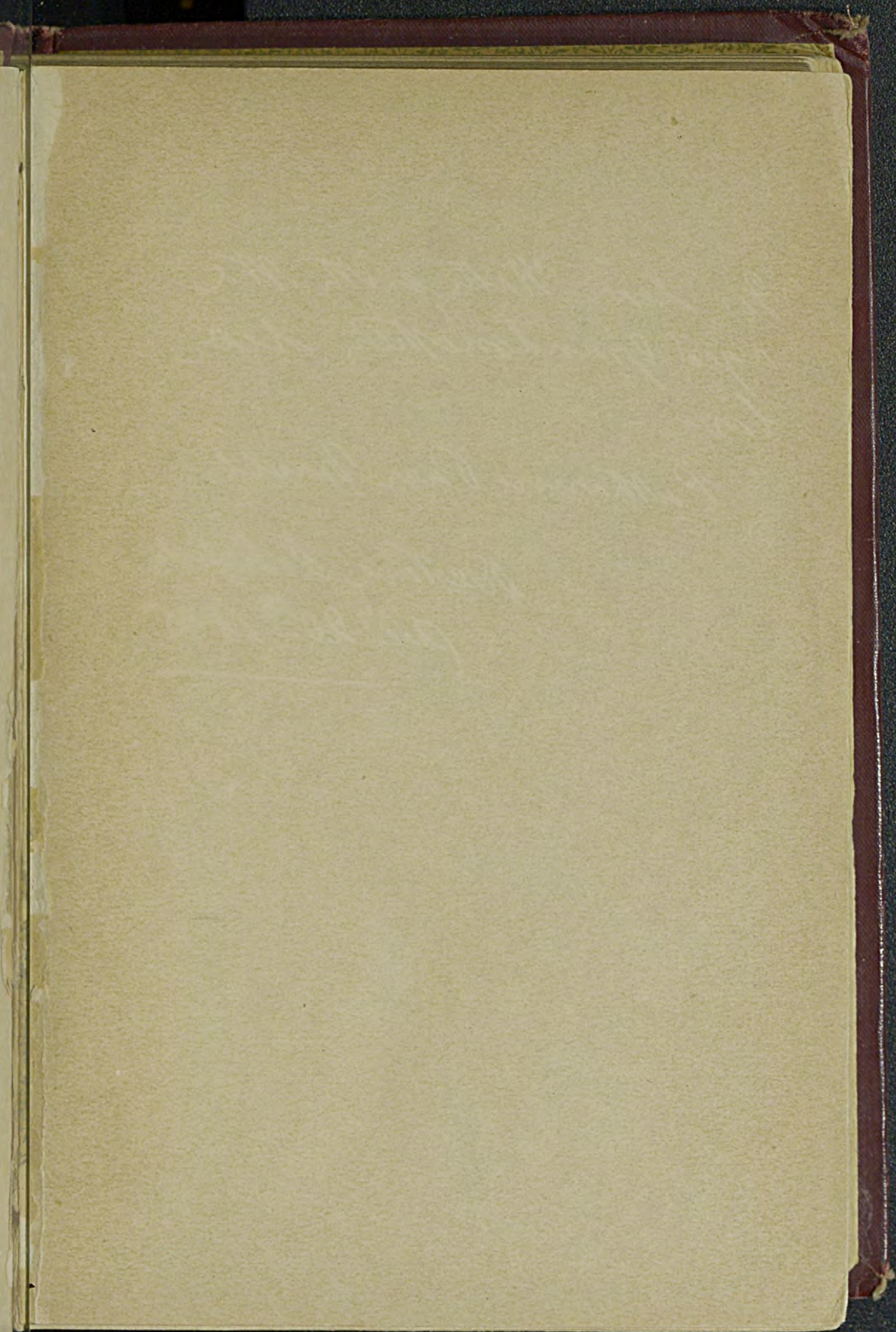
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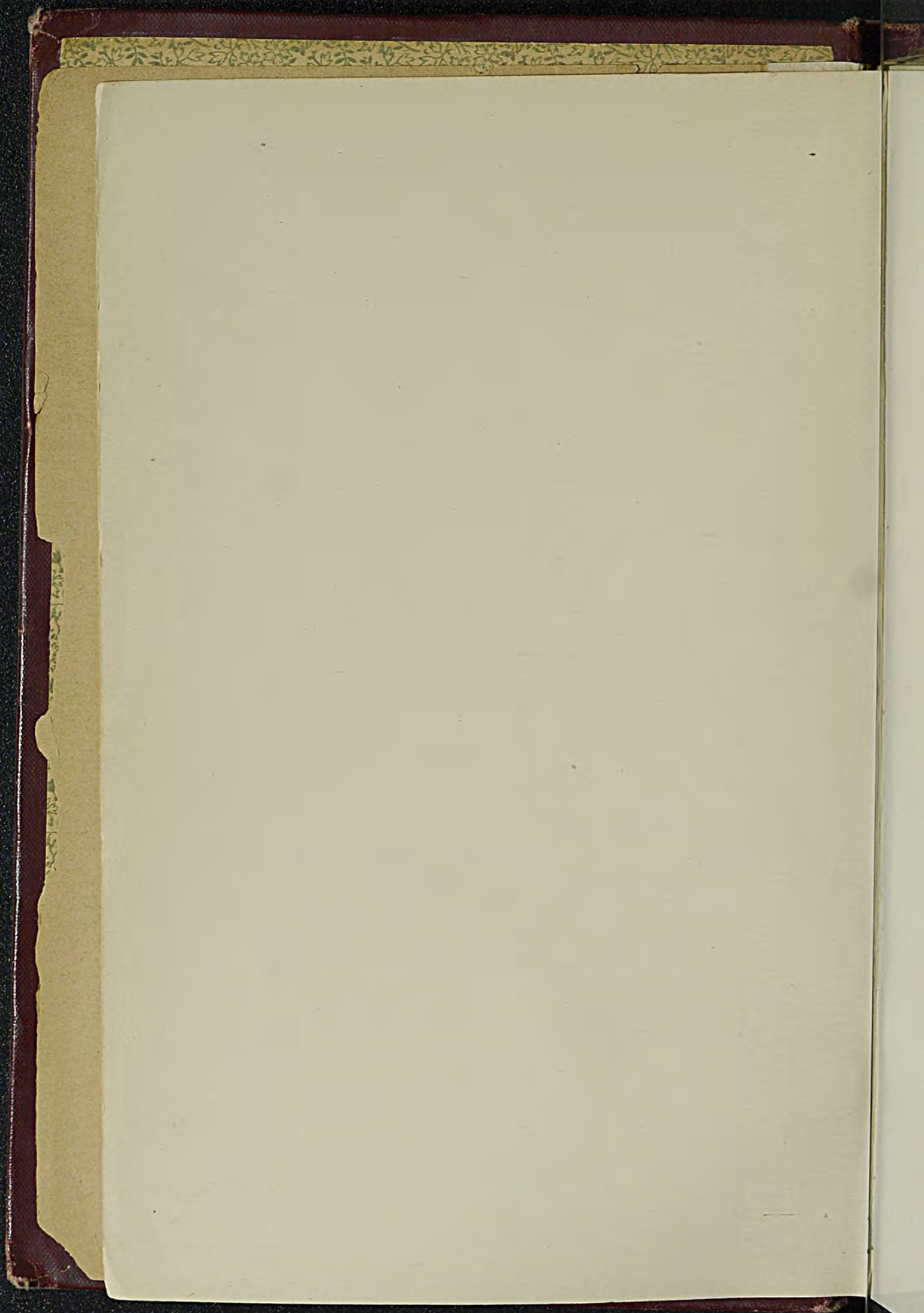


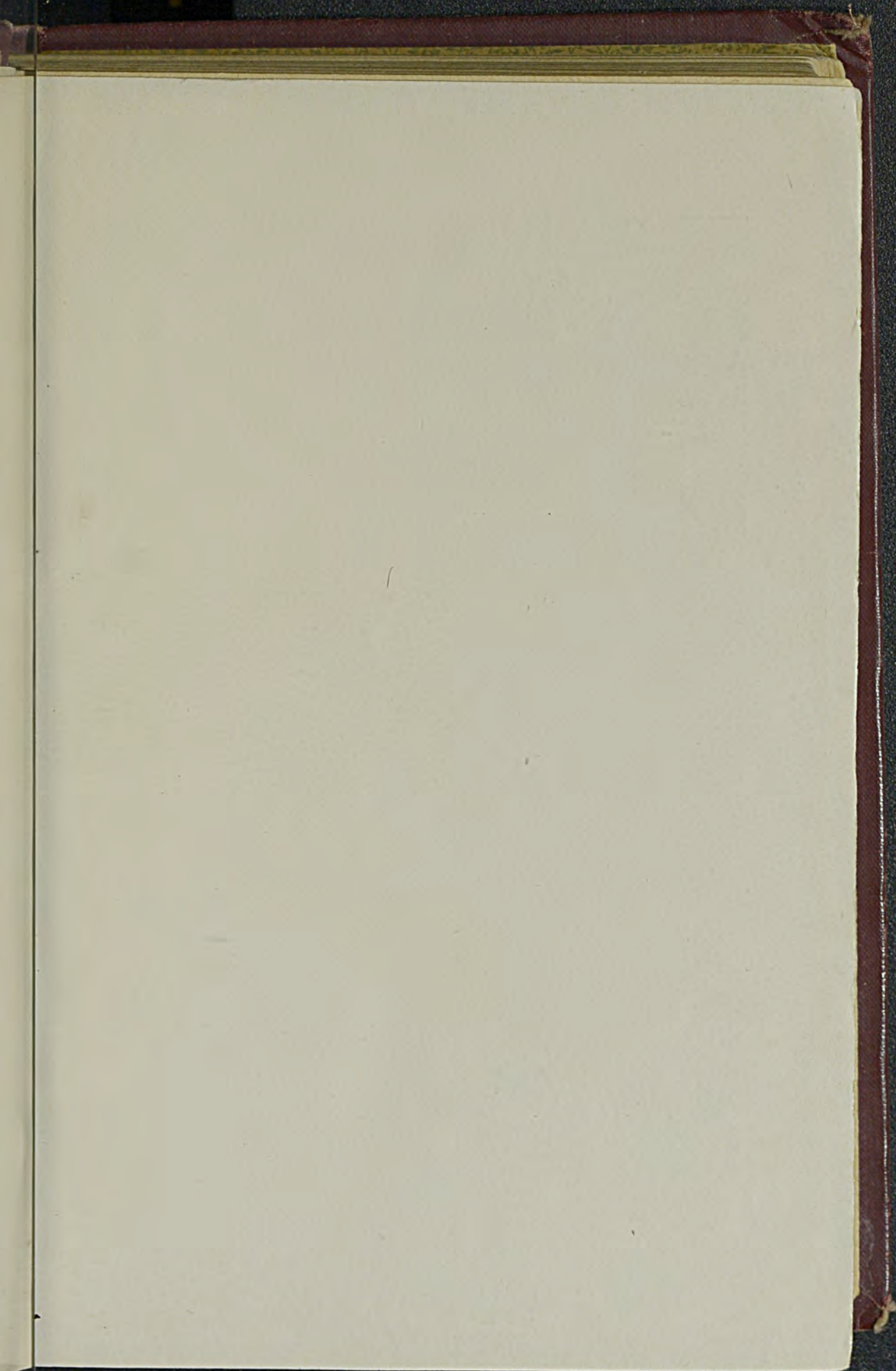
For dear Katie with the
aged grandmother dear
love -

Catherine Parr Mail.

Westover Antiochfield
Dec^r 20th 1895









Yours very sincerely
Catharine Parr Traill

COT AND CRADLE STORIES

BY

CATHARINE PARR TRAILL

AUTHOR OF "LOST IN THE BACKWOODS," "PEARLS AND PEBBLES: OR,
NOTES OF AN OLD NATURALIST," ETC.

EDITED BY

MARY AGNES FITZGIBBON

AUTHOR OF "A VETERAN OF 1812," "A TRIP TO MANITOBA," ETC.

TORONTO:

WILLIAM BRIGGS, WESLEY BUILDINGS

G. W. COATES, MONTREAL, Q.C. S. F. HURDIS, DENVER, U.S.A.

1885.



Yours very sincerely
Catherine Poor Track

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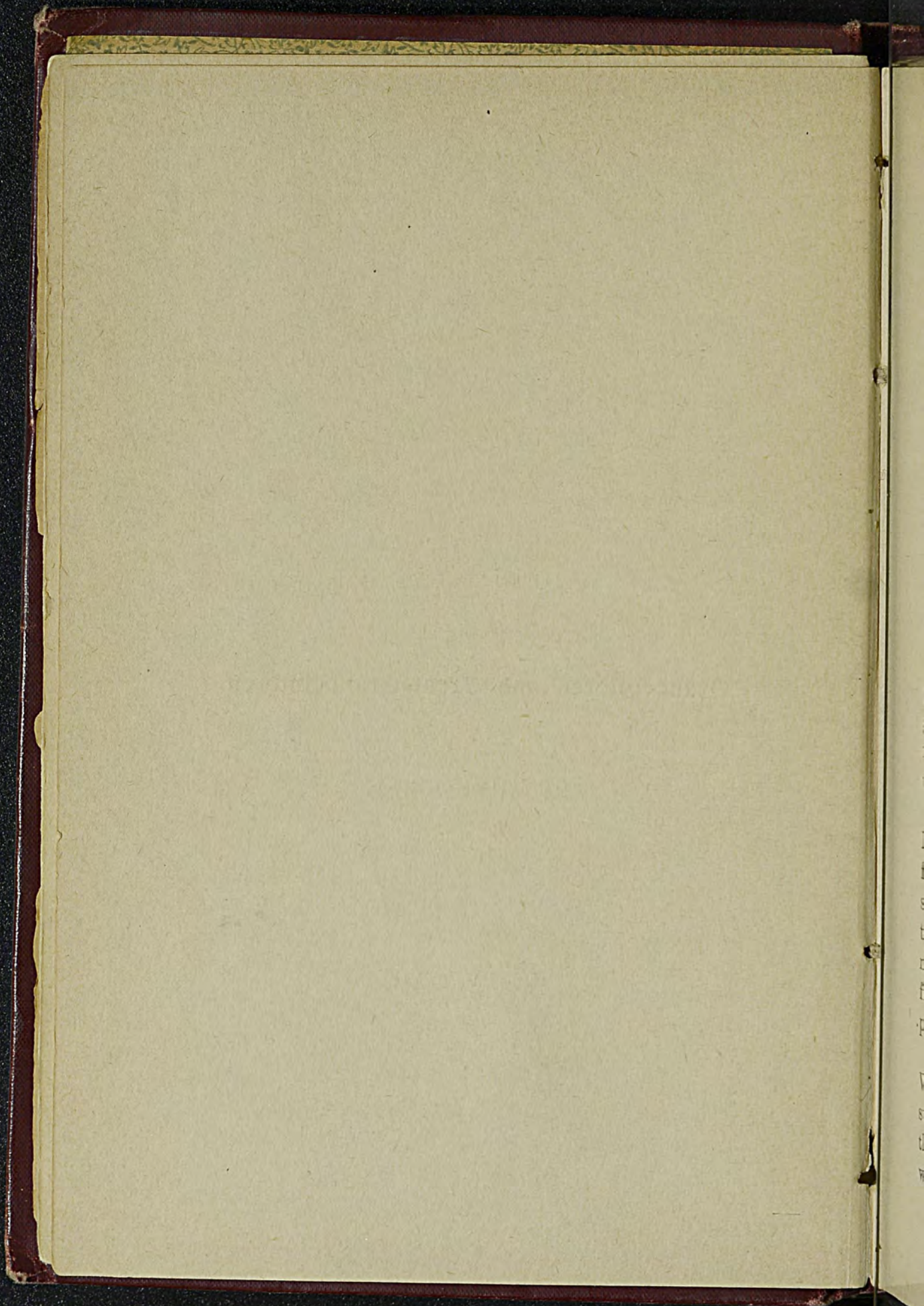
WILLIAM BRIGGS, WESLEY BUILDINGS.

C. W. COATES, MONTREAL, QUE. S. F. HUESTIS, HALIFAX, N.S.

1895.

Entered, according to the Act of the Parliament of Canada in the year one thousand eight hundred and ninety-five, by WILLIAM BRIGGS, Toronto, in the Office of the Minister of Agriculture, at Ottawa.

DEDICATED
TO THE
Grandchildren and Great-Grandchildren
OF
THE AUTHORESS.



EDITOR'S NOTE.

THE editing of this collection of children's stories written by my great aunt, Mrs. Traill, has been a pleasant privilege undertaken in order to relieve her of some of the drudgery of preparing "copy" for the press and to save her eyes the trouble of "catching the foxes," as she quaintly terms the striking out of words or phrases too often repeated.

One or two of the stories are old friends, never printed, but often told to a group of eager listeners gathered at her knee—an audience who believed there never was nor ever could be a more delightful storyteller than Aunt Traill.

Of these, "The Swiss Herd-Boy and his Alpine Mouse," the last in this volume, was always a great favourite. Written when the author was not quite sixteen, it was sold to a London publisher, but owing to his death, and consequent changes in the firm, was not published. Many years after it was re-written from memory, and now makes its first appearance in print among "COT AND CRADLE STORIES."

The initial story of "The Queen Bees" and "The Wrens of 'Westove'" were written during the past summer of 1895; the latter while I was staying with the author on the Island of Minnewawa. It is a fact worthy of note—one perhaps unique in the annals of

book-making—that this volume from Mrs. Traill's pen, containing, as it does, stories written in 1818 and in 1895, represents a broad space of seventy-eight years of active literary life.

The following paragraph from a letter dated Nov. 1st, 1895, in which she replies to my wish to include a story I had not found among the MS. sent me, is so characteristic, I make no apology for quoting it:

“Among my rough copy I found some portions of ‘The English Sparrows: their treatment in the United States, and flight to Canada.’ I could have done something with the fragments had I not been taken ill. It was the very article that had been so marred by the mice; handfuls of the MS., the very best of it, lay in chips in the drawer. *Those hungry varmints* had devoured the most telling portions of the tale, made beds of the most touching incidents in the last hours of *paterfamilias*, after his loyal exhortations to his numerous family to follow his example, fight the Yankee birds, and die gloriously under the ancient and honorable British flag, the Union Jack.”

No one has done more with her pen to inculcate the principles of truth and honor, loyalty and patriotism, and the love of nature in all its forms, than Mrs. Traill.

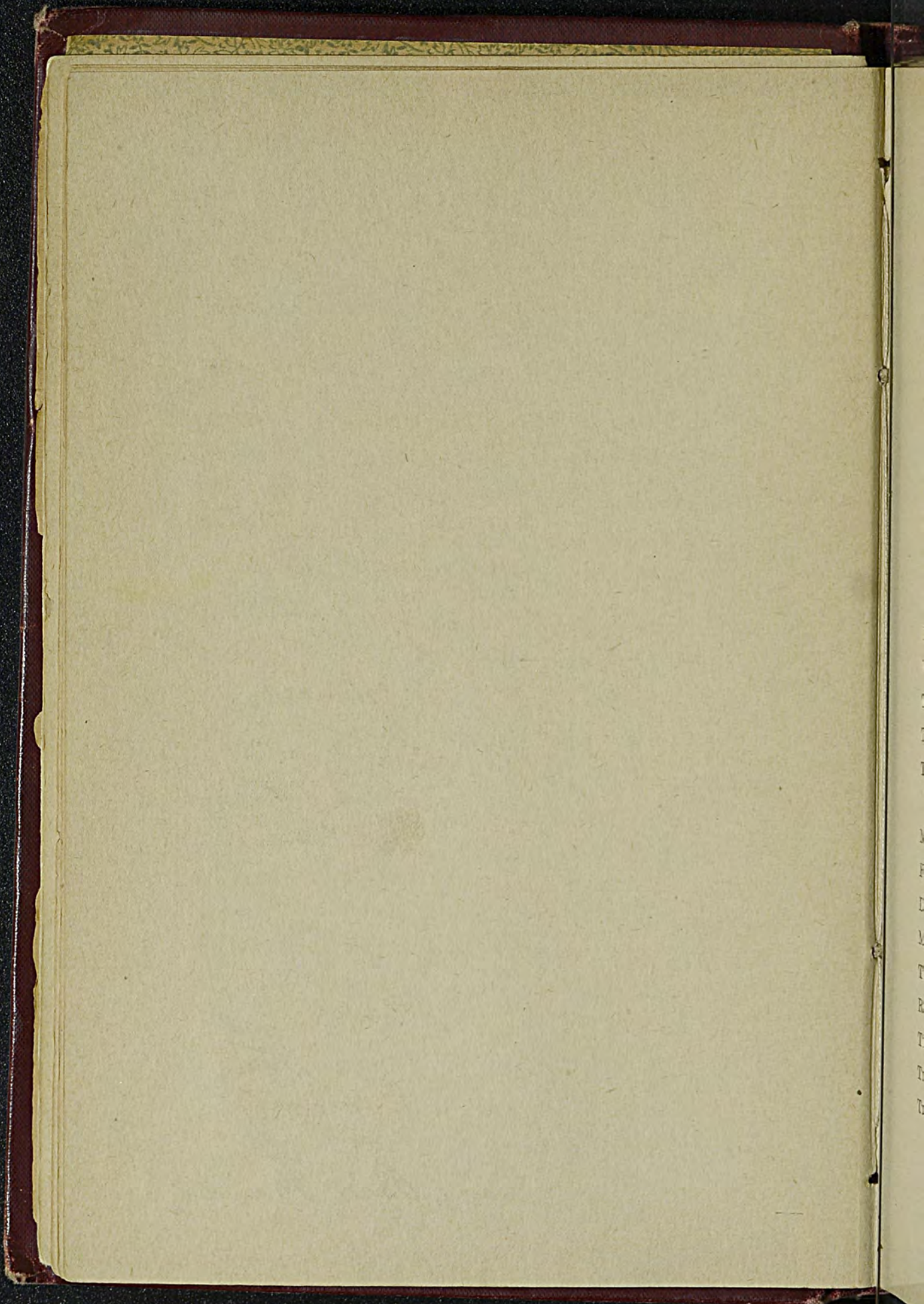
Three generations of Canadian children have read and loved her “Lost in the Backwoods,” and her gentle teaching will go down the ages to future generations with unabated influence in the pages of her

“COT AND CRADLE STORIES.”

PREFACE.

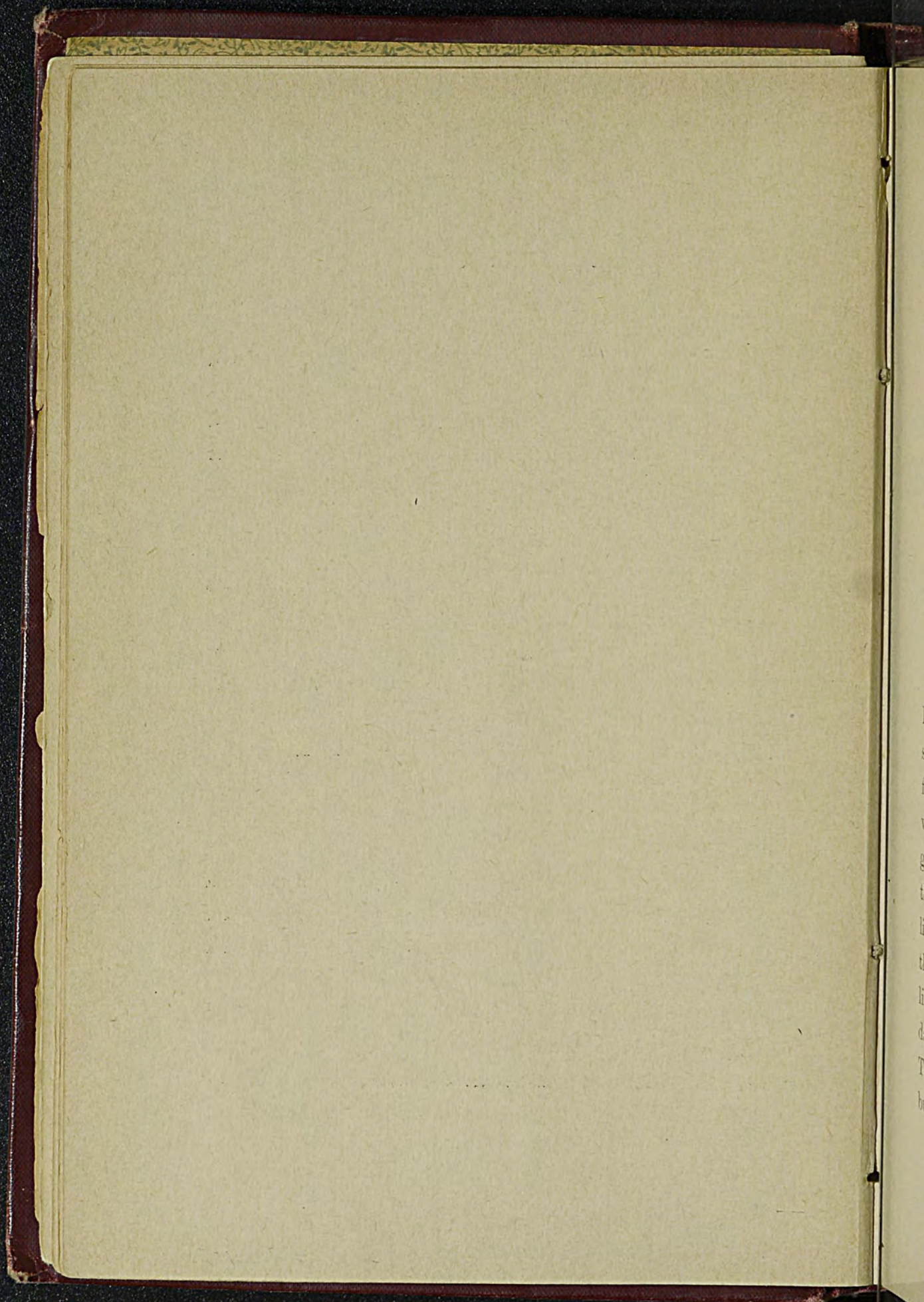
One summer eve as
I sat lozery in the warm
sunshine on the veranda
at Minne-wadda I dream-
ed that a wee bird came
and whispered -
"The children love to lis-
-ten to your stories about
birds, and bees and flowers,
and squirrels, but you are
very old and your voice
will cease to be heard a-
-mong the little ones."
Then I dreamed that I said
"Wee Birdie, I will write
the story down and make
a book that the far away
children may read, and
learn to know and love
their "Heavenly Father" and
the wild creatures. Thus
I'll do you so wisely
and so well. -

Catherine Parr Trail:



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COT AND CRADLE STORIES.

The Queen Bees.

It was a lovely bright morning in June. The dew still sparkled like diamonds on the freshly opened flowers in many a gay garden. The air was sweet with the scent of roses and lilies. Butterflies of many gorgeous colours flitted over blossoms no brighter than their own gay wings, which opened and shut like living flowers in the sunbeams. Happy creatures! they had nothing to do but enjoy their short, joyous lives. Myriads of gauzy-winged insects, too, were dancing in the warm sunshine that June morning. The bees alone were absent. Why were they not busy seeking honey in the bells of the flowers?

The humming-birds were darting hither and thither,

hovering for a brief instant with their tiny bodies glittering like emeralds and ruby gems, just poised in air, while in haste they inserted their long, slender bills in the necks of the honey-bearing flowers, the larkspurs, columbines and balsams. These little summer visitors from the Southern States and West Indies know well where the sweets are hidden ready for them and the bees.

But again we ask, Why are the bees absent? There is the yellow powder on the anthers of the flowers to be gathered for the bee-bread, to feed the young ones that are ready to take wing; and there is other delicate matter to be got for making wax for the cells wherein to store the honey for winter use. What are the little creatures doing?

In reply, we hear a strangely mournful sound, and see the hive in great commotion. The bees are creeping outside, flying a short distance, then returning as if unable to tear themselves away. Something is certainly wrong to-day among these wise and orderly creatures.

Yes, the sad news has just been told them, their beloved old Queen is dead. There is grief and deep trouble among her subjects—such trouble as would follow in this great British Empire were the tidings of so sad an event as the death of our most gracious

and beloved sovereign Queen Victoria to reach her subjects.

The Queen Bee had gone out for a few minutes to give some special order, to direct one of the chief workers to take his band to a clover-field in full bloom and abounding in fresh honey-bearing blossoms, when a rapacious fly-catcher—the largest of the Phœbe birds, known as the “Kingbird” or “Tyrant Fly-catcher”—saw her as he sat watching for prey on a bare pole near by. He gave a flirt with his wings and white-fringed tail as he swept round her, and she was quickly seized and torn by his cruel bill. Thus the hive was left without a Queen to rule over its inmates.

There was grief among the bees, but no doubt the hungry kingbird had made a sweet meal, and cared nothing for the sorrow he had caused in the garden that lovely June morning.

The work of the labouring bees was at a standstill, the news of the Queen's death having been carried to them by trusty messengers. The drones were in a state of wild distress. The overseers in charge of the honey-seekers were in despair. The fine-dust gatherers ceased their cheerful buzzing songs, and, heavy with grief, wended their way back to join in the general lamentation of the hive.

The old Irish gardener Pat was grieved for the trouble the bees were in, and took a piece of black crape from an old hat-band and tied it to the stand where the beehive stood, to show that he sympathized with them in their sorrow for the untimely death of their Queen. When someone laughed at the kindly old man for putting the bees in mourning, he said, gravely :

“Shure an’ the craythurs will take it kindly as a compliment, and be plazed that we think uv thim in the day uv their trouble for the loss uv their good ould Queen.”

The excitement was greatest among the young swarm that had been hatched only a few days. A change was at hand, and it became an important question among them as to what was to be done without a Queen. Who was to take care of them ?

Then the old bees held a consultation to consider the situation.

“How can we keep order here without a Queen ?” asked one of the elders. “This newly hatched swarm are in a very excited and unruly state ; they will not obey any law but their own sweet wills, and I fear we shall have great trouble with them.”

“We must turn them out,” said another of the old bees.

“They are already in a state of rebellion,” remarked a third. “I just overheard a pert young bee saying they were ‘not going to be lorded over and overruled by those old fellows.’”

It was only too true, the young bees were in open revolt. “We will have a Queen of our own,” they cried, “and do as we like. Let us go off at once to the royal nursery and choose one.”

So off they went to the royal cells. There were only three young female bees there, the dead Queen’s daughters. One of the princesses was much larger than the others, and the velvet of her dress finer and brighter than the sober brown of her sisters’ attire.

Of course the young bees all said, “We will have this one for our Queen.”

No one but a drone made any objection to the choice, and no attention was paid to him when he said, “This one is not the best for our ruler, she is proud, and vain, and selfish; she is fatter and finer than the others because she always got the largest share of the food and the best cell to live in.”

The others drove him away and said, “We like this one, she is the handsomest,” and then they all paid homage to her as their Queen, and she buzzed her thanks as they followed her out of the hive in a great crowd, pushing and shoving very rudely in

their anxiety to get near her, tumbling over each other like a parcel of rude boys just let loose from school. They had not even the manners to say good-bye to the old bees as they bustled off with their new Queen.

Now, the young Queen was very foolish. She had had no experience, and yet she thought she was wise enough to govern her numerous subjects and to make laws for her kingdom. She would not ask advice of anyone when she was in difficulty, so she constantly made mistakes.

The first day they had all to scatter abroad in search of something to eat, as there was no food prepared, and their only shelter was a hole in the trunk of a tree. Although the hole was a fairly big one, it was not large enough to shelter so many in the event of rain or bad weather—a fact they were not long in learning, as that very day a thunder-storm came on with heavy rain and hail. The Queen bee and a few others managed to get in and shelter themselves in the hollow of the tree, but a number of the weaker ones, and the poor helpless drones, were beaten down by the hail and never rose again.

Of course, the poor young Queen was not altogether to blame. She could not prevent the storm coming that day, though some of her followers were unreason-

able enough to say she could, but she had shown a great want of order and management. She did not set the right bees in the right places. In the old time there were regular overseers who set them their work and particular tasks, and no one interfered; but now, when the labourers came to the Queen she set the honey-makers to build the cells, and the makers of the bee-bread to pound the wax, the gatherers of the pollen from the flowers to get the honey, so that all was confusion. No one knew what to do, nothing was well done, and there was great waste of time and material. The honey-makers had no cells fit to hold the honey when they [came home with it, the wax was badly made, the bees were hungry and out of humour, and all blamed the poor Queen. At last they fretted and harassed her so much with their complaints, that she fell sick and died. There was no one left then to rule and govern the bees. They had no honey laid up in store for the winter when the frost and snow came, so they perished from cold and hunger.

It was not so with the hive bees. The new Queen that had been despised by the young swarm proved to be a most wise and careful ruler. She caused the cells to be mended and cleaned, had all the rubbish removed, and appointed careful overseers for the

workers in their several departments. She saw that every place was well filled, everything done at the right time and in the right way, and plenty of food and honey stored up against the cold days of winter.

This good Queen was so kind and thoughtful about the welfare of her subjects that she often warned the workers against wandering too far away in search of honey, lest they should be overtaken by hungry birds, or heavy rains and high winds, when too far from the shelter of the hive.

She knew how desirous some of her working bees were to please her and make the hive famous as giving the largest yield of honey for the season, and if they heard of a field of white clover or buckwheat, or a grove of fresh basswood trees in flower, many miles away from home, they would wing their way to gather honey to increase their store. She was often very unhappy when night came and these stragglers had not returned. Many accidents happened, and she constantly warned her young bees never to go farther than two or three miles away. Some old strong workers would laugh at such advice, for they often flew as far as six miles away when the scent of the basswood blossoms was strong in the air. Many of these rash ones overloaded themselves, and fell an easy prey to the kingbird or the shrike.

Things went well in the hive under the good Queen's rule. The nursery chambers were filled with eggs for fine swarms of new bees to be hatched out while the summer was yet warm, and one might have thought that nothing could happen to disturb the serenity of her reign. Suddenly, however, a report was circulated among the old bees that some thieves had entered the hive, and emptied a number of cells of the best and purest of the virgin honey.

The rumour caused a great commotion, and the Queen called her oldest and wisest counsellors together, to consider what was the best thing to be done.

One of the ablest among them said that he had noticed idle gangs hanging about a distant hive, and as none of them seemed to bring home honey from the fields or gardens, they had been suspected of being a set of thievish vagabonds. His advice was, that two or three brave working bees should be set to watch at a little distance, and if any bees not loaded with honey or flower-dust entered the hive, the workers should give a signal at once to have them seized; or if any bees came out loaded with honey, they should attack them at once and call for help.

This advice was taken and all arrangements made.

Not long after a party of sneak-bees were seen creeping cautiously into the hive, where they soon were at work filling themselves with the contents of some of the best cells. Meanwhile some of the wax-workers had filled up the sides of the door of the hive, so that an overloaded bee could not pass through without a squeeze. This trap prevented the robbers from getting out. Then the enraged hive-bees set upon them, and a great battle took place, which ended in all the thievish bees in the hive being killed. A few terrified ones outside flew home to tell of the fate of their comrades. After that day no robber-bees ventured out to steal from that Queen's hive.

There were other enemies besides the robber-bees. There were miller-moths that laid their eggs within the bee-house, the worm hatched from them doing great damage, more even than the mice did. Spiders, too, sometimes spun their webs across the door of the hive, and the unwary bees going forth got entangled in the meshes. I think had Mrs. Webspinner ventured to capture one of the good lively workers, she would have come off second-best in the battle, a dozen angry bees with their stings all ready being always at hand to defend their comrades.

Once a big snail crawled into the hive. It may have been to hide herself from some outside danger,

from a garden toad or some voracious bird, as it is hardly likely that a snail would be in search of honey or bee-bread; or it may have been just out of curiosity to see how bees lived, that she ventured into the little house.

However, she had no business there, and when she was in she could not turn herself about to retreat, when she heard a mighty buzzing and fuss all around her.

The bees were in a great quandary how to get rid of the great ugly beast. It was useless trying to sting her, and she neither could nor would go, that was plain; so they wisely went at once to their Queen for advice.

"Bury the horrid creature," was all she could say.

They all clapped their wings and cried, "We will."

Without more ado they called the cell-builders and the wax-makers and set them to work, saying, "We will soon make the abominable beast a house;" so they covered the big snail with a roof and walls of wax, and I dare say she may be sleeping there at this day, a warning to snails to mind their own business and stay at home.

There was a great deal of honey taken out of the hive by the bee-keeper that year, and for three more years the good Queen ruled well. She became the

*

nursing mother for many swarms of fine healthy young bees, and at last died at a good old age.

All the hives in the neighbourhood were put into mourning for her by the old gardener, who loved his bees and knew all their ways. Her subjects raised a white dome of virgin wax over her by way of tomb, and Pat says it is somewhere in a secret place in the garden known only to the bees and himself.

The Great Green Dragon-fly and His Friends.

ON his return from his travels the great green Dragon-fly sent cards of invitation to all his friends and acquaintances, requesting the honour of their company at a grand ball under the tall oak tree near the lake in Squire Wildflower's Park.

The following regulations and particulars were arranged by Mr. Buz, the blue-backed blow-fly, and circulated by Mr. Hum, the big black beetle:

"The company are requested to arrive at four o'clock precisely, and to assemble under the oak tree near the lake. Dancing to begin at a signal given by Mr. Tick, the death-watch, who has kindly consented to act as time-keeper. An early hour has been chosen on account of the butterflies, who never like to be

out after sunset. A good band of musicians has been engaged for the evening. The stewards are Mr. Chirp, the hearth cricket, and Squire Bombybus, the great black humble-bee.

“Refreshments will consist of fruit, nuts, honey and sugar. Nectar, fresh dew and water will be served in acorn cups.

“No quarrelling will be allowed, and notice is given to wasps, hornets and flies not to eat too much, and on no account to sting any of the guests. N.B.—This caution is not intended for the bees, whose well-bred manners admit of no doubt of the propriety of their conduct in any society.

“The blue and black dragon-fly, the great green and gold dragon-fly, the small blue fly, the dark green, the red, the crimson, the purple, the orange, the tawny, and the many other flies who claim kinship to the master of the feast, are expected to attend and are offered a hearty welcome.

“A select party of flies only will be admitted, such as can come in full dress suitable for such an occasion.”

What a bustle the insects were in for a mile around Squire Wildflower's Park! What a trimming of feet and pluming of wings! What a brushing of head-dresses and brightening of eyes were to be seen on every bush, leaf and flower! Many hearts beat high with hope and promised joy as the sun began to decline toward the west.

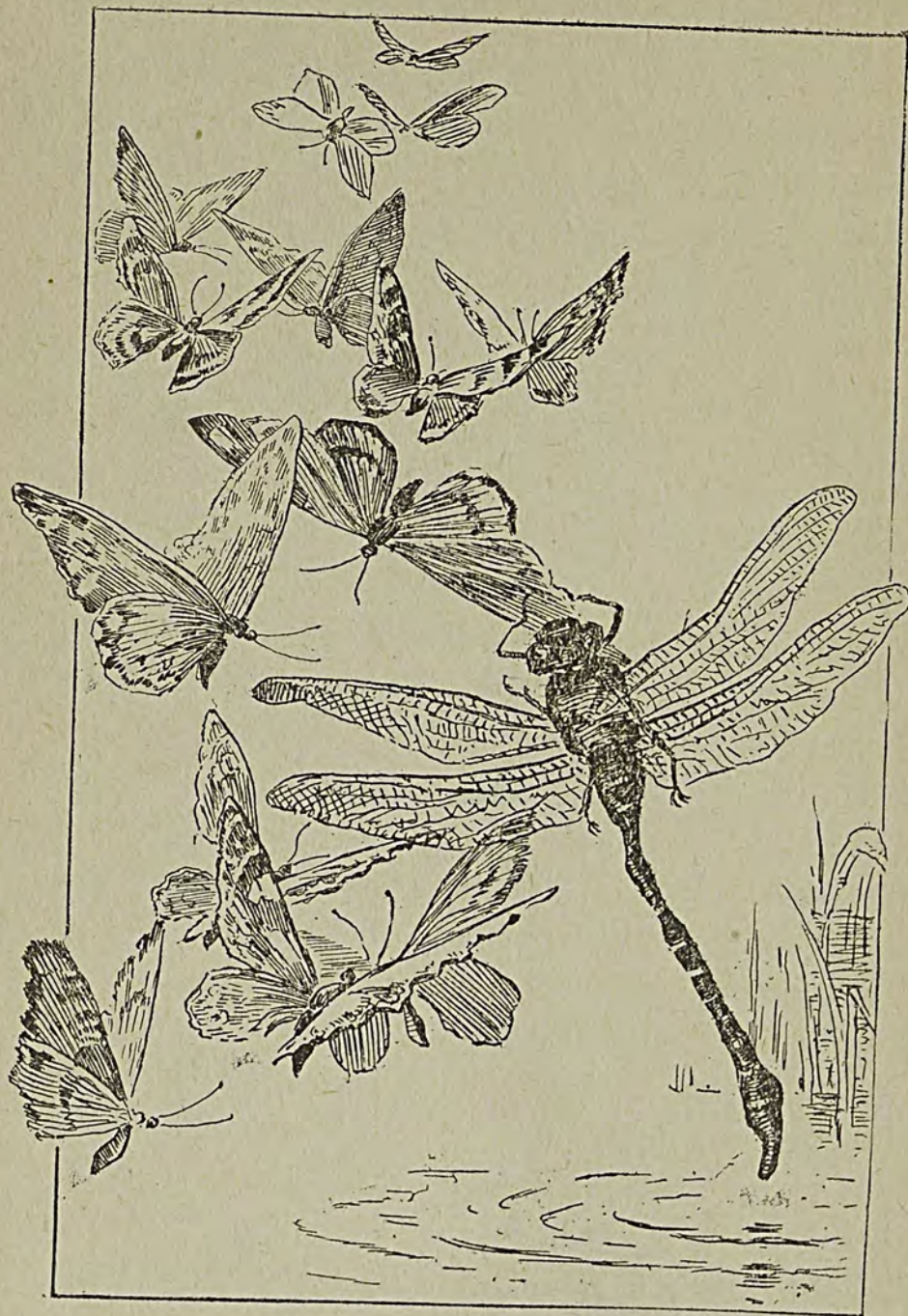
Precisely as Mr. Tick told thirty minutes past four, Mr. Hum wound his horn and announced the approach of all the Butterflies. They came along in grand state, fanning the breeze with their gorgeous wings, and in such numbers that they darkened the air for the space of two or three yards as they flew.

First came the Emperor, as befitted his rank, with his superb Empress by his side. Next came the Swallow-tail, in a delicate suit of brimstone colour and black, with beautiful blue and red eyes on the edges of his wings. After him flew the Peacocks and the Admirals, the beautiful Embroidered and two most exquisitely dressed Painted Ladies. Several large green Lunars followed; and last in size, though not in beauty, came the blue Adonis, the little dandy and beau of the ball.

Besides all these there were the Orange-tipped, the Tortoise-shell, the Wood butterflies and many others of less note, who all followed at a respectful distance.

General Sphinx sent his aide-de-camp, the Mag-pie Moth, with his compliments to their host, and to beg that he and his family might be excused until after sunset, as the glare of light was apt to injure their eyes, and to say that they would do themselves the pleasure of stepping in during the cool of the evening.

The Bees sent a drone from the hive to say that as



THE ARRIVAL OF THE BUTTERFLIES.

it was such a fine day they did not like to waste so many hours in idleness, but as soon as the flowers began to close they would arrange their dresses and join the dancers. They sent a present of some honey by the drone. This was most gratefully received, and Squire Bombybus asked the bearer to stay and join the dance.

"I should be delighted to accept your kind invitation," he replied, "but the fact is I never could move quickly enough to learn to dance even the slow minuet, but as I am a good bass musician when not hurried, I will be happy to help the band."

Among the flies were the green and the brown Blow-flies (who, by the way, were only admitted out of respect to Mr. Buz); the Soldier-fly, with his red jacket; the Musk-fly, with a splendid new suit of crimson, green and gold; the slender Wasp-fly, in his golden and black coat; the green Drake-fly, dressed in emerald green and starry eyes; the May-fly in her elegant gauze dress, and many others in robes trimmed with glittering spangles, whose names could not be learned owing to the fluttering and buzzing and humming that filled the air during the arrival of visitors from every quarter.

Greatly to the annoyance of the more aristocratic of the company, a number of House and Horse-flies,

as well as other common flies, crowded into the assembly. All attempts to expel these intruders were in vain, as they concealed themselves under the leaves of the oak tree. The Wasps, who are always ready for a fray, proposed making a general slaughter of them, but Mr. Buz, having a kindly feeling for his poor relations, petitioned that they might be allowed to remain if they promised to keep at a respectful distance and did not intrude among the grandees.

The request was granted, and the flies gratefully accepted the condition. They soon formed reels and cotillons, a few light, lively airs, piped by a band of gnats from the lake-shore, and the bagpipes, played by a drone, providing excellent music.

Of Beetles there was a great attendance, many dressed in gorgeous and shining attire; the great red Lady-bird and the spotted yellow Lady-bird, besides a number of black beetles both large and small. They all displayed suits of delicate gauze, which few people knew they possessed, as they are in the habit of keeping them carefully folded up, seldom showing them on common occasions.

Some anger might have been excited by the presence of that insect of evil reputation, the Earwig, but being disguised in a long and very fine pair of gauze wings, few recognized him, and he passed in the crowd.

Later in the evening Mr. Twirl, the cockchafer, came with his family, and the Bees, having brushed their black velvets and cleaned themselves from any wax or honey that might have stuck to them, also made their appearance. They did not dance much, but willingly lent their aid to the musicians.

Just as the dancing commenced, a bustle and chirping was heard, and a number of Locusts and Grasshoppers skipped lightly into the midst of the company: some in brown and pink, others in green hunting coats. One of the latter, named Gryllus, leaped over the heads of a party of Copper Beetles (who were chatting to some young Lady-birds, engaging them for a country dance), and presented himself before the great green Dragon-fly to request that he might be allowed to take part in the next set.

Mr. Chirp, the cricket, seconded the request, assuring their host that the grasshoppers and locusts were, like the crickets, the best horn-pipe dancers and singers in the country.

Their host having graciously granted the petition, the whole party sprang off to look for partners.

Scarcely had this matter been satisfactorily settled when a dispute arose over the intrusion of a band of Harvestmen and Harry-longlegs.

Mr. Chirp hurried forward to interpose and do his

duty as steward. With his most dignified chirrup he represented to them the impropriety of persons of their low degree thus thrusting themselves upon those who filled a higher station.

Upon this a Harvestman stood on tiptoe and asked what he meant.

"In the first place," said he, with a spiderish grin, "I am seventh or eighth cousin to Mr. Tick, the death-watch, and I am considered one of the best dancers of the present day. Indeed, I will not yield the palm to any but my friend Harry-longlegs, who can dance a minuet on the water, and has the honour of being the great-grandfather to the minstrels."

On hearing this, Mr. Chirp thought he had better not run the risk of giving offence to the minstrels by putting a slight on their great-grandfather; then, too, Mr. Tick, who was a ticklish sort of old fellow to deal with, might walk off in a huff and leave the company without the means of knowing the time of day.

Dancing now commenced with great spirit on every side. The ball was opened by the great green Dragon-fly and one of the Painted Ladies, who all were agreed was the belle of the ball. The Butterflies fluttered through the quadrilles in fine style; the Beetles preferred country dances, and while Mr. Twirl, the cockchafer, arranged a reel of

eight over the oak tree, the Harvestmen went through the figures of a rustic dance with great skill and grace.

The pleasure of the evening was a little disturbed by the bad behaviour of the Hornets and Wasps. They crowded around the honey and sweets, and when Mr. Hum and his assistant, Mr. Buz, begged them to desist—for they feared lest there would be none of the dainties left for the rest of the company—they darted out their long stings and threatened a regular battle. It was not until the Dragon-fly appeared that these ill-behaved guests could be induced to return to the dance. They did so in so bad a temper that they quarrelled with their partners, killed two or three honest black Beetles who chanced to stand in their way, and maimed several flies in so cruel a manner that all chance of the poor things ever being able to dance again was quite despaired of. Finally, having made themselves as disagreeable as possible, they left the ball to go marauding in the Squire's garden. It was little to be wondered at if they were followed by the hisses and maledictions of the whole party.

As soon as the dew began to fall the Butterflies proposed going home, to the regret of all, especially the Dragon-fly, who tried to persuade them to stay

another hour. The prudent Emperor, however, wisely declined to risk the health and appearance of any of his train, and left at the time they had appointed. Some few silly little Butterflies, who had not been hatched many hours, refused to obey his summons. Hiding themselves under the leaves until the last fluttering of papilio wings had died away in the distance, they came out again and rejoined the dance.

The green Dragon-fly lamented the departure of the Painted Lady, but roused himself to receive General and Mrs. Sphinx, who just then arrived. They were very richly dressed, chiefly in crimson and brown, with plumes of feathers on their heads. Some of the members of their train were really magnificently attired, especially the Tiger Moths. There were also some young ladies among them in robes of exquisite whiteness, entirely composed of ostrich feathers, a costume that was most becoming to their black eyes and fair complexion.

The Death's-head Moth, to be sure, produced a slight chill on his arrival, but this was politely attributed to the falling dew.

Mr. Hum introduced the Sphinx party to the Dragon-fly, Squire Bombybus having disappeared from his post as Steward. Indeed, it was rumoured among the guests that he had drunk too much nectar,

and had retired to the shelter of a white water-lily on the lake, as he had been seen pulling on his black velvet night-cap very near the place where the lilies grew. Mr. Chirp thought it wise to exalt Mr. Hum to the dignity of Deputy Steward, in the place of the departed Squire Bombybus.

As soon as it was dusk a brilliant display of light was provided by four dozen Fire-flies that had been hired for the occasion. These lovely moving lamps shed a soft refulgent glory on the scene, those stationed on the lake-shore adding greatly to the effect by the reflection of their bright beams on the surface of the water. The stars above and the glow-worms on the dewy grass beneath formed an illumination, the brilliancy of which could only be realized by those who were present at the *fête*.

After supper the dancing was resumed with unabated enjoyment. In spite of Mr. Tick's warning of the lateness of the hour, and that evil persons were about, the nightingale's song from the thicket near by sounded so sweet and made such an addition to their band of music that no one cared to break up the party.

It would have been well for those giddy insects if they had listened to the warning voice of good Mr. Tick, the death-watch. Just as the Dragon-fly was

whirling through a waltz with one of General Sphinx's daughters, a sudden rushing sound was heard. The music ceased. Terror and dismay made the heart of every insect quake, as, attracted by the sound of revelry, three nightingales and a swarm of bats bore down upon them. A most dreadful slaughter ensued. Those who escaped the beaks of the nightingales fell an easy prey to the teeth of the bats, who swept them down on every side with their flapping wings.

The glow-worms, betrayed by their own light, were pounced upon by the nightingales, who soon made an end of them despite their cries for mercy.

The great green Dragon-fly was found next morning, a floating corpse on the bosom of the lake, where he had either thrown himself in a fit of despair or been swept down by the wings of the bats.

When the Bees and Butterflies heard the sad tale, they rejoiced that they had gone home in proper time, and thus escaped the melancholy fate of the thoughtless, giddy creatures, who, in the midst of their gaiety, had fallen a prey to the bats and the nightingales.



Blind Willy's Dream.

“Where’s the blind child so beautiful and fair,
With guileless dimples and with flaxen hair,
That waves in every breeze?”

—*Blomfield.*

LITTLE WILLY had not always been blind. A severe attack of scarlet fever, when he was four years old, had so affected his eyes as to destroy their sight.

“My eyes fell asleep,” the child would say when anyone spoke kindly to him about it, “and never woke again.”

That was the way he put it; and few, looking into the sweet, happy face of the child, could realize that the light was shut out forever from the blue eyes. They had a fixed, strange look in them, as if they were gazing on some far-off object which never came

any nearer; but they were open and as blue as ever.

Willy was one of the happiest of children; no one ever saw him crying or fretting. He had a smile for everyone, and everyone loved and cared for him. His little hands seemed to take the place of his eyes. He rarely stumbled or fell; his fingers, spread at the tips, were his guides, and so fine was his touch that he knew the nature of every object, and even avoided obstructions as if he felt their presence before he touched them with the sensitive little fingers. As he grew older he ran about as fearlessly as any of the other children, his sense of hearing helping him to know when anyone was coming towards him, and enabling him thus to prevent running against them.

Besides his elder brothers and sisters, Willy had two great friends whom he loved very dearly. One, and I think the dearer—though Willy never allowed that one was any dearer to him than the other—was a shaggy little Scotch terrier. From under the long hair which hung over his eyes, Jack (for that was his name) watched his master with a great love. Jack never left Willy for long at a time. He watched every movement, and seemed to know exactly what he wanted and where to run before him and keep him away from rough places. The other

was a snow-white pussy cat. Willy called her "Owny." An odd name it was for a cat, but Willy said she was his "very own," and there could be no better name for her than "Owny."

These three spent many an hour together, and it was a pretty sight to see the golden-haired child sitting on the grass or among the flowers, his soft, white pussy clasped in his arms and rubbing her head lovingly against his face, while the faithful terrier lay at his feet, keeping watch and ward to obey the little master's slightest wish.

Willy loved the sunshine; he felt its warmth, and it seemed to shine right down into his heart and out again in his happy smile and joyous laughter. He knew that "God is love," and it kept that love ever shining bright within. This was what made them say that Willy was "the sunbeam in the house."

Willy had been told all about the flowers, and he loved them dearly, touching them tenderly and weaving many a tiny garland of the daisies he gathered from among the grass.

He heard the birds singing, and knew all their songs one from another. He asked a great many questions about the things he could not see, and as he was a bright, clever little fellow, and remembered what he was told, his mother and sisters and

brothers were never wearied by his questions; they sometimes wondered how it was he remembered so much. They did not know that he remembered because he wanted to learn all about the birds and flowers and trees, and did not ask the questions merely from idleness, as many children do who have their eyes to answer such questions for them. Then Willy thought over what he was told, and in that way impressed it so upon his mind that people said he had a good memory.

Willy had not altogether forgotten what he saw before the fever sent his eyes to sleep. He knew the sky was blue, and that white fleecy clouds chased each other across the wide, wide heavens. He remembered that there was a loving look in his mother's eyes, and that they were more beautiful than anything else in the world. He heard the wind among the tree-tops, and knew that some of these were very tall and high, almost touching the blue of the sky. He knew that the roses which grew so thickly over the wall were bright red, as well as very sweet to smell. He knew that the lily was white as snow, and that his dear "Owny" was white, too; that the velvety pansy growing in the borders was of many lovely colours, and that faithful Jack's long hair was a yellowy, brownish shade.

He could see pictures of them all, he said, when they told him about them, and Willy's mind-pictures were as real to him as the things themselves are to us as we see them with our eyes.

But it was in his sleep, he said, that he saw everything best. In his dreams the birds and the beasts, the insects and the flowers, all had voices for him and for each other. He could understand what they said, and sometimes he thought they were all really alive like himself.

The older children often laughed at Willy's odd notions, but they were always ready to listen to and be amused by his wonderful dreams. It was like reading stories of Wonderland or fairy tales, they said.

One day in June, the sun was shining brightly as Willy sat on the grass by the side of the house. He threw his head back that the warm rays might fall on his upturned face. His mother passing him laid her hand on his brow and asked, "Is my boy happy in the sunshine?"

"Oh, yes, mother," he said, as he caught her fingers and patted them softly; "it is so lovely, just as if it was kissing me."

"Tell me what you dreamt last night," said his sister Nellie, as, tired from her walk home from school, she threw herself down on the grass beside



THE Queen of the Lake.

him. "You look so bright, I know you must be thinking of something nicer than usual."

And Willy turning to her smiling, told his dream :

"I saw a beautiful lake, and the Queen of the lake was a big white bird. She was a wild swan, and she loved the bright water, and all the big fishes and the little fishes, and the wild ducks and the geese, and she loved the water-lilies that grew in the lake, and said they were pretty and sweet. She loved the wild rice, too, for it made good food for her and for the poor hungry Indians that gather it, and she cared for the May-flies and the dragon-flies, and was good to everything that was on the lake, as well as the flowers that grew on the banks of the green grassy meadow, for she was a good Queen was the white swan, and all her subjects loved her.

"Well, you must know, a wicked man came in a boat. He had a long gun, and he shot the beautiful swan and carried her away in his boat. There was great sorrow on the lake because the white swan, the Queen, was dead and gone—and they all said, 'Who will be Queen now?'

"The big bull-frog put up his ugly head and croaked out in his harsh voice, 'I'll be King of the lake!' But the big fishes said, 'No, we will not have you. You eat our little ones. You are rude and ugly,

and have a loud voice. Go back to your mud-bank again.'

"Then the bull-frog gave a croak and went away, for though he was very bold in speaking, he was afraid some big fish might open his mouth and eat him.

"A beaver came out of his dam, and said he wanted to be King of the lake; but the fish all said they would not have him either, as he would soon spoil the beautiful lake with his building. And the musk-rat and the otter were all bad subjects. They would be as bad as the beaver, so the fishes would not listen to them.

"Then a great loon came swimming along, and he said, 'Let me have charge of the lake, and I will not let any beavers, or musk-rats, or otters come into the waters; only such things as are good for the geese and ducks and fish to live upon.'

"But the fish would not have the loon to rule, as they said he was a selfish fellow, who would think only of himself.

"Before anyone could speak there was a great flapping of wings overhead, and a great osprey flew down from a tree that hung its branches over the lake. All the ducks and the geese, and all the other birds, even the kingfisher, flew away, for they were afraid of the

fish-hawk. The loon, who is a diver, went under the water like a flash, so that the keen eye of the fierce bird could not see where he went. The only one that was not quick enough to get away was the fish that had been talking. The greedy fish-hawk caught him and carried him off in his talons.

“Presently the great green Dragon-fly, who had thrown off the warm cloak he had worn while sheltered by the roots of the white water-lily at the bottom of the lake, and now sat sunning himself on the smooth surface of her large green leaf, spread his gauzy wings to dry in the warm rays of the sun. Looking about him with his bright eyes, he saw that all the creatures on the lake were sad and sorrowful, grieving that they had no Queen to make laws for the protection of the newly hatched dragon-flies and May-flies and shad-flies.

“‘Our good old Queen, the white swan, is dead!’ they cried, ‘and we have not found anyone to be Queen of the lake.’

“‘Then I will choose a queen for you,’ said the dragon-fly, ‘the pure white water-lily, who is wise as she is fair. She left her crystal palace this morning at break of day, and came up like a bride to meet the glory of the rising sun. He filled her lap with gold and sweet perfumes, and wrapped her round

with ivory whiteness, and decked her with gems of light more rare than rubies or diamonds. Is she not worthy to be our Queen? Has she not been a nursing mother in her care of us under the water when we were weak and helpless?’

“All the other water-flowers bowed their heads and said, ‘Yes, we too will have the sweet white water-lily to be the Queen of the lake.’”

“Then there was a great clapping of wings among the May-flies, the young dragon-flies, the shad-flies, and thousands of silvery winged moths and shining beetles who had all lain at the bottom of the lake, shut up in their hard prison-like little cases under the shelter of the roots of the water-lily, and were now waiting for flight into the gay sunbeams on shore, and they all cried out, ‘The White Lily shall reign over us; the White Water-lily is our Queen!’”

“And she looked so lovely and so stately that I am sure she would make a very good Queen,” added Willy. “It made me very happy, too, to have such a nice dream.”

What did blind Willy do when the days were cold or wet, and he could no longer sit on the grass in the sunshine among the flowers? While his brothers were away at school all day, or out with other boys at play, would Willy be lonely and dull and fretful?

No! he lived in too bright a world of his own to be dull and fretful. He had his faithful Jack and dear Owny to talk to, and he was so deft with his fingers that he was a great help to his mother. He could pare the apples for pies and puddings, beat the eggs for the cakes she made, and bring in the wood and water from the shed. When his mother went to the village, Willy carried her bag or basket and made himself useful in many ways. His mother, when she was young, had seen how the blind people worked in a great hospital in England, and she taught Willy to make baskets and knit stockings and warm mufflers for winter wear for his brothers and himself. Willy was never idle. He loved to plait the sweet-scented grass that the Indian women use in some of their basket work. The name of the grass is "Holy Grass," and in some countries it is used to strew over the floors of the churches. Willy's plaits were given to his sister Nellie to make into dinner mats.

He was very fond of music, and could whistle a tune very correctly. One day a gentleman heard him, and brought him a flageolet, a sort of small flute. Willy soon learned to play pretty airs and hymn-tunes on it, and it was a great delight to the blind boy.

One hope was the brightest thought in Willy's

mind, and it was one that made him most content with his lot. When anyone pitied him for being blind, he would raise his face with a bright smile and say, "Oh, never mind, when I die and God takes me to heaven, He will give me new eyes and I will see all the beautiful things in His garden, and oh! won't that be glorious!" and a ray from the truest sunshine glorified the sweet face and made it very beautiful.

Willy was indeed one of God's own children, a lamb of the Good Shepherd's fold, and he knew and loved the Good Shepherd who cared for him.



Betty Holt's Story.

BETTY HOLT was my mother's old nurse. She was a very old woman when I was a child. She had been nurse to my mother, and to all my uncles and aunts, and was very good and kind to all little children. She was grand at telling stories and singing old ballads, chanting rhymes and teaching wise proverbs which she had listened to when she was a child. There are not many old women like Betty Holt in these days.

Betty was not dressed as women folks dress now-a-days. She wore a great high-crowned cap, with a very narrow border which met under her chin. Round the front of the cap she had a broad black ribbon with a bow tied just over the right ear. Her large flowered chintz gown was open at the waist to

show a spotless white kerchief; below the skirt you could see a broad striped blue or green stuff petticoat, and above it an apron of white linen with a finely plaited border. Her shoes were of black velvet, pointed at the toes with bright steel buckles, and had high red heels. These were her best shoes, but in the nursery she wore grey list slippers. The sleeves of her gown were short, only just meeting the top of her long, grey mittens—not gloves, as she had no fingers to them, for she used to say, “My dears, muffled cats catch no mice.”

Betty was not a pretty woman, but she was always orderly and neat as a new pin. She never had a husband, yet was very fond of children, and having lived so many, many years in our grandmother’s family, she loved us all as much as if we had been her own children—and we were all very fond of old Betty.

We had heard all her stories over and over again, but would stop crying or quarrelling to listen to them again. She used to sing us long ballads, such as “Lord Thomas and Fair Ellen,” or the sad story of “The Babes in the Wood,” or “Chevy Chase,” or the doleful story of “Death and the Lady,” or “Barbara Allen.” But we loved best to listen to and learn hymns about God, and hear the old, old story of the

Lord Jesus when He came to die for us. Watts' beautiful "Cradle Hymn" was a great favourite, and we dearly loved to listen to it.

Betty made all her birds and beasts and insects, and even the flowers and trees, speak in the stories she told us; so they were more like fables than stories, but we children liked them none the less for that. Here is one of our old nurse's stories that she told to the two- and three-year-old little ones. It was called

"THE TWO WHITE PIGEONS AND THE BROWN COW."

"A long, long time ago it was, my dears, there were two pretty white pigeons that lived in a meadow by the side of a river. It was a fine place. The grass grew fresh and green, and the white daisies looked like stars holding up their little heads to the sunshine, and the cowslips smelled so sweet, and the violets sweeter still, though they hid their faces under the green leaves. They were modest and not so bold as the buttercups, who held up their yellow heads and seemed to say, 'Look at us and our gold cups, are we not fine fellows?' But everyone liked the violets and the 'meadow-sweet,' and the delicate 'meadow pinks' better than the buttercups.

"One bright May morning when the sun had

warmed the water in the river, the great green dragon-flies came out and the little water-beetles danced their reels on the top of the water under the shade of the overhanging willow trees; the May-flies, too, came up from the bottom of the river—where they had lain in their little houses snug and safe all winter—and sported themselves on the broad leaves of the water plantains, and the little red spotted Lady-birds found nice resting-places on the docks and mallow leaves beside them.

“The gold-finches and thrushes and linnets sang in the hedges, and the nightingales poured out their songs all night long in the grove by the meadow. It was as if they were all singing songs of praise to the good God who had made them so happy and joyful.

“The pigeons, too, were very happy and gladsome as they flew to and fro or nestled among the long grass and flowers. They had their own way of singing and talking to each other. It was not like the song of the lark when he rises from the ground and sings so sweetly and clearly as he soars up, up, up, so high that he seems to be lost to earth and belong to the blue sky or the white clouds.

“The note of the pigeon is only just ‘*Coo-coo-coo*,’ but it is soft and sounds nicely, just as if they were

saying softly, 'I love you, I love you'—so it was a sort of love-song they sang to each other.

"Now, the little hen-pigeon saw that all the other birds were busy making nests or sitting on the eggs they had laid, and she thought she must not be idle. So she made a hollow place in the grass by way of a nest and laid a white egg in it. She was so pleased that she called her mate to see it, and he was as pleased and proud as she was. He admired the smooth round egg very much, and did nothing but *coo* and *coo* to show how happy he was.

"I am sorry to say that their happiness did not last very long, for a great brown cow came into the meadow, and as she went over to the river to drink she chanced to see the pretty white egg as it lay in the grass. She did not know what it was—perhaps she thought it was only a white stone—so she gave a stamp with her big heavy foot and smashed it to pieces.

"The little pigeons were so vexed when they saw the egg was broken that they cried out, 'Broon Coo! Broon Coo! why did you tread on our nest and break our pretty white egg? Coo-coo-coo!'

"But the hard-hearted brown cow did not care for the grief of the poor pigeons. She tossed up her horns and swished her long tail, and walked off munching the flowers as she went.

“The pigeons were very sorry, but as they could not put the broken egg together they did not fret long over it, and were soon happy again. The next day the little mother made another nest in the grass, and laid another egg and covered it up safely, but the spiteful brown cow when she came to the river to drink, looked about her till she spied the nest, and gave a stamp, and of course broke the newly laid egg.

“Then the pigeons flew about in great distress and said, ‘Broon Coo! Broon Coo! why did you come again and break our nice white egg? Coo-coo-coo!’

“But the unkind cow only said, ‘Moo-moo! who cares for you?’ and tossed her head as she marched off.

“Now, there was a nice wise owl who had watched it all from the dead branch of a hollow tree, and she said, ‘My dear friends, why do you make your nests on the ground day after day? The wild pigeons build in the trees, and their nests are safe from the feet of cows or men, or any creature that walks the earth. Why not try that plan?’



“Then the pigeons set to work and gathered sticks and straws and other things, and made a nest on the flat branch of a pine tree, and laid two eggs in it. When the brown cow came to look for their nest as she had before, to break their egg, they put their heads out of the nest and cried, ‘Broon Coo! Broon Coo! you can’t tread on our nest and break our pretty white eggs. Noo-noo-noo!’”

“Ever since that time the pigeons have built their nests in the trees, where no ill-natured beasts can harm them.”

The Five Little Gardeners.

AGNES and Sara, Jane and Katie, and little Susie came to their father one day and asked for a piece of ground that was just outside the garden wall. It was a bit of waste land only a few feet wide, but they all wanted to have gardens of their own, because, they said, "the gardener was very cross to them when they plucked flowers out of the garden borders or made litters on the walks," and so they would like to plant flowers for themselves.

Their father, who was always kind, and wished to see the little ones happy, granted the request. He gave directions to the gardener to dig, rake smooth, and divide the piece of land into so many beds with a path between them, so that the five little gardeners need not interfere with each other, each having her

own, and to give them such flower seeds and roots as they asked for; but they were not to help themselves or meddle with his borders.

The children were very well satisfied with this arrangement, and they all agreed to be good and not vex the old gardener.

Agnes, the eldest of the children, was about ten years old. She set to work diligently, and this was how she laid out her garden:

She first strewed the dividing path which lay between her plot and Sara's with white sand from a heap in the yard. This was a good plan, as it kept the path neat and nice if it rained ever so hard. Then she got Peter the gardener to give her a bit of cord. The ends of the cord she tied fast to two sticks, one of which she stuck upright in the centre of the bed, and with the other drew a circle about four feet across. Then she drew four straight lines from the centre of the circle to the outer edge; thus dividing the round bed into four equal parts. Another large circle beyond the first, with a path between, gave her four corner beds of equal size, as the whole plot was a square.

Agnes had used her garden-line and sticks much in the way she had seen her father strike circles with his compasses, fixing one leg of the compass in the

paper and using the other, which held the pencil, to mark the exact figure on the paper; the end of her stick made the same mark in the soft earth.

In the very centre of the round, Agnes planted a lovely pink rose. The gardener brought it himself and put it in for her, he was so pleased with the neat way in which she had laid out her garden ground. A border of double daisies, red, white and pink, were next planted round the outer edge. In one quartering she planted pansies of many colours, and in another phlox; in the third, the blue nemophila, and in the fourth were portulaca of all colours. Thus the middle bed was filled with very pretty flowers, though as yet they were not in bloom. In the corner beds she had other flowers planted, but I cannot remember their names, only that later in the summer there were China asters and some geraniums. Agnes was a sensible girl, you see; she waited with patience for the blooming of many of the plants she put into the ground.

Sara's garden was next to her sister Agnes's, and Sara said: "Mine is to be a useful garden, not all for show."

She laid out her bit of ground in straight beds, and planted the sweet and fragrant lemon-thyme in one bed, sweet marjoram in another, curled parsley

in a third, and summer savory in a fourth; then she had a sage bush or two and a bush of sweet lavender, and a row of wallflowers and stalks set back against the brick wall.

This was Sara's garden, and the old gardener laughed and said: "Well, Miss Sara, you'll make a rare good housewife for some good husband one of these days." Then he brought her a root of peppermint and a bit of bergamot, and said: "Now, Miss, you have the sweetest garden in the place."

Jane's garden. Well, Jane was six years old, and she thought she would have something very nice for her garden; so she planted two currant bushes with the green fruit on them in the middle, then a big peony and a hollyhock, and some cowslips and primroses, and the rest of the bed she filled in with wild strawberries and a lot of other things, wherever there was room for anything. She would not take pattern by Agnes's or Sara's gardens, but liked to do things as she chose herself.

Katie's garden. Katie was only four years old, and she was not very wise, as you will find when you hear how she made her garden. She began by making a puddle with water from the pump, then she brought a lap-full of daisies and buttercups from the meadows, and stuck the flowers in rows over the

soft ground. Katie thought it looked very pretty and ran to call her father to see what a lovely flower garden she had made. But her father only laughed and said : "Katie, your flowers have no roots ; they will all be faded to-morrow."

Katie would not believe this, but when the sun came out next day, by noon all the flowers drooped and hung their heads, so she pulled them up and got fresh ones ; but they faded, too, and day after day it was always the same. Then she said : "I will sow seeds as Peter does."

Katie went to the cook and said : "Please, Anne, I want you to give me some rice, and some pearl barley, and some coffee."

Anne thought she wanted these things to play with, so gave them without asking any questions. Katie ran away to her garden, and making some lines in the soil with a stick, planted the rice and barley and the few coffee-beans. When she told Jane what a fine thing she had done in planting the things Anne had given her, Jane made great fun of her, and Agnes and Sara, too, laughed at the wee Katie's garden. This made the child very angry, and she said she would not do anything more to her garden ; so it grew only weeds till Agnes took pity on it, cleaned it up, and sowed mustard and cress and

radish seeds, which came up quickly, and then Katie was very happy.

Susie, the youngest, must have her garden, too, as well as her sisters, but she was a very odd child, and you shall hear what she did with the piece of ground next to Katie's against the brick wall. She got an old trowel from the garden-house, and set to work to dig a great hole in the ground. When she was tired and hot, Katie came and took a turn at the digging, and helped her to carry away the earth and make a heap with it farther off. The two little folks agreed to plant two ripe cherries in the hill they had made, and they said: "We shall have two big cherry-trees next year, with plenty of nice red cherries to eat for ourselves;" and then they went to work again digging at the hole in the ground, making it bigger and deeper.

"What are you making that hole for, children?" asked their father as he watched them at work.

"We are digging to find a treasure," said Susie.

"What sort of treasure do you expect to get out of that hole?"

"Gold and silver and beautiful things," replied Susie.

"But gold and silver do not grow in places like your garden, Susie."

“ You said they came out of the earth, *deep, deep* down, and we are going to dig till we find them,” was Susie’s decided answer as she went on digging. But Susie never found the treasure she worked so hard for that day, so many years ago. But in the years that followed she found a better treasure than either gold or silver or precious stones—treasures which never rust nor decay, which the Lord our God will give to those little ones who love Him and their blessed Saviour.

EDITOR’S NOTE.

FOR older readers a knowledge of the future of the five little gardeners may add interest to the foregoing story.

Agnes revealed her character in the methodical plan of her garden. Authoress of the Royal biographies, many poems, historical tales and several novels, she accomplished an enormous amount of work, writing her “Lives of the Queens of Scotland” only a few chapters ahead of the printers, while at the same time she was fulfilling numerous social engagements, keeping up a large private correspondence, and accomplishing some of the finest and most laborious fancy work. Her systematic way of arranging her time enabled her to do much more and better work than she otherwise could have done.

The old gardener’s prophecy as to Sara’s future was a true one. Of the five sisters she was the only one who never wrote. She was the housekeeper of the family, and married the vicar of a large parish in the north of England, a rich man, who entertained a great deal—both his friends and the poor of his parish—and Sara was indeed “a rare good housewife to a good husband.”

Jane's garden was also in a curious way an index of her life. She wrote many things on many subjects, her gamut ranging all the way from witty squibs to erudite histories and religious tracts. Her store of knowledge, apparently inexhaustible, was yet a kaleidoscopic collection of valuable material. Her love of colour was without artistic arrangement, but grand in its almost barbaric defiance of the rules of art.

Of Katie's garden we can truly say, that in her choice of the buttercups and daisies of the home meadows, she foreshadowed her love for the wild-flowers and ferns, and the valuable work she has done in bringing our Canadian *flora* to the knowledge of the world. All through life she has gathered gifts of her Heavenly Father day by day, and when the hot noonday sun of sorrow faded them, she has but turned again to the garden of her trust to replace them. She has owed much to the kindly help and sympathy of others, and has been ever as grateful as she was to Agnes when she sowed the useful mustard and cress in the garden under the wall.

Susie, who was possessed of the greatest of all gifts, the priceless gift of true genius, was ever questioning the reason of things, ever digging deep into the well of the knowledge of life, ever seeking for the treasure of truth, and finding it in increasing beauty and wealth in the Book of Life. Generous, enthusiastic, a brilliant conversationalist, a true poet, and a graphic writer, Canadian literature owes much to her influence and her pen.

A Garden Party.

DURING the absence of our eldest sister and the long confinement of our father to the house from the gout, the attention of our mother was devoted to his sick-room, consequently we younger ones were left a great deal to ourselves. In fact, we ran wild, spending the chief part of our time in play about the old-fashioned garden and plantation which bounded the west side of the pasture-fields beyond the orchards and gardens.

We had no playmates of our own class, a fact which we lamented greatly, for we were sociable young folks.

We had playmates, though, the acquisition of which led to a scene ludicrous to the onlookers, though serious enough at the time to the actors therein.

I was nine and Susie seven years old, an age when

children are rarely gifted with much discretion, and we were certainly no exceptions to the rule; and in this instance our family pride was in abeyance, for we formed a great friendship with a rustic lad and his sister Anne.

The boy's name was Jonathan Spilling, but on account of his figure being very short and stout, he was known in the house by the familiar name of "Punch."

Now, Punch was not really a bad boy. He was a sort of Gideonite that served them all in turns—cowboy, swineherd, hewer of wood and drawer of water, errand-boy, collector of eggs and feeder of poultry, gardener's assistant, and in the season of sowing of grain his daily business from "morning dawn to evening grey" was to run up and down the fields with a wooden clapper in his hands, and raise his voice to scare away the rooks and crows from preying upon the new-sown wheat and other grain. The sounds that he gave forth on such occasions I fear I should be unable to convey to the minds or understanding of my readers. Punch's warning cry was something between an Indian war-whoop and the yell of a catamount, and ended in a peculiar warble which was inimitable by any other throat than that of an accomplished Suffolk bird-boy.

It was not the musical talents of Punch nor the shrill treble of his sister Anne that attracted our intimacy, but the fascinations of the bird-boy's hut. It was scooped out of a sand-bank, below the shelter of the quick-set hedge, and in front of it he had laid out a miniature garden, edged with red and white double-daisies and divided by tiny sanded walks. The walls of the hut were adorned with strings of birds' eggs, disposed in graceful festoons. A fire of dry turf burned on the mud floor, in the embers of which were roasted potatoes, appetizingly ready for the guest and smelling good. Added to these were crab-apples, sloes and nuts from the hedge-rows, set out on a clean piece of board supported on four pegs to serve for a table, and two stools of similar construction for the honored guests.

Was there ever a more charming picnic than this, got up especially for our entertainment! And to crown all, a somersault executed by the master of the ceremonies, Punch himself.

The programme was as follows: First performance, balancing on one foot and one hand alternately; second, spinning round like a wheel; third, standing head downwards, heels upward; and as a grand *finale*, a somersault and leap-frog over Anne's head and shoulders.

Punch's talents as an acrobat were not unappreciated by his guests.

In return for such entertainments and hospitality could we do less than invite our host and hostess to a feast of plums, apples and currants in the garden, taking good care to keep out of sight of the parlour windows.

Our stolen friendship with the children of the old farm bailiff lasted for many months, but was terminated suddenly by an act of great imprudence on our part.

During the winter and early spring we had been indebted to Punch for several valuable treasures—a string of rare birds' eggs, hawks' and kites'; a tomtit's nest with ten tiny eggs in it, and two nightingale's eggs; and in our abundant sense of the obligation we invited him to a feast of green gooseberries and currants.

Now, it happened that our father, who was a great connoisseur in fine fruit, had raised a seedling gooseberry which promised to exceed in size any in the garden, and as ill-fortune befell us, it was this very bush we hit upon as the one from which to provide the feast.

During the progress of the entertainment, my brother Sam took offence at me for some slight, and

ran off with the tale to my father, who had just come into the garden, that "Miss Kate and Susan were stealing the seedling gooseberries and giving them to Punch to eat."

The next moment we heard our father's angry voice sternly bidding us to go instantly out of the garden to be punished for stealing the fruit and for playing with the cow-boy Punch.

I was so seldom in disgrace that I felt the angry rebuke dreadfully, and sobbing and trembling, I shrank away under the stern looks and reprimand, not daring to say a word in defence of my conduct. Susie bore it more stoically. Then the delinquent Punch was summoned from the kitchen, sternly reprimanded and this fearful sentence pronounced upon him, that he, "the green gooseberry stealer and currant robber, should have his skin stripped over his ears and be hung at the market-cross in the town of Southwold, as a fearful warning to all bad boys not to steal green gooseberries."

Now, Punch had borne his master's reproof with a stolid countenance, but this awful sentence was more terrible than being sent to jail, and the bucolic spirit was aroused. Wiping with the sleeve of his fustian jacket the tears that had started to his eyes, he burst out: "Ah, yah, Mr. Strickland, sir,

you darsn't do that! It would kill I, and then you'd be hanged for it."

How frightened I felt at his daring to confront my father with these bold words! I think it must have cost my father some effort to keep his countenance as the boy stood boldly before him, his grey eyes fixed unshrinkingly on his face, in defiance of the dread sentence. As for my mother and elder sisters, they could hardly keep from laughing at the boy's expanded eyes and resolute attitude.

"Go, sirrah," said my father; "be off with you, and don't let me see your face for a week."

Punch pulled his forelock and disappeared, while my mother gently remonstrated with my father for so terrifying the poor culprit, at which he laughed and seemed to enjoy the spirit the boy had shown in replying so manfully to the threat.

Not many minutes had elapsed before the old bailiff craved to speak a few words to his master, having heard that his son was not to come back for some time, as "he did not want him to be corrupting his children and teaching them to lie and steal."

The old man stroked down his white hair and said, in reply to this, that he "thought it was his master's young ladies that had been 'kruping his decent-behaved son."

Now, this was a more stunning blow to our pride than could have been inflicted by anything my father could have said, and we went no more to play with our old friends, Punch and his sister. We declined every invitation to the bird-boy's hut, and resisted the tempting offers of roasted dainties or curious specimens of rare birds' eggs. The old man's words had cut too deeply to be forgotten; we shrank from the thought of having to be answerable for Punch's delinquencies as well as for our own, and so played with him no more.

Katie's Secret.

KATIE was only seven years old. She was a sunny, happy child, petted by her older brothers and sisters, and was generally willing to share her pleasures with the younger ones until the unfortunate day when she had a secret to keep from them. How it all happened I will try to tell you, and it will show you how a hidden fault may be as bad as an untruth, as well as how easily little girls may be deceived by bad reasoning.

One beautiful spring morning Katie was very busy weeding and planting in her own garden, when Johnnie, the gardener's son, came up beside her and said in a very low voice :

“Miss Katie, look here what I have got, and it shall be yours if you like to have it.”

**

"What is it, Johnnie—a flower for my garden?"

"No, it is much nicer than a flower—just take a peep at it," whispered Johnnie, as he opened the front of his blouse.

Katie peered eagerly to see what he had hidden in his vest, and cried out with delight, "What a dear! Is it a little hare?"

"No, Miss, it is a rabbit."

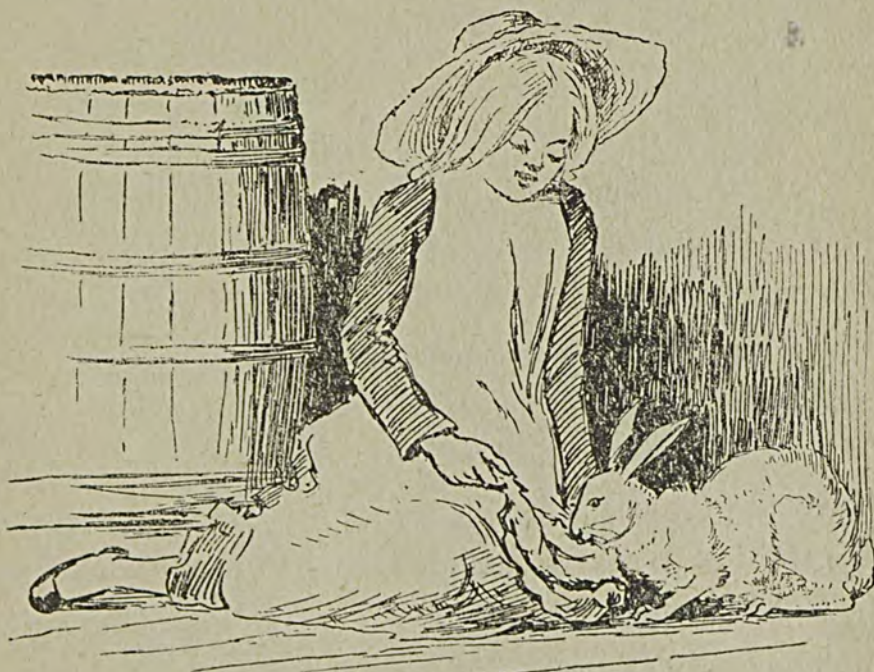
"A dear little grey bunny! Where did you find it?"

"I caught it just at the mouth of its burrow on the sand-hill beyond the garden," answered the boy, "and I will give it to you all for your own self to feed and play with if you will promise to keep it a great secret and not let your brother or Miss Susie know of it. They would soon kill it or let it run away to the hills again."

Katie hesitated, but she wanted the little bunny for her own very much, it was such a beauty; so when Johnnie said again, "I will not give it to you unless you promise not to let anybody know you have it, but keep it a secret, and say 'Honour bright.'" Foolish Katie did as Johnnie told her, and said "Honour bright," which meant she would keep the secret safe from everybody. She did not quite know why she should not tell Susie, but Johnnie said it would be such fun to keep it all to herself till the bunny had grown to be a big fellow.

Then he told her he would put the little rabbit in an empty hogshead that was in the coach-house, and would keep the door locked except when he let her in to see it, and feed it with cabbage-leaves, and carrots, and parsley, and clover, and other green things that it liked.

So it was all settled between them, and for a little while the mere thought of possessing the rabbit was a source of pleasure to Katie, only there was always the fear that the secret would be found out, and she had to be very careful lest her stolen visits to the coach-house should be suspected. She had to make



KATIE AND HER BUNNY.

false excuses when she stole away from her sister and brothers when they were playing or working in their gardens. That was not the only trouble either. Johnnie would come to her often and slyly ask her for grapes and peaches or other fruit, which she had to get for him unseen by the old gardener who had charge of the wall fruit. She was afraid to refuse, because Johnnie threatened to take the rabbit away or to tell she had it. She was now so fond of the pretty creature, and loved to watch its way so much, that she could not bear to think of parting with it.

Katie called the bunny "Gaby," and it seemed to know its name quite well when she called it. She loved to watch it skipping about, or eating the leaves she gave it out of her hands, or sitting up and washing its face and long soft ears with its forepaws. She would have liked very much to show it to Tommy and Susie and share all this pleasure with them, but she had only Johnnie to talk to about the little pet. Sometimes Johnnie was cross and rude, or teasing, and when she wanted to see the rabbit he would say, "Oh, don't bother me," or he would turn the key in the lock of the coach-house door and go away, when she wanted to stay a little longer than usual with her pet. This vexed Katie a great deal, and so you see it was not all pleasure.

One day Johnnie had left the key in the door, and

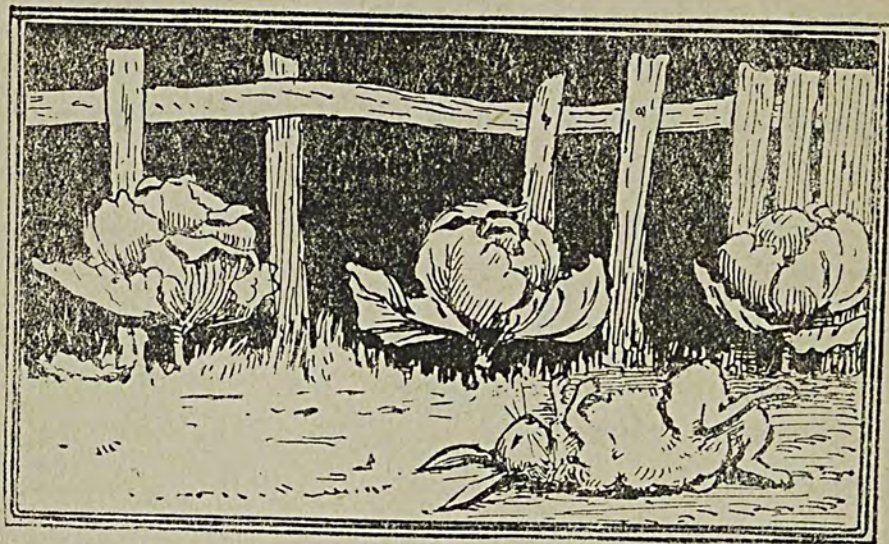
Katie, spying it, ran to look at her treasure; but no Gaby was there to stand up and lick her fingers and rub his soft grey head against her hand. The house was empty, nor could she see how the little creature had managed to escape. She forgot that the tiny rabbit had grown during the time she had had him, and that his love of liberty had increased with his power to skip and jump and play in his house, and that he was now as strong as the wild rabbits on the grassy hills outside. There was no hole or cranny in his house through which he could squeeze his body, so he must have jumped out over the top of the walls of his prison.

When Katie thought of this she hunted every part of the building to see if Gaby was hidden in some dark corner or empty box, but nowhere could she find her lost treasure. Then she thought perhaps Johnnie had taken it away to punish her for not supplying him with some of the fruit he had asked for, and she burst out crying as if her heart would break.

While she was still sobbing and crying outside the coach-house door, she heard her brother calling her very loudly, "Katie! Katie! Come here and see what I have found in the garden."

Katie ran with speed, for the sudden hope came to her that it might be her dear little rabbit. And it was the runaway. But alas! he held the poor dying

little creature in his hands just breathing its last. Tommy had caught sight of the rabbit among the cabbages, and thinking he was doing a good deed in killing a wild rabbit that was doing damage in the garden, had struck it across the neck with a stick he had in his hand and given it its death-blow.



THE DYING RABBIT.

Katie cried out in her terror and grief at the sight of the dying rabbit, and throwing herself on the ground, sobbed and cried so passionately that her brother was quite bewildered, and asked her why she acted in such a strange way.

“Oh, Tom,” she said, between her sobs, “it was my own dear bunny, and you have killed it, you wicked boy.”

"Why, Katie, it was only a wild rabbit that was eating the young cabbages."

"No, no, it wasn't; it was my little rabbit that I loved so much," she sobbed out, as she took the poor dead thing out of his hands. Then she told him the whole story, and Tommy said:

"Well, dear, I am sorry I killed the rabbit, but if you had not hidden the truth from us it would not have happened; and Johnnie was a bad boy to deceive you so."

Then Tom told Katie she had better go and tell their father all about it. This was very hard for Katie to do, but Tom said it was right and should be done, or more trouble might come of it. So Katie went and confessed all her fault to her father, and how she had stolen the fruit out of the vinery and from the walls to give to the naughty boy who gave her the rabbit.

Katie's father was very loving and kind, and talked to her a long time, showing her the sin and the evil she had been led into, and the consequences that would have followed if she had continued unchecked in deceitful ways.

Katie never forgot her father's solemn words as he laid his hand on her head and asked God to pardon her sin, and lead her ever in the path of truth.

*

Midge, the Field-Mouse, and her
Family.

MIDGE, the field-mouse, lived in a pretty orchard, under the moss-covered roots of an old apple-tree. Her house was a very small one, but she had made it warm and cosy by lining it with dry moss and soft hay. A snug little house it was, with a granary in which she stored away acorns and nuts, kernels from the plum-stones, and pips from the apples she found in the orchard.

Midge was a very industrious little housekeeper. She was always busy laying in supplies for her family, and she had no less than five little ones to feed. Her husband was dead. A wicked weasel, who lived in a bank just outside the orchard, had pounced upon poor Mr. Midge as he was picking up

some peas the gardener at the mill had dropped while sowing the spring crop, and so the brave little wife was left alone to provide for her five helpless little ones.

They were only two days old, and though the tiny things were blind and very bare-looking, having as yet no soft fur on their bodies, Midge thought them "real beauties." She loved them dearly, for they were her very own, and she did not love them any less because they were blind and bare. She cuddled them up close to her to keep them warm, and even pulled the soft white fur from her own breast to cover them.

Midge was much prettier than the common grey house-mouse, and living in the fields and among the dewy grass instead of in musty holes under boards and bricks, she was much cleaner in her habits. She had very round, bright black eyes, and two pretty little upright ears that looked like softly lined hollow shells. Her fur was a silky grey buff, except that on her breast, which was white as snow. Her tail was long, and her fore feet flat, and in these fore feet she could hold a nut or an apple and eat it as the dormice and squirrels do.

An old rat named Sly-boots, a distant relative of Midge's, lived in a big hole or burrow in the mill,

where he was a great nuisance to Bell, the miller, for he gnawed holes in the flooring of the granary, and bit the sacks that he might get at the wheat waiting to be ground, wasting and spilling more than he ate. The miller's man had set snares and baited traps, and laid poisoned bread and cheese about in Sly-boots' tracks, but the wise old rat took good care to keep his head out of snares, and his feet out of traps; and having a very sharp nose for poisoned dainties, he only sniffed at them and passed them by. He was a selfish old fellow, very boastful and vain, and not at all good-natured.

Sly-boots often stopped at Midge's door, and if she had a sweet apple or tasty nut he would help himself, without so much as a "by your leave." But as he was a relation, Midge put up with his want of good manners, and took as little notice of him as possible.

One day when he called she was very busy with her family, and did not attend to him or offer him anything to eat. This did not please him, and looking in at her children, he said crossly :

"Dear me, Mrs. Midge, what a miserable set of pigmies you have there! I would not own them if I were you. One of my ratlings would make four of such."

"Are your little ones well, cousin, and are their eyes open yet?" asked Midge, meekly.

“Open! Yes, indeed, I should think so.”

“And have they their coats on, too?” asked Midge.

“Of course! I wonder at you for asking such a question. Our ratlings are not bare like those mice-lets of yours,” and with these spiteful words Mr. Sly-boots walked off. He did not wish to answer any more questions. He was neither kind nor truthful.

Poor Midge felt very unhappy about her little ones; she feared all was not right with them, and Sly-boots' rude words made her heart ache with anxiety about her darlings.

Three days after, while Midge was cleaning out her house—for work must be done no matter how sad she might feel—she heard a rustling noise close by. Peeping out she saw a funny-looking tiny creature standing upright among the bushes on a pair of very long, slender hind legs. Midge knew at once that it must belong to the Mouse family, and therefore be some relation to her. It had a very small brown body supported on its slender long legs; its two fore feet were so short and stuck so close to its breast that they looked more like hands than feet, and Midge wondered how it could walk on them. When her visitor saw her, he gave such a jump that he nearly went over her head.

Midge was startled, and cried out, "Squee ! squee !"

The odd little creature turned round and said :
" Oh, pray don't be frightened, Cousin Midge. I hope I did not touch you."

" Oh, no !" said Midge, pleasantly.

She thought he had done it just in fun ; she did not know that he was a jumping mouse, and that he always moved about in that way.

Then the little stranger told her that he was called the " Jumper," because he skipped instead of walking or running like other mice. He could climb trees and even bare walls with his hands and sharp claws, and his long tail and flat feet kept him from falling when he stood upright like a man.

Midge was greatly pleased to see this new cousin, and they were soon good friends. Being very hospitable, she brought her guest a nice sweet apple and two hazel-nuts, which he ate while they talked about their children and the difficulty of bringing them up well and providing food for them.

Midge's little ones were lying still, covered up with a warm mat of moss and hay. Remembering what Sly-boots had said, she was very shy of letting her new friend see them, and made many apologies for their being so sleepy and stupid and not opening their eyes, regretting too that they had no nice grey coats like her own.

“How old are they?” asked her visitor.

“Seven days,” said little Midge, sadly, for they seemed very old to her.

“Seven days! Is that all? Well, then, you need not trouble about it. All mice and rats and squirrels, and even some of our enemies, the cats and dogs, are blind when they are very young. Two days more and your little ones’ eyes will be wide open.”

Delighted at being thus relieved of one anxiety, Midge uncovered her treasures that her friend might have a peep at them.

“They are nice and fat and healthy-looking,” said her cousin, “and as for their coats, they are growing finely. They will soon be as soft and silky as your own;” and Midge covered up her micelets again, happier than she had been for days.

“I must skip home now,” said her visitor, “and look after my own household; but I will come again and pay my respects to you and your family.”

“And where do you live?” asked Midge.

“My dear cousin, my nest is in a very high place, not on the ground under the roots of trees like yours. We Jumpers build nests of hay, roots and other such material as the little song-birds use, and we hang them between stalks of wheat or Indian corn, tying them so fast to each stalk that they cannot fall.

They are like the cradles the women in the big houses put their babies in, but the wind rocks our baby Jumpers to sleep.

Midge thought it must be very nice for the little ones, and as her cousin could stand up on his hind legs and look in at the nest, or climb up the corn-stalks by his sharp claws, it was all right for him, but it would never do for her to have such a high house. Then she reflected that even if she could climb up a corn-stalk, there was none growing in the orchard for her either to climb up or to tie a nest to.

Midge told her friend of the cross speech made by Sly-boots, and asked if ratlings were bare when they were very young.

"Of course they are, and blind, too," replied the Jumper, "and they are not nearly as nice-looking as either yours or mine. Now, good-bye, Cousin Midge," and with a hop, skip and jump he was off and out of sight in a minute.

It had been a very pleasant visit, and Midge was happy and lively thinking of the merry little mouse and his funny ways. How cleverly he managed to jump about on his long legs, and climb with his tiny hands!

Two days afterwards Midge had the joy of seeing five pairs of bright black eyes shining on her, and very soon the furry coats began to show and feel as

soft as the most exacting of mothers could desire; the white breasts looked just like babies' pinafores, and Midge was as proud and happy as a field-mouse could be.

Whenever Midge went in search of food she covered up her nest with thistledown and grass, bidding her little ones lie still and not leave the nest, lest they should come to harm. She had noticed a big white owl, who lived at the mill, hovering about and looking from under the thick feathers that shaded her great eyes in daylight, and was afraid if she spied one of the little mice she would swoop down and seize it; so Midge gave a strict charge to her children not to go out to play in the moonlight, as owls see far better by night than they can by day.

Now, it is a great pity that mice, as well as children, do not always obey their parents, for often as soon as the little mother-mouse was out of sight, these silly little creatures would scamper out and play at hide-and-seek in the grass.

But I have not yet told you their names. Midglet, the eldest, was the best of the lot. Although she was rather greedy and tried to get the best of the food her mother brought, she was industrious and took great care of the house, keeping everything in it in good order.

Dandy was a smart little fellow. He did not care

to soil his coat or his hands digging roots in the orchard, and spent in brushing his coat a good deal of the time in which he ought to have been at work. He said he meant to go out and pay visits where he would be courted and admired, and altogether he was a vain, silly little mouse.

Grim, the third, was quite different; he did not care enough about how he looked or how dirty he was. He would even kick Midglet when she tried to wash his dirty hands or brush his coat, and had been known to bite and scratch his mother when he was in a bad temper.

Frisky was a good-natured, careless little mouse. She loved to play, and was fonder of sitting and sunning herself among the daisies and buttercups than of helping her mother to find nuts or to dig the pips out of the apples the wind blew down in the orchard; and instead of carrying the nuts home, she would amuse herself rolling them about in the grass. Frisky ate far more than she earned, and was often scolded for her idle ways.

Dick was the youngest and smallest of the family, a merry little fellow, fond of mischief and fun; indeed, he was a great plague to his mother and sisters, always up to some impish tricks—pulling their whiskers, biting their ears or tails, or jumping over their backs. He would not take his turn at digging

for roots, but spent most of his time in chasing the big beetles and chafers, running after the crickets, or trying to jump like the grasshoppers, and even poking his inquisitive little nose under the leaves to wake up poor sleeping moths. Midge would say to him, "Dick! Dick! you are so idle I fear you will come to no good." And saucy Dick would reply, "All work and no play, you know, mother, makes Dick a dull boy."

"Very true, my son, but all play and no work is worse, and ends in want." And his careful mother warned him again not to be out too late.

"Oh, I'm not afraid of old Madge, the owl, stupid old thing! I can take care of myself; she shan't get me." And he frisked away.

But the old owl was not so stupid as Dick thought, or his self-confidence made him careless, for one night not long after his mother had warned him he was out playing in the moonlight. The owl saw him from her perch on the dead branch of an oak tree, and before Dick could hide himself she pounced down and carried him off and ate him up, bones and skin and all. Poor wilful little Dick!

One day Midge missed Dandy. When dinner-time came he was not to be found, and as his mother was going out to work with Midglet and Frisky, she put away his dinner so that he might find it ready for

him when he came in. But alas! Dandy never came back to eat it. He had carried out his intention and set out to pay some visits, and being more thoughtful of the admiration he was going to excite in the minds of his friends than of the dangers by the way, he was caught and devoured by the great grey cat belonging to the farm. No doubt she admired him, but not in the way the vain little fellow would have desired.

Not long after this sad end of poor Dandy, Midge announced her intention of taking a journey.

"I'm going away for two days to visit my uncle and aunt, the Dormice, for I hear they have come lately to settle in the beech-woods. At the same time I shall look out for beech-nuts, and by and by, when the nuts are ripe and begin to fall, we will go and gather in a good store for our winter's food. Pray be careful to keep near home in the day-time, and do not go out after sunset lest you be caught by the owl or the cat, or the cunning weasel;" and with this parting injunction Midge set out on her travels.

The first day Grim and Frisky were very good and minded what their mother had said to them; but the next day, when Midglet told them they were to stay in the house and keep quiet, they ran out and would not heed what she said. Grim went away by himself and never came back. I cannot tell what became of him. Frisky, after running about for

awhile, saw a round hole in the ground, and being a very inquisitive little mouse, poked her nose in to see what was there. Finding nothing at first, she crept in farther, and presently saw two bright red eyes looking at her. Frightened, she turned to fly, but too late; the weasel sprang upon her and caught her under the ear. A sharp bite, and in a few moments Frisky was dead.

It was a sad home-coming for the mother when, after her long journey, she came in to find only Midglet to greet her and tell her of the fate of her two undutiful children.

“Well, Midglet dear,” she said, “we cannot bring them back, and as my good aunt and uncle were very kind and invited us all to come and live near them in the beech-wood, where we shall never want for good food nor suffer from the neighbourhood of such ravenous enemies as owls, cats and weasels, I think we had better leave the old home and try our fortunes in the new.”

Midglet was very willing to bid good-bye to the house under the old apple-tree, and to settle down near their relatives, the Dormice, of Beech-wood, where they lived very happily, and I dare say may be seen any fine October day hard at work laying up a goodly store of ripe beech-nuts in a new granary under the trees.

What the Grey Parrot Said and Did.

“NEVER too late! Never too late to mend!” words shouted in a loud, unmusical voice, arrested the steps of many a passer-by in the street of a populous old English town in one of the eastern counties. Many a head was turned to see the speaker of these remarkable words, especially as they formed the title of a no less remarkable book which was attracting the notice of the reading public at the time.

These words, “Never too late!” repeated over and over again, were the first greeting I received upon entering my old friend’s sitting-room in Bungaye. I turned to see where the harsh words came from, and found a great grey parrot, with scarlet legs and a red collar about its neck, occupying a fine large cage near the window.

Setting its head to one side with a knowing look, it eyed me with so comical an expression that I fairly burst into a fit of laughter. This seemed rather to ruffle the temper of the queer bird, and she raised a fresh screech, repeating her former words in a shriller key, "Never too late to mend!" which seemed intended for a hint to me to mend my manners.

Polly was a recent acquisition in my friend's house, and it was a new and amusing experience to me to study the odd ways and listen to the sayings of the bird.

"Polly is an educated bird," was the remark of her master, a grey-headed old gentleman whom this odd bird seemed to take a delight in imitating—not his words only, but the peculiar manner in which he spoke. This had a very droll effect, for Polly was really an actor and mimic. Her master had a peculiar way of grumbling and muttering to himself when annoyed, and Polly would fidget about her cage muttering to herself, sometimes calling out, "Shut that door! Shut that door!" and ruffling up the feathers of her neck as if she felt a cold draught of air. As the door was often left open or ajar, it may be it annoyed her as much as it did the rheumatic old gentleman she was imitating.

There is a great love of mischief in some birds.

The magpie, the jay, jackdaw and others will hide any article they can manage to secrete—things that they can make no possible use of for food or comfort. Is it a thievish propensity in their nature, or is it really from the same love of fun we often see in some children?

I believe this grey parrot hid things just for fun, as she seemed to enjoy watching the result of her mischievous pranks.

One day I was sitting alone in the dining-room writing a letter. Polly's cage-door was open. I think she had learned to unlatch it herself. Out she hopped and on to the table she came, making sundry polite bows of her head and announcing her arrival by repeating several times, "Poor Polly! Poor Polly!"

A pen (it was in the days of goose-quills) lay beside a penknife a little beyond the paper on which I was writing. Polly quietly took possession of the pen and flew off with it. Sticking it between the bars of her cage and eyeing me with a cunning look, she came back again. Making her bows, she repeated in more decided tones, "Poor Polly! Poor Polly! Never too late! Never too late to mend!" then picked up the penknife in her handy claws, weighed it carefully, and transferring it to her bill, balanced it with a nicety and precision that a reasoning being might

have used. Satisfied there was no fear of dropping it, she carried it off to her cage.

I let her alone to see what she would do next, but this time I had to put a stop to her proceedings. Polly had obtained pen and penknife, but she had no ink, so she walked to and fro on the table eyeing the inkstand and repeating her address, "Poor Polly! Poor Polly!" as usual, but when she made an attempt to abstract the glass with the ink in it from the stand, I trembled for the result, and laid my hand on the stand, saying decidedly, "No, Polly! that will not do; the ink you must leave alone."

I believe the sagacious creature understood, but unwilling to let an opportunity pass, she deliberately seized my envelope by a corner and marched away with it.

Being deprived of the ink, however, she could make no attempt at writing, so wisely turned her attention to something else.

The house-maid had come in to lay the cloth for dinner, and having set the voider in order, she deposited the knife-tray on the floor beside it and left the room.

Mrs. Poll lost not a minute in taking advantage of her absence. Urged either by mischief or acquisitiveness, she flew down and set to work.

She took every knife and fork out of the tray, and laid them side by side on the floor, and then proceeded to conceal them by poking them under the edge of the carpet—hiding the knives and forks so completely that not even a handle was visible. The carver gave her the most trouble. She could not manage to hide it under the carpet, so took it in her bill, but found she could not balance it—it was too large, too heavy in the handle, and too long in the blade—so she shoved it under the stand of the voider as far as she could reach.

It was amusing to watch the manner in which she pranced about when her task was done—how she eyed the hidden things, and inspected the spot to make sure nothing of them was visible. Then repeating her usual formula, she resumed her perch on the top of the cage to see what would follow.

I do not know if Polly did, but I most certainly enjoyed the state of perplexity the poor maid was in. First she looked into the empty tray and said, "Well, sure, and I thought I had brought in them knives all right. Why, what a fool I must be!" and went out again. But they were not in her pantry, so back she came.

"If you please, Miss, did you do anything with my knives?" The question was asked humbly and doubtingly.

“No, Mary, I never touched them.”

I could not find it in my heart to betray the parrot and spoil the fun.

“Sure, the things must be bewitched, Miss, for they are not in my pantry, and they are not here, either.”

All this time the bird was hopping about, first on one leg and then on the other, bowing her head and repeating, “Poor Polly! Poor Polly!”

But Mary soon found out the trick the bird had played her. Her foot struck against the hidden knives, and then the secret was out. Mary finished setting the table, muttering to herself, “Well, I do believe that the *old one* is in that wicked bird; it’s up to everything, it is!”

One fine spring morning the window had been left open in front of the stand on which Polly’s cage always stood. The warm fresh air inspired the bird with the desire to be abroad enjoying the delights of freedom, so she managed to open the door of her gilded prison, and flew away over the Common to revel in the sweet scents of gorse and heather then in bloom on the turfy waste which lay on one side of the town.

There was a great fuss in the house when Polly’s cage was discovered to be empty. Search was made

everywhere in the house without success. She must have gone forth through the window, but in which direction no one could decide. Men and maids, boys and girls started up and down the street, into the by-ways and even down to the market-place. The hue and cry was raised that the precious "foreign bird" was lost, and liberal offers of reward were made for its recovery.

Meanwhile Mistress Poll had naturally preferred a wider range for her liberty than a dusty street, and was out among the gay golden-flowered furze bushes of Bungaye Common.

About noon a small mob of ragged boys and girls rushed up to Mrs. S——'s front door with the news that they had noticed a lot of small birds, sparrows and chaffinches and robins, gathered together and flying about a hawthorn bush, and scolding at a great rate at a big grey bird with scarlet legs and a red mark on its neck.

One of the boys said the little birds might have pecked at the grey bird and made its neck bleed, but they all wondered to hear the big one talking to the little ones.

"And oh, Missis! that queer bird did preach a real sermon to the little fellows, and told them to mend their ways; and she told them her name was Polly,

and we got right feared on her, for we never did hear a bird talk like a human afore. We ran away as fast as we could, and we met a man who told us it was your talking bird, an' he said you would give us a lot if we got her safe, maybe as much as six-pence!"

This hint being responded to, and an additional donation of cake and raisins being gratefully accepted by the boys, the spot Polly had retired to was soon reached.

The parrot was easily recaptured, the cage being set within sight of the fugitive, furnished with a lump of sugar and a biscuit. Polly, knowing that no such dainties grew on furze bushes, responded to the bait and flew down from her wanderings. She hopped in at the open door repeating her old words very emphatically: "Never too late! Never too late to mend!" and was borne home in triumph, attended by all the urchins that had gathered round to look at and listen to the wonderful talking bird.

One thing delighted the household in Broad Street. Polly had learned a new word, had added to her stock of vocables, and now shouted, "Cuckoo! Cuckoo!" imitating the mellow note of that mysterious spring visitor so perfectly that you might have fancied you heard the cuckoo calling as she flew above your head.

Polly had heard it while she was sitting in the hawthorn bush on the Common, and was evidently pleased with her new accomplishment. She lived to be quite old, but I never heard that she paid another visit to the Common, or whether the little birds she saw there profited by the sermon she preached to them.

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Tat and Tit: The Ground Squirrels of Minnewawa.

TAT and Tit began their life together on one of the large islands in Stony Lake. They were pretty little creatures. Their fur was a light brown, with stripes of black and white along the back; their tails were flat and furred, but not as long and fluffy as the red squirrels' tails are.

The Indians call the ground squirrels "chipmunks," because when they are angry or frightened they cry, "Chip-chip-chip!" as they run up the trees to get out of danger. They are the smallest kind of squirrel, not very much bigger than dormice. Their cousins, the black, the grey, the red and the flying squirrels, are all much bigger than the ground squirrel. They make their houses in the ground under rocks and roots,

not up in the forked branches of big trees nor in the hollow trunks of dead ones, as the larger squirrels do.

Tat was rather bigger than his little wife Tit, and being the stronger, he could do more work in getting seeds out of the pine cones and bringing home acorns; but Tit was very clever in finding where the ripe strawberries and huckleberries grew, and what bilberries were sweetest and earliest to ripen.

The island was a fine place for squirrels to live on. There were oak trees to give them plenty of acorns, and tall pine trees that had cones full of nice seeds, besides plenty of plants and bushes with sweet berries on them; so there was no lack of food for Tat and Tit to eat during the summer, or to lay up in the little granary dug deep down under the root of the big tree, where they kept nuts, seeds and acorns in store for winter use.

The good God, when He created them and many other of the wild animals, gave them wisdom to provide for the cold season of frost and snow, by laying up for themselves food for the time when they can get nothing to eat from the frozen ground. As squirrels and field-mice, and bears and raccoons, and many other wild creatures sleep during most of the winter months, they do not require a great deal of food, but they know just exactly how much to provide, and

never seem to lay up too much or too little for their needs.

The squirrels have no hands to carry what they gather, but they have little pouches, or pockets, in their cheeks that they fill with seeds or nuts or whatever they wish to carry, and these they can empty when they reach their storing-place. You cannot see them at work filling these pouches, but they can stuff a great deal into them, and are busy running to and fro all day filling and emptying them.

Our little squirrels were nice and cleanly in their habits, and kept everything tidy in their little house. They were very lively, and liked a good game of play



TAT AND TIT.

when the sun shone brightly, racing and chasing, skipping and leaping about and over one another's back like children in a play-ground. You would laugh to see the merry little creatures so full of frolic and fun.

Yet Tat and Tit had their troubles, too, and now I am going to tell you of how they had to leave the big island and seek another home.

One fine day a gang of rude lumbermen came in boats to the island. They had axes and ropes, and they cut down the fine pine trees and sawed them up into big logs; then they chopped down the beautiful oak trees, and hewed off the branches, and cut the trunks into lengths. The other trees they cut into firewood, and altogether made such havoc of all the pretty bushes and green things on the island, that it looked bare and ugly.

After rolling all the logs into the water and making a boom to keep them from floating off, the men went away. But they forgot to see that the fires they had made on the island to cook their food by were quite out, and some days after they left, the wind fanned the smouldering ashes into a blaze, and the dead leaves and trampled grass being very dry, the fire quickly spread. Soon there was nothing on the island but black burnt ground and bare rocks.

Our little squirrels were so frightened that they jumped into the water and swam away from the heat and smoke of their burning island. It was a good thing that they, like all these little creatures, were good swimmers.

It was a beautiful moonlight night and the water of the lake was warm, but Tat said he thought it was better to be on dry land or up in a green tree on an island than in the water. They swam a long way and Tat began to be very tired; then they had come away in such a hurry they had brought no food with them, and he was very hungry.

"Let us land on this island close by," said Tit, "and go to our cousins, the red squirrels, and ask them to give us some supper and a bed."

"Well, I am not fond of begging," replied Tat, "but I am very hungry and tired, and do not mind for once asking Dot and Dit, the red squirrels, for a nut or an acorn."

So they landed on the shore of the island, and after waiting about a little to dry their wet tails, they went to the foot of a big tree where they heard the welcome sound of cracking nuts and nibbling acorns going on.

Tat scratched joyfully at the bark of the tree by way of asking admittance. Now Dot, the red

squirrel, was not a very kind-hearted fellow, and did not like being disturbed at his supper. He poked his head out of the warm nest up in the tree where he and his wife and family lived, and said curtly, "Who is scratching at my door at this time of night?"

"It is only Tat and Tit, your cousins, Mr. Dot," replied Tat.

"Ugh!" said Dot, very gruffly, "and what do you want, you two chipmunks, disturbing folks in this way?"

"If you please, cousin Dot," said Tit, in a soft pleading voice, "we have been burnt out of house and home on our own island, and we are very tired and cold and hungry."

Dit, who was much kinder than Dot, seeing how tired and miserable the two poor little chipmunks looked, shivering at the foot of the tree, threw them down a nut and some berries, and told them they would find a hole and some moss among the roots below, where they could rest for the night.

This was but a cold welcome for Tat and Tit, and though they accepted the privilege, they did not feel very grateful to their niggardly relations. They heard Dot scolding Dit for throwing them the nut

and giving them leave to sleep in the hole at the foot of their tree.

"As for cousins," they heard him say, "I, for one, do not hold chipmunks as any relation of the red squirrel family, and I hope they will go away soon and not trouble us with their company."

This ungracious speech annoyed Tat and Tit very much, and they wished they had gone to some kinder family in their need.

"Never mind, Tat," said Tit, "we will get up very early in the morning before Dot and Dit are awake, and go away to the other side of the island, where we may find some berries for breakfast."

Tat had forgotten one thing when he craved the red squirrels' hospitality, and that was the well-known fact that the red squirrels are never friendly with the ground squirrels, but will chase them away, bite, scratch, and ill-treat them if they find them among the acorns or pine cones; just as if the oak trees and pines were their property and the ground squirrels were robbing them. Sometimes they will run after and take away from them the acorns they are carrying, and will even kill the little things, so that it was a good thing that Tat and Tit escaped before surly old Dot got up that day.

Tat and Tit cuddled down for the night, his soft

little nose over her warm back, and they soon got dry and slept well. They were awake again just as the first rays of the morning sun fell across the island, making the dew-drops shine like diamonds on the wild grasses and flowers.

I do not know whether our two little friends stayed to wash their faces in the dew, or to brush their brown coats, or trim their whiskers and tails, for they were in a hurry to go away and seek for food or find some more hospitable friends than the red squirrels.

It is a bad thing that the big and strong often attack the small and weak, even leaving the sick and wounded to die without caring for them. God has taught us to be tender and kind to the weak and suffering, the aged and infirm.

Tat and Tit soon found plenty of berries and roots, but while they were eating them they were startled by the sight of a broad-winged hawk that was hovering above the trees. They ran as fast as they could, never stopping till they found themselves at the lake-shore.

There was a canoe lying on the bank just above the water's edge. Into it the chipmunks leaped, and hid themselves under a bundle that lay at the bottom, where they felt they were quite safe from the keen eyes of the hawk.

After awhile they ventured to look out from under the bundle, which was indeed nothing but a coat which the owner of the canoe had left there. Presently they found a piece of bread, some cake and some cheese in the pocket. This was a great find for the little chipmunks, who had often picked up the crumbs and crusts left by the lumbermen, and they were glad to get such a treat. They nibbled the cheese and thought it very good. When they had eaten all they wanted they filled the little pockets in their cheeks, for they thought from past experience that it would be wise to lay by some of the nice food against the time they might be hungry again.

They thought the canoe was a fine big shell, so determined to make themselves happy and comfortable now that they had plenty to eat and nothing to trouble them. They skipped about and enjoyed themselves greatly. When they were tired they crept into one of the pockets of the coat and found it soft and warm, very pleasant to sleep in. Now and then they took a nibble at the cheese,—these little creatures did not know any law against taking what did not belong to them, but thought they were very lucky in finding such nice things provided for them without having the trouble of seeking the food for themselves. It is wrong for children to steal,

but it was no sin in these little wild squirrels. Alas!—

“The best laid schemes o’ mice an’ men
Gang aft agley.”

About noon-time the canoe-man came back, and taking up his coat gave it a shake. Out came Tat and Tit in a hurry, and away they scampered to hide themselves, clinging in a terrible fright to the side of the canoe.

“Ugh! you little thieves!” grumbled the man, when he noticed the marks of their teeth on his bread and the big hole made in his cheese; but he thought it was field-mice or a musk-rat, perhaps, that had found out his store, and did not see the poor trembling chipmunks clinging to the canoe.

They lay quite still until the man, having finished his dinner, lay down and went to sleep.

After a while he wakened up, and taking the paddle in his hand pushed off from the shore, and the next thing the chipmunks knew was that he had landed on the shore of a little cove, between two rocks, and jumping ashore dragged the canoe up; then turning it over bottom upwards went away.

Our little travellers skipped away as soon as the man was out of sight, and soon came to the conclu-

sion that they had arrived at an excellent place in which to settle.

It was indeed a fine place for them, plenty of lofty oak and pine trees, lots of bushes full of fruit, raspberries and bilberries, huckleberries and strawberries.

“This is a grand place!” cried Tat, gleefully, “and if there are no red squirrels or other disagreeable animals on it, we will call this our island and live here always.”

There are a great number of islands in Stony Lake—some large and some small; some only bare rocks without trees upon them, nothing but tufts of grass and round cushions of grey moss or lichens; others rise high in huge rugged, rocky banks that are hard to climb, and are clothed with lofty trees, such as tall pines with dark feathery tops, fine large oaks and poplars, and many other kinds.

The people who like to come to cool, quiet places in hot weather have built houses on many of these wooded rocky islands, and spend a pleasant time there during the summer. They have boating and bathing, and some plant little gardens and care for the wild-flowers, of which there are many kinds growing on all the islands, even in the most barren-looking spots among or on the rocks.

Names are given to the islands by the people who

live on them, and some have wisely chosen an Indian name which is more or less descriptive of the sort of island.

The wild, rocky, but tree-clad island on which Tat and Tit had landed, and which they meant to call their own, was called Minnewawa by the Indians. It means "Lake, or Water of the Wild Goose,"* and was called so because the wild geese came early in the spring and made their nests in the rushes of the little coves or inlets between the rocks, where the water lay calm and sheltered from the cold winds. There the good motherly geese could sit and hatch their little downy broods and teach them how to swim, without danger of their being hurt or killed by bullfrogs or fish-hawks. You see how all mothers take care for the safety and good of their children; even wild geese and ducks and hens, fierce eagles, and lions and tigers love their little ones. The great God who made them has given them this love for their young.

Well, Minnewawa was just the place for the little chipmunks and for birds. The only neighbours Tat and Tit had were a family of flying-squirrels, who were not much bigger than themselves, and a pair of

* Minnewawa has also been translated, "Murmur of the wind in tree-tops," but that given in the text is correct—*Minne*, water, *wawa*, wild geese—in the Otchipte or Chippewa language.—Ed.

wood phœbes—dear busy little birds with black heads and some white about their breasts, who build a nest of mud and moss and live by catching mosquitoes, and all kinds of small flies and midges.

The flying-squirrel is a very pretty creature. His fur is a grey colour, and soft as silk; his eyes are round, black and very bright, and he has a lovely tail which he sets up when he takes a jump, and it looks like a fine grey feather. He, too, like the chipmunk, lives on nuts and berries, and sleeps during the winter months in a soft nest, where he lies snug and warm beside his little grey wife and wee ones while the cold weather lasts.

Tat and Tit were always good friends with the flying-squirrels, so they were not sorry to find a family of them living on the island; they knew they would not chase them away, but would let them feed among the oak and pine trees, and be friendly enough to show them where the best food was to be found.

The first thing Tat did was to look out for a nice secure spot in which to make a house. He was not long in finding a suitable place, although there were so many holes and hollows among the rocks that lay piled on the shore, and on the land higher up on the island, that it was a little hard to decide which would be the best.

Tit was well pleased with Tat's choice of a deep round hole at the foot of an aged oak tree, from which the acorns would drop to the ground close by. The little pair set to work, and with their hands smoothed all the rough places, and dug and scooped out the hole till it was large enough for them to sleep in, with a little feeding-room and storehouse beside; then they made it warm and soft with moss and dried hay, and any very nice thing that they found in the way of down or feathers that had been dropped by the wild ducks or geese.

The chipmunks were very busy and very happy. Little people who have plenty to do are always much happier than those who are idle or lazy.

The summer passed away very merrily for our friends, and when the days began to shorten, they knew they must bestir themselves to lay up stores for the long cold winter that was sure to come.

Tat remembered where the wild rice grew, with its long bright green grassy leaves, and its lovely trembling flowers waving with every breath of wind, and that now the tall spikes of grain must be ripe. He knew, too, that if any of the Indian women chanced to land near the rice-bed, they would gather it all for food for themselves and their children, and leave very little for the squirrels. So he and Tit made

haste to visit the swamp where they had seen the wild rice, and in a little while they had carried an ample store to the house under the tree.

The high winds of October brought down showers of ripe acorns from the oak tree, so they had not far to go for them. Pine cones full of seeds also strewed the ground. Then there were hazel nuts on the bushes that had at first been hidden by the long leafy hoods that covered them; but the frost withered these, and then the nuts, brown as berries, were seen.

I am not sure if our squirrels cared for the hard, crude juniper berries, although they looked so bright on the green branches of the low bushes; but if they did not, there were other wild creatures who might take them. Some of the birds that stay with us during the winter season are glad of the juniper berries, so you see there is something for all God's creatures, however small.

Shorter and colder grew the days. The frost had already set in, the lake no longer flowed fresh and blue, or reflected the island shores, the tall trees, the clouds and the sunshine, or the moon and stars upon its surface. It was white and still as death—silent under a covering of thick ice and snow, where once had been sound and motion.

*Our chipmunks had retired to their well-lined nest, and were fast asleep curled up like balls of soft fur. They heeded not the cold winds sweeping through the trees, or the deep snowdrifts that lay heaped upon the ground.

We will leave them there till the winds grow soft and warm sunbeams melt the snow-wreaths and loosen the ice that binds up the water of the lakes and streams.

Good-night, little Tat and Tit; good-night, and pleasant dreams!

The Pet Bantams.

KATIE was only ten years old. Her mother was a widow who lived in a town where her two boys could be within reach of a good school, but Katie lived with her grandmother in the country.

Sometimes the boys spent their holidays in the country with their grandmother, and when they were together Katie and her brothers had always a happy time.

It was Katie's birthday, and as she could not go to spend it with her mother, her elder brother Charlie came to see her, and to bring her the accustomed birthday present from her mother.

Katie always enjoyed surprises, and this time, after Charlie had given her a new doll and some candies, he showed her a basket with a cover tied down on it, and asked her to guess what was in it. He had

brought the basket all the way from K—— in the cars, and it had something alive in it.

Katie guessed a great many times. She lifted the basket and felt it was heavy, and she heard a scratching noise in it; then she peeped through the cracks. "It is a rabbit, a white one, I know it is," she cried, "for I see something white inside."

"No, guess again," said Charlie, "it is not a rabbit."

"It is a lovely white kitten, then, and I am so glad, because I do love pussies."

"No, not right yet; guess again," laughed Charlie, who was a little bit of a tease.

"Then, is it guinea-pigs? I'm sure it is, two nice little guinea-pigs."

"No, wrong again."

"Oh, you tiresome boy!" cried Katie, getting impatient, "I won't love you a bit if you do not let me open the basket."

Charlie laughed and held the lid for a minute longer, then he untied it and lifted out a beautiful pair of bantams.

Katie was so surprised and delighted that she could only say, "Oh, what darlings!"

Charlie cut the strings that tied the feet of the little creatures together, and put them down on the

ground. The hen was as white as snow and soft as silk, but the rooster was indeed a beautiful bird. His feathers were black and red and gold-coloured, bright and glossy; he had lovely drooping feathers in his tail of a shining greenish black. Ah, many a girl would have liked to rob the bantam of them to stick in her hat. The red comb on his head was so bright it looked scarlet when the light shone on it, and he had handsome black stockings of fine feathers down to his toes.

As soon as he found himself free he stepped out, clapped his wings to shake off the dust of travel, and gave a loud sharp crow that almost startled Katie. She said it sounded like "How do you do! how do you do, Katie?" but Charlie said it was bird language, and sounded more like "Erka-rerka-kerka-kroo-kroo-oo!!!" and all he could make of the little hen's voice was "Kra-kra-kra!"

Katie and Charlie both tried to imitate the bantams, but they could not make much of it.

The next thing was to get bread crumbs and grain, and a saucer of water to refresh them after their journey, and to stand by and watch the little pair enjoying it, all the while preening their feathers before they nestled down close together after their wants had been satisfied.

Then came the question of what they should be called. Katie suggested "Beauty" and "Belle," but Charlie, who was deep in the study of Roman history, said that was too common a name—why not call them "Mark Antony" and "Cleopatra"? Katie was not at all sure she liked such grand names—in fact, she thought them very odd names to give to anything so pretty as the bantams—but as she had a very high opinion of Charlie's learning, she gave up her wish and consented to have her pets called "Mark Antony" and "Cleopatra."

"I don't suppose the darlings will mind what they are called if we give them plenty of food and find a nice house for them."

After strutting about the premises for a while the bantams found a high place in the wood-shed—a loft where there was a lot of rubbish—and they settled themselves for a roost on a beam that just suited them, and made themselves quite comfortable for the night.

At the first dawn of day Katie was awakened from her sleep by the crowing of Mark Antony, and by the time she and Charlie were dressed, the bantams were marching about the yard and scratching to find worms and seeds among the grass and chips; and when Katie scattered some grain and crumbs they

came and took them, as tame as if they had known her all their lives.

Charlie said there would be no need for a coop or a house for them, as they would not run away, they seemed so well contented.

After a few days had passed the little white hen found her way to the kitchen. Under the dresser there chanced to be an open basket in which Maggie, the maid, had put the clean clothes ready folded for ironing, and into the midst of the nicely rolled-up linen Cleopatra settled herself down very quietly, and in about half an hour or so out she flew, making such a cackling, which was answered by Mark Antony calling and clapping his wings to let all the house know the news that his wife had laid a beautiful white egg.

The egg was a very small one to make such a fuss about, but Katie was as much delighted at the sight of it as if it had been twice as big.

Maggie said she would not put up with the little hen making a nest among her clean clothes, and the next time Cleopatra came into the kitchen to lay her egg Maggie drove her out into the shed. Katie thought Maggie was very ill-natured, but the banty soon found a nest for herself in the loft. Every day she laid an egg, while Mark Antony sat on the end

of the board ready to call with her when she flew down from her nest.

At the end of a week, however, Cleopatra refused to come off the nest. It was to no purpose that her little husband urged her to leave it; she resolutely refused, and as Mark Antony could not prevail upon her to do what he wished, he got sulky and angry with her.

Whether she told him that she was sitting on the eggs and could not leave them to get cold while she went about taking her pleasure with him, I do not know, but Katie was quite sure she had explained all about the work she had to do hatching the eggs. Still the selfish fellow would not understand her, and sulked and scolded the poor little thing, but she kept very quiet on the nest and took no notice.

At last he lost all patience, and flew down in a great rage, giving her a bit of his mind very decidedly; but Cleopatra knew what was her duty to her eggs, and only nodded her wise little head without giving the least sign that she meant to yield to his wishes. Then he stalked away, and did not come back again till late in the afternoon.

And how do you think the silly fellow tried to punish Cleopatra? He made his appearance in the wood-shed with two ugly, big black hens beside him,

and he strutted to and fro, scratched up the ground just below where Cleopatra sat, and clapped his wings, and made a great crowing, as if he would say, "There, madam, you may go on sitting there as long as you like. I have got two large wives to take your place. Who cares for you? Not I!"

The pretty white hen looked down on her rivals, and if you could have heard her speak she would have said, "What a couple of great coarse-looking old frights they both are! Much good may they do you, my dear husband."

Mark Antony certainly had not chosen these common barn-yard hens for their youth or beauty, and the comparison between them and his pretty dainty little bantam wife when he saw them together made him feel rather mean, so he sulked and walked off again.

It was only a day after this that Katie, when she went out to feed her bantams, noticed that Cleopatra did not as usual come down for her breakfast. Looking closer she saw a soft fluffy little chick peeping out from beneath the careful mother's breast feathers, and presently another and another popped its tiny head out, so she knew that the white hen had hatched her eggs.

Full of joy she ran to call Charlie, who soon

scrambled up into the loft and handed down seven little chicks in his cap. Then, in a great hurry, down flew the little mother to look after her brood.

While Katie was crumbling some bread for the chicks, Charlie laid down an empty flour-barrel, and cutting some sticks with sharp points to them, stuck them in the ground in front of the open end of the barrel, with space enough between to let the little hen go in and out if she wished. It made a nice coop, and the bantam and her brood were well housed and as happy as they could be.

When Mark Antony came into the yard he was surprised at the sight of Cleopatra and her family. She had not quite forgotten his behaviour, and how he had tried to vex her by bringing the two black hens into the shed; so when he drew near she took very little notice of him, and when he looked cross she advised him to go back to his larger friends—she had her chicks to attend to and could not be bothered with him.

A brave little guardian she proved to her brood. No cat or rat or any other hurtful thing could come near them, and when one day the two black hens came to inspect them she fairly drove them before her out of the yard. They never dared venture in sight of the little vixen again.

It was late in the hot month of July before Cleopatra made friends again with Mark Antony, but by degrees she let him come near her and look at his fine, now full-fledged, family, and to take notice of their beauty and to praise them and express his pride in being father to such a flock of handsome chicks.

Before long they were quite reconciled and lived very happily together, and though they are both growing old they are still the dearest and most prized of Katie's pets.

The Lofty and the Lowly ; or, The
Oak and its Dependents.

ON a pleasant flowery plain grew a mighty oak tree and at its roots tender grass, beautiful, graceful ferns, and sweet blue violets.

The same sunbeams glistened on the shining leaves of the great oak as brightened the lowly grass and ferns and flowers. The same genial showers of spring and dews of summer fed them. The same breezes that stirred the spreading branches of the sturdy oak softly waved the leaflets of the ferns and kissed the blossoms of the violets, shedding abroad their fragrance on the air. The same rich mould that fed the strong roots of the tree had nourished the fibres of the grasses, the ferns and the violets. All had received the gifts of their great Creator in

equal shares for the good of all alike. The plants gave back to the earth for the use of the oak all their old leaves, adding richness to the soil and also giving something to the air that was needed for the good of men and animals. What the plants did not need they gave back, keeping only a little for future use stored in their living roots.

If the oak had taken more during its long life, it also had yielded more. For two hundred years it had grown and thriven through wintry blasts and summer tempests. Bravely it had held up its leafy head against the crashing thunder-bolts, and bravely it had faced the fierce lightning that passed it by without blighting a leaf or withering a branch.

Year after year in the autumn the fallen leaves of the oak were spread over its lowly dependants, a deep warm covering to keep them safe from bitter winds and biting frosts; thus had they lived and helped each other.

The squirrels played among the topmost branches of the giant tree, and feasted on the brown acorns, not neglecting to lay up stores of the latter for the winter in their hidden granaries.

The bees gathered honey from its blossoms, and in the spring the birds built their nests and hatched their young unseen among its sheltering leaves, or

filled the air with songs of gladness. All was peace and joy and harmony; each lived for the other, and high and low were both content.

One summer day it chanced that two travellers, tired from their long journey, sat down to rest beneath the grateful shade of the oak.

"What a contrast this grand tree presents when compared with these trifling plants at its roots?" said one as he leaned his back against the grey-barked, massive trunk of the tree. "Of what use are they?" he went on, as he carelessly plucked a handful of the pretty ferns and violets and cast them aside, giving no thought to their beauty, for he was no lover of God's work in nature.

"It is a fine piece of timber, my friend," said the other, as he looked up with admiration at the size of the great tree; "if felled, this oak would cut into planks and beams stout and strong enough for a man-of-war."

"If it were mine," said the first speaker, "it would soon be cut up and turned into money instead of standing here useless."

"Yet it would be a pity after all, for the tree is a great ornament and someone might miss it," said his friend.

"Not much more than these weeds at its foot

would, and no one cares for weeds," was the answer; and the men rose up and went on their way.

But the little plants had heard, and were very angry at the slight that had been shown them in being called "weeds."

"Weeds, indeed! nothing but weeds!" exclaimed the graceful lady-fern, as she tried to raise her crushed stem.

"Useless things! No one cares for us!" sobbed the poor torn violets the unfeeling man had plucked and trampled upon, while the tender blades of grass were too crushed to express their indignation at the way they had been treated.

"These graceless men made a great fuss about this big oak, and never listened to one of my songs!" cried a mocking-bird from a bough above.

"And never noticed these pretty little ones of mine playing at hide-and-seek on the branch over their ugly heads!" chattered a red squirrel, with a mortified air.

"I am sure they were quite blind to my beautiful colours," complained a swallow-tail butterfly as he rested on an oak leaf close by.

"Oh, my dear friends," said a bee, "butterflies and bees are of no value—we cannot be made use of as beams and boards!"

They were all hurt because the oak was said to be of more value than they were.

The grand old tree sighed through all its branches, and was grieved by the envious spirit roused by the words they had heard. Still more did its great heart ache when it heard one of its dependants exclaim :

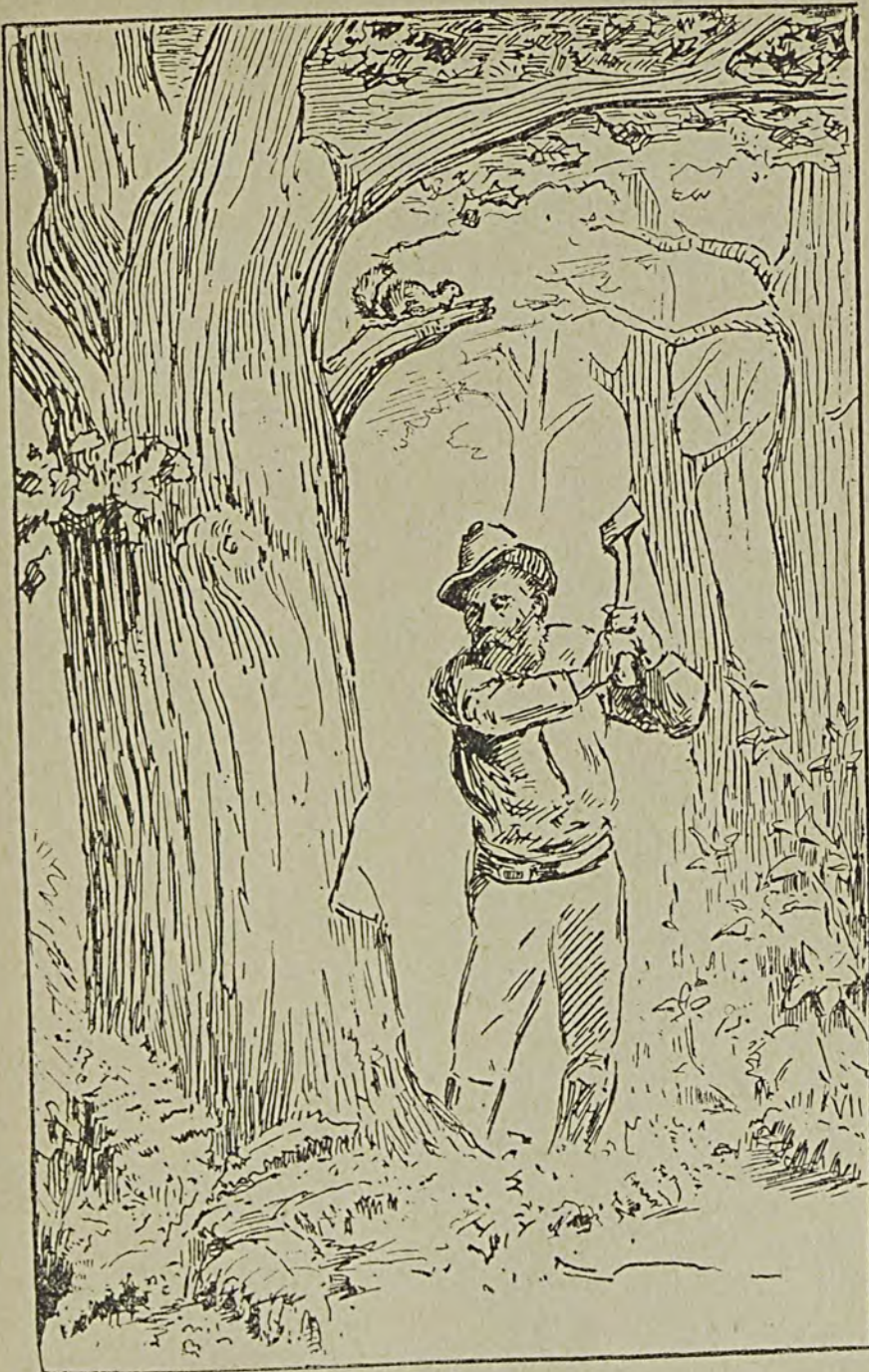
“ Let them come and cut down the oak ! we shall not mind ; there will be all the more room left for our roots ! ”

Not many days after there came a party of lumbermen, armed with sharp axes. They crossed the plain, and when they reached the oak they stopped and looked at it. Then taking the shining axes from their shoulders, they struck the trunk of the tree till the air re-echoed with the sound of the blows.

“ Yes, it is a noble tree,” said one of the men, “ but it will take many a stroke to bring it down and saw it into logs for the saw-mill. Be that as it may, though, there is money in it.”

Then the men smote the tree many more blows with their axes. The birds flew away in terror ; the squirrels fled, leaping from branch to branch, and hardly got away safe from the dogs that had come with the men.

Hour after hour the woods rang with the sound of



THE DOWNFALL OF THE GREAT OAK.

the strokes of the axe-men. At last, with a crash that made the earth fairly quake, down came the mighty tree prostrate on the ground it had so long adorned, a thing of grandeur and of beauty.

Alas! the poor ferns and the violets and grasses were so trodden down, crushed and shapeless beneath the heels of the axe-men, they had little life left in them. The winter came, but the ground was bare and there were no sheltering leaves to cover them. The frosts nipped the roots, the summer heat withered them, and thus uncared for they perished. Too late they repented of their envy and ingratitude, and learned that the oak had been their best friend for all time and seasons.

The downfall of the lofty had been the destruction of the lowly.

Mrs. Flytrap and Daddy Longlegs.

ONE fine summer evening two spiders met by chance on the top of a brick wall that surrounded a pleasant garden. These spiders were of different species and very unlike in their habits and dispositions. One, whom I shall call Daddy Longlegs, was of that wandering and harmless tribe country-folk call harvestmen, because they are often seen during harvest season galloping over the fields and gardens, and even venturing inside people's houses. There is a saying among old wives, "A great many harvestmen, a barnful of corn."

The harvestman is a most amiable spider, never being known to pinch or bite the reapers in the corn-fields, or the poor gleaners when they go to sleep under the hedges, though he will run over their faces or hands if they chance to obstruct his progress, yet

so lightly that this does not even cause the sleepers to start. The lives of these spiders, too, are protected by the same kindly prejudice that preserves the robin and the swallow. Country people consider it a barbarous act to kill the harmless harvestman.

They are not so voracious as the garden or house spiders, contenting themselves with the very small insects, such as the little grey gnats and tiny flies, which they find trapped in the old webs of the garden spiders.

Perhaps I had better give a slight account of Mr. Longlegs' appearance, as he may not be already known to my young friends.

Mr. Longlegs had a very light grey body, mounted upon eight slender legs of a most amazing length—so long that by their help he covered about six times the ground occupied by a common spider. Among his tribe he was always looked upon as a very accomplished person, the most expert dancer and swiftest of foot of all the family of Longlegs. He was also remarkable for his evenness of temper, never putting himself in a passion on any provocation.

"It is better," he would say, "to take matters coolly and fairly; those who do so are sure to be best off in the end."

Mrs. Flytrap, the garden spider, was a creature of a very different order. She was of a watchful, cun-

ning temper, very greedy and avaricious. She worked hard, and was never happy unless she had half-a-dozen webs hung out to catch unwary insects, and a larder well stocked with legs and wings of the fattest and tenderest description. Her body was of a dusky brown colour, with as many eyes as she had legs, and though you would have supposed eight eyes were quite as many as one spider could need, she said they were not enough, for let her be ever so watchful some good morsel was sure to escape her notice or be stolen from her by one of her neighbours. She was on foot from sunrise till sunset, seldom taking any rest or pleasure, and was so sour and unsociable that she was not only ugly but looked ever so much older than the gay, good-humoured harvestman.

But to my story. Mrs. Flytrap was running along the wall at full speed to look at a web she had made that very morning, and in which she expected to find entangled some fat fly or juicy young gnat when a stop was put to her progress by the unwelcome presence of Mr. Longlegs. He was standing quietly looking down at the leaves of a currant bush which grew against the wall below, his long legs taking up the whole path and effectually blocking the way.

Mrs. Flytrap was in a great hurry, and felt angry at seeing the whole width of the road taken up by one person, so she very uncourteously commanded

Mr. Longlegs to move on that she might pass, saying, "I wonder what you mean by taking up so much room with your long spindle legs."

"Come now, friend Flytrap, you had better be civil," observed Longlegs, coolly, and without moving an inch, "for I must tell you I am rather inclined to have a will of my own, especially when I am treated with any degree of rudeness."

Mrs. Flytrap looked spiteful on hearing this speech, but Longlegs took no notice of her, as he did not wish to change his place for a few minutes. He had his eye on a gnat slightly caught in an old web among the leaves of the currant bush, and was afraid if he moved he might frighten it away and so lose a good supper; so he candidly told Mrs. Flytrap that when he had secured the gnat he was watching he would allow her to pass.

"Indeed," said Mrs. Flytrap, "I am not going to wait your leisure. I might stay here all night if I did and lose all chance of prey, and that would be a pretty joke truly."

"Then," replied Longlegs, who was as obliging and polite as a spider could be, "as I do not like to put you out I will let you walk under me. There is plenty of room and to spare," he added pleasantly, as he raised himself to his full height on his long legs.

Instead of accepting this friendly offer, Mrs. Flytrap

declared she would not lower herself by doing anything of the kind. Longlegs took no further notice of her, but continued quietly watching his prey, which by this time had become pretty securely entangled. Stretching down one of his long feelers, he fished the gnat out of the net and prepared to enjoy his supper.

Mrs. Flytrap, who could never see eating going on without wanting her pickings, began to dispute the possession of the gnat with Mr. Longlegs, claiming it as her rightful property and saying she had woven the web, and ended by darting out one of her claws to seize it from its rightful owner.

"Gently, gently, my friend," said Longlegs. "How comes it you did not claim this gnat while it was yet in your web?—if, indeed, it was your own web it was in, a statement I am much inclined to doubt."

At these words Flytrap flew into a great rage and ran to and fro on the wall, trying to annoy her enemy as much as possible, but though she was the stronger and fiercer, Longlegs was the more agile; he kept his legs stretched out all round him, so that Flytrap could not approach nearer to him than within half an inch or more on either side; and being as nimble as a French dancing-master, he was always ready for her at every turn. Flytrap soon realized that she was likely to come off the worst in the encounter.

Still she did her best to dislodge her adversary, and while they were yet eyeing each other with hostile intention, a light breeze swept away the gnat which had been the bone of contention between them.

At the same moment Flytrap heard a great buzzing, which seemed to come from one of her nets close by, and a panic seized her lest her enemy should also hear it and gallop off on his long legs, and find and gobble up the prey before she could reach it herself.

"Now," thought this cunning spider, "if I could manage to put him off his guard I might take the opportunity and throw him over the wall." So she turned about to Longlegs and said in a deceitful voice, "Well, my friend, your gnat is gone and you are none the better of keeping me waiting; still, to prove to you that I do not bear malice for the little difference between us, I shall be very pleased if you will do me the favour of accompanying me home to supper. I dare say I can find some titbit in the larder that will serve to satisfy our hunger till morning. But stay," she added, as if suddenly recollecting herself. "I will first step home and see that everything is prepared with all due decorum, for I am very particular in that respect when I have friends at my table."

There was something so sly and hypocritical in the

expression of Mrs. Flytrap as she said this, and the change of manner was so sudden and unexpected, that the harvestman, who had his wits about him, suspected there was some trick and that she meant no good by her polite invitation to supper, so he resolved to watch and, if possible, to defeat her project.

Feigning compliance, therefore, he stood a little to one side to let Mrs. Flytrap pass.

“Now or never,” said Mrs. Flytrap to herself, giving a sidelong jump, hoping thereby to overset her lighter adversary from the wall; but, as often happens, the crafty are taken in their own snare, and the trap they set for others proves their own ruin. Longlegs, suspecting treachery, was on his guard, and moved so nimbly out of the way that Mrs. Flytrap lost her balance and fell off the wall herself. She began at once to spin a thread to descend by, but unfortunately was not aware of a toad who had scrambled out of his hiding-place, and with open mouth was ready to receive her, and who devoured her in an instant. Thus did avarice and treachery meet with due reward.

Longlegs had the satisfaction of finding an excellent supper ready trapped, and several new webs well stocked with the choicest provisions, which, as they no longer were required by their rightful possessor, he had no hesitation in enjoying.

Further Adventures of Tat and Tit.

SUNSHINE AND SPRING ON THE ISLAND OF MINNEWAWA.

THE sunbeams have grown strong and warm, and the ice in the lake is beginning to break up into great masses, showing here and there pools of fresh blue water, on the brink of which flocks of wild ducks are to be seen pluming their feathers. At night the clang of the Wawas* is heard coming from the south and the west, where under warmer climes they have passed the month of winter. Nature, true to her seasons, has called all her wild wanderers home again to their old haunts among the lakes and streams of Canada.

All the little animals, and some big ones, too, that have been asleep in their dens and holes and warm

* Wild Geese.

nests all winter, are waking up and looking about them.

Tat and Tit, too, are stirring and stretching, thinking it is high time to wake up and see what the world outside is like. They are soon frolicking about in the sunshine, running along the fallen trees that are clear of snow, and scratching aside the dead leaves in search of a stray pine cone or two that may have been left from last year. They do not find many, and as there are no berries or nuts ripe, it would go hard with them if they had not stored up enough to eat in their little granary under the root of the oak tree. But they have plenty there, and are growing quite fat and hearty. Many a half-hour they spend sitting basking in the sunshine on the rocks, dressing their fur coats and brushing away the dust from their tails and paws, making themselves clean and presentable.

Very pretty they look, this bright April morning. There is a sweet scent in the air from the pines and the cedars; the sunbeams have set the sap flowing through the branches and sprays of the evergreens, and all their spiny leaves are getting greener every day. There is a sound of rushing wings and splashing water, breaking the silence of the lonely lake, as flight after flight of wild ducks arrive, returning to their old haunts among the rushes and flags, where

they will soon be making nests and hatching their broods of little brown ducklings.

We hear the piping of the little birds, the chickadees and tree-creepers, the wood phoebes and crossbills, and soon the hollow sound made by the woodgrouse that we call the Canadian partridge, calling to his mate to leave the shelter of the dull cedar swamp and join him in the more cheerful open glades of the forest. Standing on the trunk of some big fallen tree he beats his breast with his wings, the rapid strokes making a hollow drumming sound that can be heard for a long distance. Like a good obedient wife, the hen leaves the close covert of the cedar trees and comes at his call, not again hiding from him till she has made her nest and hatched her brood of little chicks.

I must not stop to tell of the spring flowers and all the pretty feathery ferns that are rearing their heads from the ground and unfurling their fronds to the warm spring air, or you will think I have forgotten our chipmunks Tat and Tit.

As the spring days lengthened, Tat noticed that his little wife kept away from him. She seemed too busy to attend to him or to play as much as usual, but spent the time making their house bigger inside and bringing in small bundles of soft fine hay to the

inner nest where they slept. When he asked her what need there was for a warm bed in June, she gave him no answer, and he thought she was cross and sulky; so he stayed away from the house all day, and Tit said she was glad to have a little time to herself to work. This made Tat sulky, and he went off in a pet and sat on the bough of a tree near by.

Presently he heard Tit calling to him to come down, for she wanted him very particularly. When he got down into the house he was very much surprised to see that she had four tiny chipmunks all closely cuddled together in the new nest that she had been so busy making for the little family.

Tat was delighted. He skipped about joyously, up and down the trees and over the rocks. Then he went off to look for some nice food for the little ones to eat, but the young mother told him not to trouble himself, for she had good food herself to give them; they were too young yet to eat acorns and nuts.

Tat was very curious, and wanted to see if the little ones were like their mother and himself, but when he tried to get a peep at them Tit covered them up so that he only saw one funny little head. He could not see its eyes, for squirrels, like a great many other small animals, cannot open their eyes for some days after they are born.

Tat did not admire the little one he saw, and said he thought it was "a fright, and a stupid thing."

"Stupid yourself, sir!" cried Tit, "she's a real beauty!" and for many days she revenged herself on him by keeping the little ones covered so that he could not see them. Tat was discontented enough at this, but the crosser he got the more she teased him. It was not very kind of the little mother, but she meant to surprise him when the eyes of the chipmunks were open, and she could show him how pretty they were with their yellow coats and bright shining eyes.

Soon they began to frisk about, and Tat was very proud of his family.

As they grew older they would pop out of the nest and skip over the rocks and fallen logs, racing and chasing each other, and scampering after their father and mother, jumping over their backs and catching them by their tails, making great fun of them. Sometimes Tat was so vexed with their behaviour that he was obliged to give the boldest of them a sharp cuff, or a nip with his teeth, but Tit never even scolded them. I am afraid she rather enjoyed their pranks.

Tiny was the biggest and the boldest, Trotty was the most nimble, Tots was the gentlest, and Tricksy, the sly one, was the most mischievous.

A great many people came to Minnewawa that summer to gather the wild fruit which grew in plenty all over the island. Several Indian women and children came for the huckleberries and raspberries, cutting poles and long sticks to build the sort of house the Indians call a "wigwam." The Indian boys are good hunters and trappers. They carry bows and arrows to shoot the small birds and animals, and learn to use these with great skill. They quickly find out, too, where the squirrels have their holes or nests in the trees, and where the wild birds lay their eggs. The Indian women cook and use all sorts of herbs and roots, and make stews and soups of many things we would not care to eat. They cook all kinds of wild animals, musk-rats, ground-hogs, raccoons and squirrels, bears, and many kinds of fish and birds.

Tat and Tit were very much afraid of the Indians, and kept close to their hole with their little ones while they were about. Yet in spite of all their watchfulness, a sad fate happened to one of them. One day Tit had gone out to get some food, when she saw "White Cap," a big Indian lad, coming along over the rocks. He had on a blanket coat with a red sash around his waist, and his bow slung over his shoulder. Tit was terribly frightened and hid

herself as well as she could behind a rock, from which she could peep out to see which way he went. When he drew near, she noticed that he had a squirrel drawn through his sash, and saw by its pretty striped coat that it was Tricksy, the brightest and most playful of her own little ones.

White Cap had spied it sitting on the branch of a tree near its home and had killed it. Poor Tit was in great grief, and it was not long before she had another sorrow, for Tots, too, fell a victim to White Cap's arrow, and was probably made into soup by the Indian women.

At first Tiny and Trotty were dull and sad, but they soon forgot all about their loss, and played and frisked as lively as if nothing had happened to their little brother and sister.

The Indians remained some time longer on the island, engaged in fishing, but our chipmunks went away to another part of it and took care they were not seen by their enemy, the Indian boy. They kept very quiet, never going out except in the dusk of the evening or on moonlight nights, or when they knew the Indians were out fishing by torchlight.

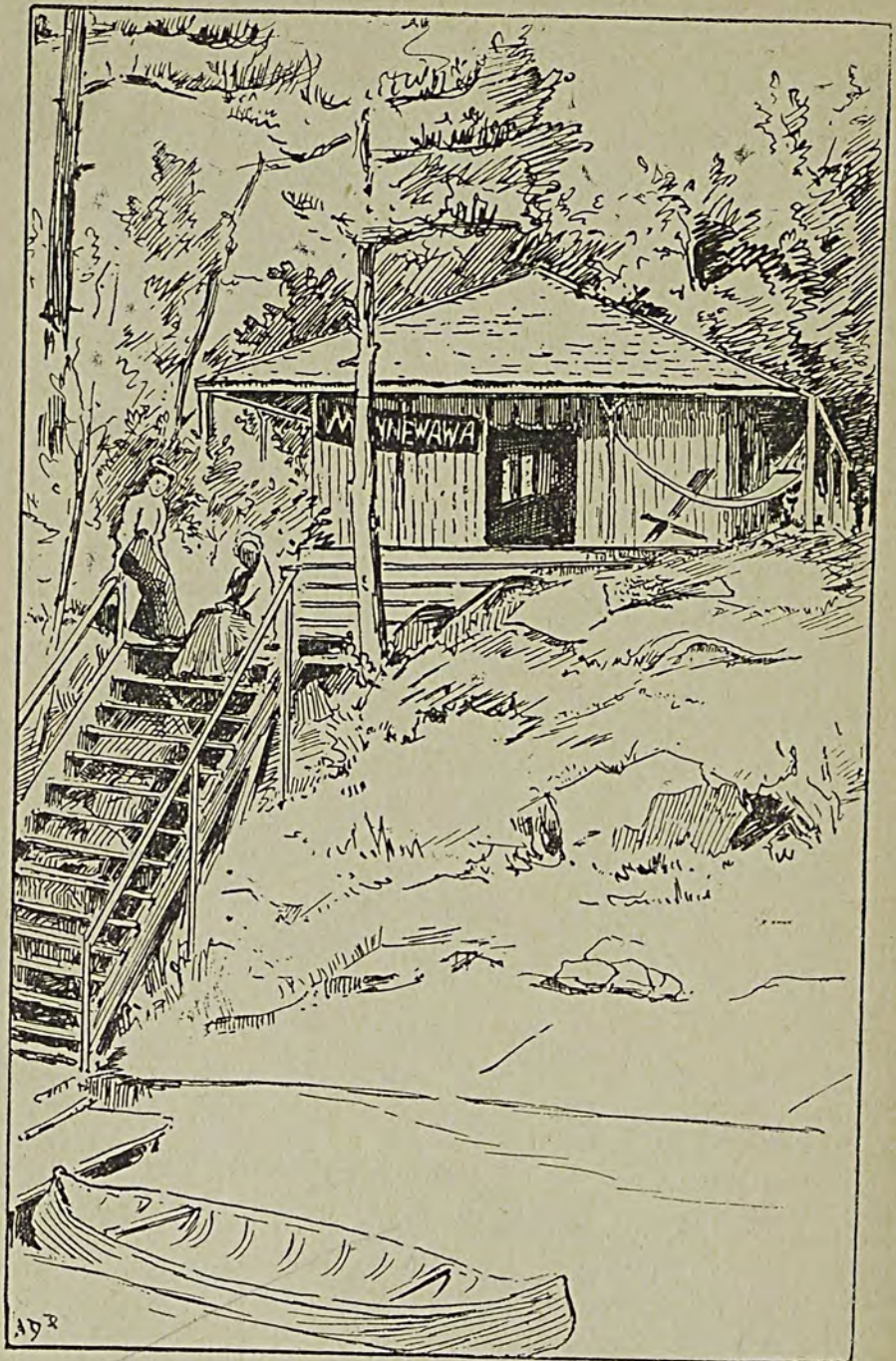
It is a pretty sight on a dark night to see the Indian canoe with flaming torch at the bow shoot out from the shadow of the forest tree-clad shore, the

figure of its occupant, spear in hand, standing in the canoe ready to strike the fish as it rises to the light. So alert and quick are the Indian's eye and hand that he seldom fails to bring up a big bass or maskinongé on the point of his spear. When he has taken several fine ones he paddles his canoe ashore, makes a fire, and laying the fish on the hot ashes, cooks it for his supper. After eating heartily he rolls himself up in his blanket, stretches himself on the ground, his feet to the fire, and is soon sound asleep.

Tat and Tit were not sorry when the Indians moved away to another island. They loved the stillness and quiet of Minnewawa, but this they were not long to enjoy.

One day a party of men with materials for building a house arrived, and soon the noise of axes and hammers, the clatter of piling the newly sawn timber, and the voices of men at work were heard.

The spot chosen for the site of the house was just above the rock where the oak tree stood, at the foot of which Tat and Tit had made their home. At first our squirrels feared that the men would cut the oak tree down, but the gentleman who had bought the island said that it must stay—he would not have the fine tree destroyed. It stands there still with its spreading boughs shading the roof of the house, a



THE COTTAGE AT MINNEWAWA.

little cottage with a wide veranda all around it, and steps leading down to the rocks and beyond to the water's edge.

Tat and Tit were rather fearful at first when they heard the joyous voices of the children who came with their father and mother to live in the house—afraid lest they should have bows and arrows such as White Cap had, and would kill them for their mother to make soup of, or to have their skins to use for trimming. For some time they would hardly venture from their house under the rock, only stealing out for a run when they knew the owners of the house and the little girls were out in the canoe or paying visits to their friends on the other islands.

After awhile, as they saw no sign of danger, they grew bolder and soon felt no fear, but would scamper out to pick up the crumbs that Ruth and Amy threw down for them, or sit upon the rock close by and eat a piece of apple or cake, holding it in their tiny hands. It was great fun for the children to watch the squirrels at play. Sometimes they would clap their hands just to see how fast the little creatures would scamper away, bounding at full speed over the rocks and up the trees, and to hear them cry, "Chip-chip-chip!" which the children said sounded like "Catch me if you can!"

When they hid themselves in the hole under the oak tree, Ruth would call out,

“Tit, Tit, come out of your hole,
Or else we’ll beat you as black as a coal ;”

and Amy would say,

“You dear little mouse,
Come out of your house.”

But Trotty and Tiny only crept closer, till the children got tired waiting for them and went away. Yet I think it was almost as much fun to the chipmunks as it was to the children, for they always came back and seemed to like playing hide-and-seek with the two little girls.

One day towards the end of summer, Tat and Tit told Tiny they were going away for some time and might not return till near winter, but they would help Trotty and her to get in the stores before they went.

So they all set to work and soon had everything settled nicely for the young ones, and were very pleased to add to their store the good things that Ruth and Amy threw out for them.

It was not very long after Tat and Tit left them that their little friends Ruth and Amy went away with their father and mother.

They said many good-byes to the chipmunks, and though I am not very sure that they understood all the kind things the children said, they took the good things they gave them as a farewell feast.

“Good-bye, Trotty; good-bye, Tiny,” they said, “we are sorry to leave you, but we are coming back next year, and we hope you will be here too.”

I think the squirrels were sorry when the steamboat came and took the children away, but they were so busy getting ready for the winter themselves that they had not time to miss them very much.

Time passed quickly, and when the snow and frost came, Trotty and Tiny were snug and warm in their nest, cuddling down for the long winter's sleep.

When Ruth and Amy come again next July, they will probably find their pets grown much bigger and as ready to pick up the bits of bread and sweet cake as they were when they bade them good-bye.

Dame Partlett and Mrs. Dorking.

“GOOD DAY to you, neighbour Dorking,” said a black and white speckled hen, as she poked her head out through the partition which divided her nest from her friend’s, the pretty white English-bred hen, who was sitting very steadily upon a nest of thirteen fine eggs.

“Good morning, ma’am,” replied the little white hen to Mrs. Partlett.

“The weather seems to me to be getting very warm,” continued the latter; “I am sure I must have sat twenty-one full days on my eggs, and yet not a cheep do I hear, nor a sign of a crack can I see on any one of them.”

“Well, my friend, I was just making the same remark to myself,” said the Dorking. “What the

reason can be that my chicks are so lazy, I do not know, for I am sure it is full time for them to be out."

"I really think you must have made a mistake about the day Dame Darby made up our nests and put those eggs under us. It is three weeks past, I am sure."

"Yes," said Mrs. Dorking, "for I know she said if we had luck these chickens would be out on the first day of June, and I am a good one for counting."

"Oh, my dear, I know it has been said, 'that little English hen is good at counting her chickens before they are hatched,' ha! ha! ha!" laughed Mrs. Partlett. "Now do not ruffle up your feathers and take offence at an old friend. Your comb has got quite red, I declare. You see I am a regular old wife, and like to have my joke sometimes."

But Mrs. Dorking rather stood on her dignity among the native-bred poultry, and said curtly :

"I dislike jokes, as I never can see any wit in vulgar sayings," then buried her head in the white feathers of her breast and took no further notice of Mrs. Partlett.

Both hens turned over their eggs, counting them, and finding none broken or addled, settled themselves down comfortably to attend to their duty.

Several days went by, and at last Mrs. Dorking

called out, "My eggs are chipping, and I can hear such a bustle among the chicks. I am sure they will be large ones and strong, too."

"I wish you luck, neighbour, with your brood," answered Mrs. Partlett, heartily. "Mine are all out."

"Big ones?"

"I guess they are!"

So there was great calling and cackling in the hen-house that day over the new broods. The old rooster, hearing all the fuss, strutted in and stood on the threshold, staring in rather a disdainful way at the two motherly hens; but when he caught sight of the newly hatched families, he raised his wings, stretched out his neck, uttered a shrill crow, loud enough to be heard all over the farm-yard, and then stalked away without so much as a kind word to Mrs. Partlett or her friend.

Mrs. Dorking was disgusted at his rudeness and said, "Well, indeed! Did you ever!" She could not utter another word, she felt so angry.

"Well, my dear," said Mrs. Partlett, "I really do not know what to make of my old husband to-day. He just gave one look at one of my chicks, and if you could have seen the face he made, you would have been surprised. Poor little innocents! I do believe," she whispered, "the old fellow is jealous."

Then the two mothers gathered their chickens under their breasts and cuddled them to sleep; they at any rate, felt very proud of them.

The next morning Mrs. Darby came, and filling her apron with the fledglings, she carried them and the hens into a nice green yard, where she put them into latticed coops, one at either end of the enclosure which was fenced round with boards about a foot high. In the middle she placed two large shallow pans, one with water in it and the other with milk, curds and bran. Then she scattered some grain outside of the coops for the hens and left them.

The two mothers were very glad to find themselves and their broods so well cared for, yet they could not feel quite happy. There was something very odd about these chicks that puzzled the mothers a good deal, and also gave them some trouble.

In the first place, the old rooster and two young ones, with all the hens in the farm-yard, would come and crane their necks over the low board fence, stare at the little flock of yellow downy things, and make remarks, such as:

“Did you ever see such odd-looking creatures? Such big splay-feet!”

“Yes, and see how awkward they are waddling about and tumbling over every tiny stone or getting tangled and upset by the long grass.”

“What heavy long bodies, and just look at their heads, and the little squinting eyes!”

“And the broad yellow beaks. Oh, my! what a set of frights!”

“Well, I pity their mothers,” said another amiable old hen; “they will have any amount of trouble in managing those queer children. They are not a bit like mine, and I have brought up half a dozen broods in my day that have done me credit.”

“And look there at the dirty creatures, all dabbling at once in the water and throwing the nice food about in such way as I never saw before,” said another.

It was in vain that Mrs. Dorking and Mrs. Partlett clucked and called to the broods to come to them. They only cried out “*Eedle! eedle! eedle!*” and went on dabbling in the dirty water or gobbling in the pan of food till they were not fit to be seen.

“What shall we do with these unruly creatures?” asked Mrs. Dorking in despair.

“I’m sure I don’t know,” replied Mrs. Partlett, “it beats all I ever saw, and I really think they must be idiots.”

“Do you think that we sat too long on the eggs before they were hatched? I am not sure, but I think it must have been four weeks instead of three, and perhaps that may have turned their brains.”

Just then old Mrs. Gray, the wisest goose in the yard, came by with her family of half-grown goslings. She nodded good-naturedly to the two hens as they stood sorrowfully discussing the odd behaviour of their families. Indeed, not the least of their trouble was that neither knew which belonged to her, and the chicks never seemed to know their own mother.

“What is the matter, my friends?” asked Mrs. Gray; “you both look rather put out.”

Mrs. Partlett, who was the readier speaker, made haste to tell the whole story of their trouble and anxiety. Mrs. Gray listened very patiently, and turning her head espied the unruly subjects of the complaint.

“Why, my friends,” she exclaimed, “surely you ought to know that those are not chickens, but ducklings.”

“Ducklings! Ducklings!” screamed the two hens in a breath; “you do not say so, Mrs. Gray.”

“Well, ladies, they are nothing more nor less, and I ought to know my own relations, for the geese and the ducks are cousins,” replied Mrs. Gray, as she stretched out her long neck to take a nearer view of them as they rushed into a pool of rain-water and began dabbling and swimming about in it.

“And a very fine set of little duckies they are,” added Mrs. Gray as she walked off, leaving the poor hens to make the best of their bad bargain. Poor things, they did not know what to do with them or how they should be brought up, all their past experience and knowledge having been of the education of chickens, not ducks.

However, they did not like to forsake them without a trial, and would have been good nurses, but the ungrateful things never would come when they were called, or eat the hard grain or other dainties the hens scratched up for them; and instead of all gathering under the wings and warm breasts of their mothers, they just huddled together in a heap among the wet grass. Indeed, they soon grew so big that not more than one or two could have found room under the feathers of their anxious nurses.

One day the stronger of the flock contrived to get over the low fence and set off as fast as they could to a pond in the near neighbourhood. There they splashed about, diving and swimming and enjoying themselves in spite of the great distress of the two foster-mothers, who called and clucked and screamed to warn them of the danger they were in. I am sorry to say these ducklings only answered: “Old ladies, mind your own business and teach your own chickens to keep out of water. *Quack! Quack! Quack!*”

Mrs. Margery Pie; or, Prating
Punished.

“GOOD EVENING to you, neighbours,” said a pert Magpie, as she hopped on the projecting arm of an old oak tree whose boughs overhung the ruined wall of the church-yard. Below her perch a Crow and a Raven were holding friendly converse while they picked the flesh from a sheep bone by way of supper.

They were too busily engaged to notice Mag's familiar salutation until she repeated it in a louder key, adding as she cast her eye with rather a scornful expression on their homely fare, “You seem to have a good appetite for your supper, my friends. I must say, for my own part, that my stomach is rather too delicate to relish such coarse food as seems to satisfy you. I have just made my evening repast

from the breast and wings of a young duckling. She had strayed rather late from her mother when searching for slugs and worms among the grass by yonder pond. I soon put a stop to her frolics, and swallowed two partridge eggs by way of sauce."

"How I dislike the company of that vain and foolish bird," said Mrs. Corby, the crow, aside to her companion.

"Her affectation and ridiculous boasting rather amuse than annoy me," replied Mr. Croaker, the raven, in an undertone. Raising his head as he finished speaking, he returned the magpie's remark by a slight nod, and she being in a gossiping humour needed no further encouragement to continue prating.

"Really, my dear friends," she said, "although I have but recently partaken of greater dainties, I fear I must appear very unsociable sitting up here on this wall by myself while you are enjoying your supper together. I dislike formality, so by your leave I will step down and pick a morsel with you, just for company's sake.

The crow begged she would use no ceremony, and without waiting for a second invitation Mrs. Mag hopped down and placed herself by Mrs. Corby, who very politely made way for her better accommodation.

"I hope you will find our meat good, Mrs. Margery

Pie," observed Croaker, slyly casting a sidelong glance at his companion." "To be sure, it cannot boast of the delicate flavouring of your young duckling, nor the richness of partridge eggs, but to such as it is you are heartily welcome."

"Pleasant society often sweetens the driest of meat," replied Mrs. Margery, condescendingly, but it was quite evident to the crow and the raven from the way she pecked at the sheep bone that she had scarcely broken her fast since noon, and that the duckling and eggs were but an imaginary repast.

Having satisfied their hunger, and slaked their thirst at a neighbouring brook, they repaired to the hollow ash tree, where they chatted for some time upon various interesting subjects, such as the backwardness of the season, the prospects of a wet harvest, and the probability of carrion becoming plentiful in consequence of a disease which had recently broken out in Farmer Haylock's flock.

Mag, who loved talking too well to be long a patient listener, soon grew tired of hearing Mr. Croaker holding forth on such grave topics. Seizing the first opportunity of a pause in the conversation, she changed the subject by inquiring with much apparent interest after his infant family of ravens.

Being duly satisfied that they were in excellent

health, she turned to her neighbour Crow and said pertly :

“As for your young folks, Mrs. Corby, I hardly need ask how they are, for they were very noisy about an hour ago.”

“Indeed, Mrs. Pie,” returned the crow, “I hope they were not quarrelling with one another.”

“Oh, dear, no, I dare say not,” replied Mag. “I suppose it was only their violent spirits. I passed your nest this afternoon, and, as I like to be neighbourly, I just looked in to give you and your partner a call. You were abroad somewhere, and I was quite grieved to see the disorderly behaviour of your crowlets. They were all cawing at once; it was impossible to push in a single word. Not an answer could I get, and the rude things made such a din with their cawing and flapping that in pity to my ears I was fain to fly off.”

“Really, Mrs. Mag,” replied the old crow, as she tried to look concerned, “I must apologize for my young folks. They have seen very little of the world, and the silly little things have such an aversion to strangers that they will never answer any questions that are put to them by anyone they do not know well. I hope, Mrs. Pie, you will excuse them on account of their youth.”

"Say no more, my good friend, say no more; I freely forgive them," answered Mag, with a grand air of condescension. "I dare say they will learn better manners in time. I merely mention the matter thinking it may suggest some useful hints for the education of your family. I must confess, though, I felt rather surprised that a bird of your well-known sagacity should not have been more particular in the early training of your crowlets. You should have visited me a year ago, and have seen how I managed my little pielets. They were, indeed, very clever birds."

The crow was about to assure Mrs. Mag that she knew how to bring up a family without coming to her for instruction, but the prating bird gave her no chance, allowing her no time to speak.

"Now we are on the subject of improvement," she went on, "let me ask you, my dear Mrs. Corby, to take a little more pains in the building of your nest. It gives me great uneasiness to observe the slovenly manner in which you and your relations build your dwellings—a few dried sticks just carelessly heaped together, with hardly a feather or a piece of wool to make them soft and comfortable. I would strongly advise you to take pattern from mine."

"Friend Mag," replied the old crow, with quiet

dignity, "you are extremely kind to take so much interest in me and my affairs. Rough and rude as my nest may appear to you, it possesses every convenience and comfort necessary for the crowlets. More I do not desire. This is the third brood I have brought up in that very nest, and not an accident has happened to any of them; nor have I addled one egg this season, wet and cold as it has been."

"Ah, my good neighbour, all this may be very true," replied Mag, with a significant nod, "but surely there is no reason why you should disdain to alter the style of your building for the better. If you could but hear the spiteful remarks that are made by your neighbours, you would feel so mortified that you would not leave one stick lying across another."

"There you are quite mistaken," replied the crow, "for I never pay the slightest attention to the idle tittle-tattle and gossiping of a country place like this. It is only a pity that my neighbours do not stay at home and mind their own business instead of troubling themselves with mine."

"Of all things in the world I hate gossiping and gossipers the most," observed Mr. Croaker, "and I do believe that half the weak and sickly families one meets with among the magpies and daws is due to their being neglected in the nest by their mothers,

who leave them too long at a time while they are abroad collecting the news and scandal of the neighbouring nests."

This speech was so pointedly aimed at Mag that she felt somewhat fluttered, but deeming it unwise to fit the cap to herself, she affected unconcern by pretending to dress her breast feathers, then resumed the conversation by inviting Mr. Croaker and Mrs. Corby to come home and spend the evening with her in a friendly way.

"My nest," said she, "is a pattern of neatness, strength and comfort, and I may say without vanity it is the best built, the warmest, the softest and most agreeably situated of any nest in the country, far or near, let the next be where it may."

"You seem to have a very good opinion of your own abilities, Mrs. Pie," observed Croaker, "but I have heard that self-praise is no recommendation."

"I am sure, when you see my home," replied Mag, nothing abashed, "you will be obliged to own I have not said half enough of its merits. It is built in a warm niche, just under the arch of a ruined window in yonder ivied tower, and in it there are two of the most beautiful eggs you have ever seen. Do fly over with me and peep in at them. I assure you it will be quite a treat.

Mr. Croaker excused himself, saying he had to go and chant a funeral elegy over the body of a young friend, Master Jacky Daw, who had fallen from the nest and broken his neck. His death had been a great shock to his parents, who had been absent at the time attending the wedding of Mr. and Mrs. Jay. The funeral was to take place in about an hour, consequently he could not possibly accept her invitation.

Mrs. Corby also declined on the plea that she had already been away from her nest long enough, and without waiting for any further farewell, flew away in great haste.

"Well, I must be going too," said Mag, slowly, "or Mr. Pie will make a fine chattering at me for staying out so late, and I dare say my eggs will be getting cold."

"That is past a doubt, I should imagine," said Mr. Croaker; "they must be as chill as yonder tombstones by this time, and most likely will be all addled and come to nothing."

"Absurd! You ravens were always reckoned birds of ill-omen," cried Mag, "and you are enough to make anyone melancholy by your gloomy forebodings. Why, the church clock has not struck seven yet; at least, I have not heard it."

"That is not much to be wondered at," said Croaker,

“since you have prated so incessantly that you could not have heard it if it had struck twenty times over. But let me tell you, it must be late, for I have heard the beetle winding his horn this hour or more, and the nightingales are singing in the hedge over there. You know they never begin till the other birds are abed. It must be eight o'clock or more.”

“Bless me, friend Croaker, you don't say so!” exclaimed Mag in a fright, now thoroughly roused to a knowledge of the lateness of the hour. “Well, I must be gone, that is certain,” and away she flew, chattering to herself as she went for want of a better listener.

Just as Mag came within a short distance of her nest she was accosted by Mrs. Leatherwings, the bat. Mrs. Leatherwings was a near neighbour, dwelling in the same old tower as the magpies.

“Oh, Mistress Pie!” she cried out as she met her on the wing, “I am so glad to find you. I have been flitting about for the last half-hour in search of you, but I am sorry to be the bearer of unpleasant tidings.”

“No accident happened to Mr. Pie, I hope?” said Mag, anxiously, as she paused in her flight.

“Not that I know of,” replied Mrs. Leatherwings, “but he has been home several times to look for you, and I warrant will be cross enough when he finds you.”

“As for that I can always out-chatter him,” answered Mag, scornfully; “but pray, neighbour Leatherwings, tell me what is the matter.”

“Matter enough; at least, I should think so if it were my case,” answered the bat, shaking her head. “You must know then, Mistress Pie, that as I was clinging to the wall waiting for the twilight, I heard the waving of heavy wings close to me. Turning my head I saw a strange bird of monstrous size coming into the tower. He flew round and round the walls, and once passed so near to me that I was forced to stick my claws into the ivy and hold on with all my strength, or I must have been swept down by his great wings. At last he darted through the window straight into your nest. The first mischief he did was to kick out your two beautiful eggs. I saw them with my own eyes shiver to pieces on the ground below; so, says I to myself, ‘Mistress Margery Pie, this comes of keeping such unreasonable hours as you do.’”

“I do not understand what you mean, Mrs. Leatherwings,” retorted Mag.

“Are you not on the wing from four in the morning till nearly nine at night? Oh, Mistress Margery! Mistress Margery Pie! Why will you not follow our example and keep better hours, stay at home more,

and then such misfortune as this would not befall you."

"Prythee, neighbour Leatherwings, spare your counsel," said Mag, who, though fond of giving it, never liked to be offered advice. "Have I not trouble enough, but you must make matters worse by your ill-natured remarks. I dare say after all this is only some doleful tale you have hatched up to alarm me. I will hurry home and learn how much truth there is in it," and turning abruptly she nearly brushed down Mrs. Leatherwings in her haste.

The bat's tidings were only too true. The first object that met Mag's sight as she reached the tower was the wreck of her two beautiful eggs. They were lying broken in a hundred pieces on the cold stones.

"Alas! Alas!" she cried, "my eggs, my dear unhatched eggs! They have been murdered by some wicked bird! Would that I had been wise and returned to my nest while it was yet daylight!"

"In good truth, Mistress Margery Pie, you would have shown your wisdom by so doing," screeched a harsh voice from among the ivy. Looking up, Mag saw a great long-eared, tawny-breasted owl regarding her with a pair of piercing black eyes. Mag smoothed her ruffled feathers and meekly requested the intruder to leave her nest as she wished to retire for the night,

adding that she expected her husband would be home at any moment and cross if he found all was not ready for his reception.

The owl declared that he made a point of never changing his lodgings when he found them to his liking.

“And really, Mrs. Margery,” he went on, “I never in my life met with so nice a place as this. I did not expect to find it nearly so pleasant, for I know how apt most people are to overrate their own handiwork. Positively you only did yourself justice when you extolled your nest to your neighbours Corby and Croaker. I heard your conversation on the subject as I sat on the church steeple, and being in want of a new house I thought from the account you gave of yours that it would just suit me. I flew off directly to look at it, and I assure you, Mrs. Pie, I am quite charmed with it in every way. The situation you have chosen is romantic and agrees with my tastes; I am delighted with the way you have lined the inside of the nest, and admire the skill displayed in its construction. It has but one fault, and that is scarcely worth mentioning. It is not quite so large as I could wish, but in all other respects it suits me almost as well as though it had been made for me. So albeit I may feel a little crowded I am willing to put up with

that inconvenience. In this world, Mrs. Pie, we cannot expect to have things perfect in every particular, and I am always ready to make the best of them and take the bitter with the sweet."

The coolness with which the owl made this long speech so enraged Mag that, losing all patience, she hopped about in a great passion, feeling ready to choke with anger.

"Let me tell you, sir," she said, as soon as she could speak, "that it is a very unjust and dishonest proceeding on your part, and I thought you were a bird of better principle than to murder my eggs, take possession of my house, and then refuse me, the rightful owner, admittance."

"For the matter of that, Mrs. Margery Pie," replied the owl, setting up his long ears, "let me tell you I am the rightful owner of this nest; it is my lawful property. It is well known that birds of the higher order have a claim on all old towers, ruined castles, churches, barns, outhouses or any other deserted dwellings, not to mention hollow trees, holes in rocks, and such sort of places. And now I remember this very tower was left me by my grandfather when I was but an owlet, and as I find the situation promises to be healthy and pleasant I shall spend most of my time here.

“However,” he went on before poor Mag could find words to express her indignation, “as I do not like to be ill-natured I will allow you to build another nest for yourself on my manor, if you do not place it too close to mine. Your vain chattering might disturb my thoughts if we were to become very near neighbours. There is a nook in the broken archway that might suit you, and should your new house prove more commodious than this I could remove to it and give up this, as you seem to have an affection for it. If you were orderly tenants I should call upon you once in a while as an encouragement.”

“You hateful bird!” shrieked Mag, as the owl finished his insolent speech. “Who do you suppose would waste their time building houses for you to live in? For my part, I would not soil a feather by entering my nest after you had set your foot in it, and as for your company, pray make no favour of that, for I think those are best off who are farthest from you, you disagreeable creature!”

“Come, come, good Mrs. Margery!” cried the owl, sharply, showing his claws over the side of the nest, “it would be well for you to keep a civil tongue in your head or you may chance to receive a little wholesome correction that will teach you to mend your manners. Go, foolish bird,” he added in a more solemn

voice, "and let this lesson teach you wisdom for the time to come. Had you stayed at home and minded your own business, instead of flying from place to place gossiping about your neighbours, prating and boasting of your own merits, your eggs would have remained unbroken and yourself still in quiet enjoyment of your house, as I should not have known that it was built in my domain. Let me tell you, Mrs. Mag, that a lowly cot, though ever so meanly built, where the mistress is wise and prudent, is far better than a lofty palace that is badly governed."

With these words the bird of wisdom withdrew into the magpie's nest, and burying his sharp beak among the downy feathers of his breast, settled himself for a comfortable nap.

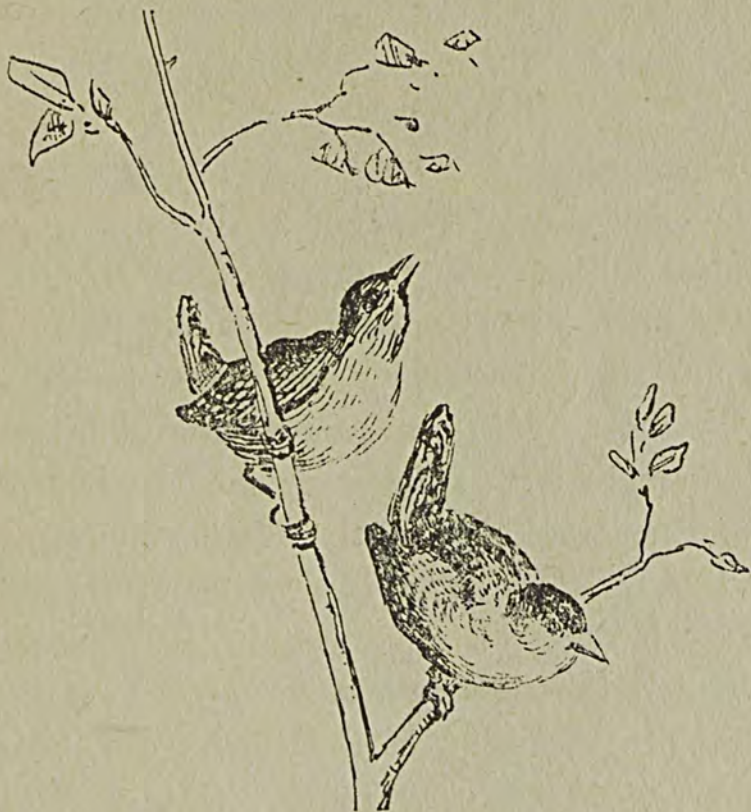
Poor Mag turned away, humbled and mortified, to seek a new home and lament over the misfortunes she had brought upon herself and her family by her foolish vanity and idle, gossiping habits.

The Wrens of "Westove."

It was about the middle of the month of May, on a fine, sunny, breezy morning, that a pair of little brown birds, looking somewhat weary and travel-worn from their flight over the big Lake Ontario, crossed the rapid Otonabee river near the village of Lakefield, and flew to the veranda of a small cottage not far from its shores, surrounded by a shady grove of maple and beech trees.

The travellers settled themselves at once in a snug corner under the overhanging roof. They were quite at home. In this spot they had nested and hatched their young families of wrens for several preceding summers, and though the little pair were growing old they did not forget their summer home, but duly came back to it every year.

What led these little birds back year after year to the same place? No man, however wise, can tell you. Neither can I, otherwise than that the great and wise God had so ordered it, and the wild birds obey the law of nature that He has given to them.



Our little pair of wrens did not begin to build at once. No doubt they were very tired and must rest and look for food the first thing. They flew down through the grove to the river, and soon found some worms and newly hatched water-flies; then

back to the bough of the white-barked birch tree that grew on the grass plot close to the house, there to pour out their joy in song. Clear, sweet and cheering the notes sounded as they sat on the light swaying sprays among the dancing catkins and new leaves of the birch tree. It was holiday time with the little pair, and for several days they courted and caressed each other, chatting away in their bird language, no doubt making plans for the future.

The robins had arrived, and were waiting for the coming of their wives from the other side of the water, having all in readiness to receive them. The dear little yellow-hammers, too, were beginning to build in the shrubbery, and the wrens, being sensible birds, thought it was time they should get to work also. They were tired of their frolic, and it would never do for them to be idle while all the others were so busy.

The first thing Jenny Wren did was to clear out the rubbish and cobwebs that had accumulated in the old nesting corner. To her great disgust she found that a phœbe had taken possession of it, and as she had always considered she had a vested right in that particular corner, Jenny was very angry at being thus supplanted by Mrs. Phœbe, the fly-catcher.

“Such a poor, miserable, untidy housekeeper as she

is, too!" cried Jenny. "Just look at the sort of nest she is building! I declare, it is made of all kinds of rubbish—straws and sticks, mixed up with dead leaves, moss and mud—the dirty thing! I hope the mistress will sweep it all down with the broom."

"Now, wife," chirped the good husband, trying to soothe and cheer his angry little mate, "never mind old Phœbe; no one expects anything tidy or neat in what she builds. She knows, I expect, what suits her and her partner and the young Phœbes."

But Jenny would not listen to a word of excuse for her untidy neighbour. "Just see what a waste of time and materials! Here are two or three nests, such as they are, that she has begun, and not one finished or fit to be looked at."

Jenny did not see the sly glance of her partner's bright eye as he said:

"Now, Jenny dear, look to home. You see our nests are by no means models contrasted with the yellow-bird's and black-cap's and the little humming-bird's."

"Oh, yes, indeed," retorted Jenny, with a flirt of her fan-like tail, "the humming-bird's! A tiny mite of a nest—you can seldom even see it—and the eggs not bigger than peas!" She forgot how small her own eggs were, but Jenny was a pettish little

creature when she was crossed and out of humour, as she was that day with Phœbe. She was very like little people who, when they are angry, are apt to lay cross things to anything or anybody.

After grumbling awhile she calmed down and appeared to heed her husband's advice to look out another corner, and presently sent him off to get a May-fly or some other dainty of the like kind for their supper.

Away he flew, gladly leaving her hard at work under the roof of the veranda at the opposite corner to their old abode. The change was not all for the worse either, for Mrs. Jenny found a good store of food in the new place, a lot of eggs in a white silken bag which some spider had laid up, as he thought, safely; but hungry birds are not altogether honest, and our little wren made a good meal on what she discovered, yet was ready to share the body of a shad-fly her thrifty partner brought from the river.

Their hunger satisfied, and the question of the spot for their nest being settled, our little wrens nestled down side by side, tucked their wee brown heads under their wings, and slept as soundly as wrens do sleep till they are roused by the crowing of the cocks in the village over the river.

Up at the earliest dawn, they were soon at work gathering tiny birch twigs and other small matters to lay the foundation of their nest. They were not very long housebuilding; the work went on bravely, and the nest was finished ready for Jenny to take possession of it the following day.

Blithe and joyful were the songs of the pair when the first wee white egg was seen in the nest. As to Mrs. Jenny, she was altogether too proud of her treasure, and when the phœbe, her neighbour, came to finish one of her ill-made nests, she was called upon to admire Jenny's lovely white egg.

"Dear me!" said Phœbe, as she whisked her long tail feathers to one side and peered into the nest, "is that all you are making such a bray about? I do not see any such wonderful thing in that mite of an egg. I will show you five or six of mine, larger and with nice little lines and spots on them."

Jenny felt dreadfully hurt at this speech, and never spoke of her eggs again to the rude phœbe.

For about two weeks our motherly little bird sat over her eggs. I do not think, unless at night, that the father-bird did anything in the way of tending the eggs, but he took good care of his wife. He brought her food all day long while she was brooding over the nest, and, sitting on the tree close

beside her, he sang his sweetest songs of love to cheer her.

Great was his pride and delight when one by one Jenny showed him the four little fledglings in the nest. No doubt both father and mother thought their young birds were beauties, although they were not like downy chickens, or ducklings, or goslings, and it was beautiful to see the loving care they took of them.

All day long the old birds were on the wing seeking the sort of food the young ones needed. This they had no difficulty in finding. There was no lack of insect food, for the three-oared May-flies and shad-flies were plentiful. The slender blue dragon-flies, too, had risen from their water-beds at the bottom of the lake and the river, and leaving their worn-out gauzy dresses on bush or flower would rise and dance reels and waltzes in the sunshine until they were caught by the birds who fed upon them. A short and happy life, while it lasts, have these beautiful creatures. Such is His will who has thus made them to enjoy the brief time He has given them here.

The wrens were a most happy family, full of life and gaiety. The parent birds were loving and kind to their little ones, and taught them to be kind to one another. They coaxed them out of the nest on

the branches, and taught them to fly, taking them longer distances each day until their wings were strong and they were able to take care of themselves; and before long they would be able to sing their bright, joyous songs and help to fill the woods with music. They had plenty to eat, and they spent the days very happily flitting about among the flowers in the garden round the cottage, or in the leafy shade of the maple and birch trees in the grove beyond.

One day, late in August, the old birds went away. They gave no warning of their intended departure, not even saying good-bye to their children, Brownie, Flossie and Flutter, but silently and secretly left their old nest in the veranda at "Westove." Whether they died or flew away over the great lake or the rapid River Niagara, in search of a warmer, sunnier climate to spend the winter in, I do not know, but I never saw them again, and the young birds were left to take care of themselves.

The family had been reduced to three. The youngest, Fan, was not quick enough to fly out of the reach of a wicked old tabby cat, who pounced upon her and carried her off to make a dainty titbit for her hungry kittens, as well as providing a lesson in cat education, her plan being to cultivate in her young a taste for the finer delicacies of life in order to en-

courage an ability to possess themselves of them. The others missed Fan very much at first, but were so busy and full of life that they soon grew used to being without her.

For awhile they managed to get on, but soon the sources of food became less plentiful. The May-flies had been gone a long time, and spiders were getting scarce. A change was going on everywhere and in everything around them; the swallows of all kinds, the swifts, the white-breasted martins, the bank and the chimney swallows, had been gathering in large flocks as if preparing for flight, and strengthening their wings by practice for a long journey. The robins, too, were now more seldom seen prancing about boldly near the houses and gardens. The blackbirds were going off in numbers, and there were only the bluejays still coming to the orchards and chattering over the fruit left on the trees. The golden-winged flickers, who belong to the Woodpecker family, were still to be seen, but our young wrens felt they must be guided by the example of the dear little canaries and the tiny warblers, who had come like their father and mother, and were now preparing to seek a warmer climate before the dreary days and cold winds appeared.

September is a busy month with all the migratory

birds, as well as with some of the wild animals. The birds must make ready to fly, and be strong and well for their long hours on the wing when they have no place to light and rest upon. The wild creatures, foxes, muskrats, woodchucks, and the black, red, grey and ground squirrels, are all hard at work gathering and storing their winter supplies of nuts, acorns, corn, seeds and roots, or burrowing their holes and making them comfortable lodgings for the long days of frost and snow.

Our little wrens found themselves as busy as any of the other birds, especially now that they were thrown entirely upon their own resources, and had to rely upon their own judgment and follow in perfect obedience the laws set down for them by their great All-wise Creator, and by which He governs His children and guides them safely to the haven where they would be.

So it was not very long after their parents' departure that Brownie, Flutter and Flossie made up their minds to go away from Canada and pay a visit to their relations in the United States, on the other side of Lake Ontario, just as their father and mother had done year after year.

Flutter was in a state of great excitement at the prospect of such a fine holiday, with its opportunity

of seeing the world. He said he meant to go first to see his rich cousins, the Goldcrests, but Flossie and Brownie were undecided whether it might not be better to go south at once to their grand Carolina relations.

They parted one fine September day and never met again. I cannot tell you anything more about Flutter, but if you will turn over to the next page you may read what happened to Brownie and Flossie during their travels.

Rich Relations and Poor Ones.

HOW OUR CANADIAN WRENS FARED AMONG THEIR SOUTHERN COUSINS.

BROWNIE AND FLOSSIE had heard such good reports of the hospitality of their cousins, the gold-crested wrens, and of the grandeur of the wrens of Carolina, that they made no longer tarrying than they could help in crossing the Niagara River over to the neighbouring State of New York, and thence to the genial State of Pennsylvania. There they fell in with a party of bluebirds with whom they had been intimate during the summer. These were very glad to see them, and invited them to stay awhile and rest after their long flight over the country. The weather was soft and pleasant, and our little travellers enjoyed the society of their old friends, who said they would

be sure to receive a warm welcome from Squire Regulus and the rest of their rich cousins.

This was very cheering, and after getting some directions from the kind bluebirds, they again started on their travels.

Flossie wanted to learn why their cousin was called by such a fine name and title.

"Some call him 'King of the Wrens,' and you see he carries a gold crown on his little head to show his title and dignity."

"Oh, does wearing a crown make a king?" asked simple Flossie. "I wish Brownie had a gold crest on his head."

But Brownie only remarked, "'Handsome is that handsome does.' I do not think that a yellow cap would become a plain brown suit such as mine is."

Flossie, however, had her own notions. She liked gay feathers and flowers, but she said no more. Brownie had not the least fear of not meeting with respect, though he did not wear a gold plume on his little brown head.

It was not long before he and Flossie presented themselves at the bower of "Rosedale," where the family of Squire Goldcrest had a charming home. Situated under the shade of a magnolia in full bloom, it was indeed a lovely bowery spot, full of

sweet scents from the blossoms of the trees, and glorious with colour from the flowers in the garden that surrounded it.

A burst of song from a party of young goldcrests had attracted Brownie to the spot. He introduced himself and Flossie as Canadian cousins, who had come from the north side of Lake Ontario to pay their respects to Squire Goldcrest and his family.

Brownie was not ashamed of his birthplace and breeding. Indeed he was proud of having been hatched under the British flag. He knew its colours well, as it had often waved over the nest on the veranda of "Westove."

The Goldcrests are well-bred and courteous, although perhaps a little too proud of the family distinction, the crest they carry on their small heads. This family expressed their pleasure at seeing their small cousins, and invited them to help themselves to whatever insect food was in season.

Mrs. Goldcrest pointed out an apple-tree near by, and bade Flossie make herself at home.

This was all very pleasant, and you may be sure the weary little birds were greatly delighted at their reception.

The orange grove seemed very much better than their old home in Ontario, and they felt they were

fortunate in having fallen into such good quarters, so gave themselves up to enjoy the pleasures that surrounded them.

Flossie greatly admired the elegance of her relatives' dress and manners, the beautiful silky olive tints were so much prettier than the coffee-brown shade of her own plain dress, and she soon began to feel unhappy because she had no fine ornaments or bright-tinted feathers.

It was not long, either, before she heard sundry remarks about the shabbiness of her and Brownie's brown coats, and their want of stylish manners and musical taste.

When she whispered her grievances to Brownie he only replied, "Never mind, Flossie, our brown suits are good enough for us. What do clothes matter, anyway?"

But when Flossie told him that they spoke of them as "poor beggarly Canadian emigrants," he got very indignant, and a coolness was soon evident between them and their hosts.

Our little birds were not at all happy, and as time passed on it became evident to them that they had out-staid their welcome, so they resolved to make their farewells and go off to Carolina to see their big cousins there.

This resolution was received with approval by the Goldcrests, who were indeed getting a little tired of their company and quite ready to speed their parting. When bidding Squire Goldcrest good-bye, he wished them a safe journey, and added haughtily that "he hoped they would meet with a warmer welcome and better treatment than the Goldcrests had given them; but the Carolinas were a proud set, always asserting their claims to being superior to the Goldcrests because they were so much bigger, and their country richer and hotter than the one we live in. They wish every wren to bow down to them, but we Goldcrests will do nothing of the kind. Possibly you poor Canadians may."

This speech made Flossie rather nervous at the thought of encountering the grand Carolinas; but Brownie thought there might be a little jealousy to prompt the Goldcrest's remark, and that after all, though bigger, the Carolina cousins might be really kinder than the purse-proud gold-crested wrens.

Nevertheless, after such a character given them of the Carolina cousins, they felt more or less timid and shy about introducing themselves to such grand folks, and were really surprised at the hearty welcome they received at their hands.

The grand head of the family was so gracious and kind that he soon put them at their ease. He only

joked them in a good-natured way about their size, and called them "wee fellows, perfect pickaninnies."

"Little and good I hope you will find us, my great cousin," replied Brownie, merrily and in happy content. Indeed, Brownie did not think size was of much importance, or that his being little and brown mattered much; he was happy and well, had plenty to eat, and was grateful for all the kindness they were receiving from the big cousins who made no ill-natured remarks about their brown coats.

The little wrens were certainly having a very good time; the weather was warm and sunny, flies and spiders were plentiful; there were the tenderest of worms for the finding, many insects hidden in the fruit and flowers, and they were at liberty to help themselves. It was little wonder that they grew fat and thriving.

The only drawback to perfect happiness was the fear of strange birds, snakes and prowling animals. The paroquets, too, often scared them with their loud discordant cries and chattering voices, calling out, "Who are you? Who are you?" a question which appeared very rude to our Canadian birds.

However, they seldom ventured very far from their nest, or away from their hospitable southern friends the Carolinas.

Although it was winter there, it was not cold as in

the winter months in Canada; but as time went on the heat began to be too oppressive, and a longing came over the wrens for cooler shades and fresher air. The home feeling at last got so strong that it made them restless, and they felt that they must hasten back to their old home in Ontario. Nothing now was so sweet to them as a nest under the trees in the grove near the place where they had first seen the light, and where they had been fed and brooded over by the old birds.

They knew there were kind hearts ready to welcome them, and bright eyes that would be watching for their return, so they bade farewell to their kind Carolina cousins, who had treated them so well, and were told they would be glad to see them again another year if they cared to travel south. The Carolinas themselves were going west for change of air, and would also be away for some months.

Our Canadians did not go back through Pennsylvania, so saw nothing more of the Goldcrests. They were in haste to reach the veranda at "Westove" before any intruding phœbe, and once more take possession of their own corner under the roof.

They arrived about the middle of May, and my young readers may find them there in the summer, busy, no doubt, and filling the air with their cheerful songs.

The Little Builders.

It was a soft, sweet summer evening. The wild bees had gone to their nests, the flowers had closed their petals, and the butterflies had folded their beautiful wings and gone to rest. The moths, who love shade better than sunshine, were flitting about enjoying the cool air in the twilight. The white water-lilies, too, had retired to their crystal halls under the waters, and as twilight deepened the fire-flies rose on wing, lighting up the gloom of the darkening forest with their tiny sparks of light, now seen like falling stars, now hidden from sight, as they appeared and disappeared among the thick covert of the pines and cedars.

The fire-fly is often seen high in the air among the loftiest of the forest trees, unlike the lowly English

glow-worm, which is found among the dewy grass in mossy dells and lonely wooded lanes, revealed to the eye by its emerald-tinted light, softer and less brilliant than that of the fire-fly of our Canadian woods.

On the slight leafy branch of a wild red cherry-tree, close beside the cottage on the island of Minnewawa, sat a pair of pretty wood phœbes, very lovingly nestled side by side.

The settlers call this bird "Peewee," from the soft syllables, slowly repeated, which they utter, like *Pee-wee! Pee-wee!* but Phœbe is the name usually given to the little birds.

Their note can hardly be called a song, though doubtless the birds know what it means. If we knew the bird language, we might understand what the phœbes are saying to each other this summer night as they sit so lovingly cuddled together.

It may be only some such word as "darling" or "dearie," but I think I can guess what it is all about, what the wee wife is saying to her mate.

"It is time for us, dearie, to be thinking about making a nest,"—to which he replies with a bright twinkle of his black eye :

"The nights are dry and warm, my darling wife. We need not trouble ourselves about building a house.

If you are cold, just lay your head against my warm breast or under your own wing."

But the wee wife was not thinking about cold that warm June night, or indeed about herself at the time. She whispered a few words in her companion's ear. It was a secret, you see, but he soon guessed it and said gaily :

"All right, Phœbe, my darling, I'll be up in the morning before sunrise and set to work. You shall find what a smart husband you have—not like some of those selfish birds I could name who leave their poor little partners all the work to do, building the nest, and hatching and feeding their broods."

Phœbe was glad to know what a good active partner she had, and I am quite sure that Mr. Phœbe was as good as his word.

Before the dew-drops had dried on the long grass and herbage of the island, our brave little phœbe was hard at work collecting tiny sticks, and hay, and fine dry fibres from the roots of the old plants of former seasons that lay rotting in the soil. Tufts of lovely moss, green and fresh, he picked from the rocks and bark of the trees. Here and there he found a feather that had been dropped by some bird in its flight. Altogether he brought a fine heap of odd materials for his wife to choose from.

At first Mistress Phœbe did not appear to be satisfied with the place chosen by her partner for laying the foundation of the nest. It was rather too public, facing as it did the front door of the house; but as phœbes are known to have a fancy for building in sheds and under the shelter of verandas, and even old bridges and such out-of-the-way places, on second thoughts she did not find fault. She looked with great approval at the heap of stuff he had collected, and with hearty good-will the pretty pair set to work.

The only tools they had to build with were their tiny bills and the sharp claws of their little feet. With these they managed to weave and twist and twine the twigs and sticks and fibre together. The bills took the place of scissors or knives, and with their breasts they contrived to mould, shape and smooth the whole into the proper form for a phœbe's nest.

All the time the little wife was busy making the nest her husband was flying to and fro supplying her with just the very bit she was ready for. Now a twig, then a bit of root-fibre like hair, or strips of basswood to lace the coarser materials together. Again it was a bit of soft moss or grey lichen, or the cast-off cocoon of a caterpillar, which she entwined so cleverly with her deft little bill. He never kept

her waiting a moment, but flew to and fro all the day long, never seeming to weary of helping the busy little weaver.

When night came the work was done, and judging from the appearance of the outside you would have thought it a large house, and that Mrs. Phœbe was making room for six or seven lodgers; but the phœbes seldom lay more than three or four eggs, white, with a few pencil marks at one end, and the deep cup-shaped hollow in the nest, moulded by the little mother's breast, was just the size fitted for the young birds when the eggs were hatched.

For about ten days the mother-bird sat over the eggs, seldom leaving them and only for a few minutes at a time. At night the faithful partner of her cares sat beside his wife, and no doubt the pair had sweet whisperings together about the strange unhatched eggs and the young birds hidden under the delicate shells, for the future comfort and safety of which, though unseen, they had so carefully provided.

Now, there was one other thing these little birds did that I must tell you about. The young birds of their family have no warm down upon them like chickens, nor any feathers at all at first, so the mother and father bird made a lovely silk mat to cover the wee birdies.

The careful father-bird had found the dried stem of the red-flowered swamp milkweed lying withered on the ground. He stripped away the bark and tore off the fine long silken fibres from the plant, and these he carried to his wife, bit by bit. Many journeys it cost him before he had collected enough, then together they heckled and pounded the threads until they became as fine and soft as silk, after which they felted all into a lovely mat. It really was a beautiful piece of work, and I wish my young friends could see it.

But I must hurry on with my story, and tell how the dear phœbes fed and cared for the tiny family when they came out of the shell.

There were but three of them, and they did not look very pretty at first. They were very bare, and seemed to be all mouths as they sat huddled together with their heads just visible over the edge of the nest, and gaping when they saw the old birds coming with a fly.

Mrs. Phœbe was very proud of her fledglings. "Are they not dear beauties?" she would say.

"All right, mammie dear," said her husband, "only their mouths are too large, and are always gaping when they hear me coming."

"Their mouths are no different from those of other

birds. All little birds have big mouths. Ours are not uglier than the sparrows and the yellow-birds, and as to young robins and catbirds! Oh, my! I am sure *our* wee birdies are perfect beauties compared with those young frights."

So Mr. Phœbe said nothing more about the big mouths of the three little ones, but only whispered slyly, "I suppose all geese think their young ones swans."

It was about the middle of July when Gracie and Rosie, with their little brother Georgie, arrived for their annual visit to the island.

The first thing the little girls noticed was the phœbes' nest just over the upper sill of the front entrance to the veranda.

"Those foolish little birds!" cried Gracie. "If they have not built their nest just opposite the glass door! Why, we must pass under it every time we go in or out."

"They must be very sociable and fond of company," laughed Rosie. "You know, they built above the north door last year, and you remember how anxious the poor birds looked whenever we passed under the nest then."

"I think the dear little things must have forgotten all about that," said Gracie, solemnly.

The children watched the birds with much interest, noting the ways of the wood phœbes and their little ones. The parent birds were very shy, and often would wait patiently with a worm ready to drop into the open gaping mouths, till they saw a chance to dart into the veranda and off again like a flash.

One day they seemed to go much more frequently, heedless of the presence of anyone. It was evident that their rapid flights to and from the nest in so unusual a way had some special cause. Rosie thought they had some secret to tell the little birds. Gracie said they must be angry with them and were scolding them, but their mother said, "No, the old birds are teaching the young ones to fly, and you will find the nest empty to-morrow."

And mamma was right; the nest was empty, the birds were flown, and the wood phœbe's "Pee-wee! Pee-wee!" was not heard again that summer from under the veranda at Minnewawa.

The Stolen Voyage.*

“RICHARD, did you ever tell the boys of your first voyage and shipwreck?” asked Mr. Warren, as he laid down the book he had been reading and looked at his brother, a plain middle-aged seaman, whose sunburnt complexion told of years passed under foreign skies.

“No, brother, I have not; there has always been so much else to tell them that I have never thought of it, but I will tell them now if they care to hear it. It may serve as a lesson to the lads.”

Captain Warren, turning his comfortably lined chair to the fire, looked around at the family circle of boys and girls whose attention had been attracted

From an incident that occurred during a gale on the east coast of England in the year 1824.

by their father's question. A story from Uncle Richard was always delightful, and one of seafaring and adventure, as this promised to be, excited additional interest.

“ Well, you know, boys, that your grandmother was left a widow when your father and I were small children. I was very little more than six years old, and your father about five.

“ Your grandmother was left without anything to live on, so she was glad to collect a few things in her house and move to a small cottage which stood on the borders of a wide common, distant about two miles from the fishing village of Southwold, in one of the eastern counties, and a short distance from the sea beach.

“ The little cottage was owned by Uncle Philip, our mother's brother. Uncle Philip was captain and part owner of the *William and Mary*, a small trading vessel which made short voyages to and from Leith and London—sometimes she went as far as the Baltic and other ports as distant.

“ Our uncle let mother have the cottage, rent free, staying with us for a few days at a time when his vessel was in the harbour or undergoing repairs. He was a good-natured, careless sort of a man, acting for the most part rather on the impulse of the moment

than from due reflection; yet he was kind and generous, very good to our dear mother, and fond of us boys. He was always ready to contribute to our enjoyment, and we hailed the season of his visiting the cottage as a time of unrestrained pleasure.

“It was to no purpose that our mother reprovèd us when Uncle Philip was at home; he laughed at all our pranks and justified all our acts of disobedience as faults which reason and time would cure, and in fact, our wildest tricks were no faults in his eyes.

“One of our favourite amusements was going to the great pond on the heath to sail our ‘fleet,’ as we called a collection of little boats which we had carved for ourselves. Once we carried off the washing tub, which caused mother some trouble and delay, and we got a good rating for it. The depth of the pond made mother very uneasy lest any accident should happen to us when we were playing on its slippery banks, and when we went out to play her last words from the open door were often, ‘Be sure, boys, you do not go to the pond.’

“I am sorry to say that we did not always give heed to the warning, but whenever we could elude her watchful eye we were sure to take the path to the scene of this forbidden pleasure.

“I well remember a quarrel that took place be-

tween my poor mother and Uncle Philip on this very subject. She had detected us sailing our boats on the pond—we had soiled and wetted our clothes, and your father had only just recovered from the measles and had a sore throat. My mother was very angry with us both and particularly with me, being the eldest, for leading your father into mischief and danger. She was proceeding to punish me when uncle interfered to prevent it, saying we were but showing our love for the sea betimes.

“‘As to the lads, sister,’ he said, in his off-hand way, ‘they are brave lads, and as soon as they are old enough shall go to sea with me, and depend upon it I will make good seamen of them.’

“At this poor mother fell a-crying, for she did not wish us to be sailors; she said it was a hard life and few sailors were God-fearing men.

“This angered her brother, and he swore that we should go to sea if he liked, and be none the worse men if we did.

“‘Ah, Philip, brother Philip,’ said my mother, ‘when did you ever see the blessing of God fall upon undutiful children? How can you encourage these boys in acts of wilful disobedience to their widowed mother?’

“Uncle Philip said nothing, but he looked hurt

and thoughtful all the rest of the day. He went away the following morning, and my mother never saw him again. I do not think there was any angry feeling between them when they parted. Uncle Philip felt that he had been wrong, and mother saw it, so they parted very affectionately.

“Some months after, on a fine afternoon in the latter end of October, your grandmother sent us out with a basket to gather mushrooms on the heath.

“Having wearied ourselves in gathering the mushrooms, for which we had strolled near to the edge of the heath, where it terminated in the high bank or cliff, below which lay the shingly beach and ever-sounding sea, we sat down on a heathy knoll under the shelter of a clump of holly trees. This was one of our favourite retreats at all seasons of the year. The holly trees grew close to the ground, and being very thick, made a fine shelter from either sun or wind.

“We sat down on the dry ferns and moss, and enjoyed the scene before us. We liked watching the flights of silvery-winged sea-gulls and other sea-birds that flitted over our heads or dropped one by one on the quiet waters of the ‘Broad,’ a sheet of salt water which extended for some distance inland and was a great breeding-place for sea-birds of all kinds.

“‘That looks very much like uncle’s ship, the *William and Mary*,’ said he.

“Uncle Philip had taught us to distinguish one sort of vessel from another, and to know many a one by the trim of its sails, and we knew his old craft as well as if we had seen the figure-head or the painted name below it.

“‘I wonder,’ said your father, ‘if uncle can see us?’

“‘Let us tie this handkerchief to a stick and wave it, and perhaps he will answer,’ I said.

“There was a stick slung through the handle of our basket, and we proceeded at once to carry out the plan. We knew uncle would be on deck looking out for the old cottage on the heath; and sure enough he was, for in a few minutes after the elevation of our flag, a boat was lowered from the ship’s side, and full of glee we watched her steering straight for the beach in a line with the steep path that wound up the side of the cliff. With a shout of delight we ran down to meet her.

“Our loud huzzas were answered by uncle’s familiar ‘Aye, aye,’ as the keel of the boat grated on the shingle.

“‘Well, boys,’ said Uncle Philip, ‘I have just run the boat ashore for five minutes to shake hands with you and say good-bye before the brig sails for New-

castle. We are out for coals this trip. I caught sight of your bit of bunting from the hill, and if you have a mind for a bit of a cruise, why, as you have never been aboard the *William and Mary*, and as it is a promise of long standing, I don't mind if I take you out now. The tide will serve for an hour to come, and that leaves us time enough to get back before we heave anchor.'

"You may suppose we were pleased at this. We had long wanted to see the ship, and joyfully hailed the opportunity. Your father was already in the boat, and I was preparing to follow him when uncle called out:

"'Avast a bit there, you Richard Warren; step home and ask your mother's leave, or maybe, boys, we shall get into hot water for sailing without orders from the commander-in-chief. And hark 'ee, lad, be back in the shaking out of a tops'le reef.'

"Off I set, scampering up the steep cliff like a frightened hare in a direct line for the cottage door. Panting and breathless I presented myself before my mother, who, without listening to a word of my passionate entreaties to be allowed to go with my uncle, gave a positive denial to my petition, and asked me angrily why I had not brought home the basket of mushrooms, bidding me begone and fetch them home without any further delay.

“With a dogged look and sullen step I turned slowly toward the beach, my brow clouding as I went with ill-suppressed resentment and disappointment: but when my eye caught once more the little boat rocking on the edge of the smooth water, my uncle at the helm and your father’s face full of joyful expectation, a sudden thought flashed across my mind, that I would conceal my mother’s refusal and no one would suspect me of falsehood. I even said to myself, I am sure she would have let us go if uncle had been there to ask her, and only she was cross about the mushrooms she might have said yes. Yet to go in direct disobedience to her command,—well, I shall get a scolding and a few blows, and maybe no supper to-night, but then Arthur will not be blamed. So I set the pleasure against the punishment, and said to myself, ‘Well, I don’t care, I’ll go.’”

“I slackened my pace to deliberate, for something just then seemed to say in my own heart, ‘It is not the punishment only. You are doing wrong, and God will mark it against you.’”

“The next moment I heard Uncle Philip’s shrill whistle urging me to quicken my steps, and my brother’s eager question, ‘May we go?’ decided me, and in an unlucky moment I replied:

“‘Yes, yes, we may go,’ and giving my hand to

Powell, the sailor who occupied the rower's bench, I leaped into the boat. Uncle cried out, 'Give way!' and off we flew over the smooth water as swift as a bird through the air. All my scruples of conscience were forgotten as I gave myself up to the delight of the moment.

"I think uncle had either forgotten his promise to take us to the brig, or perhaps the delay in sending me to ask our mother's leave made him think he had not time to do so.

"We had coasted along for a short time, when he proposed putting us ashore, but we entreated him in the most vehement manner to keep his promise and take us aboard the brig.

"For some moments he remained firm in his refusal, but we persisted, urging him not to break his promise, till, overcome by our entreaties, he bade Powell pull off into deep water. Half an hour's rowing brought us alongside the *William and Mary*, and in another minute we stood on her deck full of wonder at everything we saw. The masts, sails, compass, rudder, capstan, the boom, each rope and bit of canvas in turn attracted our attention—we wanted to be told the names and uses of everything on board.

"Now, it happened that during uncle's absence the

mate had neglected to execute some order, or had done it amiss. My uncle, though a good-humoured man when he was ashore, was very strict and hasty on board the brig, and he got into a violent passion, swearing at the sailors most dreadfully, at which your father and I were so terrified that we retreated down the companion-way into the little cabin below to be out of hearing of his angry words.

“I suppose our poor uncle quite forgot he had his nephews on board, and we, terrified by his blustering voice and the hoarse bawling of the men, dared not venture into his presence.

“We heard the noise of the anchor being weighed, and could not understand what the bustle and heavy trampling overhead could be about. The gradual decline of daylight and the deepening gloom around us made us think of home, and wish we were once more within it.

“We began to perceive an unusual motion in the vessel, and could hear the waters dashing against her sides. The brig was under way, and fast pursuing her northern voyage. It was evident that our uncle had forgotten us.

“Urged by feelings of anxiety that could no longer be controlled, we crept up to the deck and ventured to look about in the hope of catching Powell’s eye,

but he was up in the rigging. Uncle was pacing the deck in a very ill-humour, his eyes fixed on the shrouds, and too much engaged in scolding the men who were shifting the sails to notice us.

“‘Richard, what shall we do?’ whispered your father, as he looked uneasily towards the fast-receding shore. ‘What will poor mother say? she will be so frightened at our not coming home.’

“These words dyed my cheeks with blushes, and then the thought of my falsehood and disobedience rushed into my mind. I felt like a condemned and guilty criminal, and was dumb with shame and remorse. I dared not confess to my innocent brother the wicked part I had acted, but stood a guilty wretch with eyes bent on the deck, unable to say a word.

“I would have given the world, had all its riches been at my command, to have been quietly seated beside my poor mother’s cottage fire.

“Meanwhile your father had ventured to approach his uncle, and watching a favourable moment asked him when the boat was going to put us ashore.

“The sound of his tremulous, anxious voice seemed to recall Uncle Philip to himself. He had quite forgotten us. Regarding him with an expression of vexation and perplexity, he turned to Powell.

“‘A pretty go, this,’ he said, ‘I forgot the lads. What’s to be done now?’

“‘Captain, there’s no help for it,’ said the sailor, casting his eye along the line of coast; ‘there’s a heavy sea, and a lee shore, the brig’s under way and night’s coming on. Time and tide stay for no man, nor boys either; the lads must take their chances with the brig.’

“‘There is no question about the matter,’ grumbled out Hardy, the mate. ‘There’ll be dirty weather before morning and no mistake, and we’re too far out to stop now.’

“My uncle was in a thorough ill-humour with himself, with us and the whole ship’s crew. I heard him say to Powell that in case we fell in with a vessel bound to the port he would put us aboard with orders to make our way home as best we could, as he was uneasy at the trouble that our absence would occasion our mother.

“The thought of my unhappy mother and her night of anxious watching made my heart sink within me. I felt as if I were sufficiently punished for my fault, but heavier things were in store.

“Your father, who was by nature more delicate than I, began to feel all the deadly sensations of seasickness, and was soon too ill to remain on deck.

My uncle carried him down below, and putting him into a spare berth in the cabin, left me to watch beside him.

“ We passed a most miserable night. The pitching and rolling of the vessel, the thundering of the waves and the creaking and rattling of the sails and ropes, together with the horrible sickness, made my head ache and completely bewildered my brain. At last I fell asleep on the cabin floor, and remembered no more of what passed until uncle came down at daylight and told us there had been a heavy gale of wind during the night, and that it was still blowing hard. He gave us some salt beef and biscuit for breakfast, and a tin mug or ‘pannikin,’ as sailors call it, of tea, and bade us keep quiet, as there was a heavy sea and the rain was falling in torrents.

“ We were cold and miserable, and the sight of food only made us worse. We could not help noticing that poor old uncle looked anxious. Several times he said earnestly, ‘Lads, I would give a great deal if I could see you both safe ashore!’

“ I think that day was the worst and most comfortless I ever experienced. The brig rolled and pitched so much that we could not keep our feet. If we ventured to move we were thrown down, and soon were sorely battered and bruised by being thrown

against the sides of the berth and other fixtures in the cabin.

“Uncle Philip only visited us for a few minutes at a time to give us food and try to cheer our spirits, but there was a harassed and painfully anxious expression on his face which did not escape us.

“Toward evening the heavy rain ceased, but with the stormy sunset the wind, which had lulled a little, rose and by degrees increased till it blew a perfect hurricane. The sailors had put up the dead lights to keep the waves from breaking in the cabin lights, and lit a lamp to supply the place of the daylight.

“As night wore on the gale increased. About the mid-watch my uncle came down, looking worn and weary. He broke a morsel of biscuit and drank some brandy, of which he gave us both a mouthful, forcing us to take it, as he said we should grow weak unless we did so.

“I asked him if he could not turn in for an hour and try to sleep, but he shook his grey head. His eyes were full of tears as he bade me get into the berth.

“‘Be sure, Dick,’ he said, ‘do not forget to say your prayers. We need all the help of Almighty God this night more than we ever did in our lives before.’

"I knelt down by the side of the berth, and uncle on a sea chest. I heard him say, 'O Lord, have mercy; have mercy upon our souls, and save these children, for Christ's sake.'

"He rose saying to himself, 'A fearful night indeed, but the will of the Lord be done.'

"While he was yet speaking a dreadful crash was heard on deck, followed by a cry that struck terror to our hearts. Poor uncle hurried up on deck and we saw him no more.

"There was a roaring, rushing sound above our heads as of the sweep of a flood of water.

"'Richard,' cried your father, starting up in the berth, 'the vessel is going down! My mother! Oh, my poor mother!'

"His words wrung my heart with agony, and throwing myself down beside him, in a voice hardly audible from grief and terror, I confessed what I had done, and begged him to forgive me for bringing him into this fearful peril, and besought him to pray to God to forgive my great sin.

"Boys, he never reproached me, nor through the long hours of misery and danger that followed did he say one word to add to my grief and remorse. Young as I then was, for I had not completed my eleventh year, I was deeply touched by this proof of

his brotherly kindness and forbearance. I never forgot it, and I never shall."

As he said these words Captain Warren extended his hand toward his brother. There was silent but eloquent affection in the warm pressure with which Arthur Warren returned the grasp of brotherly love. It spoke the feelings of his heart more eloquently than a thousand words could have done.

"Well, boys," continued Captain Warren, "we passed that awful night in prayer and watching. At times we strained our ears to listen for the sound of uncle's voice, or the hoarse bawling of the sailors, which we had caught at intervals all through the storm, but all was silent, we heard only the thundering of the waves and the roar of the blast. We were, in fact, the only creatures left alive on that devoted ship.

"As soon as the first gleam of day reached the cabin we ascended the ladder, where an awful scene met our eyes.

"The ship lay a complete wreck on the water, her masts gone, her rudder unshipped, her rigging rent away, her bulwarks torn. The waves had swept the deck clean of everything.

"How can I describe the terror of your father and myself when we found ourselves alone in the desolate

ship as it lay tossed hither and thither by the white waves, a mere spot on that vast expanse of water!

“It was no use crying out in our despair, there was no one to hear, our uncle and his men were fathoms deep in the sea. We strained our eyes through the streaming tears in the hope of descrying some friendly sail, but there was none in sight, and our mastless hulk continued to drive before the merciless fury of the gale.

“From the wet and slippery deck we were driven by the lashing fury of the spray and the down-pouring rain, which began once more to fall in torrents, and we retreated sad and miserable to the shelter of the cabin, where we passed another most miserable day.

“We climbed into our berths, having secured some biscuits, for grief rarely destroys the sense of hunger in children, and there we remained, sometimes losing consciousness of our dreary situation in sleep. When awake we twined our arms together and looked into each other's faces as if to ask that counsel which neither could give, or we watched the stream of light as it gradually faded into the dim, uncertain grey of twilight.

“Often during that melancholy day did we kneel with clasped hands and lift up our voices crying to the

Almighty to preserve us, and then, weary with grief, would lie down and sleep. Thus wore away the longest day I ever remember to have spent.

“‘Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.’ The day dawned brilliantly. The storm had subsided, and our vessel now merely rolled like a log on the surface of the water.

The sun had risen gloriously when we went up on deck, and it was with a wild cry of delight that we saw a schooner bearing down upon us. Presently a boat came dancing over the waves, and in a few minutes one of her crew stood upon our deck. Then we felt that help had indeed come, and throwing our arms around each other we wept and laughed for joy.

“The hearts of the rough seamen were moved when they heard the tale we had to tell. We were soon on board the schooner, and the wreck was taken possession of and towed into Yarmouth, to which port their vessel was bound.

“Captain Holly and his crew were most kind to us. On our reaching Yarmouth he took us to his own home, and despatched a trusty messenger to acquaint our mother with the fact, and to bring her back to Yarmouth that he might have the satisfaction of being present at our meeting, and to smooth away all the anger toward me, if any such should remain.

“At the sight of her lost ones all feelings of anger and grief were alike forgotten. Her eyes overflowed with tears of thankfulness, and she lifted up her voice in grateful acknowledgment to Him who had looked upon the fatherless and redeemed them from the perils of the mighty deep.

“And now, my dear children, let these things teach you never under any temptation to conceal the truth, or in order to gratify yourselves disobey your parents, and above all things, to be thankful to God for all His mercies.”

The Swiss Herd-Boy and His Alpine Mouse.

HERMAN AND BERTA SWITZER were the children of a poor soldier's widow who lived in a small cabin, called a *châlet*, in one of the lovely valleys among the Alps of Switzerland.

The spot was very rugged, full of jutting rocks and deep gorges worn by the wintry torrents, and spring was always late in visiting it, the sun having but little access to the earth to warm it and bring forth buds and blossoms.

Many persons would have left it for some more favoured locality, but the Swiss peasantry love their wild mountainous country and their Alpine homes, rude and bleak though they may seem to strangers. They make the most of the blessings they possess and

thank the Giver of all good for them, and think their Switzerland the best country in the world. If it were not, they say, foreigners from all parts of the globe would not come to visit it as they do every year.

The Swiss are remarkable for industry, ingenuity and frugality. The men are brave, hardy and energetic; nor are the women less so than the men. Much of the field work is done by the women, while the husbands and sons follow the more difficult and perilous life of the hunter or guide in the wild passes of the mountains. The wives and daughters patiently cultivate the garden, carrying manure and earth on their backs in baskets to enrich some small field or flat on the side of the mountain, where they will raise a few bushels of oats and barley.

Such a field, of about half an acre in extent, had thus been made to yield a scanty supply of grain and roots by the widow Switzer and her children. This with the milk of a small flock of goats, a little honey from the hives of the wild rock bees, some hard cheese made from the goats' milk, and such small supplies of meat as they procured from snaring the mountain conies and hares, the family contrived to live, if not luxuriously, yet with comfort.

But hard times sometimes came. The cold late

springs kept back the grain from ripening, floods swept the newly sown seed out of the ground, or the wild goats, the ibex and chamois, browsed upon the tender blade when it showed promise of a fair crop.

To prevent this last misfortune it was Herman's and Berta's task to rise at earliest dawn and watch the field and chase away the wild animals. Besides the larger animals they had to watch for, there were the rock conies and the Alpine mouse or marmot.

The children knew all the ways and habits of these wild creatures. They knew where the cautious chamois and the wary ibex hid their tender kidlings in the mountain gorges, spots where the foot of man, however venturous, had never dared to approach. Herman could point out to his sister the tall pine tree that had twisted its roots so deeply in the rifted rock that no storm could move it, and where the lordly eagle had its eyry and had built its nest and reared its young ones year after year unmolested by the hunter. He knew where the bright-eyed, sharp-winged falcon that soared so high above their heads, had its nest.

The simple loving nature of the boy took pleasure in watching and studying the habits of the birds and animals he met with in their native haunts. He could imitate the songs of the birds and the cries of

the wild beasts, and was so great an adept at this natural music that he could lure the female from her perch to seek her mate. He could imitate the whistling cry of the marmot, the bark of the hill-fox, the bleat of the kid, or the call of the dam to her young, and by the last many a one was brought within the range of his cross-bow or sling.

Brave and hearty, Herman was also gentle and kind. Like David he would have killed the lion or the bear in defence of his flocks, and would have carried the lame and the helpless lambs in his arms. Among the herd-boys who frequented the mountain pasture he was friendly and kind, but if need required he could hold his own with the stoutest of them. Yet he was no brawler, and while he firmly defended his rights he quarrelled with no one, going his own way peacefully, ever ready to lend a helping hand to a companion in danger or distress.

Berta, a gentle, dutiful little girl, was younger than her brother, and like him in many ways. They were a great comfort to their mother, and cheered her lonely life and widowed heart.

During the pasturing season, Herman, now a fine healthy lad of twelve years of age, earned a scanty living for his mother and sister by keeping the flocks and herds of a farmer who lived in the neighbouring valley.

During the long cold months of winter, when the inhabitants of the Alpine valleys are shut up as in a prison, Herman and Berta were not idle. The little flock of goats that were housed under the roof of the *châlet*, as the cottages are called in that country, have to be tended and fed. Stores of dried herbage and roots from the garden had been carefully garnered during the warm season for their sustenance.

Herman had been taught by his uncle, an aged man who sometimes visited the *châlet*, to carve wooden toys, to make cups, bowls and platters, and to ornament some of the better sort with such simple devices as ears of wheat, barley or oats cut in the wood as a border. For such work he found occasional purchasers among the better class of farmers' wives, or at the fairs held in the neighbouring towns.

Herman, as I said before, was well versed in the minor arts of the hunter and trapper. He had discovered the holes and burrows of the marmots in the rocks, and often drew them from their winter retreats. The flesh served for food and the skins brought a small sum, or he made them up into caps and mittens for himself and Berta.

He took a great fancy to one of these little animals. It was very young when he caught it, and he soon contrived to attach it to him and to teach it many

little tricks. In the course of its training it became very obedient, and would do many things at his bidding.

Mouzelle, for so he named the marmot, would sit up on its haunches with a small reed stick balanced across its nose, or would hold it in its fore paws, which were flexible and almost like hands, and dance on its hind legs to the sound of that inspiriting air, the "*Raus des vaches*," or "Herd-boy's Call to his Cows," keeping good time to the notes breathed through a little pipe that his master had made and was accustomed to play upon when keeping the flocks and herds on the mountains.

The herdsmen as they sauntered home at sunset would often stop to listen to Herman's music and watch with great delight the movements of the marmot, who seemed to imitate the step of its young master as he danced and played.

"If I were you, Herman, I would go to the great fair at Altdorf," said one of the neighbours as he leant on the top of the ironshod staff called an alpenstock, and gazed with admiring eyes at the little creature.

"And what should I go to Altdorf for, Carl Graaf? I have no toys to sell, not even a bowl or a platter for the salesman at the fair; I have had no time for that work since the flood came.



HERMAN AND HIS MARMOT.

"You should take your Mouzelle to the fair," said Carl.

"What! Mouzelle, my darling pet! I should lose him in the fair among the crowd. No, no, Carl, I have no business at the great fair this year, and no money to spend withal," said Herman, sorrowfully.

"The greater need of turning an honest penny, child," was Carl Graaf's reply.

"But how, good Carl?"

"Listen to me, child. The world runs after shows and rare sights of all kinds. Franz Reusler, who has the caravan with the lions and tigers and giants and dwarfs and such outlandish animals, drew scarcely more money than the man with the dancing dogs and the monkeys and the learned pig and talking magpie. For my part I was half afraid that some of those big hungry-looking beasts would break the bars of their cages and jump out upon us, or maybe eat up a baby or two at a snap, for there were lots of those innocents in the crowd; and to my mind, Herman, it is more wonderful to hear a bird talk like a wise man, and a stupid pig tell a man or woman's fortune by the cards, and what the hour of the day is by his fore feet, than seeing lions and tigers eat poor marmots and dogs and hares. Ugh! that is an ugly sight.

"Bah! I had a young wolf cub and a bear, and

they were as tame as your little fawn was, but I had to shoot them at last, for Carline, when she came home from the silk-winding last year, took it into her silly head to be afraid of bruin, and declared the wolf cub cast hungry eyes at Fridolin whenever the little fellow passed near his kennel."

"But I do not see what good it would be to take Mouzelle to the fair," said Herman.

"Well, stupid, do you not see," said Carl, giving Herman a good-natured poke with his alpenstock, "that a marmot that can dance as well as yours does, and can keep such good time to the music, and minds all you say to him, is well worth paying a bit of money to see? Just you go to the fair and see if you do not come back with money enough in your pouch to buy your good mother a warm linsey petticoat for the winter, and maybe a red ribbon for little Berta," and Carl laughed and clapped him on the shoulder.

"Ah, indeed, Carl, that would be something to talk about," said the little fellow, brightening. "A warm petticoat for mother, and it should be black and red too, for that looks gay and so warm when the snow comes, and would match Berta's red ribbon. But, Mouzelle, if I should lose you or any harm should befall you in the crowd! Ah, that would be too bad to happen."

“Oh, never fear, lad. No harm will happen to Mouzelle. We shall all go to the fair, wife and I and the little ones. Pauline and Carline are coming home to-night to go with us, and you may go with us too. I go every year, if only to see the great tower dressed with evergreen and laurel and the flags of the free Cantons, and the statue of our great hero, William Tell, who cleft the apple off his son’s head. Hurrah for William Tell and the free Cantons!” and waving his fur cap above his head, Carl Graaf went down the valley.

“It is a pretty little beast and very well taught, too,” said a soft fawning voice behind Herman, who looking round perceived, standing close by, a man whom he had not noticed before.

The stranger was shabbily dressed and had a rushen flail basket, such as carpenters carry tools in, slung over his shoulder. He spoke low and softly, but had a sharp, cunning expression which did not suit his voice.

“Let me see your marmot go through his exercise, master,” said the traveller, seating himself on a block of stone near the door of the châlet.

Herman complied at once with the request, not a little proud of the exploits of his pet and the exclamations of delight from the stranger, who cried out repeatedly, “Bravo! Bravo! Encore!”

The boy did not understand what this last word meant until the man, pitying his ignorance, told him it meant to repeat over again.

"You will make quite a fortune at the fair with that mouse of yours," said the man as he tried to imitate the notes of the Swiss air that Herman had been playing on his flute and make the marmot dance, but finding it no easy task he soon tired, and turning to Herman said, "Boy, if you will sell the mouse I will give you this piece of silver for it. A large price for a marmot;" and he held up a coin between his finger and thumb.

"I do not wish to sell my dear Mouzelle," hastily replied Herman. "I love it too well to part from it. No, my pet," he added, bending his face fondly over the soft velvet head of the marmot, "I will not sell you for twenty gretchen. No, not for all the richest man could offer me, for I love you too dearly, my clever little pet."

"I suppose," said the man, with a sneer, "that you are fool enough to believe all yon ass of a goat-herd said to you about making a lot of money at the fair, as if people go there only to throw away money and time seeing a stupid marmot dance."

"Why," said the boy, opening his blue eyes very wide, "did you not praise my marmot yourself, and

tell me that I had better go to the fair with him, for I should make a fortune by showing off his tricks?"

At this speech the man threw himself back and laughed so long and so loudly that Herman was greatly astonished at him.

"Come, now," he said at last, "this is a great joke. I did not think you had been so green as to believe everything you hear. So you took all I said for truth, did you?"

"I would not have told you an untruth myself, and that is why I believed what you said."

"Well, well, child, you are a good boy, no doubt, and I am very glad to find you are honest and truthful. Now just step in and get me a cup of goat's milk and a morsel of rye bread. Here is a coin to pay you for it. You see that I am honest; yes, I am honest."

"Yes, indeed, you are," said Herman, "and I will bring you a bowl of milk and some cheese to eat with your bread."

"Don't hurry yourself, child," said the traveller. "I can sit here and rest myself a bit till you come back;" and crossing his legs he leaned back as one that was very weary from long walking, and shut his eyes as if to take a nap.

Herman was absent some minutes. His mother

and sister were both out working in the field above, and it took him some time to get the milk and bread and cheese.

“I will place the things nicely on the table and then ask the stranger to come in and rest awhile, for the good Book says, ‘Use hospitality, nothing grudging, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.’ I dare say mother will ask him to stay all night; he can have a part of my bed, he is not very big.”

Full of kindly feeling, Herman busied himself to set the humble fare in tempting array, and after putting the cushion from his mother’s chair on that placed ready for his guest, he stepped out to summon him to the frugal meal.

But the man was nowhere to be seen; the basket and stick he had carried were gone, and after the first moment of surprise Herman discovered to his dismay that his flute and his pet, his darling Mouzelle, had also disappeared.

In vain he ran hither and thither, calling upon the stranger and whistling the notes of an air which invariably drew the marmot from its hiding-place. No marmot was to be seen running to him to climb his leg and nestle its soft head in his breast, or lick his now tear-stained face.

The treachery of the wayfaring man filled Herman with distress.

“What a wicked man! what a wicked man! he will never go to heaven! He is a liar and a robber. It is better to be poor than to steal,” he repeated, crying bitterly for his lost pet.

In the midst of his sorrow the wife of Carl Graaf came by. It was so rare to see anything but smiles upon Herman’s face that the good woman was thunderstruck. She thought some great calamity had befallen her poor neighbour, but when Herman told of how he had been robbed, she said :

“Cheer up, child, and dry your eyes. All will yet be well. Doubtless the vile cheat has taken your mouse to the fair to show it off there. It may be the same fellow that had the cage of white mice last year. A cruel creature he is. I know him well and we will find him out. You shall go with Carl and me to the fair to-morrow. We shall start before day-break, for there is a late moon to light us. The children are all going, and you shall have your share with them. Nay, not a word. I have bread and cheese and apples. You shall not want, never fear, while we have plenty. I have mitts, and socks, and yarn of my own spinning and knitting to sell at the fair.

“Keep a good heart, my boy, you will have your Alpine mouse again. The good Lord never deserts the children of the widow, though He suffers them to be tried in this world.” And the kind neighbour went on her way.

The early morning, long ere day dawned, found Herman ready dressed for his journey. His mother gave him a good meal of boiled milk thickened with rye meal, and some goat's milk in a leathern bottle to drink by the way.

The moon, which had not yet set, gilded the distant snow-capped mountains and glittered on the icy pinnacles with a silvery radiance, while the deep clefts and gorges lay in heavy shadow. The moonlight is beautiful at all times and in all places, but most so in an Alpine country like Switzerland, and no doubt it is the grandeur of such scenery that binds the hearts of all who live in mountainous countries so closely to their native land.

“So the wild whirlwind and the tempest's roar
But bind him to his native rocks the more.”

After an hour or two the first rays of morning began to lighten the mountain path, and cheerily Carl Graaf and his wife and children hastened along.

A merry party they were. The children were full

of expectation of rare shows and fine sights that were to gladden their eyes at the fair.

Lotchen, Graaf's wife, trudged on with a pack of homespun wares upon her back, while Carl, like a good husband, carried the fat baby on his shoulder. It was the heavier and to his fond eyes the more precious load. Franz and Fridolin, two stout chubby boys of seven and nine years old, trotted behind or cantered on before like little Highland ponies, their yellow curls smoothed from their usual rough state into tolerable order, while their red cheeks gave proof of the care their older sisters, Carline and Pauline, had taken to scour them clean in the brook that flowed past their father's door.

Herman began to whistle and imitate the notes of the little birds as they carolled in the bushes, and smiled gleefully to see how Carline and her sister turned their heads to listen and look for the feathered songsters. By and by he set Franz and Fridolin scampering up the steep rocky sides of the valley to get a sight of the wild kid whose plaintive bleating he had mimicked; or to hunt for the marmot in its holes and burrows among the rocks, while he mocked its shrill whistling note of anger or surprise.

Sometimes he feigned the wild scream of the eagle

or the kestrel hawk as if it came from the pines on the rocky pinnacles above their heads, then with a merry shout and laugh ran on to surprise and delude them by some new trick or innocent deception. Even the practised ear of Carl Graaf was often deceived by Herman's mimicry, and the old goatherd would cry out, "Bah! The boy's a witch to cheat us so!"

The early dew was scarcely dry from the azure bells of the blue gentian and the rock saxifrage that carpeted the ground, when our little party made a halt under a group of arbutus bushes to eat a hasty meal before descending the steep road to the more level country. Lotchen selected a thymy knoll on the bank of a bright sparkling rill of cool water. Here she collected the stragglers and made them sit down, while she divided the rye cakes, cheese and apples among them. Herman was not forgotten, but received a liberal share, and the prudent mother greatly commended him for dividing his milk with the boys, and was glad to accept a little of it for the chubby baby.

As soon as the frugal meal was ended, the children gathered up the fragments that remained and stowed them away carefully in Carl's wallet, "for," said the mother, "they may be wanted yet as we go home; cakes are nice, but they do not satisfy hungry children."

As they descended the hill a pretty scene presented itself to the view of the travellers. The balconies and steep overhanging roofs of the cottages scattered in the valley seemed to give an air of coolness to the shaded space below. Meadows gay with flowers lay stretched out in the distance; herds of cattle were feeding or cooling themselves in the pools that glistened in the sun, reflecting the quivering branches of the overhanging trees. It was all a great contrast to the wild rocky hills and shaded valleys they had left behind them, and they enjoyed the change.

Groups of men, women and children, all in holiday attire, some in carts and carriages and some on foot, soon added a greater interest to the scene.

There were caravans of wild beasts, with pictures of huge tigers and lions on the outside, painted larger than life and as red or yellow as the painter could make them, at the sight of which dreadful-looking animals Franz set up a loud cry, declaring that the "beasts with the big claws and white teeth would eat him," and it was only with some difficulty that his sisters could drag him past the slow-moving caravans.

As they entered the suburbs of the town the throng of people grew greater, and poor Lotchen's troubles began. The baby, who had slept soundly most of the way, now began to waken and cry, frightened by the

din of pealing bells and rattling wheels and the shouting of boys and scolding of women, the blare of trumpets and all the confusion of sounds to which the poor child's ears were not accustomed. Then it was such a trouble to keep Franz and Fridolin from being run over by the carriages or lost in the crowd.

Some foreign soldiers frightened Carline by staring rather rudely at her, and one of them pinched little Christine's cheek and made her cry again.

While all this was going on, Herman, whose eyes were wandering everywhere in search of the man who had stolen his marmot, was completely separated from Carl and his family. Pushed hither and thither, one man called out to him to move along, another to stand aside. A woman declared he had trodden on her foot, and another that he had shoved her little daughter.

Presently a party of gaily-dressed people came by—ladies carrying tambourines and dressed in gauze and tinsel, with flowers and feathers on their heads, mounted on tall horses decked out with scarlet and gold cloths. Men who stood on the backs of their horses turned somersaults in the air, lighting again on their horses. There were camels with monkeys riding them, and monkeys dressed in red jackets mounted on French poodles.

These were no sooner passed than the crowd gave way for a big elephant who had a wooden tower with red silk hangings on his back, and was led by a boy dressed in crimson with a white turban on his head. Then came a band of Tyrolese minstrels in peaked hats, red jackets and blue velvet breeches, tied at the knees with rosettes of gay ribbon. They were singing their mountain melodies to the sound of the flute and flageolet. All the people stopped to hear them, and many gave them money. Herman had become a little bewildered by all the novel sights, and began to feel uneasy at being separated from his friends, when suddenly his ear caught the tones of a voice he felt sure he had heard before.

Yes, it must be the very same. He pressed eagerly forward to the stone steps at the foot of the market-place to listen, as a soft voice cried out: "Walk up, walk up, my little dears, my pretty little girls and boys, and you shall see a fine sight. Only one kreutzer, only one, to see my Alpine mouse. He is the best dancer at the fair. He will dance a saraband or a waltz, or turn a pirouette to the sound of my flute. Ah! he is a rare fellow. He will sit up on his hind legs and balance a stick on his nose. Oh, he is a wonderful little beast! Only one kreutzer to see my pretty marmot dance!"

"It is my own marmot, my own dear Mouzelle!" cried out Herman. Dashing aside the group of staring children and at one bound darting up the steps of the market-house, he snatched the trembling little animal from the ground and hid it in his bosom, then stood panting and breathless, his eyes filled with tears and his cheeks flushed with excitement.

"Boy, let that Alpine mouse alone!" screamed the man.

"It is mine, my own marmot, and you stole it from me yesterday," sobbed Herman, still undauntedly sheltering the recovered treasure.

"A likely story that!" cried one of the bystanders.

"Here, here, seize the youngster and take him before the Mayor!" called out another.

"Yes, yes, to the Mayor with him!"

"Away with him to jail!" shouted another.

"No, no, to the Mayor. He is a wise man, our Mayor, and will soon set the matter right," cried a voice from the outskirts of the crowd.

Driven forward by the rush of the crowd that had collected round the showman, the terrified boy was carried into the justice hall. So sudden had been the whole affair that he had no time to think of what he should say in his defence, but he felt strong in having

a righteous cause. "I will tell the truth," said the child to himself, "and the Mayor will believe me."

The loud threatening tones of the angry showman seemed to have no weight with the Mayor, a man of a mild but firm countenance. He listened attentively to all that the man had to say, and then bidding him be silent turned to Herman, who stood with his head bent over the marmot, and said :

"My little man, you are accused of interrupting the show and creating a disturbance among peaceable citizens of this good town, and rudely and violently taking away the complainant's property. What hast thou to say in thy defence?"

Herman raised his tear-stained face, and looking up said quietly, "I will tell you the truth, and nothing but the truth, Mr. Mayor, for my mother has taught me from the good Book to be true and honest in word and deed."

"Only listen to the canting young hypocrite," cried one of the showman's friends.

"Silence, and let the child be heard in his defence."

Herman then, gaining courage, related in his own simple words the way in which he had been robbed by the showman while he was getting some refreshment for him.

Some of the people cried out, "Shame! shame!"

but others said, "No, no, he is lying; see how he blushes."

Herman was blushing. Grief and distress at finding himself accused as a thief and liar had brought a flush to the cheek of the agitated boy.

"Appearances are against him," said a man who had listened with great attention to all that had passed, "but a child's blush is no proof of guilt."

The showman boldly offered to take his oath for the truth of his statement, but the good Mayor would not even ask the child to swear to what he had said. He saw the purity of truth in his face.

After thinking for a minute or two, he said to Herman, "Put down the marmot on the ground." Herman obeyed at once.

"Now, Mr. Showman, let me see the performance of your marmot's tricks."

"The little beast is tired and frightened by the treatment he has received," said the man, sullenly, "and I am losing time here."

"If the little creature is accustomed to obey you, he will do so whether he is tired or not, so no excuse, but begin at once," said the Mayor, sternly.

The man, forced to obey, drew out Herman's flute, but the marmot paid no heed to the tunes he played. The angry showman shook him, then set him up on

his hind legs, but he only sank down again and remained sulkily crouched on the ground, his ears set back stubbornly.

"It is plain that the marmot will not own you for his master. Now, my boy, try what you can do with this sulky rebel," said the Mayor.

"May I have my own flute?" asked the now hopeful child. When ordered to give it up the man threw the flute on the ground at his feet.

Taking it up the child placed it to his lips and began to play the old familiar air, the "*Raus des vâches*," in his sweetest strains. In an instant, as if new life had been put into the marmot, it sprang up from its sluggish posture, and Herman, inspired by his own music, began to dance, and while the curious crowd stood gazing with admiring eyes, the Alpine mouse went through all the sprightly movements of one of the native dances.

"Bravo! bravissimo!" cried out an Italian pedlar. "Now for the stick solo and the waltz."

The marmot delighted the spectators by dancing round and round with the stick balanced on his fore paws; he then went through all his tricks, and finally ran up Herman's leg and buried his soft grey head in his vest.

Just at this moment a bustling step was heard in

the entry, and a loud hearty voice cried out, "Here he is! I have found the truant at last. But hey, what is this? How did he get here?" and elbowing his way through the crowd Carl Graaf reached the boy's side. Making a respectful salutation to the Mayor, he said: "Your Worship's Reverence, may it please you to listen to me in behalf of this child?"

The Mayor made a motion of assent, and the honest goatherd in a few brief words told the story of the marmot and its master, adding, "Your Worship, this boy is a truth-telling, honest lad, and comes of God-fearing parents. I and Lotchen, my wife, who have known him from his birth, will go bail for him if such be the pleasure of your Reverence."

After imposing a heavy fine and giving the dishonest showman a severe reprimand, the Mayor let him go. He left the court-house amid the jeers and hisses of the crowd, while several pieces of silver were dropped into the hands of the now radiantly happy Herman.

Thus truth and honesty were rewarded, and Herman was able to bring home the dreamed-of good things to his mother and Berta.

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