

Julia Cowles

Crow's Language Lessons (And Other Stories)



Crow's Language Lessons And Other Stories Of Birds And Ani- mals

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A BIG BLACK CROW PICKED UP THE HANDKERCHIEF AND FLEW OFF WITH IT.

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JIM CROW'S LANGUAGE LESSONS

AND OTHER STORIES
OF BIRDS AND ANIMALS

BY
JULIA DARROW COWLES



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Crow's Language Lessons and other Stories of Birds and Animals

By Julia Darrow Cowles

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Lovingly Dedicated
To
My Four Children
Hazel, Florence, Raymond, and Edward
Whose Love For Pets And Animals
Laid The Foundation For
These Stories

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Preface by Lutheran Librarian

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A Note about Typos [Typographical Errors]:

Over time we are revising the books to make them better and better. If you would like to send the errors you come across to us, we'll make sure they are corrected.

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Crow's Language Lesson

EARLY ONE SUMMER Ray and Elsa Wilcox went with their papa to visit some cousins who lived in the country. The cousins were named Ernest and Florence, and the four children had all sorts of fun.

They especially enjoyed going off into the woods which skirted the farm, where they found the loveliest places to play, and where they could study the curious habits of the birds and squirrels. One morning while they were playing tree tag, Ray, who had gone quite a distance from the rest, heard curious and persistent cries from the tree over his head.

He called the other children, and they all listened.

“It must be a lot of young birds, but what a noise they make!” said Ray.

Ernest stood still a moment and then exclaimed, “They’re crows! I see the nest!”

Then, after watching for some time, the children went back to the house, but all the way there they were followed by the cries of the birds.

In the afternoon they again went to the woods, and took Mr. Wilcox with them. The birds were still crying in a distressed way, and Mr. Wilcox concluded that the parent birds had been killed, and that the young crows were hungry.

Then, to the delight of the children, he climbed the tree, loosened the nest from its fastenings and brought it down with the birds in it.

It turned out as the children had guessed.

They were crows – and there were four of them.

The nest was taken carefully to the house, and for the next few weeks the birds were fed and cared for by the children till they grew to be quite large, and were very tame.

When Ray and Elsa went home they took two of the crows with them, and as the birds were now well grown and able to care for themselves, they were given a home in the hen-house with the fowls. At first there was a great commotion over the strangers, but in time the occupants of the hen-house grew quite friendly, and the birds took their breakfast with the chickens quite as though that was the usual manner of crows.

The children thought a great deal of their odd pets, and when in the autumn one of them flew away with a passing flock of crows, they felt very badly about it.

The remaining crow was known as Jim; and as he was the more mischievous of the two, and the one which seemed to have the greater intelligence, the children doubled their attentions to him, and became reconciled to the loss of his mate.

All winter Jim lived with the fowls, and, as later events proved, he did not pass the time in idleness, but sought during these months to broaden his education and acquire a foreign language.

One day early in the spring Ray thought it warm enough to let the hens out in the yard to be fed. As he was scattering the grain about he heard a distant cackling on the housetop, far above his head.

“How on earth could a hen get up there!” he exclaimed in astonishment, as he looked around.

But it wasn't a hen, it was Jim Crow, cackling away in great glee. How Ray laughed! Then he ran into the house to call Elsa, but when she came out Jim was cawing in his usual crow language.

A few days later, however, when the hens had again been given the liberty of the yard, Elsa saw Jim following them about, and this time, much to her delight, imitating exactly their contented clucking.

Elsa stood and watched him, for his way of imitating their manner of walk and search for food was as funny as the noise he was making. Just then Elsa noticed that some people passing on the sidewalk had been attracted by the crow's accomplishment, and they, too, had stopped to watch him. But it was not many minutes before Jim realized this, and with a sudden “caw” he flew straight before their faces, almost brushing against them

with his wings. The unexpected movement startled them so that they jumped, and one of the ladies of the group cried out in alarm.

This seemed to amuse Jim greatly, for he perched upon a tree across the way and screamed, “Caw! caw! caw!” exactly as though he were laughing at his own performance.

After Jim had learned to imitate the hens so well, he turned his mind to a higher branch of education, much as a scholar who has mastered Latin next turns his attention to Greek.

It was later in the summer when the children noticed that he was beginning to strut around the yard after the big rooster. He held up his head and lifted his legs with a genuine rooster strut which was indescribably comical. The children laughed, of course, and although Jim never could be coaxed to “show off” it was certain that he enjoyed having his antics appreciated.

But his self-esteem was destined to have a fall. After he had learned to walk like the rooster, he evidently thought it time to talk like one.

He was strutting around one day, and the children, unknown to him, were watching. Presently he opened his mouth, stretched out his neck, and beyond a doubt tried to crow. It was a dismal failure, however, and sounded much more like a croak than a crow.

Both the children shouted with laughter. Poor Jim heard them, glanced quickly round with the drollest of faces, and flew to the shelter of the hen-house, where no amount of coaxing could get him out for a long time. Nor was he ever known to attempt to crow again, although later on he regained sufficient confidence in himself to strut around after the rooster in his old fashion.

Greatly to the regret of the children, the following autumn Jim followed the example of his mate and flew away with a flock of crows; and Ray and Elsa are sure that the chickens miss him as much as they do.

A Saucy Thief

RALPH HAD BEEN SICK a whole month, and now that he was able to sit up again, he liked to have his chair by the window, where he could look out and watch the men who were at work upon a new house being built next door.

He was very glad that the men were at work here just at this time, for the days sometimes seemed very long to him, and to see a house growing before his eyes was so interesting that he could watch it almost for hours at a time. Nothing else helped so well to pass the long days away.

But one day the funniest thing happened at the new house. A strange workman appeared upon the scene, but this workman hindered more than he helped.

Ralph was at his accustomed place at the window and was watching a carpenter measure pieces of lumber for a certain part of the building. Ralph saw him take out his rule and mark the length with a pencil. He then laid the pencil down beside him while he sawed the board. Pretty soon he looked around to get his pencil and it was gone. He searched for it a few minutes, then he took another pencil from his pocket. He marked another board with this and laid it down as before, but when he wanted it again, that one, too, was gone.

The man now began to look vexed, and he searched all about, probably expecting to find some mischievous boy around, Ralph thought. But finding no boy and no pencils, he borrowed another pencil from one of the workmen, and this time when he got through using it he put it in his pocket. So he managed in this way to keep the one he had borrowed.

Presently he finished measuring all the boards he needed, and began nailing them in place. He took a handful of nails from the pocket of the big apron that he wore and laid them down within easy reach. He used a few of

them and when he reached around for more, there were no more in sight. Then he stood straight up, took off his cap, and scratched his head.

Ralph had been watching all this time, and had seen where all the missing articles went, and now at the man's perplexity he laughed aloud. Mamma, who was in the next room, heard the merry laugh and it did her good. She determined to go in, as soon as she had finished the dusting, and see what was amusing Ralph so much.

After the loss of his nails, the workman seemed to think something was wrong. He looked all about, questioned some of the other carpenters, and finally went to work once more. But this time he took the nails from his pocket only as he needed them, and once in a while he would look around as though watching for somebody. But as nobody appeared, he at last seemed to forget his mysterious losses and to work on in his usual manner.

It was a warm day, and as the sun rose higher he began to feel very warm. Ralph could see how heated he looked, and finally he took out a large red handkerchief and wiped his forehead.

He seemed a very absent-minded sort of workman, for now he laid his handkerchief down beside him while he again turned to his work.

"Mamma, come quick, quick!" Ralph shouted, and mamma hurried to his side.

He pointed to the window. "Now watch that man's handkerchief," he said. "Don't take your eyes from it."

Mamma wondered what Ralph meant, but she did as he said, and pretty soon, when the man had gone to work and quite turned his back to his handkerchief, down swooped a big black crow, picked up the handkerchief and flew off with it.

Then how Ralph did laugh and clap his hands! "It's just too funny, mamma," he said. And then he explained to her how the crow had been playing jokes on the carpenter all the morning.

Mamma laughed, too, and then she said,

"I think, Ralph, that we will have to arrest Mr. Crow. Shall we tell the man who his tormentor is?"

“Yes,” said Ralph; “only do please wait until he finds his handkerchief gone.”

So they waited, and presently the man turned to take up his handkerchief, for he had grown very warm again. His look of blank astonishment when he found it gone was too much for both Ralph and mamma, and they laughed till the tears stood in their eyes.

Then mamma went out on the front steps and tried to call to the man, but he was shouting and motioning to the other workmen in such a frantic way, that she had to go over to the building before she could make him hear her.

Ralph watched from the window. He saw the man turn at last and listen to what his mamma had to say, and then he saw them both go around to the farther end of a pile of lumber, where there was a space between two boards; and there, safely stowed away, were the pencils, the nails, and the handkerchief!

Then Ralph saw mamma point up into the branches of a tree which stood near; and as she did so, there came from it a saucy cry of “Caw! caw! caw!”

The other workmen shouted with laughter. At first the subject of Mr. Crow’s practical joke was inclined to be angry, but at last his better nature conquered, and he laughed with the rest.

As he went back to work, Ralph saw him take the handkerchief and tie it under his chin, and mamma explained when she came in that he said he would have to tie his cap on next, or the bird would be flying; off with that.

But Jim Crow seemed satisfied with his morning’s work, and after his trick was discovered he flew off home, and the poor workman was left in peace.

Ralph was so much better the next day, that mamma said she believed his laughing over the crow’s pranks had done him more good than medicine.

Mrs. Wiggins' Sweet Peas

MRS. WIGGINS WAS CROSS; really cross.

She had planted and watered and weeded her sweet pea bed, till it was full of delicate buds just beginning to show a promise of the pink and lavender and red and white glories that would soon gladden her eyes.

“They will be out by morning, I am sure,” Mrs. Wiggins had said as she took a last look at them in the twilight; and she had even dreamed of them in her sleep. She was a lonely woman, who had lived to middle life without any children about her to brighten up the sombre little home, and her blossoms meant a great deal to her.

In the morning she went out to the yard early, and behold, her vines were bare of every blossom! There could be no mistake, – somebody had picked them, – for did not the little empty stems stand shaking in the wind with indignation?

At first Mrs. Wiggins was too much astonished to speak, if indeed there had been anybody to speak to. But finally she found her voice, and it was a very angry one indeed.

“It’s those Martin children; I just know it is. There’s nobody else around here so mischievous as they are, and it must have been they.”

I suppose she was talking to the little stems, but they only shook in the wind and answered never a word.

Mrs. Wiggins went into the house, but her breakfast did not suit her and none of her work went right. The more she thought of her sweet peas, the surer she became that the Martin children had taken them, until at last she felt as though she actually had seen them do it. So when little Bessie Martin went tripping past her house along toward noon, she stalked to the door and

exclaimed, "What in the world did you children take my sweet peas for, I'd like to know!"

Bessie stopped, and her big, brown eyes, looked up in wonder. "I didn't take your sweet peas, Mrs. Wiggins," she said.

"Well, some of you must have, and I should think you 'd be ashamed of yourselves!" And then Mrs. Wiggins disappeared and the door closed with a bang.

Bessie stood a moment, too much surprised to move. Then with a burst of tears she turned about and sped home. Ben, who was several years older, met her at the gate.

"What's the matter?" he exclaimed, for it was something unusual to find Bessie in tears.

"Somebody has stolen Mrs. Wiggins' sweet peas, and she thinks it's us," said Bessie, losing sight of her grammar in her excitement.

Ben was indignant. "I'll find out who stole those flowers, if for no other reason than to show her we didn't do it!" he said; and he kept his word.

All that day he kept one eye – as he expressed it – on Mrs. Wiggins' sweet-pea bed, but there was nothing worth while to see. But early the next morning he was out weeding his vegetable garden, and suddenly he remembered the sweet peas. He looked across to Mrs. Wiggins', and there, in the very act of picking a beautiful blossom, was his own pet crow. His first impulse was to rush at the bird, but then he thought he would wait and see what was done with the blossoms. Jim Crow flew from the vines to the gate-post, where he worked away for a time, and then flew back for another blossom. But Ben was too quick for him, and drove him home in disgrace.

Then Ben went in and told Bessie all about it – how Jim Crow had picked the blossoms and poked them all into a crevice under the top of the gate-post. Bessie had been very much troubled by Mrs. Wiggins' accusation, and now she said, "I'll go and see Mrs. Wiggins to-day."

"I guess I wouldn't go near her," Ben said. "She was cross enough to you yesterday morning, I should think. You had better keep away."

"Oh, but I don't want her to be cross," Bessie answered with a bright little smile; "and that is the reason I am going over to explain."

“Well, if the matter must be explained,” said Ben, half won over by Bessie’s smile, “let me go and do it. I’ll tell her it was Jim Crow that did it, and that she ’d better not speak to you again the way she did.”

At that Bessie laughed outright. “Now, Ben,” she said, “you know you wouldn’t say that, when you got there, and it wouldn’t do, anyway. No, indeed; I know a much better way than that. I’ll make it all right, you see if I don’t.”

“Very well,” answered Ben; “ I suppose you’re right; but I don’t envy you your visit.” Ben knew that Bessie’s kind, happy ways were much more apt to set things right than were his own, so he gave vent to his feelings by going out to the yard and bestowing a good scolding upon Jim Crow. But Jim only said, “Caw, caw,” in a very saucy way.

As Mrs. Wiggins was washing her breakfast dishes, Bessie suddenly appeared in the doorway with something square and hard in her fat little hands. She stepped into the room and sat down on the floor.

“Mrs. Wiggins,” she said, “it was one of us that took your sweet peas, but it wasn’t one of us children. It was our Jim Crow, and I can show you just where he hid the blossoms. But as long as he belongs to us, I suppose we’re responsible for him, and so I thought I ’d pay you for the flowers he took;”and with that she grasped the hard object which had been lying in her lap and began to shake it. It was her bank, and out the pennies began to roll.

Mrs. Wiggins was once more too much astonished to speak. She stood and looked at the little girl on the floor. She was still shaking her bank, while the pennies rolled in all directions.

Perhaps a great longing came into Mrs. Wiggins’ heart at the sight. Perhaps she wished – well, at any rate the next thing Bessie knew Mrs. Wiggins was holding her close in her arms and crying over her. But somehow Bessie seemed to know that Mrs. Wiggins was not crying over the loss of her sweet peas; and after a while they went out into the yard together, and looked into the crevice under the gate-post, and then Mrs. Wiggins actually laughed. Then she gathered a few blossoms which had burst out since Jim Crow’s depredations and put them into Bessie’s hand.

After that she and Bessie had great fun gathering up the pennies, which had gone off into all sorts of odd corners, and which Mrs. Wiggins insisted

upon putting back into the bank.

When Bessie had said “good-by,” promising to come again, and had started down the path, Mrs. Wiggins looked after her, and said to the sweet pea stems, “She’s just as sweet as your blossoms!”

And the sweet pea stems fluttered gladly, but answered never a word.

Tippie's Visit

TIPPIE WAS A LITTLE BLACK-AND-TAN DOG that lived in the Hawaiian Islands. He belonged to Mr. and Mrs. Austin, and they thought a great deal of him. They quite often talked to Tippie, and as he never spent much time with other dogs, but was with people every day, he learned to be very intelligent. All his friends considered him a smart dog, but he surprised even them one day, and this is the way he did it:

He used to go very often to visit a little boy who lived about two blocks from his home. This little boy's name was Charlie.

One day Charlie's mamma was taken sick. Charlie always slept in his mother's room, but now his grandmother did not think best for him to do so, so she said to him, "Now I am going to make a bed for you on the floor of this small room just off from mamma's, and when Tippie comes over you may invite him to come and sleep with you to-night."

Charlie thought that would be fine, so he made no objection to sleeping away from mamma, but said, "All right," instead. And this was just what his grandmother had hoped.

When Tippie came over, Charlie took him into the little room and showed him his bed. Then he said, "Now, Tippie, when you go home you ask your mamma to let you come over here tonight and sleep with me. Come to-night" he added, slowly, looking straight into Tippie's eyes, "and stay all night. Now, Tippie, remember."



"NOW, TIPPIE, REMEMBER."

Tippie put his head on one side for a moment as he looked at Charlie, then he wagged his tail and went home.

That evening about eight o'clock Tippie stood up in the corner and barked. This was the way in which he had been taught to say that he wanted to get out doors.

Mrs. Austin started to open the door, but Mr. Austin stopped her. "It is too late," he said. "If Tippie goes out at this hour he will get lost or some one will take him off."

"I think he will be all right," Mrs. Austin answered, and opened the door.

Tippie quickly frisked out with every sign of delight. The evening passed, but no Tippie came to the door to be let in. Both Mr. and

Mrs. Austin grew anxious, and Mrs. Austin began to think that her husband had been right. The house was closed for the night, and still no Tippie appeared.

In the morning Mr. Austin was obliged to go to the office early. After he had gone Mrs. Austin heard a sound that made her hurry to the door. As she opened it, in walked Tippie, apparently as glad to see her as she was to see him.

She knew that Mr. Austin would be glad to know that Tippie was safe, so she walked down to the office, taking the little truant with her.

On her way back, she thought she would see how Charlie's mamma was, so she and Tippie stopped at the house. After visiting awhile, Charlie's grandmother said, "Did you miss Tippie last night?"

"Why, yes," Mrs. Austin answered; "do you know anything about where he was?"

"Why, he was here," she replied. And then she told about Charlie's invitation to Tippie, and of Tippie's putting his head on one side as if to consider what Charlie said, then wagging his tail and going home.

"At eight o'clock," she added, "we heard a scratch on the door. We opened it, and there stood Tippie. We invited him in, and he ran right across the house to the little room that Charlie had shown him. He sniffed around the bed until he discovered that Charlie was in it, and then he curled quietly down by his feet and went to sleep. And there he spent the night, just as he had been invited to do."

Ponce's Vacation

DO YOU THINK THAT DOGS CAN APPRECIATE JOKES? I am inclined to think that they can. Ponce could, anyway; I am positive of that.

Ponce was a fine shepherd dog, very intelligent, and valuable to his master. But for a wonder, Ponce had run away from home. I don't know what possessed him to do it, for he was always well fed and well cared for, and he had regular daily tasks to do besides. He knew how to bring home the cows at night just as well as John, the hired man, did. Perhaps it was because of these tasks that he ran away. To be sure he really enjoyed them, and they were not in the least hard, but it was in the spring of the year, and the longing to be free and to rove without restraint, which sometimes takes possession of people at that time, may have had its effect on Ponce, too.

Whatever the reason, he had run away and was trotting contentedly down the street, wagging his tail with satisfaction.

Presently he met four girls.

"Why," exclaimed Madge, "isn't that the dog that ran away from Mr. Price's?"

"I just believe it must be," answered Edna. "That was a shepherd dog, and yes, it has a black spot on its forehead."

"Of course it is," declared Caroline; "there is the white tip on the tail."

"How do you know so much about Mr. Price's dog?" questioned Gertrude. "Did any of you ever see it?"

"No," responded Caroline quickly, "but I guess we've got the description by heart. Mr. Price thought so much of him, and he helped drive the cows home, and everything. He described him to the boys around, and said he'd give a dollar to any one who would bring him home."

Gertrude opened her eyes. "A dollar! Goodness, girls, we could have a lot of fun with a dollar."

"And wouldn't it be a joke on the boys if we could get ahead of them and take the dog home before they knew about it," said Madge.

"Let's do it," they exclaimed in chorus.

"But who knows where Mr. Price lives?" suggested Edna.

And then the girls looked at each other, but nobody said a word.

"Here comes Fayra!" exclaimed Madge.

"Let's see if she knows."

And then they all began talking to Fayra at once.

"Oh, yes, I know where Mr. Price lives," she answered. "Why do you want to know?"

They explained that they had found his shepherd dog which he had offered one dollar to have returned.

"It's quite a way out in the country," said Fayra, "but it's a perfect day for a walk. Let's start right away."

"How'll we take the dog?" asked Edna.

"Oh, I'll get a rope and we'll lead him," answered Caroline, and off she started toward the barn.

The other girls began calling to Ponce, who had fortunately stopped on the opposite side of the street to examine a suspicious-looking hole.

He came when they called, wagging his tail in friendly fashion; and when Caroline came back with the rope he made no particular objection to their putting it around his neck.

Then they started for the country, taking turns in leading Ponce, who seemed really glad to have fallen in with such good company, even though they were leading him captive and spoiling his plans for a more extended vacation.

On the way they talked a great deal about the best use of the dollar they were to receive, and made wild dashes after stray flowers that grew along

the roadside. Ponce dashed out with them, and sometimes it seemed as though he were having the best time of them all.

There was one steep hill to climb, and the girls agreed with Fayra's statement that it was a long way to Mr. Price's, but there were woods and flowers along the way, and it was pleasant after all.

Presently they came to a big gate, which seemed to block the road.

"Take hold, girls, and help push it back," called Fayra. "This is where Mr. Price lives."

They all took hold, and the gate slid back, and in a moment more they were walking down the lane which led to the farmhouse.

Ponce barked and jumped and almost wagged himself in two, running from one to another of the girls.

"See how glad he is to get home," said Caroline.

Just then a pleasant-looking man came out of the door of the house and walked down the lane toward them.

"That's Mr. Price," said Fayra, quickly.

"Now, Madge, you do the talking."

And as some one had to say something, Madge began: "Mr. Price, we have brought your dog" – but something in the expression of Mr. Price's face made her stop.

"I thank you very much for having gone to so much trouble," he answered, "but really, that isn't my dog."

And then you should have seen the expression on the faces of those five girls!

But what do you suppose Ponce did? He just laid down and rolled on the ground, and no one who saw him could help but believe that he was laughing too hard to stand up.

The girls did not lead him home, but he pranced along with them, as though he were not half so disgusted with their society as they were with his.

And that night Ponce went back to his real home and settled down to work again, feeling, no doubt, that his vacation fun had done him a world of good.

Brave Trix

UNCLE FRED WAS A FIREMAN, and he was Lawrence's hero. Trix was Uncle Fred's dog, and the most wonderful dog, in Lawrence's estimation, that ever lived. And Trix proved that he deserved Lawrence's good opinion, but that is what I am going to tell you about.

Whenever Lawrence heard an alarm of fire sounded, he flew to the window of the fire barn and looked in, for he never could tire of seeing the horses dash from their stalls to their places in front of the engine or the hose cart. And then it was quite as exciting, after the men had dropped the harnesses upon their backs and snapped them into place, to see the great doors swing open and the horses go clattering out of the barn and away up the street, with the men holding to their places, the drivers grasping the lines and bracing back at arm's length, and the men at the back of the great hook and ladder truck, turning the wheel which helps to guide it.

But if Lawrence flew when he heard an alarm of fire, Trix went faster still, and he did not stay to look through the windows, but darted into the barn and jumped up beside the driver's seat, where he rode to every single fire.

Of course the firemen all petted Trix, and every one in the neighborhood knew and spoke to him.

One day the fire alarm sounded, and Lawrence and Trix came bounding out of the yard together, and then Lawrence clasped his hands and drew a sharp breath of terror, for the fire was in the house directly opposite his own. He was about to shout to Trix, but he did not need to, for Trix's nose had detected the familiar smell of smoke, and he stopped short and began to look around. In a moment he saw the thinly curling smoke coming from the house across the street, and away he dashed, not to the fire barn this time, but straight for the front door of the house, which stood wide open.

“Oh,” screamed Lawrence; “Trix’ll get burnt up!”

By this time mamma had come out into the yard, too. “Trix is used to fires, you must remember,” she said, quietly, for she saw how excited Lawrence was; but really, she wondered herself why Trix should go into the house.

But they had not long to wonder, for just at that moment Trix came dashing out again with a sofa pillow in his mouth. Running to a corner of the yard he dropped it on the grass and ran back. Lawrence clapped his hands and began to watch eagerly, and in a moment Trix came out again, carefully carrying a lady’s hat, which he laid beside the sofa pillow.

By this time the family and neighbors began bringing out pieces of furniture, bedding, and clothes, but Trix went fastest of all, and soon added to his collection a floor-brush and a waste-paper basket.

Then the fire department came dashing up, with a ringing of gongs and a clatter of horses’ hoofs, and as the men jumped down and went hurrying up the steps of the house, out dashed Trix again, and what do you suppose he had this time? Well, it was a dear little baby, and he was carrying it just as carefully as its mother could have done, only he had it by the back, grasping its clothes firmly in his teeth, and holding his head high up in the air.

“Good dog!” exclaimed Uncle Fred, who was just running into the house. And then Trix wagged his tail hard, as Uncle Fred took the baby in his arms and carried it across the street to Lawrence’s mother, while all the people around gave a great shout.

Somehow, in the excitement everybody had supposed that somebody else had the baby, for its mother was away from home.

It was not long after the firemen came that the fire was put out, and Trix, after riding back to the barn in his usual place, ran over to see Lawrence again.

Lawrence’s praise would quite have turned his head, I am sure, if he had not been a sensible dog; but as it was, he was just as ready for a game of tag as before he became a hero.

Of course the story of Trix’s presence of mind was told many times over in the neighborhood, and the father of the baby gave him a beautiful collar

with a little silver plate, on which was engraved “Brave Trix.”

Peter's Boarding House

DID YOU EVER HEAR OF A CAT taking in boarders? I never did till I heard of Peter. But he was a real cat, and this is a true story I am going to tell you.

Peter was only an adopted cat, but his master thought just as much of him as though he had been born and brought up on the premises. And it is no wonder, for he proved himself more kind and thoughtful than some of the grown people of his neighborhood. But that was afterward.

Peter's master, Dr. Hartley, found him during a pelting rain, and took the poor, forlorn, wet kitten home with him and put him on his warm hearth-rug. Peter soon shook off the rain-drops and the air of dejection which he had brought in, and prepared to make friends with his new master, and it was not long before Dr. Hartley decided that he would keep Peter for his own cat.

Peter thrived finely, for of course a doctor's cat would be expected to eat only those things which were good for him, and he grew to be big and sleek. He was a friendly cat, and he made the acquaintance of the other cats of the neighborhood while the doctor was out calling on his patients.

Every morning Peter went with the doctor to the corner near their house, and at the corner the doctor would turn and say "good-by," and Peter would give an answering "mew" and turn and trot back home. But one morning the doctor was thinking of a particularly trying case that he was going to visit, and when he reached the corner he forgot to say "good-by."

Peter reached the corner and mewed, but the doctor walked on. Peter stopped a minute, then he trotted on after, and mewed again; but still the doctor walked on with his mind full of other matters. Peter ran after him with patient determination, and mewed again, this time louder than ever.

Then Dr. Hartley stopped, looked down at Peter and back to the corner where he usually left him. "Good-by, Peter," he said, suddenly remembering his companion and his own failure in courtesy.

Then Peter gave a contented mew, and turned and trotted back home.

Dr. Hartley lived next door to a double house, the yard of which was separated from his own premises by a high board fence. With the family which occupied one-half of this double house there lived a cat and her five kittens, and with the family in the other half of the house there lived a very small puppy. Peter had made the acquaintance of all of them.

One day the two families went away for a visit of a week, and evidently they forgot the kittens and the puppy, for they were all left behind.

Not long after these families had gone away, Dr. Hartley was looking out of a back window, when he noticed that Peter went over the high fence several times in succession, and each time brought the cat from next door back with him. Dr. Hartley thought he would watch and see what Peter was up to. In a few minutes the cats went back, and when they came over again, each had a small kitten in its mouth. A second trip was made, each bringing a second kitten, and then back they went once more. After a little longer time they appeared again, and this time the mother cat had her remaining kitten in her mouth, while Peter held on firmly to the small puppy from the house beyond. The puppy was not enjoying his trip, evidently, for he kicked and squealed with fright; but Peter was not easily dismayed, and carried him in triumph into the woodshed.

Presently the doctor heard a mewing and a scratching at his door, and opened it to find Peter standing in the hall. Now, Peter was a diplomatic cat, and when the doctor opened the door he rubbed up against his leg in the most coaxing manner. Then going a few steps down the hall, he turned and mewed, evidently asking the doctor to follow.

The doctor understood, and followed. Peter went straight to the pantry door, arched his back and rubbed against it, at the same time looking up into the doctor's face.

The doctor had a way of humoring Peter, so now he opened the door and took a generous plateful of food from the pantry shelves. Then Peter in tri-

umph led the way to the woodshed, where in his own box lay, not only the mother cat with her five kittens, but the refractory puppy as well.

“Well!” exclaimed the doctor. “So you’ve taken boarders, have you, Peter?”

But as he set the plate of food down at the same time, Peter did not take the trouble to answer.

For a week Peter took care of his “boarders,” and then the two families returned.

As soon as Peter learned of their arrival, he went to his box and took up one of the kittens. The mother cat seemed to understand, and took up another, and in the same fashion that the boarders had arrived, they took their departure, the puppy going in company with the last kitten, and objecting just as vigorously as when he came.

After returning from the last trip, Peter walked lazily over and stretched himself out in the middle of the pansy bed for what he evidently considered a much needed rest.

How Muff Won Her Way

MAMMA DID NOT LIKE CATS one bit, and the strangest part of it was that she did not even like kittens. So we children never had owned any, although we hugged every neighbor's cat that we could get hold of, and often talked over by ourselves how perfectly lovely it would be if we could just have one for our very own. We had been forbidden to feed stray cats about the door; so when we found one that seemed especially needy, we coaxed it off down the alley, and brought it as many dainties as we could induce cook to give us. All this did not satisfy our longing to possess a kitten of our own, but it had to answer us for a long time. But at last something happened.

It was a very cold week during the winter, and the snow was several feet deep. One day as we were coming home from school, just as we reached the corner of our yard, Dick espied something gray in the snow. He stopped to look at it, and then called the rest of us excitedly.

"Why, it's a kitten!" he exclaimed, "and I believe it's frozen in the snow." We all cried out in horror at this, and were at his side at a bound.

It was a kitty, sure enough, and she did not move or make a sound.

"She must be dead," Dick repeated, while the rest of us wrung our hands at such a calamity.

"Run for mamma," Dick suddenly commanded; and I darted away, glad to be able to do something.

Mamma was the one to go to in trouble of any sort, and I reached her quite out of breath.

"Oh, mamma, there's a cat out in the snow-drift, and she can't move, and we're afraid she's frozen. Won't you come out and see?"

Then, for the first time, I remembered how mamma disliked cats, and my heart gave a big jump. But, dear me, I might have known better, for mamma was always ready to help anything that was in trouble, and almost before I had finished speaking she had on her overshoes and a shawl, and was ready to go with me.

As soon as we reached the kitty, mamma began digging away the snow, and pretty soon she lifted it out. Poor kitty seemed quite stiff, but mamma said, "I don't think she is dead;" and then how glad we all were.

We took her into the kitchen, wrapped her in a blanket, and after a while she gave a faint mew. We children fairly danced about at that, and some of us watched her all the rest of the afternoon. By night she was able to take a little milk; and then we felt sure she was going to get well.

Somehow nothing was said about where she was to live after she should grow quite strong again; but we children made the most of our opportunity, and cuddled her and loved her and fed her dainty bits that we saved from our plates.

After the kitty got well, mamma paid no attention to her. She sort of acted as though she didn't know there was a kitty around. But one night when we children were all having a good time with Muff, as we had named the kitten, I heard papa say to mamma, "Just watch those children;" and mamma answered, "Yes, I have. I didn't suppose children could think so much of a cat."

I would have felt quite glad over mamma's answer if she hadn't said "cat" in such a tone at the end.

One evening, a little later, as we were all sitting before the grate fire, kitty came in and curled down at papa's feet. In a little while she began to purr contentedly, and papa smiled at mamma as he said, "It sounds quite homelike, doesn't it?"

Mamma smiled a little, but did not say anything. I began to wonder if papa didn't like kittens pretty well.

After awhile Muff got up and began playing with the balls on mamma's wrapper. She boxed the balls around, and tumbled the cutest little somersaults, and danced around on her back legs, till we all began laughing so heartily that she ran behind the heavy curtains and looked out at us in won-

der. Then mamma tied a string to an empty spool and gave it to me so that I could coax her out, and we all watched her as she played with it a long time.

I looked at papa when mamma did that, and he nodded and smiled to me, and I smiled back, but we didn't say anything.

After that we watched the kitty play very often in the evening. It was great fun.

One day we children sat on the back doorstep and cautiously began talking over the possibility of kitty's being allowed to make her home with us.

"Oh, mamma'd never!" Dick exclaimed, with firm conviction.

The others began looking forlorn over this emphatic speech, and I was sent to bring out Muff so that we might enjoy her as much as possible before we were obliged to give her up.

I knew that mamma was lying down, so I tiptoed in softly. I looked in the kitchen and in the library, two of Muff's favorite places for napping, but did not find her, so I went on into mamma's room. I peeped in quietly, and what do you suppose I saw? Why, mamma was lying on the couch, and there curled down beside her was Muff, fast asleep, with mamma's hand stroking her gray fur softly.

I didn't say a word to mamma, but I rushed out to the children, and dancing before them I exclaimed, "Mamma's cuddling the kitten! Mamma's cuddling the kitten!"

"Then she can stay!" we all shouted; and in we rushed pell-mell to mamma, and hugged both her and the kitten in our ecstasy.

And that is how Muff became one of the family.

How The Kittens Were Named

THERE WAS THE MOTHER CAT with five kittens, and none of the kittens had names. Somehow, the children had been so busy watching them tumble over each other and try to walk and then all go to sleep in a bunch, that they had not thought of naming them.

The mother cat was gray, and four of the kittens were gray, but the fifth cat was black, jet black, and so without planning or forethought the fifth kitten came to be called Blackie.

It was easy enough to tell her from the others, but how to tell the four gray ones apart was a question. At last it was discovered that three of the gray ones had white feet, while the fourth one was gray all over. So again, without a thought of naming her, the children began calling her Gray Paws.

And then there were the other three. One of these had but one eye, the children found out, sorrowfully, after the kittens were old enough to prove that they had any eyes at all, and then in all tenderness and with no thought of reproach, the afflicted kitten became One Eye.

Still there were two left; two that looked almost exactly alike. But of course the children watched them every day, and it did not take them long to find out that one of these was a very spunky kitten. She would spit at the others if they came near when she was eating, or if she was suddenly surprised by any one; and when this was discovered she was dubbed the Spit-fire of the family.

But the remaining kitten was the one that made the others “stand ’round.” If they did not do as she saw fit she boxed their ears. If the rest came around her saucer of milk she cuffed them away, and so, of course, she was the Boss.

And no one was more surprised than the children when they discovered that the kittens were all named, for every one was sure he had not named

them.

And such a funny lot of names as it was: Blackie, Gray Paws, One Eye, Spitfire, and Boss. But the names all fitted, and some of them had been earned, and the kittens didn't seem to mind them in the least.

Old Woolly Stockings

OLD WOOLLY STOCKINGS was a big white rooster that belonged to Freddie Coates. He had been christened Woolly Stockings because his feet and legs were covered with white feathers.

The way Freddie came to have the rooster was this: Freddie's papa had bought him when he was just a young rooster, and brought him home, intending to have him killed and broiled; but this seemed altogether too dreadful to Freddie, who begged that the rooster be given to him to keep, instead.

So Woolly Stockings became Fred's property, although this was before he had been given a name.

Before the winter was over, Fred had become the possessor of two more roosters, which a friend in the country had brought to him. He was too tender-hearted to have either of these killed, but Woolly Stockings continued to be his favorite.

Both the other roosters were dark in color, but the white one, by virtue of being the oldest inhabitant of the barnyard, considered himself the most important. He never allowed the other roosters to crow during all their residence with him.

He was selfish, too. When Freddie threw the corn to "his chickens," as he always called them, old Woolly Stockings would spread out his big feet, with their covering of feathers, and hide as much of the corn as possible. The other roosters would try to pick the kernels out from under his feet, but he would scold them and try to drive them away, until he had eaten as much as he wanted.

"I'm dreadfully afraid Woolly Stockings is growing up to be a greedy, naughty rooster," Freddie said to mamma one day.

“How can I teach him to be nice and generous?”

But mamma hadn't the least idea how to teach roosters good manners, although she taught one little boy with the best of success.

Fred alternately coaxed and scolded at Woolly Stockings every time he fed him; but, as far as he could discover, without making the slightest improvement in his behavior.

But Woolly Stockings was not wholly bad, as was proved one day in the early spring.

Papa gave Fred a great surprise one morning by offering to let him have six hens in exchange for the two dark roosters. Of course he knew better than to offer to make any exchange for Woolly Stockings, in spite of the hitter's bad manners.

Fred was delighted at the offer, and agreed to the exchange at once. So papa took the two roosters away with him, and at supper-time he came home, bringing the six hens. If Woolly Stockings had been lonely during the day, he was too independent to show it.

Papa took the box out into the back yard, and pulling off the slats, let the hens out.

Woolly Stockings stood for a moment and looked at them. He put his head on one side and walked about, evidently admiring the new arrivals.

Then how he did strut around, flap his wings and crow, as though challenging the admiration of the hens.

Pretty soon two of the hens started to run out of the yard. Woolly Stockings gravely placed himself in front of them and drove them back, and all with an air of gallantry which was delightfully funny to see.

After that there was no more trouble about Woolly Stockings' manners. He grew up to be as kind and polite as even Freddie could wish.

“Mamma,” Freddie said one morning, after feeding the chickens, “Woolly Stockings doesn't step on the corn any more. When he sees me coming with it, he calls the hens to come and share it with him. I am so glad he has learned good manners, for now he is just the nicest rooster in this town.”

The Rescue Of Mother Hen's Family

“OH, DEAR! OH, DEAR!” exclaimed Rodney, as he stood in the doorway of the great barn watching the drenching downpour of rain outside.

“What’s the matter, Rodney?” asked papa, who was sitting upon an overturned keg.

“Well,” answered Rodney, “I wish mamma was out here, or that we were in there.”

Papa laughed a little. “That isn’t a bad wish,” he said; “but we should be glad we got this far before the deluge came.”

“Yes, I am,” Rodney replied, looking out again to see what he had escaped.

He and papa had been out in the field together when they noticed a great bank of green, angry-looking clouds in the west, and heard distant thunder, and saw forks of bright lightning chasing each other rapidly across the sky.

“We must hurry home as fast as we can, Rodney,” papa had said; and he called to Alfred, the hired man, who was working near by.

So they all jumped into the wagon and then – my! how fast papa did drive the horses home! But it was none too fast after all, for just as they drove inside the door of the big barn, down came the rain, as though the whole ocean might have been let loose up above them.

Mamma had been watching for them from the house, and she waved her hand to Rodney as the horses went dashing past the door, feeling very glad indeed that they were back in time. But the downpour had come so soon af-

ter, that she could not get to the barn any better than Rodney could get to the house.

Pretty soon the water began to run along all the little slopes, like small rivers, and to stand in deep pools in the yard.

“Oh, dear!” Rodney began again, wondering how he was ever to get to mamma, when he heard a queer noise, and stopped to listen. Papa and Alfred had gone upstairs in the barn to do some work, so they did not hear the queer noise down below.

“Oh,” said Rodney to himself, “the water’s running into the basement. It sounds just like a river. Papa! Papa!”

Papa did not hear at first, but when he did he came downstairs, and then he hurried to the top of the steps which led to the basement of the barn.

“My! my!” he exclaimed, as he looked down. “The basement is filling with water.”

Alfred hurried part way down the stairs after him, and Rodney perched on the top step and peered down as best he could.

“There’s nothing we can do,” papa said at length, “until the water stops running.”

So they all came up again, and papa and Alfred went on upstairs to their work.

After awhile Rodney grew tired of watching the puddles in the yard and the great splashes of water that fell into them, and he thought he would look down into the basement again and see how deep the water was now.

He went part way down the stairs, and then he sat upon one of the steps to watch it. After a few minutes his eyes became used to the darker room, and presently he thought he heard a noise down there that was different from the sound of the water. He strained his eyes to look all about, and then suddenly he cried out:

“Why, Mother Hen, are you down here?”

For there, perched upon a round of a ladder which leaned against the opposite wall, and just above the water, was Rodney’s own Mother Hen, drawn up into a strange-looking bunch, and clucking with all her might.

Rodney strained his eyes again; for, surely, where Mother Hen was, there her chickens could always be found, too. And then Rodney discovered, floating about in the water in a helpless fashion, three yellow balls.

“Oh, papa,” he exclaimed, breathlessly, a moment later, “do come down quick! Mother Hen is in the basement, and her little chicks are all drowned.”

Papa and Alfred ran down quickly, and, seeing that Rodney had not been mistaken, they quickly pulled off their shoes and stockings, rolled up their trousers’ legs, and waded into the water. They fished out the three poor little chickens and handed them to Rodney, who was delighted to find that they were not dead after all.

“But there are two more, papa,” he said. “You know Mother Hen had five chickens.”

So papa and Alfred hunted for the other chickens, but they could not find them anywhere.

“It is no use,” papa said at last. “The others must have drowned.”

Then, thinking it was time that Mother Hen was rescued, he waded over to where she was, and there suddenly stopped.

“Why, Rodney!” he exclaimed. Then he picked up Mother Hen carefully, and carrying her over to where Rodney was, held her up before him, and what do you think Rodney saw? Why, sticking out from under each of Mother Hen’s wings was a little yellow head, and there, safe and dry, were the two missing chickens!

A Restaurant For Birds

"I INTEND DRIVING OUT to see Uncle Otto to-day," said Mr. Marcy, at the breakfast-table. "Who would like to take a sleigh-ride with me?" and he looked straight into Kitty's eyes.

"Oh, I would like to, papa," said Kitty, quickly. "May I?"

"If mamma thinks best," Mr. Marcy answered; and as mamma was willing, Kitty was soon putting on warm wraps and preparing for her five-mile drive.

Uncle Otto lived upon the State experimental farm, where he studied the birds and insects, and then told the farmers about them, and how to get rid of those that destroyed the crops; and a visit to him was always full of interest to Kitty.

Indeed, she thought there never could be another uncle quite so nice as Uncle Otto.

Kitty lived in Minnesota, where they sometimes have a great deal of snow in the winter, and this year there had been an unusual amount. The sleighing was fine, and the country seemed so clean and pretty that Kitty could not help exclaiming as they sped along, for in the city the snow was dirty, and here everything was white, as snow ought to be.

The drifts were piled high on each side of the somewhat narrow road, and when they met a team, papa had to turn out very carefully in order to avoid upsetting the sleigh. But Kitty thought it all great fun, and helped lean over when necessary, in order to keep the sleigh balanced.

"I wonder what Uncle Otto will have new to show me this time," said Kitty, as they caught the first sight of the large buildings which told her that they were nearly at the end of their ride. "He always has something differ-

ent from what anybody else would have,” she added, “and I learn something every time I come out here.”

“I wonder, too,” answered papa. And then he drove up to the house, and Uncle Otto himself came out and helped Kitty to unwrap the big fur robe which tucked her in so comfortably, and pretty soon they were all sitting beside the fire and talking as if it had been a year instead of two months since they had seen each other.

Immediately after lunch Uncle Otto turned to Kitty and said, “I am going out now to see to my birds’ restaurant. Would you like to go with me?”

“Indeed I would!” said Kitty, looking puzzled. But she ran to get her wraps.

When they started, Uncle Otto took with him a large covered basket, and he went out toward the great grove of oak-trees which extended for miles back of his house.

Presently he stopped beneath a tree and showed Kitty a coil of loose wire hanging from a branch. Then he opened his basket and took out something white and round like a ball.

“What is that, Uncle Otto?” asked Kitty.

“That is mutton suet,” he answered. Then he uncoiled the wire, placed the suet on the branch, and bound it securely with the wire.

“Now,” he added, turning to Kitty, “one table is spread ready for dinner.”

“Oh,” said Kitty, suddenly, “you do it for the birds?”

“Yes, indeed,” Uncle Otto returned.

“You see there are lots of cold-weather birds who do not leave us through the long winter, and when the snow gets very deep they have a hard time to find enough to eat; then besides, when it is very cold indeed, as it has been lately, they need some kind of food which will produce heat in their little bodies, and the mutton suet does just that. So when I began to think how deep the snow was and how long it had been cold, I thought I had better open a restaurant for the birds, or some of them might die; and this is the way I did it.”

Kitty looked interested, so Uncle Otto went on. “I fasten the suet in place with wire, because if I tied it on with string the birds would peck at the string, and their dinner would drop to the ground and probably be eaten by a dog or cat. I tie it high on the tree for the same reason, so that only the birds shall have it.”

Uncle Otto had been tying many pieces of suet in place while he talked, and now that the last one was secured they turned back to the house.

“What a chattering!” exclaimed Kitty, stopping suddenly and looking back.



“WHAT A CHATTERING!” EXCLAIMED KITTY.

“Yes,” said Uncle Otto, “the birds are very sociable at dinner, and sometimes, I am sorry to say, they do not display the best of manners or disposi-

tion, but I always try to think it is the fault of their training, and so do not blame them so much. At any rate, I would not want even the naughty ones to go hungry.”

“But how do they know so soon that their dinner is ready?” asked Kitty.

“I have come to believe,” said Uncle Otto, “that some of them watch for me, and when they see me they call out to the others that dinner is ready, for only a few days after I began putting the suet out for them, I noticed the noise, and that they all gathered very quickly after I went away. So I have come to the conclusion that they look for me, and know that I am manager of their restaurant.”

Kitty laughed heartily. “What a funny idea!” she said. “I believe I’ll start a restaurant on a small scale at home. I like to see the birds around, and it would be such fun to watch them. But do you know,” she added, “I never thought before about the deep snow making it hard for them to find enough to eat. If I cannot have a restaurant, I will at least start a lunch counter.”

A Saucy Band Of Robbers

FRANKIE SAT by the tightly-closed window of the hotel, watching, with a very small degree of interest, the horses and the people who passed, and wishing with all his might that he had not sprained his ankle on the slippery sidewalk two days before.

His foot didn't hurt so dreadfully, now that the doctor had fixed it, but he could not even step on it, and so he had to sit in a chair all day, and he was getting pretty tired of that.

Mamma had read stories to him, and they had played checkers and dominoes and looked at pictures, and then he had watched the strange procession of black horses, gray horses, and brown horses, with occasionally a little long-eared donkey, driven by people dressed in all kinds of coats, caps, and hats. But at last he had grown tired of that, too.

"Mamma, they all look alike now," he exclaimed; "and there isn't another thing to look at!"

"I wonder if that is right," said mamma, and she looked earnestly out of the window for a moment. Then she laughed softly.

"Frank," she said, "I have discovered a band of robbers right across the street from the hotel. You watch the fruit-stand over there and see if you can find them, too."

Frank was interested now. What boy wouldn't be when he was given the task of discovering a bold band of robbers, especially from so safe a place as a hotel window? So he began to watch the fruit stand opposite very intently.

The proprietor of the stand, a moment after he began watching, laid two cracked nuts on top of the pile of nuts which was temptingly displayed on a shelf or tray outside the door.

“I suppose he thinks people will see by those how nice and fresh his nuts are, and will buy them,” Frank said, as the proprietor went in and shut the door.

“Yes,” said mamma, “that is the way he advertises them.”

“Oh-h!” exclaimed Frank, almost before mamma had finished speaking, for, as soon as the door of the shop had closed, a fat little sparrow new down, lighted on the pile of nuts, and driving his bill firmly into the meat of a nut that was cracked, flew away with it to the low roof of the fruit stand. In a moment another sparrow pounced down upon the second nut, and carried that off to the roof. Then they chattered and hopped about and pecked away at the nut kernels, and seemed just as happy over them as though they had not been stolen.

Pretty soon the proprietor came to the door again, and he seemed to discover that his nicely cracked nuts were gone, for he looked at the pile, and then looked up and down the street.

“He thinks some boys have come along and taken them,” said Frank, with a laugh.

Mamma laughed, too. “I’m afraid he will not catch them this time,” she said.

Pretty soon he came out again with more nuts nicely cracked, and placed those, as he had the others, on the top of the pile.

The sparrows must have been watching, for as soon as he was safely within the door, down they flew again, one after another, until every piece of the cracked nuts had been carried off.

At least five birds had taken part in this theft, and they danced and chattered harder than ever on the roof of the little fruit stand as they pecked and pecked at the delicious nut meats.

In a moment the owner of the nuts came out of the door again. His nice samples were gone, and not a boy in sight!

He seemed very much puzzled, and took off his cap and rubbed his head thoughtfully. And just then something happened.

I don't know whether one of the sparrows was particularly careless or particularly roguish, but at any rate he dropped his empty nut-shell straight down upon the man's bare head.

The man looked down to see what had hit him, and then he looked up to see where it had come from, and then – well, then he put his hands on his two fat sides and laughed.

Frank laughed, too, you may imagine, and so did mamma, and then Frank watched to see what would happen next.

But evidently the man did not think his method of advertising had proved a success, for he brought out no more nuts, and at last the sparrows flew away to look up some new piece of mischief.

A Race

RED WAS ALMOST ASLEEP. He had been traveling on the cars for nearly two clays, and all of this second day they had been crossing the plains of Montana, where there had been very little to interest a boy of ten outside the car windows.

But just as his head was beginning to droop in a sleepy nod, Cousin Arthur took hold of his arm, and said: "Do you see that pony standing beside the car? That is a real cowboy's pony."

Fred was awake in a moment, and he looked out of the window eagerly.

The train had stopped at a station, but there were no buildings to be seen, except the depot and one other small frame house.

The pony was standing quite near the car, his head stretched out and the reins hanging down toward the ground.

"When the cowboy throws the reins over the pony's head," said Cousin Arthur, "the pony knows that he is to stand still, just as our horses stand still when they are tied."

"Why don't the cowboys tie their ponies?" asked Fred, curiously.

"What would they tie them to?" asked Cousin Arthur; and then Fred laughed at his own question, for as far as you could see in any direction there was not a bush nor a post in sight, to say nothing of a tree or a fence.

"The ponies understand," said Cousin Arthur, "and one that has been trained will not move when he is left that way."

Just then the whistle blew for the train to start, and as it whistled a cowboy, the owner of the pony, dashed out of the little frame building and jumped on the pony's back.

He wore a broad felt hat, a bright red shirt, a bandanna handkerchief tied loosely around his neck, and a pair of leather breeches with the hair left upon that part of the leather which formed the front of the legs. Around his waist was a cartridge belt, with two big "six-shooters" fastened to it. Fred watched him with wide-open eyes.

When he jumped so suddenly into the saddle the pony placed its four feet close together and began to "buck." The motion that it made was like that of a rocking-horse, only it was not nearly so smooth. First its fore feet struck the ground together, then its back feet, and as they went as fast as he could make them go right in the same spot, and as he kept his head and tail down as close to his feet as possible, it took a very good rider to keep in the saddle.

Fred laughed heartily at the comical sight, and at the same time wondered how the cowboy could stay on. But he did.

Presently the man struck his spurs into the pony's sides, and with one great plunge he started off. The train had started, too, and for a mile the cowboy and his pony kept up with the train.

Fred grew more and more excited as the race kept up, and when at last the cowboy drew rein and the plucky little pony dropped behind, Fred got up and waved his cap. Then he dropped back into his seat, but you may be sure he was not sleepy for some time after that.

A Winter Walk

“COME, CHARLIE,” called Uncle Lewis one winter morning, “let us take a walk through the woods.”

“All right,” Charlie responded. He could not understand why Uncle Lewis should want to go into the woods in winter, but he and Uncle Lewis were the best of friends, so he was soon ready to go with him.

There had been a fresh fall of snow a few days before, and as they started out Charlie could not help noticing how clean and white everything looked.

“The snow is beautiful in the woods,” said Uncle Lewis as he strode along.

“Just see how the dark trunks of the trees stand out against it,”

The chickadees were flitting about and calling gaily to one another.

“I am so glad the chickadees stay through the winter!” said Charlie. “They are not fine singers, but they don’t desert us as soon as it grows cold, like most of the birds do.”

“I like the chickadees, too,” said Uncle Lewis. “It is always easy to find warm-weather friends.”

Presently Uncle Lewis laid his hand on Charlie’s arm and said, “Hark!” very softly.

From just over their heads came two soft, liquid notes that were sweet and musical. Charlie looked up. There was no bird in sight but a blue-jay. Charlie was about to turn away, when he saw the bird’s throat swell and the bill open, and then again came the two soft, sweet notes. He looked at Uncle Lewis in surprise.

“Why, I thought the blue-jay could only scream and scold!” he said.

“We have caught him unawares,” replied Uncle Lewis. “It is true that his reputation as a singer and as a neighbor is none of the best, but he really has a better side to his nature which he is usually careful to conceal from men.”

“I shall always like the blue-jay better after this,” said Charlie. “What a pity it is that he cannot always show this side of his nature!”

They walked on a little farther, when they were suddenly startled by a whirr of gray wings, and a partridge flew across their path and disappeared among the trees ahead.

“Here are some interesting footprints,” said Uncle Lewis, stepping out into the deep snow. “Let us look at them.”

Charlie stopped. “What funny tracks!” he exclaimed.

“Yes,” said Uncle Lewis, “those are rabbit tracks. You can just imagine one bounding along as you look at the prints in the snow. And here,” he added, “are the tiny footprints of a field-mouse. What dainty little marks it has made!”

“See,” said Charlie, following the small trail, “a bird has hopped across the field mouse’s track. You can tell that it hopped because the tracks are side by side.”

A few steps farther on there was another queer trail. “What is this?” Charlie asked, pointing to the marks.

Uncle Lewis looked carefully. “I do not know what animal made those,” he said, “but it was evidently an animal with a long tail, for do you see the continuous, wavering line between the footprints?”

Charlie fairly clapped his hands. “Yes, I see,” he said. “Oh, Uncle Lewis, I wish I could see the animals that made these tracks all out on the snow together. It would be like a comical fairy story.”

Uncle Lewis laughed. “It really would be fun,” he replied.

“Let us go and look over that bank,” he said, when they had gone on a little farther.

Just as they reached the edge of the bank there was a sudden, startled rush of something small and gray, which disappeared under the edge of the

bank at their feet. They both stooped down and looked closer. It was a tiny animal, probably a field-mouse, judging by the track it had left in the snow.

“Why,” said Charlie, looking intently, “it certainly went under this bank, but its tracks only go part way up.”

“That is so,” said Uncle Lewis, getting down to peer over, “for here is the hole it went into.”

Charlie looked puzzled.

“I think I understand,” Uncle Lewis went on. “The little field-mouse has many enemies in the wood which are bigger than himself, but perhaps not half so smart. You see, the mouse runs along in the snow until it is about a foot from its hole and then it leaps in, leaving the tracks cut off far enough away to puzzle and mislead its enemies. This is undoubtedly the tiny creature’s means of safety and defense. Perhaps he has a wife and children under the bank to care for, and his winter stores are undoubtedly laid away there. How wonderfully God has taught each of his creatures how to defend and care for itself and little ones!”



IT DISAPPEARED UNDER THE EDGE OF THE BANK.

Charlie knelt down on the edge of the bank and peeped into the little hole. “We know your secret, little mouse,” he exclaimed softly, “but we won’t hurt you, you wise little fellow.”

“It is time to go back now,” said Uncle Lewis, looking at his watch.

“All right,” answered Charlie, scrambling to his feet. “But, Uncle Lewis,” he went on, as he ran along by his side, “I knew there were flowers and lots of nice things to see in the woods in summer, but I never knew that there was anything to see in winter before.”

Uncle Lewis smiled. “There are lots of people who have not found that out yet,” he said.

The Dog That Telegraphed

HATTIE AND HER MAMMA were on their way to visit grandma, who lived over one hundred miles from their home. They had taken a train early in the evening, and would have reached grandma's long before bedtime if it had not been for one thing – they had to change cars at a little station in the country and wait a whole hour before their train came.

Before the hour was over Hattie grew very tired and sleepy. She had tried each bench in the station, but had found them equally hard; she had unpacked and packed over again the little valise which papa had given her for her very own just the day before they started; and she had looked through the little window into the office, where a young man sat making a funny, ticking noise on a little instrument.

“I guess it's a play piano,” she said to mamma in a whisper, “but it doesn't make any music, only tick, tick, tick.”

Mamma explained that it was a telegraph instrument the young man was playing upon, and then for some time Hattie was interested in mamma's explanation of how a message could be sent over the wires by means of those little ticks.

But after a time all this lost its interest, too, and the noise of the little instrument grew fainter and fainter in her ears.

Mamma discovered this and saw the little head begin to droop, so she tried to interest Hattie once more in the contents of her valise.

I think the young man must have heard mamma trying to keep Hattie awake till the train came, for pretty soon he came out from the office and whistled. Then a little curly dog that Hattie had not seen at all before came out of the office, too, wagging his tail vigorously.

Hattie opened her eyes wide at this.

“Here, Pompey,” said the young man, “show the little girl how you can telegraph.”

Hattie was very wide awake by this time and sat up quite straight, and what do you suppose the little dog did? Well, he laid down on his back on the bare floor and began to beat upon the boards with his tail, tap, tap, tap-tap-tap, just as the young man had been doing on his telegraph instrument.

How Hattie did laugh, and mamma, too; and then the little dog jumped up and wagged his tail, as much as to say, “Didn’t I do that pretty well?”

After that Hattie found Pompey so amusing that almost before she knew it the train came puffing into the station, and she had to bid good night to the dog that could telegraph, and that had kept her from going to sleep before she reached grandma’s.

What Grandma Sent

RALPH ROGERS was making a collection of birds' nests. He had become interested in watching the birds while studying about them in school, and when his vacation came he began looking for birds whenever he had an opportunity.

He learned a great deal about the habits of the different kinds, and how they constructed their nests. Then later in the season, when the baby birds had learned to fly and the nests were of no more use to the bird families, he began his collection. He would cut down the small branch of the tree on which the nest was hung, or dig up the bit of sod or moss on which it rested, and in this way his nests made a fine showing. His collection was praised by the older members of the family and by his teachers, until Ralph began to take a great deal of pride in it.

At the close of his vacation he wrote a long letter to his grandmother, who lived in the country, but away off in another State, telling her how he had spent his vacation, and what he had learned during the summer months.

Of course, one of the main things that he told her about was his collection of birds' nests. He described how he had thrown bits of string out on the lawn, and then had watched the orioles come and take them and use them to weave into their nest on the end of one of the elm-tree boughs. Then after the orioles had left the nest he had cut it down and kept it.

Grandma always enjoyed Ralph's letters, and she enjoyed this one especially, because she knew at once that she could give him a delightful surprise.

About a week later, Ralph, received a letter from grandma, and in the same mail was a strong, square pasteboard box directed to him.

Ralph opened the letter and this is what it said:

“Dear Ralph: I was very glad to receive your letter, and very much interested in your collection of birds’ nests. And now I have a story to tell you about a bird’s nest. One day in the early summer grandpa was out on the side porch having his hair cut.” (Ralph remembered what beautiful silvery-white hair grandpa had.)

“Of course the wind blew the bunches of hair out into the grass, and a little while afterwards we noticed that a pair of small birds were making frequent trips from a tree near-by to the grass beside the porch. Then we saw that they were carrying away the bunches of hair, and we knew that they must be making a nest. And sure enough, as we found out afterwards, they were lining the nest with the soft, white hair, to make it smooth and beautiful for their babies. Now if you will open the package which I have mailed to you, I think you will find something in it which you will like to add to your collection of nests.”

Your loving “Grandma,”

Ralph opened the package pretty quickly after reading the letter, and there, inside the box, attached to a small branch of a tree, was a little round nest beautifully made, and with the inside completely covered with soft, white hair, woven so that it formed a part of the dainty bird-cradle.

“It’s grandpa’s hair!” exclaimed Ralph, as he ran to show his treasure to mamma.

And do you wonder that all the members of the family considered that nest the chief treasure of all Ralph’s collection?

An Unexpected Parade

ANNA HAD BEEN SICK for two weeks, but now she was able to sit up by the window and see the children go by on their way to school, and watch the chickens scratch industriously in Mrs. Fitkin's yard. There did not seem to be much else to look at; and after a day or two she began to tire of having to sit so still.

But the worst of all was when her brother Tommy told her that papa had promised to take him down town the next afternoon to see the parade, for mamma had read to her about it from the newspaper, and there were to be soldiers in it, and bands of music, and men on horseback all dressed in splendid uniforms, and, oh, she did want to see it so much!

But of course she couldn't, for the doctor would not even let her walk about the house yet. It did seem too bad.

"I'm awful sorry, Anna," said Tommy, as he and papa started off the next day, "but I'll tell you all about it when I get back, just the best I can."

Papa kissed her good-by, and whispered a loving little message in her ear, and then they were gone.

Anna tried to be very brave, because she knew it would grieve mamma if she was unhappy about it, and of course it couldn't be helped; but at the same time she couldn't help wishing that she was well and able to go too.

She did not feel at all interested in Mrs. Fitkin's hens, and there wasn't anything else to watch, except a yellow dog that was lying stupidly in the middle of the road.

Anna laid her head against the back of the big easy chair and closed her eyes.

She was thinking about Tommy and the soldiers and the music, when, from out in the street, she heard a strange, shrill laugh.

She sat up very quickly and looked out. And there was the strangest procession! There were three, four, five, six wagons coming up the street, and on each wagon there were two or three cages, although at a distance they looked simply like big boxes.

Anna called mamma excitedly, for in one of the cages on the first wagon was a gorgeous red and blue parrot, which was talking and laughing by turns, and evidently enjoying the ride very much. There were several other cages on this wagon, some of which held eagles, and others owls, and in one was a small monkey, which now and then opened its mouth as widely as possible, and gave the funniest long, shrill squeal.

Anna sat up and clapped her hands softly. "Oh, mamma," she said, "how funny!"

The other wagons held larger cages. There were black bears standing on their hind legs, holding to the bars at the sides of their cages, and wolves walking back and forth as if they would like to find some way of getting out so that they might run off to the woods again. There were foxes, too, and in one cage was a wildcat. It did not look one bit wild, but like an immense, big house cat, with beautiful eyes and a coat of silky hair. Anna said she felt like hugging it.

In a big cage with a tank in it, which occupied an entire wagon, there were sea-lions, but Anna could not see them very well, for they could not climb or walk about like other animals. But one raised its head, and Anna was satisfied with that.

On the last wagon was a large ape, which must have been teased by the boys and girls, for as soon as it caught sight of Anna at the window it began making faces at her. This was the funniest sight of all.

She watched the ape until it was out of sight, and then she turned to mamma and asked, "Where do you suppose they came from, and wasn't it funny that they came to-day, just when I was wishing so much to see a parade?"

Mamma laughed. "Yes, it was funny," she said, answering Anna's last question first, "but I think I know where they came from. They are the animals that have been kept in the park during the summer, and now that the

weather is becoming colder, they are being moved to winter quarters. They are to be kept in some large barns on a stock-farm outside the city."

"Well," replied Anna, as she leaned back in her chair, "I am so glad they went past here; and won't I have something to tell Tommy when he comes home!"

The Rooster's Joke

THE OLD PLYMOUTH ROCK ROOSTER had to be tied to a tree, because he was such a fighter, and Myrtle watched with interest while her auntie fastened a bit of strap about his ankle, and then a long line from the strap to the tree.

After that Myrtle was allowed to feed him with corn and wheat, and keep his drinking-cup filled with fresh water. In time she began to feel somewhat acquainted with him, and she learned that roosters have traits of character quite as strongly marked as those of people.

One day he had grown tired of walking about his tree and tangling the line into a succession of knots, and he evidently determined to play a joke upon the hens that were roaming about and enjoying the freedom which he was denied, and this is the way he did it, for I am telling you a true story.

He began to scratch in the ground very earnestly, and then, throwing up his head, he called, "Cluck, cluck, cluck, cluck!" in rapid succession. This is rooster language for, "Come, see what I've got!"

The hens all came running in haste, for the roosters are the knights of the poultry yard, and frequently treat the hens to delicious morsels of food – grubs and worms which they dig out of the ground.

Well, when the hens had gathered expectantly around, that old rooster turned his back upon them – for he hadn't a thing for them to eat – and laughed, "H-a-w, cluck, cluck, cluck, cluck! H-a-w, cluck, cluck, cluck, cluck!" ("Oh, wasn't that a good joke! Oh, wasn't that a good joke!") just as plainly as Myrtle herself could have expressed it.

And the hens? They walked away with a disgusted air and began to scratch for themselves.

The Bird That Sang In The Night

ETHEL WAS ONLY FOUR YEARS OLD, so I am sure that it cannot be thought so very, very strange that she should be afraid when she woke up in the night and everything around her was dark and still. But little Ethel was really much troubled about it.

“I know I ought not to be afraid,” she would say to mamma, “but I am every time.”

Mamma tried in many ways to teach Ethel that there was nothing for her to feel frightened about in the darkness, but Ethel still was afraid.

One day mamma and Ethel started off on the railway train to visit Aunt Charlotte, who lived several hundred miles away. They were to be in the cars two days and three nights, and it is not surprising that Ethel thought the journey would be quite wonderful.

There were many things to interest her the first evening, and it took her a long time to get to sleep.

“I feel as though I was packed away in a trunk,” she said to mamma, when she was tucked into the berth in the sleeping car. Mamma laughed, and told her she would not mind it in a little while.

At last Ethel fell asleep, and in a short time mamma went to sleep too.

Some time far on in the night Ethel woke.

“Oh, dear, why did I?” she whispered to herself, and then she felt a jolting which gradually grew less until the train stopped quite still.

Ethel remembered where she was as soon as she woke up, and as usual she began to feel afraid.

The cars were very quiet. Her window was up a little way, and she ventured to peep out. It was perfectly dark.

She was going to reach for mamma's hand and waken her, when she heard a little twitter just outside the car, and then in the stillness and darkness a bird began to sing.

"Why," she said to herself, in sudden surprise, "I didn't know that birds sang in the night. I s'pose it woke up and just began to sing so's to get to sleep again."

She thought about it for several minutes, and forgot to waken mamma.

"The little bird isn't afraid," she said to herself, "and it's all alone in the woods. I wonder if I could sing myself to sleep too."

So she began to hum a song she had learned, very softly, so that she would not waken the other passengers. And her song grew softer and softer, until it ended in a sleepy little murmur, and ceased altogether. And Ethel never was afraid when she wakened in the night after that. She always thought of the little bird in the dark woods, disturbed by the passing train, and like it, she sang herself to sleep again.

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