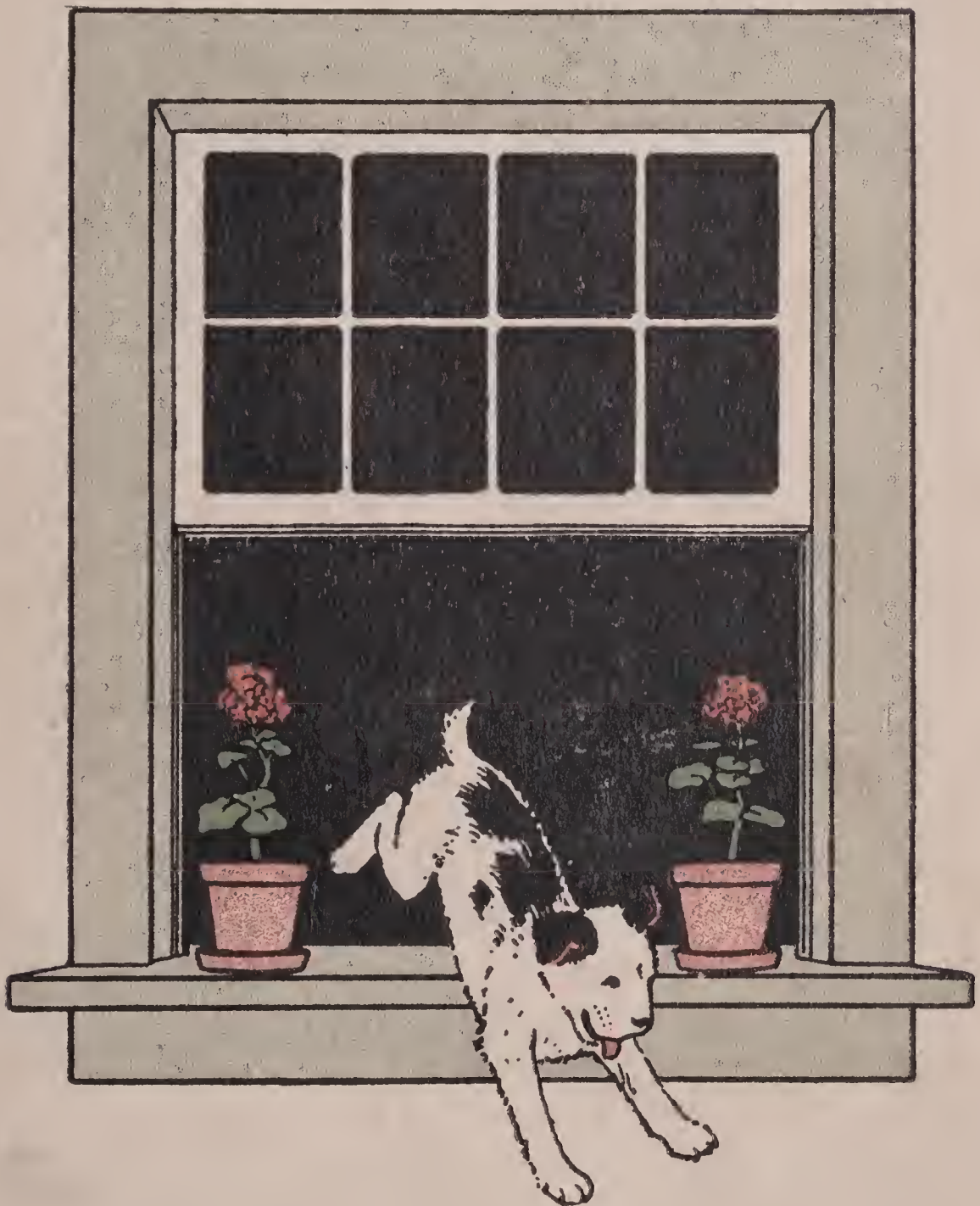
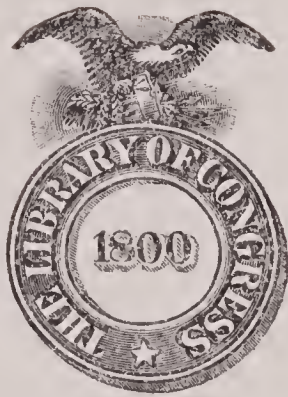


# LITTLE DOG READY



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*By* MABEL F. STRYKER

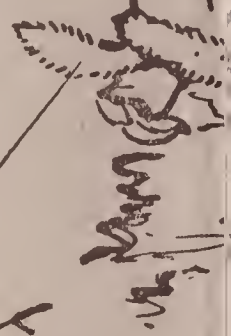


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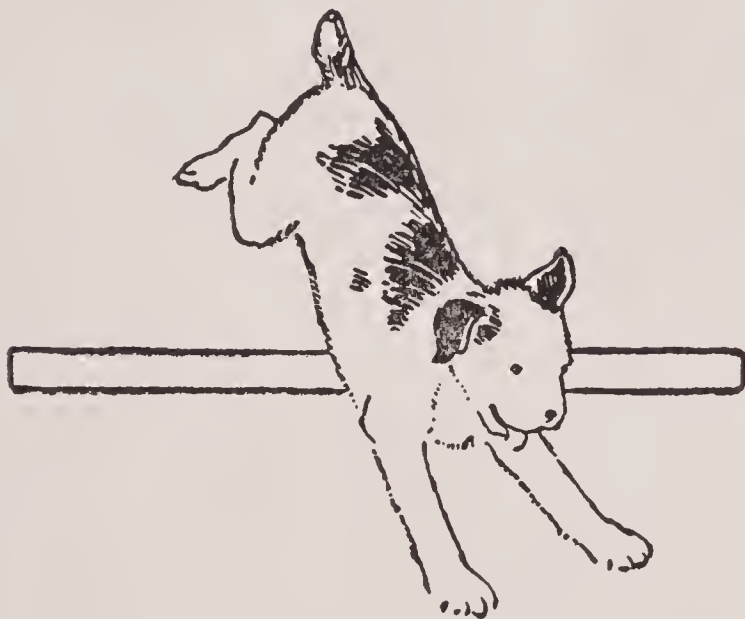
Out ran the chipmunk's

# LITTLE DOG READY

*How He Lost Himself in the Big World*

by MABEL F. STRYKER

With Illustrations by HUGH SPENCER



NEW YORK  
HENRY HOLT AND COMPANY

1923

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TO ALL CHILDREN  
AND GROWN-UPS  
WHO LOVE DOGS





## CONTENTS

### CHAPTER I

How Ready Lost His Head..... 1

### CHAPTER II

Ready a Prisoner..... 11

### CHAPTER III

Freedom ..... 18

### CHAPTER IV

Ready at the Great Gathering..... 32

### CHAPTER V

Bad News..... 50

CHAPTER VI

With the Chipmunks..... 70

CHAPTER VII

The Journey With the Swallows..... 81

CHAPTER VIII

A Dreadful Visitor..... 95

CHAPTER IX

The Journey With the Sandpiper..... 99

CHAPTER X

The End of the Lonely Road.....117



# LITTLE DOG READY



## CHAPTER I

### HOW READY LOST HIS HEAD

**H**E was a little black and white dog with a shaggy coat and a waggy tail. He had very polite eyes which were always watching people to find out what they would like to have him do. Whenever people were kind enough to tell him what they wanted, he would always do it for them if he possibly could, and that is why he was named "Ready."

Ready loved his little master Dick more than any one in the world, and Dick never wanted Ready out of his sight; and that is how this story came about.

It was a very sad day for Dick and Ready

when Dick fell from the apple tree and broke his arm. Have you ever broken your arm? If you have, you know how much it hurts, and how still you have to be. Even then the pain won't go away. Of course Dick wanted Ready with him every single minute of the day and night.

But in the middle of the second night Ready felt that he really must stretch his legs while Dick was asleep. He would not have thought of letting his master know that he was in great need of a little run, but now that Dick was asleep—and he put his nose against Dick's good arm to be quite sure that he was—Ready stepped out of the open window into the big world.

I suppose all would have gone well if Ready had not met Big Yellow Dog. Big Yellow Dog





All would have gone well if Ready had not met  
Big Yellow Dog

had always snubbed Ready frightfully, but even Big Yellow Dogs have their good moments, and this must have been one of them.

Big Yellow Dog said, "Good evening," and almost stopped.

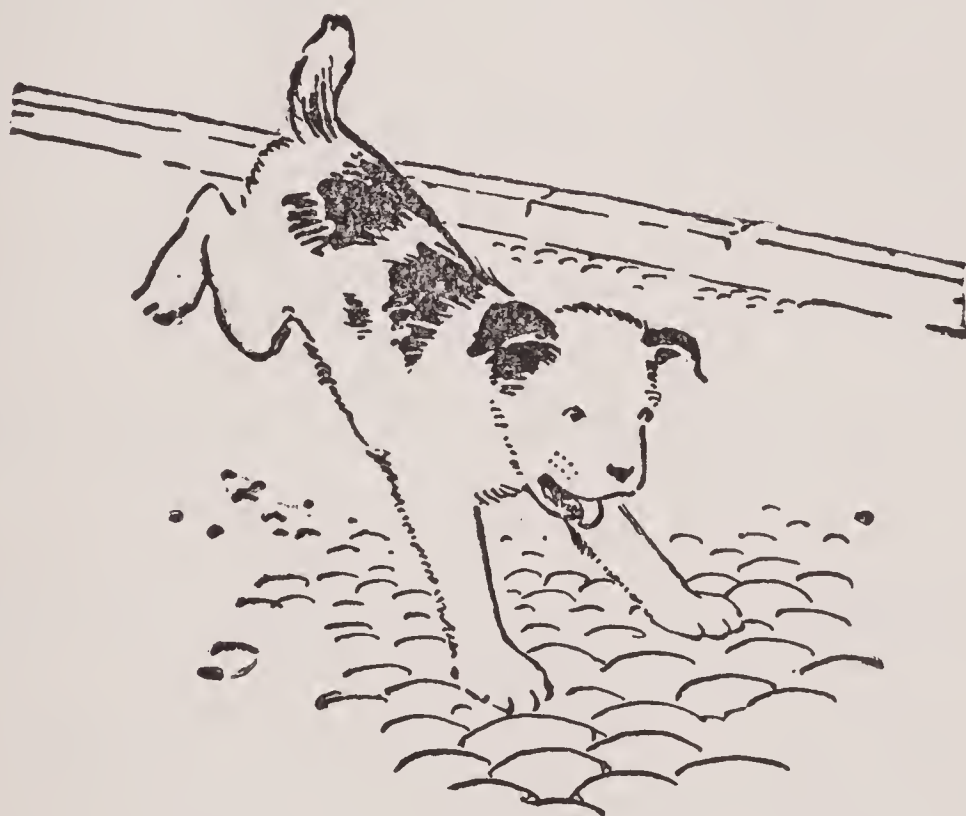
This turned Ready's head. It would have turned any dog's head. Did you ever have your head turned? You will some day, and when it happens, try hard to look where you are going, for you are *always going wrong*.

Of course Ready did not know this, and when Big Yellow Dog said pleasantly, "Come along," Ready went. Faster and faster ran Big Yellow Dog. Faster and faster ran Ready, although he felt that his legs were getting shorter and shorter.

Suddenly Ready lost sight of Big Yellow



Dog altogether, and then he felt very tired. He sat right down on the pavement, for he knew now that his head had been turned. Of



Faster and faster ran Ready

course he tried to turn it back again, but he was so tired that he only made it worse.

Then he tried to run home, but of course he ran in the wrong direction, and when you run

home in the wrong direction, a most unpleasant thing happens—*you don't get there at all.*

Ready ran on and on until he came to a house which he thought was his. You see he was quite sleepy by this time, and when you have a sleepy turned head you may as well give up.

He wondered why the windows were all closed, but even before he had finished saying, "How queer that the windows are not——" he was fast asleep on the doormat. He did not wake up until he heard some one talking.

"Oh, see this darling little dog!" said a young lady, looking down at him.

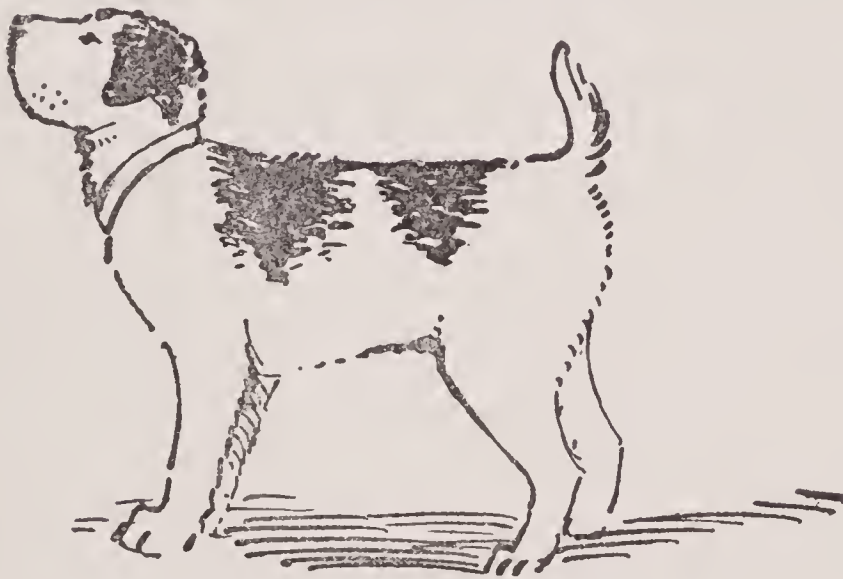
Then all the family came to look down at him and to say, "How cute!" and "What a dear!"

Now Ready, as you remember, was a very polite little dog; so of course he wagged his



waggy tail and said in his best dog language, "How do you do?"

This seemed to delight everybody, and they gave him breakfast at once. Ready greatly en-



"How do you do?"

joyed his breakfast, and he thought there would be no harm in staying a few minutes with such very pleasant people. But that is where he made his second bad mistake, as you will see.

He really should have run away from them as

fast as his little legs could carry him, for all at once the young lady said, "I am going to keep this little dog *forever*."

"But you can see by his collar," said her mother, "that he belongs to some one else."

I had forgotten to tell you that Ready wore a nice little silver collar and on it was written:

"HIS NAME IS READY BECAUSE HE  
ALWAYS IS SO."

"It does not say *where* he belongs," said the young lady with a pout, "and I *want* him."

"He will not want to stay," said the mother.

"Then I will tie him up and *make* him stay," said the young lady, quite crossly.

Now any one could see with half an eye that the young lady was going to have her own way.

Even Ready felt that without understanding young-lady language. If he had known what dreadful things she was saying, of course he would have run right out of the door.

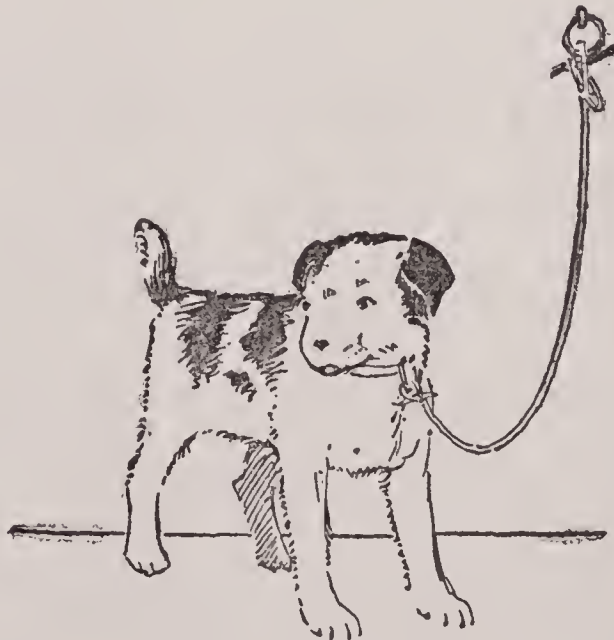
But he did not know; so he only wagged his tail, hoping that would make her feel a little better. He thought that he must do something in return for his good breakfast.

The young lady grew crosser and crosser and finally stamped her foot. This made Ready decide to leave at once, for there is no knowing what may happen to dogs or dishes when any one begins to stamp a foot!

Ready stood up and said his prettiest good-bye, which was three little barks and then one long one, with tail wagging all the time, of course.

In a second he would have been out of the house, but the young lady caught him by the collar and held him.

Then—I cannot tell you how it hurts me to say this—*they tied him*. Yes, they did! They tied him to an old hook and kept him there for nearly a week! They took him out for a breath of air for a few minutes each day and then put him back in his stuffy prison.



They tied him



## CHAPTER II

### READY A PRISONER

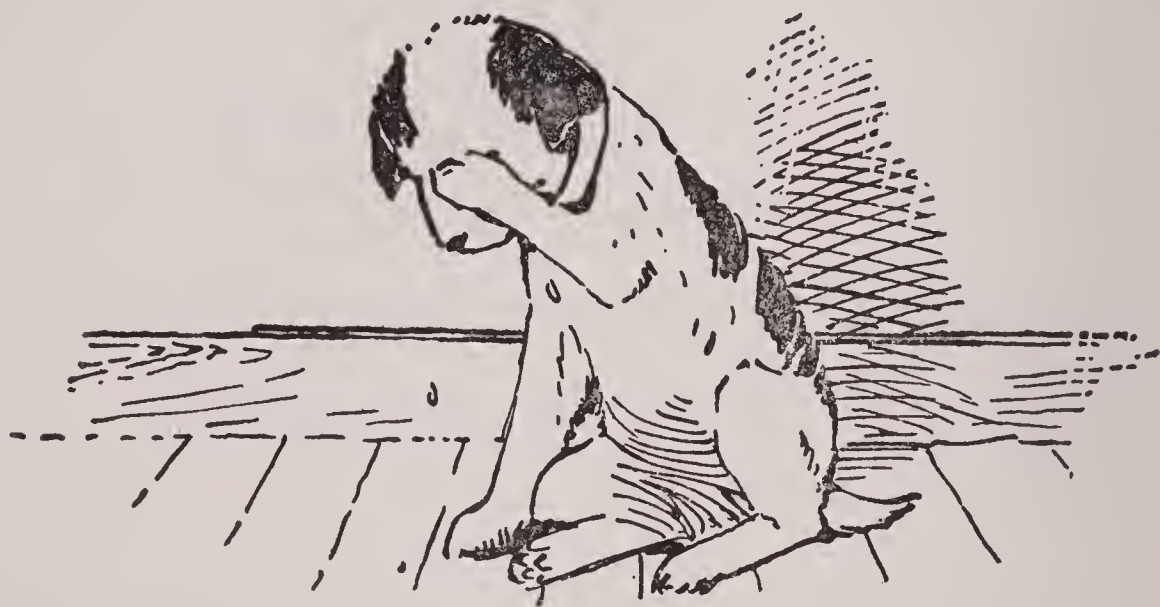
**O**F course if Ready had been a dog of the world, he might have found ways to escape. He might have snapped at people or howled all night. Then the father of the family would surely have let him out, for fathers hate to be disturbed at night.

But Ready had always been taught that snapping and growling are very wicked; so he only moaned a little and shed a few dog tears when no one was looking. You see it is a disgrace to a dog's doghood to be found in tears.

Of course he was not the least bit hungry. How could any dog be hungry shut up all day

in a stuffy old room? And then nothing takes away a dog's appetite so quickly as sad thoughts.

At first he did not eat anything, and then he began to have a very queer feeling in his legs.



Shed a few dog tears when no one was looking

They were such wobbly and uncertain legs that they frightened Ready. He remembered going once to a dog lecture where the speaker had said:

“Fellow dogs, beware of unreliable legs!

There is nothing left in life for a dog if his legs go back on him.”

Ready remembered that this great dog doctor had given him a number of prescriptions. This was one of them:

#### FOR RAPID RUNNING LEGS

Eat carefully, exercise regularly, and don't ever be cast down.

When Ready thought of these words, he began to eat a little each day and to run around the room for exercise after each meal. Then he tried very hard to cast out his sad thoughts. He would put himself to sleep saying over and over, “I think to-morrow I will get out. To-morrow I am going to be free.”

Whenever the young lady talked to him,

Ready tried in all kinds of ways to tell her that he must get to his little master as soon as possible.

First he would lie down at her feet and look up beseechingly in her eyes. After that he



“Please let me go back to my little master”

would run to the door, wagging his tail all the time. Then he would come back and beg. *Oh, how hard he would beg her to let him go!*

But she never once understood him—never once noticed he was saying, “Oh, dear young



lady, please let me go back to my little master. He is very ill and needs me. Don't you see that I belong to him? I will do anything in the world for you that an honorable little dog can do, if you will *only let me go.*"

Perhaps the saddest of all his prison days was the time he really thought she was going to release him. He had wagged his tail especially hard that morning at the door. She had put on her hat saying, "Come on, then."

Oh, how happy he was and how hard he tried to thank her! Then came the dreadful minute when she *fastened a silver chain to his collar.*

At first he broke down completely and moaned and moaned. Then he thought: "Perhaps if I walk by her side very nicely it will soften her heart; and then there is always a chance when



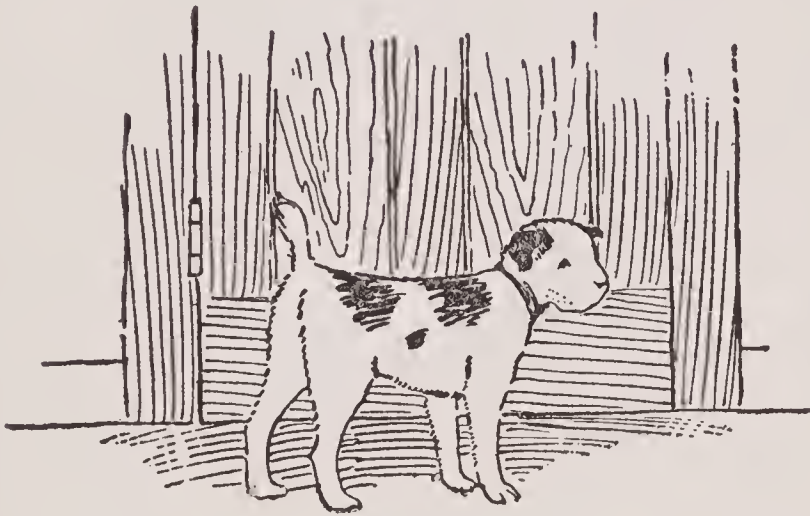
out in the great beautiful open world.”

So he walked quite contentedly by her side and waited patiently while she stopped to chat with some other young ladies. But when she said boastingly, “Do you see my beautiful new dog?” he simply could not stand it. Do you know what he did? He growled, and his growl had a bit of a snap in it, too. This made the young lady very cross, and she decided to take Ready home at once.

When they reached the door, Ready’s eyes would have melted a heart of stone. He knelt to her, he moaned to her, he begged so prettily on his hind legs, but the young lady would have none of it. She pushed him rudely into the dark room and slammed the door.

I think that was the saddest moment of

Ready's prison life. But in spite of everything, Ready never once gave up the hope of getting his chance to escape, and that is why it came.



The saddest moment of Ready's prison life

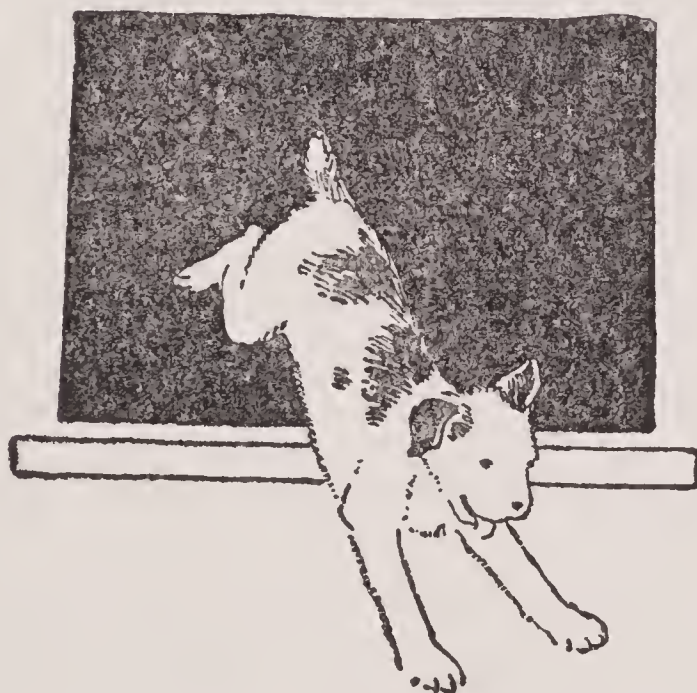
## CHAPTER III

### FREEDOM

**I**T happened this way. One evening the young lady and her mother had gone to one of those long-lasting parties which do not begin until nearly every one in the world has gone to sleep. The maid was out too, probably to another party. The fat old cook was so sleepy that she forgot to fasten Ready to the hook and cord after she had opened the window. Wasn't that lucky?

Ready pretended to be asleep until he heard her slow step on the stairs. Then, quick as a wink, he was out of the window and in the yard.

The shortest cut to the street was a dash through the flower bed, and Ready started to go that way. Then he remembered that really nice dogs were always polite to flowers. Now



Quick as a wink he was out of the window

the only way a dog can be really polite to flowers is to keep away from them; so Ready turned and ran around the path.

But in spite of this long way around, Ready

was soon on the main road. He must make no mistake now. He must never let his head get turned again. Which was the right direction? The road looked so strange, so dark and lonely, that it was hard for a dog to tell anything about it.

Ready felt that he must not wait a moment; so he started. But he soon heard an owl hooting from a tree near by, "No, no, no!"

Then Ready turned and ran in the other direction. From some very far-away place he heard, "Quite right, Bob White," and so he knew that all was well. Now he would soon come to his dear little master's house.

On and on he ran, along the cool dark village street, until suddenly he saw in the distance the queer-shaped old oak tree that stood by



the gray church at the corner. Ready was very happy, for he knew the way perfectly now. Many a race had he taken to this place with his Master Dick. Many a frolic they had had together under that old tree.

It took about three minutes more of hard dog running to bring him to the dear greenhouse. He noticed that it looked very dark and lonely. Perhaps all the grown-ups had gone to the party too. He gave three crisp little joy barks which always meant to Master Dick, "Ready's here."

There was no answer at all. So Ready, with a heavy heart, decided to lie right down by the door and wait until morning.

You may be sure that he woke up very early indeed, in order to be up before Master Dick.

He gave his three joy barks again and again, but no answer came.

Just then old Rover appeared. He was the oldest dog about that part of the town, and he knew everything.



Just then old Rover appeared

“Well, well, well,” he said to Ready. “They have been looking everywhere for you, but *now you are too late.*”

“Too late?” said Ready.

“Yes, too late,” said Rover severely. “The little master was so sick that they took him to the seashore yesterday.”

Then Ready was the saddest little dog in the world, and he looked so.

“It’s your own fault,” said Rover. “Why did you run away?”

At this Ready broke down altogether, tail and all, and sobbed out the whole story.

“Come, come,” said Rover at last, “be a dog and keep up your courage. Try wagging your tail a little, that always helps.”

So Ready wagged his tail and it did help a little speck. Then Rover gave him some breakfast and that helped a great deal.

After breakfast was over, Rover gave Ready letters of introduction to several traveling dog

friends of his in the hope that they might happen to know Master Dick's seashore home. But when night came a very tired and discouraged little Ready returned to the lonely house. You see, most of the traveling dogs had already left the city and the others had sent down word, "Too busy," or "Not at home."

It was the darkest hour of Ready's life. Indeed, I do not know what would have happened next if a happy Robin had not been still awake, singing, "Cheer up." When he saw sad little Ready, as quick as a wink he made this other verse to his evening song:

"Chance, chance, chance,  
Everybody has a chance;  
Cheer up, be Ready and wagging,  
Cheer up, cheer up."

I cannot tell you how much this helped





Listening to Robin's song of cheer



Ready. He wagged his tail at once and decided he would take a little run in the moonlight, so as to be on the lookout for chances.

As he ran along, he noticed a great many dogs going by. Dogs he had never seen, dogs old, dogs young, dogs middle-aged, all in a great hurry. He asked several of them where they were going, but few had time to answer him.

One said, "Aren't you going?" and several mumbled something that he could not make out.

At last one very fat and panting dog stopped to rest a minute.



“Won’t you please tell me where you are going?” asked Ready.

“Why, don’t you *know?*” was the answer. “This is the 21st of June!”

Just then another dog came along. “Hurry up, you two, or you’ll be late,” he called out.

“Come on,” said the panting, fat dog.

Now Ready had had so much bad luck running about with strange dogs that he only shook his head and said, “I don’t know anything about it.”

“Don’t know anything about it? By my tail, you must be a stranger here,” said the panting,



fat one. Ready afterwards called him "Paf" for short—"P" standing for panting and "F" for fat, you see.

"At midnight on the 21st of June, if it is moonlight, a wonderful thing happens. All the beasts, birds and flowers in this part of the world meet in an open space near the woods. They have music, dancing and refreshments. Then the Eagle, who is the king of the birds, grants a wish to any animal who has a clear record.

"The Eagle gives the wish to the beasts, instead of the birds and flowers, because nobody ever has anything against the flowers anyway, and they don't care for new experiences. As for the birds, they have so many chances to travel and do interesting things that His Maj-

esty, the Eagle, decided to go outside of his own family and give the wish to the four-footers. You see, they get around very little as they have no wings.



“Come on,” said the panting, fat dog

“The animals are not what they once were,” Paf went on, as they hurried along. “Last year no one could get it, and the year before only one had a chance even to try.”

“Do many want to try?” asked Ready, ’



“Not so many as there were in my young days,” said Paf. “It’s unpleasant being refused, you see, and having all the little things you have done and forgotten thrown in your face. I’d try myself to-night, but I had a bad time a few days ago with an old alley cat. It was all her fault of course, but I know she will be here to-night to complain of me if I should come forward.

“It is hard, these days,” Paf went on, “to get a clear record, since they allow all kinds of cats to vote, and even flowering vines and chickens can speak against us. So what is an animal to do? It used to be that an English sparrow’s vote counted nothing, but now these worthless creatures have as much to say as we do. Why, no cat has a chance because the



mice are all invited. Times are sadly changed.”  
And poor Paf sighed.



They allow all kinds of cats to vote

## CHAPTER IV

### READY AT THE GREAT GATHERING

**A**T LAST they reached the place, and it was a wonderful sight. All the four-footed animals sat on the ground in front. The birds were perched on the trees, and the flowers massed themselves around the Eagle's throne.

Suddenly the birds all began to sing a beautiful song, and the flowers commenced to dance a soft swaying dance. Then the thrushes sang:

“Give place, give place to our noble king,  
Whom we all do love and fear.  
Bow low, bow low, every single thing,  
And then set up a cheer.”



The Great Gathering



At this the flowers bowed their heads, the beasts all knelt, and the birds flew out to meet



He was a savage-looking bird indeed

His Royal Majesty, the Eagle. Then the birds made themselves into two lines and the great Eagle flew between them.



He was a savage-looking bird indeed. He wore for the occasion a large crown of red feathers, and carried in one of his claws an enormous stick covered with rabbit's fur, which had five large dog teeth at the end of it.

Everything and everybody clapped and bowed and cheered. Dogs wagged tails, chickens cackled, roosters crowed, birds sang, and flowers waved themselves.

The Eagle looked about fiercely, bowed slightly, and seated himself on his throne, which was on a little hill.

The entertainment began with a duet given by a wood thrush and a song sparrow. It was very pretty indeed. This was followed by a Virginia Reel given by the daisies and buttercups.



The orchestra was made up of thrushes, whippoorwills  
and woodpeckers

Then the Eagle rapped loudly with his terrible rod and said, "Every one may dance." And every one did.

The orchestra was made up of thrushes, whippoorwills and woodpeckers. The woodpeckers beat time on the bark of the trees. Sometimes the robins and song sparrows joined. It all sounded very well indeed until some blue jays and roosters started in. Then an old crow

commenced keeping time with his “caw, caw, caw.”

This was too much for the Eagle, who beat angrily on the oak tree with his rod and stopped the dance immediately. “Too much like a jazz band,” he shrieked. “We want real music here. Jays, roosters and crows be silent, or leave the dance hall. No cackling and cawing in my orchestra while I am King of Birds.”

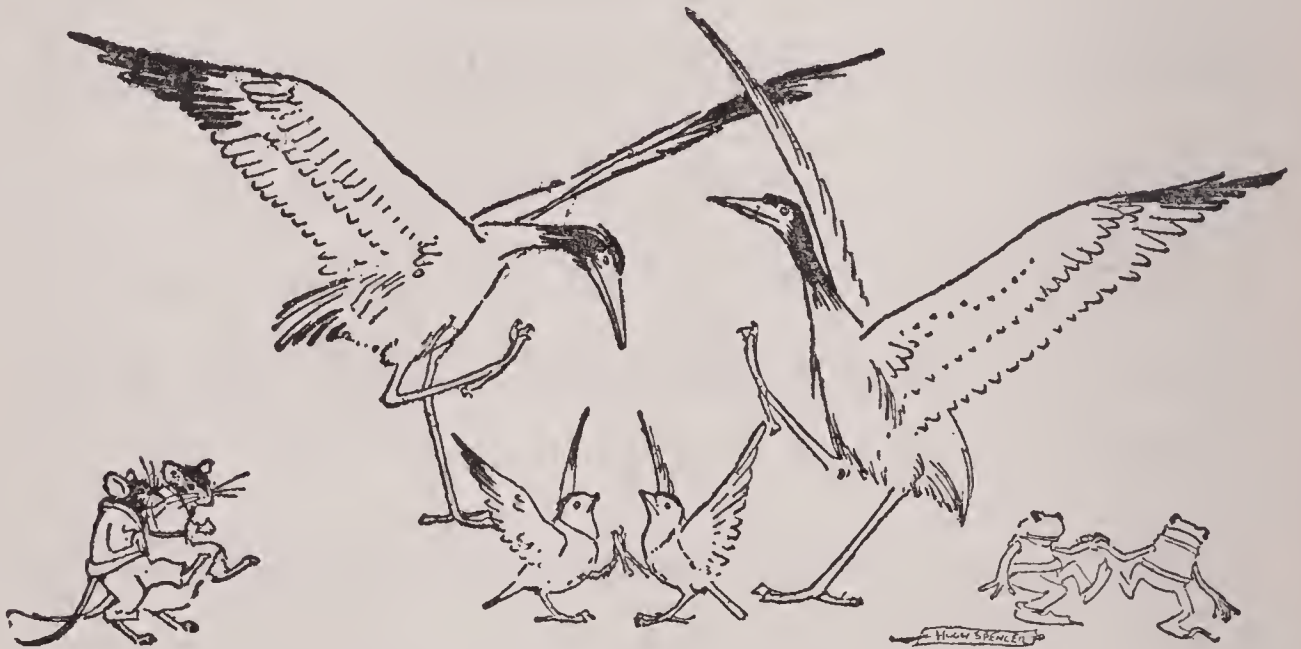
You should have seen the dancing. The flowers kept pretty much to themselves and almost always waltzed.

The birds danced a two-step, flapping their wings to beat time and splitting their dances for a bit of a fly now and then.

Most of the four-footers “toddled.” Some did

the old-time polka, because it used all of their legs evenly, beating four time, you see.

Ready saw that Paf wanted dreadfully to dance and was without a partner, so he asked



The birds danced a two-step

him. They managed somehow to get about. In fact, many thought Paf's quite awkward out-of-time step was something new, and several young chickens tried to copy it.



Then the Eagle raised his rod, and immediately the dancing and music stopped.

“Refreshments are coming next,” whispered Paf breathlessly.

Ready was glad to hear this, as he had had nothing to eat since breakfast, but Paf was mistaken this time. When all was quiet the Eagle said fiercely:

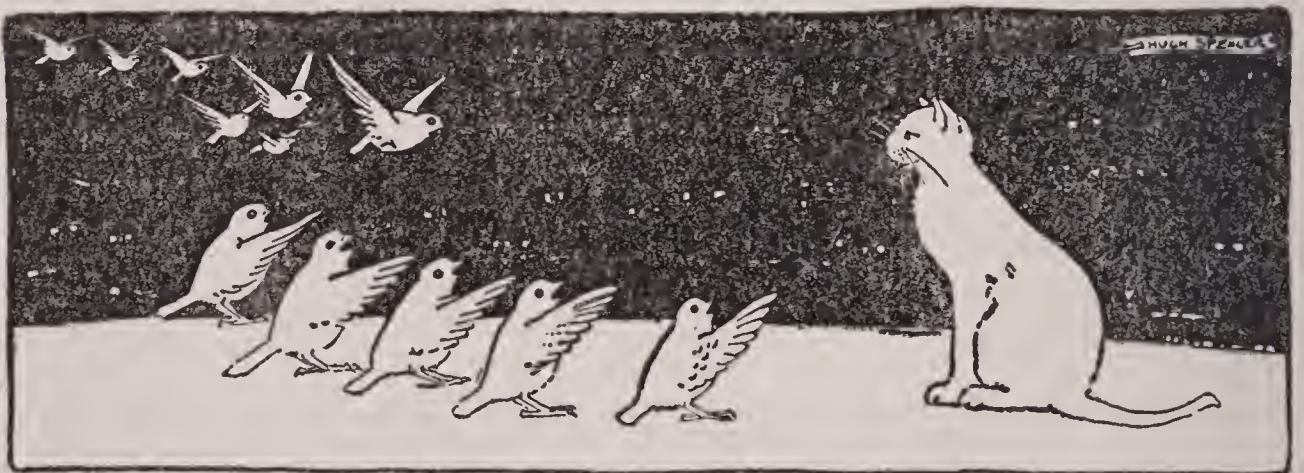
“Four-footers asking for wishes will now come forward. We may as well get this part of the program over at once, for from what I hear of the beasts this year, it will take a very short time.”

Then he tapped his rod three times and said, “Ready!”

Little Ready started to his feet. This was certainly his great chance, but he wished, oh

so much, that refreshments had come first, as his knees were weak from hunger and from pulling around Paf.

A rather handsome black dog arose and a large white cat. There was a terrible silence as they walked slowly around the Eagle's throne. All eyes were turned upon them. The near-sighted ones put on glasses which they had brought for the occasion. The white cat, being the only lady of the party, was called first to the throne.



She had eaten their father, mother, and aunt all in one day.

After asking her name, age, address and telephone number, the Eagle said, "This cat is before you. Has any one anything against her?"

Immediately a dozen English sparrows flew down to the throne and told a dreadful tale about her. They said that she had caught and eaten their mother, father and aunt all in one day.

A grape vine also bent forward with leaves outstretched, but the Eagle waved it back, saying in a terrible voice: "We have had evidence enough. White Cat, withdraw." And White Cat scudded away.

Then the Eagle called the black dog, but an old hen stepped up at once and indignantly said, "Black Dog killed my fluffiest child when she was scarcely out of the shell."



At this the Eagle took his rod and struck the black dog, saying in his great and dreadful voice, "How did you *dare* to come before me?"

Of course that was the end of the black dog, who ran away with his tail between his legs.

Then Ready knew that his time had come. If only his little legs would not give out! When the Eagle said sternly, "Next", he arose and stood before him.

"Your name," said the Eagle, pointing the dreadful rod directly at him.

"Ready," he answered huskily.

Then he heard the blue jays laughing and the mocking birds saying "Ready" quite scornfully.

"Of course you are ready if you are ever going to be," shrieked the Eagle. "Give your





“But my name *is* Ready. You can see it on my collar.”

name at *once*, or withdraw immediately.”

“But my name *is* Ready. You can see it on my collar,” said Ready, and the excitement made his legs feel stronger.

“Look at his collar,” commanded the Eagle, and everyone did.

“It is true, Your Royal Highness,” said the Owl.

“Extraordinary!” said the Eagle.

“Extraordinary!” said all the animals, one after the other, and even the hens cackled, “extraordinary!”

“Your age,” said the Eagle.

“Eleven months, Your Majesty,” Ready answered bravely.

But when it came to address and telephone number, Ready gathered up all his courage and plunged at once into his sad little story.

Everyone was much interested. Several times the Eagle leaned forward and said, “Louder.” Then all the hens cackled, “Louder.”

Ready was much excited, though it hurt his throat to pitch his voice so high. You see he was not at all used to public speaking.

However, if you had been there, you would

have known that he was making a good impression. It was noticed by many of the animals that the Eagle once put his handkerchief to his eyes.

There was a great silence when Ready finished speaking. Then the Eagle rose upon his throne, flapped his wings, and spoke in a strangely gentle voice.

He said, "*The wish of this dog shall be granted at once.*"

Everybody cheered wildly.

But the Owl, standing up and bowing low to the Eagle, said, "Your Majesty, I beg of you not to allow your feelings to carry you too far. Remember the rules of our great gathering here. Let us see if any one has anything against this animal."

Now the Eagle had always a great respect for

the Owl. Indeed, the time he had been obliged to go to Washington to have his picture taken for the new American dollar, the owl had taken his place at this meeting. So the Eagle said: "Very well, Ready is before you. Who speaks against him?"

It was very still for a minute. Ready's heart beat fast as he feared he might have offended a chicken, a cat or something without knowing it, but no one answered and the cheering began.

Then again the Owl stepped forward. "I hate to seem so particular," he apologized, "but I have just been re-reading the rules of our great gathering. It says:

All animals who are strangers in the neighborhood must be properly introduced and vouched for before any wishes can be granted them.



“Now, Ready was introduced by Paf, but he must be vouched for by some one else. By that I mean,” explained the Owl, “that some one must speak a good word for him.”

At this Ready’s heart sank. Who indeed



“I will speak for him”

would speak for him? Who knew him here? Then he heard a voice saying, “I will speak for him. When he jumped out of the window the other night, he was in a great hurry. The

shortest way would have been to step upon my lame shoulder, but he went the long way instead."

Now Ready knew that the largest geranium in the flower bed was speaking.

"I am an old flower," she continued, "but it is the first time a dog has shown me any consideration."

"Wonderful," said the Eagle, waving his rod, "when he had so much provocation, too."

"So much provocation," sang the birds.

"Much provocation," crowed the roosters, and cackled the hens.

"Much provocation," barked the dogs.

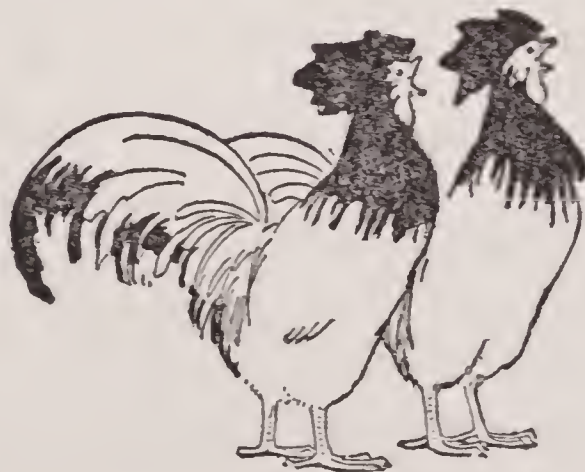
Ready wondered what the large word meant, but felt it must be a friendly word because the Eagle looked so kindly at him.

“Enough,” commanded the King of Birds.  
 “Ready, state your wish.”

By this time Ready’s legs had grown very weak. For one minute he felt that he must say, “I wish for food.” Then he remembered that this was his one great chance to get back to his Master Dick.

“I want to find my Master Dick’s seashore home,” he said in quite a loud voice.

Then his little legs gave right out and he fell fainting at the Eagle’s feet!



“Much provocation,” crowed the roosters

## CHAPTER V

### BAD NEWS

**W**HEN Ready opened his eyes, he found himself in the loveliest little bed in the world. The animals by digging, gnawing, and scratching had made a large hollow place in the ground, and the birds had lined it with feathers. Even the flowers had given some of their leaves for the pillow.

You have no idea how comfortable it was. The Eagle's trained nurse was giving Ready a teaspoonful of medicine every other minute. A special dog doctor was taking his pulse, and hundreds of birds were standing by waiting for orders. Ready really felt very comfortable.





A special dog doctor was taking his pulse

“He is better,” said the dog doctor, “but not yet on his feet.” Of course that was quite true, was it not?

“Is there anything you would like?” asked the trained nurse.

Ready raised his head and said anxiously, “May I still have my first wish granted, if I ask for anything else?”

“Certainly,” said the Eagle.

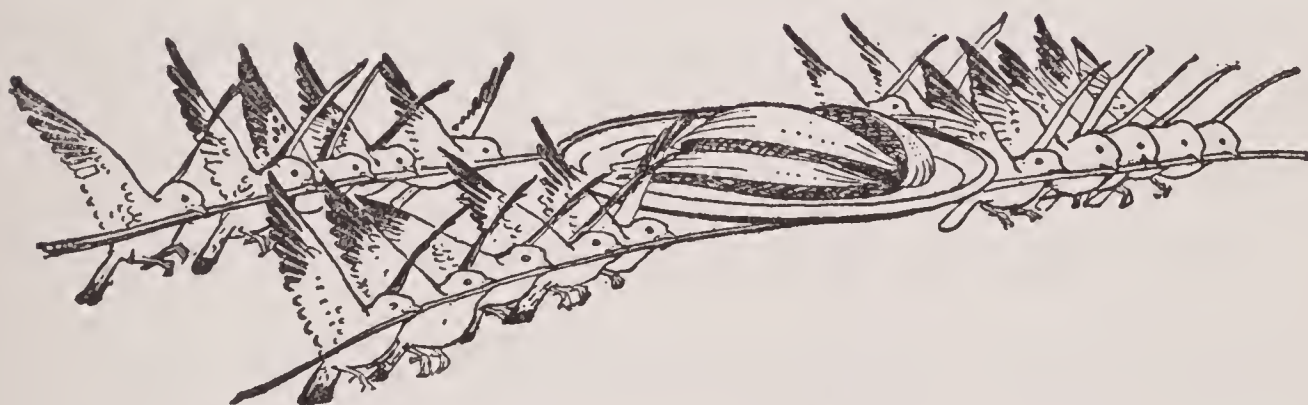
“Certainly,” said all the others.

“I very much want something to eat,” said Ready, falling back upon the pillows.

Such a commotion as there was then! Twenty blue-birds at once brought in a tray of liver. A course of bones followed, and a large dish of milk was served for dessert. Ready was a very happy dog indeed.

Then the Eagle said, "We will all have recess and refreshments."

Now there was much moving about, eating, and talking. Every one came up to Ready and



Twenty blue birds brought in a tray of liver

spoke to him. Many begged him to make week-end visits. Some asked him to house parties, and all the young dogs wanted his photograph.

At last the Eagle raised his rod and every one came to order. "We will now," he said



in a businesslike manner, "try to find Master Dick's home at the seashore."

Ready then told him all he knew about it, which, of course, was very little. It was a red house near the sea with a pine tree in front of it.

"That is quite enough," said the Eagle, "I will send out my messengers to find it."

The Eagle now called together his trusty messengers. There were five of them. A Blue Heron for watchfulness; a Crow for good judgment; a Swift for rapid flight; a Night Hawk for keen eyesight; and a little Sparrow for running the errands.

The Eagle talked to them all in a low tone for a few minutes, giving them directions and money for the journey.

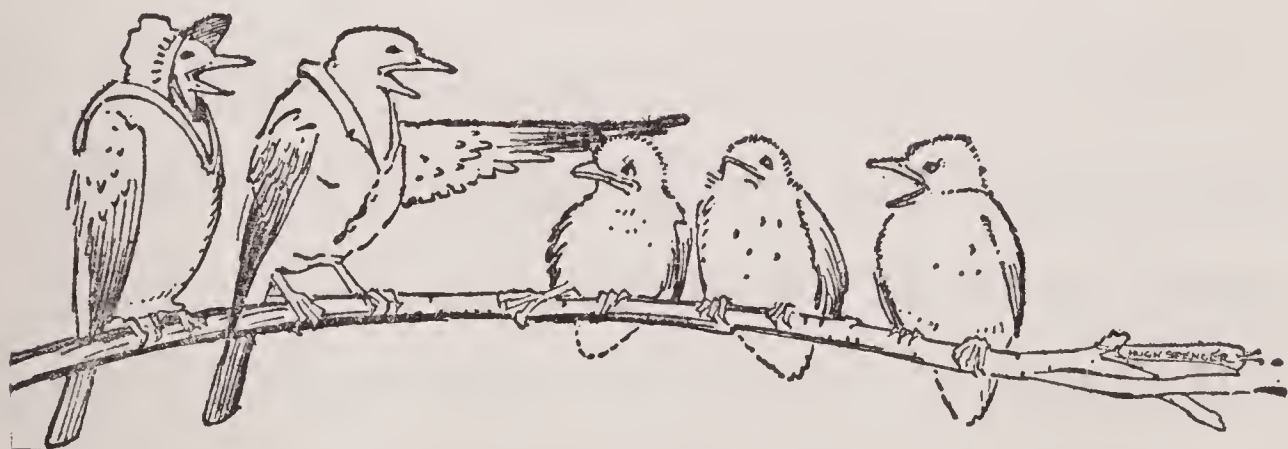
Then the dance began, and who do you think



was Ready's partner this time? Why, the Eagle of course! It is a splendid thing to dance with the King of Birds, and a rare thing for a dog.

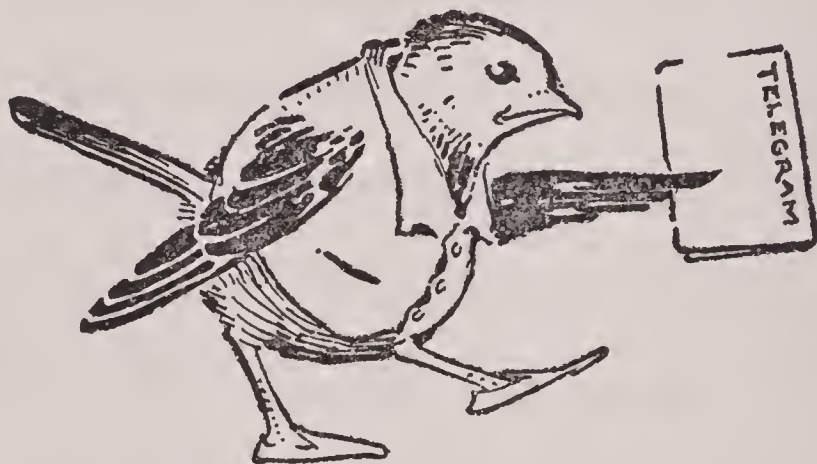
It seemed to be dog night, for the Owl, who had not danced for years, stepped out with a dog. The Owl knew only one dance, an old-fashioned hop waltz. The dog knew no dance at all. He jostled about on his hind legs.

They really looked so ridiculous that some gay young cat-birds laughed aloud, and called out, "Toddle, toddle, don't just waddle."



They were immediately cuffed by their elders

They were immediately cuffed by their elders for such bad manners, and made to sit out a whole dance in the dressing room, which was curtained off from the rest of the place by a row of young pine trees.



Telegram for the Eagle

Suddenly the dance was interrupted by the entrance of the young Sparrow, who had returned with a telegram for the Eagle.

Everything stopped at once and the Eagle's grandson immediately flew to the top of the

great oak tree, where his honored grandfather's spectacles had been placed in an oriole's nest for safe-keeping.

He returned in twenty seconds and found everybody waiting breathlessly.

The Eagle looked troubled after he had read the telegram. Then he and the Owl whispered silently together.

"Bad news," cawed the crows.

"Bad news," shrieked the blue jays.

"Bad news," squeaked the field mice.

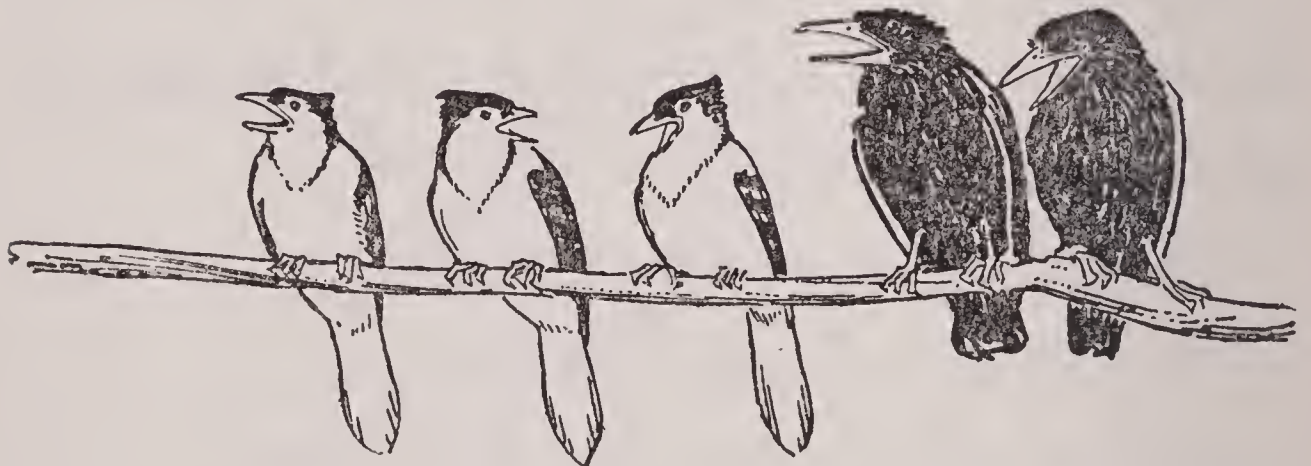
The noise was terrific, and the Eagle waved his rod angrily, crying, "Silence!"

"We are having trouble with the moths, butterflies and bats," he continued sternly, hitting at a restless young pullet.

"You remember, that once we asked them to

join our gathering, but the bats behaved so badly by bumping into everything that it broke up the dancing.

“The moths also were too silly for words. They almost stopped the orchestra by hitting



“Bad news,” cawed the crows and shrieked the blue jays them all the time. As for the butterflies, they went to bed as usual without even taking the trouble to send regrets.”

“Shameful, shameful!” hissed everybody.

“And so,” continued the Eagle, “we have



never given them another invitation.”

“Why should we?” sang a king bird shrilly.

“Why should we?” squeaked and piped, barked and crowed, chirped and croaked, the whole company.

“But,” the Eagle went on, waving his rod for silence, “the bats did not like being left out, and now they refuse to carry my messages over their telegraph wires. They have formed a union against us, and I can get nothing through to the Sandpiper because it is over a wire which they control. The telegram reads:

“REFUSE TO SEND SANDPIPER MESSAGE UNLESS ADMITTED TO MEETING TONIGHT.”

Of course no one understood a word of this message except the Owl, who kept a Book of

Knowledge in his nest and always brought it with him in case it should be needed. He now explained that the message meant that they would not be able to get Ready back to Master



The Owl kept a Book of Knowledge

Dick unless the moths and bats were allowed to come to the meeting that night.

He also explained that this telegram had been written by the oldest Bat in the world, who, for several years, had made his home in the attic of

one of the offices of the Western Union Telegraph Company. That is where he had learned all the big words to put in telegrams, and also that no self-respecting telegram could have more than ten words in it.

The Owl explained this very clearly to everyone. He even pointed out the words in the telegram and they all counted them aloud: "1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10."

"Your Majesty, I think there is but one thing to do," said the Owl at last in a firm voice, "and that is to grant them admittance to-night."

"We will put it to a vote," said the Eagle, stepping up to his throne and rapping loudly for order. Then he shouted, "All in favor of getting Ready home by admitting these bats, moths and butterflies, say 'Aye.'"

“Aye,” shouted everybody and everything.

Ready felt that he ought not to vote on such a delicate matter, but he could not help wagging his tail.

“Contrary ‘No,’” shrieked the Eagle.

Silence from everybody, for they were quite used to public meetings now, and the wiser birds and beasts always watched the foolish ones and cuffed them if they made a sound.

“The motion is carried,” said the Eagle. “The Owl will now send a telegram to admit them. The message will reach the Sandpiper and all will be right in ten minutes.”

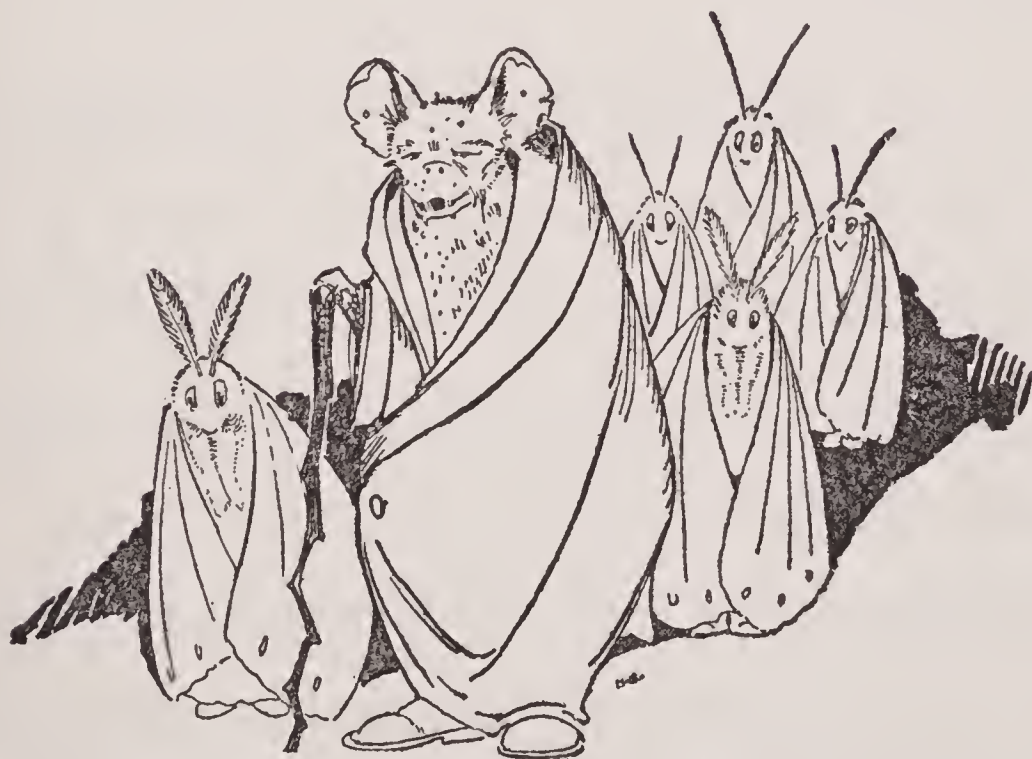
The Owl, being a wise old bird, had the telegram prepared beforehand. It said:

ACCEPT TERMS. SEND MESSAGE TO SAND-  
PIPER AND COME AT ONCE.



If you will count, you will see that this telegram has exactly ten words. Wasn't that very clever of the Owl?

The ten minutes passed very quickly, as everybody was talking in little groups about telegrams. Many tried to write them. You could hear a group of young crows counting the words, "Caw, caw, caw."



The oldest Bat in the world appeared

Suddenly, without a word of warning, the oldest Bat in the world appeared with four or five foolish moth millers. Of course no butterflies came.

The Bat flew immediately toward the Eagle and almost knocked off his glasses. Then, after running into the Owl, he batted about the dance hall. The millers followed, trying hard to imitate him.

The Bat next sat for a few moments on a rooster's back and then hit a swallow who was flying across the floor. Finally, without a word of good-bye he was off again, with the millers flopping feebly after him.

Everybody was much relieved to have it all over. Indeed, most of the lady birds and beasts had been so frightened that they put their hand-

kerchiefs over their heads.

The warblers started a song at once and soon everybody joined in.

“Zee, Zee, Zee,  
Happy are we.  
Gone are the Bats,  
So remove your hats.”

The Eagle almost smiled as he announced: “Now the plans are made for Ready’s departure.” He did not even need to rap for silence, for everybody was so interested.

“My trusty messengers have just telephoned me that everything is all right,” the Eagle continued. “They have stopped for refreshments and rest at the Night Hawk’s house and will return shortly.

“You must start at once with the Chipmunks,” he said, looking most kindly at Ready, who

came and knelt before him. "Good running will bring you to the end of the woods by dawn. I have telegraphed ahead to have your breakfast waiting for you under the last oak tree in the woods.

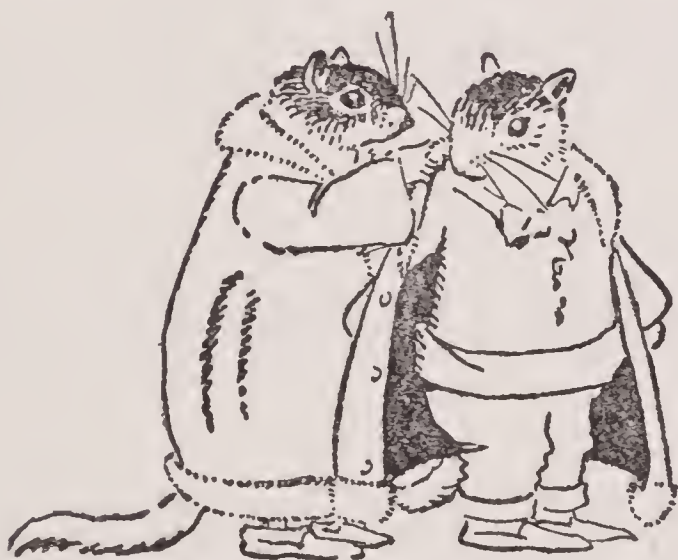
"It is to be guarded by the Red Headed Woodpecker, who has kindly consented to give his services. Rest here a half hour, but no longer.

"Then the Swallows will show you the way to the beach. They have promised to fly low so that you will not lose them.

"About noon, you will meet a Field Mouse. If she says, 'Ready,' you will follow her to a place where your dinner will be hidden. There you will meet the Sandpiper, who will take you along the beach until you come to an inlet.



“You must go the rest of the way alone, as the Heron, who was to take you, has appendicitis. The road, however is straight ahead and will take you to your master’s home.”



The Chipmunks were putting on their overcoats

Ready bowed low before the Eagle, barking his thanks again and again, while the Chipmunks were putting on their overcoats for the journey.

Some one called out “Speech, speech,” but the Eagle put a stop to that by saying that



An old Frog gave Ready the queerest thing

Ready needed to save his strength for the journey.

Just then an old Frog hopped up and gave Ready the queerest thing. You could never guess what it was—a *hot-water bag!*

She said in a croaking voice, "I have never really been warm in my life, but a hot water bag has been a great comfort to me, and has kept me next door to warm."

There was nothing for Ready to do without

hurting this old Frog's feelings, but to accept the bag with thanks. Yet he wondered how he could ever carry such an awkward thing. However, the trained nurse kindly fastened it to his collar and then he started off with the Chipmunks.

They heard the animals cheering and calling "Good luck to Ready!" long after they were out of sight.

## CHAPTER VI

### WITH THE CHIPMUNKS

**I**T WAS a little hard to follow the Chipmunks at first, as they were so very much smaller and could of course run like lightning along the woody road. However, they would always stop and wait for Ready very politely, and several times when they found some nuts under a hickory tree he had to wait for them.

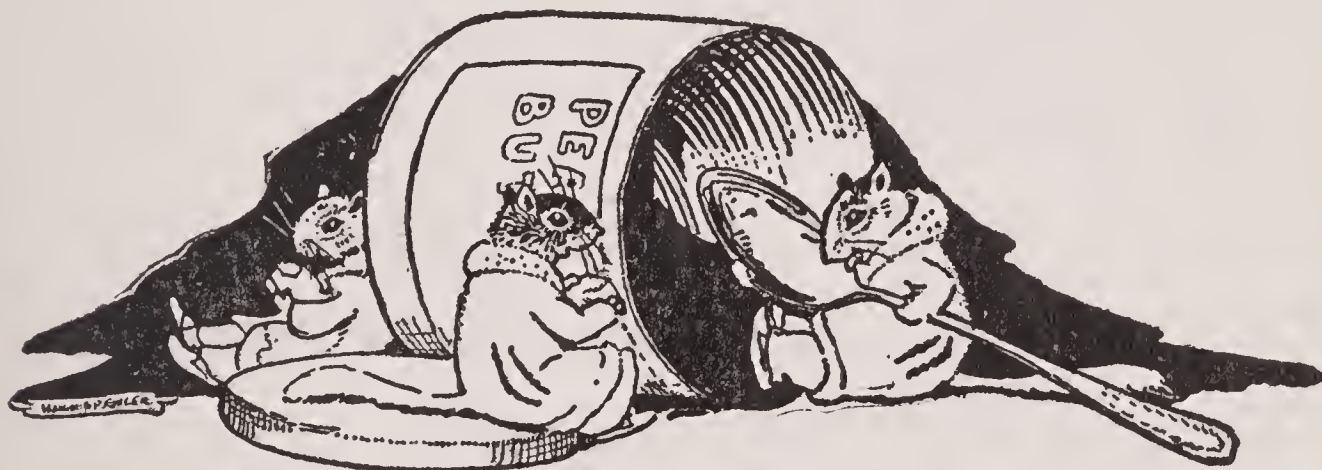
Everything went on pretty well until they reached a funny little cabin in the wood. Here a dark little creature jumped off the roof and whispered "Peanut Butter!" Then he was off again as quick as a wink.

"Peanut Butter! Peanut Butter!" chattered



all the Chipmunks, and ran after the darting little figure. Up they jumped on the roof and in a moment were out of sight.

What was poor little Ready to do? This delay might upset all his plans. Perhaps they



He knew that chipmunks love peanut butter would forget to come back altogether. He knew that Chipmunks love peanut butter, because he had heard a Chipmunk that very evening boasting between dances of stealing into a Boy Scout's tent and prying open the lid of a peanut butter jar.

Ready thought and thought, and finally decided to go around to the cabin door and give quite politely three little barks. They would mean, of course, "Ready, Ready, Ready."

At first there was no answer to his call. Then he barked again a little louder. This time he said, "Please, *please*, come."

At this, somebody in the house jumped out of bed, and stamping to the window called out, "Get away, little beast of a dog!"

Then Ready heard the peanut butter can fall to the floor with a bang; and suddenly out ran the Chipmunks, their coats flying behind them.

So fast did they run that they did not see Ready at all until they were about one hundred yards away from the house. As soon as they really came to themselves and saw Ready,





Out ran the chipmunks



they cocked their little heads on one side and pointed their paws towards a little figure vanishing in the distance.

“He made us do it,” they chattered.

“It was only a few minutes,” one of them apologized.

“You needed a little rest,” another remarked.

Ready did feel a little put out by the delay, but he remembered that after all they had offered to be his escorts and had only lost their heads for a few minutes. Had not he too once lost his head?

So he only wagged politely when he might have said, “If it were not for my barking, you would still be eating that peanut butter.”

Then they all started on again. To tell the truth, the Chipmunks really felt ashamed of





“He made us do it,” they chattered

themselves and thought that Ready was behaving splendidly. You would know this by the little things they tried to do for him.

Chippy, the oldest, actually kept waiting for him and once admired the spots on his coat. Snippy, the youngest, offered to show him a place where they all had some nuts stored for winter. Of course that was a foolish offer to make to a dog, but Ready knew it was meant to be a great attention, so he said at once, “I thank you very much, but think I will not

stop tonight, as it is growing quite late.”

They were getting near the end of the woods now and all was going beautifully when a sudden flash of lightning was followed quickly by a clap of thunder. Then came a down-pour of rain, drenching everybody in about two seconds.

There was nothing to do but take refuge in a hollow log near by. That is to say, the Chipmunks went in, while Ready curled up under a rhododendron bush which kindly acted as an umbrella.

At first the Chipmunks seemed to fuss a good deal, and complain about being crowded. Ready remembered how much they loved to chatter, so he barked, “Speech, speech, everyone make a speech!”

These words acted like magic. Such a jabbering never before was heard from a hollow log.

Chippy recited a poem he had written about himself. Snippy told of an adventure he had had with a gray squirrel, and as for Clippy, he just squeaked and thrashed around, saying, "Here, here, nuts, nuts!"

It was all rather mixed up as you can guess, and sounded something like this:

"I am great big Chippy,  
My brother's name is Snippy."

"Here, here, nuts, nuts!"

"And the old gray squirrel put his tail in my face."

"When something is the matter,  
I'm always sure to chatter."

"Nuts, nuts, here, here!"

"Then I jumped on the gray squirrel's back,  
Giving him a tremendous whack."

By this time the rain had stopped and a tiny streak of light was coming in the East. The Chipmunks suddenly ceased chattering. Ready pricked up his ears. Everything in the world was very still. Far, far away in the distance you could hear the birds beginning to wake up.

“Dawn is coming,” whispered Chippy, “and we are not yet out of the woods.”

Without another word they were all scampering along the road. Ready had never gone so fast in his life. On and on they went. It was a race with the coming dawn.

Five minutes of wonderful animal running brought Ready to the edge of the wood, and just as they reached the last oak tree, the beautiful rose-colored light had come behind the purple hills.





Five minutes of wonderful animal running brought  
Ready to the edge of the wood

Ready whispered a “thank you” to the Chipmunks, and an invitation to visit him for a week-end as soon as he found his master’s home. The Chipmunks put their little heads to one side and then curtsied. They are really quite polite little creatures when they remember to be.

They were gone before you could say “Jack

Robinson," and Ready was left alone, waiting for his breakfast under the last oak tree in the forest.



Waiting under the last oak tree

## CHAPTER VII

### THE JOURNEY WITH THE SWALLOWS

**R**EADY had scarcely been there a moment before a Red Headed Woodpecker came out of his hole and rather sleepily rang a breakfast bell.

It sounded like this: "Punk, penk, pink," and it meant, "Come to breakfast."

Ready answered at once with three of his most cheerful barks, "Ready, ready, ready."

Then the Woodpecker saluted him and flew down to a little mound covered with fresh leaves. Under this was a delicious dog breakfast.

After a pleasant little chat, the Woodpecker



A Red Headed Woodpecker rang the breakfast bell

told Ready that he would have time for a fifteen minute nap, and promised to call him. You remember the Eagle had told him that he might be able to manage a half hour's rest at this place.

So after his good breakfast, Ready was very glad to stretch himself out on the ground. He was sound asleep in three seconds and oh, how he did hate to get up when the Woodpecker



first tapped! He was very tired and his feet ached dreadfully, but after the third “punk, penk, pink,” Ready remembered what it was all about and was on his feet at once.

“The Swallows should be here by this time,” said the Woodpecker, in a troubled voice. “I think I must telephone to find out what is the matter.”

After he had hung up the receiver, which was hidden in a curled-up oak leaf, the Woodpecker said: “Bad news, indeed. One of the mother swallows has a frightful pain and cannot be left alone.”

Then Ready knew why he had carried the Frog’s hot-water bag all this time. He had wanted very much to drop it on the way as it had been so warm and heavy. Moreover, some

large bats had called out as he passed, "What is it? What is it?"

He now went at once to Mother Swallow's house, which was in the hollow of a tree nearby, and put the hot-water bag on her pain. You have no idea of the relief it gave her. Wasn't it good that Ready had not thrown it away?

Mother Swallow was then quite willing to have Father Swallow and the children go on with Ready. Even Fluffy Forked Tail, the youngest in the family, went along.

Ready and the Swallows soon made up for lost time. The Swallows were very polite, always waiting for Ready and flying low to show him the way.

Everything seemed to be going very well indeed, and Ready's heart was full of hope. The

sun was getting higher and higher and he knew that it would soon be noon.

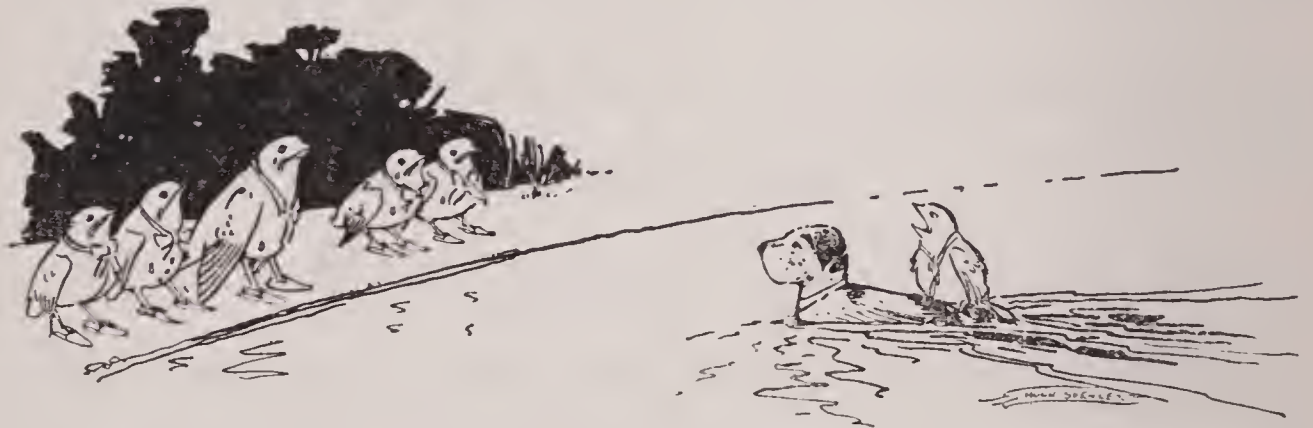
The Swallows had stopped a few minutes to rest on a telephone wire and Ready was panting a little on the ground below, when suddenly a splash was heard in a pond near by. This was followed by a great sputtering and twittering and a call for help. Father Swallow looked quickly about and saw that his youngest child was missing.

“Oh, why did I ever let him come?” moaned Father Swallow, as he flew to the rescue. “He has only just learned to fly, and I fear his wings have given out.”

In a moment they were all around the pond, and sure enough, there was Fluffy Forked Tail in the water. Fortunately he had managed to

climb up on a big lily leaf, or he would have been drowned before any help arrived.

Ready swam in at once and let poor Fluffy get on his back. In a few moments both were



Ready swam in and let poor Fluffy get on his back

safe on the shore, with all the other swallows twittering about them.

There was a family consultation at once, and then Father Swallow said to Ready: "My child is suffering from nervous exhaustion, and I fear we must consult a physician at once. I have



heard that there is a good doctor among the Barn Swallows about half a mile from here. I am sending my two oldest sons over there to try to find him. The other two children are making a bed for poor little Fluffy, and I must stay by his side and fan him until the doctor comes.

“This is a most unfortunate delay for you, Ready, but I fear that it would be impossible for you to find your way alone.”

Ready felt very much disheartened, for this delay might spoil everything. The Field Mouse might grow tired of waiting. The Sandpiper might fly home again, and then how could he ever get to his dear master's home? Indeed, he almost broke down, so great was his disappointment.

But as he looked into Father Swallow's worried and anxious face, he decided that he was quite selfish to be so full of his own affairs. He arose, and pulling himself together said, "Surely, there must be something that I can do to help."

Indeed, there was much to do, and Ready soon found his heart getting lighter as he helped the Swallows carry feathers and twigs to make the little bed by the pond.

Of course, this carrying of twigs and feathers was not a dog's work, and once a little Spaniel, from a field near by, barked "Baby! Baby!" It was hard indeed not to run after him and give him a good whipping, but this time Ready kept his head by saying to himself in a low tone, over and over again:

"My Master Dick is waiting, waiting, my

dear, dear Master Dick.” This helped wonderfully.

In a few minutes the little bed was made. It was a lovely soft one, beautifully lined with



Dr. Barn Swallow

feathers brought from a chicken yard near by.

Fluffy Forked Tail felt better immediately, and when two of the swallows, who had been watching on the telephone wire, twittered ex-

citedly, "They are coming!" he roused himself and chirped "Good, good!"

Dr. Barn Swallow, who looked very handsome in his beautiful buff vest, turned out to be a very good physician. He took Fluffy's pulse and gave him a tablet at once. Then he said, "He will be better in a few hours, but must have a good sleep now. After that he must go home and remain in bed the rest of the day."

Ready's heart sank at these words, but he again pulled himself together.

Father Swallow told the doctor about Ready, and the doctor listened with great interest, saying, every now and then, "Certainly," and "Of course."

When Father Swallow had finished, the Doctor threw away the cigar he had been smok-



ing, and was silent for a moment. Then he said:

“I think it will be quite safe for you to go on with Ready and leave the children here to take care of the patient. He must sleep, anyway, and only needs some one about to see that he is not disturbed. You will be back in time to take him home.”

Oh, how Ready loved Dr. Barn Swallow for those words! Even to this day he never passes a barn swallow without saluting most politely and asking if he can be of any service.

And so it was all settled. Soon the good-byes and thank-yous were said, the Doctor's fee was paid, and Ready and Father Swallow were speeding along the meadow road.

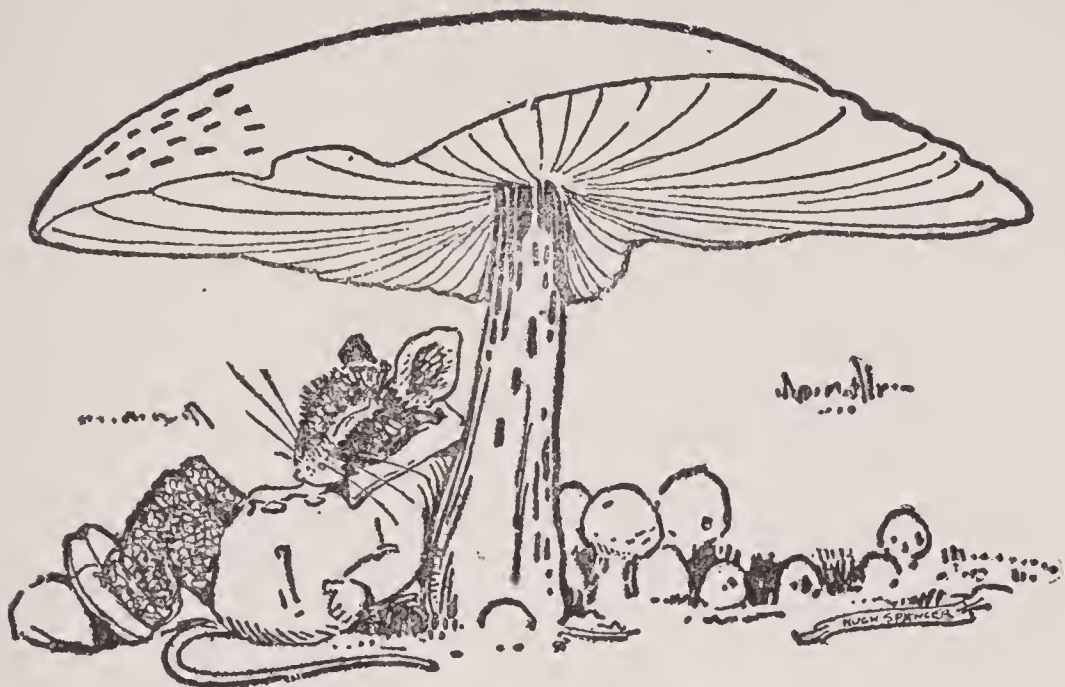
Ready was afraid that it was too late for the Field Mouse to appear. He felt that it must

be long past noon. So he was greatly excited when he saw one scudding along the road, and was about to run after it and say, "I am Ready. Are you waiting for me?"

But Father Swallow laid a detaining wing on his shoulder, saying, "The Eagle's directions are to wait until the Field Mouse says 'Ready.' There are some bad little fellows about here that might lead you astray and then pick your pockets."

So Ready had to content himself with going quietly along, but his eyes were eagerly watching both sides of the road. Several field mice passed him and stared quite rudely, but none of them said a word to him.

Just as they came to a turn in the road, Ready stopped short, for there, lying under a toad-stool,



There, lying under a toad-stool, was a Field Mouse,  
fast asleep

was a Field Mouse, fast asleep. Ready gave a tiny bark. At least he thought there would be no harm in that. The Field Mouse awakened immediately, blinked, and then squeaked: "Ready?"

Oh, how happy our little dog felt! His heart grew so light that he did not feel it at all. Father Swallow patted him on the back and said "Good-bye" at once, promising to send him a postal as soon as his son was better.

The Field Mouse apologized for having fallen asleep, and guided Ready to a dinner of nice meaty bones in an old pan near a barn.

“You were so late coming,” she said, “and the sun was so warm, that I somehow lost myself for a few moments. It is just as well you are late, as the Sandpiper telephoned that his wife had a seamstress this morning and so he could not get here on time. You must wait here until you hear him calling you from the beach.”

With these words the Field Mouse said “Good-bye,” and scudded off through the long grass.





## CHAPTER VIII

### A DREADFUL VISITOR

**R**EADY finished his dinner slowly, stretched himself out in the grass, and waited for the Sandpiper to appear. He was quite near the beach now and knew, of course, that the Sandpiper would take him along the water's edge.

How he hoped he would not have a long wait! Life lately had been so full of waiting, waiting, nothing but waiting!

He began to feel very sleepy, and then suddenly he heard something laugh. It was not a pleasant laugh—it was low and harsh, and disagreeable.

Ready started up and found the queerest creature gazing down at him. It looked something like a bird, something like a bat, and not unlike a rooster. It had dreadful colors on it,



“Nonsense,” snarled the creature

reds and greens and queer purples which somehow reminded you of all the unpleasant things you had ever seen. When the creature laughed, it reminded you of all the unpleasant things you had ever heard.

“The Sandpiper won’t come,” it said hoarsely. “The bats never sent him the message. I’m a relative, and I guess I know.”

“But he promised,” said Ready.

“Nonsense,” snarled the creature. “What’s a bat’s promise worth? The Sandpiper will never come, and as for you, you will go on and on *and never get anywhere!*”

“Oh, oh, oh!” said Ready, and then something went crack, whack, thack!

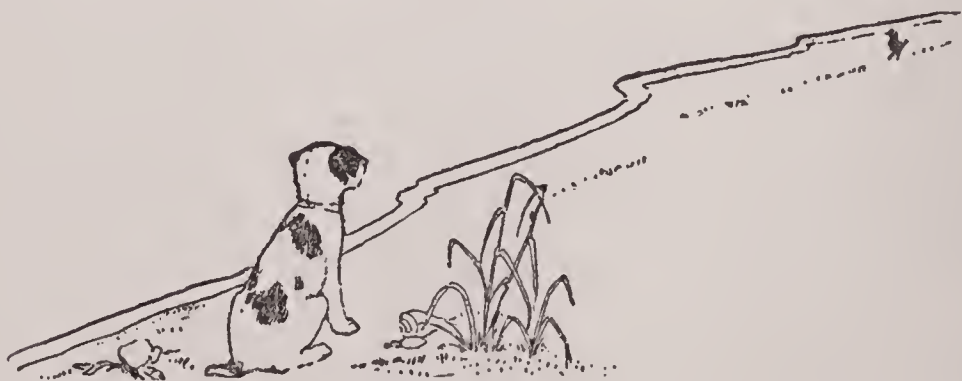
He jumped up and looked about. Not a thing was there. His bones ached, his tail felt bent and queer, and his eyes were heavy.

“Why, I do believe I have been asleep,” he said. “It’s all a dream, a kind of nightmare. Although the sun is shining so brightly, I suppose it should be called a *daymare.*”

He arose, blinked, stretched his legs, and shook himself to keep his heart from getting too heavy. "The Sandpiper will come. The Sandpiper will come," he said.

Then he looked down the beach, and away off in the distance he saw a little dark, moving object. Then he heard a low, sweet call: "Peet weet, peet weet."

"That," said Ready, with a joyful bark, "is the Sandpiper." And it was.



"That," said Ready, "is the Sandpiper"



## CHAPTER IX

### THE JOURNEY WITH THE SANDPIPER

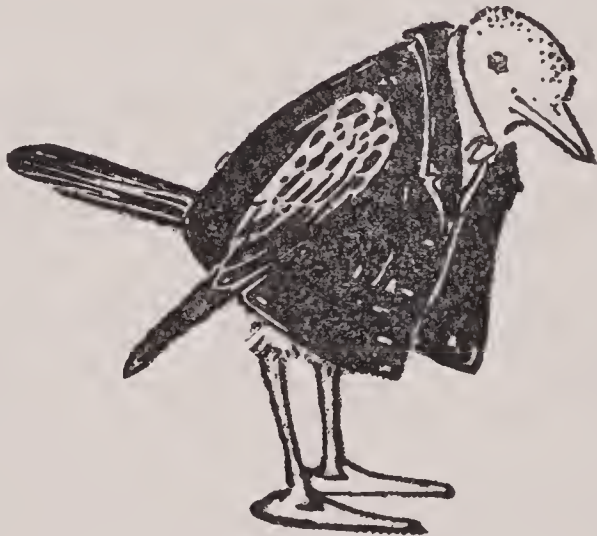
**T**HE Sandpiper arrived in about one more minute. He made many apologies for being late.

“You see, my wife has a seamstress to-day,” he said. “They have been very busy making over the children’s summer suits, and I have had to do all the housework. The children play so much in the little pool that they wear out their clothes very quickly.”

Mr. Sandpiper was a very pleasant traveling companion, although it must be said that he had some queer habits. He would run along the beach very rapidly and then stop for a few

minutes and teeter while talking to Ready. His voice was very sweet and low.

Ready greatly admired his neat and slender body, his very neat and slender legs, and his particularly neat and long slender bill.



Mr. Sandpiper

By this time Ready, having had so much experience with so many different birds and beasts, knew very well how to entertain them. He asked Mr. Sandpiper quite naturally if he had a comfortable home this year.

“Very comfortable indeed, thank you,” was the reply. “It has the best lining we have ever had.”

And then Mr. Sandpiper was off for a drink in a pool near by. He flew above Ready in a rather jerky fashion and at last alighted on a little rock and commenced teetering again.

“Our nest is a little farther from the water than usual,” he continued, and then was off again for another drink. Indeed it was quite difficult to follow him, either in movements or conversation.

Things were going along pretty well, however, when Mr. Sandpiper stopped short right in the middle of a sentence and a teeter.

“What’s that?” he said anxiously.

Ready listened but heard nothing.

“There’s trouble at home. That’s my wife’s danger call,” Mr. Sandpiper exclaimed. And then Ready did hear a low, frightened, far-away little peep.

Away flew Mr. Sandpiper in his queer jerky fashion, while Ready followed him as rapidly as he could. And then quite suddenly there appeared the strangest sight that Ready had ever seen.

Two boys were walking along the beach, and in front of them on the sand lay Mrs. Sandpiper, flopping about on one wing in a very pitiful way. She would wait until the boys had almost caught her before she would raise herself and fly a little farther away from them. Then she would flop again.

“She is not really hurt, you know,” whis-



pered Mr. Sandpiper, "but those dreadful boys want to rob us of our home, and she is trying to lead them away from it. I must fly over and look after the children, who have probably been told to hide under some leaves."

He was off without another word and disappeared behind a tall rock.

At first the boys thought it was great fun to try to catch the Sandpiper, but after failing to do it several times, they began to grow tired.

"Oh, let's go away," said one. "I believe she is just trying to fool us. I have heard that they do that sometimes."

"I am sure the nest is near by," said the other boy. "I heard something over there."

So the boys turned away from Mrs. Sandpiper and went over toward the little rock.

Ready knew that something must be done, or they would surely find the nest. Mrs. Sandpiper gave a frightened little peep which said, "Oh, please, please, somebody do something to save my home and children."

It took all Ready's courage, but it must be done. It was against his bringing up, against his highest principles, against good taste in dogs' circles, but it *must be done*. He ran barking at the two boys. He did not wait for them to protect themselves with sticks and stones, but growling and showing his teeth, he made a spring towards them. The boys ran off, with Ready close upon them. He must finish up the work now and get them really out of the way.

On and on ran the boys, on and on went

Ready, growling and barking savagely all the time. You would have thought he was the most snappy, vicious little dog in the world if you had heard and seen him then, but all the time he was running, his heart was growing heavier and heavier.

Something seemed to be saying to him, "You will lose the way, *go back, go back.*"

And then something else seemed to be answering, "*But every dog must do his duty.*"



On and on ran the boys, and on and on went Ready

At last they came to a rather rocky part of the beach. There was one very high queerly shaped rock, and the boys quickly climbed over it and tried to hide behind it.

“Here is a good place to turn around,” Ready decided. “I’ll pretend to have lost them and run back now.”

But just as he turned and started on the backward stretch, he felt a sharp stinging pain in one of his legs. A horrid little sharp stone had hit him, and then came another, almost touching him.

The boys were now taking their revenge. In spite of the sharp pain, Ready knew that he must not linger here or let them see that he had been hurt, so he ran bravely along, holding his head proudly, never once letting those



mean, cowardly boys know that anything was the matter.

The pain began to grow very bad, and Ready felt that he must stop somewhere soon. But there was no sheltered spot in sight. The sunny beach stretched out before him for miles and miles.

At last he saw another Sandpiper taking a drink in a tiny pool in one of the rocks. Ready limped up to him and asked if he knew any shady spot where he could rest for a few minutes. You see, he knew Sandpiper language very well by this time.

The Sandpiper, after jerking himself about, remembered a nice little place behind a rock about a quarter of a mile away. He guided poor limping Ready to it, and then Ready told

him all about his difficulties. The Sandpiper was very much interested.

“I think I know your guide quite well,” he said, “and I will fly back and tell him where you are. He is a neighbor of mine. Hasn’t he a particularly large black spot right in the middle of his white shirt front?”

Wasn’t it splendid that Ready remembered this very spot? He had noticed it during Mr. Sandpiper’s first teeter. As you see, Ready was really a very observant little dog.

After the Sandpiper had gone, and Ready was left all alone with the pain, it felt very bad indeed. Life seemed pretty hard. There was always something unpleasant happening to him.

He wondered if he would ever really reach

his journey's end. Perhaps his leg would grow worse and worse. He had heard of legs that did do that. Perhaps—but just then from right around the corner *a big shaggy brown dog appeared!*

Ready was a great judge of dogs. Indeed, he had been brought up with them, and one look in this dog's face told him that he had found a friend. He was such a kind-eyed dog, with understanding ears and tail. Ready knew at once that this dog was years older than he, and that he would know all about lame legs.

“You are suffering,” gently barked Shaggy Dog.

At this Ready gave up and moaned out his story. Shaggy Dog's eyes grew kinder and kinder. In a moment he had looked at the

poor leg and had made it much more comfortable by a little licking. Then he had Ready bathe it in a pool near by, and gave him the best medicine in the world. Do you know what it was? He gave him back his *courage*.

“Your leg will feel much better in a half hour,” he said, “and you will be able to go along easily. Your Sandpiper friend will soon be here, and I will stay with you until he does come.

“You have made a wonderful journey and from what you tell me, I know you must be nearly there. Be thankful that the very last part of your journey you can take alone, for then you need have no interruptions.”

Ready was much comforted, and his leg began to feel a great deal better. Shaggy Dog





HUGH SIMPSON

"You are suffering," gently barked Shaggy Dog

told Ready that he would gladly go with him to the end of his journey, but his business, as the oldest dog in the neighborhood, was to carry dog messages and to look after things generally all along the beach.

This afternoon he was taking a special delivery to a young collie some distance away. It was a message from his grandfather to say that he was coming that night to spend the week-end. The young collie must know about it this afternoon in order to get some special



Mr. and Mrs. Sandpiper and three of their children

food ready for his grandfather, whose teeth and digestion were very poor.

Then Shaggy Dog, seeing that Ready was still a little nervous, recited some dog poetry he had made. It went something like this:

“If you have a lame leg,  
You won't have to beg.  
Forget the old stone,  
And think of a bone.  
Instead of a moan,  
Say, 'Soon I'll be home.' ”

Do you know what happened? Ready was asleep in a few minutes. When he awakened, Shaggy Dog was smiling down at him and Mr. and Mrs. Sandpiper, with three of the children, were twittering above his head.

As soon as they saw that Ready was awake, they flew toward him. Then Mother Sand-

piper, in a pretty little song, thanked him for saving all the family from destruction. Father Sandpiper joined in the last two lines, and at a signal from their mother, the little Sandpipers joined in the chorus.

It sounded to Ready something like this:

“Peet-weet, peet-weet,  
You deserve much meat.  
Peet-weet, peet-weet,  
You’ll soon be on your feet.”

After all the hand-shaking and good-byes were over, Ready found out that his leg was about well, and Mr. Sandpiper and he started off again.

He hated to leave old Shaggy Dog, but had to be satisfied with the promise of a visit from him on the very first day of his vacation.

As they went along, Mr. Sandpiper ex-



plained that he would have followed Ready immediately if he had not found Mrs. Sandpiper in hysterics, and it had taken some time to quiet her. He said he was quite proud of the children, who had stood motionless under some tall weeds during the terrible danger.

At last Ready and Mr. Sandpiper came to a place where a long straight road lay before them. This was the place where the Sandpiper had to leave him. He carefully explained how easy it was to follow the road.

He said, "You remember that the Heron was to go with you and show you a short cut through the marshes. Perhaps it is just as well for you that he had appendicitis, as he always stops a long time to get his evening meal. Then if he is startled he flies at once to a tree. More-

over, he is rather apt to pick a quarrel. It is thought by some of the best authorities in Birdland that his appendicitis came from eating too heartily one night and quarreling violently afterwards.”

It was after twilight when the Sandpiper finally said good-bye and left Ready alone on the long dark road.



Alone on the long, dark road

## CHAPTER X

### THE END OF THE LONELY ROAD

**T**HERE had been no arrangement made for Ready's supper, as the Eagle had expected him to be home by dark. At first Ready was so relieved to be alone and have no one to delay him, that he gave no thought at all to supper.

It was wonderful to be free, to have no animal or bird to entertain, to be able to go on and on rapidly along a straight road.

But after a time, this going on and on grew a little difficult. Thoughts of supper would keep coming. Little side roads kept beckoning to him and whispering, "This way for

food." Then he commenced to feel the pain in his leg, but did not dare to stop and rest for fear he would be too lame to get up again.

So on through the darkness little Ready ran, keeping his eyes straight before him, never stopping a moment, so great was his fear of losing his head or falling asleep.

"I must try to keep the courage that dear old Shaggy Dog has given me," he said to himself.

Then there came to him these lines:

"Instead of a moan, say 'Soon I'll be home'." Much to his surprise he found himself adding:

"I shall keep on the run  
Till the journey is done.  
I shall not once stop  
Until I just drop



On Master Dick's bed  
In the small cottage red."

Ready felt wonderfully proud of himself to have made up this verse, and decided to have it published some day in the *Dog Biscuit Weekly*, which was considered the very best dog magazine.

Suddenly there was a rustle in the bushes, and *an enormous black dog appeared*. He was not a pleasant dog to look at or talk to. Any dog of good standing could feel that at once.

He went up to Ready and said, "Come with me, and your fortune is made."

Ready did not even slow up as he answered coldly, "I have no time to make my fortune. I must get to my Master Dick tonight."

The black dog came nearer.

“Do not let such a chance go by,” he whispered. “It means bones for months and liver as long as you live.”

“Oh, why did he mention liver?” thought Ready. He was so hungry and it was his favorite food!

But something sang to Ready,

“I shall keep on the run  
Till my journey is done.”

So he turned sharply toward the black dog, saying, as he ran:

“Go away at once. Do you suppose I would let you keep me from seeing my master tonight?”

“Suppose I *make you come?*” said Black Dog, in an ugly voice.

Ready looked at the Black Dog. He looked at him from head to foot, and then, with a growl, he made a step towards him.

Do you know what happened? The Black



In spite of his large size he was a coward

Dog turned and ran away as fast as he could. You see that in spite of his large size and big voice, he was a coward. Many large-sized big-voiced things are.

It was growing late now. Even the stars

were getting sleepy, and Ready was the weariest little dog in all the world.

He had come now to a village, and he began to look anxiously for the red cottage with the pine tree in front of it.

On and on he went, past brown houses, white houses, green houses, past everything. Oh, where was it? *Now there were no houses left.*

Ready felt the tears coming to his eyes. He had been looking so long and so eagerly; his legs ached terribly. How could he keep on? Then something sang to him,

“Instead of a moan,  
Bark, soon I’ll be home.”

There was a sudden turn in the road and there, right before him, it stood—

THE RED HOUSE AND THE BIG PINE TREE!



And yes, oh yes, there was a light in the window! He had reached his journey's end!

They were home! Ready suddenly felt very strong and happy, and not at all tired. He came softly up to the lighted window. There sat Master Dick's father and mother.

The father was saying, "How's the little fellow to-night?"

The mother answered, "He's trying very hard to be brave, but he can't forget little Ready. Do you know, he insists upon having the window nearest the bed *always* open? Poor little fellow, I fear that he cries himself to sleep after I leave the room."

Ready didn't wait to hear another word, but ran at once to that open window. In the dark room lay a little boy with wet eyes.

“I’m not being a soldier,” he was whispering to himself, “but I can’t help it. Oh, Ready, Ready, if I could just have you for a minute!”

Then there were three little barks, and a waggy tail was on Master Dick’s nose.

There was a cry of joy from a little boy and a bark of delight from a little dog.

Then a happy child’s voice was heard all over the house calling, “*Mother, father, everybody, READY’S COME BACK!*”







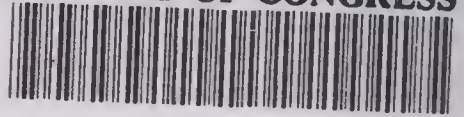








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