

The KITCHEN PORCH



By GEORGE PHILIP KRAPP



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THE KITCHEN PORCH

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SOME BORZÒI JUVENILES

C. Lovat Fraser

NURSERY RHYMES

W. S. Gilbert

THE STORY OF THE MIKADO

W. H. Hudson

A LITTLE BOY LOST

George Philip Krapp

THE KITCHEN PORCH

Walter de la Mare

THE THREE MULLA-MULGARS

Elizabeth Simpson

PRINCE MELODY IN MUSIC-LAND

Adam Gowans Whyte

THE WONDER-WORLD WE LIVE IN

Mildred Kennedy

THE FOREST BEYOND THE WOODLANDS

Hilaire Belloc

CAUTIONARY TALES FOR CHILDREN

MORE BEASTS FOR WORSE CHILDREN

THE BAD CHILD'S BOOK OF BEASTS

THE MODERN TRAVELLER



So there they were, all on the kitchen porch.

(SEE P. 53.)

THE KITCHEN PORCH



by

GEORGE PHILIP KRAPP

With illustrations by
THELMA CUDLIPP
GROSVENOR

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Published, August, 1923

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*Plates engraved by the Aetna Photoengraving Co., New York.
Set up and printed by the Vail-Ballou Co., Binghamton, N. Y.
Paper furnished by W. F. Etherington & Co., New York.
Bound by the Plimpton Press, Norwood, Mass.*

MANUFACTURED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

SEP 18 '23

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To Betty the First,
to Bobby the Next,
and to Pippy the
Last and the Least.

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LITTLE RED HEN

LITTLE RED HEN was always a very cheerful person. There had been indeed only one sad time in all her life. Fortunately for her, however, Little Red Hen was then so young that she did not realize what had happened. What she thought she remembered she had really learned from Good Cook. The story of this sad occasion had been told so many times in Little Red Hen's hearing that she knew all there was to be known about it.

According to Good Cook's report, when Little Red Hen was a tiny chick, she was one of fourteen sisters and brothers. Of course she was not red then, but all the members of this large family of little chicks were covered with a soft yellow down.

Neither could anyone have told that she would grow up to be a hen. For the chicks all looked so much alike that it was impossible to tell which of the members of the family were sisters and which were brothers. Even Old Hen, the mother of all these chicks, could not tell. But there they were, fourteen of them, all crowded into one nest and all snuggling up under the wings of their one big mother to keep warm.

What a pecking of egg-shells there was when the whole brood of young chicks was hatched out! They did not all peck their way through at the same instant, but all day long, now one and now another, made its way from the darkness inside its shell to the brightness and light of the outer world.

“I’m here!” each one peeped as soon as his head was free.

“Cluck, cluck!” said Old Hen. “Glad to see you out.”

And by the end of the day fourteen of them were peeping all together, “We’re here,” with their heads and their bodies and their tails completely out.

“We’re here, and we want something to eat.”

Now this brood of fourteen chicks was the special property of Good Cook. And Good Cook knew that little chicks are like little people. They get hungry quick and often. As soon as the chicks were out of their shells, therefore, Good Cook prepared some food for them. Do you know what the first thing was that they had to eat? It was a hard-boiled egg. Not a hard-boiled egg for each one, but one egg for all of them, chopped up very fine. The little chicks did not need to be coaxed to eat the chopped egg. They seemed to know without being told that it was good to eat. They pecked up the tiny crumbs and swallowed them

down as though they meant to begin growing right away and very fast.

And indeed they did grow very fast. In a few days, they were able to eat corn meal mixed with milk, and they even began to peck around in the grass and earth, hunting for small seeds or other fragments of food. By the end of a week, little tiny feathers began to show at the tips of their wings.

“How those chicks do grow!” exclaimed Good Cook. “Soon they won’t be chicks, but chickens.”

Then it was, when the chicks were only a little over a week old, that a dreadful thing happened. Of all that family of fourteen, only one was to grow up to be a chicken. For one morning when Good Cook went out to feed her little chicks, she found Old Hen in despair. All her little chicks had been killed except one. During the night Gray Rat had dug a hole under the side of the chicken house. He had crept in and had destroyed thirteen of Old Hen’s family of fourteen downy yellow babes.

“Oh, you poor solitary little chick!” exclaimed Good Cook, when she found that there was only one chick left. “What will happen to you now? If I leave you here, Gray Rat will certainly come back another night and that will be the last of you and the last of all my big family of little chicks. I

see I must take you into the kitchen and bring you up myself. I must be your mother now, and Old



Hen must lay some more eggs and try again. And I'm going to set a trap for Gray Rat right away. If I don't catch him, I'll know the reason why."

That is how it came about that Little Red Hen was brought up by herself, and not in the poultry yard, but in the kitchen. At first Good Cook kept her in a basket beside the kitchen stove, where it was nice and warm. Soon, however, the little chick learned how to jump out over the side of the basket. Then she ran all about the kitchen, picking up crumbs, and trying again and again, but never successfully, to catch flies with her little beak. The children often came into the kitchen to play with the little chick, and so she grew up very tame and not afraid of anyone.

She grew very rapidly, and by and by the yellow down on her body disappeared, and in its place feathers of a brownish-red color began to appear. Up to this time she had been called only Little Chick, but now she was a little chick no longer. They changed her name to Little Red Hen, and that was the name by which she was always known.

Now that Little Red Hen was grown up, Good Cook did not want to have her all the time in the kitchen. To tell the truth, she was rather a troublesome Little Red Hen. She never seemed to learn how to keep out of the way. When Good Cook was flying about in a great hurry, trying to do, as she said, forty different things at once, Little Red Hen would get excited and run about too. Perhaps she thought she was helping. But she was not. She was only making Good Cook dodge about and stumble to keep from stepping on her. So one day when Good Cook tripped over Little Red Hen and almost spilled a bowl of hot soup on her, Good Cook made up her mind that there would have to be a change.

“You’re old enough to live outdoors now, my darling,” she said to Little Red Hen, “and outdoors you go. Here’s your basket, on the kitchen porch, and you can sleep there as well as anywhere.”

After that, Little Red Hen slept at night in her basket on the kitchen porch, and in the daytime she played with the children, or wandered about in the

yard and garden, or did anything else that struck her fancy. When the kitchen door was open, she went into the kitchen and stayed there until Good Cook put her out. Good Cook was very fond of Little Red Hen, and was glad to have her company when she was not too busy.

Little Red Hen was a sort of privileged character. She went wherever she wanted to go. When Good Cook was too busy to have her in the kitchen, she went to the poultry yard and amused herself with the other chickens there. Sometimes she spent the night in the chicken house, perching on a roost as the other chickens did. This is the way chickens nearly always sleep. But Little Red Hen was brought up so differently from the hens that she did not mind sleeping in her basket. She could sleep equally well in her basket or on a roost, and she did whichever was the more convenient thing to do when it came time to go to sleep.

Having so many more privileges than the other hens and so many more favors shown to her, you might suppose that Little Red Hen would grow up to be a very spoiled sort of chicken. On the contrary, she was not spoiled at all. She always looked on the bright side of things and always tried to lend a hand. She was ready to play when the children, or Good Cook, or Towzer the dog, or anybody else wanted to play with her. But when

there was no one to play with, she could very easily amuse herself. She talked a great deal, and when there was no one near to talk to, she talked to herself. Not everybody understood all that she said. But Little Red Hen was not exacting. She did not expect to get an answer every time she spoke. If other people did not want to talk as much as she did, Little Red Hen was quite content that they should remain silent.

“What a world it would be,” exclaimed Little Red Hen, “if everybody else should talk all the time, just like me! It wouldn’t do. There must be some people to talk and some people to listen.”

Little Red Hen was not remarkable for her bravery, but she was a persistent creature. If there was anything to find out, she wanted to find it out. If she had not been so kind-hearted, she might have been an inquisitive busybody and gossip. But she was not that. She just wanted to know because she was interested. She was interested in everything that anybody did. She liked to watch what was going on. And that was why she liked the kitchen porch so well. She thought it was the busiest and most interesting place in the world. She could hear anything that happened in the house, and she could see the milk man when he came, and the ice man, and the meat man, and the grocer’s

boy, and the baker's boy, and every other girl or boy or man or woman who brought anything to the house.

The kitchen porch was the great meeting place, the center of all the world. At least it was the center of Little Red Hen's world. Sometimes she wandered away to far off regions. She knew the yard and garden by heart, and now and then she ventured into the fields, which seemed to lie spread out until the sky touched the ground, all around the house.

Occasionally she even got as far as the woods or the little pond where the children hunted for pollywogs. But these were dangerous, or at least adventurous regions. One never knew when one might not meet with strange creatures on these rambles, creatures who never came to the kitchen porch. There was Sly Fox, about whom Little Red Hen had heard many a tale, Shaggy Bear and Hungry Wolf, and Black Buffalo, Roaring Lion and Fierce Tiger, and hosts of other inhabitants of the wild country who might not do you any harm but who must nevertheless be treated with caution and respect. They were all interesting to Little Red Hen. She liked to hear about them and she liked to meet them now and then on her long rambles. But she did not like to meet them too often. For the most part, she preferred to stay close at home. She was what you might call a great home

body. There was enough on the kitchen porch to keep her interested and occupied, and after she had roamed around for a time in the great world, she was always ready to return to this comfortable resting place.

“My experience is,” said Little Red Hen, summing it all up, “my experience is, that though it is mighty fine to go roaming around in the world, seeing strange sights and meeting with exciting adventures, when all is said and done, there is nothing like the peace and quiet of home.”

SWOOPER

AS Little Red Hen became older, she grew more venturesome. While she was a little chick she never wandered far from the kitchen door. But she was born with an inquisitive nature, and soon she began to want to know what there was in the rest of the world. In order to find out she got the habit of following Fat Duck and Big Goose and Lord and Lady Turkeywing, and the other dwellers in the poultry yard, on their various excursions. In this way she came to know all about the yard and the garden, about the orchard, about the fields where Farmer Clovertop had his hay and his corn and wheat, and even about the big woods that lay beyond the fields.

One day Little Red Hen went out with a number of other ducks and chickens into a large field. It was a pasture field where the cows and their calves, and also the horses, when they were not at work, were kept. At this time Little Red Hen was about half grown. She was no longer a little chick, but neither was she as yet a full grown hen. She was what is called a young pullet. She was just old enough to get into trouble, but not yet wise enough to help herself out of trouble after she was in.

There seemed to be no likelihood of trouble, however, on this peaceful day in the pasture lot. The ducks and the turkeys and the chickens were all having a nice quiet time there together. The cows were calmly grazing, or standing still just as calmly, chewing their cuds. The little calves cavorted around in innocent joy, and altogether it would be hard to imagine a more peaceful picture than this was.

The field was not altogether as peaceful, however, as it seemed to be. Though Little Red Hen and the others did not know it, two pairs of sharp eyes were keeping a close watch on them all the time. One pair of these eyes belonged to Farmer Clovertop. He was hidden among some thick hazel bushes at the side of the field. It was impossible to see him from the field, but Farmer Clovertop himself could easily see all over the field and over the woods beyond the field. Farmer Clovertop sat very quietly among the bushes. He seemed to be watching and waiting. He did nothing, but in his hands he held his gun, and plainly he was all ready to do something when the proper time arrived.

Farmer Clovertop sat watching and waiting, but it was not merely Little Red Hen and her friends in the field that he was watching. Most of the time he kept his eyes turned towards the woods, and especially towards a tall dead hickory tree in the

woods. The gaunt leafless limbs of the dead hickory stood out above all the other trees around it. On one of the highest limbs was something black. It was small, and if one did not know better, one might have taken it for a knot on the limb. It was as motionless as a knot, and it had been there ever since Little Red Hen and her friends had come out into the field.

None of the ducks or chickens or turkeys had noticed the black knot. But Farmer Clovertop had noticed it, and he knew it was anything but a knot. He knew that the knot was really Swooper the Hawk. The second pair of eyes that were watching the ducks and chickens were the eyes of Swooper the Hawk. Farmer Clovertop was watching Swooper, and Swooper had his piercing eyes on the ducks and chickens, who were not watching anybody, but were enjoying themselves without suspicion that an enemy was waiting to pounce upon them.

For a long time the knot sat motionless on the hickory limb. Farmer Clovertop was becoming cramped and tired from crouching down among the hazel bushes. Just as his patience was about to give out, however, the knot moved. Slowly it spread its wings, and flapping them lazily, it soared up into the sky. Swooper was getting ready for action. Farmer Clovertop also got ready for action. First Swooper circled round and

round, flying higher and higher in the air. Now he was almost a speck in the sky. He had gone up into his high airy watch tower to take a look around in order to make sure that no danger was near, that is, no danger to him. But though he could look far and wide, his keen eye could not pierce the thick covering of the leaves on the hazel bushes beneath which Farmer Clovertop lay hiding.

Gay Rooster and Lord Turkeywing now noticed Swooper for the first time. They saw him soaring high up in the sky, and they did not like the look of things. They had experienced Swooper's ways of working before. One cawed and the other gobbled warningly, and they stood still, with their heads cocked up, watching their enemy as he circled slowly above them.

Little Red Hen had never seen Swooper before, and though she did not know exactly what Swooper was going to do, she understood enough from what Gay Rooster said to know that Swooper would try to do something unpleasant. If you ask me why Gay Rooster and Lord Turkeywing, as soon as they saw Swooper, did not run out at once to a safe place in the poultry yard, taking all the others with them, I must answer that I do not know. If they had been wise, that is what they would have done. The truth probably is, however, that Gay Rooster and Lord Turkeywing were not very wise. They knew they were all in danger, but they did nothing to pro-

tect themselves or anybody else from the danger. There was some excuse for Little Red Hen, because she had never seen Swooper before. But Gay Rooster and Lord Turkeywing knew very well what Swooper was up to.

In the meantime Swooper kept circling around in his airy watch tower. At last he seemed to have satisfied himself that no danger was in sight. He stopped in his flight, and for a moment he appeared to stand still in the air. Then he began to descend—slowly at first. Swifter and swifter he dropped as he came lower down out of the sky. Now he was as low as the tops of the trees. Then with a mighty swoop he dipped down as swift as a flash of lightning, fastened his sharp claws in Little Red Hen's sides as he swept over, and at once began his upward flight. Little Red Hen was the victim he had picked out from the watch tower, and now, as he thought, he had her safe in his claws. He intended to carry her off to his dead hickory tree, where he would pick the flesh from her bones and make a merry meal.

But Swooper did not know that he had an enemy lurking among the hazel bushes. When Swooper seized Little Red Hen, Farmer Clovertop had his gun ready to fire. But he did not fire at once. He knew that when Swooper began his upward flight with Little Red Hen heavy in his claws, he would have to go slow for a moment, until he got

a good start. That would be the time for him to fire. And just at the right time, fire he did. Bang! went the gun. And scarcely was the sound



of the gun heard when Swooper stopped in his flight, flapped his wings swiftly once or twice, and then fell dead to the ground. As he fell he let go of Little Red Hen.

Fortunately Little Red Hen had not been hurt. She had been scratched by Swooper's sharp claws, and she had been terribly frightened, but otherwise she had not been harmed. When Swooper let go of her, she flew to the ground, and once there, she scuttled as fast as her wings and legs could take her back to the house and to the kitchen porch.

Oh, what a relief to be back at the kitchen porch again, where no Swoopers came down like a thunder bolt from the sky to carry innocent people off and devour them!

As soon as he saw Swooper fall, Farmer Clovertop came out from his hiding place among the hazel bushes. He walked over and picked up Swooper, who was already dead as a door nail.

“Aha, my fine fellow!” exclaimed Farmer Clovertop. “I’ve got you at last, have I? Many a fat young chicken or fat young duck you have carried off to your dead hickory tree and eaten, but now you will carry off no more. There won’t be any more bones and feathers to add to the pile beneath your tree. And do you know what I am going to do with you, old Swooper? I am going to nail you to the barn door as a warning to other hawks that what happened to you will happen to them, if they show themselves where I can get a shot at them.”

Farmer Clovertop did as he said he would, and nailed Swooper, with his wings spread out as wide as they would go, to the barn door.

“There you are,” he said, when Swooper was nailed up, “as clear a sign to Keep Off as anyone could ask for.”

And apparently the other hawks did not ask for any better sign. They profited by Swooper’s sad end, and as long as Swooper hung there, nailed to

the barn door, not another hawk was seen about the place.

At first Little Red Hen and the other ducks and chickens were very much afraid of Swooper, even after he was dead and nailed to the barn door. For a long time they would not go near him. At length, however, they grew used to seeing him and appeared to realize that he could no longer harm them. But Little Red Hen never beheld the cruel claws of Swooper, as they hung from his lifeless body, without thinking of the time when she herself was clutched in those claws and was being borne up into the air by Swooper's powerful wings.

"There is one thing, however," she would then say to herself, "that I have learned from my narrow escape. And that is, the next time I see danger hovering over me, as Swooper did before he struck, I shan't wait for the danger to overtake me. The best way to be safe is to keep out of dangerous places, and the next best is to get out of a dangerous place as fast as you can if you happen to be caught in one."

CHICKS AND CHILDREN

“**I**T feels to me,” said Little Red Hen, “as though it was going to be a very warm day.”

Little Red Hen did not make this remark to anyone in particular. She just made it because it occurred to her. In fact there was no one near enough to hear them when she spoke the words. But Little Red Hen was like that. Whenever she thought of anything, she just said it.

Little Red Hen was wandering aimlessly around the yard. Though it was still early in the morning, she had already had her breakfast. Shelled corn and cracked wheat—that was what she had had for her breakfast. That was what she always had for every breakfast. She had the same, too, for every supper. The rest of her meals were not brought to her. She had to hunt them for herself. Whenever she found anything to eat she had a meal. Sometimes she caught a bug or a worm, but for the most part she scratched around to find seeds or crumbs or other little scraps of food.

“It’s entirely too warm out here in the sun,” said Little Red Hen. “I think I will go up on the porch. It’s nice and shady there.”

Little Red Hen walked over to the porch and flew up on it. She did not have far to fly, for the porch was a very low porch. It was the back kitchen porch. Little Red Hen came there often because it was a good place to hunt for crumbs and other bits of food.

When Little Red Hen flew up on the porch, she found she was not the only person there. For on the porch was Towzer, and he was eating his breakfast. He was eating it from a dish, and I



must say he was not eating very neatly. He pulled the bones out of his dish and scattered them around the porch, and in general he ate in a very messy way.

“Good morning, Towzer,” said Little Red Hen cheerfully. “Quite a warm day, don’t you think?”

Towzer said nothing. He was too busy eating. He was not very polite, but Little Red Hen did not mind this. She and Towzer were very good friends. You could tell they were good friends, because Towzer let Little Red Hen gather

some of the scraps of food which he scattered on the floor. He even let her pick out a few little pieces of meat from his own dish. If Towzer and Little Red Hen had not been good friends, he would have growled when she ate from his dish. If he said nothing, that was the same as saying that she was welcome. Little Red Hen understood Towzer very well. She knew that she and Towzer were good friends, but that she would have to do the talking for both of them.

“I’m sure this is going to be a very hot day to-day,” remarked Little Red Hen, as she pecked up the last little crumb of food. “Entirely too hot to do much running around.”

Towzer seemed to agree to this. At any rate he did not deny it. He now lay down with his head up and his front legs stretched out straight before him.

“Do you know,” continued Little Red Hen, “it was so stuffy and close last night that I scarcely slept a wink. That’s why I got up so early this morning. But I feel quite rested now. The early morning air is so refreshing, don’t you think?”

Towzer did not say what he thought. Speaking of sleeping, though, seemed to make him sleepy. He changed his position now and lay down flat on his side. His head, too, lay flat on the floor, and his four legs were stretched comfortably out their full

length. He looked very comfortable, and he felt just as comfortable as he looked.

“I wonder why the children are so late this morning,” said Little Red Hen. “I haven’t heard a sound from them, and I don’t believe they are ready yet for breakfast.”

If Towzer had heard a sound from the children he did not make any sound to show that he had. He snapped at a fly that came buzzing too near his nose. He missed the fly, but that did not greatly worry him. It was not the first fly he had snapped at and missed. Unaccountable creatures, these flies! Why should they be continually winging about through the air? Much more sensible to settle down comfortably and not wear yourself out on a hot morning like this.

“There they are now!” exclaimed Little Red Hen.

By “they,” Little Red Hen meant the children. Sounds now came down from upstairs. The children at last were awake and were getting up. I regret to say, however, that the sounds were not very cheerful. Everybody seemed to be as cross as two sticks. Perhaps the weather had something to do with it.

“Oh, dear, dear!” sighed Little Red Hen. “I’m afraid the children aren’t in a very good humor this morning.”

Towzer closed one eye, which showed that he was half asleep. Of course the children were cross. Everybody was cross now and then, but they got over it in time. Towzer forgot to remember, however, that Little Red Hen was never cross.

“Quit pulling my hair!” shouted One Little Child.

“I’m not pulling your hair,” cried Another Little Child, “you’re pushing me!”

“Get off my bed, or I will hit you,” exclaimed Third Little Child.

The three little children said a great many other rude things which I cannot take the trouble to repeat. Tears were shed and there was so much commotion that Mother finally had to appear.

“Children dear,” said Mother, “please compose yourselves. It is not at all necessary to dress to the accompaniment of such rough music. Let us be peaceful for a while.”

“I’m glad Mother has come,” remarked Little Red Hen to Towzer. “I dislike very much to hear the children quarreling.”

“Anyway I’m not going to wear any shoes today,” declared One Little Child. “It’s too hot, and I’m going barefoot.”

“No, my boy,” answered Mother. “I want you to put your shoes and stockings on.”

“Why, Mother?” whined One Little Child.

“Can’t I go barefoot today? I don’t want to put my shoes and stockings on.”

“No, my child,” repeated Mother. “Please do as I tell you. You must put your shoes and stockings on and there is no use crying about it.”

“Ouch! Ouch!” cried Another Little Child. “Stop, Mother! You’re pulling my hair.”

“Well, dear,” said Mother, “I’m combing your hair as gently as I can. If you had let me comb it last night when you went to bed, there wouldn’t be so many snarls in it this morning.”

“Oh, I just hate this old hair!” exclaimed Another Little Child. “I wish you would cut it all off as short as Towzer’s hair. He doesn’t have to have his hair pulled and combed so that it hurts.”

“Well, if you want to be a little dog,” said Mother, patiently, “you can be treated and live like a little dog, but if you want to be a little girl, you must do as little girls do.”

“I don’t know whether I want to be a little girl or not,” replied Another Little Child. “Everybody is always scolding me,”

“Well, when you are little, you have to be scolded,” said One Little Child, who was the oldest of all. “The big ones always scold the little ones.”

“But what are you doing, my child?” said Mother to Third Little Child. “Why are you putting your clothes on? You haven’t had your bath yet.”

“Oh, Mother, do I have to have a bath?” asked Third Little Child miserably.

“Yes, dear, you must have your bath,” answered Mother. “You know you always have a bath.”

“Oh dear, Oh, dear!” moaned Third Little Child. “Nothing but baths and getting dressed and getting dressed and baths! I don’t see any fun in that. Why can’t we do what we want to do sometimes?”

“Well, my child, if you will want to do sometimes what you have to do,” said Mother, “then you can do what you want to do. But hurry up, all of you, and get through with your baths and dressing. It’s just possible there may be waffles for breakfast.”

“Oh, waffles!” exclaimed Third Little Child joyfully.

“Oh, waffles!” exclaimed Another Little Child joyfully.

“Oh, waffles!” exclaimed One Little Child joyfully.

“I wonder what waffles are,” clucked Little Red Hen. “They seem to be something nice.”

But Towzer had never seen waffles any more than Little Red Hen, and so he could not inform her.

The three little children knew very well what waffles were, however, and the thought of waffles helped them through with their dressing. They

soon got their clothes and their shoes and stockings on, their hair combed and their teeth brushed, and were ready to come downstairs.

All the house was quiet now. No more howlings and shrieks came through the windows to the porch. Towzer closed the other eye and went off sound asleep.

Little Red Hen jumped down from the porch and walked slowly across the yard to a shady place under the lilac bush.

“Well, well, no doubt it’s very fine to be a grand lady or a grand gentleman, and to dress up every morning and to undress every night,” she said to herself, “but still I must say I think there are advantages in being just a little red hen or a dog.”

PUSSY IN THE BASKET

ONE day Little Red Hen was lying in the road taking a dust bath. Perhaps you have never taken a dust bath. If you have not, that proves you are not a little red hen or any other kind of hen. For all hens dearly love to take dust baths. They like to sprawl in the dust, and stretch out their wings, and wriggle around so that the dust goes all through their ruffled feathers. Then they like to get up and shake themselves, for then the dust and sand and all comes flying out again. This kind of bath makes hens feel as fresh and clean as a bath in a tub with soap and water would make you and me feel.

As I started out by saying, Little Red Hen was lying in the road taking a dust bath. It was a warm sunny day and the road was very dry. The dust was so thick in the road that it made a fine bathing place for hens. Of course when it rained, all this dust would be turned to mud. But it had not rained for days, and it looked as though it was never going to rain again.

Little Red Hen was not lying in the middle of road, but at the side where the wheels run. Here there was a hollow in the road of which Little Red

Hen was very fond. She regarded it as her own special private dust bath tub. She lay in it now, her wings spread out and her eyes almost shut. The bright sun was so pleasant and the warm dust made her feel so drowsy that Little Red Hen was on the point of falling asleep. She was at peace with the world, and in fact she had almost forgotten that there was a world.

That was why Little Red Hen did not notice a big shiny automobile until it was so near that it seemed on top of her. "Honk! Honk!" The driver of the automobile blew his horn and Little Red Hen flew up in a whirl of dust, squawking at the top of her voice. Luckily the automobile did not run over Little Red Hen. She managed to escape into the grass at the side of the road. She stood there panting with fright and watched the big automobile. With a bounce it went over the bath tub in the road where Little Red Hen had been lying just a minute before, peacefully enjoying her dust bath. Then it went speeding down the road, leaving clouds of white dust in the air behind it.

But the automobile left something else behind it besides clouds of white dust. For when it bounced over Little Red Hen's bath tub, it bounced something out of the automobile. The people in the automobile paid no attention because they never missed the object that had been bounced out. So there it was, lying right in the middle of the road.

“Cluck, cluck,” said Little Red Hen to herself, eyeing it cautiously. “What have we here and what is it for?”

She was suspicious of the strange looking object and approached it very carefully. But Little Red Hen, though she was timid, had also an inquisitive streak in her nature. If she saw something she did not understand, she could not let it alone until she knew more about it. So now she approached this object first on one side, looking at it out of one eye, and then on another side, looking at it with the other eye.

But Little Red Hen need not have been so timid. The object was only a basket.

“Why, I believe it’s only a basket,” said Little Red Hen, after she had examined it from every possible side. “And if it is a basket, perhaps there is something in it.”

When Little Red Hen had come nearer, however, she found that the basket had a lid on it.

“This begins to look very mysterious,” she said. “Why should this basket have a lid on it?”

As there seemed to be no way of telling why the basket had a lid on it except by examining it more carefully, Little Red Hen came up a little closer to the basket. Then she could hear something moving around in the basket. It seemed to be scratching the sides of the basket and trying to get out.

“Dear me!” said Little Red Hen. “There is something alive in the basket. What can it be?”

In a moment she knew very well what it was, for she heard a gentle little voice coming from the basket.

“Mew, mew,” explained Gentle Voice. “I am a little pussy cat. Won’t you let me out?”

“Oh, you poor little pussy cat,” said Little Red Hen kindly. “Of course I will let you out if I can. How shall I do it?”

“Can’t you take the lid off the basket?” asked Gentle Voice.

“I wish I could,” answered Little Red Hen, “but it is tied on so tight that I can’t budge it. But here comes Fat Duck. Maybe he can help us.”

“Quack, quack,” said Fat Duck in a very loud tone. “What’s going on here? Is it something to eat?”

“Oh, don’t you see?” cried Little Red Hen. “This is a basket, and it fell out of the automobile, and there is a little pussy cat in it, and the little pussy cat wants to get out. What shall we do?”

“I don’t see that we need to do much of anything,” declared Fat Duck. “I thought it was something to eat. If the pussy cat wants to get out, let her climb out. No doubt she climbed in, and she can very well climb out.”

“Yes, but the basket has a lid on it,” answered Little Red Hen, “and the lid is tied down tight.”

“Oh, if there is a lid on the basket, that makes quite another matter of it,” said Fat Duck. “My advice is that you had better have nothing to do with it. For myself, I never meddle with baskets with lids on them. You can never tell about them, and it’s always best to be on the safe side.”

“But the poor little kitten wants to get out of the basket,” insisted Little Red Hen. “We ought to help her.”

“Oh, quack, quack!” said Fat Duck. “Why worry about a poor little kitten? But here comes Big Goose. He may have some plan to propose.”

“Oh, Big Goose,” said Little Red Hen, “can’t you do something to help this poor little pussy out of this basket? The lid is tied tight and she can’t get out.”

“S-s-s-s-s! S-s-s-s-s!” hissed Big Goose. “Did you say there was a pussy in that basket? Ha ha! What a good joke!”

All this time Gentle Voice was mewling and asking to be taken out of the basket. She wanted to get out and play around.

“Yes, there is a pussy in that basket,” said Little Red Hen indignantly. “And I don’t see why it is a good joke. How would you like to be shut up in a basket forever and ever?”

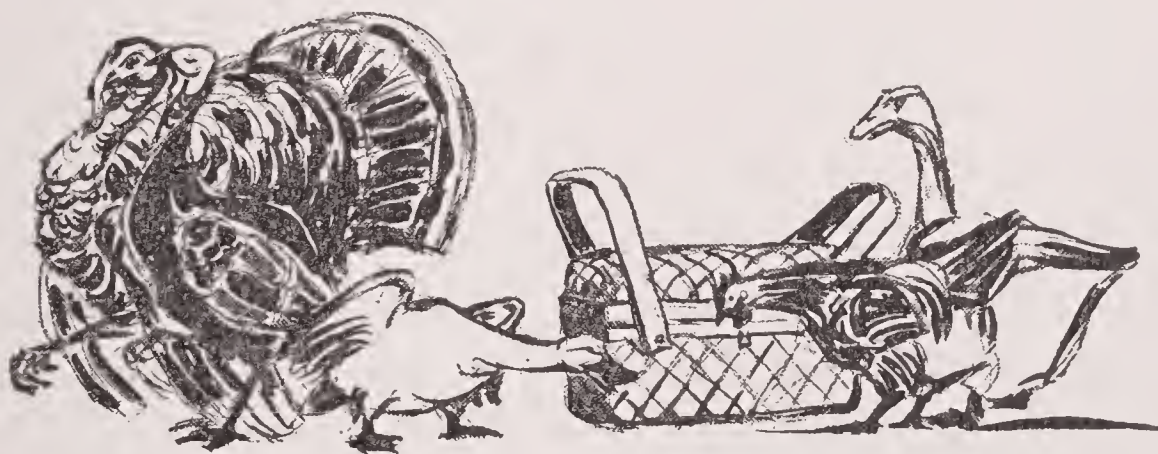
“Oh, as to that,” answered Big Goose, “I never have tried it and cannot say. But I should think a basket might do very well for a little pussy cat.

However, here come Lord and Lady Turkeywing. We can't decide anything anyway without asking them, and we had better wait and hear what they have to say."

"Gobble, gobble!" said Lord Turkeywing very grandly as he came up. "What does this unseemly behavior mean? Why are you all standing here gossiping in the middle of the road?"

"Indeed we are not gossiping," declared Little Red Hen. "We are talking about a poor little pussy cat in this basket. She wants to get out and the lid is tied down fast."

"Tut, tut! don't talk to me about poor little pussy cats," said Lord Turkeywing sternly. "I am much too important a person to have anything to do with poor people of any kind. Come, Lady Turkeywing, let us not dawdle here on the public highway."



"How very unfortunate!" exclaimed Lady Turkeywing in a cold distant voice as she passed by.

But whether she meant something was unfortunate for the poor little pussy cat or for herself, it was hard to tell. At any rate, Lord and Lady Turkeywing wasted no pity on Gentle Voice. They flew over a fence into a field near by, where they amused themselves with the royal sport of hunting grasshoppers.

By this time Little Red Hen was almost in despair.

“Oh dear! Oh dear!” she exclaimed. “Is there no one who will help me to undo the lid of this basket so that the poor little pussy can get out?”

Little Red Hen tried again and again, but the lid was fastened too tight for her to do anything with it. Finally, however, a new idea came to her. She began to squawk, and she squawked and squawked as loud as she could. If you had heard her you would have thought that something dreadful had happened.

“What’s the great idea?” quacked Fat Duck.

“Oh, Little Red Hen,” cackled Big Goose, “you can’t imagine how ridiculous you look, squawking that way.”

“How indelicate!” murmured Lady Turkeywing, with a haughty stare from the field on the other side of the fence.

But Little Red Hen did not care what Fat Duck or Big Goose or Lord Turkeywing and Lady Turkeywing said or thought. She had a plan of her

own in all this squawking. She knew that if she could not get the lid off the basket, she must have help to do it. And she knew, also, that if she squawked long enough and loud enough, help would certainly come.

Just as Little Red Hen was squawking her loudest, a little girl with blue eyes came to the window of the house.

“Mercy me!” exclaimed Blue Eyes. “What is the meaning of that terrible racket out there on the road? And what are Little Red Hen and Fat Duck and Big Goose all standing there for? I think I must go out and see.”

Blue Eyes did not wait to put on her hat, but ran out of the house to the road at once. As soon as Little Red Hen saw Blue Eyes coming she stopped her squawking, because she knew that Blue Eyes would help her take the lid off the basket.

“This is the strangest thing I have ever seen,” said Blue Eyes to Little Red Hen and Fat Duck and Big Goose. “Why are you all standing around this basket and looking so solemn?”

“Cluck, cluck!” said Little Red Hen.

“Quack, quack!” said Fat Duck, and he kept on saying it.

“S-s-s-s-s, S-s-s-s-s!” hissed Big Goose.

“Well, if you won’t tell me what it’s all about,” said Blue Eyes, “I must look for myself.”

She picked up the basket and peeped through

the cracks. She saw inside tired little Gentle Voice curled up and sound asleep.

“Oh, you darling little pussy cat!” exclaimed Blue Eyes. “How did you ever get in this basket, and how am I ever going to get you out?”

Blue Eyes tried and tried, but she could not unfasten the lid of the basket.

“I see I must take the basket in to Mother and have her help me,” said Blue Eyes finally.

Blue Eyes started to run to the house. She ran through the gate with the basket in her hand, and she had almost reached the house, when she heard Little Red Hen squawking again.

“What is the matter now?” cried Blue Eyes. “I will set my basket down here for a minute and run back and see.”

Blue Eyes ran back to the gate, and just as she got there, she saw someone come flying down the road. It was a little girl, and she was coming so fast that her hair was streaming out behind her. Her hair was brown, and so also were her eyes. When she reached the gate and saw Blue Eyes standing there she stopped.

“Oh, little girl,” asked Brown Eyes, “have you seen anything of a basket with a pussy cat named Gentle Voice in it?”

“Why do you ask me if I have seen a basket with a pussy cat in it?” answered Blue Eyes.

“Because I have lost my pussy cat, and she was

in a basket," replied Brown Eyes. "It was in the back seat. I mean the basket was—and it got bounced out. I was in the front seat and did not notice it. And now my poor little pussy cat is lost and I may never find her again."

"Well, since you ask me," confessed Blue Eyes, "I did see a basket with a pussy cat in it. I found it on the road, and there it is."

"Yes, yes, that's the one!" exclaimed Brown Eyes, as she ran to the basket. "You dear, dear little pussy, and have I found you again? I hope no harm has happened to you. My little pussy is very delicate, you know," explained Brown Eyes to Blue Eyes. "She is only about three weeks old and this is the first time she has been away from her mother."

"Where did you get her?" asked Blue Eyes.

"She is a present to me," explained Brown Eyes. "We were just taking her home in the automobile when the basket was bounced out and my poor little pussy cat got lost."

"Won't you take her out of the basket and let me see her?" asked Blue Eyes.

"To be sure I will," answered Brown Eyes, "if I can get the lid off."

Then Brown Eyes tried to get the lid off and Blue Eyes tried to get the lid off. But it was fastened too securely for them to move it.

As they were trying to remove the lid, they

heard someone blowing an automobile horn. "Honk! Honk!" said the horn.

"Oh, that is my Daddy's automobile!" exclaimed Brown Eyes. "And there is my Daddy. I'm so sorry, but I must go now. Thank you ever so much for finding my little pussy. And I hope you will come over to my house some day and we will play together with the little pussy."

"I shall be very glad to come," said Blue Eyes politely. "Good-by, little Gentle Voice. I hope you reach home without any more mishaps."

Brown Eyes got into the automobile, but this time she did not put the basket on the back seat. Instead she held it firmly in her own lap. The automobile whizzed down the road, leaving more clouds of white dust behind it, and in a few minutes it was out of sight. Blue Eyes stood at the gate for a moment and then went back into the house. Fat Duck waddled off to hunt for worms, and Big Goose went with him.

"Wasn't that a beautiful automobile!" exclaimed Lady Turkeywing to Lord Turkeywing. "I perfectly adore automobiles when they are so big and black and shiny."

Little Red Hen did not say anything. Now that all was peaceful again, she went back to her bath tub to finish her dust bath.

How delightful it was to scratch in the warm dry dust! And how nice it was that Gentle Voice



*It was fastened too securely for them to
move it.*

had not been hurt in the least when she fell out of the automobile. To be sure, neither Little Red Hen nor Fat Duck nor Big Goose nor Lord Turkeywing nor Lady Turkeywing nor Blue Eyes nor Brown Eyes had succeeded in getting Gentle Voice out of the basket. And Little Red Hen was compelled regretfully to acknowledge that Fat Duck and Big Goose and Lord and Lady Turkeywing had not cared much whether Gentle Voice got out of the basket or not. But after all there was no denying that the basket was the best place for Gentle Voice until Brown Eyes had brought her safely home. So everything had turned out right after all.

“Everything usually does turn out right,” thought Little Red Hen contentedly, “if you give it time enough. But I do hope if any more automobiles come along this road while I am in my bath tub that they will blow their horns in time, and not give me another such fright as I have just had.”

WHAT ARABELLA DID

“**I**SN’T it cosy and pleasant, all sitting out here on the porch together?” said Little Red Hen amicably.

As she made this remark in the language of hens, however, I don’t think it was completely understood. Most people would have thought when Little Red Hen spoke that she was just clucking around, on the whole very contentedly but with nothing special on her mind. It was really necessary to know the language of hens very well in order always to understand what Little Red Hen was saying.

But whether they understood Little Red Hen or not, it was indeed pleasant on the kitchen porch. It was hot outside in the glare of the sun, but cool and quiet here in the shade. Good Cook was sitting on the step shelling peas for dinner. Towzer was lying on the floor as usual, half asleep and half awake. He was a very lazy old dog and never moved or spoke unless he had to.

But Little Red Hen was not at all lazy. She was never still two minutes. She hopped up and down from the ground to the porch and from the porch to the ground, or walked about from one

person to another, visiting each in turn and always very curious about what each one was doing.

Just now Little Red Hen was most interested in what Arabella was doing. Arabella was one of the children and she loved to sit on the kitchen porch. Arabella had a slate and a slate pencil, and she was drawing pictures, and doing arithmetic, and writing out words in spelling, and doing all sorts of school tasks on her slate. She would fill the slate with pictures or figures, and then would rub them all out with her slate rag and start over again. This would make any slate rag very grimy, and the one Arabella had was especially grimy because Arabella had been using it for a long time.

But I have not yet told you about all the people on the porch. Besides Little Red Hen and Towzer and Good Cook and Arabella, there was also Good Cook's father. He was quite an old man, and though he was not so very, very much older than Good Cook, he seemed so. When he was younger he had been a policeman. But now he was too old to be a policeman, and anyway he did not need to be a policeman any longer because he had a pension. He had nothing to do now but sit in his chair all day long, and he never did much more than this. When he was younger he was a good policeman. In fact, he was a regular human Watch Dog. But now that he was old there was not much left for Watch Dog to watch. He

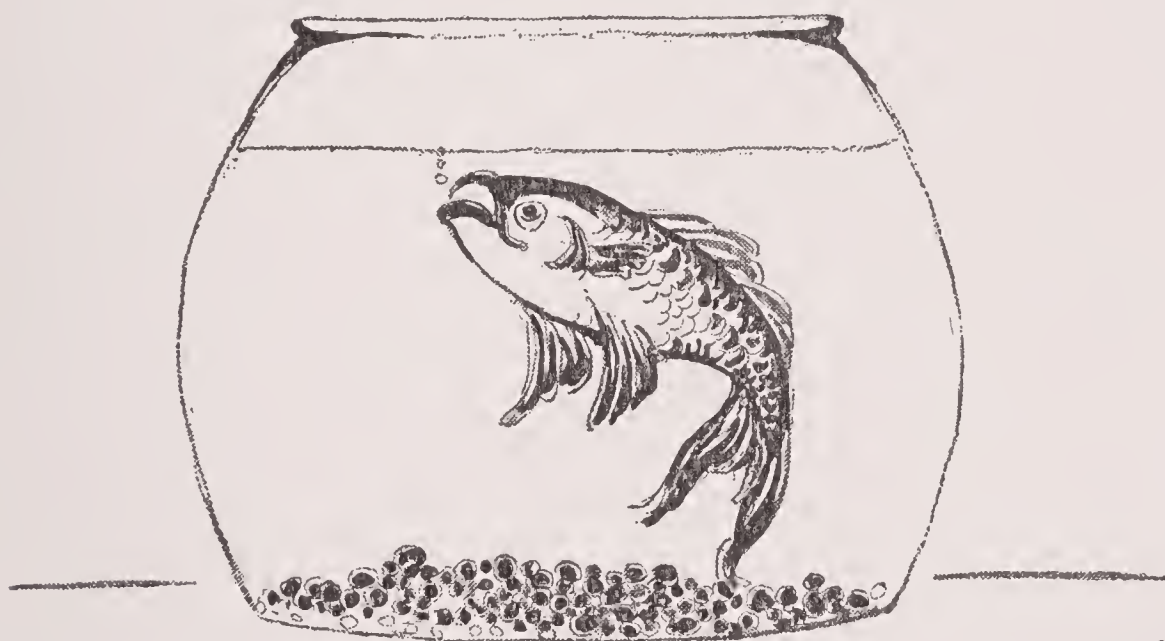
had lived so long that there was nothing left in the world that he cared for. He was just like Towzer, half asleep and half awake all the time. And he never spoke—he only growled. He was a good old Watch Dog, with his teeth taken out. For time, which weakens the mightiest, had taken the bite out of his bark, and now all there was left for him to do was to growl. But he could still growl terribly, and this showed that there must have been some things that Watch Dog really cared about, or he would not even have growled.

Now the one thing that Watch Dog cared most seriously about was also on the porch. It was in a glass globe that was standing on a little table. Arabella was sitting on one side of this table with her slate, her pencil and her slate rag, and Watch Dog was sitting on the other side. The glass globe was on the middle of the table between them. No doubt you have already guessed what was in the glass globe. It was a goldfish. This was the one thing in the world that Watch Dog really cared about.

To be sure it was a very remarkable goldfish, though you would not have known that it was remarkable just by looking at it. It was a rather pretty goldfish, but it would not have been hard to find others just as pretty. It was the color of red gold, but it had some silver spots on its sides,

and that was the reason why it was called Silversides.

If Silversides was not remarkable for her looks, neither was she remarkable for anything she could do. She could do nothing clever, and not even anything intelligent. She had learned no tricks, and she did not even know her own name. All she could do was to swim around in the water of her glass globe, poking her nose into the pebbles at the bottom now and then, but never by any chance doing anything unexpected or exciting.



Yet Watch Dog loved Silversides. He loved her more than anything else in the world, and he watched over her as carefully as though she had been made of real gold and weighed a thousand pounds, instead of about two ounces.

But there really was one thing for which Silver-

sides was remarkable. She was twenty-four years old! Think of that! She had been Watch Dog's goldfish for twenty-four years. For twenty-four years he had changed her water every day, had given her food when she needed it, had seen to it that she was not too cold in cold weather or too hot in warm weather. He would not permit anyone else to do anything for Silversides. He growled even if Good Cook came too near to her or touched her glass bowl with her hands. Silversides was Watch Dog's own special private property. If he had not had Silversides to care for and to think about, there would have been nothing left in the world for him to do. So Watch Dog took care of Silversides and watched over her and kept her alive. And Silversides in turn, though she did not know it, helped to keep Watch Dog alive by giving him something that he could still growl over.

Everybody knew that Silversides was a very remarkable goldfish. She was highly respected for her great age, though no one loved her as tenderly as Watch Dog. It is not easy to love a goldfish. But no one had ever heard of a goldfish as old as Silversides, and that made her very famous. She was almost as old as Good Cook and she was twice as old as Arabella. As for Little Red Hen, she was only a downy little chick in comparison with the ripe years of Silversides.

And the wonder was that Silversides bore her

years so well. There was not a gray hair on her head, but of course the reason may have been that she had no hair to turn gray. But there were no other signs, either, by which you could tell that she was so old. She swam around in her glass globe just as swiftly and easily now as she had done twenty-four years ago when Watch Dog first put her in it.

“Dear me! I wish I were a goldfish,” Little Red Hen would sigh now and then, when she thought how highly Silversides was honored and how tenderly she was guarded. “Then I might live to be twenty-four years old, too, and be famous.”

Little Red Hen was not usually of an envious disposition, but it must be acknowledged that Silversides led a peaceful and sheltered life. It is not every goldfish, however, that has a loving human Watch Dog to take such good care of it that it can live to be twenty-four years old.

So there they were, all on the kitchen porch, Good Cook shelling peas, Towzer sleeping, Watch Dog one eye asleep, the other eye on Silversides, Arabella drawing pictures on her slate and rubbing them out again with her slate rag, and Little Red Hen watching Arabella.

Then it was that Arabella did something that dropped like a bombshell in the midst of this quiet scene. How she happened to do it she never could explain. She knew it was a dreadful thing to do,

and the only reason for doing it she could give was that she didn't think. Didn't think! How absurd! As though one could do a thing like that without thinking.

I suppose you want to know what she did. Very well, I am going to tell you. She dipped her dirty, grimy, messy slate rag, to wet it, into the water in Silverside's bowl! Think of that! Silversides, who was twenty-four years old, who had always been cared for as tenderly as a babe, to be insulted this way! To have a dirty slate rag stuck in the sacred water in which the precious Silversides lived and breathed and had her being!

With his one open eye, Watch Dog saw what Arabella had done. At first he could not believe his senses. Had this dreadful thing really happened? Yes, there could be no doubt of it. There was Arabella, calmly washing her slate clean with the dirty wet slate rag.

Then Watch Dog rose up. He growled fiercely. It was like the rolling of thunder. He frightened everybody so that Good Cook dropped her peas and they ran all over the porch floor. Arabella dropped her slate pencil and it broke in six different pieces. Little Red Hen did not have anything to drop, unless it may have been a feather or two, as she flew quickly away at the sound of this terrible growling. Towzer woke up and also began to growl, but his growling was nothing com-

pared with the sounds that issued from Watch Dog's throat.

Seizing the glass bowl with Silversides in it between his two paws and still growling fiercely, Watch Dog bore the insulted goldfish into the kitchen. He removed every drop of the old water from the globe and filled it with entirely fresh and new water. He watched Silversides carefully, but he could not see that she was any the worse off for having had Arabella's grimy slate rag dipped into her bowl.

But what a way to treat a goldfish! Especially a goldfish like this, twenty-four years old, that had never had a harsh word spoken to it in all its life! Thus Watch Dog kept on growling until he had relieved to some extent his indignant feelings. Finally he brought the globe back and placed it again on the table, still growling, but more gently now.

You can imagine how badly Arabella felt about what she had done. She apologized to Watch Dog, and she apologized to Silversides, and she explained again and again to Good Cook how she came to do it. Only her explanations were not really explanations, because all she could say was that she didn't stop to think. But she promised that she would always stop to think after this, and that she would never, never again touch the globe in which Silversides lived, or the table on which the globe was

set. She promised that she would leave the precious Silversides altogether and severely alone.

In time Watch Dog quieted down and accepted Arabella's apologies. He stopped his growling and Towzer stopped his howling. The kitchen porch was peaceful once more. By this time Good Cook had finished shelling her peas, and having gathered up those that had fallen on the floor, she took them into the kitchen. Arabella also decided that she had had enough of drawing and writing on her slate, and she went into the house to practice her music lesson. Towzer fell into a sound sleep, and having nothing else to do, Little Red Hen started for a walk in the garden. Watch Dog and Silversides were left in lonely state on the back porch. They were happy with each other, or at least as happy as an old human Watch Dog who does nothing but growl and a goldfish that has lived twenty-four years in a glass bowl can be expected to be.

"Well, well," said Little Red Hen, as she picked a half-ripe currant from the currant bush, "no doubt Silversides is a very famous and important goldfish, but I must say, if you have to be as careful with goldfish as all that, I'd just as soon be a hen."

SLY FOX

ONE day Little Red Hen was feeling rather lonesome. The family had all gone away on a picnic. Good Cook was taking a vacation and had locked the kitchen door and departed for the day. Towzer was asleep and would not wake up. There seemed to be nothing to do. But it was a warm, sunny day, much too nice a day to be spent indoors. At last, however, an idea came to Little Red Hen.

“I think I may as well go over to visit Speckled Hen this afternoon,” said Little Red Hen.

“I haven’t been to see her for a long, long time, and I don’t know but she may be sick or something.

“I will go and visit her, and we can have a nice cosy afternoon together.

“Perhaps I had better take my sewing with me, and I’m sure Speckled Hen will enjoy a pot of my new strawberry jam and some of my sweet ginger cookies.

“I will put all the things in my dress suit case and then they will be easy to carry.”

So Little Red Hen got out her dress suit case and dusted it off and packed in it her needles and thread, and her thimble, and a little white apron

that she was making. Of course she did not forget to put in the strawberry jam and the ginger cookies.

When the dress suit case was all packed, Little Red Hen started out on her way. She walked down the road for some distance. Then she crossed over the road to a great wide hayfield where the men were busy hauling in the hay which they had cut.

“What a beautiful day it is!” exclaimed Little Red Hen as she started through the field. “Though I must say it is much warmer than I thought it was. It seems to be getting warmer all the time.”

But it was not getting warmer. It was only Little Red Hen who was getting warmer. The suit case, with all the things packed in it, was becoming quite heavy. Of course the suit case was not crammed full. There would have been room in it for quantities of other things besides her sewing and the strawberry jam and ginger cookies, if Little Red Hen had wanted to put them there.

But it was heavy enough. And it is strange, but quite true, that after one has been carrying something for a while, it seems to grow heavier and heavier.

That is the way it was with Little Red Hen's suit case. It became heavier, and as it became

heavier, Little Red Hen became hotter and hotter.

Finally she said, "I think I will go out of this field into the woods on the other side. I am sure it will be much cooler in the nice shady woods."

Little Red Hen crossed over the field and walked along through the woods. It was very pleasant and quiet in the woods. Very soon, however, whom should she meet but Sly Fox! Though he seemed much surprised to see Little Red Hen in the woods, Sly Fox was very polite.



"Good afternoon, Little Red Hen," said Sly Fox. "Isn't this a lovely day?"

"Good afternoon, Sly Fox," answered Little Red Hen, not to be outdone in politeness. "Yes, indeed, it is a most lovely afternoon, though it is a little warm."

"I'm afraid that dress suit case is too heavy for you," said Sly Fox. "Please let me carry it for you."

"It is a little heavy," acknowledged Little Red

Hen. "But I couldn't think of letting you carry it for me. I know you are a very busy man and have a great many things to do."

"Oh, no," answered Sly Fox. "I am not busy at all. I shall be delighted to be of service to you. I am only out for a walk, and may as well go in one direction as another. Only tell me where you are going, and it will give me pleasure to carry your dress suit case there."

"Well, if you insist," said Little Red Hen, as she gave the suit case to Sly Fox. "I was going over to pay a visit to my good old friend, Speckled Hen."

"Isn't it just too lucky that I met you!" exclaimed Sly Fox. "I can save you some useless steps. For I happen to know that Speckled Hen isn't at home this afternoon. In fact, she is over at my house, spending the afternoon with my wife. I left them at home when I started for my walk. Now the best thing you can do is to come along with me to my house. My wife will be glad to see you, and you can spend the afternoon with her and Speckled Hen. Thus we can kill two birds with one stone, as the saying is."

Little Red Hen did not altogether like this plan, for the truth was, Sly Fox had not a very good reputation. It was said that he had even been known to catch unsuspecting hens and carry them off and eat them. There seemed nothing else for

Little Red Hen to do, however, unless she went back home without paying her visit to Speckled Hen at all. As she did not want to do this, Little Red Hen went along with Sly Fox.

After they had been walking for a while they came to Sly Fox's home. It was in a very quiet part of the woods, far away from any houses.

"Well, here we are," said Sly Fox, when they had reached his den. "We can go right in and have a good time."

"Is that the place?" asked Little Red Hen, with surprise. "It doesn't look much like a house."

"Yes, that's it," answered Sly Fox. "But you mustn't judge it by the outside. You will find that inside it's just as cosy, dry and warm a house as anyone could wish. Just go right in and make yourself at home."

To little Red Hen, Sly Fox's home looked like nothing but a hole in the ground among some large stones. But if Sly Fox said it was all right, she thought it must be so. She ventured in a little way and Sly Fox came pressing along close behind her.

"It seems to be very dark in here," remarked Little Red Hen.

"Well, yes, it is a little dark," agreed Sly Fox. "You see I didn't put any windows in my house. I don't believe in windows. Other people are always peeping through them and meddling with your private affairs. There is only one way to get

into my house and one way to get out, and that is by this front door.”

When Little Red Hen heard that it made her a little nervous.

“Dear me,” she thought to herself, though she said nothing, “how shall I get out if it’s necessary for me to get out in a hurry?”

By this time Little Red Hen’s eyes were used to the dim light in Sly Fox’s house. She could see all around it, but she did not see either Speckled Hen or Sly Vixen, who was Sly Fox’s wife.

“How is this?” she asked Sly Fox. “I don’t see either Speckled Hen or Sly Vixen. Where are they?”

“Oh, don’t worry,” said Sly Fox. “They must have stepped out for a moment. They will be right back, I am sure. Just go on in and make yourself comfortable. We will make some tea and have it ready as a surprise when Speckled Hen and Sly Vixen come back.”

There was nothing else for Little Red Hen to do, because Sly Fox was right back of her and was pushing her along. She walked into Sly Fox’s parlor and looked around her. She saw no signs of Sly Vixen, but behind some stones in a corner she did see a lot of feathers that looked very much like Speckled Hen’s feathers.

“What will become of me now?” thought Little Red Hen to herself. “I’m sure Sly Fox has lured

me into his den with the intention of eating me. And I'm very much afraid that is what he has already done to Speckled Hen."

But Little Red Hen said nothing about her suspicions. Instead she took off her bonnet and her gloves as though she were going to settle down for a pleasant afternoon. All the time, however, she was thinking of some way by which she could escape from Sly Fox.

"That is a very good idea of yours about having tea," she said to Sly Fox. "And I'm so glad I brought some of my new strawberry jam and some sweet ginger cookies with me. They are right in the dress suit case. We can have them with our tea."

When Sly Fox heard about the strawberry jam and the ginger cookies, his mouth began to water. Sly Fox had a sweet tooth and strawberry jam was his special favorite.

"Please give me the key," he said to Little Red Hen, "and I will get the jam and the cookies at once."

"Here it is," replied Little Red Hen, taking the key from her handbag. "But be careful and don't soil the white apron I've got in there. I brought it along, thinking I might do a little sewing."

"No, no," said Sly Fox. "I won't disturb the apron."

But Sly Fox was in such a hurry to get at the

jam and the cookies that he stuck his paws in as soon as the suit case was unlocked and began rummaging around without paying any attention to the apron.

“I don’t feel any jam or cookies,” he said to Little Red Hen. “Here is a spool of thread. And here is a thimble. Ouch! Ouch! That must have been a needle I stuck in my paw.”

“Yes, there are a lot of needles in there,” said Little Red Hen. “If you rummage around that way you will get your paws stuck full of needles. I think you had better look in and see what you are doing.”

“I think so, too,” agreed Sly Fox. “Because we must get that jam and those cookies.”

Sly Fox put his nose in under the lid and pushed it up. Then he got his whole head and his neck in.

“Here they are,” he said in a muffled voice, “away over in the corner.”

He crept in still further until half of his body was in the suit case. But then, just as he came within reach of the jam and the cookies, Little Red Hen gave him a big shove so that his whole body except the tip of his tail went into the suit case. Then she slammed the lid down as quick as a wink, turned the key in the lock, and there was Sly Fox shut up in the suit case as tight as a penny in a pocket book.

“Let me out! Let me out!” he shouted. But

the suit case was so thick that his voice could scarcely be heard.

“Let you out indeed!” exclaimed Little Red Hen. “Will you tell me what has become of Speckled Hen? I know you are a wicked old fox and would gladly eat me if you had a chance.”

Sly Fox thrashed around in the suit case and upset the strawberry jam and crushed all the cookies to little crumbs. The inside of the suit case was a dreadful mess of sticky fox and strawberry jam and crumbled cookies, and Little Red Hen’s white apron that she was making was completely ruined. But Little Red Hen did not care for that. She was only too glad to have Sly Fox shut up where he could do no harm to her.

“I think I had better be moving out of here,” said Little Red Hen. “Perhaps Sly Vixen may come back and find me here in her house.”

She took up the suit case and started off through the woods. The suit case was really very heavy now, and it was all Little Red Hen could do to carry it. But she managed to stagger along with it until she reached a road that ran along the side of the woods. Here she sat down and waited for someone to come along.

Very soon she heard the rumbling of a wagon in the road. In a moment the wagon came into sight and Little Red Hen saw that it was Farmer Clovertop with his hay wagon.

“What’s the matter, Little Red Hen?” said Farmer Clovertop as he stopped his horses. “You look all tuckered out.”

“Oh, Farmer Clovertop, I have had such a dreadful experience,” replied Little Red Hen. “I am all in a flutter. Sly Fox almost caught me, but I caught him instead, and I’ve got him here in my suit case.”

“What, have you got Sly Fox?” exclaimed Farmer Clovertop. “If you have, that’s the best news I’ve heard in a month of Sundays. That miserable fox has been carrying off ducks and geese and chickens for a long long time, and I have never been able to catch him.”

“Well, here he is,” said Little Red Hen, “and I’m sure you are welcome to him. You can see a part of his tail sticking out.”

Farmer Clovertop was delighted when he saw the tip of Sly Fox’s tail, because he knew if the end of his tail was on the outside of the suit case, the rest of Sly Fox must be on the inside. By this time Sly Fox had quieted down. He was not saying a word, though he was doing a good deal of hard thinking.

“My notion is we had better take him back home before we open the suit case,” said Farmer Clovertop.

He lifted the suit case and placed it on the wagon. The horses jogged along slowly and



“Oh, Farmer Clovertop, I have had such a dreadful experience.”

Little Red Hen followed at the side of the road.

Soon they drove into the barnyard and then there was great excitement when Farmer Clovertop said that Little Red Hen had caught Sly Fox in her suit case and that they had brought him back with them.

“We must all be ready when I open the suit case,” explained Farmer Clovertop. “Sly Fox will probably pop out and try to run away.”

So Farmer Clovertop got his gun, and the hired man had a pitchfork, and Farmer Clovertop’s wife had a broom, and half a score of boys and men that had gathered around had sticks and clubs and stones and anything else they could throw or poke at Sly Fox.

When they were all ready Farmer Clovertop started to open the suit case. Little Red Hen gave him the key and he unlocked it and raised the lid just a tiny crack. Sly Fox did not budge or make a sound. Then Farmer Clovertop lifted the lid a little higher. Still Sly Fox did not budge or make a sound. Farmer Clovertop lifted it still higher, and then looked in and could see Sly Fox stretched out in the suit case as still as death.

“I do believe he has been smothered to death in the suit case,” said Farmer Clovertop. “Look, he doesn’t move at all and you can’t see him breathing.”

Everybody crowded around to see Sly Fox. They poked him with a stick, but Sly Fox never

stirred. Some said they were sure he was dead and some said that perhaps he had only fainted. But they all agreed that if he had not fainted, then he was surely dead.

“The first thing to do, then,” said Farmer Clovertop, “is to find out if he has fainted. Somebody run to the house and get a basin of water to sprinkle on him, and somebody bring some smelling salts, and somebody fetch a straw to tickle his nose with, because if he has only fainted he will sneeze if you tickle his nose with a straw.”

Three or four started off at once to get the water, and three or four more to get the smelling salts, and half a dozen to get a straw. All the time Sly Fox was peeping out of the corner of his eye, and as soon as he saw that almost everybody had gone off on one or the other of these errands, up he jumped as lively as a cricket and started off down the road.

“Hi yi!” shouted Farmer Clovertop. “The fox is gone. Run after him! Run after him!”

“Squawk! Squawk!” screamed Little Red Hen. “Don’t let him get away!”

They all started running after Sly Fox, but they might as well have tried to catch the wind. Having been in prison once, Sly Fox had no intention of being in prison a second time. He ran and ran until he was so far away that no one ever saw him again and no one ever knew what had become of him. He did not go back to live in his old den, for

he knew that Little Red Hen would tell Farmer Clovertop where it was, and Farmer Clovertop would surely catch him in it some time. He and Sly Vixen moved to an entirely different part of the country. Here they were not so well known and could play their old tricks until they were found out again. But Little Red Hen did not care where they went so long as they left her in peace.

“I’ve learned one thing though,” she often remarked, when she told about the clever trick that Sly Fox had tried to play on her, “and that is that you must not trust a rascal even when he is polite.”

HUNGRY WOLF

“**N**OW tell me, Towzer, what would you do if you were walking in the woods and suddenly in front of you in the path, you should see a huge, fierce wolf who wanted to eat you?”

It was Little Red Hen who asked this question. Towzer did not seem to find it an easy question to answer. First he shut one eye, as though he was considering it. Then he yawned, which apparently meant that he did not think it worth considering.

“Pshaw! What’s this you are talking about?” his yawn seemed to say. “I don’t think much of wolves. I eat wolves for breakfast every morning.”

But Towzer was not really as sure about wolves as he seemed to be. He knew that Little Red Hen had kept her head very well when she met Hungry Wolf in the woods, and Towzer was just a little envious.

The truth is that Towzer was getting so old and fat and lazy that he never left the kitchen porch any more. He lay there and slept the whole day long. He woke up when Good Cook brought him his dinner of bones and scraps of meat and cold

potatoes, and when he had finished it, he went to sleep again. This was a safe, comfortable kind of life. And as long as he stayed on the kitchen porch, Towzer knew that he would meet with no wolves or any other adventures.

Though she was a timid little creature, Little Red Hen simply could not be tied down to such a monotonous life as that which Towzer led. She liked the kitchen porch, too, but now and then she felt that she just had to wander off in search of adventure.

The adventure I am now telling about happened at one of these times. Little Red Hen had started out just for a little stroll in the garden. At the end of the garden, however, she discovered a hole in the fence that she had not noticed before.

“How in the world did this hole get there?” she asked herself. “And where does it lead, I wonder? Well, there’s only one way of finding out, and that is by trying.”

So Little Red Hen squeezed through the hole and through some bushes on the other side. She found then that she was at the edge of Farmer Clovertop’s hay field. The hay had been cut, and it was pleasant to walk about in the field, with no tall grass to get in your way.

Little Red Hen then wandered here and there until finally she came to the lower end of the field where there was a fence. On the other side of the

fence lay the big woods. Little Red Hen had not often been in the big woods. Even the children did not go there, unless someone was with them, because the big woods were really quite far from the house.

“But now that I’m here,” said Little Red Hen, “I think I may as well go on into the woods. I’m sure it will be cool and shady there.”

It was indeed very pleasant in the woods. The dry leaves made a cheerful rustling sound when Little Red Hen scratched around among them. In the moist earth beneath the leaves she found now and then a bug or a worm which she ate with great enjoyment. These bugs and worms were so tender and juicy and of such a delicate flavor, quite different from the bugs and worms that one found in the fields or by the roadside. There were all sorts of amusing plants in the woods, too, jack-in-the-pulpits, ginger root, and funguses and mushrooms and toad stools of many shapes and colors.

Without noticing where she was going, Little Red Hen wandered about in the woods until suddenly she found herself in the midst of the thickest part of them.

“I’d better be getting out of here,” she said to herself, “or before I know it, I’ll be lost.”

She was just about to turn to go back, when suddenly from behind a big tree, out popped Hungry Wolf! What a terrible looking creature he

was! His eyes were as red as coals. His long limber tongue was hanging out of his mouth. He was so close to her that Little Red Hen could feel his hot breath in her face. And his sharp white teeth shone and glistened even in the dim light of the forest.

“Goodness!” exclaimed Little Red Hen. “How you startled me! You came out so suddenly from behind that tree, Hungry Wolf!”

“I’m sorry to have startled you, Little Red Hen,” apologized Hungry Wolf. “But the truth is, I am in something of a hurry. You know, I intend to eat you up. Woof! Woof!”

“Well, I’d like to know why you pick on me,” said Little Red Hen, “if you want somebody to eat. Why don’t you try somebody your own size?”

“I’ve been looking for more than an hour,” answered Hungry Wolf, “and you are the first mouthful I’ve come across—if you are a mouthful. Every little helps, however, and if I eat you, I certainly can’t be quite as hungry as I was before.”

“Perhaps not,” acknowledged Little Red Hen. “And if you really are so hungry, I feel I ought to do something to help you out. Anything to oblige a friend, you know. But there is one thing I think I ought to tell you. It’s just possible you may not find me as comforting after you have eaten me as you think you will. Because you know there are the pin feathers. I don’t mean to com-

plain, but you came upon me so suddenly that my feathers are all standing on end. See how ruffled they look. Then there are a lot of little feathers underneath that you can't see. Those are the pin feathers I spoke about. They are all standing on end, too. In fact I fear if you swallowed me, you would find me about as prickly as a porcupine. I don't believe you would be very happy with all these sharp pin feathers of mine pricking you all over the stomach."

"There may be something in that," said Hungry Wolf, thoughtfully.

"Of course it's all the same to me," continued Little Red Hen. "If I have to be eaten, it doesn't make the slightest difference to me whether I am eaten with my pin feathers sticking up or lying down. I only mention it for your sake. I hate to cause unnecessary suffering."

"Perhaps the feathers will go down in a few minutes," suggested Hungry Wolf hopefully.

"I doubt it," answered Little Red Hen. "I don't see how they can go down as long as I am in this nervous condition. And it is the sight of your sharp teeth that makes me so nervous."

"Well, in that case," said Hungry Wolf, "it looks to me as though I should have to eat you, pin feathers or no pin feathers. I will just have to run the risk."

"Wait a minute, wait a minute!" exclaimed

Little Red Hen hastily. "Another idea occurs to me."

"Well, let us have it," said Hungry Wolf. "But be quick, because I'm getting hungrier and hungrier every minute."

"My plan is very simple," said Little Red Hen, "but I think it will work. I don't want you to swallow me down and then afterwards feel as though you had swallowed a horse-radish grater. You must do something to smoothe me down a little first, and what I suggest is that you spread me over with butter before you swallow me. I'll go down then as slick as a whistle, and you will never know that you have eaten me."

"Excellent! Excellent!" cried Hungry Wolf admiringly. "You certainly do have ideas, Little Red Hen, and I only wish I had a head as good as yours. But there's only one thing occurs to me. Where am I to get the butter?"

"Where are you to get the butter!" exclaimed Little Red Hen. "Why worry about a little butter? There is any amount of butter to be had. Everybody always has a little butter."

"Well, there may be any amount of butter where you live," said Hungry Wolf, "but not where I live. I've travelled about in these woods, man and boy, for a good many moons, but I never have seen any butter in them."

"It hadn't occurred to me before," replied Little

Red Hen, "but what you say may be true. The fact is I know very little about the woods. If I had known more, I would not be here now. And I must confess that I haven't seen any butter during my walk today in the woods."

"Do you know where we can get some butter, Little Red Hen?" asked Hungry Wolf.

"Well, I don't know but I do," answered Little Red Hen. "At the house, they always have butter. Good Cook is one of my best friends, and I'm sure I could get some butter from her. We won't need much—about a cupful will do. And I'm sure she must have some. They use an awful lot of butter at the house. Almost every day I hear Good Cook say to the grocer's boy, 'Bring me a pound of butter, and see to it that it's sweet and fresh.'"

"What do they do with so much butter?" asked Hungry Wolf.

"Oh, they use it on various things," answered Little Red Hen. "Everybody uses it."

"It must be very fashionable," remarked Hungry Wolf.

"Butter fashionable!" cried Little Red Hen. "I'll say it is! There isn't anything more fashionable. Why, it is used in all the best families. They wouldn't know what to do without it. And I'll tell you something else, Hungry Wolf. It's not only fashionable, but it's good too. They use

it on everything, on their bread and on their toast, and on their string beans and on their spinach and on their corn-on-the-cob, and on almost everything they eat. Everything is ten times better with butter on it than without butter on it. And on potatoes too. They put it on boiled potatoes, and on mashed potatoes, but the best of all is baked potatoes with plenty of butter and salt and pepper on them. Don't you think so, Hungry Wolf?"

"That's right, that's right!" agreed Hungry Wolf. "It takes butter to make a baked potato any good. If you haven't got butter to put on it, a baked potato isn't worth anything."

Now Hungry Wolf had never seen a baked potato in all his life, but he was not going to let Little Red Hen know that all these fine foods she spoke of had never tickled his palate. He could imagine how good a baked potato with plenty of butter on it would taste. It sounded so good he knew it must be good. And if a baked potato was good, how much better would a plump Little Red Hen be with a nice thick coat of butter spread on her to smooth the ruffled feathers and to make her slide down easily.

"Oh, dear Little Red Hen," begged Hungry Wolf, "I do wish you would go and ask Good Cook for a cupful of butter. You won't need to say it is for me. I'm not sure Good Cook approves

of me. You can say you want it for a sick friend.”

“Well, anything to oblige,” said Little Red Hen. “I feel quite sure Good Cook will let me have it for the asking. I won’t need to tell any fibs about it. You wait and I will be back with the butter in two shakes of a lamb’s tail.”

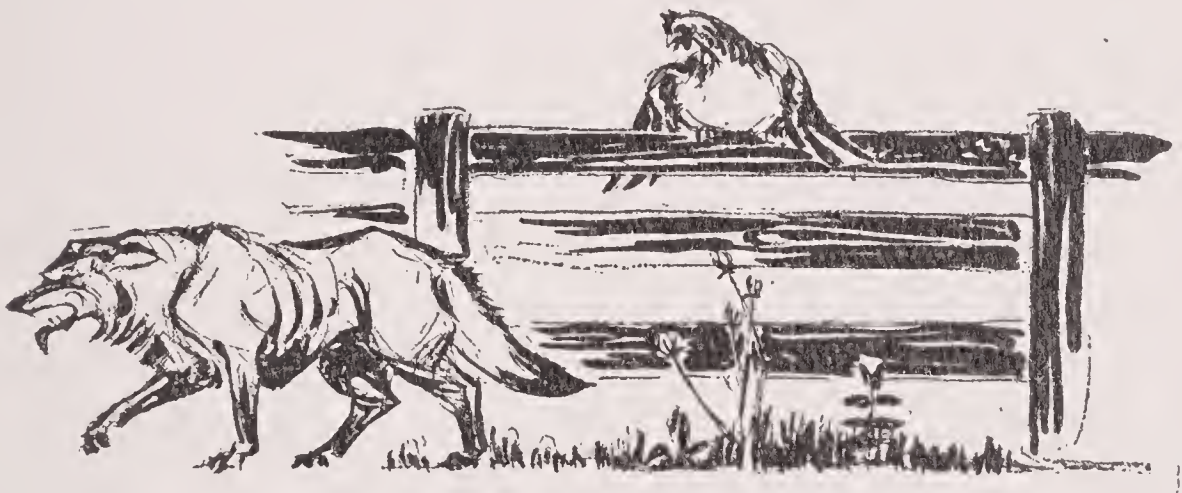
“All right,” answered Hungry Wolf. “But do hurry back. What you have just told me has made me hungrier than ever. I’ll wait for you here at the edge of the woods.”

Little Red Hen started off in great haste, as though she were going back to the house to get the butter with which Hungry Wolf was to butter her before he ate her. After she had reached the fence, however, between the field and the woods, she went more slowly. She knew that she was now safe. Hungry Wolf would never come out into the open field, for if he did, he would surely be seen by Farmer Clovertop, or some of his men, who would be only too glad to shoot him and kill him if they had a chance. Little Red Hen amused herself very pleasantly for an hour or so in the field. She hunted grasshoppers and flies and bugs, she scratched in the warm dry earth and she treated herself to a long sunny dust bath.

When she thought that Hungry Wolf must be good and tired of waiting, Little Red Hen came back to the fence at the edge of the field. She flew up on the topmost bar, and looking across into

the woods, she saw there Hungry Wolf, still patiently waiting.

“Hello there, Hungry Wolf!” she shouted. “I think you might as well go along home. There isn’t going to be any butter, and you won’t need any, because I’m not coming back. Did you really think I was silly enough to get the butter with which I was to be eaten? Oh greedy, greedy, Hungry Wolf!”



Hungry Wolf was so ashamed of himself for having been so stupid and so easily fooled by Little Red Hen that he slunk off into the woods without saying a word.

As it was almost supper time, Little Red Hen then hastened back home. She was all in a flutter of excitement over the happenings of the day when she reached the kitchen porch. It was an interesting story she had to tell, and she told it to everybody who would listen. She was quite the hero

of the day, and all said that she had done a brave and clever thing. Indeed, Little Red Hen was quite proud of herself for a while. It is not every person who can escape uninjured from the very jaws, as it were, of a cruel and famishing wolf.

“Well, I’ve learned one thing from my experience with Hungry Wolf,” said Little Red Hen. “And that is, when you are in a tight place, it is better to trust to your head than to your strong right arm—especially if you haven’t any strong right arm.”

RICE PUDDING

“**A**LTOGETHER this has been a very unfortunate morning,” said Little Red Hen. “I don’t know when I have had such an unhappy experience.”

Little Red Hen was off by herself at the very end of the yard. She was as far away from the house as she could get. She was talking to herself, which was what she always did when there was no one else at hand to talk to. It will be necessary to begin at the beginning, however, to make quite clear what this unhappy experience was.

It happened on a Sunday morning. As soon as Little Red Hen woke up and flew down from her perch in the hen house, she knew it was Sunday morning. How she knew I can’t quite tell. She had no calendar to look at, and I don’t believe she knew the names of the days of the week anyway. Perhaps you may think she knew this day was Sunday because she heard the church bells ringing. But it couldn’t have been that, because she knew it was Sunday long before the church bells began to ring. Probably the real reason she knew it was Sunday was because everything was so quiet. All the world seemed still to be asleep when

Little Red Hen woke up, and what is more, it seemed to keep on sleeping long after the time when people were ordinarily busy with their daily occupations.

There was another reason why Little Red Hen may have guessed that this day was Sunday. She got her breakfast of shelled corn and cracked wheat much later on this day than usual. It made her just the least bit cross to have to wait so long for her breakfast. That was the beginning of the unhappy experiences of this morning. The belated breakfast was a trifle, however, and worse was to follow.

They say all things come to those who wait, and finally Little Red Hen really did have breakfast. The world was beginning to wake up, too. The milk man's wagon came rattling down the street, and all around one could hear doors being opened and shut in the houses, and much bustle going on in the kitchens where breakfasts were being prepared. Little Red Hen liked this better than the quiet. For Little Red Hen was a very sociable sort of person. She liked to be in the midst of things, where she could hear and see what was going on.

"I think I'll go up to the porch," she said after she had eaten her share of corn and wheat in the chicken yard. "The family ought to be up by this time."

Sure enough, the family were up, and they were all having their breakfast in the dining-room. Their voices floated out through the window to the porch.

“Everybody seems to be quite cheerful this morning,” remarked Little Red Hen to Towzer.

Everybody may have been so, but Towzer himself at that moment was not cheerful. He had not yet had any breakfast and that made him dreadfully sullen. He had not even said “Good morning” to Little Red Hen when she hopped up on the porch, and he paid not the slightest attention to her other remarks.

Within the house Little Red Hen and Towzer could hear Good Cook scurrying back and forth between the kitchen and the dining-room. She was busy as could be, carrying bowls of porridge and plates of hot pancakes and cups of coffee and glasses of milk, and all the other things the hungry breakfasters wanted. Finally, however, all the family finished their breakfasts. As it was Sunday morning and they had nothing else to do, they set out for walks or for church or for anything else they felt like doing.

The house grew quieter now. Good Cook had time to bring breakfast out to Towzer.

“Better late than never,” suggested Little Red Hen cheerfully, as Towzer’s breakfast was placed before him. But Towzer was too hungry to be

cheerful and he gobbled up his breakfast in a trice—whatever that may be. He gobbled it up so thoroughly there were only a few small crumbs left for Little Red Hen. Even these would not have been left, except that they had fallen in the cracks between the boards on the porch where Towzer could not reach them. Such as they were, Little Red Hen managed to pick them out with her little sharp beak.

Breakfast over, Towzer settled down to his usual after-meal nap, and Little Red Hen settled down to a period of hopeful waiting.

It was then that Good Cook brought out a fine large rice pudding that she had made for dinner and set it on a bench on the porch to cool. She knew it would be perfectly safe there, for Little Red Hen and Towzer would never think of touching anything that did not belong to them.

Good Cook went back into the kitchen and began washing the breakfast dishes.

If you think now that Little Red Hen and Towzer forgot their good habits and were going to meddle with the rice pudding, you are very much mistaken. No such notion entered their minds. In fact, as soon as Good Cook had put the rice pudding down, they forgot all about it.

Good Cook forgot all about it too. She went on washing her dishes, making a great clatter and

jingling of pots and pans and knives and forks and spoons. Good Cook was in quite a cheery mood and sang a song as she washed her dishes. When other people sang, it always made Little Red Hen want to sing, too. So now and then she joined in with Good Cook. Her song was not very beautiful, being just "Ka-ka-ka-ka-koo! Ka-ka-ka-ka-koo!" But it showed that she meant well and that her heart was in the right place. You might suppose that this loud singing would wake up Towzer. But it did not. The more singing, the sounder he slept. Towzer did not have a musical ear, and thought that sleeping was the best way to get through with it.

Now all this singing attracted a third visitor to the back kitchen porch. This was Billy Goat. The truth is that Billy Goat was supposed to be shut up in his own particular place in the barn. Billy Goat belonged to the children, and the rule was, that whenever the children were not there to keep an eye on him, Billy Goat should be shut up in his pen. For Billy Goat had a bad habit of getting into mischief and of wandering away. There was still something wild in his nature that would not be tamed. He liked to scramble about among rocks and in rough places, and nothing ever frightened him. Today, however, all the children had gone off to Sunday school or to church, or I don't

know where, and had completely forgotten about Billy Goat. That was why he had not been shut up.

Being left alone, Billy Goat had to amuse himself. He was able to do this very well. First he had gone off investigating all the alleys and backyards in the neighborhood. But apparently interesting experiences were not easy to find on this quiet Sunday morning. Billy Goat had come back home again, feeling a little bored. He did not usually pay much attention to Little Red Hen, or to Towzer either, but having nothing else on hand, he decided now to go up to the porch and see what they were doing.

But Billy Goat found the back kitchen porch as dull as all the other places he had visited this Sunday morning. Towzer was still asleep, and Little Red Hen would do nothing but sing her endless song. Billy Goat began to look around to see if there might by any chance be any other objects of interest on the back kitchen porch. In a moment his eye had fallen on Good Cook's beautiful rice pudding. He examined it carefully and then came up and smelled it carefully.

"How good that smells!" he said, wrinkling up his nose. "I wonder if it tastes as good as it smells?"

Now Billy Goat knew perfectly well that rice puddings sitting on benches on back kitchen porches

to cool were not intended for Billy Goats to eat. But I think I told you that there was something wild and untamed in Billy Goat's nature. He often did things that he knew he ought not to do, merely because he felt like doing them.

And so now Billy Goat began to eat the rice pudding. He did not eat it greedily, but he ate very steadily. The first mouthful tasted good, and every mouthful after the first, tasted better and



better. He began at the middle and ate all over the top to the edge. Then he began again at the middle and ate off another layer to the edge. By this time the rice pudding was half gone, but Billy Goat had not had nearly half enough.

Little Red Hen saw what Billy Goat was doing, but she was so horrified she could not say a word. She stopped her singing, but just stood gazing in silent wonder at the wickedness of Billy Goat eating the rice pudding.

Towzer was still sleeping, and in the kitchen Good Cook was still singing her song and was busy preparing the Sunday dinner for the family.

But Billy Goat simply kept on eating. He ate a third layer off the rice pudding, and then a fourth. By that time he had reached the bottom of the pan. Then he began all over again at the top, nibbling off all the little pieces of crust that had stuck to the sides of the pan. The rice pudding was so good that Billy Goat could not bear to leave a tiny scrap of it. He ate it up to the very last grain of rice. Then he began to lick the inside of the pan. He licked it so clean that Good Cook would not need to wash it. But he licked it so hard, also, that an accident happened. He knocked the pan off the bench, and it fell to the floor with a great clatter. It rolled over the floor of the porch, fell down the stone steps, and then slid half way down the cement sidewalk. What a racket it made! Towzer woke up with a start. Good Cook stopped her singing in the kitchen. She ran to the kitchen door, picking up a broom for a weapon, as she came along.

One glance outside showed her what had happened.

“Oh, my nice rice pudding!” she exclaimed. “You wretched creatures, what have you done with my rice pudding?”

Then she laid on right and left with her broom.



Then she laid on right and left with her broom.

She struck first at Billy Goat, because she suspected he had done the mischief. But Billy Goat was as quick and nimble-footed as a chamois. He leaped like a flash over the flower bed to a safe distance on the lawn. Then Good Cook made a sweeping stroke at Little Red Hen with her broom, but Little Red Hen flew up in the air and escaped. Towzer was the only one left, and everything had happened so suddenly, that he was as yet only half awake. Good Cook gave him a stinging blow with the handle of her broom, and away he went howling down the cement walk.

Of course, Towzer was innocent. He had done no harm, and he did not even know the rice pudding had been eaten. But Good Cook was in no mood to separate the innocent from the guilty. She was angry. She was as mad as a hornet. She felt she had to punish somebody for the loss of her pudding, and Towzer was the only one she could reach. She knew Billy Goat could run much faster than she could, and so she made no attempt to pursue him. She only stood on the porch and talked to him.

“Oh, you miserable goat!” she exclaimed. “If I once get hold of you, I’ll give you a bang over the caboose that will land you in the middle of next week!”

“Oh, dear, dear!” said Little Red Hen. “What very rough talk! It’s too bad that the rice pudding

has been eaten, but I don't think Good Cook should use such dreadful language."

But Billy Goat did not mind Good Cook's rough language. Perhaps he knew that Good Cook's bark was worse than her bite, that she said a good deal more than she meant.

Nevertheless Billy Goat made up his mind to take special good care that Good Cook did not get hold of him. He knew, too, that hard words break no bones, and that Good Cook could not take the rice pudding he had eaten away from him by any amount of scolding. All he did, therefore, was to stamp his right foot defiantly and stare back at Good Cook, as much as to say, "I dare you to come down here."

Good Cook, however, was not inclined to take the dare. She was too busy to waste any more time, because now she had to make another dessert for dinner.

"Get out!" she shouted. "You miserable four-legged animals! If I catch any of you on my kitchen porch again, somebody is going to suffer for it."

"Well, that lets me out," said Little Red Hen, as Good Cook went back into the kitchen. "I don't know whether I am an animal or not, but I know I haven't four legs."

"It doesn't let me out," said Billy Goat. "But

I don't mind. I intend to go on the porch whenever I want to."

But Billy Goat apparently decided that it would be wise not to want to go on the porch for the present. He wandered off, seeking adventure elsewhere. And Little Red Hen also thought it best to withdraw to a safe distance for a time.

That was why I said at the beginning of this story that Little Red Hen was off by herself at the very end of the yard, the end farthest from the house. She thought that would be the safest place to be in.

And now you know, too, what some of the unhappy experiences of this Sunday were for Little Red Hen. But Little Red Hen never remained unhappy very long. Her clouds always had silver linings. She began to see that she might learn something useful from these various mishaps.

"Well, well," she said wisely, "this has taught me one thing, and that is, if you want to be taken for innocent you must be careful not to be seen in the company of the guilty."

T. TURTLE SLOWBOY

T TURTLE SLOWBOY was an old friend of Little Red Hen's. When I say old, I mean really old. Exactly how old he was, even T. Turtle Slowboy did not know. But he knew he was very old.

"Yes, I belong to a very old family," he would say to Little Red Hen. "It's nothing for members of our family to live to be a hundred years old. We are not only a very old but also an exclusive family. We never have much to do with other people, and that is what makes us so aristocratic."

"What a big word!" said Little Red Hen. "I never heard it before. What does aristocratic mean?"

"Oh, I suppose it means a number of things," answered T. Turtle Slowboy. "But to me it means mostly how you feel. If you feel that you are so much better than other people that you can turn your nose up at them and have nothing to do with them, then you are quite aristocratic—at least you feel aristocratic."

"If one doesn't have anything to do with other people, will that make one aristocratic?" asked Little Red Hen.

“Well, partly that,” said T. Turtle Slowboy. “But you must also belong to an old family, like mine.”

“I’m afraid I can’t be aristocratic, then,” said Little Red Hen. “Because I like to have a lot to do with other people and I don’t belong to an old family. At least, I suppose I don’t, though I really don’t know. I never happened to think about it before.”



“Oh, but if you really belonged to an old family you would have thought about it,” remarked T. Turtle Slowboy. “However, I shouldn’t worry over it if I were you. I don’t blame you for it. You can’t help it. And of course everybody can’t be aristocratic. If they were, there wouldn’t be any point in being aristocratic at all.”

“But don’t you have to do anything to be aristocratic?” asked Little Red Hen.

“Do anything!” exclaimed T. Turtle Slowboy in a horrified tone. “Of course you don’t have to do anything! You can’t. It isn’t aristocratic to do anything. Why, members of my family have lived to be a hundred years and never done a single thing. Do anything indeed! You don’t do any-

thing to be aristocratic. You just are aristocratic.”

“It’s all very puzzling,” said Little Red Hen, “but as you say, it isn’t worth worrying about. Because if you are aristocratic, you are, and if you aren’t, you can’t be. But there is another thing I would like to know, T. Turtle Slowboy, and that is, what is the T. for in your name? I should think it would be just Turtle Slowboy, not T. Turtle Slowboy.”

“Oh, but T. Turtle Slowboy is so much more aristocratic!” declared T. Turtle Slowboy. “Don’t you think that sounds fine—T. Turtle Slowboy? Much better than plain Turtle Slowboy, though that is really my name. The T. doesn’t stand for anything except to make it sound better. T. Turtle Slowboy—it looks well, too, don’t you think, when it is written out or printed? I thought of it myself, and I put the T. in T. Turtle Slowboy.”

“I didn’t know one could do that,” exclaimed Little Red Hen. “I thought people’s names were given to them and they had to take what they got.”

“Most people do,” said T. Turtle Slowboy, “but aristocratic names aren’t the same as common ordinary names. You know, kings sometimes have eight or ten or a dozen different names. A king can call himself anything he wants to.”

“Well, it may be so,” replied Little Red Hen, “but I can’t say, because I don’t really know any

kings. I think most of the people I know must be common ordinary people.”

To this last remark of Little Red Hen's, T. Turtle Slowboy did not condescend to make any reply. He probably thought it was beneath his dignity to continue talking with so humble a creature as Little Red Hen. He therefore drew his head within his shell, and all his legs and his tail. Little Red Hen then took this as a hint that the interview was over. She was not sorry. The truth is that she found T. Turtle Slowboy rather tiresome.

“No doubt he is a very excellent and aristocratic person,” said Little Red Hen to herself, as she wandered off, “but I must say, a little of T. Turtle Slowboy goes a long way. He comes pretty near to being an insufferable snob.”

You might not think it of so grand a person as T. Turtle Slowboy, but it cannot be denied that T. Turtle Slowboy lived in a mud puddle. It was not even a big mud puddle. It was not big enough to be called a pond. The children often went to this mud puddle to catch pollywogs. They knew that T. Turtle Slowboy lived there, too, but they never bothered him. They did not think he was interesting. He never turned into anything, the way pollywogs did, and he couldn't even run away if you tried to catch him. There was no fun in catching anything as easy to catch as T. Turtle

Slowboy, and there was no fun after you caught him. He simply withdrew into his shell and stayed there, and for all the good he was to anybody, he might as well have been a stick of wood.

A week or two after Little Red Hen's talk with T. Turtle Slowboy, she happened again to visit the mud puddle in which T. Turtle Slowboy lived. She found him sunning himself on a stone at the edge of the puddle. In spite of the sunny weather, however, T. Turtle Slowboy seemed not to be in a cheerful mood. He looked as though he were very much depressed.

"Dear me, T. Turtle Slowboy!" exclaimed Little Red Hen. "You look as glum as an oyster. What is the matter?"

"Matter enough, Little Red Hen," replied T. Turtle Slowboy with a sigh. "I've just about made up my mind that I must leave this lake."

It was only a mud puddle, but T. Turtle Slowboy called it a lake because he lived in it.

"Why, what's the matter with it?" asked Little Red Hen. "You've lived here a long, long time. You ought to be used to it."

"The truth is, Little Red Hen," said T. Turtle Slowboy, "that this lake isn't large enough for me any more. And then, it is becoming so common. It's simply overrun with pollywogs and frogs. And I shouldn't be surprised to see it dry up some

day, too. It isn't nearly as large as it was when I was young some four score years ago. I think there must be a crack in the bottom of it which lets the water run out."

"Well, if you feel so badly about it," said Little Red Hen, "why don't you move away to some other pond?"

"That's just the point," said T. Turtle Slowboy. "I don't know how to move away. I never have done anything but stay right here and I don't know how to do anything else."

"I know where there is a fine big pond," said Little Red Hen. "You go across Farmer Clover-top's hayfield to the other side of the hill to get to it. Of course it is pretty far, but it's nice after you get there."

"But I can't get there," complained T. Turtle Slowboy. "It would take me a month of Sundays to crawl there, and then I wouldn't get there, because I would surely be lost on the way. If you can't help me, I shall simply have to stay here until the water all dries up and then that will be the end of me. Because, you know, I can't live without water."

"What a sad fate to look forward to!" exclaimed Little Red Hen sympathetically.

"It is indeed sad," agreed T. Turtle Slowboy, with tears in his eyes.

“But I think something can be done to prevent it,” added Little Red Hen. “Indeed something must be done. The question is, What?”

“That is just the question,” said T. Turtle Slowboy. “If we only knew what was to be done, you could do it.”

“One plan occurs to me,” added Little Red Hen, after she had thought for a minute or two. “I think it will work. The only difficulty is that you will have to help. You will have to do something.”

“Oh, please don’t ask me to do anything hard!” begged T. Turtle Slowboy.

“It isn’t hard,” answered Little Red Hen, “and you won’t have to think. I will tell you what to do, and if you do just as I say, I’ll see to it that you reach the big pond on the other side of the hill.”

“Well, if I don’t have to think, perhaps I can do it,” agreed T. Turtle Slowboy sadly. “But I don’t know. Perhaps I’d better stay right here. I’m not used to these rapid changes.”

“Tut, tut!” exclaimed Little Red Hen impatiently. “But you can’t stay here. Pretty soon there won’t be any water here for you to stay in. You just wait until I come back and we will have you moved out of here in no time. I can see very well that it’s impossible to be aristocratic in a mud puddle like this. I think you are right in wanting to move to a decent sized pond. Keep a stiff upper lip and I will be back soon.”

Little Red Hen hastened away to the house and to the garden to find help in carrying out her plan. The persons she was looking for were Laughing-Scolding Bluejay and Scolding-Laughing Bluejay. They lived mostly in the garden and one could hear them there almost any time of the day. They were probably twins, because they looked so much alike that Little Red Hen could not tell them apart. And they had to have double names, because when one was laughing, the other was scolding, and when the other was scolding, then the first one was laughing, and you could never tell which was which. They were a very saucy pair, these two bluejays. They made fun of everything, and even when they were scolding, they were laughing. But Little Red Hen and Laughing-Scolding and Scolding-Laughing were very good friends. They liked Little Red Hen because she was so good-natured and did not put on airs. Besides Little Red Hen let them come down and pick up grains of corn and cracked wheat when she was having her breakfast. They had the reputation of being thievish and quarrelsome, but as Little Red Hen said, if you treated them well, they treated you well.

When Little Red Hen had explained her plan to the two bluejays, they almost exploded with laughter over it.

“So old Hardshell wants to get out of his mud puddle, does he?” they said. “And has he found

out at last that his puddle isn't the only paradise on earth? Of course we will help you, you foolish Little Red Hen. We will do anything you want us to do, for your sake, and it will be a sight worth seeing, too, when T. Turtle Slowboy goes flying through the air."

"Well, come along then," said Little Red Hen. "T. Turtle Slowboy is waiting and we might as well get him over at once."

They all three hastened to the mud puddle, and there they found T. Turtle Slowboy still sunning himself on his stone. On the way, Little Red Hen had picked up a long straight stick which she took back with her.

"Now, T. Turtle Slowboy," she explained, "I will tell you just what to do. I want you to take hold of the middle of this stick with your mouth and to hold fast. You won't have anything else to do but hold fast. Then Laughing-Scolding will take hold of one end of the stick with his beak and Scolding-Laughing of the other end. They will fly up in the air and carry you over the hill to the other pond. It's as easy as falling off a log. There's only one thing to be careful about, and that is, you must hold fast. Hold fast!"

"Oh, I can hold fast all right," said T. Turtle Slowboy. "Holding fast is my strong point. But what I don't know is whether this is really very

dignified. I don't believe any of my family ever flew up in the air on a stick before."

"Well, now is your chance to become famous, T. Turtle, old fellow," said Laughing-Scolding Bluejay. "You can go down in history as the first Slowboy to fly in the air. Perhaps after you start, all the Slowboys will follow your example."

"I trust not, I trust not," remarked T. Turtle Slowboy, who thought that Laughing-Scolding Bluejay was inclined to be impudent and familiar. "We Slowboys don't take up with every new-fangled notion that comes along."

"Just now it isn't a question of new-fangled notions," interrupted Little Red Hen impatiently. "It's a question of getting out of this mud puddle into the pond."

"Quite so, Little Red Hen," replied T. Turtle Slowboy with dignity. "I appreciate your kindness and that of your young friends here, and I assure you I am ready to start at once."

"All right, then," said Little Red Hen. "Take hold of this stick, and remember what I say, Hold fast!"

T. Turtle Slowboy seized the middle of the stick firmly in his jaws, and Laughing-Scolding and Scolding-Laughing took hold of the two ends.

Up in the air they flew, up above the tops of the trees, and still higher and higher. They flew so

high that Little Red Hen had to hold her head back to see them. There was no denying that T. Turtle Slowboy hanging to a flying stick was a comical sight. All the birds of the air flocked around to see him. The robins and the starlings laughed and joked at him, but the worst of all were the sparrows.

“Tee-hee-hee, tee-hee-hee!” they tittered. “Did you ever see such a sight? What is it anyway? Is it a beetle, or what sort of a bug would you call it?”

The sparrows knew perfectly well that T. Turtle Slowboy was not a beetle or a bug, but they thought it would annoy him to call him one. And it did. It annoyed him greatly. T. Turtle Slowboy was not very thin skinned, but if you wanted to hurt his feelings, the quickest way to do it was to pretend that you did not know that he was a person of very great importance. He felt that he could not let the insulting words of the sparrows pass unnoticed. In self-respect he decided that he must speak up and tell them a thing or two. What he wanted to say was, “You saucy, impudent sparrows, I would have you to know that I am not a bug or a beetle. I come from as good a family as you do, and I don’t doubt a great deal better.”

That is what he wanted to say and what he started to say. But he did not have much chance to say anything. For when he opened his mouth

to speak he let go of the stick, and as soon as he let go of the stick, he began to fall. He fell and fell, and the farther he fell, the faster he went. He thought he must have fallen miles before he reached the ground. But when he did reach the ground, he never thought at all any more. For he struck a great stone, and he struck it so hard that he was shattered to a thousand tiny pieces. He was completely broken up, and the pieces were so small, that no one was ever able to find a trace of him after he touched the ground. Not that any one looked very hard. It was a sad end for T. Turtle Slowboy, but he had had so little to do with other people while he lived in the aristocratic seclusion of his mud puddle that I don't think he was much missed after his great fall.

“Well, well,” murmured Little Red Hen thoughtfully, as she wended her way homewards, “I see now that even a person who talks very little may talk sometimes too much. What counts, after all, is not whether you talk very much or don't talk very much, but whether you know how to keep your mouth shut at the right time.”

HARD STONE

ONE warm summer day, Little Red Hen started out for a walk. She had not planned to go anywhere in particular, but was just rambling here and there. Thus it was that she happened to meet with Sly Fox, who was also out for a little exercise and fresh air.

“How do you do, Little Red Hen?” called out Sly Fox politely. “You seem to be out for a walk, as I am. Can’t I join you?”

“Yes, indeed, Sly Fox,” answered Little Red Hen, who knew how to be as polite as anyone else. “I shall be glad to have some company on my walk.”

“What do you think of my new coat, Little Red Hen?” asked Sly Fox, showing her a beautiful new fur coat that he had on.

“It’s a lovely coat, so bright and red and glossy,” replied Little Red Hen. “But I should think you might find a heavy fur coat rather warm in this weather. I find the sun pretty hot without any coat.”

“Well, I must confess,” said Sly Fox, “that it is a little warm. But I couldn’t bear to leave it at home. What’s the use of having a new fur coat, I said, if you can’t wear it? And that’s the reason

why I went for a walk—I wanted to wear my new fur coat and show it off to admiring eyes. But I'm almost beginning to be sorry I wore it. I am so hot already that I am almost melted and running away."

"Suppose we go over there and walk up the side of that mountain," suggested Little Red Hen. "The mountain is covered with trees and I think it will be cool and shady there."

Sly Fox thought this would be a good plan, and the two started climbing up the mountain side. It was cooler there in the shade than it had been in the sunny open field. At least it was cooler at the start. As they climbed up the steep sides of the mountain, however, they found that the climbing made them even warmer than the sun had done. Little Red Hen did not mind it a great deal, but soon Sly Fox was dripping with perspiration.

"What a fool I am," he complained, "to wear this fur coat on such a warm day! I can't stand it any longer, and the fact is I never did need it, anyway. I was just wearing it for looks. But I don't intend to be roasted to death just for looks. Don't you want the coat, Little Red Hen?"

"Don't I want it!" echoed Little Red Hen, in astonishment. "Not if I know myself! I already have one coat of feathers which keeps me warm enough in winter and too warm in summer. Thank

you just the same, but I know when I've got enough."

"Well, then," declared Sly Fox, "I'll give it to Hard Stone here. He hasn't anything to cover himself with, either in winter or summer."

Sly Fox spread the coat over Hard Stone, who seemed to be very glad to get it.

No doubt it was disagreeable for Hard Stone to lie there with the hot sun beating down upon him all day long. And in the winter, when the cold rains came, and the snow and the hail fell upon him, it was still worse. Hard Stone was just the person to have the coat, and when Sly Fox had got it off his back and on Hard Stone, everybody seemed to be perfectly happy and satisfied.

Sly Fox and Little Red Hen now continued their walk up the sides of the mountain, and all went well for a while. But pretty soon the weather began to change.

"It seems to me," observed Little Red Hen, "it's getting very dark."

"It seems to me, too, it's getting rather dark," answered Sly Fox.

"It seemes to me, too, that I heard a sound like then remarked Little Red Hen.

"It seems to me, too, that I heard a sound like thunder," agreed Sly Fox.

"It seems to me I felt a drop of rain," said Little Red Hen.

“It seems to me I felt a drop of rain,” added Sly Fox.

But after that, it was no use seeming any more. There could not be the slightest doubt that it was raining. The sky was covered with great black clouds, the thunder rolled and rumbled, and the rain came down in sheets. Sly Fox and Little Red Hen hurried along as fast as they could, but they found nothing to shelter them from the driving rain. They stood under a tree and for a time the leaves on the tree kept the rain off. Very soon, however, the leaves became dripping wet, and then the water began to trickle down on their heads and down the backs of their necks in little streams.

“Well, we might as well stand right out in the rain,” declared Little Red Hen, “as under this sprinkling pot of a tree.”

“I’m getting wet to the skin,” said Sly Fox. “And it doesn’t feel comfortable. I wish I had my coat now. That would keep the rain off. Would you mind running down to Hard Stone and asking him for it, Little Red Hen? I would go myself except that I don’t like to get too wet.”

“I’m as wet now as I can be,” replied Little Red Hen, “so I don’t mind going. I’ll be back in a minute.”

Little Red Hen hurried down the mountain side as fast as she could go, and when she reached Hard Stone she told him as politely as possible that Sly

Fox wanted his coat back. Politeness, however, made no impression upon Hard Stone. It took more than that to soften him. He did not believe in wasting words, and his reply to Little Red Hen was brief and to the point.

“Can’t have it!” was all Hard Stone had to say, in the hardest and stoniest voice you can imagine.

Little Red Hen went back to Sly Fox and reported that Hard Stone would not give up the coat.

“Go back again,” commanded Sly Fox, “and tell him he must give me half of the coat. That will be enough to keep the rain off of me at least.”

But Hard Stone had no more intention of giving up half of the coat than of giving the whole of it.

“Can’t have it! Can’t have one half inch of it!” he said most firmly, after Little Red Hen had delivered her message.

When Little Red Hen had come back and had told Sly Fox that Hard Stone would not give up one half of the coat and not even one half inch of it, Sly Fox became exceedingly angry.

“He won’t give me one half inch, won’t he!” exclaimed Sly Fox. “Well, we’ll see about that! If he won’t give it to me, I shall have to take it.”

Forgetting all about the rain, Sly Fox ran quickly down to Hard Stone, and without saying a word, he rudely snatched away the coat and put it on.

Hard Stone was so angry he could not speak. He was so angry he could not move. At best he was a slow sort of person, and it took him a long time to get started. There was no telling what he might have done if he had had time. But before he could gather himself together to do anything, Sly Fox had pulled off the coat and had joined Little Red Hen on the path down the side of the mountain.

But if Hard Stone was slow to start he was also difficult to stop after he was started, as the end of this story will show.

Now that he had his coat to cover him, Sly Fox was eager to continue with his walk. And as Little Red Hen was already as wet as she could be, she made no objections. But the rain was only a shower after all, and in a few minutes it was over. The sun came out and dried Little Red Hen's feathers, and it also made Sly Fox very warm again beneath his new fur coat. He was determined, however, not to give the coat up a second time, even if he was hot.

They had not walked far down the mountain side when Little Red Hen stopped and listened.

"Seems to me I hear a strange noise up there!" she exclaimed.

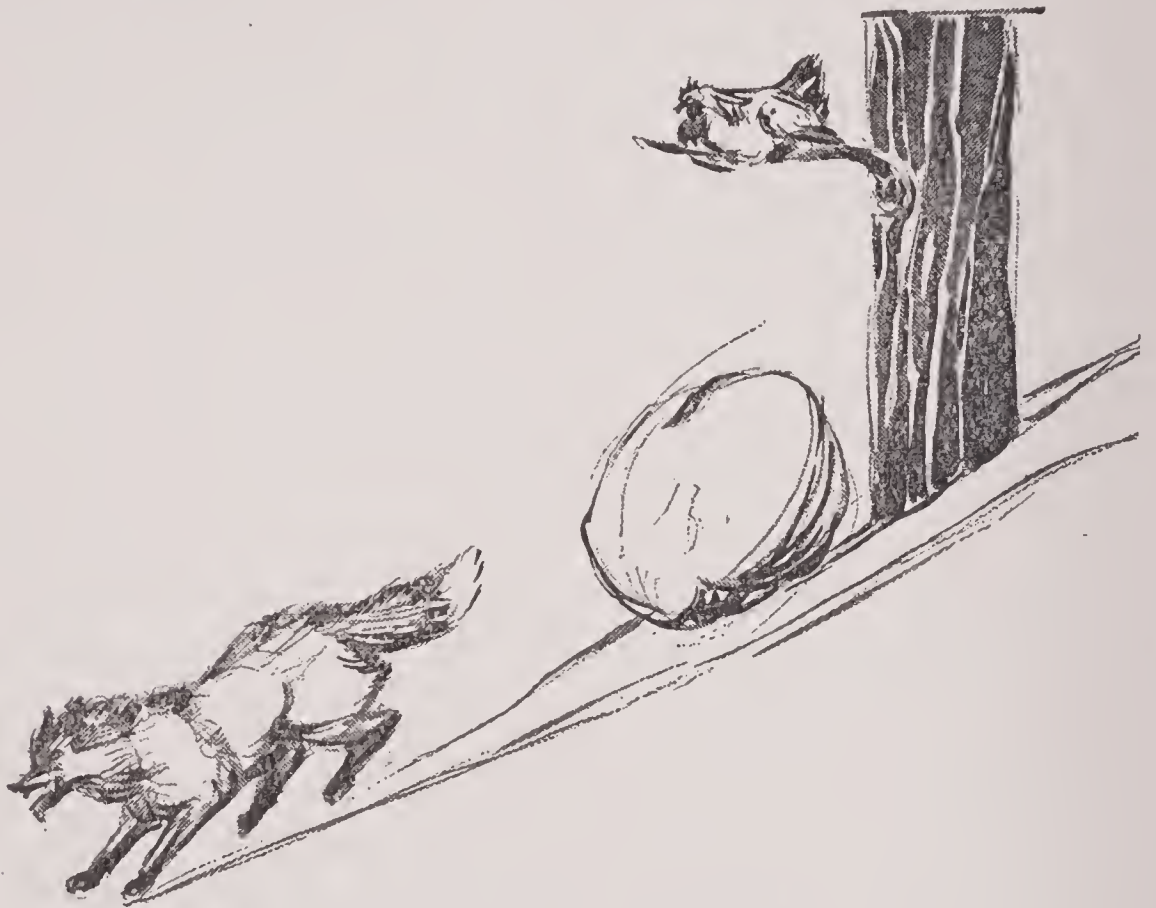
"Yes, it seems to me I hear a strange noise," answered Sly Fox.

"Seems to me it sounds like thunder," continued

Little Red Hen, "but it can't be thunder, because the rain is over."

"Yes, it seems to me it sounds like thunder," agreed Sly Fox, "but it can't be thunder."

"Seems to me it's coming this way," said Little Red Hen, looking up the steep hillside.



"Yes, it seems to me it's coming this way," added Sly Fox, "and there it is!"

Sure enough, there it was, rolling and rumbling and crashing and smashing down the side of the hill. It was Hard Stone. As soon as he saw Hard Stone, Sly Fox knew there was going to be trouble for him.

"Oh, it's Hard Stone," he cried, "and he's after me!"

There was no doubt that Hard Stone was after Sly Fox. He came rolling straight towards him, crashing over bushes and stones and anything that lay in his path. He came so fast that Little Red Hen just had time enough to fly up in the air when Hard Stone rolled along beneath her in the path where she had just been standing. Sly Fox jumped behind a big tree where he thought he would be safe. But the tree did not stop Hard Stone. He crashed into it, Bang! and the tree was broken into forty thousand little splinters. Sly Fox began to run down the hill and Hard Stone kept on rolling after him.

“I’ll swim across this little river,” said Sly Fox to himself when he had reached the bottom of the hill. “Hard Stone certainly can’t cross a river.”

Down the hill with a mighty rush came Hard Stone and into the river he fell. Splash! He was going so fast that he rolled right through the river and up the other side. Sly Fox looked back and saw that Hard Stone was still after him. Little Red Hen saw it, too, because she had flown up to a high branch in a tree where she could watch everything.

“Here’s a great field,” remarked Sly Fox to himself as he reached the other side of the river. “I’ll try running around it in every direction. I’ll run round and round and criss-cross and up and down

and back and forth, and I think Hard Stone will soon get tired of that.”

But Hard Stone did not care how Sly Fox ran. He twisted and turned whenever Sly Fox twisted and turned. Wherever Sly Fox went, Hard Stone rolled close at his heels. Instead of Hard Stone, it was Sly Fox who soon became tired of this kind of running.

“If I can’t escape him in this way,” thought Sly Fox, “I’ll try running straight ahead. I can run as swift as the wind, and maybe I can run away from Hard Stone.”

Sly Fox darted off as fast as he could go. He ran as fast as an automobile or an express train. After he had been running for some time, he turned around and looked back. What was his dismay to see Hard Stone rolling after him as fast as ever!

“Oh, what will become of me!” he exclaimed. “Hard Stone wants to roll over me and mash me as flat as a pancake.”

There was nothing to do, however, except to keep on running. Sly Fox’s legs were tired now, he was breathless, and his tongue was hanging out. But Hard Stone was as fresh as ever. He was lucky enough not to have any legs to get tired or any breath to lose or any tongue to hang out. If it came to a question whether Hard Stone or Sly Fox could last longer, there could be no doubt that Hard Stone would win.

As Sly Fox was picking up his heels as fast as he could, suddenly Shaggy Bear appeared in the path before him.

“What are you running for, Sly Fox?” asked Shaggy Bear.

“Oh, Hard Stone is after me and wants to roll over me and mash me as flat as a pancake!”

“Don’t worry,” said Shaggy Bear. “I will take care of Hard Stone. I will stand in the path here and when he comes along, I will hug him tight in my big strong arms.”

Shaggy Bear stood in the path and stretched out his arms. Hard Stone came rolling along, and when he reached Shaggy Bear, he paid no more attention to him than he would if he had been a fly. He rolled right over Shaggy Bear and mashed him as flat as a pancake.

Then Sly Fox began running again and Hard Stone after him. In a little while Sly Fox saw Wooly Buffalo standing in the path.

“What are you running for, Sly Fox?” asked Wooly Buffalo.

“Oh, Hard Stone is coming after me and wants to roll over me and mash me as flat as a pancake!”

“Don’t worry,” said Wooly Buffalo. “I will take care of Hard Stone. I will stand in the path here, and when he comes along, I will butt him into the middle of next week with my huge head.”

“Oh, thank you, Wooly Buffalo,” gasped Sly

Fox. "I hope something can be done, because I am almost out of breath."

Hard Stone came rolling along and Wooly Buffalo stood still in the path. Wooly Buffalo put down his huge head to stop Hard Stone, and Hard Stone paid no more attention to it than he would if it had been a June bug. He rolled right over Wooly Buffalo and mashed him as flat as a pancake.

While this was happening, Sly Fox enjoyed a little rest, but now he had to start running again, for Hard Stone was still rolling after him.

"Look out, Sly Fox!" shouted Hard Stone. "I've mashed Shaggy Bear and Wooly Buffalo, and in a minute I'm going to mash you too, I am."

Just then Sly Fox looked up and saw Strong Man standing in the path before him.

"What are you running for, Sly Fox?" asked Strong Man.

"Oh, Hard Stone is rolling after me, and he wants to roll over me and mash me as flat as a pancake!"

"Don't worry," said Strong Man. "I can take care of Hard Stone. I will stand here beside the path, and when he comes along I will give him a blow with my big iron hammer."

Hard Stone came rolling along, and just as he was rolling past the place where Strong Man stood, Strong Man lifted his big iron hammer and let it

come down with a mighty blow on Hard Stone.

In an instant Hard Stone was splintered into a thousand different pieces. The fragments of stone were scattered far and wide, and that is why you always see small stones now when you walk through the fields and meadows.

Unfortunately, one of these flying pieces of stone struck Sly Fox over the left eye and knocked him, as they say, into a cocked hat. He lay there as stiff as a poker, but he was not killed. He was only knocked senseless.

“I’ll take this for my pay,” said Strong Man, as he removed from Sly Fox the fur coat which was the cause of all this trouble and put it over his own shoulders. Strong Man then walked away with the coat and after that he always wore it. And this is the way Strong Man first learned how comfortable it is to wear a fur coat.

In a little while Sly Fox came to his senses again. He saw that his coat was gone, but he did not mind. He was thankful enough to be alive. He crept away into a hollow among the broken pieces of Hard Stone and there he made his den. And this is how it happens that foxes still like to make their dens in hollows and caverns among the fragments of rock.

As for Little Red Hen, she had watched all these exciting happenings from her high perch on the limb of the tree. When everything was over, she

flew down from the tree and slowly turned her steps homeward.

“Well, well,” she remarked thoughtfully, “I really don’t know whether I ought to be sorry for Sly Fox or not. Indian giving isn’t a very good kind of giving, and it seems to me I’ve heard Good Cook say that you can’t eat your cake and have it.”

GAY ROOSTER

NO one could say that Gay Rooster was a shy or modest person. To tell the truth, he was rather vain and conceited.

But then he had not a few good reasons for being vain. He had a long sweeping tail with beautiful bronze and golden plumes in it. His wings also were gay with bright-colored feathers, and the comb on top of his head was as red as the reddest coral. Altogether he was as handsome a rooster as one was likely to meet. It was natural for such a well-favored fellow as Gay Rooster to be a little proud of his good looks. He held his head high and carried himself well, and certainly that was better than being slack or careless about his appearance.

Besides his looks Gay Rooster was also proud of his singing. He was the best crower in all the neighborhood. He always crowed in the morning when it was time to get up, and people said he was as good as an alarm clock. And he also crowed during the day. Whenever he felt particularly happy or well, he stood still, stretched himself on his yellow toes, lifted his head up and shut his eyes, and crowed and crowed so lustily that it was a joy to hear him. It was a joy not only to other

people to hear him, but I think also to Gay Rooster himself, and that was why he crowed with so much enthusiasm.

With all his accomplishments, Gay Rooster was a very agreeable companion. He liked to wander about with a flock of hens, playing the part of lord and master over them, but doing so courteously and pleasantly. He would scratch in the earth until he found a bug or seed or some bit of food, and then he would cluck for the hens to come and get it. The hens would all run up, and the first one there got whatever it was Gay Rooster had found. First come, first served, was Gay Rooster's rule.

Gay Rooster was supposed not to have any favorites in his flock of hens. The truth was, however, that he liked Little Red Hen better than any of the other hens in the flock. Whenever he had a chance he showed special favors to Little Red Hen. And at night when all the poultry went to roost in the poultry house, Gay Rooster always managed to find a place for himself on the perch next to Little Red Hen.

It happened that one night Gay Rooster and Little Red Hen went to roost as usual side by side on their perch. About the middle of the night, however, Little Red Hen was wakened by a dreadful groaning and moaning. It sounded like somebody in great grief or pain. Little Red Hen soon



Little Red Hen was awakened by a dreadful groaning and moaning.

realized that it was Gay Rooster from whom these sounds were coming.

“Goodness alive, Gay Rooster!” she exclaimed. “How you frightened me! What is the matter?”

“Oh, Little Red Hen,” groaned Gay Rooster, “you can’t be nearly as much frightened as I am.”

“Why, what is the matter?” asked Little Red Hen again. “I don’t see anything to be frightened at.”

“Yes, but if you had seen what I have seen,” answered Gay Rooster, “you would know that there was something to be frightened at.”

“Well, what have you seen?” asked Little Red Hen, who was a little cross at having been waked up out of a sound sleep. “It must be pretty bad to make all this fuss about it.”

“You may well say it is pretty bad,” said Gay Rooster. “I have just had the most dreadful dream you can imagine.”

“What, is all this groaning and moaning about nothing but a dream!” exclaimed Little Red Hen. “I’m ashamed of you, and such a big strong fellow as you are.”

“Yes, but wait a minute,” explained Gay Rooster. “You don’t know what the dream was. I dreamed that I was in the orchard when suddenly a fierce creature with eyes that glowed like coals of fire jumped out at me. Then I dreamed that a black bull ran at me and caught me on his horns

and threw me in the air. And then I dreamed that forty thousand little devils danced around me, jumping up and down and poking sharp sticks at me.”

“That’s enough, that’s enough,” cried Little Red Hen. “Dreams like that are all nonsense.”

“They are not nonsense,” answered Gay Rooster indignantly. “They are a sign of bad luck.”

“Bad luck, fiddlesticks!” said Little Red Hen. “They are a sign of bad digestion. You probably ate a tough worm or something yesterday that has disagreed with you.”

“No, I did not,” declared Gay Rooster. “I didn’t eat any tough worms, or anything but a few grasshoppers and some cracked corn and some bugs and a few tender worms and a couple of tomatoes in the garden. I only ate two or three tomatoes, because the gardener came and drove me away.”

“Well, I don’t think bugs and tender worms could hurt anyone,” said Little Red Hen, “but it may have been the tomatoes. But at any rate, you are feeling better now, aren’t you?”

“Yes, I’m feeling better,” acknowledged Gay Rooster, “but I’m afraid something dreadful is going to happen.”

“Now don’t you worry,” remarked Little Red Hen soothingly. “Go right off to sleep now, and tomorrow I can fix you up. What you need is a little medicine. I will find some dock and some

dandelion and some pennyroyal for you, and if you eat these I'm sure you will be better."

"I'm very much obliged for your offer, Little Red Hen," replied Gay Rooster with dignity, "but let me tell you, I don't intend to be dosed up with medicine like that. My digestion is all right. I never had indigestion in my life. These dreams I have had don't come from that. They are a warning. They are a sign of bad luck."

"Well, in any case, don't you worry," repeated Little Red Hen. "If they come from indigestion, you will get over it. And if they are a sign of bad luck, it's a good thing you have had warning and can guard yourself against the bad luck. But go to sleep now, and I think you will be all right in the morning."

Gay Rooster felt much better after having talked over his dreams with Little Red Hen, and soon he was once more sound asleep. When he woke up in the morning, he was quite himself again and had forgotten all about his dreams. He crowed loud and long, and at the first glimpse of the morning sun, he flew down from his perch and called for his flock of hens to come after him.

"Let's go to the orchard," he said, "and hunt for bugs and worms with the dew on them. They are so much better and fresher now than they are later in the day."

The hens approved of this plan, and they all flew

down and trooped off to the orchard together.

How delicious the cool morning air was! The grasses and the flowers were all so fresh and fragrant that it was a delight to be abroad. The sun was just beginning to shine, and its soft early light made the whole world look golden. Gay Rooster led his flock of hens here and there, from one pleasant place to another. At length they came to the lower part of the orchard near the fence.

Then all at once Gay Rooster stopped suddenly. Ha! What was that? What was that over there among the bushes near the fence? It had two glowing eyes, and a red furry coat, and a long red tongue that was hanging out. Gay Rooster did not need a second glance to tell him who it was. He knew it was Sly Fox, his old friend and enemy.

“Good morning, Gay Rooster,” cried Sly Fox, very politely. “Lovely morning, isn’t it?”

“Yes, it is a delightful morning,” replied Gay Rooster, taking care not to come any nearer to Sly Fox.

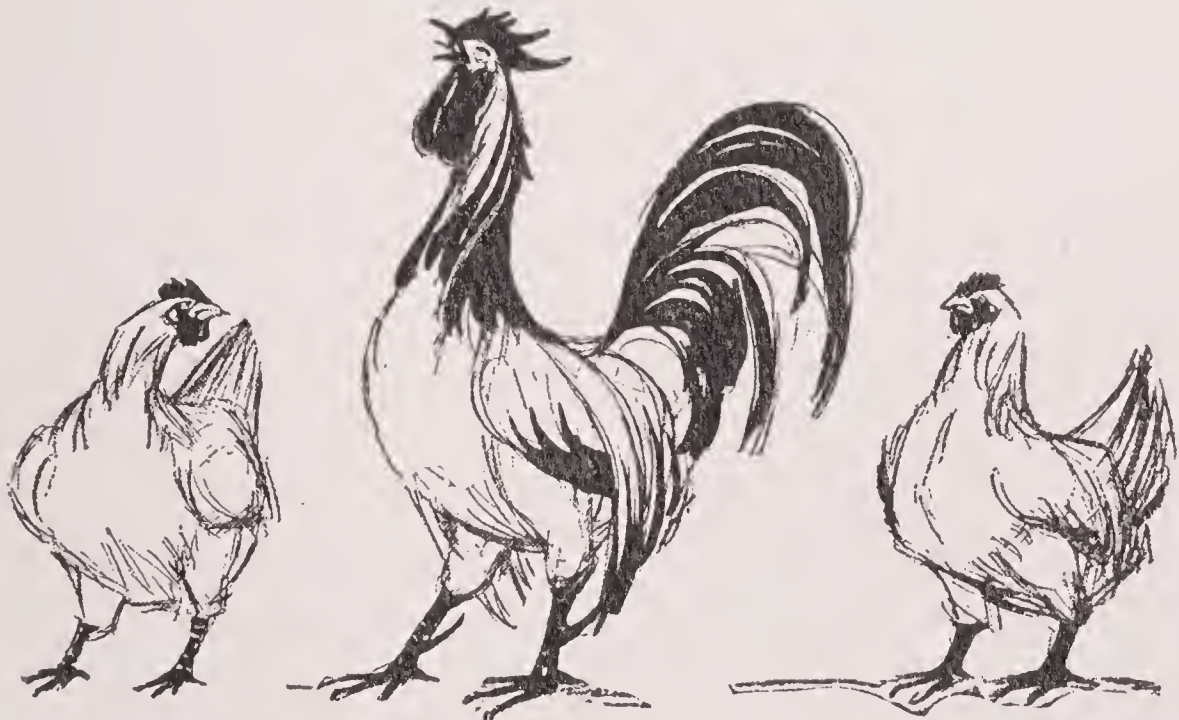
“There’s nothing like early rising,” continued Sly Fox. “I think the best time of the day is before breakfast. And I can see early rising agrees with you, Gay Rooster. I never saw you looking better. Your yellow feathers are as golden as the sun, and your red feathers are as bright as the

blooming rose. The way you look now you remind me of your dear father. He certainly was a handsome fellow. And such a singer! I don't believe he ever had his equal. You don't hear such singing nowadays."

"Oh, I don't know," said Gay Rooster. "I think we still have some pretty good singers left."

"Maybe so, maybe so," agreed Sly Fox, doubtfully. "But if so, I never hear them. I'd give anything to hear somebody crow the way your father crowed. I'll never forget the last time he crowed. I was there at the time. He certainly was a wonderful singer. And I don't doubt if anyone can do as well as he did, you are the man. Won't you give me a little crow or two, just in memory of old times?"

Gay Rooster was so flattered and pleased at



what Sly Fox had said that he began at once to get ready to crow. Little Red Hen tried to warn him and to tell him to be careful, but Gay Rooster's ears were so filled with Sly Fox's cunning words that he could hear nothing else. He planted his toes firmly in the ground, stretched up his head and began to crow.

"That was a pretty good one," he remarked as he finished his first crow, "but I can do better than that."

"I'm sure you can," agreed Sly Fox. "Let us have another one."

Gay Rooster began to crow. He flapped his wings, stretched himself up, and in order to crow all the louder, closed his two bright little eyes.

This was Sly Fox's chance. With a rush he sprang from among the bushes, scattering the flock of hens right and left. He seized the crowing Gay Rooster between his wide open jaws, and in a second was making off towards the woods with his prey.

What a noise and tumult then arose! The hens all began to squawk at the tops of their voices, flapping their wings and running here and there like creatures distracted.

Gay Rooster also shrieked and screamed, and now it was lucky that he had such a good strong voice. For Farmer Clovertop heard the racket

and rushed out into the orchard with a pitchfork in his hands to see what was the matter.

Good Cook heard the noise on the kitchen porch, and she too ran out with the rolling pin in one hand and the dishpan in the other. One Little Child and Another Little Child had just come down to breakfast, and they followed Good Cook. One picked up a rake for a weapon as he ran, and the other picked up the sickle for cutting the grass. Even Towzer was roused by the terrific shoutings, and ran barking after the rest.

They all raced down into the orchard and were just in time to see Sly Fox creep under the fence and make off across the field with Gay Rooster in his mouth. They all shouted at him, and the hens squawked, and Towzer barked madly, and Good Cook beat the dishpan with her rolling pin. Such a din and racket was never heard. It seemed as though the world was coming to an end. All this noise made Sly Fox nervous, but nevertheless he kept on running.

“Stop, you thief!” shouted Farmer Clovertop loudly at Sly Fox.

“You miserable thieving rascal!” cried Good Cook and the children. “Stop, you sneaking robber and thief!”

When Sly Fox heard them calling him a thief, it made him very angry. Of course, he was a

thief, but that was just the reason why he did not like to be called one.

“Do you hear what they are saying, Sly Fox?” asked Gay Rooster. “They are calling you a sneaking thief. I wouldn’t stand that from anyone. If anyone called me a sneaking thief, I would give him a piece of my mind.”

In fact Sly Fox had heard about all he could stand. He was so angry at being called a sneaking thief that he felt he must answer back. He was so angry, however, that his cunning left him. For he opened his mouth and was just about to say, “If I’m a thief, you’re another,” when to his surprise Gay Rooster flew off and away and lighted high up on the branch of a tree where Sly Fox could not reach him.

“Well, Sly Fox,” laughed Gay Rooster, “you made a fool of me, but I think we are even on that score now.”

Sly Fox saw that the game was up so far as he was concerned. He looked longingly for a moment at the dinner he had expected to have, now sitting safely on the limb of the tree, and without saying a word, he trotted swiftly into the woods. Soon he was lost to sight, and it was useless for anyone to attempt to follow him.

When Farmer Clovertop and Good Cook and the children and Towzer came up, Gay Rooster flew

down from his perch on the limb of the tree. They all congratulated him on his narrow escape and led him in triumph back to the poultry yard. Of course, only the hens knew how it happened that Sly Fox managed to get hold of Gay Rooster, but they said nothing, and you can be sure Gay Rooster did not offer any explanations. All his time was taken up in being thankful that he had escaped. And now he remembered again the bad dreams he had had the night before. He was more than ever sure that his dreams were warnings and signs of the bad luck he had had that day.

“Well, you can call it bad luck if you want to,” was Little Red Hen’s comment, “but I should think, when a rooster listens to the flattering words of a fox and shuts his eyes to sing for him, there is a better word than bad luck to describe what would happen.”

A GARDEN PARTY

“SEE what I’ve dug up!” exclaimed One Little Child.

“Oh, give it to me!” cried Another Little Child.

“I want to make a man out of it.”

“All right, you can have it,” agreed One Little Child, “and I will make a woman out of these.”

The children set to work and soon they had made a very good man and a very good woman.

The place where all this was happening was the garden, where the children were playing. And of course you can guess now what the man and the woman were made out of. The man was made out of carrots and the woman out of potatoes. The carrot that One Little Child dug up was remarkable because it grew in two parts which looked just like a man’s legs. And when Another Little Child had found a small round carrot and had fastened it on top of the carrot with legs, and had made a hat for the Carrot Man with a split pea-pod, and had made arms for him out of string beans, he looked as though he would get up and walk off at once. But he did not. It was not yet quite time for Carrot Man to walk and talk.

The woman which One Little Child made out of

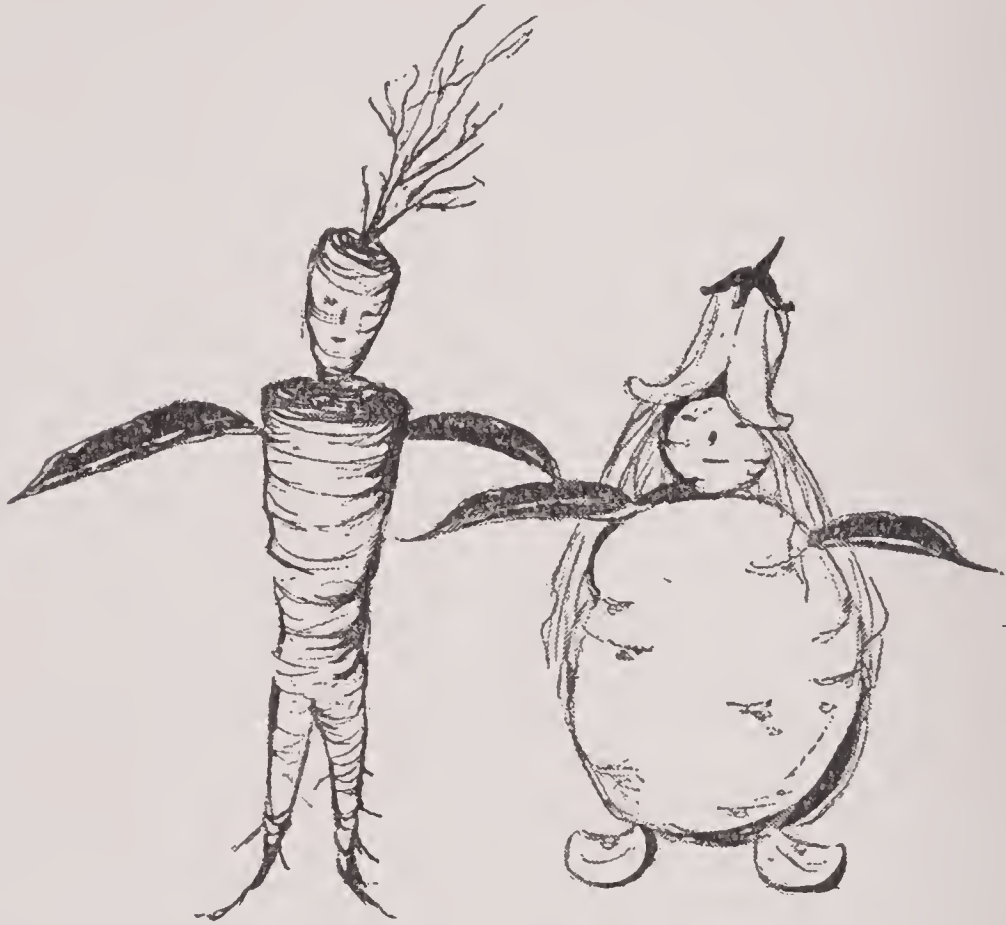
potatoes was just as a good a woman as Carrot Man was a man. But One Little Child did not want to call her a potato woman. He thought potato was not a fine enough word for the woman he had made.

“I know what I will do,” declared One Little Child. “I will call my woman by her French name—only not in French, but in English. You know potatoes in French are called *pommes de terre*, and that means apples of the earth, because potatoes are round like apples, and grow in the earth, not on trees. So I will call my woman Earth Apple.”

Earth Apple was made out of two potatoes, just as Carrot Man was made out of two carrots. One potato was large and fat and round, and that was Earth Apple’s body. The other potato was smaller and was fastened on top the larger potato, and this was Earth Apple’s head. Of course One Little Child did not need to put eyes in Earth Apple’s head, because her head, and her body, too, for that matter, grew with eyes already in them. Carrot Man’s eyes were apple seeds, and from this you may know his eyes were brown. His nose also was an apple seed, and though brown is not such a good color for a nose as it is for eyes, I don’t think Carrot Man minded a great deal.

Earth Apple had a very beautiful hat for her head. It was a pink Canterbury bell, and it was such a snug fit that no strings were needed to tie

it on. Of course, Earth Apple had arms, too, made out of string beans, the way Carrot Man's arms were made. She wore white kid shoes, made out of two large ripe Lima beans, and she had a quantity of silky, pale gold hair, which One Little Child had borrowed from Corn-on-the-Cob.



“What a beautiful woman Earth Apple is!” exclaimed Little Red Hen, who had been watching the children with the greatest interest. “What a beautiful hat, and what a lovely complexion she has!”

It was really true that Earth Apple had a lovely complexion, even though her head was a potato. But this potato head was a young potato, and pota-

toes when they are very young are not brown and rough, but are covered with a smooth pink skin as delicate as a rose leaf.

Altogether Carrot Man and Earth Apple were as handsome a man and woman as ever had been made in that garden. The children thought so, and Little Red Hen thought so, and no doubt Carrot Man and Earth Apple thought so too. But unfortunately the children could not give Carrot Man and Earth Apple tongues with which to talk, and therefore Carrot Man and Earth Apple could not express the thoughts with which their heads and their hearts were filled.

For a long time the children played in the garden with the little man and the little woman they had made. They played until the sun began to go down in the west and the shadows lay long and cool across the garden paths. No doubt they would have kept on playing forever if someone had not come out on the kitchen porch and called them. It was Good Cook.

“Children! Children!” cried Good Cook. “Come to supper! Supper’s ready. Muffins! Come along! Muffins for supper!”

“Oh, muffins!” exclaimed One Little Child and Another Little Child.

They both suddenly discovered that they were almost starved to death. Why hadn’t they thought of supper before, when they were so hungry?

“I’ll beat you to the house,” cried One Little Child.

“No, you won’t,” answered Another Little Child, “I’ll beat you.”

Up they jumped and off they raced, almost stepping on Little Red Hen in their haste and excitement. It took them but a minute or two to reach the house, to wash their hands and brush their hair and so be ready for supper. How good the muffins were! I don’t know how many muffins One Little Child and Another Little Child ate, but it was a good many. I do know, however, that by the time they had each eaten three muffins, they had completely forgotten that there were any such persons as Carrot Man and Earth Apple in the world. The little man and the little woman stood neglected but patient on the garden path where the children had left them. Even Little Red Hen had gone off to see if she could not turn up something nice for her own supper.

The garden was quiet now. The shadows of evening began to gather among the tall plants and bushes. In the house One Little Child and Another Little Child were tucked up in bed, peacefully sleeping. Little Red Hen had gone to her perch in the poultry house that stood beside the garden. Rapidly the shadows in the garden grew darker, and soon it was night.

The fleecy white clouds sailed across the sky, but down below all was quiet and still. Carrot Man and Earth Apple still stood patiently in the garden path where the children had left them. Overhead the stars winked and blinked, the breezes rustled among the leaves on the bushes, but the little man and the little woman still stood there, as motionless as though there was not a spark of life in them.

Now it was only Little Red Hen who really knew what happened later during that night. One Little Child and Another Little Child were so fast asleep that anything might have happened and they would have known nothing about it. And for the first part of the night Little Red Hen also was fast asleep. Towards midnight, however, she became restless and woke up. Gay Rooster, who was sleeping on the perch beside her, also was restless, though he did not wake up and crow. If he had it would have been a sign that witches were about. The proper time for roosters to crow is towards morning, and when a rooster crows at midnight, it means that some kind of witchery is going on.

But Gay Rooster did not crow this night at midnight, and though he was restless, he did not even wake up. Little Red Hen, however, could not go to sleep again after she had got awake. She kept

her eyes and her ears open, and that is how she came to see and hear everything that took place that night. For the door of the poultry house stood open, and Little Red Hen could look out and see all over the garden. The moon was shining, and though it was not as bright as day in the moonlight, it was bright enough for Little Red Hen to see that something very interesting was taking place.

The first thing she noticed was that Carrot Man seemed to be as restless as she was. First he shook one carroty leg, then the other carroty leg. Then he stretched one beany arm, and then the other beany arm. After that he yawned and tilted his head back so far that his pea pod hat almost fell off.

“Heigh ho!” he exclaimed as he jumped up, after his big yawn, as wide awake as could be. “I feel as limber as a jumping jack.”

To show that he really was limber, he began to caper about, hopping, skipping and jumping, dancing up and down and going through all sorts of nimble motions.

In the meantime Earth Apple had also waked up. She likewise yawned, but neatly and in a ladylike way, with her hand before her mouth, and of course she did not cut up high jinks the way Carrot Man was doing. But she did begin to skip about, waddling a little at first because she had not quite learned how to keep her balance. But she quickly learned to do better, and soon her little

Lima bean feet went twinkling up and down and round and round on the garden path in the merriest manner imaginable.

“Heigh ho!” she also exclaimed, “I feel as lively as a cricket.”

“Come on,” cried Carrot Man, “let us have a dance.”

And so they danced and danced until they were quite out of breath and had to stop to rest.

“I’ll tell you what!” exclaimed Carrot Man, as they stood resting. “Suppose we give a garden party.”

“Excellent idea!” agreed Earth Apple. “We will give a party and ask all the people in the garden to come to it.”

“I’ll go out right away and give the invitations,” said Carrot Man.

“And I will stay at home,” replied Earth Apple, “and get a dancing place ready for the party. The children did not leave this path very tidy when they got through playing here this afternoon. Such careless children! But hurry up, Carrot Man, and I will have everything neat and clean by the time the party begins.”

Carrot Man hastened away and first he went to give an invitation to Blushing Strawberry. Blushing Strawberry was very sweet about it, but she really did not see how she could come.

“You see, the fact is,” she explained, “I am

fastened to this stem, and I don't know how to get off."

"Oh, that's easy," answered Carrot Man. "I know some magic words, and when I say these words, you will come off your stem as easy as pie. Get ready now, because I am going to say the words.

"Hickery, dickery,
Nettle and dock!
Darkest night
At twelve o'clock!
Sticks and stones
And witches' bones—
Little twig, come off!"

As soon as Carrot Man said, "Little twig, come off!" Blushing Strawberry felt herself loosen gently from her stem and glide to the ground.

"Oh, I'm free!" she exclaimed. "How light I feel. I want to dance."

"All right," said Carrot Man, "be sure to come to the party and you can dance all you want to. I must go now to give the other invitations."

Carrot Man then went to Pearly Onion and asked him if he would come to the party.

"That's a pretty thing to ask me, now, isn't it?" replied Pearly Onion bitterly. "Can't you see I'm fastened to a stem above ground and a lot of little stems below ground?"

As he said this, Pearly Onion's eyes were full of tears. He was always shedding tears and making other people shed them too. Carrot Man was really very sorry for him.

"Don't worry," he replied kindly, "I can manage that. I have some magic words I can say."

"Well, it will take a lot of magic to get me loose," lamented Pearly Onion. "But if you know any magic words you had better begin saying them."

Then Carrot Man did begin and he said his magic words again.

"Hickery, dickery,
Nettle and dock!
Darkest night
At twelve o'clock!
Sticks and stones
And witches' bones—
Little twig, come off!"

In an instant Pearly Onion was free and was rolling about on the ground in the most lively fashion. He promised to come to the dance and stay till it was over.

Then Carrot Man went to Sugar Corn and asked him to come to the dance.

"Hey?" cried Sugar Corn. "What's that you say? I don't quite hear you. Speak louder. I'm so high up here on my stem that I can't catch every-

thing. Of course I know you think it's strange that I don't hear better, being nothing but an ear. But that's the way it is and I can't help it."

Carrot Man shouted as loud as he could and Sugar Corn finally heard him.

"Come to your party?" answered Sugar Corn. "Of course I would come to your party if I could. But how am I to get off my stalk? If I wait until tomorrow, Good Cook will come out and pull me off and cook me for dinner. But that won't help me for your party tonight."

Then Carrot Man said the magic words for Sugar Corn, and all at once Sugar Corn jumped from the stalk, waved his silken locks in the air, and raced off down the garden to join the other guests at the party.

"Now I must go and invite Cabbage Head," remarked Carrot Man. "I know he won't want to be left out."

But Cabbage Head was very doleful about it all at first.

"No doubt you can get me off my stem with your magic words," he replied to Carrot Man, "but what I want to know is, how am I to get back on again? You mustn't expect me to manage these things for myself. It's true I have a great deal of head. In fact, I'm all head. But the trouble is, there isn't anything inside of my head. I'm just cabbage all the way through."

“Yes, I know that,” answered Carrot Man. “Everybody knows what a cabbage head is. But you don’t need to worry. If I can get you off your stem, I can get you back again. When the party is all over, I have some more magic words which I can say to put everybody back on their stems again.”

“Let me hear them, then,” demanded Cabbage Head. “I want to be sure before I risk anything.”

“All right,” consented Carrot Man. “I can say these magic words, but of course they won’t do anything to you now because you are already on your stem. Here they are:

“Fan, fen, fin, fawn, fun!
Let all things off be on again,
Let dark be light, let loose be tight,
Fan, fen, fin, fawn, fun!”

“Well, that sounds all right,” remarked Cabbage Head. “I should think those words would get me on my stem again if any words will. Now say the words that get me off.”

Carrot Man spoke his other magic words, and as soon as he said, “Little twig, come off!” Cabbage Head rolled down lightly to the ground. This proved that Carrot Man’s words were good magic, because the stalk on which Cabbage Head grew was not at all a little twig, but as big and thick as a strong man’s wrist. As soon as he was down, Cab-

bage Head began frisking about, not very gracefully, but brisker and more frivolous than one would suppose a cabbage head ever could be.

Carrot Man still had a number of invitations to give. Luckily he found everybody at home and eager to go to the party when Carrot Man had explained to them about his magic words. Egg Plant promised to come and wear her finest purple silk dress. Of course Ripe Tomato was ready for any frolic, and her bright scarlet coat was just the thing for a party. Red Pepper was a little sharp at first, but she soon got over her bad temper and behaved very nicely after that. Long Green Okra, Pea-in-the-Pod, Snap Bean and Ruby Beet were all invited and not one of them refused. As soon as the magic words had set them free from their stems, they all tripped nimbly along the garden path to the place where the party was to be.

There they found Earth Apple waiting to greet them. Each of the guests received a warm welcome and all were told to be sure to enjoy themselves. The last guest to arrive was Cool Cucumber, who was never known to be in haste. With him came Carrot Man, and then the dance began in earnest. It made Little Red Hen's head dizzy to watch them. The guests at this garden party whirled and twisted in the most amazing way on the smooth dancing place which Earth Apple had swept clean on the path. Blushing

Strawberry and Pea-in-the-Pod made a lovely and graceful pair of dancers. Cabbage Head chose Purple Egg Plant for his partner, and of course they were very well matched.

In fact, all the dancers danced well and they were all much nimbler on their feet than you would think they could be if you had never seen them except as they were fastened to their stems.

But who couldn't dance well on a beautiful moonlight night like this, in a lovely garden, and with cheerful crickets and katydids and little rustling leaves making the music to dance by? And when the dancers were tired, they had the most delicate refreshments to give them strength again for more dancing. They drank the cool drops of dew that lay like little gleaming pearls on every leaf. It was wonderful what power there was in those glistening dew drops. If any of the dancers felt the least inclined to wilt and wither, a few drops of dew made them feel as fresh as ever again.

Little Red Hen never knew exactly how long this garden party lasted. She knew it lasted a good long time, because she sat on her perch and watched it, as it seemed to her, for hours at least. By and by, however, the music and the dancing and the silvery moonlight made her drowsy. She did not exactly go to sleep, but in a way drifted off, perhaps just dozing a little. All at once, however, she woke up with a start.

What was that awful sound?

In a moment she knew what it was. It was Gay Rooster crowing.

“Goodness, Gay Rooster!” exclaimed Little Red Hen. “How you startled me! I didn’t know it was so late.”

“Late!” cried Gay Rooster. “What are you talking about? It isn’t late. It’s early. It’s almost morning.”

Little Red Hen looked out quickly into the garden, and she saw that it was as Gay Rooster had said. The moon was no longer shining, and there was a gray light in the sky that showed that morning was near.

Then Little Red Hen looked at once for all the gay dancers in the garden party. But what was her astonishment to find that not a dancer was to be seen. She thought she saw little creatures of some kind or other scurrying about among the plants in the garden, and she thought she heard some words that sounded something like Fan, fen, fin, fawn, fun! But these were such absurd words that she finally decided that she must have been mistaken.

“And yet,” remarked Little Red Hen to herself, “there must be something in all this. Because out there in the path I see Carrot Man and Earth Apple, just as I saw them last night. To be sure, they aren’t dancing now, but they look as though they could dance.”

Little Red Hen did not like to say anything to Gay Rooster about the strange garden party for fear he might say she had been dreaming. And of course Gay Rooster could know nothing about it anyway, because he had been sound asleep all the time. She just tried to puzzle it out by herself.

Later in the morning when the sun had come up and had dried all the little pearly dewdrops on the plants, Good Cook and One Little Child and Another Little Child came out into the garden. Good Cook had come out to gather some vegetables for soup. She saw poor Carrot Man lying there in the hot sun and already beginning to look a little withered. Earth Apple lay beside him and her pink Canterbury bell hat was so shrivelled up that it protected her head scarcely at all.

“Shall I put these carrots and these potatoes in the soup?” said Good Cook to the children as she picked up Carrot Man and Earth Apple.

When Little Red Hen heard Good Cook ask if she should put Carrot Man and Earth Apple in the soup, she was beside herself with fear and excitement. She clucked and clucked and fluttered and cackled, until Good Cook noticed it and said, “Whatever is the matter with that hen! She seems to have something on her mind.”

Unfortunately, Good Cook could not understand Little Red Hen’s language. What Little Red Hen wanted to say was that Carrot Man and

Earth Apple were not just ordinary carrots and potatoes, but that they could sing and dance and play just like anybody else, and that she knew they could do this because she had seen them.

But of course Good Cook did not know this and One Little Child and Another Little Child did not know it, since none of them had seen it, and since none of them could understand what Little Red Hen was saying. And besides there was nothing in the garden to show that anything unusual had happened during the night. Blushing Strawberry and Cabbage Head and all the other garden folk were fastened firmly to their stems, the way respectable garden folk should be.

“Oh, yes,” exclaimed One Little Child and Another Little Child, “put the carrots and the potatoes in the soup! We don’t want to play with them any more.”

Good Cook took them back to the kitchen with her, and into the soup they went. No doubt they made a very good soup, for they were good carrots and potatoes. At first Little Red Hen felt very sad that this should have happened to Carrot Man and Earth Apple. After she had thought about it for a while, however, she saw that Good Cook and the children had not meant to be cruel, and that, in fact, they really were not cruel. For she saw that Carrot Man and Earth Apple in the daytime, after all, were nothing but carrots and potatoes.

It was only at night, when the moon was shining and the dew drops were glistening on the leaves and all the world was asleep and dreaming, that carrots and potatoes were no longer carrots and potatoes, but airy little sprites dancing in the silvery light. Then they were safe and nothing could harm them.

“What a dreadful thing it would be, though,” exclaimed Little Red Hen, “if Good Cook should make her soup at midnight instead of in the day time. Then I suppose all the dancing creatures in the world would have to go into the soup. But luckily that is just what Good Cook never does, and I see now that everything has its proper time and place—soup and ordinary things for day time, but magic and mystery for the moonlight.”

WHISKERS

WHISKERS was a perfectly harmless cat—for the most part. It cannot be denied, though, that besides certain good qualities, Whiskers had others that were not so good. One of his good qualities was that he caught mice now and then in the kitchen. There was no harm in that, except to the mice. In fact, Good Cook kept Whiskers specially for the purpose of catching mice.

Unfortunately Whiskers was not satisfied to catch only mice. He caught birds, too, and that was one of his bad qualities. Of course he did not succeed in catching many grown-up birds. They were too swift for him, and as birds can fly and cats cannot, they were nearly always able to get away from him. But sometimes Whiskers discovered nests with little young birds in them that could not fly. Then if the mother bird happened not to be at home to protect her birdlings, it was likely to go hard with them.

Good Cook had scolded Whiskers and spanked him many a time for robbing birds' nests, but these punishments seemed to have no effect on him. Apparently the longing to catch birds was bred in

the bones of Whiskers, and I suppose one might as well tell him not to be a cat at all as to tell him not to do what every cat feels it must do.

Now from these habits of catching birds and mice, you might suppose that Whiskers was a very fierce sort of person. But far from it! In spite of his long whiskers he was the most timid creature of his kind on earth. It does not take much brav-



ery to try to catch a mouse or a young bird in its nest.

Whiskers was not at all the sort of person to look for trouble. He had no liking for the rough and tumble life, but he loved most of all to find some quiet, snug, warm little place where he could doze the time away in peace. He was ready for a nap at any hour of the day. Good Cook said Whiskers slept so much in the day time because he

prowled around during the night. It may be so. Everybody knows that a cat can see in the dark, and likewise everybody has heard cats meowing and yowling at night, when all respectable people ought to be in their beds asleep. As a class, cats do not have a very good reputation.

On a certain sunny morning, Whiskers was taking one of his usual cat naps under a crab apple tree in the orchard. He had found a soft sleeping place among the grass and leaves, and there he lay, curled up in the warm sun. Now when Whiskers fell into one of these naps, he did not really go off sound asleep. He only dozed, being about one third awake and two thirds asleep. He was such a timid fellow that he was afraid to go entirely to sleep. He felt he must always be ready to jump up at the least sign of danger. Even when there was nothing near to alarm him, Whiskers always slept with one ear open.

Just now the only other person in the neighborhood was Little Red Hen, who was scratching among the leaves for bugs and worms under a tree in another part of the orchard. Little Red Hen and Whiskers were not intimate friends, but they got along well enough together by letting each other alone. Little Red Hen did not like the habit Whiskers had of eating birds. She was not quite sure that Whiskers would not want to eat her, if he were only a little bigger or she were only a little

smaller. And on his side, I think Whiskers was rather jealous of Little Red Hen. He thought he ought to be the only pet to be allowed in the kitchen.

“What has she ever done, anyway, I’d like to know,” Whiskers would say to himself scornfully. “I don’t believe she ever caught a mouse in all her life.”

But Whiskers was too much afraid of Good Cook to try to harm Little Red Hen, and anyway he had long since made up his mind that Little Red Hen was too big a bird for him to tackle. As he lay dozing under the crab apple tree he knew that Little Red Hen was also in the orchard, and Little Red Hen knew that he was there. They both realized, however, that the orchard was big enough for the two of them, so long as they did not interfere with each other.

But no matter where he is, a timid person will always find something to be afraid of. And so it happened to Whiskers on this peaceful summer’s morning in the orchard. For as he lay there and slept, a little wormy, worthless, green crab apple fell from the tree to the ground among the dry leaves and grasses. The crab apple made a little tiny crackling rustling sound as it fell among the leaves. Whiskers heard it and was on his feet in an instant.

“What was that terrific noise!” he exclaimed.

He was so frightened that he did not stop to think or to look around or do anything, but began to run as fast as he could. Little Red Hen saw Whiskers jump up and run away like mad, but she paid no attention to him because she saw no cause for alarm.

“Probably just another of his wild notions,” she remarked, with a smile, as she kept on scratching for worms and bugs.

Having started to run, Whiskers kept on running, and the farther and faster he ran, the more frightened he became. He ran across the field and towards the woods. Sly Fox saw him coming and hastened out to meet him.

“What are you running for, Whiskers?” asked Sly Fox.

“Oh, the world is coming to an end!” exclaimed Whiskers. “The world is coming to an end, and I’m running away from it.”

“What! The world coming to an end!” cried Sly Fox. “How shocking, and how sudden! I’m not at all prepared for the end of the world. I think I will go along with you.”

Then Sly Fox also started to run. Pretty soon they were met by Hungry Wolf.

“What are you running for, Sly Fox?” asked Hungry Wolf.

“Oh, the world is coming to an end!” exclaimed

Sly Fox. "The world is coming to an end and we are running away from it."

"What, the world coming to an end!" cried Hungry Wolf. "This is indeed terrible! I must have a little time to get ready before I can have the world come to an end. I think I will go with you."

Then Hungry Wolf began to run. Pretty soon they were met by Shaggy Bear.

"What are you running for, Hungry Wolf?" asked Shaggy Bear.

"Oh the world is coming to an end!" exclaimed Hungry Wolf. "The world is coming to an end, and we are running away from it."

"What, the world coming to an end!" cried Shaggy Bear. "I thought that might happen some day, but I did not know it had already come. It's not at all convenient for me just now, and I think I will go with you."

Then Shaggy Bear began to run. Pretty soon they met with Striped Tiger.

"What are you running for, Shaggy Bear?" asked Striped Tiger.

"Oh, the world is coming to an end!" exclaimed Shaggy Bear. "The world is coming to an end, and we are running away from it."

"What! the world coming to an end!" cried Striped Tiger. "How lucky I met you. I hadn't heard a word about it. I can't have the world

coming to an end just now. I think I will go along with you."

Then Striped Tiger began to run. Pretty soon they met with King Lion.

"What are you running for, Striped Tiger?" asked King Lion with a mighty roar.

"Oh, the world is coming to an end!" exclaimed Striped Tiger. "The world is coming to an end, and we are running away from it."

"What! the world coming to an end!" cried King Lion. "I'm sure I didn't say it could. However, if you are all going away, there won't be anything left behind for me to be king over, and I think I may as well go along."

Then King Lion started to run, and all the other creatures with him. They ran faster and faster, and finally all the dwellers in field and forest had joined in the mad race. They were so blind with fright that they could not see where they ran. All the time they kept shouting, "Oh, the world is coming to an end!" And every time they heard their own voices, they became more frightened than ever.

Now it always happens when people run about blindly like this that they travel in a circle. Without knowing that they are doing so, they always come around to the place from which they set out.

And so it happened that Whiskers and all the other creatures that he had started going came back

again to the orchard and to the very tree under which Whiskers had been sleeping.

Little Red Hen saw the distracted multitude approaching and she saw at once that they were all so frightened that they did not know what they were doing. She saw that all of them had lost their heads—that is, had lost them in so far as being able to use them was concerned. Little Red Hen saw also that something must be done to bring the panic stricken crowd back to its senses.

“Stop! Stop!” she shouted, as she flapped her wings in the faces of the frantic creatures. “What is all this nonsense about?”

King Lion was ahead of all the other animals, and he was so astonished at what Little Red Hen did that he stopped short, so that he almost fell over backwards. And all the other animals behind him were stopped so short when he stopped that they piled all over one another before they could stop running.

“What are you running for, King Lion?” asked Little Red Hen.

“Oh, the world is coming to an end!” exclaimed King Lion. “At least I think it is coming to an end, and I was conducting all my faithful subjects away to a safe place.”

“Stuff and nonsense!” cried Little Red Hen. “You are conducting your faithful fiddlesticks

away to a safe place! Who told you the world was coming to an end?"

"Striped Tiger told me," explained King Lion, shame-facedly.

"Who told you the world was coming to an end?" asked Little Red Hen of Striped Tiger.

"Shaggy Bear told me," answered Striped Tiger, apologetically.

"Who told you the world was coming to an end?" asked Little Red Hen of Shaggy Bear.

"Hungry Wolf told me," confessed Shaggy Bear, guiltily.

"Who told you the world was coming to an end?" asked Little Red Hen of Hungry Wolf.

"Sly Fox told me," replied Hungry Wolf, meekly.

"Who told you the world was coming to an end?" asked Little Red Hen of Sly Fox.

"Whiskers told me," murmured Sly Fox, humbly.

"Oh, it was Whiskers, was it?" asked Little Red Hen. "Now, tell me, Whiskers, how do you know the world is coming to an end?"

"I know because I heard it," mumbled Whiskers, but he mumbled it in the meekest, faintest little mew, so faint that one could hardly tell he was speaking.

"Speak louder, Whiskers," ordered Little Red Hen. "Everybody wants to hear about it."

“Well,” mewed Whiskers plaintively, “I was lying asleep under the crab apple tree, when all at once I heard the most terrible ripping and splitting and cracking noise. I knew at once what was happening. It was the world cracking and splitting at my very feet. As you all know, I am nervous anyway, but it quite upset me to have the world coming to an end in this unexpected way and just in the middle of my nap. I am sure any sensitive person would have felt the same way.”

“Humph!” sniffed Little Red Hen. “I thought that was about the way of it. I was in the orchard here all the time you were taking your nap, Whiskers, and I heard no ripping and splitting and cracking noise. But I can tell you what it was that Whiskers heard. It was a little green wormy worthless crab apple that fell from the tree into the dry grass and leaves on the ground. Come along to the crab apple tree and I will show you.”

Little Red Hen took King Lion over to the place where Whiskers had been sleeping, and there sure enough, among the dry leaves nearby, they found the little crab apple that had sounded to Whiskers like the end of the world.

When King Lion saw the crab apple he had nothing to say. He put his tail between his legs and slunk off to the forest, where afterwards he spent much time trying to decide the question whether he or Whiskers had been the bigger fool.

He sat for hours and hours with his head between his paws, trying to answer this question. All the other creatures also crept away. They had the same question to ask of themselves, but of course none of them had brains enough to answer it. For if they had, they would have had brains enough not to pay any attention in the first place to the absurd rumor that had put them all into such a fright.

“Well,” thought Little Red Hen, as she went back to her task of scratching among the leaves for worms and bugs, “it seems to me no matter how timid or how brave you are, whether you are King Lion, or only Whiskers the cat, it’s unnecessarily foolish to get excited over anything that a little common sense shows is too foolish to be believed.”

BUSY DAYS

“WELL, if you want to know what I think, my candid opinion is that you had better make a potpie out of her,” said the gardener. Anyone could see from the way he spoke that he was very angry.

“Make a potpie out of Little Red Hen!” cried Good Cook indignantly. “If you say that again, I will make a potpie out of you. Little Red Hen is not going to be made into a potpie, and she is to be let alone to do just as she pleases.”

“Very well, then,” replied the gardener crossly, as he walked off to his work, “let her please not come into my garden again and scratch up all my young lettuce plants and young celery plants. If I catch her at any more such tricks, I will wring her neck for her.”

You can imagine it was not very pleasant for Little Red Hen to stand there and hear the gardener talk in this way. She knew that the gardener said more than he meant, but nevertheless Little Red Hen could not deny that she had scratched around in some nice soft earth in the garden. Her conscience was not altogether clear, and for that reason she thought it best not to let

the gardener get too near her. She edged off whenever he approached her, looking at him suspiciously with her head cocked on one side.

“How was I to know that was a celery bed!” she clucked again and again, even after the gardener had left. “The plants were so tiny you could hardly see them. They looked like any other plants to me, and so they would to anybody else. I’m sorry, but I don’t see why it is necessary to make so much fuss about a few tiny little celery plants.”

“Now please don’t explain, Little Red Hen,” said Good Cook firmly. “The damage is done and you know you did it, but what I do say is, that when you can’t explain something you have done, the least said, the soonest mended. Run along now and keep out of mischief.”

Little Red Hen walked off, and at first she felt rather sad and depressed. She did not like to be scolded or to have people cross with her. She wandered off to the orchard, but somehow the things she ordinarily did in the orchard seemed to have lost their interest.

After a time, however, she forgot all her troubles in thinking about a wonderful secret plan she had just made. She at once set to work to carry out her plan. Evidently it was to be a very great secret, for she looked around carefully in every direction before she did anything. Then she crept

in among some thick bushes in one corner of the orchard where nobody ever went.

What she did there it was impossible to tell, because the leaves on the bushes were so thick one could not see behind them. She stayed there for a good long while, however, and when she came out she looked about cautiously to make sure that no one was watching her. She crept away stealthily, and after she was gone some distance from the secret place, she began to cackle loud and lustily.

“Look, here is where I am!” she cackled. “Anybody can see where I’ve been. I’ve been right here all the time.”

Of course she had not been right there all the time, but she said this to keep suspecting persons, if there were any, from guessing that she had been at her secret place among the thick bushes.

After this first visit, Little Red Hen went to her secret place every day. She always looked about very carefully to make sure that no one saw her go in, and she also looked carefully to see that no one was watching her come out. She was so cautious about it that not a soul had the slightest notion that Little Red Hen had this great secret, whatever it was, among the bushes in the corner of the orchard.

After a time Little Red Hen began to spend more and more time in her hiding place. She only came out now to get something to eat, and then she

ran right back again. She even deserted her basket on the porch and her perch in the poultry house and slept there in the orchard all night.

“I wonder whatever has come over Little Red Hen,” remarked Good Cook one day. “I almost never see her around any more.”

“Neither do we ever see her in the yard or wherever we are playing,” added One Little Child and Another Little Child.

“So long as she keeps out of my garden,” growled the gardener, “I don’t want to see her.”

Then and there Good Cook started out to hunt up Little Red Hen. She hunted all over the yard, in the poultry house, in the barn, in the garden, even in the orchard. But so well was Little Red Hen’s secret hidden among the bushes that Good Cook discovered not the least sign of it.

All the time Good Cook was hunting in the orchard, Little Red Hen lay hidden in her secret place. She saw Good Cook, and she heard Good Cook calling her, but she never budged. Her secret was such a deep and dark secret that she could not even let her dear friend Good Cook know about it—not yet at least. The time would come when Good Cook would know everything, but that time had not yet arrived. So Good Cook finally grew tired of hunting and went back to her work in the kitchen.

A week or so later, it happened that Good Cook and the children, and Towzer and Whiskers, and Silversides and human Watch Dog, and in fact everybody except Little Red Hen, were all sitting on the kitchen porch.

It was One Little Child who first noticed something strange at the end of the long cement walk.

“What is that at the end of the walk!” exclaimed One Little Child. “It looks like a regular army.”

“Why, it’s Little Red Hen!” cried Another Little Child, “and she has something with her.”

“Well, of all things!” said Good Cook. “I should say she did have something with her. I can hardly believe my eyes.”

By this time Little Red Hen had reached the porch and everybody could see what was with her.



Very proudly and importantly Little Red Hen came strutting along, bringing with her fourteen little downy yellow chicks!

Now the great secret was out! It was a nest

that Little Red Hen had made among the bushes in the corner of the orchard. In her nest she had laid her eggs until she had fourteen eggs, and then she had set upon them until her fourteen eggs hatched out into fourteen downy chicks. And now here they were! As soon as all the chicks were hatched out, Little Red Hen had brought them to show them off to Good Cook and all her other friends.

If Little Red Hen had expected to create a sensation with her fourteen chicks, she could be well satisfied with the result.

“What darling little chicks!” exclaimed one Little Child and Another Little Child.

“Oh, you deceiving Little Red Hen!” cried Good Cook laughingly. “So that is why you have been so mysterious.”

Only Whiskers seemed a little envious of all the attention that was being paid to Little Red Hen.

“What are fourteen little chicks anyway?” said Whiskers. “I could eat fourteen little chicks at one meal if I wanted to.”

But Whiskers was very careful to say this to himself, so that no one could hear him. He knew that eating little chicks was one of the things absolutely forbidden, and he was too timid to run any such risks. All he did therefore was to wrinkle up his nose and look very superior, as though

fourteen chicks was the most ordinary thing in the world. And of course Towzer was grown so lazy that he did not show enthusiasm about anything, and a goldfish twenty-four years old could not be expected to be enthusiastic about anything except itself. But Little Red Hen did not mind their coolness. She had her fourteen chicks and was satisfied.

“Well, now,” declared Good Cook, “I’ve got to see to it that Gray Rat doesn’t come along and carry away all these little chicks, as he did Little Red Hen’s sisters and brothers, when they were just as old. And I think the best plan will be to put Little Red Hen’s coop right here near the door. Then I can keep an eye on the whole family there all the time.”

As Good Cook said, so it was done. The coop was placed near the porch, and a cozy safe dwelling place it made for Little Red Hen and her family. Good Cook gave the little chicks some hard boiled egg to eat, chopped into small crumbs, and soon they were pecking away like good fellows.

And now began a busy time for Little Red Hen. With fourteen children to look after, she had not much leisure for other things. She could no longer go wandering over the fields or to the woods where in other days she had met with so many strange adventures. Her place was now chiefly at home, attending to the needs of her large family. There

was always something to do for them. Little Red Hen was continually clucking around, scratching for food for them or directing them not to do this or not to do that.

“Come back, Yellow Wing,” she cried one minute. “Don’t go into that tall grass or you will get lost.

“Now, Topknot,” she said next, “please don’t try to pick a quarrel with your brothers. You are entirely too young to begin fighting.

“And you, Waggle Tail,” she added, “keep a little further away from Whiskers. I don’t altogether like the look in his eyes.”

All day long Little Red Hen led her fourteen little chicks around with her. She showed them all the nice places about the yard and the garden. Everywhere they went, Little Red Hen was very earnest in teaching the fourteen little chicks all the things they ought to know in order to grow up properly and be wise. At night, however, she always brought them back to their safe place in the coop beside the porch. There they cuddled up under their mother’s wings, and for a while you might hear a little peep here and a little peep there. But only for a short time. Soon the little chicks were all sound asleep. They were so tired from wandering about all day that they wanted nothing better than a long cosy sleep at night.

“What a relief it is to have my family all safe

asleep!" sighed Little Red Hen. "You may not think it, but fourteen little children are quite a handful. Not that my children aren't good. They are good, but you know children will be children. Sometimes I get quite worn out. And that reminds me. I'm almost dead for sleep now. I must get up early tomorrow, and so I think I will just shut my eyes and bid the world good night. Sweet dreams and happy waking!"

Scarcely had Little Red Hen spoken these words when she went off sound asleep. She had well earned her night's rest, and there we must leave her, only hoping, as we bid her good night that all her fourteen downy little chicks may grow up to be as cheerful and as kind and as wise as their mother.

GOOD NIGHT!

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