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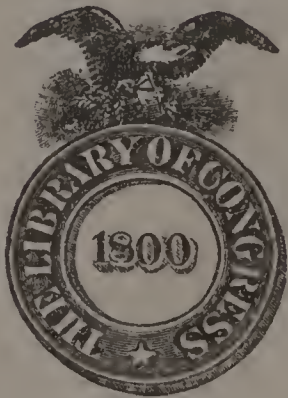
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ROBIN RED BREAST'S HOME

BY CLARA J. DENTON



BUSY LITTLE BIRDS AND
REAL BIRD TALES COMBINED



Class PZ10

Book 3
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ROBIN REDBREAST'S HOME



*Don't kill the birds, the little birds
That sing about your door
Soon as the joyous spring has come
And chilly winds are o'er.*



ROBIN REDBREAST'S HOME

BY CLARA J. DENTON
anetta (Font)



ILLUSTRATED BY
Sue Seeley

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Robin Redbreast's Home

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A "Just Right" Book
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NOTE

The unusual incidents given in the following pages are verified by the actual observers, the numbers appended thereto refer to the names which are given in the appendix.

The incidents marked with an asterisk () were seen by the author.*

AUTHORITIES CONSULTED

"MICHIGAN BIRD LIFE," by Walter Bradford Barrows.

"HANDBOOK OF BIRDS OF EASTERN NORTH AMERICA," by Frank M. Chapman.

"BIRD LORE," back and current numbers.



Names of the observers of certain incidents which appear in these stories.

1. *Miss Letitia I. Foster, Cloverdale, Barry Co., Mich.*
2. *Judge Harry Creswell, Pres., Grand Rapids, Mich., Audubon Society.*
3. *Mrs. W. S. Coleman, Grand Rapids, Mich.*
4. *Miss L. G. Winegar, Grand Rapids, Mich.*

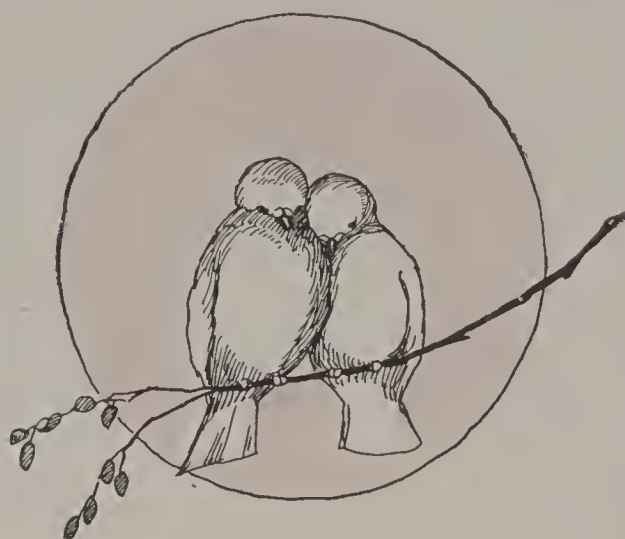
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BOOK ONE





"That may be true," said Mrs. Robin

Busy Little Birds



We were such hungry little beggars

WHAT THE BLUEJAY SAW

“WHAT DO you think of this place?” asked Mr. Robin as he warbled the last notes of his merry morning song.

“O, this is just right,” twittered Mrs. Robin.

“Just right?” repeated her happy husband, “I hope you may always feel that way about it and not wish you were somewhere else after the nest is built and the eggs are laid.”

“Indeed, I never will,” the good little wife went on, “because this orchard, standing on top of a hill, as it does, gives us a fine view of the rest of the world.”

Mr. Robin’s plans were more sensible, however, and he replied with an extra twitch or two of his brown tail, “I don’t care whether I look at the whole world or not, but I am glad that there is a fine garden on the other side of the orchard fence, and later when we are busy, it will be much better not to have to fly half around the farm in order to find a place where slugs are plentiful. This orchard is so close to the garden that it is just the right kind of place for birds and there should be a great many here this summer.



Mrs. Robin was standing on the very top-most limb of the apple tree which her husband had chosen as their home and she heard, without thinking about it, the happy talk about the near-by garden. She was enjoying to the full the privilege over which she had been so happy, “looking down on the rest of the world.”

“I think,” she began when Robin’s voice ceased, “there is something familiar about this place. I really believe it is the very spot

where I was hatched last summer. Yes, yes, I am certain of it, for there is the same house where the people lived who used to drive the cats and other cruel creatures away when my brothers and I were learning to fly. I cannot be mistaken for the house stood on a hill overlooking a beautiful little lake, just as that one does. The people used to sit on the porch and watch the boats on the water. O, but I'm glad we came here."

"Well, even if it is the same house and porch and water, the same people may not live there," said the wise Robin who knew much more about humans than did his younger wife. "People don't always stay right on in the same nest year after year any more than birds do. So it may be that there are mean people living there now who will try to drive us away for fear we will get a cherry or a berry now and then."

“Just as if we haven’t a right to their many cherries and berries,” chirped his wife angrily, “I wonder how much fruit they’d have anyway if we birds didn’t act as policemen and destroy the thieving creatures who are always busy around their trees and vines.”

“Of course, of course,” scolded Mr. Robin, “but you see many humans don’t know that, they think everything belongs to them, even the air, the sunshine and the rain.”

“What ignorant creatures they must be,” said Mrs. Robin.

“So they are, so they are, my dear, the most ignorant creatures ever made and yet they think themselves the wisest. They think they know everything, and yet, really it is so strange, there are more things they don’t know than there are things they do know.”

“That may all be true,” said Mrs. Robin cocking her head wisely, “but at the same time they are bigger and stronger than we are and I’ve heard that they can hurt us very easily.”

“Indeed they can, my dear little wife, and I, for one, have learned that they are good creatures to keep away from. Isn’t it queer that big beings like they are should care to trouble helpless little creatures like us? The summer that I was hatched a man took one of those long black things they love to carry around with them, and of which I have been afraid ever since, pointed it at my father until it made a great noise, and then poor father fell down dead. As we were very little birds mother had a hard time bringing us up. I can never forget how she worked, we were such hungry little beggars and one of us,



Pointed it at my father

smaller and weaker than the others, didn't push up in front and get his full share of worms, so that he finally died, poor birdlet."*

"What a sad story," said his kind hearted wife, "but all humans are not like that bad man, remember. Those who lived here last year were not, and if they are still in that house we'll be sure to have a happy summer. I heard mother tell how kind and thoughtful they were to her and our father when they first set up housekeeping, and I well remember one day when I was just learning to fly one of those big things they call a squirrel, came running at me. I shut my eyes, and thought I was just as good as caught, but one of the little humans, mother called him a boy, threw a stick at the squirrel and drove him away."

"A boy, indeed!" chirped Mr. Robin, "I

know what they are, they steal your eggs and catch you if they get a chance.”

“It must be then that boys are not all alike,” returned Mrs. Robin, “for this one certainly saved me from that mean squirrel. I should not have lived to tell the tale if it hadn’t been for that good boy.”

“O, you had all your fright for nothing,” said Mr. Robin, “the squirrel wouldn’t have hurt you anyway, they eat our eggs whenever they can get them, but I have never known one to eat a bird.”

“But,” objected Mrs. Robin, “they have strong teeth with which they break open hard nuts, so I don’t see why they can’t eat tender young birds.”

“Perhaps they can, but I’m very sure they don’t,” said Mr. Robin in his most positive manner.

Just at this moment a beautiful Blue Jay, that had been perched for several minutes on the next apple tree, called out in his loudest tones:

“O, brother Robin, you know very little about the red squirrels, if you are saying what you really believe.”

“I never say anything else,” returned Robin, rather crossly.

“Then you have not seen much of squirrels,” the Jay went on good-naturedly, “last summer a bold, impudent, red squirrel came to our home when our little ones were only a day old and carried off the biggest fattest nestling of the lot.”

“You surprise me,” exclaimed the Robin, “but tell me did you see him really eat the little bird?”

“Well, hardly,” retorted the Bluejay jump-



They eat our eggs whenever they can get them

ing around in excitement, “not only my mate and I rushed at him, but our cries brought to us all the Bluejays and other birds in that part of the wood. Then some humans rushed out of a big white rag house they live in—”

“O yes, a tent,” interrupted Mr. Robin.

“I don’t know what they called it, but I suppose you know as you are around among them so much and are older than I am, but anyway, we all made such a fuss, birds and humans together, and the humans threw sticks and stones at the Squirrel, that by and by he dropped the bird and ran off where we couldn’t find him.”

“What became of the poor baby?” asked Mrs. Robin.

“O, it was quite dead from the fall.” returned the Jay, “so don’t ever tell anyone again that squirrels will not bother young



Just at this moment a beautiful Bluejay called out

birds, because this is the truth that I am telling you.” ⁽¹⁾

“So, you see, dear Robin,” said his wife lovingly, “I would not have been with you here this morning, if it had not been for that dear little boy.”

“I wish I knew where he is, I’d sing a song to him to pay him for saving you for me,” chirped Mr. Robin.

His little wife, however, only half heard his remark, as she was looking fixedly toward the house on the hill.



THE PIE CRUST BREAKFAST



The chipping Sparrow

WHEN THE Bluejay had received the thanks of Mr. Robin for his information about the squirrel he flew away and the Robin then turned his attention to his little wife. She spoke out eagerly:

“O, yes, Robin dear, the same people are in that house, I am sure. Do you see those long white threads hanging from the porch? I have heard my mother say that the people

used to put threads out for the birds to work into their nests. How good it is that we have come early this year and so have found this tree close to the house before some other birds had settled on it.

“Yes, but don’t you think it would be a good plan for you to get to work on the nest before some other birds come along and start a nest in the very spot we have selected? There isn’t a thing here to show that we have chosen this place and I must say, we are not the only Robins in the world that prefer the forks of an apple tree to any other place for a home.”

“You are right as usual, dear Robin, so I’ll be off,” and away she flew to find some sticks as a foundation for the new home.

In a very few moments Mrs. Robin returned with several good sized sticks in her bill. As she was putting them carefully in place Robin asked in surprise:

“How did you find all those sticks so quickly?”

“I had the good luck to come upon a big heap of them,” she answered. “Those good people have put up a Wren’s house and have made the opening so small that only a Wren can get through it. Nearly all of the sticks the Wrens bring cannot be pushed through the opening. They work with them a long time, then they get discouraged and drop them on the ground and that is where I found them. I am so glad because they will make my work much easier.”*

“All right,” said Mr. Robin, “I am glad to hear it, I know where that Wren’s house is, for the little fellow sings all the time and you could not miss his home if you should try.”

The work on the nest went on rapidly and when the Robins tucked their heads under their wings that night, the nest was far enough along to prevent any other bird from choosing the forks in that apple tree.

When the Robins awoke at dawn they were a very surprised pair, for they found the whole world white.

“O, O, O!” twittered Mrs. Robin in great surprise, “what has happened to everything?”

“Why, my dear,” said the older and wiser husband, “don’t you know what that is? Have you never seen snow before?”



Good people have put up a Wren's house

“No indeed,” was the answer, “so that is snow! Of course I’ve heard about it from my mother, but I was hatched too late last year to see any. What are we to do with everything covered up in this way? We shall starve to death, I am sure, and of course I cannot finish the nest, what a strange, strange state we are in,” and the frightened little creature almost fell off from the limb in her anxiety.

“There, there, my dear, don’t worry,” consoled Mr. Robin, “the snow will not stay long. As soon as that great warmer, the sun, comes out it will all disappear.”

“Are you sure?” asked Mrs. Robin doubtfully, “how can it be? What has the sun to do with it anyway?”



As soon as the sun comes out it all will melt away

“I cannot explain it to you, I only know that it is so.”

“Have you ever seen it do that way?”

“O yes, indeed, last year we had a very late spring, the snow came two or three times, but as soon as the sun came out it all went away.”

“But where did it go?”

“That is a question that I cannot answer, my dear, I only know that it vanished.”

“But I am hungry and there isn’t a thing to eat in sight, every bug and worm is covered up.”

“We will fly down to the back door of the house, if those people are as good as you think they are they must have thrown something out for us to eat.”

With these words Mr. Robin flew away, and his little wife thought it wise to follow him.

The first thing they saw when they lit on the ground near the door was a big square piece of pie crust; the filling had been scooped out, and the crust, which by some accident had been only half baked had been thrown out on the ground. The Robins at once jumped upon the big crust and began their breakfast.

“I believe I’d rather have a good fat slug,” said Mr. Robin, as he swallowed a big beakful of the soft stuff, “but then this is a great deal better than no breakfast at all.”

“Why of course it is,” chirped Mrs. Robin softly, “and I think we ought to love these good people for all their kindness to us.”

Mr. Robin, however, had no time to discuss the goodness of anyone, he was too busy fill-

ing up his empty crop. They were rapidly making away with the big pie-crust, when down in front of them dropped a pair of Wrens.

“Bad morning for birds,” said Mrs. Jennie Wren as she and her merry husband added their bills to the inroad of the pie-crust.

“So it is,” returned Mr. Robin, “but this makes a very fair breakfast on a snowy morning, and I’m sure there’s enough here for all of us.”

“I hope so,” said Mr. Wren, “for although I am very hungry, I don’t like to feel that I am robbing anyone.”

At that moment they heard the shrill call of the Bluejay as he lit on the roof of the shed near which their breakfast was spread.

“I wonder if he is coming too,” asked Mrs. Robin.

“He is calling his mate,” said Jennie Wren, “he is a very polite fellow and will not eat without her.”*

“I have heard very bad stories about him,” said Mr. Robin, “that he steals eggs and I have always been a little afraid of him.”

“He surely is a fine bird to look at,” said Mrs. Robin pausing in her meal and turning her head to get a good look at his beautiful color.

“There, there,” chirped Mr. Robin, “never you mind his good looks.”

“But,” said Mrs. Robin, “what can be any prettier than waiting for his mate before he goes to breakfast, and I dare say he is just

as hungry as you were when you flew off without waiting to see whether I was coming or not.”

Just what Mr. Robin would have said in reply is not known, for at this moment the two Bluejays flew down to enjoy the pie-crust.

“I hope there is room for us,” said the Jay politely, as he took a dainty nibble of the pie-crust and immediately fed it to his waiting wife. (2)

“O yes,” said the Robin good naturedly, “my wife and I were the first ones to find this breakfast table, but we have had nearly enough, so we will leave you soon.”

Just then a hungry little Chipping Sparrow appeared among the birds.

“Well, well,” chirped the Robin loudly, “two Wrens, two Bluejays, two Robins, and

one Sparrow, but see the sun is shining now, the snow will soon be gone, so I think I can bear it until I find a worm."

"So can I," said Mrs. Robin, and away they flew together.

The other birds, however, were still too hungry to leave the queer feast, so they stayed and ate until there was not a crumb of the soft pie crust left. (1)



THE FINISHED NEST



MR. ROBIN proved a true prophet, in less than an hour after the pie-crust breakfast was over, not a trace of the snow remained except in the deep woods or in some sheltered corners of the orchard. The birds were as happy as creatures could be. The Robin sang with all his might, the Wren war-



Could be heard the plaintive "Et-se-wee-ah" of the Meadow Lark

bled as if his little body would burst, the Blue-jay called his loudest, the little chipping sparrow added his feeble trill, while in the wide meadow beyond the orchard could be heard the plaintive "et-se-dee-ah" of the meadow lark.

The nest-building went on swiftly while Mr. Robin sang his best. His wife knew that there was no time to lose, the nest must be ready for the eggs which she must lay be-

fore she could begin her long time of patient waiting.

“I think,” she said, one morning as she stood looking her nest over, “there should be a strong firm horse-hair twisted about the edge of the nest. I wish I knew just where to find one.”

“That’s not so easy,” said Mr. Robin, “but if you cannot find one you may find some string that will do.”

“Very well,” said his wife, “But anyhow I’m going off to find a horse hair if I possibly can.”

She flew out of the orchard and past the barn for the people who lived in the house on the hill did not keep horses. Her bright eyes were looking, looking everywhere but

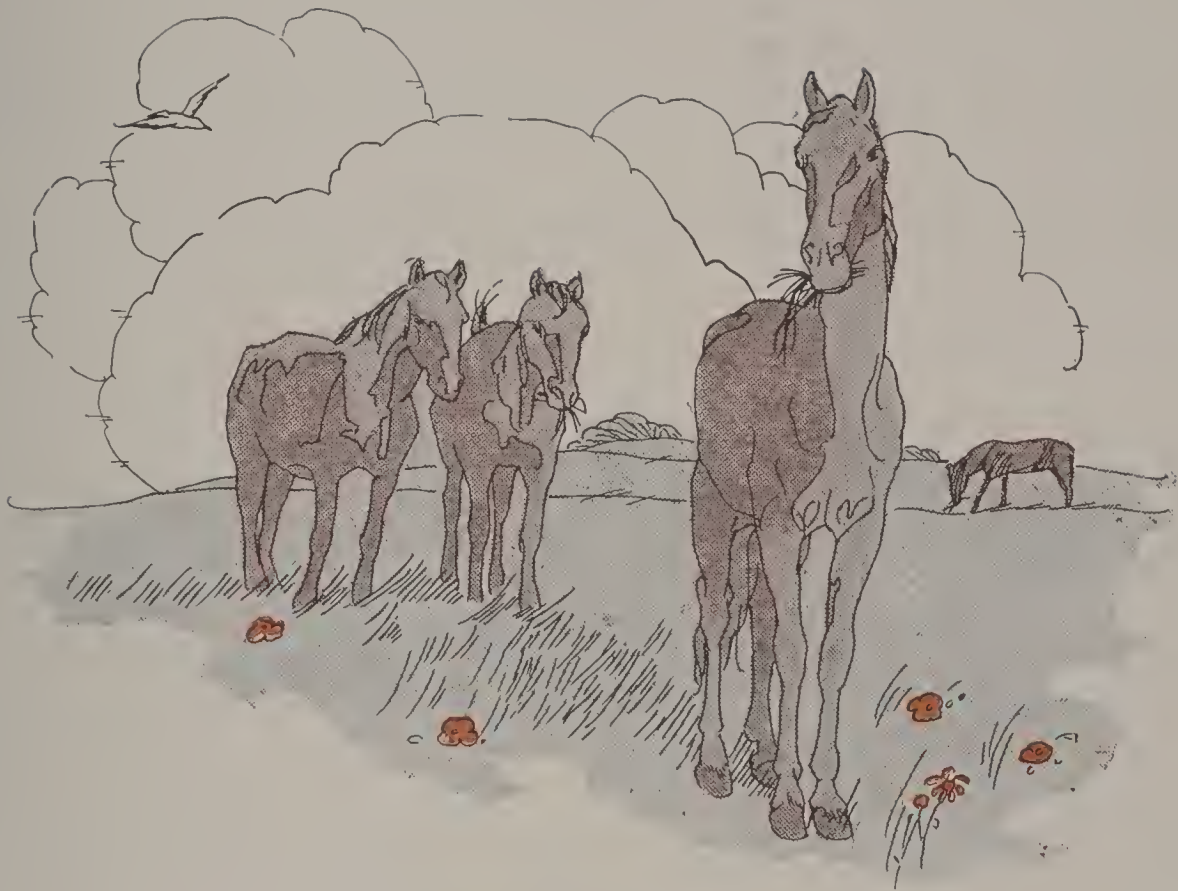
not a horse hair could she see. At last she saw some horses feeding in a meadow far away and saying to herself, "I can surely find one there," away she went on hopeful wings.

The horses were gathered in a fence corner near some tall blackberry bushes, and little Mrs. Robin was pretty sure there would be some hairs caught in these briery bushes. Her bright eyes soon spied a long white string hanging from one of the higher twigs. "If I can't get a horse hair, this string is the next best thing," she said to herself.

She flew to the bush, caught the end of the string in her bill, looped it up and pulled on it with all her might, but the wind had twisted the string around and around the twig so

that all the bird's strength could not loosen it. Then she did a very wise thing, she threw herself off the limb, thus bringing all the weight of her plump little body on the string.* It broke in two and she flew away as happy a little bird as you ever saw. Mr. Robin flew to meet her when she came near the nest and he broke into a happy song as soon as they came to the home tree. Mrs. Robin could not sing as did her gay husband but she was quite as happy because she had found exactly what she wanted.

“Do you know” she said as she stood on the edge of the nest a moment before beginning the work of twisting the string into place, “I flew clear through the orchard, and it is just full of birds, I didn't know there were so



At last she saw some horses feeding in a meadow

many birds in the world. I wonder why they all seem to flock to this orchard, I should think they would rather be in the deep woods.”

“Then why aren’t we in the deep woods, too, if that is the best place for birds?” asked her husband.

“Why, I don’t know I am sure,” answered his good wife dropping her head in a thoughtful manner, “I never thought about it in that way. I supposed that we came here near a house, because we were hatched in that kind of a place. I know that I was hatched in this very tree as I have told you before, and I suppose you were hatched in a tree near some other house, so that is why you like this kind of a place.”

“There is a deeper reason than that, my dear,” said Mr. Robin wisely. “Very few birds go to the deep woods, for the simple reason that there is very little food for them there. They follow around where humans work the soil, stir it up with the plough and plant the seeds in it. Then the insects come and the birds depend on them for food. It is the same way with fruit, men plant the fruit trees, then the insects come to live in the branches and they make good fat living for the birds. If it were not for us there wouldn’t be trees or in fact green things of any kind, for the insects would soon have them all killed, so that is the reason why birds flock around where humans live, instead of wandering off in the deep woods where the ground is never

stirred up for planting, and so of course insects are scarce. When you think of the hungry bills we shall soon have to fill you will see we could not stay in a place of that kind.”

“Well, well,” said Mrs. Robin, “how very very wise you are dear Robin, I had never thought about all that before.”

Just at this moment there was a great commotion in the trees near by for all the birds seemed chirping at once. Mrs. Robin paused in her work of weaving in the string to wonder what was going on, and her husband telling her that he would go and find out for her, since she could not leave her work, flew off out of sight.

“Of course he doesn’t care what is the matter, he is going just for me, he hasn’t any

curiosity himself. O no," she said to herself, with a funny little twitter which was her only way of laughing.

It must be confessed that the busy wife would have gone off among the other birds if she had not known that the nest must be finished. She worked the string into the edge of the nest and when that task was finished she jumped into the nest and with her soft breast pressed it into a perfect shape. Then she climbed out and standing on the edge looked down into it chirping softly to herself as if she were saying, "It is all right now, nothing can make it any better."

At this moment she heard the whirr of Mr. Robin's wings close beside her. He chirped

away in a scolding tone for a few moments, while his wife in her softest tones tried to quiet him. At last he stopped his scolding and gave his tail an angry fling.

“What in the world have they been doing to you, Robin?” she asked.

“Nothing, nothing at all,” was his answer, “when I came where they were I heard the Bluejays scolding about a big Cow-bird who had gone into a bush where the Chipping Sparrow has its nest.”

“Well, what harm could they do?” asked his wife. “Isn’t a big bush strong enough for two nests?”

“Yes, but you see, the Cow-bird never builds a nest. She is a lazy creature who lays her eggs in the nests of other birds.”



The Cow Bird never builds a nest

“O, dear, O dear, what a dreadful thing!”

“Didn’t you ever hear of that before?”
asked the husband wisely.

“No indeed,” was the answer, “I didn’t know there was such a bird.”

“O, my dear little wife, how true it is that you have much yet to learn.”

“Well,” retorted Mrs. Robin a little crossly, “I don’t know that I am in any great hurry to learn about birds who steal into other bird’s nests and lay their eggs there, but why were the birds all making such a fuss? I was afraid they were hurting you.”

“O, no,” exclaimed the proud fellow perking his head high in the air, “no birds ever bother me, not even the English Sparrow, although they do make themselves very dis-

agreeable to many birds, but I have learned to fight them so they let me alone.”

“But what was all the noise about?”

“O, some of us were just scolding over things in general. Of course I had to listen to the Bluejays’ story about the Cow-bird, and some other birds came along and we had a great time gossiping over all the wrongs done in the bird world by Cow-birds and others. One little Yellow bird told such a queer story about a Cow-bird dropping an egg into her nest. She built her nest over it so that the Cow-bird’s egg was out of sight, then along came the Cow-bird and dropped in another egg and then she built over it again, so that she had a three storied nest, and then the Cow-bird let the nest alone.”

“But what did you do to plan things right.”

“O, nothing, how could we?”

“Why didn’t you go into the bush and drive the Cow-bird away?”

“O, we couldn’t do that, the bird who owned the nest should have stayed at home and watched it just as I have been watching our home here for the last three or four days.”

“Well, then if you couldn’t do any thing to keep the Cow-bird from his bad tricks, I don’t see why you wasted your time scolding about it. You might better have been here helping me twist this string into the new nest.”

“I am sure you didn’t need any help,” he answered in his most flattering tones, “I never saw anything more beautiful than this

nest. It is wonderful indeed, especially since it is the first one you have ever built.”

“I am glad it pleases you,” said Mrs. Robin proudly, “although it cannot compare with the one Mrs. Oriole is hanging from the elm tree near the house, nor with the one the little Vireo is building here in our own orchard. They are the most beautiful things I ever saw and I know I can never equal either one of them if I should build a hundred nests.”

“Of course not,” said her husband tenderly, “because you are a Robin and neither an Oriole nor a Vireo.”

“Well, I have done my best, and I am glad you are satisfied, I am sure it is not done any too early. I shall sleep in the nest tonight, and in the morning I think there will be an egg in the nest.”

“And it will not be laid by a Cow-bird either,” said the happy husband.

“What will the Chipping Sparrow do with the Cow-bird’s egg, will she put it out of the nest?” asked the wife anxiously.

“No,” was the reply, “it is too big for that. If she has no eggs of her own in the nest she will perhaps build her nest over it, if she has her own eggs already there she will just go on sitting and hatch out the Cow-bird’s egg with her own.”

“I do think that is the strangest thing I ever heard of, but perhaps the Chipping bird will learn after this to stay with her nest when it is built.”

“Well, maybe so, but then you know, there are some creatures who never learn, and I



Mr. and Mrs. Oriole

have heard it said that there are some humans like that, they just go right on all their lives making the same mistakes over and over, so it isn't so strange in a foolish little bird like the Chipping Sparrow," he added wisely.

Mrs. Robin, however, only half heard the latter part of this sermon, for the sun was down and she had already jumped into her nest and put her head under her wing.

Mr. Robin sang a few low notes of his good night song, then moving along on the limb of the tree until he was as close as possible to the new nest he also put his head under his wing and all was quiet at the Orchard Home.

SOME BOY STORIES



The Chewick is a most sociable bird

AT THE first peep of dawn, Mr. Robin gave the opening notes of the usual morning chorus. His wife awoke at once and hopped out of the nest with a merry twitter, which was the best she could do in the way of a song.

Robin peered over into the nest as his wife left it, and there, true enough, was the very thing she had promised, a little blue egg.

Wasn't Mr. Robin proud and happy? Indeed he was, and he joined with all his might in the orchard chorus which was now well under way, from Wren, Bluebird, Thrush, Song Sparrow, Vireo, Oriole, Bobolink, Meadow Lark, Catbird and Blackbird, each doing his best to outsing his neighbor, while the strange cry of the Flicker rose now and then above all other sounds. The concert continued fast and merrily until the sun had sent its warm beams over the earth. Then the business of the bird world began and the joyous chorus was over. Now and then, it is true, a solitary singer lifted his voice, but with the shining of the sun most of the birds began the serious business of the day. No young birds had yet been hatched. Indeed, in many cases the place for the nest had not

been chosen and some of the loudest singers and most gayly dressed males had not even selected their mates. Mr. and Mrs. Robin were ahead of most of the other birds, since their nest was finished and held one egg.

As they stood near their home, guarding it from all harm, a handsome rose-breasted Grosbeak lit on a branch near them and in his most civil manner asked the happy couple if they could direct him to a good bathing place.

“Why, that reminds me,” answered Mrs. Robin, “last summer there was a fine bathing place some distance back from the house which stands on the hill. I have heard my mother say that the good people who lived in the house had made it for the birds.”

“Do you think you can show me the place?” asked the Grosbeak.

“Well, I haven’t seen it this year,” answered Mrs. Robin, “the truth is, I have been so busy nest building that I have taken my baths just wherever and whenever it happened, and have not taken the time to look for the last year’s bathing place, but if you fly down back of the house, no doubt, you will see the birds going there. I know that is the way they used to do last summer.”

“But, how can you be sure that things are just as they were last summer? Human beings, I have been told, change and move about a great deal, although the poor things haven’t any wings.”

“So they do, so they do, but at the same time, I know, in many ways, that the same

good people are in that house, and so, I am sure, if you look around you will find that fine bathing place.”

So with this, the Grosbeak had to be content, for Mrs. Robin did not intend to wander very far from her nest and its one egg.

As the Grosbeak flew away, Mr. Robin declared that he was ready for his breakfast.

“You stay here, little wife,” he said, “while I go after some worms and I will soon return with some for you.”

So Mrs. Robin nestled down on the limb of the apple tree, close to the nest with the one precious egg in it. While she was waiting there so contentedly a Chewink came flying that way and seeing Mrs. Robin sitting alone he stopped for a moment's chat, for the Chewink is a most sociable fellow.

“Such a queer thing happened out there in the field,” he said to Mrs. Robin, “would you like to hear about it?”

“Of course I would,” was the answer, “although I have to stay at home so very closely, I always like to know what is going on in the great world.”

“Some boys and girls were marching through the field and—”

“O dear me,” interrupted Mrs. Robin with a shiver of fear, “boys and girls, that is dreadful news, I do hope they’ll not come here.”

“No,” said the Chewink, “they have gone away off to the other side of the field, but when I have told you just what happened you will not think they are such dreadful creatures. A little sparrow had built her nest close to a stump and it was right in the path



The Redbreasted Grosbeak—you will find that bathing place

the children were taking. Of course, when the boys and girls came, the poor little birds flew about in great distress for the heedless children were quite likely to step upon the nest; then, one little boy, hearing the cries, left the line where he was marching and called to the children as they came along to walk on the other side of the stump."

"And did they do it?" asked Mrs. Robin, trembling with anxiety.

"Yes, they seemed to think he had been placed there by someone to tell them where to go and so, every one of that big crowd of girls and boys went on the other side of the stump, leaving the Sparrow's nest safe and sound in the tall grass. When the whole crowd had passed on to the farther side of the field where they were to play and sing a

while, the little boy had to run as fast as he could to catch up with them.”

“Dear me, I wonder if he was scolded for not keeping up with the others.”

“I dare say he was, but I don’t believe he cared, because you see, he had saved the Sparrow’s home.”

“I didn’t suppose boys ever did anything so kind as that and I hope this boy will always have a good home.”

“I hope so too, I am sure he deserves it,” said the Chewink, “I must confess his act was a surprise to me, although I have seen a few boys who were careful of birds and their nests.”*

Just at this moment Mr. Robin returned with a fat worm which he fed to his wife, and

of course, he had to be told the story of the boy who had guarded the Sparrow's nest.

“What a pity it is,” he said, “that we cannot know that boy when we see him. We have all been taught to be afraid of boys and how fine it would be if we could learn the difference between the good ones and the bad ones.”

“Well, I saw him,” said the Chewink, “and I must confess that he didn't look in any way different from others I have seen, so you better not let the boys come too near you after all.” And with this warning, the Chewink flew away.

Mrs. Robin, who was a loving little creature, told to every bird who came near the story of the boy guardian, but as soon as she was done talking, Mr. Robin would repeat the

Chewink's last warning, adding for himself the wise remark, that boys had for so long borne the reputation of being cruel to birds that they must not expect the birds to forget all at once their past evil deeds.

When he made this cautious remark to several of his bird friends his kind hearted wife said, "O, Robin dear, don't you think you are too suspicious of those poor things you call boys?"

Mr. Robin gave his handsome body an angry fling as he answered:

"Indeed, I am not, I must now tell you a story, when I was a very little bird, before I had even tried to fly, a great big boy climbed up in the tree where our home was placed. Perhaps he didn't mean to hurt us but he wanted to look at our home. He didn't

seem to know that our nest was put up high just so he couldn't see into it. Our homes belong to us and neither boys nor men have any right to pry into them, but they don't think of that. So up the boy came and as he was very big and heavy he shook the limb on which the nest was placed so hard that one of my brothers was knocked out of the nest and the fall on the hard ground killed him."

"Wasn't the boy sorry?"

"Yes, he seemed to be, but that didn't comfort my unhappy father and mother, or bring back the poor little life he had taken away."*



THE WRENS AND THE RED SQUIRRELS



The Squirrel ran up the trunk of the tree

AT THE conclusion of this sad story Mrs. Robin sat very quiet for a few moments, then, she said thoughtfully:

“How fine it would be if all boys loved us and befriended us whenever they had a chance.”

“Yes,” said her husband, “if they did and would, you could fly away with me and pick up your own dinner, but now you have to stay here and watch that one precious egg.”

“O, no, Robin,” the thoughtful wife answered, “you forget that we have other enemies than boys, don’t lay all the wrong things to them. There are birds and other creatures who do quite as much harm to us as the boys.”

“That is true, little wife,” answered Mr. Robin, “you are always able to see all sides of a question.” And with these kind words he flew away leaving his wife to meditate upon his closing words. He had been gone but a few moments, however, when her pleasant thoughts were disturbed by a loud noise in the trees near by. She was at once all attention, for she was sure the noise must mean harm to her husband. She listened intently for his voice, but instead of his musical notes

she heard the scolding tones of the English Sparrow.

“Dear me,” she chirped to herself, “that bad busy-body fellow is quarreling again, I believe I will just step away from the nest a moment and see what is going on.”

She hopped to the end of the limb on which she sat and then saw that an English Sparrow and a handsome Oriole were having an excited discussion. Presently the Sparrow flew at the Oriole, but was soon driven off by the bigger bird, at this the Sparrow gave several loud piercing cries, and a dozen English Sparrows flew to his help. It looked as if the Oriole would soon be finished, but out of the orchard somewhere came two angry Cat-birds, and in the midst of the sharp fight which followed, she suddenly saw her hus-

band coming toward the battle, a big worm in his beak, which she thought was intended for her dinner.

At the sight of the raging battle, his fighting nature which is stronger than that of almost any other bird, overcame everything else. He dropped the worm to the ground and added his sharp bill to the pecks on the heads which the Sparrows were receiving.

At last the battle was won, the Sparrows were driven away and the victorious birds alighted in the trees to smooth their ruffled plumage. ⁽¹⁾ Mrs. Robin immediately remembered her duties as sentinel and hurried back to her post. She was none too soon for a handsome Bluejay had just alighted

near the nest, but on catching sight of Mrs. Robin, he immediately flew away.

“Dear me,” twittered the little house-keeper, her heart trembling with fear, “how dreadful it would have been if Mr. Bluejay had eaten my precious egg, what would dear Robin have said to me? I will never, never, leave the nest again, not even if all the birds in the orchard are mixed up in one great fight.”

As these thoughts went through her small head she moved even closer to the nest than she had been before and she really meant to stay there. The time dragged slowly, however, and it seemed to her that it took Robin a long while to hunt up another worm. She might have been perfectly contented to wait

for him if she hadn't grown so decidedly hungry.

"I will just fly into the next tree," she said to herself, "I can see the house and the grounds around it better from there, and perhaps I can catch sight of Robin coming back with my dinner, at the same time I shall be close enough to the home tree to see if any creature comes near the nest."

She carried out her plan exactly and just as she lit on a limb which gave her a wide outlook, a big, fat red Squirrel ran up the trunk of the tree in which the Wren's house was perched. When Mrs. Robin caught sight of the Red Squirrel she was frightened, you may be sure, for whenever she saw one her thoughts flew back to the time in her early life when she came so near furnishing a fine

mouthful for a member of that family. She was not frightened for herself for she knew she was more than a match for the naughty fellow. But she felt sure that he was not sneaking up the Wren's house for any good, so she decided to watch him.

“The Wrens are so small,” she said to herself, “they will not dare to try to drive him off, perhaps they will need my help.”

At that very moment out of the wren house came Madam Jennie Wren and dashed at Mr. Squirrel, giving him a sharp peck on the head which caused him to turn about and slide down the tree-trunk much faster than he had sneaked up. Madam Wren was not done with him, however, she continued to chase him and as they came under the tree where Mr. Wren sat preening his feathers, he gave up



Up the tree in which Mrs. Wren's house was perched

the pleasure of making his toilet and joined in the chase. Away they all went, the two Wrens scolding with all their might, and though Mr. Squirrel's feet twinkled pretty rapidly, they were no match for the wings of the Wrens and so, every now and then, one or the other of them darted at him with a sharp peck on his round, red head. They disappeared around the house, and then reappeared again on the side near where Mrs. Robin sat and then, Mr. Squirrel dashed into the orchard.

Mrs. Robin was keeping her eye well upon him and she saw him suddenly bob into a hole in a dead apple tree. The Wrens seemed much surprised at his quick disappearance, but after looking around a few moments they seemed to think the battle

was won and they returned to the home tree where Mr. Wren rejoiced over the victory in one of his best concert solos. Mrs. Robin returned to her post feeling very happy, for she was quite sure that particular red Squirrel would avoid that particular corner of the orchard for the rest of the summer.*

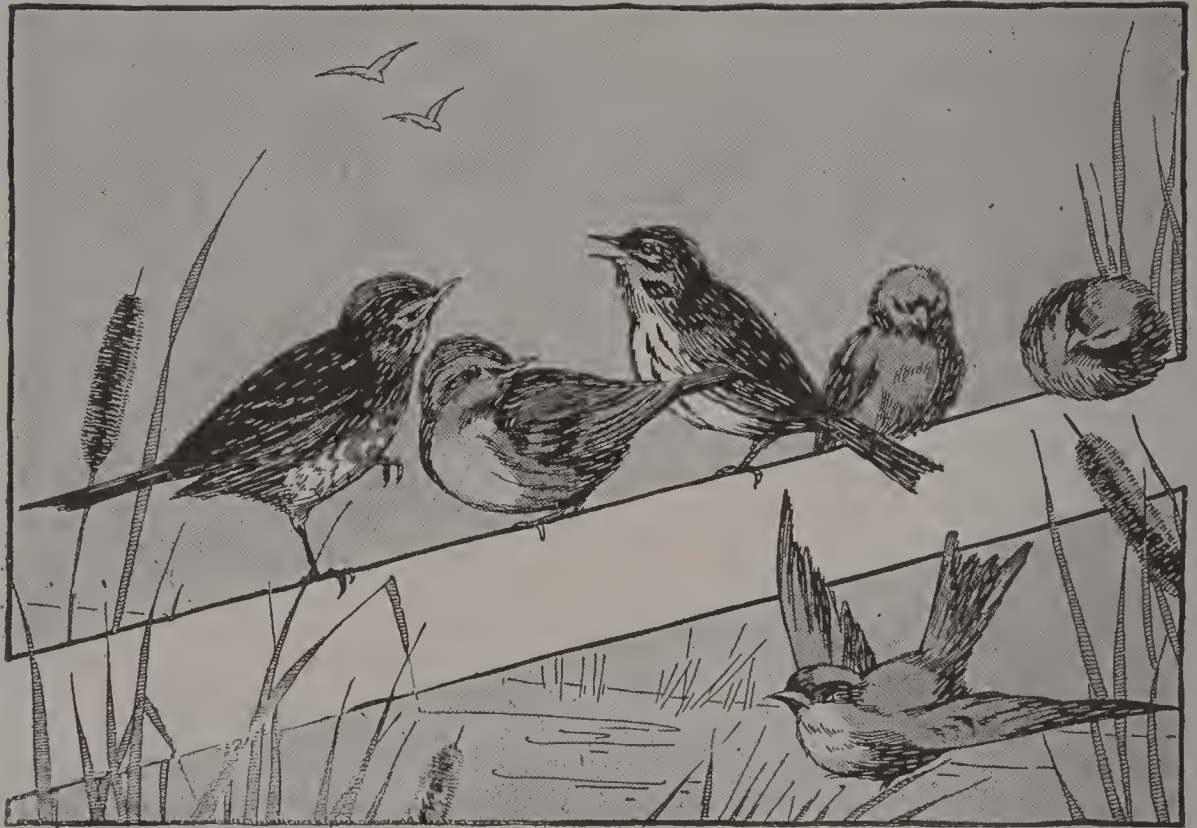
“Now,” said the good little wife to herself as she settled down as close to the nest as she could get, “if Robin would only fly home with a big fat worm in his beak I am sure I should be perfectly happy and contented.”

At this moment she heard a faint rustle on the ground beneath her, and looking down in a tremor of fear she saw two little girls peering around on the ground.

“O, just girls,” thought Mrs. Robin quite relieved, “they will do no harm to anyone.

They are looking for flowers, I suppose, although I should think they would be satisfied with what they have, for their hands are full of them. She heard them laughing and talking, but as she could not understand what they were saying, she paid no further attention to them and they soon passed out of her sight and hearing. The orchard seemed very quiet after they had gone on and she wondered if it wouldn't be a good plan to take a little nap to make the time pass more swiftly while waiting for Robin. She was just about to put her head under her wing when some loud and piercing cries from the Bluejays startled her so much that she nearly fell off the limb on which she was perched.

“Now, what's the matter?” she twittered, “I do hope Robin is not in any trouble.”



THE BLUEJAY'S STORY.



We swallow acorns whole

ALL THOUGHTS of a nap were banished from Mrs. Robin's head, when she heard the cries of the Bluejays. She listened closely but could not hear Robin's note. She knew, however, that some dreadful thing had befallen the Bluejays. If she had been able to distinguish any other bird's notes she would have flown to them at once to inquire into the matter, but she had been taught that Blue-

jays were good birds to keep away from. So she just sat there humped up in a little heap and quietly waited for the trouble to end.

It was some time before the cries ceased, and, in a moment or two after silence came, Mrs. Robin was much surprised to see handsome Mr. Bluejay alight on a limb, a little above her, where he could look down into her nest and see the one small treasure which it held.

Mrs. Robin trembled a little with fear, although she tried to appear perfectly unconcerned, and for this reason she twittered a pleasant, "Good day," to Mr. Bluejay.

"Did you hear the noise?" asked Mr. Bluejay, hopping around excitedly.

"Why, yes," returned Mrs. Robin, "I couldn't help it very well. I should have of-

ferred my aid, but I knew you Bluejays were perfectly able to take care of yourselves.”

“Indeed we are, as a rule, but this was a very peculiar case.”

“Do tell me about it,” said Mrs. Robin, moving a little closer to her nest.

“I believe you know,” said the Jay, “that my mate and I have a nest in a big bush which grows near the orchard fence?”

“No,” was the answer, “I did not know it, although I have seen you around here several times.”

“Well,” continued the Bluejay, “we have one there, and we thought we had chosen a spot where it could not be disturbed.”

“Are there any eggs in it?” asked Mrs. Robin.

“O no,” answered Mr. Bluejay, “the nest is just finished and a little while ago, when my mate and I were sitting on the fence, disturbing no one, along came two little girls, but of course we were not afraid, because we have been taught that little girls are kind and good, but suddenly one of the little girls picked up a stone and threw it at the nest. For a wonder, the stone hit the nest and down it went to the ground.”

“A little girl!” exclaimed Mrs. Robin, “I am surprised, I didn’t suppose little girls ever did things of that kind.”

“Neither did I, but I am telling you the truth. Of course, my mate and I began to scream over the loss of our nest and presently two other pairs of Jays came flying to us and

joined their cries to ours, so that we made quite a noise."

"I should say you did, I thought all the birds in the orchard were in trouble."

"Well, it was a good thing," continued the Jay, "for they heard us down at the house and the little boy who lives there came running to the orchard, when he saw our nest on the ground he picked it up most carefully. You know Mrs. Bluejay does not weave her nest very firmly. Then he made the little girl show him where the nest was when she threw the stone at it and he climbed on the fence and put it back in the very same spot."*

"Well, well, well!" exclaimed Mrs. Robin, "a boy too, and I am as afraid of them as I am of a gun!"

“But,” said the Bluejay, “you need never be afraid of the boy in that house, I know him well, for I have lived here now two winters to say nothing of the summers. In the winter he puts out food for us to eat and he is so kind and good to us that we have decided to spend the rest of our days in this orchard instead of flying off to a warmer place in the winter as so many Jays do.”

“But if he is so good, why didn’t he teach the little girl better than to throw stones at the bird’s nest?” asked Mrs. Robin.

“O, they don’t belong to each other, you must know that the girl lives away down in the village, in another nest, or I suppose I should say, house. I heard him tell her she ought to be ashamed of herself to knock a bird’s nest down that way. But she told him

it was nothing but a Bluejay's nest, and they are a mean lot of thieves anyway."

"O my!" exclaimed Mrs. Robin admiringly, "could you understand what they said?"

"Yes, you see, I have lived among these people so long that I have learned to understand most of their words. He told her the Bluejays were not thieves and he said a lot more to her which I could not quite understand, and after a while they wandered away."

Just at this moment Mr. Robin appeared with a big worm in his beak, which he at once fed to his hungry wife, and then, of course, he had to listen to the Bluejay's story about the bad girl, and he said in closing, "I don't think it is fair to give all the Bluejays a bad

name just because there is a bad one now and then.”

“You are right, it is not fair,” said Mr. Robin, “no more than it would be fair to say that all humans are bad just because now and then, a bad one comes along with a gun and shoots one of us. Then too, all the birds are afraid of boys and they are not afraid of girls, but here was a girl who was worse than the boy.”

“Which proves,” said the Bluejay, “that we should not make any hard and fast rules for either birds or humans,” and with this wise remark he flew away.

“That is all very well,” said Mrs. Robin as she watched his beautiful blue back disappear among the trees, “but at the same time, I noticed that his eyes wandered pretty often



I fear the Red Squirrel more

to my one egg in the nest, and, as long as I know he is in the neighborhood, I don't intend to get very far from this spot. I did fly into the next tree awhile ago to watch for you because I was so hungry, but I was in sight of the nest all the time."

She then told Robin of the way the Wrens had routed the Red Squirrel, all of which pleased him very much.

"I fear the Red Squirrel more than I do the Jay," he said, "and I am glad the Wrens have driven him away, we now have one enemy less."

“There are plenty left, though,” twittered Mrs. Robin.

“No matter, if we are brave and watchful we can overcome them all.”

“You are brave, I know, but I do not think you are very watchful,” said Mrs. Robin with an angry fling of her tail. “You were gone a long, long time, leaving me here to watch alone.”

“Well, I knew you were doing your duty,” answered Mr. Robin in a loving tone, “and you may be sure, if you had given one little cry I would have come to you just as fast as my wings could have brought me.”

“But, I might have been killed while you were getting here,” she said with another angry fling.

“O no,” said her husband, “for I have seen you fight pretty hard when there was any real danger, and now, as the sun is almost down, I will sing you my very best good night song to make up for my staying away from you so long.”

“All right, and I will pass the night in the nest,” she said.

“As she settled her plump little body into the nest, she twittered softly to herself a few notes which meant, “Robin is brave and he sings most beautifully, but he can’t lay eggs and I can,” and she tucked her little head under her wing before Mr. Robin had half finished his evening song.



AN EARLY MORNING CHAT.



WHEN Mrs. Robin hopped out of the nest, early the next morning, Mr. Robin who was close by peered over the edge of the nest and saw another blue egg snuggled up close to the first one. You may be sure he was very proud and he at once began to sing his loudest notes. At the end of this song, telling his wife she should have the finest and fattest worm he could find for her breakfast, he flew away to make his promise good.

He had no sooner disappeared than a handsome red-winged Blackbird lit on the limb



A handsome Red-Winged Blackbird lit on the limb near Mrs. Robin.

near Mrs. Robin and bade her a cheerful good morning.

As she was, at all times, a civil little creature, she returned the greeting pleasantly and then waited for him to open the conversation.

“Do you know what that sound is?” he asked at once.

“I don’t hear anything,” was the reply, “except the Bluebird and the Oriole singing, you can hear them at all hours of the day.”

“But that isn’t what I mean,” explained the Blackbird, “Listen now, and you will hear it again, there it is!” he exclaimed eagerly.

“O, do you mean that harsh rattle?” asked Mrs. Robin, “I hear that every day, and I always supposed it was some sort of a noise

made by the people who live in the house yonder. Humans make all kinds of queer sounds, you know, poor things, I suppose they do the best they can."

"True enough, but this sound is not made by a human. If you will move along nearer to me, so that you can see through the trees, I can show you where the queer noise comes from."

Mrs. Robin turned her head toward the nest, but made neither a reply nor a motion to leave her position. The Blackbird noticing Mrs. Robin's slowness to move away from her nest, exclaimed.

"O, you needn't be afraid of me, I will not molest your treasures, I am not that kind of a bird, although I have a first cousin who is

said to be a bold robber. Come on now, and to make sure of my good intentions, you can perch between me and your home.”

Thus assured, the little guardian moved along to an opening in the trees. She then saw a low white building with a peaked roof standing in the water quite close to the shore.

“O, another house!” she exclaimed in surprise, “I didn’t know that one was there.”

“It is very plain that you are a quiet little home body and do not go flying about as do so many mother birds. If you were that kind you would know that building is nothing but a boathouse. There is water and not land under that roof, and there the boats can safely ride at anchor and are always dry and ready for their owners to use.”



Boats can safely ride at anchor

“How fine,” said Mrs. Robin, “Humans are quite smart after all, but see, there is a beautiful bird on the peak of the roof, I never saw one like him before, such a lovely blue color and a handsome crest on top of his head, I wonder why I never saw him before? What is his name, do you know?”

“His name is Kingfisher, and the reason you have not seen him before is because he does not make his nest in the trees or bushes

as do most all other birds, and as I have said before you do not wander away from home very much.”

“But,” asked Mrs. Robin, in great surprise, “if he doesn’t make his nest in the trees or bushes what does he do? He surely must have a place he calls his home.”

“Yes, he makes his nest in a hole made by some sort of a water animal, in the bank of a stream, that is why I know so much about him, because I like to be near the water too.”

“He is a handsome bird,” said Mrs. Robin, looking at him intently, “but I think I should like him better if his head were not so big.”

“Well,” said the Blackbird, “as he goes head first into the water, perhaps he could not do that if his head were like yours or mine.”



His name is Kingfisher

“But, what is he doing now?” asked Mrs. Robin, as the Kingfisher stood very still and seemed to be watching the water below.

“He is looking for a fish, see! there he goes.”

Even as the Blackbird said these words the Kingfisher made a plunge into the water and in a moment or two he came flashing up to the roof again with a good-sized fish in his long bill, he flopped it quickly against the roof on which he sat, then opened his mouth and swallowed the fish whole.

“Well,” exclaimed Mrs. Robin, “that was a big meal to be taken so quickly.”

“Yes,” said the Blackbird, “he is even smarter than we are, we swallow acorns whole, ⁽³⁾ but I am very sure we could not manage a fish that way.”

“But where is he going now?” asked Mrs. Robin as the Kingfisher left the roof of the boathouse and flew in a straight line along the bank for a short distance, when he suddenly disappeared.

“He has gone into his nest in that bank!” exclaimed the Blackbird.

“Does he make it as we do, of sticks and mud?” she asked.

“O, no indeed! Sometimes he puts in dry grass, but not always. There is one thing though which is always found in the nest of the Kingfisher, and that is the bones of the fish they have swallowed.”

“Why,” exclaimed Mrs. Robin in much surprise, “how can that be? I certainly saw him swallow that fish, bones and all.”

“Of course, you did, that is the way he always takes his food, his stomach digests the flesh of the fish, but not the bones, they soon become soft, however, and they are thrown up by the bird in the shape of small pellets, these he distributes around on the floor of the nest as a soft lining for it.”

“That is certainly a quick and easy way to build a nest,” said Mrs. Robin, “but I do not think I should like it so well as my own way.”

“Neither would I,” said the Blackbird, “and besides all that, the Kingfishers are not good housekeepers, they never clean their nests out as the Robins and the Blackbirds do, but there is one good thing to be said about the Father Kingfisher, he is kind to his family and helps his wife hatch the eggs, which are usually five in number.”

“You are very kind to tell me so many interesting things about the Kingfisher, I see that he is a very smart bird, and whenever I hear his harsh call after this I shall peep through the trees at him. It seems that he doesn't help along the humans as much as the rest of us do, since he doesn't eat up the insects which make them so much trouble.”

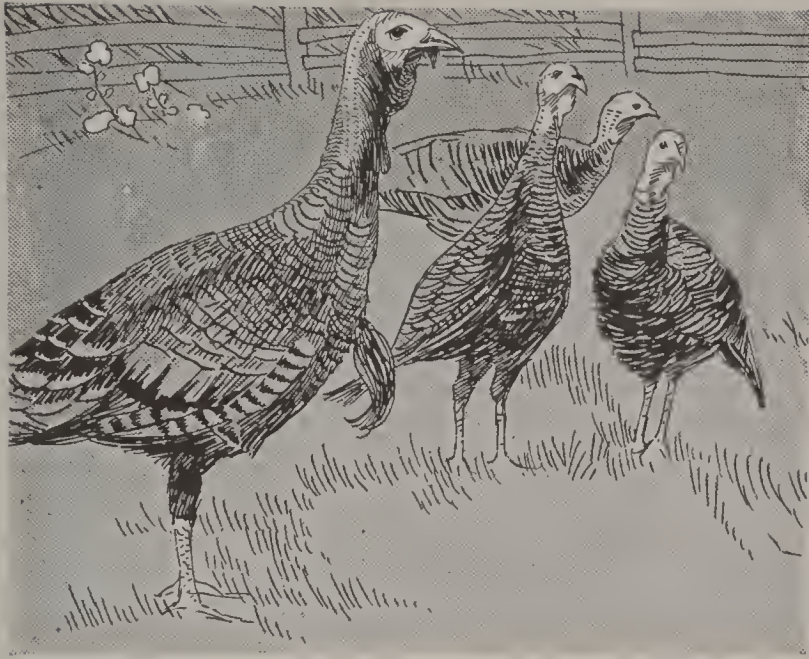
“O, but he does, the Kingfisher likes variety in his food as well as the other birds, he eats grasshoppers, lizards, crickets and beetles of the June bug family. Many queer stories are told about these birds, by the humans, so I have heard, but I dare say, none of them are really true. Humans are always so busy, you know, that they do not take time to watch the birds, so they make up very queer stories about us. If they would spend more

time in studying us it would be better for us and also for themselves, but there comes your good husband with a worm in his beak, so I will just say good morning for this time.”

“You don’t mean to say you are really here?” twittered Mrs. Robin unkindly, “Were you waiting for this worm to grow?” she added as she snapped her bill over it and swallowed it greedily.



THE CHASE.



POOOR Robin dropped his wings at this unkind speech and was silent for a minute or two, then his wife went on saucily.

“You haven’t a word to say, I think you might at least tell me what you have been about.”

“I will tell you gladly,” said Mr. Robin, lifting his head and singing a few merry notes, “I was watching a High-hole, or Flicker,

boring a hole high up in a telephone pole, and the performance was so very interesting that time went by faster than I thought.”

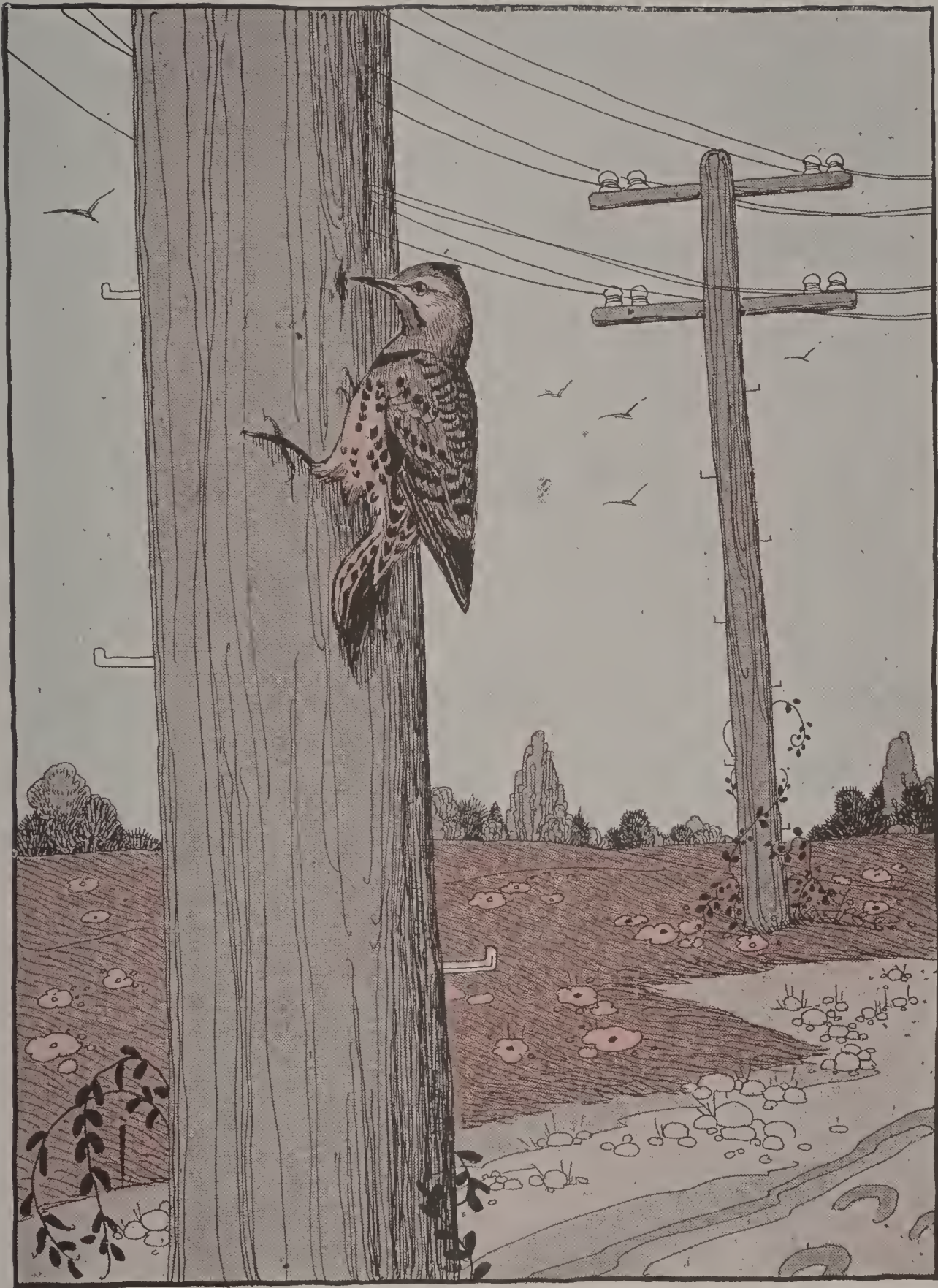
“Boring a hole high up? why that sounds like his name, Highhole, but what was he doing that for?”

“Making a place for his nest.”

“You don’t mean to say that a mere bird can bore a hole with his beak in the wood, big enough for him to go through!”

“Yes, that’s just what I mean, and while I waited there he made a beginning and I was so surprised to see him work that, as I said before, I forgot for a few moments my duties as a husband, but I am sure you will forgive me this time.”

“O yes, I will forgive you gladly,” said Mrs. Robin with a saucy twist of her head,



I was watching a Flicker boring a hole in a telephone pole

“because I had a talk with Mr. Blackbird, and he told me all about the beautiful Mr. Kingfisher and the strange things he does.”

“Kingfisher!” exclaimed Robin, twitching his tail angrily, “I hope you didn’t have anything to say to that common fish-eating fellow. Why, I don’t believe he would know a respectable grub if it was right under his eyes. He is not a good mannered bird for a genteel lady like yourself.”

Mrs. Robin, pretending not to hear what he said, exclaimed,

“But now, Robin dear, if you will be so good as to stay here awhile and watch our home, I believe I will fly away and see the High-hole make a high hole,” and without waiting for his answer, she spread her wings and in another moment was out of sight.

Mrs. Robin came out of the orchard at a point where she could plainly see the telephone pole and there on one of them, directly opposite to her, a bird much larger than herself, was striking hard and fast on the wood of the pole.

“Dear me,” she chirped softly to herself, “I wonder if that is the bird he calls the ‘High-hole,’ why it is nothing in the world but one of those Golden winged Woodpeckers. I remember, there was a whole nest full of them hatched out near our nest last summer, but I didn’t know that they could bore holes in the wood as that one is doing, for I don’t believe I was hatched when they built the nest last year.”

She kept her perch in the tree, watching eagerly the work of the Flicker, but suddenly

her eyes were turned from it to a pair of birds that had alighted on a limb below her. She could not see them clearly, but presently the male bird began to sing.

“Oho, that is the Grosbeak,” twittered Mrs. Robin, “he is the beautiful fellow that, the other day, asked where he could find some water. How attentive he is to his wife, going around with her while she is finding stuff for her nest and singing to her all the while. I wish Robin was like that. He seemed to think he was doing his duty if he flew to meet me on my return with my bill full of building material, but then, I must remember, he is a Robin and not a Grosbeak and we all have our different ways of getting the same sort of work done.”

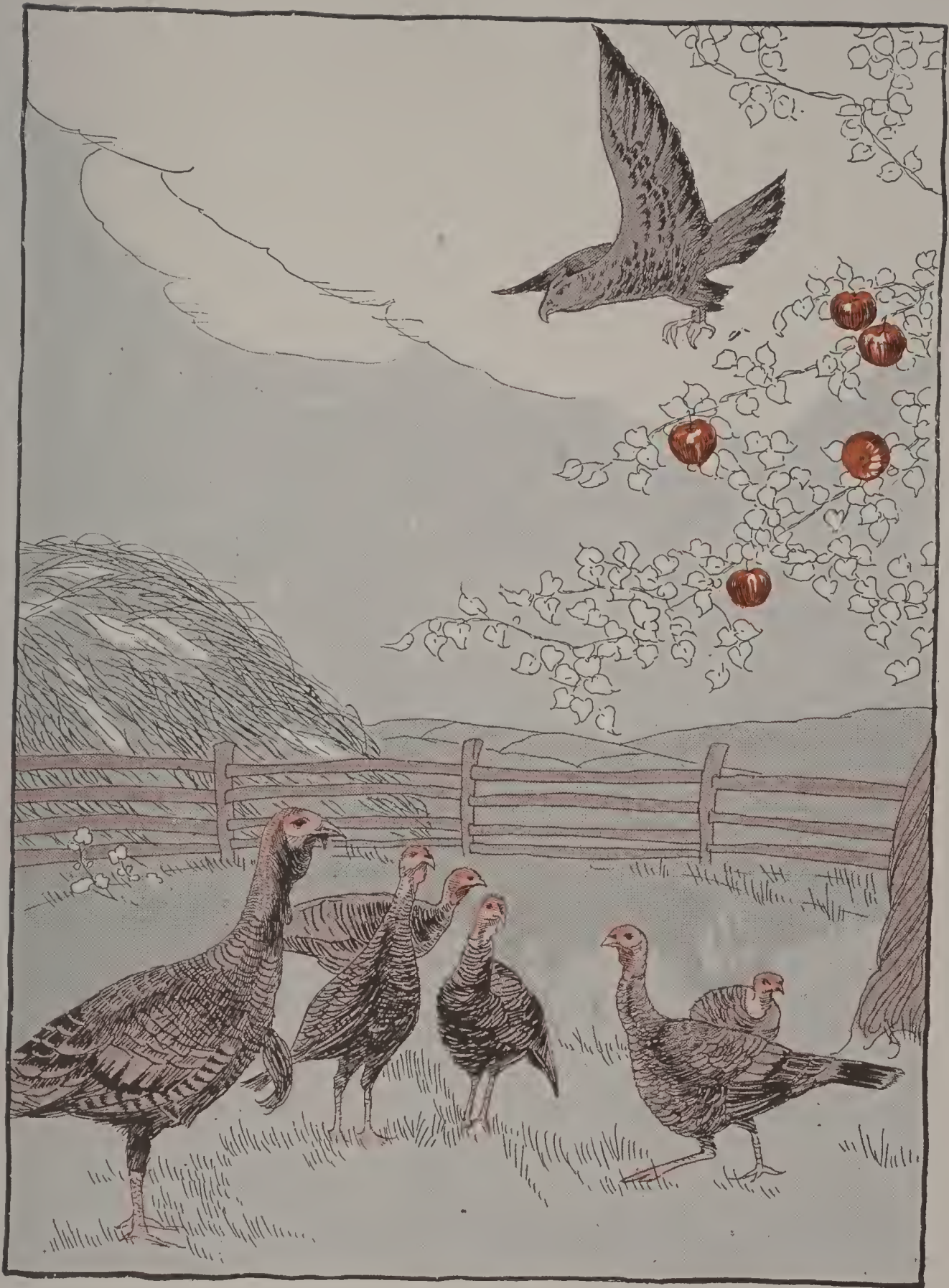
With this comforting thought she turned

to fly back to her nest, but just at this moment, she heard a loud squawking near her, and full of curiosity to know what the noise meant, she changed her course and lit in a large oak tree back of the summer cottage. She perched on an outside limb where she could see whatever was going on and she soon discovered the cause of all the noise.

Two turkey hens with their broods of young ones were calling their flocks together, and between whiles giving cries of alarm. Presently they settled under the very tree where Mrs. Robin was perched. She scarcely knew what was going on, but she felt sure that danger of some sort was quite near. Suddenly she discovered, directly above them, a large bird which was circling slowly about and every moment coming nearer to

earth. She was terribly frightened and her first thought was that she must fly back to her home and the protection of her mate, but the next moment her own danger was forgotten, for one of the Turkey mothers arose quickly to the level of the strange bird and with wings outstretched and neck extended she seemed about to strike the bold intruder. He, however, fully realizing his danger, changed his slow poisoning to swift flight, and rising higher in the air darted away with the Turkey in close and swift pursuit.

Poor little Mrs. Robin gave a chirp of relief as she watched the two birds sail away into space. It was a losing chase from the beginning and the smaller bird was flying toward a forest which crowned a far-distant hill. Mrs. Robin watched them until they disap-



A large bird which was circling about

peared like two black spots within the gloom of the forest. She then hurried with all speed back to her home, where Robin impatiently awaited her coming. He began to ask her about her long absence when she interrupted him to tell her exciting story.

“O,” said Mr. Robin quietly as she paused for breath, “that was a hawk and he was after a nice tender young turkey for his dinner.”

“The wicked thing,” said Mrs. Robin angrily, “I hope the mother Turkey will kill him.”

“O, come now, don’t blame the hawk too much,” said Mr. Robin, “remember, he has to live as well as you, and he was doing just what you do when you dash after a moth, or gobble up a caterpillar.”

Mrs. Robin was silent a moment and then chirped out joyfully,

“Well, he didn’t get a young turkey anyway.”

“No,” was the answer, “and he’ll have to get his dinner somewhere else because he’ll have to hide from the mother turkey when he’s safe inside the big forest.”

“Then you think the mother turkey will have her chase for nothing?”

“No, hardly that, because she saved the life of her young one, but she will never get the hawk. You saw for yourself that her flight was no match for that of the hawk.”

“But she’s so much bigger than the hawk,” said Mrs. Robin.

“Of course, and that is just why she could not catch him. I am surprised to learn that she could chase him even as far as she did.

But what became of her little ones while she was off on her wild hawk chase?"

"O, the other mother turkey who was right there brooded them all."

"She was a good bird."

"Yes, wasn't she, but Robin don't you think it is time the fly-away turkey is getting back?"

"I don't know I am sure," answered Robin looking away toward the far-distant forest, "that looks to me like a very long flight." ⁽⁴⁾

"O, well, let's not worry about her," said Mrs. Robin cheerfully, "her babies are here and she will certainly get back just as soon as she can. But do tell me, dear Robin, what you were about all the while that I was gone. I hope you found something to amuse you, for I am afraid I was away a very long time."

THE RETURN.



“SO you were,” said Mr. Robin, trying to look very much abused, “but you know I always make the best of my time, so I passed the time chatting with a Robin who has a nest just back of the cottage and he told me an interesting story.”

“Can you not tell it to me?”

“Yes, if you care to hear it and I suppose you do, as you are always ready to listen to me when I wish to talk.”

“Of course I am, dear Robin, why shouldn’t I be when you always talk so well?” answered Mrs. Robin lovingly.

Mr. Robin gave his wife’s glossy back a gentle stroke with his bill, and then began his story.

“It seems several springs ago this Mrs. Robin took a notion to build a nest on top of a smooth post.”

“What a foolish whim,” exclaimed his listener, “she ought to have known that was impossible.”

“She didn’t it seems, for she kept on trying, some birds, you know, are very stubborn.

The humans must have been watching her and noticed that the sticks which she brought fell off about as soon as she laid them down, for one day on her return with her beak full of stuff, she found some queer things which Mr. Robin said were called nails driven into the post. Around these some thread was wound so there was a sort of frame work ready for the material she had brought. Mr. Robin said it was such a surprise to them both that at first they didn't know what to do. They talked about it a long time, looked it over, hopped around it, there was just room for them to stand outside of the thing, and they pulled at the string with all their might but could not break it. His wife declared at first that she would never build a nest in such

a place for it was too much of it human, but after spending one whole day fussing and scolding about it she finally seemed to think that she must do one of two things, either accept this help from a human, or else find some other place for the nest. She chirped and chirped about it, declaring there was no other spot in the world which suited here so well for a nest as the top of that post. So at last she went to work with all her might and built there the most beautiful nest that ever was, and now, her good husband told me, they come back every spring to that very same place.” (1)

“And is it always ready and waiting for them?” asked the little wife eagerly.

“Yes, indeed, it is always there just as they left it when the last brood was hatched.”

“But I shouldn’t think it would be very nice to live in after it had been rained on and snowed on through all the cold winter time.”

“O, I suppose Mrs. Robin tears it all to pieces and then uses the same stuff to build it up again, going after new stuff if necessary. I have seen mother birds do that way. Then, by giving the nest a new lining, it is just as good as ever.”

“Yes, I suppose it is. I wonder if I will do that way when we come back here next spring.”

“I dare say. I know that’s what I would do if I were a mother bird.”

“O, yes, you wise fellow,” said his wife, poking him lovingly with her bill, “I should feel sorry for the little ones if you had to build

the nest, but maybe if you had to sit for so many days in the nest you would take good care to make it comfortable just as I do.”

“All right,” said Mr. Robin, “but now isn’t it time for you to jump into your nest? I am all ready to sing you a good night song.”

“It is nearly bed time,” said Mrs. Robin, but instead of going to her nest as her husband had suggested, she flew to the very top of the old apple tree and looked off toward the forest. She was hoping to see that big gray form of the turkey sailing slowly toward the cottage. But not a bird was in sight against the calm evening sky.

“I suppose all honest, respectable birds have gone to roost at this hour,” she thought, “and the poor wandering mother Turkey has

her head safely tucked under her wing by this time. How lonely she must be in that dark forest so far from her little ones."

Just at that moment Robin, who had flown to a near by fence post to sing his evening song, stopped in the middle of his tune and called in his most eager tones,

"Come here! Come here!"

Very much surprised, Mrs. Robin flew to the post and perched close beside her husband.

"See," he said, twitching his head toward a certain point back of the house, "there she comes!"

Sure enough, there was the mother Turkey walking slowly up the hill at the foot of which was a wide swamp which she had been obliged to cross.

“Do you suppose she was too tired to fly home?” asked Mrs. Robin anxiously.

“Perhaps so, and it was a long, long walk for her, poor thing.”

“Well, I was wondering how she could stay all night so far from her little ones.”

“Your wonder is answered, for you see she could not do it. How very, very tired she looks.”

They watched her as she came slowly to the big oak tree under which she had left her young ones, and where there were now no turkeys to be seen. She did not halt there a moment, but went direct to the poultry house and soon by the calling, the peeping and general clamor they knew that the mother and her brood were re-united. (4)

“But what do you suppose became of the hawk?” asked Mrs. Robin.

“O, he’s out in the forest yet, safe and sound, you don’t need to worry about him.”

“Indeed, I am not so foolish as that, I am only afraid he will come back tomorrow again after a baby turkey.”

“No indeed,” said Mr. Robin, “he’ll not show up here again right away, and if he should get over his fright and venture back again by and by, the young turkeys will be big enough to take care of themselves.”

“Yes, and maybe the whole flock will get after him and chase him away, wouldn’t that be fine?”

“But he’ll not come unless there are some more young turkeys or chickens hatched out

so you may never have the pleasure of seeing that chase,” said Mr. Robin.

“Well, now, I can go to my nest and sleep in comfort,” said his wife.

In another minute she had put her words into action and peace and quiet settled over their world.





The Dinner Call

BOOK TWO





Mr. Robin Was a Proud and Happy Husband

Real Bird Tales



The Robin's Nest

FENCE POST TWITTERS

THE days went on swiftly and happily to the dwellers of The Orchard Home. Mrs. Robin watched the nest closely and every night saw a new egg added to the nest

until four beautiful blue eggs were tucked away in the place prepared for them with so much care. Mr. Robin was a proud and happy husband and he spent a good many minutes standing on the edge of the nest gazing at its precious contents.

Mrs. Robin was quite as proud and happy but the morning after the fourth egg was laid she turned her little head on one side as she said to her husband in her sweetest tones, "Now dear Robin, I have done my part. I've laid the eggs which must soon hatch into lively young robins. If you'll just stay here and watch the nest awhile, so as to be sure that no red squirrels, blue jays, blackbirds or other thieves can come here and harm our nest, I will go in search of

my own breakfast, and perhaps when I have eaten that I'll fly around a little, just to see what is going on in the world today.

“When Mr. Blackbird was talking to me the other day he told me it was fine that I was a regular stay-at-home but he seemed to think that birds who stay at home as much as I do cannot be very learned so as I have my long time of sitting before me, I mean to see what a little flying around in the world will do for me. Perhaps when I return I'll be so learned you'll be very much pleased.”

“All right, but do not go too far then,” called her husband at his loudest but she was out of sight before he had finished his twittering.

He looked very lonely indeed as he settled down on the limb near the nest.

Perhaps he was wondering what he should do with those four beautiful eggs if his little wife should get lost and not come back at all. But no lonesome thoughts troubled Mrs. Robin, as she flew clear out of the orchard and down to the lawn in front of the houses where she had never failed to find a satisfying breakfast of angle worms. When she had eaten all she wanted she flew to the top of the tall white house and looked around.

It was still early morning and there were many birds flitting about, but they all seemed too busy to talk to her. Presently she noticed quite close to her, a tall tree stump and down its rough side was running, head first,



The Chickadee Flew to a Post Quite Near Mrs. Robin

a small bird clad in black and white. He seemed to be picking something very good to eat from under the bark of the stump. When he had nearly reached the bottom he flew to a fence post quite near Mrs. Robin and sang out merrily,

“’Tsic-a-dee-dee.”

“Why,” exclaimed Mrs. Robin, turning herself around to get a better view of the new comer, “you must be a Chickadee!”

“Indeed, that is just what I am; have you never seen a bird like me before?”

“No, I never have. You see, I am a very young bird. I was only hatched late last year, but I have heard about you a great deal.”

“Indeed, and what have you heard about me? Only good, I hope.”

“O no, nothing bad, only about your funny ways, staying all winter where it is cold and running down the tree trunks head first. Then, too, I have heard about your funny song, that is if you can call it a song, but it doesn't compare with the one my husband sings.”

“Of course, I must own up to that. I know who you are well enough, you are a mother robin. How is it you can leave your family and sit here on the fence post so long at your ease?”

“My eggs are not hatched yet, in fact they are just laid. My nest is back in the orchard, and my good husband is watching the home while I take a little flight. Do you mind telling me where your nest is?”

“Right over in that stump,” returned the Chickadee. “Do you see the little hole near the top? That is our front door and my mate sits there as happy as can be. She has under her warm breast seven white eggs with brown specks on them. When they are all hatched out don’t you think my mate and I will be kept pretty busy feeding all those hungry little ones?”

“What kind of food do you have to find?” asked the robin.

“O, everything that is alive that isn’t too big for us to catch; spiders, caterpillars

worms, grasshoppers, daddy-long-legs, butterflies, moths, flies, and all kinds of insect eggs and their larvae. Oh! I must say, we will be a busy pair when those seven eggs have changed into seven wide open mouths which need to be filled just so many times a day, 'Tsic-a-dee-dee!' "

"You seem very happy over it all anyway," said Mrs. Robin.

"Of course, who wouldn't be happy when he is alive, has a pair of wings and knows just where to find food when he is hungry? But then I have had my troubles. Only a short time ago a cruel boy killed my mate and O, I tell you, I was sad and lonesome enough for a while."

"That was too bad," chirped Mrs. Robin in her most sorry tone, "but you found an-

other mate, of course, since you say there is a nest in the stump with some eggs in it.”

“Yes, I found another one though it took me some time to do so. I don’t know why it is, but Chickadees are not so plentiful as they were once. My great, great grandfather, who died just the other day, told me that there used to be flocks and flocks of them around this creek when he was a young bird.”

“O, is there a creek anywhere around here?” asked Mrs. Robin.

“Yes, indeed, just a short flight across the meadow, in that little piece of woods. We love to go there, but my mate thought it would be better to have our nest in that tall stump, so we agreed to build it there.”

“I am sure that was very good for both of you,” said Mrs. Robin.

“Good to ourselves, yes, because when she is pleased she’s sure to be happy and contented. But soon I must be looking around for something more for her to eat.”

“Do you ever forget her?”

“O never, how could I? Because when I am hungry myself, I know she must be the same, so I fly and feed her first.”

“You are indeed a very good husband,” said Mrs. Robin with a merry chirp.

“She will not agree with you unless I feed her pretty soon, but before I go I should like very much to tell you a story about one of those tiny creatures they call Humming birds.”

“O, but just wait a minute, until I catch that white Butterfly,” said Mrs. Robin, and away she flew in swift chase after the dainty morsel.



MEETING MORE BIRDS



IN a moment or two, Mrs. Robin returned clicking her bill happily over her quickly found meal.

“Now,” she said, “I am ready to hear your story about the Humming bird,” and she settled herself in comfort on the fence post again.

“Yesterday,” continued the Chickadee, “I went into a queer, dark place to look for some

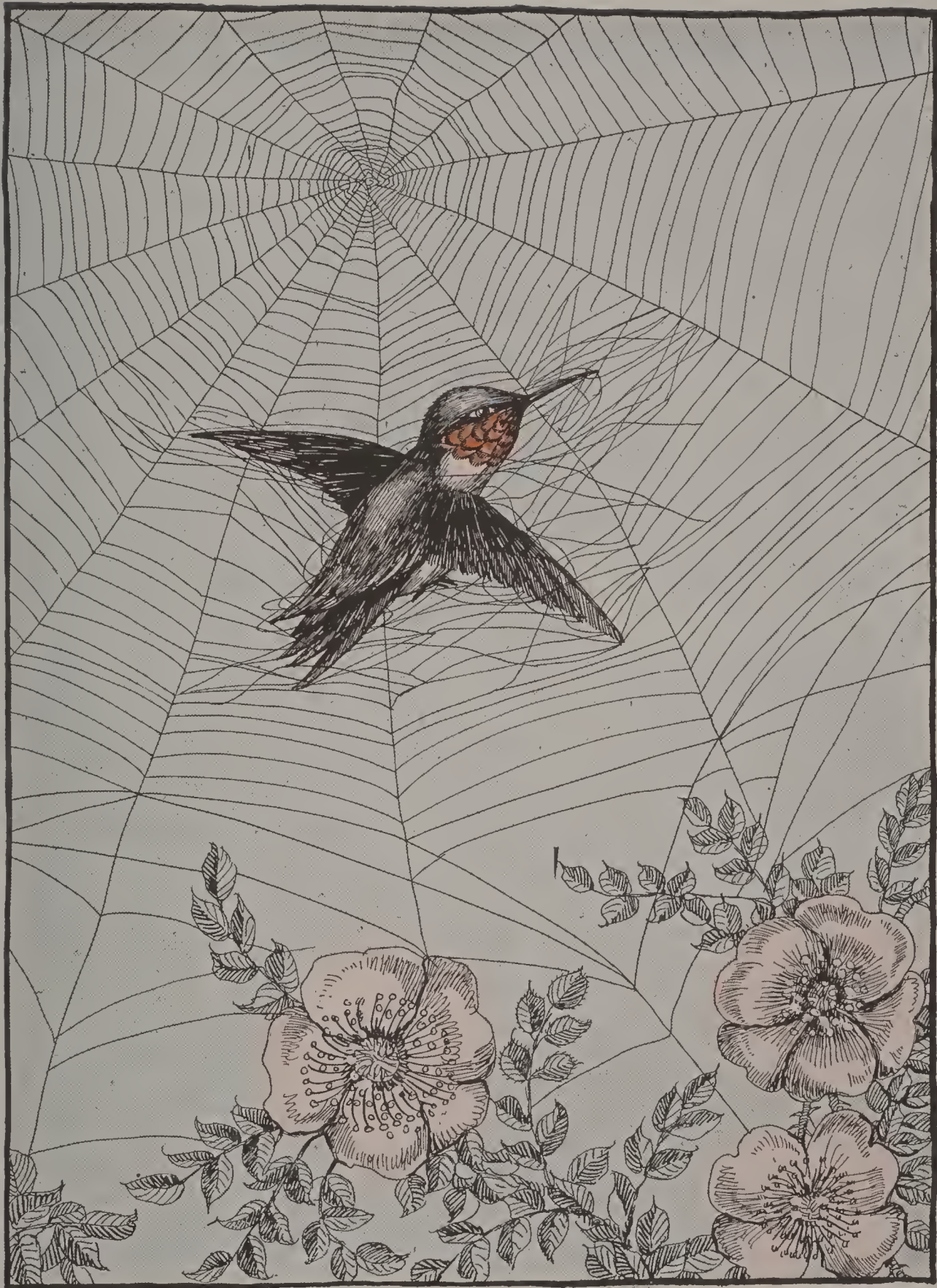
spiders and there was a poor little Humming bird caught in a big thick spider web. I didn't dare go near it, because I knew I couldn't help it any and might tangle it up more, so I flew out into the air as quickly as I could and lit on a tree-trunk to see what I could find to take the place of the spider I had wanted. While I was busy in this way, the first thing I knew there was a human quite near me holding that mite of a bird in its hand and trying to get the cobweb off its tiny legs and body.

“My! I thought it would never be clean again, and as it was lying so still in that big, queer hand, I thought the poor little thing must be scared out of its wits. After what seemed a long, long time the cobweb was all

wiped away, I suppose, for it flew off into the air and its mate, who must have been waiting nearby, flew to meet it. They put their little bills together and they whirled around in the air like two wheels, as if happy with joy. My! but I was glad for them. But now good bye, I hope we'll meet again some day," and away the little fellow flew, merrily repeating his 'Tsic-a-dee-dee'." (4).

When the Chickadee was gone, Mrs. Robin sat for several minutes lost in deep thought.

"How many good people there are after all," she was saying to herself. "I wonder if all the birds everywhere find as many good humans as there are around this part of the world." Just at that moment, a tiny Humming bird flew by. "O, come back!" called



There Was a Humming Bird Caught in a Big, Thick Spider Web

Mrs. Robin eagerly, "Come back, I want to talk to you."

The humming bird turned herself around and lit on a tall weed near the fence post on which the Robin was perched.

"I want to know if you are the Humming bird who was caught in that big ugly cobweb yesterday?"

"Yes," twittered the Humming Bird, "I am the very same and I am still surprised to think that I am alive."

"But do tell me, weren't you very much scared when the human was holding you?"

"Scared! indeed I was. I thought at one time that my heart would break right through my body, it beat so fast and hard although the hand which picked me off the cobweb was very soft and tender."

“But you are all right now?”

“O yes indeed I am, and I have the dearest little nest in a bush under a big tree down near the creek; it is soft and warm inside and there is one tiny white egg in it.”

“How do you make your nest soft and warm inside?”

“O, I line it with cobwebs. That was what I was after when I got caught yesterday. That cobweb was too big and strong for me. Then I take the down from the thistles and the dandelions too. O, I think it is the cosiest and prettiest little home that you ever saw!”

“And does your good husband stay with you and help you bring up the little ones?”

“I am sorry to say, he does not. He is a good attentive mate until the babies are hatched,

then he seems to lose interest in his family and goes off by himself, leaving me to bring up the children as best I can. But now, I hear him calling me and I must be good to him while I have him with me, so good bye," and with a whirl she was gone.

"Well, I wouldn't think much of that kind of a husband," said Mrs. Robin to herself, "and perhaps it would be a good thing for me to return to my husband and see what kind of help he wanted while I was away learning."

She turned her head toward the orchard, but before she spread her wings in flight she remembered again that she was soon to begin her long time of staying on the nest and that this was her last chance for a far flight away from home.

“I believe I will just fly down to that creek the Chickadee was telling me about and see how it looks there,” she thought. She turned herself about in the other direction and darted away. She had no trouble in finding the creek, for though she was only a young bird, when she saw the bushes all leaning over in one direction, she knew that the creek was under them. So in a very short time she was sitting all alone on a limb listening to the gentle gurgle of the stream.

She was not left alone long, however, for presently she heard a lively chirping quite near her and a voice said,

“How do you do, Madam Robin?”

“How do you know my name, and who is it talking?” asked the Robin wonderingly.

“Everybody knows a mother Robin,” said the voice, “and perhaps you will know my name if you look at me closely.”

“But I don’t see you!” exclaimed Mrs. Robin quickly as she peered around among the shadows.

“Well, I will come closer,” said the voice, and immediately a strange bird sat on the limb beside her.

“Now, tell me what I look like,” he said.

“You look like a big, black bird,” exclaimed Mrs. Robin, still very much surprised.

“So now, you have my name exactly, Black-bird, and very glad I am indeed to know you.”

“Black-bird!” exclaimed Mrs. Robin with a puzzled air, “Mr. Blackbird called on me a few days ago, but it wasn’t you for that bird had beautiful red wings.”

“O, I know, that is the Red-winged Black-bird, he is my first cousin. But now, tell me, Mrs. Robin, what do you think of this place for a nest? Don’t you wish you had built here instead of in that orchard on the hill so near a house where there are certain to be wicked cats about?”

“How do you know where my nest is?” asked the little creature in surprise.

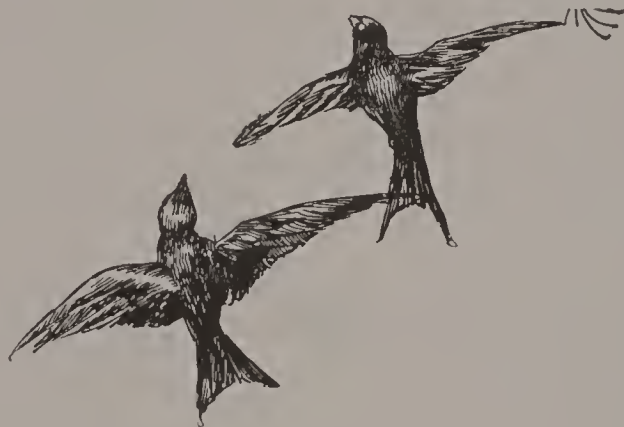
“O, my cousin, the Redwing, with whom you chatted so long about the Kingfisher told me about it.”

“But how do you know that I am the one? I should think Mother Robins would all look alike to you.”

“Well, you see they don’t. You never mistake any other Robin for your good husband, do you?”

“O no!” exclaimed Mrs. Robin, “I can tell him anywhere.”

“Of course, just as I can pick out my mate down in yonder swamp where there are hundreds of other Blackbirds.”



IN THE SWAMP



Mrs. Robin

MRS. Robin jumped around in great eagerness when the Blackbird spoke of the swamp.

“O,” she said, “is there a swamp near here?”

“Yes,” he said, “we think it is one of the most beautiful swamps you ever saw. You

can find it by flying up this creek, for it rises in a cool bubbling spring just at the edge of the swamp.”

“Is that the same swamp which lies beyond the orchard, where we are nesting?” asked Mrs. Robin.

“Yes, the very same, and you should see the big company of Blackbirds. When they are going to roost at night, they are as busy as a lot of humans.”

“I know all about those roosting places. Last year there was a Robin’s roosting place somewhere near where I was hatched and as soon as we nestlings were big enough we had to go off with Father Robin and roost there every night.

“I know how the Robins do late in the summer or early fall, but in the spring they



You Should See the Blackbirds Going to Roost

go off each pair by themselves. We Blackbirds are different, we stay together through the hatching time. This swamp has been our home for many, many years. When we go away each fall we say over to each other that perhaps before we come back in the spring those human creatures called people will get to work upon our swamp and destroy it."

"Why, I don't see how they could!" exclaimed Mrs. Robin.

"But it is possible, and any one would know by that speech that you are a very young bird! There is just no end to the many things which people can do. I have heard my great grandfather tell that the Blackbirds once owned a beautiful swamp where they always spent their summers, and

one year in that wonderful swamp, there was hatched out a beautiful, snow-white Blackbird.”

At this the Robin chirped so loud and hard that she nearly fell off the limb.

“O, you don’t expect me to believe that? ‘A white Blackbird’ ” she said.

“But it was just that. The egg was laid by a Blackbird, and when the bird was hatched out it was as white as snow. It was near the nest where my great grandfather was hatched. All the birds in the swamp were as proud as they could be of the beautiful white creature. I have heard that it looked wonderful flying around among all the other Blackbirds.”

“Did it stay white always, or did it turn black when it grew older?”

“I cannot tell how it might have changed, because one day some men came into the swamp, carrying those dreadful things called guns, and one of them shot the beautiful white creature and carried it away.”*

“How dreadful!” exclaimed the Robin.

“Yes, wasn’t it? but a stranger thing than that was yet to come. When this flock of Blackbirds came back in the spring, their beautiful swamp was gone, and instead of the great trees where they had been so happy, they found houses and people living in them.”

“I don’t see how they could build houses on a swamp,” said Mrs. Robin. “I have heard my husband say that the ground in swamps is wet and soft.”



“So it is, but there was a Blue Jay living near the swamp and, as he stays around all winter and likes to be near people and watch them, he told the Blackbirds when they came back in the spring just how all the changes had been made. He said the people dug great, deep ditches in the swamp and so drained the water out of it into the river.

Then they brought great cart loads of good dry ground and spread it all over what had been wet, black mud, so you see, the place was then quite as good as any other to build houses upon."

"O yes, I see, but what did all the Black-birds do then?"

"They hunted up the swamp where we are living now."

"I think I will fly over there and see what it is like," said Mrs Robin.

"See what it is like!" exclaimed the Black-bird. "Do you mean to tell me that you have never been in a swamp?"

"Never. I know nothing about one, except what my husband has told me. He, you know, has been everywhere and has seen everything."

“O yes, yes, I understand and you would like to keep up with him, wouldn’t you?”

“Yes, and then there is another reason why I want to see the swamp.”

She then told the story of the mother turkey who had chased the hawk. Who, Robin had told her, had been obliged to cross a big swamp either by flying or walking, “and so,” she added, “I should like to see just what kind of a place it is.”

“I hope you like it. You will find it is the most beautiful place in the world, although I am not so sure that you will agree with me in that.”

“I know I shall not,” said Mrs. Robin, “because I think the orchard on the hill is the most beautiful place in all the world.” And with this remark, away she flew.

The first living creatures seen by Mrs. Robin as she entered the swamp, were Black-birds flying about in every direction hunting food. She did not stay long among them, but flew farther into the swamp, meeting as she went along, many birds whose names she did not know. She flew so far and so fast that she began to think that maybe she could not find her way back, when, suddenly she saw the waters of the lake glinting through the trees.

She chirped and twittered in her joy, "Now I know where I am."

She lit on the branch of a tall tree and looked off on the lake. It certainly was a delightful picture. Its waters were as calm and bright as a mirror. Then she looked around

on the swamp. The grass grew tall and lush, flowers were blooming everywhere and the birds were singing from bush and tree. "It is indeed a beautiful spot," she said to herself with her best notes, which nearly approached a song.

Suddenly she heard a noise quite near her and turning about she saw a queer, long-legged creature standing in the lake, directly beneath her, with its eyes fixed on the water.

"I wonder what that is?" she thought, "surely not a bird, although those things on its sides look like wings."

While she was watching and wondering the queer creature suddenly plunged its beak into the water and brought up a good sized fish in its long, sharp bill. The next moment

her doubts as to the creature being a bird were scattered, for it spread its immense wings and flew across the lake to a distant tree where it alighted.

Mrs. Robin was full of curiosity to know whether or not this immense bird nested in a tree like an ordinary bird, but she lacked the courage to fly after it and find out all about its home.

“It is so big,” she said to herself, “that I do not dare to go near it. If it should plunge that long bill into me as it did into the fish that would be the end of me forever, so I shall have to fly along without knowing anything about this wonderful bird. Too bad too. Why no,”—was her next thought, “I don’t need to do that at all, I’ll just fly home and

ask dear Robin all about it, I am sure he knows. Anyway it is time for me to return, I have been away a long time.”

So, spreading her wings which seemed small to her after seeing those of the long-legged bird, she flew swiftly out of the swamp straight to the dear old orchard home.



THE BLUEBIRD'S NEWS



MR. Robin saw his wife coming when she was still a long way off, but he did not fly to meet her as was his habit when she was building her nest. At that time there was nothing to lose, but now the precious eggs were to be guarded. He knew she would be

more pleased with him for watching the eggs than she would if he came flying to meet her. So, by way of welcome he sent out to her his most joyous song and she came flying to him chirping her sweetest notes.

“Well,” he twittered as she took her place on the branch as close to him as she could possibly get, “you seem to have flown a long distance. You went out of the orchard in the direction of the road, but you came back straight from the swamp. Have you been there?”

“How did you know that, Robin? That’s exactly where I have been, and O, I saw the queerest bird standing in the lake, its legs were so long that it stood up just like a human, and yet, it had wings. It doesn’t

seem fair for a bird to have wings and such long legs too.”

“What color was the bird?” asked her husband.

“A bluish color and, O my, it had the sharpest bill you ever saw. It gave me a shiver just to see it.”

“No wonder,” said the husband, “that was a Blue Heron, and its bill is a cruel one. If you had flown after him you would have found his nest in a tall tree and you would have seen many other Herons’ nests in the same tree. They keep together in flocks just as Blackbirds do. They come back to the same swamp year after year I have heard.”

“Why, that is like the Blackbirds too!” exclaimed the wife.



Said Mr. Robin, That Was a Blue Heron

“What did you learn about Blackbirds? I should like to hear?” asked her husband.

Mrs. Robin then gave a full history of everything that had happened during the long summer day.

“I am glad that you saw and heard so much that was new, you are certain to become a very well educated bird,” said Mr. Robin.

“But I am sorry I did not fly after the Blue Heron and see what its nest is like, but perhaps you can tell me.”

“Yes, and of course you understand that a big bird like that must have a big nest. It is made of sticks and twigs, but they do not build their nests as closely and carefully as you build yours. They use the same nests year after year, but they clean house and patch all holes.”

“O, then it isn’t so bad,” said Mrs. Robin, “as it would be to build one of those big nests every year.”

“But tell me, little wife, you have been gone a long, long time, have you had plenty to eat through all this summer day?”

“O, indeed I have, food is so plentiful in this part of the world, that I haven’t been hungry a minute, and how have you fared?”

“Very good indeed. Of course I couldn’t go off in search of food, but it has seemed to come in my way every time I was hungry.”

“That must be because you were doing your duty so well.”

“I hope so. We will think so, anyway, but now I have some news for you. Mr. Bluebird stopped to chat a moment with me, and the

Bluebirds in the nest in that box down near the house are hatched out.”

“O indeed, why how smart they are.”

“Yes, but you must remember, they were already here when we found this spot. Mr. Bluebird told me they come here every year. So you see, they did not need so much time looking up a home as we did. Mr. Bluebird said this is the only place where there are no English Sparrows and that is why he and his wife come here. He does not like to fight as well as I do, so he just keeps away from the places where the English Sparrows live.”

“I have often wondered why there are no English Sparrows around here.”

“Mr. Bluebird says the people in the house down there break up their nests and drive them off.”

“That seems too bad,” said kind hearted Mrs. Robin, “I suppose they like to have homes and bring up families as well as the rest of us.”

“Yes, of course, but if the people have to choose between Bluebirds and English Sparrows, they take the Bluebirds and I think I should do that myself.”

“So would I,” agreed Mrs. Robin, “they are not only prettier to look at but the Bluebird’s song, though not to be compared with yours, dear Robin, is certainly better than the Sparrow’s twittering.”

“But I must tell you that the Bluebird also brought me some bad news.”

“O, O, tell me quick, what is it?”

“The people in the house down there have a pet Crow, and I am sure that even

you are old enough to know what a bad neighbor a Crow is.”

“A pet Crow,” exclaimed Mrs. Robin, “I never heard of such a thing!”

“Neither did I before, but the Bluebird says it is true.”

“But what in the world can anyone want of a pet Crow? They are ugly, black things at the best. If it were a Bluebird now, or a Robin, it might seem worth while.”

“The Bluebird says that if he had known the pet Crow was here they would not have come back, but they did not discover him until Mrs. Bluebird had already laid an egg, so then they thought they had better stay.”

“Well, if he is a pet Crow,” said the hopeful little wife, “I dare say he doesn’t go very far from home.”

Just at this moment, Mr. Bluebird lit on a limb near them and they at once began to ask many eager questions about the pet Crow.

“I will answer your last question first,” said the Bluebird, “Why do these people make a pet of an ugly Crow? I think it is because he does so many funny things. This morning a man stood at the gate eating something out of his own hand and at the same time talking to the man of the house, when all of sudden, down came that bad Crow, stuck his bill into the stuff the man was holding and flew off to the very top of that tall oak tree back of the house.”

“Well, well,” exclaimed both Robins, “I hope he’ll not get around here with his

thieving, but what did the man think of that?"

"O, they all laughed over it and then the man went into the house. I suppose they gave him his dinner."*

"Yes," said Mr. Robin, "they could give the man his dinner, but if the bad Crow should come here and steal one of our eggs, or into your house and steal one of your babies, they couldn't make it up to us."

"No," said the Bluebird, "and I heard them scolding about him this morning. It seems he steals bright things out of the house and puts them in an old pump down by the barn. The men upset the pump and picked up a lot of bright things off the ground and then carried the pump away, so that Jack, that is



The Pet Crow Steals Bright Things Out of the House

the Crow's name, couldn't have a place to hide things."* And at the end of this story the sociable Bluebird flew away.



OTHER BIRDS



THE days which followed were much alike to Mrs. Robin, but they were not lacking in variety to her husband. He sang his loudest and best and fed her regularly. Although he did not go far from the nest, even when searching for food, he saw many of the other birds with which the orchard thronged and since he was a sociable fellow they had many merry times together. Nearly every day when he was digging for worms on the lawn in front of the house he saw the pet

crow, but the friendly "Caw, Caw" met only silence from him.

"He is not my kind," said Mr. Robin, one morning to little Mr. Wren, whom he met upon the lawn, when the Crow was loudly calling, "Caw, Caw, Caw," from the peak of the barn. "It is better to treat him coldly now than it would be to let him hang around us and find out where our nests are."

"He already knows where mine is," said the Wren, "all the world knows that."

"Yes," agreed the Robin, "but it will do him no good to stay around your house now, for he knows he is too big to get through the door, and I do not think he will trouble you much, even after your little ones are hatched out. He knows what will happen to him if

he comes hanging around your home. Your attack on the Red Squirrel some time ago was the talk of the orchard.”

The Wren plumed himself at these words of praise and then flying to the roof of his house, he sang a merry song while the Robin having pulled out of the lawn a long fat earthworm, hurried with all speed to feed it to his wife.

As he was leaving the home tree, soon afterward, in search of more food he met a beautiful Baltimore Oriole who stopped for a chat and the Robin immediately gave a few warning notes about the pet Crow.

“O, he can’t trouble us,” said the Oriole, “my wife you know makes her nest like a deep cup hung from a limb, and I don’t think he can get at the eggs. But I should think

you would fear him, since your nest is so shallow.”

“Yes, but we watch it closely, and my wife has decided that when our little ones are hatched we will go farther into the middle of the orchard and she will build a new nest for the next brood. Of course that is a great deal of work and something which we do not always do, but she thinks she would rather build a dozen new nests than to lose even one precious egg.”

“I think she would, for every one knows what good and careful mother birds belong to the Robin family. I suppose I ought to add that you make good fathers too. You stay around home and look after your family better than we Orioles do. We like to have a good time.”



Mrs. Oriole Makes Her Nest Like a Deep Cup Hung From the Limb

“I like to have a good time too,” said the Robin, “but you see, we have different ideas as to what makes a good time. Mine comes when we have a nest full of little ones to care for.”

At this moment they heard a faint tapping near them and then a gentle voice said, “Yes, Mr. Robin, that is true, we all have different ideas of a good time. To me it means tapping this big, round, apple-tree trunk to get its rich sap.”

“Why, I always supposed you were after insects, when you made holes in the trees that way,” said the Oriole.

“Of course we take insects when we find them, but our real reason for making holes in the trees is to get the sweet sap which is hidden under the bark.”

“It is a great surprise to me to hear you say that,” said the Oriole, “for I have always heard that birds like you who tapped trees were after insects which were hidden under the bark.”

“O, yes, I see, you have mixed me up with my first cousins the Woodpeckers.”

“But you are a Woodpecker too, are you not?”

“I suppose I am, some people call me that and of course, I do peck the wood, but my correct name is Sapsucker. There are a great many Woodpeckers, the most common of which are the Red-headed and the Downy.”

“That must be the little black and white fellow with the red band around his neck,” said the Robin, “I have often seen him tapping the trees. Does he eat the sap too?”

“O no, he eats nothing but the insects he finds under the bark.”

“I have seen that big kind you speak about,” said the Oriole, “with the bright red head.”

“Yes,” replied the Sapsucker, “he is truly a handsome bird and he is seen almost everywhere, but he is quite unlike the rest of the family.”

“In what way?” asked the Robin.

“Well, I don’t like to tell stories about my relations,” said the Sapsucker, “but it is true that this beautiful Red-headed Woodpecker does sometimes eat the eggs of other birds. It is hard to believe it, but I have seen him with my own eyes steal the eggs when there was plenty of his favorite food around. So,

he must do it out of pure mischief which is something that none of the rest of our family could ever do.”

“I have heard before”, said the Robin, “that we should watch out for the Redheaded Woodpecker, but I never quite believed it. I am very glad to have talked with you, Mr. Sapsucker, “since I have learned something new. But now it is feeding time, so good bye, until some other day.” And with these words the Robin flew away.

“That Robin is such a talkative fellow,” said the Oriole, “that I never get a chance to say much when he is around, but I would like to ask you some questions about yourself.”

“Well, please do,” said the Sapsucker, “I am sure I am willing to tell you all I know.”

“Do you tap only apple trees?”

“No,” said the Sapsucker, “we tap any trees which have sap in them, but the trees which we like better than others are the pine trees, the sugar maples, apples, pears, mountain ash, haw and white birch.”

“You surprise me,” said the Oriole, “you seem to like a good many. I should think you’d kill the trees and make the humans hate you.”

“Well,” said the Sapsucker, “if there were just one tree in the world we would soon kill it, but since there are so many trees, we take a little from each and not a great deal from any particular one. Then you must remember, we eat many other things which people want to be rid of. We eat ants, beetles, caterpillars and flies. So, after all, we are not so bad, even if we do, now and then, kill a tree.”

Just at this moment a beautiful song burst upon the air and the birds looking around saw one much larger than the Oriole sitting on top of the tallest pear tree and singing with all his might. He was rusty brown in color and as he sat singing on the limb his long tail hung gracefully down almost touching the limb below.

“My, but that is singing,” said the Downy Woodpecker.

“Very good,” answered the Oriole, “I don’t know that I could do much better myself.”

“Do much better yourself!” screeched the little Woodpecker, “I wonder if you think you can sing like that?”

“What is the name of the bird?” asked the Oriole, quite anxious to change the subject.

“I don’t know, I wish the Robin were here, he could tell us I am sure,” answered the Woodpecker. At this moment the Robin lit on the limb beside the Oriole.

“What, you two visiting here yet?” he asked.



SOME BIRD STORIES



BEFORE either one of the birds could reply to Robin's question there came again the notes of a sweet song from the top of the tall pear tree. When it ended Robin exclaimed:

“A Brown Thrasher, and the first one I have heard this year! How I wish he would sing again.”

But even as he spoke there was a rush of wings over their heads and the topmost limb of the tall pear-tree was empty.

“That is the worst fault the Brown Thrasher has,” said the Robin, “he is the finest singer of the whole Thrush family, but his song is always too short.”

“Then I am glad I happened to hear him this time,” said the Sapsucker, “but now I must leave your delightful company and get back to my nest.”

“Is your nest anywhere around here?” asked the Robin.

“Well, I don’t mind telling you both, since neither of you is a robber bird, that there is a big basswood stub, just at the edge of the woods, on the other side of this orchard. We dug a deep hole in this soft basswood, and

there on top of the chips, my mate is sitting on five white eggs.

“I am glad to know that you took a dead stub in which to dig your nest,” said the Oriole.

“We are not always so careful, but this basswood stub happened to please our fancy and so there we are.”

“You admit then that sometimes you do dig holes for your nest in good trees?” asked the Robin.

“O yes, now and then.”

“And of course the tree dies?”

“I suppose it does, though we don’t stay around long enough to find out.”

“I am afraid then, Mr. Sapsucker,” continued the Robin, “that you do more harm than good.”

“Perhaps we do,” said the Sapsucker, “but what of it? We are here and I suppose we will stay. Anyway we have more sense than the Whip-Poor-Will and Nighthawk, who although they are first cousins to each other are different in many ways.”

“Yes, I know that,” said the Robin, “yet I have heard that there are humans who really do not know the difference between them.”

“I cannot see why they should ever mix them up!” exclaimed the Sapsucker. “Of course they both lay their eggs flat on the ground without protection of any kind, but the Whip-poor-will lays her eggs in the woods, while the Nighthawk lays hers in an open field, sometimes on a bare rock and I have even heard of their being laid on the

stony roofs of those things called houses where the humans stay. There was never such a thing as a Nighthawk laying her eggs under a tree or even near a bush.”

“But you know,” said the Robin, “humans don’t know all these things.”

“If they’d use their eyes more they would know these things,” replied the Sapsucker crossly. “There is a Whip-poor-will’s nest in the woods over beyond the orchard. The other day a man came into the woods with a gun, and the minute Mrs. Whip-poor-will saw him she jumped off the nest, flew near the man and pretended to be lame.”

“What good did that do her?” asked the Oriole.

“Why don’t you see? Humans are always anxious to get their hands on a bird, I sup-

pose because birds have wings and they have none, but when the man saw the Whip-poor-will limping he thought he could catch her easily, so he followed her. She kept a little ahead of him making him think she was a poor, lame bird, until they were far from the nest, then she spread her wings and disappeared. I call that a very good joke," and at that Mr. Sapsucker spread his wings and left them without a goodbye.

"Perhaps he thinks that is a joke too," said the Oriole looking after him."

"Perhaps it is," answered the Robin, "but if he had not been in such a hurry I could have told him a better joke than that, but he didn't even give me time to ask him to wait a minute."

“Well, tell the tale to me”, said the Oriole, “you see I am perfectly willing to wait any length of time for the sake of hearing a good story.”

“You are certainly a bird of leisure, Mr. Oriole, I don’t see how you manage it,” was the Robin’s surprised remark.

“O, it’s easy enough when you just make up your mind to it,” chirped the Oriole, and then he broke into his most rollicking song. The Robin was too polite to interrupt, so he waited patiently until the song was over.

“I know all about that Whip-poor-will’s nest the Sapsucker spoke of,” began the Robin, and the Oriole was immediately all attention. “It so happens that there are lots of ground beetles near the Whip-poor-will’s

nest and for that reason I am around there several times in the day. Yesterday when I was near there some children were running through the woods and they came bolt on the Whip-poor-will and her little ones. They stopped just a minute to look at them and went right on without touching the birds or harming them.

When I went back there toward night the Whip-poor-wills, little and big, were all gone. While I was sitting in a tree near by, wondering what had become of them, back came those same children and some women with them. The children pointed to the very spot where the nest had been, they couldn't mistake it, you know, because it was close to some big black stones. But the women

shook their heads and wouldn't believe the children at all. I was sorry for the children and wished that I could explain that the children were right, and that the mother Whip-poor-will had made her little ones run off to some other place. They were just about big enough to run with the mother's help pushing them along."*

"So, because you were not able to tell them all about it," said the Oriole, "I suppose the women will always think that the children didn't know what they saw with their own eyes."

"I suppose so."

"Well, then, that was a joke on the women, wasn't it?" asked the Oriole.

“Yes,” returned the Robin, “but my wife will not think it much of a lark if I don’t get home pretty soon, so good bye for this time,” and the Oriole was left to himself.



IN THE MORNING



The Wren Was Trilling From the Top of His Dwelling

THE NEXT morning something happened. By the time the sun was just peeping over the farther side of the swamp, Robin had sung his early song and was on the lawn in front of the house seeking his breakfast. The Wren was trilling from the top of his little dwelling and from the peak

of the barn roof came the loud cawing of Jack the pet crow. Not a human was stirring about the place, even the "hired man" had not gone to the barn to milk the one cow. Music was ringing from bush and tree far and near, and for the time being the birds owned the earth. Suddenly the Wren darted from his post and lit near the Robin.

"Listen to that bold, bad Crow," he said. "He's been calling that way ever since the first peep of dawn. I suppose he thinks if he keeps it up long enough some of us respectable and well-bred birds will answer him, but I am sure, I never shall though he calls until he drops."

"Ho, there he goes!" exclaimed the Robin, as something big and black swept over them.



He's Been Calling That Way Since Dawn

Both birds looked up, expecting to see Jack sailing above their heads, but instead, there was another Crow and it flew straight to the peak of the barn and took its place beside Jack who at once ceased his anxious, "Caw, Caw!"

"O, do you see?" said Mr. Robin. "He wasn't calling to any of us at all, he was calling a mate."

"Well, she has answered him," said the Wren, and both birds looked at the two crows, who with their bills together were making low sounds.

"I wonder where she came from," said the Robin. "Isn't this bad, for now instead of one crow to watch out for, there will be two."

The Wren was about to add his scolding to

that of the Robin when suddenly the two black things opened their wings and fled off toward the swamp. The Wren and the Robin immediately darted to the top of the highest tree and watched the Crows until they were mere specks beyond the swamp.*

“They have gone off to build a nest,” said the Robin. “Rather late for Crows, but I suppose he could not go alone.”

“Why should they go so far away when there are plenty of good nesting places around here?” asked the Wren.

“I have heard,” was the Robin’s answer, “that they like to nest in pine or other evergreen trees, and just beyond that big swamp there is a long stretch of evergreens, so I suppose that is where they have gone.”

“Well, I don’t care much why or where they have gone,” said the Wren, “if they only stay away.”

“They will do that, for the rest of the summer, you may be sure,” said the Robin wisely, “and after that, we don’t care.”

“No,” said the Wren, “if they are foolish enough to stay here through all the cold weather it is nothing to us.”

“But now for a worm,” said the Robin, “to carry to my wife with the good news that the ugly black creature of which she was so afraid is gone.”

Breakfast for two being over and the good news having been told, Mr. Robin took his place near the nest and was about to begin one of his best solos when, from a clump of

bushes, on the other side of the orchard fence, there came a sound which startled Mrs. Robin so much that she nearly fell out of the nest.

“O,” she exclaimed, “did you hear that dreadful sound, dear Robin? I thought the people in the house down there did not allow cats around the place.”

“Cats!” exclaimed Mr. Robin, “what do you mean? There are no cats any where about.”

“But I heard one,” insisted Mrs. Robin. “Listen now, and you will hear it too.”

Mr. Robin sat silent a moment and then came the faint mewling which had so scared Mrs. Robin.

“Cheep, cheep, cheep!” called Mr. Robin, “O, little wife you are so funny. That was not a cat but another bird.”

“A bird, O, are you sure? I know you are very wise, dear Robin, but it does not seem as if a bird could, or would, even if he could, make a noise of that kind.”

“But, it is a bird, my dear, and a harmless one too; of that I am certain.”

“Well,” declared Mrs. Robin, a little unkindly, “it’s a disgrace for a bird to make a noise like that. It ought to be called a Catbird.”

This amused Mr. Robin so much that he hopped the whole length of the limb, and he could not answer her for several minutes, finally he managed to say, “What a clever little wife you are, for that is his true name, Catbird.”

“I must say, he is well-named,” answered



For That Is His True Name, Catbird

the wife, "but I do wish he would stop making that noise."

"Hark," exclaimed Mr. Robin, and the next moment there came a burst of sweet song from the same direction. When the singer paused for a moment or two, Mrs. Robin said:

"Now that was something like singing. Why Robin dear, I do believe that song was almost as beautiful as yours!"

"Your praise is very fine indeed, my dear," replied Robin, "but the Catbird sings far better than I do."

"The Catbird!" exclaimed Mrs. Robin, and she was silent a moment from pure astonishment, then she said:

"O, yes, I understand, that is one of your jests."

“Indeed darling, that is no joke, that was the Catbird who sang so beautifully, but now, listen again!”

This time it was not a “me-ow,” nor a burst of music, but a queer sound as if someone back in the bushes were breaking up sticks.

“You don’t mean to tell me, Robin,” said the puzzled wife, “that the same bird is making all those sounds?”

“The very same, my dear.”

“He is something like the big Mocking birds which we used to hear in the warm country where I flew a while ago with the rest of my family.”

“Yes, he is often called the Mocking bird.”

Then Mrs. Robin seemed to have a bright idea and she said:

“Maybe he is the same bird and comes here as the warm weather begins, just as we have.”

“No, you would not think that if you could see him. He is much smaller and of a different color, besides he does not sing so loudly nor in so many different ways as does the other Mocking birds of which you speak. I think there must be a pair of Catbirds nesting not far away, and he just happend to stop in the clump of willows to sing a little song. He may never come near us again.”

“Well, I don’t care,” said Mrs. Robin, “of course his song is fine, but your song suits me well enough, and anyway, you never sound like a mean cat.”

Just as she said these words, the mewling notes began again and Mrs. Robin begged



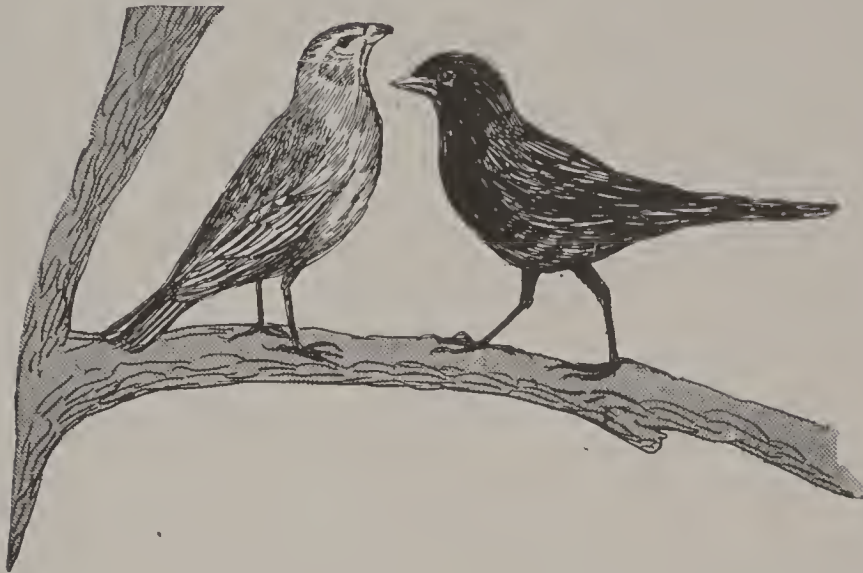
The Other Mocking Birds of Which You Speak

her husband to sing his loudest to drown the cat sound.

Mr. Robin opened his bill to grant the request when a loud Bang, bang! tore through the air and seemed to fill the world with fright.



THE COW-BIRD'S STORY



GLORIOUS June! and the earth seemed full of birds. Every tree in the orchard, as well as in the small piece of woods next to it, was thronging with young birds of all ages. Their shrill cries for food seemed to take the place of the father birds' songs, for only the worst shirkers among the feathered fathers had time for singing. At the orchard

home Mr. Robin was doing his best to silence the shrill clamor of his four little ones who had been coaxed out of the nest by his busy wife in order that she might clean and repair their home for the next brood. Everywhere the story was the same. Feed, feed, feed, seemed to be the continual cry of the youngsters, and there was but little time for play and idle chat among the old birds.

One morning, however, the Oriole, who always took family cares lightly, and the Cow-Bird, who never had any, met on the orchard fence and as usual seemed to have time for idle conversation. While they were talking of the weather and bird affairs in general a man came along carrying a long black thing on his shoulder. The birds at once flew into the thickest part of the trees

where they were well-hidden from the man's eyes. When he was out of sight, the Cow-Bird said to the Oriole:

“Do you know what it was that man was carrying?”

“No,” said the Oriole, “I don't, do you?”

“Yes, it was a gun.”

“A gun!” exclaimed the Oriole, “I have heard of those. They are dreadful things, are they not?”

“Yes, indeed,” replied the Cow Bird, and many days ago when the birds were all busy making nests and laying eggs, or sitting on them, a man came along here with a gun and shot a Cat Bird that was singing in the clump of bushes right beneath us. Don't you remember hearing the noise of the gun?”

“Yes, I do remember something about it.”

“I should think you would remember it, there was such a terrible bang that all the birds around here were scared nearly to death. I was told that Mrs. Robin, of the Orchard Grove, nearly fell out of the nest because she thought she was shot.”

“And what became of the Cat Bird?” asked the Oriole.

“O, it was killed, The man was what is called a good shot. He took the bird to the village with him and it seems the humans have something they call a law about shooting birds and they do some just things to the wicked people who kill them. So they took this man off somewhere and put him in a cage to punish him for shooting the Cat Bird.”

“Well, wasn’t that fine!” said the Oriole, dancing about in his joy, “I have heard that people sometimes put birds in cages, so it serves them right if they are put into cages now and then. But who told you all of this?”

“The Blue Jay, you know he stays here all the year around and he hears the people talk so much that he understands what they say.”

“What became of the Cat Bird’s mate?” asked the Oriole.

“O, I never heard about that, I suppose she had to bring up her little ones all alone.”

Just at this moment Mr. Robin lit on the fence under the tree and as soon as the Oriole saw him he repeated the story he told the Cow Bird, who by this time had flown away.

“Well,” said the Robin, “I am glad to hear that the man was punished for his wickedness, and I think I’ll go home and tell my good wife all about it. She will be glad to hear of it, for she was very much scared.”

“And how about you?” asked the Oriole.

“Well, I must say, I was frightened too, although I had heard guns before, but that was the first one that my wife had ever heard in her life, and now I think I must hurry away from your pleasant company, as my young family is waiting for me to feed them.”

As soon as Robin reached the home tree and had fed his young charges, he repeated the story of the Cat Bird.

“That’s all very well,” said Mrs. Robin, “and I would say, the story is true, because

the Blue Jay generally has things correct, but I must say, I don't like to hear of anything coming from the Cow Bird."

"O, that is not right," said Mr. Robin.

"Perhaps it is, but just now, when I was down on the lawn looking for a worm there came along a little Chipping Sparrow with one of her own birds and a young Cow Bird twice as big as she was, and she was feeding it and taking as much care of it as if it had been her own bird. It kept her very busy too." (1)

"It was too bad, of course, dear wife, but we cannot help it."

"Do you think the Chipping Sparrow will watch her nest more closely next time?" asked Mrs. Robin.

“I hope so, but I think I am not so sorry for the Chipping Sparrow as I am for the mother Catbird. Think of her having to bring up all those babies alone, just because that cruel man shot his gun. If her babies are such eaters as ours the poor thing has her beak full.”

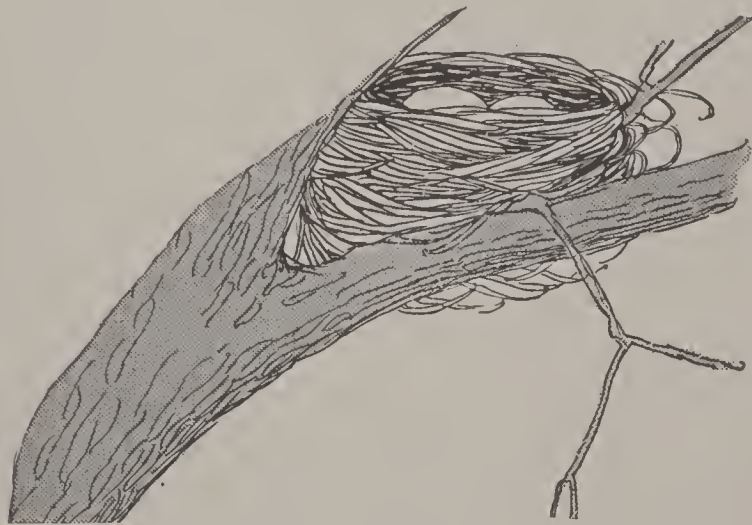
“Yes, dear Robin, but I am so glad to know that people do care enough about us creatures of the woods to punish those who harm us. I always supposed that humans were so busy with their own affairs that they wouldn’t bother about us as much as that.”

“I think we ought to be quite safe around here, after this,” said Mr. Robin.

“Yes,” was the answer, “and if we have as good fortune with the next brood as we have

had with this one, we will come here to live next summer. And now, Robin dear, if you will stay here and watch the eggs which I have laid in the new nest I will go away for food this time."

She did not wait for her husband to consent or refuse, but was gone like a flash.





AWAY THEY FLY



MRS. ROBIN was away so long that her husband began to get quite uneasy about her; he knew it was time to be off in search of food, but he dared not leave the nest entirely unguarded. Presently the youngsters lifted their heads and gave the shrill cry which he understood all too well.

“O, yes, I know, you are all hungry,” he chirped uneasily, “but there is not a thing here for you. We must wait for Mother.”

At this moment, just as he said this, Mrs.

Robin flew to the babies and began to feed them as quickly as possible.

Robin knew that it was his place to fly away at once after more food, but he was full of curiosity to know why his faithful little wife had been so long away.

“I suppose I did stay longer than I ought to have done,” explained Mrs. Robin, in answer to his questions. “But you know I begin to sit again tomorrow, and so I flew around a little for exercise and I saw something which I know will interest you. Of course you know that the Wrens have a nest in a box out near the barn fence. The back of the box is some kind of stuff through which you can see, so the people climb up on the fence to look at the little ones in the



nest. When I saw a boy standing there peeping into the nest I flew into a bush near by where I could see what was going on, and this is what happened:

“When the little ones heard their mother coming they raised their heads and screamed for food, just as our little ones do, but when the mother Wren got her eye on the boy watching them, she made a funny kind of a chirp and down the youngsters’ heads dropped while the mother stood there as though she had never heard of such a thing

as feeding young ones. After a long time, the boy took the hint and went away.

“Then the mother Wren fed the babies quickly. I stayed there in the trees so long watching that I saw this thing happen several times. The boy was determined to see the little ones fed and the mother was determined that he should not do so. It was queer to see how quickly the Wrens minded her order. Of course the mother Wren didn’t mind my looking at her, but she wouldn’t give the little ones anything until the boy jumped down where he couldn’t see into the nest.” (3)

“Smart little mother Wren, truly,” said Mr. Robin, “I don’t wonder you stayed to watch her.”

“But please tell me, my wise husband, why do the humans want to pry into our bird homes? Why should they care what we do or how we do it? What would they think of us if we were always poking around their homes and trying to find out every single thing they do and say?”

“My dear little wife, it is very plain that you don’t know much about humans. They like to understand things. They not only look into bird’s ways, but they study and puzzle and inquire into everything under the sun; they are made that way. We don’t do so, because we have all we can do to attend to our own affairs.”

“O, dear Robin, how wise and ready you are to explain things to me. I may some day

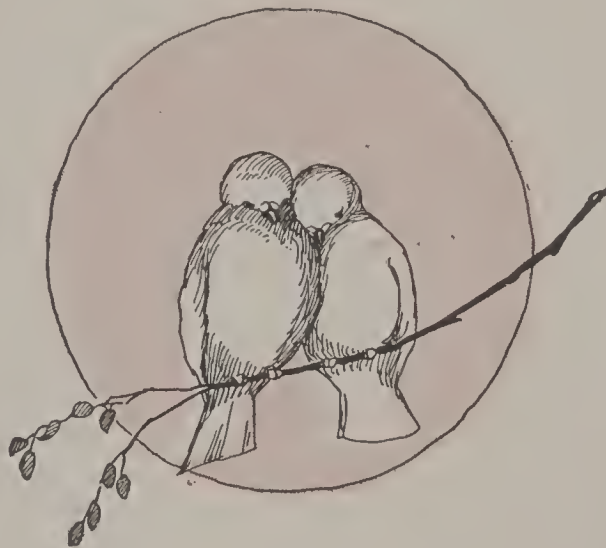
be as ready as you are, but I am sure I shall never, never, be so wise, much as I wish it.”

“There is one thing sure, little wife,” said Robin, giving her a loving little touch with his bill, “you can never be wise just by wishing. There is much more to it than that,” and with this puzzling sentence he flew away on another worm hunt for the little ones.

The following morning Mrs. Robin began sitting, this time on five eggs. Mr. Robin thus was left with the entire care of the young birds, to feed them and to train them in flying. So well did he fulfill these duties that by the time the second brood was hatched, the first brood could fly well and

feed themselves. This left Mr. Robin free to help in the care of the second brood of little ones. Everything went well with them and by the first of September they were indeed a most beautiful family.

* * * *



I saw them one chilly morning gathered around a mountain ash eating the berries, and as I counted them, just eleven, I wondered if it was their last meal in the north land. Mr. Robin had no song to give, he was

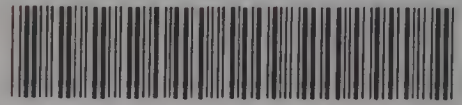
intent upon one thing, a good, hearty meal. But as I watched them fly away I hoped they would all return in the spring to make the old orchard ring with their songs and our eyes glad with the sight of their beauty and grace.







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