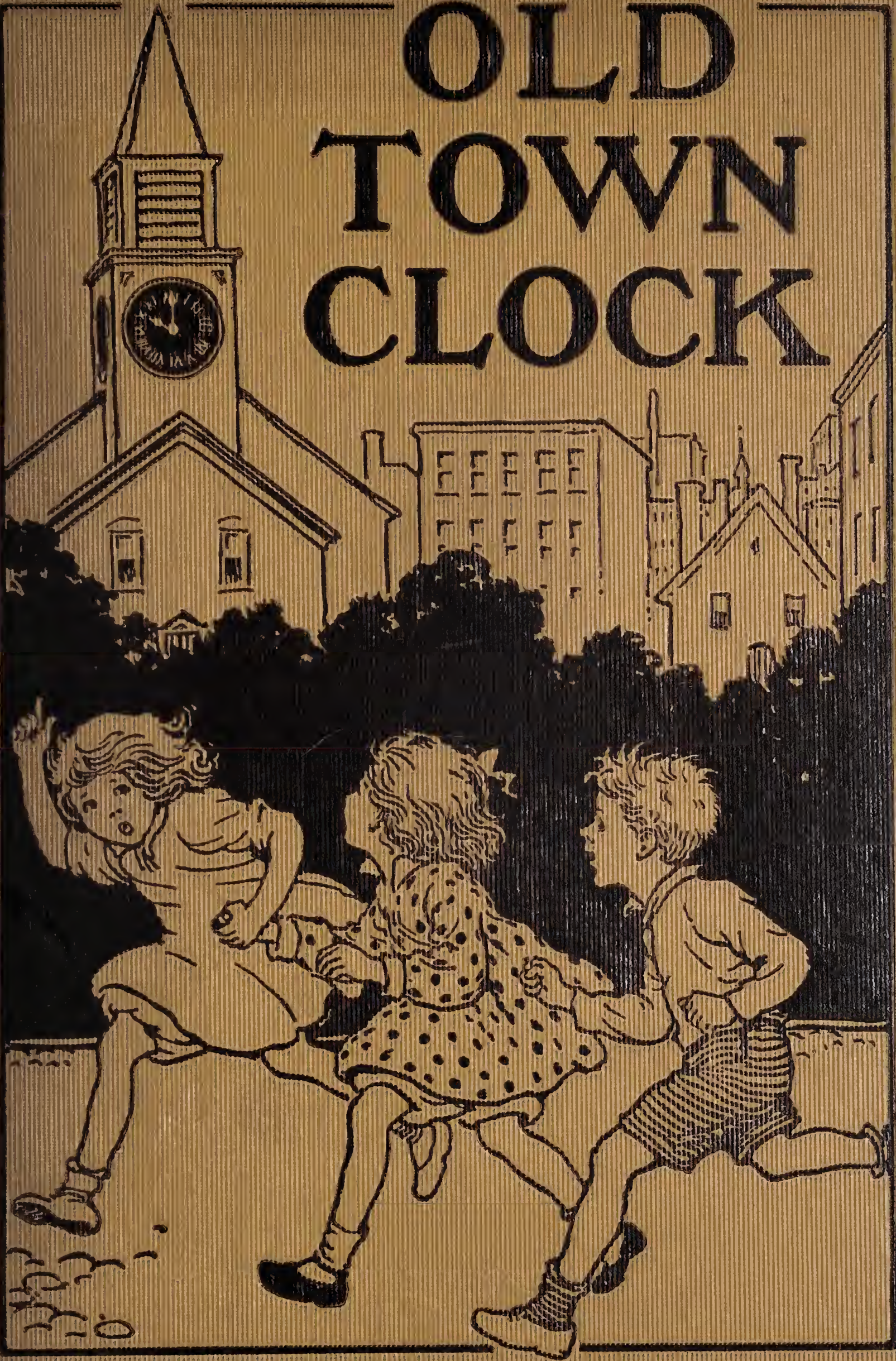


OLD TOWN CLOCK



REBA MAHAN STEVENS

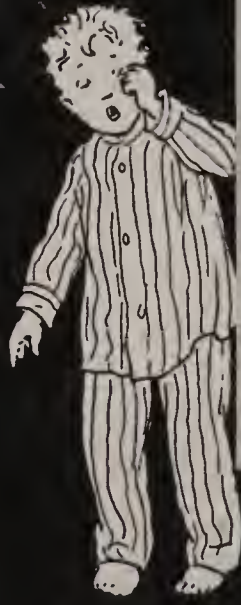


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OLD TOWN CLOCK
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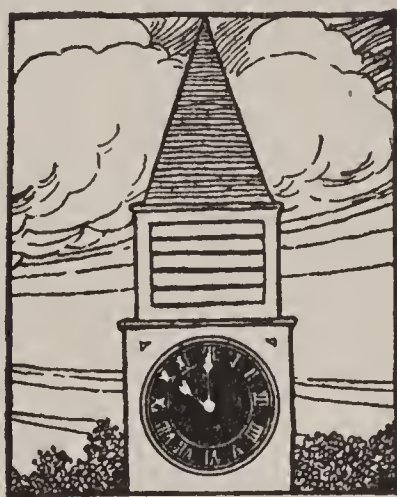
YOU NEVER WOULD THINK THAT SO SLIGHT A MISTAKE
WOULD CAUSE SO MUCH COMMOTION.—Page 14.

OLD TOWN CLOCK and OTHER STORIES

BY

Mrs. REBA MAHAN STEVENS

ILLUSTRATED BY
FLORENCE LILEY YOUNG



BOSTON

LOTHROP, LEE & SHEPARD CO.

1931

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OLD TOWN CLOCK AND OTHER STORIES

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OLD TOWN CLOCK

“ONE-two-three-four-five-six-seven-eight-nine!” came the voice of Old Town Clock from his home high up in the belfry of the Court House. He was telling the townspeople that it was nine o’clock, just as he had for many and many a year told them each hour and half-hour as it passed.

No pleasanter spot in all the wide world was there than the place where Old Town Clock had his home. Right in the center of the town, with the shops gathered closely about him, he could see all the interesting things that went on there, and could look, too, far out over the town—this way and that—to where trees, and houses, and gardens lay.

The pigeons, great flocks of them, nested on the roof at his feet, and cooed and pecked about in the friendliest way. All the breezes swept gayly around him, and he felt near to the sky and near the people, too, did honest Old Town Clock. And so, as he had done time and time again, he told them all, in clear, ringing tones, "One-two-three-four-five-six-seven-eight-nine," this lovely sunny morning.

But scarcely had he settled back into quietness when the strangest fancy took possession of his funny old head. Looking down on the busy square where all sorts of people were bustling about, getting started on the day's work, he fell to thinking that, although he could see them all quite plainly, yet he could not hear their voices, and that not one of them ever took the trouble to speak to him, anyway. They did not even look up at him unless they wanted to know the time, and then they were apt to

shade their eyes and squint and scowl instead of giving him the same smiles he saw them give each other.

“No,” he thought, grumpily, “they don’t care much about me after all, I guess.”

Poor Old Town Clock! From that he went on and on. He bethought himself that although he had served the community long and well, no one had ever taken the pains to tell him so. No one ever climbed the long stairs to visit him; no one had ever hung a flag on him as they often did on the bronze statue that stood in the yard below. In fact, Old Town Clock was so busy feeling sorry for himself that when the time came to strike the half-hour he entirely overlooked it; and when ten o’clock rolled around, he was so upset and befuddled that he gave a few ugly rattles deep in his throat and banged out, “One-two-three-four-five-six-seven-eight-nine-ten-eleven!”

Well, well, you never would think that so slight a mistake would cause so much commotion! Down on the square, a man carrying a traveling-bag stopped suddenly in surprise, then started running to catch a street car; the boy who was driving the delivery wagon flapped the lines excitedly over his horse's back and rattled down the street at a great rate; three children who were looking in at a shop window turned quickly and scampered away; a messenger boy, trundling slowly along on a bicycle, speeded up and was soon out of sight; a lady, about to enter a shop door, turned round and walked briskly down a side street. All about the square, men and women who were going about their business in one way and another began to step faster and hurry along as though some one had pulled tiny strings to which they were all attached.

People looked out of upstairs office windows; clerks came to doorways, staring upward in amazement, then laughing good-naturedly as though some one had played them an excellent joke. Telephone bells in the Court House rang furiously, and from all over the town came the question: "What is the matter with the town clock?"

What, indeed, was the matter with Old Town Clock?

Well, whatever it was, it did not change for the better but grew worse. At noon he gave a few, hoarse growls; at one o'clock, a harsh grating sound came from his deep throat; and after that, for days and days, Old Town Clock refused to make a sound or say a word, by day or by night.

The man from across the street, who sold clocks and watches, came over and poked

about among the wheels and weights, but left without helping matters.

“It is too big a job for me,” he declared, shaking his head.

The clock-man from the other side of the square came, and went away saying the same thing.

So Tom the Janitor set to work to see what he could do. Every spare hour of each day he busied himself, oiling and polishing, tightening a screw here and loosening another there, gently trying the springs, carefully prodding and prying about for dust and dirt, rubbing and scouring away every tiniest bit of rust that had gathered.

“Old fellow,” he said often as he worked at his lonely job, “I’d just like to know whatever’s the matter with you. Here you’ve been working for this town ever since I was a boy, and then all of a sudden you quit—without

giving notice! That's no way to do. You ought to be ashamed of yourself, you ought!"

But even such a sharp scolding did not start Old Town Clock going about his business. It was on another lovely sunshiny morning a week later that he began work—and this was the way of it.

Tom the Janitor was high up in the windy belfry poking about as he had done for so many days, trying hard to find out what might be the trouble, when up the steep stairway came a young man, whistling gayly.

"Hello, Tom!" he called out from the top step. He had the jolliest voice, and the pleasantest grin as he dusted the cobwebs off his shoulders. "How are you getting along? Found out yet what's the matter?"

"No," Tom told him, "I haven't. I have done everything I can think of, but this old fellow refuses to start running. He's beaten me! Can't

you suggest something? A smart young man who works on a newspaper and hears everything that is going on ought to be able to furnish some ideas to help out.”

The young man laughed, and his laugh was so hearty that three gray pigeons who had ventured quite close in their friendly curiosity flew away in a hurry.

“No, Tom, I’m afraid I’m not much good on clocks. If I were, I’d surely do my best, for I miss this one more than I can tell you. Why, he’s one of my best friends! More than once I should have been late back to the office if he hadn’t struck the hour so loud and clear that I couldn’t overlook it.”

“Same with me!” agreed Tom the Janitor.

“You should see some of the letters we have over at the office asking what is the matter with Old Town Clock,” went on the young man earnestly. “From all over town—all sorts of

people. The Boss is going to print some of them to-morrow.

“There’s a letter from Old Bob, who’s been night watchman for years. He says he never minded his work before, never felt lonely at all, because he had the big clock to keep him company; but if it isn’t fixed soon, any one who wants it can have his job. And that singer, famous all over the country, who gave a concert here the other night, told the editor that she was disappointed not to hear the old clock striking as it did when she was in town a couple of years ago. She says his voice has a wonderful tone and she has always remembered it.”

“Well, well!” exclaimed Tom the janitor proudly, “this old fellow certainly is popular, isn’t he? I tell you what, if I had as many friends as this clock has, I’m afraid my head would be turned entirely—it would, so it would!”

Rattle-rattle; wheeze-wheeze; jerkity-jerk; tick-tock; tick-tock; one-two-three-four-five-six-seven-eight-nine-ten!

Yes, it actually was, it really was, it was, it was Old Town Clock going again!

“Well, now, do you hear that? Do you just hear that?” gasped the surprised Tom. “What in the world did I do to start him off like that, I’d like to know—I would, so I would!”

“Yes, and striking right, too—exactly on the dot!” exclaimed the young man, looking at his watch. “Hooray!” and he threw his cap up into the air and never minded a bit that it came down covered with cobwebs.

So, without the least explanation to any one for his strange behavior, Old Town Clock went happily about his work again, feeling very foolish that he had ever left off. Every time now when he struck the hour or half-hour, he knew that some one, somewhere out in the

town, was listening for it, so he kept his voice as clear and sweet as a clock's could possibly be, and sent his message ringing out, out, far and wide, thinking so much about the busy people who were waiting for it that he quite forgot himself.

WHAT CAME OUT OF THE WILLOW BASKET

SINA BELL had not the faintest idea when she went across the Ridge to spend the week at Aunt Melissa's farm that she would come home bringing six yellow ducklings shut tight in a willow basket. But so it came about.

"Hold them carefully, daughter," cautioned her father. "Riding on Old Nell is almost like swinging in a cradle, I know; but even so, your ducks may think it rough going."

Sina Bell did hold them carefully.

"Be quiet, little ducklings!" she said gently, over and over again, when the ups and downs of the hill road set them quacking excitedly.

“You are all right. Peep through the cracks and see how blue the sky is—and the trees and blossoms—”

Sina Bell wrinkled up her small nose and drew in deep breaths of the spring air, sweet-scented with the bloom of wild plum and locust trees.

“Isn’t the world nice!” she thought happily, as she rode slowly through all this sweetness of a Kentucky springtime, following behind Father on his big gray mount, going home to Mother, with her six yellow ducklings in the willow basket.

“Is my bag safe, Father—quite safe?” she called ahead to him, suddenly remembering something that was tucked away in its depths. “It isn’t slipping loose—it won’t get lost, will it?”

Father’s laugh was good to hear.

“Perfectly safe, my daughter. What makes

it so extra precious, I wonder, now that it is on the way home?"

But that was Sina Bell's secret which she was not going to tell, even to her father.

"It is a wonder, though," she thought, "that he has not smelled it;" and she fell to counting over all the delicious spicy things that had gone into the little round cake which she had baked all by herself to take home to Mother.

"It's only a little gift, but Mother will like it because I made it. Next year, though—" and quite abruptly she gave the basket such a joyous pat that the ducklings set up a perfect babble of quacks, and Old Nell started forward into an awkward lope.

"Whoa, Nell! Don't be in a hurry!" laughed Sina Bell, bringing the old horse back to a slower pace. "We shall have to wait a whole year, you know. Aunt Melissa said—"

Her thought drifted back to the afternoon

when she had sat with Aunt Melissa on the sunny porch sewing quilt patches. Then it was that the little cake had been planned, down to the last plump raisin.

“Mother will be pleased, I am sure,” she had said, and then with a tiny wistful sigh had added, “but I do wish I could earn some money of my own and buy Mother a really, truly, store present!”

Aunt Melissa smiled cheerfully.

“Money of your own?” she repeated. “Why, of course. Every person in the world should have a purse of his own—and something in it, too. Haven’t you?”

“Oh, yes!” was the quick reply. “Father gives me ten coppers each week. But I want really to earn money. Mother has her butter, and eggs, and fowls—Tom sells his pop-corn. But I don’t have anything to do.”

“Well, well,” said Aunt Melissa, brightly,

“we mustn’t be in the doldrums about it! There is surely something for you, too. Let’s see—let’s see—” and she stopped stitching, and sat gazing thoughtfully out across the meadow. Presently she gave a quick laugh.

“I have it—I have it!” she cried. “How would you like to raise ducks?”

Sina Bell’s face clouded with disappointment.

“Father doesn’t like ducks,” she said. “We don’t keep ducks at our farm.”

Aunt Melissa laughed gayly.

“Since there are none there, that’s the very reason you should start with them. They are different, you see, and won’t be getting mixed with your mother’s turkeys, and guineas, and chickens. I know your father hasn’t thought he wanted ducks on the farm, but it will be quite another story when he finds that you want to raise them as your part of the family business.”

It turned out to be another story, indeed, for when Father came riding over at the end of her visit, they found he liked the plan more than a little.

Great was the excitement when Sina Bell, in the midst of her family, opened the willow basket.

“What are you going to do with them?” asked Tom, teasingly.

“Just let them eat, and grow,” he was told. “Next spring they will lay eggs, and I shall sell them to any one who wants duck eggs to set.”

“Oh, so that’s it, is it? Well, what will you do with all your money?”

Then he gave a long whistle, and answered his own question: “It wouldn’t take a very clever person to guess what you will buy with it. Haven’t I heard you tell what you want more than anything else? I know! A blue silk parasol! Isn’t that it?”

But Sina Bell only pursed up her small mouth at that, and left Master Tom to figure out as best he might what a girl would be doing with her duck money.

It was a long year to wait, but it was a busy one, for never had ducks more careful tending than the six which lived in the pasture behind the dairy barns; and never did ducks do more to repay it. Great white beauties they were, by early springtime, with clean, roomy nests all ready and waiting. What a day it was when Sina Bell came racing in from the pen, carrying the first egg.

“You’d think it was the golden egg the goose laid in the fairy tale!” joked Tom.

“It is a golden egg!” cried Sina Bell, triumphantly. “It is a golden egg!”

No one had shown more interest in the ducklings than had their neighbor, Farmer Hop-

kins. When first he saw them, he exclaimed at their beauty, and time and time again he had been down to the pasture to see how they were coming on. Now, when he saw the eggs that were being added, day by day, to the basket in the storeroom, he laughed and said to Sina Bell's mother, "Your daughter and I have a little secret about those eggs which we must tell you. The first time I saw her ducklings I knew they were of a breed which I was hoping to get hold of, and I made a contract with her to take all the eggs she had to spare this spring."

"Contract" was a very big word, it seemed to Sina Bell, but just the same she knew perfectly well what Farmer Hopkins meant by it.

No one could possibly have felt more important than Sina Bell when she rode over each week to deliver the eggs to Farmer Hopkins; and it would have been hard to find anybody in

all the world more completely filled with simple contentment than Mammy Lou, the faithful colored maid, trundling along behind on her white mule, Joey.

Week by week the money box in Sina Bell's bureau grew heavier, and clinked more encouragingly. Of all the trips that she and Mammy Lou ever took together, by far the most wonderful was the one to Mr. Kinkaid's store when the treasure in the money box had grown to a size that satisfied her. Jogging along through the sunshine, Mammy Lou's happiness overflowed into snatches of song and gay remarks of all sorts.

"I 'spect some one sure will look powerful sweet under a little blue par'sol!" she teased. "I cal'ate we all gwine to 'pear mighty splendiferous ridin' back home! I hope to goodness Joey knows his manners about blue par'sols.

'Low he never saw one. 'Low he gwine to see one 'fore he gets a day older! How 'bout it, honey chile?" And she chuckled softly to herself.

It may have been that Sina Bell did not hear—at any rate, she made no reply.

Once inside the store, Mammy Lou ambled over to the counter on which was spread out a very rainbow of small silk parasols. "See, honey—" she began, but found she was talking only to the parasols, for Sina Bell had stopped at another counter and, very pink in the face, was making her wishes known to Mr. Kinkaid.

"It is not for myself," Mammy Lou heard her say. "It is for my mother. I want a very good piece, if you please, sir."

Mammy Lou stood rooted to the spot, watching Sina Bell examine the rolls of lovely silk,



FEELING THIS PIECE AND THAT

feeling this piece and that, holding them to the light, trying them between her hands, in the most grown-up manner imaginable.

When at last the choice was made, and the length cut off and wrapped up, Mr. Kinkaid said kindly, "You must feel pretty proud, I should think, buying a silk apron for your mother."

"I do," answered Sina Bell, with shining eyes.

Riding home, down the fragrant roads, Mammy Lou was silent for a long time, deep in thought, but, by and by, she burst into a very jubilee of song.

"Here we are—here we are home again!" she said with a tremendous sigh of gladness, when finally they turned into the lane. "And nobody's missed that blue par'sol one little mite! I tell you what, honey—some folks don't need little blue par'sols to set them off. Some folks is jes' naturally so sweet they don't need nothin' but their own pretty thoughts to fix up in, week day or Sunday!"

It was many years ago—that day when Sina Bell rode home so happily with the first precious gift for her mother. The little blue parasol, though it came to be her own later, has long since faded, and frayed, and been cast aside. But the memory of her mother's smile when she laid in her hands the little bundle, and the remembrance of the glad feeling of content in her own heart can never fray, nor fade, nor wear away.

THE ADVENTURE OF BENNY, THE BOY DOLL

BENNY, the boy doll, was lost. At least that was what every one was saying. The first to say it was Jane. When she went in to put her dolls away for the night, she came running to tell Mother that Benny was nowhere to be found—he was lost! Next, Mother, when she met Father in the hallway, told him that Benny was lost, and within a few minutes Father had passed the news on to Grandmother—Benny was lost! Everybody hunted for him, of course—out on the front porch, the side porch, the back porch; and Father even felt his way through the darkness about the swing.

But when Benny could not be found, Mother

told Jane that she must wait patiently until morning came, and then she would surely find him. So Jane tucked each doll into its wee bed in the playroom, and on her way to her own little bed she stopped by the porch door and looked out into the soft darkness.

“Good night, Benny dear,” she said gently, “wherever you are, I love you.”

And out in the dewy grass, suddenly Benny felt warm and comfortable and contented.

At first, when he found that every one had gone into the house for the night and left him behind, there had come to him a queer little feeling of loneliness, such as might come to any one who had been tucked into a pasteboard bed each night as long as he could remember, with a row of dolls on either side. And later, when he heard voices passing, and each one saying that he was lost, he had another uncom-

fortable moment, for never in his life had Benny had an experience like this.

But, by and by, he said to himself, "I don't see how I can be lost when I know where I am!" and lay quite still, turning this over in his mind. "No, I don't think I am lost. I think I must be having an adventure."

And having come to this conclusion, he decided to have the very best adventure possible, to lose not one pleasant thing of all that might be going to happen to him.

After a while the last light went out in the house, and that might have been rather disturbing except that he remembered in time that this was a part of his adventure. When there were no lights in the windows to look at, he turned his eyes up to the sky, and the beautiful sight he saw there sent a quiver of delight through him. Stars and stars and stars, twin-

bling and shining—lovely beyond anything he had ever dreamed. And the moon was there, a silver crescent, swung down like a doll's hammock made of silver.

More than once Benny had wished for eyes that opened and shut like the eyes of the little girl dolls which belonged to Jane. It had seemed quite fascinating to him to watch them laid in their beds and see their eyes go tightly shut with a click, and then see them open wide the moment they were set up again. It must be very pleasant, he thought, and often he felt a bit ashamed that his own blue eyes were immovable, and, sitting up or lying down, they were always wide open. But to-night he was glad, glad clear through that this was so. Not for anything would he have had his eyes go shut so that he could not look up at this wonderful sky filled with stars above him.

When he had looked at the stars for a long

time and was really beginning to think it would be a good idea to count them, he began to notice the noises all about him. First, the crickets with their cheery chirrup, chirrup, chirrup—it was such a contented little song.

Benny had no idea what a cricket was, but he liked the sound nevertheless, and he felt sure that it must come from a very friendly some one. He liked the locusts, too. For a long time he listened to the call he heard: “Katy did, Katy didn’t; Katy did, Katy didn’t,” and he liked it immensely, for some reason. Later, not far away, from a tall tree came a solemn “Whoo! Whoo!” It was quite the loudest sound that Benny had heard, and a bit startling just at first, but he soon found himself liking it, too.

He liked the rustling of the leaves when the wind stirred them; he liked the creaking of the empty swing; and once in a while when an ap-

ple came thumping to the ground, he liked that best of all, for somehow it made him think quickly of Jane. Once a cat he knew quite well came through the yard and stopped to sniff about him. Later, a prowling dog did the same. And he grew excited beyond words when a tiny mouse came his way and went feeling all about him with its tiny whiskered nose.

In the very middle of the night, a big, gray cloud came across the sky and hid the stars from him for a while. But when it had dropped a gentle shower of raindrops it went gliding away again, and there were the stars as bright as ever.

“What a wonderful adventure I am having!” Benny kept saying to himself. “I wouldn’t have missed it for anything! What a lot of things I shall have to tell the other dolls to-morrow.”

Just when it seemed to him that surely no

other new thing could happen, just when he thought he had seen all the lovely things the night held, a soft glow began to spread over the eastern sky. Then a beautiful pinkness came, and then, almost before he knew it, there before his eyes was a sky filled with every exquisite color that ever was made. Many times Benny had seen the sunset as Jane sat on the porch and held him while she watched it. But this was not evening—and yet here was something so very like the sunset that for a moment Benny was thoroughly puzzled. But by thinking hard, at last he decided he had the problem solved.

“Oh, now I see!” he told himself. “This is the other end of the sunset!”

And now the chickens were crowing! From all parts of the town came their vigorous, waking songs. Benny had great fun listening to them. Big rooster bass voices, little rooster

tenor voices, and all sorts of rooster voices were calling and answering in a perfect hubbub of welcome and good feeling. Benny had not known that there were so many chickens in all the world.

Then came the milkman, then the morning paper, then men and boys whistling on their way to work. Doors were being opened, and "Good morning," called across the street. And almost before he knew it, here was Jane snatching him from the grass and hugging him to her.

"Benny dear, I am so sorry that I lost you. I shall never be so careless again," she told him over and over.

But while she ate her breakfast, Benny, back in the playroom, had quite another story to tell the dolls who crowded around him.

"I wasn't lost, you know. It was just that you didn't know where I was. How could I be lost when I knew all the time where I was? And I



“I SHALL NEVER BE SO CARELESS AGAIN”

am not sorry—I am glad. It was a beautiful adventure!”

“But weren’t you lonely, out there by yourself, all night?” asked the dainty bisque doll.

“Lonely? Why, no, not a bit. Why should I be? Besides, I wasn’t alone. There were the stars, and all the singing things in the trees.

Why, the night is just as full of nice things as the day, only, you see, we go fast asleep and do not know about them.”

“But wasn’t it very dark?” was the next question.

Benny looked surprised for a moment, and then he laughed.

“Perhaps it was. But isn’t it funny—I forgot to think of that. It was a tremendous adventure, and I loved every minute of it.”

And when all the dolls saw that he really meant what he said, they nodded their heads this way and that way in great admiration, and looked a little as though they wished that they, too, might be lost some night.

“Yes,” Benny repeated. “it was certainly a wonderful adventure. I would not have missed it for anything in the world. Besides, I found out something.”

Every doll, big and little, old and young,

pricked up its ears to hear what this bold adventurer had discovered.

“Now I know,” Benny told them, “that the night is just the other side of the day.” And with that, although his eyes appeared to be wide open, he fell into a gentle sleep there in his cardboard bed, while all the dolls kept very still, that he might not be disturbed.

ADVENTURE OF A SLEEPY-HEAD

MOST surely if ever a little boy had a comfortable bed and every reason for wanting to stay in it, that boy was Noddy. It was the plumpest bed, and the bounciest bed, and the snuggest bed imaginable—together as satisfactory a bed as could be found in a day's journey. In it, Noddy could turn on one side and look out into the tree tops, or he could turn the other way and see all over the garden, or he could lie quite still and look at nothing but the pretty flowered walls, and think sometimes, when he was not too sleepy, what a pleasant thing it was for a little boy to waken of a morning in his own warm bed.

Then, more often than not, Noddy squirmed about luxuriously, snuggled down, and was off

to sleep again. And that was just what he did on a certain morning, a sharp, crisp morning, when Mother had called up the stairway more than once, "Noddy! Noddy! Get up, my dear!" and again, "Noddy, son, hop out now—buck-wheat cakes for breakfast!"

Noddy was torn between the desire to hurry down and eat the hot, siruped cakes, and the wish to stay cuddled in his cozy bed. He would get up—no, he wouldn't get up just yet—in a few minutes—he really should get up right now—he didn't want to, one bit—why—

But before he knew it, Noddy was out and running along the hall. How very queer though—was it the hall? Just for a moment it had seemed so, but no, the hall at home did not have a row of white beds on either side; and surely, it had never been so wide and so long, so very long!

"My! what a lot of beds!" thought Noddy,

noticing, too, that they were beds, not with smoothly drawn counterpanes, but with small rounded humps in them, as though each held some one—perhaps a little boy.

On and on went Noddy down the long hall, faster and faster, looking first to one side and then to the other, trying to count the beds as he went, until he brought up at the far end before a high platform, all glittering and velvety, upon which sat the King and Queen. Noddy knew that they were the King and Queen because a large sign said so. “King” was printed quite plainly over the head of the jolly-looking fat man, and “Queen” was just as easy to read above the beautiful lady.

No one could possibly have been more surprised than Noddy. A King and Queen—on a marvelous throne! But he remembered his manners in time and made a bow that seemed to be correct, for the King held out his scepter, and

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the Queen smiled and patted him on the head. When she stretched out her arm, all the jewels



A KING AND QUEEN—ON A MARVELOUS THRONE

about her tinkled like soft, tiny bells, so that Noddy wished she would keep on moving for the sound was very sweet.

Then the King, quite unexpectedly let his

smile slide away and said, in the most business-like manner, "You are late!" And the Queen looked at him sorrowfully and repeated, "You are late!"

"But you may begin at once," said the King, picking up his morning paper and searching through it for the weather report, just as Noddy had more than once seen his own father do.

Begin at once? Noddy was puzzled. Whatever was he to begin, and how was he to begin it? He stood first on one foot and then on the other, fidgeting about as he always did when he couldn't get the answer to, "How many feet are there in three yards?" or something like that, until the King looked over his paper and seemed surprised to find him still there.

"You may begin at once," he said. "They should have been up long ago." And he waved his hand majestically toward the long rows of beds.

Noddy understood then that he was to wake whoever was sleeping there, and from the size and shape of the humps he knew they must be little boys.

“Hurry now!” said the King, turning to his paper and hunting for the market quotations. “Hurry, my dear!” repeated the Queen.

So down the long rows went Noddy, giving a shake here and a prod there, whispering loudly at every bedside, “Get up—it’s late! Get up—it’s late!”

It was rather a long trip, thought Noddy, and there were a tremendous lot of beds, but finally he was back and bowing before the King and Queen.

“It’s done!” he announced proudly. “They are all getting up!”

The King looked out over Noddy’s head and then burst into a laugh—such a hearty laugh that the tears ran down his cheeks and his face

became almost as scarlet as the royal cushions.

“My dear, my dear,” he said to the Queen when he had his breath again, “they are all getting up!”

The Queen cast one glance down the rows and broke into a perfect shower of silvery laughter. “So I see,” she said, at last, and her eyes twinkled mischievously.

Noddy turned himself about, and O dear!—each and every bed had each and every hump under its counterpane exactly as it had been when he started on his rounds.

Quite suddenly, the King was businesslike again. “Wake them up!” he said shortly, folding his paper over to the sport sheet.

“Wake them up!” repeated the Queen softly.

“I will see to it that they shall be waked this time, and no mistake,” thought Noddy, giving the first sleeper a punch that ended in a pinch,

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and the second sleeper something very much the same.

Such vigorous digs they were, that it is very likely every boy would soon have been scrambling out on the rug if there had not been so many things to interrupt Noddy in his work. First, there was the bed with the two humps. When they got their punches which ended in pinches two tousled heads came out from under the covers in a jiffy, and two voices chanted grumpily:

“We’re Robert and Richard, two pretty men,
We lie in bed till the clock strikes ten,—so there!”

And under the covers went the heads again.

Probably they were supposed to sleep late, decided Noddy, going on to the next bed. No better luck there! His sharp little punch that ended in a pinch brought a cross fellow out of the blankets.

“Here, stop that!” he demanded. “Don’t you know I’m to go at noon? I used to go at ten o’clock but now I go at noon. I’m the dillar, the dollar, the ten o’clock scholar,” and he disappeared beneath the blankets again.

“O dear!” sighed Noddy, “they all have excuses. How am I to get them up if they won’t get up?” He glanced cautiously back over his shoulder but the King was busy reading, and the Queen had taken up her hooked rug and was absorbed in her work.

“Early to bed and early to rise—” began Noddy at the next bed, thinking some familiar quotation might have a good effect, but he got only so far when a loud “Quack! Quack!” above his head made him look up quickly. There in the window sat a bird, a blackbird, a large blackbird, who cleared his throat and announced in the most dignified manner, “Ladies

and gentlemen, good evening! This is station S-L-E-E-P. We will now sing, 'The early bird catches the worm.' " But instead, he seemed instantly to change his mind, for he spread his wings and flew away with a great swish.

On the very next window sill was another bird. "A birdie with a yellow bill," said Noddy to himself the minute he laid eyes on him. He tried hard to hear what the bird was saying, to make sure that he had guessed right, but what with all the clocks that were ticking and tocking and whirring and buzzing and chiming and striking, he had to listen very closely before he was able to hear, "Ain't you 'shamed, you sleepy-head!"

"If only the clocks would stop!" wished Noddy. The only really pleasant one was the cuckoo clock that hung above the throne. When its door opened, instead of a wooden cuckoo,

there came out a dear little woman in a pink checked dress (where had he seen a dress like that? he wondered), and in the sweetest voice she called out, "Buckwheat cakes for breakfast! Buckwheat cakes for breakfast!"

Noddy finished one row of beds and started slowly up the other. He was very tired, and he was not yet half done with this task to which the King and Queen had set him. Why, oh, why, wouldn't these sleepy boys get up when they were called? Would he have to go on forever poking and prodding them, finding them fast asleep again when he looked back? Anxiously he worked his way toward the throne, dreading what the King would say.

"Buckwheat cakes for breakfast!" called the little woman from the door of the cuckoo clock. "Buckwheat cakes for breakfast!" Louder and louder came the words, nearer and nearer

sounded the voice. Noddy raised his eyes to the clock, in wonder that the little pink lady should be shouting so—but the clock had disappeared. And, believe it or not, the King with his newspaper and the Queen with her hooked rug were nowhere to be seen. Nothing was left but the throne, which glittered and sparkled so brightly that Noddy rubbed his eyes with his knuckles—and opened them again to a flood of sunshine that came streaming in through the tree tops. The voice still called, “Buckwheat cakes for breakfast! Come, Noddy, come—it’s getting very late!” Noddy scrambled out of his own bed as hungry as a starved little bear.

“Dear me!” Mother told him, as she poured the golden sirup over his cakes, “some little boys are very hard to wake up mornings. It’s rather like work for the one who has to get them out of bed.”

“I know it,” sighed Noddy, thinking of his own experience along that line. “After this, Mother, you’ll see—I’m going to get up the first time I’m called.”

And he did!

THE HUMDRUM FAMILY

MOTHER HUMDRUM was hanging out the washing in the funny back yard. It was Monday morning and half-past eight, and on a Monday morning at exactly half-past eight, come what might, Mother Humdrum felt that she should be pinning the pillow-cases on the north and south line, while Tilly, the laundress, arranged the sheets very precisely on the line which ran east and west. What would have happened if the sheets should have got themselves pinned on the north and south line, and the pillow-cases had been seen swinging from the east and west line, was something Mother Humdrum would never have been able even to think of without being greatly horrified.

The Humdrum twins came out through the

porch door, all ready for school and their good-by kiss.

“Have you a clean handkerchief?” Mother Humdrum asked Jill, looking straight at the fresh little plaid one which peeped out of her pocket; and, “Did you wash your hands?” she questioned Jack, although she could plainly see they were still red from the scouring he had given them. Then with a kiss they were off.

Out to the corner they went, then down Customary Avenue until they reached Monotony Street, and so to school. There was no loitering, for everything along the way had been seen so many times that they could almost have gone with closed eyes and told where they were and what they were passing. Every house, every yard was like something they had learned by heart. There were any number of other ways the Humdrum twins might have taken in going to

school, by turning at this corner or at that corner, but they never turned, and that was all there was to it.

Down these same streets Father Humdrum had gone, a little earlier, driving absent-mindedly along the route he took to work each morning. If you had asked him why he went this special way, day in and day out, he would very likely have told you that it was his custom; and if you had questioned the Humdrum twins why it was that they went this same way to school, over and over again, they would have said they didn't know, but they just did.

In fact, there was an amazing number of things which the Humdrum family "always did"—a lot of things which seemed to be "their custom." For instance, the Humdrum family always had roast beef for dinner on a Sunday; they had browned hash, without fail, on Mon-

day; they had milk toast for breakfast three hundred and sixty-five mornings each year except on leap year, when they had it three hundred and sixty-six mornings. On Saturday there was always a cake, a beautiful cake, one week chocolate and the next week cocoanut, then back to chocolate, and so on; and they were always round cakes, because Mother Humdrum had always baked round cakes. All of which was very nice, of course, only that the Humdrums had in some way come to think that there was no other way of doing things.

But, to tell the truth, in spite of everything being so precisely arranged, in and about the home, to suit their own particular customs, the Humdrum family was not a very happy family, after all.

Then, quite all of a sudden, things began to happen to this family—things which rather upset them in a way, and they began on a Mon-

day morning, too, when everything should have been going along in the most orderly and methodical manner.

Tilly, the laundress, telephoned that she would not be at work that day—instead, she would wash on Friday! Tilly did not say: “Will it be convenient?” or “Do you mind if I change my day?” Tilly said, “I shall be there on Friday,” and Mother Humdrum was so astonished at her action that she never even thought of calling back to argue the matter with her. Never, in all her life, had Mother Humdrum washed on a Friday.

“Mrs. Woods washes every Thursday, Mother,” Jill told her, by way of comfort, and then Jack remembered that Mrs. Hendricks, next door, washed on Wednesday, but their mother only looked quite shocked, and replied, “But we always wash on Monday.”

However, that week, and for a good many

more weeks to come Mother Humdrum was to wash on Friday. And, anyway, when Friday came, so many astounding things had happened in the Humdrum family that they entirely forgot it was Monday's washing which was swinging in snowy rows in the back yard.

First of all, at Monday noontime the twins came home, not up Customary Avenue at all, but from the opposite direction! Linemen were stringing wires along Customary Avenue and the children were told by their teachers that they must keep off that street for several days. So, whether or not it was their custom to do so, Jack and Jill had to choose another way home.

And on this new way they passed—what do you think? A carpenter shop! A wonderful place with wide-open doors, sweet with the smell of clean lumber and the heaps of curly shavings that lay all about the floor. The Humdrum twins had never seen anything half so

fascinating. When the man inside, whistling away at his work-bench, saw how interested they were, he gave them some cunning blocks of wood and told them to take all the shavings they wanted. Home they scampered in the greatest excitement, and Mother Humdrum was quite surprised at the appetites they brought with them.

The carpenter shop was only the beginning of their adventures.

The next morning they were very nearly late to school because they ventured another way and came upon a blacksmith shop where a man was actually shoeing a horse.

“Just like the Village Blacksmith,” said Jack, and he looked around curiously, half expecting to see the “spreading chestnut tree”.

At noon, still another route took them past a new house that was being built, and they tiptoed through its doorless rooms feeling as ad-

venturous as any pioneers who ever made their way through pathless forests.

One evening they passed a quaint little shop where spices and fruits were sold, and Jack brought home to Mother an empty packing-box covered over with Japanese pictures.

Still another evening—oh, that never-to-be-forgotten evening, when they discovered the parrot!

“Hello! Hello!” they had heard some one calling. They looked this way and that way, but no one was in sight. Still, “Hello! Hello!” came after them, and finally Jack ventured to call back, “Hello, yourself!” At that a burst of noisy laughter followed—“Ha-ha-ha,” and Polly hopped into plain sight in the window of the house across the way. That was something to tell at the supper table!

Each day the adventures grew more exciting; so that the twins were almost sorry to see

Friday night come. But when it did come they went skipping home singing to the time of their own hippety-hops, a verse they had learned that afternoon.

“The world is so full of a number of things,” began Jill, and Jack finished with her:

“I’m sure we should all be as happy as kings.”

The very next day Uncle Judson arrived for a visit—Uncle Judson whom the twins barely remembered but whom they loved instantly. Scarcely was he through his greetings, and unpacked, when he said, “Let’s have a picnic! Let’s go to the Park!”

Now, of course, it was not the custom of the Humdrum family to get up a picnic on such short notice. Mother Humdrum said kindly, but no less firmly, that it couldn’t be done—they would have a picnic in a few days. But Uncle Judson just laughed and went about

getting up a picnic himself. He took the twins with him to the corner grocery and they came back with their arms full of what he called "picnic things".

When Father came from work, off they went to the Park, and what was more, there wasn't a jollier picnic party anywhere to be found than the Humdrum family and their Uncle Judson. Mother Humdrum declared that she never would have believed that food could taste so good, gotten together in such haphazard fashion; the twins said they wished that they could have a picnic every day; and Father Humdrum agreed that it certainly was pleasant to eat out under the trees after a day in the office.

When Father went to town on Monday morning, Uncle Judson drove with him, and while Father worked away all day at the office, he went poking about the town having what he called "a lark". He found no end of interesting



THEY CAME BACK WITH THEIR ARMS FULL

things, and kept them all laughing at dinner that night while he told of his experiences. He had been in the place where the ice cream was made, and seen the whole business; up over a candy store he had watched a man making candy; he had spent a while in a laundry; had been up in the belfry of the Court House—altogether he had made a splendid day of it.

In fact, so good a time did he have that he went again the next day. Into the car they got, waving a jolly good-by to Jack and Jill. But when Father turned the car into Customary Avenue Uncle Judson's smile changed to a look of surprise.

“Look here,” he said, “we went this way the other time. Let's try some other street. I've seen all this.”

So down another street they went, and it would have been hard to tell which enjoyed its houses and gardens more, Father or Uncle Jud-

son, for they were quite as new to one as to the other.

It was a week of good times, of doing this and doing that, something different every day.

Tilly, the laundress, came again on Friday, and Mother Humdrum found the clothes exactly as fresh and spotless as if they had been washed on a Monday. In fact, Mother Humdrum soon forgot that she “always washed on Monday”—just as Jack and Jill and Father Humdrum forgot that it had been “their custom” to go one certain route to work and to school each day.

No happier or livelier family now in all the town than the Humdrum family, and every one laughs to think that should be their name.

“Humdrum, indeed!” says the little old lady next door. “Why, that family is as full of surprises as a Christmas stocking. I never saw people that could pack more fun, and more

work, too, into twenty-four hours. See those bathing suits on the line! That means they were every one swimming last night. To-day they are out scouring the country for rocks to make a fish pond in the back yard. And to-morrow I'm to go with them bright and early to watch the circus people unload and put up their tents. Humdrum, indeed!"

LITTLE MARCH WIND

THE little old lady who lived around the corner the third house down on Weather Street was greatly disturbed. Some one had been telling tales, and bad ones at that, about her favorite child. Not that she really had any favorite—not truly and actually; but somehow Little March Wind had a special tuckaway corner in her heart.

South Wind was a dear child—warm-hearted and gentle, with a voice so soft and sweet that every one loved her. North Wind, though a strange, cold-mannered fellow, who did not easily make friends, was yet as straightforward a youngster as one could wish. East Wind and West Wind were as charming and obedient children as one could meet with in a

day's journey. But Little March Wind had a way all his own. He it was, who, with his mischievous teasings and roguish pranks, made his mother wish she had nothing to do but go scampering joyously away over the hills with him all the day long.

This was his holiday time—for one whole month he was to be free to go romping about and do just as he wished by day and by night. But here it was scarcely started, and some ill-natured folk were bringing in complaints that he was annoying them. He was too wild, too rough, they said, and much too noisy.

So, like a sensible mother, the old lady who lived around the corner, three doors down on Weather Street, said to herself, "I shall look into this matter. I shall go myself and see if this son of mine is making a nuisance of himself."

And go she did. Very early the next morning, when North Wind had gone off on a journey

up the river, and East Wind and West Wind were sleeping snugly in their beds, she locked the door behind her and set out after Little March Wind, who was already far down the street with no thought that his mother was following behind.

He was chasing a big piece of newspaper, tumbling it about this way and that, rolling it over and over through dooryards and across streets in the wildest excitement. Finally it came to a sudden stop, flapping up against the side of a garden wall, and Little March Wind turned abruptly about, instantly forgetting the paper, and set himself industriously to sweeping the dry leaves out of a gutter near by. The minute he had a sizable pile, he sent them whirling like a top down the street, around and around in spinning circles, while he ran after them as happy as a king. But, just as suddenly as he had started, he left off and went skipping

across a wide yard up on a doorstep. He banged a shutter and rattled a door, and then with a gusty effort he flopped the porch rug over and tossed it halfway down the steps.

“Dear me!” said his mother to herself. “Is he going to be naughty, after all?” She really knew, deep in her heart, that he wasn’t, but just the same she was glad he had scampered away before the lady who owned the rug opened the door. There was a bit of a frown on her face, though otherwise she seemed to be a very comfortable sort of person. It might be possible, too, that her early morning curl-papers and the dignified neighbor who was passing had something to do with the frown.

“Good-morning! Good-morning! Somebody trying to steal your porch rug?” laughed the neighbor, his eyes so full of fun that they never even saw the curl-papers.

“Yes, it’s that little rascal, March Wind,”

she answered with a brightening face, as she put the rug back into its place. "I'm glad, after all, that he did it—otherwise I might not have come out to see this fine morning. It is glorious, isn't it?" And when the neighbor had gone quite to the end of the street, she still stood in her doorway enjoying the fresh beauty of the day.

"What a sensible woman!" remarked the mother of Little March Wind.

Where was the child, she wondered, as she turned again to look for him. Far away, high up in the sky, she saw him, whisking the smaller clouds along at a furious pace, panting and pushing and tugging with all his might as he rolled the larger ones across the blue. From the clouds he dropped into the top of a huge oak tree and set all the dry leaves rattling on their brittle stems. Before she knew what he was about, he had stripped every leaf from the old

tree and sent them to the ground in a shower. Then he must chase them up the street in a mad whirl. The very sight of a leaf, it seemed, set him wild with delight, and he could no more help teasing them than he could help being Little March Wind.

In his hurry, he quite passed by a group of little girls on their way to school, but catching sight of them over his shoulder he turned sharply and hurried back.

“I do hope he won’t bother the little girls,” thought his mother. “The pretty curly-haired one looks very cross already.”

But the pretty curly-haired one was the very one Little March Wind singled out. He darted up behind and flapped her tiny skirts about her knees until she could scarcely walk; then he snatched her hat and sent it scooting down the street at a great rate. Such a scramble, such shrieks, and such a race pell-mell after it! But

when at last the hat was back on the curly head the cross frown was gone entirely, roses bloomed in cheeks, and a happy voice sang out, "Oh, wasn't that fun! I just love the wind,



HE DARTED UP BEHIND

don't you?" And off they danced with Little March Wind close at their heels.

But he wasn't going to school. Oh, no—not he! He went whistling around the corner of the building, cutting roguish capers, and then

scurried off across lots. Through the back yards he ran boisterously, all but overturning the women who were bringing out baskets of freshly washed linens to hang on the swinging lines.

What fun he had! How he teased them all, twisting the wet pieces around the line, slyly flipping the pins out of their hands. But not one of them was cross with him, and so he stayed a long time after the washings were hung out, and helped to dry them. He blew the sheets out straight until they snapped and cracked like whips, and the gowns and dresses he puffed up so that they looked like round white people hanging upside down. When that was done, he was off to the street to play in the dust, stirring it about and scattering it into clouds that went sailing away through the sunshine.

All day long his mother followed patiently,

just far enough behind so that he never guessed it, while he went here and there and everywhere banging shutters, swinging signs on their creaky hinges, sweeping up trash and leaves, beating bushes free of dried twigs, whistling shrilly around house corners, and finally ending up on a hill beyond the town where a great crowd of boys were getting ready to fly their kites. How they ever could have done it without Little March Wind, his mother could not imagine. For though all the boys made a great to-do of running up and down and shouting wildly, in the end it was March Wind who lifted them skillfully and guided them up, up, and up, higher and higher, until they seemed only tiny toys melting into the blue of the sky.

Plainly, Little March Wind was at his best on the hill with the kites. He would stay there as long as the boys stayed, his mother well knew, so she turned back toward the town to

find her way around the corner to the third house down on Weather Street. And on her way, whom should she spy but the same kindly neighbor she had seen early in the morning. He was walking briskly homeward with a tall friend and as she came quietly up behind she heard him say, "Yes, it's been a wonderful day! This March wind makes me feel like a boy again—I've been whistling all day. I hope it keeps up all night, too. To my way of thinking, one of the pleasantest things in this old world is to lie snugly in bed at night and hear the wind whistling around the corner of the house. It's great!"

The tall man looked at him oddly, and said that he had never thought of it that way before—but very likely there was something in it. He had always grumbled a lot, he said, about the March wind, but very likely it was just because he had heard other people do the same thing.

After all, if the truth were told, he believed he actually did enjoy this month, and if he could keep awake long enough he was going to try this business of listening to the wind whistle around the corner—if it blew that night.

Little March Wind's mother chuckled to herself. Well she knew that most of the night would find this vigorous little son of hers out at his fun, and she was heartily glad to know that he had friends even in the darkness.

"A nuisance, indeed!" she said to herself. "Why, he has hosts of friends! Things about town look much better than when he started out this morning, too. He has done a good day's work and made a lark of it. I'm quite proud of him!" And turning the corner she went down Weather Street to number three, feeling very comfortable and happy indeed.

IN PETER'S CLOCK SHOP

TO BE sure, the tiny shop in Mulberry Street had a name across the top of the door. There, in faded gilt letters, any one, by trying quite hard, could read:

PETER CROSSWAIT—CLOCKS AND WATCHES

But if a stranger had asked any child in town to tell him where Mr. Crosswait's shop was, probably no child could have told him. To all the children, it was simply "The Clock Shop."

Even a father, who went downtown to business every day, would have hesitated just a moment, perhaps, at the same question, because every father, and likewise every mother, knew the shop as "Peter's Shop," and the dear old man who owned it as just "Peter." If the clock did not strike right, mothers said, "I

think we must get Peter to take a look at it." And when it was brought back home again, fathers said, "Well, now we shall have the correct time. Peter certainly knows how to put a clock in order!"

All the children loved an opportunity to get inside the Clock Shop. The minute the door was shut tight, one was right in the midst of the quietest sort of sound—"Tick, tick, tick!" "Tick, tock, tick, tock!" "Tick, tick, tick, tick, tick!" Big clocks, little clocks, and middle-sized clocks were there, all very busy about their business. Every boy and girl loved it, but no boy and no girl knew just how interesting The Clock Shop really was, and how many fascinating things went on there.

The Old Grandfather Clock could have told them strange tales of his adventures. So, for that matter, could any of the other clocks, but they were far too busy to give more than a



BIG CLOCKS, LITTLE CLOCKS, AND MIDDLE-SIZED
CLOCKS

glance at the eager and admiring little boys and girls. There was always some stir, some excit-

ing thing going on among them—some one leaving for a new home, some stranger being unpacked and set up on the shelves, casual callers stopping for a few days to be put into better working order—besides all the regular happenings of the day.

There was Little China Clock, for instance—back again this very morning. And more than one older and more sedate clock was discussing her return. The wise Old Grandfather Clock, however, said never a word. He did not enter into the gossip, neither did he speak one word of reproof, nor ask one question of Little China Clock. But when Peter had locked up and gone home for the night, leaving The Clock Shop dark and shadowy, and when the other clocks were busily talking among themselves, then Grandfather Clock kindly questioned her.

“Why are you back again?” he asked.

Little China Clock looked quite embarrassed and did not reply.

“This is the third time you have been sold and later brought back,” went on Grandfather Clock. “I have been wondering what is the reason.”

Still Little China Clock answered not a word.

“Did you like your last place?” questioned the old fellow.

Little China Clock replied quickly to that.

“Oh, I loved it,” she said. “It was a beautiful place! I loved it so!”

“Tell me about it,” urged Grandfather Clock.

“Well,” began his little friend, “you remember the lovely lady who came in and bought me last time? You remember she said when she saw me that I looked as though I just

really belonged in her room—as though I had been made especially for it?”

“Yes,” Grandfather Clock said, he remembered it very well.

“And really,” went on the tiny tick-tick-ticking voice, “I thought so, too, when I got there. It was a beautiful room, all lacy and satiny, and filled with soft rugs and shining mirrors. And my place was on her dressing-table, right in front of a set of mirrors—”

“Where you could look at yourself all day long!” broke in Grandfather Clock. “And in a few days you had neglected your work so much that you were away behind time. Isn’t that about right?”

“Well, yes, I did get behind a little,” she admitted, sheepishly, “but how did you know?”

“I know,” was the answer, “because I’m a Grandfather Clock. If I could not guess a

simple secret like that, I should think I had made poor use of my experience. I know! You sat in front of the mirrors, and you enjoyed looking at your reflection so much that you entirely forgot what your real business was. And when you had lost quite a bit of time, you made the little lady late for some important engagement, and she was angry with you and sent you back here. Am I right?"

"Yes," wailed the small culprit, "and, oh, I do want to go back there. I love the lady and I love the room. It is the prettiest place I ever saw. I do want to go back!"

"If I am not mistaken, this is the third time you have come back with the same complaint against you—that you lose time. Were there mirrors in the other two places?" asked Grandfather Clock, sternly.

"Yes, there were," Little China Clock owned, shamefacedly.

The wise old fellow looked at her closely.

“There is no doubt about it—you are pretty,” he said gently. “Of course, that is one reason why ladies buy you, but that isn’t the only one. The main reason is that they want a clock—something to tell them the time—the correct time. Then when they take you home, you sit looking at yourself in their mirrors—you waste your time and theirs, too—you make them late for appointments—”

Grandfather Clock was tick-tocking pretty loudly by this time, for he was getting out of patience with his little friend, so he ended quite suddenly and crossly, too, with— “Why do you do so?”

“I don’t know,” wailed Little China Clock, “only I do love mirrors.”

“Silly!” was the scornful reply. “If you don’t take care, you’ll never see a mirror again. You will be sold to the junkman some day un-

less you attend to business—and a clock's business is to keep correct time. Look at me! Why do you think Peter came clear across the sea to Austria to fetch me here when his uncle left me to him? Was it because of my fine looks?"

"But you are handsome," protested Little China Clock.

"Yes, perhaps I am," agreed the honest old fellow. "But if I am handsome, it is because some trees in the mountains attended to their business and grew true and straight and strong, so that the wood in my case is as fine as you could find anywhere. But Peter would never have made that long journey across the sea to bring me back just on account of my handsome case. I'm a good timekeeper! That's why Peter came for me. I should not be worth much as a clock if I were only ornamental. It is a wonderful thing to be beautiful—but to be beautiful and serviceable is still better."

Little China Clock was beginning to look very repentant, but Grandfather Clock went on talking.

“One hundred and fifty years have I been keeping time for Peter’s family. His grandfather made my case with his own hands, and set together the springs and wheels inside that case. There was a workman for you! I should be ashamed to slight my work when he did his so well. I have lived among mirrors, too. Oh, I could tell you tales, Little Clock—tales of lords and their ladies, of gay hunting parties, of weddings, and banquets, and balls. But Peter’s grandfather, when he wound me first and set me going, said to me, ‘Be honest—do your work well, and you will have a happy life.’ And I have been happy. So will you be happy, if you do your work well.”

Grandfather Clock stopped abruptly and tick-tocked, tick-tocked gravely for many

minutes before he spoke again—as though he were thoroughly enjoying doing his work well. The small clock sat meekly waiting. Suddenly he broke the silence.

“Would you really like to go back to the beautiful lady and her room?” he asked.

“Yes, I should,” was the earnest reply, “very much—more than anything else in all the world.”

“Well, it’s quite simple,” he told her. “Peter will put you in order in a day or so. The lady will very likely try you again—they always do. People become attached to a clock, you know, just as they do to a person. Yes, she will try you again. Then, what are you going to do?”

Little China Clock spoke quickly.

“I’m not going to look at myself in the mirror so much. I can keep just as good time as any clock in Peter’s Shop, and I’m going to do it!”

“Hooray!” shouted Grandfather Clock. “Tick, tock! I only wish Peter could hear you say that. You have certainly been a worry to him. He has a mighty pleasant surprise in store for him. Tick, tock! Tick, tock! Be honest, do your work well, and you will have a happy life and make others happy, too. Tick, tock! Tick, tock!”

LITTLE PINE TREE'S WISH

DEEP in the forest stood Little Pine Tree, and close about him stood his neighbors and friends, all very tall, very straight, and very proud, too, that they were so. To them, Little Pine Tree was only a pretty child. The secrets which the wind told them in passing, they did not often bother to tell him; the news they got from the birds that stopped to rest in their tall branches, they did not trouble to hand down to this eager little companion.

So, when he overheard them gossiping about lumber camps and woodchoppers, he had not the slightest idea what they meant. And later, he was greatly puzzled by their talk of going out into the world to become telephone poles. But, by and by, he did get it fairly clear, and

came to understand what was needful to be chosen for such a wonderful place in life. One must be tall, must be straight, without bend or twist, sound and whole. The old tree who finally took time to talk with Little Pine Tree about it, told him all this very kindly, and then he bent down a low-hung branch and gently touched the very top of Little Pine Tree's head in a most loving way.

"You are sound and whole, little one," he said, "you are straight as any one could wish, but—you are not tall."

"I feel tall," argued Little Pine Tree.

A soft laughing murmur came from the great fatherly pine.

"I believe you do," he said earnestly. "You are sound at heart, and so you feel tall. But no woodchopper would choose you for a telephone pole. I haven't a doubt there is something for you to do in the world, but no, little

friend, you are not tall enough to bear the heavy, singing wires high in the air where they must be borne."

If, deep in his heart, Little Pine Tree grieved a bit, he took care that none knew of it. He held his sturdy branches out and nodded his needled head as gayly as he had always done.

Busy days came into the life of the forest. High up in the topmost branches there was so much important talk going on that Little Pine Tree was left more and more to himself. There drifted down stray bits of gossip, so that by putting things together in his own quiet way, he knew that the woodchoppers were near at hand, and that the ringing sounds he had been hearing from dawn till dark each day were their axes at work, and that the tremendous crashes were trees falling.

"Going away to be telephone poles," sighed

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Little Pine Tree, quite to himself, of course.

And then, one wonderful day, he saw the woodchoppers themselves—and what was more, three of them came and sat with him and ate their noonday lunch. How he quivered with delight when the jolly white-haired man sat leaning against him, eating his thick sandwich while he read again a letter from his boyhood home in England!

“It’s going to be springtime in Old England soon, lads,” he said, as he folded it again into his pocket.

“The same as here, Old Joe,” laughed back one of his helpers.

“Yes, the same as here, and yet not the same,” answered Old Joe. “I’m wondering now if they still keep the May Day as they kept it when I was but a lad. Early up and early out, we were that morning, to the village green—carrying nosegays to our little sweet-



hearts, and choosing the May Queen. And then the dances around the Maypole, with the pretty ribbons fluttering—and children everywhere, tumbling and scampering and skipping the whole day through. I'd give a deal to see a Maypole again. The woods I love, but, lads, I'm fair hungering for the sight of children."

From that minute Little Pine Tree knew. Once he had thought it would be a grand thing to go out into the world and be a telephone pole, but now, oh, much more he wished he might be a Maypole and stand in the center of a circle of dancing children. It seemed a foolish dream, perhaps, but he hugged it softly to his heart. Children? He scarcely knew what they were, but they danced and sang, and they were maybe a bit like birds, he thought.

The chopping came nearer and nearer, and then there came a day when some one called

out, "Hey, Joe, what about this little fellow? Shall we take him or leave him standing?"

Old Joe ran his hand lovingly over Little Pine Tree's shaggy sides.

"He will make no pole for the company, of that I'm sure, but let's send him along. He takes me back someway to the Maypoles I used to know. Let's send him along. Who knows? Some one may yet want a Maypole."

So Little Pine Tree went along with the tall, straight trees—out from the deep forest, away and away on long trains, for miles and miles. Many a bump did he have from the heavier and longer poles, many a jolt and hard knock.

"You are very foolish," they said to him more than once. "We have told you that telephone poles must be tall. As to the Maypoles you keep talking about, we have never heard of such things. Why don't you drop out and be

comfortable? We don't like to be forever crowding you, but how can we help it when we are so big and heavy and you are so small?"

But, no. Little Pine Tree did not drop out. Whenever they were shifted from one place to another, whenever there was a sorting, in some way he crept in and went along, until by and by they were landed in an immense yard filled with stacks and stacks of lumber of all sorts. Workmen came and looked them over, tapped their sides and measured them; and then, one by one, they were carted away until most of the old friends were gone. But Little Pine Tree had no time to be unhappy at being left alone. Were there not strangers coming in now every day in great loads? Plainly, it was his duty to make them welcome.

Sometimes when the night came down, and the soft moonlight shone all about him, Little

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Pine Tree lay awake wondering. Was he always to live here in this great yard?

“Well,” he sighed softly, “there really is plenty for me to do here, what with keeping those who get left behind from becoming discontented, and seeing that the newcomers do not get lonely. I’m busy every minute. But there is no harm in wanting to be a Maypole if I do not let it spoil me for my day’s work. It isn’t a bad wish—it’s a good wish—and I am not going to give it up just because it doesn’t seem to come true. If I do get a chance to be a Maypole sometime, I’ll be the happiest pine tree that ever came out of the forest. But if I don’t, I guess I can be happy here, too.”

And moonlight or no moonlight, any one so comfortable and contented as was Little Pine Tree, couldn’t stay awake one minute longer.

Some one was thump, thump, thumping

Little Pine Tree, and that, of course, waked him from his dream of the old forest. Half asleep, he heard a brisk voice saying, "The very thing! Exactly what we want! If we had looked the city over, we couldn't have found a pole that suited better. Just the right height, just the right size, straight as a pikestaff—why, I tell you this tree was grown just to be a Maypole!"

Too hurried and excited even to say good-by to all his friends, Little Pine Tree was carted away to the Public Playground, and found himself being set in place, while a great crowd of children shouted about him, and played games, and did a hundred happy things that happy children do, but of which little pine trees deep in the forest never know.

What Old Joe had called ribbons turned out to be long strips of bunting, and to one who had never known any color other than green,

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the lengths of scarlet and lavender and blue and orange were very beautiful. The laughing boys and girls who went dancing about him, weaving these lovely things into pretty patterns, made Little Pine Tree think again of a flock of butterflies which had fluttered across the big yard one summer day.

To be sure, there was a May Queen, just as Old Joe had said there used to be in England when he was a lad—a little mite of a dark-haired girl with shining eyes. And when the garland was placed on her head and all the children shouted, "Hurrah! Hurrah! Peggy's Queen!" she made a shy bow. But when they called out, "Make your wish, Peggy Queen! Make your wish!" she stood up beside her pretty throne and said without one trace of shyness, "I wish we might keep the Maypole here to play with all the time, instead of having it just for to-day."



F. LILLY-YOUNG

DANCING AND SINGING ABOUT LITTLE PINE TREE

LITTLE PINE TREE'S WISH 107

It was a pretty wish, just as Little Pine Tree's had been—and they both came true. The flimsy bunting ribbons were exchanged for waterproof strips of brilliant colors, and not a day of all the week but a crowd of laughing children went dancing and singing about Little Pine Tree.

And often when all the children had gone away home to their beds, Little Pine Tree kept awake, too full of gladness for sleep.

POLLY PRISM'S SECRET

HOW long she had lain in the drawer with the hosts of buttons, no one knew—not even the pretty glass trinket herself. But at least it had been so long that she felt quite at home, and very much as though, of all places in the world, she belonged right there.

Year by year the crowd of buttons had grown. Most often they came one at a time, but sometimes the drawer was pulled open and a whole handful dropped in—buttons cut from some garment out of fashion, all alike and all a bit shy at first, but soon great friends with the older inhabitants of the drawer.

Quite like a little town it was, with its small people of all sorts. Tiny, frivolous buttons of crystal there were, with brilliant flowers set

deep in the hearts of them, specks of shining brass buttons, jet buttons cut like diamonds, glass buttons of clear red and orange and green, velvet buttons of every hue, metal buttons crusted over with tiny colored sets of glass, silver buttons, gold buttons, old style, new style, large and small.

Biggest of all and most important of all, was the fat brass button which had once, long ago, adorned the uniform of an army officer. He was greatly looked up to by the whole lot of buttons, and because he had once done service on the coat of a commander, it suited him exactly to advise and direct the doings of the others. But not even he remembered when the shiny glass ornament had come among them, nor whence she had come.

“She certainly isn’t one of the Button family,” was all he could tell them when they fell sometimes to talking of such things. “I have

never seen a button which looked the least bit like her.”

And when they took their questions to their little friend, she could tell them almost nothing about herself.

“I know my name is Polly Prism,” she laughed, “and how I know even that much is more than I can say. But it is. Try as I will, I cannot seem to remember one thing about any other home I ever had. I’m so happy here that I don’t see that it makes much difference, anyway, where I came from, does it?”

“No,” they all agreed, “it doesn’t really make any difference only—”

“Don’t you remember anything you ever used to do?” questioned a perky little gold button.

“Not exactly,” answered Polly, holding herself, for once, quite still that she might think very hard. “Not exactly—only someway

it seems to me that once, long ago, I must have hung, swinging and dangling, from something—I feel so swingy!”

Yes, all the buttons knew that Polly Prism felt “swingy”. Wasn’t she forever wiggling and twisting joyfully about among them, this way and that way, over and over? Not that any one objected for one moment to her doing so, for many was the frolic they would have missed had this gay little friend not been there to start it. Indeed, there was not a button, large or small, young or old, who did not love Polly Prism with all his heart. Sometimes when they felt crowded, and there seemed scant room for so many of them, cross words were heard, and then Polly Prism came quickly to the help of all.

“Let’s not waste any time being cross,” she urged. “Let’s be happy every minute. It is so good to be happy, and such a horrid, miserable

feeling to be cross. Come on, now—cheer up! Why, I'm happy all the time. I like it!"

"How can you be happy all the time? How can you be happy at all when you haven't one speck of color about you? I should think you would feel so dull and lifeless that you would be wretched!" So said the tiny blue button, she with the gold rose set deep in her prettiness.

"I wonder at it, too," chimed in the ruby glass button. "I do so love color."

Polly Prism laughed and shrugged her tinkling shoulders.

"I can't tell you how it is—I know I can't. You will say I am colorless and pale. But, isn't it funny?—I feel all full of rainbows—as if all the colors in the world were dancing about in me!"

And then, one day—and a rainy day, too—a very pleasant thing happened to Polly Prism. The Nice Lady came into the sewing-room and

sat down to her work. And while she worked, the Nice Little Girl stood at the window, looking out at the gray sky, and the wet garden, and the slanting crowd of raindrops, wondering, over and over again, what to do.

“Why not try the button drawer? You haven’t looked through that for ever so long,” suggested the Nice Lady, at last.

All the buttons pricked up their ears at that, for they felt sure that something exciting was in store for them. And they were not wrong, either, for soon the soft, inquiring fingers of the Nice Little Girl were busy among them, tumbling them about, this way and that way, with exclamations of delight.

“What pretty things! Oh, Mother, I had forgotten all these darling buttons were here. Aren’t these cunning little ones? And look at the big sparkly ones! My, how funny your Grandmother must have looked with a long

row of them from her neck to the hem of her dress!"

Suddenly her bright eyes spied something



F. LILEY-YOUNG

“WHERE DID IT COME FROM?”

which glittered and shone in the very bottom of the drawer.

“But, Mother, what in the world is this queer glass one? It isn't a button, is it? Where

did it come from?"—and her eager, prying fingers drew Polly Prism from among the rest and held her dangling in the air.

The Nice Lady laid down her sewing quickly and took Polly Prism into her own hands, and something in the way she touched her made Polly feel very glad and comfortable inside.

"Why, if it isn't Polly Prism! Isn't it queer that I could ever become so busy that I should forget Polly? For years she hung in the east window downstairs, but when the little hanger broke she was put away to be mended—and forgotten. Come, this minute! Let's go and mend her and hang her where she really belongs. She has a beautiful secret, and when the sun shines she will love to tell it to you."

Hung in the big window downstairs, Polly Prism wondered, more and more, just what was to come of this exciting adventure, and, try as

she would, she could not quite seem to think what this secret was that the Nice Lady seemed so sure she would tell when the sun shone again.

The rain came down all day, but outside the window there were any number of interesting things going on, quite new to Polly—grass turning greener and greener every minute, buds on the lilac bush swelling larger and larger, robins taking a bath in the eaves across the way, under the shelter of an apple bough, and the cardinal who whistled right through the rain from the topmost branch of an elm. How Polly reveled in all these things, these lovely things, and how she did wish that all her button friends might see this wonderful world outside the window.

“You must wait,” she heard the Nice Lady tell her little daughter. “Polly Prism is at her best on sunshiny days. Her pretty secret is

there all the time, but you will have to be patient.”

And if the Nice Little Girl had to wait, Polly Prism knew very well that she would be obliged to wait, too, and meanwhile she grew so excited over the happy doings of the growing things outside that she entirely forgot she was waiting.

When the morning came and the sun could be seen plainly, as if no cloud or storm had ever been there to hide him for one instant, Polly woke up feeling an extra warmth and gladness within her happy self. Outside, the world was brighter and greener than even the green glass button upstairs, and inside—well, when Polly looked about the room and saw the gay bits of rainbows that were dancing over ceiling and wall and floor, she was thrilled to the very center of her joyous little heart.

She watched the exquisite, darting colors,

and slowly, with a new wave of gladness, it came to her— “Those are pictures of my happiness—that is what my heart is like—that is the reason I felt all filled with rainbows. I wish the buttons knew—they would love my colors. And I wish the Nice Little Girl would hurry down.”

The Nice Little Girl did come down a whole half-hour earlier than usual, and when she saw the tiny rainbows, she danced about almost as much as they did, only, of course, she did not dance on the ceilings and walls as the little reflections did.

“To think, Mother, Polly Prism had all those lovely colors hidden away inside all the time!” she cried, in great excitement.

Then the Nice Lady said something which Polly and the Nice Little Girl were going to remember for a long time, though perhaps they did not know it just that minute.

“I wonder,” she said, “if all of us haven’t pretty rainbow things hidden away in our hearts just like Polly Prism? I wonder, too, if we let the clear sunlight shine through, if we cannot send these lovely things dancing out into the world to make it a still more beautiful place—I wonder!”

So Polly Prism swings happily in the window. On sunshiny mornings she has the gayest time catching the sunbeams and turning them into fascinating little rainbows that go skipping joyously about the room. And on other days, when clouds fill the sky and raindrops come splashing against the window-pane, or flocks of soft snowflakes go whirling merrily past, Polly Prism, knowing well that the sun is really there, anyway, swings back and forth contentedly, with the rainbows tucked snugly inside.

CHRISTMAS IN THE FOREST

IT ALL came about because Little Brother Rabbit grew adventurous one wonderful November day, and went exploring beyond the spot where he usually left off running and turned back into the woods again. He had a most delightful afternoon, and not the least of his good time was in hopping about in a garden, nibbling the tender leaves in a patch of late lettuce. He had to be quite careful not to let himself be seen, for some boys and girls were hulling nuts close at hand. By listening attentively, he was able to overhear what they were talking about, and not a word of it did he fail to remember, so that when he scampered off home in the twilight he took with him the most amazing idea that he had ever heard of.

He couldn't make it out, but he felt sure that his mother could tell him, in the wink of an eyelash, what it all meant. But just here he was mistaken. For once, Mother Rabbit was at a loss.

“Christmas trees?” she repeated slowly, turning the thought over this way and that way. “Christmas trees? I don't know, my dear. I know the elm tree, the maple, the oak, the poplar, the beech, the walnut—but the Christmas tree is a stranger to me.”

However, little Brother Rabbit was soon to have it all explained to him, for just at that minute Mr. Brown Squirrel happened by, and, being a gentleman who traveled far and wide, he was able to tell them at once all about Christmas trees. He had, himself, seen more than one when he peeped inquisitively through winter windows, and could tell pretty much all that one wanted to know about them.

While he talked, all the woodland dwellers drew near to hear the story, and when he had finished his glowing description, Little Brother Rabbit piped up, excitedly, "Let's have one!"

Mr. Squirrel looked at Mrs. Rabbit in astonishment; the redbird and the woodpecker and the jay, who were perched on the oak branch overhead, looked at each other in astonishment; the tiny field mice looked at Mother Mouse in astonishment; the crow in the elm tree looked at Wise Old Owl in astonishment; and Wise Old Owl, looking straight ahead, said solemnly, "Why not?" Then everybody looked again at everybody else in astonishment and echoed, "Why not?"

Why not, indeed? No one had ever heard of a Christmas tree for animals, but then, as Mrs. Rabbit remarked, some one always has to be the first to think of a new thing. Mr. Squirrel told them all over again just what the tree

must be like; and Wise Old Owl undertook to explain what he called "the why and wherefore" of Christmas trees in general.

"Christmas," he said, blinking his eyes slowly, "is a state of mind."

No one said a word in reply to this strange remark, for no one knew what to say.

"What I mean," continued Wise Old Owl, "is that you have to feel Christmasy in order to have Christmas. You have to be filled with love and wanting to do something for some one else. Many people live all their lives and never have one single Christmas; and some others have a Christmas Day every time the sun comes up."

"And a Christmas tree?" asked the tiniest field mouse.

"No, not a tree every day," replied the Owl, with a kindly smile on his wise old face, "just one tree each year."

In less time than it takes to tell it, the animals had decided to have a Christmas tree of their own. Every one talked at once and without stopping to take breath for at least five minutes. Every one agreed with every one else that it should be the finest tree to be found all the country round, because it would be the first Christmas tree the baby animals had ever seen. "The first one any of us has ever seen—except Mr. Squirrel," Mrs. Rabbit reminded them.

Down by the brook they found a tiny fir tree. "The very thing!" declared Mr. Squirrel, the minute he set eyes upon it. "The very thing!"

So, without more delay, all the animals set to work on their preparations. What a host of things there were to be done! If there was to be a tree, there must be gifts, of course; and through the woods they went scampering, dodging here and there, far and wide, to find

and fetch just the right thing. Under the overhanging bank was a storehouse, where all that was brought might be hidden away in safety until all was in readiness for the great night.

And if there was to be a party, all the mothers felt there was a certain amount of furnishing up to be done. Mother Rabbit, after she had made the children's clothes as pretty as possible, set herself to work making Father Rabbit a most beautiful pair of gayly striped trousers with a long scarf to match, and unless you had seen him, you cannot imagine how very stylish Father Rabbit looked. Little Sister Squirrel had the most marvelous new bonnet that ever sat atop a squirrel's head, and the most fetching cape of brown felt, with wee gaiters to match—oh, but she was excited with all her finery! Some of the field mice even went so far as to appear with bows of cherry ribbon

tied on their tails. The birds, each and every one, had new bonnets and furs and gay boutonnières.

And, at last, when it seemed that no one could possibly wait another single minute, the evening for the party came.

“It couldn’t have been a lovelier night,” said Mother Rabbit, as mothers have been saying since time began. “The moon—did you ever see a more beautiful moon? Why, it is as light as day!”

“It isn’t made of green cheese, is it Mother?” questioned little Sister Rabbit, doubting very much if little Brother Rabbit had known what he was talking about when he said it was.

“No,” Mother told her, “it most certainly is not—only little boys who want to tease their sisters say that.”

So they strolled along through the silent

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woods until they came to the spot down by the brook where the tree was waiting for them, and when they came upon it the sight fairly took their breath away. Under the moon's light it shone like something the fairies had made. Every branch was festooned daintily with lacy



OH, BUT IT WAS A BEAUTIFUL TREE!

snow and powdered over with frost crystals. From the tips hung long icicle tapers that flashed and sparkled with every movement of the night wind. The birds had gathered red berries from the bushes and tucked them among the fringed branches close beside the tree's own cones. Every bit of finery that could be found in the woods had been brought to adorn it—oh, but it was a beautiful tree!

And the gifts! When Father Rabbit handed them out to the excited group never was there greater delight! Some one had brought a whole carrot for the Rabbit family; there were scraps of soft cloth and bits of twine for the birds' springtime nests; Old Black Crow had an oak leaf filled with yellow kernels of corn presented to him by the Rabbit children; each tiny field mouse was given an acorn cup full of cheese crumbs which Mr. Redbird had been at great pains to bring from the farm beyond the

hill; there was a piece of suet for Wise Old Owl; and a new sort of nut for the squirrel children and their parents; and there were bits of bark and acorn and nuts for everybody.

“Are we going home now? Is it over?” asked little Sister Rabbit anxiously of her mother when she had finished the piece of carrot which was her share.

Going home? Indeed they were not! Hadn't Father Rabbit been scratching his ear for days, thinking up fun for this party?

“This way, everybody!” he shouted as he wiped the last crumb of carrot from his whiskers. “This way!” And he led them down to the icy brook. Such fun! Words could not tell it. Such shouts of delight! Such tumbling down and getting up again! Such fancy figures as Father Rabbit cut! Such long strokes as Brown Squirrel took when he went gliding across the smooth surface!

Mother Rabbit suggested that they leave off skating for a while and swing in the grapevine swings, or have a game of hide-the-acorn; but no one listened to her at all and every one, including Father Rabbit,—yes, every one, including Father Rabbit, kept right on skating until the moon went down.

Then home again, through the quiet woods, they went—so sleepy that it was hard to tell whether the stars overhead were really winking, or the blinking of weary eyes made it seem so.

“Wise Old Owl had a happy thought,” said Father Rabbit, with a contented yawn, “when he suggested that we have a Christmas tree of our own. I think we had better try the plan again next year.”

“Why not?” agreed Mother Rabbit.

And little Brother and Sister echoed, sleepily, “Why not?”

DANNY DUCK GIVES HIS MOTHER A PRESENT

DANNY DUCK had six fluffy yellow brothers and sisters who lived with him in the low house beside the duck pond; but if you had asked Mother Brown Duck, when she was half-napping on the sunny bank, how many children she had, very likely she would have answered absent-mindedly, "One!" Because the six small brothers and sisters took so little of her time and attention that she was apt to forget them. But Danny Duck! Dear me, how could she ever overlook him for one single instant!

Not that Mother Brown Duck called him naughty. No, indeed! She would never have permitted either herself or any one else to call

him naughty; but he was, she had to admit, very trying!

Every morning when Mother Brown Duck lined her family up in an orderly row and taught them earnestly just what little ducks should and should not do, Danny sat quite still with his head tilted attentively to one side and a most angelic smile on his funny little face. But half an hour later he would very likely be found doing some one of the very things he had been taught not to do.

A full hour every morning before Mother Brown Duck was ready to get the family up, Danny began squirming about, giving disturbing quacks of restlessness; when Mother Duck led the way, at last, to the feed yard for breakfast and six little ducks waddled behind her obediently, Danny made all sorts of side trips into the weeds and bushes; and when finally, she had them one and all safely there, what

should Danny do but go running about under the taller fowl, half upsetting many of them, and gobbling more grain than was necessary for any small duck. Later, when they went into the water and the six little brothers and sisters circled about their mother like tiny boats about a big ship, Danny swam swiftly out of hearing and made the most reckless dives after bits of weed and tempting morsels.

Yes, without a doubt, Danny was trying.

There he was now—in the very middle of the pond. Just a moment ago, when she had closed her eyes for a comfortable nap on the sunshiny bank, he had been beside her. But Old Mr. Drake was with him, and so Mother Brown Duck knew he was quite safe.

All the young ducks about the place had been taught that great respect was due Mr. Drake; but Danny had a way of making himself quite friendly with the stately old gentle-

man. When the other small ducks glanced timidly up at him in passing, Danny grinned good-naturedly. Perhaps that was the reason Mr. Drake liked Danny. At any rate, there they were—old Mr. Drake sailing along majestically with his neck arched royally, and Danny, head erect and eyes shining with happiness.

“Danny,” quacked the old fellow, and Danny quivered joyously with expectation, for sometimes this was the way Mr. Drake began to tell a story. “Danny.”

“Yes sir,” replied Danny with the very best of little duck manners.

“Danny, you and I are friends, aren’t we?”

“You bet!” said Danny with the very worst little duck manners in the world.

Mr. Drake looked down at him oddly for a moment and then a twinkle came into his eyes as he went on, “So we are! So we are! And be-

cause we are friends, I am going to tell you something."

This sounded quite confidential and grown-up. Danny puffed out his downy chest until it looked as though he had swallowed a toadstool whole, and waited breathlessly. Old Mr. Drake cleared his throat with a long "Ahem!"

"Danny," he said, "I do not think you love your mother properly."

Poor little Danny Duck! Danny Duck not love his mother! Why, her soft feathers over him at night were the dearest thing in all the world; no sound he had ever heard was so sweet as her voice; on the pond he looked at her with such pride and said softly to himself, "That's my mother!" All his little heart grew warm with love at just the thought of her.

"I do love my mother properly!" blurted out Danny in a tearful voice.

Old Mr. Drake cleared his throat again with a thoughtful quack.

“I know, I know,” he agreed. “But, anyway, Danny, I want you to swim once around the pond and think it over.”

Danny Duck swam quickly away toward the edge of the pond and started on his trip around it, more upset and bewildered than he had ever been in all his life. Not love his mother!

“I do love my mother! I do love my mother! I do love my mother!” he said over and over to himself, keeping time to his paddling.

Halfway around the pond, what should he come upon but the sweetest bit of a crumb floating on the water. Another and then another of the same delicious sort led him nearer and nearer to the bank, and finally tempted him out of the water onto the grass, where two little girls sat sewing. And as Danny waddled

about, picking up their scattered cooky crumbs, he listened to the pretty sound of their voices as they chattered over their work.

“I hope my mother will like this towel. It is the prettiest thing I knew how to make, but it isn’t nearly pretty enough to tell how much I love her,” said Little Black Hair.

“And I hope my mother will like this handkerchief,” answered Little Yellow Hair. “Isn’t it nice to have a regular Mother’s Day?”

Danny Duck quite forgot that he was to swim clear around the pond. Instead, he plunged into the water with a great splash and set out across the very deepest part toward Mr. Drake. The moment he came within hearing, panting and spluttering, he called out abruptly, “What is Mother’s Day?”

Now Old Mr. Drake didn’t know one single, solitary thing more about Mother’s Day than

Danny did, but he thought for a minute, took a long drink, cleared his throat slowly, and, "Mother's Day?" said he, "Well, it is a day—a day especially for mothers."

This sounded like a good beginning and feeling quite encouraged and rather proud of himself, he went on, "Just for mothers, you know. A day when—when we do nice things for them—"

"And give them presents?" interrupted Danny excitedly. "The little girls over yonder are sewing things for their mothers. My mother doesn't like sewed things. What could I give my mother?"

"Well," was the slow reply, "I know what your mother would rather have than anything else because I heard her tell Mrs. Gaddy Goose so only yesterday."

Danny was delighted.

"What is it? What is it?" he demanded,

churning the water into ripples in his excitement.

Old Mr. Drake looked down his long bill at his little friend and said, "A nice, quiet, comfortable day of rest. That is what she wants most, if you ask me, and it is something you can so easily give her if you will only pay a bit more attention to being obedient."

What more he might have suggested we shall never know, for just then, across the water, came Mother Brown Duck's voice calling, "Danny! Danny! Come in, my dear!"

"In a min—" Danny started to call back, but right in the middle of it he turned himself suddenly and started pell-mell for the bank, leaving old Mr. Drake with a broad smile on his wise old face.

If Danny waked a full hour before the rest of his family the next morning, no one knew it,

for he kept as still as a mouse though it was the hardest thing he had ever done. When at last they were up and on their way to the barnyard, Danny waddled demurely along behind his brothers and sisters, looking neither to the right nor to the left. In the crowd and confusion of the morning meal he came at once to his mother's side in answer to her "Quack! Quack!" and ate what she pointed out. Not once did he leave his own family to push and scramble about among the other fowl.

When they went for their swim, Danny made one of the obedient little flock beside the proud mother, riding the tiny waves in great delight and never once going beyond the sound of her voice. Did he lag behind when she turned toward the bank? Not he! Up he hopped on the grass and set himself to work arranging his clean wet feathers before the the noonday nap.

Long before dark—in fact while the sky was still filled with all the pretty colors that Danny loved to watch, Mother Duck led her family homeward, nodding a “Good night” to a neighbor here, and passing the time of day with another there.

“It has been a fine day!” remarked old Mr. Drake, as they met in the path.

“A wonderful day!” agreed Mrs. Brown Duck in her happiest quack. “A most wonderful day, Mr. Drake—quite the pleasantest day I’ve had in a long time.”

“A fine family you have there, Mrs. Duck!” said the stately old fellow. “All good children, I suppose?”

“Yes, indeed,” was the quick reply. “Every one good! If you should ask me, I really couldn’t tell you which one has been the best child to-day,” and she looked them over proudly.



“A FINE FAMILY YOU HAVE THERE, MRS. DUCK”

Old Mr. Drake gave each yellow head a fatherly pat in duck fashion and beamed kindly upon them all.

“Good-night, Mrs. Duck!” he quacked. “I wish you many more happy days like this one. Good-night, children!” And, holding his head very erect, as became a fowl of his standing, he waddled away.

MR. PETTIGREW'S CHRISTMAS

IT NEVER, in all the world, would have happened if there had not been, in the big store on the corner, so many gay little raincoats that Ann's mother had to make a second trip before she could quite decide which one Ann would most love to find on her Christmas tree. What with all her errands, her stopping to admire this, and peeping in at pretty windows to be delighted with that, she found it really impossible to make her choice without Ann's father to advise her. And if Ann's father was to go with her, then Judson and Ann must get out of the car, too, and be left at some place where no thought of gay little raincoats could come to them.

“They can stay in Mr. Pettigrew's shop,”

said Father, as they hurried up the street, which was beginning to sparkle and glow with the evening lights. "The very place! Right next door—nice and quiet—no danger of not finding them in the crowds. Here we are now!"

Ann and Judson had never been inside the tiny shop with its dingy front and untrimmed window, tucked in between the tall brick buildings, but in a vague way they knew it as "Mr. Pettigrew's Picture Store," and Mr. Pettigrew himself as a rather lonely old man whom they sometimes saw at Grandfather's.

Judson swung back the door and Ann stepped inside, as shy and inquisitive as a venturesome snowbird. It was not a very long shop, and not a very wide shop, but even in the dim light they could see that rows and rows of pictures hung on the walls. And, indeed, they had time to look at several of them before the

tap, tap, tap in the room beyond stopped and Mr. Pettigrew came peering out from behind the curtained doorway. Perhaps he was a bit disappointed to find only a little boy and girl there, and it may be that he was even more disappointed when he found they wanted nothing, but when he saw how interested they were in the pictures he said kindly to Judson, "You like pictures, do you?"

"Yes, I do," was the quick reply, "I like them a lot—but Ann just loves them. She's going to be an artist when she grows up, I guess. You must be pretty busy with so many pictures to sell."

"I might be, if I sold them." Mr. Pettigrew's voice sounded hard and a little cross, but even so small a boy as Judson could tell that the crossness was really a sort of sadness and discouragement.



“YOU LIKE PICTURES, DO YOU?”

“Don’t you sell them?” he asked.

Mr. Pettigrew gave a short laugh, a laugh without one bit of fun in it.

“No,” he said, “I don’t. Nobody wants them. I like them, but nobody else does.”

“Oh, everybody loves pictures,” came shyly from Ann. “I wish the whole world could see this one of the little boy and his boat. Couldn’t you put it in your window so people could see it as they go by? Couldn’t you?”

It seemed a very short while to them, this visit with the pictures, and then the door swung open again and there was Father shaking hands kindly with their owner. Mother took one quick glance around the room.

“Why, Mr. Pettigrew, I had no idea you had all these lovely things in here!” And she went about, admiring them in the sweetest way until Father finally bundled them all out the door with a cheery “Good-night.”

When they had gone, and he turned in again from the gay hurry and flurry of the passing shoppers, the tiny shop seemed very quiet and

empty to Mr. Pettigrew. But standing before Ann's favorite picture, looking at it long and thoughtfully, slowly the loneliness and sternness faded out of his face.

"She's right!" he said softly to himself. "She's right! I'm a selfish old man. Here I've been wishing I could go out and do some big thing to help the world along, and I won't even show them my pictures. But I will, I will! If I can't give toys to the children and baskets to the needy, I can put beautiful pictures in the window for them to look at as they go by."

Mr. Pettigrew's face was becoming amazingly cheerful, and a pleasant sparkly light was in his eyes as he peered up through the half-light at his treasures.

Next morning, a full hour before his usual opening time, came Mr. Pettigrew, and with him he brought a bundle of cleaning-rags, a stout scrubbing-brush, and a cake of soap. In

less time than it takes to tell it, he was in the window, wiping away the dust and sweeping out the crumpled papers and faded advertisements which had been there. And then, oh, then, such a scouring as he did give the glass front, stepping back to look at it critically this way and that way, rubbing and polishing until it shone clear and bright.

Then Mr. Pettigrew reached up carefully and took "The Young Mariner" from his hook, and he, in turn, had his dusting and polishing before he was put into the window. Almost before he was well settled there, a boy no older than "The Young Mariner" himself, with a bundle of papers under his arm, stopped outside, and with his nose pressed flat against the pane, stood lost in joyous admiration.

"Hey, come see the fellow with the boat!" he called down the street to another paper boy, and to himself, he said, "It's lucky I came this

way. I wouldn't have missed seeing that picture for a good deal."

Mr. Pettigrew brought "Baby Stuart" and he brought "The Horse Fair" to keep "The Young Mariner" company, and more than once he said to himself what a pity it was that the window was so small; for, now that he was about it, there were dozens of pictures that he wanted to share with every one.

When the window was quite finished (and what a window it was!) Mr. Pettigrew found himself dusting off the counter, and polishing the glass showcase, and finally scrubbing the floor; so that by the time people were going past to work he had rosy cheeks and the cheeriest of smiles, while the shop seemed to be wearing a sort of rosy smile, too.

The first to stop in front of the window was a trim little shop girl who gave Baby Stuart a pretty, friendly smile; later, a brusque gentle-

man, bundled to his ears in a fur coat, stood for fully five minutes enjoying "The Horse Fair"; and at noontime, a woman who was stationed out in front selling holly wreaths came in to thank Mr. Pettigrew.

"It's a pretty cold, lonesome job usually," she said, "but I didn't mind it a bit this morning, for I had that dear little boy in your window to keep me company."

One, two, three customers came in, and the money drawer had to be emptied of the string and tacks which had been at home there for so long. Small sales they were, but quite large enough to start Mr. Pettigrew whistling. Mr. Pettigrew had not been whistling for ever so long; and what with the pleasant sound of it, and the jingle of small coins, and the sun shining through the spotless window, and the friendly faces which now and then looked in, noontime found him eating his lunch in the

tiny workshop with the heartiest appetite and enjoyment.

It was mid-afternoon when Ann's mother came in, and what should she say, almost before the door was closed behind her, but, "Mr. Pettigrew, I want to buy 'The Young Mariner' you have in the window. It is a beautiful copy. Ann has talked of nothing else since she saw it last night."

Mr. Pettigrew said, "Yes, yes, indeed," in the most absent-minded way. His smile was only a sort of a half-hearted one, for all the while he was saying to himself, "The holly lady— O dear! O dear!—she needs 'The Young Mariner'—he made her morning easy—she likes to have him there."

And what did he do but excuse himself politely to Ann's mother and rush pell-mell out on to the sidewalk to tell the holly lady; and

what did she say but, "Isn't that splendid! A sale! I'm that glad for you! Another picture will do just as well for me."

After "The Young Mariner" had been wrapped up, Ann's mother decided that she must have two little gold-framed spring scenes; then, a shepherd with his lambs, for Grandfather; and then—"But I must get out of this lovely place," she said, "or I shall be wanting them all."

Mr. Pettigrew had not the heart to leave his pictures in darkness there in the window when the night came on, for, said he to himself, "Some one else may come by who would like to see them." So he turned the lights on, one by one, and then he went away down the street to his home more briskly than he had gone in many a day, thinking perhaps a little of what was in the small money drawer, but more—oh,

much more—of the friendly words and companionship that had come his way that day.

In no time at all Mr. Pettigrew got quite accustomed to the sound of his door turning on its squeaky hinge at all hours; but as everything about the shop became daily and hourly more orderly and inviting, it came about that before long he oiled the squeaky hinge and hung above the door a tiny bell which tinkled happily when any one entered.

Little by little the money drawer filled; one by one the pictures disappeared from the walls; until one lovely snowy day when the shoppers were trotting briskly up and down the street, bumping into each other with all sorts of odd-looking bundles, and excusing each other with good-natured smiles, Mr. Pettigrew locked his shop door for a few minutes and skipped hurriedly over to the bank.

“Hello, Pettigrew! A Merry Christmas!”

cried Judson's father from behind his funny little glass window. And as Mr. Pettigrew reached in and laid down a roll of bills, "Business picking up some for you?" he asked. "That's fine! What have you been doing?"

"What have I been doing?" repeated Mr. Pettigrew slowly. "Well, it's a funny thing. You see, I decided to give the people of this town a sort of a Christmas gift by putting some pictures in my window for them to look at as they went by shopping; and they up and bought them—yes sir, bought them and carried them off home to put on Christmas trees, and—well, I calculate my pictures are going to have a happy holiday. I haven't a doubt they got good and tired of stopping there in that shop of mine so long with no one but me for company." Then he hurried away, whistling a little Christmasy tune that he had forgotten for a good many holiday seasons.

“I wonder if we have room for one more at our Christmas table?” asked Ann’s father that night at dinner.

“Of course—Mother always has room to squeeze in one more,” Judson informed him before Mother had time to say, “Indeed we have. Who is it?”

“Mr. Pettigrew,” he said, and Ann’s eyes shone as he went on, “He is an old friend of Grandfather’s, and I believe would enjoy being here.”

So that is how it came about that on Christmas Day, at precisely fifteen minutes before dinner time, Mr. Pettigrew, all spick and span, carrying a picture carefully beneath his arm, and whistling a carol softly to himself, came up the walk to Ann’s house. And what a day he made of it! He cracked nuts and he cracked jokes; he told Ann any number of stories about pictures that she loved; he petted the kitten

and played with Judson's dog; he joined in all their old games and taught them some new ones.

Then when bedtime came, he trotted off home, turning over in his happy mind a plan that was slowly coming to him. Tucked snugly in his bed, he dreamed a perfect jumble of dancing dreams, and through them all went fresh shop signs, and pots of paint, and the jingle of his shop bell, and—best of all—whole flocks of little boys and girls peeping in at his window full of pictures.

And that's all for this time.





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