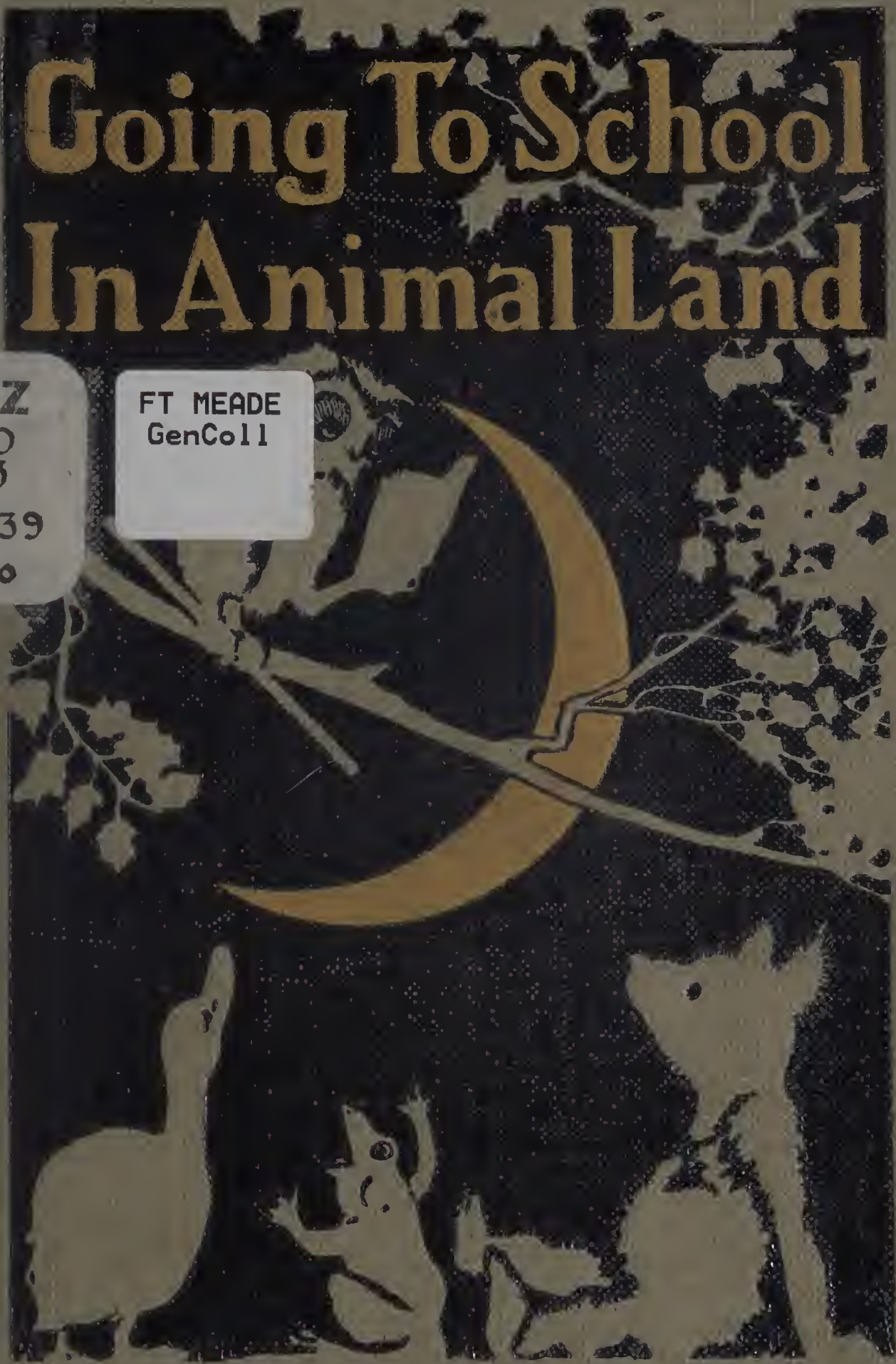


Going To School In Animal Land

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THE NIGHT SCHOOL IN THE FOREST

GOING TO SCHOOL IN ANIMAL LAND

BY

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“ROBINSON CRUSOE READER”

“STORIES TO TELL”

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GOING TO SCHOOL
IN ANIMAL LAND



Little Cub Ruff

HIS ADVENTURE WITH THE BABY HOUSES

ONCE there was a little cub named Ruff who lived in the woods with Father Bear and Mother Bear.

Now Little Cub Ruff was very curious about everything he saw. He always wanted to know *what* it was, and *why* it was there, and *how* it came to be there. Then he wanted to know *what* it did, and *why* it did it, and *how* it did it.

He asked a great many questions of Father Bear and Mother Bear, which was a good way to find out about things. But sometimes

he just went and tried to find out for himself.

“That is the way Ruff will learn,” said the Wise Old Owl, who lived in a tree by the edge of Wild Goose Pond.

The Owl taught a night school which many of the forest children attended. He was a very learned owl, and was highly respected in the neighborhood.

“Ruff has reached the investigative age”—which means the finding-out age—“and he will learn many useful lessons through his habit of finding out things for himself,” the Owl said to Mother Bear.

“Perhaps,” said Mother Bear, who was a trifle old-fashioned, “but, in my opinion, he is likely to learn something to his sorrow. I think it is much safer for him to ask questions of his father and mother first.”

But, as I said, Mother Bear was a trifle old-fashioned.

One day Ruff went out hunting with Father Bear. Father Bear was hunting part-

ridge for dinner. Ruff was hunting wintergreen berries, which he knew, by the delightful scent in the air, must be just turning red at this time.

Wintergreen berries with partridge, taste as good as cranberry sauce with turkey, you know.

Well, as Father Bear and Ruff went along toward the edge of the woods, they came all at once in sight of something very big and square. Ruff never had seen anything like it.

“*What* is it, Father Bear?” he asked—which was quite right, of course, for he wanted to know.

“It’s a house,” said Father Bear, in his deep, growly voice. He had stopped short at sight of it.

“*How* did it come there?” asked Ruff.

“Men built it,” answered Father Bear.

“*Why* did they build it?” asked Ruff again.

“They built it to live in,” said Father Bear, sniffing his nose about curiously.

Ruff sniffed his nose about, too, and he sort of imagined that he smelled something good.

“*What* good does the house do them?” he asked after a minute—for he still wanted to know.

“It keeps off the rain and the cold,” said Father Bear, still sniffing his nose about, and speaking in his deep, growly voice.

“*How* did they build it?” asked Ruff again.

“With queer things they call tools, and with boards cut from the trees,” Father Bear answered. He was a very patient Father Bear.

“*Why* don’t they live in hollow trees, as we do?” questioned Ruff.

“Because they like to make themselves a great deal of work, instead of taking things as nature provides them,” said Father Bear, and this time his voice was so *very* growly that Ruff decided not to ask any more questions. Besides, he could not think of any more to ask just then.

Father Bear started off in another direction through the woods to hunt for partridge, and Ruff started to follow him, when he caught sight of something that he thought must be a whole row of little, baby houses.

They were square, like the big house, and made of boards, too, only they were so very, very little; and he believed—yes, he was quite sure—it was from them that a most delicious scent came.

It made him think of a time, many months before, when Father Bear had been off hunting, and had come back with the most delightful sweet stuff that Ruff ever had tasted. And he never had had any of it to eat since then, for Father Bear had told him that it was very hard to get.

Now, as Ruff followed along after Father Bear, he kept thinking of the little, baby houses, and of that delicious sweet scent that came from them.

Soon Father Bear began talking to Ruff.

“You must be very careful to keep away from men, Ruff,” he said, “because very often they have a thing called a gun in their hands.”

“*What* is a gun?” asked Ruff—which was quite right, for he wanted to know.

“A gun is a long stick that has fire in it. And the fire makes a big noise when it comes out. Men can kill you with that fire, without touching you,” said Father Bear in his very deepest growly voice.

“*How* do they make guns?” asked Ruff. His eyes were very wide open.

“With tools, too, I suppose,” answered Father Bear.

“*Why* can not *we* make guns?” said Ruff.

But when Father Bear answered that question, his voice had grown so *very* growly that Ruff could not understand a word he said.

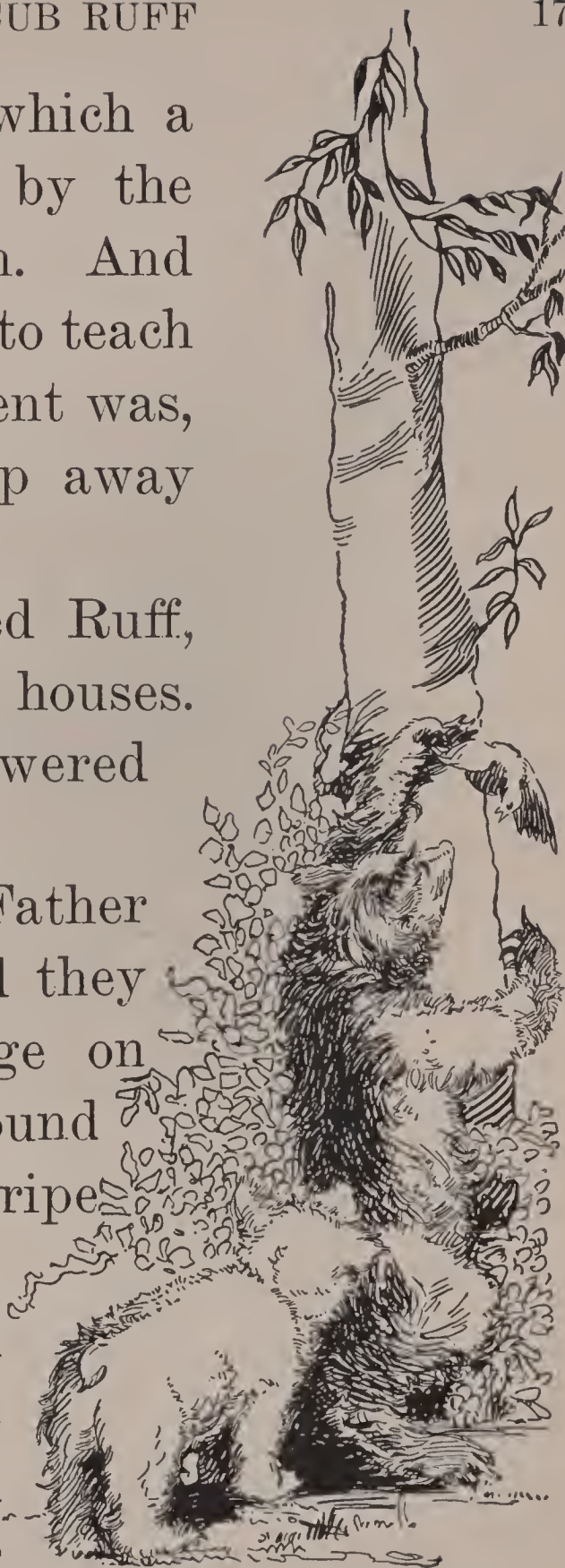
Then Father Bear went on to tell Ruff how very dangerous it was to have anything to do with men; and he told him about the traps

which they set, but which a wise bear could tell by the man-scent about them. And he promised some day to teach Ruff what the man-scent was, so that he could keep away from it.

“Is it *sweet*?” asked Ruff, remembering the baby houses.

“No, not sweet,” answered patient Father Bear.

So Ruff followed Father Bear along home; and they caught some partridge on the way, and Ruff found a whole lot of fine ripe wintergreen berries, and my! how good their dinner did taste when they sat down to eat it with dear Mother Bear.



“THEY CAUGHT SOME
PARTRIDGE”

That night Ruff was going to ask Father Bear about the row of little, little houses; but he remembered what Father Bear had said about men, and about how dangerous everything around them was—and that sweet scent was so good!

Then Ruff remembered what the Wise Old Owl up in the tree had said, about his learning many useful lessons through his habit of finding out things for himself, and he decided that he would not ask Father Bear about the baby houses at all.

Sometime he would find out for himself. That would be much nicer than just asking questions.

The next day when Father Bear went off hunting alone, and Mother Bear was busy sweeping out the bones that had been left from breakfast, Ruff decided to go off by himself and find out what the sweet scent was that came from the baby houses on the edge of the woods.

Ruff remembered what Father Bear had said about the men and the guns, and he remembered, too, what Mother Bear had said about his getting into trouble; but he knew she was thought to be a trifle old-fashioned, and though he loved her dearly, he thought the Wise Old Owl must really know better.

So Ruff started off through the woods, and soon he came in sight of the big house, and of the whole row of little houses. *And he could smell that sweet stuff that he remembered, just as plainly!*

Ruff looked all about, but he could not see any man. He was sure he would know a man if he should see one, for Father Bear had told him that men had four legs like other animals, but they only knew how to walk on two; and they had no hair on their skins.

But Ruff did not see any man, and he crept slowly up, up toward the baby houses—and the sweet scent grew stronger and stronger.

When Ruff got up close beside the first little house, he looked all around it. Then he rose up on his hind legs and looked on top. But there was no door anywhere!

The scent had grown so strong now, that Ruff could almost taste the sweet, messy stuff that he remembered so well, and so, as there was no door, he just raised up one of his big fore-paws and gave the little house a hard cuff—*and over it went.*

But, oh, my! oh, my!! oh, my!!!

Before Ruff could give one lick of his tongue into the sweet stuff that was all inside the house, the queerest little yellow-and-black things darted out by hundreds and hundreds; and they stung him and bit him, and stabbed him, until he just rolled over and over on the ground, and tried to rub them off from his face with his paws.

Then he jumped up and ran, limping and crying, to the tree-home, where Mother Bear was just finishing her morning work.

And Mother Bear scarcely knew him, his face was so swollen from bee stings!

But when Ruff called out, "Oh, Mother Bear, something dreadful has happened to



"MOTHER BEAR SCARCELY KNEW HIM"

me," she ran for some salve, and rubbed it upon his poor, swollen face; and then she put him to bed.

Soon Father Bear came home, and after awhile, when Ruff was better, he told them about the baby houses, and the sweet scent, and the angry little yellow-and-black things that had stabbed him.

“What did I tell you about the man-things?” said Father Bear in such a growly voice that Ruff whimpered, “I know it; but the Wise Old Owl said I should learn many useful lessons from my habit of finding out things for myself, and I thought he knew.”

And at that, Mother Bear exclaimed, “There! What did I tell that Owl? I shall just have him come over here and see what has happened because of his new-fangled teaching!” And she started right away for Wild-Goose Pond.

But the Wise Old Owl was very busy, and he could not come!

One day, after Ruff was very much better and able to sit in the sunshine Father Bear came home, holding his paws behind him.

“Guess what I have!” he said to Ruff, and his voice was not the *least bit* growly.

And Ruff guessed quail and wintergreen berries, and wild turkey, but at each guess Father Bear shook his head.

Ruff's nose was still so swollen that he could not smell.

At last Father Bear took his paws from behind his back and held them out toward Ruff, and they were dripping with—*honey!*

Ruff gave Mother Bear a piece of the sweet, messy comb. And when he had licked the last drop from his own sticky paws and his fat little stomach, he said to Father Bear, "Father Bear, the next time I want to find out anything, I'll ask you and Mother Bear first."

And then you should have seen the bear-hugs that they gave to Little Cub Ruff!





Little Owl Who-oo

HIS FIRST DAY IN SCHOOL

DO YOU remember the night school in the forest, down by the edge of Wild-Goose Pond?

Well, the Wise Old Owl who taught the night school had a grandson, and the grandson's name was Little Owl Who-oo. He named himself, you know, and this was the way it happened.

A very little while after Little Owl Who-oo came out of the shell, his grandfather came to look at him.

Now, baby owls, just out of the shell, are not a bit pretty to look at, and at first Grandfather Owl did not know *what* to say. He shook his head wisely up and down, took off his spectacles and wiped them carefully, and put them on again. Then he looked the baby owl all over, and at last he said in a very deep voice, "What—is—his—name?"

"Who-oo," said the baby owl, in a very squeaky little voice. It was the first word he ever had spoken.

"That is a very—good—name," said the Wise Old Owl. "That name has been in our family for many—hundred—years."

Then he settled his glasses more firmly upon his nose, and flew back to the top of the tree.

And that is the way Little Owl Who-oo got his name.

It was only a few weeks after this that Mother Owl said to Father Owl, "I think it is time Little Owl Who-oo went to school.

I expect him to learn very fast, because he will have his grandfather to teach him.”

“Do you not think it is a little early for him to begin?” asked Father Owl.

“No, indeed,” replied Mother Owl. “You know it takes a very long time to learn everything, and I think he should begin at once.”

So it was decided that Little Owl Who-oo should go to night school with the other forest children.

The very next day, as soon as twilight came, Mother Owl brushed Little Owl Who-oo’s feathers, wiped his spectacles very clean and bright, and settled them firmly over his nose. Then she tied on his funny little two-pointed cap and sent him off to school. “Hurry along now, and don’t you be late,” she said, “and be sure you are a good little owl and learn your lessons.”

Little Owl Who-oo promised to be very good indeed, and he flew happily away to the big forest tree in which Grandfather Owl

held his night school for the forest children.

“Good evening, Grandfather,” he said politely, as he lighted upon a branch. “I have come to school.”

“Oh, indeed!” replied the Wise Old Owl. “Well, well!” And then, as he could not think of anything else to say, he said “Well, well!” again.

Then he found a book for Little Owl Who-oo and showed him where the lesson began.

“You may sit right here on this branch near me,” he said. Then he looked very hard at Little Owl Who-oo and added, “Now see that you study—your—lesson.”

Little Owl Who-oo blinked very fast. Then he took the book and tried to hold it open at the lesson. But it was dreadfully hard to hold the book with one foot and balance on the branch of the tree with the other. He had always had both feet to stand upon before.

After awhile he learned to manage his book better, and then he began to study his lesson very hard. But as soon as he began to study his lesson *real* hard he forgot to keep his balance; and when he tried to keep his balance he lost the place in the book.

“Dear me,” said Little Owl Who-oo to himself, “going to school is very hard work.”

And just then the Wise Old Owl turned to Little Owl Who-oo and said in his very deep voice, “If one big green caterpillar swallows one small green caterpillar, how—many—are—there—then?”

Little Owl Who-oo hadn't the *least idea!*

He felt dreadfully ashamed, and he tried to find the place in his book right away. But before he found the place he lost his balance again, so he put his other foot down to keep from falling.

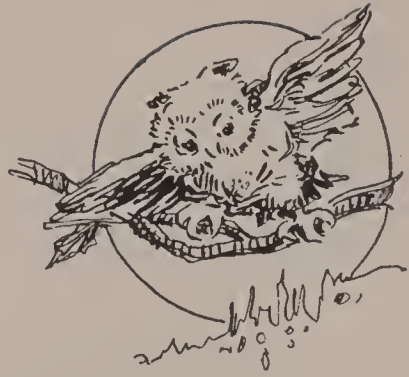
He didn't fall, but of course when he put his other foot down he dropped his book, and it struck Cub Ruff right on the head!

Cub Ruff gave a terrible growl that scared poor Little Owl Who-oo 'most out of his wits. But Billy Bull-Frog and Polly Water-Frog laughed until their sides shook, and Shorty Little-Fox barked right out loud.

"*Order!*" called the Wise Old Owl in such a very big voice that Cub Ruff stopped growling, and Shorty Little-Fox and Billy Bull-Frog and Polly Water-Frog stopped laughing, and everybody began studying very hard.

After awhile Little Owl Who-oo began to feel hungry. He kept right on studying, but the longer he studied, the hungrier he got.

"Oh, dear! School hours



"CUB RUFF GAVE A TERRIBLE GROWL"

are so dreadfully long," he said to himself.

Just then he began to smell something, and it smelled *so good!*

"It is field mouse, I know," he said under his breath. "Nothing ever smells so good as field mouse."

So he began to look around, and pretty soon he discovered, tucked away in a crotch of the tree close by him, two little field mice rolled up in a nice green leaf.

It was Grandfather Owl's lunch that he had brought to eat at recess.

"Oh, dear," said Little Owl Who-oo, "Mother forgot to put up any lunch for me, and my stomach is *so empty!*"

And the hungrier he got, the better those field mice smelled.

He forgot all about his book and his arithmetic lesson, thinking about those field mice and of how good they smelled. And after awhile he said to himself, "Of course Grandfather would not care!" And then he reached

over and pulled one of the little field mice out of the nice green leaf and ate it, quick as a wink. And it tasted so dreadfully good that he reached over and pulled the second little field mouse out of the green leaf and *ate that, too!*

And before he had finished swallowing it, the Wise Old Owl turned to him and asked solemnly, “If there are two field mice in one nest, and two field mice in another nest, how many field mice—is—that?”

Little Owl Who-oo tried to swallow very fast. He stammered, and stuttered, and blinked his eyes, and swallowed hard but he could not say a word!

Then the Wise Old Owl said sternly, “Little Owl Who-oo, you will have to study your lesson much better—than—this!”

And Little Owl Who-oo was *so ashamed*, because he knew perfectly well that two field mice and two field mice make four field mice—only he thought that Grandfather Owl was

talking about the two field mice that he had just eaten.

Anyway, he was very glad that it was just the field mice in the book that he had been asked about, so he finished swallowing the second little field mouse, and he felt ever so much better, because he was not so hungry.

Then he began to study his lesson again, very hard indeed, but he had scarcely begun when he heard the Wise Old Owl say, "It is now time for recess. You may eat your lunches and play awhile. Put your books away."

At that, something seemed to jump right up in Little Owl Who-oo's throat. Perhaps it was one of the field mice—I am not sure.

Little Owl Who-oo swallowed and swallowed, but it would not go down. And while he was swallowing, Grandfather Owl turned around and looked into the crotch of the tree where he always put his lunch, and—it was not there!

“Who has taken—my—lunch?” said Grandfather Owl in such a dreadful voice that all the leaves on the tree just shook.

And Little Owl Who-oo shook, too. You may be very sure he did!

Then all the forest children looked scared, for such a thing never had happened before, in the whole history of the night school in the forest.

Cub Ruff stopped eating his bread and honey, and Furry Fleet-Foot stopped nibbling his tree buds, and Shorty Little-Fox dropped his chicken wing, and Billy Bull-Frog and Polly Water-Frog forgot that their lunch-flies were still alive, and let every one of them get away!

But Little Owl Who-oo just sat on the branch of the tree and shivered.

“Who has taken—my—lunch?” asked Grandfather Owl, in even a more terrible voice than before; and when Little Owl Who-oo saw how dreadfully scared all the

forest children were, he just fluffed up his feathers and said, quickly, "I did!"

He had to say it quickly, because if he had not he would have been too scared to say it at all.

Grandfather Owl looked at him a very long time before he could say a word. And Little Owl Who-oo kept blinking and swallowing, and swallowing and blinking because he was so frightened.

"*Why* did you take—my—lunch?" Grandfather Owl asked at last.

And Little Owl Who-oo swallowed hard again, and said in a very small voice, "Because I was so hungry."

Then Grandfather Owl looked hard at Little Owl Who-oo and said, "Little Owl Who-oo, you may go right home to your mother; and tell her not to send you to school again for—thirteen—days. Perhaps by that time you may be old enough to behave properly—in—school."

So Little Owl Who-oo spread his wings and flew toward home as fast as ever he could.

He was dreadfully sorry, and *so ashamed*, because he had intended to be very good indeed in Grandfather Owl's night school. He had not *wanted* to lose his balance, or to drop his book, or to get so very, very hungry.

"I wonder," thought Little Owl Who-oo, "what Mother Owl will say." But as soon as he reached home he told Father Owl and Mother Owl all about it.

Then Father Owl said to Mother Owl, "Did I not tell you it was too early to send him to school?"

And Mother Owl answered, "Yes, but it takes so long to learn everything, I thought he could not begin too soon."

By this time it was almost morning, and time for Little Owl Who-oo to go to bed. He was dreadfully sleepy. So Mother Owl tucked Little Owl Who-oo's feathers around him and put him carefully into his tree bed.

And then she asked him, sorrowfully, "Little Owl Who-oo, why did you not behave better in school to-day?"

Little Owl Who-oo nodded, half asleep, and his voice was almost lost in his feathers. "I guess," he answered drowsily, "it was because I could not balance on—one—foot—and—study—with—the other."





Furry Fleet-Foot

WHO RAN AWAY FROM SCHOOL

FURRY FLEET-FOOT lived in the forest with Mother Deer and Brother Deer. Furry Fleet-Foot and Brother Deer went to school. Mother Deer kept the house, and made the beds, and did the marketing.

Their home in the forest was very beautiful. The green tree boughs made the roof; the floors were covered with rich leaf-mould and soft moss; and the pictures upon the walls were of blue sky, and waving branches, and nodding flowers. It was a very beautiful

home, and Mother Deer, and Furry Fleet-Foot, and Brother Deer all loved it.

They had a very happy time together, but sometimes — *sometimes* — Furry Fleet-Foot wanted to have his own way; and that always made trouble.

One morning, after he had finished the breakfast of tender twigs which Mother Deer had found for him, she said, “Now run along to school, Furry Fleet-Foot. Brother Deer is waiting for you.”

“But I am still hungry,” said Furry Fleet-Foot coaxingly.

He did wish that Mother Deer would give him something besides tender twigs for breakfast. He had those every morning. And tender twigs were such plain food!

“Nonsense!” answered Mother Deer. “You have eaten twice as much as Brother Deer. If you eat too much you will not be able to study your lessons well, for then you cannot run, and jump, and hide so easily.”

Furry Fleet-Foot looked only half convinced.

“Just think,” continued Mother Deer, “about the bear family, and the fox family, and the wolf family. They are dreadful eaters! Can any of them run, or jump, or leap as we do?”

“Oh, no,” said Furry Fleet-Foot, but he still spoke in a very half-hearted fashion.

“Now run along to school,” said Mother Deer briskly. “Baby deer must not be greedy.”

So Furry Fleet-Foot and Brother Deer started off to school together, bounding along the smooth ground, and leaping over the fallen logs, until they came in sight of Wild-Goose Pond. Then all at once Furry Fleet-Foot stopped, and planted his four pretty feet firmly upon the ground.

It was almost school time, and Furry Fleet-Foot knew it. But down by the edge of Wild-Goose Pond, the water lilies were budded,



"ALL AT ONCE FURRY FLEET-FOOT STOPPED"

and Furry Fleet-Foot could see them. And water-lily buds were *so* good to eat!

“I’m going to have a taste of lily-buds, before I go to school,” he said, with a stamp of his pretty hoof, and a wig-wag of his stumpy tail.

“But you’ll be *late*,” said Brother Deer, looking straight ahead at the school yard in the forest, and breathing with short little breaths, so that he should not smell the lily buds.

And then Furry Fleet-Foot said something dreadful. He said, “I don’t *care!*” And he tossed his head, and ran down to Wild-Goose Pond.

The lily buds were just de-li-cious, and Furry Fleet-Foot ate and ate.

After awhile Furry Fleet-Foot’s stomach began to feel dreadfully queer and bulgy, and he decided that he wouldn’t eat any more lily buds just then.

“I’ll just take a run around the pond,” he



“THE LILY BUDS WERE JUST DE-LI-CIOUS”

said to himself, though he *knew* that he ought to go straight to school.

So he planted his four pretty feet close together and gave a great bound, and off he went, faster than you can think.

“This is very much nicer than being in school,” Furry Fleet-Foot said to himself. “I suppose Brother Deer is learning to follow the leader, or to jump a fallen tree without

making a noise, or to cover himself among the bushes so he cannot be seen by man. But *I* think it is more fun just to run and jump and hide as you please.”

Wild-Goose Pond was a lovely place to play.

When Furry Fleet-Foot was half-way around, he said to himself, “I wish I had some one to play with me.”

And just at that minute, there rose up from behind the log that he was all ready to jump, a *big, black bear*.

“Oh, my!” exclaimed Furry Fleet-Foot, and he tried so suddenly to stop himself, that he fell all in a heap behind the log.

Oh, how frightened he was!

Furry Fleet-Foot scrambled up as fast as ever he could, and was just ready to bound away, when he heard the big Bear say, in a *very* polite voice, “Please don’t hurry off. I’m quite lonely here; and besides, I have a most interesting story to tell you.”

Furry Fleet-Foot stopped, just a minute, with his feet planted ready to spring, but in that minute he discovered something. The Bear was caught fast in a trap.

“Don’t be afraid,” said the Bear, still in a *very* polite voice. “I would not harm you for the world. Please don’t hurry away.”

Furry Fleet-Foot stood still another minute. “What a very strange bear!” he said to himself. “Mother Deer always tells me that bears are cross and ugly, and would eat us up, if they got a chance. This bear doesn’t seem a bit cross, and he says he wouldn’t harm me for the world.”

Then Furry Fleet-Foot shook his head, wig-wagged his stumpy little tail, and stamped one foot hard upon the ground, as much as to say, “What is it you want? I’m not in the least afraid.”

“That’s right,” said the Bear. “Most deer would run away, but you are brave; though really, there is no need at all of being afraid.”

“What a very pleasant bear,” said Furry to himself. “I’m sure Mother Deer must have met some very ill-bred bears, not at all like this one.”

“Ka-a-a,” came a call just then through the woods.

Furry Fleet-Foot knew well enough what it meant. Mother Deer must have found out that he was not at school, and now she was calling to him to come.

But Wild-Goose Pond was such a delightful place, and the old Bear was so sociable and friendly, and besides—Furry *did* want to hear the story he had promised to tell him!

So, instead of answering, “Ka-a-a,” and bounding away to Mother Deer, he just shook his head and stamped his foot, and moved a very cautious step nearer to the old Bear.

And when Mother Deer called “Ka-a-a-a,” again, he just wig-wagged his tail in the *naughtiest* manner, and pretended not to hear.

The old Bear knew what the call meant, as well as Furry Fleet-Foot did, and when Furry wouldn't answer it, he winked one eye—but it was the eye that Furry couldn't see.

“What about that story you were going to tell me?” asked Furry, taking a nibble of twigs.

“Oh, yes,” answered the old Bear, very politely. “Just lie down, do, while I tell it to you.”

“No thank you,” answered Furry, “I like to stand where I can reach these twigs.”

There was an odor about the old Bear that Furry Fleet-Foot did not like, but of course he was too polite to tell the Bear, so he just pretended he wanted to eat the twigs. They were very tender, nice twigs, but Furry Fleet-Foot's stomach was so full of lily buds that he really couldn't swallow another mouthful.

“You see,” said the old Bear, “that I am—ah—er—caught in a trap:”

Furry nodded.

“It is just a joke,” the Bear added, “all a joke. The men who put me here were very



“THE BEAR WAS CAUGHT FAST IN A TRAP”

careful that I should not be hurt. They are very nice, kind men.”

Furry Fleet-Foot wig-wagged his tail. “I never heard of nice, kind men,” he said.

“There are different sorts of men,” said the old Bear, wisely nodding his head.

“Oh!” said Furry, trying to look wise, too.

“And these men,” resumed the old Bear,

“are going to take me on a train, to a beautiful park, where there are all kinds of animals.”

“What is a train?” asked Furry Fleet-Foot.

“A train is something that men make, and it takes you along faster than any deer can run,” said the old Bear, wagging his head knowingly.

“Do you suppose that they would take me, too?” asked Furry eagerly.

“I’m sure they would,” said the old Bear, quite hugging himself with delight, and smiling dreadfully.

“Come up here, close to me,” he said, “and I’ll whisper in your ear something I heard them say about it.”

“Can’t you tell me from here?” asked Furry, pretending to nip another twig.

“No, I really can’t,” said the old Bear in his very politest voice. “I’m afraid the men may be somewhere around, and I wouldn’t have them hear me for the world.”

“What fun it would be,” thought Furry Fleet-Foot, “to go faster than any deer can run!”

He tipped his head to one side, nibbled a twig, and wig-wagged his tail. He *did* want to know the old Bear’s secret, but—how could he go any nearer when that dreadful odor was so strong?

Suddenly a twig in the woods near-by snapped, and Furry wheeled around, threw up his head, and planted his feet. He had been taught at school *always* to pay attention when a twig snapped in the woods.

There, right at the edge of the forest, were the very two men that the old Bear had been talking about, and both of them were aiming their guns!

Furry Fleet-Foot gave a bound, and then another bound.

“Come back!” called the old Bear with a terrible growl. “I’ll tell you my secret—and I’ll eat you alive!”

Bang! Bang! went the guns. But Furry Fleet-Foot was almost home.

And the next day, Furry Fleet-Foot went to school!





Billy Bull-Frog

HIS ADVENTURE AT SINGING-SCHOOL

BILLY BULL-FROG buttoned up his gay yellow vest, turned the collar of his best green coat well up about his ears—for the evenings were still a bit chilly—and tucked his new songbook under his arm.

He was going to singing-school, down by the edge of Wild-Goose Pond.

Professor K-Chug was the teacher, and all the small frogs of the neighborhood took lessons from him.

He had a deep bass voice, and could swell his throat to *wonderful* size, when he sang.

Billy Bull-Frog hippety-hopped down the path, jumped across a bit of water, and landed *plump*, right in the middle of a lily-pad.

All the little frogs were furnished with lily-pad seats, and Professor K-Chug stood on the biggest lily-pad of all, and beat time with a smooth and shining fishbone.

The fishbone had a very sharp point; and sometimes, when a little frog was *very* inattentive, Professor K-Chug would suddenly poke him in the ribs with it—which always made the little frog sit up straight and blink very hard for a few minutes.

Singing-school always began just as the last ray of sunlight stole away from Wild-Goose Pond. Then Professor K-Chug would stand up very tall and straight on his lily-pad, place his green goggles astride his nose, open his singing-book, and waving his fish-

bone, would say, "One, two, three, *ready*, NOW!"

And then you should have heard those little frogs sing!

On this particular evening, when Billy Bull-Frog landed—*plump*—on his lily-pad, he was thinking so much about his yellow vest and his new green coat, that when Professor K-Chug raised his fishbone and said, "NOW"—Billy forgot to sing!

I think he was looking at little Polly Water-Frog, who sat on the next lily-pad, to see if she had noticed his fine suit.

But Polly was singing with all her might.

Billy felt very much hurt, but he made up his mind that she *should* look. So he put one foot down into the water and began to make little waves.

The waves rocked Polly's lily-pad, but before Billy had time to see whether or not she was going to look at him, he felt a sharp prick in his ribs.

It was Professor K-Chug's fishbone!

Billy forgot he was at singing-school, and he jumped—*k-plunk*—right into the water.

The Professor stopped singing. He took off his goggles and rubbed them hard. Then he put them on again and stared straight at Billy's empty lily-pad.

Never before had a little frog dared to run away from his school.

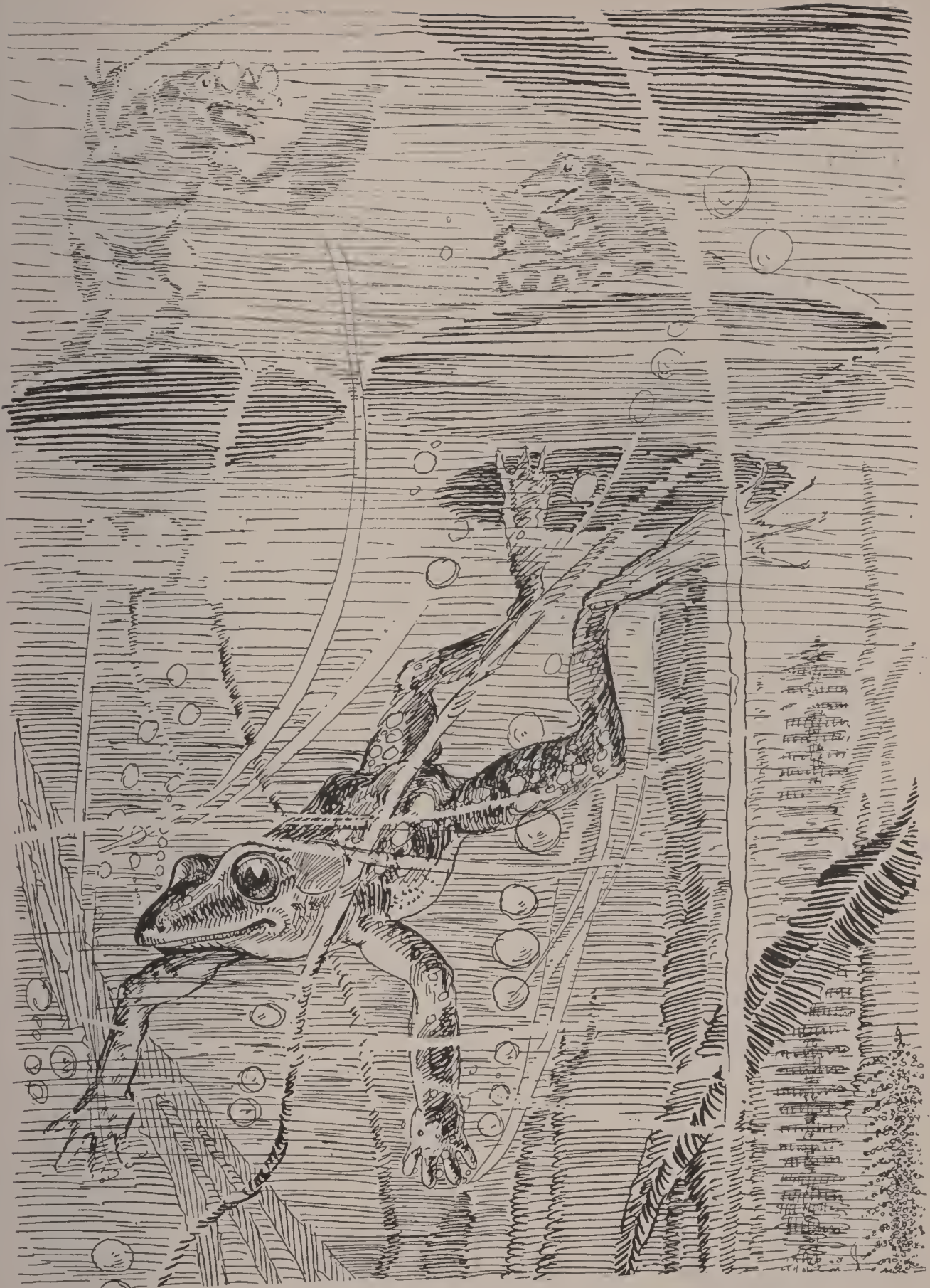
He could scarcely believe his eyes.

“Where is Billy Bull-Frog?” he asked, in a big, rumbly voice.

And Polly Water-Frog raised her hand and said, timidly, “I think, sir, that he dived under his seat.”

At that Professor K-Chug took off his green goggles, laid his fishbone across the page of his singing-book to keep his place, and dived straight under Billy's empty seat.

Billy saw him coming and swam away. But he was so frightened that he bumped his head against the stem of Polly Water-Frog's



"HE JUMPED—K-PLUNK—RIGHT INTO THE WATER"

lily-pad, and nearly tipped her off. He also scraped all the skin off his own nose.

His nose hurt him dreadfully, but he couldn't hold it and swim, too, so he just had to let it hurt.

When the Professor saw that he could not catch Billy, he swam back, and climbed upon his lily pad again. Then he put on his goggles, took up his songbook and fishbone, and began to sing at just the same place at which he had left off.

And all the little frogs sang, too—but they kept wondering where Billy was, and *what would become of him*.

When Billy found that the Professor was not following him, he sat down on a stone to rest, and to think what he should do next.

He was very much frightened to think that he had run away from school, for he had not intended to, in the least. But he did not dare go back now, and he did not quite like to go home, either.

“I’ll just play around till time for school to be out, and then I’ll go home,” he said to himself. “Maybe Father Frog and Mother Frog won’t know about it at all!”

He stood up and looked at his yellow vest. Then he turned his head and looked at the back of his green coat.

“I’m glad frog clothes do not spoil by getting wet,” he said, as he turned, now this way, now that way, to admire his picture in the water.

He had forgotten his new clothes had been the source of all his trouble, when—*snap!*

Billy dodged, doubled up his legs and shot away through the water. *He had just missed being swallowed by a big fish.*

“Oh, dear!” said Billy. “I guess everybody is after me because I ran away from school.”

There was no one to play with, so Billy began to amuse himself by swimming in and out among the stems and reeds that grew thick at the edge of Wild-Goose Pond.

Soon he grew hungry, and began to hunt for something to eat. "I wish I could catch a minnow, or a water-snail," he thought.

Then he saw a strange-looking object among the wet grasses. "I wonder what *that* is," he said. "I never saw anything like it before, but it looks as though it might taste good, and I am *dreadfully hungry*."

Out flashed Billy's red tongue, and down his throat went the queer-looking object.

Somehow, it didn't taste as good as it looked, and pretty soon Billy began to feel ill. He sat up and rubbed his gay yellow vest, and oh! what a pain there was underneath it.

After awhile—when the pain was not quite so bad—Billy decided that he would go home, and away he hopped.

"I will just tell Mother Frog all about it!" he said—like a wise little frog. *And he did.*

And Mother Frog said that she would send Father Frog to see the Professor, and, for

her part, she thought he had been punished enough, since he had not *intended* to run away.

But the next day, Billy's gay yellow vest covered such a sore stomach, and the end of his nose was all swelled up, and hurt him *dreadfully!* Besides, he had a bad sore throat from being in the water so long.

When he went to singing-school that night—Mother Frog had tied a red flannel rag around his throat to keep it from getting worse—he could not find his songbook *anywhere*—and Polly Water-Frog had to let him look on with her.





Shorty Little-Fox

HOW HE LOST HIS TAIL

LITTLE-FOX was very fond of chicken. He would say “Um, um!” and lick his chops whenever he heard chicken spoken of; and the sight of a chicken would just make his mouth water dreadfully!

Father Fox was a very fine hunter. In fact there was not a better hunter anywhere around Wild-Goose Pond.

Little-Fox intended to be a great hunter, too; as great a hunter as Father Fox. In

fact, he sometimes thought he would be a *greater* hunter—but that was when Father Fox came home without any chicken, or even a tiny field mouse for supper, and he had to go to bed hungry.

At such times Little-Fox would sit up in bed after the candles were put out—it made him feel better to sit up because that doubled up his little empty stomach and there was not so much space to feel hollow—and then he would listen to Father Fox telling Mother Fox about the night's hunting.

“First,” said Father Fox, “I went into the woods to see if I could not find a fat turkey, and while I was looking up into the branches of the trees, I just missed stepping into a dreadful steel trap. I think Farmer Jones's boy had put it there,” Father Fox added with a shake of his head which showed that he knew Farmer Jones's boy pretty well.

“That terrible boy!” exclaimed Mother Fox, with a snap of her black eyes.

“Then I thought I would go to the other side of the woods and see how Farmer Judd’s chickens were roosting,” Father Fox resumed; and at that, Little-Fox, sitting up in bed, gave his empty stomach a sympathetic hug and said, “Um, um!”—only he said it under his breath so that Father Fox and Mother Fox could not hear.

“The chickens were all shut up tight in the hen-house,” Father Fox added, “but Towser,



“‘I HAD TO RUN FOR MY LIFE’ ”

the dog, was outside of course, and he woke up just as I came around the corner. My! but I had to run for my life.”

“It makes me shiver,” said Mother Fox, “to think of the risks you run to get food for us all. I would rather go to bed hungry, I am sure, than to have you go to such dangerous places,”—which was very kind of Mother Fox, Little-Fox thought. He wondered if she felt as hollow as he did.

Little-Fox had four brothers and sisters. Their names were Fluff, Yellow-Ball, Lightfoot, and Bushy. But Little-Fox was the littlest of them all, so they just called him Little-Fox. That is, they did until he earned his new name of “Shorty.”

Fluff, Yellow-Ball, Lightfoot, and Bushy were all very obedient little foxes, and never gave Mother Fox any trouble. But Little-Fox was more daring; and once he had run away as far as the juniper bushes down by the pond and Mother Fox had worried about him a great deal since then.

When they were sent to bed, Fluff, Yellow-Ball, Lightfoot, and Bushy always lay down

and went right to sleep. It was only Little-Fox who sat up and listened.

One bright, sunny morning the five little foxes ran outdoors to play.

“You must not go far from the doorway,” warned Mother Fox, “or some men or boys may see you, and we might all be caught and killed.”

So they all promised to be very careful, and Mother Fox went back into the house to clear away the breakfast bones.

They played hard all day. Fluff and Yellow-Ball chased their tails until they were dizzy, and when they lay down to rest, Little-Fox pounced upon them and teased them until they both set upon Little-Fox and rolled him down the long, sloping hill that was in front of their home den.

Then Fluff and Yellow-Ball ran back up the hill, and Little-Fox intended to run back, too, but just at that moment he discovered a doodle-bug, and he stopped to have some fun.

He patted the doodle-bug with his paw; then he turned it over and watched it get slowly back upon its feet; and then he turned it over again.

After awhile he became thirsty, and thought he would run down to the edge of Wild-Goose Pond for a drink.

He knew very well that Mother Fox would not want him to go so far away. But he was already at the bottom of the hill, and he was so *very* thirsty!

So he looked all about, and as there was no one in sight, he trotted down to the edge of the pond.

Not a thing happened!

Little-Fox took a long, delicious drink, and then he turned and trotted back home. Mother-Fox was still in the house at work, and Fluff, Yellow-Ball, Lightfoot, and Bushy had been so busy playing that they had not missed him at all.

“How foolish it is of Mother Fox to think

that I cannot go that far alone," he said to himself. "Some day I must begin to hunt for myself. I have heard Father Fox tell all about it when I have been listening nights, and I am sure I should know how to catch a chicken. Um, um!"

That very night, Father Fox came home without so much as a partridge for supper. The night before he had brought them a fat duck, and the night before that a fine, big rabbit. But *this* night there was not a *thing* for supper!

Fluff, Yellow-Ball, Lightfoot, and Bushy obeyed at once and went off to bed, as they always did. But Little-Fox had played so hard all day that he was just too hungry to sleep and so, after every one else was quiet, he slipped softly out of the door.

"I know where Farmer Bell's chickens roost—um, um!—and I'll just go and get a fat chicken and bring it home and surprise them all! It is not a bit far away."

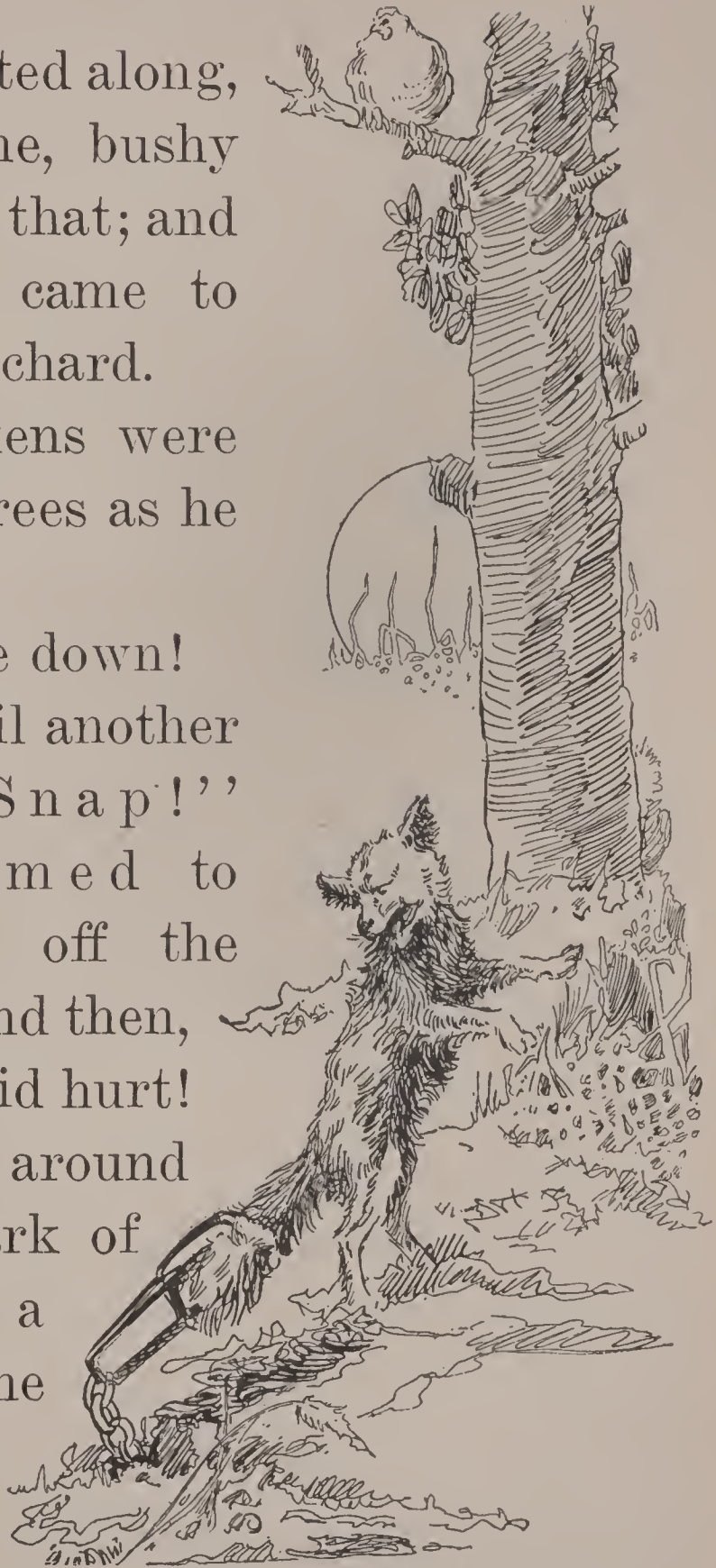
Little-Fox trotted along, swinging his fine, bushy tail this way and that; and pretty soon he came to Farmer Bell's orchard.

Yes, the chickens were roosting in the trees as he had expected.

Now to get one down!

He gave his tail another swing, when "Snap!" Something seemed to jump right up off the ground at him, and then, oh, how his tail did hurt!

He turned around with a quick bark of pain, and he saw a big thing that he knew must be a trap, and in it was at least



"HE TURNED AROUND WITH
A QUICK BARK OF PAIN"

two-thirds of his beautiful, bushy tail!

When Little-Fox barked it wakened all the chickens, and they began to squawk, and the roosters began to crow, and a dog began to bark, and then the house door opened and a man came running out, shouting as loudly as he could.

Oh, my! how frightened Little-Fox was! He ran out of the orchard, and along a stone wall, and down through the juniper bushes, and past the edge of the pond, and up to the door of the home den.

Then he stole in very softly, and went to bed—but dear, dear, how the stump of his tail did ache!

In the morning, when Fluff, Yellow-Ball, Lightfoot, and Bushy went out to play, Little-Fox was so ashamed that he didn't want anybody to know what had happened. So he just sat around on his stump of a tail—though it was a very painful thing to sit upon.

But of course he could not sit down *all* the time, and when Mother Fox called them in to breakfast, though he walked in behind Fluff, Yellow-Ball, Lightfoot, and Bushy, Mother Fox discovered what had happened.

“Why, Little-Fox!” she exclaimed, holding up her paws in horror, “*where is your tail?*”

And Fluff, Yellow-Ball, Lightfoot, and Bushy all ran around him to look.

Little-Fox just sat down and cried, he was so ashamed. But when Father Fox came in he had to tell them all about it.

“When we will not learn by being told,” said Father Fox, soberly, “we have to learn by experience. And experience is sometimes a *very painful teacher.*”

But Mother Fox put medicine on his tail, and tied up the end of it with a rag—which made it look worse than ever!

And when they went out to play again, Fluff, Yellow-Ball, Lightfoot, and Bushy all began calling him “Shorty.”

One day, when his tail was quite well, Shorty Little-Fox went off by himself to see the Wise Old Owl that lived up in a tree.

After the Owl had put on his spectacles and had looked Shorty Little-Fox over, and examined his stumpy tail, he said gravely, "If you are very careful to mind all that Mother Fox and Father Fox say to you, and never run away again *perhaps* your tail may grow longer. But I cannot say *for sure*."

After that Shorty Little-Fox was the best little fox you ever saw. And, after awhile, as he grew bigger, Shorty Little Fox's tail *did* get a little bit longer; but it never had a nice brush at the end, as did the tails of Fluff, Yellow-Ball, Lightfoot, and Bushy.





The Story of Pip

THE CHICKEN THAT WANTED TO FLY

PIP was a dreadfully daring chicken. All his life he had slept with his head pushed out from under Mother Hen's wing.

Brownie, his brother, told him that it was dangerous to sleep that way. "You will get your head snapped off by a rat or a weasel, yet," said Brownie wisely, "and, besides, you are quite likely to take cold."

But Pip was not scared a bit. "I want to know what is going on," he said, and kept on sleeping in the same dangerous fashion.

Of course Mother Hen, with a brood of eleven chickens could not be expected to

know where each one put its head, so she was spared *that* worry about Pip. But, dear me, she had enough *other* worries about him!

To begin with, he was the last chicken out of the shell, and she had begun to think that he was not going to hatch at all, and had nearly lost her patience waiting for him, when he finally broke his shell and tumbled out.

“Dear me, child, you’re late enough!” she exclaimed.

But even at that early age she could see that he was a strong, smart-looking chicken.

When the Farm Wife came to take them all out of the nest and put them in the pen in the yard, Pip did not wait for her to lift him out. He fluttered and scrambled up the side of the box and tumbled over the edge before she could so much as get her hand upon him.

Mother Hen was dreadfully frightened at this, but Pip was not hurt in the least, and

began to scratch for bugs the moment he reached the pen.

One of the first things Mother Hen taught her brood was the way she would call them if she saw a hawk coming. They all listened very carefully, for she told them that hawks just loved little chickens to eat.

After that, whenever she called, they would run as fast as possible and hide under her wings. But, somehow, Pip was always the last one under. It was not because he could not run fast enough. It was just because he wanted to catch one more bug, or pull one more worm out of the ground. And this worried Mother Hen dreadfully.



"PIP WAS ALWAYS THE
LAST ONE UNDER"

Pip always looked into every gopher hole he found; tasted of everything that looked

the least bit good to eat, scrambled and fluttered to the rim of every box and kettle about the barnyard, and once lost his balance on the edge of the water pail and was almost drowned.

He was always ready for an adventure of any sort; but the thing Pip wanted the very *most* was to *fly*. He watched the birds that hopped about the barnyard, and felt so envious whenever one of them flew up into a tree!

When the House Cat came stealing noiselessly along on her velvet paws, he felt quite vexed because the birds could spread their wings and sail away over the House Cat's head, while he could only spread *his* wings and *run*.

Often, when he had caught as many bugs and worms as his round little crop could hold, he would settle down in some cool, dusty corner and watch the birds. They just spread their wings and soared up, up, toward the

blue sky and the white clouds, and it looked so *easy*.

He had wings! Why couldn't *he* fly?

Then, sometimes, he would run a little way, spread out his wings, and give the biggest hop that he could. But he always came, bump, down upon the ground, and he couldn't fly a bit.

But Pip didn't grow discouraged, and he *never* gave up hope. He didn't sit down and mope because he couldn't fly. He didn't believe in moping, and, besides, he was always too busy to mope.

Why, he could catch and eat two bugs any time, while Brownie was catching one! His crop was as round and as hard as a little green apple, and so of course he grew bigger and fatter than any of his brothers or sisters.

"Yes," Mother Hen would say, when gossiping with the other hens of the barnyard, "I am very proud of Pip; but he does worry me, too. He is so *dreadfully* daring."

And the other hens would shake their heads and say, "I am really afraid he will meet with some sad end."

One day, when Pip thought that he was all alone, he hopped upon a box and thought he would try to fly from there. Perhaps it would be easier if he were higher up from the ground. He had been watching some bluebirds very carefully, and he believed he had now learned just how they did it.

So he spread his wings, flapped them a time or two, gave a big jump with his strong little legs, and—tumbled right upon his head.

His head felt very big and very sore when he got up, but he wouldn't have minded *that* much if he had not seen Brownie just then standing at the corner of the barn. Brownie was looking very much surprised!

"What did you do that for?" he asked.

Then Pip drew himself up, just as though his head did not hurt a bit, and said in dignified fashion, "*I am learning to fly.*"

Brownie disappeared around the corner of the barn, and Pip, left to himself, rubbed his head a bit, and then ran to look down a new gopher hole.

Brownie found his nine other brothers and sisters and told them about Pip; and then each one of the nine ran off and told another chicken. It wasn't *five minutes* before every chicken, hen, rooster, duck, goose, and turkey in that barnyard knew Pip was trying to fly.

Then the chickens cheeped, and the hens clucked, and the roosters crowed, and the ducks quacked, and the geese hissed, and the turkeys gobbled, until the Farm Boy came running out to see what all the noise was about.

Pip, who was chasing a grasshopper, jumped right between the Farm Boy's feet, after the hopper, and the Farm Boy, in trying to keep from stepping on Pip, lost his balance and fell flat upon the ground.

And he *almost* fell on Pip.

But Pip didn't care. He had caught the grasshopper and it tasted good.

But from that day on, all the chickens, and hens, and roosters, and ducks, and geese, and turkeys, teased and tormented Pip because he wanted to fly.

One day, when all the barnyard folk were out hunting kernels of grain and fine fat bugs, there was a sudden, frightened call from Mother Hen.

“A hawk! a hawk!” it meant.

Brownie, and his nine little brothers and sisters, scampered as fast as ever they could to Mother Hen, who had run into the barn, and snuggled close down under her feathers.

All the other chickens, and hens, and roosters, and ducks, and geese, and turkeys ran away and hid, too.

Pip meant to run, but he had a worm pulled just half-way out of the ground. It was a nice worm, he knew, for he had tasted one just like it, two days before.

“There’s time,” he said to himself, as he gave another tug. “No hawk ever caught me yet!”

But just as he opened his bill to swallow the worm, something big, and dark, and terrible, came swiftly down upon him.

He felt a sharp pain in his right wing, and then—then he felt himself lifted swiftly into the air and carried away from the barnyard up, up, toward the clouds.

Now Pip was scared. His wing hurt dreadfully, and the hawk’s big claw was holding him tightly, and—he had lost his worm!

“I’ll never see Mother Hen again,” he said to himself, “nor Brownie, nor——” but before he could say any more, another big bird—bigger than the hawk—came through the air, straight toward them, and the hawk suddenly opened his claw, and Pip dropped.

Down, down, he went, and—what do you suppose?



He dropped right upon the straw stack in the barnyard, and—except for that pain in his right wing—he wasn't hurt a bit!

But *scared!* He was the scarest little chicken you ever saw!

He climbed down from the straw stack, and scampered under Mother Hen's wing—with his head out, as usual.

Mother Hen had never been so frightened in all her life, before, and now she put her head down to see if it really *could* be Pip back under her wing again.

“Next time I'll surely run when you call me,” Pip said, softly into her ear.



“HE DROPPED RIGHT UP-
ON THE STRAW STACK”

But by this time all the chickens, and hens, and roosters, and ducks, and geese, and turkeys, had come out of the coops, and barns, and sheds, where they had run to hide. And when they saw Pip back, safe and sound, they all began to cheep, and cluck, and crow, and quack, and hiss, and gobble, until there was such a noise that you could not hear yourself think. Then, they all gathered around Pip.

“What a *dreadful* thing to have happen to you!” said one of the hens, shaking her head as though she had always expected it.

“What a *mercy* that you came back alive!” said one of the geese.

“What a very *strange* escape!” said one of the ducks.

“Why didn’t you run *sooner*?” asked one of the roosters.

“Perhaps you will mind *better* next time!” said one of the turkeys.

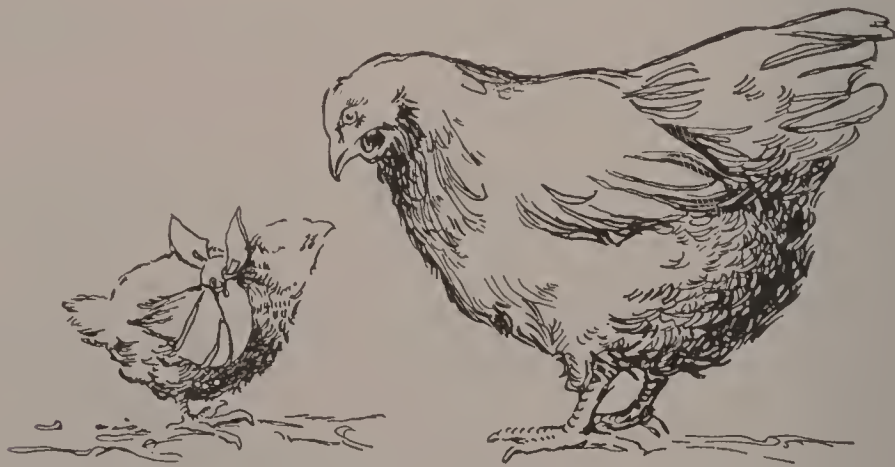
Pip listened to them all. He wasn’t so scared now. He had had time to think a

little, and he came out from under Mother Hen's feathers.

He put his head on one side, and flapped his wings a bit—although his right wing hurt like everything when he flapped it—drew himself up as tall as possible, and said:

“Well, anyway, I FLEW!”

Then he scampered back under Mother Hen's wing—with his head out, as usual. But never before had the shelter of Mother Hen's wing seemed so warm, and soft, and—*safe!*





Nibblekin

THE MOUSE THAT ATE A KITTEN

NIBBLEKIN was just a common-looking gray mouse. But Nibblekin was not a common mouse. No indeed!

Did you ever hear of a common mouse eating a kitten? Of course not.

But that is just what Nibblekin did, and I will tell you how he did it.

Nibblekin lived in a little cottage with Father Mouse and Mother Mouse, and a lot of brother and sister mice. In the same cottage lived Betty Brown, with Father Brown and Mother Brown. But they do not count very much in my story, except that Betty Brown owned the kitten that Nibblekin ate.

Of course Father Brown and Mother Brown did not know at all that Father Mouse and his family lived in their cottage. If they had I am very much afraid that they would have driven them away, and then my story would never have been written.

Mother Brown was a very particular housekeeper, and she never left bits of food about—not even crumbs. This made living very hard for the mice. Indeed, it was really the cause of Nibblekin's eating the kitten. He just had to eat the kitten or starve!

One night after Betty Brown, and Father Brown, and Mother Brown had all gone to bed, and to sleep, Nibblekin started out to see what he could find to eat.

It was in the spring, and Mother Brown had just finished housecleaning—which made it even harder than usual for the mice to pick up a living. Nibblekin went first to the pantry, but there was not so much as a crumb on the floor, and all the food was shut away

behind glass doors. It was dreadful to look at all the beautiful pies, and cakes, and cheese, and not be able to get a single bite. But Nibblekin knew that he could not gnaw through glass doors, so he sat up and sniffed and sniffed as hard as ever he could, and then he jumped down and ran to the cellar.

But he could not find anything in the cellar except coal, and some cans of paint, and some jars of the nicest looking preserves with the covers screwed down tight.

It was most discouraging!

He went back to Mother Mouse with his tail dragging in a dreadfully disappointed way.

“There is not a thing to eat!” he exclaimed. “I have looked everywhere.”

“Did you look in the attic?” asked Mother Mouse.

“I have looked there dozens of times, and there is never a crumb to be found,” replied Nibblekin.

“One never can tell,” sighed Mother Mouse, for she was feeling rather discouraged herself.

“Well, I will try again,” answered Nibblekin, for he was dreadfully hungry.

The attic stairs were steep and very hard to climb, and when Nibblekin reached the top he sat down to rest.

“Dear me!” he said to himself, “I am *so* hungry. I believe I am nothing but a hole with skin around it. If there is not anything to eat in this attic, I shall starve.”

Then he crept softly to the door and looked in. “My stars!” he exclaimed, jumping back quickly, and shivering with fright. “There’s a cat!”

He sat still in the corner for a whole minute. Then he carefully looked again.

The cat had not moved.

“It is not a cat,” said Nibblekin. “It is just a kitten.” But he squeezed himself back into the corner as far as he could and he

hardly breathed for fear the kitten would hear him. However, he kept one eye out where he could see.

The kitten kept perfectly still.

Nibblekin began to feel cramped, sitting up in the corner so close. He sat down where he could see with both eyes.

Still the kitten did not move.

“Funniest kitten I ever saw!” said Nibblekin, to himself. Then he moved a little farther from the corner, but the kitten did not even turn her head.

“Squeak!” said Nibblekin, growing very bold—but all ready to run.

The kitten did not look at him.

“She must have had all she wants to eat,” thought Nibblekin, “and so she pretends she does not see me. Probably Betty Brown gave her a good supper. I wish I had had one!”

Then Nibblekin grew very bold. He went farther out into the attic.

The kitten did not turn her head.

“She is a proud thing,” said Nibblekin, “but I am not afraid of her.” He sat down directly in front of the kitten and impudently wiggled his whiskers.

But that proud cat did not pay the least bit of attention to him.

“Humph!” said Nibblekin, “I believe she is a ’fraid cat. She is afraid of a mouse, I know she is.” And with that he went straight up to her and nibbled one of her toes.

Then he scampered back to his corner as fast as ever he could go.

“I did not know kittens tasted so good as that,” he said, licking his lips delightedly. “Why,” he added, sitting up very straight, “come to think of it, probably nobody ever found it out before. I do not suppose any of our family ever *tasted* cat!”

After awhile Nibblekin ventured out from his corner again. He sat down and nibbled at that kitten’s toes, and he kept on nibbling, and nibbling, and nibbling. It was the best

supper he ever had had in his life. And after awhile, when his stomach was so full that he could not eat any more, he sat right up in front of the kitten and washed his face.

Then he looked at the kitten, and he said to himself, "She does not look quite so proud as she did. She has found that I am not afraid of her, if I *am* a mouse," and with that he ran back down stairs and curled up for a nap.

In the morning he was awakened by a fretting and scolding. "I have not found a mouthful to eat, all night," said Father Mouse.

"Nor I," said Mother Mouse.

"Nor I," said all the brother and sister mice.

"Why, I did," exclaimed Nibblekin. "I had the finest supper I ever ate in my life."

"What was it?" asked Father Mouse and all the other mice in chorus.

"It was kitten," said Nibblekin.

“Kitten!” shouted all the mice together. “I guess you must have been dreaming.”

Nibblekin thought a minute. It really did not seem possible! Then he rubbed his paws over his stomach.

“No, I did not dream it,” he answered. “There was a proud kitten in the attic. She had had so much supper that she did not want to eat me, so I ate her.”

“Stuff!” said Father Mouse. “What do you want to talk like that for?”

“Nibblekin,” said Mother Mouse, “you must not tell such make-believe stories.”

“Ho-ho,” laughed all the brother and sister mice. “Do you expect us to believe *that*?”

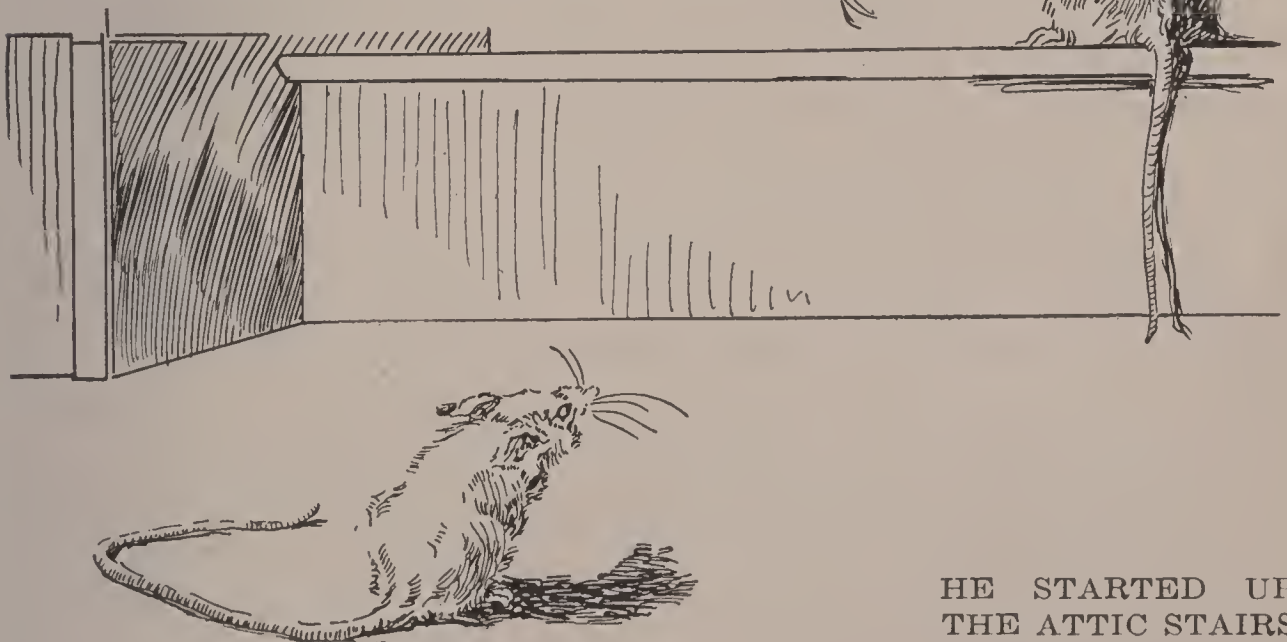
“Well,” said Nibblekin, “I left plenty of her for breakfast. You come along and see.” And with that he started up the attic stairs.

The rest followed: the brother and sister mice with squeaks of scorn, and Father Mouse and Mother Mouse looking rather foolish.

Nibblekin marched boldly until he reached the door of the attic. Then he stopped and looked in rather carefully.

There sat the kitten, just where he had left her, but looking a little limp and somewhat bent over.

“She is probably hungry by now,” thought Nibblekin to himself,



HE STARTED UP
THE ATTIC STAIRS

“and perhaps she will want to eat me.” So he “squeaked” again, as he had the night before, but the kitten did not move.

“I surely killed her last night,” he said, and calling up all his courage he walked boldly on and, before the astonished eyes of the family, began nibbling at the kitten’s toes.

After the third mouthful, Nibblekin looked up. “Come on,” he called. “There is enough for you, too.”

But before Father Mouse, and Mother Mouse, and the brother and sister mice had time to get over their surprise, there was a great noise on the stairs, and Nibblekin and all the rest scampered into the darkest corners, just as Betty Brown’s head appeared above the attic stairs.

“Poor Puss,” she cooed. “Did I forget you and leave you in the attic all night?”

And then Betty Brown screamed.

Catching up the limp looking kitten, she cried, “Oh, you poor, poor kitten! A mouse

must have been trying to eat you, *and the bran is all running out of your toes*. Oh, I am so sorry I forgot you!"

Then Betty Brown caught the limp-looking kitten up in her arms and carried it down stairs; and when it was all quiet in the attic again the mice came out, one by one, from their hiding places.

"What did I tell you!" said Nibblekin, looking around at the family, and curving his tail proudly. "Did you not hear Betty say that I killed and ate her kitten?"

But all the brother mice were too astonished to answer.

And all the sister mice were too astonished to answer.

Mother Mouse could only nod her head.

"Yes," answered Father Mouse at last, "it is altogether a most marvelous thing! I never heard of anything to equal it in all the history of Mousedom. I shall tell it to all the mice in the county."

And every one of Nibblekin's brothers and sisters vowed that they would eat the first kitten that they met!

Of course I shall have to admit that they did not—but that has nothing to do with my story of Nibblekin and the kitten that *he* ate.





Henny Speckle's Daddles

WHO WOULD NOT WEAR A BIB

HENNY SPECKLE was a regular old fuss. She fussed when the ducks went in swimming—as though that were any of *her* affair.

She fussed when the colts went galloping out of the barn—as though *that* were any of her affair.

She fussed when the turkeys went about the barnyard saying, “Gobble, gobble, gobble,”—as though that were *any* of her affair.

Henny Speckle had one chicken, named

Daddles. At least he was supposed to be Henny Speckle's chicken, for she surely had hatched him out of an egg after *three weeks* of patient waiting.

All the other chickens of Henny Speckle's brood had died soon after they were hatched, and the neighbor hens all said it was because Henny Speckle fussed so over them.

But that may have been mere gossip.

At any rate, Daddles lived on, and his mother's fussing never seemed to disturb him in the least. Probably that was the reason he lived.

Henny Speckle was a very small hen—a very small hen, indeed! But Daddles was very large and awkward. It disturbed Henny Speckle to have Daddles so large.

"I cannot understand it at all," she said one day to Mrs. Bantam. "I come of a very small family, and I do not see why Daddles should be such a big, awkward chicken."

"Why, my dear," said Mrs. Bantam wisely,

“he probably was hatched out of a very large egg.”

Henny Speckle was quiet for an unusually long time, and then she said, “Come to think



“IT DISTURBED HENNY SPECKLE TO HAVE DADDLES SO LARGE”

of it, there *was* one very large egg in the nest. Most likely that was Daddles!”

“Most likely,” replied Mrs. Bantam, returning to her search for tender worms—for she had a whole brood of little bantams to scratch for, and it left her little time for talking.

One day when Daddles was eating his corn meal he dropped some of it on his yellow feather vest.

“Daddles Speckle!” exclaimed his mother. “Have you no better eating manners than that? Just see what a spot you have made on your vest!”

Daddles looked down and tried to eat the bit of mush off his vest. But it was too close to his bill. He could not reach it.

“I shall make you a bib this very morning,” exclaimed his mother, “and you shall wear it after this whenever you eat!” And with that she walked off and began to look for stuff for Daddles’ bibs.

“A bib!” said Daddles to himself, when his mother’s back was turned. “A *bib!*”

And with that he just ran down the lane and out between the boards of the gate, and hid himself in the tall grass at the edge of the ditch.

As he sat there, all snuggled down out of sight of the farmyard, a rabbit came hopping along the road and saw him.

“What are you doing there?” asked the

rabbit, sitting up on his hind legs and wiggling his nose.

Daddles tried to wiggle his nose, too, but it was not made like the rabbit's and it would not wiggle.

"What are you hiding for?" asked the rabbit, with a stamp of his foot.

"I am hiding from Mother," replied Daddles, though he hated to say it.

"What for?" asked the rabbit briefly. "Been bad?"

"Yes," admitted Daddles. "I dropped some meal on my yellow feather vest, and Mother said she was going to make me a bib to wear when I ate—so I ran away."

The rabbit wiggled his nose very hard for a minute, and then he said, "*I* would not wear a bib, either. Come along with me."

So Daddles ran out into the road and trotted along beside the rabbit, who went hop, hop, hop, so fast that Daddles could hardly keep up with him.



" 'JIM CROW, WOULD YOU WEAR A BIB?' "

It was very hot and dusty in the road, but the rabbit kept hop-hopping along, and Daddles had to take a great many steps to match one hop of the rabbit. Besides, he had to take them *very fast*.

At last they met a crow sitting on a fence by the roadside, and the rabbit stopped. My! but Daddles was glad!

The rabbit sat up on his hind feet, wiggled his nose, and asked, "Jim Crow, would *you* wear a bib?"

"Naw, naw, naw!" screamed the crow. And then he flapped his wings and flew away.

"He is not very polite," said the rabbit, "but, you see, he thinks just as we do about the bib." Then he wiggled his nose and hopped on.

Daddles ran along as fast as he could, but he did wish the rabbit would slow up a bit. However, he did not like to ask him, so he waved his small wings to see if that would help him get over the ground.

After traveling several miles farther—at least it seemed miles to Daddles—they saw a squirrel sitting on a stump at the edge of a field.

The rabbit stopped, wiggled his nose, and inquired, “Bushy Tail, would *you* wear a bib?”

“A bib!” said the squirrel. “A *bib!* Why, house-children wear those. Indeed, I would not.” And he whisked down off the stump, ran up a tall tree, and began chattering and scolding after the pair for asking such a silly question.

While Henny Speckle was hunting for stuff for Daddles’ bibs, Mrs. Bantam came by and stopped for a chat. As Henny Speckle was thinking about Daddles and his naughtiness, she naturally began to talk about him.

“I cannot see why Daddles should be so awkward,” she said fretfully.

“Why, what is the matter?” asked Mrs. Bantam.

“He ate so fast and so clumsily,” replied Henny Speckle, ruffling up her feathers, “that he dropped some of his meal on his yellow feather vest and spotted it dreadfully. I told him I should make him wear a bib after this, and I am looking for stuff to make some out of,” she added.

“Why, here is a piece of red calico, this minute,” she exclaimed. “The milkmaid tore it off her apron. That will make a splendid bib.”

“And here is a piece of blue gingham,” called Mrs. Bantam. “The house-baby caught his dress on a nail in the fence. I saw him.”

“That will make two,” said Henny Speckle; and she took the bits of cloth and hung them upon a long stem, which made a beautiful clothesline. And then she turned about and began looking for Daddles.

“Cluck, cluck!” she called. “Cluck, cluck!” But Daddles did not come.

“Dear me!” Henny Speckle began fuss-

ing. "Was there ever a mother that had so much trouble with a family? How Bidly Leghorn gets along with *ten* is more than I can understand. Cluck, cluck! Cluck, cluck!"

But still Daddles did not come.

Then Henny Speckle ran to Mrs. Bantam and told her that Daddles was lost. Then she and Mrs. Bantam told Bidly Leghorn and Chicken Pinfeather that Daddles was lost, and in a few moments the whole barnyard was in an uproar.

Chickens, geese, ducks, and turkeys were all flying this way and that, looking into boxes, poking under the barn, and scratching up dark corners—but nobody could find Daddles!

Henny Speckle flew back and forth and was almost beside herself, she was so worried. And every time she passed the little stem which held the red and the blue bibs she stopped and wiped her tears upon them.

“*They are all I have to remind me of Daddles!*” she said.

And all the time, without ever guessing what a fuss he was causing in the farmyard, Daddles was running and flying along beside the rabbit.

The sun was very hot, and it seemed to Daddles that the rabbit hopped faster than ever.

But he did not want to go back. *No, indeed!* Did not every bird and animal they met think just as he did about wearing a bib? Of course!

After a very long time it began to grow a wee bit dark, and up in a tree by the roadside they discovered an owl, just sleepily opening one eye.

“I say, Blink Eyes,” cried the rabbit, stamping his foot and wiggling his nose, “would *you* wear a bib?”

And the owl shouted back slowly, “Who-o, who-o?”

“Nobody, I am sure,” replied the rabbit, starting on again.

But it was beginning to get dark now, and Daddles began to wonder where the rabbit slept, and what Henny Speckle was doing, and where he was going to spend the night.

He remembered how soft and quiet and comfortable it was under Henny Speckle’s wings—but then he thought of the *bib*, and he stiffened his little legs and ran on as fast as he could.

Just at that moment there came walking down the road the most beautiful creature that Daddles ever had seen. Its feathers were dark green and shone as though they had been dipped in melted gold. Its head was covered with the same beautiful feathers, and its throat and breast were pure, dazzling white.

The rabbit stopped short in the road and said politely, “How do you do?” Then he added, “May I ask if *you* would wear a *bib*?”

And the duck—for it was a duck—answered, “Yes, indeed. Do you not see that I wear one? I am very proud of it, you may be sure.”

And at that the rabbit stamped his foot, wiggled his nose just once, and dashed off into the woods—leaving poor, tired Daddles to his fate.

“Dear me,” exclaimed Daddles, “what shall I do now? I do not know the way home, and I am afraid to go home, anyway.”

“What is the trouble?” asked the duck politely.

And at that, Daddles just told him all about it.

“I would not care,” he added, as he finished his story, “if Mother could make me a beautiful bib like yours. But I am afraid it will be a horrid bib made out of a rag, like housebabies wear, and tied about my neck with a string.”

The duck looked at Daddles a moment, and

then he said, "You *shall* have a bib like mine! Come on back to the farmyard."

At that, the beautiful duck went waddling down the road, and Daddles was really *glad* to go back with him.

He did not have to run to keep up with the duck, as he had to keep up with the rabbit. Instead, the duck seemed to travel along just the way that Daddles liked to travel.

Daddles somehow never had been able to keep step with Mother Henny Speckle when they went walking together, and she had done a great deal of fussing at him about it, too.

He never had let the fussing trouble him at all for he really could not keep step with her, so what was the use?

Now he kept wondering, as he went along the road, if he really could have a white feather bib, like the duck's.

It was almost dark in the farmyard. Henny Speckle had worked herself into a

fever, and, at last, holding the red bib fast in one claw and the blue bib fast in the other, she had rolled over upon her back and closed her eyes.

Just then Mrs. Bantam and Bidly Leghorn and Chicken Pinfeather all called out together, "Here comes Daddles! Here comes Daddles!"

And into the farmyard walked Mr. Drake—the duck—with the truant, Daddles.

Mr. Drake waddled up to Henny Speckle, who dropped the bibs and hopped upon her feet.

"Do not scold Daddles," said Mr. Drake, for Henny Speckle had begun ruffling up her feathers. "He really *could not* wear a rag bib, like a house-baby, you know, and so he ran away."

Henny Speckle gave a scratch or two with her feet and covered the little rag bibs quite out of sight in the dust. *But she pretended that she was only curtsying to Mr. Drake.*

“If you will be patient,” Mr. Drake continued, “Daddles will, before long, have a fine feather bib of his own making—just like my own. Believe me; it is quite true. But you must be patient and wait.”

And Henny Speckle was so glad to see Daddles safe back in the farmyard that she made up her mind to take Mr. Drake’s advice and say nothing more about the bibs. She would just wait, and keep Daddles with her.

“After a while,” Mr. Drake went on, “if you will just be patient, all that I have said will come true. As Daddles grows his feathers will come out a beautiful, shining green, and on his throat and neck will be a fine, white feather bib, just like mine. Because, you see, Daddles is not a chicken at all.

“He is a duck!”

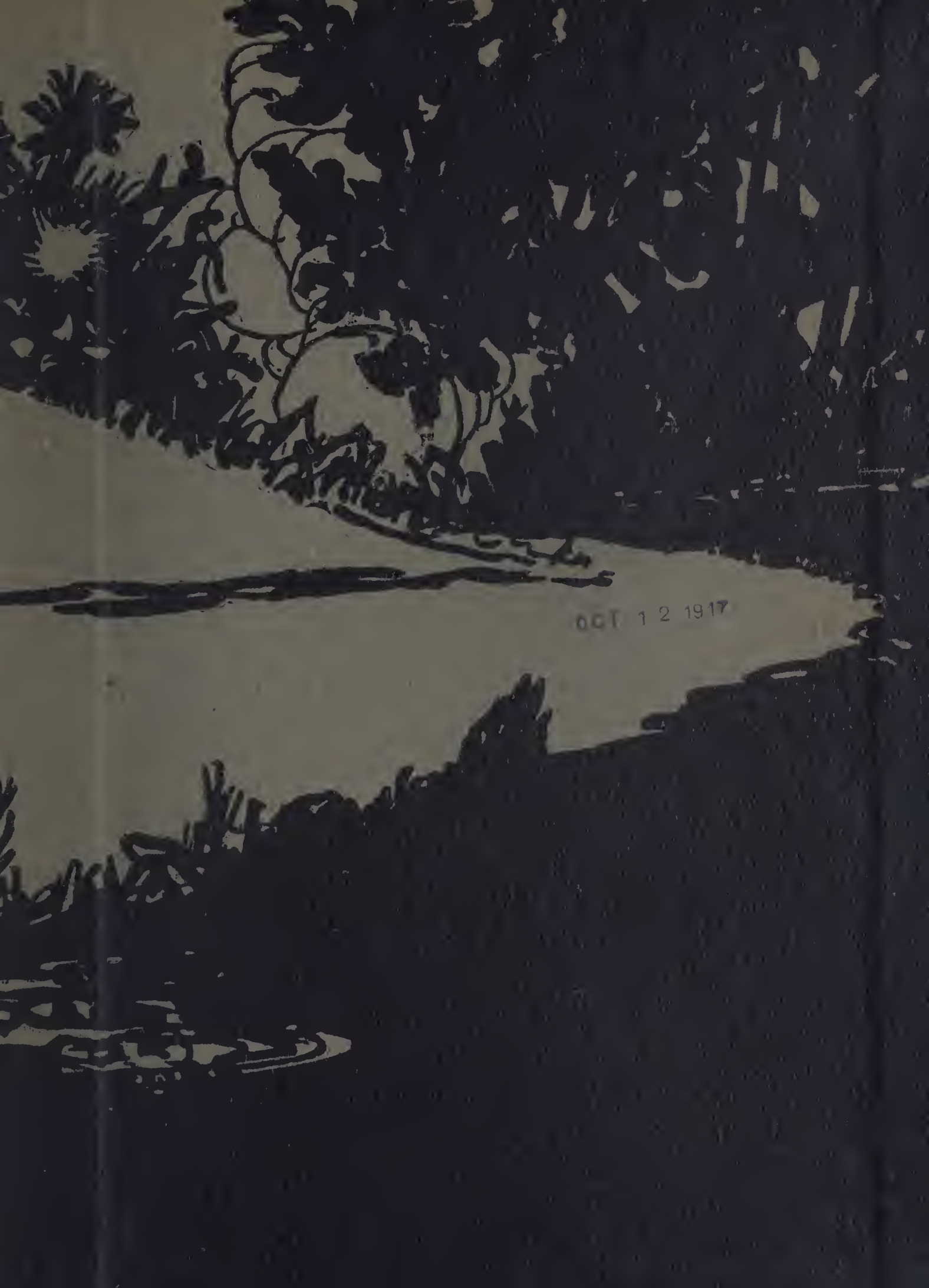
Henny Speckle never said a word. She just held out one wing, and Daddles waddled under it, the tiredest, happiest little fellow in all the whole big farmyard.

“My, how soft and comfortable and quiet it is under here,” thought Daddles, as he folded up his tired little legs.

And in another moment he was fast asleep.

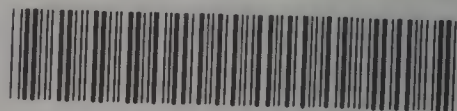






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