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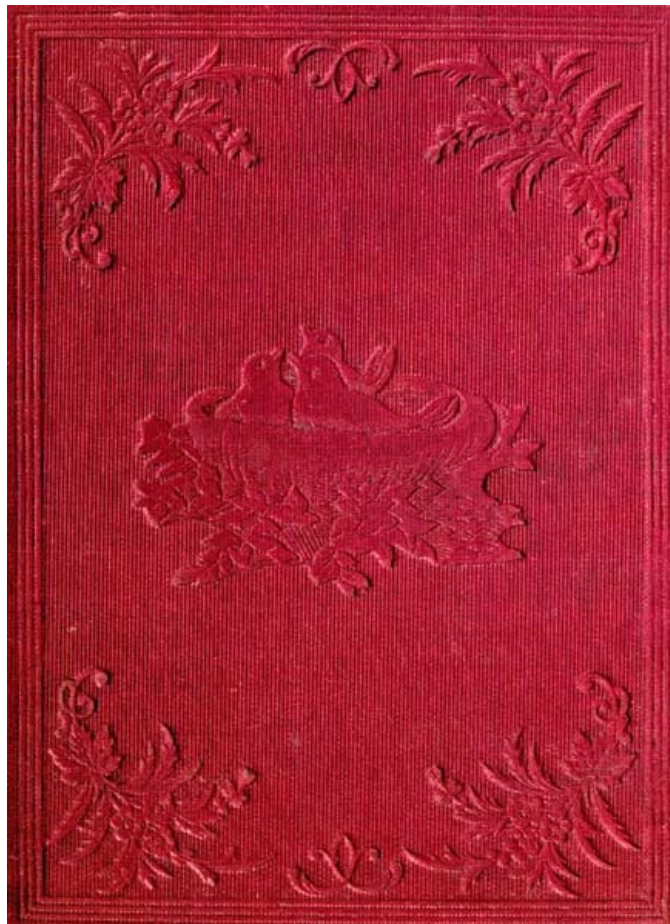
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MRS. LESLIE'S BOOKS

FOR
LITTLE CHILDREN.

THE ROBIN REDBREAST SERIES.



LITTLE ROBINS' LOVE ONE TO ANOTHER.

**LITTLE ROBINS'
LOVE ONE TO ANOTHER.**

BY

MRS. MADELINE LESLIE,
AUTHOR OF "THE HOME LIFE SERIES;" "MRS. LESLIE'S JUVENILE SERIES," ETC.

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LITTLE ROBINS' LOVE ONE TO ANOTHER.

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CHAPTER I.

JACK ROBIN'S OFFENCE.

It was a lovely May morning. The air was full of sweet fragrance from the orchards of blossoming trees. All nature seemed alive with melody. The singing of birds, the humming of insects, the cooing of doves about their cotes, the responsive crowing of the cocks in the farm yards, the lowing of the cows for their calves,—even the gurgling of the ambitious little brook running along over stones and pebbles at its utmost speed, sparkling and foaming in the ecstasy of its delight,—all hail with exultation the approaching summer.

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But let us turn from this universal rejoicing to our friends under the old elm tree. Mrs. Symmes we see standing within the shed churning butter. Fred is before the door, with a pail of dough in his hand, calling "chick, chick, chick." Annie is following grandpa to the barn with a pan of warm milk for Whiteface, while the good farmer is driving his oxen to the field.

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The barn yard gate has been accidentally left open, and the cosset, hearing Annie's voice, bounds forward to meet her, and puts his fore feet on her dress, nestling his head under her arm.

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"O grandpa!" exclaimed the child, "do please take the pan; Whiteface is making me spill it all over."

"Set it down on the ground, dear, and let her drink it," said grandpa.

"I have a good mind to let her run round with me, as I did yesterday," continued Annie.

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As grandpa smiled approval, the two were presently engaged in a merry chase from house to barn, round the trunk of the old tree and back to their starting spot again.

"Now," cried the little girl when she could recover her breath, "it's time to feed my Robin family. O, they are all here!" she added, as she opened the front door.

Jack, without waiting for further invitation, hopped into the entry, and then into the room. The table was set for the family, and he made bold to fly upon it, and walk round among the dishes. He looked so funny as he hopped a step or two, and then, standing on one leg, turned his head archly, as if to say, "I hope I don't intrude," that Annie laughed till she cried.

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"O, where is Fred? I do wish Fred were here to see the robin!" she exclaimed, as her mother entered with a dish of smoking hot potatoes.

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"Tut, tut, tut," cried Mrs. Symmes, "you are getting rather too bold;" and she shook her apron to scare the robin away. "No, no, birdie, you must be content with eating the crumbs from the floor."

In the mean time, Mr. and Mrs. Robin were talking to Jack in a very excited tone, trying to convince him of the impropriety of his conduct.

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"No," said Mrs. Robin, as Katy hopped closer to her brother, and cast a pleading glance at her parents;—"No, I do not accuse you of intending to do wrong, but you have never seen your father hop on a table, or take liberties of that kind."

Jack did not try to excuse himself, and as Annie called them to the door, and fed them from her hand, the parents hoped she was not much offended.

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Mr. Robin noticed that when Jack was reproved by his mother, Dick was very much pleased, while Molly and Katy appeared greatly distressed. "O," said he to himself, "why will not this unruly bird imitate the lovely example of his sisters!"

When they returned to the tree, and were sitting on their favorite bough near the nest, Dick exclaimed, "I was glad, for once, to see that some one was in fault beside myself. If I had been guilty of such a breach of propriety, I should have been severely chastised, if not disinherited; but bad as you have always thought me, I have never been guilty of any thing like that."

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"I am sorry to hear you talk so, my son," said Mrs. Robin, eyeing him with a sad glance. "Jack was rather too familiar, and perhaps took undue advantage of the kindness of our friends; but that was all. There was no unfriendly feeling, no selfishness, no disregard of others' wishes in his conduct; neither was there direct disobedience to his parents' commands, such as has often

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pained us in your case. We must judge the motive, my son, before we condemn."

"I knew it would be just so," answered Dick, in a sulky tone. "Every thing that Jack does is right, and every thing I do is wrong; and that is a specimen of the justice of this family." [Pg 18]



CHAPTER II.

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THE SPARROWS' NEST.

Mr. and Mrs. Robin were deeply pained by Dick's bad conduct. They concluded, however, it was best to refrain from further reproof, as it only seemed to make him worse. After the disrespectful remark at the close of the last chapter, he flew away, and did not return until night.

Katy then begged her father and mother to accompany her to the village where Canary lived; and, after a ready consent, they all stretched their wings and flew away over the tops of houses and trees, not once alighting until they reached the dwelling where the pretty bird belonged. [Pg 20]

Canary received them very cordially. She assured Mr. and Mrs. Robin of her interest in their promising children. "In their society," she added, "I sometimes forget my own trials. Young as you may think me, I have reared four young broods. Now—but I will not make you sad by relating my troubles. I see my kind mistress has provided water for me to take a bath. Perhaps it will amuse you if I do so now." [Pg 21]

Mrs. Robin assured her that the sight would delight them all.

Canary then sprang off the highest perch into the saucer of fresh water, splashed herself thoroughly with her wings, then jumped into the ring, and shook herself from head to foot. "I feel greatly refreshed," said she, after new oiling her feathers. [Pg 22]

At the request of Katy, she then exhibited her accomplishments to the wondering parents, and having ended by a thrilling song, they gave her their best wishes, and took their leave. [Pg 23]

In the mean time, Mr. Symmes, his wife, grandpa, and Annie sat down to their breakfast, though wondering that Fred, who had been sent of an errand, did not return. They had nearly finished their meal, when Annie saw him running toward the house, his face all in a blaze of excitement.

He held in his hand a bird's nest; and, as he entered, took a wounded sparrow from his bosom. [Pg 24]

"Father," he exclaimed, "isn't it real wicked to steal little birds from their nest?"

"Certainly, my son."

"Well, Joseph Marland and Edward Long have been doing it all the morning, and they say it isn't

wicked at all. As I was coming 'cross lots through Deacon Myers's pasture, I heard some boys laughing very loud; and I ran to see what the fun was. They had taken all the young birds from the nest, and the poor parents were flying around chirping and crying in dreadful distress. [Pg 25]

"Don't tease the birds so," said I; 'put the little things back and come away.'

"No, indeed!" shouted Joseph; 'after all the trouble we've had, we don't give up so easy.' And only think, grandpa, they didn't want the young sparrows for any thing,—only they liked the sport of seeing the old birds hop round and round. [Pg 26]

"I got real angry at last, and said I wouldn't have any thing to do with such wicked, cruel boys. I started to run away, when they saw Deacon Myers driving his cow to the pasture, and they sneaked off about the quickest. After they had gone, I picked up the nest and this poor bird from the ground."

"Let me see it," said Mr. Symmes, holding out his hand; "and you sit down and eat your breakfast." [Pg 27]

He left the room immediately, carrying the sparrow with him. Presently Annie came back with tears in her eyes, saying her father had killed it, to put it out of pain.

"I was afraid it couldn't live," rejoined Fred. "Ugly boys! I am glad they don't know of our robins' nest." [Pg 28]

"Such cruelty always meets with its punishment," remarked grandpa. "I myself knew a man who, when a boy, delighted to rob birds' nests. Sometimes he stole the eggs, and sometimes he waited until they were hatched, that he might have the greater fun. Then he took the poor, helpless, unoffending things, and dug out their eyes, to see how awkwardly they would hop around." [Pg 29]

"Shocking!" exclaimed Mrs. Symmes.

"He ought to have been hung!" shouted Fred.

Annie pressed both hands over her eyes, and turned very pale.

"Well," resumed grandpa, "he grew to be a man, was married and settled in life; and now came God's time to punish him. He had one child after another until they numbered five. Three of them, two daughters and one son, were born stone blind. [Pg 30]

"He was a man coarse and rough in his feelings, as a cruel man will always be; but this affliction cut him to the heart, and when it was announced to him that the third child would never open its eyes to the light of the sun, he threw up his arms and cried aloud, 'O God, have mercy on me, though I had none on the poor birds!' [Pg 31]

"Never before had he made the slightest allusion to his former cruelty, except to his wife, though it seemed by this expression, that he had always regarded it as a judgment."

"If ever I see,
On bush or tree,
Young birds in their pretty nest,
I must not, in play,
Steal the birds away,
To grieve their mother's breast.

"My mother, I know,
Would sorrow so
Should I be stolen away;
So I'll speak to the birds
In my softest words,
Nor hurt them in my play. [Pg 32]

"And when they can fly
In the bright blue sky,
They'll warble a song to me;
And then, if I'm sad,
It will make me glad
To think they are happy and free."

CHAPTER III. [Pg 33]

JACK ROBIN'S CART.

A few days after this, it rained very hard. The children were of course confined to the house, though Annie pleaded to go with her father to the barn.

After standing for some time gazing from the window, to watch the drops following each other down the glass, she saw Mr. and Mrs. Robin springing from one bough to another, chirping [Pg 34]

contentedly.

"I wonder they can be so happy when it rains," she thought. "I mean to make some paper dolls, and then perhaps I shan't think so much about staying in doors."

She ran quickly up stairs, and brought down a large box full of pasteboard, and pieces of paper of various colors.

Grandpa sat reading by the kitchen fire, as the rain made the air damp, and Fred held a book in his hand. He was not reading, however; his eyes were wandering listlessly around the room. When he saw his little sister, his face brightened, and he asked, "Don't you want me to cut you out some new dollies?" [Pg 35]

"Thank you," she exclaimed, her whole countenance lighting up with smiles. [Pg 36]

The next hour passed swiftly, as the brother and sister cut babies and houses for them to live in, and carriages in which they could ride. Fred had just finished quite an ingenious contrivance, a little pasteboard cart, with wheels and shafts all in order, when tap, tap, went somebody at the door.

"That's our robin," cried Annie, springing up to go and let him in. [Pg 37]

True enough, it was Jack Robin, looking as drenched as a drowned rat.

"O, see how wet he is! I mean to take him to the fire," said the little girl.

"Set him on the floor, and he'll shake himself dry in a minute," answered grandpa. "Birds have an oily covering," he added, "which turns the water off and prevents it from soaking in. Look now at robin; you would scarce know he had been wet at all. If it were not for this wise provision of Providence, thousands of birds would be chilled to death by every shower. Take a duck or goose after he has been swimming in the water. After a moment, he is as dry as if he had not been near the pond." [Pg 38]

"O grandpa," exclaimed Annie, "will you please to tell us a story to-day?" [Pg 39]

"I'll try and think of one after dinner," replied the old gentleman. "I wish to finish this book this morning."

When the little girl returned to her brother, she found the whole family of robins there. Fred was busy fastening a piece of cord into the front of the pasteboard cart, and presently began to harness one of the birds into it.

"Talk to him, Annie," he said, "and hold some crumbs before him to keep him still." [Pg 40]

But she laughed so heartily, she could not do much else. Fred persevered, however, and after a while succeeded in driving Jack Robin around the room, to the great astonishment of his parents, brother and sisters. They perched on the backs of the chairs to be out of the way, tipped their heads this side and that, chirping and chattering incessantly. [Pg 41]

But at last Jack grew tired of this unusual exercise, and taking an opportunity when Fred was holding the string loosely, he flew away, wagon and all, to the gilt eagle which adorned the top of the looking glass.

The perfect shout of delight drew their parents and grandfather to the room, and there stood Master Robin, apparently no ways incommoded by this unusual appendage to his tail, looking down as innocently as possible upon the merry group. [Pg 42]

"You must get your grandpa to tell you about an exhibition he once took me to," suggested Mrs. Symmes. "Your play with robin reminds me of it."

"O, you will, you will, you're such a dear, kind grandpa," pleaded the child, fixing her earnest, expectant eyes upon his benevolent face.

"Yes, yes, dear," said he, patting her rosy cheeks. "After dinner I'll be ready." [Pg 43]

"Well, then, I'll give the birds something, and let them fly away to their nest," said Fred; "and you may be picking up all the pieces scattered round on the floor."

"Now," said the boy, when the door was shut, "I'll be the master, and hear you spell."

"Cat."

"C-a-t; cat," answered Annie. [Pg 44]

"Well, you must give the meaning."

"I don't know how."

"Say like this," said the young master: "C-a-t, cat, a full-grown kitten."

This exercise was carried on with much spirit until the children were called to dinner.

THE CANARY EXHIBITION.

After he had eaten his dinner, Fred accompanied his father to the barn to assist him about the work, then fed his fowls and Annie's lamb, after which he returned to the house, eager to hear grandpa's account of the exhibition.

"I dare say," began the old gentleman, "that your mother can remember more about it than I can. The owner of the canaries was a Frenchman, who had for many years devoted himself to the business of educating birds. There were a great number of them, some of which were over twenty years old." [Pg 46]

"During the exhibition the canaries were arranged in order at one end of the stage, and came forward as they were called by name." [Pg 47]

"One of them, whose name, I think, was Major, was dressed in a tiny suit of military uniform. He had a chapeau on his head and a sword in his claw: after sitting upright for some time, Major, at the word of command, freed himself from his dress, and flew to his cage.

"Another came forward with a slender stick in his claws. This he put between his legs, and holding his head down, suffered himself to be turned round and round, as if he were being roasted." [Pg 48]

Annie was listening in open-mouthed wonder to these astonishing feats. "O grandpa!" she exclaimed, "I hope there was no fire there."

"No, of course not," cried Fred; "but what did the others do, grandpa?"

"I can think of but two more feats, my dear. Several of them came out together and practised some gymnastic exercises." [Pg 49]

"What are those?" inquired Annie.

"They balanced themselves over sticks, head downwards, with their legs and tails in the air; or on a rope, and were swung backward and forward.

"The last feat was perhaps the most wonderful of either. A bright little fellow came out, and taking his place on the platform, was shot at, and fell down, pretending to be dead. He lay quite still and motionless; and presently one of his companions came forward with a little mite of a wheelbarrow, as Annie would say, and wheeled him away." [Pg 50]

"How very funny!" exclaimed Fred.

"See, grandpa, how very fast it rains," said the little girl; "but I like rainy weather, when you will tell us such beautiful stories." [Pg 51]

At this moment Mrs. Symmes joined their party. She had in her hand a pan of beans, which she was going to pick over before they were baked.

Fred jumped up and took them from her. "Annie and I can do them, mother," he said, "and you can sew while you hear grandpa's stories."

"That's right, my boy," said the old gentleman. "Help your mother all you can." [Pg 52]

The children were soon seated at their work, and their mother at her mending. "Now, dear grandpa, we're all ready for you to begin."

"Really, my dear," he answered, pleasantly, "you are hungry after stories."

"I like yours," said the child, "because they're always true."

"Well, let me think with what I shall begin. Have I ever told you how fast birds can fly?" [Pg 53]

"No, sir."

"It is perfectly astonishing," he added, "with what rapidity they dart through the air. Not many years ago, a large number of carrier pigeons were taken from Holland to London. They had been trained to carry messages by attaching a small paper bag to their wing. If taken from any particular place and let loose, they will find their way back again. These birds were set at liberty in London at half past four in the morning, and reached their home in Holland, a distance of three hundred miles, by noon of the same day. One of them, a great favorite, named Napoleon, entered his dove-cote at a quarter past ten, having flown fifty miles in an hour." [Pg 54]

"Another pigeon from Ballinasloe, in Ireland, belonging to a gentleman by the name of Bernard, was let loose at eleven o'clock in the forenoon, with a note appended to it, directing dinner to be ready at Castle Bernard at a given time, as he purposed being home that day. The message reached its destination, which was twenty-three miles distant, in eleven minutes, being at the rate of one hundred and twenty-five and a half miles an hour." [Pg 55]

"I had no idea that they could fly so fast," remarked Mrs. Symmes.

"These are by no means remarkable cases," added grandpa. "The eagle has been supposed to fly

one hundred and forty miles an hour; and a bird by the name of swift, one hundred and eighty. But the most extraordinary that I ever heard, was of a titlark who alighted on board a vessel from Liverpool, when thirteen hundred miles from the nearest main land, and nine hundred miles from a wild and barren island. Sea birds retain their position upon the wing for a wonderful length of time."

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CHAPTER V.

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KATY ROBIN'S CAPTIVITY.

Not long after the rainy day, Mr. and Mrs. Robin were invited to Mrs. Bill's nest, to give their advice regarding her future prospects.

"Here am I," said she, "a lonely, sorrowing bird. Soon I am to part from my dear children, who will, in the order of nature, form new ties, thus leaving me still more desolate. I have a proposal from a robin, who has, like myself, been cruelly bereft of his mate, to become his wife. I feel it is due to the relations of my husband to ask their approbation before I take so important a step."

[Pg 59]

Mr. Robin politely waited for his wife to give her opinion, but she nodded her head in desire that he should speak first.

"You have not mentioned the name of the robin," he said; "but if he is one whom you can esteem and love, I advise you to accept his offer. Do I express your opinion, my dear?"

[Pg 60]

"Certainly," responded Mrs. Robin.

Mrs. Bill then uttered a peculiar cry, and a bird who had been seated on the top of the tree, flew into the nest.

"How do you do?" said Mr. Robin, recognizing a bird that he had often met.

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"This is my friend," said Mrs. Bill, turning her head modestly on one side.

"He will make you a kind husband," added Mrs. Robin. "I knew and loved his dead wife."

This matter being so pleasantly arranged, the company took their leave.

When they reached home, they found the young robins absent; and they went to the Observatory and passed an hour or two in singing duets, after which they descended to the cottage door, wondering their children did not return.

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It was nearly an hour later, when they heard in the distance dreadful shrieks and cries of distress, and darting from the tree in the direction of the sound, met Jack and Molly flying at full speed, as if pursued by an enemy.

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"O, O!" groaned Jack; "I've lost my darling sister, my beloved, whom I had chosen for my future mate."

Molly's cries were heart-rending; and it was some time before the almost distracted parents could wring from their afflicted children the cause of their grief.

At last, with broken sobs and expressions of anguish, Jack, trembling with agitation, began: "We went, soon after you left this morning, to visit Canary, and from there we went to several farm yards, where we saw a quantity of grain scattered on the ground. At last, grown weary of eating, as the sun was very warm, we hopped near a house under the shade of a cherry tree. Soon a little girl came to the door, and scattered some crumbs on the step. Katy thought she looked very much like Annie, and began to chirp most merrily."

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"The child laughed and laughed, and tried to entice Katy inside the house; but she was not disposed to go without me. She seemed to think she was taking too much of the attention to herself, and turned, in her sweet, affectionate manner, to introduce us."

"This is my brother Jack," she chirped; "and this is my dear Molly." She looked so cunning, that I hopped up and nestled her head in my breast. The little girl then ran and called a tall boy, and talked very loud and fast to him; but though I turned up first one ear and then the other, I could not understand a word she said.

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"They kept scattering crumbs, and we, without once thinking of danger, advanced farther and farther, as they retreated, until Katy and I were within the room. But we were scarcely inside the door, when, with a loud slam, it was shut to, and we were made prisoners, though neither of us at first realized this."

[Pg 67]

"The tall boy opened another door very cautiously, and stepped through; but presently returned with a cage similar to that in which Canary is confined. He came softly toward Katy; but at the same instant a dreadful fear darted through our minds—a fear of being made prisoners for life."

[Pg 68]

"Take care, Katy," I cried; "don't let them catch you;" and I flew to the top of the door. She flew away too; but they chased and chased from one side of the room to the other, while all the time

she uttered the most piteous cries, as if she were pleading for her life, until the cruel boy caught her by the tail and pulled the feathers out. The girl then sprang forward, and, throwing a cloth over her, held her until her brother brought the cage, when they thrust her into it. [Pg 69]

"She lay so still upon the bottom of it that they thought she was dead; but as soon as she began to moan, they directed all their attention to catching me. I suppose they would not have found it very difficult, for I was so full of anguish at the thought of being separated from my beloved mate, that I cared little what became of me, had not some one entered the room just as I was flying toward the door, and so I escaped. [Pg 70]

"Molly had witnessed all the scene from the window, and was crying dreadfully when I joined her."

CHAPTER VI. [Pg 71]

JACK ROBIN'S LOVE.

All the while her brother had been relating his sad tale, poor Molly stood on the side of the nest, shaking from head to foot. In the course of an hour she was so ill that her parents feared she would die, and thus that they should be deprived of two children in one day.

"To think," cried Mrs. Robin, "that we were singing so gayly while our loved ones were in such danger and trouble!" [Pg 72]

"We must contrive some means to rescue her," said Mr. Robin, sternly. "I, for one, will perish before I will leave her to so horrible a fate."

Jack at this remark gave a cry of joy. He had the greatest confidence in his father's capacity, and wondered he had not thought of this before. [Pg 73]

"Why can't we go at once?" he exclaimed. "Mother will nurse sick Molly, and I will show you the house."

Mrs. Robin and Molly added their entreaties, and the birds flew away. When they reached the house, they found the cage already hung on a hook over the front piazza.

Poor Katy was uttering the most piercing cries, and striking her wings against the wires of the cage. As soon as she saw her father and brother, she gave a scream of delight, and fell to the floor of her prison house. [Pg 74]

Jack alighted on the wires, and called her by the most endearing terms.

Mr. Robin perched on a bough hanging over the piazza, and contemplated them with strong emotion. "O, how cruel!" he exclaimed, "to separate such loving hearts." [Pg 75]

At this moment the tall boy, with his sister, came to the door, and the father listened earnestly to their voices, to learn whether they would be friends to his imprisoned child.

"Good by, father; bid mother and Molly good by for me," cried Jack. "I have determined to remain in captivity with Katy, rather than leave her to pine and die alone. Yes, darling sister, I love you better than freedom, or even than life. Here I will stay to comfort you with my affection." [Pg 76]

Dear little captive, how her heart beat and her bosom swelled when she heard this! She flew to the upper perch of the cage, and put her beak lovingly to his.

"I cannot deny such a wish, my dear Jack," said Mr. Robin, "though it will pierce your mother's heart with sorrow to be deprived of two children. I love you better for your ardent affection; but I do not at all despair of your release. Good by, dear ones; I go to consult our friends at the cottage." [Pg 77]

As soon as he was fairly out of sight, the tall boy brought a stool, and stood upon it, to take the cage down from the hook, and carried it into the house, Jack still remaining perched upon the wires.

There were poor Katy's tail feathers still lying on the floor; but the heroic bird cared not for those. He only longed to have the door opened, that he might feel his sister's soft head nestling once more against his own breast. [Pg 78]

He did not have to wait long, for as soon as the room doors were carefully secured, the cage was opened, when he flew in.

"Now, darling," said he, "we must be all the world to each other. Let us forget every thing else in the joy of being reunited." [Pg 79]

Katy was so happy, that she could only flutter her wings, and give gentle cries of delight.

As soon as they became somewhat composed, Jack hopped down from the perch to examine the cage. Like that in which Canary was confined, it had conveniences for eating and drinking, and a nice bath tub. In addition to this, the little girl soon stuck between the wires a piece of cracker [Pg 80]

and a large lump of sugar.

"This stone, my dear," said Jack, "is, I suppose, for us to sharpen our beaks upon."

"O, how sweet!" exclaimed Katy, as she tasted the sugar; and before they left it, they had diminished it about one half.

When the tall boy thought they were a little wanted to their new home, he hung them out in the sun again; and here we will leave them while we return to their parents. [Pg 81]

Mrs. Robin was indeed sorely grieved when her husband returned alone. Molly still continued to suffer so much from the shock she had received, that she could scarcely fly to the ground for her food.

"I still have hope," cried Mr. Robin, "that our friends may find a way to relieve us, if we can make them understand what our trouble is." [Pg 82]

It was in vain, however, that he chirped, and cried, and flew from the door off in the direction of his distressed children; and thus day after day and week after week went by, and still Jack and Katy remained in captivity.

Mr. and Mrs. Robin, with Molly, visited them many times in a day, and carried them fine worms. Nor did they wholly forsake Canary, whose fate was even worse than their own. They carried many tender messages from one cage to the other, thus enlivening the imprisonment of both. [Pg 83]

Dick, to his parents' great sorrow, had expressed little sympathy for his brother and sister, and had never once visited them, though he gave as a reason that he feared himself being captured. [Pg 84] He was joined now almost wholly to Mrs. Bill's family, and seldom returned to his parents' nest.



CHAPTER VII.

[Pg 85]

THE RESTORED ROBINS.

One morning, Mr. Robin, his wife, and Molly, came, as usual, to the cottage for crumbs. They were very much excited, and hopped hurriedly about the room, flapping their wings and jerking their tails incessantly.

"What can they want?" exclaimed Annie. "There is something the matter, I am sure." [Pg 86]

Grandpa gazed thoughtfully at them, and then said, "The little one has never been as cheerful since the loss of her companions; perhaps they are intending to leave this part of the country."

"O, I hope not!" exclaimed Annie, almost ready to cry. "I should miss them dreadfully."

This was indeed the case, Mr. and Mrs. Robin having long given up all hope of procuring the release of their children; and finding that they were well fed, had concluded to leave for a time, in the hope that change of scene would restore Molly to health. [Pg 87]

Fred and Annie were sincere mourners for their pretty birds; and though many others came and sang on the old elm tree, they insisted that no songs were so sweet as those sung by their old friends. Their school commenced, however, about that time, and this somewhat diverted their minds. [Pg 88]

On rainy days, Annie begged her grandfather for a story about birds; and he smiled as he related the account of a stork who refused to be comforted when separated from his mate, until a looking glass was placed in his house, that reflected his own image, which he took to be his mate, and was thus pacified.

He also told her about the blind woman who was led to church every Sunday by a tame gander, who took hold of her gown with his bill. [Pg 89]

He related to them the story of the strange attachment which was formed between a goose and a fierce dog, so that she made her nest in his kennel, and sat on her eggs with her head nestled against his breast.

To these incidents of birds he added that also of the raven who regularly travelled over the stage road in one coach, until at a certain town he met another coach of the same line in which last he took passage and returned to his home. [Pg 90]

We must now pass over several months, and relate an adventure which occurred late in the fall. Fred and Annie one morning received an invitation to a party given by one of their schoolmates, on the afternoon of the same day. [Pg 91]

As they entered the house, dressed in their Sunday suits, their countenances glowing with pleasure, Fred heard the familiar chirp of a robin, and, glancing to the window, saw a large cage containing a pair of their favorite birds.

"O Fred!" cried Annie, suddenly, growing pale with excitement "there are our lost robins." [Pg 92]

Jack and Katy (for it was indeed they) instantly recognized their young friends. They flew rapidly from one side of the cage to another, striking their wings against the wires in their vain efforts to fly to her.

Mrs. Jones, the lady of the house, at that moment entered the room. Fred advanced toward her, and fixing his frank eyes full on her face, said, "Those are our robins, ma'am." [Pg 93]

"Do you think so?" she asked, with a smile. "If you can prove that they belong to you, you shall have them, cage and all; but they have been here a long time."

"If you will please open the cage, I will show you that they know us," said the boy, earnestly.

"What is it?" inquired Mr. Jones, coming forward and joining the group. [Pg 94]

His wife repeated what Fred had said.

"What makes you think they are yours?" asked the gentleman, kindly.

"Their parents came and built a nest in our tree," said the boy. "When the little ones were hatched, we always fed them, and they grew so tame they would eat crumbs from our mouths, hop about the room, and alight on our heads." [Pg 95]

"Yes!" cried Annie; "and one we tackled, that largest one, into a paper cart, and he drew it all round the room, and then flew with it to the top of the mirror."

"How many young ones were there?" asked the lady.

"Four," answered Fred; "but one was a naughty bird, and his parents had a great deal of trouble with him. The other was a little darling; but after these went away, and did not come back, she pined, and at last the old robins flew away with her." [Pg 96]

Annie then related how Molly was fastened to the nest.

The whole party of children were standing about eagerly listening. "Well," said the gentleman, "I will close the doors of the room and open the cage. If they fly to you, or seem in any way to recognize you, I will restore your property." [Pg 97]

"And the cage too," said the lady.

"Birdie, birdie," called the little girl.

Katy hopped quickly from her perch, and flying over the heads of the others, alighted on Annie's shoulder.

Jack quickly followed, and perched on her head.

"If you will please give me some crumbs," said the happy girl, tears of joy standing in her eyes, "I will show you how they eat from my mouth." [Pg 98]

"Here, birdie," she cried, placing a piece between her teeth.

Jack alighted on her finger, then flew forward and caught the crumb in his beak, after which both he and his sister repeated the feat many times.

Mr. Jones laughed heartily, as he called his little girl to his side, and putting a piece of sugar in her mouth, told her to call the robins as Annie had done. [Pg 99]

She did so; but though Jack and Katy turned their bright eyes toward the sugar, of which they were very fond, and chirped loudly for it, yet they would not leave their old friends.

Mr. Jones bade Fred take the birds, while Annie left the room, to see whether it was not accident which had led them to alight on her head. But the moment she returned, they flew to meet her, and showed the greatest pleasure when she caressed them. [Pg 100]

"I'm afraid," said the gentleman to his daughter, "that you'll have to give up your pets."

"I don't care for them now," answered the child. "They never play any tricks for me; they only stay cooped up in their cage."

"When you go home, then, you may carry them," said the lady. "But how will you get them back to the cage?" [Pg 101]

There was some difficulty in this, to be sure; for Katy and Jack, having once tasted the joys of liberty, did not like to return to captivity again. But at length by coaxing they succeeded in making them enter the door, which was quickly closed upon them.

"O mother! O grandpa! what do you think Fred is bringing?" shouted Annie, running forward and opening the cottage door. [Pg 102]

Now, being so near the end of my book, I can only tell my young reader, in a few words, how delighted the robins were to return to their old home;—how in pleasant weather they flew around the nest in the elm tree, but always returned to the cage at night;—how during the cold winter they learned to warble forth their thanks to the dear children who had proved such loving friends;—how the old robins returned with the warm breath of spring, and were welcomed with delight by Jack and Katy, who had begun a nest of their own;—how Molly had found a mate, and built a nest on a bough near her parents;—and how sweetly at sunrise and at sunset they all carolled rich music, until the whole air resounded with their song. [Pg 103]

Of Dick nothing was known by his parents, until their new brood was hatched, when one day a robin perched on a bough of the elm tree, and after gazing around for a moment, was recognized as the lost bird. Then were loud chirpings and great rejoicings, especially after he told them he had reformed from his old habits, and was trying to train up his young family as he had been taught by his parents. [Pg 104]

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