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Title: Little Henry and His Bird

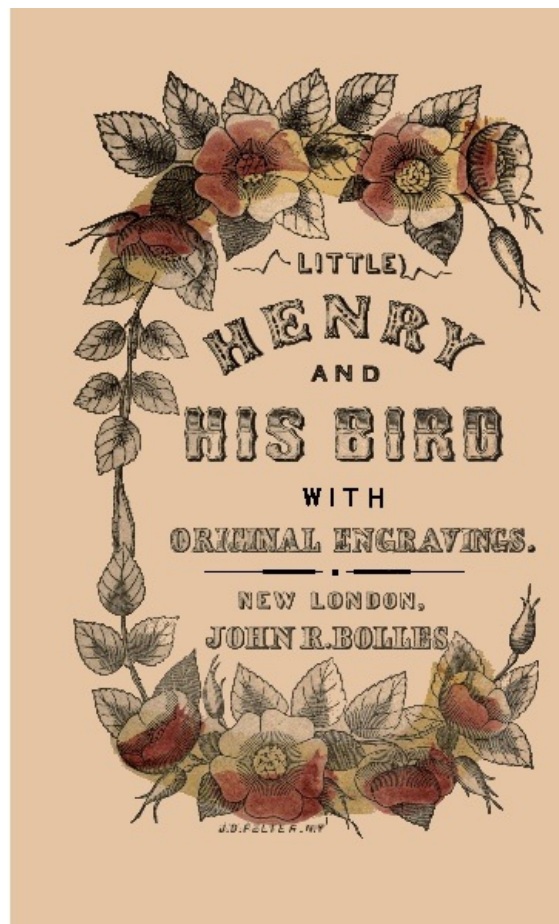
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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK LITTLE HENRY AND HIS BIRD ***



LITTLE HENRY AND HIS BIRD

NEW LONDON:
JOHN R. BOLLES.

LITTLE
HENRY
AND
HIS BIRD



NEW LONDON:
JOHN R. BOLLES.

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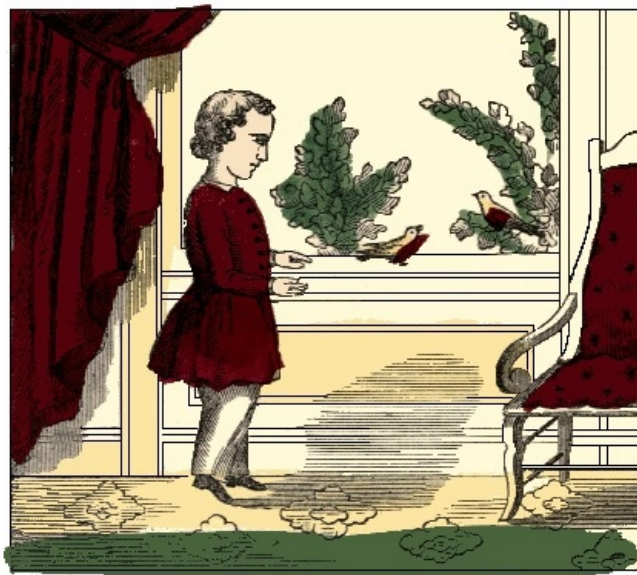
LITTLE HENRY AND HIS BIRD.

Little Henry took his book one day and went into the garden to study. He sat where the arbor cast a pleasant shade, and he could smell the fragrance of the flowers that he himself had planted. At times, he would forget his book while listening to the music of the birds, or gazing at the peonies and tulips, but he would soon think again of his lesson, and commence studying with new zeal. He was to recite in an hour, so he had wisely chosen a comfortable place, and bravely resolved to conquer his lesson as soon as possible. All at once the yellow cat, which had been watching on the wall, sprang at a beautiful red bird and tumbled down with it at Henry's feet. He started and caught the bird away from the furious cat, but some of its bright feathers were flying about on the ground, and one wing was so hurt that it could not fly, so he ran into the house and told the story to his mother. She pitied the poor little thing, and brought an old cage from the garret, where, placing the bird softly upon the perch, she fastened it in so as to have no more trouble from the cat. It was well that Henry had learned his lesson, and was able to repeat it to his mother, for now he could think of nothing but the bird. He gathered chickweed and flowers to place in its cage, and gave it water and some crumbs and seeds. For a long time it seemed too ill

to eat, and when at last it picked up a few seeds, he danced about the room for joy.

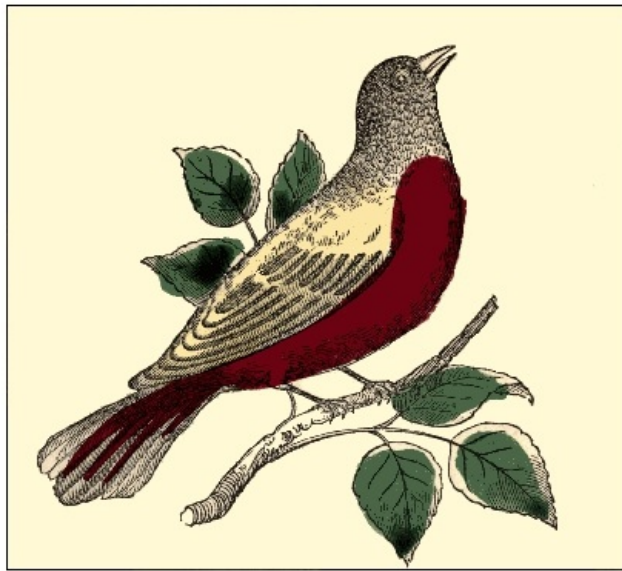


Next day the little bird seemed better, for it ate seeds and crumbs, and dipped its bill in the water. So Henry shut the cat into another room, and placed the bird on the sill of the open window. He did not suppose it was well enough to fly away, and he even fancied it would never wish to leave him, but would live in his house and sing to him, sit on his finger and be his own bird, and think itself the happiest of birds, too, with such a friend and protector.



The tall flowers growing around the window, and the gentle breeze and sunshine, made it very pleasant, and the little bird seemed to enjoy it, for raising its head it sung as if delighted, and Henry was doubly delighted to think he possessed such a treasure. By-and-by a bird like Henry's came and sat on a rose bush, close to the open window, and sang a joyous strain. It then flew away, and behold Henry's bird lifted up its wings and flew away with it, and together they went to the top of a great oak tree, and then there was such a singing as if all the birds were rejoicing together. Henry stood alone at the window—his beautiful bird was gone. The cage stood there with the cup of water and the seeds, but he turned away his eyes, and covering his face with his hands, burst into tears. His father came in, and seeing his grief, inquired the cause. When Henry had told him, he took him on his knee and said, "My son, if you should go away on an errand, and should get hurt by some furious animal, so that you could not come back, we should all be in trouble, and when you became able to return, we should be very happy. Shall we not be glad, then, with the birds, because their lost one is found? You may still hear it sing from the trees, and see its bright plumage as it skips about the garden, and know that it is happier there than it would be in confinement, where its song would seem to be—

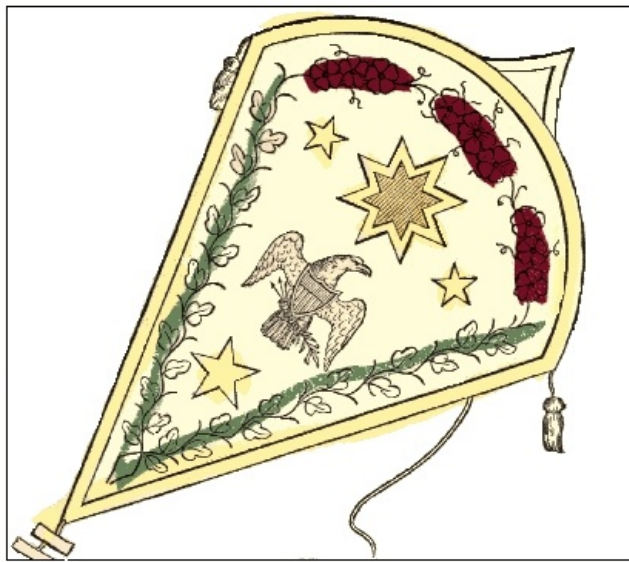
"Thanks, little stranger, for all thy care,
But dearly I love the clear cool air;
And my snug little nest, on the old oak tree,
Is better than a golden cage to me."



Still, if you want something which will fly in the air, and yet return when you wish it, be a good boy, and when I come home again I will bring it for you." Henry no longer shed tears for the bird when he thought of its being so happy in freedom.



All the afternoon he studied and worked and played as usual, often wondering what it was that his father would bring him. At length sunset came, and his father returned, bringing him a handsome kite, adorned with painted pictures. "O, father," cried Henry, after he had joyfully examined it, "may I go and play with it now?" "Not now," replied his father, "but in the morning when the wind is fresh I will show you how to raise it, and you may see it fly." Early the next morning Henry rose while a faint star was still shining in at his window, and kneeling down with a confiding heart, he repeated softly and slowly, his morning prayer. He then took his kite and went down into the garden, where the sun was just lighting up the dew-drops, making them shine like diamonds, and the breeze was fresh and strong. In a few minutes his father appeared, smiling at his promptness, and went with him into the field to assist in raising his kite.



Proudly it soared away until the yellow star upon it looked smaller than the morning star that had peeped in at Henry's window, and as they watched it moving through the air like a bird, his father told him that Benjamin Franklin, a philosopher, once tried an experiment with a kite, by which he discovered the nature of lightning. Henry said he thought Benjamin Franklin was a little boy that paid all his money away for a whistle. "So he was," said his father, "but he learnt wisdom by his mistakes, and that made him a philosopher." Henry wanted to hear all about the experiment. So his father told him how Franklin made his kite with an iron point at the top, and the string of hemp with the lower part of silk, and a key fastened where the two were tied together, and how he raised it in a thunder-storm, and the iron drew the lightning which passed down the hemp-string to the key, but no further, because it could not pass down a silken string; that he then drew it down so as to touch the key, when he received a spark like that from an electrical machine, which showed that electrical sparks are of the same nature as lightning, which no one knew before, and which was a great and useful discovery. Henry was pleased with the story, but when his father told him that another man trying the same experiment afterwards, was killed by the lightning, the little boy said that he should not care about trying it himself.



Thus the time passed pleasantly until they returned to breakfast, and when they heard the birds singing sweetly among the trees, Henry was glad that his little red bird was among them, free and happy.

DIALOGUE

BETWEEN A CHILD AND BIRD.

Little bird, little bird, come to me!
I have a green cage ready for thee;
Many bright flowers I'll bring to you,
And fresh ripe cherries, all wet with dew.

Thanks, little stranger, for all thy care,
But dearly I love the clear cool air;
And my snug little nest on the old oak tree,
Is better than a golden cage to me.

Little bird, little bird, where wilt thou go
When the fields are all buried in snow?
The ice will cover the old oak tree—
Little bird, little bird, stay with me.

No, little stranger, God guides me,
Over the hills and over the sea—
I would be free as the morning air,
Chasing the sunshine everywhere.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK LITTLE HENRY AND HIS BIRD ***

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