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# LITTLE MITCHELL

## THE STORY OF A MOUNTAIN SQUIRREL

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**LITTLE MITCHELL HAS HIS PICTURE TAKEN**  
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## LITTLE MITCHELL

### *THE STORY OF A MOUNTAIN SQUIRREL*

BY

**MARGARET W. MORLEY**

AUTHOR OF "A SONG OF LIFE," "THE BEE PEOPLE," ETC.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY BRUCE HORSFALL



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A. C. McCLURG & CO.  
1904

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# LITTLE MITCHELL

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## LITTLE MITCHELL

### *THE STORY OF A MOUNTAIN SQUIRREL*

#### I

##### LITTLE MITCHELL'S LADY COMES

**B**ABY MITCHELL was an August squirrel. That is, he was born in the month of August. His pretty gray mother found a nice hole, high up in the crotch of a tall chestnut tree, for her babies' nest; and I know she lined it with soft fur plucked from her own loving little breast,—for that is the way the squirrel mothers do.

This chestnut tree grew on the side of a steep mountain,—none other than Mount Mitchell, the highest mountain peak in all the eastern half of the United States. It is in North Carolina, where there are a great many beautiful mountains, but none of them more beautiful than Mount Mitchell, with the great forest trees on its slopes.

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One of these forest trees was the big chestnut where Baby Mitchell was born. In the warm and lovely summer he lay safe in his snug nest twenty feet above the ground.

How many little brothers and sisters there were, I do not know, for a very sad thing happened, and all of them died but Little Mitchell. I must tell you what this sad thing was that happened to the little squirrels.

There was a small log-cabin at the foot of the mountain, and here lived a father and mother and a very large family of very small children. There was no other house near; and the father had to go a great many miles through the woods to his work in a saw-mill that some one had set up in the mountains.

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### LITTLE MITCHELL'S FIRST HOME

"A squirrel's nest, in a nice hole, high up in the crotch of a tall chestnut tree." (Page [13](#))

And the children had to go such a long way to school, over little rivers that they crossed on narrow foot-logs; and through deep shady woods, where the sun could scarcely send a ray down through the tops of the tall trees; and under tangled rhododendron bushes that were often like little trees they were so large, and in the summer time were covered with masses of splendid white flowers.

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Yes, it was a beautiful forest, though it was very, very wild; but there were no dangerous animals to hurt the children, excepting once in a while a long rattlesnake that wiggled out of the way as fast as it could if anybody came along.

The children loved their forest home, and they could run across the foot-logs without slipping into the little rivers, for they had no shoes, and their pretty bare feet had learned to cling to whatever they touched, like the feet of the wild animals, and they, you know, never tumble down or slip on a log.

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When the children had run across the foot-logs, and danced through the dark woods, and skipped along under the rhododendrons far enough, they came to the schoolhouse.

You would be surprised to see this schoolhouse, for it was only a little log-hut with one room; and the seats were just rough benches, and there were no desks and no blackboards.

The schoolhouse stood on the bank of a little river; and all the children who lived "yon side" the river, as they say there, had to come to school over a long and narrow foot-log. But this log had a railing to hold on by, and the children did not mind going over it any more than you mind walking on the sidewalk. You see, they had their bare feet to cling with.

But they did not have to cross the log to go to the schoolhouse very often, for it is almost always "vacation" in the mountains. Sometimes the children go to school three months in the year, but very often there is school for only six weeks at a time. So they have to make the most of the good times, when they all meet together, and play with each other, and learn to read a little.

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It would be fun to tell you about the little girls who came from ever so far, barefooted and sunbonneted, and the little boys who

came from ever so far, barefooted with ragged caps on their heads, to this queer school. And it would be fun to tell of what they did in school, and of the sport they had at recess, playing in the river that ran so close to the schoolhouse door, and in the woods, all full of wild flowers, where the rabbits scampered under the trees, showing nothing but a tuft of white down which was their tail. But up in the trees gray squirrels ran about, with tails all big and bushy, and not white at all. It would be fun to tell about these things,—but there is little Baby Mitchell waiting for us up in the top of the chestnut tree, and we must hurry and take him down.

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But first we must go back to the little log-cabin at the foot of the mountain, and wait for the lady to come along; because, you see, the story all turns on the coming of the lady.

One August day, toward night, when it began to get very cool at the foot of the high mountain, the mother of the little children who lived in the log-cabin was very much astonished. The little children were very much astonished too. The dog was so astonished that he forgot to bark; and the very cabbages and cornstalks that grew in the clearing in front of the cabin no doubt were also very much astonished.

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Such a thing had never happened before; for coming along the path out of the woods were two strangers,—a lady from away off, and a mountain man who was acting as her guide.

The lady, on her part, was very much astonished too. She wanted to climb to the top of Mount Mitchell; and somebody had told somebody who had told her that the shortest way up was from a house at the foot, on the east side of the mountain, and that this house was a little hotel where strangers usually went to spend the night before starting up the high mountain.

So the lady came from away off, until she got within a few miles of the foot of the high mountain. Here she spent the night in a farmhouse, and next morning took a mountain man for a guide, who said he knew the way; and they started to walk to the little hotel, which she found was no hotel at all, but only the tiny log-cabin where the father and mother and their children lived.

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The lady had to walk, because that was the only way to get there. There was no road through the forest, only a narrow path that went waggling along over rocks and rivers and tangly tree-roots, and nobody but a mountaineer could have found it. The lady followed her guide miles and miles, and would have felt very tired, only the air is so refreshing up by the big mountain that you cannot feel very tired, not if you walk ever so far.

The lady wore shoes, of course, and she could not get through the woods and over the foot-logs as easily as the little barefooted children. But at last, just before dark, they crossed one more stream over a particularly small and wobbly foot-log, and there they were.

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“That is the house,” said the guide, as they came out into the clearing where the cabbages and cornstalks were growing.

“Where?” said the lady.

“There,” said the guide, pointing to the cabin.

It was then that the lady felt very much astonished.

Ladies always feel very much astonished in these mountains, because nothing ever turns out as they expect.

This lady had expected to find a little hotel, you remember.

But where is Baby Mitchell all this time? you are asking.

Oh, he is safe enough yet. Nothing at all has happened to him, and you must wait patiently until it is time for something to happen.

The lady is very tired, remember,—or at least as tired as anybody can be in that enchanted forest; and she is hungry, and must have her supper.

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When the mother of the little children saw the lady coming, she was glad as well as astonished, and ran to meet her.

“Law me! You must be plumb tired out,” she said. “Come right along in, and set down and rest yourself. We hain’t got much, but what we have got you’re welcome to.”

That is the way the mountain people always talk. Their grammar is all wrong, but their hearts are all right,—and a good heart is worth a great deal more than good grammar; don’t you think so?

So the lady went in. There was nothing else to do. She couldn’t *possibly* have gone back all that way through the forest and across the rivers at night, you know. And though the log-house was so

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small and so crowded, she felt that she was not in the way, the mother and all the little children looked so friendly at her.

She was quite a wonderful lady,—or at least so thought that family in the woods; for while the little children stood looking at her, what do you think?

There she sat—with a doll in her hands!

It was a little doll, but it had real hair, and when you laid it down it shut its eyes.

The little children who lived in the cabin had never seen a doll in their long lives before,—never.

But they knew right away what it was for. So did the lady. She knew very well it was meant for children to play with; and presently she laid it in the arms of one of the little girls. And the little girl grabbed it tight in both hands, as if she were afraid it would run away. Then she laid it up over her shoulder, with its curly head in the hollow of her neck, just as her mother held the baby, and she patted it softly with a gentle motherly touch of her chubby little hand, and, oh, how her eyes did shine!

[25]

Then, wonder of wonders!—there was another doll in the lady's hand, and she put it into the arms of another little girl; and still another doll came out of her pocket, or somewhere, for the third little girl; and the three dolls were all as much alike as two peas.

It was all wonderful. The three little girls would have thought Christmas had come in the middle of the summer, if they had known anything about Christmas, which they did not. Yet they were very good and pretty little girls, and they had lovely rivers to play in, and a great splendid mountain to look at all their lives.

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Of course there were some boys,—three of them; and they were about as much interested in the wonderful dolls as were their little sisters. That is, they were until the lady took out of the bag which the guide carried a new jack-knife with two shiny blades; then the boys' eyes got very shiny too. None of them had ever owned a knife. Their father had one, and when he was at home the boys used to borrow it to whittle the ends of sticks into brushes to kindle the fire with; for there was never a scrap of paper with which to start a fire.

You can imagine how those three boys felt when the lady gave each of them a new knife! You can imagine how they felt, I say; but they could not have told you. They really didn't know themselves; for they had never felt that way before.

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What are you asking?—are we *never* coming to Little Mitchell?

Yes; but we must have supper first.

What has supper to do with it?

Oh, everything. For now that the lady is found, the whole story turns on the supper.

If it hadn't been for the supper, the lady would not have found Little Mitchell, and you would never have known a thing about him.

You see, the people who lived in the cabin had nothing to eat but corn-pone, which is a kind of coarse cornbread baked in the ashes; for they had no stove,—nothing but a big stone fireplace to do their cooking in.

There was nothing but corn-pone and fried cabbage there to eat. So when the lady came, the father took his gun (he had just got home from the saw-mill) and went out to get some meat for supper.

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After a little while he came back with a large gray squirrel; and pretty soon they all had a nice hot supper of corn-pone, fried cabbage, and squirrel-pie.

Now squirrel-pie is really no worse than chicken-pie or veal-pie or mutton-pie; but it sounds worse. And of course nobody knew that the squirrel that went into the pie was a poor little mother bunny with a nestful of young babies.

I should like to tell you how the lady spent the night in the log-cabin, which had only two rooms for its eleven occupants, counting the lady and her guide who were not expected, and not counting the very littlest baby and the next biggest baby and the three-year old baby, who were all tucked away somewhere—under one of the beds, I think—before supper.

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### THE LOG SCHOOLHOUSE

“The schoolhouse stood on the bank of a little river.” (Page [17](#))

I say I should like to tell you about that strange night; only, of course, you would not listen, with Baby Mitchell waiting up in his tree to be rescued. [30]

But I must say that many rooms do not make kinder hearts or better manners than the lady found in those two crowded little rooms of the log-house.

The lady was not used to living as her new friends had to live, and she could not get used to it in time to go to sleep that night. So when morning came she should have felt very tired after the long walk of the day before and the sleepless night. But, remember, she was in an enchanted forest,—that is, it seemed to have enchanted air, for the moment she got out in the morning and breathed deep of the pure high air she felt as fresh as she ever felt in her life.

And the school-teacher did look so fresh and pretty!

Who was the school-teacher? [31]

Why, she was just the school-teacher. She was young and pretty, and the little children loved her, and went to school every morning with her through the deep woods and over the many rivers.

She lived at their house during term-time, and she had just come, for school was to begin the next Monday. Her own home was in another part of the mountains.

When the lady asked her how she liked living out in this wild and lonely place, and teaching in the wild and lonely schoolhouse, she smiled until her pretty white teeth showed, and said,—

“Oh, I like it splendid.”

So you see the little children had good reason to love her.

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## LITTLE MITCHELL IS FOUND, AND TAKES A STRANGE JOURNEY

**W**HEN the little gray bunny mother did not come home, the babies in the crotch of the old chestnut tree got very hungry, and I am sure they cried all night.

No doubt they were cold too, for they had no little furry mother to curl herself about them and keep them warm. Poor babies! I suppose they cuddled as close together as they could, and cried and cried, and wondered why mother did not come home and take care of them.

At last, when morning came, the strongest one—that was our Little Mitchell, you know—felt so desperate that, although he was only two or three days old and had not got his eyes open yet, he climbed up to the crotch of the tree to find out what he could.

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All he felt was the cold keen air of the early morning; and then, being all confused, I suppose, and not knowing how high he was from the ground,—for his eyes were tight shut, remember,—he tried to walk out into space, and down he fell,—not to the ground, oh dear, no! If he had fallen to the ground he would have been killed, and this story would never have been told.

When he felt himself falling, he caught at the tree-trunk with his little claws, and managed to get hold of a piece of loosened bark. Here he clung, terribly frightened, and crying like a little baby,—which, indeed, he was.

Perhaps it was a good thing for him that his eyes were shut, for how frightened he would have been to look down and see the earth so far below him!—such a cold, unfriendly earth, too, with nothing on it for a baby squirrel to eat.

[34]

I do not know how long he had been clinging there and crying before the lady came. For now it is time for his lady to come along, and when she once comes Little Mitchell will be in the story every minute until it ends.

You see, as soon as breakfast was over and they had all eaten all the hot corn-pone and fried cabbage they wanted, the lady was ready to start up the mountain.

The little children and their mother and the school-teacher were sorry to see the lady go, and the father looked anxious,—for Mount Mitchell is a very wild mountain and a very big one, and he was afraid they would get lost. He offered to go and show them; but the guide said no, he knew the way.

So the lady and her guide started on up the mountain in the cold morning air, and it became so steep right away that the lady had to keep stopping to get her breath.

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It was while she was stopping to breathe that the guide said,—

“Listen! I hear a boomer, and I would like to get to see it.”

“Boomer” is their name for the little red squirrel, of which the mountaineers are very fond, and which is not nearly so common there as the big gray squirrel. The people who live down below call the mountain people “mountain boomers,”—why, I do not know, unless perhaps they think they live in the mountains like squirrels.

Well, the guide began to look around to find the boomer, and the lady looked around too, and at last they spied a little squirrel clinging to the bark of a tall chestnut tree, twenty feet from the ground, and crying very hard.

They soon found that it was no boomer, but a tiny gray squirrel. The guide threw up small sticks and bits of bark to make him run; but he did not stir, even when a bit of bark hit his tail.

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Then said the guide, “I’m going up to get him.”

So up the tree he went, clinging with arms and knees, for the tree-trunk was so big his arms could not reach half-way around it.

It was a very hard climb, but the man got there at last, and, catching the little fellow by the tail, came sliding down, the little squirrel squeaking frantically, for it was both frightened and hurt at being handled in that rough way. Its own little bunny mother never picked it up by the tail, you know.

The man put the little fellow in the lady's hand, and, to her surprise, she saw it was a young gray squirrel with its eyes not yet open.

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### LITTLE MITCHELL'S FIRST MEAL

"The Lady dipped the end of her finger in the milk and put it in Little Mitchell's mouth." (Page 52)

And now you know it was Little Mitchell, who had fallen out of his nest and was lying there in the lady's hand.

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Such a funny little fellow as he was!—all head and feet, with almost no body at all, and a queer little stub of a tail that was hardly as long as his queer little body.

The lady laughed when she saw him, and then she felt very sorry for the helpless little one.

What could she do with him? She could not lay him down on the cold mountain and go away and leave him. And yet he must just as surely die if she took him, she thought, for she had nothing with which to feed him.

He nosed around in her hand in such a comical, helpless way, not crying now, but whimpering like a very tired, worn-out little baby,—which, you know, is just what he was.

[39]

Finally the lady started on with him in her hand; but he squirmed and whimpered so, she soon grew tired of holding him—and then, what do you think she did?

She had on a warm flannel waist with a soft loose belt, and into the waist she tucked him. In a moment he had worked his way down under the belt, where he snuggled up, stopped crying, and went fast asleep.

You see, he was almost dead from cold and weariness.

On went the lady, slowly climbing up the steep mountain; and the wonder is that Little Mitchell was not squeezed to death under her belt. But he slept on.

On through the great chestnut forest went the lady and her guide,—on past the handsome tulip trees, the great oaks, and all kinds of beautiful forest trees.

[40]

The sun grew hot on the mountain side, and the air became soft and hazy,—a little too soft and hazy for safety on that wild mountain, where storms ride swiftly up like witches from nowhere.

But on and up they went, until they came out of the forest to a wide sloping pasture,—a "bald" they call such open places on the mountains.

Here they found the ground covered thick with grass and flowers, and a herd of cattle grazing. These half-wild cattle raised their heads as the lady and her guide came out of the forest into their pasture, and some of them shook their long horns and began to step nearer. But the guide shouted and waved a big stick at them, and they went off.

And Baby Mitchell slept on.

When they were half-way across the "bald" that sloped gently upward, the lady turned around and looked back over the tree-tops.

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It was a wonderful view.

Below was the valley where stood the log-cabin; but she could not see the cabin, it was so close under the mountain; and the valley

itself looked like a slit, it was so deep and narrow.

And now you know why the night came on so soon, and why the morning sun was so long in shining down into the cabbage patch. The valley was so deep and narrow that the sun could not look into it until it was high up in the sky.

Across the narrow valley, and right in front, was a splendid tree-covered spur of the Blue Ridge mountains; and off a little to the left was the queer-looking Table Mountain, stuck up like a big hat set on the head of a mountain. Beyond were billows upon billows of mountains; and beyond them, far off in the distance, the lowlands looked blue and level like the sea. [42]

The lady stood several minutes looking at the grand and beautiful view, with Baby Mitchell fast asleep under her belt. Then she went on, and at last they got to the top of the "bald," and, with a last look back at the wide world below, the lady followed her guide on into the black fir forest.

The black fir forest was very black indeed, and the fir trees towered up and up and up so high you could not see their tops, and so thick you could not see the sky through their branches. Oh, but it was dark under them!—it was like walking under thousands of Christmas trees before the candles and presents have been put on; only these trees were ten times as big as Christmas trees. They were balsam firs, the kind you get the sweet-smelling needles from to put into sofa pillows; only these were ten times as big as the balsam firs that grow in the North. But they smelled just as sweet as those, and all the forest was filled with the perfume of them. The ground was covered ankle deep with soft green moss that the lady's feet sank into as she walked. [43]

And everywhere were the rhododendrons. It was too late for them to be in bloom; so they were not as lovely as they are sometimes. When you get into the rhododendrons, you cannot see up into the tree branches, because the rhododendron branches are tangled about you and above you with their stiff green leaves. They make the woods seem dreadfully black and gloomy; but when they are in bloom it is another matter.

The lady and the guide went on and on under the twisted rhododendrons, and Baby Mitchell lay fast asleep under the lady's belt. [44]

Then the guide lost the trail.

It was, in fact, a great deal easier to lose it than to keep it. Indeed, it could hardly be called a trail at all, it was so little used, and one had to know the mountain very well indeed to get safely to the top.

Such a wild and lovely forest as they found now, you never were in. I do not believe such balsam firs grow anywhere else in the world. Their dark green tops make the mountains look black, excepting when the air is hazy and makes them look faint and blue in the distance. But when the air is clear the mountains look black because of the fir trees that grow all the way up to their tops.

And when anybody asks, you can tell them that is why the Black Mountains got their name; and Mount Mitchell, you know, is one of the Black Mountains,—the very highest one of all. [45]

Well, they lost the trail, the lady and her guide, and soon they had to creep on their hands and knees under the rhododendrons that twisted great tangly arms about them and tripped them up with roots that lay like giant snakes upon the ground. And then they came to awful precipices, and had to creep back again. And sometimes they had to climb over immense fallen logs, slippery with a deep coat of green moss.

The lady remembered Baby Mitchell under her belt, and crept along as carefully as she could; yet it is a wonder he wasn't squeezed to death. But he was a good tired baby, that said never a word, but slept on, warm and snug under the soft belt. [46]

It was hard work for the lady, and the air began to smell damp, and sweeter than ever,—the way it does before a rain.

And now and then they would get glimpses through the forest to where was a deep gorge with a tremendous tree-clad spur beyond, and down into this gorge went pouring what looked like a river of white mist.

The lady was frightened now, for she knew they were lost on the wild mountain, and that the white river she saw was the fog-clouds rolling in.



The fog-clouds sometimes shut down on the mountains so thick and heavy that you cannot see your way at all; and then it is not safe to take so much as a step.

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#### LITTLE MITCHELL CRIES FOR MORE

“He had squirmed out of the blanket.” (Page 62)

But the guide struggled on as fast as he could, and would not own that they were lost, though his face was all drawn with fear of the wild cloud-covered mountain.

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At last they reached a little icy stream coming down the mountain and began to climb up its bed, not minding the cold water that soaked their feet. Then on they went as fast as they could struggle through the terrible forest, and just as they got to a trail that the guide knew would lead them to the top the rain began to fall and a cloud closed swiftly about them. But they were on the right path now, so they did not care for the creeping cloud.

It was still a long, long walk to the top,—for one thing that always astonishes strangers who go to these mountains is the way distances stretch out. They tell you it is two miles to a place, and when you have gone two miles it is still two miles farther,—only sometimes when you have gone the two miles it is four more before you get there.

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Well, they got to the top at last, but by that time the rain was pouring and the clouds had settled down over everything. It was a terrible storm they were in, and so icy cold.

But Little Mitchell slept on,—he was so very, very tired, you see, and then the lady had managed somehow to keep him dry and warm.

You can see the whole world from the top of Mount Mitchell,—well, no, not really the whole world, but you know what I mean,—you can see so much it seems as if it must be the whole world; and that is why the lady had wanted to go there. But for all she could see that day, she might as well have stayed at home.

It is usually that way on Mount Mitchell. No matter how clear it is when you start, there is a watchful cloud that goes sneaking up after you, or else comes sneaking down from its hiding-place back of the sky as soon as you come, and the first thing you know it has folded itself down over the mountain-top and blotted out everything from sight.

[50]

There is a cave on the top of Mount Mitchell, made by a large overhanging rock. People generally go up from the sensible side of the mountain,—which is not the side the lady went up, because she

didn't know any better, you see.

The people who go up from the sensible side take blankets and food on the backs of mules, and stay all night in the cave. That is good fun.

But the lady had no blankets and no mule,—only a very tired guide, who was so tired because he got frightened on the mountain thinking he had lost the way, and a poor little hungry baby squirrel fast asleep under her belt.

[51]

The lady looked into the cave, and what do you think she found?

A couch of balsam boughs; but that doesn't count.

An old coffee-pot; but that doesn't count.

A little can partly full of condensed milk; and that does count,—for, you see, it saved Baby Mitchell's life.

Somebody had been camping there sometime, and had left the can of milk, and it had not turned sour because it is so cold up there even in midsummer.

While the guide was trying to make a fire out of wet sticks, the lady took Little Mitchell out from under her belt,—and a very limp baby he was by this time, for he was nearly starved to death, of course.

She dipped the end of her finger in the milk and put it in Little Mitchell's mouth. Perhaps you think he wouldn't eat condensed milk. You should have seen him! He licked every bit from the lady's finger, and then cried for more.

[52]

She fed him all she dared,—for when you are almost starved it is dangerous to eat too much at a time, you know. When she would give him no more, he cried very hard,—he was such a hungry baby, and the milk tasted so good. But pretty soon he quieted down and went fast asleep again, and was tucked back under the soft belt.

The guide could not start a fire,—which shows he was not a "truly" guide, for a "truly" guide can make a fire out of icicles, you know.

So, all wet and shivery, they sat in the cave and ate some lunch out of the lady's bag, which had been carried by the guide.

[53]

They hardly dared to rest at all, for they had to get to the foot of the mountain before night; so in a few minutes they started down.

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[54]

### III

#### LITTLE MITCHELL'S FIRST RIDE, AND HOW HE AND HIS LADY GET HOME

O H, no, indeed! They didn't try to go back the way they came up. They went down the sensible side of the mountain. The distance was more than twice as great, but there was a plain path all the way.

But first they stopped a minute to look at the Mitchell monument. I must tell you about this. It is made of metal, and is fastened with four strong wire cables, to keep it from blowing down,—for there are terrible winds on the top of Mount Mitchell. The monument is placed over the grave of Dr. Mitchell, for whom the big mountain is named, because he loved it so, and went up to the top of it a great many times, and measured it to find out how high it is; but one day the clouds came down, and he stayed so long that he got lost on his beautiful mountain, and died there.

[55]

So the mountain was named after Dr. Mitchell; and Baby Mitchell, as you have guessed long before this, was named after the mountain, because the lady found him on the side of it.

Well, they started down in the rain, and the path was plain enough, for mules sometimes came up it as I have told you. But it was a hard path to walk in, for the roots of the big trees that grew so close together had come up out of the ground, as tree roots do, and had twisted about everywhere. Sometimes it was like going down a flight of break-neck stairs, the path was so steep, and the twisted roots made the steps. Besides, there were deep holes full of water that your feet kept sinking down into.

[56]

But in spite of all this, it was a beautiful forest. And soon the lady forgot how cold and tired she had been, and went along as happy as could be. You see, the forest was so lovely, all dripping wet, and the air was so fine, she had to feel happy. The dampness made the moss like king's velvet, so soft and deep and green.

And the great fir trees towered high up toward the sky, and stood so close together there was scarcely room to pass between them; and it was all dim and half dark, because of the trees overhead, and the cloud over the trees.

After a while they got out of the firs into the briar patch; and here the sun was trying to break through the clouds. And after the briar patch, where it was not so steep, they came into another kind of forest.

[57]

They had got below the fir trees, and now went along under the broad-leaved oaks, and chestnuts, and lindens, and many other mountain trees.

The path got smoother, excepting where they had to cross the beds of rocky streams, full and roaring from the rain. It wound back and forth on the mountain-side, and was not so steep, and the lady kept on feeling very happy, the forest was so lovely.

At last they got down the mountain and came to a river that was hard to cross. It went rushing along, and they had to jump from rock to rock to get over. But they managed it, and then went on through more lovely woods, till they got to Mr. Dolph Wilson's house.

This house had several rooms, and the Wilsons were used to having strangers come and stay with them on their way to or from the mountain. They had a mule named Belle, that had been up,—oh, I don't know how many times,—and she could walk in the holes between the tree roots on the steep part, and over the rocky beds of the streams, without tumbling down.

[58]

As soon as the lady got into the house, she asked for some milk, which she warmed over the kitchen stove, not to drink herself,—oh dear, no,—but for the poor little baby squirrel that was lying all snuggled up asleep under her belt.

At first he would not drink from the spoon; it was hard and cold, and he did not know how to drink in that way. But presently he happened to get the edge of it in his mouth, and tasted the good warm milk. How he did drink it then! He held the spoon between his lips, and drank just as you drink from a tumbler; and I don't suppose anything in the world ever tasted better to any one than that milk did to Baby Mitchell.



### LITTLE MITCHELL IN HIS LADY'S CAP

"All curled up in a little round ball in his lady's cap." (Page 73)

Then the lady took a piece of soft cloth for a blanket, and wrapped him up in it, and took him to her bedroom, where she put him to bed, and left him while she got warm and dry and had her supper. [60]

Do you want to know about his bed?

Well, you see, the mountain people use feather-beds, and they have two or three beds in one room. That is the way they like to live, —a great many people together in one room.

But the lady did not like this way, so she had a room to herself, with two big beds in it, and there was a thick feather-bed on each of them. She punched her fists down into one of the feather-beds until she had made quite a deep hole, and in this she buried Little Mitchell in his blanket. [61]

You see, young squirrels, like other babies, need to be kept warm.

So Baby Mitchell had a whole feather-bed to himself that night, and he slept without a sound until the lady unrolled him the next morning.

She hardly expected to find him alive, he was such a tender little thing to undergo such hardships. Starving, and sleeping under ladies' belts, and being carried in that way up a rough mountain and then down again, and fed on condensed milk and cow's milk, and put to sleep at last in a feather-bed, one would think would be enough to wear out any squirrel so young it couldn't open its eyes.

But it didn't wear out Baby Mitchell.

When the lady unrolled him, there he was, as alive as could be and as warm as a kitten. She laughed when she saw him, he was so little and the bed so big! [62]

As soon as she unrolled him, he lifted up his head, and then he opened his mouth and screamed for his breakfast. He was used to being cared for earlier in the morning, in his home in the tree, and he was starving hungry.

The lady hurried to give him some warm milk, and when he had drunk it he went fast asleep right away, and she wrapped him up and put him in the feather-bed again, and went off.

When she came back he had squirmed out of the blanket and was standing up as straight as he could on his funny little legs, and holding up his funny head, with his eyes still tight shut. And he was screaming at the top of his voice, "Oh, come and take me! come and take me!" At least that is what the lady said he meant, for the minute she put her hand on him he stopped crying. [63]

So of course she cuddled him up against her cheek for a minute,

and talked to him, and comforted him, and then gave him another drink of warm milk.

You see, she had left him until he got hungry, and then he had squirmed out to look for his lady; and when he could not find her he screamed and cried. He always did make a great fuss when he was hungry.

Little Mitchell and his lady were comfortable enough at the home of Mr. Dolph Wilson, who, you must not forget, lives at the foot of the sensible side of the great Mount Mitchell; and if you ever decide to go to the top of that mountain, that is the very best way to go. Only it will take you a long time to get to the Wilsons' from anywhere,—almost as long as it would take to go to the moon if there were a rapid-transit trolley up there. [64]

But you will see a very lovely valley if you do go,—not to the moon, to Mr. Adolph Wilson's, I mean,—and a beautiful cold river with a great many large smooth rocks in its bottom, and as handsome a forest as exists this side of the moon, or the other side either, as far as I know.

Besides, there are the young Wilsons, who will be glad to see you, and who will show you over the mountains round about; and, finally, Mr. and Mrs. Wilson will take you up Mount Mitchell on Belle, the mule, if you want to go that way.

Mr. Dolph Wilson is the son of "Big Tom," the most famous bear-hunter in these parts. It was he who found the body of Dr. Mitchell when every one else had given up the search. He loves to tell the story of that search, and it would make you cry, it is so sad,—for "Big Tom" loved Dr. Mitchell. But if you want to hear him tell the story, which is well worth going a long distance for, you will need to go soon, for "Big Tom" is a very old man now, so old that he cannot have a great many more years to live. [65]

Well, the lady had to get back home; so the day after she got to his house Mr. Dolph Wilson drove her and the guide and Baby Mitchell, in his carriage, with the two little, lazy, long-eared mules, for ten miles. They stopped at "Big Tom's" log-cabin to see him and hear him tell his story, and then they went on.

Their way was over a rough mountain road, where they had to ford a great many stony streams and a shining river two or three times. [66]

But Baby Mitchell did not care anything about this, for he was asleep in the guide's hand. You see, at that time of his life he did almost nothing but sleep and eat, and he never cried at all excepting when he was hungry.

The big, kind-hearted guide looked very funny holding Baby Mitchell so carefully in one hand, and the little can of condensed milk in the other, while the carriage bumped and jerked over the rough road. For of course they had to take along the can of milk for fear they might not be able to get anything else for Baby Mitchell's dinner.

Mr. Dolph Wilson could take them only ten miles on their way, because he had to go back home and attend to some men who had come from ever so far to go fishing for trout in the river by his house. [67]

But ten miles was enough, for the lady could easily walk to her next stopping-place, which she did, along a lovely valley with the high mountains on all sides of her; and she carried Little Mitchell now, while the guide took her bag and the can of milk.

At noon she sat down under a tree by the roadside. So few people live along here that it was as quiet and lonely where the lady stopped to rest as though it had been in the midst of the forest.

She unrolled Baby Mitchell and let him lie and stretch his limbs in the warm sun, which he did in a very comical manner,—for all the world like a nice, comfortable human baby. Then she gave him some condensed milk, and he had no sooner eaten it than he fell fast asleep again, and she rolled him up in his blanket and laid him on a stone while she ate her lunch. [68]

When she was rested, they went on until they reached the place where the lady was to spend the night. The guide went home, and he wanted very much to take Baby Mitchell for his children to play with. But of course the lady could not allow that. The little fellow was altogether too young and tender to be handled by careless children who might not know how to avoid hurting him. So she kept him with her; and again he had good warm milk for his supper, and

was put to sleep in a whole feather-bed.

The next morning Baby Mitchell and the lady took another long drive. This time they had to go in a lumber wagon, over a road that was, oh, so rough! Even Baby Mitchell kept waking up, the wagon jolted so. They forded deep rivers, and they went down mountains and up mountains; but by noon they got back to the place where the lady started from when she went ever so far to the foot of Mount Mitchell.

[69]



#### LITTLE MITCHELL WARMING HIMSELF

“He would flatten himself out and warm the under side of his body before the fire.” (Page 77)

This place was a log-house, but it was not like the log-houses of the mountain people. It was a beautiful house, and belonged to dear friends of the lady. They had built it that they might come deep into the mountains to live every summer.

[70]

There were no feather-beds here, and there were a number of cats. But you will want to know more about them, for they were very remarkable cats.

The gentleman at this house where Baby Mitchell’s lady was visiting gave him a nice little wooden box, with a great many holes bored in it to let in the air; and the gentleman’s wife gave him some soft cotton for a bed. Then Baby Mitchell’s lady, and the gentleman, and the gentleman’s wife, all looked at Baby Mitchell. His lady had scarcely taken time for that before, she was so occupied in getting him safe through.

[71]

Such a funny Baby Mitchell! All head and feet, you know, with the queerest little fuzzy tail! And those eyes tight shut! The gentleman said he never would have any eyes; but he only said that to tease the lady, and the gentleman’s wife said, “Oh, shame!” for she had quite fallen in love with the ridiculous-looking little furry baby.

Then the lady took Baby Mitchell up to her own pretty room and laid him on the bed, rolled up in his blanket, while she went to eat her supper. When she came back with a cup of warm milk for him, she took up the little roll of blanket, and what do you think!

[72]

It was empty. No Baby Mitchell there!

The lady thought of the cats; but the door was tight shut, and there were screens in the windows. She looked on the bed and on the floor, but saw no Baby Mitchell. Then she began, as well as she could, to make the little noise that Baby Mitchell made when he was hungry; and presently, if you will believe it, she heard something answer her. So she kept calling, and Baby Mitchell kept answering,

until at last she found him; and where do you think he was?

He had managed to crawl out of his blanket, and no doubt he felt very lonely and tired and hungry, so he started out to find his lady. He had scrambled down to the floor, and gone across the room, and climbed upon a low couch under the window; and on the pillow of the couch was lying his lady's cap, where she had left it a few minutes before. And here she found him, all curled up into a little round ball on the top of her cap. He must have smelled it, and gone there.

[73]

So the lady said, "It is time now for you to have a room of your own, where you cannot get lost."

Then she took the cotton that her friend, the gentleman's wife, had given her, and put it into the box that her friend the gentleman had bored full of holes, and made a soft bed for Baby Mitchell. Then she gave him a good supper of warm milk, and put him to bed in his box, and he went fast asleep and slept soundly until the next morning.

[74]

After breakfast next day the lady put Baby Mitchell on the couch while she fixed his box, and when she went to take him,—what do you think? He had one round black eye wide open! He didn't seem to know he had an open eye, though, and went nosing about just as he did when he had no eye at all.

Next day open came the other round black eye, and then all at once Baby Mitchell seemed to be able to see. And if you will believe it, he was now afraid of his lady! He probably had not expected to open his eyes on a lady instead of on a furry little bunny mother; and so he was as badly frightened as though he had never licked condensed milk from her finger, nor been taken care of by her through more than half of his short life.

[75]



#### **LITTLE MITCHELL'S FIRST CHESTNUT**

"He took it in his baby hands, and sat up, and looked around, very wise indeed." (Page [113](#))

No, not quite so badly frightened, either; for when his lady caught him and covered up his bright eyes, he smelled her hands and was not afraid, and very soon he got to know her by sight.

[76]

She used to give him warm milk out of a spoon three or four

times a day, and every day he took a little more, and every day he grew a little larger. After he had eaten he would climb all over his lady, and sit on her shoulder or on her knee for a few minutes; but he would soon get sleepy and be glad to creep into his warm nest, when his lady would shut the box cover down tight over him—so that if a cat should happen to get into the room and find his box, and should try ever so hard to get him out, she could not do it.

Sometimes Baby Mitchell would climb up on the wire screen that stood before the fireplace; and in the early morning, when the air was cool and there was a fire blazing in the fireplace, he used to like to flatten out on the screen and warm the little white underside of his body. But soon it would get too hot for him; and then do you think he would climb down again? Not at all. He would look at his lady out of his big black eyes, and nod his head at her as much as to say, "Come and take me down,"—which she always did.

So, you see, he was very much petted and spoiled. Everybody in the house petted and spoiled him—excepting the cats, and they longed to pet him, and I am perfectly sure that if they had done so they would have completely spoiled him.

[77]

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[78]



## LITTLE MITCHELL'S CAT NEIGHBORS

PETERKIN, Jack, Hallet, and Goliah,—these were the cats. Peterkin and the lady had been great friends. Peterkin was a very proud cat and a very handsome one, dark and tiger-striped. He used to come into the lady's room a great deal, and sometimes he would sleep all night on the couch under the window.

When the lady got back from her visit to Mount Mitchell, Peterkin was glad, and ran up to her room; but, to his amazement, she did not invite him in. She even shut the door in his face.

Peterkin walked off with his tail in the air, and never came to see her again. She tried to explain, but it was no use; Peterkin never forgave her. [79]

He was a very wise cat, and likely enough, if she had shown Baby Mitchell to him, he would have understood and been very good; but she was afraid to risk it, for Baby Mitchell was such a tender little dot that if Peterkin had not understood, or had not understood soon enough, there might have been a sad ending to the little Black Mountain baby. For, you see, no matter how sorry Peterkin might have been after it was all over, or no matter how well he might have understood after he had done it, that wouldn't have helped Baby Mitchell any after he had been eaten up. So Peterkin was gently but firmly refused admittance; and, as I said, he never got over it.

Peterkin was a wise cat, but not so wise as his mother. Peterkin's mother was called Grandma, and she was the wisest cat I ever knew. She was a little cat, striped like Peterkin, but not handsome like him, for she had had a very hard time when she was young, and that perhaps is why she was so wise. [80]

She belonged to people who were not kind to her, and they often teased and hurt her, and they did not give her enough to eat. So she did not grow large nor handsome, because one must have the right kind of food and care when one is young in order to grow properly.

But she learned a great deal about people and how to look out for herself; so when she came to live with the gentleman and the gentleman's wife and catch mice for them, she was a wise little cat as well as a homely one.

But they did not know she was homely, for they found out what a loving little heart she had, and how wise she was; and, you know, it doesn't matter at all how homely you are if you are only loving and thoughtful and quick and kind. Indeed, you will seem quite beautiful to those about you,—more beautiful than if you looked prettier and were less kind and loving. [81]

So the little Grandma soon won the hearts of her new friends. Jack and Hallet were her grandchildren, and fine fellows they were, so big and black and striped,—real tiger-cats.

It was strange that such a little cat as Grandma should have such large, handsome children and grandchildren; but then, you see, she might have been large and handsome herself if she had been properly cared for when she was young.

Well, Grandma's daughter Ann was the mother of Jack and Hallet. Before Jack and Hallet were born their mother Ann was in great trouble, because every time before all but one of her kittens had mysteriously disappeared, and after a while that one disappeared too. [82]

She seemed to know that the gentleman and the gentleman's wife were somehow to blame for this, for she had always had her kittens in the house, and had taken great pride in showing them to her human friends as soon as they were born. This time she and Grandma were noticed having a great consultation together; that means, you know, that they seemed to be talking it over. Finally, she and Grandma went off, Grandma leading the way.

The gentleman wondered what it was all about, and watched them without their knowing it. Grandma led Lady Ann up the long hill back of the house to an old barn, way off where hay was stored. Into this barn they went, and in a nice soft bed of hay Jack and Hallet were born; and not a word did these two conspirators say to their human friends about the two handsome kits up in the old hay [83]

barn.

But when the kittens were half grown,—too big to disappear, you know,—their mother proudly took them home and showed them to the gentleman and his wife, who were also very proud of them, they were so handsome.

Well, they were Jack and Hallet, and they lived to be old and very well behaved cats, and they were always handsome. Little Goliah was Grandma's own child; but he never was much of a kit, for Grandma was very old—that is, old for a cat—when he was born. She hid him away until he was a big kit, for she wanted to save him from disappearing; and because he was her youngest he was also her favorite. Even after he was grown up, she would wash his face and brush his coat with her rough tongue. She treated him as though he were a little kitten until she died of old age.

[84]

And Goliah was always a weak kit, and not nearly as large nor as handsome as the others, and not so very wise. But the gentleman's wife took the best of care of him for Grandma's sake.

The very funniest, cunningest thing Grandma ever did was to bring the kit that sat on the sticky fly-paper to her mistress. This happened before Grandma got to be so old. The kitten was very young, and it was her grandchild, the child of her daughter Sue.

[85]

One day the little fuzzy kit sat down on the sticky fly-paper that the girls who worked in the kitchen had left lying around. They had been forbidden to use it, for fear a kit might sit on it; and how they got the fly-paper anyway is a mystery. For the gentleman and his wife had built their pretty log-house away out in the mountains, thirty or forty miles from a railroad, and there were no shops in the mountains where one could go to buy things.

Probably the fly-paper had been sent by mistake with the things ordered from the far-away big city. Things were always being sent by mistake.

So the kit sat down on the fly-paper. Then it rolled over on it, trying to get loose.

The girls took it up as soon as they saw it, but it was a dreadful-looking kitten by the time they got it free. Its fur was all stuck together, and its paws and its ears and everything were terribly stuck up.

[86]

Then its mother and Grandma tried to put it to rights, and they licked and licked and licked, but the more they licked the worse it looked. There was no doing anything with it.

Finally the gentleman and his wife, who were in the sitting-room, heard Grandma crying very loudly at the door. They wondered what had happened, and opening the door saw Grandma on the step. She was talking very fast,—in her *meow* talk, you know,—and behind her stood Mother Sue with the kitten in her mouth.

They had done all they could, and now they had come for help to the gentleman and his wife.

[87]



#### LITTLE MITCHELL WASHES HIS FACE

“Out there in the corn-field he climbed quickly up to her shoulder, and sat there and washed his face with his little hands.” (Page [125](#))

The gentleman was very angry when he saw the fix the kitten was in, and the careless girls in the kitchen got a good scolding, which I am sure they deserved. But before he took time to do any scolding, the gentleman got something that would soften the sticky stuff, and he and his wife very carefully cleaned the baby kitten's fur, and then washed it with warm water and soap, and rubbed it dry. It was hours before they got that kitten put to rights.

[88]

Well, those were the cats that lived around Baby Mitchell; and if he had only had a number of lives, no doubt the kittens could have been taught, after they had killed him a few times, that they must not hurt him. But as he had only one life, he couldn't very well spare that; and so the kits had to be shut out of the room where he was.

I think they knew he was there, for they used to smell about the door and act as kits do when they think there is a mouse inside. Not that Baby Mitchell smelled at all like a mouse,—indeed, he was the sweetest, cleanest little dot that ever wore a fur coat,—never any unpleasant odor about him. But kits can smell so much sharper than we, that they no doubt knew there was some little chap in there, and they no doubt thought the little stranger needed their attention. For they were famous hunters, and caught all the mice on the place, as well as all the squirrels and birds they could, and even the rabbits.

[89]

Of course it was too bad for them to catch the birds and squirrels; but they were not really to blame, for they did not know any better. They thought all little animals ought to be eaten up by kits, if kits could catch them.

Not that they ever got very hungry, for they always had enough, and more than enough, in their plates around at the back of the kitchen. Every morning and evening, when the man brought the fresh milk, their dishes were filled, and when they heard him sing out, “Poos, p-ooo-s, p-ooo-s,” they would come running out of the woods, or from under the house, or off the porch, or wherever they happened to be,—for no matter how many mice and squirrels and birds they had eaten they were always able to drink a little milk.

[90]

It was fun to see their heads close together in the dish; only Goliah would never eat with the others. He had to have his dish separate, and sometimes he would not eat at all unless his mistress took him in the house and let him sit by her chair. He would not

even eat the nice meat and things the gentleman's wife gave the kits every day unless she fixed a plate for him all by himself.

By this time you will have guessed that the gentleman's wife was fond of kittens. [91]

Long ago, when Grandma was young, there were twenty kits to take care of. They were all Grandma's children or grandchildren, and they accumulated before the gentleman's wife could harden her heart enough to cause some of them to disappear when they were first born. Those were great days for the cats! And it was a sight to see them come running when the man brought in the milk and called "Poos, p-ooo-s, p-ooo-s."

It was a sight, too, to see them go walking with the family. When the gentleman and his wife would start for a walk in the cool of the evening, all the kits would go tagging on behind, with their tails in the air, as proud as you please. But as years passed, some of them died of old age or otherwise disappeared, until finally there were only Peterkin, Jack, Hallet, and Goliah left,—a very harmonious family, all but Goliah, who was sometimes cross to the other kits, and would growl at them and slap their faces, which seemed to astonish them very much. [92]

Peterkin, Jack, Hallet, and Goliah were the only cats that belonged there when Baby Mitchell appeared upon the scene. Not that Baby Mitchell was seen much, for he stayed in his lady's room, with the door shut, all the time.

But Billy came every day to drink the milk and eat the good things the other cats had. Billy belonged to the man who brought the milk, and he had plenty to eat at home. Still, he liked to come, and the gentleman's wife let him, because he was related to Grandma too. He was a funny-looking cat, rather square in shape, and he had a way of scratching with his hind legs, like a dog. He was cross to Goliah and would cuff him when he got a chance. [93]

Then there was Lady Jane. He had one white eye and a torn ear. He was a very dissipated-looking cat, and he had evidently fought a great many fights. Why he was called Lady Jane, I am sure I do not know. He was not related to Grandma, and nobody knew where he came from. He did not fight the kits that belonged to the gentleman's wife, at least not when he came to get something to eat. And though she did not like his looks, the gentleman's wife was too kind-hearted to drive him away.

When summer was over, the gentleman and his wife went away to their other home in a Northern city; but you must not suppose they left their cats to suffer. No, indeed! The kits had a warm house of their own to sleep in, and there was a little door left open at the back of it so that they could go into the kitchen if they wanted to. They were good neat cats, that never abused this privilege. [94]

Every day, all winter long, the man came with fresh milk, night and morning, and called "P-ooo-s, p-ooo-s, p-ooo-s." And two or three times a week they had fresh meat, or, best of all, canned salmon. The gentleman left a whole case of salmon for them every year, and they loved it better than anything else,—for you know cats are very fond of fish. Some cats will even go fishing for themselves if they live near the water. [95]



#### **LITTLE MITCHELL LIKES CHINKAPINS**

“He sat on the Lady’s knee and cracked chinkapins, and would give the shells a toss that sent them far away.” (Page [132](#))

Baby Mitchell’s lady once had a cat whose name was Little Man Friday, and he would catch his own fish out of a little bayou that came up from the Gulf of Mexico, on whose shore the lady lived. For Little Man Friday was a Florida cat, and perhaps some day you may like to hear his story, and how he got his name. [96]

Grandma and the other kits knew perfectly well when the gentleman and his wife were packing their trunks to go North, and it made the poor kits very unhappy. It made Grandma so dreadfully unhappy toward the end of her life that they used to do it slyly, and not let her see the preparations for going away.

Well, there isn’t any more about Peterkin, Jack, Hallet, and Goliah. They came into the story only because they lived in Baby Mitchell’s house—no, Baby Mitchell lived in their house a little while, and they didn’t eat him up, although they were such near neighbors.

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## LITTLE MITCHELL STARTS OUT TO SEE THE WORLD

**I**T was soon time for Little Mitchell's lady to go back to her home in Boston.

"What are you going to do with that little squirrel?" asked her friend the gentleman in whose house she stayed.

"I shall try to take him with me," said she.

"Of course you will," said her friend the gentleman's wife. She knew how it is about kittens, you see, and how you get attached to them and do not like to give them away to other people who may not always remember to take good care of them.

So the lady told Little Mitchell he should go to Boston with her. He didn't say whether he wanted to go or not, but of course he did want to go,—for what could the little fellow have done without his lady? He was still such a baby, and slept more than anything else, and still drank his milk out of a spoon as you drink out of a tumbler. But how he did hate to have his mouth wiped! When he had done drinking milk, his lady would wipe his mouth off on a soft napkin, and he never forgot to scream and cry when she did it. He was like some other naughty children. [98]

Oh no, he didn't like to have a dirty face,—that wasn't it. But he liked to wipe his mouth himself, and the trouble is he wouldn't always wipe it in the right place. Sometimes he would wipe it on the napkin, like a good little squirrel; but he preferred to squirm out of his lady's hand and wipe it on her dress, and of course she did not like that. [99]

She would often give him a drink of cold water, and he seemed to enjoy that almost as much as the milk, though the gentleman said he ought not to have it, for his own mother would not have given him cold water. But the lady only laughed, and said the reason that mother squirrels did not give their babies cold water was because they had no tumblers in which to carry it.

Anyway, he enjoyed the cold water, and he grew fast, and seemed a very healthy, happy little fellow; and if he ever had a stomach-ache he said nothing at all about it. So I do not believe he ever had one, for if anything was really the matter with him he was quick enough to make a fuss.

The day came at last for the lady to say good-bye to her dear friends, the gentleman and the gentleman's wife, and Peterkin, Jack, Hallet, and Goliah, and Sally and Lenoir. [100]

Who were Sally and Lenoir? Why, don't you know? Sally was the white horse with the long mane, and when the long forelock was parted down over her face she looked just like the beautiful picture of Rosa Bonheur's horse; and Lenoir was the black horse, just as handsome as Sally, but not so famous-looking.

The gentleman and the gentleman's wife said good-bye to Little Mitchell; but Peterkin, Jack, Hallet, and Goliah did not, for they were not allowed to. The lady gave Peterkin a kiss on the top of his head between his ears, because she liked him very much and felt sorry that he was offended with her.

Then the man who was to drive her and Little Mitchell away in the carriage snapped his whip, the two mules started off at a trot down the driveway, and Little Mitchell and the lady were off,—not exactly for Boston, because they had to go to a good many places before they could get there. [101]

And first, they had to go to Grandfather Mountain.

Of course they took a long and lovely drive that day, but there were no deep rivers to cross, only some dear little streams, all ripply and shiny where the sun got through to them under the tall trees.

After a while they came to a schoolhouse, buried deep in the shady forest. It was not vacation, and as it was recess, all the little barefooted boys and girls stood and looked at the carriage and the lady and the driver.

It was not often that anybody passed the schoolhouse on that lonely road, and they were very much interested. The lady was very [102]

much interested too. They were such bright, pretty little barefooted people. So she got out and spoke to the schoolmaster, and to the children, who gathered shyly about her and looked into her face so sweetly that she wanted to kiss them all.

After the lady and Little Mitchell and the driver had gone ever so far past the schoolhouse, they stopped for dinner. The mules had some corn and some dried corn-leaves to eat, and the lady had sandwiches and cake and jam and lots of other good things out of a box that the gentleman's wife had given her; and the driver had all he wanted too. But of course Little Mitchell had condensed milk again; the gentleman's wife had given the lady a nice fresh can of it for him. When he had eaten his dinner, he stretched out on his lady's knee and took a sun-bath and a nap while she read in a book.

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Then he was put back in his little box, and they all went on again, through more lovely forests and over the Blue Ridge Mountain, which is not so very high along here. The road was rather rough and steep in places; but you know what a sleepy-head Little Mitchell was, so the jolting of the carriage did not wake him up.

Well, toward night they got to a little hotel near the beautiful Linville Falls. Here they stayed until next morning; but Little Mitchell did not sleep in a feather-bed this time, because, you know, he had his own little box, with nice warm cotton to cuddle down in.

Of course the children who lived here had to have a peep at the funny little fellow. The children's mother gave him some milk for his supper, and then the lady put him to bed.

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Next morning the lady and Little Mitchell and the driver went on, and at noon they had their dinner again by the roadside, and Little Mitchell again had his condensed milk, and screamed as naughty as could be when his mouth was wiped, and stretched himself on his lady's knee in the sun.

Toward night they climbed a long sloping road up the side of the Grandfather Mountain. It was a beautiful smooth road, not at all jolty; and soon they came to a white house on the mountain side, the only house for several miles.

Here the driver left them and returned to his own home; but Little Mitchell and the lady stayed there several days.

Little Mitchell did not care about the beauty of the mountains, but the lady did. She used to go out and walk, and leave him at home asleep. Sometimes she walked up toward the top of the great Grandfather Mountain,—that rocky top, as black as ink, which you can see miles and miles away. It is black because the sharp rocky ridge wears a dress of lichens as black as coals. I don't know why such black lichens grow all over Grandfather's top, but they do, and below the black rocks is a wide belt of dark green balsam firs that you know look black in the distance; so it is a very stern-looking Grandfather Mountain indeed.

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Why is it called the Grandfather Mountain?

Well, if you walk along a road that is at the north side of it you will come to a place where you can look across and see standing out from the side of the mountain a great stone face, like the face of an old, old man; and it is from this profile the mountain gets its name.

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Where Little Mitchell's lady walked down in the woods below, it was not black at all, but very bright and sweet, with fine trees growing; for it is only near the top that the balsam firs are found.

Some of the forest leaves had already changed their color; for it was early fall now, and the woods were all golden in the sunshine, and the yellow witch hazel was everywhere in bloom.

Along the edges of the road were little piles of acorn shells. These were the work of the squirrel folk. They had shelled out the green acorns, and of course they must have eaten the inside part, or kernel. Every little pile of shells showed where a squirrel had sat and eaten acorns, or perhaps he had been on a limb of the tree above and dropped the shells down.

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### LITTLE MITCHELL ON A FROLIC

“Hop, hop, went Little Mitchell, all up and down the room.” (Page [142](#))

The lady tasted one of the green acorns, but it was so bitter and puckery she made up a queer face over it. But she put some of the acorns in her pocket for Little Mitchell. Since the other squirrels liked them so much, she thought perhaps he would like them too; but when she gave them to him he only played with them, and did not even try to eat one. [108]

It was about this time that Little Mitchell began to sit up. Such a funny, floppy sitting up as it was! He did not hold his back up straight, but got himself all into a queer little heap, and the best he could do was to keep from tumbling over. But no doubt he felt very proud of himself, and imagined he was a big grown-up squirrel. [109]

He wasn't, though, for he could not crack even an acorn; and he still drank milk, though he had learned to love sugar cookies. His lady would give him a little piece of one, and he liked it so much he almost choked himself to death trying to stuff it down his throat too fast.

You may know what a baby he was when I tell you how he ran into the fireplace.

The first time he tried it, there was no fire there, and he started to go up the chimney, and his lady caught him just in time and pulled him down all black and sooty.

The next time there was a fire; but that didn't matter to Little Mitchell. He ran right into it, and burned the whiskers all off one side of his face, and the lady snatched him out just in time to prevent his poor little nose from getting burned too. He was so surprised that he didn't even try to get out. You see, he was *such* a baby! [110]

Of course he slept in his little box of cotton, and one cold night his lady was awakened in the middle of the night by a great commotion. She heard something scratching frantically somewhere, and Little Mitchell was screaming and crying like everything.

She jumped up and got a light, and there was Little Mitchell's box wiggling about as though bewitched. He was inside, scratching and thumping about and crying with all his might. What *could* be the matter?

You remember it was a cold night, and the lady concluded the little fellow was cold, and so she took him out. The moment he got into her warm hand, he stopped crying; so, not knowing what else to do, she took him to bed with her, and he curled down at her side under her hand and went to sleep like a good little kitten. [111]



When he woke up in the morning, what do you think he did? He licked his lady's hand first; then he began to play with her fingers, making believe to bite them, and patting them with his little paws and jumping away just as a kitten does.

They had a real good frolic. Little Mitchell would scamper down to the foot of the bed under the covers, then come creeping up until close to the lady's hand, when she would poke it at him and he would scurry off again.

So he kept on playing until it was time to get up; then the lady left him alone, all covered up in the warm bed, and he curled right up and went to sleep until she was ready to go downstairs, when she put him in his little box, which he didn't like at all, you may be sure. But there was a fire now, so the room was warm; and soon his lady brought him his breakfast of warm milk and a little piece of sugar cooky.

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Of course the lady always remembered the baby bunny asleep in his nest at home, when she went out to walk; and if she saw anything she thought he would like, she brought it home to him.

One day she brought him some chestnuts. They were the very first ones to get ripe. Indeed, they were not ripe enough to fall out of their burrs of themselves; but when their burrs were pounded open with a stone, out they slipped, fine, fat, shiny brown ones. And so big they were! That is because they grew on the dear and lovely Grandmother Mountain, which you know is not so high as Grandfather Mountain, but close to it, and very beautiful, covered with all sorts of delightful growths. And its chestnuts *are* so big! They grow on little low trees, so little you would hardly expect to find any nuts on them; but their tops are just covered with big, round, splendid burrs full of big, plump, brown nuts that are as sweet as any nuts can be. The lady took some of these nuts home, but she did not give them to Little Mitchell until she had roasted them in the hot ashes and made them quite soft. Then she gave him one, and the baby took it in his hands, and sat up as well as he could, and looked very wise indeed. But he was just making believe, for he didn't know in the least what to do with that nut. He sniffed at it, but seemed to have no idea what was inside, until the lady opened it for him. Then he ate a piece of it, gnawing it with his four little front teeth, and liked it very much.

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Every day after that he had roasted chestnuts with his milk.

Oh yes, indeed, he soon learned to know them with the shell on, and to take it off too. He would bite it loose, and then give it a fling that sent it ever so far.

Thus they lived and had good times on the side of the beautiful Grandfather Mountain for more than a week. Then one day the lady's trunk was taken off by a mule team to Blowing Rock; but she and Little Mitchell did not go with it. They went around on the other side of the mountain.

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## VI

### LITTLE MITCHELL REFUSES TO LEAVE HIS LADY

**L**ITTLE MITCHELL in his box, and the lady on her two feet, started off to go to the other side of Grandfather Mountain. They were on the south side now, you know, and they wanted to get to the north side.

The way is to go across a sheep pasture, and climb a fence, and go across an old garden, or what once was a garden, and climb another fence, and then you are in the wild woods, with a pretty winding path in front of you and service trees overhead dropping down ripe red berries for you to eat, if you go at the right time of year. Little Mitchell and his lady were too late for the berries, but they went along under the pretty service trees.

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Well, you go on down the path into the deep, deep forest, with the big old oaks and beeches and other trees about you, and the sunbeams dancing in and out, making the forest all motley like the skin of a leopard.

You go down steeper and steeper, until you come to the end of the path and enter a road that runs at right angles to it.

It is a fearful road, full of loose stones and great rocks, such as you find in the bed of a stream. Indeed, it is the dry bed of a stream, and the stream itself, in another bed near by, is the very beginning of the Linville River, and you keep having to cross over the river any way you can, by jumping from stone to stone, and sometimes slipping off and getting wet.

Sometimes this queer road runs right up the river bed; and then you walk along the edge of it, along a winding path through the rhododendrons.

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There were some mountain people going along the road when Little Mitchell and the lady got to it that day. There were a man, a boy, a horse and wagon, and two young girls; and they were all walking, because it was easier to walk than to go tilting and jolting and jiggling over all those stones. Besides, the horse was not strong enough to pull anything but the wagon over such a road, and so they showed Little Mitchell's lady how to get across the young Linville by jumping on the stones.

Little Mitchell was asleep in his box, which of course the lady carried as carefully as she could, so that he didn't know nor care anything about all this.

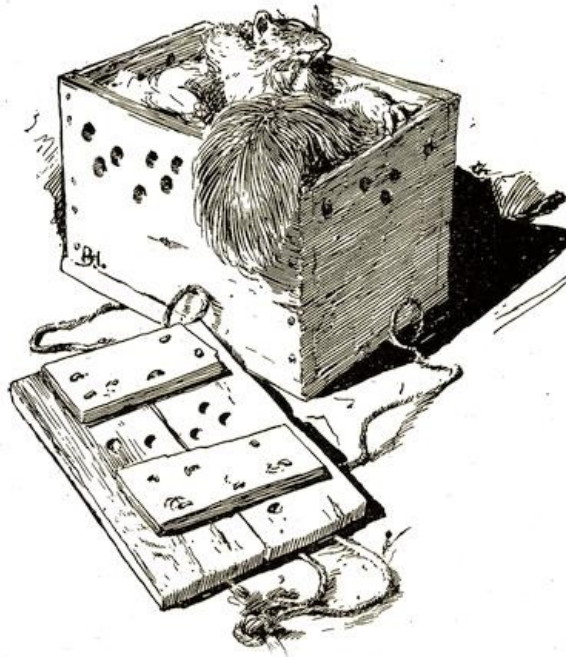
They went gayly along together, until they got to the house where Little Mitchell's lady was to stop. It was a wild place, close to the great Grandfather Mountain; but it was very sweet, with the fresh air and the tinkly stream across the road in front of the house.

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The stream was not the Linville,—they had left that behind. It was the beginning of the Watauga River, that flows in exactly the opposite direction from the Linville, and has trout hiding in its pools.

The house stands on such a steep slope! You look out of the front windows across the narrow Watauga valley, which is nothing but a gorge here, and see the Grandfather Mountain rising up like a tremendous wall all covered with trees.

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### LITTLE MITCHELL IN HIS BOX

"There he lay on his back, like a hot, tired, human little baby." (Page [152](#))

But back of the house, where the trees have been cut away, the steep slopes are just covered with wild strawberries. Such big, sweet berries! Why, they are as big as your thumb; mind, I say as big as *your* thumb, not as big as mine, which is quite another matter. But anyway they are big enough. Of course there were none then,—it was too late; but in the early summer I should like to see you climb that slope without wetting your feet in strawberry juice! You couldn't do it, they are so thick. And sweet?—Well, you should just taste them!

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Little Mitchell and his lady stayed all night in the house at the foot of the strawberry slope, and the people who lived there were pleased, for they knew Little Mitchell's lady, and were glad to see him too. They thought him the cunningest baby they had ever seen. He ran about the room, and climbed on the table, and washed his face, and played with his lady, and looked up the big stone chimney. He almost had a mind to run up it; but his lady said no, so he ate his supper of roasted chestnuts and fresh milk, and went to bed in his little box.

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Next morning the woman who kept the house went with Little Mitchell and his lady on a lovely walk over the mountains to where her mother lived.

When noon came, they were only half-way there; so they sat down on a sweet mountain-side, to rest and eat, and Little Mitchell's lady took him out of his box and gave him sugar cooky and roasted chestnuts for his dinner. She thought he could get along without milk now for a little while, because it was so hard to carry it.

He had grown to be quite a squirrel by this time, and the lady thought that perhaps he was old enough to care for himself, and would like to be set free in the woods, which is the best home for the little squirrel-folk, you know.

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So she looked at him as he sat on her knee eating his chestnuts, which he held in his funny little hands and nibbled very fast indeed. He could sit up pretty well now, and yet he did look like such a baby!

Still, she thought perhaps she ought to let him go free; and here in this wild spot, where there were no cats to catch him, was a good place.

So when he had finished his dinner she put him down on the ground near a little tree, and then went back and sat down where she had been before, some distance away.

What do you think Little Mitchell did now?

He looked around at the big, wild, lonely forest, and then at his dear lady, and he ran and scrambled and scampered as fast as his little legs could carry him,—not up the tree, oh no, indeed!—but

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straight back to his lady. He climbed into her lap and stuck his head up her sleeve, and seemed glad to be at home again.

You see, the little fellow was afraid, and no doubt it made him feel very bad to think that maybe he was to be left there all alone.

But you may be sure the lady did not leave him after that. She tucked him into his little box, where he curled right up and went to sleep; and when they started on again, she carried along the box with Little Mitchell in it.

After all, there were no sugar cookies and roasted chestnuts in the woods for the little fellow.

They spent the night at the woman's mother's house, and next morning Little Mitchell and his lady went on to Blowing Rock, which is several miles away.

But it was a glorious walk,—first through the beautiful forest, and then out into a corn-field where the cornstalks were rustling their brown leaves in the breeze. [124]

When they got to the corn-field, the lady took Little Mitchell out of the box; the sun was warm, and she thought he would enjoy it,—for he was getting too big now to stay shut up all day.

So she opened the box-cover and out popped Little Mitchell. He climbed quickly up to her shoulder, and sat there and washed his face with his hands very fast indeed.

He looked so cunning washing his face, that the lady always liked to see him do it. First he would flatten his ears down close to his head, then he would put his face into his two hands held close together, and scrub very fast, rubbing all over his ears and back of them.

He did not lick his paws to moisten them, as a cat does, for he did not seem to have much moisture in his little mouth. His tongue was very small, and as soft as velvet. But when he wanted to wash his face, now, what do you think he did? Why, he blew his nose hard into his hands, and then washed away! What he got from his little nose was very clean and watery, just as clean as what puss gets on her paws when she licks them. Yes, it does seem strange to you, but that is the way the squirrel-folk all do. If you were a squirrel, you would think it queer to do any other way. [125]

Well, Little Mitchell, out there in the corn-field, sat up on his lady's shoulder and washed his face until he was satisfied; then he climbed all over her, up and down and around, clear down to the hem of her dress.

She was afraid he would get a little too frisky, and jump down to the ground and get lost; but, dear me! she needn't have worried about that. Jump down? He wouldn't have left his lady that day among those rustling cornstalks, not for the whole world. He just climbed about for fun and exercise; but when the corn-leaves rustled, how scared he was! He scrambled as fast as he could down the lady's arm and up into her coat-sleeve; and when she got him out, back he went as soon as a corn-blade rustled near them. [126]

"You must be hungry," she said, when at last she had him cuddled up in her hand. So she picked an ear of corn, and they sat down and pulled off the husk and all the long soft silk that was inside, and Little Mitchell had some of the kernels.

He took them in his little hands, one at a time, and looked up at his lady out of his bright eyes with such a wise air! He turned the kernel of corn over, and sniffed at it until he found the germ that lies in one side,—the little thing that sprouts when you plant the corn,—and he pulled this out with his sharp front teeth, and ate it very fast; but the rest of the kernel he threw away. Not a bit of it would he eat but that! You see the germ was soft and sweet, and pleased the little chap. [127]

If all squirrels eat corn in that way, it is no wonder the farmers worry when they make a raid on the cornfields in the early autumn!

When Mitchell had eaten all the tender corn-germs he wanted, they went on; and the very next blade that rustled near them—pop! —he was over the lady's shoulder, up under her jacket, and in the top of her sleeve. She had to stop and take off her jacket and extract him. He kept on at this trick until finally she put him in his box and fastened the cover down,—which, after all, was just what he wanted, for he was tired, and he curled right up and went fast asleep and gave her no more trouble. [128]

Away they went, down the mountain, across the valley, up another mountain, and down into the Watauga valley, where the

river is larger and where the chinkapins grow.

It is the same valley where stands the house on the strawberry slope,—only the Watauga River is not a tinkling trout-brook down here, but quite a proud stream, though it still has trout in its pools.

Of course, when they got among the chinkapins they stopped to gather some,—for these were ripe, if the strawberries were not, and there were plenty of them too.

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What *are* chinkapins?

Why, don't you know? All the children who live in the South know what chinkapins are,—at least, all who live where they grow know.

They are not berries! No, guess again.

Yes, nuts; little shiny brown nuts, like baby chestnuts. The mountain children often string them for beads, they are so pretty. They grow in little burrs, like tiny chestnut burrs; but there is only one nut in a burr instead of two or three, and they grow on bushes or little trees, with leaves like chestnut leaves, only smaller.

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No, chinkapins are not shaped quite like chestnuts; they are not flat anywhere. Chestnuts have to be flat on at least one side, because they grow three in a burr, and are squeezed against each other, so the middle chestnut is flat on both sides, but the others are flat only on the inside and rounded on the outside. But the chinkapin is rounded on both sides, because it is alone in its burr, with nothing to flatten against. Oh no, it is not round all over like a marble,—it is like a tiny chestnut, only it is rounded instead of being flattened on its sides.

I wish I could give you a handful of shiny chinkapins, then you would know just how they look.

Children who do not live near chinkapins need to know about them because of "Uncle Remus." When you read how "Brer Rabbit" sat on a chinkapin log, combing his hair with a chip, you ought to know what a chinkapin log is like.

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#### LITTLE MITCHELL'S VISITOR

"He scampered off as if the old cat were after him." (Page [158](#))

Chinkapins being so small, and only one in a burr, you can imagine they are not easy to gather until Jack Frost comes along with his sharp fingers and splits open all the tiny burrs on all the little chinkapin trees. Then you have only to shake the trees or beat the bushes, and patter! patter! patter!—out will come jumping the pretty brown chinkapins, as thick as rain-drops in a summer shower, and all you have to do is to get down and pick them up.

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Mitchell liked the little nuts, they are so sweet, and he could crack them for himself because the shells are soft, like chestnut

shells. So he sat on the lady's knee in the chinkapin patch, and cracked chinkapins, and when he had succeeded in getting a shell off he would give it a toss that sent it far away.

The lady ate chinkapins too, they were so sweet and good; but Little Mitchell did not quite like that,—he seemed to think she was eating his nuts, and once in a while he would reach up and snatch away her chinkapin, and scold and chatter at her. That was because he was hungry, and thought he wanted them all; but when he had had enough he let her eat what she wanted too.

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Presently along came Phyllis Amaranth, Lucy Ansonia Belindy, and Mollie May. Of course they came with their pretty feet bare, and none of them were more than seven years old.

They just smiled and smiled, and clasped their hands tight together, when they saw Little Mitchell. But he kept one eye on them, and when they came too near he ran and hid in the folds of his lady's dress. He didn't care for little girls, and he was terribly afraid they might touch him.

So Phyllis Amaranth, Lucy Ansonia Belindy, and Mollie May ran to the chinkapin bushes and shook them, and picked up the chinkapins very fast, and gave them to Mitchell's lady for him, so that she soon had all she could carry without the trouble of picking any up. That is the way with these mountain people; they will give you something if they possibly can.

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Then they all said good-bye to each other, and Little Mitchell and the lady went on. They crossed the Watauga valley, which is easy enough, it is so narrow; then they crossed the Watauga River, which is hard enough, the bridge is so narrow, and so high up in the air, and wobbles so you are afraid of your life to go over it,—but you have to, or else stay on the wrong side of the river, which, you understand, is quite a river here, very swift and rather deep.

But they got safely over the wobbly bridge, and went on through the forest, only stopping a few minutes to look at a birch-still.

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A birch-still is a place where they distil birch-oil out of birch-bark. Do you know how it is done? Well, you ought to, for you eat so much birch-oil. You don't think you ever ate any birch-oil in your life? Oh, but I *know* you have eaten it. I am perfectly sure you sometimes eat wintergreen candy and other things flavored with wintergreen. That is, you call it wintergreen; but it is not that at all, it is birch. You see the flavor is the same, and it is much easier to get it out of the birch.

The way they do is to strip the bark from the young black-birch trees,—which of course kills the trees, and that is too bad; but they do it, and chop the bark into little pieces, which they put into a long wooden box with a zinc bottom.

When the box is full of bark, they put in some water, and fit on the cover, and plaster all the cracks with clay until the box is air-tight,—all but a little round hole in the cover that has a lead pipe fitted into it.

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Then they build a fire in the fire-hole under the box, and soon the steam from the boiling water escapes through the pipe that is fitted in the cover. The pipe is coiled up in a barrel of water when it leaves the box, and is kept cool by a little stream of water which runs into the barrel all the time.

Of course the steam that escapes through the pipe is turned back to water when it becomes cooled, passing through the coil in the barrel, and finally runs out of the other end of the pipe into a bottle. There is birch-oil in the steam that goes over, and the oil runs into the bottle with the water, but being heavier than water it sinks to the bottom of the bottle. When the bottle is full, the water runs out at the top; but when it gets full of oil, they do not allow that to run over,—they take away the bottle of oil and put an empty bottle in its place.

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Yes, I know that oil is said to float on water, and some oil does, but birch-oil is heavy, as I have told you, and sinks to the bottom.

The people take the oil to the store and exchange it for shoes and calico and safety-pins, and all the things they need. The storekeeper sells the oil to the manufacturers, who purify it and make it into flavoring extracts, and then the druggists use it in making medicines and tooth-powder, and the candy-makers flavor some of their candies with it, and the perfumers mix it with other things to make perfumes and scented soap. A great deal of this oil comes from the North Carolina mountains, and is made in the woods, as I

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have told you.

Well, when Little Mitchell's lady had looked at the birch-still long enough, they went on until they got to Blowing Rock. And this is a very wonderful place.

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## LITTLE MITCHELL'S FIRST CAR-RIDE

**Y**OU can see three thunder-storms at once from Blowing Rock.

Perhaps sometimes you can see more than that number.

This is because Blowing Rock is on the edge of a mountain, where you can look off and off and off,—oh, so far, over a sea of mountains, where the storms gather. You know a thunder-storm is not very big; it is only as big as two or three clouds close together, and these clouds may be rather small.

It is queer to see the rain pouring down in long straight lines over one part of the mountains, while all the rest is in sunshine.

Little Mitchell's lady used to like to watch the thunder-storms, but Little Mitchell did not care anything about them. He preferred going with the lady to the big rock from which the little village of Blowing Rock gets its name. The Indians named it long ago, because when the wind is in the right quarter it blows so hard you cannot throw anything over the rock. If you try to throw your handkerchief or your hat over, you cannot do it, because the wind flings it back to you. Sometimes it blows so strong you couldn't even jump over,—so people say. But I should not like to try that, no matter how hard the wind blew; it is such a very long way down to the tree-tops at the foot of the rock!

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What Little Mitchell liked at the big rock was the sunshine and the fine places to run about; but he never ran far from his lady, and at the slightest noise he would scurry back to her.

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There were some dear little children at Blowing Rock; but you know how Mitchell felt on that subject! He would have nothing to do with them, and if one of them took him up he would squirm and squeal so that he was quickly dropped.

It was at Blowing Rock that he found out he could hop.

His lady used to let him out of his box early in the morning, so that he could run around the room and exercise his muscles. She was afraid to take him outside with her unless she went a long way off, on account of the cats.

So he would frolic with her, and jump at her hand under the bed-covers in the early morning, and when she got up he would play about the room, run over the table, look at everything on the bureau, including his own funny little face in the looking-glass; and one day he found out he could hop.

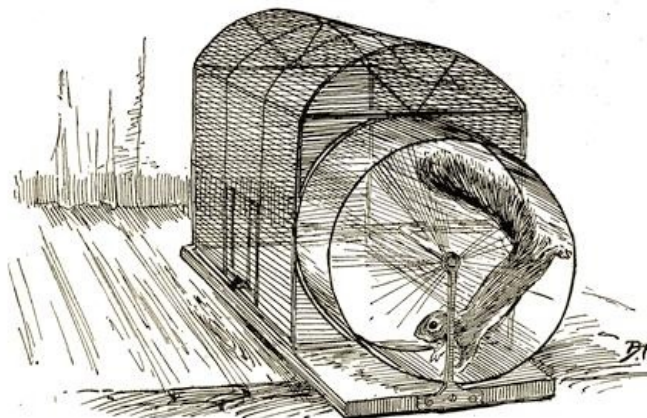
[142]

He went hop, hop, hop, just like a grown-up squirrel, the whole length of the room.

Hop, hop went Little Mitchell. He had always crawled or crept about before this; but that day he went hop, hop, hop, all up and down the room, and then up and down again.

When the lady was ready to go out, she thought she would put him in his box. He had never given her any trouble before, but this time he scampered under the bed, away over against the wall out of reach, and there he went hop, hop, hop, up and down, up and down; but he never came out from under the bed, because he did not want the lady to catch him.

[143]





## LITTLE MITCHELL AND HIS WHEEL

“As soon as he moved the wheel began to turn, and he began to run.” (Page [170](#))

He looked so funny, hopping up and down, and he was having such a glorious time, that his lady did not like to end it, and waited ever so long; but as he kept on hopping, and showed no sign of ever going to stop, she finally got under the bed and captured him. [144]

You see he had found something new to do, and he was as excited over it as a child is over a new and delightful game. When the lady put him in his box, he squirmed and screamed; and when she fastened the cover down, he cried and scratched to get out. It was too bad,—but what else could the lady do? She did not want to stay shut up in her room all day, and she dared not leave him alone for fear some one might open the door and a cat get in.

But he was really tired by this time; and when he found that crying and scratching did no good, he curled up and went to sleep. When the lady peeped into the room before going off, he was as quiet as a mouse; and when she returned, he was still sound asleep in his little box. [145]

Now about hopping,—that is the way grown squirrels get over the ground, in little jumps; and Baby Mitchell was growing every day, not only in size but in squirrel habits. How do you suppose he knew about hopping, when he had never seen a squirrel hop? And how do you suppose he knew about sitting up and holding his nuts in his hands, when he had never seen a squirrel do these things? And how do you suppose he knew about washing his face after the funny manner of the squirrel folk, when he had never seen another squirrel do it?

I cannot tell you how he knew all these things; but he did know them, and as he grew older, more and more squirrel habits came to him, as you shall see. [146]

The lady stayed at Blowing Rock only a few days; then one morning she and Little Mitchell started off down the long winding road in a carriage,—and this was the end of their life in the mountains.

At the end of that drive they got onto a railway train, and went a little way, and then changed to another train,—only they had to wait a long time between trains.

Little Mitchell’s lady was very sorry for him now, because you see he was getting big enough to run about, and he had to take this long journey all shut up in his little box.

But when they got to the station where they had to wait so long, she opened his box, and out he came. He ran all over her as fast as he could go, even jumping from her shoulder to the top of her head, and played with her hair, which she told him was naughty. Then he jumped down and ran all around the tops of the benches, for there was nobody else in the waiting-room. [147]

After a while a gentleman came in to wait for the train too, and he fell quite in love with the playful little fellow, and wanted to buy him to take home to his children; but of course the lady would not sell him.

At last the train came, and they got on and rode awhile, and then got off again to wait for another train. This was in a large station, full of people and lighted by electric lights.

Little Mitchell’s lady saw his box bumping about, and heard something inside go scratch, scratch, scratch. So she took off the cover, and out came Little Mitchell. He was very tired from being shut up so long and carried so fast in the jolty train, and he wanted to come out and see what was going on. The electric lights and the crowd and the strange sights and sounds all excited him. His eyes shone, and he was not satisfied to sit on his lady’s shoulder and look about. He wanted to leap upon the back of a lady who was dressed in laces and furs. He was determined to do it, too; but every time his lady caught him just as he was about to spring, and told him he mustn’t. [148]

How surprised the strange lady would have been if he had done it! And how frightened Little Mitchell would have been! For, once there, he would not have known what to do, and would have wished himself back on his own lady’s shoulder.

At last she went into a dark corner with him, and let him sit on the seat by her and look at the people while he ate a piece of sugar

cook.

Then the train came, and they got into the sleeping-car,—Little Mitchell in his little box, of course.

[149]

He was a good squirrel all night, and early in the morning the lady let him look out of the window; but he did not like that,—it frightened him to see things rushing by so fast. He preferred to race up and down in the berth, and jump at the lady's fingers from under the edge of the blanket, and turn somersaults when she made believe catch him.

After a little while he got tired of this play, and was quite willing to be put into his box, where he stayed quietly until they got to Jersey City, and crossed the ferry, and went to the Grand Central Station in New York City, and got upon another train that soon left the noisy city behind.

The noise and motion of the train seemed to tire and confuse the little fellow, so that he was glad to stay hidden away in his own box, which was now the only thing that really seemed like home to him,—for even the lady had changed her skin, or at least she had put on strange clothes, which must have seemed to him just like changing her skin.

[150]

When they left New York on the train for Hartford,—which is where they were going next,—Little Mitchell was let out of his box to sit on the seat by the lady's side and eat his dinner of roasted chestnuts and cook. They still had some of the big, sweet Grandmother chestnuts, which they had brought with them, and which had all been nicely roasted, though Little Mitchell was beginning to enjoy a bit of raw chestnut by this time. Still, he preferred the roasted ones, and was able to pick them out from a handful of both kinds.

When he had finished his chestnut, he climbed up on the back of the seat, and looked at an old lady, who fell in love with him on the spot, and wanted ever so much to hold him in her hand; but do you think he would allow it? Not he. He jumped up on his own lady's shoulder, and then sprang down into her lap and hid in the folds of her dress.

[151]

He was still such a baby, you see!

It is not a very long ride from New York to Hartford, as you know; and when they got off the train it was almost dark, and there was a friend waiting for them, and soon they were driving along over nice smooth streets that did not jolt them at all. Then they came to a driveway under big trees, and to a house with the windows all lighted up; and here they got out of the carriage, and some more friends came to the door to meet them. They were in Hartford at last.

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## VIII

### LITTLE MITCHELL GOES TO BOSTON

**N**O doubt Little Mitchell was glad enough to go to sleep that night in a box that stayed still instead of wagging about as it had done for so long a time on the train.

It was a very hot night, although rather late in the season for such warm weather in Hartford. It was so warm that the lady did not like to shut Little Mitchell up in his box, even though it had so many holes in it. So she left the cover off, and just before going to bed she looked in to see how he was getting along.

Well, there he lay, on his back, with his head resting on the edge of the box and his arms up over his head, for all the world like a hot, tired, human little baby. [153]

He looked so cunning that the lady called some of her friends to see him; but by that time the light had waked him up, and he stretched and yawned and curled up after the usual fashion of squirrels when they go to sleep.

He was up bright and early next morning, racing about the room, playing hide-and-seeek with the lady under the bed-clothes, and having a grand time.

The lady's friend thought his little box too close and small for him, and gave him a nice large basket; but he did not like to sleep in that at all, and cried and scratched so when he was put in to take a nap that the lady let him out. And then what do you think he did?

Why, he ran straight to his own little box and crept in and curled up and went to sleep there. [154]

But first he made a visit into the big world. He went into the sitting-room, where there were ever so many tables and chairs for him to examine, and, best of all, a wide couch with many big soft pillows on it; and behind these pillows he would hide, and jump out at anybody's fingers that came that way,—for all the world like a playful kitten.

He had a fine time playing with the lady's friends behind the pillows; and finally he climbed up the nice soft coat which her friend the gentleman who lived there had on, and got into his coat-pocket, and would not come out. It was cosey and dark there, and he liked it; and when anybody put in a hand to take him out, he would scream and nip at their fingers. [155]



#### LITTLE MITCHELL PLAYS WITH HIS TAIL

"It was funny to see him hanging by his hind toes from his screen, head downward, and play with his tail." (Page [174](#))

And this, my dears, was not playing at all,—it was real genuine naughtiness; for when he played he was careful never really to nip anybody,—he only made believe, you know. [156]

Well, the gentleman who lived there let him stay in his pocket until he was ready to go down town; then he called the lady, and she put in her hand, and Little Mitchell jumped at it and growled, but when he found whose hand it was he did not nip at all,—he would no more hurt his lady than he would hurt himself, no matter how naughty he felt.

Well, the lady wanted to go away for a little while; so she put him into his box,—which was not an easy matter, for as fast as she got him in one side he squirmed out at the other, and screamed, and was very naughty indeed.

Finally she got him in, and fastened the cover; but he acted so that she finally took him out and fastened him into the basket. [157]

When she got back, what do you think? Little Mitchell was not in the basket! He had gnawed a naughty great hole right through the pretty new basket, and had got out and was hiding in the closet in the folds of a dress that was hanging there.

The next time he was missing, somebody found him among the papers in the bottom of a scrap-basket, where he sat, jumping at any strange fingers that came his way, and nipping them, and growling like a bad little bear, until his lady came and fished him out, screaming and squirming, but not nipping.

Why do you suppose the gentle, timid little Baby Mitchell had all at once become such a naughty, self-willed squirrel?

What *shall* I do with him? thought the lady. She was afraid he would gnaw her friend's furniture, and do all sorts of mischievous things; so whenever she was not there to take care of him, she had to keep him shut up in his little box, which was fast getting to be too small for him. [158]

One morning, as he sat on the window-sill eating a nut, he had a visit.

Along came a big reddish yellowish squirrel, as large as a full-

grown gray one, but all fluffy,—a very handsome, afraid-of-nobody sort of fellow, who sat on the window-sill on the other side of the wire screen, and looked in at Little Mitchell.

How do you suppose Little Mitchell received this pretty visitor? He just dropped his nut with a squeal, and scampered off as if the old cat were after him, and went and hid in the corner under the table.

You wouldn't consider that very good manners, would you? But then, you see, he was really only a baby, and had not yet learned how to behave. [159]

There were a great many squirrels about the lady's friend's place. The grounds were large, with fine big trees and wide lawns,—just the kind of place squirrels like, for nobody can shoot them there, and they know it.

So all about were squirrels,—little red fellows, and big gray fellows, and once in a while a big, tawny fluffy fellow such as came to visit Little Mitchell. Well, these squirrels played a great deal, scampering about the lawn and racing over the branches of the trees, which made bridges for them high up in the air. And oh, how they would jump! It was enough to make one dizzy to look at them. [160]

But when the chestnuts that grew on the big trees back of the house were ripe, then was the time of joy for all these squirrels.

They had their own trouble in getting their share of the nuts,—what with the boys and all the other people who wanted them,—but you may be sure the squirrels got more than anybody else.

There were so many squirrels hunting for nuts!—and I am sorry to say they were not all as honest as they might have been.

The little red squirrels were the quickest, and got the most nuts; but they didn't keep the most, because there were those rascally gray squirrels, which were nimble-witted if they were not nimble-footed.

You know what the squirrels do with their nuts. They hide them. If they do not find a good place in a hollow tree or somewhere, then they just dig a little hole and bury the nut in the ground. [161]

One day Little Mitchell's lady was sitting by a window that looked out on the lawn at the back of the house, and this is what she saw.

Along came a little red squirrel with a nut in his mouth. He dug a hole in the ground with his little paws, very fast indeed. Then he tucked the nut in, covered it up, and patted the dirt and grass all down nice and smooth over it.

This done, he scampered off and got another nut and buried it in the same way, and then another and another, until he had planted quite a space with his nuts. Then off he went, and I am sure you could not have found one of those nuts, he had hidden them so cleverly, patting the earth and grass down over them, so that the places where they were did not show at all.

But if you could not have found them, there was somebody else who could. [162]

The little red squirrel had no sooner hidden his last nut and gone off, than along came a big gray squirrel. Hop, hop, he came, his nose to the ground. Then he stopped, and began to dig very fast with his hands, and—pop!—out came one of the nuts the little red squirrel had so carefully hidden!

Then the big gray mischief bounded off to the other side of the lawn, where *he* dug a hole and buried that nut! His hole was deeper,—very likely too deep for the little red fellow to get his nut again, though I am not sure about that. But, anyway, the gray squirrel dug up all the poor little red fellow's nuts, and went off and hid them, one by one, somewhere else.

The lady sat at the window and watched this mischief. Then the gray squirrel sprang up a tree and went tearing across the grove chattering like mad. [163]

No, not because he felt so proud of what he had done, but because a blue-jay was after him.

There were blue-jays in the grove, too, and they were always tormenting the squirrels, chasing them and screaming at them as though they meant to do all sorts of things to them.

Little Mitchell did not see these things going on among his kinsfolk, because he would have nothing to do with any other squirrels. He would not even look at them; and if one came near the window where he was, he always scampered off and hid.

One day the lady took Little Mitchell down town with her. He was in his little box, you know, because she could not quite trust him to go without it. She was afraid he would jump on somebody's back, or do something dreadful on the electric car; so she shut him up in his box, and took him along.

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You couldn't guess where they went!

It was to the photographer's, to see if he could take Little Mitchell's picture. The man said he would try.

They put Little Mitchell up on a stand; but he wouldn't stay. They did everything they could think of, but it was of no use,—he wouldn't keep still one second.

At last the lady sat down, and tried to coax him to sit still with her; but he wouldn't do that, either. He jumped up on her shoulder, and cocked his tail up over his head,—it was quite a tail by this time,—and peeped out at the photographer, and at the queer box with a glass eye that kept pointing at him. The photographer snapped, the way they do when they take a picture; but Little Mitchell was too quick for him, and gave his tail a flirt that spoiled the picture.

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Then the photographer got all ready again; but this time, just as he was about to take the picture, Little Mitchell jumped up on his lady's head,—and that, of course, wouldn't do.

So they got all ready again, with Little Mitchell sitting on his lady's knee; but again he flirted off, just in time to spoil the picture.

Then he climbed up on his lady's arm, and the photographer whistled, and Little Mitchell cocked up his tail and his ears,—just as you see him in the picture,—and listened, and in a trice the man had pressed the bulb and the restless Little Mitchell had his picture taken after all. Whether it was a success or not, you can decide for yourself; for it is the frontispiece to this very book.

When the lady was ready to go, she could not find Little Mitchell. That is because he was in the photographer's pocket. He had climbed in there to hide away after the excitement of having his picture taken; and at last the photographer laughed, for he knew the little rascal was there all the time, and hauled him out, squirming and protesting, and handed him to the lady.

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In a few days she was ready to go on to Boston; and she said she would be glad to get there, so as to have a suitable place for Little Mitchell, where he would not have to be shut up so much and yet could not get into mischief.

So they said good-bye to the Hartford friends, and started for Boston, Little Mitchell in his little box, which he did not like at all.

They had their lunch on the train, and Little Mitchell's lunch was chestnuts and chinkapins, which he ate sitting in the corner of the seat next the window. But his lady had some very dainty sandwiches, made of thin slices of bread and butter with cream cheese between.

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Presently Little Mitchell smelled the lady's lunch, and it smelled better than his own; so he threw down his nut and ran up on her arm and tried to take her sandwich away from her.

She said no, for she feared it might not agree with him; but he said yes, he would have some, and he snatched and got a crumb which he crowded into his mouth.

The lady set him down on the seat and gave him his nut; but he threw it down, and again snatched at her sandwich. He nearly got it all this time, but the lady caught it away just in time. Then he began to scream and struggle and fight for the sandwich, until the people in the car began to laugh, and then the lady gave him a little piece, and he sat up very straight, eating cheese sandwich and looking as solemn as an owl.

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When they neared Boston, there was a struggle to get him into his box; for he had decided he wouldn't go. But this time he had to; and the minute they got off the train the lady drove to a bird-store and got a big wire squirrel-cage to take home with her.

As soon as she was in her own room, she let Little Mitchell out. Such a relief as it was to get him safely there! And such a time as he had getting acquainted with his new home! He went all about the room,—over the couch, on the table, all through the bookcase, and even into the closet where the lady hung her dresses.

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### **LITTLE MITCHELL PLAYS WITH A STRING**

“Across the room and back again he would chase it.” (Page [190](#))

Then he helped her to unpack her trunk and put everything away. Of course the way he helped was to get under her feet or her hands and be in the way all the time as much as possible. [170]

Then the lady put him in the big new cage, and shut the door. He walked all around it, and then got into the wheel. You know the wire wheel that is always in a squirrel-cage? As soon as he moved, of course the wheel began to turn, and he began to run. The faster he ran the faster it turned, until he fairly flew.

At last his legs ached so he could run no more, and he stopped, and then the wonderful wheel stopped too; but as soon as he took a step, it turned again. Finally he jumped out; but in a few minutes he went back and tried it again. He thought it was splendid fun; and so all in a minute, without any teaching, Little Mitchell learned how to use his play-wheel.

The lady stood close by the cage and watched him, for she feared he might be frightened by it, and if he had seemed at all troubled she was ready to put in her hand and stop the wheel until he gradually learned how to use it. [171]

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## LITTLE MITCHELL'S HAPPY DAYS

LITTLE MITCHELL was a very happy squirrel in his Boston home. His lady's room had a large bay-window in the end, that looked out over the tops of the houses and away off up the beautiful Charles River; and there was a large platform, almost like a little room, in the bay-window, and here, by the side of the writing-table, stood his cage. Its door was always open when the lady was at home, and he had glorious frolics all about the big room.

He climbed everywhere, but the best fun was racing over the Japanese screen. The lady had no tree for him to climb, so she gave him the screen to play with; and up and down it he would go, now this side, now that. But he had the best time biting the eyes out of the birds on the screen and unravelling the embroidery. [173]

Then he would sit up on top of the screen and gnaw away at the wooden frame. You see, when he was spoiling the screen he was not spoiling anything else; and as he liked the screen better than anything else, his lady said he might as well eat it up if he wanted to, so she gave it to him.

It was very funny to see him go up the side of the screen, which stood upright, you know, like the wall of a house. His claws were as sharp as a cat's, and he would hold on by his front feet, and jump up with his hind feet and get a new hold with his front ones, and so on. He looked as though he went hopping up the screen. And it was funnier still when he came down head-first.

But funniest of all was to see him hang by his hind toes, head down, and play with his tail! He was very fond of playing with his tail, and when he was on the floor he would often chase it just as a kitten does. It was a fine tail by this time, long and bushy; and when he got excited he would fluff it out until it looked like a real grown-up squirrel's tail. [174]

But talking of tails, the most outrageously funny thing Little Mitchell ever did was to roll himself up into a ball, with his tail hugged in his arms and held between his teeth, then go over and over, like a ball, from one end of the platform to the other.

The first time the lady saw him, she was rather startled,—she could not imagine for a moment what that queer soft-looking ball was, rolling so fast about the platform. How she did laugh when she saw that it was only Little Mitchell amusing himself! She had never seen a squirrel or anything else act like that before. [175]

He was so funny playing about the room, hanging by his toes from the screen and rolling around like a ball, that the lady could do nothing but watch him when he was out of the cage. She said he wasted all her time; and he certainly did waste a great deal of it.

The first thing in the morning, he had to be fed and given a drink of fresh water. He ate all sorts of nuts now, but he would not crack the hard ones himself. The lady used to bring home any nice new nuts that she saw when she was out, and Little Mitchell was always on hand to open her parcels. He enjoyed opening them as much as you do when your mother comes home from shopping. If he found nuts, he would get into the bag and paw them all over, and at last run off with one. If there were no nuts, he would sniff at everything, and then go off, though sometimes he found something he liked to play with in the parcels. [176]

When he was hungry, he insisted on sitting upon the lady's knee to eat his nuts. Of course he could sit up as well as anybody now, and hold the nut in his funny little hands. Some people would say *paws*; but if a squirrel has not hands, then nobody has. Just watch one take a nut and turn it over and over with those hands, and finally hold it firmly between those ridiculous little nubbins that are his thumbs, while he gnaws it. And then watch him comb his tail with his fingers, and wash his face with his hands, and catch your watch-chain when you dangle it in front of him. Only, you see, he always uses both hands at once. At least Little Mitchell did, for the lady never saw him take anything in one hand alone. And he did not pick up things with his hands,—he picked up his nuts with his mouth, and then took them in his hands. [177]



Didn't he crack any of his nuts himself? Oh yes, indeed, he cracked the almonds and beech-nuts, and such soft-shelled ones, as cleverly as you could have done it yourself. But when it came to hickory nuts and filberts, he wouldn't even try to crack them; he would go and poke them into his lady's hand for her to crack, or else he would hide them away.

He knew perfectly well, when she got out the little hammer, that she was going to crack his nuts,—and a hard time she had not to crack his nose too, for he insisted upon poking it under the hammer, to see how the nuts were getting on, I suppose.

Peanuts? Oh, he wouldn't touch a peanut,—not if he were ever so hungry. He wouldn't open one, and he wouldn't eat it if the lady opened it for him. No,—he wouldn't look at peanuts. But he would eat beech-nuts until you wondered where in the world he put them all. And pecan nuts he liked almost as well, only of course the lady had to crack them for him.

He knew a good nut from a bad one, too, before opening it. You could be very sure that if he threw down a beech-nut or an almond without trying to open it, there was nothing fit to eat inside. How he knew, I cannot tell; but the rascal did know. I suppose it was some of that squirrel wisdom that kept coming to him as he grew older.

He used to drink from a tumbler in those days; but he would not take it between his lips, as he used to take the spoon. He would stand up, holding on to the edge with his hands, and then drink, making a great noise while doing it. It was just the way children sometimes drink when they are naughty; but he was not naughty,—he didn't know any better, and it was all so cunning his lady did not try to teach him.

She made up her mind, though, that she would teach him a great many things, he was so gentle and affectionate and intelligent.

But he *was* something of a nuisance about wasting her time. For one thing, she had to brush his coat every morning; and he would sit quite still to have his head and ears brushed. He would turn his head first one side, then the other, so that his ears could be brushed all around and back of them, inside and out. But as soon as his ears were washed, he thought that was enough, and that it was time for some fun; so he would catch hold of the brush and bite it, and kick at it with his hind feet like a kitten playing, and when the lady scolded him he would sit still for about a second, then he would snatch at the brush again, or maybe suddenly fly off from her knee and across the room. But she always brought him back, and made him stay until his fur was nicely brushed from the tip of his nose to the tip of his tail.

The tail was the hardest to fix. How he would act when she got to his tail! He *knew* it was time for some fun then, and he would jerk the brush out of his lady's hand, and run away with it in his mouth, and when she caught him and took it away he would catch hold of his tail and begin to comb it very fast himself with his hands and his front teeth.



#### LITTLE MITCHELL SITS IN HIS CHAIR

"He sat in the doll's chair before the little table, and ate his supper."

(Page [192](#))

Did he ever get over crying when his mouth was wiped? Oh no, after every drink of water he screamed in the same naughty way if the lady wiped his mouth. He much preferred springing upon her and wiping it very hard on the front of her dress. I suppose he

thought laces and ribbons were made for squirrels to wipe their faces on!

But he did love his lady. He did not want to be away from her a moment. Sometimes, when he ran across the front of her waist to get to her shoulder, she would drop a little kiss on his furry coat as he passed. Then what would he do? Run on without noticing it? Oh no; he would stop for just the fraction of a second, and give one soft touch of his little velvety tongue to her cheek, and then race on again.

Sometimes he would lick her hands like a little dog; and if she was busy, he couldn't *possibly* let her alone. If she was writing, he would take hold of the pen and shake it, and bite at her fingers, and turn somersaults in her lap, and caper so she couldn't do a thing but stop and play with him, as though he were a little monkey. [183]

He liked to have her tousle him about, as you do a kitten, upside down, and tickling his little white neck and chest with her fingers; and he would make believe bite, and really scratch just like a kitten. You see, his little claws were as sharp as any cat's claws; and though he did not mean to hurt her at all, he scratched her hands all over until they were a sight to see. Then she had to stop playing that way, and instead she took a long lead-pencil, and he would bite at that and catch it in all four of his feet, and hang from it like a sloth, back down, and she would swing him back and forth, as though he were a hammock suspended from the ends of the pencil. He thought that was great fun, and so did the lady. [184]

As to sewing, she couldn't do a bit of it if he was out of his cage, for he insisted upon helping, and caught hold of the thread and tangled it all up. It was such fun to see the lady's hands go back and forth, that he would jump at them, and she was afraid that she would stick the needle into his nose or his eye. With the scissors it was even worse; she couldn't so much as snip a thread without running the risk of clipping something off him,—one of his feet, or his nose, or the end of his tail. He seemed to be all over everything at once.

Of course she could have shut him up in his cage, but she didn't like to do that, it made him so unhappy. He would shake the cage door, and bite at it, and do everything he could think of to coax her to let him out.

Of course he wasn't bothering her every minute, though when he was not playing with her she had to keep sharp watch of him, for she never knew what he might do next, excepting when he was taking a sun-bath on the platform. For when the sun flooded the big windows, nice and warm, he would flatten himself out on the floor, and stretch first one leg, then another, and finally he would open his mouth and yawn, and show his four front teeth, two above and two below, that looked very long and sharp. [185]

For that is the way the squirrel-folk have their teeth,—two long, sharp ones in the front of the upper jaw, and two opposite them in the front of the lower jaw. These teeth are like little chisels, and it is with them they gnaw wood so easily. Not that they have only four teeth,—they have others, away back in the mouth, that look something like our back teeth, and are used for the same purpose—to chew the food. [186]

Well, when Little Mitchell went to take a sun-bath, the lady was glad, you may be sure; for then she knew he would be out of mischief for a little while. But it did not last long. He was soon up and off to see what he could do next.

He had soon collected a number of things to play with. If the lady missed any little thing, she was always sure who had run away with it. His pet plaything at this time was a little white envelope that had had a visiting-card in it. He fished the envelope out of the scrap-basket and carried it about for a long time, and then hid it away under the corner of a sofa pillow. He was always hiding his things, and the lady was always finding them in the queerest places. He used to put nuts in her slippers, and one day he even tried to drop nuts down her back. She never knew what she would find in the sleeves of her dresses when she took them out of the closet. [187]

At last she collected all his playthings that she could find,—the little envelope, a big button, a hard cracker, a piece of cooky, a small pine-cone, three acorns, a worsted ball, and a butternut,—and put them in a little basket on the bureau. Very soon, you may be sure, Little Mitchell found them. The first thing his lady knew, he was sitting on the very corner of the bureau, with his cracker in his

hands, nibbling it. Then he took a taste of the cooky; next he hauled out the little envelope, and had a joyous time hauling everything out of the basket.

What do you think he did next?

To the lady's great astonishment, he put them all back again!

He took the greatest fancy to the little basket; and ever after, when he took his things out of it, he put at least part of them back again. He seemed to think they were safely hidden there. [188]

He had such a hard time hiding things! All his extra nuts he wished to bury; for that is the way with the squirrel-folk, you know, and though Little Mitchell had never seen a squirrel bury anything, he could not get over wanting to do it. His favorite place, next to the folds of the lady's dress, was the deer-skin that lay on the platform. It was a beautiful skin from his own mountains, where the deer still run wild.

But the hair on a deer is short and stiff; so there was not much chance to hide anything in it. Yet how Little Mitchell did try! He would hold in his mouth the nut to be buried, while he dug very fast indeed with his hands,—that is, he went through the motions of digging, for of course he couldn't dig a hole in the deer-skin. [189]



#### LITTLE MITCHELL LISTENS TO THE WHISTLE

“He would climb up on the screen, and there he would stay, as still as a mouse.” (Page 197)

When he had dug long enough, he would poke the nut down under the hair on the skin, and then pat it all down nicely on top. Only when he got through there was the nut in plain sight! Poor little chap! He would try again and again, and at last give the nut a good patting, and scamper off. He often succeeded in getting the nuts out of sight under the hair; and a funny skin it was to walk over then, all hubbly with hard nuts! [190]

Another trick was to hide the nuts all over his lady as she sat reading, and when she got up a perfect shower of nuts would rattle out upon the floor.

You should have seen the little fellow play with a ball tied to a string!—across the room and back again, around and around he would chase it, just like a kitten. But he was ever so much quicker and funnier than a kitten, and prettier, too, with that bushy tail of his flirting and curving about. [191]

You see how it was,—he had nobody but his lady to play with, and he just *had* to play; so he learned all sorts of funny little tricks that

squirrels in the woods, who have each other to chase and who have to put away their winter stores, have no time for.

Do you know how he learned to sit in the doll's chair?

The lady got a little wooden chair and table to give to a little girl; but before she gave them away she thought she would see if she couldn't teach Little Mitchell to sit in the chair. So she let him get quite hungry one day; then she put him in the chair with one hand while she gave him a nice cracked nut with the other.

He was so eager to eat his nut that he never moved! She drew the table up in front of him, with some nuts and a little red apple lying on it, and Little Mitchell sat there like a well-behaved child and ate his supper. He soon got used to it, and if he felt like it he would sit still in the tiny rocking-chair and eat his nuts; but sometimes he would jump up and tip over the chair, table, and everything else.

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He liked apples. He liked to have a whole one, so he could roll it around and play with it. You should have seen him try to hold it in his hands like a nut! When he found he couldn't, he would crouch down close to it and gnaw a hole in the skin. But don't imagine he would swallow the skin! He wouldn't, not a bit! He flung it away, as he did the nut-shells, and ate the soft pulp inside.

He did not often get a whole apple, because the lady did not like to have the bits of skin thrown about the floor. You see, he would go to work and peel half the apple before he took a bite. He seemed to do this for fun; but he never picked up the little pieces of skin he flung about.

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But much as he liked apples, he liked grapes better; and these he could hold in his hands. He looked very pretty, sitting up with his bushy tail showing above his head and a big yellow California grape in his hands.

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## LITTLE MITCHELL MAKES A MISTAKE

LITTLE MITCHELL did not allow anybody to touch him except his lady; and he would not eat for any one else. He would not even make friends with the other people in the house,—but that may be because he did not see enough of them.

One day the lady heard no sound from him for a long time, and she began to look around for him; but Little Mitchell was gone! She looked all about the room,—no Little Mitchell. In his cage,—no Little Mitchell. In the closet, where the dresses hung,—no Mitchell. She shook the dresses to see if he had not gone to hide in them and fallen asleep,—no Little Mitchell. Then she called him,—not a sound. Finally she went out into the hall and looked for him, for the door was open,—but still no Little Mitchell.

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Then she went into the room of her next neighbor, who was a newspaper editor and not at home, but whose door was open; and there, in the middle of the floor, looking about him to see what to go at first, sat Little Mitchell!

The rascal! As soon as the lady came he made a dive for the hall and scampered home; for she had told him he must not go near the open door, and had scolded him so often for doing it that he knew perfectly well he ought not to do it.

Yes, indeed,—he knew when he was scolded, and scolding was usually enough; though once or twice the lady had spat on him,—not hard, you know, not hard at all; but it almost broke his heart, he was such a sensitive little thing.

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The first time it happened he had done something *very* naughty, and he knew it was naughty too. The lady caught him up and cuffed him ever so little; but she was dreadfully frightened when the little fellow stiffened out as though he were dead, and lay perfectly still for ever so long. But he never did the naughty thing again.

The only other time he got slapped was when his lady's friend put out her hand to touch him. He was sitting on his lady's knee, and he deliberately reached out and bit the visitor's finger. Yes, he really bit it so that a drop of blood came.

That *was* naughty, and he knew it; and his lady slapped him a little, and said, "*No, no, Mitchell!*" very crossly, and he jumped away, his tail all fluffy, and ran as fast as he could and tucked his head up her sleeve as far as he could get it.

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Perhaps the reason why he went to the editor's room was because that was where the singing came from, and he did enjoy hearing anybody sing! When the editor was at home, he used to sing a great deal; and Little Mitchell would climb up on the screen which stood in front of the open door, and lean his head away down, and cock his ear to listen, and there he would stay as still as a mouse as long as the editor sang or whistled.

One day he really went visiting. His lady took him to a friend's house one night just as they were finishing dinner, and she was invited to have some of the ice-cream.

She had Little Mitchell buttoned up under her jacket; but as soon as the ice-cream came along he put in an appearance and wanted his share, which he ate very nicely out of a spoon, to the amusement of all who saw him.

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After dinner, when they were all together in the sitting-room, one of the young men—who was a Harvard student, and knew more about many other things than he did about squirrels—said Little Mitchell did not really know the lady, but would just as soon go to anybody else if he were left alone.

So all the family—eight or nine, counting the visitors—formed a circle, and the lady set Little Mitchell down in the middle, and then quickly stepped back behind him to a new place in the circle.

Little Mitchell's bushy tail jerked nervously for a minute, and his bright eyes looked wildly from one strange face to another; then he gave a leap and landed at his lady's feet, and in another second was up on her shoulder.

After that, no one denied that he knew his lady, and liked her

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best of all.

He had to take an airing once in a while, and the way he went was to ride in his own private carriage,—which was nothing less than the inside of his lady's jacket. She would button it all but the two top buttons, and tuck him in, and away they would go for a walk or a romp together.

Little Mitchell thought this great fun, and usually gave no trouble. Sometimes they walked along the street, when Little Mitchell would pop his head out and look about, but if anybody came along he would pop it back again.

Sometimes they went to the Public Garden; and here he had many adventures. One day his lady thought she would let him climb a tree. So she chose a little one, put him on one of the lower limbs, and then stepped back. Little Mitchell looked about, but did not climb; he took two or three steps, then I suppose he decided it was an awful thing to be left there alone on a wild little tree in a wild park that stood in a wild world that he knew nothing about; so he gave one tremendous jump and landed on his lady's shoulder, and scurried down into his safe hiding-place under her jacket, and peeped out at the terrible tree and the strange world he was so afraid of.

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Then she put him on the grass, and went on; but Little Mitchell went on too, and in less time than it takes to tell he had caught her and come flying up again to his safe place in her jacket.

Sometimes he would come out and sit in her hand; but it seemed a very dangerous world to a squirrel who had never been out of doors,—and so it was, for did not a little girl come up to look at him one day and suddenly grab him in both hands? But how quick she let go! He squealed his loudest, and squirmed like an eel, and no doubt would have bitten her, only she was so frightened that she dropped him on the grass. The lady quickly stooped down with her hand out, and he sprang upon it and ran up her arm and hid in her jacket. No little girls for him!

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He liked to have the lady go to a lonely part of the Public Garden, and sit on a bench, and let him sit beside her with a nice pecan nut that had been cracked a little so that he could open it by working at it awhile.

You see, he did not crack his own nuts, because he did not know how. It must be that mother squirrels start the nuts for their young ones; but Little Mitchell's lady did not know that, only she saw nuts that the squirrels had gnawed, and there were two little holes in the sides opposite each other. But Little Mitchell did not gnaw the sides of the nut,—he always tried to gnaw the end; and you know it would take him forever to get at the meat that way. So finally the lady started his nuts with a penknife in the right place, and Little Mitchell would try very hard to finish opening them; but he liked much better to have his nuts cracked with a hammer, so that he could peel off pieces of the shell.

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No doubt he would soon have learned to open his nuts himself, and do it very well, only something happened that made this impossible. It is strange he did not know how, he knew so many other things the squirrel folk know, but that they had never taught him. You remember he knew how to clean himself and wash his face in the funny squirrel way. And he knew how to talk squirrel talk. He had several sounds that meant different things.

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The funniest talking he ever did was when he saw the dog in the backyard. It was away down below him, and not in his yard either, but in another yard over the fence. It is strange he should have noticed the dog so far off; but he had good eyes, had Little Mitchell,—and the way he screamed and scolded when he saw the dog! You never heard anything like it,—unless you have been scolded by a gray squirrel out in the woods sometime!

He was sitting looking out of the big window, when the little dog ran across the yard. Up went Little Mitchell's hands across his breast, in the most comical manner, as though he were pressing them over his fast-beating heart. Then he stretched his neck, and opened his mouth wide, and screamed at the dog. The way he screamed when his mouth was wiped was nothing to this. How he did go on!—just as the gray squirrels in the woods do when they are very much excited; and he had never heard a squirrel do it in all his life.

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There were gray squirrels on Boston Common, where Little Mitchell sometimes went to walk with the lady; but he did not take

the slightest interest in them.

There are more squirrels on the Common sometimes than others. The winter Little Mitchell was in Boston there were several of them living on the Common, and they had nests in some of the trees. Yes, they built nests that looked like big clumsy bird's-nests, and they went into them to sleep and to keep warm. [205]

One cold winter day, when Little Mitchell's lady was crossing the Common early in the morning, and Little Mitchell was not with her, a big gray squirrel ran up to her and asked for a nut. Of course he could not ask in people's talk, but he asked very plainly in squirrel talk,—in their sign language. He made no sound, but signed for nuts in the prettiest way, running close up to her, flattening out a little toward the ground, and looking up into her face as Little Mitchell looked when he was coaxing for something. The lady had no nuts with her; but she brought some when she came that way again. Then she found somebody else had given him nuts, and he was sitting on the ground eating them. Of course this squirrel did not pass the winter in a nest in the branches of a tree. Oh, no, he had a nice warm hiding-place inside a big tree that had a hole in the crotch so that he could get in. [206]

Once there were a great many squirrels on the Common, but one day there were none. They had all gone off. What had become of them? everybody was asking. The policeman knew, for he saw them go. It was very early in the morning, and they went all together, single file, across Cambridge bridge. They were on the bridge railing, one old fellow leading the way. Perhaps there were getting to be too many of them to be comfortable on the Common. Perhaps they were tired of city life. Anyway, the policeman saw them go, and that was the end of the squirrels on the Common for some time. At least, so I was told.

A good many city parks have gray squirrels in them, but where else are they so tame as in the park at Richmond, Virginia? Little Mitchell's lady was there one day, before she had found Little Mitchell, and the squirrels were so tame they came right up and ate out of her hand; and when she stooped down to speak to one, another little fellow raced right up her back,—which rather startled her, because she was not used to squirrels then. [207]

Well, Little Mitchell grew fast, and promised to become a very large and handsome squirrel, when he made a dreadful mistake one day and licked the heads of the matches. He got into the match-box somehow,—he was always opening boxes to see what was in them,—and he liked the taste of the matches, never suspecting what sad results would follow.

The lady looked about at last to see what he was up to,—for if he was quiet more than a minute at a time it meant mischief. How she jumped when she saw what he was doing! But it was too late, and little Mitchell tumbled over then and there, and the lady thought he was dead; but he was not. [208]

He appeared to get over it and be perfectly well again; and the lady—who did not know as much about phosphorus poisoning then as she was soon to learn—thought nothing was to come of it. You see, phosphorus is the stuff on the ends of matches that makes them light; and it is poison,—and a mean, horrible poison too.

Little Mitchell played about as usual for a few days, rolling like a ball on the platform, racing over the screen, and tormenting the lady when she wanted to work. Then one morning he was frightfully sick and he stayed sick all day. He sat hunched up on the couch, making queer, mournful little noises, and eating nothing. [209]

He could not even bear the gentle touch of the lady's hand, and screamed if she came near him, he was so afraid she would touch him. So she left him to himself, and went to the doctor and asked about it, and the doctor told her what to do. There was not very much she could do then, but keep him warm and wait.

For two or three days Little Mitchell was a very sick squirrel; but then he began to get better again, and soon was running about almost as well as ever,—but not quite. He seemed weak, and could not use his hind legs as well as usual. But he was still very cunning and lively, and as affectionate as ever.

While he was sick, the lady let him sleep under the corner of her travelling rug instead of in his cage; and when he got better he still wanted to sleep in the rug. He would creep in to take a nap in the daytime, and at night he teased so to stay that the lady yielded at last, and fixed him a bed on the floor, at the head of her own couch. [210]

She doubled a towel in between two folds of the rug, for sheets, as it were; but Little Mitchell did not like the towel, and would creep in on top of it or under it. Then it was pinned down so he had to go into it; and at last he got used to it, and always went in right, whether it was pinned or not.

After a few days the lady woke up one night and thought she heard him making queer noises. She got a light, and, sure enough, there he was, as sick as ever. But he got over it again, and went on for a long time about as usual, though his hind legs seemed weaker than before. He could scarcely climb to the top of his screen, and never raced over it and hung by his toes, as he had liked to do.

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He had to take medicine; but he would not touch his drinking water if the medicine was put in that, so the lady got it in the form of little sugar pills. He was very fond of sugar, you know, though he was not allowed to eat much candy; and he liked those little pills, and was always ready to eat one whenever it was given him.

He liked his flaxseeds, too, at first, and would crunch them up, one at a time, between his sharp little teeth; but he soon got tired of them, and would not eat them unless the lady made him. The way she managed was to pour some of the seeds in the palm of her hand, and give them to him early in the morning. If he would not eat them, she waited, and after a while offered them again; and not a bit of breakfast would he get until he had eaten his flaxseeds. He soon learned that he must eat them, and it was funny to see him try to get rid of them by pawing them out of the lady's hand. He would paw them all out into her lap; but she would gather them up again, when he would stick in his nose very hard, so as to spatter half of them out. He would munch two or three, looking at her out of his bright eyes; then he would nose around in them again, until he had spilled them all out into her lap. But again she would gather them up, and so they would keep on until he had eaten what was necessary for him.

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LITTLE MITCHELL GOES TO SLEEP

ONE day Little Mitchell's lady said good-bye to him, and went away to stay two or three days. He had been well now for more than a week, so that she did not feel troubled at leaving him.

A friend promised to attend to him in her absence; but this was easier said than done. She opened the cage, thinking he would come and sit in her lap as he did in his lady's.

Sit in her lap? Not a bit of it! Nor would he take any nuts from her, nor have anything to do with her. As soon as he got out of the cage, off he scampered, and she could not catch him. So she took a book and sat still, hoping he would return to his cage, in which she had laid some nuts.

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Presently she heard a match snap, and looking quickly up, saw Little Mitchell drop a lighted match and scamper off.

Some one had dropped a match on the floor, and poor Little Mitchell had found it. This time he gnawed it and set it on fire, which made him quickly drop it, and thus he did not get so much of the poison as before, though he burned the whiskers all off the side of his face again. It was the same side they were burned off before, but they had grown out since then.

He went into his cage at last; but he ate scarcely anything, and was a very unhappy little fellow until his lady came back to him. You may be sure he was glad to see her! She let him out the minute she got into the room, and he climbed up and cuddled close to her face, and then ran around and around her,—for though it was hard for him to climb the stiff screen, he could climb up on his lady's dress quite easily. He hung about her as though he could not bear to leave her for a minute, and kept this up as long as she stayed in the room.

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But the extra taste of phosphorus soon had its effect, and next day the poor little fellow was sick again. But he recovered as before.

Then he had another misfortune. He got his tail skinned.

His lady had to be gone all one day, so she left him in his cage as she always did when she went out. When she got back, there was poor Little Mitchell with the cotton in his nest wrapped all tight about his tail. He had struggled to get free until his tail was all twisted and torn. Oh, but he was glad to see the lady! She did not even stop to take off her things before she pulled the cotton out of the nest, and took Little Mitchell out and carefully untwisted the poor tail, from which the skin was off for a third of its length. You can imagine he was a queer-looking fellow then! But the lady took good care of him, and bathed the tail every day, and put oil on it to make the hair grow. It was a pretty sad-looking tail, and she feared the hair never would grow on it again; but it did.

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After a while rows of short hairs began to come out all along the bare spot; and then his tail looked funny enough. Do you remember how the little scouring rush that grows in swampy places looks? Do you remember the rings of stiff little bristles all down it? Well, Little Mitchell's tail reminded his lady of the scouring rush. The hairs came out in rings, a ring of them at each joint; but they grew ever so fast, and in the end that part of the tail was almost the handsomest of all!

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But what a lot of trouble it made for both of them,—that tail! It had to be bathed often,—and Little Mitchell did hate so to have it put into the water. At first, as soon as the water touched it he would squirm loose and run off, and the lady would catch him, and, holding him before her face, would talk to him and tell him all about it, and that he must be good and let her wash it. And then—will you believe it?—Little Mitchell would be good, and let her finish washing him in the warm soapy water.

Yes, he had a bath all over once in a while with nice warm water. He didn't like it very well, though the lady was ever so careful not to get the soap in his eyes. But what came after the bath,—the rubbing, and the sitting on his lady's knee in the warm sun until he was perfectly dry,—he liked very much indeed. And then, when his coat changed, the bath and the rubbing stopped that dreadful itching.

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His baby coat was very soft and fine and of the same gray color all over, excepting of course on the under side of his body, and there it was white. But when he was three or four months old, he began to change in many curious ways. For one thing, there came a queer growth under his coat that surprised the lady very much. When she brushed him, instead of a dainty white skin under his fur he seemed covered with a sort of gray felt. Pretty soon this felt got to be a coat of long close hair, that was very pretty, and quite different in coloring from the baby coat, which soon began to fall out. That is why he itched so; the loose hairs tickled him, and he was all the time biting and scratching himself, so that it was almost impossible for the lady to brush him, he wriggled about so.

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His new coat was light gray on the sides, with a dark stripe down the middle of the back; and there was such a pretty reddish brown stripe between his gray sides and the pure white on the under side of his body. At the same time, he got a reddish stripe on each side of his face, and his face changed its shape, or else the new markings made it look changed. You see now what was happening,—Little Mitchell was no longer a baby. He was fast getting to be a handsome grown-up squirrel, with all the stripes and markings of one. His face seemed to shorten up and change in expression,—just as people change when they grow out of childhood into grown-up men and women. Only *their* faces grow longer instead of shorter.

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It was very pretty to watch these changes come over Little Mitchell; but one thing troubled his lady,—as time went on he did not get well. He would seem pretty well for a long time, but the poor little hind legs got weaker and weaker. The lady comforted him by rubbing them,—they seemed so stiff, just as though he were a little old man with the rheumatism. He liked the rubbing every morning. The lady would gently knead the muscles of his back, and then of his hind legs, one after the other. When she got to the leg, he would stick it out straight in her hand, it felt so good to have it rubbed.

When she had finished and put him down, he would look up at her and nod his head,—which was his way of coaxing her to rub him some more.

The rubbing seemed to help the little legs, but it did not give them strength; and soon Little Mitchell could not climb his screen at all. He could climb up the table-cover, though, to the table, where he loved to poke around among the books and papers,—and I am sorry to say he would sometimes gnaw at a book-cover unless he were watched.

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He could climb up the lady's dress, too, quite easily, and get into her lap, where he loved to lie stretched out. And he could climb up the dresses that hung in the closet. The best thing there was the woolly wrapper; he used to climb up to the hook it hung on, and sit there, and after a while slip into the top of the sleeve and take a nap.

One day his lady hung the cuff of the sleeve on another hook, and so made a fine hammock for him to creep into. He lay there a long while, having the most beautiful time,—and what *do* you suppose he was doing? He was pulling the fuzz all off the inside of the sleeve! He did not gnaw the cloth at all,—he just amused himself pulling off the fuzz and rolling it into balls.

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As Little Mitchell became weaker, he would often lie in his little hammock in the closet half a day at a time. And when, finally, he got to be too weak to climb even the woolly wrapper, the lady would lift him up and put him into the sleeve, and he would stay there until he wanted to come out, when he would get up on the hook from which the wrapper hung, and wait for the lady to take him down. He was very much afraid of falling; so he did not try to climb much. He did fall once in a while, and it seemed to hurt him dreadfully.

But though he had become so weak, he was not at all stupid. Even in his nest in the dark sleeve, he knew when the lady came into the closet. I suppose it was that wonderful nose of his that told him. It did not disturb him to have her come, even when she brushed against him. It did not seem even to wake him up.

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But one day a friend of the lady went into the big closet for something, and passed Little Mitchell as he lay asleep in his hammock. She did not touch him at all; but his quick little nose must have smelled a stranger, and how he did growl and scold at her! She did not know what it was at first, and jumped out of the closet as though a bear had been in there.

Little Mitchell seldom sat in his little chair in those days; but the

day when Margaret and George and the baby came to see him, the lady set him in his chair before his table and gave him a nut. [224]

You should have seen the children,—how pleased they were! George had the jolliest laugh you ever heard; and he was the jolliest boy, anyway. But he was careful about laughing out loud, for fear of scaring Little Mitchell; and Margaret was careful too. Even the baby was used to playing with the kitten without hurting it; so that Little Mitchell was perfectly safe with those dear little children, if he had only known it. But he didn't know it,—and you remember how he felt about children.

Now, what do you think he did? He ate his nut as fast as he could, and then he tumbled out of his chair and went off to bed! Yes, he scrambled down into his own corner, and crept into his bed—without a good-bye look at his pretty visitors. [225]

As time passed, Little Mitchell grew still weaker. The lady again had to be away for a day or two, but this time she would not leave him in his cage. She fixed his corner like a little room,—the screen, which he could no longer climb, at one end, and the wall opposite it. The edge of the platform, upon which he could no longer get without help, made the third wall, and a box the fourth. In the end of his little room opposite his bed the lady put a little dish of water, some cracked nuts, and a bunch of grapes.

When she returned from her visit, she went right away to see how Little Mitchell was; and what do you think? When she touched the rug, which you remember was his bed, something like a little bear inside growled at her!

It was funny to hear Little Mitchell growl. It was like a very mite of a bear; but the lady was not afraid of such bears, and boldly put her hand right into its den, when the wild bear inside gently licked her finger and was as glad as could be to see her. [225]

She took him out and shook out the rug, for he had carried his nuts inside, but his grapes he had eaten outside like a nice, neat little bear.

He got so at last that he would not eat unless he sat in his lady's lap. He could not sit up unless she put her hand against his back and helped him. He would sit in her lap and look up in her face while he ate his nuts and grapes.

When he wanted to go to her he would get as close as he could and nod at her to take him. When he wanted anything, he would nod his head at his lady, which was his way of saying "Please do it for me," and she generally understood what he wanted and did it for him. [227]

As soon as he stopped climbing, his toe-nails grew very long and curved, and he had not strength to pull them out of the couch-cover or the blanket-wrapper or his lady's dress, and she would have to help him. Sometimes he would try to go from the couch to the floor, and his toes would catch, and there he would hang until the lady saw him and jumped to help him get loose.

One day she cut the tips off those troublesome nails. Her friends said it would spoil him; but she tried it, and he was very comfortable until they grew again, when she again very carefully cut off the sharp curved points, and kept them short enough to be out of his way.

Sometimes when he was on the floor and wanted to get into her lap, he would stand in front of her and nod his head, when she would reach out her foot and he would clamber upon it. Then she would raise her foot, and he would walk along up to her knee. When he wanted to get down from her lap, he would reach down with his hands, and she would raise her foot until he could walk down to it without falling; then she would lower him to the floor. [228]

If he wanted to go from one place to another, he just told his lady,—by nodding, you know,—and she would put out her hand to him. He would get upon it and keep still until she had carried him to the right place. You see, they had got to be such friends they understood each other very well.

Sometimes he would slip when trying to get down from the platform, or from a chair where the lady had put him. One day he slipped and caught by the edge of the platform, but had not strength to pull himself up again. The lady did not see him until his strength was about gone, and he was letting go, and about to get a fall that would hurt his poor little crippled body; so she said, "Mitchell, hold fast a minute more; hold fast, I'm coming," and put down her work [229]

and hurried to him. As she spoke, she saw him tighten up for another effort, and he held until she got to him.

At last there came a day when the poor little fellow could not eat. The paralysis that disabled his legs had reached the muscles of swallowing; and then his lady knew the end had almost come. She sat on the platform where she had so often sat while Little Mitchell sunned himself on her knee, and took him gently in her hands. She put one little kiss between his ears,—and maybe there were tears in her eyes. Thus did Little Mitchell end his days.

[230]

It is true, he was nothing but a squirrel; but living as he did with human beings, developing his intelligence, suffering, and learning love and patience, he seemed very near the human life with which his own life was spent.

THE END

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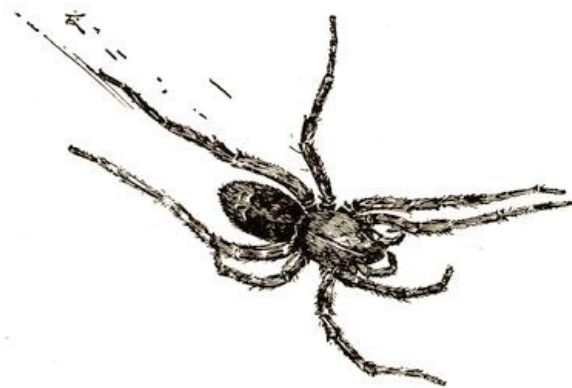
[231]

[232]

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[233]

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