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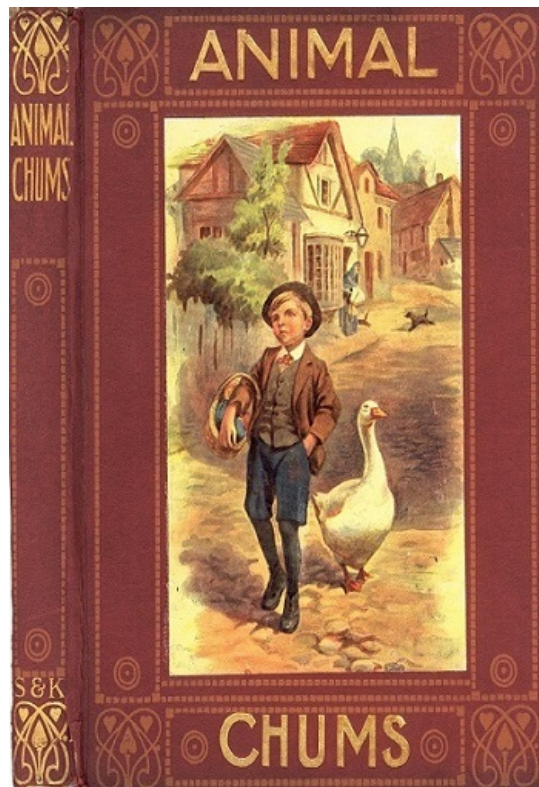
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ANIMAL CHUMS

True Tales about Four-footed
Friends

BY
JEAN McINTOSH



NEW YORK
SULLY AND KLEINTEICH

(PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN)

CONTENTS.

John Willie	5
"Hurry Up, Jack!"	14
Brer Rabbit's Adventure	18
The Greedy Lamb	28
The Sparrow Hawks	38
Jacko	48
The Horse that went to Church	61
The Weasel and the Rabbit	68
The Saucy Squirrels	76
The Owl in the Dovecot	84
A True Story of a Canary	92



ANIMAL CHUMS.

John Willie.

HAVE you ever heard of any one having a real live goose for a pet?" said Uncle John to Willie and Tommy.

"Oh! do tell us all about it, uncle," said Tommy.

Now these two little boys loved to hear a nice story; and whenever their uncle came to live with them, they made him promise to come to their nursery every evening and tell them a story.

"Well," said Uncle John, when they had settled down, "this is a *true* story that I am going to tell you to-night."

"I know it is true, because I saw the goose not very long ago, and very funny he did look with his _"

"But I must begin at the beginning."

In a country village not very far from the seaside lived a little boy and girl with their father and mother.

Now these people were very, very poor.

It was drawing very near to Christmas time, and they



were thinking of all the nice presents and things that little boys like you would be sure to get on Christmas morning.

Said Robbie (for that was the boy's name) to his sister,—

"Mamie, do you think Father Christmas will bring *us* anything this year?"

"I do hope so," said Mamie. "I *have* tried to be good."

"What would *you* like?" said Robbie.

"Well," said Mamie, who was thinking hard, "I think I should like something that we could all share—father and mother as well."

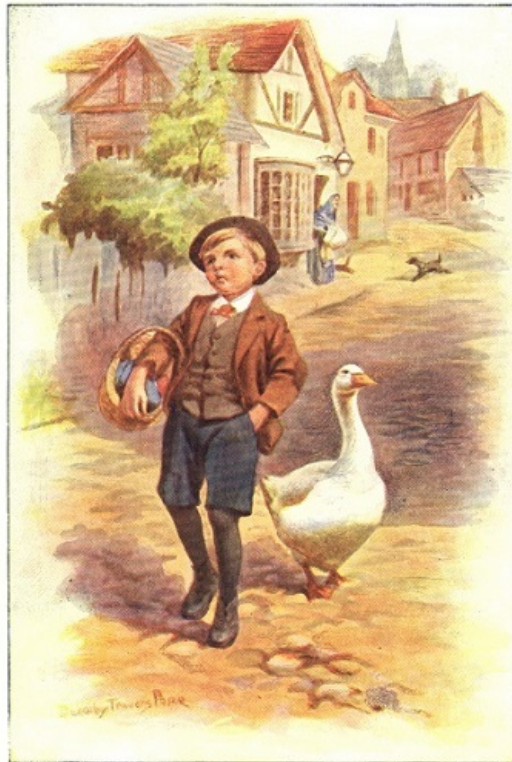
"But what could that be?" asked Robbie in surprise.

"Well, I *have* thought of something," said Mamie, "but I am afraid you will laugh at me if I tell you."

"Oh no, I won't," cried Robbie. "Do tell me what it is."

"I shall tell you," said Mamie, "if you promise faithfully not to laugh."

"I promise faithfully," answered Robbie.



"Well," Mamie went on, "I thought that I should like Father Christmas to send me a *goose*, and then we could all have it for dinner on Christmas day."



"That would be jolly," said Robbie. "What a surprise father and mother would get!"

"Yes, that is what I thought," said Mamie, much relieved that Robbie did not laugh. "Let us both call up the chimney now and ask Father Christmas if he will send us one."

So Robbie and Mamie shouted up the chimney together, and what a noise they did make! This is what they said:—

"Please, Father Christmas, we should like a lovely big goose for Christmas instead of a present for our stockings."

"I wonder if he heard," said Robbie and Mamie together.

But Father Christmas did hear. For there was a tiny little fairy listening all the time, and she caught the message in one of her wings, and flew right away there and then to give it



to Santa Claus.

The next morning Robbie and Mamie ran out into the garden, and what do you think they saw?

"Oh, oh!" cried Mamie.

"Oh, oh!" cried Robbie.

"It *has* come," they both said together.

And there waddling about on the grass was a large goose.

They ran away to tell their mother, and she said,—

"Well, we must give it something to eat."

So Robbie and Mamie fed it, not only that morning, but every morning.

By-and-by this goose became very tame, and was soon the pet of the family.

"I am afraid we shall never have him for dinner now," said Robbie.

"Oh no," answered Mamie; "I could not bear to eat him, he is such a darling."

So they kept him and gave him the name of John Willie.



"And now," said Uncle John, "if you are good children, I will take you to see this strange pet some fine day.

"You will see it going for a walk with its master. It sometimes walks along beside him for miles and miles, with a slow, stately tread.

"Or you may see it sitting on its master's shoulder while he sits and reads.

"It will also feed out of your hand as dainty as—well, as a goose can."

"What a jolly story!" said Tommy.

"I wish *I* had a goose," said Willie.

"Hurry Up, Jack!"

A LADY who lived in the country had a son who was a sailor boy.

Once when he came home from a long, long voyage he brought his mother a parrot.

Now this parrot was very, very wise indeed, and the lady had taught her to say all manner of things.

In the mornings the master of the house had to get up very early, and the parrot used to wake him by crying out,—

"Hurry up, Jack! It is time to get up!"



One day Polly got out of her cage, and, as the door was standing open, she flew very quickly through it and out of sight.

The lady hunted high and low for her pet, but she was not to be found. At last, just when she had given up all hope of ever seeing Polly again, a boy came to the door of the house.

"Please, Mrs. Brown" (for that was the lady's name), "I think your parrot is in Farmer Day's orchard. She is sitting in an old apple tree screeching for all she is worth."

"Oh, I do hope it is she," said Mrs. Brown, and off she went to seek the bird as fast as she could.

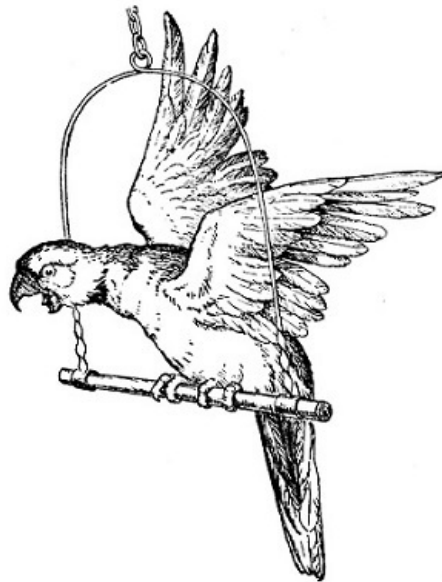
Sure enough, there was Polly perched high up in the tree crying out,—

"Oh dear me, poor Polly's lost—poor Polly's lost!"

As soon as she saw her mistress Polly cried out,—



"Hullo, Sally! Poor Polly's lost. Take Polly home!" And the bird flew down to her. Now, don't you wish you had a parrot so clever?



Brer Rabbit's Adventure.

SAID Brer Rabbit to his wife one day, "Oh, how I should like to see the world! It is very dreary living in this green field, and always having the same thing over and over again."

"My dear," answered his wife, "it is a dangerous world beyond the green fields, where all manner of strange things dwell, and two-footed animals lie in wait to gobble you up. *I* do not want to leave my little burrow."

And Brer Rabbit's wife tucked herself up in her little bed and went to sleep.

But Brer Rabbit kept thinking and thinking, and longing and longing to go beyond the green field in which he had his home; and one fine morning he popped out of his hole and ran away with all his might and main.



Over the fields he went faster and faster. On the way he passed whole families of rabbits, and when they called after him, "Where are you going to, Brer Rabbit?" never a word he answered.

At last Brer Rabbit began to feel tired. It was long since he had left his home, and he had travelled many, many miles, and now felt very hungry.

"I wonder where I could get something to eat," he said to himself.

But he looked about in vain. Not a blade of nice sweet grass could he see anywhere, and he began to feel very sad.

"Oh, what shall I do?" thought poor Brer Rabbit. "How I wish I had never left my nice

home!"

But now he was too tired to go back; and even if he would, he could not go, for, in his haste, he had not noticed by which way he had come.

Just then he spied a nice box with a lot of straw in it.

"Ah," said Brer Rabbit, "this looks a nice quiet bed. I will just pop in here and have a good sleep."

So in he popped, and curled himself up in the corner, and soon fell fast asleep.

Brer Rabbit must have been sleeping for a long time when he awoke with a fearful start.

And what do you think had happened?

Some one had put a chair inside the box and packed it in with more straw, and now the lid was being hammered on, and poor Brer Rabbit was too terrified to move. There he was held fast in a prison, and no one to let him out.

"Oh dear, *dear* me!" wailed Brer Rabbit. "If only I had taken my wife's advice and never left my nice little home!"

But Brer Rabbit wailed in vain, for never an answer was there to his cry.

Presently Brer Rabbit felt the box being lifted and put into a train. Then the door was shut, the whistle blown, and away he went, far, far across the country to a strange land.

Brer Rabbit shivered and shook with fright, and he got so ill with hunger that he was forced to eat the hard coarse straw. How he longed for some green grass and a nice cool drink!

After many hours the train stopped and the box was taken out; then it was put into a van and taken to a big shop in a town. There, with poor Brer Rabbit still in it, the box was put into a dark cellar.

After a long time a man came to the box and took off the lid; then he took out the chair.

"I am lost now," said Brer Rabbit, "for surely this is a two-footed animal come to gobble me up."

So he huddled himself up in the corner, but it was so dark in the cellar that the man never saw him, and he took the chair away, and left Brer Rabbit all alone, and *the lid off the box*.

"Now," said Brer Rabbit, "I am at least free of this box, but I will just wait awhile before I pop out in case any one should come in and see me."

So he waited till all was quiet, and then popped out of his prison. Oh, how weak and ill he did feel! He could scarcely hop round the floor. He looked all over for something to eat, and found some crumbs, but no water to drink.

So Brer Rabbit stayed there all that night and the next day, until he was almost dead and had lost count of time.

"O sir," said Bob, the errand boy, to his master, "there is a great big rat in the cellar. I have never seen such a big one before, and I am almost afraid of it."

"I will come and see," said the master. And off he went with Bob to the cellar.

Bob opened the door very gently and peeped in.

"It is still there," said he.

"Let *me* look," exclaimed the master, and he too peeped in at the door.

"Why," he said, "that is not a rat; it is a *wild rabbit*."

Bob's eyes nearly dropped out with surprise. And no wonder, for here was poor Brer Rabbit sitting in the corner, too weak and ill to run away.

"Now," he thought, "I must surely die, for I am caught at last."

But Bob's master was a kind man, and he loved animals very much.



He took Brer Rabbit up in his arms, and gave him some milk to drink and biscuits to eat, and then put him into a warm basket, and took him home for his little girls and boys to look at.

That same day they took Brer Rabbit away into the country, and put him down in a lovely green field, and gave him his freedom.

And this was the end of Brer Rabbit's adventure. After many long days he found his wife and family again, and when he had told them all about it, he said,—

"I shall never, never again want to see the world."

The Greedy Lamb.

HAVE you ever seen a pet lamb?" said Bobs to his mother one day.

Bobs was a little boy who was always asking questions; and if he could only get his mother to tell him a story, he was quite content. He would sit so still that he scarcely so much as winked.

"Yes," answered his mother; "I had a pet lamb for my very own when I was a little girl."

"Oh, do tell me all about it," cried Bobs. "Was it very tiny?"

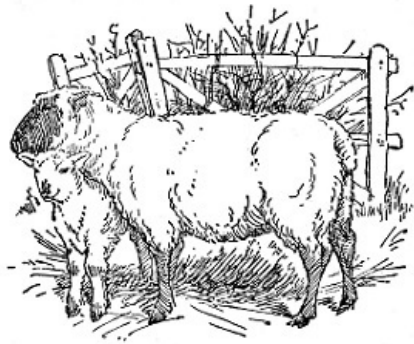


So Bobs and his mother sat down in a chair by the fire, and she began,—

"A long, long time ago, when I was quite a little girl, I had a great longing to have a pet lamb.

"My father owned a farm, and although I had lots of other pets, I was not content, and still wanted a lamb for my own.

"'Very well,' said my father, 'you may have a pet lamb, but I am sure you will get tired of it and never want another.'



"But I did not believe what father said, for I thought nothing could be so nice as a little woolly lamb.

"One day we went for a picnic to a lovely valley where a beautiful waterfall leaped and dimpled in the sunlight, and then fell down, down, down hundreds of feet into the river below.

"Father and I were standing on a rock watching this waterfall and thinking how lovely it looked, when, all at once, I saw something that made me jump.

"'Look, look, father!' I cried; 'there is something lying in the pool below. What can it be?'

"'Why, I do believe it is a sheep,' said father. 'You stay just there, and I will go nearer and see.'

"'O father, it *is* a sheep,' I cried, 'and there is its little lamb.' And I pointed to a ledge of rock where a tiny lamb was standing nibbling at some green leaves on a tree that grew by the water-side.

"Every few moments it bleated most piteously, and looked all round for its mother.

"But never again would it hear her bleat, for there, in the deep pool at the foot of the waterfall, she was lying drowned.

"'O father,' I cried in great distress, 'what if the poor lamb should fall in too?'

"But father had gone to try to save it.

"Down, down he went, slipping and sliding on the wet rocks.

"At last he reached the lamb, and, putting it on his shoulder, he began to climb up the steep rocks to a place of safety.

"After much hard and dangerous climbing, he came back to me and said,—

"'Now, my little girl, you have got your wish at last, for here is a lamb, and you must take care of it until it is old enough to look after itself.'

"How pleased I was, although I felt very sad when I thought of the poor sheep that had fallen into the water and lost its life.

"Well, we took the lamb home, and very soon it got to know me quite well.

"It would come running to me as soon as I called, and would drink milk out of a bottle in a very funny way.

"But oh, it *was* a mischief; and Jane, the kitchen maid, used to be very angry when it came trotting into her kitchen on wet days and dirtied the floor with its feet.

"One day Jane had made the chickens' food all ready, and put it in a pail, and placed it outside the door to cool.

"The chickens were all waiting for their meal and feeling



very hungry. Jane went to the door for the food, and to her surprise and horror she found the pail upset and not a bit of food left.

"'Bother that lamb!' cried Jane. 'It has gone and eaten up all the chickens' food.'

"And just then we saw the lamb trotting off to the field quite content.

"At last it grew to be a very big sheep—too big to come trotting into the farm kitchen, for it was so strong and bumped against Jane so much that she would often chase it out with a broom.



good.

"Then father said it must go into the field and stay there for

"'I am glad,' said Jane, when she heard about it; 'I hope we shall never have another pet lamb.'

"But I did not think so, for I loved it very much.

"Long afterwards, when I went to the field, it would come running to me when I called.

"So that was how I got my pet lamb," said Bobs's mother.

"How lovely it must have been!" said Bobs. "I wish I lived in the country."



The Sparrow Hawks.

GEORGE, George! Where are you?" called Frank as he went through the wood.

"I am here," answered George.

"Where? I can't see you," shouted Frank at the top of his voice.

"I am here, up a tree," said George.

"Whatever are you doing there?" said Frank as he spied George's fat legs through the branches of a tree.

"I shall be down in a minute," said George, "and I will tell you."

Presently George came scrambling down so quickly that Frank thought he would be sure to fall.



But George was not afraid of this, for had he not been used to climbing trees all his life? But then, you see, George lived in the country, and Frank had only come to stay with him for his summer holiday.

And what a surprise this holiday was to Frank, who lived in a town where he could not see the green fields nor hear the birds sing!

"Frank," said George in a whisper, "there is a hawk's nest up that tree."

"Did you see it?" asked Frank.

"Yes," answered George, "but I could not get close to it; I must try again tomorrow."

The next day being fine, George and Frank hurried to the wood. They soon came to the tree where the nest was, and George began to climb.

Up, up, he went, higher and higher, until Frank could not see him any more, for it was a very high tree.



"I have found it," shouted George, "and there are young ones in it."

"Oh! do bring one down," called Frank. "I *should* like to see it."

"I will try," answered George, "but they are very savage."

However, George managed to get hold of one of the young hawks, and he started to come down the tree once more. It was not so easy to climb down this time, and he had many scratches and bruises before he reached the ground again.

"Look!" said George; "this is a young hawk." And he held it out for Frank to see.

It was very pretty but very angry, and it had given George some hard pecks, so that his fingers were bleeding.

Well, George and Frank took the young hawk home and put it into a cage.

Now, I think these two boys were very cruel to rob the nest; but if you read the rest of this story you will see what happened.

The next day Frank said to George, "I wish I had another hawk to take home to my brother Fred. He would be *so* pleased."

So, sad to say, George climbed the tree again, and took out of the nest another bird, and they put it into the cage beside its mate.

The next week Frank went back to town, for he had spent a long holiday, and it was now time to go back to school.

What must have been the feelings of the poor hawks when they found themselves shut up in a cage and taken away in the train to a smoky town?

Fred was delighted when he saw them, although he was rather afraid to go near them, for they ruffled their feathers and looked so angry if any one attempted to touch them.



So the poor birds were put in an outhouse, and given raw meat to eat, and very miserable they looked.

After a few days Frank began to wish that he had never asked George to take them from their nest. You see, after Fred had seen them there was no more fun, and Frank thought that they might die if they were shut up for a long time in a cage.

"Fred," said Frank, "what do *you* think we should do with these birds?"

"Well," said Fred, "I think we ought to take them into the country and set them free again."

"Hurrah!" shouted Frank; "that is just what I was thinking. Let us do it now."

So Frank and Fred covered up the cage, and off they went.

I think the sparrow hawks must have been saying to each other, "Oh dear me! What are they going to do with us now?"

After a very, very long walk the two boys came to the green fields. They were very tired and hot and dusty, so Frank said, "Oh, let us open the cage now, for I cannot go any further."

But Fred answered, "There is a wood not far away. Let us go there, and then the birds will feel more at home."

So they went on until they came to the wood. Frank took the cover off the cage, and Fred opened the door.

The hawks looked out for a few seconds, and then made one dash for liberty.

They mounted higher and higher, and then soared away out of sight.

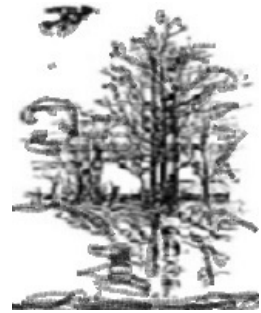
Frank looked at Fred, and Fred looked at Frank, and then both together they said,—

"I am glad they are free."

"I wonder where they will go," said Fred.

But they never knew, for the birds were never seen again.

Frank and Fred were two happy boys as they trudged back to town again. Never, never again will they keep a hawk in prison, or indeed any other free and happy bird of the woods.



Jacko.

Oh, look, look!" cried Tony; "here are some real live bears."

"Where?" said Elsie, as she came running round the corner. "Oh, what funny-looking things they are!"

It was a fine day in June, and Tony and Elsie had come with their mother to see all the animals at the Zoo.

And what a jolly time they were having!

When they had paid their money and passed through the turnstile, the first thing they saw was a strange-looking bird perched on a branch beside a seat where one of the keepers was sitting.

"*That* is not a real bird," said Tony. "It is only put there to make fun of people."

Just then it turned its head right round and stared steadily at Tony.

"Why, it *is* real!" said Tony in surprise. "What a funny-looking bird!"

"It is an owl," said the keeper, "and there are a lot more in the cages there."

So Tony and Elsie went on and saw the rest of the owls.

Next, they came to the parrot house. Oh! what screeching and screaming there was!

"Hullo!" said a voice so close to Elsie that it made her jump.

"It is only a parrot," said Tony, laughing; "he *can* talk."

There were parrots outside too, swinging on perches, and they looked very beautiful in the sunlight.

Then Tony, Elsie, and mother went on and on and saw all kinds of animals. They had a ride on an elephant, and when it was time to get off, mother was standing with a bag of buns in her hand, and before she could speak Jumbo had put out his trunk and taken one. What a surprise she got!





Inside the elephant house was another Jumbo, and when they told him to dance he went round and round in his cage in the most comical manner. Then he opened his mouth wide for Tony to throw a bun into it.

Well, well, what heaps of things there were to see! At last Tony and Elsie came to the bears.

And there, sitting in a cage, was a lovely brown bear.

"Oh, isn't he a darling?" said Elsie.

"Yes," answered Tony. "Let us give him something to eat."

So he threw a piece of bun to him, and he caught it in his paw. Then mother said, "Sit up, then;" and greatly to their surprise the bear sat up on his hind legs and begged.

"Now," said Elsie, "I should like to see the monkeys."

"Come on, then," cried Tony; "I'll race you." And away they ran.

Just inside the door of the monkey house was a great big monkey sitting all alone in his cage.

"Ugh!" said Elsie; "isn't he ugly?"

And what do you think happened? Up got the monkey, and picking up a handful of gravel, threw it at Elsie.

You see the monkey did not like being called names, and was very much hurt.

Well, there were all kinds of monkeys—big monkeys and little monkeys—running and climbing about their cages. Tony gave them nuts and pieces of carrot, and one sly old monkey took his share and hid it in a corner under the straw.

"I do wish I had a monkey, all for my very own," said Tony, as they went home that day.

"Do you?" asked Elsie. "I do not think *I* should like one."

The next day Tony and Elsie had been playing in the garden, and as they were coming into the house Tony spied a queer-looking bundle in the corner of the door-way.

"What is this?" he said. "Look, Elsie; why, I do declare it is a *monkey*."

"A monkey!" exclaimed Elsie.

"Yes," said Tony. "Poor little thing, how he does shake!"

"Mother, mother!" they both called out, "come and see this monkey!"

"Why, Tony," said mother, "you have got your wish. Here is a monkey come to you. But let us take him inside."

So Tony picked the monkey up in his arms and took him into the house.

They found the poor little thing was suffering from a wounded foot, and when they had bathed and dressed it they gave it some food.

Just then father came in, and when he saw the monkey he said,—

"Hullo! what have you got here? A monkey!"

"O father!" said Tony and Elsie together.

"One at a time," said father.

So Elsie told the story whilst father listened.

"Well," said father, "I think I know where this poor little monkey has come from."

"As I came through the village I saw a man looking for a monkey. He told me it had run away from him, and he could not afford to lose it, as it earned a lot of money by doing tricks."



"Well," said Tony, "the man must have been very cruel to it, for it is very thin and tired."

"O father, *don't* send it back," said Elsie.

"But I thought *you* did not like monkeys," said father.

"Yes, yes, I do," replied Elsie; "I like this one very much."

"Then," said father, "I shall ask the man if we may buy him."

The next day the man was sent for, and he willingly sold the monkey to father. "For," he said, "Jacko will never do much good now."

So Jacko was tenderly cared for and fed, and very soon his foot got all better, and he began to grow fat.



He was very kind to the children, and would play with them, but sometimes he was very mischievous.

One day, when the maid was washing, she went into the garden and found the clothes all lying about on the grass.

"Dear me," she said, "I cannot have hung them up right." So she pinned them up again, and went into the house. Presently, out she came once more, and what was her surprise to find the clothes all down again!

The maid said, "I will put them up again, and this time I will watch."

So she pinned the clothes up again, and hid behind the door.

Presently, along the garden wall came Jacko. Away he ran along the clothes-line, picking out all the pegs as he went, and down dropped the

clothes upon the grass.

"Oh, you villain!" cried the maid; "take that!" And she threw a bowl of water at Jacko. But Jacko only made a face at her as he scampered away.

So Jacko had recovered his spirits, and was very happy. Let us hope he will live for many, many years.

The Horse that went to Church.

MAGGIE and May had a dear old horse which was a great pet, and its name was Bobbie.



Now Bobbie was very, very wise, and if I were to tell you all the funny things he did, why, I should fill this book so that there would not be room for anything else.

Of course, these two little girls lived in the country; for boys and girls who live in towns very

seldom have a horse to play with.



It was harvest time, and the reapers were very busy cutting down the golden corn and binding it into sheaves.

Have you ever been in a harvest field on a summer afternoon? I can tell you it is delightful, and those of you who have not been there have missed something very nice indeed.

Now every afternoon there was great running to and fro in the farm kitchen, for Mollie, the cook, was putting into a basket tea, and bread and butter, and scones, and all sorts of good things for Maggie and May to take to the workers in the harvest field.

At four o'clock the stable boy opened the stable door, and out trotted Bobbie, saddled; for he, too, was going to the harvest field.

Maggie would ride upon his back, and May would carry the basket; and when the workers saw them coming they would all sit down in a corner of the field waiting to have tea.

Bobbie knew the road to the field quite well, but, sad to say, he was very lazy, and would not hurry at all. Then Maggie would drive him close to the hedge, and pretend she was getting a stick to whip him with. When she did this he began to trot, and never stopped until he came to the gate in the field.



When tea was over, and all the things were gathered into the basket again, these two little girls would both get on Bobbie's back, one behind the other; and he galloped off, for he was thinking to himself, "Now I am going back to my stable and to a good feed of hay."

When all the corn was gathered in and sent away to be made into flour, Maggie and May went back to school. Bobbie went with them every day, for it was too far away for little girls to walk.

They would both jump upon his back, and with a "Gee-up, Bobbie," off he trotted.



Every Sunday Bobbie went to church. I do not mean that he went into church, for I am afraid the seat would not have held him, and he would have looked rather funny.

As soon as the first bell rang, the stable boy harnessed him to the trap, and round trotted Bobbie to the door of the house.

When the second bell began to ring Maggie and May got into the dogcart and drove off to church. When they got there Bobbie was put into a stable not far away until the service was over.

Now one Sunday morning these two little girls could not go to church, so that Bobbie was not harnessed as usual.

When the first bell began to ring Maggie said to May, "Listen, May; I think I hear Bobbie crying for us. Let us look out of the window."

There, with his head looking over the stable door, was Bobbie, whinnying as loudly as he could.

"Look, look!" cried May; "he is trying to get out."

Just then Bobbie gave a great jump over the door, and was trotting off to church.

He went straight to his stall in the stable, and remained there until the service was over; and when the other horses backed out, Bobbie did the same, and came home, no doubt feeling that he had done his duty.

The Weasel and the Rabbit.

FREDA and MAX were having a holiday in a lovely country town. Every day they went for a walk, sometimes climbing hills, and at other times going down by the river.

One morning Uncle Jim said,—

"Let us all go down to Hope's Farm and see the farmer, and I may just fish a little in the river before coming home."

"Hurrah! hurrah!" cried Freda and Max together. "I should love to see you catch a fish."

So off they went. There were Freda and Max, Uncle Jim, and father and mother—quite a jolly party.

It was a lovely morning, and the banks at the sides of the road were clad with all kinds of flowers. Freda and Max gathered big bunches, and Don, the sheep-dog, kept poking his nose into every rabbit hole he came to. Sometimes he got so far down the hole that only his hind legs were sticking out.

Don was very anxious to catch a rabbit, and sometimes he sat outside poor bunny's house for quite a long time, with his ears pricked up and his head on one side, listening. He *did* catch a rabbit once, but I will tell you about that some other time.



Well, after Freda and Max and all the others had walked for some miles, they came to the farm. It stood at the foot of a high hill, and quite near to the river.

Max said how jolly it would be to jump out of bed in the mornings and fish for trout for breakfast.

Uncle Jim saw the farmer, who gave each of them a glass of milk to drink. It was fresh from the cow and still warm. They all sat down on the grass before the house to drink it.

The sun was shining, and the birds were singing, and Freda said it would be lovely to sit there for ever and ever.

Max said *he* did not think so. He wanted to go fishing some day like Uncle Jim.

But Freda said, "Of course, Max is only a boy."

I am afraid these two children would have begun to quarrel there and then, had not Uncle Jim cried out,—

"Look! look! there are some trout jumping out of the water."

And it was quite true. The river was sparkling in the sunshine, and the trout were leaping out of it high into the air to catch the flies for food.

Suddenly, it seemed as if the whole world had stopped moving. The birds ceased their singing, and all was silent.

They all sat and looked, and presently, away at the other side of the broad river, near the edge of the wood, a rabbit came hopping along as though in great pain. They all watched until it disappeared into the wood.



"What is the matter with the poor rabbit?" said Max.

"Hush!" said Uncle Jim. "See what is coming now."

And there, creeping along swiftly and silently, in the very track of the poor rabbit, was a large weasel.

They all watched it with bated breath.

Nearer and nearer the weasel got to the place where the rabbit had fled, and presently it, too, went out of sight.

"Oh! I do hope poor bunny is safe now," cried Freda.

But alas, just then a loud scream rang through the wood, and they knew then that at last the weasel had caught the rabbit.

Uncle Jim then waded across the river, and went into the wood to see if he could find the weasel, but he came back without being able to do so.

"But how could a small weasel kill a large rabbit?" asked Max.

"Well, you see," said Uncle Jim, "when a weasel hunts a rabbit, the rabbit is so much afraid that it loses all its strength, so that it is unable to run fast and get to a place of safety."

"Then the weasel very soon catches the rabbit and kills it."

"I hate weasels," said Freda.

"So do I," said Max.

"Oh, well, you see," said Uncle Jim, "the weasel must get food; and I know some little people who are very fond of rabbit pie."

The Saucy Squirrels.

Do tell me a true story, auntie," said Maggie one evening.



"Very well," answered auntie. "It is just half an hour before bed-time. Now what shall I tell you?"

"It must be a true story," said Maggie, "because, you know, we agreed that bed-time stories must be true. Do you know anything about squirrels?"

"Yes, I do," answered auntie, "and I will tell you about them.

"One day, not very long ago, Auntie Jessie and I went for a walk in Regent's Park.

"Now you may remember that this park is quite near to the Zoo, and as you walk along you can hear the roaring of the lions and the shrieking of the different animals in their cages not far away.

"It was a beautiful spring day, and Auntie Jessie and I were sauntering along one of the walks, when suddenly she said,—

"Look, look! there is one of the squirrels out of the Zoo! It must have escaped.'

"And there, sitting in the middle of the path before us was a lovely gray squirrel, with its bushy tail curled up its back.

"Ah, how pretty it is,' I cried. 'See, it is not a bit afraid!'

"Auntie Jessie threw some biscuit to it, and it came close up to us.



"Why,' I cried, 'I do believe there are some more coming to us.'

"And down the trees they came, helter-skelter, along the grass as fast as they could.

"Well,' said Auntie Jessie, 'I had no idea there were squirrels here.'

"Nor I,' I said. 'Let us go and buy some nuts and buns for them to eat.'

"Yes, do,' said Auntie Jessie, and off we went.

"We came back in a very short time, and when the squirrels saw us they came scampering along once more.

"I stood with my back to the railings, and one bold little squirrel climbed up my back. Then it ran along my arm as I held it out, and took nuts out of my hand.

"Then some would climb up my dress, and when I looked up I saw one saucy little squirrel sitting on Auntie Jessie's shoulder.



"Another one who was not very hungry took a nut and ran along the grass, scratched away some leaves with his foot, made a little hole, dropped the nut inside, covered it all up again with the earth and leaves, and then came back for more.

"Oh, he was a funny little fellow! You see that was his cupboard, and he kept all his food there until he was hungry enough to eat it."

"How pretty they must have been!" said Maggie.



"Yes, they were indeed," answered auntie, "and some day I shall take you there, and you can then feed them yourself.

"After we had fed the squirrels, it was time for us to come home. As we were coming along the lane I found something awfully nice. Can you guess what it was?"

"A purse," answered Maggie.

"Wrong," said auntie. "Try again."

"A bracelet."

"Wrong again," said auntie. "I will tell you."

"Just as Auntie Jessie and I were coming past the orchard we spied a black-looking object in the path before us. As we got nearer to it we found it was a tiny young blackbird. It had flown down from its nest in the tree, and now it was too afraid to move."

"I took it in my hand, and how its little heart did beat! It was very much afraid. Then I went into the orchard, and put it in a place of safety, and it fluttered away."

"We had not gone very far along the road again when Auntie Jessie gave a squeal and jumped back."

"Just then down dropped a young thrush from another tree. But just as I was going to pick it up it flew across the road. So I left it there, as it was quite able to take care of itself."

"And now there is not time to tell you any more to-night, for it is time to go to bed."



The Owl in the Dovecot.

FATHER," said Jack, when he came home from school one day, "I have had a lesson to-day about the owl."

"Have you?" said Jack's father. "And what did the teacher tell you?"



"Well," said Jack, "the teacher told us how it slept in the day time and only came out after dusk. Have you ever seen an owl, father?"

"Yes I have," answered Jack's father. "Come and I will tell you about it."

So Jack sat himself down on the mat before the fire, and father cleared his throat and began,—

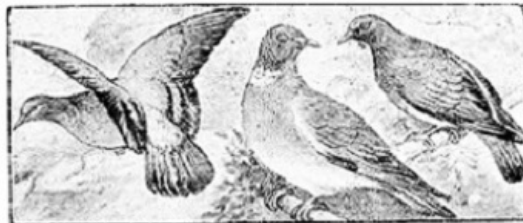
"Once upon a time, when I was a boy like you, I had a little brother, and his name was Bob."

"Now Bob and I used to play together, go to school together, go to bed together—in fact, we did nearly everything together."

"Bob said one day to his mother, 'Mother, I should *love* to have some real doves. Do, please, get me some.'

"So mother said, 'Well, I will help you to get some, but you must save up all your pennies as well.'

"Bob and I saved up our Saturday pennies for a long time. At last, with mother's help, we had enough to buy some doves. They *were* pretty, all white, with rings round their necks."



"I can remember what fun we had putting up the dovecot. We placed it against the wall of the house, and not far from our bed-room window."

"Our house was in the country, and when Bob and I were in bed at night we could hear the owls hooting and crying to one another. It was a weird sound, and if Bob and I had not known what it was, I think we should have been very much afraid. But then, you know, it was only the owls' way of talking to one another."

"Well, one night, a long time after Bob and I had gone to bed, we heard a very strange noise."

"Did you hear that noise, Bob?" I said.

"Yes," said Bob. 'I wonder what it is.'

"The noise still went on, so Bob said,—

"Let's get up. I believe the noise is in the dovecot.'

"So we both jumped out of bed, and got into our clothes as fast as ever we could.

"Bob picked up the candle, and we ran out, and what do you think had happened?

"First of all, we saw the door of the dovecot wide open. Bob had forgotten to close it for the first time. There, lying dead upon the floor, was one of our pretty doves.

"By this time father and mother came rushing out to see what all the noise was about.

"They brought a lantern, and we looked inside. The other doves were trying to hide in the corners, or clinging to the wire-netting in a great state of fear.



"At last we could see a great dusky owl crouching on a box near the roof. Its feathers were all ruffled up, and its great black eyes staring at us as it kept rocking to and fro. Then it lay down on its back and pretended it was dead.

"All at once it got up in a great rage, struggling, scratching, and flapping its wings to try to escape.

"'Let us carry the box to the summer-house,' said Bob.

"So we took the box out with the owl in it, and carried it to the summer-house, and left it there for the rest of the night. You see we wanted to see the owl in daylight.

"Very, very early in the morning there came another owl to seek its mate; and when it could not find it, the bird sat upon the roof of the house and called and called again in very mournful tones for quite a long time.

"The next morning Bob and I went straight to the summer-house to see our captive.

"It was now quite quiet, and sat on Bob's hand letting him stroke it gently.

"'What shall we do with it?' said Bob to me.

"'Let us take it to the old tree in the field,' I answered.

"So Bob put it down near the hollow of the tree, and it shuffled away into the darkness.

"And that is the end of the story," said Jack's father.

"But why did you let it go?" cried Jack.

"Well, the farmer does not like people to kill owls, as they eat up the mice that do harm to his corn-fields."



A True Story of a Canary.

It was the day after New Year's Day, and we had all gathered at Uncle Jim's house to have a tea-party. When I say *we*, I mean Ethel, and Mabel, and Godfrey, and myself. Of course, Ethel's mother was there, as well as *her* uncle and aunt, and altogether we had a lot of people.

Presently, Ida came.

Now Ida is Ethel's very dear friend, and she lives at the sea-side. She had to come in the train to get to our party.

Uncle Jim has two canaries, and they are such dear little things.

One is called Dicky and the other Fluffy.

Dicky is a beautiful singer and very proud; he is always preening his feathers to make himself look nice. Fluffy cannot sing at all. She sometimes tries to imitate Dicky, and all the sound she makes is a croak. Then she looks quite ashamed of herself.

These two little birds are so tame, they come out of their cages and fly about the room.

They sometimes alight on the table and pick up crumbs, and Fluffy will even hop on to the edge of your plate and steal your dinner. They look very tiny when they hop about the table.

Fluffy is a very greedy bird. She is always eating, and whenever she sees a loaf of bread on the table she cheeps and cheeps until she gets some crumbs.

Now when Ida saw these birds she looked very sad.

"Why, Ida," said Godfrey, "you look quite ready to cry. Whatever is the matter?"

"Well," said Ida, "a most dreadful thing happened yesterday. A lady asked me to take care of her canary while she went away to do some shopping. I did so, and was teaching it to fly about the room like Fluffy and Dicky.

"It was a very valuable bird, and she prized it greatly.

"In the afternoon I thought I would let it out of its cage. It flew round the room a few times, and then to my horror it went straight into the fire. There was just a little squeak, and it was gone."

The bright fire had attracted this little bird, and now Ida did not know how she would tell the owner when she came back for her pet.

So this is a warning to all little boys and girls who have birds to keep—to be sure to put a guard before the fire before letting them out of their cages.

THE END.

Transcriber's Notes

1. Typographical errors have been silently corrected.
2. Some illustrations have been moved from their position in the original publication.
3. Variations of spelling and hyphenation are as seen in the original.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK ANIMAL CHUMS: TRUE TALES ABOUT FOUR-FOOTED FRIENDS ***

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