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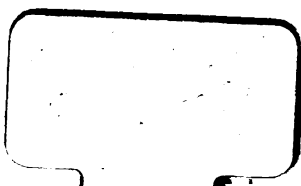
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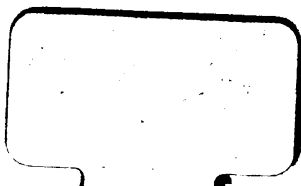


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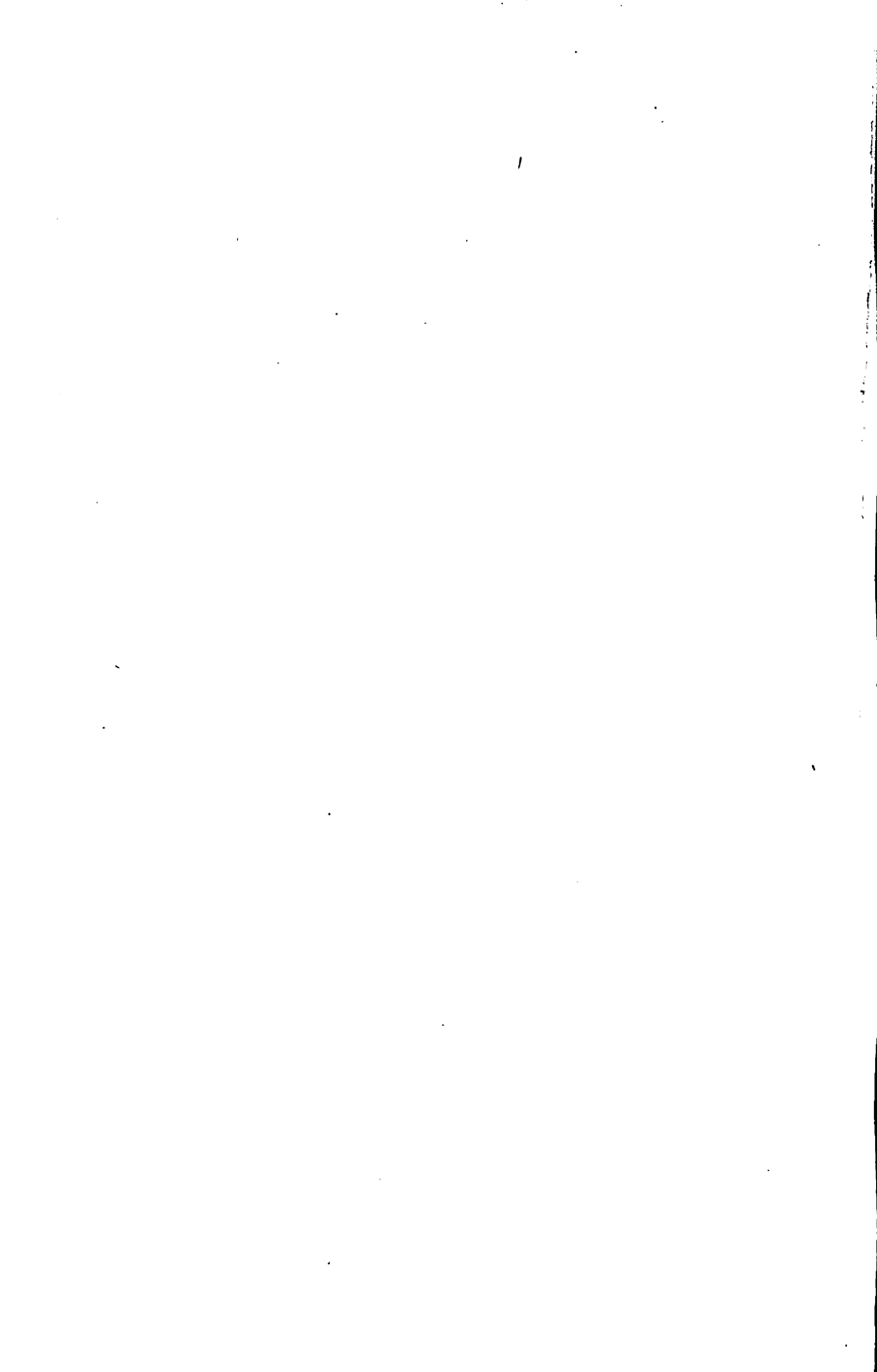
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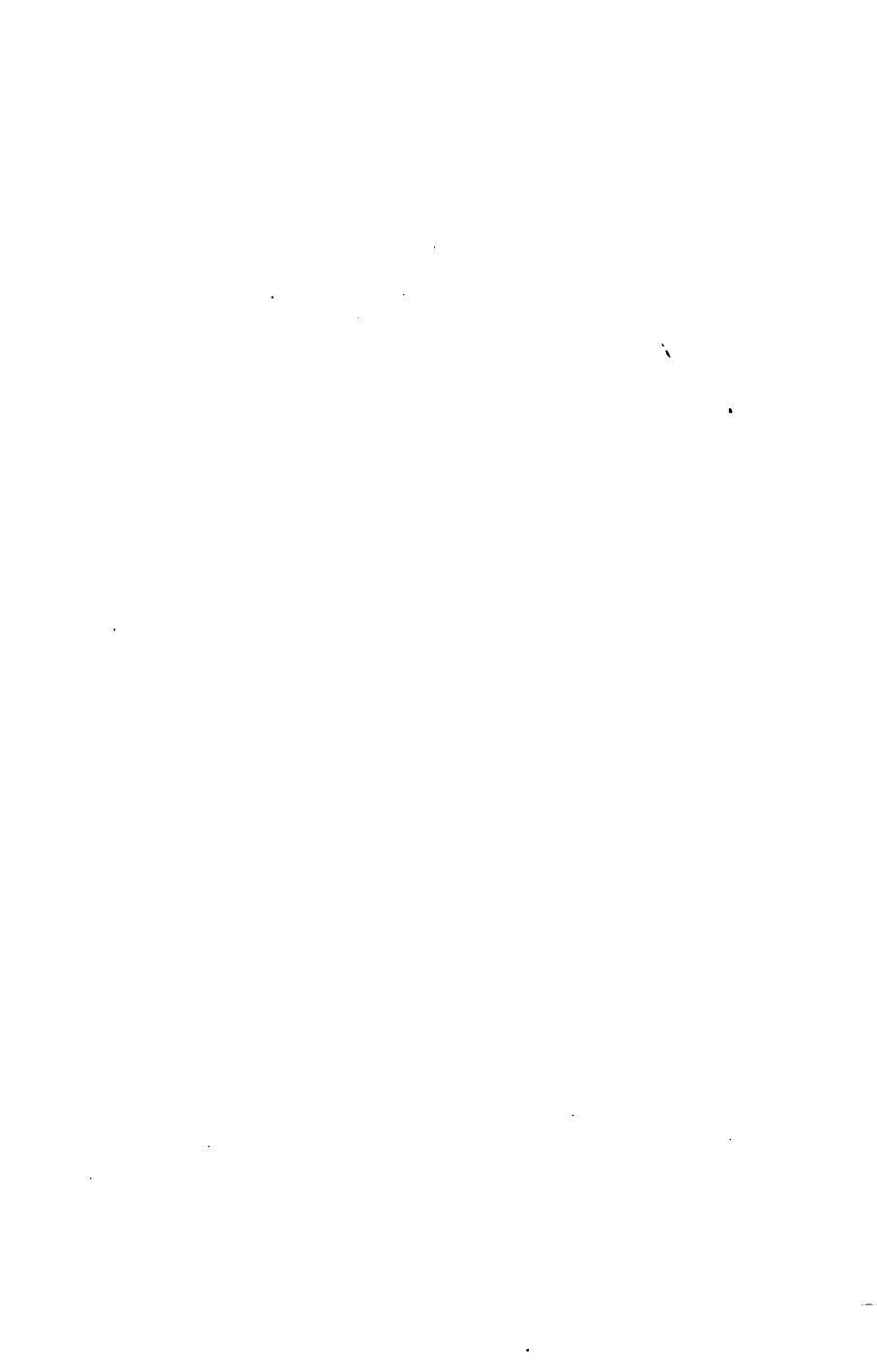


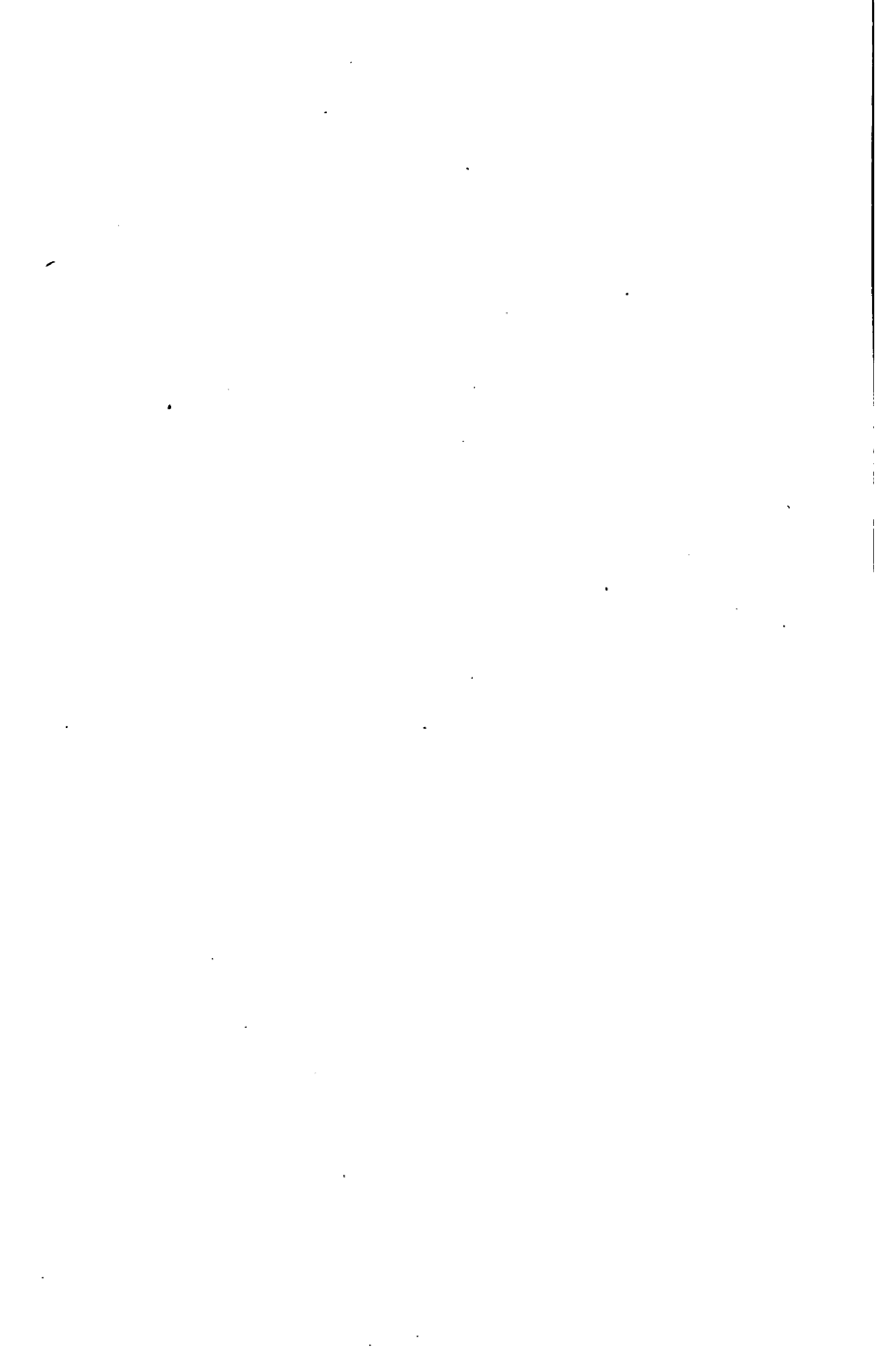
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THE ROBIN FAMILY IN THE ORCHARD.

THE
HISTORY OF THE ROBINS

BY
SARAH TRIMMER

EDITED WITH INTRODUCTION
BY EDWARD EVERETT HALE
AUTHOR OF "THE MAN WITHOUT A COUNTRY," ETC.

ILLUSTRATED BY
C. M. HOWARD
AFTER GIACOMELLI, HARRISON WEIR, ETC.

D. C. HEATH & CO., PUBLISHERS
BOSTON NEW YORK CHICAGO

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PRINTED IN U.S.A.
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AND SEVENTEEN SMALLER ONES IN THE TEXT.

INTRODUCTION.

MRS. SARAH TRIMMER, the author of this book, was born in Ipswich, England, in 1741, and died seventy years afterwards. She was the daughter of J. J. Kirby, an architect, at one time celebrated for his writings on the subject of architecture.

The first Sunday Schools were started in England when she was a little more than twenty years old, and she occupied herself actively in promoting them. She was a woman of more than the average education and accomplishment of her day, and enjoyed the friendship of Dr. Samuel Johnson, Sir Joshua Reynolds, and nearly all of the more celebrated English authors and painters of that time.

She wrote a great many books, which were chiefly of a religious educational character; they are now nearly all of them dead and forgotten; but one of them at least has lived, and has been the delight of thousands of children for over three quarters of a century.

Her "History of the Robins" became popular as soon as it was published, and has never since ceased to be so; it has been issued in all styles and sizes, and at all prices.

The greatest critics have praised it, and some of the most distinguished bird painters of Europe have illustrated it; but whether illustrated or not, every happy child who has ever owned it has delighted in and treasured it.

In telling the history of the Robins, Mrs. Trimmer mixed it up very much with doings of the Benson family, which often had no connection whatever with the birds themselves. We have left all that out, for it has nearly always been found that the boys and girls who read the book cared little about what those very good but very uninteresting little people did. On the other hand, every reader was eager to follow the fortunes of the bird family. So we have given only what is really Mrs. Trimmer's "History of the Robins," which, while it was one of the earliest books devoted to the teaching of kindness to animals, is well abreast of the highest standard of to-day. The diction of the original story, which represented the "correct" style of the period, appears very stilted to modern ears, and we have, therefore, availed ourselves of the excellent version prepared by Miss Edith Carrington, who has done so much to bring man and animals into closer and more loving relations.

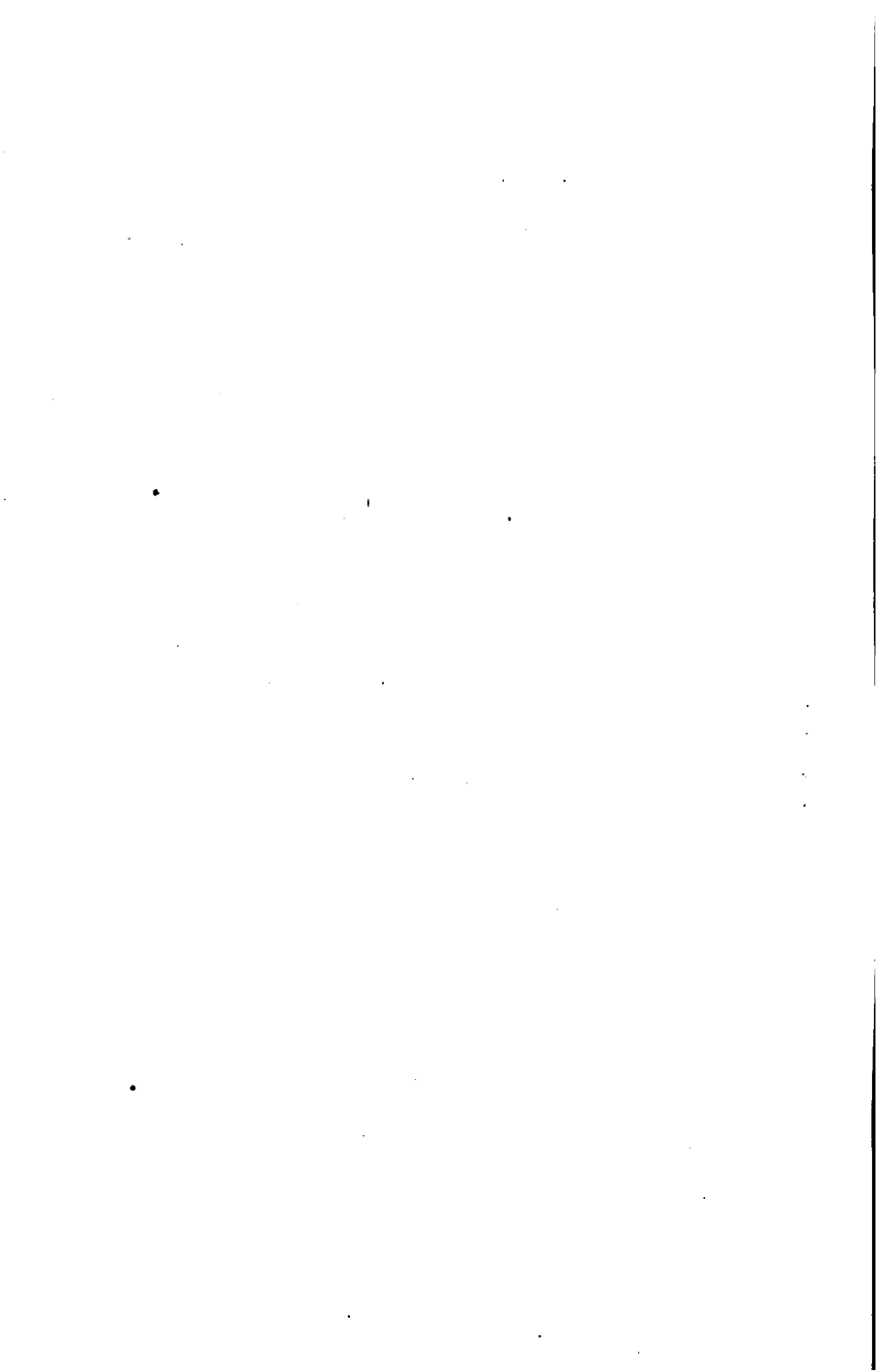
The book was written for English children, and the Robin referred to is the English Robin Redbreast, which is very different from our American bird of the same name. The American Robin is really a thrush; the English Robin belongs to another family; it is a smaller and chubbier bird, and not quite so graceful as the American Robin. But he is more comfortable looking, especially in cold weather. Indeed, the only resemblance between the two birds is in the coloring of the breast, about which the following legends, among many others, have been told for so many years that no one knows when or where they had their origin.

Far away, they say, there is a land of woe and darkness and fire. Day by day the Robins carry each one

a drop of water, to try and put out the burning river, and they go so near in their eagerness to quench the fire that they scorch the feathers of their breast. Another story says that a long time ago the wren caught fire, and the Robin, trying to stop the burning of her feathers, scorched his own and made them red forever. The Robin has been called a fire-bringer ever since he has had a name, for his earliest name had that meaning, and his ruddy-colored breast has doubtless given rise to these legends as well as to others in which blood and not fire is the chief element.

EDWARD E. HALE.

ROXBURY.



THE HISTORY OF THE ROBINS.

THE ROBINS' NEST.

IN a hole which time had made in an old wall, over which ivy grew, a pair of redbreasts built



On the nest.

their nest. No place could have been better chosen for the purpose.

It was sheltered from the rain, screened from the wind, and was in an orchard which belonged to a gentleman who had told all his servants that they must not destroy or meddle with the work of any little songsters in his grounds.

In this happy place, into which no thief dared to come, the hen-redbreast laid four eggs and then took her seat upon them. She made up her mind that nothing should tempt her to leave the nest until she had hatched her young brood.

Her kind mate took her place for a short time each morning while she picked up a hasty breakfast, and he often cheered her with his song before he had tasted any food himself.

At length the day came when the happy mother heard the chirping of her little ones. In the most tender way in the world she spread her motherly wings to cover them. Then she threw out the eggshells in which they had been pent up.

She pressed them to her breast and showed them to her mate, who was very much pleased to look at his children, and seated himself by her side that he might share her joy.

“We shall enjoy ourselves very much while we bring up our little family,” said he; “but I dare say it will be a great deal of trouble. I would do it all myself if I could, but you see I cannot, do what I will, work hard enough to supply all



“ He fed them by turns.”

our nestlings with enough to eat. So you must help too.”

The mother bird said that she should be very

glad to help, and added that it would not be needful for her to be away from the nest long at a time, as she had found a place in the orchard where food was put on purpose for birds to pick up.

A chaffinch had told her, so she said, that there was no danger at all in going to this place for food. "That is very lucky indeed for us," replied her mate, "for we really have so many children that we shall hardly know what to do.

"We must do all we can to get them enough to eat, and I myself must fly farther from home than I have ever done before, for there are some kinds of insects which are very good for young robins, but which cannot be found close to the nest."

The little ones now began to be hungry, and opened their gaping mouths for food, on which their kind father at once flew forth to find it for them, and he fed them by turns, as well as giving a bit to his good mate.

This was a hard day's work, and when evening came on he was glad to take a little rest. Tucking his head under his wing, he soon fell asleep. His mate did the same thing. The four little ones had gone to sleep long before.

The next morning they were awakened by the

Chaffinch, an English bird of the same tribe as our finches. It has a great variety of sweet song.

song of a skylark, just as the sun was rising. He had his nest near the orchard, and as the young redbreasts were in a hurry for food their father got ready to fetch it.

He asked his mate to go with him to the place of which she had spoken, where food was to be found. "So I will," said she, "but it is too early now. You had better go by yourself first and get breakfast for the little ones. I am afraid to leave them until the air is warmer, for fear they should be cold."

THE YOUNG ROBINS.

THE robin thought his mate quite right in not leaving the nest till the sun was hot. He set to work and fetched food alone. Then he fed all his darlings, to whom he gave the names of Robin, Dicky, Pecksy, and Flapsy.

When this kind deed was done, the father bird perched on a tree, and while he rested he sang a tune to his family till his mate, springing from the nest, called him to go with her to a yard which belonged to the house close by.

The skylark and the nightingale have perhaps had more poetry written about them than any other birds. One poet says:—

"The bird that soars on highest wing,
Builds on the ground her lowly nest;
And she that doth most sweetly sing,
Sings in the shade when all things rest."

No sooner did the happy pair draw near to the window of the breakfast room than it was quickly thrown open by Harriet Benson, a little girl about eleven years old. She was the daughter of the lady to whom the house belonged.

Harriet, with great delight, called her brother to see the two robin redbreasts, and she was soon



joined by Fred, a chubby, rosy-cheeked boy, about six years of age.

As soon as he had taken a peep at the robins, he ran to his mother and asked her to give him something to feed them with. "I must have a large piece of bread this morning," said he, "for there are all the sparrows and chaffinches that

come every day, and two robin redbreasts besides." And Fred ran to the window with the bread in his hand.

When Harriet first showed herself at the window the little birds drew near with eager hopes of seeing her crumble the daily handful which their kind little friend never failed to give them.

They could not make out why it was so long coming, and were just going away, thinking that there was nothing for them, when Fred, breaking a bit from the piece in his hand, tried to scatter it among the little crowd.

As he threw the crumbs he called out, "Dicky, Dicky!" On hearing the well-known sound, the little flock at once drew near. Fred begged that his sister would let him feed all the birds himself.

But he found that he could not fling the crumbs far enough for the redbreasts, who, being strangers, kept a good way off. So he asked Harriet to throw some crumbs to the very spot where the loving pair stood waiting for her notice.

With grateful hearts they picked up the crumbs thrown to them, and in the meanwhile the other birds, having had enough, flew away, and they were left alone.

FEEDING THE NESTLINGS.

WHEN the redbreasts had finished their meal, the mother bird seemed to be in a hurry to return to her nest. Her mate wished her to go, and so she flew as fast as she could homewards. Her little heart beat as she came in, and she called in an anxious voice, "Are you all safe, my little dears?"

"All safe, dear mother," replied Pecksy, "but a little hungry, and very cold." "Well," said their mother, "I can soon make you warm, but as to giving you something to eat, I must leave that to your father. He will soon be here, no doubt."

Then, spreading her feathers over them all, she soon made them nice and warm. In a short time her mate came back, for he only stayed at Mr. Benson's long enough to finish his song and sip some clear water which his friends always kept ready for the birds.

He brought in his mouth a worm, which was given to Robin, and was going to fetch one for Dicky, when his mate said, "My young ones are now hatched, and you can keep them warm as well as I can. Take my place, and I will fetch the next worm."

"Very well," said he. "I agree to that because I think that a little flying now and then will do

you good after so much sitting. But, to save you trouble, I will tell you of a place where there are plenty of fine worms."

He then told her the way to this spot, and as soon as she got off the nest he placed himself on it and gathered his young ones under his wings. "Come, my dears," said he, "let us see what kind of nurse I can make; but an awkward one, I fear.

"It is not every mother bird even who is a good nurse; but you are fortunate in yours, for she is a very tender one, and I hope you will be grateful to her for her kindness." They all promised that they would.

"Well, then," said he, "I will sing you a song." He did so, and it was a merry one, and delighted them so much that they did not mind being under his wings, although they were not nearly so comfortable as when their mother sat over them.

Nor did they think the time long while she was away. She did not succeed in finding worms in the place of which her mate had told her, as she was frightened away by a boy. But she made all the haste she could.

Though more than one gay and giddy bird asked her to join in play, she thought of her duty, and went straight home the moment she had found a worm. This good mother preferred the pleasure of feeding Dicky to playing in the fields and woods.

As soon as the hen-bird came near the nest, her mate started up to make room for her, and went to take his own turn in finding food for his family. "Good-by once more," said he, and was out of sight in an instant.

"My dear children, how have you been getting on?" said their mother. "How are you?"

"Very well, thank you," they all replied at once.

"And we have been very merry," said Robin, "for my father has sung us a sweet song."

"I think that I should like to learn it," said Dicky.

"Well," replied the mother, "he will teach it to you, I dare say. Here he comes, ask him."

"I am ashamed," said Dicky.

"Then you are a silly bird. What is there to be ashamed of? It is nothing wrong. There is no harm in asking your father to teach you a song."

HOW ROBIN AND DICKY LEARNED TO SING.

THE mother bird was pleased that her son should learn to sing. "Singing is a good and proper thing," said she; "you may be sure that your father would not sing if it were not so. And he will be glad for you to learn."

Then, turning to her mate, who had just stopped at the edge of the nest for an instant to pop a worm into one of the hungry mouths, she said, "Am I not right in what I have just told them?"

"Quite right," said he. "I shall find great delight in teaching them all that I know myself. But we must talk of that another time. Who is to feed poor Pecksy, who has not had a bit yet, if I am to give singing lessons?"

"Oh, I — I will feed her," answered the mother, and was gone in an instant. "And so you want to learn to sing, Dicky?" said the father. "Well, listen carefully that you may learn the notes, though you will not be able to sing till your voice is stronger."

Robin now said that the song was very pretty indeed, and that he, too, should like to learn it. "By all means," said his father. "I will sing it very often so you may learn it if you like."

"As for me," said Flapsy, "I do not think I could have patience to learn it."

"Nobody can learn anything without taking trouble," said her father. "But I hope that if you have no taste for music, you will try to learn something useful."

"Well," said Pecksy, "I would try to learn music with all my might, but I do not think that I should ever get on at all."

“Perhaps not,” said her father. “Do what your mother tells you. She knows best what you can do, and what will suit you best.



Learning to sing.

“She is no songstress herself, and yet she is very clever, I can tell you. Here she comes.” Then, rising to make room for her, “Here is

your seat, my love," said he, "and I will perch on the ivy."

The hen again sat over her brood, while her mate amused her with his singing and conversation till the evening, each parent bird flying out in turn to get food for the young ones.

In this way several days passed, and nothing of any importance happened. The nestlings grew and became stronger every day, and they learned to know more about the world.

A QUARREL IN THE NEST.

ONE day both the redbreasts, who always went together to Mrs. Benson's, were absent longer than usual.

When the mother bird arrived at the ivy wall, she stopped at the entrance to the nest with a beating heart. But, seeing all her brood safe and well, she made haste to take them under her wings.

As soon as she was seated, she said: "You do not seem so cheerful as usual, my dears. What is the matter? How have you agreed while I was away?" To these questions no one seemed willing to reply.

The truth was that they had been quarrelling almost the whole time. "What, all silent?" said

she. "I fear that you have not done what I told you. I am afraid that you have been quarrelling. Tell me the whole truth."

Robin, who knew that he had been most to blame, began to make excuses for himself before the others could have time to accuse him.



"I am sure, mother," said he, "I only gave Dick a little peck because he crowded me so, and all the others joined him and fell upon me at once."

"Since you have begun, Robin," answered Dick, "I must speak; for you gave me a very hard peck, and I was afraid you had put out my eye."

"I am sure I made all the room I could for

you, but you said you ought to have half the nest and be master when father and mother were out because you are the eldest."

"I don't like telling tales," said Flapsy, "but what Dicky says is very true, Robin. And you plucked two or three little feathers out of me because I asked you not to behave so badly."

"And you trod upon me very hard," cried Pecksy, "for telling you that you had forgotten what our dear mother said to you before she left the nest."

ROBIN IN DISGRACE.

"THIS is a sad story indeed," said the mother. "I am very sorry to find, Robin, that you show such a proud and bad temper already. If you go on like this, we shall have no peace, and I shall always be uneasy while I am away."

"As for your being the eldest, that does not give you the right to bully your brothers and sisters. To show you that you are not master of the nest, you must get from under my wing and sit outside while I cuddle the rest who are good."

Robin, feeling much ashamed, did as his mother told him. Dicky, who was a kind little bird, began to beg for him. "Do forgive Robin, dear mother," said he. "I forgive him what he did to me, and

should not have said a word about it if I had not been obliged to do so."

"You are a good bird, Dicky," said his mother; "but Robin has been so naughty that I must see him look more sorry for what he has done before I forgive him." At this instant her mate came back with a fine worm, and looked, as usual, for Robin.

"Give it to Dicky," said the mother bird to him. "Robin must be fed last this morning." Dicky did not like to hurt Robin's feelings by taking the worm, yet, when his mother spoke to him, he opened his mouth and swallowed the delicious morsel.

"What can be the matter?" said the good father, when he had emptied his mouth. "Surely none of the little ones have been naughty? I cannot stop to ask just now, for I left another fine worm behind, and it will be gone if I do not make haste."

As soon as the old robin was gone, Dicky asked again that his brother might be forgiven. But, as the young Robin sat puffing out his feathers with anger and scorn, the mother would not hear a word in his behalf.

The father soon came and fed Flapsy, and then, thinking it best for his mate to scold Robin herself, he flew off again. During her father's absence, Pecksy, whose little heart was much

grieved to see her brother in disgrace, tried to comfort him.

"Never mind, Robin. I will give you my breakfast if mother will let me."

"Oh," said naughty Robin, "I don't want any breakfast, thank you. If I cannot be helped first, I will not eat anything."

"Shall I ask mother to forgive you?" said Pecksy.

"Mind your own business," said Robin. "If you had not been a pack of ill-natured things, I should not have been pushed out here."

"Come back, Pecksy," said the mother. "I will not have you talk to such a naughty bird. I forbid every one of you even to go near him."

The father then came up, and Pecksy was fed.

"You can now rest yourself, my dear," said the mother, "your morning task is ended."

"Why, what has Robin done?" asked he.

"I am sorry to have to tell you that he has quarrelled with his brothers and sisters."

"Quarrelled with them? You surprise me. I should not have thought that he could be so foolish and unkind."

"Oh, that is not all," said the mother. "He boasts that he is the eldest, and wants to take half the nest for himself while we are out. And now he is sulky because I punished him, and did not feed him first, as usual."

“If that is the case, leave me to manage him,” said the father. “You had better go out into the fresh air a little, for you seem to be worried.”

“Yes, I am worried,” said she. “After all my care and kindness I did not expect him to behave so badly.”

HOW ROBIN WAS SCOLDED.

As soon as the mother was gone the father thus spoke to his naughty little son. “And so, Robin, you wish to be master of the nest. A pretty master you would make, indeed, who do not know even how to rule your own temper!

“I shall not say much to you now, but be sure of this. If you behave again as you did to-day, I shall have to separate you from the rest of the family. I should be very sorry to have to put you out of the nest, for I love you, too; but no bird must interfere with the rights of the others.”

This threat frightened Robin very much. He also began to be very hungry as well as cold. So he promised to behave better for the future, and his brothers and sisters took his part, begging that he might be allowed to come back into the warm nest.

“That depends upon his mother,” said the father. “But as it is the first time that he has done wrong, and as he seems to be sorry, I will

ask her to forgive him." He then left the nest to look for her.

"Come back, my dear," said he. "Robin is sorry for what he has done, and I think that he may now be forgiven." Pleased with this news, the mother raised her head and flew to the nest. Robin felt half afraid to meet her.

But as soon as he had begged her pardon she made room for him again under her wing. He nestled closely to her side and was thankful for the warmth. But he was still hungry, and hardly liked to ask his father to fetch him food.

But the kind father, without waiting to be asked, flew into the nearest field, where he soon met with a worm. This he gave to Robin, who swallowed it thankfully. Thus peace was restored to the nest, and they were all very glad.

But a few days after a fresh quarrel took place. All the little robins, except Pecksy, were often scolded for some fault or other. She was such a good little robin that she never did wrong, and so she was always praised by her parents.

The others grew tired of hearing Pecksy set up as a pattern for them to copy, and they made up their minds to treat her badly, calling her "mother's pet," and grumbling because, they said, all the best worms were saved for her.

Poor Pecksy bore all their unkind words with

patience, hoping that in time they would grow tired of being cross. But it happened one day that their mother came back while they were saying these things to Pecksy.

Hearing a great hubbub and noise among her young ones, she stopped on the ivy to find out what all the din was about, and soon popped into the midst of them in a way that showed she knew what was going on.

“Is this the way you speak to one another when I am not here?” cried she, in a sad tone. “Is this the feeling that brothers and sisters ought to have for each other? You ought to be ashamed of yourselves.

“And how dare you say that Pecksy is better fed than the rest of you, when your father and I divide everything quite fairly? For several days I have seen that something was the matter with Pecksy.

“In future I shall expect you to give her the warmest place in the nest to make up for your past unkindness to her.” Saying these words, the mother ruffled out her feathers till she looked quite fierce.

Robin, Dicky, and Flapsy were sorry they had been so cross, and Pecksy tried to make excuses for them. “I am sure they did not mean what they said,” said she. “I do not want to keep the best place for myself. Let us have it in turn.”

This kind speech made peace in the nest. The other little robins felt vexed with themselves for having teased so good a sister, and they said so. Pecksy was ready to spring out of the nest in her joy at finding all was right again.

THE CHILDREN AND THE ROBINS.

ROBIN was a very strong bird, and robust, though not remarkable for his beauty. There was a great briskness in his manner, which made him lively and pleasant to look at. He was a bird who was sure to please.

His father judged from the tone of his chirpings that he would one day be a good singer. Dicky had very fine feathers, though, being young, he wore no scarlet waistcoat; yet his body and wings looked very pretty, and his eyes sparkled like diamonds.

Flapsy was also very pretty, but her fine shape was the best thing about her, for her feathers were not very bright. Pecksy was a plain little body, but her temper was so sweet that no one could help loving her.

She was never out of temper, and she was always ready to give up her own way. The kind parents gave up all their time to the little ones, but made their daily visit to Fred and Harriet,

who never forgot to spread food for the little birds.

The old robins, made friendly by being cared for so kindly every day, became more and more



tame. At last they would come shyly into the room and feed on the breakfast-table. Fred was so delighted that he longed to catch them and keep them in a cage.

But his mother told him that this would be the way to drive them away. The robins had trusted him as a friend, she said, and it would be a bad thing to repay them by taking their freedom away.

The little birds soon flew out at the window, and as soon as they were gone Mrs. Benson went on: "Think again, Fred. I am sure you would not like to shut up these sweet little birds in a cage only that you might have the pleasure of feeding them.

"Fancy how wretched you would feel, always shut up in one small room. Should you like that, even if you had enough to eat and drink? What should you do if you were never allowed to run or jump or go from place to place again?

"It is as dreadful for a bird to be shut up in a cage as for a boy to be shut up in prison. The caged bird cannot use his wings, he is parted from his friends, and he cannot enjoy the pleasure of flying about in the fresh air."

CANARIES IN CAGES.

"THERE is another reason why it is cruel to keep birds in cages," said Mrs. Benson. "It is, that they cannot build nests and rear young ones there. The greatest pleasure which a bird knows, is to have a home, and little birds to tend.

“And besides this, by keeping birds in cages we prevent them from doing useful work in clearing the fields and gardens of insects and grubs. The keeping of any birds in cages is a cruel custom.”

“But, mother,” said Harriet, “if it is wrong to



catch birds or keep them in cages, why did you at one time keep that little canary?”

“That was different,” said Mrs. Benson. “By keeping that poor little bird I did it a kindness, for I bought it from a man who did not treat it well.”

“That kind of bird comes from a warm country, and it would have died from the cold if I had let it go. Still, I think it is a pity to keep even a canary in a cage. No creature which has wings ought to be kept so that it cannot use them.

“If I had turned it loose, the sparrows and other birds would have seen that it was a stranger, and they would have pecked it. It is their nature to chase any bird which is unlike those that they know.

“I remember once seeing a poor little canary which had flown out at a window. It was starving for want of food, for after being long in a cage no bird knows how to find food for itself in the fields and woods.

“A whole mob of birds were hunting this poor little canary from tree to tree, and it was nearly frightened to death. It looked like a little foreigner followed by a rabble of boys laughing at him because he looked different from them.”

“And what became of the poor little thing, mother?”

“Well,” said Mrs. Benson, “I hung up a cage, with seed and water in it, on a tree near.

“No sooner had I done this than the poor little bird flew into it. I had great pleasure in seeing how glad the canary was to be safe again. Yet it never can be right to bring any bird up in such a way as to make a cage seem its best refuge.”

“What became of him, mother?” asked Harriet.

“I kept him for a little while, but as I could not bear to see any bird cooped up in a cage I gave it to Mr. Bruce, who has a large place made of wire-work in which it could at least fly about.

“The song of a bird sounds harsh and ugly to my ears when the singer is caged. If the little creatures cannot be free, I would rather go without their music.”

“I see,” said Harriet. “I shall never wish to keep any bird in a cage, not even a canary. I would rather tame them while they are free, or else find something else to amuse me.”

THE NESTLINGS HAVE A FRIGHT.

WHEN the hen-redbreast returned to her nest, she was startled at not hearing, as usual, the chirping of her young ones, and what was her surprise at seeing them all crowded together trembling with fright!

“What is the matter, my dears?” said she.

“Oh, my dear mother!” cried Robin, who first dared to raise his head, “is it you?”

Pecksy then looked up too, and begged her mother to come into the nest as fast as she could. The little tremblers crept under her wings, trying to hide themselves.

“What has frightened you so much?” said she.

“Oh, I do not know,” replied Dicky; “but we have seen such a dreadful monster! I never saw anything like it before!”

“A monster, my dear? Tell me what it was like.”

“I cannot,” said Dicky, “it was too dreadful to be described.”

“Frightful, indeed,” said Robin, “but I had a



full view of it, and will tell you what it was like as well as I can.

“We were all sitting in the nest and were very happy together; Dicky and I were trying to sing, when suddenly we heard a noise against the wall.

“And presently a great, round, red face bobbed up in front of the nest, with a pair of huge, staring eyes, a very large beak, and below that a wide

mouth, with two rows of bones that looked as if they could grind us all to pieces in an instant.

“Over the top of this round face and down the sides hung something black, but not like feathers. When the two staring eyes had looked at us for some time, the whole thing disappeared.”

“I cannot tell at all from what you say what this thing could be,” said the mother, “but perhaps it may come again.”

“Oh, I hope not!” said Flapsy. “I shall die from fear if it does.”

“Why so, my love?” said her mother. “Has it done you any harm?”

“I cannot say it has,” replied Pecksy.

“Well, then it is very silly of you to be afraid of it. You must try to conquer your foolish fears.

“When you go out into the world, you will see a great many strange things. If you are in terror of everything that you have never seen before, you will have a most unhappy life. But here comes your father; perhaps he will be able to tell us what it was that frightened you so much while I was out.”

Their father told them that it was a man—their friend the gardener; but they could not help peeping over the edge of the nest with beating hearts when they heard a sound near the ivy wall. They feared that the dreadful round face would show itself again.

JOE FINDS THE NEST.

WHILE this excitement was going on in the nest, the monster, who was no other than honest Joe, the gardener, went to the house to ask for the young master and mistress. He felt that he had pleasant news to tell them.

Both Harriet and Fred ran out. "Well, Joe," said Harriet, "what have you to say to us? Have you got a peach or a plum, or have you brought me a root of sweet-william, as I asked you to do?"

"No, Miss Harriet," said Joe, "but I have something to tell you that will please you as much."

"What's that, what's that?" said Fred.

"Why, Master Fred, a pair of robins have come very often to one place in the orchard lately.

"So, thought I, these birds have a nest. I watched and watched, and at last I saw the old hen fly into a hole in the ivy wall. I had a fancy to look in, but, as master told me never to frighten the birds, I stayed till the old one flew out again.

"And then I mounted, and there I saw the little creatures full fledged; and if you and Miss Harriet will go with me, I will show them to you, for you may easily get up the step-ladder." Fred

was in raptures.. He ran off at once to his mother, and Harriet was not slow to follow.

When the redbreasts had quieted the fears of their young family, and fed them as usual, they went away to a tree.



But they took care to tell their little nestlings not to be frightened if the same monster were to look in at them again, as it was very likely that he would do so. The little birds promised to bear the sight as well as they could.

When the old birds were seated in the tree, the father said to the mother: "It is high time that we taught our young ones to fly. If we do not teach them to go out into the world and face danger, they will never be able to shift for themselves."

"Very true," said the mother. "They are now fully fledged, and therefore if you like we will take them out to-morrow and begin to prepare them for getting their own living."

"One of the best ways to begin will be to leave them by themselves for a while," said the father bird. "Let us go for a little flying trip together, and then go back."

The mother agreed, though she longed to go back to her little ones. When they stopped to rest on a tree, she said, "I can remember how, last year, I was robbed of my darlings by some cruel boys."

"It is that which makes you so nervous at leaving the nest now, perhaps," said her mate. "I can see that you keep looking that way, as if you wished you were flying home."

"Yes, I never feel comfortable away from them," said she.

"I once had a trouble of the same kind before I married you," said the father robin, "and I shall never forget it."

"I had been taking a flight in the woods to



“ When the old birds were seated.”

fetch some nice bits for my nestlings. When I came back the first thing that put me into a fright about them was seeing a part of the nest on the



“ ‘A large hole in the wall.’ ”

ground. I had not been prudent in the place I chose.

“ I am older and wiser now, but at that time I built too near the ground, and the nest was not safe. The next thing I saw was a large hole

in the wall, where before there had only been a small one, just wide enough to let me go in and out."

ROBIN REDBREAST'S STORY.

THE robin went on telling his mate the story of how he lost his nest. "What did you see next?" said she.

"Why, I stopped outside the hole, hardly daring to look in. At first I was in hopes of hearing the chirpings of my nestlings.

"But all was silence. At last I made up my mind to go in. But what was my misery when I found that the nest, which my dear mate and I had built for the little ones with so much care and hard toil, had been stolen away!

"Worse than this, my dear baby robins were gone too, and I could not see their mother anywhere. I rushed out of the place, full of sorrow and dread, crying aloud, for I could do nothing to help them.

"I feared that they were in great trouble, if not dead. But still I hoped that my dear mate might be somewhere near, and I made up my mind never to leave off searching till I found her.

"As I was flying along, I saw three boys, who looked very dreadful to me. One of them held in his hand my nest of young ones, which he

eyed with cruel delight, while his comrades seemed as glad as he was.

“The dear little creatures, who were too young to know what danger they were in, opened their mouths. Poor little dears! They expected to be fed by me or their mother, but all in vain.

“It was of no use trying to feed them while they were in the hands of the boys—that was a thing which no bird is bold enough to try. But I made up my mind to follow the great savage giants.

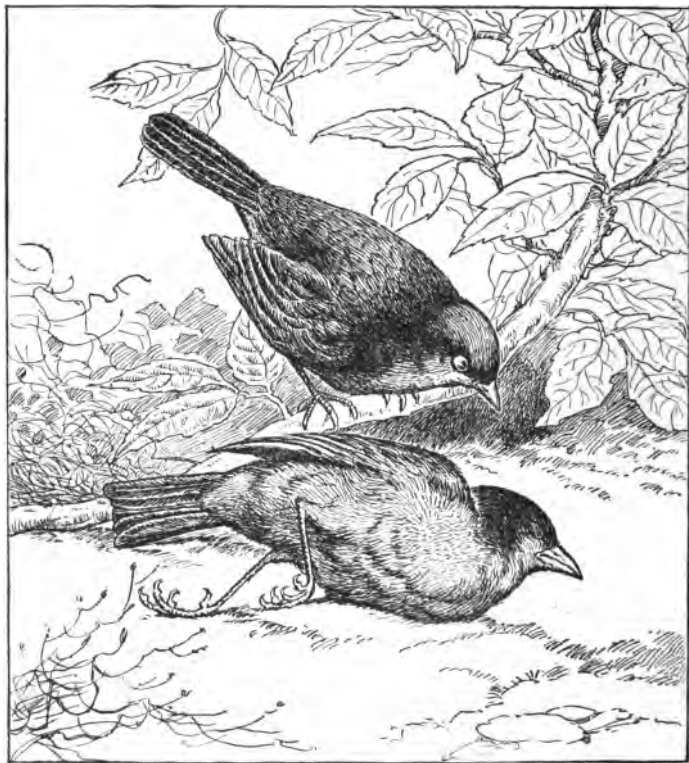
“I wished to see what would become of my darlings. In a short time the party came to a house, and he who had carried the nest before now handed it to another, while he went in and fetched something to give them.

“He soon came out with a kind of food which I know nothing about, and with this my young ones were fed. Hunger led them to swallow it. But soon, missing the warmth of their mother's breast, they set up a sad cry, which pierced my very heart.

“Directly after this, the nest was carried away, and what became of my nestlings I never could find out, though I often flitted round the great house, which was their prison, with the hope of seeing them.”

“And,” said the mother, “what became of your mate?”

“Why, my dear,” said he, “when I found that there was no chance of helping my little ones, I went on looking for her everywhere, but nowhere was she to be seen.



“‘Lay dying on the ground.’”

“At last I went back to the old bush where the nest had been. Here I saw a sad sight, indeed. My beloved mate lay dying on the ground. I flew

to her as fast as I could, and tried to call her back to life by one of the sweetest songs I knew.

“At the sound of my voice she lifted up her head and looked at me with a dim eye. ‘Are you then safe, my dear mate?’ said she. ‘Oh, what has become of our little ones?’

“To comfort her, I told her I hoped they were alive and well, but she said, ‘You have come too late. I feel I am dying. The horror, when I missed my darlings and thought that you, too, were dead, was too much.

“‘Oh, why will men and boys be so cruel and thoughtless?’

“With these words she breathed her last, and left me alone in the world. I passed the rest of that summer and the winter in a very unhappy state of mind.”

GOING TO SEE THE NEST.

As soon as the Benson children saw their mother, Fred ran up to her, saying: “Good news, good news! Joe has found the robins’ nest.”

“Has he really?” said Mrs. Benson.

“Yes, mother,” said Harriet, “and we are going with Joe to see it.”

“But how will you get up?” said her mother, “for I suppose it is above the ground.”

“Oh, I can climb a ladder very well,” said Fred,
“and so can Harriet.”



“Very well. Only be careful not to frighten
the poor little things.”

“Not for all the world,” said Fred. Joe and
the children soon came to the place where the

nest was, and the gardener placed the ladder for them to mount. Fred ran up it very quickly, and how delighted he was to see the nestlings!

“Oh, what dear little things!” said he. “There are four of them. I wish I might carry them all home.”

“Oh, no, Fred,” said his sister. “Do come away. I am sure that you will frighten the young ones, or else their parents, who are waiting close by.”

“Well, I will come down in a minute,” said Fred; “and so, good-by, robins.” He then clambered down. Joe next turned to Harriet. “Now, miss, will you go up?” said he. Harriet soon climbed the ladder, and was as much pleased as her brother.

“They are sweet little dears,” said she, “and I hope they will soon join our party of birds, for they seem ready to fly. But let us go home now, that the birds may feed their young ones in peace.”

As soon as they were well out of sight, the mother bird came back. She had seen the people close to her nest, and thought they had been taking a peep into it. She told her mate of this.

He said that he thought the same thing, and that now he expected to hear a fine story from the nestlings.

"Let us go back in any case," said the mother, "for perhaps they have been very much frightened again."

"Well," said he, "I will come, too. But let me



advise you not to pay too much heed to their fears, — that will only make matters worse."

"I will do the best I can," replied she, and then flew to the nest with her mate.

She perched upon the ivy, and, peeping into the nest, asked how they all were.

“Very well, dear mother,” said Robin.

“What!” said the father, who now came down, “all safe? Not one of you eaten up by the monster?”

“No, father, we are not gobbled up,” said Dicky, “and yet the monster has been here again and has brought two others with him.”

“Two others! What, like himself? I thought, Flapsy, that you were going to die of fright if you saw him again?”

“And so I think I should, if you had not told me that he was a good man and would not scrunch me with his teeth,” said Flapsy. “When I saw him my heart began to flutter, and every feather of me shook.

“But when I found that he stayed only a very little while, I got better, and was in hopes he was quite gone. My brothers and sisters felt as badly as I did.”

NEW FRIENDS.

“WELL, and what happened next?” said the mother bird to Flapsy.

“We tried to comfort each other,” said Flapsy, “and said that the danger was over. We all said that we should be happy now.

“But before we were quite happy again, we heard some very odd noises; sometimes a hoarse sound, horrid to our ears as the croaking of a raven, and sometimes a shriller noise, quite unlike the note of any bird that we know of.

“Just after this, something came in sight which was rather like the monster, but not so large and frightful. Instead of being red all over, it had on each side two reddish spots of a more beautiful hue than father’s breast.

“The rest of it was white, except two streaks of a deep red, like the cherry we saw the other day. And between these two streaks were two rows of white bones.

“But they were not at all dreadful to look at, like those of the great monster. Its eyes were blue and white, and round this pretty face was something which I cannot describe, very lovely, and as smooth as the feathers of a goldfinch.

“But it stayed only a very little time. While we were puzzling ourselves about it, there came another, which looked quite as nice, and so mild and gentle that we were charmed with it. But it soon went away too.”

“I am glad to find you so far from being afraid,” said their mother, “for, as your father and I were flying together, on our way back to you, we saw the monster and the two pretty creatures that Flapsy has described.

"The first is our friend the gardener. The others are also friends, though they are young.



A conversation.

It is these two creatures who put out food for us every day, and I feel sure they will not do you any harm.

“ Though they are good to a great many birds, I am sure that they like us best.”

“ Oh,” said Pecksy, “ are these sweet creatures our friends? I long to go out that I may see them again.”

“ Well,” said Flapsy, “ I see that we cannot judge of people by their looks. Who would have thought that such an ugly monster as that gardener could have a tender heart?”

“ Very true, Flapsy,” said the mother. “ You must make it a rule not to judge of mankind by their looks. I have known plenty who were good to look at; yet they were cruel enough to take eggs out of a nest and spoil them.

“ Not only would they take eggs, but young birds, too, without knowing how to feed them, and without caring how unhappy they made the old birds.”

“ Oh, how full of danger the world is!” cried Flapsy, “ I shall be afraid to leave the nest.”

“ Instead of feeling afraid, Flapsy,” said her father, “ try to be as brave as you can, for tomorrow you shall all begin to see the world.”

Dicky jumped for joy at hearing this, and Robin boasted that he had no fear at all.

Flapsy, though still rather afraid of monsters, yet longed to see the fun, and Pecksy wished to do what her father and mother liked. As it was now evening, each bird went to sleep with its head under its wing.

LEARNING TO FLY.

EARLY in the morning, the mother redbreast waked her young brood. "Come, my little ones," said she, "wake up! Remember that to-day you are to go for the first time into the wide world.

"Mind that you all shake out your feathers and make them tidy with your beaks as I showed you."

The father bird was on the wing very early that he might give each of his young ones a breakfast before they left the nest.

When he had fed them, he asked his mate to come with him to Mr. Benson's, where he found the window open, and his young friends sitting with their mother. Crumbs had been strewn in plenty before the window, as usual.

But the redbreasts took up their post on the breakfast-table, where the father bird sang his morning song. After this they went back at full speed to the nest. They could not be absent long that day, as so great a piece of work was before them.

As the father came into the nest he cried out in a cheerful voice, "Well, my nestlings, are you all ready?"

"Yes," they chirped.

The mother then bustled up, and told each

one of them to climb to the edge of the nest. Robin and Pecksy sprang up in an instant, but Dicky and Flapsy, being afraid, were not so quick.

The hearts of the parent birds were glad at the sight. "Now," said the father, "stretch your wings, Robin; flutter them a little in this way." Then he showed Robin how to begin. "Now, be sure to do just what I tell you.

"That is very well," he went on. "Do not try to fly yet; there is not room here, nor air enough. Walk gently after me to the wall, then follow me to the tree that stands close to it.

"Then you must hop from branch to branch, as you will see me do. Stop to rest yourself now and then. And, as soon as you see me fly, spread your wings and use all the strength you have to follow me."

Robin did all that his father told him so well, that he met with great success in his first flight. He was soon standing safe on the ground. "Now, stand still," said the father, "till the rest join us."

Then, going back, he called Dicky to do the same as his brother had done. But Dicky was very much afraid of fluttering his wings. He was a timid little fellow, and said he was sure he should fall.

They were too high from the ground, Dicky thought. His father, who was a very brave bird,



Trying his wings.

could not bear to think that any son of his should be a coward. "Why, you foolish little

thing," said he, "do you mean to stay in the nest and starve?"

"I shall leave off bringing you food, I can tell you. Do you think that your wings were given you to be always folded by your sides, and that all you have to do in the world is to dress your feathers and make yourself look pretty?"

"Without exercise you will soon be ill. And, besides, you have your living to earn. Get up, this instant!"

Dicky was startled at his father's anger, and got up.

He crept as far as to the end of the branch from which he was to fly, but here he began to tremble from fear. He stood flapping his wings without being able to make up his mind.

Twice did the good father bird show him the way to begin, and twice did Dicky fail to follow him. The old bird, finding that Dicky would not venture to fly, went round him while Dicky was not looking.

He waited till the little bird had once more spread his wings, and then came suddenly up behind and pushed him off the branch. Dicky, now finding himself in real danger, stretched his wings, and, borne up by the air, went gently down to the ground.

The mother now said she would bring Pecksy and Flapsy, while her mate took care of the two

youngsters on the ground. Flapsy said she would much rather not try, but did what her mother told her.

And Pecksy, without waiting for a moment, did the same, and found it much easier than she expected. As soon as they felt a little rested after their first attempt at flying, they began to look about them in great surprise.

The orchard seemed a world to them. For some time they said nothing, but just gazed around. At last Flapsy cried out, "What a charming place the world is! I never thought it was half so big!"





“ ‘What a charming place the world is!’ ”

Before long the birds were hopping about in search of food. Dicky was so lucky as to find four worms all at once, but instead of calling the others to have a share he ate them all himself.

“Are you not ashamed, you little greedy creature?” said his father, who saw him gobbling the last worm in a great hurry for fear any one should see him; “what should you think of your mother and me if we were to treat you so?”

“By the time that you are a father, Dicky, which may be next year, you will have to learn how to deny yourself. You had better begin now, and let your brothers and sisters have a bit of the next worm you find.”

Dicky looked much ashamed, but hopped away to look for more worms. Perhaps he thought that it would be time enough to give up his dinner when he had young ones of his own.

In the meantime Robin and Pecksy were tugging at two ends of the same worm, when, just as Robin had jerked away the biggest share, a sparrow snatched it from him, and flew away with it for his young ones.

Furious with rage, Robin begged his father to fly after the sparrow and punish him.

“That would be taking a violent revenge, indeed,” said his father. “No, Robin, the sparrow had as good a right to the worm as you had.

“Very likely he has a great many little gaping

mouths to fill at home, and he thought that his hungry children wanted it more than such plump little birds as you and Pecksy."

At this instant Pecksy came up with a fine spider in her mouth, which she laid down at her mother's feet. "Please to eat that, dear mother," she said affectionately. "I have so often wished, when I have seen you and father working so hard for us, that I might be able to do something for you."

ROBIN TRIES TO FLY WITHOUT HELP.

THE eyes of the mother sparkled with delight at seeing her little brood so well able to take care of themselves. Yet she saw that the time had come for them to leave off living together, as they had done in the nest.

"They will do nothing but quarrel and fight," she said, "unless they part."

"This seems sad, my dear," said her mate. "But do not let it grieve you. It would never do for our young birds to go on living together always, for then they would not build nests and rear young.

"The best thing we can do is to teach them all how to fly, and then they need no longer keep so near each other. They will be all the better friends for being sometimes apart."

"Now, Robin," said his father, "let us see you try to fly upwards; come, I will show you how to raise yourself."

"Oh, don't trouble about me," said this foolish young bird, "as I flew down, there is no reason why I should not be able to fly up."

Then, spreading his wings, he tried to rise into the air, but in so unskilful a way that he only shuffled along the ground.

"That will not do at all," cried his father; "shall I show you now?"

Robin kept to his first notion, that he needed no teaching, and tried again. He just managed to raise himself a little way from the ground, but soon came tumbling headlong down again.

His mother began to scold him for being so silly, and advised him to ask his father to teach him. "To blunder in this way because you are too proud to learn will only make sensible birds laugh at you."

"Let him alone, let him alone," said his father; "if he is above being taught, he may find his own way to the nest. Come, Dicky, let us see what you can do at flying upwards. You did not cut a noble figure this morning when you flew down."

Dicky was not in a great hurry to try. He came forward slowly, and then hung back At

last he said he did not see why they need go back at all. He should think that they might find some snug corner to creep into.

"Why, you, are as absurd as Robin," said his father. "He is too bold, and you are too timid. If you rest on the ground all night, you will suffer from cold and damp.

"Besides, there are rats, owls, and other creatures, too, which go out by night to seek for food, and which would enjoy a fat young bird like you, and snap you up in a moment while you were asleep."

RETURNING TO THE NEST.

Dicky began to think that he should be wise to obey his father, and said he would try to fly up.

"Never despair," said the old robin; "you will not be the first young robin who has learned to fly after thinking he never could.

"Just look up into the air and see how many birds are flying about. They were once all nestlings like yourself. I wonder whether they said, 'Oh, I can't,' when their fathers wanted them to fly?

"See that new-fledged wren; it only left the nest yesterday, and yet how bravely it skims along! Do not let it be said that a redbreast

lies grovelling on the earth, afraid to fly, while a little baby wren soars above him."



" Dicky now felt ashamed."

Dicky now felt ashamed of himself. So, without more delay, he spread his wings and tail. His father stood near, showing him the right

way, and, raising himself from the ground, went on in front to guide him.

By carefully watching his father and doing everything that he saw him do, Dicky reached the nest in safety. He found it a most comfortable resting place after the tiring journeys of the day.

The mother went to Flapsy and said, "Get ready to follow me when your father comes back, for the sun is very scorching here, and the nest will be more comfortable and cool in the shade of the ivy."

Flapsy asked her mother to tell her all she had better do. "Well, then," said the kind old bird, "first bend your legs, then spring from the ground, as quickly as you can, stretching your wings as you rise, on each side of your body.

"Shake them with a quick motion, as you will see me do, and the air will yield to you, and at the same time support your weight." The mother bird then rose from the ground.

Flapsy, having practised two or three times what she had been learning, at length dared to follow, though with a beating heart. She was soon happily seated in the nest by the side of Dicky.

The mother bird now went back to Pecksy, who was waiting; this little bird was quite ready to go. She sprang from the ground with a light-

ness and strength which were wonderful for a first attempt.

The faithful mother could not rest while Robin was still on the ground, and so she sat in a tree close by, where she could keep an eye on him, and be ready to help him if he asked her.

But Robin sat sulky, and would not own that he was in the wrong. He would not humble himself to ask help from his father or mother, so they left him for a little while. Instead of being sorry when they were gone, Robin grew angry.

He gave way to ill-temper. "Why am I to be treated in this way?" cried he. "I am the eldest of the lot, and all the others are fondled and caressed. But I don't care, I can get to the nest well enough if I choose, only I don't choose."

ROBIN HAS A TUMBLE.

At last Robin began to get very tired of being all alone on the ground. It was getting dark, too, and he began to think of what he had heard his father tell Dicky about cats and other night creatures who snapped up fat little birds.

He made a desperate effort to fly up, and after a great many trials did get up into the air. But as he did not in the least know how to guide himself, he turned sometimes to the right, sometimes to the left.

At length, quite tired out, he fell and bruised himself a good deal. Stunned by the fall, he lay for some time as if dead. And then, as soon as his senses came back, he was in terror at finding himself alone in this dismal state.

And Robin's kind parents were not far off. They had watched him and seen his distress.

Darting from the branch from which she had seen Robin's fall, the mother stood in an instant before him. "My poor little bird," said she, "I have seen everything. My heart aches for you. And gladly would I help you if I could!"

Just at that moment the father came up, and they began to consult together as to a place of safety into which Robin could flutter or creep for the night, since it was plain that he had hurt himself too much to be able to fly up to the nest.

The father robin flew to a meadow close by, and fetched a worm from a place he knew. His son soon gobbled it up and was thankful. Refreshed by this morsel, and comforted by his parents' kindness, Robin was now able to stand up.

On shaking his wings he found that he was not so much hurt as he had thought. His head indeed was bruised, and he had a pain in the joint of one wing, so that he could not fly at all, but he managed to hop.

"I think that for to-night he cannot do better than creep into this hole at the root of the hollow



The old apple tree.

apple tree," said Robin's mother. "What do you think, my dear?"

"Well," said her mate, "I should say that 't was a very safe place."

HOW ROBIN FARED.

VERY early the next morning, the mother of Robin went to see him. She found him well, but still unable to fly. He said that he had been terribly frightened in the night.

In the tree above, just as he had put his poor bruised head under his wing and was dropping asleep, a loud fearful noise began. "It was a little like the noise which the monster made, when first he came to see us in the nest," said Robin.

"Nonsense," said the father bird, who now came up; "Joe, the gardener, goes to sleep in his nest all night, and never comes out till the morning. You must have had a bad dream, Robin, because you were such a naughty bird last night."

"Indeed, father, it was not a dream. I heard it, and I was awake. It cried out, 'Hoo-hoo-hoo, tu-whit to-who!' till I was nearly dead from fright. I felt as if something were coming to eat me."

"Oh, it said 'Tu-whit, tu-who,' did it?" said the father robin. "Well, then, after all it was not a dream. That great noise was made by a large bird that looks like a cat.

“Men call him an owl, and he destroys mice and little birds. So if you hear him again, keep quiet; he cannot get you, in here.” But Robin said he could not sleep in the hole any more.

It made him shake to think of it. So the parents said they would find some safer place for him out of the sound of the owl's voice. His mother was anxious now to see whether Robin could hop.

She told Robin to follow her as well as he could. This he did, though not without some pain.

“Now,” she said, “amuse yourself by looking for insects and worms in the grass. There are plenty here.

“Stay here for the day, and before evening I will come back and settle about a sleeping place for you.” Robin took a sorrowful farewell of his mother.

She was forced to leave him, because the rest of her brood needed her care, for it was but their second day in the wide world. The little nestlings were very glad to hear that their brother was safe.

They asked their father to let them go and keep him company. But he said the journey was too long for such little birds. “Perhaps you may pay him a visit to-morrow,” said he, “when your wings will be stronger.”

They kept on saying that they could not be happy without Robin, and from time to time they fancied they heard his cries. Then the father or



mother would take wing and just see that he was all right.

“Robin is safe enough,” said the mother; “he is pecking here and there at whatever he can find.”

After a time the father of Robin came flying to him, and with a good deal of trouble managed to get him to a pump in the garden, where the water dripped into a trough.

Here Robin sipped the fresh drops, and they did him a great deal of good. "To-morrow you may try to bathe," said the old bird.

IN THE TOOL-HOUSE.

THAT night, when bedtime came, the father robin came with his mate to see where their nestling should sleep. "I have thought of a place," said he, "where at least you will be safe from cold, rats, cats, and owls.

"In a part of this orchard, a very little way from here, there is a large hut which belongs to our friend Joe. Once or twice I have found shelter in it from a storm, and there is a door which is shut tight as soon as the sun sets.

"It is opened again in the morning." The old bird then led the way, and his son followed him. When they came to the tool-house, a place where the gardener kept his spade, they found the door open.

The father bird looked carefully about, and at last he found, in a corner, some scraps of cloth used for nailing up fruit trees.

“Here, Robin,” he said, “here is a charming bed for you. Let me see you in it. Then I must bid you good night.”

So saying, away he flew, while his mate, who had waited outside to see whether she could find an earwig or two, came in to look. She was much pleased with the lodging which he had found.

She reminded him that if they stayed any longer they might be shut in for the night and their other children would be left alone. So they took leave, telling Robin that they would visit him early in the morning.

Though this house was much better than Robin expected, he fretted a little to get back to his brothers and sisters in the nest. But he soon put his head under his wing and forgot all about it.

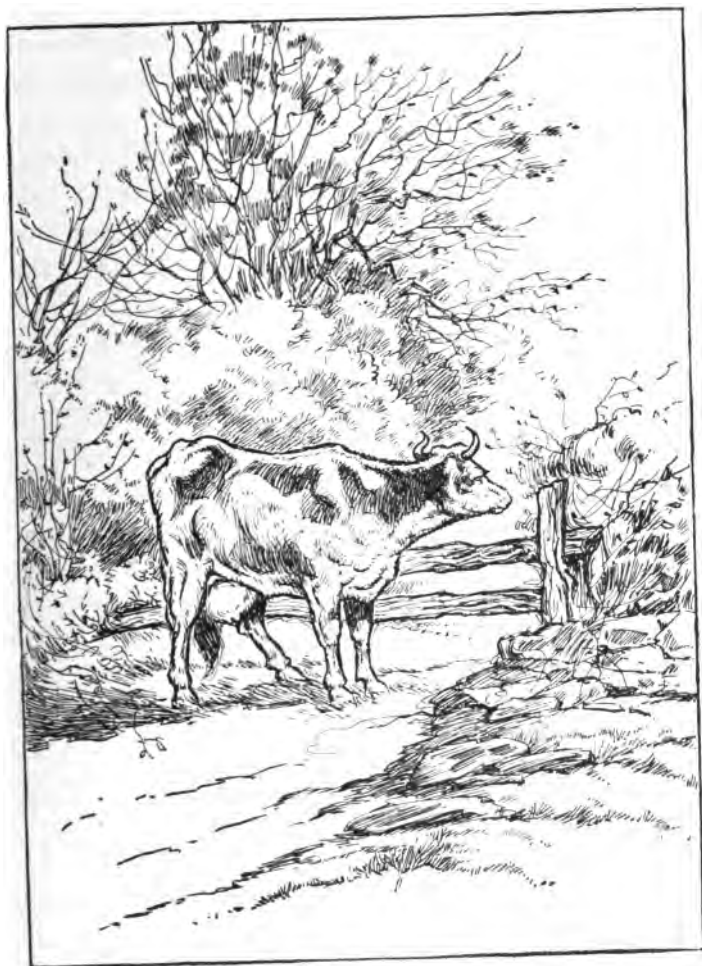
Before the sun showed his glorious face in the east, all the family of robins were awake. The father was in a great hurry for the gardener to open the tool-house; the mother got her little ones ready to go out.

“You will be able to get on better to-day, my dears, will you not?”

“Oh, yes, mother,” said Dicky, “I shall not be at all afraid.”

“Nor I,” said Flapsy.

“That is famous,” said their mother. “Then let us see who will be down first.”



In the farmyard.

On this, the mother bent her course to the spot where Robin lay hidden, and they all followed her at the same moment, and surprised their father. He had seen Joe, and was expecting every instant that he would open the door.

At last, to the joy of the whole party, Joe drew near. Taking a large key from his pocket, he soon undid the door, for he wished to fetch his shears. Joe left the door of the tool-house open, in case he should want anything else.

So the mother redbreast proposed that they should all go in and pay Robin a call. There they found him in his snug little bed, and how pleasant the meeting was! They all chirped as loud as they could, which meant "How do you do?"

They soon left the tool-house and hopped about the currant-bushes. "Those of you who have the full use of your limbs, could manage to get into those low bushes," said their father.

"But poor Robin must content himself with the ground a little longer."

A HAWK.

As soon as the old redbreasts left their family to go to Mrs. Benson's, Pecksy and Robin began to talk.

"How are you now, Robin?" said she, kindly.

“ Oh, I am much better ; but it is a wonder that I am alive, for you cannot think what a dreadful fall I had. With turning about as I did in the air, I became quite giddy, and could not try to save myself when I began to fall.

“ You see how my eye is still swollen, and it was much more so at first. My wing is the worst ; and it still gives me a good deal of pain when I move it. Just look how it drags on the ground ! But it was my own fault.”

“ Well, I suppose we cannot do things without learning,” said Pecksy, “ and what a lot of things there are for a young bird to learn ! I quite dread the day when I must take care of myself, and never go back to the nest again.”

“ Oh, I dare say we shall know how to fly and peck all in good time,” said Flapsy, “ it is of no use to be afraid. For my part I am longing to see the world. I am sure the birds enjoy a great many pleasures that we know nothing of.”

Dicky said he very much wished to go out into the world, but felt much afraid of birds of prey. “ Only think,” said he, “ they come down on you out of the sky, and you are dead before you know it ! ”

“ Well, that is better than being made to bear pain for a long while,” said Robin.

“ Besides,” said Pecksy, “ do you really think that a hawk would hurt us ? I am sure he would not seize such a dear little bird as you, Dicky.”

“Well, you see, I suppose the hawk is too hungry to notice whether we look pretty or not,” said Dicky. “Do you wait to see whether a spider is pretty or not before you gobble him up?”

“To be sure,” said Flapsy, “it is no worse for the hawk to eat us, than for us to swallow spiders.”

Just as she said this, a speck was to be seen in the sky above them. It drew nearer, and to the horror of the whole party, it changed into a large bird.

At the sight of him all the little birds felt a great fear, and tried to hide as well as they could among the grasses. They could not help screaming. At the same moment the shrieks of many other small birds rang through the orchard.

The redbreasts were bold little things, and they soon got the better of their fright and began to look about them. Each young bird wished to see what had become of the rest. And they also peeped up towards the sky to see whether the dreadful foe was gone.

How sad they were when they saw him carrying off a bird that had often flitted about the orchard! A few of his feathers fell near the young robins' hiding-place, and they knew them for those of a goldfinch that they had often seen.

“This shows,” said Pecksy, “that hawks do not care whether the birds they eat are pretty or not. Nobody is safe, and I shall never be happy



The hawk and the goldfinch.

any more." And Robin, who could not fly, crept under a currant bush and hid himself.

ROBIN LOST.

WHEN the redbreasts came back they found that Robin was gone! They could neither see nor hear him. The gardener, too, was no longer near, and they were afraid that as soon as he had left the spot some cat or rat had taken Robin away and killed him.

In the most anxious way the old birds searched every corner in which they thought that poor Robin might be hidden, and they strained their little voices till they were quite hoarse in calling to him.

The tool-house was locked, but if he had been inside he would have called out in reply to the cries. At length, in despair, they went back with heavy hearts to the old nest in the ivy wall. There they all sat, feeling very sorrowful.

After a mournful night, the mother left the nest again next morning early, that she might try once more to find her little lost bird. But after spending an hour in looking for him she came back to her mate.

"Come," said he, "let us take a flight. If we sit here grieving forever it will be of no use, for it cannot bring poor little Robin back. If he is

dead, he will never have pain or hunger any more, and if he is not, the more we fly about the more likely we are to get news of him.

“Suppose we go to the great house, and take the little ones with us. They have never been to the window yet, where we have been fed so often. I do not think it will be too far for them. And perhaps our friends may know something about Robin.”

All the little ones were very much pleased at hearing this, for they had often longed to go with their father and mother to the fine place where such nice food was to be had without the trouble of finding it. So they set out at once.

By the time that the family of robins reached the window, all the other birds had been fed and were gone. “Now,” said the father bird, “stop a little; don’t be in such a hurry. Behave yourselves properly. Hop only where we hop.

“You will be getting into some scrape if you do not take care. Recollect that we are now going into the nest of a human being, where there are many dangers. Do not meddle with anything, or try to peck any crumbs but those which you see us peck.”

The father and mother flew in at the window. The little ones, afraid at being left alone outside, soon followed. How delighted Fred was to see them settle on the table!

And how glad the little birds themselves were, for a great surprise awaited them. Sitting perched on the edge of the bread-plate, as much at his ease as if he had lived there all his life, sat the lost Robin!



The meeting was a happy one for all parties, though all were too busy eating crumbs and scraps to say much. Yet the father sang a few notes of pleasure while in the midst of his feast, and the mother bowed and bobbed, clapped

her wings, and touched Robin's beak with her own.

The young ones, who had never seen so many good things before, were too busy to talk, but they would have liked to ask Robin how he came there, and how he dared venture in alone.

But they were wise robins, and thought that talking could be put off, while meal times could not. So they finished the bits which were given to them, and which were as much as they wanted.

Dicky perched on the edge of a honey pot and got himself very sticky, so the mother thought it high time to go.

POOR ROBIN CAUGHT.

FRED's mother had promised him that when his lessons were done he and his sister should go into the orchard and see if they could catch a glimpse again of the young robins.

When they reached the orchard, the old red-breasts had just taken the others back to the nest, and poor Robin was left to himself, as his parents could do nothing for him. He kept hopping about, and at last got into the middle of the path.

Fred spied him some little way off, and cried, "Oh, there is one of them, I declare!" And before his mother had noticed what he was doing,

he ran to the place, and clapped his small hand over Robin, delighted that he had caught the young bird.

Though Fred did not mean to hurt Robin, he could not help doing so. The wounded wing was not well yet, and the least touch gave him pain. The poor little bird sent forth piteous cries of fright, on which Fred let him go, saying, "I won't hurt you, you poor little thing."

Harriet, who saw him catch the bird, ran as fast as she could to prevent him from holding it, and seeing that Robin was lame as he hopped away, was sure that it was her brother who had hurt him.

But Fred said he was sure that the wing hung down before Robin was caught. Mrs. Benson said, "Very likely he was lamed by some accident, and this has prevented the little creature from going to the nest with the others.

"If this is the case, it will be kind and good to take care of him. Some cat or rat or other creature may snap him up if we do not protect him."

Fred was delighted to hear her say so, and asked whether he might carry him home.

"Yes," said his mother, "if you can be sure of carrying him gently and safely."

"Shall I carry him, ma'am?" said Joe. "He can go nicely in my hat, and it will not frighten him so much as being held in the hand."

This was a very good plan, so Fred picked up some handfuls of the soft grass which Joe had mown down, and put them in the bottom of the hat. Then Robin was gently caught again, and placed in the hat.

As soon as Robin felt and saw how kindly he was being cared for, he seemed to know that he was among friends, and he left off trying to get away. Sitting gravely in the hat, he peered with his bright eyes at Joe and Fred.

That night he spent more happily than any since he had left the nest, for the hat, lined with its soft hay, was like the old home, and Joe lent it to him for a bed. Joe's mistress said she would make him a present of a new hat instead of it.

FIGHT BETWEEN A CHAFFINCH AND A SPARROW.

ROBIN had slept very soundly in Mrs. Benson's room, where she had put him to bed, for fear that Fred should be tempted to handle the little fellow and perhaps hurt him.

Robin was able to use his lame wing a little. Fred was therefore trusted to carry him into the breakfast room, where he was placed on the table. It was there that he met his little brother and sisters each morning.

For some time the young redbreasts behaved

very well at breakfast, but at length Dicky, who became pert when he was a little more tame, forgot to do as his father told him.

He began to hop in a very rude manner; he even jumped into the plate of bread and butter, and having a mind to taste the tea, hopped on the edge of a cup. But he found when he dipped his toes into it that the tea was too hot, and he went off in a fine flurry.

Flapsy, too, made so bold as to peck at the sugar; but, finding it too hard for her beak, went to the butter dish instead. Her mother told them she would not bring them with her next time if they did not mind their manners.

As soon as the servants came to take away the cloth, all the robins hurried out at the window again, after saying good-by to Robin.

“You have not yet seen half the orchard,” said their father, “and I wish to let you know a few of our neighbors.”

He then led the way to a pear tree in which a linnet had built her nest. The old linnets seemed much pleased to see their friends the redbreasts.

With great pride the old redbreasts showed their family. “My own nestlings are just ready to fly,” said the hen-linnet, “and I hope they will know each other. Birds like your young ones will make nice playmates for mine.”

Then they flew on to a cherry tree, in which

a pair of chaffinches in a great fright were trying to part one of their own brood and a young sparrow, who were squabbling and fighting about nothing.

“It is all the fault of my nestling,” said the chaffinch, “he will go about with the sparrows, who don’t want him. If he would stay at home, he would not always be getting into trouble.” Here she pounced down on the young sparrow and sent him flying.



“As soon as he began to peck, he would go with sparrows instead of staying at home,” went on his mother, panting after her attack on the sparrow. “He made friends with that very young bird you saw him fighting with, who is bad company for him.”



The chaffinches and the sparrows

“The two went about quarrelling and fighting with every bird they met, and they have just picked a quarrel between themselves. I am heartily glad of it, for now they will not go about together any more.” The young linnet, who had received a sharp nip in the wing, said that he should now mind what his mother said.

THE MAGPIES.

“LET this be a warning to you, my dears,” said the mother robin. “Never go about with any quarrelsome birds, for you do not know what trouble you may get into. Let us take another flight now.”

The robins began pecking about, when, all of a sudden, they heard a strange noise which frightened the little ones. Their father told them that they need not mind it, and he led them to the top of a high tree.

In this there was a nest of magpies, who had been round the orchard to see what sort of place it was, and were now chattering about it. They all spoke at once and made such a clamor that nobody could tell what they were talking about.

In short, each magpie wished to speak, and no magpie wished to listen. “What a foolish set of young birds these are!” said the father

robin. "Mind you speak one at a time, and do not be so silly as the magpies."

They soon saw a cuckoo surrounded by a number of smaller birds who had been pecking at her. But all she said was "Cuckoo, cuckoo," as loud as she could. "Get back to your own country," said a thrush; "what business have you here?"

"She has been dropping her eggs into our nests," cried the other little birds, "why cannot she build a nest for herself? Yah! get out, go home!" And they flew after the cuckoo till they fairly jostled her out of the orchard.

"What I like to see is a swallow," said the robin. "He comes here and builds his nest in an honest way and helps to eat flies as we do. Besides, the swallows can tell splendid tales. I like to hear them speak of what they have seen.

"But come, let us go on." They soon came to a hollow tree. "Peep into this hole," said the father to his young ones. They did so, and spied a nest of young owls. "What funny creatures!" said Dicky; "they seem to be all eyes and beak."

"And how they are muffled up!" said Flapsy; "what can they do in hot weather dressed so warmly?"

"What do we do?" said one of the young owls, "why, have you not sense enough to know that we are night birds and do not fly about by day?"



The quarrel with the cuckoo.

At that instant the parent owl came back and seeing a lot of strangers looking into her nest, she set up a screeching which made the place ring again. This loud cry of anger soon scattered the robins, who took wing as fast as they could.

As soon as they stopped to rest, the cock-redbreast, who was really frightened, as well as his mate and family, plucked up his courage. "We have had a narrow escape," said he.



"Why has the owl such big eyes, father?" asked Dicky.

"The better to see you with, my dear," said his father, "and he has a big beak on purpose to gobble up little birds. So never go near an

owl if you can help it, by day or by night. He is as bad as a hawk.

"In the daytime, if you chance to see him abroad, he is not so dangerous. But let no little bird dare to stay up late at night after his mother has told him to go to bed. If he does, very likely the big owl will eat him up before he has time to cry out."

THE BIRD CATCHER.

THE next morning the redbreasts came to Mrs. Benson's as usual, and Robin was still better. When they flew away, they soon found themselves in a meadow, on one side of which was a row of fine oak trees. On a branch of one of these they sat.

On the next tree a blackbird and a thrush poured forth their sweet songs; a number of linnets joined them. The little robins had not long been in the tree, when they spied a man below, who was scattering food on the ground.

"Look there!" said Dicky, "what fine food that man throws down! I dare say he is some kind creature who is a friend to us; shall we go down and pick up some of it?"

"Do not be in a hurry, Dicky," said his father; "watch here with me a little while, and then you shall please yourself." All the little ones stretched out their necks and kept their bright eyes fixed on the man.

In a few moments a number of sparrows, chaffinches, and linnets went down, and began to feast on the food which the man had placed beneath. He himself withdrew to a little distance.

The man, who was a bird catcher by trade, now called another man to help him. In a moment

all the poor little birds that had been feasting on the ground felt a net suddenly cast over them.

The two men caught them, and put the unhappy little things into a cage. This cage was divided into a number of small parts, and into these divisions the linnets, chaffinches, and others were put.

Into this dismal prison where they had hardly room to flutter, the poor little birds were thrust! What a sad change for them after singing free on the boughs!

The little redbreasts trembled, and wished to fly away. "There," said the father, "what about your friend now, Dicky? Will you not look twice now before picking up crumbs scattered by strangers? No man in the world is so dreadful as the bird catcher.

"Those little creatures that he has carried off will never be set free again; most of them will die from sorrow or fright, or from pain. The rest will spend a life in prison. It is far better to die than be kept in a cage."

They then flew about seeing the sights, till presently the father robin gave a great start and cried out loudly, "Turn this way, turn this way!" Lucky it was that they did so at once, for at the same instant they saw a fearful flash of fire.

A thick smoke followed it, and then a dreadful sound like thunder. A young bird fell wounded



The snare.

and bleeding to the ground, and struggled there for a moment. Then he lay quite still.

The little redbreasts were now in terror, and asked the meaning of this dreadful accident. "How was the poor little bird killed? What did he die of?" they both asked at once.

"He was shot to death," said the father robin. "The same thing might have happened to you, to me, or to your mother. This only happens when men are about.

"But come, let us take a sip of fresh water from this stream, and we will try to find some place where we may amuse ourselves without danger. Are you rested enough to take a pretty long flight?"

"Oh, yes," said Dicky, who was quite eager now to leave the spot. The father led the way, and in a short time he and his family came to the grand house of a rich gentleman.

Among the other strange things to be seen here was a huge bird-cage, called an aviary, which was built like a temple. Bright brass wires were round it, and the framework was painted green, and decked with gilt carvings.

In the middle a fountain threw up fresh water, which fell into a basin with flowers round it. At one end were troughs holding many kinds of food for birds, and places for nests.

It seemed as if a dwelling like this must make any bird happy, and Dicky wished very much to

go in. "Wait a little," said his father, "find out first whether the birds who live here are really happy before you wish to change places with them.

"Sit here on this bush. Then you will soon hear what the birds are saying within, and if you still wish to go inside, I will not prevent you. Here is a twig close to the wire bars, and remember, those who once get on the other side can never get out again, no matter how much they may try."

THE UNHAPPY DOVE.

THE first bird that Dicky saw inside the aviary was a dove, who sat cooing in so sweet and gentle a tone that a stranger who listened would have heard him with delight, but the redbreasts, who knew what he meant, heard him with sorrow.

"Oh, my dear mate," said he, "am I then taken away from you forever? Of what use is all this food to me, this clear water and this sheltered place? Without you I cannot enjoy anything.

"They will not let me out to go and find you. Never more shall I have pretty nestlings to feed in the trees! Never more shall I stretch my wings and fly far away, or roam where I please." Here his voice failed, and he became silent from grief.

"The dove is not happy, you see," said the hen-redbreast to Dicky. Let us hear what that lark



The unhappy dove.

has to say." His eyes were turned towards the sky, he fluttered his wings, he strained his throat, and to a human eye would have seemed full of joy.

But the redbreasts saw that he sang from violent grief, not joy. "And am I always to be shut up in this hateful place?" sang he; "is my upward flight to be stopped by bars? Must I no longer soar towards the bright sun, and make the arch of heaven echo to my voice?"

"Shall I never build my nest and rear young in a cornfield again? Oh, cruel and unjust man, to take from a poor little bird all that he holds dear, that you may enjoy his song! But of what use is it to complain? No one will listen. I shall die here in my prison."

"What do you think now, Dicky?" said the redbreast. "Do you still think that the birds in the aviary are better off than you?"

"I cannot help thinking that it must be very comfortable to have everything that one wants!"

"Well," said the father, "let us move on," and they went close to the branches of a tree in the aviary, in which a pair of linnets were seated. "Come," said one of the linnets, "let us finish the nest, though there is small pleasure in hatching a set of poor little prisoners."

"How different it would be if we were free in the fields! Men, it is true, have given us some stuff to make our nest of, but how much happier

we should have been seeking it ourselves! And they cannot find the right things to make it with as we should have done.

“How dull and wretched it is never to fly about! There is no room here to take a good leap and a wide sweeping flight.”

At this instant a mother-goldfinch brought out her brood, which were fledged.

“Come, my nestlings, use your wings,” said she. So the little ones tried to fly. But one of them hit himself against the bars, and fell down hurt.

“Why cannot I soar as other birds do?” said he.

“Alas!” said the mother, “we are shut in, and cannot. We shall never get out, so you must make the best of it here.”

“Never get out?” cried they; “then we shall never be able to play with the birds outside.”

Dicky was thoughtful while this went on, and he now said, “Let us go back to the orchard, where we can fly about, or they may shut us up here. Nothing is of use to a bird unless he is free.”

So the robin family went back to the orchard, where they lived in peace and joy. Each of the young birds grew up to have a mate and a nest; and no birds could be better off than they were. Fred and Harriet soon let Robin go, for his wing healed in due time.





