

The Fairy School of Castle Frank

Grant Balfour

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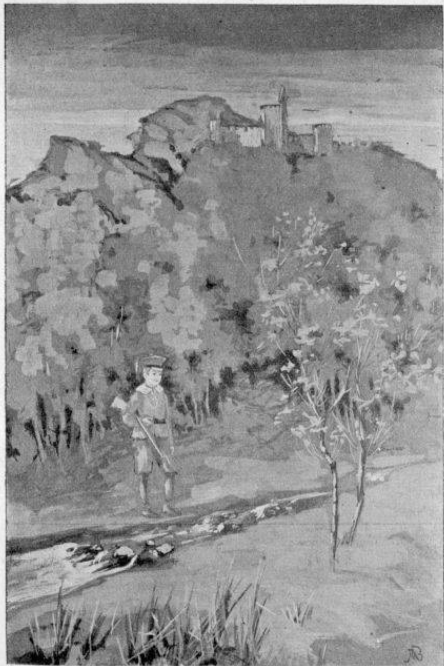
*** START OF THIS PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE FAIRY SCHOOL OF CASTLE
FRANK ***

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THE FAIRY SCHOOL OF CASTLE FRANK

BY GRANT BALFOUR





ROBIN OF CASTLE FRANK.

ROBIN OF CASTLE FRANK.

THE FAIRY SCHOOL OF CASTLE FRANK.

BY

GRANT BALFOUR,

AUTHOR OF "THE MOTHER OF ST. NICHOLAS."

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Hon. G. W. Ross, LL.D., Premier of Ontario, says:—"I have read this little story by Grant Balfour, which I can cheerfully recommend to the children of Ontario. It is both interesting and

instructive, and contains a useful moral lesson."

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Robin of Castle Frank Frontispiece

"How many walnuts are 2 and 4 and 6?"

Fascinated

Crafticus: "I have a cunning plan."

King Muffler: "It is no new thing," remarked the king,
"for crafty creatures to get the simple to begin a foolish
quarrel."

THE FAIRY SCHOOL OF CASTLE FRANK.

CHAPTER I.

ROMANTIC ROBIN.

I've found at last the hiding place
Where the fairy people dwell,
And to win the secrets of their race
I hold the long-sought spell.
Havergal.

One hundred years ago, in the great land of Canada, there lived a boy whose name was Robin. His home was in the grand old woods, with wapitis, wolves and bears. It was near the edge of a deep ravine that opened out on the east by a slow winding river flowing into one of the great blue lakes. And the name of his home, though built of wood, was Castle Frank.

The castle was well-furnished, for Robin's father was a great man. The best rooms had comfortable carpets and carved oak furniture, while on the walls were interesting pictures, representing people of high rank, and battles on sea and land. In one room there was a fine arrangement of muskets, pistols and swords, together with Indian spears and bows and arrows. In another room there was a library, containing books of religion and science, histories and tales of adventure, and story-books for children. With the weapons and stories the boy beguiled away many a pleasant hour.

But there was something more pleasant than guns and spears and stories. Outside the castle, in little houses built of wood, with doors and windows of

netted wire, were a number of pets, as foxes, rabbits and squirrels. To these Robin was greatly devoted, he fed them regularly with his own hand, and kept their dwellings sweet and clean. In a grassy enclosure where their little cotes stood, he let them have liberty every day, watching over them carefully, that no harm should come from savage beasts or birds of prey. He had also other pets—a white pony, big dogs and little ones, and beautiful birds—which he loved much and tended faithfully. So that among all these companions Robin passed much of his time very happily, even more so than when accompanying friendly Indians shooting game in the wild woods miles away, or fishing from a canoe in Lake Ontario.

A boy that is truly kind to animals will love men and, of course, boys. This quality and what was brave and honest shone plainly in his clear, blue eyes, as they shine in all kinds of eyes that have them. Unspoiled by city dainties, and clad in the grey shooting suit which he usually wore, he looked strong, active and healthy. Yet Robin had at times a dreamy, meditative look. Away from the stir and hum and engagement of city life, he dwelt in a kind of fairy-land, where flowers and trees and solitary paths called forth quiet questionings and aroused reflection, gilded by mystery and imagination. The tales of Indian life, and the stories of mighty giants and magic-working fairies, told and read in the quaint castle in the evenings, cultivated the growth of his imaginative mind. So that, mingled with his natural brightness and activity, there were moods that occasionally carried him under the shade of some elm or maple tree, to sit and see pictures of wonderful creatures in the beauty and melancholy of nature all around. For this reason his loving mother called him *Inabandang*, a dreamer of dreams.

CHAPTER II.

FAIRYLAND.

With the woodland fairies I can talk,
I can list their silver lays;
Oh! pleasant in a lonely walk

Is the company of fays.

Havergal.

The ravine adjoining the castle was a mysterious looking place, dark with dense underwood, the haunt of wild beasts and the home of numberless birds, now sending forth awful cries and inspiring songs, then silent as the grave. A tortuous difficult pathway in the hollow extended along its length, while one or two animal tracks in the neighborhood crossed it from side to side. A few grassy spaces here and there slightly relieved the gloom, while a small stream of water moved slowly along its base, now forming into pools where little fishes leaped, then gradually unwinding itself and stealing softly on under a wealth of branches and green leaves.

Down to that stream Robin wandered alone one beautiful afternoon in June. He followed its course as best he could till he found it turning into a deep, dark, eddying pool beside and partly under the steepest slope of the ravine. The opening underneath the projecting bank, though large, was almost concealed by overhanging branches. Robin crawled out on a strong beech branch, brushed aside the leaves and peered in. It seemed as if it were a water-gateway into the heart of the great ridge, and had a weird misty look. Robin said to himself, "Wouldn't it be fine if I got a real peep at some of those brownies and fairies I hear so much about! Wouldn't mother stare when I got home and told her!" He therefore waited and imagined and watched, until he got quite excited at the thought of seeing something wonderful. But no, nothing came, and he was disappointed, although he only half believed that anything strange might really appear. His excitement cooled down, and then after a time he yawned, feeling weary; yet, retaining a lingering hope, he stretched himself comfortably across two or three adjoining branches, his face downwards, with one arm and one leg dangling below, and finally fell asleep. It was not a very becoming or a very wise act in that riskful, dismal hollow; yet, are not men themselves but thoughtless boys in bigger shape?

While thus under the blissful spell of Morpheus, Robin heard a noise that made his heart throb with expectation. He pushed aside the leaves and looked in. There, sure enough, something was coming out that was not common. Nearer it came on the surface of the pool. What could it be? A beautiful little ship, with white sails spread, and manned by Mississagua sailors dressed in

vivid red. The gallant ship round the pool most gracefully, and Robin's eyes looked down and followed it with intense interest. When this was done three times all sails were taken down, then a silver anchor was thrown out, and the ship stood still. Two Indian sailors stepped forward from the rest, seized something, swung their arms to and fro for a moment, and then flung a long ladder of yellow silken ropes right over an overhanging branch a short distance away from Robin's head.

After a brief pause, a beautiful little lady in white, with a golden crown upon her head, ascended the ladder and stood erect among the leaves of the branch. Then the captain of the ship took off his peaked hat and called for a cheer for their good Queen Celeste of happy and beautiful Fairyland. And the sailors cheered Her Majesty mightily. Robin thought her the prettiest creature he had ever seen, and when she smiled upon him sweetly, he put his hand to his cap politely and smiled his best in return.

"Art thou the dreamer of dreams?" enquired the Queen with a merry but dignified look.

"I am," answered Robin with a blush, and wondering what was going to happen.

"Art thou he that I have heard so much of in my hidden realm?"

"I don't know," said Robin modestly.

"Art thou he that hast so much interest in my people?"

"I am," replied Robin, feeling relieved.

"Art thou Robin of Castle Frank who lovest all animals?"

"I am, your Majesty," answered Robin happily, and at last managing to address a queen as he ought.

"Wilt thou come with me, and I will show thee wonderful things?"

"I shall, your Gracious Majesty, with great pleasure."

The Queen then raised a jewelled sceptre in her right hand, the captain of the ship saw it and flashed a signal inward towards the cavern, when by-and-

bye a silver canoe shot out with an Indian chief at the stern, and halted underneath the branch upon which Robin rested. The boy was delighted, and without a moment's hesitation he clasped the branch firmly with both hands and let himself drop as gently as possible into the boat below. He was hardly seated, with the oars in his hands, when the white ship passed by, all sails spread, and Queen Celeste sitting upon a golden throne on deck. Robin followed. There was darkness as he entered, and he felt bewildered and even eerie. But it was only for a moment, for the white ship ahead became aglow with many brilliant colored stars, and, with the silver boat behind, it glided into a land whose beauty and marvellousness no pen can describe.

The sky was of entrancing azure, lit up by twelve mellow suns, making perpetual day; the fields were like rich velvet carpets of green; and the rivers, winding in fantastic shapes, widening into blue lakes and forming dashing cascades, were pure as crystal. There were also plains of gold dust, fine as flour, where butterflies enriched their tender wings; great forests, where birds of gay plumage built peculiar nests and sang in choirs most glorious songs; high hills, with rocks of red ruby and blue lazuli, on which gilded reptiles basked and whistled; lovely valleys full of fragrance and of luscious fruits; cool grottoes, and sombre ravines; picturesque villages; busy towns, and majestic castles.

All the animals could speak and sing and dance, and every one was a pet. Nay more, they were useful. Squirrels ran messages, and calculated like schoolboys; foxes drew out plans as architects; tigers drove waggons pulled by zebras; and lions built bridges, which pretty parrots wreathed with flowers.

Children played and laughed everywhere, dressed in the quaintest and prettiest styles. None ever quarrelled, except in fun, as kittens do.

There was no time to see all that could be seen, so Robin was wafted over a part of this wonderful land in a crimson silk balloon, with Queen Celeste at his side, pointing out what was most interesting, till his eyes were almost sore with gazing and gazing. Then they descended into a field of gorgeous flowers, among a number of animal pets that were leaping, racing, resting and talking. Robin was charmed and amazed.

"Oh," said he, "if I could only get mine to speak like that I should be happy, and what is it I would not teach them to do?"

The Queen was delighted because her guest was delighted.

Then Robin turned to her and said with a smile full of entreaty:

"Will your Majesty not aid me? Please help me, at least with my pretty black squirrels I love so much."

"It shall be done," said the Queen, with a gracious smile, and she raised her sceptre and touched his forehead.

"But thou art hungry," she added, "and thou must not leave my land without tasting of my delicacies."

As Celeste said this she plucked a great flower full of nectar, and handed it to him to eat. Robin did so, and the effect and odor were so delightfully soothing that he fell into a deep sleep.

Queen Celeste then gave orders, through a glossy black squirrel, to have Robin conveyed with great gentleness to another part of her dominions. Six brownie giants appeared promptly with a flying machine shaped like a Bird of Paradise. They placed him inside its body, on a bed of down and softest silk, as if he had been a child again. Then the chief brownie, dressed like an admiral, mounted the neck of the machine, touched a spring, and the Bird of Paradise rose high into the blue sky, flew softly over lakes and forests and prairies, then over a high mountain of emerald, and at last down through a dense mist into a picturesque spot, the very image of that on which Castle Frank stood on the ridge of the great ravine. The machine descended gently into the castle enclosure amidst a crowd of pets. The brownie touched another spring, when the Bird of Paradise deposited Robin in the soft, green grass, as if a new-laid egg in a nest.

The brownie quietly arranged everything and then quickly left with the flying machine. He had scarcely gone when Robin was awakened by the sound of whispering, and, slightly opening his eyes, he saw his black squirrels around, warning each other not to disturb their master. He was overjoyed to hear that they had received the gift of speech, and in his heart he praised the Fairy Queen for her kindness and marvellous skill. But he could not understand how she managed to transfer him to where he was. It seemed only a moment before when he was talking to her among the flowers of Fairyland, and now he was among his pets in the garden of Castle Frank.

CHAPTER III.

THE STRANGE SCHOOL CLASS.

Full many a beauteous lesson, too,
 Their rosy lips can teach;
Great men would wonder if they knew
 How well the fairies preach.
 Havergal.

One day in June, when the sky was as blue as it is in Italy, and when all the trees and shrubs were dressed in bright green, there was a curious sight in the Fairy Garden of Castle Frank. Under the shade of a big apple-tree, and upon a long school-like seat, there sat twelve little jet-black squirrels. They were but half-grown creatures, the offspring of different parents. They sat upon their haunches, all in a row, with their forefeet raised as hands, holding tiny slates. Right in front of them stood Robin, giving them a question in arithmetic to answer.

"How many walnuts are 2 and 4 and 6?"



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"How many walnuts are 2 and 4 and 6?"

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"How many walnuts are 2 and 4 and 6?"

"Not half enough for them anyway," said a tame grey parrot, sitting on a branch above the class.

The little squirrels shook their tails and tittered and said "tut—tut—tut—," but the teacher looked up and gently said—

"You are not one of the class; please keep quiet, Chattie" (which was the parrot's name).

"I am above their class anyway," replied Chattie.

"Please do not take away their attention," said the teacher patiently.

"Yes, the friskies need all their attention. It is the first rule of getting on. It was the first thing that helped me to speak anyway." And here Chattie stopped, believing that she had said a wise thing (which indeed was true), and that it was prudent to stop now for fear of offending her master.

"Put up your slates, all that have got the answer down," requested the teacher.

Every slate went up except one. Examining them, Robin saw that four had the correct answer, seven were wrong and one was unfinished. The teacher commended the successful pupils, helped those that were mistaken, and worked out the sum for the pupil that had stuck. This took a long time, for Robin wished everyone to understand before going further. He then made a sign to Chattie to give the signal for dismissal of the class. Chattie did so, giving a loud shrill whistle, ending in a long cat-like yell that filled the woods and made the friskies and Robin laugh outright; which greatly pleased the parrot, for she loved to talk and make a noise and be well thought of. The signal over, the squirrels marched away to their several homes, laid aside their slates and went out to play.

"You do not believe much in cram," said Chattie, as the pupils marched away.

"Mother says that 'cramming makes the figures blurred and weak; education makes them bright and strong.'"

"Ah," replied Chattie, "but laziness makes no figure at all."

Robin smiled and asked her to come home with him to tea. Chattie was his constant companion, and she flew down upon his shoulder and rubbed her head affectionately against his soft, ruddy cheek.

"I suspect you have a cheat in the class," said the parrot.

"I hope not," replied Robin trustfully, and he walked into the castle to partake of tea with his mother, who was alone, his father being far away on government business.

Robin's mother was much interested in the progress of the squirrel-class, not only as a pleasure and discipline for the pupils themselves, but as helping to train her darling boy in patience and kindness. These little creatures sometimes found their lessons irksome, and being naturally frisky they would suddenly leap from their seat and chase each other over a score of trees, while Robin entreated and waited patiently for their return; but they were gradually getting

interested in their lessons and trained to attention and submission, out of love for their teacher. Robin's mother also wished her boy to learn the value of thoroughness. If he could observe that a pupil that thoroughly understood the lessons would be able to do them alone, whereas one that copied from others would fail when left alone, it would stimulate thoroughness where he himself was a learner.

When Robin entered the room his mother was already seated and waiting him. "Good evening, mother dear," he said, and he went forward and kissed her. He loved his mother much, and well he might. We do not love people for what they promise or give us, but for the heart that lies behind. Bad people may give much for their own ends, but we do not trust or love them. Robin's mother had a tenderness of heart that warmed and enhanced the beauty of her face, so much so that her servants and the poorest felt quite at home in her presence. She had also refinement and intelligence, giving her a dignity that kept even the rudest from being familiar and disrespectful. The Indians of the district called her *Ininatig*, the maple tree, because they thought her so sweet and beautiful. During tea there was much conversation about Robin's father, and when it was over his mother said—

"I have a gift for your best pupil, and something for all of them, when vacation comes."

"What are the gifts, mother?" Robin asked eagerly.

"A big white toy-horse for the first, a doll for the second, a looking-glass for the third, a tall hat for the fourth, then a trumpet, a small sword, a little ship, and so on, getting less and less in value according to the pupil's merit."

Robin was delighted.

Next morning the twelve young friskies were in their places as usual, and it was such a pretty picture to look at the row of glossy black bodies, with a silk ribbon around each neck to distinguish one black pupil from another. Number one wore a red ribbon, number two a white, number three a blue, and so on, each a different color down to the last, who wore a modest black.

When the teacher announced that prizes were to be given when the school session was over, there was much gladness, with many promises of attention and diligence for the time to come. Proceeding to work, he asked—

"If you divide 24 nuts among 12 good friskies, how many are left?"

"They're all left if they're bad," said Chattie.

Red, White, and Blue were correct, each having a big round O on their slates. So was number four, called Silver Ribbon. Several of the others were incorrect. Black Ribbon wrote down that he thought the parrot was right, but that after all he wasn't sure if the nuts were bad. He had a big head, a loving heart, and open honest brown eyes, and when the teacher saw what was written down he laughed and took him up in his arms and kissed him.

"My simple pet," said Robin, "you have as good a head as the others, but you have not been so long in the class; and, besides, your mamma is a poor, sick widow and unable to help you with your lessons."

Silver Ribbon (whose constant position for a certain reason was against the apple-tree) was the oftenest correct of all the class; but though very frolicsome and good-looking, she had a strange sly look about her face, very different from Black Ribbon's.

Chattie was pleased to hear her master sympathise with Black Ribbon, and desiring that no one might overlook his remark, she very distinctly said—

"Failure does not always mean a faulty head."

She had quite a liking for Black Ribbon, and well she might: he was a splendid climber of trees, and a magnificent leaper from branch to branch, his best feats being performed too whether the others were looking on or not. He was also civil and kind to everyone, and was most helpful to his sick mother at home. For these reasons, Chattie had lately taken his arithmetic in hand, but she was a great joker, and sometimes led the simple-minded little fellow astray. She was very sorry for his helpless mother, and therefore she visited her every day, prepared her meals, chatted with her, made her bed and swept the house with her tail. Indeed widow Black Ribbon's final recovery was due to Chattie's careful nursing, rather than to Dr. Beaver's baths and poplar pills.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ADVICE OF HUG-GRIPPY, THE AFFECTIONATE.

The class was just finishing when Hug-grippy, the chief of the Chippewa bears, appeared upon the scene. He had come on a friendly visit, and to get a breakfast of ripe raspberries and honey that Robin had promised him for saving the white pony, Plumpy, from the horns of a huge elk. He had indulged in a recent meal evidently, for his ribs bulged out so much and so comically that Chattie shrieked with laughter and cried out—

"There is more nourishment in fasting sometimes than in eating over much."

Hug-grippy himself laughed, although had he been thin-skinned he would not, but he was good-natured, and looking up he merely remarked that Miss Chattie appeared to him to be uttering a contradiction in some way or other. For his entertainment the teacher gave the class another question in division, and Hug-grippy wondered at their cleverness.

"As for me," said he, "I am bad at any kind of counting, but I can't do division at all. I suppose it's because I——"

"like everything to myself," said Chattie, finishing his sentence and laughing at her own joke.

When Robin told his class to count the bear's toes, they all jumped from their seat and seized his feet, and before he could recover from his mock alarm he was astonished to learn what he never could find out for himself—that he had no fewer than twenty toes. Then the friskies jumped upon his great back and head like a lot of monkeys. During the fun and confusion that followed, Black Ribbon ran to his home (which was close by) and begged a nut from his mamma; then returning quickly, he stood upon his hind legs and duly presented it to Hug-grippy. The great bear looked down, and patting the little fellow on the head, remarked, with a broad grateful smile, that he was a dear wee boy, fit to be at the head of his class, if for kindness only. Then turning to Robin he said

"I think you should get up a kindness class, and (with a sly twinkle at Chattie) I shall come along often, not to talk and joke like some people, but to

give the class an opportunity of putting their learning into practice."

"Very good advice," replied Robin.

Encouraged by this, Hug-grippy continued—

"There is too much teaching of the head in this world, and too little acting of the heart. Is it not intended that every bit of us should be exercised? If people neglect kindness, that fine feeling will die."

"Hear, hear," said Robin, "you have spoken well."

"Mind, master Robin," answered Bruin earnestly, "I am not hinting anything against your class, for the friskies need head treatment, and I am sure you show them in your own life how to be kind; but they will be all the better of doing as well as seeing, and so I have humbly suggested a class for the exercise of the faculty of kindness."

"Thank you, Hug-grippy, the idea is capital. I will raise such a class very soon, and put my best arithmetic-pupils into it by way of reward."

"Yes," replied Bruin, "the cleverest often need it most, to restore the proper balance between head and heart; and put Chattie in it," he added with a funny smile, as he lay down on the grass with his nose between his toes.

"And Hug-grippy too," cried Chattie.

"Oh no," said the bear, "I am trained."

"But you require to keep up your education, Mr. Bruin."

"True, very true," replied Hug-grippy quietly, "but too much exercise is bad, and I need an occasional rest. Besides, my dear, the class must have someone to work upon, someone to whom to be kind." Putting one of his great paws over his eyes he looked through his claws at Robin, and with a modest but humorous smile added—

"And if I might venture to speak of myself, I may mention that I am not unfavorable to honey."

"Oh you cunning rascal," cried the parrot.

"Hush," said the white pony, putting back her ears, "hush, hush."

And Robin laughed.

CHAPTER V.

THE ADVICE OF THE SUBTLE SNAKE.

Two weeks passed, the class had worked hard, and even Black Ribbon had pulled up wonderfully, but Silver Ribbon had the highest number of marks. The time for prize-giving, however, had not come, but the pupils were to get a rest for two or three days before going through a special examination, which would last half a day. When this was over the prizes would be given, and then there would be the glorious holidays, with excursions far into the forest.

Meantime Silver Ribbon got the preliminary silver medal attached to her neck. The other pupils crowded around her, congratulated her, and kissed her. Black Ribbon took her hand in his, and in a simple boyish way promised her a nut. Then they all carried her home shoulder high, singing and dancing merrily. Her mother, a kind, thin, old squirrel, with soft, black, melting eyes, was quite excited as she received her victorious daughter with a good big hug and many kisses. But her father, who was a stout, gruff-toned squirrel, though not unkind, was suspicious.

"I can't understand," said he, "why a girl that never does anything but play—never studies at home—should be the very head of a class of clever boys and girls. There is no special gift in our family to explain it: I fear there is something wrong."

And, sad to say, her father's honest suspicion was too well founded. The explanation is this. One day shortly after the class was formed, and when the other squirrels had all gone home from play, either to study or help their parents, Silver Ribbon remained stealthily behind to amuse herself as best she could. Hearing a soft noise in the tree upon whose branches she was leaping

and running, she turned quickly round and saw a large, dark snake with gleaming, piercing eyes. She was frightened and was about to run away, which she could easily have done, as the reptile was not very near, but it spoke at once, and in a soft, attractive, motherly voice persuaded her to stay a minute.

"Do you wish to be at the head of your class, dear?" enquired the snake.

"I do indeed," answered Silver Ribbon, "it is a great honor."

"You can easily secure it," said the snake.

"Without labor and trouble?" enquired the squirrel.

"Yes, if you do what I tell you."

"What shall I do?" asked the squirrel.

"What is your position in the class at present?" the reptile asked.

"I am second, but I have reached it mainly by a cunning copying from the other slates, and I fear I can't keep that up long."

"You suffer slightly from a weak spine, don't you?" enquired the snake in a sympathetic tone.

"I do," said Silver Ribbon.

"Well, dear, take my advice, and when the class meets again go to your teacher in a very modest manner and make a graceful curtsy. Tell him that though you would not in the least mind being at the lower end of the class, yet because of your weak back he might favor you by allowing you the support of the shade tree opposite the 4th place. This will win him, for his mother has taught him to love modesty and to be kind. Having secured that place for the remainder of the session, watch what the three pupils above you jot down on their slates, and copy all their answers if they be different. When the teacher comes to examine the slates, beginning with number one, and mentions who is correct, you will know which answer to rub out, which you can easily do without being suspected. Do as I tell you, and you will be as often successful as any one of the three best pupils above you is correct. Be clever, be cunning, there is no harm in wrong-doing, and you will get honor and reward without any trouble, with plenty of time to go about idle and amuse yourself. Glide along

through life as I do, dear, as smoothly and as pleasantly as you can, taking everything and giving nothing."

Although Silver Ribbon could not quite shake off her dread of the snake, and therefore kept her former safe distance, yet the advice was ingenious and charming. She at once agreed to take it, and having thanked the cunning reptile, she hurriedly scampered home.

"I shall have you as a choice mouthful yet, and, through you, all the rest of your nimble pretty crowd," said the snake, when Silver Ribbon was gone. The reptile was an active specimen of the great boa-constrictor tribe, thirty feet long. It had taken a trip from the sunny South to the North, deceiving and doing much mischief on the way. Its advice was the secret of Silver Ribbon's success.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MODEST MEDALLIST.

In the previous chapter we turned aside and went a long way back—back nearly as far as the formation of the class—to explain how Silver Ribbon had come to be the most successful pupil, at least so far as to win the preliminary silver medal. We come forward now to where we left off, at the reference to two or three days' rest from study. That rest passed away very quickly. Then came the final tug-of-war, the day of special examination which was to reveal who was really the best scholar.

All the pupils were in the garden on a Friday morning at 9 o'clock prompt. Their black fur was beautiful and glossy—nicely washed and brushed for the occasion—and their silken ribbons were neatly tied and clean. Silver Ribbon looked exceedingly well, and her silver medal was burnished till it shone like a little moon. When all the pupils had gathered together they gave her a ringing cheer. Black Ribbon looked clean and tidy, but he seemed as if he had been studying rather than resting, for his lovely dark eyes were somewhat weary.

Silver Ribbon took up her place against the apple-tree as usual, but judge of her surprise and alarm when, by Hug-grippy's advice, the pupils were separated from each other a considerable distance, and seated on chairs brought out for the occasion. Having a sprightly disposition, however, she shook off her fears, and, trusting to chance and to what little she had learned, she prepared for the contest.

Robin was a reasonable schoolmaster, and did not give questions that had not been already gone over, or that could not be understood. When each pupil had finished a question, the teacher went over quietly, examined the slate, and whispered the result.

Silver Ribbon succeeded with the first question, and she was happy; with the second also, and her spirits rose high. She was, she thought, going to be chief prize-winner and the head of her class after all. But her hopes were soon crushed. She was wrong in the 3rd question and the 4th, still she held on bravely. She was wrong in the 5th, 6th and 7th, and her spirits fell. She looked wistfully towards the best pupils' slates, but even her sharp eyes could not discern the figures. When she found herself incorrect in questions 8, 9 and 10, she felt sick at heart, and when she tackled the remaining questions her heart palpitated painfully, the perspiration came down in beads from her little forehead, and her hands felt clammy and cold. She was wrong to the very last, and she fell into complete despair.

When the results were announced to all the class, everyone was surprised to hear that Black Ribbon was first and that Silver Ribbon was last. Black Ribbon was cheered three times over, and was astonished to find himself famous, while poor Silver Ribbon was dazed, and her little head dropped upon her medal and breast. As her chin touched the medal, she was reminded of its presence, a shining mockery seen by all, and she hated it from the bottom of her heart.

Robin drew up the white toy-horse and presented it to Black Ribbon, and the class cheered again and again. He then presented the other gifts to the pupils in the order of merit till he came to poor Silver Ribbon. He was so sorry when placing his hand gently underneath her little chin and raising her head he saw that her eyes were dull, wet and very sad. He knew at last that she had been a copyist and a deceiver, but he gave her no rebuke while removing the medal from her breast. He felt keenly that she was suffering punishment enough from disappointment, shame and humiliation. Not knowing how she had been

tempted to cheat him, he placed by her side the only remaining gift, which was a pretty little toy snake. All eyes were upon her, saying nothing, yet pitying and despising her. She looked sideways at the toy a moment and shuddered—shuddered at what would have delighted any of the others—and being unable to bear the shame any longer she leaped from her chair and ran away.

"Didn't I tell you that you had a cheat in the class?" said Chattie sorrowfully.

"She has cheated herself more than anyone else," answered Robin regretfully.

"One can't live long on empty nuts," said Hug-grippy gloomily.

Robin now commended the class for their diligence and progress, and amidst great cheering announced a long vacation. He then tied the silver medal with golden silk on the neck of Black Ribbon, who tried to repress a happy smile, while all the others cheered wildly. Taking the little victor up in his arms, he caressed him and said—

"My clever pet, my mother has asked me to say that hard work and honesty have their true and lasting reward. Your name henceforth is Golden Ribbon."

The signal was given to Chattie, and she dismissed the class with an exultant Indian whoop that even startled big Bruin and made him laugh.

Said he, "I thought for a moment that my enemies had suddenly come upon me."

Three of the best pupils—Red, White and Blue, referred to, before—then ran forward and seizing Golden Ribbon, lifted him upon the back of his white toy horse. Getting confused, the little black rider sat upon the horse's neck and held it by the ears. Robin went in front and pulled, while all the pupils marched behind in pairs, singing merrily as they tripped along. Bruin brought up the rear with all the presents on his big, broad back. Golden Ribbon was drawn to the castle and duly presented to Robin's mother, who praised and kissed him, while she presented him with a gilt-edged picture book full of wonderful stories.

When Golden Ribbon was drawn home to his own door they all parted from him with much hand-shaking but with silence, because his mother was sick. Entering the door and going over to her bedside he said—

"Mother, dear, I am first, and here is a great, beautiful picture book, and there is a big, toy horse at the door."

"My darling boy," said his mamma, raising her head and opening her eyes wide when she saw the medal and golden band around his neck, "I can scarcely believe it, but you deserve it, for you have been a hard, honest worker, as well as most loving and attentive to me," and she kissed him tenderly. Then laying her head upon the pillow she wept with joy.

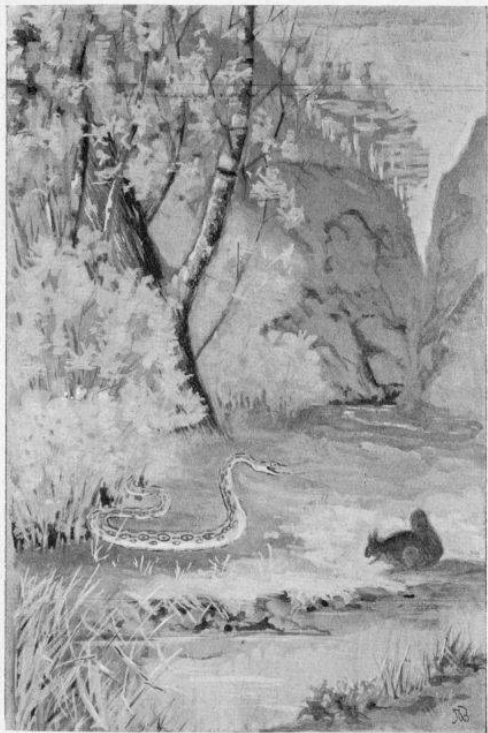
That night Silver Ribbon sobbed herself to sleep upon her mamma's neck. Her mother did not punish her, for she knew that she had pain enough. She tried indeed to comfort her by saying that every one would forgive her if she would begin and do better for the future, for she was very grieved for her deceitful little child.

CHAPTER VII.

THE FIGHT IN THE RAVINE.

When morning came, Silver Ribbon heard all the others at play with Golden Ribbon's horse, and she ventured out. But on seeing the crowd she was still so ashamed that she slipped quietly past, and went right into the wood. Going down the edge of the deep ravine she wandered she knew not and cared not where, till she came to the winding stream at the bottom. Seeing Bruin taking a drink she passed softly down the bank, and coming to a grassy spot she sat down, feeling very unhappy. She watched for awhile the little fishes as they darted to and fro, envying their happiness.

But hearing a gliding movement in the grass behind her, what was her horror when on turning round she saw the big snake a few feet away, its head raised, its neck arched, and its cunning eyes shining with fiendish glee. Poor Silver Ribbon would have run away, but she could not; she was too near and was fascinated.



The Fairy School of Castle Frank.] FASCINATED.

FASCINATED.

"Aha," said the hideous reptile with a hiss, "I have got you now."

*

Although Chattie was a funny bird and straightforward, still she had a liking for Silver Ribbon, and when with her quick eyes she saw the poor sad thing wandering aimlessly down the ravine, she followed secretly from tree to tree to watch over her. Noticing the rise of the horrid snake's head, she flew back like an arrow to Castle Frank to tell of Silver Ribbon's danger.

Robin seized a short loaded gun and ran after the parrot as fast as he could. The brushwood was very thick but he pressed on, and as he drew near the spot he heard roars and groans and hissing. Getting out into the open, he saw the snake and Hug-grippy fighting desperately. The reptile was coiled around the bear's body, its head was raised, its mouth wide open, and its glittering eyes were looking straight into Bruin's face. It was gripping Hug-grippy dreadfully: he was in agony and was losing breath.

Kneeling down upon one knee, Robin raised his gun; but being scarcely near enough, it was dangerous to fire—he might shoot the bear. Running right up, without realizing his danger, he went close behind the combatants. Not noticing the serpent's tail in the grass he trod upon it, when round his ankle it swept, and in an instant he was thrown upon his face and stunned.

Bruin, though fighting bravely, was losing the battle. Chattie was circling wildly in the air and screaming. Everything seemed to be lost.

Suddenly Robin woke up, drew a hunting knife from his belt and slashed the serpent's tail, setting himself free. The reptile turned its arched head towards him, showed its tiger-like fangs and hissed as from a pipe of steam. Robin jumped back a little and picked up his gun. Placing it to his shoulder, he took rapid aim within a few feet of the serpent's head—bang went fire and smoke and bullet—snake and bear tumbled down together and rolled upon the grass. The unusual sometimes happens, a boy had done the work of the bravest man.

The huge, dark monster was shot through the head, and its long, scaly body twisted and quivered in death.

Hug-grippy, slowly disentangling himself, went down to the brook all in a tremble, and freely drank of the water. He rested for a little in the cooling stream and rose up refreshed. Coming forward to Robin, he licked his extended hand in unspoken thankfulness. As a member of a kindness class he had come to the aid of Silver Ribbon just in time to break the spell, yet he himself would have perished but for the timely aid of a brave, true boy.

"Hurrah for my beloved young master, and for dear old Hug-grippy," shrieked Chattie in hysteric happiness.

"Don't mention me," said Bruin softly, with a smile broad and funny.

"Nor me," said Robin modestly; "it is due to us all," added he with a sweet becoming smile.

And the young soldier-teacher, with Chattie on his shoulder and Hug-grippy by his side carrying the gun, went home with glad and exultant heart to the quaint castle.

Silver Ribbon became completely changed, working honestly and well; and from that time forward she was respected and loved.

The awful conflict was never forgotten by the many pets of Castle Frank: they talked over it now and again all their lives, and they thought how good and great was the young master, who went through such trouble and danger for the benefit of creatures so much his inferior.

"I guess," said Red Ribbon on a certain occasion, "Master Robin understands that we have feelings as well as human people."

Chattie, who could quote Scripture, sometimes more appropriately than greater parrots, chimed in—

"A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast."

"Dearie me," said Green Ribbon, "I never knew there was a text for us before."

*

But Fairyland we now must leave—

The land of Robin's spell.

Adieu! Celeste, magic Queen:

We like thy teaching well.

CHAPTER VIII.

ROBIN'S BOOK.

When Robin went to school in a great city, he saw children trifling with their lessons, copying from the workers, and cheating their teachers. They succeeded for a time, but when the day of searching trial came, he saw them fail.

When Robin became a young man, he saw many who, carrying up the craft and ignorance of earlier days, were utterly broken down in the great business of the world. Impressed with the ruin that lies in shunning true and ennobling labor, he wrote a little book, and the title was—

"MEN THAT CHEAT THEMSELVES."

THE SNOW-WHITE FOX.

There was once a lion with a bushy mane, whose name was Muffler. He lived in a country, called Antartika, where the hills were high, the valleys low, the forests thick, and the waters broad and deep. It was a fertile land, where grass and fruits and flowers grew in abundance. It was also a rich, rich country, full of precious stones lying on the ground, shining in the beds of the rivers, and glittering on the face of the mountains. Antartika was indeed a beautiful land.

But no people lived there, nothing but birds and beasts and fishes, and a wonderful race of tailless apes that died out long ago. And Muffler, the lion, was king.

On a certain day, a law-court day, Muffler sat on a diamond rock, and at his back was a rock of ruby blazing in the sun. On his head was a crown of laurel powdered with gold-dust and pearls. Beside him stood Old Primeval the ape, his faithful adviser, wearing on his neck a wreath of white poplar leaves dusted with silver, and holding in his hand a club inlaid with shining emeralds. On each side of the king and behind him were many young lions looking respectful and brave. Some distance in front was a crowd of all kinds of beasts, such as tigers, panthers, bears, wild-boars, wolves, hyenas, foxes, wild-cats, and even deer, sheep and goats, while the trees around were covered with birds of brilliant plumage. And they were all very quiet, because they were expecting something.

"Who is next?" enquired the king.

"Crafticus, come forward," cried old Primeval.

There was a movement among the beasts as of someone pushing his way, and then there came out from among them a snow-white fox with a bushy tail. He walked forward with bowed head till he stood before the great Muffler,

who looked down at him sternly and haughtily.

"Stand up," commanded the king.

Crafticus stood on his hind legs, and his eyes blinked because of the light from the ruby, which made him look as if covered with blood.

"State the charge," said the king turning to his counsellor.

"Crafticus," said Primeval solemnly, "you are charged with wilfully slaying Awkwardibus, the king's gander, last night up beside Lake Snow among the Topaz Hills. What have you got to say in self-defence?"

"I did not know that the gander was the king's," replied the fox in a humble tone.

"Crafticus, you must have known, knowing that the king's ganders and geese are green, while all the others are gray, black, and white," and the counsellor thought he had promptly caught the fox, and that the king would be highly pleased.

But Crafticus replied—"There was a storm up there last night, and the gander was covered with snow—in my eyes he was white."

Old Primeval looked perplexed and annoyed.

But king Muffler laughed and his mane shook. "Crafticus is clever," said he. "I know something myself about the case, nevertheless call for witnesses."

"There is but one witness, O king, and that is the gander's widow."

"Call her," said the king.

"Stupidify, come to the front," cried the counsellor.

The green goose waddled up before the king, napped her wings, cackled, and screamed hysterically.

"Be silent, you idiot, don't you see the king?" Primeval shouted between her cries.

"Where?" replied the goose, looking around her confused.

"There," said Primeval emphatically, pointing his emerald club at Muffler's nose.

"Oh yes, I think I see him," cried the goose through her tears. "But I thought the king was like my lovely husband. Oh dear me," and she cried bitterly.

King Muffler cast his eyes down towards her with pity and contempt.

"Stupidify," said Primeval gravely, "was there a fall of snow last night?"

"What? What?" enquired the goose.

"Are you deaf, you silly creature?" cried Primeval angrily. "Was there not a fall of snow last night?" He wanted to frighten her into saying there was, for he thought the king admired the fox and wished him to escape.

"Be patient, be patient," said king Muffler, "my counsellor's conduct should be dignified. Be gentle with the poor widow."

"Pardon me, O king," replied Primeval bowing low. Then turning to the goose he enquired,

"Are you deaf, dear?"

"Yes, sir," answered she, and receiving such sympathy she screamed loudly; which was rather annoying to Muffler's ears, for they jerked as if wasps were at their tips.

When the goose quieted down, Primeval asked: "You don't think of course there was any snow last night, my dear?" He wanted to coax her to say there wasn't, for he now thought the king was in her favor.

"I don't remember," answered Stupidify; and Primeval scratched his head in

disgust, while the king gave a muffled laugh.

"O king Muffler," said Primeval, "I can proceed no further, for the green goose is no use as a witness. Is the explanation given by Crafficus satisfactory? Does he go free?"

"No," replied the king, "his explanation is cunning, but untrue. I went to the top of the Topaz Mountain last night to get nearer the ear of the man in the moon, in order to invite him down to see me and my country. He did not seem to hear me, although I roared and shouted at him all night, and during the time I was there not a flake of snow fell. Therefore my judgment is that Crafficus did know that Awkwardibus the gander was mine, for it was green and nothing else all the time. Crafficus, I do therefore sentence you to leave your wife and children, with all the rest of the Craftikites, and to stay with widow Stupidify in my barn and its near surroundings, and to provide food and comfort for her as long as she lives."

This was a deep humiliation, and Crafficus howled with shame and disgust. When he moved away from the king's presence with the fat goose waddling by his side, all the hyenas laughed and laughed. And this was so vexing to him that he slyly turned his head toward Stupidify and showed her all his teeth in anger.

So they walked away in the direction of the king's barn, which was to be their home when they were not out in search of food.

*

That night before the goose came in, Crafficus thought and thought how he could get rid of Stupidify. At last he rose up and sniffed through the dried grass in search of Furrier, the black cat.

Furrier was asleep; but Crafficus nipped his left ear gently, and he awoke with a yawn and stretched out his claws.

"What do you want?" said he, looking up.

"I wish you to help me to get rid of that hateful goose, dear Furrier."

"I am afraid of the king," replied the cat.

"You needn't, you will be quite safe. I have a cunning plan, but I need your help, and I will reward you well."



CRAFTICUS.

"I have a cunning plan."

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CRAFTICUS. "I have a cunning plan."

Crafticus then told his plan, and Purrier agreed and went out to meet the goose, while the fox lay down in a low broad box, as if fast asleep.

"Hail, Stupidify, lovely fat goose," cried Furrier, when he met her and saw her by the light of the moon.

"Joy be with you, dear sooty cat."

"Has Crafficus provided any food for you to-day?"

"Not a single speck, and I have been searching till now and have scarcely got any—this place is new to me, as you know."

"Oh my poor dear goose, how sorry I am."

And hearing this she sat down and screamed.

"Arise and assert your rights," said Purrier, "and I will help you. Let us go together to Crafficus, and if he be as careless about your bed as about your food, you just scream and scream till you get what you want."

So they went along side by side, and when they entered the barn and looked into the box, Crafficus appeared to be in a deep sleep, but he was only pretending.

Purrier leaped in softly and lay beside him. "Oh this is cold," said he. Then he went to the other side and lay down. "Oh, this is cold also," and he rose up shivering. Then he poked his paw under the fox and whispered—"Ha, ha, this is warm. The selfish fellow—it is just like him to choose the warmest spot. Come and judge for yourself, poor neglected Stupidify."

The goose jumped in clumsily and fell on her fat breast. Then she poked her beak under Crafficus and found it to be as the cat had said. It never struck her that the heat came from the fox's own body.

"Now, demand your rights," said Purrier, "demand a share of the comfortable spot," and he went away and lay down among the dried grass.

"I want my rights," cried the goose, in the fox's ear.

"What?" said Crafticus, rubbing his eyes.

"I want my rights, I want you to move."

"You have got your rights and double your rights. You can rest on either side of me and I have only the centre."

"I want my share of the warm part."

"How can the centre be warmer than the sides?"

"Let me try," said the goose.

"All right, but it is very disturbing," replied the fox, and he rose up and let the goose sit down.

"It is just as I felt with my beak, it is the warmest spot, and you can't deny it. Now, I want my share of it."

"You won't get it, your request is absurd," and he pushed her aside. Then he lay down and buried his eyes in his tail, as if trying to sleep.

Stupidify looked as if she might give in.

"Demand your rights," cried Purrier, in a shrill menacing voice; "the king is on your side," he added, with an emphatic yell.

"I want my rights," cried the goose, encouraged to quarrelsomeness, and she bit Crafticus on the ear.

"Stupidify," said the fox, slowly raising his head, "you are breaking my rest. Don't you know that I have to run in the king's chamois chase to-morrow, and that I need all the sleep I can get?"

"The king is my friend," answered the goose with a chuckle and a stubborn look.

"Do let me alone," rejoined the fox, as he buried his face again in his tail. But it was no use.

"I want my rights, I want my rights," screamed the goose, and she went on demanding them or scolding and hissing every now and then till midnight.

At last Crafficus arose and said—"I can't stand this any longer. I can't get any sleep, and I shall be quite unfit for the king's chase." Then turning to the goose he cried—"Wretch, you have provoked me to kill you, and you have yourself to blame"; and having said this, he seized Stupidify by the neck and killed her.

Purrier now sprang from his bed and leaped into the box beside Crafficus, and they had a right royal feast together. They chatted and laughed, and Purrier told what he said to the goose when he met her and walked with her towards the barn.

"You have done well, Purrier, and I'll never forget you."

"Oh, my part was nothing," replied he, "it was your own wise head that planned the whole trick. And when your case comes again before the king, I am sure it can't be broken."

"Thank you sincerely," rejoined Crafficus. "I shall now get back to my dear, sorrowing wife and children."

*

Two days afterwards, the fox stood again before the king.

"Crafficus," said the counsellor, with a grave face, "you are charged this time with wilfully killing Stupidify, the king's fat goose. Now what have you to say for yourself?"

Then Crafficus told the whole story of his provocation in a persuasive, modest manner, and he finished by saying—

"Purrier, if I mistake not, was present at the time, and, if so, he will be able to support every word I have spoken."

"Call for the black cat," commanded the king.

"Purrier, to the front," cried Primeval.

With a few fine springs the cat was in his place and on his hind legs before the king. But his eyes were closed because of the glare of light from the ruby and the diamond.

"Tell king Muffler all you know about Stupidify's treatment of Crafticus."

Purrier did so and added—

"I was so sorry and indignant after the selfish goose sat down in the poor fox's warm place that I called out to him—'Demand your rights, the king is on your side.'"

Then Purrier finished by saying—

"Pardon me, O king, if I venture to say that such senseless, irritating conduct as the goose exhibited all that night might almost try your own great patience."

"It would indeed," said Muffler, "it was absurd and provoking in the highest degree, and if there be nothing to set aside your testimony, Crafticus shall go free." And when Purrier bowed and sprang away, the king smiled approvingly and called after him—"You are a sympathetic, clever little fellow, and I like your glossy, black coat."

"Next witness," said Muffler.

"Niblius, come forward," cried the counsellor.

But although everyone looked, no one could see Niblius, and they wondered if he had dared not to be present. At last a little mouse with a white face and white feet was seen running up the hairy body of Primeval and out along his extended arm, and then sitting bolt upright on his broad palm. Then it

bowed with a pretty jerk to king Muffler, and he nodded back and smiled.

"I suppose you will be able to prove the black cat's words to be true?" remarked Primeval.

"No, my king," replied the little fellow bravely, and he told everything he overheard in the barn.

King Muffler opened his eyes in astonishment and enquired—

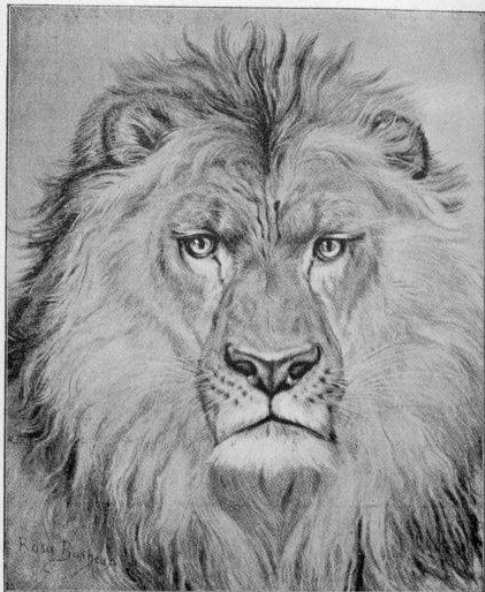
"Is Niblius truthful?"

"He was never known to tell a lie in all his life," answered Primeval.

"Then Purrier must be very treacherous," rejoined the king.

"He is," said the counsellor.

"It is no new thing," remarked the king, "for crafty creatures to get the simple to begin a foolish quarrel."



KING MUFFLER.

"It is no new thing," remarked the king, "for crafty creatures to get the simple to begin a foolish quarrel."

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KING MUFFLER. "It is no new thing," remarked the king, "for crafty creatures to get the simple to begin a foolish quarrel."

"True, O king, and the crafty gain their end by seeming to be in the right."

"If not found out," said Muffler. "Crafticus," he added, indignantly, "such trickery, if practised by all my subjects, would break up my mighty realm. And, besides, you showed no mercy. I do therefore sentence you to be struck down by the lion Thunderpeal, my grumbling uncle, or, if you choose, to be torn in pieces by the tiger Clawnailla, my cruel cousin, or to the mercy of anyone as cruel-hearted as yourself, and if you can escape their terrible clutches, good and well. I am sorry for you, and I am doubly sorry that talent like yours should be so much abused."

"I bow to your will, O King," said Crafticus meekly.

The fox's wife and children now came forward to bid him farewell forever. They were beautiful creatures, especially the little foxes, and their cries were heart-rending. They looked wistfully into the eyes of the condemned Crafticus, and placed their heads gently and affectionately beside his drooping head.

When Thunderpeal advanced by the counsellor's request to separate them, he had much difficulty in pushing them away, and king Muffler's big heart was touched with sorrow.

Then Crafticus stood alone by the side of Thunderpeal, who waited impatiently the signal to strike him down.

"O king," said Crafticus, "may I speak one word?"

"You may, but make haste, for my uncle's face is getting dark and cloudy."

"You gave me my choice of a slayer, O king?"

"I did, but of one as cruel as yourself."

"You placed me in their mercy, O king?"

"I did, and I am very sorry for you, but the law must take its course."

"Then, O king Muffler, I choose my wife."

On hearing this the king's eyes opened wide, while Thunderpeal broke into a roar of anger, but a flash of Muffler's eyes sent him howling away. Then the king turned toward his counsellor and said—

"Well, well, isn't Crafticus clever? He catches at words as a lawyer handles them among mankind. Who would have thought that he would turn my words in his own favor?" Then Muffler laughed, and said—"he deserves to escape. After all, it was only a goose, and the goose was my own, and I can well afford the loss." And he laughed till his mane shook. "Go, Crafticus," he added, "and be slain by the mercy of your wife—by one indeed as cruel as yourself when it is a case of geese and ganders."

Crafticus bowed low and answered—

"I am deeply thankful, O king Muffler, for your justice and sympathy."

"Before you go," said the king, "there is one command I desire to make."

"I await your pleasure, O king."

"Make a right use of your talents, my Crafticus—be straightforward, be straightforward."

"I will, my king, I will."

Old Primeval smiled but said nothing.

Then Crafticus left with a bound, and getting into the presence of his wife and children, they killed him nearly—with kindness.

THE SONG-SPARROW.

The song-sparrow sang a long sweet song. Then he stopped and looked around. Butterflies and bees and other insects were on the wing everywhere, floating, darting and dancing in the sunshine; but the bird did not seek to disturb any of them, he had had a good breakfast of berries, and he was happy.

He might well be happy, not only for delicious food and glorious sunshine and power to sing a lovely song, but for the fact that his home was near. And in that home were his young ones—his tiny children,—and his little wife.

So the song-sparrow raised his rufous head, and opening his mouth, and vibrating his throat, he sang again as if in thankfulness and praise.

"Listen, Richard," said his little mate suddenly, and of course in her own tongue, "listen, listen." She called him "Richard," but if he were in a cage people would call him "Dickie."

Richard stopped in the middle of his song, and bending down his head, while turning his right eye toward a pretty cottage close by, he listened attentively and with great delight.

"Jenny," remarked he to his tiny wife, when the cottage song was done, "Master George is at the open window, the beautiful day has stirred his heart, and he has sung happily and well."

"Yes," said Jenny, "this must be Saturday, for his tone is unusually bright and happy."

"It is always happy," answered Richard.

"True," said Jenny, "but it is happier to-day."

"Well, be it so, we won't differ, dear."

"That is right, dear husband, we must show a good example to our children;" and the mother-sparrow nestled her little ones lovingly.

"There is only one thing that makes me anxious in this glad world," remarked Richard as he looked down from the bush to the comfortable nest in the grass.

"What is it husband?"

"I am afraid of that snake I saw gliding outside and round the fence yesterday."

"Ah, yes," replied the little mother, "it makes my flesh creep to think of it; but I hope it won't venture into the garden."

"I trust not," said Richard; "but if I were a man, and if I had a gun, I should make short work of it."

"Aren't guns wonderful things, husband? How they blow out fire and smoke, and what a deafening noise they make!"

"They are indeed wonderful, Jenny; but aren't they fearful? Do you remember how the poor hare fell, although it was far away from the gun and running like a railway train?"

"I do, Richard; it tumbled over just as the fire burst out, and there was such a big blood spot on its side. Oh, guns are dreadful things."

"They are, Jenny, and we ought to be thankful that nobody around this garden uses them," said Richard, with a look of relief.

"Isn't Master George a fine boy?" remarked Jenny.

"He is; he wouldn't hurt a fly—that is, pull off its legs and then its head and torment it, as wicked youngsters do."

"I love to see him in the garden," said Jenny; "somehow I feel safer when he

is near. He is so big compared with you, Richard, and so kind. He comes gently towards our nest, and looks down on me with his interesting, dark grey eyes; then he gets down on his knees, and stretching out his forefinger he lightly strokes my head and wings, saying as he does so—"Don't be frightened, birdie, I won't hurt you." I was scared at first, and jumped out and flew away; but I don't do that now."

"Yes, we know our friends," chimed in Richard, "and Master George is one of them."

The two birds went on speaking to each other this way in praise of the kindly boy, and then the mother-bird said—

"Sing me another song, Richard; I never tire of hearing your voice. Sing out, dear, with all your might, and make every one happy far and near."

Richard was about to open his beak and fill the air with melody, when his quick eye detected something among the grass. He uttered a sharp note of warning, and the mother sparrow shrank close into the nest.

"The snake is coming," shouted Richard. But Jenny did not move, she only kept flat and shuddered.

"Come from the nest, and we will mislead the reptile," cried Richard.

Then both birds flew around and at and over the snake, doing their utmost to bewilder it; but it was no use—the cunning creature glided on—it knew its helpless prey was near; and the poor parents were frantic, as it raised its head and looked around.

*

"Mother," said George, as he looked into the garden through the open window, "what can be wrong with our song-sparrows?"

His mother came forward, and seeing the birds fluttering about excitedly, she said—

"Run, George, there is a cat or some other enemy at the nest."

Without a moment's delay the lad seized a cane, and running along the garden-walk and jumping over flower-beds and bushes, he came to the scene of the disturbance. He knew well where the nest was, and looking to that spot he was horrified to see the snake bending over it with arched neck and head, preparing to devour the helpless young song-sparrows. Springing fearlessly forward like a hound, George smote the snake on the head, and that one blow was enough. But grasping its tail he jerked it back from the nest, and stamped upon its head, to make sure that the life was gone. Then lifting it across his cane he went to the fence, and flung it over in indignant disgust.

Oh, how the parent song-sparrows rejoiced. The mother flew to the nest to examine and fondle her young, while the father-bird went up on the twig of a white rose-bush and sang a rapturous song of deliverance.

"Ever since then the male sparrow has shown his gratitude to George in a truly wonderful manner. When he goes into the garden the sparrow will fly to him, sometimes alighting on his head, at other times on his shoulder, all the while pouring out a tumultuous song of praise and gratitude."

*

"How is it, Richard," said Jenny one day, "that nearly all these great creatures called mankind look upon us as if we had very little understanding in our head? Is it because we are so little and wear feathers?"

"Oh, no, it is because our language is different. In fact, they really think we do not speak at all, and it seems to them that where there is no speech there is little or no thought."

"What language does Master George speak, Richard?"

"English, dear, a beautiful language when well spoken and especially when well sung."

"And what language do we speak, Richard?"

Sloping his head a little to the side, Richard thought for a moment and then replied with a funny twinkle in his eye—

"Our language is Song-Sparrowish."

"Dear me," said Jenny, "it must be greater than English, when it needs such a big word. But Master George understands it, doesn't he?"

"He does indeed, he does, because he is well acquainted with us. I overheard him say the other day that he understood our ways well, and that our musical language and gratitude were to him a great delight."

"Here he comes," exclaimed Jenny. "See, he opens the garden-gate. I do love to see his winsome, cheerful face."

"And he is both brave and kind," answered Richard, clearing his throat and preparing to deliver an eloquent speech in Song-Sparrowish.

"Now raise your song of gratitude, dear, and sing your very best."

*

The above little story is founded on a fact recorded in the **Courier Journal*.

*A SONG-SPARROW'S GRATITUDE.

It is a rare occurrence for animals in a wild state to select man for a companion and friend, yet well-authenticated instances where this has been done are a matter of record. The following incident is vouched for by a young lady who is a close and accurate observer:

"Last week my brother, a lad of 12, killed a snake which was just in the act

of robbing a song-sparrow's nest. Ever since then the male sparrow has shown his gratitude to George in a truly wonderful manner. When he goes into the garden the sparrow will fly to him, sometimes alighting on his head, at other times on his shoulder, all the while pouring out a tumultuous song of praise and gratitude. It will accompany him about the garden, never leaving him until he reaches the garden gate. George, as you know, is a quiet boy who loves animals, and this may account in a degree for the sparrow's extraordinary actions."—*Courier Journal*.

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