

MYSTERY  
*in the*  
WINDFLOWER WOOD  
*by*  
*Flora Klickmann*



*With drawings by*  
H.M. BROCK

*G.P. Putnam's Sons*  
London & New York

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# Mystery in the Windflower Wood

## CHAPTER I THE DISAPPEARANCE

It began like this, and--as everyone in the Wind-Flower Wood agreed--it really was rather mysterious. Mrs. Song-Thrush put the children to bed at the usual time, in their nest in the holly bush, just as the sun was disappearing behind the opposite hill.

They had only moved into the holly bush that spring. The previous year they had lived in an old apple tree. But it had been a very cold season. The snow had come down on her as she sat on the nest, because the leaves had not yet opened on the apple tree, and there was nothing to shelter her but a very little bit of ivy trimming. Also, it had been rather too public up there at first, while the branches around her were bare. So, she had decided to move lower down, in the wood.

“The Hollies,” a most convenient place, was to let. It seemed exactly what the Thrushes needed, with its evergreen leaves making a splendid sort of umbrella over the nest. The only drawback was the fact that it was close to the Ferny Path that went down hill, right through the middle of the wood. But, as Mr. Song-Thrush pointed out, it was a very thick bush, with sharp prickles on every leaf; and these would not only keep inquisitive neighbours from poking their noses into the Thrushes’ affairs, but passers-by would not be anxious to scratch themselves by meddling with the bush.

So they decided to take it.

When they moved in, they found everything most cosy and convenient--plenty of leaves to hide them, and good stout branches to hold up the nest.

They felt they were very fortunate in having secured “The Hollies” before the Blackbirds had got it. They had seen Mrs. Blackbird hopping all about the premises, upstairs and down, evidently with a view to taking it. Therefore the Thrushes had hurriedly brought along a few twigs and moss, and some feathers

from the farmyard, and started their nest; because they knew that the Blackbirds would then go further off and find another place to live in. They are like the Thrushes, very exclusive, and prefer to have a tree or bush to themselves.

This was how the Thrushes came to live at “The Hollies.”

Well--as I was saying--the young Thrushes went to bed one evening as usual. In a few minutes mother settled down, with her wings spread over them to keep them warm all night; while father perched on the branch of a beech tree close by. As soon as the sun had disappeared, and taken the golden sunset with it, the family went to sleep, with their heads tucked under their wings.

And everything seemed just as it always was.

But--it wasn't!

For when the sun arrived back next morning and woke up Mr. Thrush--whose duty it was to arouse the birds and start their Dawn-Concert with his famous “Wake-up Song”--the poor bewildered father couldn't find his wife and family!

He was positively certain he had left them in a beautiful nest, in a lovely holly bush, when he went to sleep over night. Whereas now--*there wasn't any holly bush!*

At first he felt sure he must still be asleep and dreaming; but next minute he heard Mrs. Thrush calling him. She sounded as though she were down below him somewhere. Peering through the beech leaves, there he saw her--nest and children and all--flat on the ground! Quite close to the path, too! Such a dangerous spot to have chosen!

“How on earth did you get down there?” he asked, gazing in astonishment from his high-up perch, and wondering again if he were really awake.

“That's what I want to know!” she said. “I thought the wind was *very* high last night. We seemed to sway about much more than usual, and once there was a big bump. But I didn't worry about it, because I knew the children couldn't fall out while I was there. And Eric had been so restless, I didn't want to wake him up again to find out what had happened. But it's plain enough now that we're on the ground.”

“But what have you done with the holly bush?” he inquired anxiously.

“For goodness sake, don't keep on asking ridiculous questions.” Mrs. Thrush was rather put out, as you can well believe. It isn't a trifling matter to find your house has entirely vanished in the night. “Of course I've done nothing with it,” she continued. “And it would be more useful if you looked around for it. Better still, fetched the policeman. I can't possibly leave the children alone down here on the ground.”

Mr. Thrush was so bewildered that he forgot all about the Wake-up Song. As the result, all the Little People in the Wind-Flower Wood overslept that

morning. When at last they did wake up, they wondered what had happened to Mr. Thrush, and several came along kindly to inquire if he had caught a cold or had a sore throat, as he hadn't sung a note that morning.

When they arrived at the place where "The Hollies" used to be and found Mrs. Thrush on the ground, loud were the squawks and whistles of surprise. Each caller was quite sure he or she knew exactly how it happened, and what had become of the holly bush. And everyone was in the midst of giving heaps of good advice and telling Mrs. Thrush what she ought to do--when Mr. Thrush returned with Police-Constable Crow. The neighbours immediately retired to the trees close by, taking care to be near enough to hear every single word.

The first thing P.C. Crow did was to question everybody. But though the neighbours seemed so wise before he came, they really knew nothing at all when he questioned them, and evidently had no more ideas than the Thrushes had as to how or why the bush had gone travelling in this unexpected manner.

Even Bunny, the rabbit with the silky ears, who had a very comfortable burrow under an adjoining rock, couldn't give any information about the affair, because he had been out all night at a big supper-party one of his friends had given in the garden of the Flower-Patch House, which is higher up the hill, and just above the Wind-Flower Wood. He told Policeman Crow that the young carrots and lettuces up there were simply delicious. They had intended to nibble the carnation tops for dessert. But unfortunately the gardener had put netting all over them that very day, for which they were extremely sorry, of course. Still, they made up for it with young cabbages.

But Mr. Crow wasn't interested either in carnations or cabbages just then, though he did inquire how the green peas were getting on, and he too seemed sorry when he heard that they also were netted now. He changed the subject, however, because of course his business at the moment was to discover what had become of Mr. Thrush's desirable villa residence known as "The Hollies." Therefore he insisted on searching "Bunny's Burrow," in case the rabbit had stolen the property. But no sign of the holly bush could he find.

Then he routed out the owl, who lived in the Hollow Oak across the way. But the owl, when questioned, said he had been away from home all night, hunting mice by the big barn. So he wasn't any help. In any case he didn't intend to be! for he much objected to being wakened in the daytime; and he said so in a very hooty manner.

But Policeman Crow didn't let a little noise like that upset him; and he wasn't going to stand any nonsense either. So he proceeded to search every nook and crannie of the "Owls Hollow" in the oak tree to make sure that the Thrushes' happy home wasn't hidden up there. In fact, he searched the place so thoroughly, and stirred up such heaps of dead leaves and twigs and pieces of

bark and other bits of household furniture, that it was *hours* before Mr. Owl got his bedroom to rights again, and fit for a gentleman to sleep in.

Which only shows that it isn't wise to hoot at a Policeman!

"As nobody seems able to give any information which will help me to arrest the stolen property, I must write down full particulars," Mr. Policeman Crow said. Getting out his notebook, he started first to question Mr. Thrush.

I should explain that Mr. Crow and Mr. Thrush had never been very good friends. The Policeman had such a harsh voice, it quite got on Mr. Thrush's nerves. Mr. Thrush was so extremely musical, and had such a highly cultured voice. Why, he could sing a dozen different songs at one recital, and all in the same breath, so to speak. And the worst of it was, the Crows thought *they* had magnificent voices too. And the more Mr. Thrush sang, the more noise did the Crow family make in the tree tops. Till at last Mr. Thrush offered to lend them a little hair-oil to see if it would improve their throats.

Mrs. Crow, too, had made some very personal remarks about Mrs. Thrush's dress. Said *she* should be ashamed to go about like Mrs. Thrush did, in nothing better than that dowdy brown tweed coat and skirt. *She* (Mrs. Crow) always wore the richest black satin, even when getting breakfast in the morning.

Naturally, the two families hadn't been over-friendly after this. But now Mr. Policeman Crow was the important person, and he meant Mr. Thrush to understand this.

"What name?" He began his questions in a loud voice, as though he had never seen or heard of these birds before.

"Thrush" was, of course, the reply he got.

"I see; Brush," he said, and licked his pencil in order to get it to work properly.

"Not Brush. I said Thrush--it's a T, not a B."

"Who said you were a bee, may I ask?" said P.C. Crow severely. "Don't try to be funny. I quite understand now that the name begins with a T, as I happen to be exceptionally intelligent. But in future kindly remember to be more accurate and perfectly clear in your statements, and say 'T for Treacle Tart, not B for Boiled Bacon; T for Toasted Tomatoes, not B for Braised Beef; T for Turnip Tops, not B for Baked Beans'--and then people may perhaps know what you are talking about. Always express yourself in simple, straightforward language when you are in the hands of the police, or, let me tell you, there may be trouble, my good man!"

"What name?" he began



He spelt it carefully to himself as he wrote it down--"T-H-R-U----" then he looked up: "Do you spell it with an S or a C, as you are so particular about the spelling?"

Mr. Thrush really wanted to smash the policeman's helmet for him by this time, but he controlled his feelings, as he didn't want to upset the children, and merely explained that they spelt it "T-H-R-U-S-H."

"I see," replied Mr. Crow, writing it down.

"No, it *isn't* a C!" Mr. Thrush was nearly boiling over with annoyance. "I told you we spelt it with an S for Sauce, not C for Cheek; S for Singing, not C for Croaking. You've got C on the brain, man. We aren't all crows you know."

The listening neighbours were enjoying all this immensely, especially as none of them loved the policeman or his family. Indeed the blackbirds began to applaud.

Here Mrs. Thrush interrupted the conversation, because it looked as though they would be arguing all day, at this rate. And she wanted to find her house.

"Policeman Crow means that he knows exactly how to spell our name, dear. He's written it quite correctly in his book."

"Of course I write correctly," the policeman replied. "And I must insist on SILENCE while I make my notes"--glaring round at the audience in the surrounding trees.

No one so much as twittered!

His pencil scratched away for a moment. Then he asked: "Any wife?"

"Yes, there's me," said Mrs. Thrush.

“I see”--writing down as he repeated it--“one wife named ‘ME’.”

“Oh, dear, that’s not my name,” said poor Mrs. Thrush, but he went on with his questions:

“How many children?”

“Three,” said Mrs. Thrush. “Eric, Adelaide and Ellen.” (She was determined he should get their names correctly.) “There used to be four; but unfortunately Gerald fell out of the nest. So there isn’t any Gerald now. Eric is rather delicate, takes cold easily. But I rub his chest each night with wild strawberry juice. That’s what makes him so red. It isn’t fever or anything infectious.”

“I see”--carefully writing again--“three children: Eric, Laid-an Egg, and Fell-in-Wild-Strawberry Juice. So there aren’t any children now.”

“Oh! That’s all wrong,” said Mrs. Thrush.

“Of course it’s all wrong!” said the policeman. “Children ought not to be allowed to fall into wild strawberry juice like that. It would be bad enough if they were tame strawberries. But WILD ones--why you never know *what* might happen. It’s such a dreadful waste of strawberries too! Now then, next question: What’s your address?”

“The Hollies,” Mr. Thrush told him, for poor Mrs. Thrush was nearly weeping.

“The Hollies? Whereabouts is it?”

“Unfortunately we don’t know! That’s all the trouble.”

“You don’t know where you live?” exclaimed P.C. Crow. “Then how can you live at ‘The Hollies’ if you don’t know where it is?”

“Yes, we do live there, only you see we’ve no idea where the holly bush is.”

“*I don’t see!*” said the policeman severely. “It’s puffedly absurd to tell me that you live where you don’t, and you don’t know where you do live, and the house that you live in isn’t anywhere! I really can’t have my valuable time wasted in listening to such nonsense!”

“But everything you’ve written in your notebook is wrong,” said Mr. Thrush, who was fast getting into a temper. “In your notes you ought to have everything quite right.”

“Then if everything is quite right, why did you fetch me? I was told that there was something wrong here. Then, when I leave my early breakfast, which I was really enjoying in that newly-ploughed field, and hurry down here to inquire into it, you tell me that I must put down ‘Everything quite right’ in my notebook. Let me tell you this, Mr. Brush--no, I mean Thrush--I know someone who *isn’t* quite right, and that is the individual who says he lives in a home that isn’t anywhere, and he doesn’t know where it is when he does live there. I shall go back at once to the police station and report this case--after

I've seen if those wretched rooks have left me any breakfast, and I don't suppose they have."

Mr. Thrush opened his beak to say something in reply, as Policeman Crow shut up his notebook with an important snap, but at that moment, someone among the neighbours who were perched on the trees all around, called out:

"Mrs. Thrush; Mrs. Thrush; your baby's lost!"

Mrs. Thrush turned round to look at her nest, which was still on the ground, of course. Eric and Ellen were there, just as she had left them, with their little beaks open, waiting for father and mother to pop something in.

But Adelaide's place was empty!

## THE THRUSH'S WAKE-UP SONG

Wake up! Wake up! You sleepy heads,  
For see! the daylight's coming,  
When everything should start to sing,  
And bees begin their humming.

Wake up! Wake up! The sun is glad,  
And warm, and bright, and cheery.  
Without our songs, the world is sad;  
Without the sun, it's dreary.

So sing a song that's sweet and strong,  
And set the wood a-ringing;  
For all too soon it's afternoon--  
And night-time needs no singing!



## CHAPTER II

### THE THRUSHES MOVE AGAIN

“Where’s Adelaide?” Mrs. Thrush asked in great concern, as she looked at the nest.

“She’s gone to find something to eat,” whimpered Eric, “but she says she isn’t going to bring us any, ’cos we’re lazy. We’re so hungry, Mother”--which reminded Mrs. Thrush that she had quite forgotten to get the breakfast, in her surprise at finding “The Hollies” had vanished.

She looked around to see if she could discover the missing Adelaide, but there was no sign of her. As the other two children were crying loudly for something to eat, she decided to get breakfast before she did anything else, in case they too should disappear.

Adelaide had always been an “up-and-doing” sort of a child, and much more forward than her brother and sister. And as she was nearly old enough to walk, she had struggled out of the nest, and toddled off on her own little legs, which seemed rather weak at first, but got stronger as she went on. She meant to find her own breakfast, as no one else seemed to be doing it. None of the neighbours noticed her go, they were all so intent on watching Policeman Crow. She was soon out of sight under a clump of big ferns, where, to her delight, she found several very nice morsels, that were just what she fancied.

She could hear her poor distracted father and mother flying from tree to tree, and calling her name. But not a scrap of notice did she take. She merely went on gobbling.

She was really enjoying herself immensely; and thought it was much more fun to be out in a huge world like the one she had found under the ferns, instead of being stuffed up in a nest, with Eric always kicking, and Ellen taking up more than her share of the room. Every day the nest had seemed to grow smaller, every day the children seemed to grow bigger, and every day there was less chance to turn round and have a good stretch than there was the day before. No! Adelaide decided that she wasn’t going to put up with that cramped nest any longer--and perhaps be starved to death into the bargain. Just look how they had left her this very morning, with not a morsel of food!

And Adelaide went on gobbling.

I daresay the other fathers and mothers would have helped to search for the missing child, but at the moment Mr. Crow was shutting up his notebook, and stalking off majestically, a big foxglove bell started to ring over the other side of the wood and everyone exclaimed:

“Good gracious! there’s the school bell! And the children haven’t had their breakfast yet!”

Each mother rushed home and hastily got her family ready for school, giving them some breakfast to eat on the way there.

By this time, Eric and Ellen were cheeping loudly for something to eat. And, what was also very worrying, they had both scrambled out of the nest, and were now actually on the path that ran through the wood, where they might easily be stepped on by anyone passing that way who didn’t happen to notice them.

Evidently something would have to be done, and done quickly too.

“We must get them to a safe spot,” said Mrs. Thrush. “Under that great fir tree wouldn’t be at all a bad place. Those big branches touching the ground are just like a tent and would hide them beautifully.”

“The very thing!” said Mr. Thrush, who was getting really exasperated with the collection of troubles which seemed to have rained down upon his head. “And while you are getting them there, I’ll go to the top of the tree and sing the song I composed yesterday. It will make that conceited Missel Thrush across the river simply pale-blue with envy.” (The Missel Thrushes--who love mistletoe berries--have rather harsh voices, not like the lovely Song Thrushes.) “And I’m sure you will enjoy this new song, my dear,” he added.

“I should enjoy a new caterpillar much more!” said Mrs. Thrush. She was getting exasperated too. “And so would the children. If you’ll just hunt about for a nice one, I’ll also get one, and then we’ll set about removing to ‘The Firs.’ Besides, I don’t feel a bit like listening to a concert this morning, with poor dear Adelaide” (here she began to weep) “perhaps dead with starvation by now.”

Mr. Thrush hadn’t thought of *that*! And of course he was very sorry too.

Little did they think that all the while that Adelaide was not so very far away, with so much food already inside her that she wouldn’t have died if she had had nothing more all day! And that naughty person was actually giggling to think how she had hidden herself. And still she went on gobbling! Creeping farther and farther away.

Shocking, wasn’t it!

Father and Mother soon found something they knew the children would like. But--here is the curious part. Instead of flying down and feeding the youngsters, Mr. Thrush went to a low branch of a tree, near the spot where they were, and dangling the choice morsel in his beak, he called out to Eric to come and get it.



Called out to Eric  
to come and get it



Of course Eric wailed that he couldn't possibly fly so far.

But his father encouraged him; told him it was ever such a little way. And quite easy. And such a lovely breakfast treat when he got there. And "if at first you don't succeed, try, try, try again!" which Eric did, because he was desperately hungry by this time, and willing at last to do anything, if only he could get some food.

Finally, after several floppity, feeble, half-afraid attempts, he made one mighty effort and flew across the few inches which separated him from his father. And wasn't he proud of himself, too, when he was actually perched on the branch! Though his legs felt very wobbly, and he was sure he would topple off.

But when he saw his mother on another branch, dangling another tit-bit, and trying to get Ellen to come to her, he felt very superior indeed, and called out: "Hurry along Ellen. It's quite simple. See how easily *I* hopped up here."

This gave Ellen a little courage; she, too, made a hop and a jump and a sort of tumble, which landed her on a low branch beside Mother. And oh! how good it was to find something popped into her mouth!

The children were told to cling tightly to the branches, while father and mother got them something more to eat, that would be very nice. So they waited, hoping the food would come soon, as they felt top-heavy, and likely to tumble off! When they saw their parents coming, they opened their beaks so as to be quite ready.

Yet, instead of flying down and settling beside Ellen, Mrs. Thrush again stopped on a branch a little distance away, dangling the delicacy she had brought and telling Ellen to come and get it. While Father Thrush was doing exactly the same thing, in order to get Eric to come to him.

Well--the children hesitated for a minute; but it didn't seem worth while to stay hungry, when there was such a beautiful morsel only a little way off. So, after another desperate effort, each child managed to land beside its parent once more.

In this way, by degrees, the thrushes got the children moved--a little way at a time, and then a little more--from branch to branch, until at last they reached the big fir tree which was to be their new home.

Wasn't it clever of them?

It was really a long journey for the children, as they were so young. They were glad to nestle down among the warm, dry pine needles, which were like a thick bed under the sweeping dark-green branches. And soon they were asleep.

But what about that Adelaide?

Ah----!

### CHAPTER III THE LITTLE WHITE DOG ARRIVES

“Queer about that holly bush, isn’t it!” said the rabbit with the silky ears to Bushey Tail, the squirrel, who happened to come past “Bunny’s Burrow,” a little later on that morning. Bushey Tail was searching for some nuts he had buried nearby the previous autumn. Nuts become scarce in the summer time, before the new ones are ripe on the hazels. “I don’t like the look of it at all,” Bunny continued, rather anxiously. “And it’s quite spoilt the view from my front door. Everybody can see right into my living-room now that tree’s gone.”

“Any idea who took it?” asked Bushey Tail.



“Queer about that  
holly bush, isn’t it!”

“Poachers, of course,” Bunny replied, “only I wasn’t going to say so this morning. Old Crow is so disagreeable.”

“How do you know it was the poachers?”

“Well, who else would it be if it wasn’t them? And you can easily see what for--they wanted to get *me* for certain; only, luckily, I wasn’t at home that

night. I'm awfully nervous now about staying in the house alone."

"Oh, keep your whiskers cheerful!" said the squirrel. "I don't believe it was the poachers. They never carry off a bush. When they cut down anything that's in their way, they always throw it down and leave it there. Dreadfully untidy they are. And what could they want with it if they did carry it off?"

"Why, they'd eat it, of course."

"*Eat it!* They aren't rabbits. People don't eat green leaves like we do!"

"Don't they? What about those lettuces and broccoli and radishes I saw the gardener taking into the kitchen, up at the Flower-Patch House? Who's going to eat all that, let me ask you. The cat? I don't think!" And the rabbit snorted.

"Taking them into the kitchen, was he?" Bushey Tail suddenly became excited. "That means that the Lady-with-the-Crumbs is coming soon. And I shall have plenty to eat. Hurrah!"

"Who is the Lady-with-the-Crumbs?" Bunny asked.

"I forgot; you don't know about her, as you haven't lived long in this wood. She and the Gentleman belong to the Flower-Patch House just above the wood--where you went to the party last night. Sometimes they live in London, and are only here for holidays. When they come, the Lady puts out *miles* of crumbs, and nice bits and rolled oats for the birds, and nuts for ME in the nut boxes. We have a gorgeous time. And you told old Crow that the peas were netted, I remember--then she's certain to be here soon, and the gardener's hurrying up and getting it all ready for them. That reminds me--Mac, their dog, is sure to come too. You'll like him. He's a bit umptious, but a real sport."

"Oh, dear! I'm not at all keen on dogs," said the rabbit, who was looking very upset--what with one thing and the other. "They're as worse as poachers and even badder! He'll be in my home before I have time to get out. *What a life I do lead!*"

"Don't worry your whiskers about him. He's a very good sort. He caught a poacher once and saved his master's life. He doesn't love poachers any more than you do. I'll tell him you're a friend of mine. It will be all right, you'll see."

Bunny was opening his mouth to say that he wasn't so sure that it would be all right--when he espied something white trotting down the Ferny Path that ran through the middle of the wood. And there came the little dog, Mac, himself, looking as important as ever.

And before Bushey Tail could say: "Why there he is!" Bunny had disappeared, and a whisper came from far back in the burrow under the big rock, "Don't let him know I'm here."

Mac wagged his tail in a pleased manner as he caught sight of the squirrel. They used to be saucy to each other once upon a time; but they were very friendly now. Business matters, however, were always first with Mac. He

knew it was his duty to see that each stone and bush and tree and gate was exactly where it ought to be, and where he left it last time.

When he came to the place where the holly bush had been, but wasn't there now, he stopped! Looked! Sniffed! Ceased to wag his tail! He was just going to ask what had become of the bush, when he sniffed again a little nearer "Bunny's Burrow," and that time he caught a delicious scent--rabbit! Yes, as he sniffed still nearer, he was sure it was rabbit.

Now Mac, like all other dogs, loved to chase rabbits, to dig for rabbits, and to get as far into their burrow as he could. Once, indeed, when he was new to the game, he got stuck, head first of course, in a burrow, and couldn't get out again. And if his master hadn't chanced to see two white hind legs and a white tail waving frantically on a bank he might have been there now!

But since that day he had been taught that he must not chase anything that lived in the Wind-Flower Wood. And being a very intelligent dog, he soon learnt his lesson. But, all the same, he still thought that the most delicious scent on earth was rabbit!

"Won't your friend come out and speak to me?" he said to the squirrel. "I hope I haven't interrupted you?"

("Tell him I'm awfully ill, dying, in fact; can't possibly move!" said a hoarse whisper from the burrow.)

"I'm afraid he can't come out," the squirrel replied:

"His old head aches,  
His small tail shakes;  
He's really very wonkey!  
He stayed out late,  
And ate and ate;  
Of course he's ill! the donkey!"

Naturally, Bunny wasn't pleased at hearing himself called names. But he dared not say a word. There was that dog to be considered.

"What sort of a chap is he?" Mac asked.

The Squirrel replied:

"His ears are wrong,  
His nose too long;  
He's like a bag of bones!  
He has to stay  
And hide all day  
Under that heap of stones!"

This was still more annoying to Bunny. For everyone in the wood knew that he was the plumpest young rabbit--with the loveliest ears too--for miles around. Of course he could see that the squirrel was jealous of him; that was quite plain. He was so proud of his bushy tail, and for ever dangling it, for all the parish to see, from the branches. But Bunny was sure his own tail was quite

correct--as rabbits' tails go. In any case he usually sat on it; so what matter if it were not quite so large as the squirrel's. In fact he much preferred short, stumpy tails. Far more artistic, and so much easier to sit upon. And as to his ears being wrong, *his* ears! Why----!

But the squirrel was continuing, in a loud voice:

“He’s such a fright,  
The merest sight  
Would give you quite a shock!  
We’ve never had  
An uglier lad  
Living beneath that rock!”

Really, this was *too* much! Dog or no dog, he wasn't going to stay quiet and listen to such horrid things being said about him--and he the handsomest rabbit in the district!

Out he bounced (which was exactly what Bushey Tail meant him to do). He was just going to fight the squirrel, when that young gentleman skipped up a tree and said, with the politest bow:

“Mr. Mac, will you allow me to introduce our new neighbour, Mr. Bunny?” Then to the rabbit: “This is Mr. Mac. You’ve heard me speak of him.”

Mac gave a dignified wag; Bunny sat up on his hind legs and waved a paw. That being that, the three then settled down in the sun for a friendly chat.

Of course they began with the holly bush, giving Mac all the details. He listened attentively, but didn't talk a great deal. Dogs are too wise to say much when anything important is on hand. They listen, not only with their ears, as we do, but with their eyes and paws and tail. Watch your own dog when he is listening attentively, and you'll see what I mean.

Mac intended to ask a few questions when they had finished; but at that moment he heard his master's whistle. He was a wonderful dog, and a clever dog. And he knew that no one could possibly be wonderful or clever who disobeyed when he ought to be obedient. Instantly he jumped up, saying: “Ta! ta! till next time. I'll keep my weather eye open for that holly bush.” And he bounded up the path and was soon out of sight.

“A nice sort of friend *you* are,” the rabbit began in an aggrieved tone, “to say such dreadful things about me, behind my back.”

But Bushey Tail, who was up a tree by this time, sang out:

“I said them to your face!  
And I'm sure it's no disgrace  
To say things which I know that you can hear.  
If you call that gratitood!  
When I tried to do you good!--  
I'll merely say 'Good afternoon, old dear!' ”



## CHAPTER IV THE CARPENTER IS CONSULTED

“This bungalow will do very well while we’re rebuilding,” said Mr. Thrush, after breakfast, hopping about and inspecting the ins and outs of the place they had chosen under the fir tree. “But we must get the carpenter as quickly as possible, and find out how soon he can have the nest fixed in another tree. I’ll go round at once and see him about it.”

“Yes, *do* dear!” Mrs. Thrush urged him. “I should be so thankful to get up into a tree again. I know this is better than lying in the middle of the Ferny Path; but it’s unsafe for the children even here, being on the ground. The farm cat will be around the moment my back is turned. And as for that kitten of hers, Fluffy is the most inquisitive little baggage I ever came across. Wants to find out everybody’s business, and poke her nose into everything.”

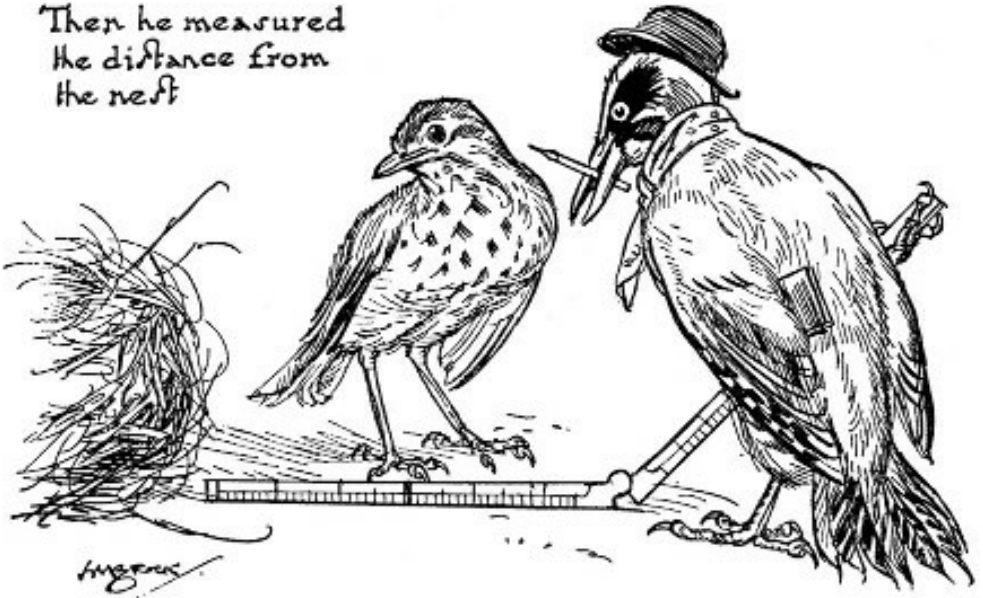
“She’d better not poke it in here, or she’ll get a peck she won’t forget in a hurry,” valiant Mr. Thrush threatened.

“That’s all right if we are at home; but if we should be out when she comes snooping around----” Mrs. Thrush was very anxious.

“I’ll go and see about rebuilding at once!” and off he went.

Mr. Woodpecker, the carpenter, came back with Mr. Thrush. He examined the stump of the holly. He examined the nest.

Then he measured  
the distance from  
the nest



He measured the distance from the tree stump to the nest, and found it was exactly two feet three inches and a quarter.

Then he measured the distance from the nest to the tree stump, and found it was a little over two feet six inches and a half. After measuring several times and making it a different figure each time he said it was undoubtedly a serious matter.

Next he measured the height of the stump from the ground, and made it thirteen inches. And though he measured it twice over, it never came to more than fifteen inches. Therefore, he said, it looked to him as though the holly bush wasn't there! Because holly bushes were always much higher than that when they grew up. And if the holly bush wasn't there (and he was almost sure it wasn't), he wasn't quite certain if he could put the nest back in its branches! Though of course he would do his best.

Mr. Thrush explained that he didn't expect him to put it back in the *holly* bush, under the sad circumstances. What they required him to do was to fix the nest very firmly in another tree--a steady sort of tree that wouldn't be inclined to walk off all in a hurry; and with strong branches, not likely to break down easily, as their children were exceptionally fine children, and were growing finer every day.

Mr. Woodpecker said he quite understood, and thought the suggestion was a very good one.

“What you want is a commodious residence, at least three storeys high, guaranteed to last a whole summer if needed; not a jerry-built bungalow like that old hen-house over there,” said the Carpenter, pointing to the nest on the ground.

“Oh; but my wife wants the same nest used. She built it herself, you know, and doesn’t want to part with it. It’s made from a recipe her great-aunt gave her that has been in the family for ages.”

“H’m!” said Mr. Woodpecker. “H’m! To be sure!” And he looked at the old nest pityingly. “I can quite believe it! And we don’t want to upset any lady, of course. They are all very fond of quaint, old-fashioned things just now. But *your* family, Mr. Thrush, ought not to be living in a house with its wall plastered with mud like that. Really, sir, if you’ll excuse my saying so--it isn’t your style! However, I’ve no doubt but what I can work in a bit of the old place here and there, so that Mrs. Thrush won’t feel that she’s been turned out of house and home, so to speak. I could use that small bit of twig, very likely, and perhaps that feather. But you can safely leave it to me, now that I know exactly what you want.”

“Yes, I think I’ve made it all clear.”

“Perfectly clear, sir; perfectly! And you would like to have one of the new Laurel Leaf roofs, I expect, to keep the rain off?”

“That sounds very useful.”

“It is. You would find it would keep the place beautifully dry. And, by the way, while we are going over details, what about a verandah just outside the nest? So handy for Mrs. Thrush to sit and nurse the baby there on sunny days.”

“That’s a splendid idea. The children could play there, too.”

“Exactly, sir. All the best birds are having verandahs now. And probably you’ll want me to put a handsome flight of stairs leading up to the nest. It’s so dangerous for the little ones to have to keep hopping up and down uneven, rough branches. You never find canaries, or budgerigars, or any of the really aristocratic birds using branches. They are so terribly common.”

“Ye-es; but I think I had better speak to my wife about the stairs. I’m not sure whether she would like them. You see the farm cat might easily----”

“I *quite* understand, sir. We’ll leave the stairs to be settled later. Though I’ll just take the measurements for them while I’m here. It will save going over the same sums again, won’t it. Let’s see, two and two makes--makes----”

“Four,” said Mr. Thrush.

“You’re absolutely correct, sir. Add two, that makes five, and three more makes----No, I’m wrong. Where was I? I’ll begin again. Two and three makes four, and then two more there, that will be five, no I mean seven----”

“That isn’t right,” said Mr. Thrush. “Now listen!” and he spoke very slowly. “If you have two steps there . . . and three next them . . . that will

make--er--seven, won't it? And then . . . if you have two more steps . . . that would make nine steps--or perhaps it's eight--wouldn't it?"

"Ah, yes, sir, I daresay you are correct. But you are counting *steps*; I was counting *inches*. That makes *all* the difference, you see. However, you needn't worry a bit more about it, I can see your new country house in my eye. I'm going home to get my tools this very moment, and I'll start the work straightaway. I had promised Mr. Nuthatch to make a hole in the bark of his larch tree, large enough for him to wedge a walnut in----

(A nuthatch always fixes a nut firmly in a tree crevice, you know, and breaks the shell by striking it with his strong beak.)

"But walnuts won't be ripe for several months yet. So there will be time to do that later on. And probably you won't mind my leaving off your work for a little while in September, just to oblige another gentleman, while I make the walnut holder for Mr. Nuthatch?"

"But several months! That seems a long while to take over a job like this!" said Mr. Thrush. "Surely you'll be finished before September?"

"Well--maybe I shall be, but on the other hand, maybe I shan't. I'm like George Washington, when he cut down your holly bush--I can't tell a wicked story. And if I tell the truth, which I very often do, I can't say exactly how long it may take me. When you start on these pulling-down jobs, you never know what you're going to find underneath."

"Why, I could pull that nest to pieces in no time," said Mr. Thrush, impatiently.

"Quite so, sir; I can believe it, for I makes it a rule always to believe a gentleman when I know he's certain to pay my bill. But there's one thing I would ask you, sir: After you'd pulled that nest to pieces, could you turn it into an imposing mansion suitable for a famous singer like yourself, with all modern conveniences--verandah, sun-parlour, breakfast room, day nursery, night nursery, staircase (if the lady approves), draughts, hot and cold, and an up-to-date roof?"

"Perhaps not. But I want to get the youngsters moved from the ground as soon as possible."

"I understand that. And I daresay you could get it done quicker by some people. That fellow Rook, for instance, would only use about three sticks, and simply fling 'em up into the branches, call it a nest, and charge you full price, same as if you were having high-class work done properly by a high-class bird. But that's not *my* way. I take proper time to turn out a proper article. The work mayn't be finished this year; it mayn't be finished next year. But I can guarantee that it may be finished some time. What bird can say more? And in addition, I promise you this, and make no extra charge for it either--if it ever is finished, you and your good lady will have the surprise of your lives! And

now, sir, as you are in a hurry, I'll go back home at once and get my hammer.”  
And for the rest of the day he hammered and hammered and hammered.

## CHAPTER V

### THE LESSON ON BRUNCHING

You will remember that the school bell was clanging away before the youngsters in the Wind-Flower Wood had started for school. Needless to say, when they arrived there, all breathless with hurrying, and still eating their breakfasts, the bell had stopped. Dr. Heron, the headmaster, looked at them over his spectacles with a displeased expression, and asked why so many were late for school when they knew how particular he was that all should be perched in their places on the hawthorn tree when the foxglove ceased ringing.

Bobbie Robin, who was very fond of putting himself forward, said: "Please, sir, Mr. Thrush didn't sing the Wake-up Song 'cos he'd lost his house, and there wasn't anything for breakfast, only the policeman, and we came as fast as ever we could."

"I really don't know what you are talking about, Robin," Dr. Heron said. "It sounds a queer jumble. You had better go to your class now, and I'll inquire into the matter later."

Miss Blackbird, their teacher, was waiting for them. The birds from the Oak Wood across the river were already in their seats--had been there quite two minutes--and they were hoping that the Wind-Flower Gang (as they called them) would get a caning, or else be kept in for being late. For the Oak-Wood Gang and the Wind-Flower Gang were always at loggerheads. They were very disappointed when Miss Blackbird merely said: "Take your places quickly children, so that we can start lessons."



D<sup>r</sup> Heron asked why  
so many were late

Of course the birds don't learn exactly the same things that you learn; but they have to be taught a number of very important subjects.

The girls learn weaving, and making feather beds, and things like that, because they must know how to make proper comfortable nests when they grow up.

Mrs. Gold-Crest is the Weaving Mistress. She can make a nest with a top

to it, which covers it all up very snugly, leaving only a little hole at the side, just large enough for her to slip in and out. She can hang it by a bit of twig or woodbine or ivy, underneath the branch of a tree. When it swings in the summer breeze, it rocks the babies to sleep.

All the children have to learn how to feed themselves. Major Flycatcher takes this lesson. He sits on the branch of a tree, or on a post, waiting for some insect to come along; then he darts up into the air, catches the next piece of his dinner, and is back on the branch again all in a flash.

When you see a bird flitting out and back again like this, you'll know it is a flycatcher--and perhaps he is giving a lesson!

Tobogganing is another subject many of the youngsters take--only they toboggan on air and without any sled! Mr. Tree Pippit is the teacher. This is the way he does it.

Going to the very top-most point of the tallest tree he can find, he suddenly flies right up into the air. Then--when he is up ever so high--he starts singing, and keeps on singing, as he slides down the air, just as though he had a toboggan under him, till he reaches the tree-top again. He has a most beautiful voice. And in May you can often see and hear him, in the country, and watch his wonderful performances.

I can't stop now to tell you about the Gym. in the larch tree, where Sergeant Tit shows the children how to turn somersaults, and swing about on the end of the tiniest twig, and do all sorts of clever things, with heads downwards.

We must hurry back to Miss Blackbird, who was starting a lesson on Brunching; a most appetizing subject--all about food; what they may eat for breakfast, and what they may eat for lunch. But as it would be rather a mouthful to keep on saying "Breakfasting" and "Lunching," they shorten it into "Brunching." (The children, however, usually refer to it as Munching!)

Miss Blackbird began by telling them about the various eatables they would find growing in the woods and fields, and reminded them that some of it belonged to other Little People. This is how she put it:

"Heather-bells and clover  
Belong to the bees,  
And the scented blossoms  
In the tall lime trees.  
Fuchsias they are fond of;  
Cowslips are their own;  
And so the bees  
Say--'If you please  
Just leave our flowers alone!'

"Birds may have the berries  
On the mountain ash;



And the red wild cherries;  
Or the ripe gooseberries  
    When they go to smash.

“Currants, too, are tasty  
    If the days are hot;  
But do not be too hasty  
    And try to eat the lot!  
Leave some for Big People  
    Who cannot live in trees;  
Who cannot hang head downwards  
    When eating the green peas!

“A bird may take a morsel  
    From any fruit he sees.  
But flowers belong  
The whole day long  
    To the honey-making bees.”

Then Miss Blackbird told them that she had seen some birds--who should be nameless--nipping off the primroses to get the honey, and damaging crocuses. And she hoped this would not occur again!

(The sparrows hung their heads!)

She said she would be most ashamed if The Lady-with-the-Crumbs at the Flower-Patch House had to tie black cotton over her flowers, to keep the birds off, as she had seen done in *some* gardens.

Here Bobbie Robin (who wasn't at all interested, as his family all prefer worms to flowers) moved ever so slightly along his perch, till he got close to young Chaffinch, an enemy of his; and he began, ever so gently, to push him off the branch!

Young Chaffy didn't want to tell tales, of course, and he tried his hardest not to budge. But every time Miss Blackbird chanced to look in another direction, Bobbie gave an extra hard shove. And just as she was saying:

“I'm sure you will all try to behave like little gentlemen, if only to please me----”

*Bump!* went young Chaffy, clean off the branch! While Bobbie looked most surprised, as though he knew nothing whatever about it, and couldn't imagine what Chaffy was trying to do.

But their teacher saw more than they thought she did. And when they had picked up Chaffy, rubbed his sore place, brushed his coat with a bit of moss, and found him a seat on the other side of the class, Miss Blackbird said:

“Now we'll have some mental arithmetic. Listen most carefully now”--as she began slowly, and in a clear voice:

“If one bird ate three blackberries in three minutes, how many blackberries on the same spray would two caterpillars eat? Bobbie Robin, what's the

answer?”

“Oh--oo--er--Miss Blackbird--er--do say it again, please. I--er----”

She repeated it. “Now think hard.”

“Er--er--oh, I expect they’d eat--er--er--er--a holly bush.”

“Bobbie Robin! What *are* you thinking about?”

All the class were grinning and giggling, of course; while Bobbie looked very foolish.

“He’s thinking about Mr. Thrush’s lost house,” one bird told her.

“Oh; then I’m afraid he’ll have to think about blackberries now instead of holly berries! I’ll repeat the sum, and the first one who gives me the right answer will go to the top of the class.”

All sorts of answers were given. Some said four blackberries; some thought half a berry would be enough. They were all wrong.

At last Jackie Wren put up his claw.

“Well, Wren, what do you say?”

“They wouldn’t eat any at all!”

“Why not?”

“‘Cos any bird would eat both of them before he began on the blackberries.”

“Quite right! And up to the top of the tree you go!”

Which naturally pleased Jackie Wren; but Bobbie scowled.

“And now Wind-Flower Wood children, you can tell me what is all this talk I’ve been hearing about a holly bush.”

Everyone started to tell her, but it was such a babel, she had to say: “Don’t all talk at once, or I shan’t be able to make any sense of it. Tommy Tit, you may begin.”

He quickly told her all he knew, the others joining in occasionally.

“And haven’t they found it yet?” she asked. “How unfortunate for poor Mrs. Thrush and the children.”

“Please Miss Blackbird”--it was Bobbie speaking--“Adelaide’s lost too. And please can we have anarf-holiday to-day, to go and look for all of the losts?”

“I’m afraid you can’t, Bobbie. You were all late for school. And you haven’t been the brightest bird on the branch this morning, have you?”

So that settled it.

“I say, you fellows,” said Bobbie, after morning school. “I’m getting sick of this old wood, and this old school. And I’m worse than sick of old Flypaper’s lessons. Let’s dodge him this afternoon, and slip across the river and have some fun.”

All the bad ones agreed with him, and I’m sorry to say most of them were bad that day.

But suddenly someone remembered that it would be useless to go over and pay a surprise visit to the Oak-Wood Gang if they weren't at home, but were all safely in afternoon school. Whereas to-morrow, Saturday, would be a holiday; and they could get across the river early and have a fine what-you-may-call-it of a kick-up, while the mothers were out marketing and the fathers were having discussions.

Naturally they all saw the sense of this. So it was decided to start immediately after breakfast, when----

“Sh! Sh! Not another word,” Bobbie whispered, seeing some of the Oak-Wood Gang coming their way.

And they all looked the best of good children as they filed in to Major Flycatcher's class.

## CHAPTER VI

### MAC IN HIS YOUNGER DAYS

Isn't it strange, what a number of big things often happen, because of one little thing which someone says or does!

When Bobbie proposed that they should play truant from school in the afternoon, he was only thinking of the fun it would be to miss lessons, and have a jolly good row with the birds who lived across the river. The two gangs were constantly having riots. And didn't they all enjoy them too! Little did Bobbie imagine what a number of other things would result from that jaunt of his.

But before I tell you of these adventures, I want you to know something about the history of Mac, the little white dog whom you met just now, because this will help to explain some of his later doings.

Did I hear someone asking about Mr. Woodpecker?

He is still hammering.

And about Adelaide?

She is still hopping about among the ferns, gobbling a bit here and a bit there. And all the time keeping out of the sight of her terribly worried father and mother; and never making the teeniest sound when she hears them calling and calling her. She has been there all the morning, while the children were at school. And she is still somewhere thereabouts, now that it is dinner-time.

(What happens to her later, we must wait and see!)

Meanwhile there is Mac to be considered--a far more important person than that naughty piece of goods--young Adelaide.

For the first few months of his life Mac lived with his mother and brothers and sisters in Scotland. Such a cosy kennel they had, with lots of straw inside; and though it was cold out of doors, he was ever so warm when they cuddled up together among the straw.

The master he had in those days owned a lot of sheep, and Mac's mother was always out with the shepherd when she could spare time from looking after her family.

A very wise dog she was; and most careful to teach the children properly.

One day, Mac, who was beginning to notice things, said to his mother: "It's very kind of that man to bring us those lovely things to eat, isn't it?"

"Yes," said his mother. "And you must always try to do everything you can for the Big People who belong to you. Because you can see how unfortunate they are--they have only two legs, poor things! whereas we have four. They

really are very good to us, and will do anything they can for us. But of course they can't do much beyond giving us nice food. I can't imagine how they manage to walk at all. They don't seem able to take care of themselves a bit; they can't bark, and their teeth aren't an atom of good, except for eating their dinner, so we have to protect them, and bark at anyone who is likely to hurt them."

"And may I bite the other people?" Mac asked eagerly. He had some new teeth and was anxious to use them.

"Oh, no! A well-behaved dog doesn't bite, unless the other person is ever so bad indeed, and going to hurt his master. In that case he may catch hold of the bad man's leg."

"Then what can I do besides barking? I do like that man who brings our dinner; he pats me and his voice is so kind. I wish I could do something for him. But it wouldn't be right to bark at him, would it?"

"No, we don't bark at kind people; we try to help them," his mother explained. "For instance, when you are old enough to go out into the fields, you will see lots of animals, and especially sheep. Very well-meaning they are, though not as intelligent as dogs. But at least they have four legs, whereas the shepherd who looks after them is another of the two-legged Big People; so, of course, he can't do very much running about. And I don't know what in the world he would do if he hadn't us dogs to look after his flocks. When he wants the sheep to go through a gate, into the next field, they never want to go; but prefer to stay where they are, and go on nibbling. If he tries to drive them, they simply run about wildly all over the place, going everywhere and anywhere excepting through the gate. They know he's no good at catching them, without the other two legs. The poor man would be utterly helpless but for us!"

Mac was very interested. He felt he was getting old enough and fierce enough now to do anything, and he wanted to make a beginning.

"What do you do, Mother? Do you bite the sheep?"

"Certainly not! *That* is one of the *most* forbidden things! It would be absolutely dreadful if a dog were to bite a sheep. Never forget that. It's *tremendously* important."

"I'll remember. Then what am I to do if I have to help the poor man who has lost his other legs?"

"As soon as you see that he wants his animals to go through a gate, run up quickly behind them, and tell them quietly what they have to do. If some of them start to scamper off in another direction, run after them and send them back. Keep behind them all the time, close to their tails; but don't hurt them or frighten them; only make them go through the gate."

"What are their tails, Mother?"

"Those tassels which hang on behind. You have one, you know."

“Have I?”

“Yes, here it is.”

“Why, how funny! I never saw that before. I must examine it.” And he tried to catch it, running round and round after it. Only the more he went after it, the more it ran away from him! It was very strange.

“Now listen to me,” said his mother. “If you keep close to their tails, and send them along--in front of you, mind--it seems to help the animals to go on, when they know you are behind them. And if you keep them in a bunch, instead of letting them get all over the field, it saves you a lot of work and waste of time, in running around after the stray-aways.”

“It sounds great fun,” said Mac. “I’d love to send them along in front of me like that. Is there anything else I can do for kind Big People?”

“You must listen if you hear anyone coming; and bark, if it is a stranger, to let them know that *you* are there, protecting the house and the kind people. You must never let strangers come inside the door, if your master or mistress isn’t there, no matter how nice and friendly they pretend to be.”

“If I mustn’t bite them, may I show them that I have some teeth?”

“Yes, you may do that. But I think you had better go to sleep now. That’s enough for to-day. I’ll tell you some more to-morrow. Now I’ll sing you to sleepy-byes.”

And she began:

“Little Bo-Peep  
She lost her sheep  
Because she’d forgotten to mind them!  
But little dog Mac  
Ran all the way back  
Up the hill-side, to help her to find them.

“Little Bo-Peep  
Did nothing but weep--  
Which wasn’t much help to the doggie!  
Though he ran very fast,  
He gave up at last,  
The hill was so dreadfully foggy!

“ ‘If you sit on this stone,  
I’ll go on alone,’  
Said Mac, ‘as they may be up higher.’  
And when he got there  
He found that the air  
Was clear and decidedly drier!

“And there were the sheep  
In the grass, fast asleep,  
With never a notion of hurry!  
‘Now why do you stay

Up here all the day,’  
Asked Mac, ‘when you know how we worry?’

“ ‘It’s that silly Bo-Peep,’  
Said Grandfather Sheep;  
‘She always has lost us, you know;  
For she wakes up and cries,  
And it makes the damp rise,  
Till it’s foggy wherever you go!’

“ ‘It’s so lazy to sleep,’  
Said Grandmother Sheep,  
‘And then never be able to find you!’  
‘Now don’t stop to talk!’  
Said Mac, ‘but just WALK--  
And bring your long tails behind you!’ ”

When Mac woke up next morning, he found the shepherd looking at him. He hoped he was going to be taken out into the fields. But the shepherd said to him:

“You must say ‘good-bye’ to your mother, young man. You’re going a long journey to-day--all the way to London. And I hope you’ll turn out a credit to your family.”

This was a great surprise for Mac.

His mother licked him sorrowfully, for she knew she would never see him again. But she whispered:

“Always obey your master instantly, and try to help him all you can. That’s the way to make people love you. Remember that your father was a Champion, and I am a Champion too. You must never disgrace us.”

Then they put him in a box, with a hole at one end where he could see out. Quite comfortable it was, but decidedly close quarters. He was in the Guard’s van, and very frightened at first. The train made such an awful noise, so different from the quiet of the hills he had left behind. Sometimes he slept, sometimes the Guard talked to him. He didn’t seem to fancy any food, though he drank water, he was so thirsty.

After what seemed to him to be years and years and years in that small box--though it was only about eighteen hours--he found himself in a wonderful place with a lady and gentleman talking kindly to him. He didn’t understand the London language, but they seemed pleased to see him. It was strange, though, to see no straw. There wasn’t a bit on the floor, though it was soft and warm to walk on. But they were very friendly, and gave him milk. And then they sent for the gardener, and said: “You had better take him out for a little run now.”

He was so small that the gardener easily put him in his coat pocket. He took him into the kitchen and said:

“Here’s a little gentleman come to visit you, Cook!”

Cook only said: “For mercy’s sake, don’t bring a dog in here, when you know I can’t abide them. I won’t have him here at any price.”

The gardener let him peep out of his pocket, and then put him down on the floor. He certainly was a very small creature, and not particularly handsome, either, at that time.

He looked up at Cook, wondering whether she was one of the kind sort, or a stranger he ought to bark at. He was feeling dazed with so many new faces around him. Cook was cutting up meat at the table. She glanced down at him, and then said:

“If anyone thinks I’m going to have that miserable white rat rampaging over my kitchen, and getting under my feet, and upsetting my saucepans of boiling water, and stealing off the table--they’re mightily mistook!”

“Oh, have a heart, Cookie,” said the housemaid. “The poor little shrimp isn’t so bad.”

Mac looked at the housemaid. She certainly had a loving voice, though he was so confused with the noise and his long journey that he couldn’t remember whether he ought to drive her through a gate or bark and show his teeth.

“To call him the son of a Champion, indeed!” said Cook contemptuously, and chopping harder than ever at the meat. “I’ll say this much for him--when it comes to downright plainness, that puppy takes the biscuit!”

Mac pricked up his ears. “*Biscuit!*” He knew that word quite well. They used to say, in his old home: “He can have some soaked biscuit.” Perhaps they were going to give him some now. How lovely! He really was hungry. In his excitement he sat up on his hind legs, and waved his tiny front paws pathetically at Cook.

“Look at the darling,” said the housemaid, “asking you to excuse his being so plain. He’s explaining to you that he can’t help his looks any more than you can help yours.”

“None of your impertinence, Miss,” said Cook. “If you had any sense, you’d know that he’s asking for food. And though I don’t approve of dogs, I’m not one to see a dumb animal--or any other animal--starve!” And cutting up a nice tender bit of meat into small pieces, she gave it to him in a saucer.

How delicious it was! Mac had never tasted roast beef before. Evidently this was a very kind lady; he must certainly try to help her when he got a chance. At any rate, he could say “Thank you” now. And up he jumped, on to her lap, and gave her a little lick with his tiny pink tongue.



At any rate,  
he could say  
"Thank you"



Poor little dog! It was the only way he could show that he was grateful!

Finding her lap extremely comfortable, he settled down at once on her apron, gave a sigh of contentment, wagged his absurdly small tail at the others, and then prepared to have a nap, for he was very tired.

You should have seen Cook's face!

"Well! Of all things! Here's a nice kettle of fish!" she exclaimed.

"Serves you right, Cook," said the gardener. "He must be a most forgiving little thing to let bygones be bygones like that! Evidently you are going to be his pet!"

"If *you* had a little more sense," said Cook to the gardener, "you'd know that the poor mite is dead tired with his rickety long journey. And although I don't hold with dogs, excepting in their proper places--which is outside, digging up the flower-beds you ought to be digging, but aren't!--I'm not one to

turn a deaf ear when a mere baby like that asks to be put to bed. Here--just hold him a minute, and see that he doesn't get on my table while I'm upstairs."

She returned quickly with a nice soft cushion of her own. And in a few minutes she had rigged up a cosy bed for him in a box turned on its side, and placed in a warm corner of the kitchen.

When he woke up next day, he wondered why he was in such a funny kennel, with no mother and no straw. But he remembered there were some nice people here. So he tried to be useful, and carried off the black-lead brush, when the housemaid wasn't looking, and ate as much of it as he could manage at one meal, in his box. Of course the black-lead didn't improve his white coat.

But what pleased him very much was the discovery that if he went through the kitchen door, and along the hall, he came to the room he was in the night before, and found there the kind Gentleman and Lady who had given him milk. And then, if he walked out of that door, and back along the hall, he came to the room where Cook was, and his box. And if he kept on going to and fro, he kept on seeing these nice people. It was so funny the way the hall always led to one room or the other! At least these were the only doors he found open.

It amused him very much to keep on making these little journeys. Each time he appeared, he wagged his tail, and danced up to the persons in the room, as much as to say: "Well, I never did! Fancy seeing you again!"

After a while he discovered another part of the hall he hadn't noticed before--a queer place that seemed to go up and up and up. He had never seen anything like it in his kennel. He decided he must investigate, in case there were some more kind people up there.

Before very long, however, a sad, sad wail startled everyone. And got louder until it became a big howl. The whole household rushed into the hall to find out what was the matter.

There, on the third step of the stairs, crouched poor little Mac, crying and shivering with fright. He had managed to get his fat little body up so far. Then he became afraid to go any higher. Also he hadn't any idea how to get down those three steps again, and was evidently terrified lest he should fall down them. You can understand how nervous he was, because in the kennel and barn, where he had spent all his short life so far, he had never seen any stairs.

His master and mistress were out at the time, but Cook took command. "Poor little lamb," she said, lifting him up tenderly, and carrying him to the kitchen, "of course I disapprove of dogs altogether, but I couldn't bear to see a tiny mite so frightened. We must make a fuss of him so that he will forget it."

And he got another saucer with roast beef cut up into little bits.

"We must teach him how to go upstairs," said his mistress, later.

At first he didn't want to go near those stairs again. They were dangerous! But she put his front paws on the first step, and holding him gently with her

two hands, showed him how to jump on to the second one. Then she put his front paws on the next step, and he had another jump. And so on, step by step. Very soon he tried to do it by himself, and found it worked quite easily. He wasn't afraid, with his mistress beside him. At last he got so courageous that he gave two or three jumps, and landed at the top of the first flight. And wasn't he proud of himself!

"Now you must learn how to go down again," said his mistress. That was a more difficult matter. It wasn't so pleasant to find his head looking all down those stairs--miles and miles it seemed to be--and his hind legs no one knows where, up in the clouds somewhere behind him!

However, he realized that he must move on downwards, as he couldn't stay like that. So down he went--at a terrific pace, too.

After a little rest at the bottom, he thought he would like to do it all over again. This time it was much easier, and he got to the top and down again, almost by himself.

He liked this new game. It was great fun; and he proceeded to race up and down, up and down, as fast as he could. Till at last they had to take him away lest he overdid it.

A few weeks later, Mac left London and was taken to the Flower-Patch House, when the family went there for a holiday. How he loved being in the country.

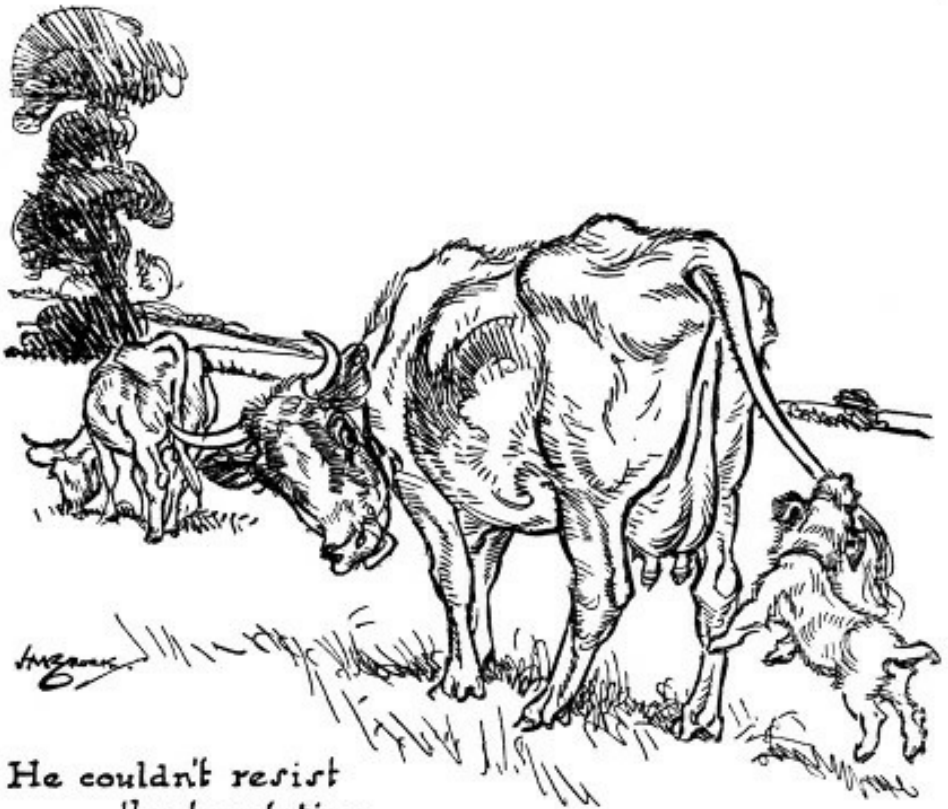
The first morning his master took him out to show him round the place, and introduce him to the cows. He was very fond of his master, and wanted to do something to help him. He remembered that his mother had told him that he must always help his master with the animals, and get them to go through the gates.

Of course! There were the animals; and there was a gate at the top of the field. What could be easier?

It's true the gate was shut, but Mac wasn't to blame for that. At any rate he would do his best to get the animals through it, or over it--somehow! anyhow!

And off he started.

"Keep close behind their tails," his mother had said.



He couldn't resist  
the temptation

“Certainly! That was quite easy, too.” The cows, after one glance at him, didn’t stop their eating. So it was quite a simple business to slip up behind them. And such lovely long tails they had; they were most inviting. He couldn’t resist the temptation to jump up and give a little nip to the tail of the first cow he came to.

Much surprised, she stopped eating, and turned round to see what sort of a fly had got on her tail this time. All she saw was a small dog scampering off in high glee. She scorned to take notice of such an insignificant creature--and continued her meal.

By this time Mac had discovered that all the cows had beautiful long dangling tails, and he was dancing round giving a nip to each in turn--not enough to hurt them, but distinctly irritating, when they desired to eat their breakfast in peace.

They tried to ignore him in a dignified fashion; but at last it got too much for one highly respectable cow, the Leading Lady of the herd, who had never

been accustomed to such goings on, and didn't intend to put up with them.

Lowering her horns, she suddenly made a dash for young impudence. But he was quicker than she was, and started up the field ahead of her. All the cows now gave chase. Some were much nearer to him than the Leading Lady had been. Then poor Mac realized that he must run for his life--which he did!

He was very glad to find that there was just room for him to squeeze under the gate, and truly thankful that the gate was shut with the cows inside.

"That will larn him!" said the cowman to his master, as they both stood watching the performance.

Later in the day, as Mac lay in front of the fire, going over all the high jinks of the morning, he said to himself: "It seems rather strange, but it was the animals who kept close to *my* tail, and got *me* to go through the gate. Now I come to think of it, I don't believe that was exactly what Mother said."

As the months went on, however, Mac quickly got to know his business, and how a dog should behave. I confess there were a few accidents occasionally, as, for example, when Cook couldn't find the £1 note she had left on the table ready to pay the baker. As soon as she discovered that it wasn't where she had left it, everyone said: "Where's Mac?"

They found him very happy in his box, chewing away at the bank note! They collected the scraps that were left, and stuck them on a piece of paper. But it was like putting together a jig-saw puzzle, with a lot of the parts missing, because, of course, they couldn't get back the portions he had swallowed.

When the baker was offered what remained of the note, he shook his head, and said he hadn't any use for mincemeat at present, as Christmas wasn't coming for months yet. And if he might give Cook some good advice, he thought she was feeding that puppy on food that was far too rich for one so young. Whereas if she had many £1 notes to spare, he himself could digest them quite easily. They never gave *him* a pain!

In the end, Mac's master took what remained of the note to his banker, who thought at first that it was a piece of dog biscuit. But after examining it carefully with a magnifying glass and his best spectacles, he said it would be all right, as the dog had obligingly left the most important bits with the figures on--which was very thoughtful of him.

The master told Cook afterwards that he thought Mac ought to be punished; his dinners were getting too expensive.

But Cook said it was her fault entirely. It was true that she didn't approve of dogs, and everybody was welcome to hear her say so. But, all the same, the trouble was because of her stupidity in leaving a bank note to be blown off the table with the first puff of wind. Naturally the poor innocent lamb thought he was only doing his blessed little duty by taking care of it for her in his inside

pocket, as he hadn't any other.

Another time some glass and china had come from the Stores. The gardener got his tools and undid the packing case, took off the lid, and then left the crate in the kitchen to be seen to later on.

No one else was in the kitchen at the time.

Mac watched the proceedings with his little head cocked on one side, as it invariably was when he was especially interested in what was going on.

As the lid came off, he espied straw, heaps of straw, stacks of straw! Why it was hundreds of years since he had seen any straw, he said to himself. How lovely it was! And didn't it remind him of the games they used to have, playing at hide-and-seek in the kennel!

He pulled out a bit and took it under the table. Yes, it had just the same beautiful scent and flavour that he remembered in the past.

"You'd better not drag your fal-lals over the floor, young man, or you'll get 'what-for' if you mess up the place," the gardener said, as he hurried off to his outside work.

Mac sat and looked at the big case for a moment. Then it occurred to him that perhaps his brothers were inside.

In he jumped. He couldn't find his relations, but there was a glorious lot of straw. He pulled it about; tossed it over and over, and out of the box; threw out packets containing glass, which got in his way; buried himself among it all; played hide-and-seek by losing his tail in the straw and then finding it again.

Altogether he was having a delightful time, and feeling quite young again, when the housemaid's voice caused him to peep up above the box in which he was partially hidden. He hadn't heard her come into the kitchen.

"Hurry up Cook; here's a pleasant surprise for you."

Cook appeared.

A great deal--a very great deal--was said.

Henry, the chauffeur, was invited in to have a look at the place, "strewn with straw and smashed glass from end to end," they said.

The butcher, who called at that moment, inquired if Cook were starting a circus? Because, if so, he'd like a reserved seat ticket for the front row, please, if she was to be the Fairy Queen, and jump through a hoop!

The gardener was fetched from hoeing the potatoes. He called the dog some painfully uncomplimentary names, and offered to give him a good hiding there and then.

But Cook wouldn't allow this. "As you know," she said, "I consider all dogs a rare nuisance, and I don't care who knows my views. But if you've got a poor little orphan in the house, who's lost his father and mother, and is all alone in the world, at least you needn't grudge him a bit of play. I expect he thought he was helping to unpack."

By this time they had gathered up the wreckage, and found that nothing was broken but one wine glass; the other things, fortunately, had fallen on straw.

“Well, that’s cheaper than eating bank notes,” Cook went on, “and though I’m not fond of dogs--never was--at least the darling shall have a little bit of play if he wants it. See here, duckie, you can have that case of straw in the scullery, and do what you like there.”

And you should have seen that scullery when he had finished his “do-what-you-like.”

But Cook swept it up quite cheerfully.

After that, he soon grew up. And on one never-to-be-forgotten occasion, he saved his master’s life. But as I’ve told all about that in another book called: “The-Lady-With-The-Crumbs,” I need not repeat it here. He became a Truly Important Person after that brave deed, and all the Little People who lived in the Wind-Flower Wood looked upon him as their chief. Even the saucy squirrel wasn’t cheeky to him any more. Only one enemy remained--the cat! And she hated him and he disliked her, as much as ever.

And now that you know so much about Mac, we will get back to where we left him in Chapter III--racing uphill in answer to his master’s whistle, while Bushey Tail the squirrel, and Bunny the rabbit, each went about his own business.

## CHAPTER VII ABOUT A WALKING STICK

“Come along, old man,” Mac’s master said to him, as he raced up the Ferny Path, in answer to the whistle. “We’ll take a short stroll around and see how things are getting on, and what has happened since we were here last.”

Mac was delighted, and trotted on ahead, to make sure that no dangerous enemy was waiting to attack his beloved master. All about the hillside they went, through woods; over brooks; across orchards; and around fields. Mac knew quite well that he must walk at the sides of a field when the grass was growing up for hay. But, all the same, he would have loved to nose in the tall grass, because he could smell that there were some new rabbits there, and he badly wanted to have a look at them.

When a pheasant rose from the grass, making a very loud whirring noise with its wings, Mac looked up inquiringly at his master, wishing he would give permission for him to rout around and see if there was another one there.

But his master shook his head. “Not this time. You must keep close to the hedges till the hay is cut.”

So the small dog pattered on, trying not to look at all the Little People he could see, playing about under the buttercups and moon daisies, though his master was too high up in the world to notice them. Sometimes Mac couldn’t help taking a peep at them out of the corner of his eye. He did so want to join in their games.

But then he remembered he was a Truly Important Dog, and his master must be protected. If any bad person should come along, his splendid teeth would soon settle them! So on he went, looking round every little while, to make sure that his master was safe, and each time giving a pleased wag, which was his way of saying: “Aren’t we having a jolly time here. Very different from being in London isn’t it? I do so enjoy having a walk like this with you.”

Presently they got back to the Wind-Flower Wood. This was exactly what Mac wanted. In the first place, he liked all his friends in the Wood to see how Important he was, and that his master couldn’t possibly be allowed to go out alone, without Mac to take care of him.





When a pheasant  
rose from the grass

But also he felt that his master ought to know about the serious things that had happened to the Thrushes' home. It was quite against the rules for a tree to walk itself off like that, without asking permission! Quite!

He quickly led the way to the vacant place, and stood still, looking at it, and then at his master, when he reached the spot.

"What is it, old chap? Is any friend of yours at home in that burrow?" But he suddenly stopped talking, and like Mac, he stared hard at the empty place.

At last he spoke: "Where's that holly bush gone?"

But Mac didn't know, any more than his master did.

"Why, I wouldn't have had that holly cut down for a good deal," the Gentleman went on. "It was such a perfect shape. Hi! Jones!" he called out to one of the men who helped the gardener, and who at that moment was not far off and *most* industriously mending a wall. The poachers had broken this down

a few nights before, when they were looking for the rabbits who liked to hide in the hollows among the big stones.

“Yes, sir?” Jones hurried towards him.

“Fetch the gardener, quickly.”

In a minute the gardener arrived. And no one was more surprised than he was to find the holly gone.

“Why, I saw it there myself, only yesterday,” he said, “when I came down with Jones to see about that wall. I’m positively certain it was there then.”

And Jones was just as positively certain too. And he said: “Poachers, most likely, sir. I’ve a-seed a rabbit a-bobbing in under that thur rock,” pointing to Bunny’s Burrow. “They’ll have him yet, if they haven’t got him already.”

Mac looked the other way. He had heard a faint groan coming from the very back of the burrow, and he felt sorry for his new friend.

At that moment, a nutshell hit his tail. He looked up, and there was the saucy squirrel in a tree above.

“Tell Bunny to keep his whiskers cheerful,” the squirrel whispered. “He can easily move to-night, and that will ‘do’ the poachers. There’s a fine hole in the Larchwood, where I stored my nuts last autumn. It’s under that big tree that blew down in the gale. It would take the poachers all next week to move that! He’ll be quite safe there. The front door is round at the back, under the brambles, tell him. I’ve just cleared out the last of my nuts. I’ll lend him the hole with pleasure.”

Mac merely wiggled his left ear, and flicked his tail ever so slightly, without letting his attention be taken off his master. Bushey Tail, the squirrel, could read this language perfectly. He knew these signs meant: “All right. I’ll tell him later. At the moment I’m engaged with a very serious matter. You wouldn’t understand if I tried to explain it to you. But my master and I are deep in important business, which mustn’t be interrupted.”

“I don’t think the poachers did this,” his master was saying. “They wouldn’t carry off a big bush like that; it would only hinder them.”

The gardener agreed with him, and looked severely at Jones for having put in his word before he was asked.

“If it were December,” the master continued, “I should say it was taken by one of those thieves who go about the country robbing the woods and hedges in order to send holly to market. But they couldn’t do anything with it at this time of year.”

The gardener agreed.

And Jones agreed.

Then they still stood looking at the empty place.

“I suppose you’re all going to stand there till the tree grows up again!” the squirrel chuckled. Mac could hear him, although the others didn’t notice

anything out of the ordinary. Then, being rather tired of doing nothing himself, the squirrel skipped from tree to tree, singing gaily--at least *he* called it singing, but no one else did. Anyhow, this was what Mac heard, and the rabbit heard it too:

“There was a little Bunny  
Who looked so very funny;  
And he lived in a hole by a tree.  
A poacher came one night,  
And gave him quite a fright!  
For he said: ‘He’s just the Bunny-boy for me!  
For me! For me!  
Oh! He’s just the funny, Bunny-boy for me!’ ”

Sad sounds and sadder groans could be heard inside the burrow. But the squirrel didn’t bother about the rabbit’s feelings. He continued:

“Then along came our old Mac,  
And gave the man a WHACK,  
With the prickly branches of the holly tree!  
But the poacher said: ‘Look here!  
Well! You *are* a pretty dear!  
And the most politest dog I *ever* see!  
You’ll come with me.  
Oh! you’re just the funny dog I want with me!’ ”

By this time Mac was decidedly annoyed. Fancy anyone having the impudence to pretend that a poacher could catch *him* indeed! Of course, it was only a made-up story, and all nonsense. But all the same it pained him. The squirrel had no sort of consideration for *his* feelings, however. He continued:

“Then appeared MY Bushey Tail!  
And the poacher grew quite pale!  
For he knew that I’m as fierce as fierce can be!  
So he said: ‘I’ve only cut  
Just a tiny little but-  
ton-hole of holly from your tree, for me!’  
Said he, ‘For me!  
The teeniest little button-hole, for me!’

“ ‘And if you say I may,  
I will take it right away,  
And put it in the parlour vase! You see  
I do not want your rabbit,  
But this dog tried to grab it,  
And that was why I whacked him with a tree.  
A prickly tree!  
He truly needed whacking with a tree.’ ”

Mac wished he could only whack that cheeky squirrel. But he was high up, and out of reach. Meanwhile his master had decided that they would plant something else in the place of the holly, as he thought the gap looked ugly.

The gardener agreed.

And Jones agreed.

And as they happened to have a suitable tree handy, the gardener fetched it, and his spade, while Jones brought a big can of water in one hand, and a big pail of water in the other. The ground was rather dry, and they knew it wasn't safe to move any plant in warm weather, without giving it a nice large drink, as it was sure to be very thirsty after all the fuss and bother of moving.

Jones walked very cautiously, as the path was steep and rugged, and the water was inclined to go sloppity-slop with every step he took. Just as he got near Mac, and was going to put down the can and pail, a hard round nut landed on the end of his nose, with such a sharp knock that he lost his footing and sent the water right over Mac!

You can imagine the look the gardener gave the unfortunate young man, and his own feelings as he went back for more water. But they were nothing in comparison with poor Mac's feelings when he heard a chuckling voice above him, saying: "You wouldn't understand if I tried to explain matters to you. But I'm deep in a most important bath, which mustn't be interrupted!"

Jones got the next lot of water quite safely to the spot. They made a big hole, filled it with water, and put the roots in.

Everybody helped.

The master put down his walking stick and held the tree in position, so that it shouldn't tumble over, while the gardener and Jones packed the earth and leaf mould around the roots, trampling it in to make the tree as firm as possible.

Then Mac sniffed all round the stem, to enable him to recognize it again. Dogs trust more to their noses than they do to their eyes, you know. They find their way by the scent of everything they pass. If a dog has once walked anywhere, no matter how far it may be, or how dark the night, he can always find his way back, just by sniffing.



Everybody helped

Mac made a “sniffing” note of every new thing that came on the premises--every single thing which he could get near enough to sniff! And he would always be able to recognize that thing again.

Very wonderful, isn't it?

Well--after the planting was pronounced "done," they stood a little way off, and looked at the new tree, first from one side and then from the other. Finally the master said he thought it would do very well there.

And the gardener agreed.

And Jones agreed.

After that they went back to the house.

Later in the afternoon, the Gentleman suddenly said: "I've only this moment remembered--I left my walking stick by the Ferny Path, when we were planting that tree. Send Jones down to get it. He knows exactly where it is."

But Jones came back presently, saying that he "couldn't see it no-where."

The gardener said: "Tut! Tut! Some people can't see a thing if it's right under their very nose. Of *course* it's there. Why I saw him put it down with my own eyes!"

Jones asked him whose else's eyes he'd have seen it with, if not with his own? But the gardener was on his way to the wood to fetch the stick himself.

He had to return, however, with the news that the stick wasn't there.

Jones said: "Well, you ain't the fust pusson to make *that* wonderful discovery, remember!"

The Gentleman said it was all nonsense. The stick *must* be there, because he had put it there with his own hands.

He set out to get it; and he also returned without it.

"One of they gipsies has got it, you mark my words!" said Jones. The gardener didn't contradict him that time. For it was quite plain to everyone that the stick had disappeared.

"It's gone off to keep the holly bush company, I suppose," said the Gentleman, when he got back. "Well, it can't be helped. It serves me right for being so careless as to leave it there. But you men might keep your eyes open when you're down in the village."

"We will, sir," said the gardener.

"We certainly will, sir," said the hopeful Jones. "It'll turn up soon, I expect."

But it didn't!

## CHAPTER VIII THAT ADELAIDE!

It is high time now that we looked for that Adelaide, for she has been out all day, without ever sending a single word to her family, or letting them know her whereabouts.

Having had any number of meals, and eaten all she could find, or at any rate all she could manage to stuff inside her, that young lady presently decided that this was the sort of life that exactly suited her. Therefore she would never go home again. Why should she indeed? This was very much nicer than being poked up in that stupid nest.

In the afternoon she began to feel sleepy. She had missed the nap she had always had in the morning. So, after a very good dinner, she found a snug corner, hidden right away from everybody, tucked her head under her wing, and went to sleep. She had wandered a good distance from her old home, and so much walking had made her very tired. You see, she hadn't been used to it; and her wings were not strong enough either to be much help to her as yet. Therefore she was glad of a rest. It *was* warm there, too, as the sun looked in through the leaves. And she slept and slept and slept.

When she did wake up, she was surprised to find that the sun had gone. Instead of being warm, she felt quite chilly. The leaves and grass were damp already with the dew, which kindly comes and gives the leaves and flowers and grass a little drink of water, as soon as the sun has set, after a hot day. But as Adelaide's feathers were neither leaves nor flowers nor grass, they didn't require any dew, thank you, and were not so comfortable to wear now that they were damp. Adelaide positively shivered.

Then again, it was worrying to see the Wood getting darker and darker every minute. In the nest, she had always fallen asleep soon after sunset, and had never noticed the dark before.

"Perhaps, after all, I'd better go back home," she said to herself, as she got up from the grass. She was surprised to find that her legs were stiff. She had a difficulty in walking at first, the tiredness and the damp had so affected her legs.

"I know my way back to the nest. I must get there as quickly as I can, or I shan't be able to see the way." She started off as well as she could, but being so very tired, she could only go slowly. Also it wasn't at all easy to see where she was going. The place looked so different in the dim twilight from what it did in the sunshine. However, she plodded on.

“Won’t they be glad to see me, too,” she went on talking to herself, for the Wood was very lonely now that there were no birds singing. It seemed “company” if she said her thoughts out loud as she went along. “I expect they are sorry enough by now for the way they treated me this morning--forgetting all about my breakfast, and leaving me to starve like that! They are wishing now that they had been kinder to me, while they had me with them, *I know!*”

Here she stumbled over some stones she hadn’t seen in the dark, and hurt her toes. She had to rest a while till the pain got a bit better.

“It would really serve them right if I never returned. But it’s rather cold and dark here. I think I’ll go back just this once.”

She got up and struggled on.

“I know Ellen must have missed me dreadfully. *She* will be thankful to see me, so as to have me to talk to. If they aren’t very nice to me, I shall just go away again to-morrow. And we’ll see how they will like that!”

At last she reached the Ferny Path, and she went straight to the place where the nest was when she left.

There it was still--only it was on its side, where the men had tossed it when they were planting the new tree.

But, when she went up to it, to her great surprise it was empty!

She had hurried away so quickly in the morning that she hadn’t seen her parents moving the children to “The Firs.” She expected the family would be where she had left them. It was such a shock to her to find them gone, that, what with the darkness and her own aching little legs, she flopped down on the ground and began to cry.

“What’s up?” said a voice close beside her.

“Oh, Mr. Bunny, is that you?” Adelaide revived a little. “I’ve lost my family, and I’m so frightened of the dark.”

“That’s silly!” said the rabbit, though he wasn’t really paying much attention to her, for he was hastily packing up a few things in order to move into the hole the squirrel had kindly lent him. He was so terribly nervous about the poachers, and afraid to stay a minute in his own burrow after dark, lest they should catch him.

“What is silly?” Adelaide asked.

“Why, it’s silly to be frightened of the dark. What could the dark do to you? And then it’s even sillier to lose your family. You should have stayed at home and helped mother, like a truly admirable child, and then you would have gone with them.”

“Where have they gone?” she asked him. “It’s so cold here, and I want to get home.”





“I’m afraid it’s too late for you to find your way there to-night; and I can’t take you, because--I’ve an important engagement somewhere else this evening--can’t stay another minute--can’t *possibly*.” Poor Bunny’s ears and nose were twitching with nervousness as it was.

Adelaide began to cry again. “Oh, don’t leave me, please, Mr. Bunny. I shall die out here in the cold. And then you’ll be sorry.”

But the rabbit had no time to stand there, either talking or being sorry. He felt sure he could hear stealthy footsteps coming down the path, and he was trembling all over.

“I’ll tell you what to do,” he said in a hurried whisper, lest the stealthy footsteps should hear him, “Slip into my house now. You’ll be ever so warm if you snuggle down among the dry bracken. In the morning I’ll come and take you to your new home. Can’t stop a moment now. Good-bye. If anyone should come and inquire for me, say I’ve gone away, you don’t know where.”

And with a hop, he was gone.

“Well--I suppose I must make the best of it. Mr. Bunny’s house will be better than nothing,” Adelaide thought to herself. Certainly it was warmer inside there than out in the open. She found a cosy bed of bracken and leaves and grass in a corner, and was soon asleep.

An hour or so later she woke up with a start. Someone was looking in the burrow. A man with an electric torch. She was ever so scared. He didn’t see her at first. But as he was poking about with a stick, to try and find the rabbit, he suddenly came on her.

It really was the poacher this time. The rabbit had skipped off none too soon. The man was cross at finding the place empty. He had been counting on Mr. Bunny for dinner to-morrow. He was going away, when he caught sight of Adelaide, crouching among the brown leaves.

“Hullo!” he said. “You’ll do for my little girl. She’s wanting a bird to put in her empty cage. Out you come!”

And poor Adelaide found herself clutched by a big, dirty hand, and then dumped into a big, dirty pocket.

It was awful!

She thought she would be suffocated. But she wasn’t one to give up easily. After a good deal of struggling, she got her head out of the pocket at last. But the man thrust her down again.



This happened over and over. Once he gave her such a knock on the head that she was quite stunned for a little while. When she felt better, however, she

was up once more, trying to get out--though, if she had managed to get free, she wouldn't have been much better off, for he had been tramping on and on about the wood. The poacher was looking for rabbits or pheasants, so he went first one way and then another; along one path and then along another; going in all sorts of directions. She had no idea where they were by now.

At last she got herself so far out of the pocket that the man lost patience. He wanted to find a rabbit, and this bird was beginning to be a nuisance.

"Here! Out you go, you little plague. I won't be bothered any longer with you," and he flung her away, anyhow, anywhere; he didn't care what happened to her.

She landed under a tree, on something soft that proceeded to kick her.

"Why--why--it's Eric!" she said aloud.

And so it was! The man had actually tossed her right into "The Firs," though if you ask my opinion, I think it would have served her right if he had tossed her somewhere less comfortable.

"Is that you, Adelaide?" her mother inquired. "What in the world do you mean by coming home at this hour of night? Where have you been all day?"

Now what do you think that good-for-nothing Adelaide replied? She merely said:

"I've been looking for the holly bush!"

Hearing the talking, Ellen woke up. "Oh; have you come back?" she said in a disappointed voice. "I wish you'd stayed away. It's so much nicer when you're not here, because we have more room."

"I will just tell you one thing," said Mrs. Thrush. "You deserve a thorough good spanking. And if it wasn't for waking Eric, you should have it too!"

As Adelaide squeezed herself in beside the other children, who weren't at all inclined to let her have much room, she thought to herself: "They don't seem so pleased to see me back after all. Still--it's better than that man's pocket!"

## CHAPTER IX

### TROUBLE! MORE TROUBLE!

Saturday morning--being a holiday from school--every member of the Wind-Flower gang was awake early; the mothers had no difficulty in getting them up that day.

They could hardly wait for breakfast, only they knew it was useless to set off too soon to cross the river, because the fathers of the Oak-Wood Gang would still be at their breakfast. And the youngsters preferred to wait till they had finished and left home, and gone to see their friends and discuss things. Fathers sometimes objected to noise!

But the Wind-Flower Wood was full of excitement at the prospect of a lovely riot with their enemies; and many of the little animals, besides Bobbie and his friends, wanted to join the expedition.

Bobbie said No! Of course they couldn't come too. How could they get across the river? This outing was for birds only, because they could fly.

Now it happened that Fluffy the kitten was hovering around, as usual, and trying to poke her little furry nose into other people's business. She heard plans being made, and directions being given; it sounded so cheerful and as though it would be great fun. Everybody was laughing so much, and in the best of spirits. She did wish she could go too.

But she didn't say a word. Cats don't as a rule, excepting out of doors at night, when they like to wake people up, by singing "Come into the garden, Maud."

Fluffy simply sat quite silent, in the sun, and washed her face. And listened. So quiet was she, that no one even noticed she was there. But her mind was made up. She intended to go too!

As to the river--she was sure she could get across it somehow. Kittens could go anywhere. Already she had climbed up the ivy to the roof of the barn where she lived; got on to the kitchen table; crept upstairs and gone to sleep on top of the Lady's best hat; lost herself inside someone's Wellington boots; squeezed herself into the chickens run; tied herself up so thoroughly in a tennis net that it had to be cut to get her out; and got her head stuck fast in an empty salmon tin. Of course she could cross a river!

When they started, she had no difficulty in following them at first, slipping under the bushes and keeping them in sight. But she soon found that they went very much faster than she did. They took the shortest way, through the air; while she had to walk all down the hillside--and it was really a long way down

to the bottom of the valley--before she got to the water.

Still, it was a pleasant walk. She saw the way they went, and would catch up with them later. There was plenty to interest her on the way down; lots of new holes she had never seen before, which had to be investigated; little field-mice to chase; pheasants to run after. She took her time, and enjoyed every minute of it. But it was a good while before she actually reached the river.

When at last she came to the bank, she searched about for some way to get across. The water looked very deep; and it rushed past her at a terrific rate. Further up there were some large rocks strewn about the river bed. It was a Weir, but she didn't know that. The water tore madly around the rocks, then hurried on at a great pace. She decided, however, that if she could manage to jump from one rock to another, as there seemed a good many of them, she could get to the other side that way.

She made a start. Got on to a rock close to the bank. The water was shallow there, though she didn't like wetting her paws. Cats never do. The next rock wasn't far off; she jumped on to that. A few more scrambles and jumps, and she got a little farther ahead.

But then she found a big gap, which she had not seen when she started. It was alarming to look down and watch the water swirling and dashing and foaming, and no other rock near. She was glad she hadn't jumped into it.

She had to go right back over the rocks, the way she had come, to the bank again. She tried another place. This seemed more promising. She went very cautiously, however, as she didn't want to tumble in. By degrees, she got nearly to the middle of the river. But here she had to stop short again; another big gap! Another roaring piece of river, and not a stone near. She looked up the river and down the river, but there was no foothold on ahead to be seen. It was very aggravating. At first she was so cross, she said she would *not* go back. She would simply wait there till something came along to help her. Something usually did when she was in trouble. They always got her out of the places she got herself stuck in.

Unfortunately nothing and no one turned up this time. As her feet were getting wetter and wetter, she realized she had better turn round and go back. Evidently there was no use in waiting.

But what was her dismay, on looking round, to find that the tide, which was coming in very rapidly, had by now covered most of the rocks she needed to jump on to, if she was ever to get back to the place she had started from, on the bank.

There she was, stranded on the ledge of a boulder in the very middle of a river, water rushing round her, and getting higher every minute. It made the poor little scrap quite dizzy.

No one was in sight but a fisherman, and he was a long way off, too far to

see her. She was distracted, and ran up and down the ledge of the stone, but could find no way to get off it.

After a little while, to her joy, she saw the Wind-Flower Gang returning. It was getting near their dinner time. She had taken all the morning, and had only got as far as this! And now they were going back home.

She called out to them, feeling sure that one of them would try to help her. But the water was making such a noise, they couldn't hear her. And she was so small that probably they wouldn't have seen her, even if they had looked down at the river. Whereas they were all looking straight ahead--as most birds do when flying--watching for the place they were wanting to reach.

Finally, poor Fluffy saw them disappear into the woods, high up on the hills, leaving her alone--actually all alone!--shivering with cold and with fright, and wet to the skin with the foam and dashing spray; all alone, I repeat, on a rock that now was completely surrounded by water. And no sort of help anywhere near.

This was what you might call "a serious predicament!"

Fluffy didn't like  
predicaments!



It really deserves a long word, doesn't it! And by that time Fluffy was quite certain that she didn't like "predicaments."

## CHAPTER X

### MRS. MOLE TRIES TO GET IN A WORD

You won't be surprised to hear that Emma-Maria, the farm cat, had got more and more uneasy as the morning wore on, and no Fluffy could be found. Where her child had got to, she couldn't imagine.

She went up and down the wood, in and out of the garden, round about the house and farm and barns, mewing at the top of her mew, and asking everybody:

"Have you seen my Fluffy? I can't think what has become of her. It's twelve o'clock now, and she ought to have taken her cod-liver oil at eleven."

But no one had seen her, so far as they could recollect, though, after a while several thought they had seen her somewhere, if only they could remember where it was. But unfortunately they couldn't.

A wood-pigeon who had flown home from a village the other side of the hill, where he had been on a visit, said he certainly had seen a kitten--yes, she had four legs and two eyes and two ears--yes, she was a white kitten with little black patches on her head . . . yes, she had a beautiful complexion and a sweet expression and exquisitely soft fur, so far as he could see . . . and she seemed to be a very large kitten for her age.

And after listening to more of Emma-Maria's descriptions, he said it certainly looked as though it was Fluffy whom he had seen on that doorstep in the next village.



Said he certainly  
had seen a kitten.



Off went the mother, out of the Wind-Flower Wood, and up the hill in

search of her missing kitten.

When she had gone some distance, and was safely out of hearing, a little wood-mouse peeped out of his cranny near Bunny's Burrow, and said to the rabbit who was home again now, as there was no risk of poachers coming in the daytime:

"I say!--I saw Fluffy nosing in your house when you were out yesterday, Mr. Bunny. It was before the Big People planted that new tree. It's my belief they've planted her under it by mistake. And good riddance, too, for I'm afraid to move out of my cranny, in case she should catch me."

"Under that new tree?" Bunny repeated. "Did you say *under* that tree? It will *never* do to leave her there! Why, she'll be scratching her way into my house before I know where I am, and then where shall I be? I'll dig her out at once. What a *life* I do lead! A cat this time!"

He set to work there and then to dig-and-burrow, dig-and-burrow, till he got quite a long way under ground. But no sign of the lost Fluffy could he find.

He wasn't discouraged, however. No rabbit ever is, when he sets about digging. He went on farther and farther, still looking and listening for the kitten; till, suddenly, before he knew what he was doing, he dug so energetically that the ground gave way beneath him, and he tumbled right into Mrs. Mole's house, and landed on top of the dinner!

"Of all things!" she exclaimed. "I never heard the like in all my born days! To come through the ceiling into a lady's kitchen and sit on the soup, without so much as 'By your leave,' or sending a telegram beforehand to say you are coming! If you call that the way for a gentleman to behave, even if your old coat is only natural coney, let me tell you I don't!"

"I'm extremely sorry," Mr. Bunny began; "but the farm cat----"

Landed on top  
of the dinner.



“What? WHAT?” she nearly screamed; “the farm cat’s coming? Oh, she’ll be the death of me! Children, run as fast as ever you can and fetch your dad. He’s up at Grandma’s. Tell him----”

“Please don’t be alarmed,” Mr. Bunny tried to re-assure her. “The cat----”

“You know the way, children. Take our Tube as far as Beech Tree Station. Change there for the Stone Wall Tube. When you get to the Junction, go through the subway to the Rose Garden Tube. You’ll find Grandma under the moss rose bush in the corner. Tell Dad----”

“You needn’t worry, Mrs. Mole. The cat----”

“Supposing Dad isn’t there, Mother?” one of the children interrupted.

“Then go up to ‘The Steel Trap’; you’re certain to find him and Uncle having a little rhubarb juice together. Tell him the farm cat is coming. I expect it’s for the taxes. Mr. Bunny has kindly dropped in to warn us. And will he come home at once. But don’t you show so much as half the tip of your nose above ground unless you want to be made into a fur coat.”

“But the cat----” Mr. Bunny tried his hardest to get in a word. It was no use. On went Mrs. Mole.

“Off you go, and don’t waste a minute!”

The little moles rushed off.

“You must excuse my being so agitated just now, Mr. Bunny. I didn’t see it was you at first--these basement kitchens are so dark--or I would have welcomed you like a perfect lady. Only you see he’s the only husband I’ve got, and of course I’m anxious about him. He goes to see Grandma very often, as he likes ‘The Steel Trap.’ I daresay you know it? Such a comfortable place. The gardener kindly put it in the ground, and my husband and his friends find it very handy for keeping off some of the draught from the Tube----”

“Off you go,  
and don't waste a minute!”



“As I was saying, Mrs. Mole, the cat----”

“Someone once told my husband that the trap was put there to catch him. That did amuse him! He went off at once and made a beautiful ring of mole-hills all round the trap, to show the gardener how nicely he took care of it----”

“Yes, but the cat----”

“I don’t suppose you would think much of Grandma’s house; the old Moss Rose is so out of date. We’ve begged her over and over again to move, but she’s as obstinate as can be; says she’s no patience with the modern roses; roots too skimpy; no sort of comfort in them for a mole. While as for the rest of them, she can’t endure the way they stand about with so little on them. It makes her cold through and through to see them. When *she* was young, she says, roses dressed properly, with leaves and stalks right down to the ground. Whereas nowadays they seem all legs, with nothing but a few snippets on their heads. So she stays under the old Moss Rose, and seems quite content to put up with the inconveniences.”

“I want to tell you that the cat----”

“For myself, I much prefer to live in a wood. It’s less disturbing. I went to see some friends who think no end of themselves because they live in a fine garden. But, if you believe me, no sooner do they settle under the geraniums than a gardener comes along, routs out the geraniums, digs up the place, making no end of a mess in their drawing-room, just like you’ve done in my kitchen; and after that, in go bulbs, right on top of their best bedstead very likely! They’ve no peace at all! Whereas here, we are so near the Tube, we can get to the Flower-Patch up above us easily, heave up the vegetables, hoist up the flowers as much as we like, and off home again in next to no time. It’s so nice and handy. You aren’t going, are you? Why, I’ve hardly had a word with you yet”--as Mr. Bunny edged to the door, seeing it was useless to try to talk.

“Oh, don’t leave me here to face that terrible cat all alone,” and she began to sob loudly, which gave Mr. Bunny a chance to say still more loudly:

“The cat isn’t coming!”

“What? The cat isn’t coming? *Isn’t* coming? Then what do you mean by keeping on telling me the cat *is* coming? And standing there wasting my time by talking all these hours, and me hardly able to get in a syllable sideways or upside down even, when I’m as busy as can be. You ought to be ashamed----”

By this time Mr. Bunny had managed to get out of the door. He decided to take the shortest route home, leaving Fluffy to look after herself!

## CHAPTER XI THE RESCUE

Mac hadn't paid much attention to the hue and cry about Fluffy. The youngsters were continually getting mislaid in the Wind-Flower Wood, but they invariably turned up again--like that Adelaide, for instance.

Moreover, the farm cat was no friend of his; and he had not the slightest desire to be mixed up in her affairs. If he met her in the garden, he had always done what he considered it his duty to do; that is--he always scooted after her at such a rate that as a rule she took refuge up a tree. Then he danced around the bottom of the tree, and said various things to her, while she said still worse things to him from a safe branch beyond his reach.

What particularly annoyed him was the way she would look down at him--when she had used up all the words she knew, and could think of nothing else to say--yawn largely, then curl herself round as comfortably as she could on the branch of the tree, and go to sleep up there!

At last he would get so tired of dancing and barking down below, that he would sit down and wait till she should wake up. All the while she would really be watching him through one half-shut eye, though pretending to be snoring. Then, if he closed his own eyes for half a second, down she bounced, and was off, before he could jump up and be after her.



But to-day, when he saw that she was really in trouble, he didn't chase her; he merely looked the other way and pretended that he didn't know she was there.

And she kept out of his way as much as possible, for she didn't feel at all in the mood for scooting up and down trees.

After an early lunch, Mac went out for a stroll--nowhere in particular, but just to make sure that the world was moving around properly. Some of his

friends were having their afternoon nap; a good many birds and animals rest out of sight in the hottest part of the day, during the summer, coming out again when it is a trifle cooler.

Emma-Maria, the farm cat, had gone over the hill to see if she

could find Fluffy on that doorstep mentioned by the pigeon. Mac was glad she had gone, as her sorrowful mewling was getting on his nerves. Besides, *he* didn't think a mere kitten was worth such a fuss! If she had been a lost puppy, of course it would have been a very different matter--in *his* opinion.

He had gone into a wood which he didn't often visit. But Bushey Tail had told him some young foxes had recently come to live there, and he thought he would like to call on them.

Suddenly he stopped! Sniffed the grass! Sniffed again! Went back a few steps and sniffed! Ran on; sniffed some more. Yes . . . it was still the same.

What do you think had happened?

Why, he had picked up the scent of Fluffy! That is to say, he could smell that the lost kitten had walked over that ground!

Now if you or I had made a discovery like that, we should immediately have looked about in all directions, to see if the kitten were anywhere in sight. And we should have said: "Dear me! How remarkable! I wonder whatever she was doing here? It's a good way from the barn, and she would have no need to come so far from her mother. Perhaps she is here still----" And then we should have called out: "Fluffy! Fluffy! where are you, kitty?"--hoping that she would answer and come running to us from under some of the bushes.

But Mac wasted no time on anything like that. He looked nowhere, and never made a sound. Without stopping even for a moment to make sure that she wasn't there, he simply kept his nose to the ground and ran straight on--in fact, he raced! He knew perfectly well that he would find her quicker with his nose than with his eyes.

To look at him, you would almost have thought that his nose was scraping the ground, or the ground scraping his nose, so close was the one to the other.

Said various things  
to her.



Sometimes he missed the scent. Back he would run the way he had come, till he picked it up again. Then on and on he followed it. Sometimes it led him into thickets and bushes; up on banks, or round big rocks. Fluffy had evidently been poking her nose into all sorts of odd corners. But he never stopped a minute to look about him, because that would have given Fluffy a minute to get farther away; and he wanted to catch up to her. So on he went, at a steady but very rapid pace, which was easy, as it was all down-hill. He stuck to the scent, without raising his head, till at last it actually brought him to the river bank, right down to the water's edge too!

He was very much surprised! And then he did look about and wonder why she had gone such a distance from home. It was useless to keep his nose down any longer, because water doesn't take care of the scent of an animal, as the ground and grass and trees do. You can understand that the water is always moving; the scent doesn't remain on the surface as it does on land. It moves on and on with the water, and soon is washed away, no one knows where.

As Mac was looking around to see what he had better do next, he espied poor Fluffy on the rock. He could see her mouth opening and shutting. Evidently she was calling to him. But the water made such a roaring noise, he couldn't hear a word.

He called out to tell her he had seen her, and would soon help her. But probably she couldn't hear him any more than he could hear her, for she kept on opening and shutting her mouth in a pitiful manner.

Only, the question was: How was he to get at her? He ran along the bank, this way and that, but soon realized that there was only one way to reach her, and that was by swimming, as most of the rocks by the Weir were now under water.

In he plunged, close to the Weir just *above* the rock, and struck out bravely for Fluffy. But, though he tried his hardest, he seemed to get farther and farther away from it, with every stroke he took! He was actually being carried up the river and right away from her! This would never do! At last he had to give up, and he swam back to the bank.

It was one thing to be willing to help a friend in distress; but quite another matter to reach her.

Poor Fluffy was frantic now. She thought he was going to desert her, and leave her there to drown. But he was a wise dog, as well as kind-hearted. He realized that the tide had been too strong for him, and it had carried him away from the rock he was trying to reach.

Thinking the matter over, while he waited a moment to get his breath, he decided on another course.

Going farther down the river, *below* kitty's rock this time, he jumped in once more. The tide was coming in--as I mentioned in the previous chapter. It



was flowing up and up the river. This time, as he was lower down than the rock, it carried him with it, up the river towards the rock--instead of driving him away from it. He didn't have to work nearly so hard with his legs, because the tide was helping him.



Soon he was on the rock, to Fluffy's intense joy. She began to tell him a long tale of woe. But he hadn't time to listen. The sun had gone behind some black clouds; the wind had changed; it was really cool out there in mid-stream. It looked as though a big storm were coming. He was anxious to get back to dry land as quickly as he could; and the most difficult part of the journey had yet to be done. It had been hard enough to get himself across the water; it would be harder still to get Fluffy back as well as himself. He was a brave dog, however, only he had no time to spare for Fluffy's mewings just then!

Picking her up carefully by the back of her neck, just as he had seen her mother carry her, he leaped into the water, holding her up as high as he could, to keep her from drowning.

She gave a heart-rending squeal at the first big splash, and told him she was quite dead now.

He didn't let that worry him! He had enough to do to hold her up in the deep water, and keep them both from sinking. This time he let the tide take him where it pleased; this made swimming easier for him than if he were struggling against the rushing tide. He paddled along with it towards the bank, and soon was near enough to scramble over some rocks in shallow water and up on to the grass.

He was truly glad to get out of the river; the water had seemed almost too strong for his small legs to deal with. It had swirled around him with an angry noise near the Weir. But that was all over now. They were both safe on land once more.

He was very thankful that there was only one kitten to be rescued. He wasn't sure that he would have had enough strength to battle with the water any longer. His muscles felt very queer already.

Putting Fluffy down for a moment, he gave himself several big shakes, to get rid of as much water as he could from his coat. Water is very heavy, far heavier than you would think. He didn't want to have to carry a few pints up-hill, as well as the kitten! He told her to do the same; but she was helpless now, partly from want of food, because she had had nothing to eat since the morning. Also, she was ill with fright and cold; even though it was summer, it was chilly having to stand on that stone for so long with the water splashing over her all the time. And she was only a baby, poor little mite! She was so weak now she couldn't as much as crawl!

Mac didn't want to stop there. He also was wet and chilly. He knew that the right thing for a dog to do, on coming out of the water, was to run about as fast as he could, to get himself dry. But he couldn't leave Fluffy lying there like that.

So he picked her up in his mouth again, and started off up-hill to carry her home. It was slow work, because, being a smallish dog, he had to hold his head high, or she would have dragged on the ground. He managed it by degrees, however, taking her a short cut, which was very steep, but a nearer way home than the long trail he had followed on the way down.

Every now and then he put her on the grass, to give his mouth a rest; it was aching work carrying a kitten! He would give her a little lick, to cheer her up. Then on he would go again, padding steadily up the hill-side, till at last--oh, joyful sight!--the house appeared.

By rights, Fluffy ought to have gone to the big barn, which was her home. But Mac knew a place where she would be better off; and right into the kitchen he carried her, laying her carefully on the hearth-rug in front of the warm fire.

"Do look here, Cook! Wherever has Mac found Fluffy?" the housemaid exclaimed. "Why, they are both sopping wet, and the kitten looks more dead than alive!"

“My patience!” said Cook. “She must have tumbled in a brook. I’ll rub him down with his towel while you warm a drop of milk. They both seem utterly exhausted. Mac’s little heart is going like a steam-engine. What can have happened to them?”

At first it seemed too much effort for Fluffy to open her eyes. She lay on the hearth-rug without moving. But the warmth of the fire gradually revived her. The housemaid put a few drops of warm milk around her mouth. It smelt good. She tried to lap a little. When she heard Mac golloping down a saucerful, she liked the sound, and made a further effort herself.

“That’s right!” said Cook. “Take another sip, Fluffy; you’ll feel heaps better after it. And if I were you, I’d keep away from water in future. It has proved fatal, let me tell you, to quite a number of your relations already!”

At this moment, the farm cat was again heard in the garden, telling the world that she hadn’t found Fluffy yet though she had tramped over the hill to find her.

Cook called her in. Emma-Maria was surprised at such cordiality, for Cook usually shoo’ed her away if she came anywhere near the kitchen door.

Then she saw her child, and rushed to her with a pathetic mew. She set to work at once, in a business-like way, to lick her all over, and get her dry and comfortable again. To her surprise, no one made any objection to her remaining there on the rug. It was most unusual, but certainly it was a very pleasant place!

Even Mac was out of her way. Knowing that he had done his good deed for the day, he had curled himself up in his box, and was soon sleeping off the tired feeling which had got into his legs.

“I can’t think, for the life of me, where that dog could have found the kitten,” said the gardener, at tea-time. “The water in the brooks is so shallow everywhere, with this long spell of dry weather. I don’t know of any place hereabouts where he himself could get as wet as all that. There isn’t a pond for miles.”

“Was there a can of water standing where she could tumble into it?” Cook asked, “You know what she is. If she can get into trouble, she does.”

“No, there was nothing like that anywhere about. And if there had been, it wouldn’t have soaked Mac like that. Very mysterious, isn’t it?”

They all agreed. It never so much as crossed the mind of anyone that she might have gone that long journey down to the river. It would have seemed ridiculous to suggest it, the river being so far off. So they still went on wondering and wondering.

## CHAPTER XII

### MR. PEPPERKIN SURPRISES EVERYBODY

The next day, Sunday, was just like any other Sunday. Everyone did as they usually did on Sunday. The only difference was the way Fluffy took up her abode in the kitchen, refusing to be parted from Mac. She even hopped into his box, when he was taking a nap, and settled down to sleep beside him--which rather worried him. He remembered how Emma-Maria had boxed his ears long ago, when he didn't know much about kittens, and had tried to sniff one of hers. He did hope she wouldn't suddenly appear and smack him again. Her claws hurt!

That was on Sunday.

But on Monday things began to happen.

Mac's Master had gone into the study after breakfast, and was attending to his letters, when he heard someone with a surprisingly loud voice talking in the garden.

Very soon the housemaid came to him and said: "Mr. Pepperkin wants to see you, sir, about something very urgent." Mr. Pepperkin was a farmer who lived some little distance away--nowhere near the Flower-Patch House, in fact.

He was shown into the study. He hardly waited to say, "How d'you do," or anything of that kind, but began talking at once in a very excited manner.

He said he had come about that wretched dog Mac--a terrible animal! A perfect villain! Such a dog ought never to have been brought into the district--and a great deal more like that.

"But what has he done?" Mac's master asked.

"Done? Why he's chased and worried my sheep and lambs, and killed several of them--that's what he's done! I'm having the law on you, and that dog will have to be shot! So I tell you straight!"



Mr. Pepperkin was really shouting by now; he was so angry. And as Cook and the housemaid were not sure if they had dusted the hall quite properly that morning, they went to look at it, to make certain it was done nicely. Of course they couldn't help hearing what he said.

The gardener, too, remembered that the violas in the border, just outside the study window, needed tidying; so of course he couldn't help hearing him too.

Henry, the chauffeur, happened to come along to see if by chance the motor car had hidden itself among the violas. So he also heard Mr. Pepperkin.

Next, Jones came to inquire if the gardener needed any help--so he heard the shouting too.

Naturally they were all very surprised at what they heard, just as the Gentleman was.

Mr. Pepperkin went on talking as loudly as he could. He said it was a disgrace, and a scandal, and a danger to the neighbourhood, that anyone should be allowed to keep such an awful dog. The sheep and lambs were worth ever such a *heap* of money (I forget how much he said), and the Gentleman would have to pay for all the damage done, in addition to doing away with the brute! (That was only one of the many ugly names he called poor Mac!)

The Gentleman asked what made him think it was Mac? There were plenty of other dogs in the district. There must be a mistake somewhere, and it couldn't have been Mac.

But the farmer said he had a witness. His man had actually seen Mac doing the dreadful deed! They had only found out last night where the dog belonged. There was no doubt about its being Mac, he said, because there was no other dog in the neighbourhood of the same breed. And if only he himself had seen the ferocious beast, he would have shot him on the spot, as the law allowed a farmer to shoot any dog found worrying sheep.

And he went on and on and on!

Well--the Gentleman said the farmer must do as he pleased about going to law; but he would have to prove that it was Mac who had killed the lambs. If he could prove this, then the Gentleman would pay for all the loss, and take away the dog.

They got Mr. Pepperkin out of the house at last. But he went all over it again outside to the gardener and Henry, and anybody else he could get to listen.

When he had gone, the whole household could talk of nothing else, though no one believed that Mac was the culprit. Yet what could they do if the farmer's man said he *saw* him doing the wicked deed? In that case it would be a serious matter; for, in the country, no one is allowed to keep a dog that chases animals. The owner of such a dog must get rid of him.

"Mac had better be kept chained up for the present, and only taken out on a lead," Mac's master gave orders. "I'm afraid there will be trouble over this."

Everyone was grieved about it; and Cook was particularly upset.

"If they want to shoot that innocent little dog, it will have to be over my dead body," she announced, "for they will have to shoot me first, before they will get him."

"I hope it won't be quite so bad as that," her master said. "If the worst comes to the worst, we shall take him back to London, and keep him there, where there are no lambs to chase. He wouldn't be allowed to come here again. But we'll hope for the best."

Cook was still sad about it, however. The housemaid even found her one day mopping her eyes with her hankie, as she nursed Mac. She kindly said: "Don't give way, Cookie. He isn't dead yet. I wouldn't cry about the dog till

he's actually gone."

But Cook said she wasn't crying about the dog; wouldn't dream of crying about a dog, indeed! She was crying because her corns were so painful!

Of course Mac wondered why he was never allowed to go out alone. He had not heard what the shouting man had said about him, because Cook had shut him up in the kitchen, while she and the housemaid were dusting the hall that morning. He tried to think if he had done anything wrong. But it did not seem like a punishment, as they were all so extra loving to him. Everyone talked to him in a smiling, pleased tone of voice. His mistress was constantly rubbing him gently behind his ears and under his chin--his favourite spots. Cook gave him more titbits than he could possibly eat--though they didn't get out of date, because Fluffy always nosed about his box till she found the spare pieces which he had hidden under the cushion.

Yet it did seem strange that he couldn't run down into the wood to see his friends. He wondered if they missed him.

Bushey Tail had been watching for a chance to call and make kind inquiries. But it wasn't easy to find Mac alone. The Big People seemed positively afraid to leave him! So absurd! Surely they could take care of themselves sometimes! One morning, however, he saw the kitchen was empty, and he was on the window ledge immediately, and asked Mac if he were ill, as he had not been into the wood for several days.

Mac explained that he had to stay at home because an awful man with loud shouts had come the other morning and made a dreadful noise in the study. They thought he was a poacher who was going to poach indoors. So of course he had to stay in to protect the family.

News soon gets about among the Little People in the Wind-Flower Wood, though they haven't newspapers. And it wasn't long before they all knew that Mr. Pepperkin said Mac had killed his lambs, and was altogether a most disreputable hound, who would have to be shot! A rabbit from Mr. Pepperkin's fields met Mr. Bunny, and told him about it. That was how the sad tidings first reached them.

They were sure Mac wasn't a disreputable hound. But what could they do to help him? They had committee meetings where they talked and discussed the affair; but nothing seemed to come of them. All they did was to get up a concert outside the back door, to cheer him up. It would let him know that they hadn't forgotten him.

This is what the birds sang to him from the branches of the damson tree near the window. Each verse was a solo, with all the birds joining in the chorus. The black-cap, who is one of the most beautiful of the singers who visit the wood in the summer, began:

THE BLACK-CAP'S SOLO.

“Don’t worry, Mac! It will all come right.

Don’t be discouraged if the time seems long.  
Some days are jolly; some days are bright;  
Some days, most certainly, the world goes wrong!”

*Chorus*

“But perk your ears up nicely!  
Wag-wag all you can!  
And take the ups and downs like a brave young man.”

Then the little wren stepped forward to sing the next verse.

THE WREN'S SONG

“Don’t worry, Mac! You have heaps of friends;  
They all mean to help, so you’ve nothing to fear.  
Clouds soon pass over; a trouble soon ends.  
Don’t be downhearted, though the world seems queer!”

*Chorus*

“But perk your ears up nicely!  
Wag-wag all you can!  
And take the ups and downs like a brave young man.”

“Aren’t the birds singing beautifully this morning?” said the housemaid. “It does one good to hear them.”

“Ah, me! It’s all very well for them,” sighed Cook. “But there’s a heap of trouble in the world.”

Mac couldn’t bear to see her sad like that. “I expect she’s afraid that shouting man will come back,” he said to himself. “I must remind her that I’m here to protect her, and I’ve some strong teeth, too, if he comes shouting here!” So he perked his ears up nicely, wag-wagged his tail ever so many times, and rubbed his head against her shoe. Then he looked up at her and said:

“Don’t worry, Cook, for you know I’m your friend.  
I’m here on guard, so you’ve nothing to fear!  
I’ll tear his trousers, till they never will mend!  
Don’t be downhearted; though I own--he was queer!”

“So perk your cap up nicely!  
Wear your Smiling look!  
And take the ups and downs like a dear, kind Cook!”

He thought he was speaking very clearly and distinctly; but Cook evidently didn’t understand him, for all she said was: “I wonder why he’s making that whimpering noise as he looks at me? Perhaps he’s hungry. . . . Here, duckie, you’ll relish this bit of chicken, I know.”



He was grateful, of course, because he knew it was good of her, but he couldn't eat it; he had so many little pieces inside him already, as everyone was petting him. He knew his friends outside who had been singing to him would enjoy some light refreshments. As he couldn't get out to them himself, he asked Fluffy if she would take it to them, with his compliments and many thanks for their kind attention and beautiful singing which he had much appreciated.

Fluffy said: "Certainly; with the greatest pleasure; and only too happy to oblige." And she repeated his message carefully, long words and all, to make sure she had it right. Then set off with the little present of chicken.

Everything would probably have been all right, if she hadn't put it down for just a quarter of a tiny minute, while she poked her nose behind the pansies, in case there might be a mouse there.

When she turned round, it was gone!

And there was that Adelaide, gobbling the last atom, under a lavender bush!

## CHAPTER XIII

### MAC APPEARS BEFORE A MAGISTRATE

In a short while Mac's master received a "summons"; that is a paper which told him he must appear before a magistrate, on a certain date, and if he didn't turn up he would be put in prison! He would have to say why he kept a ferocious dog who did all sorts of bad things that were against the law.

Of course Mac went too. And so did Cook and the housemaid and the gardener and Henry and Jones; and Cook took a basket with her, in case she should want to do some shopping in town, she said.

Mac enjoyed going out with such a nice family party.

When they got to the Court, that is the place where the magistrate is, Mac behaved very nicely, and sat up on his hind legs politely when they took him before the magistrate. That gentleman looked at the dog very carefully indeed, and in a surprised manner. Then he took something out of his pocket book, studied it, and looked hard at Mac again. But he said nothing.

Mac was sorry to see the man with the loud shouts again, because he didn't care for his voice; it hadn't the sound of a friendly voice.

And Mr. Pepperkin soon let it be known that he didn't care for Mac, either! It was a dreadful story which he told of the savage dog who had killed his lambs and nearly killed his sheep. After he had described how he went out and found them dead, and had said over and over again what a disgraceful thing it was that such a truly awful dog should be allowed to go about and do such harm, Mr. Pepperkin had to stop, and his man was called. He told his tale.

He said he had himself seen *that* dog, pointing to Mac, slinking slowly and artfully up-hill, actually carrying a little dead lamb in his mouth--yes, carrying it home in his mouth! He watched him put it down and lick it, too! He felt sure it must be one of Mr. Pepperkin's lambs, because there were no other lambs anywhere near. He hurried to the farmer's fields, and there he found what had happened, and told Mr. Pepperkin about it.

The magistrate asked him how near he was to Mac.

The man said he was some little distance off in another field. But it was not too far off to see the lamb. He was holding its neck, and its legs were dangling.

The magistrate then asked if anyone had actually seen Mac chase the sheep, or even seen him in Mr. Pepperkin's fields? But it turned out that no one had seen him anywhere near the sheep or the farm. All that had been seen was the dog carrying a dead lamb--and the only person, apparently, who had seen that, was Mr. Pepperkin's man; and he wasn't close to the dog.

After everyone had done all their talking, and had sufficiently explained what a frightful monster of a dog Mac was, the magistrate said to Mr. Pepperkin:

“This happened at about half-past-one on the Saturday you named?”

The farmer said: Yes; that would be the time, because he went in to his dinner at a quarter-past one, and the sheep were all right then--and by two o'clock they were all wrong. But Mr. Pepperkin wondered to himself how the magistrate knew the time, for he hadn't told him.

Then the man was asked what time he saw the dog? Was it about a quarter-to-two?

The man said: Yes, it was. He was on the way back to the farm after his dinner.

Mr. Pepperkin also said he was sure it would be that time, because it was nearly two o'clock when his man rushed in and told him that mad dog had been raging all over the field.

Then the magistrate spoke again:

“I thought it was about that time, because *I myself saw that dog!*” He said this very impressively.

The farmer looked very pleased. He felt sure this would help his case. But Mac's friends looked worried. Things were beginning to look rather black for the poor dog, if the magistrate also saw him.

You can understand how attentively everyone was listening.

Then he had Mac called up to him, and he said to him:

“I have been hearing some very shocking things said about you. It is a pity you can't *speak*, or you could tell us your version----”

Mac was sitting up on his hind legs, as usual. When he heard that word “speak,” he knew what he ought to do; they often told him to “speak” at home. At once he gave his loud, sharp bark--which made everyone jump! And then they laughed! Even the policeman standing there could hardly help smiling. When Mac saw how pleased they all were, he barked again. He was really rather glad to have something to do.

“Now I'm going to tell you, Mac,” the magistrate went on, “that you will have to prove an ALIBI----”

“An alibi?” said Cook to Henry, at the back. “What's an alibi? Does it mean that they are going to shoot him?”

“Hush, Cook,” he said in a whisper. “An alibi means that Mac was somewhere else at that time, and wasn't where Pepperkin says he was----”

“Of course he wasn't there,” Cook said, “and if they touch a hair of his head, I'll alibi them. So they had better look out!”

But she didn't go on talking, because she wanted to listen.

“I saw this dog,” the magistrate said again, “on that particular Saturday

afternoon. I was fishing, and had just looked at my watch--it was twenty minutes past one--when I saw something white jump into the water, further up the river, and some distance off. I went nearer to find out what it was, and saw a dog struggling against the tide. I wondered what he was after; then I saw a white kitten stranded on a rock in mid-stream, with no means of getting ashore.

"I hid behind some bushes, watching to see what the dog would do, and ready to help him if he got into difficulty. After several attempts, he at last reached the kitten, and then he swam back to the bank with her in his mouth."

Everybody was listening with the deepest interest now. You see, it was news to his master and all the family that he had found the kitten *in the river!* The only person who didn't listen was Mac. He was getting so bored with the proceedings that he laid himself down and wished he could go to sleep.

"I had my camera with me," the magistrate went on, "and I took some snaps of him as well as I could. I thought it was such a remarkable thing for a dog to do. I happen to have them in my pocket to-day. They are here before me. It is plain to see that this is the same dog. And it is certain that the animal he was carrying in his mouth was a kitten, and not a lamb. This photo proves it."

"No wonder they were both like drowned rats when they came in that day! Didn't I say it was mysterious?" the gardener whispered.

"It's a pity we haven't the kitten here too," the magistrate continued, "because we could have compared it with my snaps."

"But she *is* here, sir," said a voice from the back. And Cook jumped up with her basket. "I brought her with me in case I might have a chance to tell you what a wonderfully kind dog he was, and how he brought the wet kitten indoors to dry her."

By this time all heads were turned towards Cook, who had Fluffy in her arms. Mac was very pleased when he saw the kitten. Cook took her to him. He licked her little nose, and she licked him, in a most affectionate manner.

"That doesn't look like a very ferocious dog," the magistrate said.

The kitten was compared with the photograph, and there was no doubt about it--she was the same young lady who had been rescued by the dog.

The magistrate then said that as no one had seen Mac anywhere near the sheep, and as it was proved that he was somewhere else at the time the lambs were hurt, the case must be dismissed. And Mac could leave the Court without the very slightest stain on his character.

I need not tell you how glad his master and mistress were, and his friends. Cook positively wept for joy. Though, when the housemaid asked if her corns were worse, she said: No; she was crying because they were better!



Press photographers  
were waiting



Press photographers were outside waiting to take Mac's portrait for the newspapers. He was photo'd with Cook, with Henry, with the housemaid, and even the gardener managed to get his best hat into one of the photos, though the rest of him was lost behind Henry.

They were going to make a final picture of Mac with the kitten, when he suddenly pulled at his lead, and tried to get over to a man who was among the crowd of people watching Mac being photographed. As the dog seemed anxious to get to the man, his master went with him. The man looked surprised, but smiled kindly at the dog.

When Mac got close to him, he immediately sniffed at a stick he was holding, then looked at his master.

Sure enough--there was the lost walking stick. Mac had seen it and recognized it as being a familiar piece of his master's property; but he wanted to sniff it to make quite sure.

Explanations followed. The man said he had picked it up when he was out for a walk. And though he had tried hard--*ever* so hard--to find the owner, he had never been able to discover to whom the stick belonged.

I hope he was telling the truth. But I am not certain about that.

Anyhow, Mac's master was willing to believe him; he was so happy at having the dog's character cleared, that nothing else seemed to matter. He gave the man some money in return for the stick.

So that cleared up another mystery. And everybody went home happy--except Mr. Pepperkin. He, unfortunately, had not only lost his lambs, but he had to pay the costs of the case.

No, he was not at all happy, poor man.

## CHAPTER XIV CLEARING UP MYSTERIES

Mac was overjoyed when he found he could now go out without being taken on his lead. He raced down to the Wind-Flower Wood to tell his friends all about the doings at the Court. He found they knew about it already. Dr. Magpie had been out in his aeroplane to see a patient of his, living in an elm tree near the Court. The doctor had promised that he would bring back an account of what had happened to Mac, as it was rather a long way to the town, and the Little People couldn't all leave home, on account of the babies in the nests.

On every side you could hear congratulations, as soon as Mac appeared. The saucy squirrel said he even felt like singing a song about it; only the others begged him not to do so, as they said they didn't feel strong enough to endure the strain of it. No offence meant, and they hoped none would be taken.

In any case, there was one very important and urgent matter they must inquire into at once, viz. who was the dog that really did the damage? Of course they knew it wasn't Mac. No one in their senses would ever have imagined that he could do such a thing. But some dog *had* done it. As he was not caught yet, there was no telling what further wickedness he might do. Therefore they must set to work and find the sinner.

Mr. Bunny was particularly anxious about this. "Supposing that creature were to come into our wood! Where should we all be then?"

"In his tummy of course," said the saucy squirrel, "that is--all of you but me! He couldn't catch me!"

"Oh, dear! Oh, dear! I know the first one he would get would be me," said Bunny. "Oh; what a life I *do* lead!"

A committee was appointed to deal with this serious business. They told Mac they would let him know as soon as they discovered anything.

Next morning he heard his mistress say:

"I do feel sorry for Mr. Pepperkin. It is such a loss of money to him to have those lambs killed."

"I've been thinking about him too," said Mac's master. "I'll go along and see him. We might give him some money to buy a few more."

He set off after breakfast. But he didn't whistle for Mac to go with him. In fact, he shut the dining-room door, with Mac inside the room, before he started. It looked as if he didn't want a dog with him.

Mac decided that it wouldn't be safe for his master to go and see that

shouting man all by himself. Also, a new dog had been barking somewhere in that direction. He wanted to call on him, and see what sort of a fellow he was. Dogs always know when a newcomer arrives in their neighbourhood. He begins to say things; the old inhabitants then say things back in chorus. You can often hear them, especially at night, exchanging kind inquiries in this way.

Mac wasn't certain that his master intended him to go. He managed to slip out of the room very soon and follow his master, however; but he thought it wiser to remain out of sight as much as possible. He kept a good distance behind him, instead of trotting ahead, as he usually did; he hid himself as much as possible among the tall grass, and in various ways avoided his master seeing him, for he had an uncomfortable notion in his little head that he would be sent back home, *at once*, if he were seen!

He kept well behind, too, when they reached Mr. Pepperkin's stile, which led into a big field, where a large number of sheep were rushing about in a most terrified manner with Mr. Pepperkin and his man shouting and trying to drive them through a gate into the next field. The shouts only increased their fright. They seemed crazy with fear.

Seeing Mac's master, the farmer left off shouting at the bewildered animals, and came up to the stile. He looked very sorrowful and unhappy.

"I was coming to see you this afternoon," he began, "to tell you that I've discovered----"

But by this time Mac had edged near, to see what all the commotion was about. He saw sheep rushing in all directions, and a man bellowing at them, and waving his hands in the silliest way possible--according to Mac's ideas.

"Why, it's enough to scare the life out of the poor things," he thought.

He suddenly remembered his mother's instructions to help any poor unfortunate Big Person with only two legs, who was trying to get sheep to go through a gate.

Without a moment's hesitation, he slipped under the stile and ran down the field.

His master was literally dumb with amazement. In the first place he had no idea that the dog had followed him, and in the second place--it looked as though Mac actually *did* worry sheep, and was going to do so now! It undoubtedly did!

Mr. Pepperkin stared after him also.

But Mac knew how to do something better than worry them.

He ran up to them quite pleasantly, told them there was much nicer grass in the next field, and it would be as well to go there soon, in case some cows got the grass. He didn't try to get two or three through the gate alone, because he knew they would only come back again while he was getting the others to go in. So he began with the sheep that were farthest off, and got them to go back



and join the others.

They weren't easy to manage, at first, as they had had more than enough of dogs lately! But he persuaded them kindly; and at last they seemed to recognize that he was a respectable dog--not one who kills lambs.

When he had them all rounded up in a nice bunch, he told them to move on quickly, so as to get that lovely grass; he would look after them and see nothing hurt them at the back. By keeping close to their tails--as his mother had taught him--and being careful not to frighten them, but only to talk to them, he at last got the whole flock tidily through the gate, all by himself too, for the poor two-legged man had given up shouting, and was simply watching the proceedings with astonishment.

When the last sheep had scampered through the gate, in a great hurry, lest she should be left behind and miss the grass, Mac knew that it would not be wise to leave matters like that, because they might come back again. And he wasn't large enough to close the gate. So he merely stood by the opening, on guard, panting with his exertions and wagging his tail, as he looked over at his master, and hoping he would say he had done it properly.

All this time, the three men in the field had stood watching in silence.

At last Mr. Pepperkin found his voice again. "Well, if that doesn't beat all!" he said. "That dog of yours is a born sheep dog. Where did he learn? I've never seen a job done better or quicker than that in my life. Why, he'd be worth anything to me; he would save a man's wages over and over again."



Got the whole flock  
tidily through the gate

By this time the man had closed the gate, and Mac was free to run back to his master. He was very surprised when Mr. Pepperkin actually patted him. He was also surprised to see scores of his friends from the Wind-Flower Wood perched in the trees. He asked them how they came to be there. They told him a thrilling story of how they had decided, at the Committee Meeting, to come to Mr. Pepperkin's farm, and just watch and watch, till they saw who was the bad dog. They knew he would come again. And he did! They quickly let the farmer know about it.

At the very moment, Mr. Pepperkin was also telling his side of the story to the Gentleman.

He said he had put the sheep into this field an hour ago, as it was close to the house, and he could hear then if anything went wrong. He had gone into the kitchen, and sat down to have a bit of bread and cheese for lunch, while he looked at the newspaper. Presently he heard a most terrific row being made by birds. There must have been hundreds and hundreds of jays and magpies and crows and rooks and woodpeckers and owls, as well as blackbirds, thrushes and smaller birds. The jays were screaming frightfully, the woodpeckers hammered on the trees fit to break them in half, the magpies clattered like

dozens of rattling wagon-wheels. Crows, rooks and all of the others shrieked as loudly as they could. It was an *awful* noise, and the pigs and cocks and hens joined in at the top of their voices.

He and Mrs. Pepperkin both rushed out to see whatever could be the matter, and there they found the sheep in a panic, while their dog--their very own dog--had a lamb in his jaws!

Here poor Mr. Pepperkin nearly broke down. "And to think I was blaming your little dog, and all the while it was my own. I never suspected mine for a moment; he's as mild as milk and water when I'm on the spot."

It appeared that this was a new dog he had bought a few weeks before, who was said to be a perfect sheep dog, and as gentle as a baby.

"It looks like it, doesn't it!" said the farmer, grimly. "Why he's as fierce as a tiger when no one is watching him. But he won't do it again. He'll be shot this afternoon!"

"Don't do that," said the Gentleman. "I'm wanting a fierce dog in town, to help the night-watchman guard the business premises. He would be the very dog for that job. I should be glad to buy him from you. There will be nothing but burglars for him to chase up there!"

"I'd be pleased to give him to you," the farmer replied. "For I hate to have to kill anything. He's a handsome animal too. Won't you have a look at him?"

He led the way to a shed, where the criminal was securely chained to his kennel. He slunk inside immediately, not wishing to meet his master, under the circumstances.

The Gentleman saw that he was a fine-looking dog, however, and arranged about buying him, and having him sent to London, there and then.

As he was turning to go, however, he caught sight of an object in a corner of the shed that caused him to stand still again.

It really was a day of surprises!

"That's a fine holly bush you have in that corner"; he said to the farmer. "Where did it come from? It seems a pity for a tree like that to be cut down."

"That holly bush?" Mr. Pepperkin repeated. "Let's see. Where did it come from? Oh, I remember. My man bought it from a friend of his. We wanted a holly to sweep the chimney with. He said he knew someone with a bush to sell. So he got this."

"Did you say you wanted it to sweep the chimney?" the Gentleman asked in surprise. "The sweep uses a brush in town."

"Yes, sir, but we've no sweep nearer than the next town, down here. That's ten miles away. And a holly bush cleans a chimney better than a brush. So most of us use a holly for our chimneys about here. You try it, sir, yourself. You'll be surprised how well it does the job."

But the Gentleman thought to himself: Perhaps the Lady at home wouldn't

like it if he did! Also he didn't want any more of his holly trees cut down for that purpose.

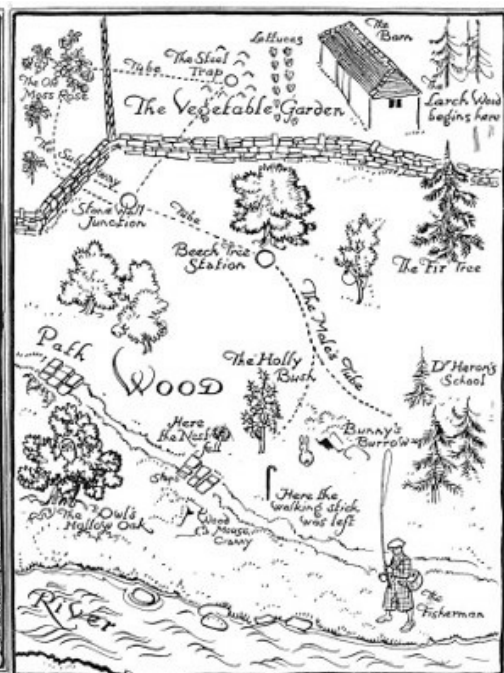
He didn't say this out aloud. It would only have worried the farmer worse than ever if he had known that his man had stolen the Gentleman's holly bush and then pretended that he had bought it from a friend and charged the farmer for it too! In any case, the tree wouldn't grow again, now it was cut down. Mr. Pepperkin had troubles enough just now. But it explained why the man had cut it down after dark! He didn't want to be seen, of course. However, the Gentleman said no more then.

"But I'm glad to have that mystery cleared up," he said to the Lady, when he got home.

"Yes," she replied. "And so am I. But most things do come right in the end, if we only wait long enough."

"That's very true," said the woodpecker, who was carpentering in a fir tree outside the window. "This house I'm making for the thrushes isn't likely to be finished this year, and I don't think for a moment that it will be finished next year, or the year after. But they'll see what they'll see, if they wait long enough. Only they mustn't expect me to tell them how long they will have to wait! That wouldn't be reasonable."

He went on hammering and hammering--and he is still hammering.



## TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Obvious errors and inconsistencies in spelling and punctuation have been corrected. Inconsistencies in hyphenation have been retained.

[The end of *Mystery in the Windflower Wood* by Flora Klickmann]