

the increase of light of the new mountain tops. ment for my sowing we three must act for the coming it be?"

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MOTHER SILVER-NECK.

Founded On Fact.

By Elizabeth Price.

They all insisted on sitting at once—Muff, and Fluff, and Silver-neck. Walter wasn't very well pleased about it, for he was trying to get ahead on his egg money, and of course a hen that insists on sitting can't be expected to bother with laying eggs. He tried to break Muff and Silver-neck up. He shut them in a coop for a while, and dipped them in the rain-barrel and did some other things, but whenever he'd let them alone, back they'd strut to their nests, saying, "Cluck, cluck," as if it was all settled. Willis had a great deal of sympathy for the hens, and privately thought Walter rather cruel to them, so he was glad when Walter gave it up and said, "If they will sit they might as well have something to sit on. Willis, will you go over to Mr. Rhodes' and engage three sittings of eggs? Tell him I'd like them to-night."

Mr. Rhodes had them ready on time and next morning when Willis went down to the hen-house, there they all sat, as proud and happy as they could be. They stayed proud and happy all of the three weeks, till at last there came a day when Walter shut into a coop a whole crowd of downy yellow balls and Fluff.

"Why, where is Muff's coop—and Silver-neck's?" asked Willis. "Oh my, Walter, these chickens don't all belong to Fluff. Why—" "I know," said Walter. "That is, she didn't hatch them all, but she's going to be the mother to all of them, now."

"Why?" Will's plainly disapproved. "Because there's no use wasting the time of three hens when one will do as well. Fluff's big—she can brood them all and I want Muff and Silver-neck to go to laying. So I've given their babies to Fluff."

"Oh, poor chickens. Oh, Walter they're so disappointed. They sat on 'em so long." Willis' eyes looked as if it wouldn't take much more to bring the tears, but Walter only laughed and said, "That's all right, Kid. They'll forget in a day or two. I'll shut them up by themselves, and they'll be happy if they get enough to eat and drink. Hand me that chicken-feed, will you?"

They got enough to eat. Willis saw to that. If food was going to console them, food they should have, so morning, noon, and night, he piled their basin with goodies. Corn, wheat, and oats, and rye, table-scraps and buttermilk. His tender heart ached over their disappointment, and he tugged and pulled till he managed to prop an old door between their coop and Fluff's, "so they can't be reminded all the time that somebody else got their share," he said.

Muff soon made up her mind that "what can't be cured must be endured," so she stopped crying "Cluck, cluck," and began singing "Kwawk, Kwawk." So Walter let her out. But Silver-neck kept on looking sad, and after she was left alone she lost her appetite. Then Walter set her free, too, for he said he'd rather



have a live hen that would lay eggs for a while, than a dead one that would never lay them at all. Silver-neck would go over near to Fluff's coop and call the babies to come under her soft feathers. She was a very motherly hen and it hurt her feelings when the wee chicks ran at Fluff's call instead of hers. She wouldn't have much to do with any of the other chickens—just walked about alone and looked wistful.

By-and-by Fluff got out with her big brood and began teaching them all sorts of chicken-accomplishments. How to scratch gravel, how to brace their feet when a very long angle-worm had to be pulled out of its hole, how to take a sand bath, and how to prink their tiny new feathers. And then as if she thought her duty was done, she suddenly deserted them. They were still very young to be left to the mercies of a cold world, when one night she marched off, hopped up on the roost beside the other hens, and let them take care of themselves.

They couldn't reach the roost—it was too high, but they stood about under it and peeped pitifully for mother's warm wings. But Fluff just cocked her eye at the ceiling and said "Kwawk."

They gave it up after a while, and cuddled against each other in the corner where Spangle's larger children were trying to keep warm. It was very chilly. Nobody had shut the hen-house door, and the wind was blowing in sharply. The babies shivered; Spangle's children fairly shook in their very scanty feathers, and they all huddled together, wondering if there ever would be any warm sunshine again.

Just then Silver-neck came in. She had taken a long walk down through the orchard and was late getting back, but the minute she stood in that door she saw how things were. She spread her wings, gave one motherly "cluck," and every little cold orphan scampered.

Willis ran down to shut the door a few minutes later and there sat Silver-neck, crooning a hen-lullaby down in her throat, while from every feather—it seemed to Willis—a wee beak stuck out or a bright eye peeped.

"She was almost as big as a bushel basket," he said when he told about it up at the house. "If she'd stretched any farther she'd have burst herself. She had the whole batch—

Spangle's and all—safe and warm, and, Walter, she was almost laughing she was so happy."

So she had her reward for patient waiting, and she didn't desert her adopted brood till they were all big enough to perch beside her on the high roost. Even then they tried to push each other away to get close to Silver-neck, and never gave a glance at Fluff.—The S. S. Times.

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