

The  
Jolly Animals' Club  
By LILIAN LEVERIDGE

XXI.

## Overheard in the Garden.

**B**ETWEEN two tall, pink hollyhocks in a quiet corner of the Red Cottage garden, a big, handsome spider was spinning his web. It was nearly done. Just a finishing touch here and there, added with skill and swiftness, and then Sir Spider stood back and looked at his work with satisfied eyes. Certainly he had no reason to be ashamed of it.

"That's a pretty fine piece of work, Sir Spider."

The spider looked down quickly to see where the quiet voice was coming from, and soon his sharp eyes spied the Flowers' Friend, who, as you will remember, was once called Old Warty, the Toad. He was peeping from under a morning glory leaf.

"Yes," assented the Spider proudly. "I don't believe I ever made a better one. This is a good place to hang it, and I am glad now that meddling Miss Mattie drove me out of the cellar with her broom. This is all ready now for the Dew Fairies to thread their jewels on, and I hope they'll come to-night. For some reason or other the Dew Fairies don't seem to like cellars, they never come there."

"I don't blame them for that," said said the Toad. "I don't like cellars myself, but it would be hard to find a better home than this garden. I'm sure the Dew Fairies love it, for they come nearly every night."

"Do you really believe in the Dew Fairies?" asked the Spider.

"Believe in them!" cried the Toad in surprise. "Of course I do! Don't you?"

"I always have believed in them," the Spider hastened to explain. "But one day I heard Miss Mattie say there were no such things as fairies."

"Miss Mattie!"—the Toad spoke with the utmost scorn. "I have very little respect for Miss Mattie. If she would get out of bed early enough in the mornings to see the work of the Dew Fairies—the thousands of beautiful jewels they hang on the flowers and leaves and grass—she'd just have to believe in them. I'd like her to see that web of yours to-morrow after the Fairies are through with it—all strung with hundreds of tiny, shiny pearls and rubies and diamonds—and I'd ask her who put them there. The White Lady, now, is much wiser, and even Doll Dimple and Boy Blue know more than Miss Mattie."

"I agree with you," returned the Spider. "But—did you ever see the Dew Fairies?"

"No. I have never seen them, and I don't suppose you ever have. But I'll tell you why. We both sleep too sound at night. I have often thought I'd try to keep awake, just to see what they look like, but I can't. Sometimes I do keep awake a long time, but my eyes will go shut at last, and when I get them open again, there hang the jewels, and the fairies are gone. I need lots of sleep, else my eyes would lose their beauty. The flowers tell me that my eyes are lovely. Do you think they are?"

The Spider spun a slender thread, swung himself down quite close to the Toad, and took a good look at his eyes. "Yes," he answered. "I think the flowers are right. You have nice eyes. If only you had a body to match them, now—"

The Toad sighed patiently. "I shall be all beautiful—some day," he said in a half whisper.

"Nonsense!" laughed the Spider. "I never saw a really beautiful Toad yet."

"You won't either—here," said the Toad. "The flowers tell me a lovely story that I don't just understand, but I know it is true. They say my home—some day—is to be on one of those little stars away up in the sky. The stars are bigger than they look, you know, and there are millions of them, so there's lots of room for us without being in anybody's way."

The Spider was very much interested, and hardly knew whether to believe this strange story or not. "And when you get to this far-away Star," he asked, "will your whole body be as beautiful as your eyes?"

"As beautiful as my thoughts," the Toad corrected. "Here in the garden, my eyes give you tiny pictures of the things I see—flowers and dew-drops and sky and stars. But there, not only my eyes but my whole body will picture the things I love. That's what the flowers tell me."

"I wish the flowers would talk to me," said the Spider. "I'd like to ask them if there's a home for me, up there in a Star."

"Oh, I'm sure there is," replied the Toad assuringly. "The important thing is to get ready now to live there."

"I'm not so particular about beauty," said the Spider, after a thoughtful silence. "But I'll tell you what I do want—to be worthy of my title."

"Please explain yourself," said the Toad, somewhat puzzled.

"Did you ever wonder why I am called 'Sir Spider'?" I'll tell you. You know I lived some time ago in a school house, and I learned a lot of things there, especially something very interesting about my family."

"A long, long time ago, in a beautiful land called Scotland, there lived a good king, whose name was Bruce. His country and his people were in great danger, and he wanted to help them, but he didn't know how. And my great-great-great-great-grandfather helped him out of the difficulty. This is how it happened:—

"The King flung himself down in a dark corner alone to think of a plan by which his country and his people might be saved from their enemies. But he couldn't think of any plan at all, and he felt very sad and hopeless, until he happened to notice a spider trying to climb up his little rope to the high, high ceiling. It was a long, hard climb, and the spider fell back, tired out, several times. But he wouldn't give up, and at last, after many attempts and many failures, he got up to his home."

"The King saw that the spider had succeeded just because he kept on trying and didn't give up, and he thought: 'Why can't I do the same—keep on trying till I win?' He did keep on trying, and he did win."

"That's why I have 'Sir' before my name—because my great-great-great-great-grandfather, hundreds of years ago, helped a king to do a noble deed. But you know, I never did a great thing myself, and I want to, more than I want anything else in the world."

"That's a fine story," said the Toad. "I'm sure if the flowers heard it they would say you are travelling toward your Star—just because you want so much to be great and good. Just keep on thinking that way, and your chance will come, sooner or later. But, Sir Spider, why don't you go to the Jolly Animals' Club some evening and tell them that story? I'm sure they would be delighted."

But Sir Spider shook his head sadly. "You forget that they won't let me in until I have done something good. What my great-great-great-great-grandfather did ages ago won't satisfy your Professor Owl, nor open any doors for me."

"No. I don't suppose it would," replied the Toad slowly. "But you'll get your chance yet, never fear!"

Sir Spider's chance came sooner than either of them expected.

## Boys and Girls

My dear Cousins,—

As I write, I am wondering how many of you are planning to begin tobogganing right away? It almost looks as if winter has really begun, doesn't it? with snow staying on the roads, a cold wind blowing, and the sky that beautiful sharp blue we can only see in winter. I thought, somehow, when I made that expedition I told you about a few weeks ago, that that was going to be my last chance, and sure enough it was. I still keep wondering about my little place, though, and when I brought my wild berries home that day, Mrs. Cousin Mike got quite concerned about what the squirrels were going to do, for she was afraid I'd left none for them! She needn't have troubled, though. There were lots more in the trees, and a squirrel can climb a tree a lot better than Cousin Mike can—though he has done it many and many a time!

While we are on the subject of squirrels, I must tell you a tale about one that I saw this summer up in the lakes. He was a very saucy person, and we used to see him sometimes trying to get into the bread-box or the cake-tin—anything that was outside and had a lid on he felt bound to investigate. So one day, one of the boys had an idea. He tied a string to a half-eaten apple, which he laid carefully outside, a little way from the cottage. Then he hid himself behind a tree, holding the other end of the string, and waited. In a few minutes along came Mr. Squirrel, dodging about and sniffing at everything. Presently he saw the apple, seized it, took a bite, thought it was good, and dashed away with it. But—he didn't know that the boy was there, and he couldn't understand why he couldn't get away with the apple. So he tried again and again; the apple jerked itself away from him, and, to his amazement, began to tumble about in a very alarming fashion.

At this, he began to be angry, and he ran up the saw-horse and began to scold at the top of his voice. Bye-and-bye, though, he thought he'd have another shot. But this time he crept slowly up to the apple, with his eye on it all the time. When he reached it, he grabbed suddenly, sat up and began to nibble away as if he'd have to start for school in five minutes, and wasn't through his first course yet. Then he discovered the string, and without a second's stop, began to nibble that too! In less than no time, he had cut it right through, though he didn't realize for a minute or two that the apple was his. However, when he remembered that Mrs. Squirrel might like a bite, he left off eating, and jumped away, looking very surprised that he was still able to keep the apple!

The boy couldn't help laughing at the clever way he'd nibbled the string. So next day, he fixed a wire round the apple first, and then a string, and it was funnier than ever. Whenever the apple moved, the squirrel moved, sometimes nearer to it, sometimes with a big jump away. But he followed and followed till he got quite close to the house. Then the funniest thing happened. For a friend of his dropped down from a tree nearby, likewise desiring the apple, though when he came on the scene, our squirrel was so angry, he didn't know what to do. He chased his friend a little way, then ran back and chased the apple. Then when Mr. Friend came again, he just sat up and screamed at him, not daring to move in case the apple disappeared entirely. I never had such fun in my life as I did when I watched them. Somehow or other, he managed to detach the wire and get that apple. So



he was pretty smart, don't you think?

But look where I've got to! All this long letter, and no room for more, and I meant to say something quite different. But I can't depend on this pen. It's a new one, and I haven't disciplined it thoroughly yet. It will say what it wants to sometimes, and rather neglects me.

So goodbye for a few days,

Your affectionate

Cousin Mike.

Lieut.-Col. Bishop, V.C., D.S.O., M.C., the famous aviator, has been appointed an honorary aide-de-camp to the Governor-General.

A remarkable feat is said to have been performed by two French dogs during one of the German offensives. Their keeper stayed in the rear of the retreating French army till the last possible moment, waiting for his dogs to come back to him with a message. When they returned there was no way of escape except by swimming across the Marne. The man could not swim, but the dogs could. He chained them together and clung to the chain, and so they got him safely across under heavy fire. As dogs cannot be decorated, nor have the honour of a "citation," an account of the incident was posted up at all the kennels of the army.—Tjt-Bits.

The Medaille Militaire, which has recently been conferred upon Sir Douglas Haig, gives the Field Marshal a very rare distinction—one that he shares with Viscount French—for the decoration, which is a few years older than the V.C., is only bestowed upon privates, N.C.O.'s, and generals who have commanded-in-chief against the enemy. The ribbon of the Medaille Militaire is of yellow and green, and poilus who wear the striking combination of colours enjoy several pleasant privileges, besides a pension of 100 francs a year. While the holder of the decoration is on active service he is entitled to a salute from men of his own rank and to the presentation of arms by sentries, while he may stay out of barracks later than the ribbonless soldier.

## "Barber's Itch"

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