

Aunt Mary's Four Guests.

"The table is all set, Aunt Mary."

"All right," Aunt Mary answered, "we will have dinner as soon as the outdoor table is ready, too."

"Why," exclaimed Sue, "it's dreadful cold. Who would want to eat outdoors to-day?"

"I know it is cold," Aunt Mary replied, "and for that reason I must be all the more particular to spread a nice feast outdoors, for I have four guests who come to eat there every day."

Sue was very much puzzled, and she watched curiously while Aunt Mary brought out a piece of suet and a slice of bread, and cut them into small pieces.

"The table is under the elm tree, just outside the dining-room window, and the guests are a squirrel, a bluejay and two little birds called sapsuckers."

"Oh!" exclaimed Sue, beginning to understand.

"I like to feed them at dinner time," Aunt Mary continued, "because then I can watch them while I eat my own dinner. They have been lots of company for me this winter."

"Oh, I should think it would be nice!" exclaimed Sue. "Can I help set their table?"

"Yes, indeed," answered Aunt Mary; and then they went out together to the little shelf under the elm tree, and there they scattered the bits of bread and suet.

"The suet helps to keep them warm in the cold weather," Aunt Mary explained, as she placed the last piece upon the board.

Then they hurried in, for it was cold, as Sue had said, and in a moment more were ready for their own dinner, for Aunt Mary lived alone, and Sue had come to spend her holiday vacation with her.

It was only a few minutes before one of the little sapsuckers appeared, and began to peck eagerly at the suet. He was working busily away, when down the tree came the squirrel. The little sapsucker hastily caught a bit of suet in his bill and flew back to the limb of the tree.

"Oh, that is too bad," exclaimed Sue. "Won't they eat together?"

"No," said Aunt Mary. "Sometimes the squirrel and the bluejay will eat together for a time, for the bluejay is nearer the squirrel's size, but the little sapsuckers are afraid of them both, and usually the squirrel is king of the feast."

Just then a gorgeous bird, which Sue knew from the color of its feathers must be the bluejay, came boldly down beside Mr. Squirrel. He fluttered his

wings as though for a sign to the squirrel to leave, but the squirrel did not think he had had his share, and nibbled away on his bit of bread. Pretty soon he took another piece and ran with it up the tree. The bluejay flew off with a piece of suet, and in a twinkling the two sapsuckers flew down and began to eat.

"It's just too funny," said Sue, "the way they take turn about. I wish they would all come and eat peaceably together."

"I wish they would," said Aunt Mary, "but they have not become that friendly yet. Perhaps they may before the winter is over, but I am afraid not. I notice, though, that each one seems to get his share of the feast."

Just then Sam, Aunt Mary's cat, jumped upon the sewing machine which stood in front of the window.

"Oh!" said Sue in alarm, ready to run and take him down; but to her astonishment the two little birds went calmly on eating, and paid no attention to Sam, while Sam himself sat quietly by and watched the birds at their dinner.

Aunt Mary noticed Sue's look of amazement, and laughed.

"I don't wonder that you are surprised," she said, "but both Sam and the birds have learned that there is a good thick pane of glass between them. When they first began coming Sam was quite excited. He jumped upon the machine, scratched upon the glass, and of course frightened both birds and squirrel away. Then when they came again, he tried jumping for them, but he found that he only dashed his foolish little head against a very hard window pane. The birds, too, soon found that he could not reach them, and now they eat, as you see, while he sits and watches them."

Sue had almost forgotten her own dinner in her interest in the small visitors in "feathers and fur" just outside the window, and during all the rest of her stay with Aunt Mary she enjoyed her dinner more than any other meal, for she never tired of watching these small guests who seemed to find something different to do for her amusement every time they came to their outdoor table.—*J. D. Cowles, in Kindergarten Magazine and Pedagogical Digest.*

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