

doll, and with a little help from an older sister, dressed it prettily. When all was done she looked at it with shining eyes.

'Isn't it just lovely, mama?' she exclaimed. 'Won't Maggie be pleased!'

Brother Tom got interested, too, and he whittled some things. Then a bright thought struck him.

'I know where there are some pretty little pine trees up near Slater's pond. I'll bring one of them home, and we'll have a Christmas spread for Maggie. Her mother says she has sprained her ankle, so it can't be a very gay holiday-time for her at the best.'

Tom was as good as his word. A dainty little tree was found and trimmed, and just before dark on Christmas eve he and Alice carried it to Maggie's home.

How Maggie's eyes sparkled as she looked at her treasures, and then, catching up her crutch, she tripped gayly to the other side of the room, exclaiming:

'And just see here, too! These came from Gertrude Otis. I'm not going to touch them till mamma gets home from work and sees them, but look at them every little while.'

There on the table was a large box, containing a complete wardrobe for Maggie, from warm, bright hood to stout boots, and besides there was a lovely doll with golden curls.

'It's larger than yours,' said Maggie with a shy smile, 'but it isn't a bit prettier, and I shall love them both alike. How good everybody has been!'

'Well, now, who's the one to be ashamed, I'd like to know!' Alice exclaimed to herself a little later. 'You'd better be careful after this, Alice Daily, how you call folks stingy and other things that ain't nice, till you know for sure any way.'

### Rusty Blackbird's Christmas

(By Hope Daring).

'It's beginning to snow. Oh dear, oh dear! How I am going to get through the winter is more than I can tell.'

Rusty Blackbird stood on one foot, the other drawn up among his brownish-black feathers. He spread his wings and took refuge in the depths of the fir trees which grew in Farmer Steward's yard.

'It ought not to be so cold here, it really ought not,' he fretted. 'I had a right to expect different things.'

It is easier to find fault with others than to own we are wrong. When there is nothing else to blame the weather will do. If Rusty Blackbird had told the exact truth, he would have said:

'It serves me right for trying to winter here. I thought I knew best, and here I am.'

'Snowing, is it?' piped the Snowbird. He had hurt his wing a week before, and found it very difficult to fly.

'Yes.'

It was a gruff reply, and Snowbird shivered. At last he spoke again.

'I hope the snow will not be deep. Yet it is selfish for me to wish that just because it is hard for me to get food. The children enjoy the snow so much, and tomorrow is Christmas.'

'The children!' Rusty Blackbird's voice was a discordant cry. 'I hate children. As a family we have nothing to do with them. Our nests are always ten feet or more from the ground, so as to be safe from these same children.'

'Blackbirds live all about here,' Snowbird said timidly.

'They are Red-Wings, and only our cousins. Well, I must go over to the barn and see if I can find some grain.'

Snowbird sighed. 'I'm so hungry, but I don't believe I can fly to the barn.'

'Why, you'll starve if you don't,' and he flew away.

It snowed all night. When daylight came the earth was covered with a mantle of white.

The fir trees were planted in a circle, the long branches making of the inner circle a beautiful house. In warm weather little Nellie had her playhouse in the shady nook. Even that morning the enclosure was free from snow.

'I wish I was down there,' Snowbird said; 'perhaps I could find a crumb.'

Rusty Blackbird heard, but he only murmured:

'You might as well give up. It will be hard work for even me to find food this morning.'

Just then little Nellie entered the enclosure.

'Good morning, birdies, dear!' and the little face was uplifted. 'You are there, even if I don't see you. I wish you a merry Christmas, for this is the day when the dear Christ child came to the earth. To be like him we must be kind to others, so I've brought you a Christmas breakfast and a dinner, too. I'll feed you every day,' and she scattered crumbs and wheat on the ground, and fastened a small sheaf of wheat where the birds could pick it.

'Merry Christmas, birdies, good-bye!' Nellie called, waving her hand.

Rusty Blackbird peered through the green branches, watching her as long as he could see her scarlet cloak.

Christmas! Kind and helpful to others! There was Snowbird.

'I've been selfish,' he thought. 'Well, Christmas is a good time to commence to be better.'

He fluttered to the earth. Seizing a tempting crumb, he rose to the spot where Snowbird sat.

'Hear, dear, take this.'

'Oh, thank you, thank you! I don't believe I can fly down there.'

'You don't need to. I will feed you,' and a moment later another crumb was waiting Snowbird's pleasure.

'You're so good!' the lame bird murmured. 'And it's Christmas.'

'Yes, it's Christmas.' Rusty Blackbird's voice was no longer discordant, but clear and gleeful.

Nellie was on the porch. She understood what the "tehach, tehack" of the bird meant, for she nodded her brown head and said:

'Yes, it's Christmas.'

—'Michigan Christmas Advocate.'

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