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BIRDS OF THE MERRY FOREST
By **LILIAN LEVERIDGE**
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CHAPTER XXVIII. (Continued.)
Letters From Home.

"Boy Blue was so lonesome and restless yesterday that I went out with him for a walk in the Tamarack Swamp. It is lovely there. We gathered a nice bouquet of flowers, and then sat down at the foot of the Twin Cedars and watched the birds for nearly an hour. I was so interested that I quite forgot how tired I was, and Boy Blue brightened up wonderfully. He told me a good deal I didn't know about the birds. There were a great many all around us. They seem to be fond of the swamp, but stay mostly near the edge for, as Daddy says, not very many birds choose the solitude of the deep woods. Most of them like human society—at a safe distance of course.

"I was particularly interested in the Flickers. Of course I have seen hundreds of them before, down in the grass hunting for ants and things or drumming on dead trees in search of the insects hidden there.

"But I had never been so close to one of them before, and I was surprised to find how beautiful it was. It had looked to me before like a dull brown bird with a white patch on its back; but when one of them perched on a bush just a yard or two away from us, I found out that it is quite a handsome bird.

"Boy Blue was quite excited, for he had never seen one so close before. He said you hadn't either, so I'll tell you what the Flicker is like when you meet him at his own garden gate.

"His coat is brownish, barred with black, and the wings and tail are yellow on the under side. When he flies in the sun this yellow takes on quite a golden hue, and it must be for that reason he is sometimes called the Golden-winged Woodpecker. High-hole, High-holder, and Yellow-hammer are some more of his names. I wonder why one bird should have so many. He has black stripes on the sides of his throat and a black crescent on his breast. This black must have been given to show off by contrast the pretty pinkish fawn color of his throat. There is a red band on the back of his neck which shows beautifully against the brown.

"Nature is a wonderful painter, and people who never see the birds at close range miss a great deal of beautiful colouring and artistic pattern. I have missed a lot myself, but you know mothers have so many things to see to that they have to depend a good deal on other people's eyes.

"Mr. Flicker, after taking a good look at us and letting us take a good look at him, flew down off the bush and began pecking in the grass. We soon found that he was at an ant hill, and was making a very hearty meal off the inhabitants of the little ant city.

"Wouldn't it be dreadful to be an ant and have a great big bird ever so much bigger than you, come and gobble you up without so much as giving you time to say good-bye? I tell you, Dimple, when I stop to think of it it seems to me that you and I with all our troubles have a great deal still to be thankful for. You have a broken arm, and I have lost my little girl for a while, but it might be worse for both of us—if we were ants!

"After a little while our friend flew away to a dead tree not far away. He lit and clung just in front of a hole near the top, and what do

you think we saw?—Some little heads peeping out, asking for something to eat.

"Daddy bird seemed to be feeding them, though we hadn't seen him carry anything away. Your Daddy says the Flickers swallow the food first and are able to get it back in something the same way a cow gets her cud to chew. That is an easier way of feeding their young, and saves them a good many trips. Soon after, we saw the mother bird come to a little bank near by and pick some strawberries, which she fed to the children in the same way.

"Daddy has been helping Mr. West to get in his hay to-day, for it looks like rain, and Boy Blue went with him. I hear their voices at the gate now, so I must hurry and get tea ready. They are sure to be hungry.

"Good-bye, my darling. Try to be as happy as you can.

"Your loving Mother."

"What a nice letter!" the nurse said when she had finished reading it. "I should like to know your mother."

"O! You'd just love her," Dimple replied eagerly, "and Daddy and Boy Blue too. Read Daddy's letter next, please."

Dimple, however, had to wait a whole hour for that other letter, for the nurse was suddenly called away, and in her haste laid the precious folded sheets on a table just out of the little patient's reach.

She was not impatient and the hour passed quickly; for her Mother's letter seemed to have opened a magic gate through which she passed, in thought, to the old familiar region of caressing sunshine and spicy breezes, of smiling flower faces and cool green leaves where the friendly feathered folk made their homes. There, with Mother and Boy Blue under the Twin Cedars, pain and loneliness were laughed away; the roar of the street traffic became the music of wind in the pines, and the honk of motor cars softened to the piping of homing birds.

(To be continued.)

PUZZLE CORNER.

1. Riddles.

1. Why would a sixth sense be undesirable?
2. Why is a pig a paradox?
3. Why is the sun like a well-made loaf?

2. Word Diamond.

The head of a pin; an old English beverage; a board; the conclusion of a thing; the eighth consonant.

3. Beheaded Word.

Complete, I am increasing; behead me, and I am an aquatic pastime; behead again, and I am due; behead a third time, and I am part of a bird; behead again and transpose, and I am a beverage; behead a fifth time, and I am a preposition.
Answers next week.

Answers for Last Week's Puzzles.

1. Growing.
2. BANK. AREA. NEAT. KATE.
3. The image of one's face in a looking-glass.
4. Look around you all ways and see that nothing vexes or crosses your eyes. C. A. B. H.

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An evil example is a spiritual poison: it is the proclamation of a sacrilegious faith. . . . Sin would be only an evil for him who commits it were it not a crime towards the weak brethren whom it corrupts.—Amiel.



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