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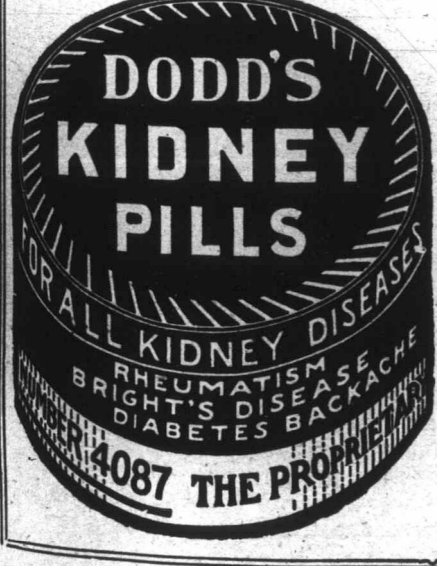


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Boys and Girls

Birds of the Merry Forest

BY LILLIAN LEVERIDGE
(Copyright applied for)
CHAPTER XXIV. (Continued.)
The World of Books.

Dimple was ready enough to help, for she always took a pride in learning to do little things around the house. She set out the dishes, while Boy Blue slipped into his rainy-day outfit and gathered a fragrant bouquet of roses and sweet alyssum for the table.

The simple repast was soon ready. Meals at the Red Cottage were never elaborate or extravagant, but always nourishing and dainty. To-day the potato puffs, salad and rhubarb pie, with whipped cream, seemed like a holiday feast.

After dinner Daddy went to his workshop again, Mother to the sewing machine and the children to their books. Having discussed their reading with Mother, they went out to the workshop, where a surprise awaited them.

Daddy was just putting the finishing touches to the dearest little bookcase, which he said was to be their very own. It contained two sections, one for each of them, and after being stained and varnished would be ready to occupy its own little niche in the library.

"Your books won't near fill it yet," he said, "but no doubt your library will grow up with you—especially if you make such good progress in reading as you have done to-day."

The children could scarcely contain their delight. "Life seems full of lovely surprises, Daddy," said Boy Blue. "To-day seems just bubbling over with them."

Daddy laughed. "Don't waste the overflow," he advised. "If you keep always on the lookout you can generally find someone to share your happiness with."

"I tell you what, Daddy," said Boy Blue, thoughtfully, "I wish Jimmie could join our reading circle in the evening. I don't believe anyone ever reads to him, and I know he would just love it."

"Good idea," said Daddy. "If it weren't so wet you might run over and invite him, but you would be drenched going through the woods."

"I have an idea," said Dimple. "Just wait."

It had stopped raining for a few minutes, and without a word of explanation she dashed across the yard and into the house.

In a short time she returned with a small, sealed envelope addressed to Jimmie, and with a string through one corner. "See!" she cried, breathlessly. "I've written a note to Jimmie, asking him to come. There's two of his pigeons here, and you can catch one easy, Boy Blue, they are so tame. Tie this on to its foot, and it will be sure to fly home, and maybe Jimmie will get the note. Just try it."

The boy was delighted with the idea, and acted at once on the suggestion. It was easy enough, for the birds had no fear of him.

"Now, fly straight home," he said, as he let the pigeon go, "and be sure to give this letter to Jimmie as soon as he comes home from school."

The two white pigeons flew over the meadow and the woods and were soon out of sight. "I do wonder if he'll come," said Boy Blue.

Sure enough, a little before eight o'clock, the time set, Jimmie arrived,

proud and happy. He wore a water-proof coat and long rubber boots, but the rain was over and the sun shining radiantly on the wet, glistening world.

"Oh! I'm so glad you came," called Boy Blue, and Dimple echoed the welcome.

"You may be jolly sure I wouldn't decline an invitation like that," he returned, "not if I had to swim."

In the cosy library, with windows wide open to the fresh, flower-laden air, the little circle gathered on this first evening, though afterwards the veranda was their usual meeting-place.

Mr. and Mrs. Marlowe, whose voices were pleasant and expressive, took turns in reading. There was some quality in that sweet, simple story, so beautifully told, that held them all spellbound. The beginning contained nothing about the bird; it was all about a boy, who lived where Warblers were unheard of. But they all felt that the boy on the rim of the city and the bird in the heart of the wild would some day meet, drawn by the magnet of the undefined love and longing in the boy's heart.

There were not many chapters, and Jimmie came every evening until the book was finished. As the story progressed there was much that Dimple and Boy Blue could not fully grasp as yet, but they enjoyed the story, and its beauty left on their young minds an impression that time could never quite efface. Besides this, it strengthened their ambition to read understandingly and unlock for themselves the golden treasure stores of literature.

A few weeks later Jimmie was delighted to find on his Composition paper at the examination the question, "Tell, briefly, the story of some book you have read." Jimmie told the story of "The Kentucky Warbler" so beautifully that he won full marks on the paper, and the examiners never forgot his name.

CHAPTER XXV.
"Follow the Gleam."

IT was a still, sultry night in July. The household in the Red Cottage had long ago retired to rest, but Boy Blue could not sleep. After tossing restlessly in his bed for what seemed to him half the night he got up and went to the window.

"Oh! How lovely!" he whispered. "Not much wonder I couldn't sleep when all out-doors is calling to me!"

It seemed, indeed, true. It was a perfect jewel of a summer's night. The full moon laughed down out of a clear blue sky, and sprinkled ethereal silver showers over the glistening, dewy world; the stars winked in a friendly manner; the air was heavy with an intoxicating blend of new-mown hay, roses and other flower perfumes.

In the old garden, Shadow, the Whip-poor-will, was singing with all his might, while a cricket tuned up his little violin, and a Killdeer circled and called above the Merry Forest. It might have been fancy—the boy couldn't be quite certain—but he thought he heard the Canterbury bells ringing a fairy chime. Hither and thither a score of fireflies, their tiny lanterns alight, were searching for some lost, illusive magic of the night.

"Surely that one is beckoning to me," thought the boy, suddenly. "Perhaps they are playing a game of 'Follow the Leader.' How nice it would be to go and join them!"



Instantly there floated into his mind a line of a poem he had heard Daddy reading to Mother:—

"After it, follow it,
Follow the Gleam."

Though he had felt the beauty of the poem, he had not quite understood it at the time, but now it seemed quite clear. It must have been fireflies the poet meant. Yes, truly, he would follow the Gleam, no matter where it might lead.

(To be Continued.)



Could Not Sleep

Mr. Earnest Clark, Police Officer, 338 King St., Kingston, Ont., writes:

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