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Birds of the Merry Forest

By LILIAN LEVERIDGE

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CHAPTER V.

A Council of Three.

BLACK-CAP the Chickadee and Neddy the Nuthatch talked the matter over long and carefully. They were delighted—yes, more than delighted, they were fairly crazy with joy—to think of that doctor's prescription. Oh! he was well named. He was a wise doctor, and no mistake about it.

"I tell you," said Neddy to Mr. Bluejay, who had just flown to the birch tree to see what the confab was about, "I tell you, that's one man who didn't go to school for nothing. He learned more than the seven times table. The idea of making a child cram his poor, little head with such nonsense! Not much wonder it ached, poor, little mite!"

Mr. Bluejay nodded approvingly. "I've met Dr. Wise lots of times, and he's a man you can trust—wouldn't hurt a boy or a bird or a lady-bug for a fortune. Whistles like a Bobolink and smiles like a sunflower. That's the kind! I wish people of that sort multiplied as quick as caterpillars, but they're not as plenty as they might be."

"Of course," commented the Chickadee, thoughtfully, "there's any number of bad, cruel people in the world, but it's my opinion that there are more good people than bad, if we only knew, and that half the bad ones are just thoughtless and ignorant. If they understood that we birds have feelings like they have—that we suffer and enjoy, love and hate, hope and fear, just as people do—they would be more careful not to hurt us."

"Yes," agreed the Nuthatch; "and if they knew how hard we work for their benefit they'd be mighty good to us."

"If they only knew," put in Mr. Bluejay, "but they don't know, and what can we do about it?"

"Teach them," answered Black-Cap. "All very well—it's easy enough to talk—but how are we going to set about it?"

"We might begin on Dimple and Boy Blue."

"Huh!" laughed Mr. Bluejay, with a scornful frown of his tail, "that's a clever idea, that is! How much teaching do Dimple and Boy Blue need? Don't they love us birds already? I guess you mean, begin on those boys over in the Ridge School, who steal birds' nests and eggs and throw stones at anything in feathers."

"No; I don't mean the Ridge School boys," answered the Chickadee with quiet dignity. "I mean just what I say—begin on Dimple and Boy Blue. Of course, I know they love us—a few of us. But that's just it. There's only a few of us birds they know by sight even; hundreds of birds right in this same Merry Forest they have never heard of. And as for our work, they haven't learned the A B C about it. Bless their little hearts! They think we're just amusing ourselves all day long. Just let us put a wrinkle or two in their clever little brains and trust them to pass the word along."

"Very well spoken, Black-Cap," said Neddy.

Mr. Bluejay put his handsome blue-crested head perkily on one side and said good-naturedly, "I guess your little head is longer than it looks, Black-Cap. We'll let it go at that, anyway. But how do you propose to teach the twins?"

"I haven't thought it all out yet," said Chickadee, "but I've been thinking at it, and I want you all to think. I've begun by inviting them here; but Boy Blue may not be able to come yet, he's pretty tired. I'll find out tomorrow, and if he has to stay in and rest, suppose we give them a little surprise party to begin with."

"A surprise party!" all the birds exclaimed in one voice, "Why, how do you mean?"

"He'll be sitting by the window in his little room, or lying on the bed, maybe, and Dimple will be there, too. Now, there's a big, old apple tree that just reaches up to the window and taps against the pane. It would hold quite a flock of birds. Suppose we all go together with as many other birds as we can coax to join us, and perch in that tree, and have a little chat with them. We needn't stay very long, but I'm just sure they'd be as glad as anything to see us."

"Well, upon my word!" cried Mr. Bluejay, nodding his head approvingly, "that's a great idea! A famous idea! We'll do it. I know that old apple tree, a very pleasant resting place. At what time shall we plan to have this party?"

"Hadn't we better tell the other birds about it first?" suggested the Chickadee, "and then choose a time to suit them all."

To this they all agreed, and very soon the little group broke up, all flying in different directions to carry invitations to the Surprise Party.

QUITE A DIFFERENCE.

"Your greatest enemy is whiskey," said the parson to an incorrigible member of his flock.

"But," said the wayward one, "you have always told us to love our enemies."

"Yes," answered the good man, "but not to swallow them."

LENGTHY WIND-UP.

A young man was waiting for a young lady at the church door.

"Isn't the sermon nearly done?" he inquired of the verger.

"No, sir; another hour of it yet. He's only on his 'lastly.'"

"But will it take him an hour to get through his 'lastly'?"

"No, sir," was the verger's demure reply; "but there's the 'one word more and I am done,' and the 'finally,' and the 'in conclusion' to come yet."

WHO KISSED THE VICAR?

People in West Surrey are asking, "Who kissed the bashful bachelor Vicar of Addlestone?"

The Rev. A. Cuming, the Vicar, writing in the current issue of his parish magazine, said: "I have hitherto in life had but little difficulty in resisting the blandishments of the fair sex, but not long since, in the course of my pastoral visitation, I was saluted by an adult female in the early Christian way—that is, with the kiss of peace! A decided attempt was made to administer this sign of Christian friendship a second time, but with great dexterity I eluded my fair persecutor."