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Boys and Girls

Birds of the Merry Forest

BY LILLIAN LEVERIDGE

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CHAPTER XXVI.

The Great Grey Bird.

THE blue velvet shadows were lengthening over Lonely Lake as the sun slipped behind the trees, and Shadow, the Whip-poor-will, slowly awoke from his long sleep. He had been roused by the sound of voices, which he recognized as those of Downy and Redhead, the Woodpecker cousins.

"You don't expect me to believe that yarn, do you?" Downy was saying.

"I tell you it isn't a yarn; it's every word true," replied Redhead with some spirit. "You spend your life in this out-of-the-way spot, and when anybody more venturesome than yourself tells you what is going on in the great, wide, wonderful world, you think it's all fairy tales."

With a soft rustle of his shadowy wings, the Whip-poor-will joined the two cousins, eager to hear more. "What is it all about?" he asked. "I was asleep and missed your story, Redhead, but I'd like to hear about the great, wide, wonderful world."

Redhead welcomed a more appreciative listener. "You see," he began with a proud toss of his crimson head (he was one of the handsomest of the Woodpecker family, and he knew it), "I have been living near a big, splendid city on the shore of a beautiful lake too wide to see across, and I have always been very fond of visiting the lovely parks. Thousands and thousands of people live in the city, but I am never afraid of them, for I don't believe there is a single one who would touch me.

"Well, as I was telling Downy, I have often seen a most wonderful bird flying over the city—a huge grey bird with great wings that never flap. Sometimes they look grey, and sometimes they flash like gold in the sun. It has a short, flat tail, and a queer-shaped head, with the face of a man. It flies away, away up in the sky. A bird the size of you or me would never be seen so high up as that. It breathes so hard that you can often see its breath, and it makes a strange, loud buzzing sound all the time it is flying. It is a bird of mystery. It gives me a queer feeling every time I see it, and I can't make it out at all."

"Perhaps it is an Eagle," Downy suggested.

"An Eagle!" cried Redhead scornfully. "An Eagle would be nowhere beside this bird. I guess a good many Eagles could perch on its back and wings. Besides, there's nothing mysterious about an Eagle, but this great grey Bird—I simply can't make you understand what it is like."

Shadow listened in silence. The story of this wonderful Bird interested and fascinated him strangely. He longed to know more, and to see it for himself.

"I've seen flocks of Pigeons and other birds try to follow it," Redhead went on, "but it was a foolish chase, for they could never fly so high nor so swiftly. 'I'd be afraid to go near it myself; it could swallow you or me as easily as we would swallow a mosquito. And the marvellous things it can do in the air—diving and twisting and circling. But I won't try to tell you; you'd never believe me, never!'"

Redhead refused to tell any more; he said it was nearly his bedtime

and he was sleepy. But Shadow was very wide awake. Noiselessly he flew through the darkening woods to the deserted garden; and there, all night long, he put into his song all his wonder and longing for a glimpse of the great grey Bird.

Before long all the birds in the Merry Forest had heard the story. Some believed and wondered, but a great many only laughed.

At last, however, on a never-to-be-forgotten day, the bird of mystery flew over the Merry Forest. There was no mistaking it—its great grey wings that never flapped, flashing golden in the noonday sun; its strange, buzzing song; its little clouds of misty breath—all were even more wonderful than Redhead's story. Little else was talked of in the Merry Forest for several days, and those who had missed the sight were sick with envy of the rest.

Shadow was one of these; he had of course been taking his usual noonday nap, and even if he had been awake his eyes would not have stood the strong light in that dazzling, cloudless sky.

But from the very depths of sadness he rose suddenly to the heights of joy.

It was just after sunset, on a still, moonlight night. Shadow was in a little oak tree on the top of Windy Hill, when, faint and far away, but growing louder every minute, he heard the strange buzzing song of the great Bird. He knew what it was, and his whole body quivered with excitement. Was the bird of mystery going to fly over? Would he see it in the sky?

(To be continued.)

FROM — TO —

While on a railroad train, did you ever stop to consider how many different men are involved in bringing you safely to your destination? Train dispatchers, telegraph keymen, signal-towermen, trackmen and the engineer himself, all are diligently responsive and awake to every condition that may aid in bringing you safely to your journey's end.

WORKS BOTH WAYS.

"One by one our children leave us," said the mother sadly, as the fourth daughter started on her wedding journey.

"Yes," replied the father, a little more sadly, "and one by one they bring our sons-in-law back to us."

ANOTHER ITEM.

"This bill of yours—why, it makes my blood boil!" the indignant patient stormed.

"Ah!" the man of medicine returned calmly, "in that case we must make a little change," and, taking the bill he added the line:

"To making blood boil and thereby sterilizing system, \$25."

SELF-EFFACEMENT.

"Leonidas!" exclaimed Mrs. Meekton, "are you aware that I was reading my essay on politics aloud to you?"

"Yes, my dear."
"But you went to sleep."
"Why not? You removed every doubt so thoroughly and solved every problem so completely that I saw no further reason for retaining personal consciousness."