

BOYS AND GIRLS

Comical Joe.

A TRUE STORY OF AN AFRICAN GRAY PARROT.

(Mrs. W. B. Dingman, in 'Human Alliance.')

One bright afternoon in April I started out to make a few calls. The visit at the home of the first friend proved so interesting that the afternoon passed with but one call to my credit.

While waiting in the parlor for my friend I was surprised by the familiarity with which I was addressed by an unseen and unknown individual from an adjoining room. 'Hello! Are you cold?' My surprise was too great to admit of a reply. 'Are you cold?' again repeated the forward individual. I moved uneasily in my chair, and felt obliged to answer, 'No, thank you; I'm quite comfortable,' when to my great astonishment the questioner broke

has lived with us sixteen years, and was eleven years old when we got him, and, of course, during this time we have become very fond of each other.'

At this point Joe broke into the conversation, endeavoring to change the subject, crying: 'Joe wants some cracks.' Cracks is a word of Joe's own coinage, meaning nuts of all kinds, of which he is very fond.

'Well! well!' again interrupted Joe, evidently thinking the presence of the stranger took up his mistress' time and he might be deprived of the coveted cracks, and he called out in a very modest and dignified tone, 'Good-by!' evidently hoping I would take the hint and go.

'Joe causes no end of amusement,' continued his mistress. 'We usually spend the summer at our cottage by the lake, and of course Joe accompanies us. Last season our goods were loaded on the waggon, when we decided Joe might ride with the driver, thus saving me this extra care and

then the burrod would play the mischief by a-screaming out 'Whoa!' and instantly the horses would stop. Sure the horses weren't to blame, for I myself could have believed it was myself a-saying "Whoa!" 'But where's the bird now?' I asked anxiously. 'There, ma'am, I knowed we'd not reach here for a long time to come unless I did something wid the burrod; so I put his cage down betwixt the boxes and covered him up wid carpet, and wid all respect to you, ma'am, I hope he has gone to slape, and may he niver wake up again until you want him to,' he remarked, apologetically. I was so glad for the safe arrival of my pet that I had not the heart to reprove Pat, and when I lifted Joe from the cage he hid his glossy neck upon my breast and in most pathetic tones muttered: 'Oh, oh! Poor Joe! Kiss poor Joe!'

The visit which I was enjoying, and which I desired to prolong that I might learn more of this most intelligent bird, seemed now about to be cut short, for I heard the neigh of approaching horses and the "Whoa!" of the driver. 'Your coachman? You were going for a drive?' I said inquiringly. But Joe had succeeded in deceiving me too. It was only Joe. He could not keep still, and he shouted again 'Whoa! Get up!' in tones that would have deceived the most acute hearing.

Joe does not enjoy cold weather, and gives vent to his chilly feelings in most expressive terms, but when the thermometer in 90 degrees in the shade he enjoys life immensely; he sings, whistles and talks constantly.

Just at this point he broke out with one of his favorite songs, 'Shoo fly, don't bother me, for I belong to Company—' and no amount, of persuasion would induce him to tell to what company he belonged.

'My husband brought with him to dinner one day a friend for whom he held the greatest esteem, and of course desired to make the occasion a pleasant one. This particular friend was quite bald, and as this was the first bald head that Joe had ever seen, it seemed to amuse him immensely. After eyeing the visitor a moment in a most curious fashion, he broke out in a shrill voice: "Well, well! Hello, old to! Hello! hello! hello!" but our discomfort was relieved, as our guest seemed to enjoy the joke heartily. But now when we expect visits from bald-headed friends we endeavor to keep Joe out of sight.'

'Joe also has a rather uncomfortable way of breaking out with a fearful, shrill "Hoopla!" or a tremendous, base "Rats!" when a seemingly doubtful story or statement of unusual magnitude is made, particularly when visitors are present with whom we are not very well acquainted, always seeming to know just when he can cause the greatest embarrassment.

'Joe dislikes above all things to be called Polly, and the boys in the neighborhood discovering this, when passing the house, if Joe is in sight, are sure to call out in the most tantalizing tones, "Polly want a cracker" which of all things to Joe is the most insulting. He become frantic with rage, beating himself against the sides of his cage with very anger, screaming frantically. Lately he has taken a more sensible view of the situation, and when he sees the tormentors coming, anticipating their intention, he begins, in tones of most cutting sarcasm, "Polly want a cracker?" and so accurately does he imitate the tone of each boy he hears that the boys have at length been compelled to "see themselves as others



DRAT THE BASTE OR ANIMAL OR WHATEVER HE MAY BE

out with a rough 'Ha! ha! ha!'—a piece of most startling impudence, I thought. At this point I was greatly relieved by the appearance of my hostess, who, after greeting me, said: 'Joe has evidently been entertaining you.' 'Some one has been talking to me from the adjoining room, probably thinking he knew me,' I said, trying at least to be charitable. 'Oh, that's a way Joe has; he feels it his duty to entertain every visitor.' 'Is Joe your brother?' I asked, really wishing to give the young man some needed advice in the matter of etiquette. 'Joe is our parrot; nice fellow, too. Aren't you, Joe?' 'Nice fellow! Ha! ha! ha!' was the quick reply. 'Was it really, then, a bird who tried to entertain me before you entered?' I was intensely interested, and besought my hostess to tell more of this remarkable bird that, to me, seemed almost human. 'There is so much to tell, I scarcely know where to begin. Joe

attention. Accordingly, the cage was placed upon the seat of the waggon and we had no further concern for the safe arrival of our goods or our pet. We reached the cottage, however, several hours before the waggon, and, wondering what could be the cause of the delay, became very anxious, fearing that all was not well; but we were soon greatly relieved by seeing the team pulling up the long hill from the lake shore, and as it neared the cottage there was a general expression of surprise as nothing was to be seen either of Joe or his cage. 'Where's Joe, the parrot?' we asked in concert of Pat, the driver. With face flushed with anger he said: 'Drat the baste or animal or whatever he may be. Not a blessed thing could I do wid him a-perched up by me side. You know yourself all the load I had on, and it was all the horses could do to be moving the thing along, and whin all would be a-going well, sure it was