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**Birds of the Merry Forest**

By LILIAN LEVERIDGE

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**CHAPTER VII.**

**Mr. Bluejay Rescues the Twins.**

ON the evening of the Surprise Party Neddy Nuthatch, in his snug, little home in the elm, had just dropped off to sleep when he was awakened by an unusual noise outside. He lifted up his head and listened. There seemed to be a lot of birds talking. Mr. Bluejay's loud voice could be heard above the rest, but there were others. Wondering what it could all be about, he hopped up to the doorway and peeped out.

It was almost as light as day in the Merry Forest. There was still a slight rose flush in the western sky, and just across the Winding River the big, silver moon was climbing above the tree-tops. How lovely everything looked! The snow, what there was left of it, glistened whitely along the river banks; every branch and twig was tipped with silver; every bit of moss and lichen touched by the moonlight looked like the work of some fairy silversmith.

Neddy was so struck with the beauty of it and the thought of how much he had missed by being such a sleepy head that just for a moment he forgot what had roused him, but a startling word from Mr. Bluejay put everything else out of his head, and he looked up.

In the tree-tops just above were a group of Bluejays, Owls, Woodpeckers, Crows and a few Redpolls. They, too, seemed half turned to silver, and the picture was certainly pretty, but Neddy scarcely noticed it, for his curiosity was by this time fully aroused.

"Yes, siree!" Mr. Bluejay was saying. "Those twins came as near getting spanked as they ever did in their lives. I was just in the nick of time." "Tell us about it! Tell it! Tell it!" the birds cried all together.

"Just a minute, please," begged Neddy, flying into the midst of the group. "If you are going to tell a story about the twins, Mr. Bluejay, wait till I call the Chickadees. They have a right to hear it, if anybody has."

"All right, then, but look alive!" said Mr. Bluejay.

Neddy quickly disappeared amid the silvery tree-tops, and in a minute or two returned with half a dozen Chickadees. These all perched on a bough near Mr. Bluejay, who at once began his story. Mr. Bluejay had a special fondness for telling stories, and a good one like this, with himself for hero, and with such an interested audience, was just to his liking.

"When the rest of you birds flew home from the surprise party," he began, "I went only half-way and then turned back. I had a sort of feeling that the twins were in danger of something and needed me."

"Caw! caw!" laughed an old crow, with a flap of his black wings. "I guess what you really felt the need of was another peck at that suet."

Mr. Bluejay lifted his blue crest with an air of offended dignity and said, "Well, if you know all about it, Sooty, you may as well go on and tell it."

At this the other birds made such noisy protest that Sooty thought he had better keep still, and when all was quiet again Mr. Bluejay went on:

"I wasn't afraid of the cat, because I knew he didn't belong there. Our friends don't keep a cat, and their little fox terrier, Nino, is a sworn foe

of the whole cat tribe. And, sure enough, I was just in time to see the tip of the cat's tail disappearing over the fence, and to hear Nino laying down the law in pretty plain terms.

"Well, I heard excited voices in the dining-room, and there I saw Dimple and Boy Blue and their mother. As there were double windows, I couldn't catch all they said; but, I heard enough to find out that the twins, all wild with excitement, were trying to tell their mother all about our surprise party, but she wouldn't listen, and was trying to hush them up because she thought it wasn't true.

"It was some job to hush up those twins, believe me! and she didn't make much headway with them. But when I heard her calling them 'Dorothy' and 'Frederick,' I knew it was pretty serious. At last she said she'd have to tell their Daddy, and left them sitting forlorn on two chairs, with all the sunshine gone from their little faces.

"I skidooed round to the library, where I knew Daddy was. The window there was open, so I could peek right in and see and hear everything.

"Daddy was sitting in his big arm-chair before the open fireplace, where a little wood fire was burning. Mother came right up to his chair and said in a tremulous voice, 'Daddy, I'm afraid you'll have to spank the twins.'

"What! he cried; and you should have seen the surprise on his face. 'They need spanking,' she went on, 'and I—I can't do it.'

"Why? What have they been up to?" he asked.

"Telling stories again," she said. "It's really getting to be alarming. They will insist on saying that the birds gave them a surprise party, and they tell me the most outlandish things that those birds said to them. We mustn't let it go on. I'm so afraid they'll grow up to be liars."

"Daddy looked very grave. 'Send the kids to me,' he said, 'and I'll see what I can do with them.'

"So she went out, and pretty soon in came the twins. They were not in their usual merry spirits, but looked half-eager, half-fearful, as they hung back, just inside the door.

"Daddy called them to him, and they came and stood at his knee. 'What's this I hear about you?' he asked, gravely.

"O Daddy!" Boy Blue burst out, 'Mother doesn't believe it, but it's really true. The birds did talk to us, and they said such funny things.'

"I should think they did!" put in Dimple. 'We both heard them say the same things, didn't we, Boy Blue?'

"Frederick! Dorothy!" said Daddy, sternly. 'You know you are not telling the truth. You know birds can't talk. When you used to tell yarns about the cave of Fireflies your Mother and I didn't stop you, because we thought you would know better when you grew older. You are old enough now to know the truth from a lie. To tell a story when we all know it is a story is all right, but to try to make anyone believe something which isn't true, as you are doing now, is telling lies, which is very wicked, and you've got to stop it at once.'

"Now, my son, you first. I want you to own up that you were not telling the truth, say you are sorry, and promise not to do it again.'

"Boy Blue didn't answer, and, after waiting a little while, Daddy said, 'Aren't you going to do as I say, son?'

**Will You?**

LATELY we have been urging our subscribers who are in arrears to remit without waiting for an account. We appreciate the effort of those who responded so promptly, but there are many more who we have yet to hear from.

If you are one of these will you please send us your remittance at your very earliest convenience and oblige.

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