

W.A.
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 ay, April 16th.
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 7.) on May 13th,
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POINTMENTS.

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Birds of the Merry Forest
 By LILIAN LEVERIDGE
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CHAPTER VIII.
The Robins' Return.

"Sing me a song of the Springtime—
 Merrily, merrily, merrily!
 Bud-time, blossom-time, wing-time—
 Cheerily, cheerily, cheerily!"

Over and over again, Boy Blue heard this song in his dreams. The notes were sweet and clear and ringing, like the chiming of little, silver bells. Lovely pictures of green leaves and apple blossoms and running brooks seemed to pass before his eyes, until he suddenly found himself wide awake. The leaves and blossoms were gone, but the bells kept on ringing that little, cheery tune. What was it? He lay perfectly still for half a minute—then he knew.

"Dimple!" he called, bouncing up off the pillow as if his head were a rubber ball. "Dimple! Here's the Robins come back."

Dimple slept in the next room, and the door between was always open.

There was a sudden thud of bare feet on the floor, and the next moment, Dimple, all rosy in her warm, pink nightie, was beside her slim, blue-robed brother at the open window.

"Oh!" cried Dimple, softly, "it's our own dear Robins home again. Aren't they early? They must have been travelling in the night."

It was early. The eastern sky was rapidly changing from old-rose to blue and gold, but the sun was still below the horizon.

"Good morning! Good morning! Little curly heads!" called the Robins.

"Good morning, you dear Robins!" the children returned. "And welcome home again!" Boy Blue added. "We're ever so glad to see you."

"It's ever so long since you went away," said Dimple. "Where have you been all this time? Won't you tell us about your journey, and all you've seen and done?"

Sir Robin winked his tail and Lady Robin winked her eye, and then they both laughed.

"That's a pretty big order, seems to me," said Sir Robin. "You must think birds have nothing more to do than boys and girls."

"Oh!" said Boy Blue, "they haven't! You birds don't work, do you?"

"Don't work!" they both cried loudly. "Don't work! Well, that's a good one!"

"Who do you suppose," asked Sir Robin, "is going to build us a new house if we don't work? And who's going to get us our meals, and keep our brown coats and new red vests clean and tidy, and lay eggs and feed and train a hungry family—or most likely two families—before we fly south again, and keep the bugs and worms and caterpillars from eating up the fruit and vegetables—who's going to do all that if we birds don't work?"

Boy Blue had no words to express his surprise—for this was quite a new idea—so he just whistled.

"I guess that will keep you pretty busy," Dimple admitted.

"Yes, it certainly will," Sir Robin replied. "Ask us again when our second brood is able to take care of itself. Then if we have time for that long story—well, we'll see, we'll see."

"Oh!" chirped Lady Robin. "I'm so glad, glad, glad to be home again in the dear Northland! When I think of all the lovely days ahead of us I've simply got to sing."

That was just the way Sir Robin felt, and they both burst into a regular torrent of silvery song:—

"Sing me a song of the Springtime—
 Merrily, merrily, merrily!
 Bud-time, blossom-time, wing-time—
 Cheerily, cheerily, cheerily!"

"Sing to the blue skies above us—
 Merrily, merrily, merrily!
 Sing to the sweethearts that love us—
 Cheerily, cheerily, cheerily!"

When they had come to the end, they started at the beginning and sang it all over again. They were just beginning it a third time when the children, who had been listening in silent delight, heard a soft step behind them. Turning, they saw their mother, with a pretty, flowered kimona slipped on over her white gown and her hair in a long, thick braid down her back.

"Oh, Mother!" Boy Blue cried, eagerly, "the Robins are back. Just listen to their lovely song!"

"O dearie, O me!" she exclaimed. "Do you children want to get your deaths, standing there by the open window in your nighties, and with nothing on your feet? Hustle back to your beds this very minute."

"But, Mother," Dimple pleaded, "it's time to get up, isn't it? We want to go to the Merry Forest."

"By-and-by you may, but it isn't time yet, and you must have another sleep. Is this the way you take care of your brother, Dimple?"

The children scampered back to bed again. They weren't the least bit sleepy, but the birds sang such a soft, little lullaby that before they knew it their eyes were tight shut, and they were sailing away to the beautiful Land of Nod.

When they awoke the sun was shining brightly. Sir Robin was whistling a waltz tune this time, and, as the children's hands kept time to such lively music, they weren't long dressing. Then they knelt side by side at the window to say their prayers.

They shut their eyes so tight that their faces were all wrinkled up, but somehow, they didn't seem to get on very well.

At last Boy Blue opened his eyes. "O dear!" he sighed. "Do your prayers fit that tune, Dimple?"

"No; they don't at all," she replied. "I can't think of a single thing but 'Hickory, hickory, dock.'"

"Robin," Boy Blue called softly to the frivolous bird in the apple-tree. "Have you said your prayers yet? 'Cause if you haven't, I wish you'd say them now and give us a chance."

"I always sing mine," Sir Robin replied, "and I sang them long ago, but I don't mind doing it again," and he began singing a softer, slower tune, which just fitted the children's whispered words:—

"The morning bright with rosy light
 Has waked me from my sleep;
 Father, I own Thy love alone
 Thy little one doth keep."

In a few minutes they were downstairs, just in time for breakfast. They were just brimming with excitement, but managed to keep it in until grace had been said. When Daddy turned to them with the question, "Well, chick-a-biddies, what have the birds been saying to you this morning?" it was like taking the stopper off a bottle of ginger pop.

As their words came tumbling over one another, and both talked at once, it wasn't very easy to make any sense of it, so Mother held up her hand for silence. When they were quiet she said, "Now, Boy Blue."

"We were just telling you," he said, "what a pretty song they sang us. The first verse was—I wonder now if I can remember it."

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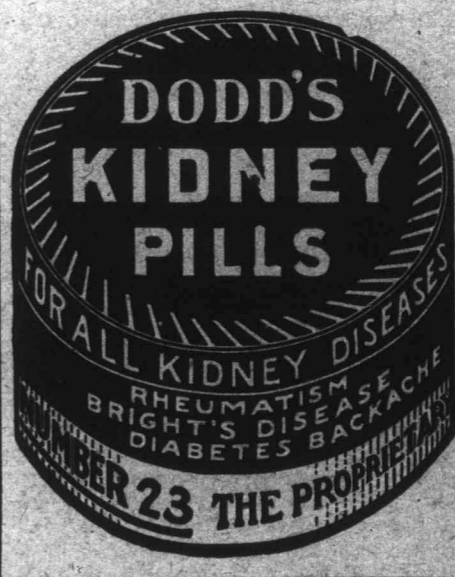


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