

Many Persons

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What the Brook Said.

BY AMY E. BLANCHARD.

It was a very talkative little brook, and chattered away at a great rate as it ran along over the white pebbles. It sang quaint songs to the nodding ferns, and laughed outright as, once in a while, it leaped up to kiss some flower which leaned over to look at itself in the water. It told funny tales which set the sunbeams smiling broadly and made the little leaves dance with delight on the boughs bending down to the water's edge. It was always bubbling over with mirth and rippling with smiles; in fact, it was the jolliest, most good-natured little brook in the world.

One morning, while it was running along through the woods, there was a little boy also running—along the road which would presently lead to the woods. The sun was hot, and the little boy, whose name was Carl, was trying as hard as he could to get over the ground quickly, that he might enjoy the cool shade of the trees.

Presently Carl saw, on the other side of the road, an old man carrying a basket of apples. The old man seemed feeble, and his load was heavy.

Before long Carl saw him stumble against a stone; and, in trying to save himself, he overturned the basket, and the apples rolled this way and that.

"If the sun wasn't so hot I'd go help him," thought Carl. "But I can't stop now." So he hurried on.

After a while he saw in a cornfield a cow having a good time eating the young corn.

"That cow has no business there," said Carl. "If I had time, I would go drive her out, or tell some one that she is there. But I cannot stop to day." So on he went, faster than ever.

So he reached the woods. How cool and pleasant it was! Away off he heard the chatter of the brook, and next he saw it dancing along over the pebbles.

"Ah, little brook," said Carl, "here you are! It must be very nice to live in the woods as you do, and have nothing to do all day." So saying, he sat down on the grassy bank, and thought how glad he was to get out of the sun.

The brook sang its little song, and Carl tried hard to understand what it said.

"I wish you would talk so I could make out what you say," he said, getting up and walking along the brink, talking all the time. "You are the crookedest little brook I ever saw," he went on. "What makes you go from one side to the other so much? I jumped across you a while ago, and now I have to jump back again. What does make you so crooked?"

"I am not a canal," Carl thought the brook said, "and I don't have to go in a straight line; that is not the character of a brook."

"But it would be much easier, I should think," returned Carl, "and you would get to the river much sooner."

"Oh, easy, to be sure; but I should not be half so interesting; and then these woods would not be near so pleasant for you."

"Why not?" asked Carl. "Because," said the brook, "I make

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it cool on hot days, and I make it cheerful, too. Why, those old trees say they don't know what they would do without my chatter."

"Humph!" was all Carl said. Just then a little bird alighted on a twig near by; then he flew down to a small, hollow stone, and decided he would take a bath in this most convenient bath-tub. He ruffled his feathers, gave his sleek head a dip, and then jumped in, shaking the water all over himself: then out he hopped, preening over himself and cocking his head to one side, looking at Carl out of his bright eyes as he did so; then he swelled out his pretty throat and sang the sweetest little song you ever heard,

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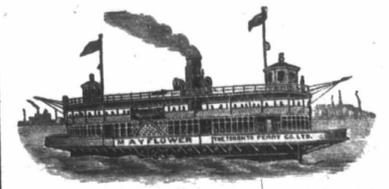
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