

# PAGE FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

## Overthrow of Jack Crow

IN THE feathered world, primrose Lane was looked upon as one of the finest lanes in the land. It was also the most aristocratic. Mr. and Mrs. Missel Thrush lived there; Mr. Redstart had thrust his house in its broad hedge; the Sparrows, the Goldfinches, the Blackbirds, the White-throats, the Bullfinches, and their cousins, the Greenfinches, all answered to the same address.

Beautiful Mrs. Golden-crested Wren lived there also, and further down the lane, where the neighborhood was considered to be not quite so select, the Sparrows, the Redstarts, the Goldfinches and the Brown-Wrens had skillfully built their nests.

Now, on sunny mornings it was the custom of the birds of Primrose Lane to meet on the green banks of a clear stream that lay in a meadow near by. And as the morning of which this story tells was as bright as any in the spring-time, you must imagine to yourself every kind of bird whose name you know hopping and strutting about in the grass or bathing in the cool water, some catching caterpillars, some minnows and roaches, and all chirping out the latest news about eggs.

Mrs. Missel Thrush was saying that she had four handsome eggs in her nest, and when she had the fifth, which she expected shortly, she would commence to hatch. Little Mr. Redstart, who was a very old gentleman in other respects than his tail, after rather rudely snapping up and swallowing a large fly that Mrs. Blackcap had caught, said that his wife was already "settling" on their eggs, "and no doubt we shall hatch 'em before any of you," he boasted.

In the midst of all this poor Mrs. Robin Redbreast, captain of the flock, told them in a terrible state of agitation. Her eyes were so bright and angry that it was easy to see something perfectly awful had happened.

"What's the matter?" asked Mrs. Golden-crested Wren. She was the coolest and boldest of them all, and the smallest.

"Jack Crow has stolen all my eggs!" chirped Mrs. Redbreast.

No sooner were these words out of her beak than Mr. Redstart started up at once and flew straight home. Mrs. Blackbird, who to other birds' culture, rose up with a loud, frightened cry and followed, in company with Mrs. Missel Thrush and several other birds, only the smallest and bravest birds behind.

"When did it happen?" asked Mr. Tomtit.

"It was coming here to bathe," said Mrs. Redbreast, looking timidly around. "No sooner did I leave my nest than the great black monster came hopping down from an old nearby tree and carried away my eggs. Oh, dear, what shall I do!"

"That comes of building a nest, open nest," said Mrs. Wren, sagely, whose own nest was as open as a book, and with only one little hole in front to admit her one little self.

"If I were you," said Mr. Blackcap, "I should—"

"Caw! caw! caw!" came a loud cry overhead, and looking up, they saw that terrible rook, Mr. Jack Crow, but few birds were so bold as to speak to him.

### CHAPTER II

Mr. Jack Crow was the craftiest scamp in Bird Land. He was said to be as old as the hills. Certainly he must have been very, very old, for there was not a bird in Primrose Lane who could remember the year when Jack Crow had failed to build his nest in the oak tree that reared its great branches to the sky on the top of Mumbleton Hill.

Jack Crow had not lived all those years for nothing. Oh, dear, no! He knew the nesting place of every bird for miles around. He also knew that it was good to nourish young Jack Crows on eggs. It was a diet they grew strong upon.

It took a good number of eggs to feed Mr. Crow's hungry family; and many a nest had to go round to get the young birds to grow and plump. What were the birds of Primrose Lane to do?

How could they keep their nests from being raided by the great black monster?

One morning in the height of the nesting season Mr. Jack Crow rose with the sun, for, like the sun, he had a great deal to do that day. The three young crows were fine, fat, nodding by this time, ready to spread their wings and fly into the world.

"What would you like for breakfast, my dears?" he asked, winking slyly across to his wife. As if he didn't know! "Eggs! Eggs!" piped the three young crows, hungrily. "Eggs! Eggs! Eggs!"

"I am not sure there are any left," the old rook answered with a chuckle. "You have some appetites, you see. But perhaps some fresh supplies have come in during the night."

With a long-drawn "caw-w," the thief swooped down between the high hedge-rows of Primrose Lane. Neither did he return empty-footed. In his talons he carried a large blue thrush's egg—a new-laid egg.

Leaving this with Mrs. Crow to be equally divided among the family, he set forth again, and yet again each time returning with some fresh plunder.

"Can't make it out," he said to his wife, after returning with his third trip. "Can't understand it at all."

"What's the matter?" cawed Mrs. Crow.

"Why, all the birds of Primrose Lane have flown away. But down by the brook I met our old friend, Mr. Butcher Bird."

"Well?"

"He told me that if we wished to save our feathers we'd better leave home and fly at least fifty miles away."

"But why?" asked Mrs. Crow.

"That I don't know," said Jack Crow, gravely. "You see, Mr. Butcher Bird was in too much of a hurry to tell me more. By this time he and his wife and family are ten miles away."

"We are much too old to be scared by such idle gossip as that," said Mrs. Crow.

### CHAPTER III

So, Mr. and Mrs. Jack Crow were "at home" all that morning. And Mr. Crow improved the shining hours by burrowing at least half a dozen nests. By mid-day he was in the very best of humor, and he'd had the foggy, the butcher bird's warning. But he had good reason to remember it before the day was over.

For when the sun was low, he saw in the west a little black cloud, which broadened out as it drove forward, till it was like a black, billowing across a part of the sky. And Mr. Crow and Mrs. Crow and all the little crows quaked with fear, for they knew that the hour of reckoning had arrived.

They knew that the birds of Primrose Lane had told the swallows of their wrongs. And the swallows were coming to give the Jack Crows, young and old, the punishment they had long deserved.

Even the hawk, who had been scared by such idle gossip as that, said Mrs. Crow.

"We can't leave the nest behind!" wailed Mrs. Crow.

## WANT THE DWARF



### PART II

QUANTOCK's great-grandmother, you remember, suddenly disappeared before she had quite told the dwarf the secret of the rock, and which she had now and then told Elvina, and for her sake longed to save the village from the terrible flood which his great-grandmother had foretold, and which he could not prevent without learning the half-revealed secret about the rock.

The villagers, after the death of his great-grandmother, saw nothing of Quantock for many weeks; and when he went into the village, and the children were about to tantalize him as usual, Elvina rushed forward and protected him.

They all liked Elvina; besides, she was the daughter of the Mayor? So they allowed the dwarf to go his way in peace, and once more he had to thank the pretty girl for her kindness. In return he told her of what the ancient dame had said to him, and she was grateful, indeed, and informed her father, the Mayor, who was very seriously alarmed, for he knew what havoc the mountain floods had done.

All through the summer Quantock went exploring the mountains to try to find the secret of the rock. Sometimes he spent whole nights and days on the banks of the mountain lake, feeding upon berries and goat's milk. In his anxiety to discover the half-revealed

secret, he was so busy that he never saw outside a cage that the birds began to build their nests. On the occasions of his visits he was always kindly greeted by Elvina, whose friendly smiles gladdened his heart, and he went away more firmly resolved than ever to save her and, therefore, the entire village from the flood.

The summer passed away and the rains began to descend, and Quantock, the dwarf, began to despair of ever finding the secret. One day, a heavy downpour of rain, he missed his footing and fell into a deep ravine. He was seeking shelter from a very hard downpour of rain, he missed his footing and fell into a deep ravine. He was seeking shelter from a very hard downpour of rain, he missed his footing and fell into a deep ravine.

In the morning, when the sun was up, he examined his hiding place, and found he was immediately beneath a gigantic rock that rested on two ledges of black stone. Instinct told

him that here was the rock which he had so long been seeking.

He saw at once that if a flood reached this point it would diverge and overwhelm the village. But the rock could be removed, then the stream would rush down the channel, which was now and then called Elvina, and for her sake longed to save the village from the terrible flood which his great-grandmother had foretold, and which he could not prevent without learning the half-revealed secret about the rock.

The season, as Quantock's great-grandmother had predicted, was the wettest for years. The rain came down in blinding torrents, and the Mayor was at his wits' end what to do. At last Quantock, the dwarf, said:

"Let all the horses in the village be harnessed together; let a chain be fastened to the rock, and then let all the steeds be urged forward."

Again Stormont laughed; and as he was the only man who had listened to him, he had no sensible suggestion to make. So the Mayor called a meeting in the Town Hall, and told them of the dwarf's proposition, and, somewhat shamefacedly, the villagers, remembering how they had treated the unfortunate cripple, agreed that, as it

was the only plan to save them all, it should be tried.

Already the lake was trickling over, and if the earthenwork should give way the rush would come. Just as Quantock had suggested, the rock was chained round and the horses harnessed there; and none too soon, for the waters high in the mountains, were giving forth with violence. And at the very first tug at the rock the dam began to weaken and a heavy stream gushed forth with violence. Stormont, reckless Stormont, with the greatest excitement that almost amounted to a panic, the horses, cheered on by the men, struggled with the gigantic stone.

At last it showed signs of moving, as

the waters came nearer and nearer, and Stormont finally began to take an interest in the work, but his offers of help were too late to do him any good. However, he insisted on pushing his way closer to the rock than was really safe, in order to see if it was really shifting from its position.

"A long pull, and a strong pull and a pull all together," you know, usually brings about successful results. So the rock, with a sound as of thunder, rolled from the ledge, crushing reckless Stormont beneath its enormous weight. Just as the lake burst, and with the fury of a thousand seas, roared down the mountain side, into the open channel—and, thanks to Quantock, the dwarf, the vil-

lage was saved.

All along Quantock had loved Elvina, but now Elvina for the first time made an open declaration of her love for him, only her intention to marry the Dwarf Hero of Dellydale.

Her father tried to dissuade her from her purpose, promising to make Quantock as rich as he could desire to be, if only she would reconsider her decision.

But no! "My heart," said Elvina, "is with the true heart of one who has suffered with one who has proved himself a hero."

So it ended by the prettiest girl in Dellydale becoming the bride of Quantock, the dwarf.

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