

Finally he seemed satisfied that he was alone. His notes became soft guttural coos. He nodded his head up and down in grave satisfaction, tip-toeing from end of the ridge-pole to the other and chuckling softly to himself. Then suddenly, he vanished from sight.

"Where has he gone?" whispered Lou.

"Hush," warned Billy. His heart was pounding.

The watchers stood with eyes glued to the ridge-pole. By and by they saw a black tail-feather protrude its point from a hole just beneath the roof's gable. A black head followed and Croaker came tiptoeing back along the ridge-pole.

The girl felt her companion's hand tighten spasmodically on hers. She glanced up to find him staring intently eyed at the bird.

"Billy!" she whispered, almost forgetting her own anxiety. "What is it?"

He pointed a shaking finger at Croaker. "That shiny thing that old rogne has in his bill, Lou?"

"What do you 'spose that is?"

"Why, w—"

"It's one of those gold pieces your uncle hid away on, now we want Croaker throw a fit."

They stepped out into plain view of the crow, muttering to the gold-piece which he now held between his eyes in one black claw. Croaker lowered his head and twisted it from side to side in sheer wonder. He scarcely believe his eyes. Then as Billy stepped forward and called him by name his black neck-ruff arose and, dropping his prized bit of gold, he poured out a torrent of abuse upon the boy and girl that Lou pressed her fingers in her ears to stop the sound.

"He's awful mad," grinned Billy. "He's been this find to himself for a long time." At sound