

## ✻ ✻ The Story Page. ✻ ✻

### In the Pantry.

BY L. M. MONTGOMERY.

Johnny Wright was in the big pantry behind the stairs, eating a saucer of plum jam which Nora had left there for him. Ellis saw him there, and, partly because he thought Johnny had no business to be eating the jam and partly because he was far too fond of teasing his small brother, he softly shut the door and slid the stout, old-fashioned iron bolt into place so noiselessly that Johnny never knew he was locked in until he had swallowed his last spoonful and tried to get out.

Ellis went off laughing. He meant to let Johnny out in about a quarter of an hour, but Stan Herbert from across the way called to him to go over and help him develop some photographs he had taken, and Ellis forgot all about the small boy bolted in the pantry. Goodness only knows how long Johnny would have had to stay there—for the only window in the pantry was a tiny one high up near the ceiling—had not Mamma Wright come home sooner than she expected and, hearing a rumpus in the pantry, let the prisoner out.

Johnny was very cross, and I can hardly blame him. It is not good for the temper to be locked into a hot pantry on a hot day, when you are only eating the jam you were told you could eat. Johnny had been in the pantry only half an hour, but he was convinced that he had been there "for ages," and he had been there long enough to miss what he called a very potent "gagement."

He had promised to meet Elmer Herbert and Willie Crigson in the park at two o'clock. Willie's Uncle was going to take them bathing. The time was long past and of course they were gone and Johnny had no idea where to look for them, even if mamma had been willing to let him start off alone.

Johnny grudgingly resolved that he would "pay Ellis back." This was very wrong in Johnny, of course; but then you know even small, nine-year-old boys are human when they have missed a very "portant" "gagement." Besides Johnny had already endured a good deal at Ellis' hands.

He brooded over his wrongs all day and went to bed still full of resentment. Ellis was not coming in until late. He had gone over to Westmouth to attend a baseball practice with the Westmouth team.

About eleven o'clock Johnny woke up with a jump. He heard a noise below and knew that Ellis had returned. The noise was in the pantry. The remembrance of his wrongs rushed over the small boy's soul. He crept out to the landing and peered through the banisters to the moonlight below. The house was so still that Johnny felt creep, and the pantry door was shut, but he knew Ellis was inside getting a snack before coming to bed. Johnny made up his mind what he would do. He softly crept down the stairs, a little white-clad figure. The stairs creaked until Johnny thought every soul in the house would be fishing out to see what the noise was about. That is a habit stairs have at night, you know.

But Johnny got down without disturbing anyone. Noiselessly he crept along the hall. He had not stalked before with Willie and Elmer times out of mind for nothing.

Outside the pantry door he halted. He could hear Ellis moving about inside and softly rattling the dishes. Johnny shot the bolt noiselessly into place and then crept back upstairs with a chuckle.

"Well, see how Master Ellis likes being locked in the pantry for hours at a stretch, himself," said Johnny vindictively, as he shut the door tight, "and though he make ever so much noise nobody'll hear him. Father and mother's room is too far away, and Nora sleeps like the dead. I've heard her say so."

He shut his eyes tight and resolved to go right to sleep. Then Johnny's conscience began to trouble him. He had never known he had a conscience before; and he didn't know what it was. But he felt uncomfortable. Something worried him. He tried to think of all the tricks Ellis had played on him, but could only remember all the nice things Ellis had done for him. He thought of the day he had cut his foot and couldn't go to the picnic and Ellis had stayed home, too, and read to him and made taffy for him.

Johnny rolled over on his pillow and groaned. If this was revenge he didn't see anything very sweet about it. He would count a thousand and see if—three, four, five, six, seven—that would put him to sleep. One, two—Johnny sat up in bed suddenly. He was going down to let Ellis out!

Just then the door opened, and Ellis, lamp in hand, walked noiselessly in.

"O so you got out yourself," said Johnny.

"Hello, youngster, aren't you asleep yet?" said Ellis, patronizingly.

"How did you do it," persisted Johnny.

"Do what, kid?"

"Why get out of the pantry. I bolted you in—and I was just starting down to let you out. I don't know how you ever managed to open it yourself. I'm sure I bolted it good and tight."

"You've been dreaming, Johnny, kid. That's what's the matter. I wasn't near the pantry tonight. Didn't need to be. Ted Stavert's mother over at Westmouth gave us a dandy lunch!"

"I wasn't dreaming," said Johnny, stubbornly. "I tell you I heard someone in the pantry and I went down and locked the door to pay you out for locking it on me. If it wasn't you, who was it?"

Ellis looked puzzled. Johnny certainly seemed to be wide awake and in earnest. But if his story were correct, who, or what was in the pantry?

Suddenly Ellis thought of a burglary that had been committed on that very street, two weeks before. A house had been entered and a good deal of plate stolen. The police had been unable to capture the thief or recover the booty. Ellis thought of all the silver in the pantry drawers, and of Grandma Wright's spoons.

"You stay here, Johnny," he said. "I'm going to wake father up."

Mr. Wright listened to Ellis' story in amazement. Johnny was brought out into the hall and stoutly maintained his story under much cross-questioning. Finally Mr. Wright telephoned to the police station. Two men came down and they opened the pantry door.

There was the burglar, and they captured him and took him off to the police station, having first relieved him of the Wright silver. He was a young fellow and seemed too frightened and bewildered to resist. The booty he had carried off in his former raid was found and restored to its owner later on.

Johnny Wright was the hero of the town for nine days. He did not enjoy it; somehow, Johnny had very little to say about his exploit. Although it had turned out well he was ashamed of it. Mamma Wright had talked a little talk to him about revengeful feelings. She said the fact that it had all turned out so fortunately was no excuse for the motive. Johnny hung his head and promised that he would never again try to pay people out.

Ellis got his talking to from his father. I do not know just what Mr. Wright said to him, but I know that Ellis never played any more tricks on his small brother. He went from his father straight to Johnny.

"Look here, sonny," he said manfully, "I'm sorry for locking you into the pantry, and putting ice down your back, and knocking over your Indian ambush, and hiding your air gun, and all the rest. Forgive your penitent brother and he'll let you alone after this."

"G'way with you," said Johnny, very red in the face.

But he told Elmer and Willie that afternoon that Ellis was a splendid brother and he meant to be just like him when he got big.—The Congregationalist.

### How Polly Cured the Cat.

Did I ever tell you how our cat Sizer was cured of his habit of catching birds? No? Well, I must tell you, for I think it was the most effective object lesson Sizer ever had. He was a great pet, and had learned to do some pretty tricks, but had one propensity which was as wicked as could be—no bird was safe if Sizer could reach it.

He had eaten two of mother's canaries, and the neighbors had threatened to kill him if he came into their houses. At last, however, Sizer met his equal.

Aunt Clara wrote to mother that she would spend the summer with us, and would bring her big parrot. Mother was perfectly willing to have Polly come, and we children were wild with delight. We had never had an opportunity of knowing a parrot—neither had Sizer! One day mother was busy preparing Aunt Clara's room, and John and I were helping her. Suddenly mother dropped down on the nearest chair saying, "Oh, dear! I have forgotten Sizer!"

In a moment she was able to explain that in her joy that Aunt Clara was coming, she had forgotten Sizer's love of birds. "What if anything should happen to the parrot!"

We thought we could give Sizer away. It is easy to give a cat away, but he will not always stay given. So we presented him to the man who brought vegetables from his farm four miles from the city, and mother felt relieved.

At last Aunt Clara came with trunks and boxes, and a big cage containing her pet. Polly was a handsome bird, green and gold, with a few beautiful red feathers, a wise, solemn expression and an accomplished tongue. She was very tired after her journey, and began to say, "Polly's sleepy! Good night, Polly! Hello, boys!" and stretched her legs and neck to get rested.

We young people felt as if we could listen to her all night; but Aunt Clara said she would be cross if she was kept awake too long, and John carried the cage to Aunt Clara's room. In the morning we heard cries and squeaks that startled us at first, but very soon a jolly "Ha, ha, boys! Good day, Polly! Good day!" assured us that Miss Polly was the author of the strange sounds.

Aunt Clara said at breakfast that she had put Polly's cage on the porch up stairs, so that her ladyship might enjoy the fresh air. She was so very noisy, she added, because she could see a big grey cat on the fence. We all knew

that Sizer was four miles from the fence, and only laughed at Polly's vehemence. After breakfast John was allowed to bring the cage down to the dining room, and there it stayed during the entire visit. The cage door stood open, and Polly walked out or in at her own sweet free will.

When John set the cage down, Aunt Clara opened the door, and Polly came out with slow and stately step, saying in an injured tone, "Polly wants her breakfast!" Her reckless words were so ill-suited to her dignified appearance that one could not help laughing, which seemed to entertain Polly very much. While the bird was sitting near her cage holding a bit of bread in her claw, she stretched her neck, dropped the bread, and called out, "Poor pussy! Come, pussy! Hello boys!" looking intently at something that had appeared at the window.

That "something" was Sizer! He had come home again, and we were filled with alarm. Aunt Clara looked on quietly and said, "you need not be afraid; Polly is a match for any cat I ever saw." So we thought it would be fun to see an encounter between bird and cat, for we knew Sizer to be no coward. He only looked at the bird, this time, and sprang out of the window while Polly screamed after him. "Good-bye, Pussy! Who's afraid? Who's afraid? Polly wants a bath!"

This final remark, which was such a favorite with Polly, seemed to be merely a reflection, as she generally said it in very low tone, and busied herself in recovering her perch or her food. For two or three days Sizer did not come into the room, and even mother began to lose her fears for Polly's safety. Then he began to sit quietly near a window or open door, so that he could run if danger menaced, and looked at the parrot with longing eyes.

Her conversational powers had abashed him, but he finally thought, "She's only a bird, after all," and too long for a meal of his own providing. The sequel is easily foreseen. One day we heard the greatest commotion in the dining-room. Father ran in with his glasses in one hand and newspaper in the other; mother came, dismay on every feature; we children ran to the scene, of course, and in a minute Aunt Clara came.

Such a sight as we beheld! We all stood transfixed for an instant, and then burst into laughter. Polly had evidently been dozing on the broad window sill, when Sizer had made an attack. When we saw them Polly was holding Sizer with her strong claws, and had his ear in her sharp, cutting bill. Sizer was fairly howling, and trying his best to use his claws on Polly.

The parrot made some inarticulate noise all the time, and then they rolled off on to the floor. There was a mixture of feathers and fur for a second, and Sizer dashed madly past us, and we could hear him "spit" as he fled the scene. Polly began to smooth her ruffled plumage, and was evidently none the worse for the conflict. She was still very angry, and screamed after Sizer, "Poor pussy! Poor pussy! Polly's mad! Polly's mad! Hello, boys!"

She would hardly allow Aunt Clara to soothe her, and was quarrelsome for two or three days. No one dared say, "Poor pussy," in Polly's hearing. It is needless to say Sizer was cured. He returned to the house after a few days, with a much injured ear, but nothing could induce him to enter the dining-room, and the sound of Polly's voice seemed to terrify him. From that day the sight of a cage seemed to recall the encounter, and as far as he was concerned, a caged bird could hang in safety.—Our Dumb Animals.

### The One Who Failed.

"Mr. Wright, may I speak to you a minute?"

The busy lawyer gave his revolving chair a whirl, and faced a tall, resolute looking boy, with a strap of books across his shoulder.

"Certainly, Philip; sit down, my boy."

"Thank you, sir, I haven't time; it's almost school hour. I just want to say, Mr. Wright, that I'd like you to get someone else for an Epworth League leader, in my place."

"You want to give up your job, Phil?"

"I don't want to exactly, but I think I ought. The truth is, Mr. Wright, I've failed, and I know somebody else could do better."

The gentleman was thinking what a young face this was to wear that bitter sense of failure so plainly written out; but he spoke encouragingly.

"Why do you think you have failed, Phillip? What about the 'try, try again' plan?"

"We did try again, Mr. Wright. You know we set ourselves to prevent Dobbs from opening a saloon on the corner of Bolton and Pelham streets. We worked like everything getting petitions signed. But we failed; the saloon is open, and the very boys that we were trying to help by keeping the saloon away, are jerrying at us all the time now, and calling us church lambs, and pretty pigeons, and things like that."

Mr. Wright could not help smiling at the very un-lamb-like expression of this League, but there was no time to discuss the matter now.

"Suppose you don't take any steps about giving it up