



THE BIRDS CHRISTMAS
TREE.

WAS IT RIP'S FAULT?

BY E. P. A.

"NINA, Nina, what are you doing to Rip?" cried a voice from the window.

But Nina would not listen; her face was red with anger, and with one doubled-up fist she was beating poor Rip, who had slunk down at her feet, looking very miserable.

"Nina, stop beating Rip at once," said the voice, sternly now, "and come up to me."

And presently the flushed face appeared in the doorway. "Rip has brought me bad luck, mamma," said Nina; "I wish you would let me whip him hard."

Poor Rip was rubbing up against her hand with his wet nose, he felt that the little mistress was in a bad humour with him, and he was trying in his dumb, dog fashion to please her.

"Bad luck!" exclaimed mamma in surprise, "what do you mean?"

"Yes, mamma, I've had bad luck all day. I lost my gold pencil this morning, and I tore my dress, and I broke grandma's spectacles, and just now I fell down and scratched my wrist."

"But what in the world has Rip to do with all that?" asked mamma.

Nina began to look rather sheepish. It had all seemed plain enough when she told it over to Mammy Cass, the black nurse, who believed in a thousand signs of good and bad omen; but in the light of mamma's clear eyes it seemed different.

"Why, Rip howled when I was practising this morning and wouldn't stop, and Mammy Cass says that always brings bad luck."

"Did Rip's howling make a hole in your pocket?"

"No'm I guess not."

"But it was the unended hole that lost your pencil. Did Rip's howling make you

climb through the barbed-wire fence?"

"No'm."

"But the fence tore your dress. What were you doing with grandma's glasses when you broke them?"

"I—I was trying them on."

"Which grandma told you not to do. And how did you come to fall down?"

But Nina's eyes were on the floor now; for some reason she did not want to answer that question.

"Never mind, then," said mamma; "I think you see now that if anybody is to be punished for your bad luck it is not Rip, it is my little girl herself."

"Mammy Cass says,"—began Nina.

"But God says, little daughter, that not a sparrow falleth to the ground without his permission. Do you think he lets the poor dumb brutes govern this world? The only signs to believe in are his blessed signs, day by day, that his kind care is over all his creatures—over you, and over poor little Rip as well."

But Rip seemed to think himself a very happy doggie, for Nina had her arms tight round his neck, begging his pardon, and he was wagging his tail almost off for joy.

THE NEW BOOK.

THERE were only two books, and three children. One of the books was all about a little boy, and as Dick was a little boy, it seemed clear that he should have that one. The other book was about two little girls; but to which of the girls would papa give it? Did they quarrel, and each one want it? No, indeed; I am glad to tell you it was just the other way. Bess said: "It is beautiful, but Belle is the little one, and ought to have it." Belle said: "It is lovely, but Bess is the oldest, and ought to have it." Then, when papa talked with them, they said: "It will belong to both of us." Wasn't that sweet and good in them?

GREAT LUCK.

MONSIEUR CALINO was greatly disturbed because the city authorities changed the numbers of the houses in his street, and roundly denounced the functionaries who had forced him, by this simple change of figures, to live at No. 436 instead of No. 216. But one morning, as he came down to breakfast and took up his paper, he exclaimed:

"Goodness! I was all wrong! What a fortunate thing that our number was changed!"

"How is that?" asked Madame Calino.

"Why, here is an account of the total destruction by fire of No. 216! If the number hadn't been changed, we should have been homeless wanderers this minute!"

WHEN TO SAY "NO."

"No" is a very little word;
In one short breath we say it—
Sometimes 'tis wrong, but often right;
So let me justly weigh it.
"No" I must say when asked to swear,
And "No" when asked to gamble;
"No" when strong drink I'm urged to share;
"No" to a Sunday's ramble!

"No," though I'm tempted sore to lie,
Or steal, and then conceal it;
And "No" to sin when darkness hides,
And I alone should feel it.
Whenever sinners would entice
A-foot from paths of duty,
"No," I'll unhesitating cry—
"No, not for price or booty."

God watches how this little word
By everyone is spoken,
And knows those children as his own,
By this one simple token.
Who promptly utters "No" to wrong,
Says "Yes" to right, as surely—
That child has entered wisdom's ways,
And treads her path securely.

—Golden Hours.

CLOTHES THE BIRDS WEAR.

WE usually call birds' clothing dresses, and not coats. These dresses are made of feathers, and many of them are very beautiful, much more beautiful than those which girls wear.

Birds change their dresses once in a while, as cats and dogs change their coats. The new dresses of most birds are just like the old ones, but a few birds have two dresses which look very unlike. They wear one dress a part of the year, and then put on the other. Sometimes the new dress is so unlike the old one that we think the birds are of a different kind.

Some birds have bright red dresses, some have green ones, some have blue ones, and some have yellow ones.

A few birds wear only plain black, brown, or gray clothes, and never put on any bright colours; others have dresses in which there are many colours mingled together so as to make a very showy garment.

The bluebird, which we often see in the summer, wears a dress which is almost all blue.

A woodpecker, which comes about in the summer, and sometimes in the winter, has a bright red cap, a blue-black coat, and a nice white vest.

The blue jay wears a light blue head-dress and a shawl of the same colour. His underclothes are nearly white, and his overcoat, or cloak, is deep blue, with a white border.

There are very many birds, and if we keep our eyes open when we walk along the streets and in the fields, we shall see some very beautiful dresses.—*Sheldon's Second Reader.*