

# **BIRD STORIES**

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Edith M. Patch***

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# BIRD STORIES

by

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*Chick, D. D. in his pulpit.*

## CHAPTER I

# CHICK, D.D.

RIGHT in the very heart of Christmas-tree Land there was a forest of firs that pointed to the sky as straight as steeples. A hush lay over the forest, as if there were something very wonderful there, that might be meant for you if you were quiet and waited for it to come. Perhaps you have felt like that when you walked down the aisle of a church, with the sun shining through the lovely glass in the windows. Men have often called the woods “temples”; so there is, after all, nothing so very strange in having a preacher live in the midst of the fir forest that grew in Christmas-tree Land.

And the sermon itself was not very strange, for it was about peace and good-will and love and helping the world and being happy—all very proper things to hear about while the bells in the city churches, way, way off, were ringing their glad messages from the steeples.

But the minister was a queer one, and his very first words would have made you smile. Not that you would have laughed at him, you know. You would have smiled just because he had a way of making you feel happy from the minute he began.

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He sat on a small branch, and looked down from his pulpit with a dear nod of his little head, which would have made you want to cuddle him in the hollow of your two hands.



*Firs that pointed to the sky.*

His robe was of gray and white and buff-colored feathers, and he wore a black-feather cap and bib.

He began by singing his name. "Chick, D.D.," he called. Now, when a person has "D.D." written after his name, we have a right to think that he is trying to live so wisely that he can teach us how to be happier, too. Of course Minister Chick had not earned those letters by studying in college, like most parsons; but he had learned the secret of a happy heart in his school in the woods.

*CHICK, D.D.*

Yes, he began his service by singing his name; but the real sermon he preached by the deeds he did and the life he lived. So, while we listen to his happy song, we can watch his busy hours, until we are acquainted with the little black-capped minister who called himself “Chick, D.D.”

Chick’s Christmas-trees were decorated, and no house in the whole world had one lovelier that morning than the hundreds that were all about him as far as he could see. The dark-green branches of the pines and cedars had held themselves out like arms waiting to be filled, and the snow had been dropped on them in fluffy masses, by a quiet, windless storm. It had been very soft and lovely that way—a world all white and green below, with a sky of wonderful blue that the firs pointed to like steeples. Then, as if that were not decoration enough, another storm had come, and had put on the glitter that was brightest at the edge of the forest where the sun shone on it. The second storm had covered the soft white with dazzling ice. It had swept across the white-barked birch trees and their purple-brown branches, and had left them shining all over. It had dripped icicles from the tips of all the twigs that now shone in the sunlight brighter than candles, and tinkled like little bells, when the breezes clicked them together, in a tune that is called, “Woodland Music after an Ice-Storm.”

That is the tune that played all about the black-capped bird as he flitted out of the forest, singing, “Chick, D.D.,” as he came. The clear cold air and the exercise of flying after his night’s sleep had given Chick



*“Woodland Music after an Ice-Storm”*

a good healthy appetite, and he had come out for his breakfast.

He liked eggs very well, and there were, as he knew, plenty of them on the birch trees, for many a time he had breakfasted there. Eggs with shiny black shells, not so big as the head of a pin; so wee, indeed, that it took a hundred of them or more to make a meal for even little Chick.

But he wasn't lazy. He didn't have to have eggs cooked and brought to his table. He loved to hunt for them, and they were never too cold for him to relish; so out he came to the birch trees, with a cheery “Chick, D.D.,” as if he were saying grace for the good food tucked here and there along the branches.

When he alighted, though, it wasn't the bark he

*CHICK, D.D.*

found, but a hard, thick coating of ice. The branches rattled together as he moved among them and the icicles that dangled down rang and clicked as they struck one another. The ice-storm had locked in Chick's breakfast eggs, and, try as he would with his little beak, he couldn't get through to find them.

So Chick's Christmas Day began with hardship: for, though he sang gayly through the coldest weather, he needed food to keep him strong and warm. He was not foolish enough to spend his morning searching through the icy birch trees, for he had a wise little brain in his head and soon found out that it was no use to stay there. But he didn't go back to the forest and mope about it. Oh, no. Off he flew, down the short hill slope, seeking here and there as he went.

Where the soil was rocky under the snow, some sumachs grew, and their branches of red berries looked like gay Christmas decorations. The snow that had settled heavily on them had partly melted, and the soaked berries had stained it so that it looked like delicious pink ice-cream. Some of the stain had dripped to the snow below, so there were places that looked like pink ice-cream there, too. Then the ice-storm had crusted it over, and now it was a beautiful bit of bright color in the midst of the white-and-green-and-blue Christmas.

Chick stopped hopefully at the sumach bushes, not because he knew anything about ice-cream or cared a great deal about the berries; but sometimes there were plump little morsels hidden among them, that he liked

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to pull out and eat. If there was anything there that morning, though, it was locked in under the ice; and Chick flew on to the willows that showed where the brook ran in summer.

Ah, the willow cones! Surely they would not fail him! He would put his bill in at the tip and down the very middle, and find a good tasty bit to start with, and then he would feel about in other parts of the cone for small insects, which often creep into such places for the winter. The flight to the willows was full of courage. Surely there would be a breakfast there for a hungry Chick!

But the ice was so heavy on the willows that it had bent them down till the tips lay frozen into the crust below.

So from pantry to pantry Chick flew that morning, and every single one of them had been locked tight with an icy key. The day was very cold. Soon after the ice-storm, the mercury in the thermometer over at the Farm-House had dropped way down below the zero mark, and the wind was in the north. But the cold did not matter if Chick could find food. His feet were bare; but that did not matter, either, if he could eat. Nothing mattered to the brave little black-capped fellow, except that he was hungry, oh, so hungry! and he had heard no call from anywhere to tell him that any other bird had found a breakfast, either.

No, the birds were all quiet, and the distant church-bells had stopped their chimes, and the world was still. Still, except for the click of the icicles on the twigs when

*CHICK, D.D.*

Chick or the wind shook them.

Then, suddenly, there was a sound so big and deep that it seemed to fill all the space from the white earth below to the blue sky above. A roaring BOOOOOOOM, which was something like the waves rushing against a rocky shore, and something like distant thunder, and something like the noise of a great tree crashing to the earth after it has been cut, and something like the sound that comes before an earthquake.

It is not strange that Chick did not know that sound. No one ever hears anything just like it, unless he is out where the snow is very light and very deep and covered with a crust.

Then, if the crust is broken suddenly in one place, it may settle like the top of a puffed-up pie that is pricked; and the air that has been prisoned under the crust is pushed out with a strange and mighty sound.

So that big BOOOOOOOM meant that something had broken the icy crust which, a moment before, had lain over the soft snow, all whole, for a mile one way and a mile another way, and half a mile to the Farm-House.

Yes, there was the Farmer Boy coming across the field, to the orchard that stood on the sandy hillside near the fir forest. He was walking on snowshoes, which cracked the crust now and then; and twice on the way to the orchard he heard a deep BOOOOOOOM, which he loved just as much as he loved the silence of the field when he stopped to listen now and then. For the winter sounds were so dear to the Farmer Boy who lived at

## *BIRD STORIES*

the edge of Christmas-tree Land, that he would never forget them even when he should become a man. He would always remember the snowshoe tramps across the meadow; and in after years, when his shoulders held burdens he could not see, he would remember the bulky load he carried that morning without minding the weight a bit; for it was a big bag full of Christmas gifts, and the more heavily it pressed against his shoulder, the lighter his heart felt.

When he reached the orchard, he dropped the bag on the snow and opened it. Part of the gifts he spilled in a heap near the foot of a tree, and the rest he tied here and there to the branches. Then he stood still and whistled a clear sweet note that sounded like “Fee-bee.”

Now, Chick, over by the willows had not known what BOOOOOOOM meant, for that was not in his language. But he understood “Fee-bee” in a minute, although it was not nearly so loud. For those were words he often used himself. They meant, perhaps, many things; but always something pleasant. “Fee-bee” was a call he recognized as surely as one boy recognizes the signal whistle of his chum.

So, of course, Chick flew to the orchard as quickly as he could and found his present tied fast to a branch. The smell of it, the feel of it, the taste of it, set him wild with joy. He picked at it with his head up, and sang “Chick, D.D.” He picked at it with his head down and called, “Chick, D.D.D.D.D.D.D., Chick, D.D.” He flew here and there, too gay with happiness to stay long

*CHICK, D.D.*

anywhere, and found presents tied to other branches, too. At each one he sang "Chick, D.D., Chick, D.D.D. Dee Dee Deeee." It was, "indeed" the song of a hungry bird who had found good rich suet to nibble.

The Farmer Boy smiled when he heard it, and waited, for he thought others would hear it, too. And they did. Two birds with black-feather cap and bib heard it and came; and before they had had time to go frantic with delight and song, three others just like them came, and then eight more, and by that time there was such a "Chick"-ing and "D.D."-ing and such a whisking to and fro of black caps and black bibs, that no one paid much attention when Minister Chick, D. D., himself, perched on a branch for a minute, and gave the sweetest little warble that was ever heard on a winter's day. Then he whistled "Fee-bee" very clearly, and went to eating again, heeding the Farmer Boy no more than if he were not there at all.

And he wasn't there very long; for he was hungry, too; and that made him think about the good whiff he had smelled when he went through the kitchen with the snowshoes under his arm, just before he strapped them over his moccasins outside the door.

Yes, that was the Farmer Boy going away with a clatter over the snow-crust; but who were these coming through the air, with jerky flight, and with a jerky note something like "Twitcherty-twit-twitcherty-twit-twitcherty-twitcherty-twitcherty-twit"? They flew like goldfinches, and they sounded like goldfinches, both in the twitcherty song of their flight and their "Tweet" as they called one

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another. But they were not goldfinches. Oh, my, no! For they were dressed in gray, with darker gray stripes at their sides; and when they scrambled twittering down low enough to show their heads in the sunlight, they could be seen to be wearing the loveliest of crimson caps, and some of them had rosy breasts.

The redpolls had come! And they found on top of the snow a pile of dusty sweepings from the hay-mow, with grass-seeds in it and some cracked corn and crumbs. And there were squash-seeds, and sunflower-seeds, and seedy apple-cores that had been broken up in the grinder used to crunch bones for the chickens; and there were prune-pits that had been cracked with a hammer.

The joy-songs of the birds over the suet and seeds seemed a signal through the countryside; and before long others came, too.

Among them there was a black-and-white one, with a patch of scarlet on the back of his head, who called, "Ping," as if he were speaking through his nose. There was one with slender bill and bobbed-off tail, black cap and white breast, grunting, "Yank yank," softly, as he ate.

But there was none to come who was braver or happier than Chick, D.D., and none who sang so gayly. After that good Christmas feast he and his flock returned each day; and when, in due time, the ice melted from the branches, it wasn't just suet they ate. It was other things, too.

That is how it happened that when, early in the

*CHICK, D.D.*

spring, the Farmer Boy examined the apple-twigs, to see whether he should put on a nicotine spray for the aphids and an arsenical spray for the tent caterpillars, he couldn't find enough aphids to spray or enough caterpillars, either. Chick, D.D. and his flock had eaten their eggs.

Again, late in the summer, when it was time for the yellow-necked caterpillars, the red-humped caterpillars, the tiger caterpillars, and the rest of the hungry crew, to strip the leaves from the orchard, the Farmer Boy walked among the rows, to see how much poison he would need to buy for the August spray. And again he found that he needn't buy a single pound. Chick, D.D. and his family were tending his orchard!

Yes, Minister Chick was a servant in the good world he lived in. He saved leaves for the trees, he saved rosy apples for city girls and boys to eat, and he saved many dollars in time and spray-money for the Farmer Boy.

And all he charged was a living wage: enough suet in winter to tide him over the icy spells, and free house-rent in the old hollow post the Farmer Boy had nailed to the trunk of one of the apple trees.

That old hollow post was a wonderful home. Chick, D.D. had crept into it for the first time Christmas afternoon, when he had eaten until dusk overtook him before he had time to fly back to the shelter of the fir forest. He found that he liked that post. Its walls were thick and they kept out the wind; and, besides, was it not handy by the suet?

In the spring he liked it for another reason, too—the

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best reason in the world. It gave great happiness to Mrs. Chick. "Fee-bee?" he had asked her as he called her attention to it; and "Fee-bee," she had replied on looking it over. So he said, "Chick, D.D." in delight, and then perched near by, while he warbled cosily a brief song jumbled full of joy.

Chick and his mate had indeed chosen well, for it is a poor wall that will not work both ways. If the sides of the hollow post had been thick enough to keep out the coldest of the winter cold, they were also thick enough to keep out the hottest of the summer heat. If they kept out the wet of the driving storm, they held enough of the old-wood moisture within so that the room did not get too dry. Of course, it needed a little repair. But, then, what greater fun than putting improvements into a home? Especially when it can be done by the family, without expense!

So Mr. and Mrs. Chick fell to work right cheerily, and dug the hole deeper with their beaks. They didn't leave the chips on the ground before their doorway, either. They took them off to some distance, and had no heap near by, as a sign to say, "A bird lives here." For, sociable as they were all winter, they wanted quiet and seclusion within the walls of their own home.

And such a home it was! After it had been hollowed to a suitable depth, Chick had brought in a tuft of white hair that a rabbit had left among the brambles. Mrs. Chick had found some last year's thistle-down and some this year's poplar cotton, and a horse-hair from the lane. Then Chick had picked up a gay feather that

*CHICK, D.D.*

had floated down from a scarlet bird that sang in the treetops, and tore off silk from a cocoon. So, bit by bit, they gathered their treasures, until many a woodland and meadow creature and plant had had a share in the softness of a nest worthy of eight dear white eggs with reddish-brown spots upon them. It was such a soft nest, in fact, with such dear eggs in it, that Chick brooded there cosily himself part of the time, and was happy to bring food to his mate when she took her turn.

In eleven or twelve days from the time the eggs were laid, there were ten birds in that home instead of two. The fortnight that followed was too busy for song. Chick and his mate looked the orchard over even more thoroughly than the Farmer Boy did; and before those eight hungry babies of theirs were ready to leave the nest, it began to seem as if Chick had eaten too many insect eggs in the spring, there were so few caterpillars hatching out. But the fewer there were, the harder they hunted; and the harder they hunted, the scarcer became the caterpillars. So when Dee, Chee, Fee, Wee, Lee, Bee, Mee, and Zee were two weeks old, and came out of the hollow post to seek their own living, the whole family had to take to the birches until a new crop of insect eggs had been laid in the orchard. This was no hardship. It only added the zest of travel and adventure to the pleasure of the days. Besides, it isn't just orchards that Chick, D.D. and his kind take care of. It is forests and shade-trees, too.

Hither and yon they hopped and flitted, picking the weevils out of the dead tips of the growing pine trees, serving the beech trees such a good turn that the

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beech-nut crop was the heavier for their visit, doing a bit for the maple-sugar trees, and so on through the woodland.

Not only did they mount midget guard over the mighty trees, but they acted as pilots to hungry birds less skillful than themselves in finding the best feeding-places. "Chick, D.D.D.D.D.," they called in thanksgiving, as they found great plenty; and warblers and kinglets and creepers and many a bird beside knew the sound, and gathered there to share the bountiful feast that Chick, D.D. had discovered.

The gorgeous autumn came, the brighter, by the way, for the leaves that Chick had saved. The Bob-o-links, in traveling suits, had already left for the prairies of Brazil and Paraguay, by way of Florida and Jamaica. The strange honk of geese floated down from V-shaped flocks, as if they were calling, "Southward Ho!" The red-winged blackbirds gave a wonderful farewell chorus. Flock by flock and kind by kind, the migrating birds departed.

### WHY?

Well, never ask Chick, D.D. The north with its snows is good enough for him. Warblers may go and nuthatches may come. 'Tis all one to Chick. He is not a bird to follow fashions others set.

This bird-of-the-happy-heart has courage to meet the coldest day with a joyous note of welcome. The winter is cheerier for his song. And, as you have guessed, it is not by word alone that he renders service. The trees of the north are the healthier for his presence. Because

*CHICK, D.D.*

of him, the purse of man is fatter, and his larder better stocked. He has done no harm as harm is counted in the world he lives in. It is written in books that, in all the years, not one crime, not even one bad habit, is known of any bird who has called himself "Chick, D.D."

Because the world is always better for his living in it; and because no one can watch the black-capped sprite without catching, for a moment at least, a message of cheer and courage and service, does he not name himself rightly a minister?

Yes, surely, the little parson who dwells in the heart of Christmas-tree Land has a right to his "D.D.," even though he did not earn it in a college of men.

## CHAPTER II

# THE FIVE WORLDS OF LARIE

LARIE was all alone in a little world. He had lived there many days, and had spent the time, minute by minute and hour by hour, doing nothing at all but growing. That one thing he had done well. There is no doubt about that; for he had grown from a one-celled little beginning of life into a creature so big that he filled the whole of his world crammed full. It was smooth, and it was hard, and its sides were curved around and about him so tightly that he could not even stretch his legs. There was no door. Larie was a prisoner. The prison-walls of his world held him so fast that he could not budge. That is, he could not budge anything but his head. He could move that a little.

Now, that is what we might call being in a fairly tight place. But you don't know Larie if you think he could not get out of it. There are few places so tight that we can't get out of them if we go about it the right way, and make the best of what power we have. That is just what Larie did. He had power to move his head enough to tap, with his beak, against the wall of his world that had become his prison. So he kept tapping with his

## *THE FIVE WORLDS OF LARIE*

beak. On the end of it was a queer little knob. With this he knocked against the hard smooth wall.

“Tap! tip tip!” went Larie’s knob. Then he would rest, for it is not easy work hammering and pounding, all squeezed in so tight. But he kept at it again and again and again. And then at last he cracked his prison-wall; and lo, it was not a very thick wall after all! No thicker than an eggshell!

That is the way with many difficulties. They seem so very hard at first, and so very hopeless, and then end by being only a way to something very, very pleasant.

So here was Larie in his second world. Its thin, soft floor and its thick, soft sides were made of fine bright-green grass, which had turned yellowish in drying. It had no roof. The sun shone in at the top. The wind blew over. There had been no sun or wind in his eggshell world. It was comfortable to have them now. They dried him down and made it fluffy. There was plenty of room for its fluffiness. He could stretch his legs, too, and could wiggle his wings against his sides. This felt good. And he could move his head all he cared to. But he did not begin thumping the sides of his new world with it. He tucked it down between two warm little things close by, and went to sleep. The two warm little things were his sister and brother, for Larie was not alone in his nest-world.

The sun went down and the wind blew cold and the rain beat hard from the east; but Larie knew nothing of all this. A roof had settled down over his world while he napped. It was white as sea foam, and soft and dry

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and, oh, so very cosy, as it spread over him. The roof to Larie's second world was his mother's breast.

The storm and the night passed, and the sun and the fresh spring breeze again came in at the top of the nest. Then something very big stood near and made a shadow, and Larie heard a strange sound. The something very big was his mother, and the strange sound was her first call to breakfast. When Larie heard that, he opened his mouth. But nothing went into it. His brother and sister were being fed. He had never had any food in his mouth in all the days of his life. To be sure, his egg-world was filled with nourishment that he had taken into his body and had used in growing; but he had never done anything with his beak except to knock with the knob at the end of it against the shell when he pipped his way out. What a handy little knob that had been—just right for tapping. But, now that there was no hard wall about him to break, what should he use it for? Well, nothing at all; for the joke of it is, there was no knob there. It had dropped off, and he could never have another.

Never mind: he could open his beak just as well without it; and by-and-by his mother came again with a second call for breakfast, and that time Larie got his share. After that, there were calls for luncheon and for dinner, and luncheon again between that and supper; and part of the calls were from Mother and part from Father Gull.

Larie's second world, it seems, was a place where he and his brother and sister were hungry and were fed. This is a world in which dwell, for a time, all babies,

## THE FIVE WORLDS OF LARIE

whether they have two legs, like you and Larie, or four, like a pig with a curly tail, or six, like Nata who lived in Shanty Creek.<sup>1</sup> An important world it is, too; for health and strength and growing up, all depend upon it.

There was, however, only a rim of soft fine dry grass to show where Larie's nest-world left off and his third world began. So it is not surprising that, as soon as their legs were strong enough, Larie and his brother and sister stepped abroad; for what baby does not creep out of his crib as soon as ever he can?

They could not, for all this show of bravery, feed themselves like the sons of Peter Pan, or swim the waters like Gavia's two Olairs at Immer Lake. However grown up the three youngsters may have felt when they began to walk, Father and Mother Gull made no mistake about the matter, but fed them breakfasts, dinners, and suppers, and stuffed them so full of luncheons between meals, that the greedy little things just had to grow, so as to be able to swallow all that was brought them.

There were times, certainly, when Larie still felt very much a baby, even though he ran about nimbly enough. For instance, when he made a mistake and asked some gull, that was not his father or mother, for food, and got a rough beating instead of what he begged for!

Oh, then he felt like a forlorn little baby, indeed; for it was not pleasant to be whipped, and that sometimes cruelly, when he didn't know any better; for all the big gulls looked alike, with their foam-white bodies and their pearl-gray capes, and they were all bringing food;

<sup>1</sup>*Hexapod Stories.*

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so how could he know who were and who were not his Father and Mother Gull? Well, he must learn to be careful, that was all, and stay where his very own could find and feed him; for gulls can waste no time on the young of other gulls—their own keep them busy enough, the little greedies!

Again, Larie must have felt very wee and helpless whenever a big man walked that way, shaking the ground with his heavy step and making a dark shadow as he came. Then, oh, then, Larie was a baby, and hid near a tuft of grass or between two stones, tucking his head out of sight, and keeping quite still as an ostrich does, or,—yes,—as perhaps a shy young human does, who hides his head in the folds of his mother's skirt when a stranger asks him to shake hands.

But few men trod upon Larie's island-world, and no man came to do him harm; for *the regulations under the Migratory-Bird Treaty Act prohibit throughout the United States the killing of gulls at any time*. That means that the laws of our country protect the gull, as of course you will understand, though Larie knew nothing about the matter.

Yes, think of it! There was a law, made at Washington in the District of Columbia, which helped take care of little downy Larie way off in the north on a rocky island.

I said "helped take care of"; for no law, however good it may be, can more than help make matters right. There has to be, besides, some sort of policeman to stand by the law and see that it is obeyed.

## *THE FIVE WORLDS OF LARIE*

So Larie, although he never knew that, either, had a policeman; and the law and the policeman together kept him quite safe from the dangers which not many years ago most threatened the gulls on our coast islands. In those days, before there were gull-laws and gull-policemen, people came to the nests and took their eggs, which are larger than hens' eggs and good to eat; and people came, too, and killed these birds for their feathers. Then it was that the beautiful stiff wing-feathers, which should have been spread in flight, were worn upon the hats of women; and the soft white breast-feathers, which should have been brooding brownish eggs all spattered over with pretty marks, were stuffed into feather-beds for people to sleep on.

Well it was for Larie that he lived when he did; for his third world was a wonderful place and it was right that he should enjoy it in safety. When Larie first left his nest and went out to walk, he stepped upon a shelf of reddish rock, and the whole wall from which his shelf stuck out was reddish rock, too. Beyond, the rocks were greenish, and beyond that they were gray. Oh! the reddish and greenish and grayish rocks were beautiful to see when the fog lifted and the sun shone on them.

But Larie's island-world was not all rock of different colors: for over there, not too far away to see, was a dark-green spruce tree. Because rough winds had swept over this while it was growing, its branches were scraggly and twisted. They could not grow straight and even, like a tree in a quiet forest. But never think, for all of that, that Larie's spruce was not good to look upon. There is something splendid about a tree which, though

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bending to the will of the mighty winds that work their force upon it, grows sturdy and strong in spite of all. Such trees are somehow like boys and girls, who meet hardships with such courage when they are young, that they grow strong and sturdy of spirit, and warm of heart, with the sort of mind that can understand trouble in the world, and so think of ways to help it.

Yes, perhaps Larie's tree was an emblem of courage. However that may be, it was a favorite spot on the island. Often it could be seen, that dark, rugged tree, which had battled with winds from its seedling days and grown victoriously, with three white gulls resting on its squarish top—birds, too, that had lived in rough winds and had grown strong in their midst.

There was more on the island than rocks and trees. Over much of it lay a carpet of grass. Soft and fine and vivid green it was, of the kind that had been gathered for Larie's nest and had turned yellowish in drying. Under the carpet, in underground lanes as long as a man's long arm, lived Larie's young neighbor-folk—little petrels, sometimes called "Mother Carey's Chickens."

There was even more on the island yet: for high on the rocks stood a lighthouse; and the man who kept the signal lights in order was no other than Larie's policeman himself. A useful life he lived, saving ships of the sea by the power of light, and birds of the sea by the power of law.

So that was Larie's third world—an island with a soft rug of bright-green grass, and big shelfy rocks of red and green and gray, and rugged dark-green trees, with



*Birds, too, that had lived in rough winds.*

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white gulls resting on the branches, and a lighthouse with its signal.

All around and about that island lay Larie's fourth world—the sea. When his great day for swimming came, he slipped off into the water; and after that it was his, whenever he wished—his to swim or float upon, the wide-away ocean reaching as far as any gull need care to swim or float.

All over and above the sea stretched Larie's fifth world—the air. When his great day for flying came, he rose against the breeze, and his wings took him into that high-away kingdom that lifted as far as any gull need care to fly.

Now that Larie could both swim and fly, he was large, and acted in many ways like an old gull; but the feathers of his body were not white, and he did not wear over his back and the top of his spread wings a pearl-gray mantle.

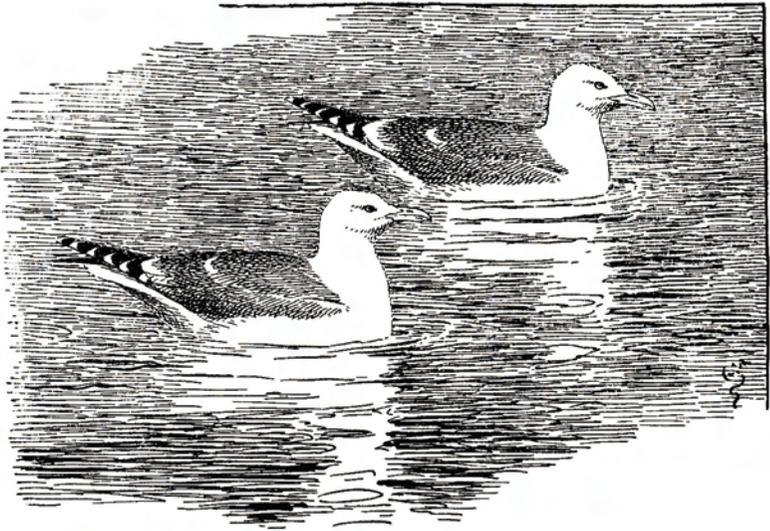
Nor was he given the garb of his father and mother for a traveling suit, that winter when he went south with the others, to a place where the Gulf Stream warmed the water whereon he swam and the air wherein he flew.

But there came a time when Larie had put off the clothes of his youth and donned the robe of a grown gull. And as he sailed in the breezes of his fifth world, which blew over the cold sea, and across the island with a carpet of green and rocks of red and green and gray,—for he was again in the North,—he was beautiful to behold, the flight of a gull being so wonderful that the heart of him who sees quickens with joy.

## THE FIVE WORLDS OF LARIE

Larie was not alone. There were so many with him that, when they flew together in the distance, they looked as thick as snowflakes in the air; and when they screamed together, the din was so great that people who were not used to hearing them put their hands over their ears.

And more than that, Larie was not alone; for there sailed near him in the air and floated beside him in the sea another gull, at whom he did not scream, but to whom he talked pleasantly, saying, "me-you," in a musical tone that she understood.



*Floated beside him in the sea another gull,  
to whom he talked pleasantly.*

Larie and his mate found much to do that spring. One game that never failed to interest them was meeting the ships many, many waves out at sea, and following them far on their way. For on the ships were

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men who threw away food they could not use, and the gulls gathered in flocks to scramble and fight for this. Children on board the ships laughed merrily to see them, and tossed crackers and biscuits out for the fun of watching the hungry birds come close, to feed.

Many a feast, too, the fishermen gave the gulls, when they sorted the contents of their nets and threw aside what they did not want.

Besides this, Larie and his mate and their comrades picnicked in high glee at certain harbors where garbage was left; for gulls are thrifty folk and do not waste the food of the world.

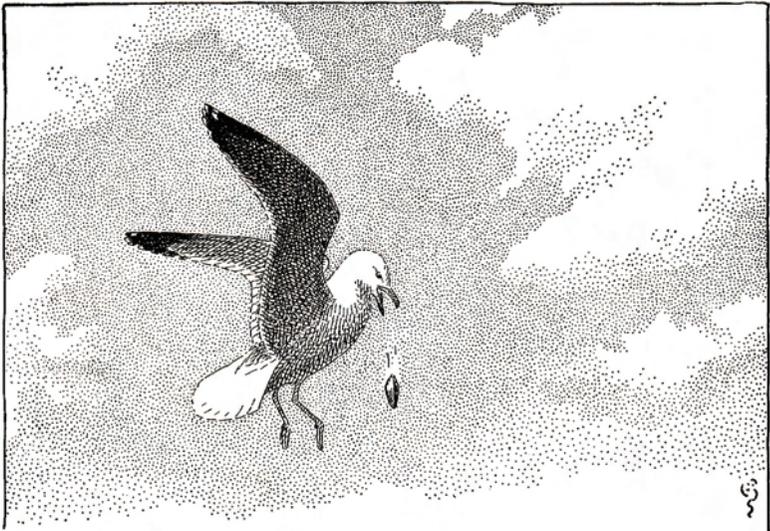
From their feeding habits you will know that these beautiful birds are scavengers, eating things which, if left on the sea or shore, would make the water foul and the air impure. Thus it is that Nature gives to a scavenger the duty of service to all living creatures; and the freshness of the ocean and the cleanness of the sands of the shore are in part a gift of the gulls, for which we should thank and protect them.

Relish as they might musty bread and mouldy meat, Larie and his mate enjoyed, too, the sport of catching fresh food; and many a clam hunt they had in true gull style. They would fly above the water near the shore, and when they were twenty or thirty feet high, would plunge down head-first. Then they would poke around for a clam, with their heads and necks under water and their wings out and partly unfolded, but not flopping; and a comical sight they were!

After Larie found a clam, he would fly high into

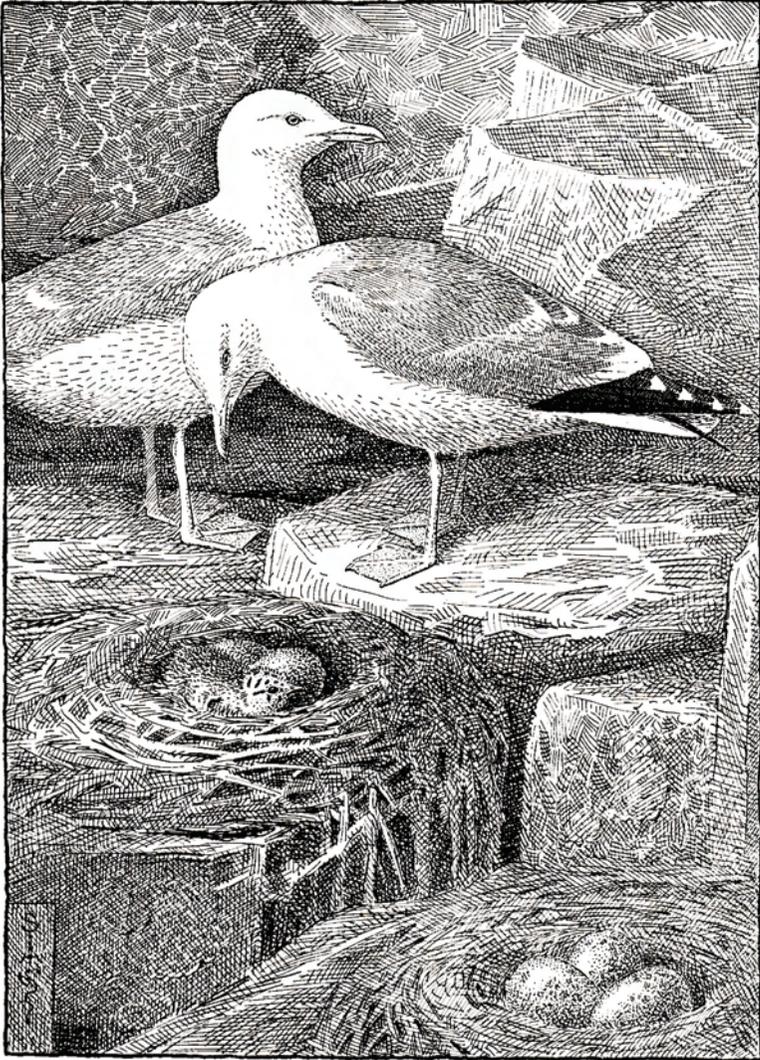
## THE FIVE WORLDS OF LARIE

the air a hundred feet or so above the rocks, and then, stretching way up with his head, drop the clam from his beak. Easily, with wings fluttering slightly, Larie would follow the clam, floating gracefully, though quickly, down to where it had cracked upon the rocks. The morsel in its broken shell was now ready to eat, for Larie and his mate did not bake their sea-food or make it into chowder. Cold salad flavored with sea-salt was all they needed.



*After Larie found a clam, he would fly high into the air a hundred feet or so, and then drop it.*

Exciting as were these hunts with the flocks of screaming gulls, it was not for food alone that Larie and his mate lived that spring. For under the blue of the airy sky there was an ocean, and in that ocean there was an island, and on that island there was a nest, and in that nest there was an egg—the first that the mate



*It was not for food alone that Larie and his mate  
lived that spring.*

*THE FIVE WORLDS OF LARIE*

of Larie had ever laid. And in that egg was a growing gull, their eldest son—a baby Larie, alone inside his very first world.