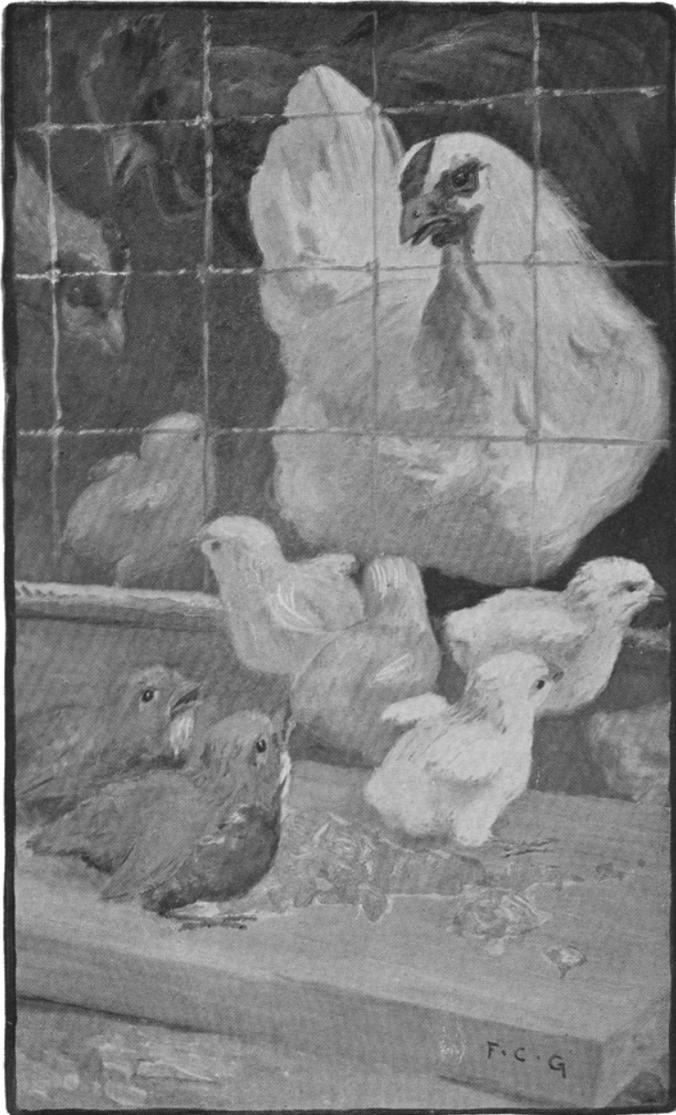


DOORYARD STORIES



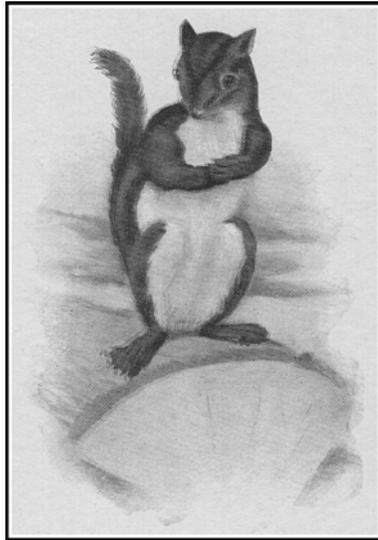
THE VERY RUDE YOUNG ROBINS

DOORYARD STORIES

BY

CLARA DILLINGHAM PIERSON

Illustrated by F. C. Gordon



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PREFACE

MY DEAR LITTLE FRIENDS:—These stories are of things which I have seen with my own eyes in my own yard, and the people of whom I write are my friends and near neighbors. Some of them, indeed, live under my roof, and Silvertip has long been a member of our family. So, you see, I have not had to do like some writers—sit down and think and think how to make the people act in their stories. These tales are of things which have really happened, and all I have done is to write them down for you.

Many of them have been told over and over to my own little boy, and because he never tires of hearing of the time when Silvertip was a Kitten, and about the Wasps who built inside my shutters, I think you may care to hear also. He wants me to be sure to tell how baby Swift tumbled down the chimney into his bedroom, and wishes you might have seen it in the little nest we made. When I tell these tales to him, I have great trouble in ending them, for there is never a time when he does not ask: “And what did he do then Mother?” But I am telling you as much as I can of how everything happened, and if there was more which I

did not see and describe, you will have to make up the rest to suit yourselves.

Besides, you know, there is always much which one cannot see or hear, but which one knows is happening somewhere in this beautiful great world. The birds do not stop living and working and loving when they leave us for the sunny south, and above us, and around us, and even under our feet many things are done which we cannot see. As we become better acquainted with the little people who live in our dooryards, we shall see more and more interesting things, and I wish you might all grow to be like my little boy, who is never lonely or in need of a playmate so long as a Caterpillar or a Grasshopper is in sight.

See how many tiny neighbors you have around you, and how much you can learn about them. Then you will find your own dooryard as interesting as mine and know that there are playmates everywhere.

Your friend,

CLARA D. PIERSON.

STANTON, MICHIGAN,

October 30, 1902.



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SILVERTIP

A VERY small, wet, and hungry Kitten pattered up and down a board walk one cold and rainy night. His fur was so soaked that it dripped water when he moved, and his poor little pink-cushioned paws splashed more water up from the puddly boards every time he stepped. His tail looked like a wet wisp of fur, and his little round face was very sad. “Meouw!” said he. “Meouw! Meouw!”

He heard somebody coming up the street. “I will follow that Gentleman,” he thought, “and I will cry so that he will be sorry for me and give me a home.”

When this person came nearer he saw that it was not a Gentleman at all, but a Lady who could hardly keep from being blown away. He could not have seen her except that Cat’s eyes can see in the dark. “Meouw!” said the Kitten. “Meouw! Meouw!”

“Poor little Pussy!” said a voice above him. “Poor little Pussy! But you must not come with me.”

“Meouw!” answered he, and trotted right along after her. He was a Kitten who was not easily discouraged.

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He rubbed up against her foot and made her stop for fear of stepping on him. Then he felt himself gently lifted up and put aside. He scrambled back and rubbed against her other foot. And so it was for more than two blocks. The Lady, as he always called her afterward, kept pushing him gently to one side and he kept scrambling back. Sometimes she even had to stand quite still for fear of stepping on him.

“Meouw!” said the Kitten, and he made up his mind that anybody who spoke so kindly to strange Kittens would be a good mistress. “I will stick to her,” he said to himself. “I don’t care how many times she pushes me away, I *will* scramble back.”

When they turned in at the gate he saw a big house ahead of him with many windows brightly lighted and another light on the porch. “I like that home,” he said to himself. “I will slip through the door when she opens it.”

But after she had turned the key in the door she pushed him back and closed the screen between them. Then he heard her say: “Poor little Pussy! I want to take you in, but we have agreed not to adopt another Cat.” Then she closed the door.

He wanted to explain that he was not really a Cat, only a little Kitten, but he had no chance to say anything, so he waited outside and thought and cried. He did not know that the Lady and her husband feared that Cats would eat the many birds who nested in the trees on the lawn. He thought it very hard luck for a tiny Kitten to be left out in the cold rain while the Lady was reading

SILVERTIP

by a blazing grate fire. He did not know that as she sat by the fire she thought about him instead of her book, for she loved little Kittens, and found it hard to leave any out in the street alone.

While he was thinking and crying, a tall Gentleman with a black beard and twinkling brown eyes came striding up to the brightly lighted porch. "Well, Pussy-cat!" said the Gentleman, and took a bunch of shining, jingling things out of his pocket and stuck one of them into a little hole in the door and turned it. Then the door swung open, and the Gentleman, who was trying to close his umbrella and shake off the rain, called first to the Lady and then to the kitten. "O Clara!" he cried. "Come to see this poor little Kitten. Here Kitty, Kitty, Kitty! I know you want to see him. Here Kitty, Kitty, Kitty! I should have thought you would have heard him crying. Here, Kitty, Kitty, Kitty!"

The Lady came running out and was laughing. "Yes, John," she said, "I have had the pleasure of meeting him before. He was under my feet most of the way home from church to-night, and I could hardly bear to leave him outside. But you know what we promised each other, that we would not adopt another Cat, on account of the birds."

The Gentleman sat down upon the stairs and wiped the Kitten off with his handkerchief. "Y-yes, I know," he said weakly, "but Clara, look at this poor little fellow. He couldn't catch a Chipping Sparrow."

"Not now," answered the Lady, "yet he will grow, if he is like most Kittens, and you know what we said. If

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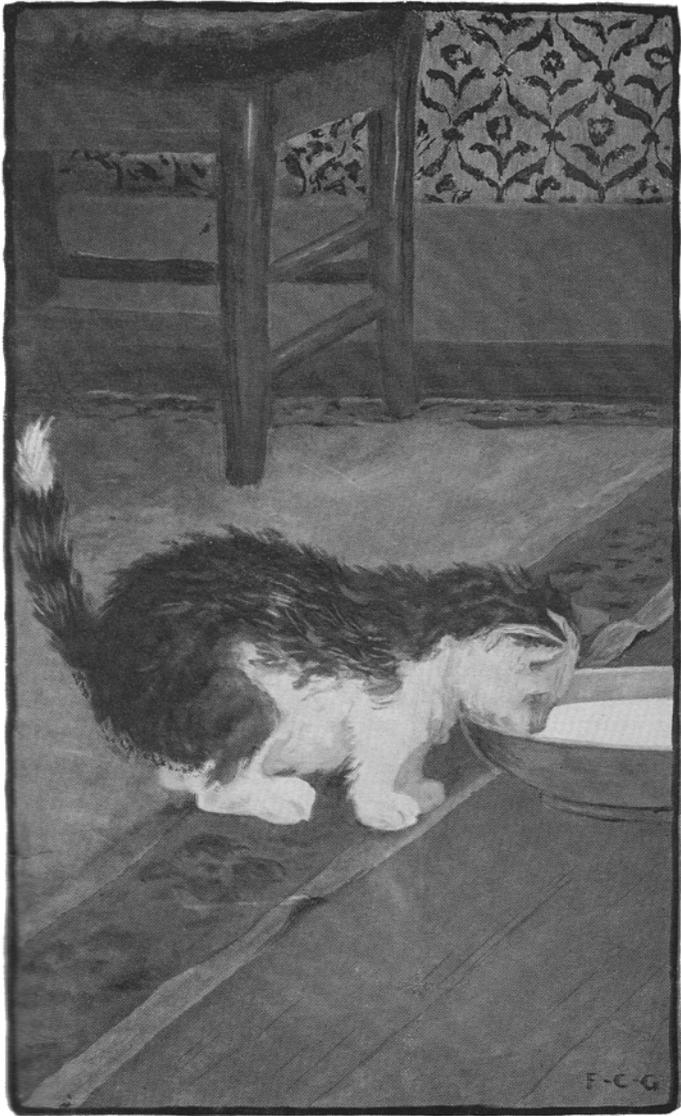
we don't stick to it we will soon have as many Cats as we did a few years ago."

The Kitten saw that if he wanted to stay in this home he must insist upon it and be very firm indeed with these people. So he kept on crying and stuck his sharp claws into the Gentleman's sleeve. The Gentleman said "Ouch!" and lifted him to his coat lapel. There he clung and shook and cried.

"Well, I suppose we must n't keep him then," said he; "but we will give him a warm supper anyway." So they got some milk and heated it, and set it in a shallow dish before the grate. How that Kitten did eat! The Lady sat on the floor beside him, and the Gentleman drew his chair up close, and they said that it seemed hard to turn him out, but that they would have to do it because they had promised each other.

The Kitten lapped up his milk with a soft click-clicking of his little pink tongue, and then turned his head this way and that until he had licked all the corners clean. He was so full of warm milk that his sides bulged out, and his fur had begun to dry and stuck up in pointed wisps all over him. He pretended to lap milk long after it was gone. This was partly to show them how well he could wash dishes, and partly to put off the time when he should be thrust out of doors.

When he really could not make believe any longer, his tongue being so tired, he began to cry and rub against these two people. The Gentleman was the first to speak. "I cannot stand this," he said. "If he has to go, I want to get if over." He picked up the Kitten and



THE KITTEN LAPPED UP HIS MILK.

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took him to the door. As fast as he loosened one of the Kitten's claws from his coat he stuck another one in, and at last the Lady had to help get him free. "He is a regular Rough Rider," said the Gentleman. "There is no shaking him off."

The Kitten did n't understand what a Rough Rider was, but it did not sound like finding a home, so he cried some more. Then the door was shut behind him and he was alone in the porch. "Well," he said, "I like that house and those people, even if they did put me out. I think I will make them adopt me." So he cuddled down in a sheltered, dry corner, put his four feet all close together, and curled his tail, as far as it would go, around them. And there he stayed all night.

In the morning, when the rain had stopped and the sun was shining brightly, he trotted around the house and cried. He went up on to another porch, rubbed against the door and cried. The Maid opened the door and put out some milk for him. He could see into the warm kitchen and smell the breakfast cooking on the range. When she came out to get the empty dish, he slipped in through the open door. She said "Whish!" and "Scat!" and "Shoo!" and tried to drive him out, but he pretended not to understand and cuddled quietly down in a corner where she could not easily reach him. Just then some food began to burn on the range and the Maid let him alone. The Kitten did not cry now. He had other work to do, and began licking himself all over and scratching his ears with his hind feet.

When he heard the Gentleman and the Lady

SILVERTIP

talking in the dining-room, he watched his chance and slipped in. He decided to pay the most attention to the Gentleman, for he had been the first to take him up. They were laughing and talking and saying how glad they were that the rain had stopped falling. "I believe, John," the Lady said, "that if it had not been for me, you would really have kept that Kitten last night."

"Oh, no," answered the Gentleman, "We ought not to keep Cats. *I* think that if it had not been for me *you* would have kept him."

Just at that minute the Kitten began climbing up his trousers leg and crying. "Poor little Pussy," said the Gentleman. "Clara, can't we spare some of this cream?" He reached for the pitcher. The Kitten began to feel more sure of a home.

"O John, not here?" began the Lady, and the Maid came in to explain how it all happened. The Kitten stuck his claws into the Gentleman's coat and would not let go. Then he cried some more and waved his tail. He had a very beautiful tail, marked just like that of a Raccoon, and he turned it toward the Lady. He had heard somewhere about putting the best foot forward, and thought that a tail might do just as well. While he was waving his tail at the Lady he rubbed his head against the Gentleman's black beard.

"If we *should* keep him, John," said the Lady, "we ought to call him Silvertip, because he has such a pretty white tip to his tail." The Kitten waved it again and began to purr.

"If you knew what a strong and fearless fellow he is,

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you would call him Teddy,” answered the Gentleman, turning over a paper which said in big black letters, “Our Teddy Wins.”

“Call him Teddy Silvertip then,” said the Lady, as she reached for the bell. When the Maid came in answer to her ring, she said, “Belle, please take our Kitten into the kitchen and feed him.” Then the Kitten let go and was carried away happy, for he had found a home. He had also learned how to manage the Lady and the Gentleman, and he was always *very* firm with them after that.



THE FIGHT FOR THE BIRD-HOUSE

UNDER the cornice of the tool-house was an old cigar-box with a tiny doorway cut in one end and a small board nailed in front of it for a porch. This had been put up for a bird-house, and year after year a pair of Wrens had nested there, until they began to think it really their own. When they left it in the fall to fly south, they always looked back lovingly at it, and talked over their plans for the next summer.

“I think we might better leave this nest inside all winter,” Mrs. Wren always said. “It will seem so much more home-like when we return, and it will not be much trouble to clear it out afterward.”

“An excellent plan, my dear,” her cheerful little husband would reply. “You remember we did so last season. Besides,” he always added, “that will show other birds that Wrens have lived here, and they will know that we are expecting to return, since that is the custom in our family.”

“And then do you think they will leave it for us?”

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Mrs. Wren would ask. "You know they might want it for themselves."

"What if they did want it?" Mr. Wren had said. "They could go somewhere else, could n't they? Do you suppose I would ever steal another bird's nesting-place if I knew it?"

"N-no," said Mrs. Wren, "but not everybody is as unselfish as you." And she looked at him tenderly.

The Wrens were a most devoted couple,—all in all, about the nicest birds on the place. And that was saying a great deal, for there were many nesting there and others who came to find food on the broad lawn. They were small birds, wearing dark brown feathers on the upper parts of their bodies and lighter grayish ones underneath. Even their bills were marked in the same way, with the upper half dark and the lower half light. Their wings were short and blunt, and they had a habit of holding their tails well up in the air.

People said that Mrs. Wren was very fussy, and perhaps it was true, but even then she was not a cross person. Besides, if she wished to do a thing over five times in order to make it suit her, she certainly had a perfect right to do so. It was she who always chose the nesting-place and settled all the plans for the family. Mr. Wren was quite content to have it so, since that was the custom among Wrens, and it saved him much work. Mr. Wren was not lazy. He simply wanted to save time for singing, which he considered his own particular business. Besides, he never forgot what had happened to a cousin of his, a young fellow who found fault with

THE FIGHT FOR THE BIRD-HOUSE

his wife and insisted on changing to another nesting-place. It had ended in his going, and her staying there and marrying another Wren. So he had lost both his home and his wife by finding fault.

Now the April days had come, with their warm showers and green growing grass. A pair of English Sparrows, who had nested in the woodbine the summer before and raised several large broods of bad-mannered children, decided that they would like to try living in the bird-house. Having been on the place all winter, they began work early. The Blackbirds were already back, and one reminded them that it belonged to the Wrens.

“Guess not now,” said Mr. Sparrow, with a bad look in his eyes. “Nothing belongs to anybody else if I want it. Do you see?” Then he picked up and swallowed a fat Grub which the Blackbird had uncovered for himself and left lying there until he should finish talking. One could hardly blame the blackbird for being vexed about this, for everybody knows that English Sparrows really prefer seeds, and that this one ate the Grub only to be mean. It did not make the Blackbird any happier to hear his relatives laugh at him in the evergreens above, and he made up his mind to get even with that Sparrow.

The Sparrows pitched all the old nest out of doors and began quarrelling with each other about building their own. They always quarreled. Indeed, that was the way in which they had courted each other. Mrs. Sparrow had two lovers, and she married the one who would stand the worst pecking from her. “For,” she said,

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“what is the use of having a husband unless you can beat him when you fight with him?”

Now they stuffed the dainty little bird-house full of straws, sticks, feathers, and anything they could find, until there was hardly room left in which to turn around. They were just beginning to wonder if they must throw some out when they heard the happy song of Mr. Wren.

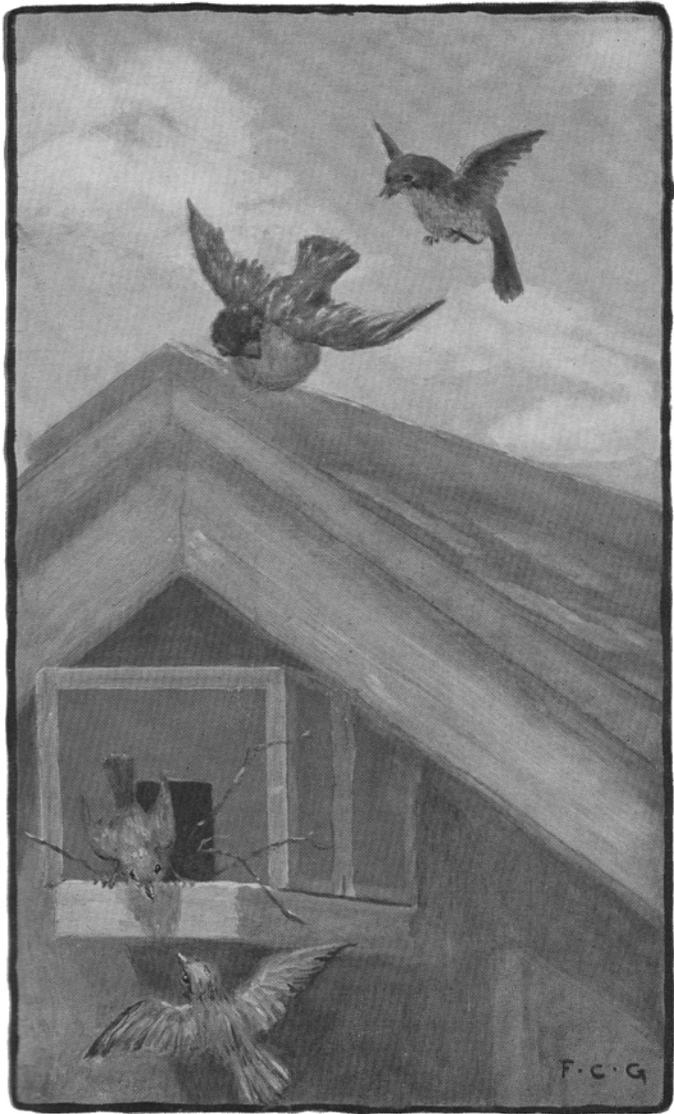
“Get inside!” cried Mr. Sparrow to his wife. “I will stand on the porch and fight them.”

Down flew Mr. and Mrs. Wren. “Oh, is n’t it pleasant to get home again?” she exclaimed. “But what is that Sparrow doing on our porch?”

“This is our home now,” said Mrs. Sparrow, “and we are very busy. Get out of my way.”

“Your home?” cried the Wrens. “How is that? You lived in the woodbine last season and knew that this was ours. You are surely not in earnest.”

Mr. Wren looked at his wife and she nodded. Then he flew at Mr. Sparrow and they fought back and forth on the grape trellis near by them, in the air, then on the ground. Mrs. Sparrow peeped out of the open door to see if her husband needed help. He was the larger of the two, but not so quick in darting and turning. Now they passed out of sight behind the tool-house and she forgot Mrs. Wren and flew down to see better. She was hardly off the tiny porch when Mrs. Wren darted in. Mrs. Sparrow saw when it was too late what a mistake she had made, and tried to get back. She reached the



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porch again just in time to have a lot of straws, twigs, and feathers poked into her face by the angry Mrs. Wren.

“I am cleaning house,” said Mrs. Wren. “My house, too! Get out of my way!” Then she pushed out more of the same sort of stuff. Mrs. Sparrow tried to get in, and every time she put her head through the doorway she was pecked by Mrs. Wren. And she deserved it. She called Mr. Sparrow, but he could not help her, and Mr. Wren was so pleased that he sat on top of the tool-house and sang and sang and sang. To look at him you would have thought he was trying to kill himself. He puffed up his throat and swelled up his body and sang so fast that he seemed to be saying about four words at a time.

“Good for you! Good for you! Good for you!” he sang. “Stick to it! Stick to it! Stick to it! I’m here! I’m here! I’m here, here, here!”

Mrs. Wren was too busy to say much, but she did a great deal. Every scrap of the nest was thrown out, and as she worked she decided to keep that house if she starved there.

This was the middle of the morning and she could not get out to feed until late in the afternoon. Mr. Wren found some delicious insects on the grapevines, and tried to carry a few billfuls to his wife, but the Sparrows prevented him. He would have enjoyed his own dinner better if she could have eaten with him. When he asked how she was, she chirped back that she was hungry but would not give up. Mr. Wren spend most of his time walking around the roof of the tool-house in

THE FIGHT FOR THE BIRD-HOUSE

circles, dragging his wings on the shingles, and saying, "Tr-r-r-r-r!" He was so angry that sometimes he could not say anything else. The Sparrows sat on the grape trellis and said mean things.

They were still doing this late in the afternoon, while the tree shadows grew longer and longer on the lawn with the lowering of the sun. Suddenly a Blackbird alighted on the trellis. It was the same one whose fat Grub Mr. Sparrow had stolen.

"This has gone far enough," said he. "This house belongs to the Wrens and they are going to have it. *I* say so. If I catch either of you Sparrows around here again, I will drive you off the place. I can do it, too. You may think it over until the next time that grapevine is blown against the tool-house. If you do not go then, there will be *trouble*." He ruffled up his feathers and glared with his yellow eyes. That was all he had to do. Before the grapevine swayed again, the Sparrows were far away.

The Wrens thanked him, even before Mrs. Wren ate her late dinner. "You are welcome," he said. "It was just fun for me. I cannot bear those Sparrows, and I hoped they would stay and give me a chance to fight them. How I wish they had stayed!" He looked sad and disappointed.

"I'll never have another such good chance," said he. And he never did. Perhaps it was just as well, although there are times when it is not wrong to fight, and the Wrens think this would have been one.



THE FIR-TREE NEIGHBORS

WITH so many trees in the yard, it always seemed a little strange that three families should choose to build so close together in one. Still, it must also be remembered that there were many birds who liked to build near the big house, and thought of that yard as home.

The Lady spoke of this tree as “The Evergreen Apartment House.” The birds simply called it “The Tallest Fir Tree.”

Early in the spring a pair of English Sparrows decided to build there. Perhaps one should say that Mrs. Sparrow decided, since her husband had nothing to say about it, except to murmur “Yes, dear,” when she told him of her choice. They built well up in the tree, and had a big mass of hay, grass, and feathers together there when the Blackbirds came. This would have more than made a nest for most birds. Mrs. Sparrow called it only a beginning, and was always looking for more to add to it.

When the Blackbirds came in a dashing flock, they

THE FIR-TREE NEIGHBORS

began hunting for building places and talking it all over among themselves. One mother Blackbird, who had nested on the place the year before, had counted on having that particular tree.

“I decided on it last fall,” said she, “before I went South, and I have been planning for it all winter. I shall build in it just the same.” She shut her bill in such a way that nobody could doubt her meaning exactly what she said. Her husband did n’t like the place particularly well, but she said something to him which settled it. “You need not ruffle up your feathers for me,” she said, “or stand on tip-toe to squeak at me, unless you are willing to live there.”

They built higher than the nest of the English Sparrows. “We have always been well up in the world,” she said, “and we do not care to come down now.” That was all right. One could not blame them for feeling above the English Sparrows.

The English Sparrows had added more stuff to what they had, and the Blackbirds had their nest about half done when a pair of Hairbirds came to look for a comfortable tree. They were a young couple, just married that spring, and very devoted to each other. They did not decide matters in the same way as the English Sparrow, and the Blackbirds.

Although there were eleven other great evergreens in the yard, besides a number of trellises covered with vines, and all the vine-covered porches, there was no place which suited them so well as that particular tree. Yet each was so eager to please the other that it was rather

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hard to get either to say what he really thought. They perched on the tips of the fir branches and chattered and twittered all morning about it.

“What do you think?” Mrs. Hairbird said.

“What do you?” he replied.

“But I want to know what *you* think,” she insisted.

“And I would rather know what *you* think,” said he.

“No, but really,” asked she, “do you like this tree?”

“Do you?” asked Mr. Hairbird.

“Yes, yes,” answered she.

“So do I!” he said, with a happy twitter. “Is n’t it queer how we always like the same things?”

“I wonder if we like the same branch?” said Mrs. Hairbird, after a long pause, in which both picked insects off the fir-tree and ate them.

“Which branch do you like?” asked he. But he could not help looking out of the side of his eye at the one he most fancied. He could not look out of the corner of his eye, you know, because round eyes have no corners, and being a bird his eyes were perfectly round.

“I like that one,” she cried, and laughed to think how easily she had found out his choice. Then he laughed, too, and it was all decided, although Mrs. English Sparrow, fussing around in her mass of hay and feathers above them, declared that she never heard such silliness in her life, and that when she had made up her own mind

THE FIR-TREE NEIGHBORS

that was enough. She never bothered her husband with questions. Mr. English Sparrow heard her say this, and thought he would rather like to be bothered in that way.

Mrs. Blackbird thought it all a great joke. "When they have been married as long as I have," she said, "it won't take so long to decide things." Mrs. Blackbird laughed at everything, but she was mistaken about this, for the Hairbirds, or Chipping Sparrows, as they are sometimes called, are always devoted and unselfish.

It being the custom in their family, the newcomers built quite low in the tree. Such a happy time as they had. Every bit of grass root which either of them dragged loose and brought to the tree, was the prettiest and stoutest and best they had ever seen. And when it got to the Horsehairs for lining, they visited all the barns for a block around, hunting for them. Once, when Mrs. Hairbird wished for a white hair for one particular place, Mr. Hairbird even watched for a white Horse, and pulled it out of his tail.

You can imagine how surprised the Horse was when he felt that little tweak at his tail, and, looking around, saw a small brown bird pulling at one of his longest hairs. "I am sorry to annoy you," said this bird, "but Mrs. Hairbird needed a white hair."

"That is all right," said the Horse, to whom one hair was a very small matter, and who dearly loved a joke. "Please tell Mrs. Hairbird that my tail is hers if she wishes it."

"Your tail is hers!" exclaimed Mr. Hairbird, who

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ought to have seen the joke, since he was not an English Sparrow. "Oh, no, surely not! Surely your tail is not her tail. They are quite different, you know!" Then he understood and hurried away, but not in time to help hearing the Horse laugh.

When the white hair was woven in, the nest was done, and Mrs. Hairbird laid in it four greenish blue eggs with dark brown specks. In the nest above were six greenish white ones with brown and light purple spots. In the nest above that were five dingy streaked and speckled ones. Mrs. Hairbird said that hers were by far the prettiest. "It is not because I laid them," she said to her husband. "It is not for that reason that I think so, but they really are."

Mr. and Mrs. Hairbird were the only ones who paid for the chance to build in the tree. They picked insects off the branches, insects that would have robbed the tree of some of its strength.

The Blackbirds would not bother with such small bits of food. The English Sparrows should have paid in the same way, but they would not.

Their great-great-great- —a great many times great—grandparents were brought over to this country just to eat the insects which were hurting the trees and shrubs, but when they got here they would not do it. "No, indeed," said they; "we are here now, and we will eat what we choose." Their great-great-great- —a great many times great- —grandchildren were just like them.

Silvertip often came to sit under this tree. He called

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it a family tree, because it had so many little families in its branches. He could not climb it. The fine branches and twigs were so close together that he could not get up the trunk, and they were not strong enough for him to step from one to another of them.

As might perhaps have been expected, there was some gossiping among neighbors in this tree. The Blackbirds usually climbed to their nest by beginning at the bottom of the trunk and going around and around it to the top. This took them so close to the other nests that they could not help looking in. At any rate, they did n't help it.

Mrs. Blackbird told Mrs. Hairbird that the way Mrs. Sparrow kept house was a disgrace to the tree. Mrs. Sparrow told her to be very careful not to leave her eggs or young children alone when the Blackbirds were around, because when they were very hungry they had been known to—! She did not finish her sentence in words, but just ruffled up her feathers and fluttered her wings, which was a great deal meaner. If she were going to say such things about people, you know, she should have said them, and not made Mrs. Hairbird guess the worst part.

Mr. Blackbird said he pitied Mr. Sparrow with all his heart. He knew something what it was to have a wife try to run things, but that if Mrs. Blackbird had ever acted as Mrs. Sparrow did, he would leave her, even if it were in the early spring.

Mr. Sparrow said it was most disagreeable to have such noisy neighbors as the Blackbirds overhead. That

DOORYARD STORIES

if his wife had known they were coming to that tree, she would have chosen another place. "Of course it was too late for her to change when she found it out," he said. "Her nest was well begun, and she had some very choice straws and feathers which she did n't care to move. You know how such things get spoiled in carrying them from place to place."

Most of these things were told to Mrs. Hairbird, because she was at home with the eggs, but she repeated them all to her husband when he came. She even told him how Mr. Sparrow flew down one day just after a quarrel with his wife, and of all the things he had said when angry. It was quite right in Mrs. Hairbird to tell her husband, and yet she never chirped them to another bird. And that also was right.

When people talked these things to her, she always looked bright and pleasant, but she did not talk about them herself. Indeed, she often made excuses for her neighbors when she repeated things to her husband. For instance, when she told what Mrs. Sparrow had said about Mrs. Blackbird, she added: "I suppose that may be so, still, I feel sure that Mrs. Blackbird would not eat any of our children unless she were *dreadfully* hungry."

You can see what a sweet and wise little person Mrs. Hairbird was, and her husband was exactly like her. No matter how other people quarreled, they did not. No matter what gossip they heard, they did not repeat it. And it ended just as such things always do.

In late spring, about the time that the Bees were

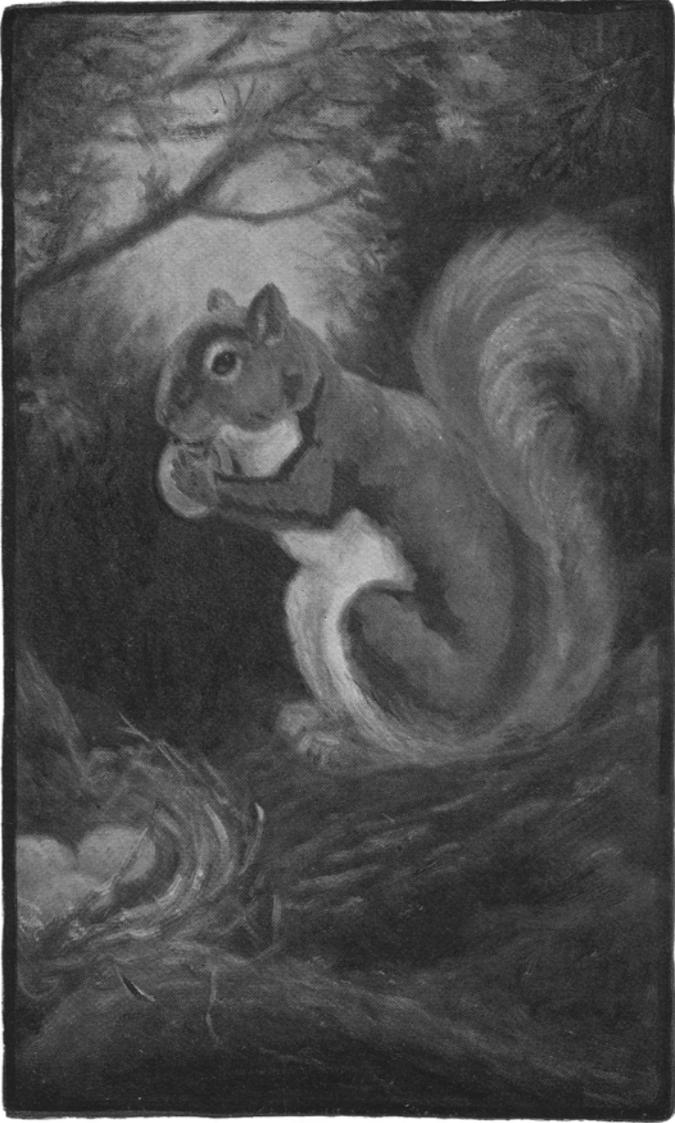
THE FIR-TREE NEIGHBORS

gathering varnish for their homes, and every fir-tree tip had one or two buzzing around it, there was a dreadful quarrel in the family tree. Mrs. Sparrow wanted some grasses from the outside of the Blackbirds' nest, and she sat on her own and looked at them until she felt she could not live without them. Of course, that was very wrong. She might have forgotten all about them if she had made herself think about something else. Any bird who wants something he ought not to have should do that. She might better have looked down at her own breast, or counted her wing feathers over and over. However, she did n't. She took those grasses.

Mrs. Blackbird missed them, and then saw them woven loosely into the nest below hers. She did not say much, and she did not eat the eggs out of the Sparrows' nest. Some people said that she ate them, but that was a mistake. All that she did was to sit very quietly on her nest while a Red Squirrel ate them. When this same fellow would have eaten those in the nest below, both the Hairbirds being away, she drove him off herself.

You can imagine what the Sparrows said when they returned. Or perhaps you might better not try to, for they said very cross things. Then Mrs. Blackbird told what she thought about those stolen grasses, and her husband joined in, until there was more noise than a flock of Crows would make.

It ended in Mr. and Mrs. Sparrow tearing down that nest and building another in the woodbine, where most of their relatives lived. Some of their neighbors thought the Blackbirds right and some thought the



A RED SQUIRREL ATE THEM

THE FIR-TREE NEIGHBORS

Sparrows right, but through it all, Mr. and Mrs. Hairbird were happy and contented, and brought up their four charming children to be as good birds as they were themselves.

The Sparrows often said that the worst thing about going away from the family tree was leaving the Hairbirds, who were such delightful neighbors. The Blackbirds said that the pleasantest thing about the tree was having the Hairbirds for neighbors. The Hairbirds were liked by everybody, and never made trouble between friends. It was all because they knew how and when to keep their bills shut.