

ABBIE BROWN

THE BOOK OF SAINTS
AND FRIENDLY BEASTS

Abbie Brown

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and Friendly Beasts**

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The Book of Saints and Friendly Beasts

IN the old legends there may be things which some folk nowadays find it hard to believe. But surely the theme of each is true. It is not hard to see how gentle bodies who had no other friends should make comrades of the little folk in fur and fins and feathers. For, as St. Francis knew so well, all the creatures are our little brothers, ready to meet halfway those who will but try to understand. And this is a truth which every one to-day, even tho' he be no Saint, is waking up to learn. The happenings are set down quite as they read in the old books. Veritable histories, like those of St. Francis and St. Cuthbert, ask no addition of color to make them real. But sometimes, when a mere line of legend remained to hint of some dear Saint's relation with his friendly Beast, the story has been filled out in the way that seemed most likely to be true. For so alone could the old tale be made alive again. So all one's best is dressing old words new.

SAINT BRIDGET AND THE KING'S WOLF

EVERY one has heard of Bridget, the little girl saint of Ireland. Her name is almost as well known as that of Saint Patrick, who drove all the snakes from the Island. Saint Bridget had long golden hair; and she was very beautiful. Many wonderful things happened to her that are written in famous books. But I suspect that you never heard what she did about the King's Wolf. It is a queer story.

This is how it happened. The King of Ireland had a tame wolf which some hunters had caught for him when it was a wee baby. And this wolf ran around as it pleased in the King's park near the palace, and had a very good time. But one morning he got over the high wall which surrounded the park, and strayed a long distance from home, which was a foolish thing to do. For in those days wild wolves were hated and feared by the people, whose cattle they often stole; and if a man could kill a wicked wolf he thought himself a very smart fellow indeed. Moreover, the King himself had offered a prize to any man who should bring him a dead wolf. For he wanted his kingdom to be a peaceful, happy one, where the children could play in the woods all day without fear of big eyes or big teeth.

Of course you can guess what happened to the King's wolf? A big, silly country fellow was going along with his bow and arrows, when he saw a great brown beast leap over a hedge and dash into the meadow beyond. It was only the King's wolf running away from home and feeling very frisky because it was the first time that he had done such a thing. But the country fellow did not know all that.

"Aha!" he said to himself. "I'll soon have you, my fine wolf; and the King will give me a gold piece that will buy me a hat and a new suit of clothes for the holidays." And without stopping to think about it or to look closely at the wolf, who had the King's mark upon his ear, the fellow shot his arrow straight as a string. The King's wolf gave one great leap into the air and then fell dead on the grass, poor fellow.

The countryman was much pleased. He dragged his prize straight up to the King's palace and thumped on the gate.

"Open!" he cried. "Open to the valiant hunter who has shot a wolf for the King. Open, that I may go in to receive the reward."

So, very respectfully, they bade him enter; and the Lord Chamberlain escorted him before the King himself, who sat on a great red-velvet throne in the Hall. In came the fellow, dragging after him by the tail the limp body of the King's wolf.

"What have we here?" growled the King, as the Lord Chamberlain made a low bow and pointed with his staff to the stranger. The King had a bad temper and did not like to receive callers in the morning. But the silly countryman was too vain of his great deed to notice the King's disagreeable frown.

"You have here a wolf, Sire," he said proudly. "I have shot for you a wolf, and I come to claim the promised reward."

But at this unlucky moment the King started up with an angry cry. He had noticed his mark on the wolf's right ear.

"Ho! Seize the villain!" he shouted to his soldiers. "He has slain my tame wolf; he has shot my pet! Away with him to prison; and to-morrow he dies."

It was useless for the poor man to scream and cry and try to explain that it was all a mistake. The King was furious. His wolf was killed, and the murderer must die.

In those days this was the way kings punished men who displeased them in any way. There were no delays; things happened very quickly. So they dragged the poor fellow off to a dark, damp dungeon and left him there howling and tearing his hair, wishing that wolves had never been saved from the flood by Noah and his Ark.

Now not far from this place little Saint Bridget lived. When she chose the beautiful spot for her home there were no houses near, only a great oak-tree, under which she built her little hut. It had but

one room and the roof was covered with grass and straw. It seemed almost like a doll's playhouse, it was so small; and Bridget herself was like a big, golden-haired wax doll, – the prettiest doll you ever saw.

She was so beautiful and so good that people wanted to live near her, where they could see her sweet face often and hear her voice. When they found where she had built her cell, men came flocking from all the country round about with their wives and children and their household goods, their cows and pigs and chickens; and camping on the green grass under the great oak-tree they said, "We will live here, too, where Saint Bridget is."

So house after house was built, and a village grew up about her little cell; and for a name it had *Kildare*, which in Irish means "Cell of the Oak." Soon Kildare became so fashionable that even the King must have a palace and a park there. And it was in this park that the King's wolf had been killed.

Now Bridget knew the man who had shot the wolf, and when she heard into what terrible trouble he had fallen she was very sorry, for she was a kind-hearted little girl. She knew he was a silly fellow to shoot the tame wolf; but still it was all a mistake, and she thought he ought not to be punished so severely. She wished that she could do something to help him, to save him if possible. But this seemed difficult, for she knew what a bad temper the King had; and she also knew how proud he had been of that wolf, who was the only tame one in all the land.

Bridget called for her coachman with her chariot and pair of white horses, and started for the King's palace, wondering what she should do to satisfy the King and make him release the man who had meant to do no harm.

But lo and behold! as the horses galloped along over the Irish bogs of peat, Saint Bridget saw a great white shape racing towards her. At first she thought it was a dog. But no: no dog was as large as that. She soon saw that it was a wolf, with big eyes and with a red tongue lolling out of his mouth. At last he overtook the frightened horses, and with a flying leap came plump into the chariot where Bridget sat, and crouched at her feet, quietly as a dog would. He was no tame wolf, but a wild one, who had never before felt a human being's hand upon him. Yet he let Bridget pat and stroke him, and say nice things into his great ear. And he kept perfectly still by her side until the chariot rumbled up to the gate of the palace.

Then Bridget held out her hand and called to him; and the great white beast followed her quietly through the gate and up the stair and down the long hall, until they stood before the red-velvet throne, where the King sat looking stern and sulky.

They must have been a strange-looking pair, the little maiden in her green gown with her golden hair falling like a shower down to her knees; and the huge white wolf standing up almost as tall as she, his yellow eyes glaring fiercely about, and his red tongue panting. Bridget laid her hand gently on the beast's head which was close to her shoulder, and bowed to the King. The King only sat and stared, he was so surprised at the sight; but Bridget took that as a permission to speak.

"You have lost your tame wolf, O King," she said. "But I have brought you a better. There is no other tame wolf in all the land, now yours is dead. But look at this one! There is no white wolf to be found anywhere, and he is both tame and white. I have tamed him, my King. I, a little maiden, have tamed him so that he is gentle as you see. Look, I can pull his big ears and he will not snarl. Look, I can put my little hand into his great red mouth, and he will not bite. Sire, I give him to you. Spare me then the life of the poor, silly man who unwittingly killed your beast. Give his stupid life to me in exchange for this dear, amiable wolf," and she smiled pleadingly.

The King sat staring first at the great white beast, wonderfully pleased with the look of him, then at the beautiful maiden whose blue eyes looked so wistfully at him. And he was wonderfully pleased with the look of them, too. Then he bade her tell him the whole story, how she had come by the creature, and when, and where. Now when she had finished he first whistled in surprise, then he laughed. That was a good sign, – he was wonderfully pleased with Saint Bridget's story, also. It was so strange a thing for the King to laugh in the morning that the Chamberlain nearly fainted from

surprise; and Bridget felt sure that she had won her prayer. Never had the King been seen in such a good humor. For he was a vain man, and it pleased him mightily to think of owning all for himself this huge beast, whose like was not in all the land, and whose story was so marvelous.

And when Bridget looked at him so beseechingly, he could not refuse those sweet blue eyes the request which they made, for fear of seeing them fill with tears. So, as Bridget begged, he pardoned the countryman, and gave his life to Bridget, ordering his soldiers to set him free from prison. Then when she had thanked the King very sweetly, she bade the wolf lie down beside the red-velvet throne, and thenceforth be faithful and kind to his new master. And with one last pat upon his shaggy head, she left the wolf and hurried out to take away the silly countryman in her chariot, before the King should have time to change his mind.

The man was very happy and grateful. But she gave him a stern lecture on the way home, advising him not to be so hasty and so wasteful next time.

"Sirrah Stupid," she said as she set him down by his cottage gate, "better not kill at all than take the lives of poor tame creatures. I have saved your life this once, but next time you will have to suffer. Remember, it is better that two wicked wolves escape than that one kind beast be killed. We cannot afford to lose our friendly beasts, Master Stupid. We can better afford to lose a blundering fellow like you." And she drove away to her cell under the oak, leaving the silly man to think over what she had said, and to feel much ashamed.

But the King's new wolf lived happily ever after in the palace park; and Bridget came often to see him, so that he had no time to grow homesick or lonesome.

SAINT GERASIMUS AND THE LION

I

ONE fine morning Saint Gerasimus was walking briskly along the bank of the River Jordan. By his side plodded a little donkey bearing on his back an earthen jar; for they had been down to the river together to get water, and were taking it back to the monastery on the hill for the monks to drink at their noonday meal.

Gerasimus was singing merrily, touching the stupid little donkey now and then with a twig of olive leaves to keep him from going to sleep. This was in the far East, in the Holy Land, so the sky was very blue and the ground smelled hot. Birds were singing around them in the trees and overhead, all kinds of strange and beautiful birds. But suddenly Gerasimus heard a sound unlike any bird he had ever known; a sound which was not a bird's song at all, unless some newly invented kind had a bass voice which ended in a howl. The little donkey stopped suddenly, and bracing his fore legs and cocking forward his long, flappy ears, looked afraid and foolish. Gerasimus stopped too. But he was so wise a man that he could not look foolish. And he was too good a man to be afraid of anything. Still, he was a little surprised.

"Dear me," he said aloud, "how very strange that sounded. What do you suppose it was?" Now there was no one else anywhere near, so he must have been talking to himself. For he could never have expected that donkey to know anything about it. But the donkey thought he was being spoken to, so he wagged his head, and said, "He-haw!" which was a very silly answer indeed, and did not help Gerasimus at all.

He seized the donkey by the halter and waited to see what would happen. He peered up and down and around and about, but there was nothing to be seen except the shining river, the yellow sand, a clump of bushes beside the road, and the spire of the monastery peeping over the top of the hill beyond. He was about to start the donkey once more on his climb towards home, when that sound came again; and this time he noticed that it was a sad sound, a sort of whining growl ending in a sob. It sounded nearer than before, and seemed to come from the clump of bushes. Gerasimus and the donkey turned their heads quickly in that direction, and the donkey trembled all over, he was so frightened. But his master only said, "It must be a Lion!"

And sure enough: he had hardly spoken the word when out of the bushes came poking the great head and yellow eyes of a lion. He was looking straight at Gerasimus. Then, giving that cry again, he bounded out and strode towards the good man, who was holding the donkey tight to keep him from running away. He was the biggest kind of a lion, much bigger than the donkey, and his mane was long and thick, and his tail had a yellow brush on the end as large as a window mop. But as he came Gerasimus noticed that he limped as if he were lame. At once the Saint was filled with pity, for he could not bear to see any creature suffer. And without any thought of fear, he went forward to meet the lion. Instead of pouncing upon him fiercely, or snarling, or making ready to eat him up, the lion crouched whining at his feet.

"Poor fellow," said Gerasimus, "what hurts you and makes you lame, brother Lion?"

The lion shook his yellow mane and roared. But his eyes were not fierce; they were only full of pain as they looked up into those of Gerasimus asking for help. And then he held up his right fore paw and shook it to show that this was where the trouble lay. Gerasimus looked at him kindly.

"Lie down, sir," he said just as one would speak to a big yellow dog. And obediently the lion charged. Then the good man bent over him, and taking the great paw in his hand examined it carefully. In the soft cushion of the paw a long pointed thorn was piercing so deeply that he could hardly find the end. No wonder the poor lion had roared with pain! Gerasimus pulled out the thorn as gently as

he could, and though it must have hurt the lion badly he did not make a sound, but lay still as he had been told. And when the thorn was taken out the lion licked Gerasimus' hand, and looked up in his face as if he would say, "Thank you, kind man. I shall not forget."

Now when the Saint had finished this good deed he went back to his donkey and started on towards the monastery. But hearing the soft pad of steps behind him he turned and saw that the great yellow lion was following close at his heels. At first he was somewhat embarrassed, for he did not know how the other monks would receive this big stranger. But it did not seem polite or kind to drive him away, especially as he was still somewhat lame. So Gerasimus took up his switch of olive leaves and drove the donkey on without a word, thinking that perhaps the lion would grow tired and drop behind. But when he glanced over his shoulder he still saw the yellow head close at his elbow; and sometimes he felt the hot, rough tongue licking his hand that hung at his side.

So they climbed the hill to the monastery. Some one had seen Gerasimus coming with this strange attendant at his heels, and the windows and doors were crowded with monks, their mouths and eyes wide open with astonishment, peering over one another's shoulders. From every corner of the monastery they had run to see the sight; but they were all on tiptoe to run back again twice as quickly if the lion should roar or lash his tail. Now although Gerasimus knew that the house was full of staring eyes expecting every minute to see him eaten up, he did not hurry or worry at all. Leisurely he unloaded the water-jar and put the donkey in his stable, the lion following him everywhere he went. When all was finished he turned to bid the beast good-by. But instead of taking the hint and departing as he was expected to, the lion crouched at Gerasimus' feet and licked his sandals; and then he looked up in the Saint's face and pawed at his coarse gown pleadingly, as if he said, "Good man, I love you because you took the thorn out of my foot. Let me stay with you always to be your watch-dog." And Gerasimus understood.

"Well, if you wish to stay I am willing, so long as you are good," he said, and the lion leaped up and roared with joy so loudly that all the monks who were watching tumbled over one another and ran away to their cells in a terrible fright, locking the doors behind them.

Gerasimus carried the water-jar into the empty kitchen, and the lion followed. After sniffing about the place to get acquainted, just as a kitten does in its new home, the lion lay down in front of the fire and curled his head up on his paws, like the great big cat he was. And so after a long sigh he went to sleep. Then Gerasimus had a chance to tell the other monks all about it. At first they were timid and would not hear of keeping such a dangerous pet. But when they had all tiptoed down to the kitchen behind Gerasimus and had seen the big kitten asleep there so peacefully they were not quite so much afraid.

"I'll tell you what we will do," said the Abbot. "If Brother Gerasimus can make his friend eat porridge and herbs like the rest of us we will let him join our number. He might be very useful, – as well as ornamental, – in keeping away burglars and mice. But we cannot have any flesh-eating creature among us. Some of us are too fat and tempting, I fear," and he glanced at several of the roundest monks, who shuddered in their tight gowns. But the Abbot himself was the fattest of them all, and he spoke with feeling.

So it was decided. Gerasimus let the lion sleep a good long nap, to put him in a fine humor. But when it came time for supper he mixed a bowl of porridge and milk and filled a big wooden platter with boiled greens. Then taking one dish in each hand he went up to the lion and set them in front of his nose.

"Leo, Leo, Leo!" he called coaxingly, just as a little girl would call "Kitty, Kitty, Kitty!" to her pet. The lion lifted up his head and purred, like a small furnace, for he recognized his friend's voice. But when he smelled the dishes of food he sniffed and made a horrid face, wrinkling up his nose and saying "Ugh!" He did not like the stuff at all. But Gerasimus patted him on the head and said, "You had better eat it, Leo; it is all I have myself. Share and share alike, brother."

The lion looked at him earnestly, and then dipped his nose into the porridge with a grunt. He ate it all, and found it not so very bad. So next he tried the greens. They were a poor dessert, he thought; but since he saw that Gerasimus wanted him to eat them he finished the dish, and then lay down on the hearth feeling very tired.

Gerasimus was delighted, for he had grown fond of the lion and wanted to keep him. So he hurried back to the dining hall and showed the empty dishes to the Abbot. That settled the lion's fate. Thenceforth he became a member of the monastery. He ate with the other monks in the great hall, having his own private trencher and bowl beside Gerasimus. And he grew to like the mild fare of the good brothers, – at least he never sought for anything different. He slept outside the door of his master's cell and guarded the monastery like a faithful watch-dog. The monks grew fond of him and petted him so that he lived a happy life on the hill, with never a wish to go back to the desert with its thorns.

II

WHEREVER Gerasimus went the lion went also. Best of all, Leo enjoyed their daily duty of drawing water from the river. For that meant a long walk in the open air, and a frolic on the bank of the Jordan. One day they had gone as usual, Gerasimus, the lion, and the stupid donkey who was carrying the filled jar on his back. They were jogging comfortably home, when a poor man came running out of a tiny hut near the river, who begged Gerasimus to come with him and try to cure his sick baby. Of course the good man willingly agreed; this was one of the errands which he loved best to do.

"Stay, brother," he commanded Leo, who wanted to go with him, "stay and watch the foolish donkey." And he went with the man, feeling sure that the lion would be faithful. Now Leo meant to do his duty, but it was a hot and sleepy day, and he was very tired. He lay down beside the donkey and kept one eye upon him, closing the other one just for a minute. But this is a dangerous thing to do. Before he knew it, the other eye began to wink; and the next moment Leo was sound asleep, snoring with his head on his paws. Then it was that the silly donkey began to grow restless. He saw a patch of grass just beyond that looked tempting, and he moved over to it. Then he saw a greener spot beyond that, and then another still farther beyond that, till he had taken his silly self a long way off. And just then there came along on his way from Dan to Beersheba, a thief of a Camel Driver, with a band of horses and asses. He saw the donkey grazing there with no one near, and he said to himself, —

"Aha! A fine little donkey. I will add him to my caravan and no one will be the wiser." And seizing Silly by the halter, he first cut away the water-jar, and then rode off with him as fast as he could gallop.

Now the sound of pattering feet wakened Leo. He jumped up with a roar just in time to see the Camel Driver's face as he glanced back from the top of the next hill. Leo ran wildly about sniffing for the donkey; but when he found that he had really disappeared, he knew the Camel Driver must have stolen him. He was terribly angry. He stood by the water-jar and roared and lashed his tail, gnashing his jaws as he remembered the thief's wicked face.

Now in the midst of his rage out came Gerasimus. He found Leo roaring and foaming at the mouth, his red-rimmed eyes looking very fierce. And the donkey was gone — only the water-jar lay spilling on the ground. Then Gerasimus made a great mistake. He thought that poor Leo had grown tired of being a vegetarian, of living upon porridge and greens, and had tried fresh donkey-meat for a change.

"Oh, you wicked lion!" he cried, "you have eaten poor Silly. What shall I do to punish you?" Then Leo roared louder than ever with shame and sorrow. But he could not speak to tell how it had happened. The Saint was very sad. Tears stood in his kind eyes. "You will have to be donkey now," he said; "you will have to do his part of the work since he is now a part of you. Come, stand up and let me fasten the water-jar upon your back." He spoke sternly and even switched Leo with his olive stick. Leo had never been treated like this. He was the King of Beasts, and it was shame for a King to do donkey's work. His eyes flashed, and he had half a mind to refuse and to run away. Then he looked at the good man and remembered how he had taken out that cruel thorn. So he hung his head and stood still to be harnessed in the donkey's place.

Slowly and painfully Leo carried the water-jar up the hill. But worse than all it was to feel that his dear master was angry with him. Gerasimus told the story to the other monks, and they were even more angry than he had been, for they did not love Leo so well. They all agreed that Leo must be punished; so they treated him exactly as if he were a mean, silly donkey. They gave him only oats and water to eat, and made him do all Silly's work. They would no longer let him sleep outside his master's door, but they tied him in a lonesome stall in the stable. And now he could not go to walk with Gerasimus free and happy as the King of Beasts should be. For he went only in harness, with never a kind word from his master's lips.

It was a sad time for Leo. He was growing thinner and thinner. His mane was rough and tangled because he had no heart to keep it smooth. And there were several white hairs in his beautiful whiskers. He was fast becoming melancholy; and the most pitiful beast in all the world is a melancholy lion. He had been hoping that something would happen to show that it was all a mistake; but it seemed as though the world was against him, and truth was dead.

It was a sad time for Gerasimus, too; for he still loved Leo, though he knew the lion must be punished for the dreadful deed which he was believed to have done. One day he had to go some distance to a neighboring town to buy provisions. As usual, he took Leo with him to bring back the burden, but they did not speak all the way. Gerasimus had done the errands which he had come to do, and was fastening the baskets on each side of the lion's back. A group of children were standing around watching the queer sight, – a lion burdened like a donkey! And they laughed and pointed their fingers at him, making fun of poor Leo.

But suddenly the lion growled and began to lash his tail, quivering like a cat ready to spring on a mouse. The children screamed and ran away, thinking that he was angry with them for teasing him. But it was not that. A train of camels was passing at the moment, and Leo had seen at their head a mean, wicked face which he remembered. And as the last of the caravan went by, Leo caught sight of Silly himself, the missing donkey of the monastery. At the sound of Leo's growl, Silly pricked up his ears and stood on his fore legs, which is not a graceful position for a donkey. Then the Camel Driver came running up to see what was the matter with his stolen donkey. But when he came face to face with Leo, whose yellow eyes were glaring terribly, the thief trembled and turned pale. For he remembered the dreadful roar which had followed him that day as he galloped away across the sand holding Silly's halter. The poor donkey was quivering with fear, thinking that this time he was surely going to be eaten piecemeal. But after all this trouble on Silly's account, the very idea of tasting donkey made Leo sick. He only wanted to show Gerasimus what a mistake had been made.

All this time Gerasimus had been wondering what the lion's strange behavior meant. But when he saw Leo seize the donkey's bridle, he began to suspect the truth. He ran up and examined the donkey carefully. Then Leo looked up in his face and growled softly, as if to say: —

"Here is your old donkey, safe and sound. You see I didn't eat him after all. *That* is the real thief," and turning to the Camel Driver, he showed his teeth and looked so fierce that the man hid behind a camel, crying, "Take away the lion! Kill the wicked lion!" But Gerasimus seized Silly by the bridle.

"This is my beast," he said, "and I shall lead him home with me. You stole him, Thief, and my noble lion has found you out," and he laid his hand tenderly on Leo's head.

"He is mine, you shall not have him!" cried the Camel Driver, dodging out from behind the camel, and trying to drag the donkey away from Gerasimus. But with a dreadful roar, Leo sprang upon him, and with his great paw knocked him down and sat upon his stomach.

"Do not hurt him, Leo," said Gerasimus gently. But to the Camel Driver he was very stern. "Look out, Sir Thief," he said, "how you steal again the donkey of an honest man. Even the yellow beasts of the desert know better than that, and will make you ashamed. Be thankful that you escape so easily."

Then he took the baskets from Leo's back and bound them upon Silly, who was glad to receive them once more from his own master's hands. For the Camel Driver had been cruel to him and had often beaten him. So he resolved never again to stray away as he had done that unlucky time. And when they were all ready to start, Gerasimus called Leo, and he got up from the chest of the Camel Driver, where he had been sitting all this time, washing his face with his paws and smiling.

"My poor old Leo!" said Gerasimus, with tears in his eyes, "I have made you suffer cruelly for a crime of which you were not guilty. But I will make it up to you."

Then happily the three set out for home, and all the way Gerasimus kept his arm about the neck of his lion, who was wild with joy because he and his dear master were friends once more, and the dreadful mistake was discovered.

They had a joyful reception at the monastery on the hill. Of course every one was glad to see poor Silly again; but best of all it was to know that their dear old lion was not a wicked murderer. They petted him and gave him so many good things to eat that he almost burst with fatness. They made him a soft bed, and all the monks took turns in scratching his chin for ten minutes at a time, which was what Leo loved better than anything else in the world.

And so he dwelt happily with the good monks, one of the most honored brothers of the monastery. Always together he and Gerasimus lived and slept and ate and took their walks. And at last after many, many years, they grew old together, and very tired and sleepy. So one night Gerasimus, who had become an Abbot, the head of the monastery, lay gently down to rest, and never woke up in the morning. But the great lion loved him so that when they laid Saint Gerasimus to sleep under a beautiful plane-tree in the garden, Leo lay down upon the mound moaning and grieving, and would not move. So his faithful heart broke that day, and he, too, slept forever by his dear master's side.

But this was not a sad thing that happened. For think how dreadful the days would have been for Leo without Gerasimus. And think how sad a life Gerasimus would have spent if Leo had left him first. Oh, no; it was not sad, but very, very beautiful that the dear Saint and his friendly beast could be happy together all the day, and when the long night came they could sleep together side by side in the garden.

SAINT KENETH OF THE GULLS

ONCE upon a time, more than a thousand years ago, a great white sea-gull was circling above the waves which roll between South England and Wales. He was pretending that he was doing this just for fun; and he seemed very lazy and dozy as he poised and floated without much trouble to move his wings. But really he was looking for a dinner, though he did not want any one to suspect it. And he hoped that some unwary fish would swim up near the surface of the water within diving reach of his great claws. His keen gray eyes were open all the while unsleepily, and not much that was going on down below on the water escaped his notice.

Suddenly his eye caught sight of a little black speck on the waves. "Aha!" he said to himself, "I think I see my dinner!" and with a great swoop down he pounced. You could hardly think how anything which looked so lazy and quiet could dart so like a flash of lightning. But a gull is an air-ship that can sink whenever it chooses. And when he gives a fish a sudden invitation to step in for dinner, the fish is hardly able to refuse.

But this was no fish which the hungry gull had spied. Before he reached the water he saw his mistake, and wheeling swiftly as only a gull can, he flapped back again into the air, uttering a screech of surprise.

"Cree-e-e!" he cried. "'Tis no scaly water-fish such as I like to eat. 'Tis one of those smooth land-fishes with yellow seaweed growing on its head. What is it doing here? I must see to this. Cree-e-e!"

No wonder the great bird circled and swooped curiously over the wicker basket which was floating on the waves. For on a piece of purple cloth lay a tiny pink-and-white baby, sound asleep, his yellow hair curling about the dimpled face, and one thumb thrust into the round red mouth.

"Well, well!" said the sea-gull to himself when he had examined the strange floating thing all he wished. "I must go and tell the others about this. Something must be done. There is a storm brewing, and this boat will not bear much rough weather. This little land-fish cannot swim. We must take care of him. Cree-e-e!" So off he flapped, and as he went he gave the family cry to call the gulls about him, wherever they might be.

Soon they came, circling carelessly, swooping sulkily, floating happily, darting eagerly, according to their various dispositions; and as they came they gave the Gull cry. "Cree-e-e!" said they, "what is the matter?" "Follow me," said the White Gull to the great fleet of gray-winged air-ships. "Follow me, and you shall see" (which is Gull poetry).

Then he led the flock over the spot where the wicker cradle tossed on the growing waves. "Lo," said he, "a land-fish in danger of being drowned among the Scaly Ones. Let us save it. See how pink it is. Its eyes are a piece of the sky, and its voice is not unlike ours – listen!"

For by this time the baby had wakened, and feeling cold and hungry and wet with the dashing spray, opened his pink mouth, and began to cry lustily. "E-e-e-e-e!" wailed the baby; and as the White Gull had said, that sounds very like the chief word of the Gull tongue.

"Poor little thing!" said all the mother gulls in chorus. "He talks our language, he must be saved. Come, brothers and sisters, and use your beaks and talons before the clumsy nest in which he lies is sunk beneath the waves. Cree-e-e, little one, cree-e-e! We will save you."

Now, I don't know what *cree-e-e* means in Gull. But the baby must have understood. For he stopped crying instantly, and looked up laughing at the white wings which fanned his face and the kind gray eyes which peered into his own blue ones.

So the strong gulls seized the corners of the purple cloth on which the baby lay, some with their claws, some with their hooked beaks. And at a signal from the White Gull they fluttered up and away, bearing the baby over the waves as if he were in a little hammock. The White Gull flew on before and guided them to land, – a high shelf which hung over the sea roaring on the rocks below,

the nicest kind of a gull home. And here they laid the baby down, and sat about wondering what they must do next. But the baby cried.

"We must build him a nest," said the White Gull. "These rocks are too hard and too sharp for a little land-fish. I know how they sleep in their home nests, for I have seen."

Now the gulls lay their eggs on the bare rocks, and think these quite soft enough for the young gull babies. But they all agreed that this would never do for the little stranger. So they pulled the downy feathers from their breasts till they had a great pile; and of this they made the softest bed in which they laid the baby. And he slept.

This is how little Saint Keneth was saved from the waves by the kind sea-gulls. And it goes to show that birds are sometimes kinder than human folk. For Keneth was the Welsh Prince's little son. But no one loved him, and his cruel mother had put him into the wicker basket and set him afloat on the waves, not caring what became of him nor hoping to see him again. But this in after years she did, when Keneth was become a great and famous Saint whom all, even the Prince and Princess, honored. She did not know him then because she believed that he was dead. How proud she would have been if she could have called him "Son!" But that was many years later.

Now when the gulls had made Keneth this comfortable nest, they next wondered what they should do to get him food. But the White Gull had an idea. He flew away over the land and was gone for some time. When at last he returned he had with him a kind forest doe, – a yellow mother Deer who had left her little ones, at the White Gull's request, to come and feed the stranger baby. So Keneth found a new mother who loved him far better than his own had done, – a new mother who came every morning and every night and fed him with her milk. And he grew strong and fat and hearty, the happy baby in his nest upon the rocks, where his friends, the sea-gulls, watched over him, and the mother Deer fed and cared for him, and washed him clean with her warm crash-towel tongue.

Now when Keneth had lived in the sea-gulls' home for some months, one day the flock of guardian gulls left him while they went upon a fishing trip. The mother Deer had not yet come with his breakfast, but was at home with her own little ones, so that for the first time Keneth was quite alone. He did not know this, but was sleeping peacefully on his purple quilt, when a strange face came peering over the edge of the rocks. It was a Shepherd from the nearest village who had clambered up to seek gulls' eggs for his breakfast. But his eyes bulged out of his head, and he nearly fell over backward into the sea with surprise when he saw Keneth lying in his nest of feathers.

"The Saints preserve us!" he cried, "what is this?" But when he had climbed nearer and saw what it really was, he was delighted with the treasure which he had found. "A beautiful little baby!" he exclaimed. "I will take him home to my wife, who has no child of her own." And forthwith he took up Keneth, wrapped in the purple cloth, and started down over the rocks towards his home.

But Keneth wakened at the stranger's touch and began to wail. He had no mind to go with the Shepherd; he wanted to stay where he was. So as they went he screamed at the top of his lungs, hoping some of his friends would come. And the mother Deer, who was on her way thither, heard his voice. She came running in a fright, but she could do nothing to protect him, being a gentle, weaponless creature. However, she followed anxiously to see what would happen to her darling. So they went down the rocks, Keneth and the Shepherd, with the Deer close behind. And all the way Keneth shrieked loudly, "E-e-e-e!"

Now at last a messenger breeze carried the baby voice out over the water of the Bristol Channel where the gulls were fishing.

"What is that?" they said, stopping their work to listen. "Is it not our little land-fish calling us in Gull? He is in trouble or danger. Brothers, to the rescue! Cre-e-e-e!"

So the flock of gulls left their fishing and swooped back to the rock where they had left the baby. Dreadful! The nest was empty. They flapped their wide wings and screamed with fear, "What shall we do?"

But just then up the rocky hill came panting the mother Deer. Her glossy hide was warm and wet, and her tongue lolled out with weariness, she had run so fast.

"He is down there," she panted. "The Shepherd has carried him to his hut and laid him in a nest such as human-folk make. The Shepherd's wife loves him and would keep him there, but he is unhappy and cries for us. You must bring him back."

"We will, we will!" screamed the gulls in chorus. "Guide us to the place, mother Deer." And without another word they rose on their great, strong wings, and followed where she led. Back down the hill she took the path, over the moor and up the lane to a little white cottage under the rosebushes. "Here is the place," said the Deer, and she paused.

But the flock of gulls with a great whirring and rustling and screaming swooped in at the little low door, straight up to the cradle where Keneth lay crying "E-e-e-e!" as if his heart would break.

The Shepherd's wife was sitting by the cradle saying, "Hush!" and "Bye-lo!" and other silly things that Keneth did not understand. But when she heard the rushing of the gulls' wings, she gave a scream and started for the door.

"Cree-e-e!" cried the gulls fiercely. "Give us our little one." And they perched on the edge of the cradle and looked tenderly at Keneth. Then he stopped his crying and began to laugh, for these were the voices he knew and loved. And in another minute the gulls had fastened their beaks and claws into the purple cloth, and once more bore him away as they had done when they saved him from the sea.

Out of the door they flew, right over the Shepherd's astonished head, while his wife stared wildly at the empty cradle. And soon Keneth was lying in his own nest on the ledge above the roaring billows.

After this no one tried again to bring the gulls' adopted baby back among human folk. Little Keneth tarried and thrived with his feathered brothers, growing fat and strong. When he came to walk he was somewhat lame, to be sure; one of his legs was shorter than the other, and he limped like a poor gull who has hurt his foot. But this troubled Keneth very little, and the gulls were kind. He was always happy and contented, full of singing and laughter and kind words for all.

And here in his wild, spray-sprinkled nest above the Atlantic breakers, Keneth dwelt all his life. The Welsh peasants of the Gower peninsula revered him as their Saint, knowing him to be a holy man beloved by the gulls and the deer and all the wild creatures of shore and forest, who did their kindly best to make him happy.

SAINT LAUNOMAR'S COW

SAINT LAUNOMAR had once been a shepherd boy in the meadows of sunny France, and had lived among the gentle creatures of the fold and byre. So he understood them and their ways very well, and they knew him for their friend. For this is a secret which one cannot keep from the animals whose speech is silent.

Saint Launomar had a cow of whom he was fond, a sleek black and white beauty, who pastured in the green meadows of Chartres near the monastery and came home every evening to be milked and to rub her soft nose against her master's hand, telling him how much she loved him. Mignon was a very wise cow; you could tell that by the curve of her horns and by the wrinkles in her forehead between the eyes; and especially by the way she switched her tail. And indeed, a cow ought to be wise who has been brought up by a whole monastery of learned men, with Launomar, the wisest person in all the country, for her master and friend.

It was a dark night after milking time; Launomar had put Mignon in her stall with a supper of hay before her, and had bade her good-night and a pleasant cud-time. Then he had shut the heavy barn door and had gone back to his cell to sleep soundly till morning.

But no sooner had his lantern disappeared through the gate of the monastery, than out of the forest came five black figures, creeping, creeping along the wall and across the yard and up to the great oak door. They were all muffled in long black cloaks, and wore their caps pulled down over their faces, as if they were afraid of being recognized. They were wicked-looking men, and they had big knives stuck in their belts quite convenient to their hands. It was a band of robbers; and they had come to steal Launomar's cow, who was known to be the handsomest in all that part of the world.

Very softly they forced open the great door, and very softly they stole across the floor to Mignon's stall and threw a strong halter about her neck to lead her away. But first they were careful to tie up her mouth in a piece of cloth so that she could not low and tell the whole monastery what danger she was in. Mignon was angry, for that was just what she had meant to do as soon as she saw that these were no friends, but wicked men who had come for no good to her or to the monastery.

But now she had to go with them dumbly, although she struggled and kicked and made all the noise she could. But the monks were already sound asleep and snoring on their hard pallets, and never suspected what was going on so near to them. Even Launomar, who turned over in his sleep and murmured, "Ho, Mignon, stand still!" when he dimly recognized a sound of kicking, – even Launomar did not waken to rescue his dear Mignon from the hands of those villains who were taking her away.

The robbers led her hurriedly down the lane, across the familiar meadows and into the dense woods, where they could hide from any one who happened to pass by. Now it was dark and they could see but dimly where they were going. The paths crossed and crisscrossed in so many directions that they soon began to quarrel about which was the right one to take. They did not know this part of the country very well, for they were strangers from a different province, who had come to Launomar's home because they had heard of his famous cow and were bound to have her for themselves.

Very soon the robbers were lost in the tangle of trees and bushes and did not know where they were, or in which direction they ought to go. One said, "Go that way," pointing towards the north. And one said, "No, no! Go *that* way," pointing directly south. The third grumbled and said, "Ho, fellows! Not so, but *this* way," and he strode towards the east. While the fourth man cried, "You are all wrong, comrades. It is *there* we must go," and he started to lead Mignon towards the west. But the fifth robber confessed that indeed he did not know.

"Let us follow the cow," he cried; "she is the only one who can see in the dark. I have always heard that animals will lead you aright if you leave the matter to them." Now as the other robbers really did not have the least idea in the world as to which was the right direction, this seemed to them

as sensible a plan as any. So they stripped the halter from Mignon's head and said, "Hi, there! Get along, Cow, and show us the way."

Mignon looked at them through the dark with her big brown eyes, and laughed inside. It seemed too good to be true! They had left her free, and were bidding her to guide them on their way out of the forest back to their own country. Mignon chuckled again, so loudly that they thought she must be choking, and hastily untied the cloth from her mouth. This was just what she wanted, for she longed to chew her cud again. She tossed her head and gave a gentle "Moo!" as if to say, "Come on, simple men, and I will show you the way." But really she was thinking to herself, "Aha! my fine fellows. Now I will lead you a pretty chase. And you shall be repaid for this night's work, aha!"

Mignon was a very wise cow. She had not pastured in the meadows about Chartres with blind eyes. She knew the paths north and south and east and west through the forest and the fern; and even in the dark of the tangled underbrush she could feel out the way quite plainly. But she said to herself, "I must not make the way too easy for these wicked men. I must punish them all I can now that it is my turn."

So she led them roundabout and roundabout, through mud and brambles and swamps; over little brooks and through big miry ponds where they were nearly drowned, – roundabout and roundabout all night long. They wanted to rest, but she went so fast that they could not catch her to make her stand still. And they dared not lose sight of her big whiteness through the dark, for now they were completely lost and could never find their way out of the wilderness without her. So all night long she kept them panting and puffing and wading after her, till they were all worn out, cold and shivering with wet, scratched and bleeding from the briars, and cross as ten sticks.

But when at last, an hour after sunrise, Mignon led them out into an open clearing, their faces brightened.

"Oh, I think I remember this place," said the first man.

"Yes, it has a familiar look. We must be near home," said the second.

"We are at least twenty-five miles from the monks of Chartres by this time," said the third, "and I wish we had some breakfast."

"By another hour we shall have the cow safe in our home den," said the fourth, "and then we will have some bread and milk."

But the fifth interrupted them saying, "Look! Who is that man in gray?"

They all looked up quickly and began to tremble; but Mignon gave a great "Moo!" and galloped forward to meet the figure who had stepped out from behind a bush. It was Saint Launomar himself!

He had been up ever since dawn looking for his precious cow; for when he went to milk her he had found the barn empty, and her footprints with those of the five robbers in the moist earth had told the story and pointed which way the company had gone. But it was not his plan to scold or frighten the robbers. He walked up to them, for they were so surprised to see him that they stood still trembling, forgetting even to run away.

"Good-morning, friends," said Launomar kindly. "You have brought back my cow, I see, who to-night for the first time has left her stall to wander far. I thank you, good friends, for bringing Mignon to me. For she is not only a treasure in herself, but she is my dearest friend and I should be most unhappy to lose her."

The men stood staring at Launomar in astonishment. They could hardly believe their eyes and their ears. Where did he come from? What did he mean? But when they realized how kind his voice was, and that he was not accusing them nor threatening to have them punished, they were very much ashamed. They hung their heads guiltily; and then all of a sudden they fell at his feet, the five of them, confessing how it had all come about and begging his pardon.

"We stole the cow, Master," said the first one.

"And carried her these many miles away," said the second.

"We are wicked robbers and deserve to be punished," said the third.

"But we beg you to pardon us," cried the fourth.

"Let us depart, kind Father, we pray you," begged the fifth. "And be so good as to direct us on our way, for we are sorely puzzled."

"Nay, nay," answered Saint Launomar pleasantly, "the cow hath led you a long way, hath she not? You must be both tired and hungry. You cannot journey yet." And in truth they were miserable objects to see, so that the Saint's kind heart was filled with pity, robbers though they were. "Follow me," he said. By this time they were too weak and weary to think of disobeying. So meekly they formed into a procession of seven, Launomar and the cow going cheerfully at the head. For these two were very glad to be together again, and his arm was thrown lovingly about her glossy neck as they went.

But what was the amazement of the five robbers when in a short minute or two they turned a corner, and there close beside them stood the monastery itself, with the very barn from which they had stolen Mignon the night before! All this time the clever cow had led them in great circles roundabout and roundabout her own home. And after all this scrambling and wading through the darkness, in the morning they were no farther on their journey than they had been at the start. What a wise cow that was! And what a good breakfast of bran porridge and hay and sweet turnips Launomar gave her to pay for her hard night's work.

The five robbers had a good breakfast too; but perhaps they did not relish it as Mignon did hers. For their consciences were heavy; besides, they sat at the monastery table, and all the monks stood by in a row, saying nothing but pursing up their mouths and looking pious; which was trying. And when the robbers came to drink their porridge Launomar said mildly, —

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