

Leslie Madeline

Little Robins' Love One to Another



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CHAPTER I.

JACK ROBIN'S OFFENCE

It was a lovely May morning. The air was full of sweet fragrance from the orchards of blossoming trees. All nature seemed alive with melody. The singing of birds, the humming of insects, the cooing of doves about their cotes, the responsive crowing of the cocks in the farm yards, the lowing of the cows for their calves, – even the gurgling of the ambitious little brook running along over stones and pebbles at its utmost speed, sparkling and foaming in the ecstasy of its delight, – all hail with exultation the approaching summer.

But let us turn from this universal rejoicing to our friends under the old elm tree. Mrs. Symmes we see standing within the shed churning butter. Fred is before the door, with a pail of dough in his hand, calling "chick, chick, chick." Annie is following grandpa to the barn with a pan of warm milk for Whiteface, while the good farmer is driving his oxen to the field.

The barn yard gate has been accidentally left open, and the cosset, hearing Annie's voice, bounds forward to meet her, and puts his fore feet on her dress, nestling his head under her arm.

"O grandpa!" exclaimed the child, "do please take the pan; Whiteface is making me spill it all over."

"Set it down on the ground, dear, and let her drink it," said grandpa.

"I have a good mind to let her run round with me, as I did yesterday," continued Annie.

As grandpa smiled approval, the two were presently engaged in a merry chase from house to barn, round the trunk of the old tree and back to their starting spot again.

"Now," cried the little girl when she could recover her breath, "it's time to feed my Robin family. O, they are all here!" she added, as she opened the front door.

Jack, without waiting for further invitation, hopped into the entry, and then into the room. The table was set for the family, and he made bold to fly upon it, and walk round among the dishes. He looked so funny as he hopped a step or two, and then, standing on one leg, turned his head archly, as if to say, "I hope I don't intrude," that Annie laughed till she cried.

"O, where is Fred? I do wish Fred were here to see the robin!" she exclaimed, as her mother entered with a dish of smoking hot potatoes.

"Tut, tut, tut," cried Mrs. Symmes, "you are getting rather too bold;" and she shook her apron to scare the robin away. "No, no, birdie, you must be content with eating the crumbs from the floor."

In the mean time, Mr. and Mrs. Robin were talking to Jack in a very excited tone, trying to convince him of the impropriety of his conduct.

"No," said Mrs. Robin, as Katy hopped closer to her brother, and cast a pleading glance at her parents; – "No, I do not accuse you of intending to do wrong, but you have never seen your father hop on a table, or take liberties of that kind."

Jack did not try to excuse himself, and as Annie called them to the door, and fed them from her hand, the parents hoped she was not much offended.

Mr. Robin noticed that when Jack was reprovved by his mother, Dick was very much pleased, while Molly and Katy appeared greatly distressed. "O," said he to himself, "why will not this unruly bird imitate the lovely example of his sisters!"

When they returned to the tree, and were sitting on their favorite bough near the nest, Dick exclaimed, "I was glad, for once, to see that some one was in fault beside myself. If I had been guilty

of such a breach of propriety, I should have been severely chastised, if not disinherited; but bad as you have always thought me, I have never been guilty of any thing like that."

"I am sorry to hear you talk so, my son," said Mrs. Robin, eyeing him with a sad glance. "Jack was rather too familiar, and perhaps took undue advantage of the kindness of our friends; but that was all. There was no unfriendly feeling, no selfishness, no disregard of others' wishes in his conduct; neither was there direct disobedience to his parents' commands, such as has often pained us in your case. We must judge the motive, my son, before we condemn."

"I knew it would be just so," answered Dick, in a sulky tone. "Every thing that Jack does is right, and every thing I do is wrong; and that is a specimen of the justice of this family."

CHAPTER II. THE SPARROWS' NEST

Mr. and Mrs. Robin were deeply pained by Dick's bad conduct. They concluded, however, it was best to refrain from further reproof, as it only seemed to make him worse. After the disrespectful remark at the close of the last chapter, he flew away, and did not return until night.

Katy then begged her father and mother to accompany her to the village where Canary lived; and, after a ready consent, they all stretched their wings and flew away over the tops of houses and trees, not once alighting until they reached the dwelling where the pretty bird belonged.

Canary received them very cordially. She assured Mr. and Mrs. Robin of her interest in their promising children. "In their society," she added, "I sometimes forget my own trials. Young as you may think me, I have reared four young broods. Now – but I will not make you sad by relating my troubles. I see my kind mistress has provided water for me to take a bath. Perhaps it will amuse you if I do so now."

Mrs. Robin assured her that the sight would delight them all.

Canary then sprang off the highest perch into the saucer of fresh water, splashed herself thoroughly with her wings, then jumped into the ring, and shook herself from head to foot. "I feel greatly refreshed," said she, after new oiling her feathers.

At the request of Katy, she then exhibited her accomplishments to the wondering parents, and having ended by a thrilling song, they gave her their best wishes, and took their leave.

In the mean time, Mr. Symmes, his wife, grandpa, and Annie sat down to their breakfast, though wondering that Fred, who had been sent of an errand, did not return. They had nearly finished their meal, when Annie saw him running toward the house, his face all in a blaze of excitement.

He held in his hand a bird's nest; and, as he entered, took a wounded sparrow from his bosom.

"Father," he exclaimed, "isn't it real wicked to steal little birds from their nest?"

"Certainly, my son."

"Well, Joseph Marland and Edward Long have been doing it all the morning, and they say it isn't wicked at all. As I was coming 'cross lots through Deacon Myers's pasture, I heard some boys laughing very loud; and I ran to see what the fun was. They had taken all the young birds from the nest, and the poor parents were flying around chirping and crying in dreadful distress.

"Don't tease the birds so," said I; 'put the little things back and come away.'

"No, indeed!" shouted Joseph; 'after all the trouble we've had, we don't give up so easy.' And only think, grandpa, they didn't want the young sparrows for any thing, – only they liked the sport of seeing the old birds hop round and round.

"I got real angry at last, and said I wouldn't have any thing to do with such wicked, cruel boys. I started to run away, when they saw Deacon Myers driving his cow to the pasture, and they sneaked off about the quickest. After they had gone, I picked up the nest and this poor bird from the ground."

"Let me see it," said Mr. Symmes, holding out his hand; "and you sit down and eat your breakfast."

He left the room immediately, carrying the sparrow with him. Presently Annie came back with tears in her eyes, saying her father had killed it, to put it out of pain.

"I was afraid it couldn't live," rejoined Fred. "Ugly boys! I am glad they don't know of our robins' nest."

"Such cruelty always meets with its punishment," remarked grandpa. "I myself knew a man who, when a boy, delighted to rob birds' nests. Sometimes he stole the eggs, and sometimes he waited until they were hatched, that he might have the greater fun. Then he took the poor, helpless, unoffending things, and dug out their eyes, to see how awkwardly they would hop around."

"Shocking!" exclaimed Mrs. Symmes.

"He ought to have been hung!" shouted Fred.

Annie pressed both hands over her eyes, and turned very pale.

"Well," resumed grandpa, "he grew to be a man, was married and settled in life; and now came God's time to punish him. He had one child after another until they numbered five. Three of them, two daughters and one son, were born stone blind.

"He was a man coarse and rough in his feelings, as a cruel man will always be; but this affliction cut him to the heart, and when it was announced to him that the third child would never open its eyes to the light of the sun, he threw up his arms and cried aloud, 'O God, have mercy on me, though I had none on the poor birds!'

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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