BY AUNT JUNE

Our Boys and Girls Corner

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DEDICATED TO EVERY BOY AND GIRL IN CANADA

My Dear Boys and Girls:

You will remember that I promised to tell you something more this week about our friends, the birds.

Last week I heard a very interesting lecture by a man, who has long known and loved these little friends, has studied their ways and habits, and knows all their pretty colors, where they live, and how they build their nests. So I hope to be able to tell you more about them from time to time, as I have learned a great deal more from hearing this talk than I ever knew myself about them.

Today I am going to tell you something about the reason why birds are dressed in the way they are. As you know, a bird's chief clothing is made up of feathers. They are the only creatures who are clothed in feathers and the reason is that fur or hair would not be so useful to them when flying. The way the feathers grow on the back of the bird protects him and keeps him warm. They form a roof and are closely webbed, overlapping like shingles on a roof, and ending each in pointed tips. The breast feathers—and when we speak of the bird's feather dress this is known as plumage—are much softer and each breast feather is very closely webbed at the tip and soft and downy at the end.

This soft, downy fluff, which comes close to the bird's body, keeps him warm in much the same way that the warm underclothes you wear keep the heat in your body.

You have seen baby chicks, I am sure, with no clothes on but this fluff, looking like dear little balls of living cotton wool. This downy appearance, by the way, applies particularly to baby chicks, and if you live in the country or have ever been on a farm abut this time of year, you will know that the little chicks are beginning to break out of the shells and run about looking so sweet and fluffy. Perhaps you have kept chickens, so that you will know how interesting they are.

Now I will tell you about the wings of the bird. The feathers in the wing of a bird are very wonderfully made for the purpose of helping him to fly. Each little shaft or feather is curved slightly and has a very tightly knit webb which helps the bird to press down on the air when in flight. When the bird first starts to fly he beats his wings very rapidly in the air. This is to give the curving under part of his wings a chance to catch a current of air like a parachute, and this helps to carry him up. His tail acts as a rudder. You all know, I expect, what a rudder on a boat is for. It is the guiding piece at the end of the boat which turns it in whichever direction you wish to sail. This is what the tail of the bird does for him. For this reason the bird's tail feathers are longer and of a different shape to those on the other part of his body. There is a certain quality, too, in the feathers of all the birds which helps to make them fairly waterproof, so that if they get a little wetting, it will roll off their feathers. This is an oily substance contained in the quills of the feathers, which also helps to give a bright, shiny appearance to their pretty coats.

Now that I have told you these few things about the birds' clothing, what can you tell me further about the birds you have seen?

PLEDGE FOR HELPERS.

"Do a little kindness to someone every day.
Scatter rays of sunshine all along the way."

I pledge myself in the service of my King and Country to DO MY BEST IN MY DAILY WORK, wherever it may be, to help others wherever possible, and to endeavor in every way to make myself A GOOD CITIZEN.

Date .....

Name .....

Age .....

Address .....

RIDDLES

How many guessed the riddles that were given last week? Here are the answers:—

R. When are you all artists?

A. When we draw a long face.

We mustn't do this often, though, must we? Not if we are really, truly "Helpers." A "Helper must go around trying to cheer everyone else up. That is the "Helper's" mission, and if we have a long face, why no one would ever be cheered by it.

R. What is the difference between a soldier and a bomb?

A. One goes to wars and the other goes to pieces.

R. What precious stone is like a door?

A. Agate.

Here is a funny tongue-twister for you to try upon your friends. Ask them to repeat this very quickly; if you want some fun:

"A cheerful cup of coffee in a copper coffee pot."

Would you like some more riddles? New Riddles.

R. Why it a shoemaker like a brave soldier?

R. What men may be said to work with a will?

R. What animal would you wish to be on a cold day?

Thinking about gardens? I hope so. The weather is improving every day. Sometimes only for a little part of the day, but gradually as the days are growing longer they are getting brighter too, and in places where the snow has completely disappeared one can see little patches of green grass beginning to show. Isn't it just lovely to think of spring days, and all the jolly things there are to do, making garden, planting seeds, watching the birds and feeding them, and oh, so many interests. Here is a poem about the spring:—

Spring Patchwork.

If I could patch a coverlet
From pieces of the Spring,
What dreams a happy child would have
Beneath so fair a thing!

A centre of the dear blue sky,
A bordering of green,
With patches of the yellow sun
All checkered in between.

Bright ribbons of the silky grass
Laced prettily across.
With satin of new little leaves,
And velvet of the moss.

In every corner, violets,
Half-hidden from the view,
With many-flowered squares betwixt,
Of pinky tints and blue.

Of flossy silk and gossamer,
Of tissue and brocade;
A warp of rosy morning mist,
A woof of purple shade.

Embroideries of little vines
And spider-webs of lace,
With tassels of the alder tied
At each convenient place.

With gold-thread I would sew the seams,
And needles of the pine.
Oh, never child in all the world
Would have a quilt like mine!

Please send me lots of news about your helping. Tell me what your garden is going to be like or what you hope it will be. I shall tell you of some pretty flowers that are worth planting in a week or two. Hurrah for a jolly spring time for every helper!

Yours lovingly,
AUNT JUNE.

ADVICE TO GIRLS

By Rosalind

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Dear Rosalind:

I am in great perplexity, and I do hope you can help me. I am nearly 18 years old; I live next door to a boy one year older than myself. He is a dandy sport, and a good playmate. I have known him ever since I was five years old, so you see I ought to understand him, and I thought I did, but I'm afraid I don't. He is the best playmate I ever had. We used to go for bicycle rides and long tramps with a bunch of other young people. Altogether, we had a jolly time. But now, dear Rosalind, he seems to be so different. Instead of going out for a walk or a ride, he wants to come over to our house, to talk or dance, or play the piano. Every now and then he'll begin to talk about love, and once he went as far as practically proposing to me.

Now, dear Rosalind, I feel that his friendship is giving way to a ridiculous boyish love affair. We are both far too young to think of such serious things, and I would like to call a halt, but last fall he got the same way and I called him down for it, and asked him to stop. He seemed quite angry and was several weeks getting over it. What can I do now? Shall I pursue the same method? If I do, I may lose his friendship. Oh, Rosaliad, I wouldn't lose that for the world, for he is the best chum I ever had. I never had a best girl friend, but he's everything rolled into one. I want his friendship, but I don't want his love.

I do hope you can help me by telling me what to do. I will wait anxiously for next week's paper. ELINOR.

Dear Elinor:

What a lucky, lucky girl you are to have a real boy chum. It is the best thing in the world for both of you; and I'd be as sorry as you to see such friendship spoiled. But it needn't be. Don't notice any difference in him. Just make up your mind not to see it; and, above everything else don't talk about it the way you did. Be such a good pal, and plan your good times with such tact that he will not have time or opportunity to talk about things that should be deferred several years.

But—and now I seem to be contradictory myself, if you must talk, tell him what you have told me—and that as soon as you really grow up you will let him talk about love, but that now you just want to play and learn how to grow up right.

The reason I first said, don't talk about it or notice it, is because girls are apt to dwell on these things more than they mean to, and the chances are, my dear, that your nice boy friend is really much more sensible than you give him credit for.

Down in your romantic heart you just love to think that you are having a real love affair so soon. So forget it! Be a good sport and a sensible little girl and you'll find everything will be splendid. ROSALIND.

The Kangaroo's Leap.

The kangaroo, reputed in ancient books to leap as far as 30 yards at a bound, can jump "no better than an elephant," according to Australians.

What Good is a Dollar?

It's largely up to you. It depends on how you spend it--on the value TO YOU of what you get for it---on your ability to find where that value is to be had.

Of course, its all right to shop around a bit if you like, but why not let the other fellow make it easier for you by doing a little shopping after your dollar—by showing you what you want and where you can get most of it for your money?

It's a great idea, once you get the hang of it, and here's how!

Right in this paper you'll find dozens of advertisements offering you merchandise. Some things you'll need to-day; some tomorrow; some next week or next year---but the point is that these merchants are coming to you, looking for your dollar and offering the best they have to get it.

You'll find that by reading the advertisements consistently to-day and every day, you can increase the value ---to yourself---of every dollar you have to spend. The things you see advertised are almost invariably as represented. The advertisers' statements are usually safer to trust than your own judgment. Advertised misrepresentation is business suicide.

Read the advertisements and increase the value of your Dollar!

LITTLE Miss Lilly
Looks awfully silly
Dressed up in her mother's best clothes.
If she doesn't take care
She may trip on the stair,
Or fall down and bump her small nose.

Find three other persons. Left side down, on skirt; upper right corner down, on skirt and parasol; right side down, along arm.

The Sunday School Lesson

LESSON IV. April 25

Ruth's Wise Choice---Ruth 1

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time.—The fact that Ruth was the great-grandmother of David makes it fairly certain (Hastings) that the events of this book took place when Eli was judge, or about B.C. 1173 (Beecher).

Place.—The parting between Orpah and Naomi may have taken place (Hastings) at the Ford of the Arnon, on the northern boundary of the Field of Moab, or perhaps when they reached the Fords of the Jordan, the eastern boundary of Judah. The scene of the rest of the story is Bethlehem, five miles south of Jerusalem, the town which was to become the birthplace of Ruth's great descendants, David and Jesus. "Then, as now, the single street of Bethlehem ran along the double crest of the white chalk ridge, 2,500 feet above the sea; its slopes terraced into hanging gardens, with rows of olives and vines; a pleasant valley lying underneath on three sides, musical with the sound of brooks, though its eastern end is almost touched by the terrible wilderness of Judah."

Ruth and Orpah.

This little book is one of a collection of five short works called "the five rolls," the others being the Song of Songs, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, and Esther. These "five rolls" belong to the third of the three divisions of the Bible as the Jews arranged it: the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings; the other "Writings" were the Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Chronicles. Ruth was read in the synagogues every year at the Feast of Weeks.

We do not know the author of the book of Ruth, nor the date. It tells a story of the period of the Judges, which extended over three and a half centuries. The book of Judges is full of war and commotion and Ruth is a peaceful idyl, but between the wars there were many intervals of peace when these events might have occurred.

The story of Ruth is of special importance because it gives the ancestry of David, the ancestor of Christ. It is of special interest also because of the prominence it thus gives to a Moabitess, in spite of the fact that, on account of their unkind treatment of the Israelites as they went up from Egypt to Canaan, Moabites to the tenth generation were forbidden to enter the Hebrew religious assemblies. Further it is of interest because it illustrates the duty of the nearest relatives to marry the widow of a man who has died without male children.

But the beauty of the character of Ruth, the charm of her simple story, are enough in themselves to account for the popularity of this little book. It is the loveliest narrative in the Old Testament, which abounds in beautiful stories. Merely as a piece of literature, it is perfect and priceless.

In the days when the judges judged. Ruth became the great grandmother of David, so that her story must belong to the close of the period of the judges, which extended from B.C. 1450 to B.C. 1102. There was a famine in Palestine. Modern civilization, with its telegraphs, railroads, and steamboats, has conquered famine for itself, rendering the surplus of one part of the world available for the failure of crops in another part, though still the largely populated and backward nations suffer severely from hunger. But all the world, in ancient days, was in frequent peril of famine, and this terrible scourge often afflicted ancient Palestine. A certain man of Bethlehem-Judah, so-called to distinguish it from the Bethlehem in Zebulun. Ephratha is the name of the district in Judah containing Bethlehem. This man Elimelech ("God is King"), with his wife, Naomi, and his sons, Mahlon and Chilion, in order to escape the famine emigrated eastward across the Jordan to Moab, the high plateau 4,300 feet above the Dead Sea. The Moabites were descendants of Lot, the nephew of Abraham, and so were kindred of the Israelites; but they had quite lost their true religion, and had fallen away into idolatry.

Naomi's husband died. She had left, however, her two sons, who married two Moabite girls, Ruth and Orpah. Such a marriage was allowable (see Edersheim) in foreign lands, though not in the homeland of the Hebrews. But after ten years the two sons also died, leaving Naomi indeed a stranger in a strange land. She had learned that the famine was over in Palestine, and, old as she was, and very poor, the courageous woman made up her mind to walk home to Bethlehem alone.

They went on the way. This does not mean that the two daughters-in-law intended to go with Naomi, for the people of the East seldom say good-by in the house, but accompany a departing friend part way on his road. When Naomi thought they had gone far enough, she thanked them for all their kindness to her sons and to her, and bade them each return to their own mother's home and marry again. Struck with pity for her loneliness, the two young women wept, and declared that they would not leave her. Naomi, however, insisted. If she had had other sons, it would have been their duty under the law to marry Ruth and Orpah; but as this was impossible, and as the young men in Bethlehem would not be likely to marry women of Moab, and as Naomi takes it for granted that Ruth and Orpah will wish to have husbands and children, she persists in sending them back. When we consider how dark and solitary Naomi's path must have been had Ruth yielded to her entreaties, it is hard to say which of these two noble women was the more generous and self-forgetting.

The Two Decisions.

Orpah kissed her mother-in-law. But Ruth clave unto her. Kissing and cleaving, the outward show of affection and the reality of affection!

Gone back . . . unto her god. While she lived with her husband and with Naomi, Orpah had worshipped Jehovah; but her worship had little conviction back of it, evidently, for Naomi expected her to return to her heathen god when she returned to her heathen home. Her religion was "in her husband's name."

Verses 16 and 17 are the most famous of this book, among the best-loved of the Bible. "They constitute the most determined, the most decisive, the most unhesitating confession of love in all literature."—Hastings. It should be printed in poetry:

"Intreat me not to leave thee,
Or to return from following after thee:
Whither thou goest, I will go;
Where thou lodgest, I will lodge;
Thy people shall be my people,
Thy God shall be my God:
Where thou diest, will I die.
There also will I be buried:
Jehovah do so to me, and more also,
If aught but death part thee and me."

There will I be buried. The Hebrew family lived altogether, father and mother, sons and daughters and their wives and husbands and children. So also they were usually buried in one place, and expected thus to be a united family in the next life. Note the expressions so common in the Bible, "were gathered to their fathers," "slept with their fathers." Ruth showed her devotion conspicuously by the surrender of her family burial place.

Jehovah do so to me, and more also. This oath is common through the books of Samuel and Kings. The form of the imprecation is vague; "so" may include any evil that God chooses to send; yes, "and more also!" "Ruth shows how instantly and entirely she adopts Naomi's religion by sealing her vow with the Hebrew oath and by calling on the God of the Hebrews."—Hastings.

She was steadfastly minded. Ruth was of a very sweet disposition, but she had a firm will, as her mother-in-law doubtless knew. When Naomi saw that she had made up her mind, she ceased to urge her to return to Moab. They gave one look after the figure of Orpah, now far in the distance, and then with happy hearts set out together on the long road to Bethlehem.

They came to Bethlehem. It was a walk of about sixty miles, and they may have been six days on the journey. All the city was moved about them.

Call me not Naomi, which means "pleasant," "delightful," call me Mara, which means "bitter," "sad." Thus Gideon caught up the common greeting, "God is with thee," and turned it back: "God is far from our wretched nation." The Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. Like many of us, Naomi saw only the bitter side of her life, and did not realize how much sweetness God had dealt to her in Ruth.

UNCLE JIM'S STORY.

THE CAT AND THE MOUSE IN PARTNERSHIP.

You may not believe this story, but I heard it on very good authority when I was living one winter in a large farmhouse out in the country.

A white pussy cat and a little gray mouse once decided to live in the same house together and share everything they had.

"There isn't any reason in the world why cats and mice shouldn't live together happily," smiled pussy, and the little gray mouse shook his head and said: "Of course, of course."

"Now you are to stay at home," pussy said, "because if you go trotting around the first thing that will happen to you will be to fall in a trap. Now here is a pot of nice chicken fat which I found the other day. We'll put this under the cellar steps and you can cook it when we want something especially good."

"All right," said the little gray mouse, for he was a peaceful little mouse and was so proud to think that a beautiful white pussy would want to keep house with him.

One day pussy said to the mouse: "I have a cousin who has a little son, all black with yellow spots, and she wants me to come and be a god mother. You keep house to-day."

The little gray mouse promised and the cat went off. But she really did not have any cousin at all. Se just slipped back in the cellar under the steps and began to lick the little pot of fat till she had licked the top all off.

When she came back the little mouse asked: "What is the name of the child?"

"Top Off," said the cat with a sly wink, licking her paws, because that fat tasted wonderfully good.

It was not very long before she wanted some more fat and she told the same story. This time she ate it half up, and when the mouse asked her the name of the second child she winked to herself again and said: "Half Gone."

The third time she went away she ate up all that was left in the pot, and this time when Mousie innocently asked the name of the child, the cat grinned and said: "'Clean Gone,' and for goodness sake stop asking me so many questions."

Pretty soon winter came on and it grew cold, and it was very hard to find anything to eat. The mouse crept off to find the little pail of chicken fat—and found it was gone.

"O, I know what you meant by 'Top Off' and 'Half Gone,'" cried the little gray mouse, and he started to cry because he was so very hungry.

"Will you be quiet?" screamed the cat, or I will eat you up this minute."

"But 'Clean Gone' was already on the poor mouse's tongue, and he could not stop it, and no sooner had he spoken it than the white cat made a spring at him and swallowed him.

So that is the way that the only case of friendship between a cat and a mouse ended. And I have never heard of another cat and mouse that tried. Have you?