Under the Home

Second Grade Science
Lesson Printout

Learn from the Masters

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Animal Nature Study

Lesson 1: 'The Unfortunate Fireflies' from *Among the Night People*
by Clara Dillingham Pierson

Several very large families of Fireflies lived in the marsh and were much admired by their friends who were awake at night. Once in awhile some young Firefly who happened to awaken during the day would go out and hover over the heads of the daylight people. He never had any attention paid to him then, however, for during the day he seemed like a very commonplace little beetle and nobody even cared to look at him a second time. The only remarkable thing about him was the soft light that shone from his body, and that could only be seen at night.

The older Fireflies told the younger ones that they should get all the sleep they could during the daytime if they were to flutter and frisk all night. Most of them did this, but two young Fireflies, who cared more about seeing the world than they did about minding their elders, used to run away while the rest were dreaming. Each thought herself very important, and was sure that if the others missed her they wouldn't sleep a wink all day.

One night they planned to go by daylight to the farthest corner of the marsh. They had heard a couple of young Muskrats talking about it, and thought it might be different from anything they had seen. They went to bed when the rest did and pretended to fall asleep. When she was sure that the older Fireflies were dreaming, one of them reached over with her right hind leg and touched the other just below the edge of her left wing-cover. "Are you ready?" she whispered.

"Yes," answered the friend, who happened to be the smaller of the two.

"Come on, then," said the larger one, picking her way along on her six tiptoes. It was already growing light, and they could see where they stepped, but, you know, it is hard to walk over rough places on two tiptoes, so you can imagine what it must be on six. There are some pleasant things about having many legs. There are also some hard things. It is a great responsibility.

When well away from their sleeping relatives, they lifted their wing-covers, spread their wings, and flew to the farthest corner of the marsh. They were not afraid of being punished if caught, for they were orphans and had nobody to bring them up. They were afraid that if the other Fireflies awakened they would be called "silly" or "foolish young bugs." They thought that they were old enough to take care of themselves, and did not want advice.

"Oh, wouldn't they make a fuss if they knew!" exclaimed the Larger Firefly.

"They think we need to be told every single thing," said the Smaller Firefly.

"Guess we're old enough now to go off by ourselves," said the Larger Firefly.

"I guess so," answered the Smaller Firefly. "I'm not afraid if it is light, and I can see pretty near as well as I can at night."

Just then a Flycatcher darted toward them and they had to hide. He had come so near that they could look down his throat as he flew along with his beak open. The Fireflies were so scared that their feelers shook.

"I wish that bird would mind his own business," grumbled the Larger Firefly.

"That's just what he was doing," said a voice beside them, as a Garter Snake drew himself through the grass. Then their feelers shook again, for they knew that snakes do not breakfast on grass and berries.

"Did you ever see such luck?" said the Smaller Firefly. "If it isn't birds it is snakes."

"Perfectly dreadful!" answered the other. "I never knew the marsh to be so full of horrid people. Besides, my eyes are bothering me and I can't see plainly."

"So are mine," said the Smaller Firefly. "Are you going to tell the other Fireflies all about things tonight?"

"I don't know that I will," said the Larger Firefly. "I'll make them ask me first."

Then they reached the farther corner of the marsh and crawled around to see what they could find. Their eyes bothered them so that they could not see unless they were close to things, so it was useless to fly. They peeped into the cool dark corners under the skunk cabbage leaves, and lay down to rest on a bed of soft moss. A few stalks of last year's teazles stood, stiff and brown, in the corner of the fence. The Smaller Firefly alighted on one and let go in such a hurry that she fell to the ground. "Ouch!" she cried. "It has sharp hooks all over it."

While they were lying on the moss and resting, they noticed a queer plant growing near. It had a flower of green and dark red which was unlike any other blossom they had ever seen. The leaves were even queerer. Each was stiff and hollow and grew right out of the ground instead of coming from a stalk.

"I'm going to crawl into one of them," said the Larger Firefly. "There is something sweet inside. I believe it will be lots better than the skunk cabbage." She balanced herself on the top of a fresh green leaf.

"I'm going into this one," said the other Firefly, as she alighted on the edge of a brown-tipped leaf. "It looks nice and dark inside. We must tell about this at the party tonight, even if they don't ask us."

Then they repeated together the little verse that some of the pond people use when they want to start together:

"Tussock, mud, water, and log,

Muskrat, Snake, Turtle, and Frog,

Here we go into the bog!"

When they said "bog" each dropped quickly into her own leaf.

For a minute nobody made a sound. Then there was a queer sputtering, choking voice in the fresh green leaf and exactly the same in the brown-tipped one. After that a weak little voice in the green leaf said, "Abuschougerh! I fell into water."

Another weak voice from the brown-tipped one replied, "Gtschagust! So did I."

On the inside of each leaf were many stiff hairs, all pointing downward. When the Fireflies dropped in, they had brushed easily past these hairs and thought it rather pleasant. Now that they were sputtering and choking inside, and wanted to get out, these same hairs stuck into their eyes and pushed against their legs and made them exceedingly uncomfortable. The water, too, had stood for some time in the leaves and did not smell good.

Perhaps it would be just as well not to tell all the things which those two Fireflies said, for they were tired and out of patience. After awhile they gave up trying to get out until they should be rested. It was after sunset when they tried the last time, and the light that shone from their bellies brightened the little green rooms where they were. They rested and went at it carefully, instead of in the angry, jerky way which they had tried before. Slowly, one foot at a time, they managed to climb out of the doorway at the top. As they came out, they heard the squeaky voice of a young Mouse say, "Oh, where did those bright things come from?"

They also heard his mother answer, "Those are only a couple of foolish Fireflies who have been in the leaves of the pitcher-plant all day."

After they had eaten something they flew toward home. They knew that it would be late for the party, and they expected to surprise and delight everybody when they reached there. On the way they spoke of this. "I'm dreadfully tired," said one, "but I suppose we shall have to dance in the air with the rest or they will make a fuss."

"Yes," said the other. "It spoils everything if we are not there. And we'll have to tell where we've been and what we've done and whom we have seen, when we would rather go to sleep and make up what we lost during the daytime."

As they came near the middle of the marsh they were surprised to see the mild summer air twinkling with hundreds of tiny lights as their friends and relatives flew to and fro in the dusk. "Well," said the Larger Firefly, "I think they might have waited for us."

"Humph!" said the Smaller Firefly. "If they can't be more polite than that, I won't play."

"After we've had such a dreadfully hard time, too," said the Larger Firefly. "Got most eaten by a Flycatcher and scared by a Garter Snake and shut up all day in the pitcher-plant. I won't move a wing to help on their old party."

So two very tired and cross young Fireflies sat on a last year's cattail and sulked. People didn't notice them because they were sitting and their bright bellies didn't show. After a long time an elderly Firefly came to rest on the cattail and found them. "Good evening," said he. "Have you danced until you are tired?"

They looked at each other, but before either could speak one of their young friends alighted beside them and said the same thing. Then the Smaller Firefly answered. "We have been away," said she, "and we are not dancing tonight."

"Going away, did you say?" asked the elderly Firefly, who was rather deaf. "I hope you will have a delightful time." Then he bowed and flew off.

"Don't stay long," added their young friend. "We shall be so lonely without you."

After he also was gone, the two runaways looked into each other's eyes. "We were not even missed!" they cried. "We had a bad time and nobody makes any fuss. They were dancing without us." Poor little Fireflies!

They were much wiser after that, for they had learned that two young Fireflies were not so wonderfully important after all. And that if they chose to do things which it was never meant young Fireflies should do, they would be likely to have a very disagreeable time, but that other Fireflies would go on eating and dancing and living their own lives. To be happy, they must keep the Firefly laws.

Lesson 2: 'The Butterfly That Went Calling' from *Among the Meadow People* by Clara Dillingham Pierson

As the warm August days came, Mr. Yellow Butterfly wriggled and pushed in his snug little green chrysalis and wished he could get out to see the world. He remembered the days when he was a hairy little Caterpillar, crawling slowly over the grass and leaves, and he remembered how beautiful the sky and all the flowers were. Then he thought of the new wings which had been growing from his back, and he tried to move them, just to see how it would feel. He had only six

legs since his wings grew, and he missed all the sticky feet which he had to give up when he began to change into a Butterfly.

The more he thought about it the more he squirmed, until suddenly he heard a faint little sound, too faint for larger people to hear, and found a tiny slit in the wall of his chrysalis. It was such a dainty green chrysalis with white wrinkles, that it seemed almost a pity to have it break. Still it had held him for eight days already and that was as long as any of his family ever hung in the chrysalis, so it was quite time for it to be torn open and left empty. Mr. Yellow Butterfly belonged to the second brood that had hatched that year and he wanted to be out while the days were still fine and hot. Now he crawled out of the newly-opened doorway to take his first flight.

Poor Mr. Butterfly! He found his wings so wet and crinkled that they wouldn't work at all, so he had to sit quietly in the sunshine all day drying them. And just as they got big, and smooth, and dry, it grew dark, and Mr. Butterfly had to crawl under a leaf to sleep.

The next morning, bright and early, he flew away to visit the flowers. First he stopped to see the Daisies by the roadside. They were all dancing in the wind, and their bright faces looked as cheerful as anyone could wish. They were glad to see Mr. Butterfly, and wished him to stay all day with them. He said; "You are very kind, but I really couldn't think of doing it. You must excuse my saying it, but I am surprised to think you will grow here. It is very dusty and dry, and then there is no shade. I am sure I could have chosen a better place."

The Daisies smiled and nodded to each other, saying, "This is the kind of place we were made for, that's all."

Mr. Butterfly shook his head very doubtfully, and then bade them a polite, "Good morning," and flew away to call on the Cardinals.

The Cardinals are a very stately family, as everybody knows. They hold their heads very high, and never make deep bows, even to the wind, but for all that they are a very pleasant family to meet. They gave Mr. Butterfly a dainty lunch of honey, and seemed much pleased when he told them how beautiful the river looked in the sunlight.

"It is a delightful place to grow," said they.

"Ye-es," said Mr. Butterfly, "it is very pretty, still I do not think it can be healthful. I really cannot understand why you flowers choose such strange homes. Now, there are the Daisies, where I just called. They are in a dusty, dry place, where there is no shade at all. I spoke to them about it, and they acted quite uppish."

"But the Daisies always do choose such places," said the Cardinals.

"And your family," said Mr. Butterfly, "have lived so long in wet places that it is a wonder you are alive. Your color is good, but to stand with one's roots in water all the time! It is shocking."

"Cardinals and Butterflies live differently," said the flowers. "Good morning."

Mr. Butterfly left the river and flew over to the woods. He was very much out of patience. He was so angry that his feelers quivered, and now you know how angry he must have been. He knew that the Violets were a very agreeable family, who never put on airs, so he went at once to them.

He had barely said "Good morning" to them when he began to explain what had displeased him.

"To think," he said, "what notions some flowers have! Now, you have a pleasant home here in the edge of the woods. I have been telling the Daisies and the Cardinals that they should grow in such a place, but they wouldn't listen to me. The Daisies were quite uppish about it, and the Cardinals were very stiff."

"My dear friend," answered a Violet, "they could never live if they moved up into our neighborhood. Every flower has his own place in this world, and is happiest in that place. Everything has its own place and its own work, and every flower that is wise will stay in the place for which it was intended. You were exceedingly kind to want to help the flowers, but suppose they had been telling you what to do. Suppose the Cardinals had told you that flying around was not good for your health, and that to be truly well you ought to grow planted with your legs in the mud and water."

"Oh!" said Mr. Butterfly, "Oh! I never thought of that. Perhaps Butterflies don't know everything."

"No," said the Violet, "they don't know everything, and you haven't been out of your chrysalis very long. But those who are ready to learn can always find someone to tell them. Won't you eat some honey?"

And Mr. Butterfly sipped honey and was happy.

Lesson 3: 'The Fussy Queen Bee' from *Among the Farmyard People* by Clara Dillingham Pierson

In a sheltered corner of the farmyard, where the hedge kept off the cold winds and the trees shaded from hot summer sunshine, there were many hives of Bees. One could not say much for the Drones, but the others were the busiest of all the farmyard people, and they had so much to do that they did not often stop to visit with their neighbors.

In each hive, or home, there were many thousand Bees, and each had his own work. First of all, there was the Queen. You might think that being a Queen meant playing all the time, but that is not so, for to be a really good Queen, even in a Beehive, one must know a great deal and keep at work all the time. The Queen Bee is the mother of all the Bee Babies, and she spends her days in laying eggs. She is so very precious and important a person that the first duty of the rest is to take care of her.

The Drones are the stoutest and finest-looking of all the Bees, but they are lazy, very, very lazy. There are never many of them in a hive, and like most lazy people, they spend much of their time in telling the others how to work. They do not make wax or store honey, and as the Worker Bees do not wish them to eat what has been put away for winter, they do not live very long.

Most of the Bees are Workers. They are smaller than either the Queen Mother or the Drones, and they gather all the honey, make all the wax, build the comb, and feed the babies. They keep the hive clean, and when the weather is very warm, some of them fan the air with their wings to cool it. They guard the doorway of the hive, too, and turn away the robbers who sometimes come to steal their honey.

In these busy homes, nobody can live long just for himself. Everybody helps somebody else, and that makes life pleasant. The Queen Mother often lays as many as two thousand eggs in a day. Most of these are Worker eggs, and are laid in the small cells of the brood comb, which is the nursery of the hive. A few are Drone eggs and are laid in large cells. She never lays any Queen eggs, for she does not want more Queens growing up. It is a law among the Bees that there can be only one grown Queen living in each home.

The Workers, however, know that something might happen to their old Queen Mother, so, after she has gone away, they sometimes go into a cell where she has laid a Worker egg, and take down the waxen walls between it and the ones on either side to make a very large royal cell. They bite away the wax with their strong jaws and press the rough edges into shape with their feet. When this egg hatches, they do not feed the baby, or Larva, with tasteless bread made of flower-dust, honey, and water, as they would if they intended it to grow up a Worker or a Drone. Instead, they make what is called royal jelly, which is quite sour, and tuck this all around the Larva, who now looks like a little white worm.

The royal jelly makes her grow fast, and in five days she is so large as to nearly fill the cell. Then she stops eating, spins a cocoon, and lies in it for about two and a half days more. When she comes out of this, she is called a Pupa. Sixteen days after the laying of the egg, the young Queen is ready to come out of her cell. It takes twenty-one days for a Worker to become fully grown and twenty-five for a Drone.

In the hive by the cedar tree, the Queen Mother was growing restless and fussy. She knew that the Workers were raising some young Queens, and she tried to get to the royal cells. She knew

that if she could only do that, the young Queens would never live to come out. The Workers knew this, too, and whenever she came near there, they made her go away.

The Queen Larvae and Pupae were of different ages, and one of them was now ready to leave her cell. They could hear her crying to be let out, but they knew that if she and the Queen Mother should meet now, one of them would die. So instead of letting her out, they built a thick wall of wax over the door and left only an opening through which they could feed her. When she was hungry she ran her tongue out and they put honey on it.

She wondered why the Workers did not let her out, when she wanted so much to be free. She did not yet know that Queen Mothers do not get along well with young Queens.

The Workers talked it over by themselves. One of them was very tenderhearted. "It does seem too bad," said she, "to keep the poor young Queen shut up in her cell. I don't see how you can stand it to hear her piping so pitifully all the time. I am sure she must be beautiful. I never saw a finer tongue than the one she runs out for honey."

"Humph!" said a sensible old Worker, who had seen many Queens hatched and many swarms fly away, "you'd be a good deal more sorry if we did let her out now. It would not do at all."

The tenderhearted Worker did not answer this, but she talked it over with the Drones. "I declare," said she, wiping her eyes with her forefeet, "I can hardly gather a mouthful of honey for thinking of her."

"Suppose you hang yourself up and make wax then," said one Drone. "It is a rather sunshiny day, but you ought to be doing something, and if you cannot gather honey you might do that." This was just like a Drone. He never gathered honey or made wax, yet he could not bear to see a Worker lose any time.

The Worker did not hang herself up and make wax, however. She never did that except on cloudy days, and she was one of those Bees who seem to think that nothing will come out right unless they stop working to see about it. There was plenty waiting to be done, but she was too sad and anxious to do it. She might have known that since her friends were only minding the law, it was right to keep the new Queen in her cell.

The Queen Mother was restless and fussy. She could not think of her work, and half the time she did not know whether she was laying a Drone egg or a Worker egg. In spite of that, she did not make any mistake, or put one into the wrong kind of cell. "I cannot stay here with a young Queen," said she. "I will not stay here. I will take my friends with me and fly away."

Whenever she met a Worker, she struck her feelers on those of her friend, and then this friend knew exactly how she felt about it. In this way the news was passed around, and soon many of the Workers were as restless as their Queen Mother. They were so excited over it at times that

the air of the hive grew very hot. After awhile they would become quiet and gather honey once more. They whispered often to each other. "Do you know where we are going?" one said.

"Sh!" was the answer. "The guides are looking for a good place now."

"I wish the Queen Mother knew where we are going," said the first.

"How could she?" replied the second. "You know very well that she has not left the hive since she began to lay eggs. Here she comes now."

"Oh dear!" exclaimed the Queen Mother. "I can never stand this. I certainly cannot. To think I am not allowed to rule in my own hive! The Workers who are guarding the royal cells drive me away whenever I go near them. I will not stay any longer."

"Then," said a Drone, as though he had thought of it for the first time, "why don't you go away?"

"I shall," said she. "Will you go with me?"

"No," said the Drone. "I hate moving and furnishing a new house. Besides, someone must stay here to take care of the Workers and the young Queen."

The Queen Mother walked away. "When we were both young," she said to herself, "he would have gone anywhere with me."

And the Drone said to himself, "Now, isn't that just like a Queen Mother! She has known all the time that there would be young Queens coming on, and that she would have to leave, yet here she is, making the biggest kind of fuss about it. She ought to remember that it is the law."

Indeed she should have remembered that it was the law, for everything is done by law in the hive, and no one person should find fault. The law looks after them all, and will not let anyone have more than his rightful share.

That same afternoon there was a sudden quiet in their home. The Workers who had been outside returned and visited with the rest. While they were waiting, a few who were to be their guides came to the door of the hive, struck their wings together, and gave the signal for starting. Then all who were going with the Queen Mother hurried out of the door and flew with her in circles overhead. "Goodbye!" they called. "Raise all the young Queens you wish. We shall never come back. We are going far, far away, and we shall not tell you where. It is a lovely place, a very lovely place."

"Let them go," said the Drones who stayed behind. "Now, isn't it time to let out the young Queen?"

"Not yet," answered a Worker, who stood near the door. "Not one feeler shall she put outside her cell until that swarm is out of sight."

The tenderhearted Worker came up wiping her eyes. "Oh, that poor Queen Mother!" said she. "I am so sorry for her. I positively cannot gather honey today, I feel so badly about her going."

"Better keep on working," said her friend. "It's the best thing in the world for that sad feeling. Besides, you should try to keep strong."

"Oh, I will try to eat something from the comb," was the answer, "but I don't feel like working."

"Zzzt!" said the other Worker. "I think if you can eat, you can hunt your food outside, and not take honey we have laid up for winter or food that will be needed for the children."

The Drones chuckled. It was all right for them to be lazy, they thought, but they never could bear to see a Worker waste time. "Ah," cried one of them suddenly, "what is the new swarm doing now?"

The words were hardly out of his mouth when the Queen Mother crawled into the hive again. "Such dreadful luck!" said she. "A cloud passed over the sun just as we were alighting on a tree to rest."

"I wouldn't have come back for that," said a Drone.

"No," said she, in her airiest way, "I dare say you wouldn't, but I would. I dare not go to a new home after a cloud has passed over the sun. I think it is a sign of bad luck. I should never expect a single egg to hatch if I went on. We shall try it again tomorrow."

All the others came back with her, and the hive was once more crowded and hot. "Oh dear!" said the tenderhearted Worker, "isn't it too bad to think they couldn't go?"

The next morning they started again and were quite as excited over it as before. The Queen Mother had fussed and fidgeted all the time, although she had laid nine hundred and seventy-three eggs while waiting, and that in spite of interruptions. "Being busy keeps me from thinking," said she, "and I must do something." This time the Queen Mother lighted on an apple tree branch, and the others clung to her until all who had left the hive were in a great mass on the branch,—a mass as large as a small cabbage. They meant to rest a little while and then fly away to the new home chosen by their guides.

While they were hanging here, the farmer came under the tree, carrying a long pole with a wire basket fastened to the upper end. He shook the clustered Bees gently into it, and then changed them into an empty hive that stood beside their old home.

"Now," said the Workers who had stayed in the old hive, "we will let out the new Queen, for the Queen Mother will never return."

It did not take long to bite away the waxen wall and let her out. Then they gathered around and caressed her, and touched their feelers to her and waited upon her, and explained why they could not let her out sooner. She was still a soft gray color, like all young Bees when they first come from the cell, but this soon changed to the black worn by her people.

The Workers flew in and out, and brought news from the hive next door. They could not go there, for the law does not allow a Bee who lives in one home to visit in another, but they met their old friends in the air or when they were sipping honey. They found that the Queen Mother had quite given up the idea of living elsewhere and was as busy as ever. The farmer had put a piece of comb into the new hive so that she could begin housekeeping at once.

The new Queen was petted and kept at home until she was strong and used to moving about. That was not long. Then she said she wanted to see the world outside. "We will go with you," said the Drones, who were always glad of an excuse for flying away in pleasant weather. They said there was so much noise and hurrying around in the hive that they could never get any real rest there during the daytime.

So the young Queen flew far away and saw the beautiful world for the first time. Such a blue sky! Such green grass! Such fine trees covered with sweet-smelling blossoms! She loved it as soon as she saw it. "Ah," she cried, "what a wonderful thing it is to live and see all this! I am so glad that I was hatched. But now I must hurry home, for there is so much to be done."

She was a fine young Queen, and the Bees were all proud of her. They let her do anything she wished as long as she kept away from the royal cells. She soon began to work as the old Queen Mother had done, and was very happy in her own way. She would have liked to open the royal cells and prevent more Queens from hatching, and when they told her it was the law which made them keep her away, she still wanted to bite into them.

"That poor young Queen Mother!" sighed the tenderhearted Worker. "I am so sorry for her when she is kept away from the royal cells. This is a sad, sad world!" But this isn't a sad world by any means. It is a beautiful, sunshiny, happy world, and neither Queen Bees nor anybody else should think it hard if they cannot do every single thing they wish. The law looks after great and small, and there is no use in pouting because we cannot do one certain thing, when there is any amount of delightful work and play awaiting us. And the young Queen Mother knew this.

Lesson 4: 'The Mosquito Tries to Teach His Neighbors' *Among the Meadow People* by Clara Dillingham Pierson

In this meadow, as in every other meadow since the world began, there were some people who were always tired of the way things were, and thought that, if the world were only different, they

would be perfectly happy. One of these discontented ones was a certain Mosquito, a fellow with a whining voice and disagreeable manners. He had very little patience with people who were not like him, and thought that the world would be a much pleasanter place if all the insects had been made Mosquitoes.

"What is the use of Spiders, and Dragonflies, and Beetles, and Butterflies?" he would say, fretfully; "a Mosquito is worth more than any of them."

You can just see how unreasonable he was. Of course, Mosquitoes and Flies do help keep the air pure and sweet, but that is no reason why they should set themselves up above the other insects. Do not the Bees carry pollen from one flower to another, and so help the plants raise their Seed Babies? And who would not miss the bright, happy Butterflies, with their work of making the world beautiful?

But this Mosquito never thought of those things, and he said to himself: "Well, if they cannot all be Mosquitoes, they can at least try to live like them, and I think I will call them together and talk it over." So he sent word all around, and his friends and neighbors gathered to hear what he had to say.

"In the first place," he remarked, "it is unfortunate that you are not Mosquitoes, but, since you are not, one must make the best of it. There are some things, however, which you might learn from us fortunate creatures who are. For instance, notice the excellent habit of the Mosquitoes in the matter of laying eggs. Three or four hundred of the eggs are fastened together and left floating on a pond in such a way that, when the babies break their shells, they go head first into the water. Then they——"

"Do you think I would do that if I could?" interrupted a motherly old Grasshopper. "Fix it so my children would drown the minute they came out of the egg? No, indeed!" and she hurried angrily away, followed by several other loving mothers.

"But they don't drown," exclaimed the Mosquito, in surprise.

"They don't if they're Mosquitoes," replied the Ant, "but I am thankful to say my children are land babies and not water babies."

"Well, I won't say anything more about that, but I must speak of your voices, which are certainly too heavy and loud to be pleasant. I should think you might speak and sing more softly, even if you have no pockets under your wings like mine. I flutter my wings, and the air strikes these pockets and makes my sweet voice."

"Humph!" exclaimed a Bee, "it is a very poor place for pockets, and a very poor use to make of them. Every Bee knows that pockets are handiest on the hind legs, and should be used for carrying pollen to the babies at home."

"My pocket is behind," said a Spider, "and my web silk is kept there. I couldn't live without a pocket."

Some of the meadow people were getting angry, so the Garter Snake, who would always rather laugh than quarrel, glided forward and said: "My friends and neighbors; our speaker here has been so kind as to tell us how the Mosquitoes do a great many things, and to try to teach us their way. It seems to me that we might repay some of his kindness by showing him our ways, and seeing that he learns by practice. I would ask the Spiders to take him with them and show him how to spin a web. Then the Bees could teach him how to build comb, and the Tree Frog how to croak, and the Earthworms how to burrow, and the Caterpillars how to spin a cocoon. Each of us will do something for him. Perhaps the Measuring Worm will teach him to walk as the Worms of his family do. I understand he does that very well." Here everybody laughed, remembering the joke played on the Caterpillars, and the Snake stopped speaking.

The Mosquito did not dare refuse to be taught, and so he was taken from one place to another, and told exactly how to do everything that he could not possibly do, until he felt so very meek and humble that he was willing the meadow people should be busy and happy in their own way.

Lesson 5: 'The Dragonfly Children and the Snapping Turtle' from *Among the Pond People* by Clara Dillingham Pierson

The Dragonflies have always lived near the pond. Not the same ones that are there now, of course, but the great-great-great-grandfathers of these. A person would think that, after a family had lived so long in a place, all the neighbors would be fond of them, yet it is not so. The Dragonflies may be very good people—and even the Snapping Turtle says that they are—still, they are so peculiar that many of their neighbors do not like them at all. Even when they are only larvae, or babies, they are not good playmates, for they have such a bad habit of putting everything into their mouths. Indeed, the Stickleback Father once told the little Sticklebacks that they should not stir out of the nest, unless they would promise to keep away from the young Dragonflies.

The Stickleback Mothers said that it was all the fault of the Dragonfly Mothers. "What can you expect," exclaimed one of them, "when Dragonfly eggs are so carelessly laid? I saw a Dragonfly Mother laying some only yesterday, and how do you suppose she did it? Just flew around in the sunshine and visited with her friends, and once in awhile flew low enough to touch the water and drop one in. It is disgraceful!"

The Minnow Mothers did not think it was so much in the way the eggs were laid, "although," said one, "I always lay mine close together, instead of scattering them over the whole pond." They thought the trouble came from bad bringing up or no bringing up at all. Each egg, you know, when it is laid, drops to the bottom of the pond, and the children are hatched and grow up there, and do not even see their fathers and mothers.

Now most of the larvae were turning into Nymphs, which are half-grown Dragon Flies. They had been short and plump, and now they were longer and more slender, and there were little bunches on their shoulders where the wings were growing under their skin. They had outgrown their old skins a great many times, and had to wriggle out of them to be at all comfortable. When a Dragonfly child became too big for his skin, he hooked the two sharp claws of each of his six feet firmly into something, unfastened his skin down the back, and wriggled out, leaving it to roll around in the water until it became just part of the mud.

Like most growing children, the Dragonfly larvae and Nymphs had to eat a great deal. Their stomachs were as long as their bodies, and they were never really happy unless their stomachs were full. They always ate plain food and plenty of it, and they never ate between meals. They had breakfast from the time they awakened in the morning until the sun was high in the sky, then they had dinner until the sun was low in the sky, and supper from that time until it grew dark and they went to sleep: but never a mouthful between meals, no matter how hungry they might be. They said this was their only rule about eating, and they would keep it.

They were always slow children. You would think that, with six legs apiece and three joints in each leg, they might walk quite fast, yet they never did. When they had to, they hurried in another way by taking a long leap through the water. Of course they breathed water like their neighbors, the fishes and the Tadpoles. They did not breathe it into their mouths, or through gills, but took it in through some openings in the back part of their bodies. When they wanted to hurry, they breathed this water out so suddenly that it sent them quickly ahead.

The Snapping Turtle had called them "bothering bugs" one day when he was cross (and that was the day after he had been cross, and just before the day when he was going to be cross again), and they didn't like him and wanted to get even. They all put their queer little three-cornered heads together, and there was an ugly look in their great staring eyes.

"Horrid old thing!" said one larva. "I wish I could sting him."

"Well, you can't," said a Nymph, turning towards him so suddenly that he leaped. "You haven't any sting, and you never will have, so you just keep still." It was not at all nice in her to speak that way, but she was not well brought up, you know, and that, perhaps, is a reason why one should excuse her for talking so to her little brother. She was often impatient, and said she could never go anywhere without one of the larvae tagging along.

"I tell you what let's do," said another Nymph. "Let's all go together to the shallow water where he suns himself, and let's all stand close to each other, and then, when he comes along, let's stick out our lips at him!"

"Both lips?" asked the larvae.

"Well, our lower lips anyway," answered the Nymph. "Our upper lips are so small they don't matter."

"We'll do it," exclaimed all the Dragonfly children, and they started together to walk on the pond-bottom to the shallow water. They thought it would scare the Snapping Turtle dreadfully. They knew that whenever they stuck out their lower lips at the small fishes and bugs, they swam away as fast as they could. The Giant Water-Bug (Belostoma), was the only bug who was not afraid of them when they made faces. Indeed, the lower lip of a Dragonfly child might well frighten people, for it is fastened on a long, jointed, arm-like thing, and has pincers on it with which it catches and holds its food. Most of the time, the Dragonfly child keeps the joint bent, and so holds his lip up to his face like a mask. But sometimes he straightens the joint and holds his lip out before him, and then its pincers catch hold of things. He does this when he is hungry.

When they reached the shallow water, the Dragonfly children stood close together, with the larvae in the middle and the Nymphs all around them. The Snapping Turtle was nowhere to be seen, so they had to wait. "Aren't you scared?" whispered one larva to another.

"Scared? Dah! Who's afraid," answered he.

"Oh, look!" cried a Nymph. "There go some grown-up Dragonflies over our heads. Just you wait until I change my skin once more, and then won't I have a good time! I'll dry my wings and then I'll——"

"Sh-h!" said one of the larvae. "Here comes the Snapping Turtle."

Sure enough, there he came through the shallow water, his wet back-shell partly out of it and shining in the sunlight. He came straight toward the Dragonfly children, and they were glad to see that he did not look hungry. They thought he might be going to take a nap after his dinner. Then they all stood even closer together and stuck out their lower lips at him. They thought he might run away when they did this. They felt sure that he would at least be very badly frightened.

The Snapping Turtle did not seem to see them at all. It was queer. He just waddled on and on, coming straight toward them. "Ah-h-h!" said he. "How sleepy I do feel! I will lie down in the sunshine and rest." He took a few more steps, which brought his great body right over the crowd of Dragonfly children. "I think I will draw in my head," said he (the Dragonfly children looked at each other), "and my tail (here two of the youngest larvae began to cry) and lie down." He began to draw in his legs very, very slowly, and just as his great hard lower shell touched the mud, the last larva crawled out under his tail. The Nymphs had already gotten away.

"Oh," said the Dragonfly children to each other, "Wasn't it awful!"

"Humph," said the Snapping Turtle, talking to himself—he had gotten into the way of doing that because he had so few friends—"How dreadfully they did scare me!" Then he laughed a grim Snapping Turtle laugh, and went to sleep.

Lesson 6: 'The Beetle Who Did Not Like Caterpillars' from *Among the Meadow People* by Clara Dillingham Pierson

One morning early in June, a fat and shining May Beetle lay on his back among the grasses, kicking his six legs in the air, and wriggling around while he tried to catch hold of a grass-blade by which to pull himself up. Now, Beetles do not like to lie on their backs in the sunshine, and this one was hot and tired from his long struggle. Beside that, he was very cross because he was late in getting his breakfast, so when he did at last get right side up, and saw a brown and black Caterpillar watching him, he grew very ill-mannered, and said some things of which he should have been ashamed.

"Oh, yes," he said, "you are quick enough to laugh when you think somebody else is in a fix. I often lie on my back and kick, just for fun." (Which was not true, but when Beetles are cross they are not always truthful.)

"Excuse me," said the Caterpillar, "I did not mean to hurt your feelings. If I smiled, it was because I remembered being in the same plight myself yesterday, and what a time I had smoothing my fur afterwards. Now, you won't have to smooth your fur, will you?" she asked pleasantly.

"No, I'm thankful to say I haven't any fur to smooth," snapped the Beetle. "I am not one of the crawling, furry kind. My family wear dark brown, glossy coats, and we always look trim and clean. When we want to hurry, we fly; and when tired of flying, we walk or run. We have two kinds of wings. We have a pair of dainty, soft ones, that carry us through the air, and then we have a pair of stiff ones to cover over the soft wings when we come down to the earth again. We are the finest family in the meadow."

"I have often heard of you," said the Caterpillar, "and am very glad to become acquainted."

"Well," answered the Beetle, "I am willing to speak to you, of course, but we can never be at all friendly. A May Beetle, indeed, in company with a Caterpillar! I choose my friends among the Moths, Butterflies, and Dragonflies,—in fact, I move in the upper circles."

"Upper circles, indeed!" said a croaking voice beside him, which made the Beetle jump, "I have hopped over your head for two or three years, when you were nothing but a fat, white worm. You'd better not put on airs. The fine family of May Beetles were all worms once, and they had to live in the earth and eat roots, while the Caterpillars were in the sunshine over their heads, dining on tender green leaves and flower buds."

The May Beetle began to look very uncomfortable, and squirmed as though he wanted to get away, but the Tree Frog, for it was the Tree Frog, went on: "As for your not liking Caterpillars, they don't stay Caterpillars. Your new acquaintance up there will come out with wings one of these days, and you will be glad enough to know him." And the Tree Frog hopped away.

The May Beetle scraped his head with his right front leg, and then said to the Caterpillar, who was nibbling away at the milkweed: "You know, I wasn't really in earnest about our not being friends. I shall be very glad to know you, and all your family."

"Thank you," answered the Caterpillar, "thank you very much, but I have been thinking it over myself, and I feel that I really could not be friendly with a May Beetle. Of course, I don't mind speaking to you once in awhile, when I am eating, and getting ready to spin my cocoon. After that it will be different. You see, then I shall belong to one of the finest families in the meadow, the Milkweed Butterflies. We shall eat nothing but honey, and dress in soft orange and black velvet. We shall not blunder and bump around when we fly. We shall enjoy visiting with the Dragonflies and Moths. I shall not forget you altogether, I dare say, but I shall feel it my duty to move in the upper circles, where I belong. Good morning."

Lesson 7: 'The Grasshopper Who Wouldn't Be Scared' from *Among the Meadow People* by Clara Dillingham Pierson

There were more Ants in the meadow than there were of any other kind of insects. In their family there were not only Ants, but great-aunts, cousins, nephews, and nieces, until it made one sleepy to think how many relatives each Ant had. Yet they were small people and never noisy, so perhaps the Grasshoppers seemed to be the largest family there.

There were many different families of Grasshoppers, but they were all related. Some had short horns, or feelers, and red legs; and some had long horns. Some lived in the lower part of the meadow where it was damp, and some in the upper part. The Katydids, who really belong to this family, you know, stayed in trees and did not often sing in the daytime. Then there were the great Road Grasshoppers who lived only in places where the ground was bare and dusty, and whom you could hardly see unless they were flying. When they lay in the dust their wide wings were hidden and they showed only that part of their bodies which was dust-color. Let the farmer drive along, however, and they rose into the air with a gentle, whirring sound and fluttered to a safe place. Then one could see them plainly, for their large under wings were black with yellow edges.

Perhaps those Grasshoppers who were best known in the meadow were the Clouded Grasshoppers, large dirty-brown ones with dark spots, who seemed to be everywhere during the autumn. The fathers and brothers in this family always crackled their wings loudly when they flew anywhere, so one could never forget that they were around.

It was queer that they were always spoken of as Grasshoppers. Their great-great-great-grandparents were called Locusts, and that was the family name, but the Cicadas liked that name

and wanted it for themselves, and made such a fuss about it that people began to call them Seventeen-Year-Locusts; and then because they had to call the real Locusts something else, they called them Grasshoppers. The Grasshoppers didn't mind this. They were jolly and noisy, and as they grew older were sometimes very pompous. And you know what it is to be pompous.

When the farmer was drawing the last loads of hay to his barn and putting them away in the great mows there, three young Clouded Grasshopper brothers were frolicking near the wagon. They had tried to see who could run the fastest, crackle the loudest, spring the highest, flutter the farthest, and eat the most. There seemed to be nothing more to do. They couldn't eat another mouthful, the other fellows wouldn't play with them, they wouldn't play with their sisters, and they were not having any fun at all.

They were sitting on a haycock, watching the wagon as it came nearer and nearer. The farmer was on top and one of his men was walking beside it. Whenever they came to a haycock the farmer would stop the Horses, the man would run a long-handled, shining pitchfork into the hay on the ground and throw it up to the farmer. Then it would be trampled down on to the load, the farmer's wife would rake up the scattering hay which was left on the ground, and that would be thrown up also.

The biggest Clouded Grasshopper said to his brothers, "You dare not sit still while they put this hay on the load!"

The smallest Clouded Grasshopper said, "I do too!"

The second brother said, "Huh! Guess I dare do anything you do!" He said it in a rather mean way, and that may have been because he had eaten too much. Overeating will make any insect cross.

Now every one of them was afraid, but each waited for the others to back out. While they were waiting, the wagon stopped beside them, the shining fork was run into the hay, and they were shaken and stood on their heads and lifted through the air on to the wagon. There they found themselves all tangled up with hay in the middle of the load. It was dark and they could hardly breathe. There were a few stems of nettles in the hay, and they had to crawl away from them. It was no fun at all, and they didn't talk very much.

When the wagon reached the barn, they were pitched into the mow with the hay, and then they hopped and fluttered around until they were on the floor over the Horses' stalls. They sat together on the floor and wondered how they could ever get back to the meadow. Because they had come in the middle of the load, they did not know the way.

"Oh!" said they. "Who are those four-legged people over there?"

"Kittens!" sang a Swallow over their heads. "Oh, tittle-ittle-ittle-ee!"

The Clouded Grasshoppers had never seen Kittens. It is true that the old Cat often went hunting in the meadow, but that was at night, when Grasshoppers were asleep.

"Meouw!" said the Yellow Kitten. "Look at those queer little brown people on the floor. Let's each catch one."

So the Kittens began crawling slowly over the floor, keeping their bodies and tails low, and taking very short steps. Not one of them took his eyes off the Clouded Grasshopper whom he meant to catch. Sometimes they stopped and crouched and watched, then they went on, nearer, nearer, nearer, still, while the Clouded Grasshoppers were more and more scared and wished they had never left the meadow where they had been so safe and happy.

At last the Kittens jumped, coming down with their sharp little claws just where the Clouded Grasshoppers had been. The Clouded Grasshoppers had jumped too, but they could not stay long in the air, and when they came down the Kittens jumped again. So it went until the poor Clouded Grasshoppers were very, very tired and could not jump half so far as they had done at first. Sometimes the Kittens even tried to catch them while they were fluttering, and each time they came a little nearer than before. They were so tired that they never thought of leaping up on the wall of the barn where the Kittens couldn't reach them.

At last the smallest Clouded Grasshopper called to his brothers, "Let us chase the Kittens."

The brothers answered, "They're too big."

The smallest Grasshopper, who had always been the brightest one in the family, called back, "We may scare them if they are big."

Then all the Clouded Grasshoppers leaped toward the Kittens and crackled their wings and looked very, very fierce. And the Kittens ran away as fast as they could. They were in such a hurry to get away that the Yellow Kitten tumbled over the White Kitten and they rolled on the floor in a furry little heap. The Clouded Grasshoppers leaped again, and the Kittens scrambled away to their nest in the hay, and stood against the wall and raised their backs and their pointed little tails, and opened their pink mouths and spat at them, and said, "Ha-ah-h-h!"

"There!" said the smallest Clouded Grasshopper to them, "we won't do anything to you this time, because you are young and don't know very much, but don't you ever bother one of us again. We might have hopped right on to you, and then what could you have done to help yourselves?"

The Clouded Grasshoppers started off to find their way back to the meadow, and the frightened Kittens looked at each other and whispered: "Just supposing they had hopped on to us! What could we have done!"

Lesson 8: 'The Katydid's Quarrel' from *Among the Meadow People* by Clara Dillingham Pierson

The warm summer days were past, and the Katydids came again to the meadow. Everybody was glad to see them, and the Grasshoppers, who are cousins of the Katydids, gave a party in their honor.

Such a time as the meadow people had getting ready for that party! They did not have to change their dresses, but they scraped and cleaned themselves, and all the young Grasshoppers went off by the woods to practise jumping and get their knees well limbered, because there might be games and dancing at the party, and then how dreadful it would be if any young Grasshopper should find that two or three of his legs wouldn't bend easily!

The Grasshoppers did not know at just what time they ought to have the party. Some of the meadow people whom they wanted to invite were used to sleeping all day, and some were used to sleeping all night, so it really was hard to find an hour at which all would be wide-awake and ready for fun. At last the Tree Frog said: "Pukr-r-rup! Pukr-r-rup! Have it at sunset!" And at sunset it was.

Everyone came on time, and they hopped and chattered and danced and ate a party supper of tender green leaves. Some of the little Grasshoppers grew sleepy and crawled among the plantains for a nap. Just then a big Katydid said he would sing a song—which was a very kind thing for him to do, because he really did it to make the others happy, and not to show what a fine musician he was. All the guests said, "How charming!" or, "We should be delighted!" and he seated himself on a low swinging branch. You know Katydids sing with the covers of their wings, and so when he alighted on the branch he smoothed down his pale green suit and rubbed his wing-cases a little to make sure that they were in tune. Then he began loud and clear, "Katy did! Katy did!! Katy did!!!"

Of course he didn't mean any real Katy, but was just singing his song. However, there was another Katydid there who had a habit of contradicting, and he had eaten too much supper, and that made him feel crosser than ever; so when the singer said "Katy did!" this cross fellow jumped up and said, "Katy didn't! Katy didn't!! Katy didn't!!!" and they kept at it, one saying that she did and the other that she didn't, until everybody was ashamed and uncomfortable, and some of the little Grasshoppers awakened and wanted to know what was the matter.

Both of the singers got more and more vexed until at last neither one knew just what he was saying—and that, you know, is what almost always happens when people grow angry. They just keep saying something as loud and fast as possible and thought all the while that they were very bright—which was all they knew about it.

Suddenly somebody noticed that the one who began to say "Katy did!" was screaming "Katy didn't!" and the one who had said "Katy didn't!" was roaring "Katy did!" Then they all laughed, and the two on the branch looked at each other in a very shamefaced way.

The Tree Frog always knew the right thing to do, and he said "Pukr-r-rup!" so loudly that all stopped talking at once. When they were quiet he said: "We will now listen to a duet, 'Katy,' by the two singers who are up the tree. All please join in the chorus." So it was begun again, and both the leaders were good-natured, and all the Katydids below joined in with "did or didn't, did or didn't, did or didn't." And that was the end of the quarrel.

Lesson 9: 'The Crickets' School' from *Among the Meadow People* by Clara Dillingham Pierson

In one corner of the meadow lived a fat old Cricket, who thought a great deal of himself. He had such a big, shining body, and a way of chirping so very loudly, that nobody could ever forget where he lived. He was a very good sort of Cricket, too, ready to say the most pleasant things to everybody, yet, sad to relate, he had a dreadful habit of boasting. He had not always lived in the meadow, and he liked to tell of the wonderful things he had seen and done when he was younger and lived up near the white farmhouse.

When he told these stories of what he had done, the big Crickets around him would not say much, but just sit and look at each other. The little Crickets, however, loved to hear him talk, and would often come to the door of his house (which was a hole in the ground), to beg him to tell them more.

One evening he said he would teach them a few things that all little Crickets should know. He had them stand in a row, and then began: "With what part of your body do you eat?"

"With our mouths," all the little Crickets shouted.

"With what part of your body do you run and leap?"

"Our legs," they cried.

"Do you do anything else with your legs?"

"We clean ourselves with them," said one.

"We use them and our mouths to make our houses in the ground," said another.

"Oh yes, and we hear with our two front legs," cried one bright little fellow.

"That is right," answered the fat old Cricket. "Some creatures hear with things called ears, that grow on the sides of their heads, but for my part, I think it much nicer to hear with one's legs, as we do."

"Why, how funny it must be not to hear with one's legs, as we do," cried all the little Crickets together.

"There are a great many queer things to be seen in the great world," said their teacher. "I have seen some terribly big creatures with only two legs and no wings whatever."

"How dreadful!" all the little Crickets cried. "We wouldn't think they could move about at all."

"It must be very hard to do so," said their teacher; "I was very sorry for them," and he spread out his own wings and stretched his six legs to show how he enjoyed them.

"But how can they sing if they have no wings?" asked the bright little Cricket.

"They sing through their mouths, in much the same way that the birds have to. I am sure it must be much easier to sing by rubbing one's wings together, as we do," said the fat old teacher. "I could tell you many queer things about these two-legged creatures, and the houses in which they live, and perhaps one day I will. There are other large four-legged creatures around their homes that are very terrible, but, my children, I was never afraid of any of them. I am one of the truly brave people who are never frightened, no matter how terrible the sight. I hope, children, that you will always be brave, like me. If anything should scare you, do not jump or run away. Stay right where you are, and——"

But the little Crickets never heard the rest of what their teacher began to say, for at that minute Brown Bess, the Cow, came through a broken fence toward the spot where the Crickets were. The teacher gave one shrill "chirp," and scrambled down his hole. The little Crickets fairly tumbled over each other in their hurry to get away, and the fat old Cricket, who had been out in the great world, never again talked to them about being brave.

Lesson 10: 'The Cheerful Harvestmen' from *Among the Meadow People* by Clara Dillingham Pierson

Some of the meadow people are gay and careless, and some are always worrying. Some work hard every day, and some are exceedingly lazy. There, as everywhere else, each has his own way of thinking about things. It is too bad that they cannot all learn to think brave and cheerful thoughts, for these make life happy. One may have a comfortable home, kind neighbors, and plenty to eat, yet if he is in the habit of thinking disagreeable thoughts, not even all these good things can make him happy. There was the young Frog who thought herself sick—but that is another story.

Perhaps the Harvestmen were the most cheerful of all the meadow people. The old Tree Frog used to say that it made him feel better just to see their knees coming toward him. Of course, when he saw their knees, he knew that the whole insect was also coming. He spoke in that way because the Harvestmen always walked or ran with their knees so much above the rest of their bodies that one could see those first.

The Harvestmen were not particularly fine-looking, not nearly so handsome as some of their Spider cousins. One never thought of that, however. They had such an easy way of moving

around on their eight legs, each of which had a great many joints. It is the joints, or bending-places, you know, which make legs useful. Besides being graceful, they had very pleasant manners. When a Harvestman said "Good morning" to you on a rainy day, you always had a feeling that the sun was shining. It might be that the drops were even then falling into your face, but for a moment you were sure to feel that everything was bright and warm and comfortable.

Sometimes the careless young Grasshoppers and Crickets called the Harvestmen by their nicknames, "Daddy Long-Legs" or "Grandfather Graybeard." Even then the Harvestmen were good-natured, and only said with a smile that the young people had not yet learned the names of their neighbors. The Grasshoppers never seemed to think how queer it was to call a young Harvestman daughter "Grandfather Graybeard." When they saw how good-natured they were, the Grasshoppers soon stopped trying to tease the Harvestmen. People who are really good-natured are never teased very long, you know.

The Walking-Sticks were exceedingly polite to the Harvestmen. They thought them very slender and genteel-looking. Once, the Five-Legged Walking-Stick said to the largest Harvestman, "Why do you talk so much with the common people in the meadow?"

The Harvestman knew exactly what the Walking-Stick meant, but he was not going to let anybody make fun of his kind and friendly neighbors, so he said: "I think we Harvestmen are rather common ourselves. There are a great, great many of us here. It must be very lonely to be uncommon."

After that the Walking-Stick had nothing more to say. He never felt quite sure whether the Harvestman was too stupid to understand or too wise to gossip. Once he thought he saw the Harvestman's eyes twinkle. The Harvestman didn't care if people thought him stupid. He knew that he was not stupid, and he would rather seem dull than to listen while unkind things were said about his neighbors.

Some people would have thought it very hard luck to be Harvestmen. The Garter Snake said that if he were one, he should be worried all the time about his legs. "I'm thankful I haven't any," he said, "for if I had I should be forever thinking I should lose some of them. A Harvestman without legs would be badly off. He could never in the world crawl around on his belly as I do."

How the Harvestmen did laugh when they heard this! The biggest one said, "Well, if that isn't just like some people! Never want to have anything for fear they'll lose it. I wonder if he worries about his head? He might lose that, you know, and then what would he do?"

It was only the next day that the largest Harvestman came home on seven legs. His friends all cried out, "Oh, how did it ever happen?"

"Cows," said he.

"Did they step on you?" asked the Five-Legged Walking-Stick. He had not lived long enough in the meadow to understand all that the Harvestman meant. He was sorry for him, though, for he knew what it was to lose a leg.

"Huh!" said a Grasshopper, interrupting in a very rude way, "aren't any Cows in this meadow now!"

Then the other Harvestmen told the Walking-Stick all about it, how sometimes a boy would come to the meadow, catch a Harvestman, hold him up by one leg, and say to him, "Grandfather Graybeard, tell me where the Cows are, or I'll kill you." Then the only thing a Harvestman could do was to struggle and wriggle himself free, and he often broke off a leg in doing so.

"How terrible!" said the three Walking-Sticks all together. "But why don't you tell them?"

"We do," answered the Harvestmen. "We point with our seven other legs, and we point every way there is. Sometimes we don't know where they are, so we point everywhere, to be sure. But it doesn't make any difference. Our legs drop off just the same."

"Isn't a boy clever enough to find Cows alone?" asked the Walking-Sticks.

"Oh, it isn't that," cried all the meadow people together. "Even after you tell, and sometimes when the Cows are right there, they walk off home without them."

"I'd sting them," said a Wasp, waving his feelers fiercely and raising and lowering his wings. "I'd sting them as hard as I could."

"You wouldn't if you had no sting," said the Tree Frog.

"N-no," stammered the Wasp, "I suppose I wouldn't."

"You poor creature!" said the biggest Katydid to the biggest Harvestman. "What will you do? Only seven legs!"

"Do?" answered the biggest Harvestman, and it was then one could see how truly brave and cheerful he was. "Do? I'll walk on those seven. If I lose one of them I'll walk on six, and if I lose one of them I'll walk on five. Haven't I my mouth and my stomach and my eyes and my two feelers, and my two food-pincers? I may not be so good-looking, but I am a Harvestman, and I shall enjoy the grass and the sunshine and my kind neighbors as long as I live. I must leave you now. Good day."

He walked off rather awkwardly, for he had not yet learned to manage himself since his accident. The meadow people looked after him very thoughtfully. They were not noticing his

awkwardness, or thinking of his high knees or of his little low body. Perhaps they thought what the Cicada said, "Ah, that is the way to live!"

Lesson 11: 'The Robins Build a Nest' from *Among the Meadow People* by Clara Dillingham Pierson

When Mr. and Mrs. Robin built in the spring, they were not quite agreed as to where the nest should be. Mr. Robin was a very decided bird, and had made up his mind that the lowest crotch of a maple tree would be the best place. He even went so far as to take three billfuls of mud there, and stick in two blades of dry grass. Mrs. Robin wanted it on the end of the second rail from the top of the split-rail fence. She said it was high enough from the ground to be safe and dry, and not so high that a little bird falling out of it would hurt himself very much. Then, too, the top rail was broad at the end and would keep the rain off so well.

"And the nest will be just the color of the rails," said she, "so that even a Red Squirrel could hardly see it." She disliked Red Squirrels, and she had reason to, for she had been married before, and if it had not been for a Red Squirrel, she might already have had children as large as she was.

"I say that the tree is the place for it," said Mr. Robin, "and I wear the brightest breast feathers." He said this because in bird families the one who wears the brightest breast feathers thinks he has the right to decide things.

Mrs. Robin was wise enough not to answer back when he spoke in this way. She only shook her feathers, took ten quick running steps, tilted her body forward, looked hard at the ground, and pulled out something for supper. After that she fluttered around the maple tree crotch as though she had never thought of any other place. Mr. Robin wished he had not been quite so decided, or reminded her of his breast feathers. "After all," thought he, "I don't know but the fence-rail would have done." He thought this, but he didn't say it. It is not always easy for a Robin to give up and let one with dull breast feathers know that he thinks himself wrong.

That night they perched in the maple-tree and slept with their heads under their wings. Long before the sun was in sight, when the first beams were just touching the tops of the forest trees, they awakened, bright-eyed and rested, preened their feathers, sang their morning song, "Cheerily, cheerily, cheer-up," and flew off to find food. After breakfast they began to work on the nest. Mrs. Robin stopped often to look and peck at the bark. "It will take a great deal of mud," said she, "to fill in that deep crotch until we reach a place wide enough for the nest."

At another time she said: "My dear, I am afraid that the dry grass you are bringing is too light-colored. It shows very plainly against the maple bark. Can't you find some that is darker?"

Mr. Robin hunted and hunted, but could find nothing which was darker. As he flew past the fence, he noticed that it was almost the color of the grass in his bill.

After a while, soft gray clouds began to cover the sky. "I wonder," said Mrs. Robin, "if it will rain before we get this done. The mud is soft enough now to work well, and this place is so open that the rain might easily wash away all that we have done."

It did rain, however, and very soon. The great drops came down so hard that one could only think of pebbles falling. Mr. and Mrs. Robin oiled their feathers as quickly as they could, taking the oil from their back pockets and putting it onto their feathers with their bills. This made the finest kind of waterproof and was not at all heavy to wear. When the rain was over they shook themselves and looked at their work.

"I believe," said Mrs. Robin to her husband, "that you are right in saying that we might better give up this place and begin over again somewhere else."

Now Mr. Robin could not remember having said that he thought anything of the sort, and he looked very sharply at his wife, and cocked his black head on one side until all the black and white streaks on his throat showed. She did not seem to know that he was watching her as she hopped around the partly built nest, poking it here and pushing it there, and trying her hardest to make it look right. He thought she would say something, but she didn't. Then he knew he must speak first. He flirted his tail and tipped his head and drew some of his brown wing-feathers through his bill. Then he held himself very straight and tall, and said, "Well, if you do agree with me, I think you might much better stop working here and begin in another place."

"It seems almost too bad," said she. "Of course there are other places, but——"

By this time Mr. Robin knew exactly what to do. "Plenty of them," said he. "Now don't fuss any longer with this. That place on the rail fence is an excellent one. I wonder that no other birds have taken it." As he spoke he flew ahead to the very spot which Mrs. Robin had first chosen.

She was a very wise bird, and knew far too much to say, "I told you so." Saying that, you know, always makes things go wrong. She looked at the rail fence, ran along the top of it, toeing in prettily as she ran, looked around in a surprised way, and said, "Oh, that place?"

"Yes, Mrs. Robin," said her husband, "that place. Do you see anything wrong about it?"

"No-o," she said. "I think I could make it do."

Before long another nest was half built, and Mrs. Robin was working away in the happiest manner possible, stopping every little while to sing her afternoon song: "Do you think what you do? Do you think what you do? Do you thi-ink?"

Mr. Robin was also at work, and such billfuls of mud, such fine little twigs, and such big wisps of dry grass as went into that home! Once Mr. Robin was gone a long time, and when he came back he had a beautiful piece of white cotton string dangling from his beak. That they put on the

outside. "Not that we care to show off," said they, "but somehow that seemed to be the best place to put it."

Mr. Robin was very proud of his nest and of his wife. He never went far away if he could help it. Once she heard him tell Mr. Goldfinch that, "Mrs. Robin was very sweet about building where he chose, and that even after he insisted on changing places from the tree to the fence she was perfectly good-natured."

"Yes," said Mrs. Robin to Mrs. Goldfinch, "I was perfectly good-natured." Then she gave a happy, chirpy little laugh, and Mrs. Goldfinch laughed, too. They were perfectly contented birds, even if they didn't wear the brightest breast feathers or insist on having their own way. And Mrs. Robin had been married before.

Lesson 12: 'The Bragging Peacock' from *Among the Farmyard People* by Clara Dillingham Pierson

The farmyard people will never forget the coming of the Peacock; or rather they will never forget the first day that he spent with them. He came in the evening after all the fowls had gone to roost, and their four-legged friends were dozing comfortably in meadow and pasture corners, so nobody saw him until the next morning.

You can imagine how surprised they were when a beautiful great fowl of greenish-blue strutted across the yard, holding his head well in the air and dragging his splendid train behind him. The fowls were just starting out for their daily walks, and they stopped and held one foot in the air, and stared and stared and stared. They did not mean to be rude, but they were so very much surprised that they did not think what they were doing. Most of them thought they were asleep and dreaming, and the dream was such a beautiful one that they did not want to move and break it off. They had never seen a Peacock and did not even know that there was such a fowl.

A Lamb by the pasture fence called to his mother. "Ba-baa!" cried he. "One of the cloud-birds is walking in the farmyard." He was thinking of the night of the storm, when all the Sheep and Lambs huddled together in the meadow and watched the clouds, and thought that they were birds and dropped shining worms from their beaks.

Then the Peacock, who understood the Sheep language perfectly, said, "Paon! I am no cloud-bird. I am a Peacock." He said this in a very haughty way, as though to be a Peacock were the grandest thing in the world, far better than having one's home in the sky and bringing showers to refresh the thirsty earth-people.

The Turkey Gobbler never could stand it to have others speak in that way when he was around, so he thought he would show the newcomer how important he was. He drew up his neck and puffed out his chest; he pulled his skin muscles by thinking about them, and that made his feathers stand on end; next he dropped his wings until their tips touched the ground; then he slowly spread his tail. "Pffff!" said he. "I am no Peacock. I am a Turkey Gobbler."

The Hen Turkeys looked at each other with much pride. They were a little afraid of him themselves, but they liked to have him show the newcomer that Turkeys are important people. Their children looked at each other and murmured, "Isn't the Gobbler fine though? Guess the Peacock will wish now that he hadn't put on airs."

But the Peacock did not seem to feel at all sorry. He stood and looked at them all without saying a word, and they all wondered what he was thinking. Then a Duckling who stood near him exclaimed, "Look at his train! Oh, look at his train!" Everybody looked and saw all those beautiful long feathers rising into the air. Up and up they went, and spreading as they rose, until there was a wonderful great circle of them back of his body and reaching far above his head. The Gobbler's spread tail looked as small beside this as a Dove's egg would beside that of a Goose.

"Paon!" said the Peacock. "I am no Turkey Gobbler. I am a Peacock."

"Pffff!" said the Gobbler. Then he turned to the Hen Turkeys. "My dears," he said, "I think it is time that we walked along. The children should not be allowed to see and speak with any stray fowl that comes along. We cannot be too particular about that." Then he stalked off, with the meek Hen Turkeys following and the children lagging behind. They did so want to stay and see the Peacock, and they thought the Ducklings and Goslings were much luckier than they.

The Geese were delighted with the newcomer, and hoped he would be quite friendly with them. They wished he were a swimmer, but of course they could tell with one look that he was not. He did not have the trim, boat-shaped body that swimmers have, and then, his feet were not webbed. The Gander noticed that they were remarkably homely feet. He thought he would remember this and speak of it to the Geese some time when they were praising the Peacock's train.

The Drake was the first to speak politely to the Peacock. "We are glad to meet you, sir," he said. "Will you be with us long?"

"Thank you," answered the Peacock. "I have come to stay."

"We hope you will like it here. I'm sorry to see you do not swim. We should be very glad of your company if you did. You will excuse us if we go on to the brook. We are late already." He and all of his family waddled away to the water. "A fine-looking fellow," said he heartily. "Even my cousins, the Mallard Ducks, have not such a beautiful sheen on their neck feathers." The Drake was a kind, warm-hearted fellow, and it never troubled him to know that other people were handsomer than he.

The Geese were eager to reach the water, too, but they could not leave without asking one question. First they told the Gander to ask it, but he replied that if they wanted to know, they should ask it for themselves. Then they hung back and said to each other, "You ask him. I can't." At last the Gray Goose stepped forward, saying, "Excuse us, sir. You said that you were to stay with us, and we wish to know if you work for your living."

"I work!" cried he. "Paon! Never. The farmer invited me here to be beautiful, that is all."

"We are so glad," cackled the Geese, and the Gander joined with them. "So many of the people here work. They are very good, but not at all genteel, you understand."

"And don't you do anything?" asked the Peacock. "I thought Geese grew feathers for beds and pillows. It seems to me you look rather ragged. Haven't you been plucked?"

This was very embarrassing to the Geese. "Why, yes," they said, "we do let the farmer's wife have some feathers once in a while, when the weather is warm, but that is very different from really working, you know."

"Perhaps," said the Peacock. "If they want any of my feathers, they can wait until I moult. Then you will see how much they think of me, for whenever they find one of my train feathers (not tail, if you please; every bird has a tail, but I have a train) they carry it carefully into the house to be made into a duster for the parlor. I never give away any but my cast-off plumage. I am so very, very beautiful that I do not have to work."

This impressed the Geese very much. "We are glad to know you. Quite honored, we assure you!"

The Peacock bowed his crested head, and they bowed their uncrested and very silly ones, and then they went to the river. The Peacock thought them most agreeable, because they admired him, and they thought him the best sort of acquaintance, because he didn't work. It was all very foolish, but there are always foolish people in the world, you know, and it is much better to be amused by it and a little sorry for them, than for us to lose our tempers and become cross about it. That was the way the Shanghais, Black Spanish, Dorking, and Bantam fowls felt. They were polite enough to the newcomer, but they did not run after him. The Chickens used to laugh when the Peacock uttered his cry of "Paon! Paon!" His voice was harsh and disagreeable, and it did seem so funny to hear such dreadful sounds coming from such a lovely throat.

The Black Spanish Cock reproved the Chickens sharply for this. "It is very rude," said he, "to laugh at people for things they cannot help. How would you like to have a Lamb follow you around and bleat, 'Look at that Chicken! He has only two legs! Hello, little two-legs; how can you walk?' It is just as bad for you to laugh at his harsh voice, because he cannot help it. If he should say foolish and silly things, you might laugh, because he could help that if he tried. Don't ever again let me hear you laughing when he is just saying 'Paon.'"

The Chickens minded the Black Spanish Cock, for they knew he was right and that he did not do rude things himself. They remembered everything he said, too.

One day the Peacock was standing on the fence alone. He did this most of the time. He usually stood with his back to the farmyard, so that people who passed could see his train but not his

feet. A party of young fowls of all families came along. Their mothers had let them go off by themselves, and they stopped to look at the Peacock.

"I do think you have the most beautiful tail, sir," said a Duckling, giving her own little pointed one a sideways shake as she spoke.

"Please call it my train," said the Peacock. "It is beautiful and I am very proud of it. Not every fowl can grow such a train as that."

"Oh, dear, no!" giggled a jolly little Bantam Chicken. "I'd grow one in a minute if I could."

This made all the other young fowls laugh, for they thought how funny the little brown Bantam would look dragging around a great mass of feathers like that.

The Peacock did not even smile. He never understood a joke anyway. He was always so busy thinking about himself that he couldn't see the point. Now he cleared his throat and spoke to the Bantam Chicken.

"I hope you don't think that I grew my train in a minute," said he. "It took me a long, long time, although I kept all the feathers going at once."

"Look at his crest!" exclaimed one young Turkey in his piping voice.

The Peacock turned his head so that they could see it more plainly. "That is a crest to be proud of," he said. "I have never seen a finer one myself. Have you noticed the beauty of my neck?"

"Charming!" "Wonderful!" "Beautiful!" exclaimed the young fowls. Just then one of the spoiled Dove children flew down from the barn roof and sat beside the Peacock.

"What homely feet you have!" this Squab exclaimed. "Are you not dreadfully ashamed of them?"

The young fowls thought this rude. Not one of them would have said it. The Peacock became very angry. "I know my feet are not so handsome as they might be," he said, "but that is no reason why I should be ashamed of them. I couldn't help having that kind of feet. They run in my family. I don't feel ashamed of things I can't help."

The young fowls felt so uncomfortable after this that they walked away, and the Squab flew back to the Dove-cote. For a time nobody spoke. Then a Gosling, who had heard her mother talk about the Peacock, said, "I should think he would be proud of his train, and his crest, and his neck, and—and everything!"

"Everything except his feet," giggled the Bantam Chicken, "and you know he couldn't help having them."

"I wonder if he could help having his train, and his crest, and his neck, and—and everything?" said a young Turkey.

They all stopped where they were. "We never thought of that!" they cried. "We never thought of that!"

"Let's go ask the Blind Horse," said a Duckling. "He is a good friend of mine, and he knows almost everything."

They stalked and waddled over to the Blind Horse, and the Duckling told him what was puzzling them. The Blind Horse laughed very heartily. "So the Peacock is proud of having grown such a fine train and crest, but he isn't ashamed of his homely feet, because he couldn't help having those! There is no reason for either pride or shame with the Peacock. He has just such a body as was given him, and he couldn't make one feather grow differently if he tried."

"I don't see what anybody can be proud of, then," said a Gosling sadly; for, you see, she wanted to be proud of everything.

"Be proud of what you have done yourself," said the Blind Horse gently. "Be proud of keeping clean, or of telling the truth, or of speaking pleasantly when things go wrong. There are plenty of chances to be proud in a good way, if one must be proud."

Lesson 13: 'The Young Robin Who Was Afraid to Fly' from *Among the Meadow People* by Clara Dillingham Pierson

During the days when the four beautiful green-blue eggs lay in the nest, Mrs. Robin stayed quite closely at home. She said it was a very good place, for she could keep her eggs warm and still see all that was happening. The rail-end on which they had built was on the meadow side of the fence, over the tallest grasses and the graceful stalks of golden-rod. Here the Garter Snake drew his shining body through the tangled green, and here the Tree Frog often came for a quiet nap.

Just outside the fence the milkweeds grew, with every broad, pale green leaf slanting upward in their spring style. Here the Milkweed Caterpillars fed, and here, too, when the great balls of tiny dull pink blossoms dangled from the stalks, the Milkweed Butterflies hung all day long. All the teams from the farm-house passed along the quiet, grass-grown road, and those which were going to the farm as well. When Mrs. Robin saw a team coming, she always settled herself more deeply into her nest, so that not one of her brick-red breast feathers showed. Then she sat very still, only turning her head enough to watch the team as it came near, passed, and went out of sight down the road. Sometimes she did not even have to turn her head, for if she happened to be facing the road, she could with one eye watch the team come near, and with the other watch it go away. No bird, you know, ever has to look at anything with both eyes at once.

After the young Robins had outgrown their shells and broken and thrown them off, they were naked and red and blind. They lay in a heap in the bottom of the nest, and became so tangled that

nobody but a bird could tell which was which. If they heard their father or their mother flying toward them, they would stretch up their necks and open their mouths. Then each would have some food poked down his throat, and would lie still until another mouthful was brought to him.

When they got their eyes open and began to grow more down, they were good little Robins and did exactly what they were told. It was easy to be good then, for they were not strong enough to want to go elsewhere, and they had all they wanted to eat. At night their mother sat in the nest and covered them with her soft feathers. When it rained she also did this. She was a kind and very hard-working mother. Mr. Robin worked quite as hard as she, and was exceedingly proud of his family.

But when their feathers began to grow, and each young Robin's sharp quills pricked his brothers and sisters if they pushed against him, then it was not so easy to be good. Four growing children in one little round bed sometimes found themselves rather crowded. One night Mrs. Robin said to her husband: "I am all tired out. I work as long as daylight lasts getting food for those children, and I cannot be here enough to teach them anything."

"Then they must learn to work for themselves," said Mr. Robin decidedly. "They are surely old enough."

"Why, they are just babies!" exclaimed his wife. "They have hardly any tails yet."

"They don't need tails to eat with," said he, "and they may as well begin now. I will not have you get so tired for this one brood."

Mrs. Robin said nothing more. Indeed, there was nothing more to be said, for she knew perfectly well that her children would not eat with their tails if they had them. She loved her babies so that she almost disliked to see them grow up, yet she knew it was right for them to leave the nest. They were so large that they spread out over the edges of it already, and they must be taught to take care of themselves before it was time for her to rear her second brood.

The next morning all four children were made to hop out on to the rail. Their legs were not very strong and their toes sprawled weakly around. Sometimes they lurched and almost fell. Before leaving the nest they had felt big and very important; now they suddenly felt small and young and helpless. Once in a while one of them would hop feebly along the rail for a few steps. Then he would chirp in a frightened way, let his head settle down over his speckled breast, slide his eyelids over his eyes, and wait for more food to be brought to him.

Whenever a team went by, the oldest child shut his eyes. He thought they couldn't see him if he did that. The other children kept theirs open and watched to see what happened. Their father and mother had told them to watch, but the timid young Robin always shut his eyes in spite of that.

"We shall have trouble with him," said Mrs. Robin, "but he must be made to do as he is told, even if he is afraid." She shut her bill very tightly as she spoke, and Mr. Robin knew that he could safely trust the bringing-up of his timid son to her.

Mrs. Robin talked and talked to him, and still he shut his eyes every time that he was frightened. "I can't keep them open," he would say, "because when I am frightened I am always afraid, and I can't be brave when I am afraid."

"That is just when you must be brave," said his mother. "There is no use in being brave when there is nothing to fear, and it is a great deal braver to be brave when you are frightened than to be brave when you are not." You can see that she was a very wise Robin and a good mother. It would have been dreadful for her to let him grow up a coward.

At last the time came when the young birds were to fly to the ground and hop across the road. Both their father and their mother were there to show them how. "You must let go of the rail," they said. "You will never fly in the world unless you let go of the rail."

Three of the children fluttered and lurched and flew down. The timid young Robin would not try it. His father ordered and his mother coaxed, yet he only clung more closely to his rail and said, "I can't! I'm afraid!"

At last his mother said: "Very well. You shall stay there as long as you wish, but we cannot stay with you."

Then she chirped to her husband, and they and the three brave children went across the road, talking as they went. "Careful!" she would say. "Now another hop! That was fine! Now another!" And the father fluttered around and said: "Good! Good! You'll be grown-up before you know it." When they were across, the parents hunted food and fed their three brave children, tucking the mouthfuls far into their wide-open bills.

The timid little Robin on the fence felt very, very lonely. He was hungry, too. Whenever he saw his mother pick up a mouthful of food, he chirped loudly: "Me! Me! Me!" for he wanted her to bring it to him. She paid no attention to him for a long time. Then she called: "Do you think you can fly? Do you think you can fly? Do you think?"

The timid little Robin hopped a few steps and chirped but never lifted a wing. Then his mother gave each of the other children a big mouthful.

The Robin on the fence huddled down into a miserable little bunch, and thought: "They don't care whether I ever have anything to eat. No, they don't!" Then he heard a rush of wings, and his mother stood before him with a bunch in her bill for him. He hopped toward her and she ran away. Then he sat down and cried. She hopped back and looked lovingly at him, but couldn't

speak because her bill was so full. Across the road the Robin father stayed with his brave children and called out, "Earn it, my son, earn it!"

The young Robin stretched out his neck and opened his bill—but his mother flew to the ground. He was so hungry—so very, very hungry,—that for a minute he quite forgot to be afraid, and he leaned toward her and toppled over. He fluttered his wings without thinking, and the first he knew he had flown to the ground. He was hardly there before his mother was feeding him and his father was singing: "Do you know what you did? Do you know what you did? Do you know?"

Before his tail was grown the timid Robin had become as brave as any of the children, for, you know, after you begin to be brave you always want to go on. But the Garter Snake says that Mrs. Robin is the bravest of the family.

Lesson 14: 'The Story that the Swallow Didn't Tell' from *Among the Farmyard People* by Clara Dillingham Pierson

"Listen!" said the Nigh Ox, "don't you hear some friends coming?"

The Off Ox raised his head from the grass and stopped to brush away a Fly, for you never could hurry either of the brothers. "I don't hear any footfalls," said he.

"You should listen for wings, not feet," said the Nigh Ox, "and for voices, too."

Even as he spoke there floated down from the clear air overhead a soft "tittle-ittle-ittle-ee," as though some bird were laughing for happiness. There was not a cloud in the sky, and the meadow was covered with thousands and thousands of green grass blades, each so small and tender, and yet together making a most beautiful carpet for the feet of the farmyard people, and offering them sweet and juicy food after their winter fare of hay and grain. Truly it was a day to make one laugh aloud for joy. The alder tassels fluttered and danced in the spring breeze, while the smallest and shyest of the willow pussies crept from their little brown houses on the branches to grow in the sunshine.

"Tittle-ittle-ittle-ee! Tittle-ittle-ittle-ee!" And this time it was louder and clearer than before.

"The Swallows!" cried the Oxen to each other. Then they straightened their strong necks and bellowed to the Horses, who were drawing the plow in the field beyond, "The Swallows are coming!"

As soon as the Horses reached the end of the furrow and could rest a minute, they tossed their heads and whinnied with delight. Then they looked around at the farmer, and wished that he knew enough of the farmyard language to understand what they wanted to tell him. They knew he would be glad to hear of their friends' return, for had they not seen him pick up a young Swallow one day and put him in a safer place?

"Tittle-ittle-ittle-ee!" and there was a sudden darkening of the sky above their heads, a whirr of many wings, a chattering and laughing of soft voices, and the Swallows had come. Perched on the ridge-pole of the big barn, they rested and visited and heard all the news.

The Doves were there, walking up and down the sloping sides of the roof and cooing to each other about the simple things of everyday life. You know the Doves stay home all winter, and so it makes a great change when their neighbors, the Swallows, return. They are firm friends in spite of their very different ways of living. There was never a Dove who would be a Swallow if he could, yet the plump, quiet, gray and white Doves dearly love the dashing Swallows, and happy is the Squab who can get a Swallow to tell him stories of the great world.

"Isn't it good to be home, home, home!" sang one Swallow. "I never set my claws on another ridge-pole as comfortable as this."

"I'm going to look at my old nest," said a young Swallow, as she suddenly flew down to the eaves.

"I think I'll go, too," said another young Swallow, springing away from his perch. He was a handsome fellow, with a glistening dark blue head and back, a long forked tail which showed a white stripe on the under side, a rich buff vest, and a deep blue collar, all of the finest feathers. He loved the young Swallow whom he was following, and he wanted to tell her so.

"There is the nest where I was hatched," she said. "Would you think I was ever crowded in there with five brothers and sisters? It was a comfortable nest, too, before the winter winds and snow wore it away. I wonder how it would seem to be a fledgling again?" She snuggled down in the old nest until he could see only her forked tail and her dainty head over the edge. Her vest was quite hidden, and the only light feathers that showed were the reddish-buff ones on throat and face; these were not so bright as his, but still she was beautiful to him. He loved every feather on her body.

"I don't want you to be a fledgling again," he cried. "I want you to help me make a home under the eaves, a lovely little nest of mud and straw, where you can rest as you are now doing, while I bring food to you. Will you?"

"Yes," she cried. "Tittle-ittle-ittle-ee! Oh, tittle-ittle-ittle-ee!" And she flew far up into the blue sky, while he followed her, twittering and singing.

"Where are those young people going?" said an older Swallow. "I should think they had flown far enough for today without circling around for the fun of it."

"Don't you remember the days when you were young?" said the Swallow next to him.

"When I was young?" he answered. "My dear, I am young now. I shall always be young in the springtime. I shall never be old except when I am moulting."

Just then a family of Doves came pattering over the roof, swaying their heads at every step. "We are so glad to see you back," said the father. "We had a long, cold winter, and we thought often of you."

"A very cold winter," cooed his plump little wife.

"Tell me a story," said a young Dove, their son.

"Hush, hush," said the Father Dove. "This is our son," he added, "and this is his sister. We think them quite a pair. Our last brood, you know."

"Tell us a story," said the young Dove again.

"Hush, dear. You mustn't tease the Swallow," said his mother. "They are so fond of stories," she cooed, "and they have heard that your family are great travellers."

"But I want him to tell us a story," said the young Dove. "I think he might."

This made the Swallow feel very uncomfortable, for he could see that the children had been badly brought up, and he did not want to tell a story just then.

"Perhaps you would like to hear about our journey south," said he. "Last fall, when the maples began to show red and yellow leaves among the green, we felt like flying away. It was quite warm weather, and the forest birds were still here, but when we feel like flying south we always begin to get ready."

"I never feel like flying south," said the young Dove. "I don't see why you should."

"That is because I am a Swallow and you are a farmyard Dove. We talked about it to each other, and one day we were ready to start. We all had on our new feathers and felt strong and well. We started out together, but the young birds and their mothers could not keep up with the rest, so we went on ahead."

"Ahead of whom?" said the young Dove, who had been preening his feathers when he should have been listening.

"Ahead of the mothers and their fledglings. We flew over farms where there were Doves like you; over rivers where the Wild Ducks were feeding by the shore; and over towns where crowds of boys and girls were going into large buildings, while on top of these buildings were large bells singing, 'Ding dong, ding dong, ding dong.'"

"I don't think that was a very pretty song," said the young Dove.

"Hush," said his mother, "you mustn't interrupt the Swallow."

"And at last we came to a great lake," said the Swallow. "It was so great that when we had flown over it for a little while we could not see land at all, and our eyes would not tell us which way to go. We just went on as birds must in such places, flying as we felt we ought, and not stopping to ask why or to wonder if we were right. Of course we Swallows never stop to eat, for we catch our food as we fly, but we did sometimes stop to rest. Just after we had crossed this great lake we alighted. It was then that a very queer thing happened, and this is really the story that I started to tell."

"Oh!" said the young Dove and his sister. "How very exciting. But wait just a minute while we peep over the edge of the roof and see what the farmer is doing." And before anybody could say a word they had pattered away to look.

The birds who were there say that the Swallow seemed quite disgusted, and surely nobody could blame him if he did.

"You must excuse them," cooed their mother. "They are really hardly more than Squabs yet, and I can't bear to speak severely to them. I'm sure they didn't mean to be rude."

"Certainly, certainly," said the Swallow. "I will excuse them and you must excuse me. I wish to see a few of my old friends before the sun goes down. Good afternoon!" And he darted away.

The young Doves came pattering back, swaying their heads as they walked. "Why, where is the Swallow?" they cried. "What made him go away? Right at the best part of the story, too. We don't see why folks are so disagreeable. People never are as nice to us as they are to the other young Doves."

"Hush," said their mother. "You mustn't talk in that way. Fly off for something to eat, and never mind about the rest of the story."

When they were gone, she said to her husband, "I wonder if they did hurt the Swallow's feelings? But then, they are so young, hardly more than Squabs."

She forgot that even Squabs should be thoughtful of others, and that no Dove ever amounts to anything unless he begins in the right way as a Squab.

Lesson 15: 'Why Mr. Great Horned Owl Hatched the Eggs' from *Among the Forest People* by Clara Dillingham Pierson

If the Rattlesnake is the king of the forest in the daytime, the Great Horned Owl is the king at night. Indeed, he is much the more powerful of the two, for he is king of air and earth alike and

can go wherever he wishes, while the snake can only rule over those who live near the ground or who are so careless as to come to him there.

There was but one pair of Great Horned Owls in the forest, and they lived in the deepest shade, having their great clumsy nest in the hollow of a tall tree. You might have walked past it a hundred times and never have guessed that any Owls lived there, if you did not notice the round pellets of bone and hair on the grass. They are such hungry fellows that they swallow their food with the bones in it. Then their tough little stomachs go to work, rolling all the pieces of bone and hair into balls and sending them back to be cast out of the Owls' mouths to the ground.

The Great Horned Owl was a very large bird. His whole body was covered with brown, dull yellow, and white feathers. Even his feet and legs were covered, and all that you could see besides were his black claws and his black hooked bill. Yes, at night you could see his eyes, too, and they were wonderful great eyes that could see in the dark, but they were shut in the daytime when he was resting. His wife, who was the queen of the forest at night, looked exactly like him, only she was larger than he. And that is the way among Owls,—the wife is always larger than her husband.

Every night when the sun had gone down, the Great Horned Owl and his wife would come out of their hollow tree and sit blinking on a branch near by, waiting until it got dark enough for them to see quite plainly. As the light faded, the little black spots in their eyes would grow bigger and bigger, and then off they would go on their great soft, noiseless wings, hunting in the grass and among the branches for the supper which they called breakfast.

Mrs. Owl could not be gone very long at a time, for there were two large round white eggs in the nest which must not get cold. Her husband was on the wing most of the night, and he often flew home with some tender morsel for her. He was really a kind-hearted fellow, although you could never have made the small birds think so. Sometimes his wife would sigh and tell how tired she was of sitting still, and how glad she would be when the eggs were hatched and she could go more with him. When she began to speak of that, the Great Horned Owl would get ready for another flight and go off saying: "It is too bad. I am so sorry for you. But then, one would never have young Owlets if one didn't stick to the nest." He was always proud of his children, and he thought himself a very good husband. Perhaps he was; still he had never taken his place on the nest while his wife went hunting.

One night, after they had both been flying through forest and over field, he came back to the hollow tree to rest. He expected to find Mrs. Owl, for she had started home before he did. She was not there and he grew quite impatient. "I should like to know what keeps her so long," he said, fretfully. After a while he looked into the nest and saw the two big white eggs. "It is a shame," he said. "Our beautiful eggs will be chilled, and it will be all her fault if we have no Owlets this summer."

You see, even then he did not seem to think that he could do anything to keep them warm. But the next time he looked in, he put one feathered foot on the round eggs and was surprised to find how cool they were.

It fairly made his head feathers stand on end to think of it, and he was so frightened that he forgot to be cross, and stepped right in and covered them with his own breast. What if they had already been left too long, and the Owlets within would never hatch? Would Mrs. Owl ever forgive him for being so stupid? He began to wonder if any of the other fellows would see him. He thought it so absurd for the king of the forest to be hatching out a couple of eggs, instead of swooping around in the dark and frightening the smaller birds.

The night seemed so long, too. It had always been short enough before, and he had often disliked to have daylight come, for then he had to go to bed. He was very much upset, and it is no wonder that when he heard a doleful wail from a neighboring tree, and knew that his cousin, the Screech Owl, was near, he raised his head and called loudly, "Hoo-hoo-oooo! Waugh-hoo!"

The Screech Owl heard him and flew at once to a branch beside the nest hollow. He was a jolly little fellow in spite of his doleful call, and before he could talk at all he had to bend his body, look behind him, nod his head, and shake himself, as Screech Owls always do when they alight. Then he looked into the tree and saw his big cousin, the Great Horned Owl, the night king of the forest, sitting on the eggs and looking very, very grumpy. How he did laugh! "What is the matter?" said he. "Didn't you like your wife's way of brooding over the eggs? Or did she get tired of staying at home and make you help tend the nest?"

"Matter enough," grumbled the Great Horned Owl. "We went hunting together at twilight and she hasn't come home yet. I didn't get into the nest until I had to, but it was growing very cold and I wouldn't miss having our eggs hatch for anything. Ugh-whoo! How my legs do ache!"

"Well," said his cousin, "you are having a hard time. Are you hungry?"

The Great Horned Owl said that he was, so the Screech Owl went hunting and brought him food. "I will look in every night," he said, "and bring you a lunch. I'm afraid something has happened to your wife and that she will not be back."

As he flew away he called out, "It is too bad. I am very sorry for you. But then, I suppose you would never have the Owlets if you didn't stick to the nest."

This last remark made the Great Horned Owl quite angry. "Much he knows about it," he said. "I guess if he had ever tried it he would be a little more sorry for me." And then he began to think, "Who have I heard say those very words before? Who? Who? Who?"

All at once the Great Horned Owl remembered how many times he had said just that to his patient wife, and he began to feel very uncomfortable. His ears tingled and he felt a queer hot

feeling under his face feathers. Perhaps he hadn't been acting very well after all! He knew that even when he told her he was sorry, he had been thinking she made a great fuss. Well, if she would only come back now, that should all be changed, and he shifted his weight and wriggled around into a more comfortable position.

Now, if this were just a story, one could say that Mrs. Owl came back and that they were all happy together; but the truth is she never did come, and nobody ever knew what became of her. So her husband, the night king of the forest, had to keep the eggs warm and rear his own Owlets. You can imagine how glad he was on the night when he first heard them tapping on the inside of their shells, for then he knew that he would soon be free to hunt.

A finer pair of children were never hatched, and their father thought them far ahead of all his other broods. "If only Mrs. Owl were here to see them, how lovely it would be!" he said. Yet if she had been there he would never have had the pleasure of hearing their first faint cheeps, and of covering them with his soft breast feathers as he did each day. He forgot now all the weary time when he sat with aching legs, wishing that his cousin would happen along with something to eat. For that is always the way,—when we work for those we love, the weariness is soon forgotten and only happiness remains.

It is said that the Screech Owl was more thoughtful of his wife after his cousin had to hatch the eggs, and it is too bad that some of the other forest people could not have learned the same lesson; but the Great Horned Owl never told, and the Screech Owl kept his secret, and to this day there are many people in the forest who know nothing whatever about it.

Lesson 16: 'The Chicken Who Wouldn't Eat Gravel' from *Among the Farmyard People* by Clara Dillingham Pierson

It was some time after the Dorking Hen had come off the nest with her little brood, that the mother of the Shanghai Chickens began to have so much trouble.

She had twelve as fine Chickens as you could find anywhere: tall, wide-awake youngsters with long and shapely legs and thick down and feathers. She was very proud of them, as any Hen mother might well be, and often said to the Shanghai Cock, "Did you ever see so fine a family? Look at those twenty-four legs, all so long and straight, and not a feather on one of them." His eyes would shine and he would stretch his neck with pride, but all he ever said to her was, "They will do very well if they only behave as well as they look." He did not believe in praising children to their faces, and he thought their mother spoiled them.

Perhaps he was right, for the little Shanghais soon found out that they were good-looking, and they wanted everybody in the poultry-yard to notice their legs. It was very foolish, of course, to be proud of such things, but when the other fowls said, "We should think you would be cold without feathers on your legs," they answered, "Oh, we are Shanghais, and our family never wear feathers there!" And that was true, just as it is true that the Dorkings have extra toes, and that the Black Spanish fowls have white ears.

The Shanghai mother was now roaming the fields with her brood, and there was rich picking in the wheat-stubble. All the fowls were out of the yard now, and would not be shut up until cold weather. Early in the morning they would start out in parties of from six to a dozen, with a Cock at the head of each. He chose the way in which they should go; he watched the sky for Hawks, and if he saw one, gave a warning cry that made the Hens hurry to him. The Cocks are the lords of the poultry-yard and say how things shall be there; but when you see them leading the way in the fields,—ah, then you know why all the fowls obey them.

The farmyard people still tell of the day when a Hawk swooped down on one of the young Dorkings and would have carried him off if the Black Spanish Cock had not jumped out, and pecked him and struck at him with his spurs, and fought, until the Hawk was glad to hurry away. The Cocks are not only brave—they are polite, too, and when they find food they will not eat it until they have called the Hens to come and share with them.

You can imagine what good times the Chickens had in the stubble-fields. They were so old now that their down was all covered with feathers, and some of them wondered if they couldn't feel their spurs growing. Still, that was all nonsense, as a Bantam told them, because spurs do not start until the fowl is a year old. They had long been too large to cuddle under their mother's feathers at night, and had taken their first lessons in roosting before they went to the stubble-fields. They had learned to break up their own food, too, and that was a great help to their mother. Fowls, you know, have no teeth, and no matter how big a mouthful one takes he has to swallow it whole. The only way they can help themselves is to break the pieces apart with their feet or peck them apart with their bills before eating them.

The yellow grains of wheat that lay everywhere in the field were fine food, and should have made the little Shanghais as fat as the Grouse who sometimes stole out from the edge of the forest. Eleven of the brood were quite plump, but one Chicken was still thin and lank. His mother was very much worried about him and could not think what was the matter. She spoke of it to the Black Spanish Hen one day, but the Black Spanish Hen had never raised a brood, and said she really didn't know any more about the care of Chickens than if she were a Dove. Then the anxious mother went to the Shanghai Cock about it. He listened to all she said and looked very knowing.

"I don't think there is anything the matter," said he. "The Chick is growing fast, that is all. I remember how it was with me before I got my long tail-feathers. I was very thin, yet see what a fine-looking fellow I am now." He was really a sight worth seeing as he towered above the other fowls, flapping his strong wings in the sunshine and crowing. His feathers were beautiful, and the bright red of his comb and wattles showed that he was well. "Ah," thought the Shanghai Hen, "if my Chicken could only become such a fine-looking Cock!" And she didn't worry any more all day.

That night she and her brood roosted in the old apple tree in the corner of the orchard nearest the poultry-yard. She flew up with the older fowls and fluttered and lurched and squawked and

pushed on first one branch and then another, while the Chickens were walking up a slanting board that the farmer had placed against one of the lower branches. It always takes fowls a long time to settle themselves for the night. They change places and push each other, and sometimes one sleepy Hen leans over too far and falls to the ground, and then has to begin all over again.

At first the Chickens had feared that they would tumble off as soon as they were asleep, but they soon learned that their feet and the feet of all other birds are made in such a way that they hang on tightly even during sleep. The weight of the bird's body above hooks the toes around the branch, and there they stay until the bird wishes to unhook them.

After a long time, all the fowls were asleep with their heads under their wings. The Sheep, Pigs, and Cows were dreaming, and even the Horses were quiet in their stalls. There was not a light to be seen in the big white farmhouse, when the Dorking Cock crowed in his sleep. That awakened him and all the other fowls as well. Then the other Cocks crowed because he did and he crowed again because they did, and they crowed again because he had crowed again, and the Chickens asked if it were not almost morning, and their mothers told them not to talk but to go to sleep at once and make morning come more quickly.

All of this took quite a while, and the Shanghai mother could not sleep again. She could see her brood quite plainly in the moonlight, and one of them was not plump like the rest. She roosted there and worried about him until suddenly (she could never tell how it happened) she seemed to know just what was the matter.

She flew down beside him and poked him under his wing. "Wake up," she said. "I want to ask you something. Do you eat gravel?"

"No," he answered sleepily, "I don't like gravel."

"Didn't I bring you up to eat it?" she asked sternly.

"Yes, but I don't like it, and now that I am old enough to roost in a tree I don't mean to eat any more. So!"

Just imagine a Chicken talking to his mother in that way! His mother, who had laid the egg from which he was hatched; who had sat upon the nest through all the weary days and nights while he was growing inside his shell; who had cuddled him under her soft feathers; who had taught him all he knew, and would have fought any hawk to save him! She had begun to love him before he even knew that he was, and had lived for him and his brother and sisters ever since.

The mother said nothing more to him then. She spent the rest of the night watching the stars and the moon and the first rosy flush of the eastern sky which told that morning was near. Then she said to her naughty Chicken, as he began to stir and cheep, "I shall never try to make you eat gravel if you think you are too big to mind your mother. I shall just tell you this, that you will

never be strong unless you do. I have not told you why, because you never asked, and I supposed you would do as you ought without knowing the reason. You have no teeth, and you cannot chew the grain you eat before it is swallowed. You have a strong stomach, and if you eat gravel this stomach or gizzard will rub and press the tiny stones against the grain until it is well broken up and ready to make into fat and strength for your body."

"But it doesn't taste good," he replied, "and I'd rather eat other things. I don't believe it matters, and I won't eat it anyway."

The Shanghai Hen flew down from the tree and clucked to her Chickens. She would not waste time talking to him. Whenever he came near her that day, he ate everything but gravel. He had his own way and yet he was not happy. For some reason, nothing seemed to be any fun. Even lying under the bushes on the sunshiny side was not comfortable, and when he wallowed in the dust with his brothers and sisters he didn't enjoy that.

Things went on this way for a good many days, and at last he saw that his shadow was only a small black spot on the ground, while his brothers and sisters had big fat shadows. He heard the Black Spanish Cock call him a Bantam, and the Shanghai Cock say that he wouldn't live until his spurs grew. One of the Dorking Chickens was talking to her sister, and he heard her say, "Imagine him at the head of a flock!" Then she laughed, a mean, cackling little laugh.

That night, when the rest were asleep in the apple tree, he walked softly down the slanting board and ate gravel. The next morning he felt better than he had in a long time, so when there was nobody around he ate some more. He didn't want anyone else to know that he had found out his mistake. Every morning he looked at his shadow, and it grew fatter and fatter. Still he was not happy, and he knew it was because he had not told his patient old mother. He wanted to tell her, too. One day he heard her telling his brother to eat more gravel, and the brother said he didn't like the taste of it. That made him speak at last.

"Suppose you don't like it, you can eat it. Queer world it would be if we didn't have to do unpleasant things. I've just made up my mind that the people who won't do hard things, when they ought to, have the hardest times in the end. Wish I'd minded my mother and eaten gravel when she told me to, and I'm not going to let you be as foolish as I was."

Just then he heard somebody say of him, "What a fine-looking fellow he is growing to be! I like him ever so much now."

It was the Dorking Chicken who had laughed at him. He ran after a Grasshopper, and she ran after the same Grasshopper, and they ran against each other and the Grasshopper got away, so of course they had to wander off together to find something to eat, and after that they became great friends.

The Shanghai Hen looked lovingly after him and raised one foot in the air. "Now," she said, "I am perfectly happy."

Lesson 17: 'The Duckling Who Didn't Know What to Do' from *Among the Farmyard People* by Clara Dillingham Pierson

"Quack! Quack!" called the Duck who had been sitting on her nest so long. "My first egg is cracked, and I can see the broad yellow bill of my eldest child. Ah! Now I can see his downy white head." The Drake heard her and quacked the news to every one around, and flapped his wings, and preened his feathers, for was not this the first Duckling ever hatched on the farm?

The Drake had not been there long himself. It was only a few days before the Duck began sitting that she and her five sisters had come with him to this place. It had not taken them long to become acquainted with the other farmyard people, and all had been kind to them. The Geese had rather put on airs, at first, because they were bigger and had longer legs, but the Ducks and Drake were too wise to notice this in any way, and before long the Geese were as friendly as possible. They would have shown the Ducks the way to the water if it had been necessary, but it was not, for Ducks always know without being told just where to find it. They know, and they do not know why they know. It is one of the things that are.

Now that the first Duckling had chipped the shell, everybody wanted to see him, and there was soon a crowd of fowls around the nest watching him free himself from it. The Drake stood by, as proud as a Peacock. "I think he looks much like his mother," said he.

"Yes, yes," cackled all the Hens. "The same broad yellow bill, the same short yellow legs, and the same webbed feet."

The mother Duck smiled. "He looks more like me now than he will by and by," she said, "for when his feathers grow and cover the down, he will have a stiff little one curled up on his back like the Drake's. And really, except for the curled feather, his father and I look very much alike."

"That is so," said the Black Spanish Cock. "You do look alike; the same white feathers, the same broad breast, the same strong wings, the same pointed tail, the same long neck, the same sweet expression around the bill!" That was just like the Black Spanish Cock. He always said something pleasant about people when he could, and it was much better than saying unpleasant things. Indeed, he was the most polite fowl in the poultry-yard, and the Black Spanish Hen thought his manners quite perfect.

Then the Duckling's five aunts pushed their way through the crowd to the nest under the edge of the strawstack. "Have you noticed what fine large feet he has?" said one of them. "That is like his mother's people. See what a strong web is between the three long toes on each foot! He will be a good swimmer. The one toe that points backward is small, to be sure, but he does not need that in swimming. That is only to make waddling easier."

"Yes, yes," "A fine web," and "Very large feet," cried the fowls around the nest, but most of them didn't care so much about the size of his feet as the Ducks did. Large feet are always useful, you know, yet nobody needs them so badly as Geese and Ducks. The Geese were off swimming, and so could not see the Duckling when first he came out of the shell.

"Tap-tap, tap-tap," sounded inside another shell, and they knew that there would soon be a second damp little Duckling beside the first. The visitors could not stay to see this one come out, and they went away for a time. The eldest Duckling had supposed that this was life, to have people around saying, "How bright he is!" "What fine legs!" or "He has a beautiful bill!" And now that they all walked away and his mother was looking after the Duckling who was just breaking her shell, he didn't like it—he didn't like it at all.

Still, it was much better so. If he had had no brothers and sisters, he would have been a lonely little fellow; besides, he would have had his own way nearly all the time, and that is likely to make any Duckling selfish. Then, too, if all the other fowls had petted him and given him the best of everything, he would have become vain. Truly, it was a good thing for him not to be the only child, and he soon learned to think so.

After there were two Ducklings, a third one came, and a fourth, and a fifth, and so on until, when the broken shells were cleared away and the mother had counted bills, she could call to the Drake and her sisters, "Nine Ducklings hatched, and there were only nine eggs in the nest."

"Then come to the brook," said the Drake, "and let the children have a bath. I have been swimming a great many times today, and they have not even set foot in water yet. Why, our eldest son was out of his shell before the Horses were harnessed this morning, and here it is nearly time for their supper."

"I couldn't help it," said the mother Duck. "I couldn't leave the nest to take him swimming until the rest were ready to go. I am doing the best I can."

"I didn't mean to find fault," said the Drake, "and I suppose you couldn't get away, but we know that Ducklings should be taught to bathe often, and there is nothing like beginning in time."

"I might have taken some of them to the brook," said one of the aunts. The mother straightened her neck and held her head very high, while she answered, "You? You are very kind, but what do you know about bringing up Ducklings?"

Now the aunt might have said, "I know just as much as you do," for it was the young mother's first brood, yet she kept still. She thought, "I may hatch Ducklings of my own some day, and then I suppose I shall want to care for them myself."

"Wait," said the Drake, as they reached the brook. "Let us wait and see what the children will do." The words were hardly out of his bill when—flutter—splash—splash!—there were nine yellow-white Ducklings floating on the brook and murmuring happily to each other as though they had never done anything else.

The Dorking Cock stood on the bank. "Who taught them to swim?" said he.

"Nobody," answered their mother proudly. "They knew without being told. That is the way a Duck takes to water." And she gave a dainty lurch and was among her brood.

"Well!" exclaimed the Dorking Cock. "I thought the little Dorkings were as bright as children could be, but they didn't know as much as that. I must tell them." He stalked off, talking under his breath.

"They know more than that," said the Drake. "Did you see how they ran ahead of us when we stopped to talk? They knew where to find water as soon as they were out of the shell. Still, the Cock might not have believed that if I had told him."

They had a good swim, and then all stood on the bank and dried themselves. This they did by squeezing the water out of their down with their bills. The Drake, the mother Duck, the five aunts, and the nine Ducklings all stood as tall and straight as they could, and turned and twisted their long necks, and flapped their wings, and squeezed their down, and murmured to each other. And their father didn't tell the little ones how, and their mother didn't tell them how, and their five aunts didn't tell them how, but they knew without being told.

The Ducklings grew fast, and made friends of all the farmyard people. Early every morning they went to the brook. They learned to follow the brook to the river, and here were wonderful things to be seen. There was plenty to eat, too, in the soft mud under the water, and it was easy enough to dive to it, or to reach down their long necks while only their pointed tails and part of their body could be seen above the water. Not that they ate the mud. They kept only the food that they found in it, and then let the mud slip out between the rough edges of their bills. They swam and ate all day, and slept all night, and were dutiful Ducklings who minded their mother, so it was not strange that they were plump and happy.

At last there came a morning when the eldest Duckling could not go to the brook with the others. A Weasel had bitten him in the night, and if it had not been for his mother and the Drake, would have carried him away. The rest had to go in swimming, and his lame leg would not let him waddle as far as the brook, or swim after he got there.

"I don't know what to do," he said to his mother. "I can't swim and I can't waddle far, and I've eaten so much already that I can't eat anything more for a long, long time."

"You might play with the little Shanghais," said his mother.

"They run around too much," he replied. "I can't keep up with them."
"Then why not lie near the corn crib and visit with the Mice?"

"Oh, they don't like the things that I like, and it isn't any fun."

"How would it suit you to watch the Peacock for a while?"

"I'm tired of watching the Peacock."

"Then," said the mother, "you must help somebody else. You are old enough to think of such things now, and you must remember this wise saying: 'When you don't know what to do, help somebody.'"

"Whom can I help?" said the lame Duckling. "People can all do things for themselves."

"There is the Blind Horse," answered his mother. "He is alone today, and I'm sure he would like somebody to visit him."

"Quack!" said the Duckling. "I will go to see him." He waddled slowly away, stopping now and then to rest, and shaking his little pointed tail from side to side as Ducks do. The Blind Horse was grazing in the pasture alone.

"I've come to see you, sir," said the Duckling. "Shall I be in your way?"

The Blind Horse looked much pleased. "I think from your voice that you must be one of the young Ducks," said he. "I shall be very glad to have you visit me, only you must be careful to keep away from my feet, for I can't see, and I might step on you."

"I'll be careful," said the Duckling. "I can't waddle much anyway this morning, because my leg hurts me so."

"Why, I'm sorry you are lame," said the Horse. "What is the matter?"

"A Weasel bit me in the night, sir. But it doesn't hurt so much as it did before I came to see you. Perhaps the pasture is a better place for lame legs than the farmyard." He didn't know that it was because he was trying to make somebody else happy that he felt so much better, yet that was the reason.

The Blind Horse and the Duckling became very fond of each other and had a fine time. The Horse told stories of his Colthood, and of the things he had seen in his travels before he became blind. And the Duckling told him what the other farmyard people were doing, and about the soft, fleecy clouds that drifted across the blue sky. When the mother Duck came to look for him, the little fellow was much surprised. "Didn't you go to the brook?" he asked.

"Yes," said his mother, with a smile. "We have been there all the morning. Don't you see how high the sun is?"

"Why-ee!" said the Duckling. "I didn't think I had been here long at all. We've been having the nicest time. And I'm coming again, am I not?" He asked this question of the Blind Horse.

"I wish you would come often," answered the Blind Horse. "You have given me a very pleasant morning. Goodbye!"

The mother Duck and her son waddled off together. "How is your leg?" said she.

"I forgot all about it until I began to walk," answered the Duckling. "Isn't that queer?"

"Not at all," said his mother. "It was because you were making somebody else happy. 'When you don't know what to do, help somebody.'"

Lesson 18: 'The Last Party of the Season' from *Among the Meadow People* by Clara Dillingham Pierson

Summer had been a joyful time in the meadow. It had been a busy time, too, and from morning till night the chirping and humming of the happy people there had mingled with the rustle of the leaves, and the soft "swish, swish," of the tall grass, as the wind passed over it.

True, there had been a few quarrels, and some unpleasant things to remember, but these little people were wise enough to throw away all the sad memories and keep only the glad ones. And now the summer was over. The leaves of the forest trees were turning from green to scarlet, orange, and brown. The beech and hickory nuts were only waiting for a friendly frost to open their outer shells, and loosen their stems, so that they could fall to the earth.

The wind was cold now, and the meadow people knew that the time had come to get ready for winter. One chilly Caterpillar said to another, "Boo-oo! How cold it is! I must find a place for my cocoon. Suppose we sleep side by side this winter, swinging on the same bush?"

And his friend replied: "We must hurry then, or we shall be too old and stiff to spin good ones."

The Garter Snake felt sleepy all the time, and declared that in a few days he would doze off until spring.

The Tree Frog had chosen his winter home already, and the Bees were making the most of their time in visiting the last fall flowers, and gathering every bit of honey they could find for their cold-weather stock.

The last eggs had been laid, and the food had been placed beside many of them for the babies that would hatch out in the spring. Nothing was left but to say "Goodbye," and fall asleep. So a message was sent around the meadow for all to come to a farewell party under the elm tree.

Everybody came, and all who could sing did so, and the Crickets and Mosquitoes made music for the rest to dance by.

The Tree Frog led off with a black and yellow Spider, the Garter Snake followed with a Potato Bug, and all the other crawling people joined in the dance on the grass, while over their heads the Butterflies and other light-winged ones fluttered to and fro with airy grace.

The Snail and the fat, old Cricket had meant to look on, and really did so, for a time, from a warm corner by the tree, but the Cricket couldn't stand it to not join in the fun. First, his eyes gleamed, his feelers waved, and his feet kept time to the music, and, when a frisky young Ant beckoned to him, he gave a great leap and danced with the rest, balancing, jumping, and circling around in a most surprising way.

When it grew dark, the Fireflies' lights shone like tiny stars, and the dancing went on until all were tired and ready to sing together the last song of the summer, for on the morrow they would go to rest. And this was their song:

The autumn leaves lying, so thick on the ground,
The summer Birds flying, the meadow around,
Say, "Goodbye."

The Seed Babies dropping, down out of our sight,
The Dragonflies stopping, a moment in flight
Say, "Goodbye."

The red Squirrels bearing, their nuts to the tree,
The wild Rabbits caring, for babies so wee,
Say, "Goodbye."

The sunbeams now showing, are hazy and pale,
The warm breezes blowing, have changed to a gale,
So, "Goodbye."

The season for working, is passing away.
Both playing and shirking, are ended today,
So, "Goodbye."

The Garter Snake creeping, so softly to rest,
The fuzzy Worms sleeping, within their warm nest,

Say, "Goodbye."

The Honey Bees crawling, around the full comb,
The tiny Ants calling, each one to the home,
Say, "Goodbye."

We've ended our singing, our dancing, and play,
And Nature's voice ringing, now tells us to say
Our "Goodbye."

Lesson 19: 'The Old Orchard Bully - The English or House Sparrow'
from *The Burgess Bird Book for Children*
by Thornton W. Burgess

Peter Rabbit's eyes twinkled when Jenny Wren said that she must look her old house over to see if it was fit to live in. "I can save you that trouble," said he.

"What do you mean?" Jenny's voice was very sharp.

"Only that our old house is already occupied," replied Peter. "Bully the English Sparrow has been living in it for the last two months. In fact, he already has a good-sized family there."

"What?" screamed Jenny and Mr. Wren together. Then without even saying goodbye to Peter, they flew in a great rage to see if he had told them the truth. Presently he heard them scolding as fast as their tongues could go, and this is very fast indeed.

"Much good that will do them," chuckled Peter. "They will have to find a new house this year. All the sharp tongues in the world couldn't budge Bully the English sparrow. My, my, my, my, just listen to that racket! I think I'll go over and see what is going on."

So Peter hopped to a place where he could get a good view of Jenny Wren's old home and still not be too far from the safety of the old stone wall. Jenny Wren's old home had been in a hole in one of the old apple trees. Looking over to it, Peter could see Mrs. Bully sitting in the little round doorway and quite filling it. She was shrieking excitedly. Hopping and flitting from twig to twig close by were Jenny and Mr. Wren, their tails pointing almost straight up to the sky, and scolding as fast as they could make their tongues go. Flying savagely at one and then at the other, and almost drowning their voices with his own harsh cries, was Bully himself. He was perhaps one fourth larger than Mr. Wren, although he looked half again as big. But for the fact that his new spring suit was very dirty, due to his fondness for taking dust baths and the fact that he cares nothing about his personal appearance and takes no care of himself, he would have been a fairly good-looking fellow. His back was more or less of an ashy color with black and chestnut stripes. His wings were brown with a white bar on each. His throat and breast were black, and below that he was of a dirty white. The sides of his throat were white and the back of his neck chestnut.

By ruffling up his feathers and raising his wings slightly as he hopped about, he had managed to make himself appear much bigger than he really was. He looked like a regular little fighting

savage. The noise had brought all the other birds in the Old Orchard to see what was going on, and every one of them was screaming and urging Jenny and Mr. Wren to stand up for their rights. Not one of them had a good word for Bully and his wife. It certainly was a disgraceful neighborhood squabble.

Bully the English Sparrow is a born fighter. He never is happier than when he is in the midst of a fight or a fuss of some kind. The fact that all his neighbors were against him didn't bother Bully in the least.

Jenny and Mr. Wren are no cowards, but the two together were no match for Bully. In fact, Bully did not hesitate to fly fiercely at any of the onlookers who came near enough, not even when they were twice his own size. They could have driven him from the Old Orchard had they set out to, but just by his boldness and appearance he made them afraid to try.

All the time Mrs. Bully sat in the little round doorway, encouraging him. She knew that as long as she sat there it would be impossible for either Jenny or Mr. Wren to get in. Truth to tell, she was enjoying it all, for she is as quarrelsome and as fond of fighting as is Bully himself.

"You're a sneak! You're a robber! That's my house, and the sooner you get out of it the better!" shrieked Jenny Wren, jerking her tail with every word as she hopped about just out of reach of Bully.

"It may have been your house once, but it is mine now, you little snip-of-nothing!" cried Bully, rushing at her like a little fury. "Just try to put us out if you dare! You didn't make this house in the first place, and you deserted it when you went south last fall. It's mine now, and there isn't anybody in the Old Orchard who can put us out."

Peter Rabbit nodded. "He's right there," muttered Peter. "I don't like him and never will, but it is true that he has a perfect right to that house. People who go off and leave things for half a year shouldn't expect to find them just as they left them. My, my, my what a dreadful noise! Why don't they all get together and drive Bully and Mrs. Bully out of the Old Orchard? If they don't I'm afraid he will drive them out. No one likes to live with such quarrelsome neighbors. They don't belong over in this country, anyway, and we would be a lot better off if they were not here. But I must say I do have to admire their spunk."

All the time Bully was darting savagely at this one and that one and having a thoroughly good time, which is more than could be said of anyone else, except Mrs. Bully.

"I'll teach you folks to know that I am in the Old Orchard to stay!" shrieked Bully. "If you don't like it, why don't you fight? I am not afraid of any of you or all of you together." This was boasting, plain boasting, but it was effective. He actually made the other birds believe it. Not one of them dared stand up to him and fight. They were content to call him a bully and all the bad names they could think of, but that did nothing to help Jenny and Mr. Wren recover their house. Calling another bad names never hurts him. Brave deeds and not brave words are what count.

How long that disgraceful squabble in the Old Orchard would have lasted had it not been for something which happened, no one knows. Right in the midst of it Dragonfly discovered Black

Pussy, the cat who lives in Farmer Brown's house, stealing up through the Old Orchard, her tail twitching and her yellow eyes glaring eagerly. She had heard that dreadful racket and suspected that in the midst of such excitement she might have a chance to catch one of the feathered folks. You can always trust Black Pussy to be on hand at a time like that.

No sooner was she discovered than everything else was forgotten. With Bully in the lead, and Jenny and Mr. Wren close behind him, all the birds turned their attention to Black Pussy. She was the enemy of all, and they straightway forgot their own quarrel. Only Mrs. Bully remained where she was, in the little round doorway of her house. She intended to take no chances, but she added her voice to the general racket. How those birds did shriek and scream! They darted down almost into the face of Black Pussy, and none went nearer than Bully the English Sparrow and Jenny Wren.

Now Black Pussy hates to be the center of so much attention. She knew that, now she had been discovered, there wasn't a chance in the world for her to catch one of those Old Orchard folks. So, with tail still twitching angrily, she turned and, with such dignity as she could, left the Old Orchard. Clear to the edge of it the birds followed, shrieking, screaming, calling her bad names, and threatening to do all sorts of dreadful things to her, quite as if they really could.

When finally she disappeared towards Farmer Brown's barn, those angry voices changed. It was such a funny change that Peter Rabbit laughed right out. Instead of anger there was triumph in every note as everybody returned to attend to his own affairs. Jenny and Mr. Wren seemed to have forgotten all about Bully and his wife in their old house. They flew to another part of the Old Orchard, there to talk it all over and rest and get their breath. Peter Rabbit waited to see if they would not come over near enough to him for a little more gossip. But they didn't, and finally Peter started for his home in the dear Old Briar-patch. All the way there he chuckled as he thought of the spunky way in which Jenny and Mr. Wren had stood up for their rights.

Lesson 20: 'Drummers and Carpenters - The Downy, Hairy, and Red-headed Woodpeckers' from *The Burgess Bird Book for Children* by Thornton W. Burgess

Peter Rabbit was so full of questions that he hardly knew which one to ask first. But Yellow Wing the Flicker didn't give him a chance to ask any. From the edge of the Green forest there came a clear, loud call of, "Pe-ok! Pe-ok! Pe-ok!"

"Excuse me, Peter, there's Mrs. Yellow Wing calling me," exclaimed Yellow Wing, and away he went. Peter noticed that as he flew he went up and down. It seemed very much as if he bounded through the air just as Peter bounds over the ground. "I would know him by the way he flies just as far as I could see him," thought Peter, as he started for home in the dear Old Briar-patch. "Somehow he doesn't seem like a Woodpecker because he is on the ground so much. I must ask Jenny Wren about him."

It was two or three days before Peter had a chance for a bit of gossip with Jenny Wren. When he did the first thing he asked was if Yellow Wing is a true Woodpecker.

"Certainly he is," replied Jenny Wren. "Of course he is. Why under the sun should you think he isn't?"

"Because it seems to me he is on the ground more than he's in the trees," retorted Peter. "I don't know any other Woodpeckers who come down on the ground at all."

"Tut, tut, tut, tut!" scolded Jenny. "Think a minute, Peter! Think a minute! Haven't you ever seen Redhead on the ground?"

Peter blinked his eyes. "Ye-e-s," he said slowly. "Come to think of it, I have. I've seen him picking up beechnuts in the fall. The Woodpeckers are a funny family. I don't understand them."

Just then a long, rolling rat-a-tat-tat rang out just over their heads. "There's another one of them," chuckled Jenny. "That's Downy, the smallest of the whole family. He certainly makes an awful racket for such a little fellow. He is a splendid drummer and he's just as good a carpenter. He made the very house I am occupying now."

Peter was sitting with his head tipped back trying to see Downy. At first he couldn't make him out. Then he caught a little movement on top of a dead limb. It was Downy's head flying back and forth as he beat his long roll. He was dressed all in black and white. On the back of his head was a little scarlet patch. He was making a tremendous racket for such a little chap, only a little bigger than one of the Sparrow family.

"Is he making a hole for a nest up there?" asked Peter eagerly.

"Gracious, Peter, what a question! What a perfectly silly question!" exclaimed Jenny Wren scornfully. "Do give us birds credit for a little common sense. If he were cutting a hole for a nest, everybody within hearing would know just where to look for it. Downy has too much sense in that little head of his to do such a silly thing as that. When he cuts a hole for a nest he doesn't make any more noise than is absolutely necessary. You don't see any chips flying, do you?"

"No-o," replied Peter slowly. "Now you speak of it, I don't. Is—is he hunting for worms in the wood?"

Jenny laughed right out. "Hardly, Peter, hardly," said she. "He's just drumming, that's all. That hollow limb makes the best kind of a drum and Downy is making the most of it. Just listen to that! There isn't a better drummer anywhere."

But Peter wasn't satisfied. Finally he ventured another question. "What's he doing it for?"

"Good land, Peter!" cried Jenny. "What do you run and jump for in the spring? What is Mr. Wren singing for over there? Downy is drumming for precisely the same reason—happiness. He can't run and jump and he can't sing, but he can drum. By the way, do you know that Downy is one of the most useful birds in the Old Orchard?"

Just then Downy flew away, but hardly had he disappeared when another drummer took his place. At first Peter thought Downy had returned until he noticed that the newcomer was just a bit bigger than Downy. Jenny Wren's sharp eyes spied him at once.

"Hello!" she exclaimed. "There's Hairy. Did you ever see two cousins look more alike? If it were not that Hairy is bigger than Downy it would be hard work to tell them apart. Do you see any other difference, Peter?"

Peter stared and blinked and stared again, then slowly shook his head. "No," he confessed, "I don't."

"That shows you haven't learned to use your eyes, Peter," said Jenny rather sharply. "Look at the outside feathers of his tail; they are all white. Downy's outside tail feathers have little bars of black. Hairy is just as good a carpenter as is Downy, but for that matter I don't know of a member of the Woodpecker family who isn't a good carpenter. Where did you say Yellow Wing the Flicker is making his home this year?"

"Over in the big hickory tree by the Smiling Pool," replied Peter. "I don't understand yet why Yellow Wing spends so much time on the ground."

"Ants," replied Jenny Wren. "Just ants. He's as fond of ants as is Old Mr. Toad, and that is saying a great deal. If Yellow Wing keeps on he'll become a ground bird instead of a tree bird. He gets more than half his living on the ground now. Speaking of drumming, did you ever hear Yellow Wing drum on a tin roof?"

Peter shook his head.

"Well, if there's a tin roof anywhere around, and Yellow Wing can find it, he will be perfectly happy. He certainly does love to make a noise, and tin makes the finest kind of a drum."

Just then Jenny was interrupted by the arrival, on the trunk of the very next tree to the one on which she was sitting, of a bird about the size of Sammy Jay. His whole head and neck were a beautiful, deep red. His breast was pure white, and his back was black to nearly the beginning of his tail, where it was white.

"Hello, Redhead!" exclaimed Jenny Wren. "How did you know we were talking about your family?"

"Hello, chatterbox," retorted Redhead with a twinkle in his eyes. "I didn't know you were talking about my family, but I could have guessed that you were talking about Dragonfly's family. Does your tongue ever stop, Jenny?"

Jenny Wren started to become indignant and scold, then thought better of it. "I was talking for Peter's benefit," said she, trying to look dignified, a thing quite impossible for any member of the Wren family to do. "Peter has always had the idea that true Woodpeckers never go down on the ground. I was explaining to him that Yellow Wing is a true Woodpecker, yet spends half his time on the ground."

Redhead nodded. "It's all on account of ants," said he. "I don't know of anyone quite so fond of ants unless it is Old Mr. Toad. I like a few of them myself, but Yellow Wing just about lives on them when he can. You may have noticed that I go down on the ground myself once in awhile. I am rather fond of beetles, and an occasional grasshopper tastes very good to me. I like a variety. Yes, sir, I certainly do like a variety—cherries, blackberries, raspberries, strawberries, grapes. In fact most kinds of fruit taste good to me, not to mention beechnuts and acorns when there is no fruit."

Jenny Wren tossed her head. "You didn't mention the eggs of some of your neighbors," said she sharply.

Redhead did his best to look innocent, but Peter noticed that he gave a guilty start and very abruptly changed the subject, and a moment later flew away.

"Is it true," asked Peter, "that Redhead does such a dreadful thing?"

Jenny bobbed her head rapidly and jerked her tail. "So I am told," said she. "I've never seen him do it, but I know others who have. They say he is no better than Sammy Jay or Blacky the Crow. But gracious, goodness! I can't sit here gossiping forever." Jenny twitched her funny little tail, snapped her bright eyes at Peter, and disappeared in her house.

Lesson 21: 'A Butcher and a Hummer - The Shrike and the Ruby-throated Hummingbird' from *The Burgess Bird Book for Children* by Thornton W. Burgess

Not far from the Old Orchard grew a thorn tree which Peter Rabbit often passed. He never had paid particular attention to it. One morning he stopped to rest under it. Happening to look up, he saw a most astonishing thing. Fastened on the sharp thorns of one of the branches were three big grasshoppers, a big moth, two big caterpillars, a lizard, a small mouse and a young English Sparrow. Do you wonder that Peter thought he must be dreaming? He couldn't imagine how those creatures could have become fastened on those long sharp thorns. Somehow it gave him an uncomfortable feeling and he hurried on to the Old Orchard, bubbling over with desire to tell someone of the strange and dreadful thing he had seen in the thorn tree.

As he entered the Old Orchard in the far corner he saw Johnny Chuck sitting on his doorstep and hurried over to tell him the strange news. Johnny listened until Peter was through, then told him quite frankly that never had he heard of such a thing, and that he thought Peter must have been dreaming and didn't know it.

"You're wrong, Johnny Chuck. Peter hasn't been dreaming at all," said Skimmer the Swallow, who, you remember, lived in a hole in a tree just above the entrance to Johnny Chuck's house. He had been sitting where he could hear all that Peter had said.

"Well, if you know so much about it, please explain," said Johnny Chuck rather crossly.

"It's simple enough," replied Skimmer. "Peter just happened to find the storehouse of Butcher the Loggerhead Shrike. It isn't a very pleasant sight, I must admit, but one must give Butcher credit for being smart enough to lay up a store of food when it is plentiful."

"And who is Butcher the Shrike?" demanded Peter. "He's a new one to me.

"He's new to this location," replied Skimmer, "and you probably haven't noticed him. I've seen him in the South often. There he is now, on the tiptop of that tree over yonder."

Peter and Johnny looked eagerly. They saw a bird who at first glance appeared not unlike Mocker the Mockingbird. He was dressed wholly in black, gray and white. When he turned his head they noticed a black stripe across the side of his face and that the tip of his bill was hooked. These were enough to make them forget that otherwise he was like Mocker. While they were watching him he flew down into the grass and picked up a grasshopper. Then he flew with a steady, even flight, only a little above the ground, for some distance, suddenly shooting up and returning to the perch where they had first seen him. There he ate the grasshopper and resumed his watch for something else to catch.

"He certainly has wonderful eyes," said Skimmer admiringly. "He must have seen that grasshopper way over there in the grass before he started after it, for he flew straight there. He doesn't waste time and energy hunting aimlessly. He sits on a high perch and watches until he sees something he wants. Many times I've seen him sitting on top of a telegraph pole. I understand that Bully the English Sparrow has become terribly nervous since the arrival of Butcher. He is particularly fond of English Sparrows. I presume it was one of Bully's children you saw in the thorn tree, Peter. For my part I hope he'll frighten Bully into leaving the Old Orchard. It would be a good thing for the rest of us."

"But I don't understand yet why he fastens his victims on those long thorns," said Peter.

"For two reasons," replied Skimmer. "When he catches more grasshoppers and other insects than he can eat, he sticks them on those thorns so that later he may be sure of a good meal if it happens there are no more to be caught when he is hungry. Mice, Sparrows, and things too big

for him to swallow he sticks on the thorns so that he can pull them to pieces easier. You see his feet and claws are not big and stout enough to hold his victims while he tears them to pieces with his hooked bill. Sometimes, instead of sticking them on thorns, he sticks them on the barbed wire of a fence and sometimes he wedges them into the fork of two branches."

"Does he kill many birds?" asked Peter.

"Not many," replied Skimmer, "and most of those he does kill are English Sparrows. The rest of us have learned to keep out of his way. He feeds mostly on insects, worms and caterpillars, but he is very fond of mice and he catches a good many. He is a good deal like Killy the Sparrow Hawk in this respect. He has a cousin, the Great Northern Shrike, who sometimes comes down in the winter, and is very much like him. Hello! Now what's happened?"

A great commotion had broken out not far away in the Old Orchard. Instantly Skimmer flew over to see what it was all about and Peter followed. He got there just in time to see Chatterer the Red Squirrel dodging around the trunk of a tree, first on one side, then on the other, to avoid the sharp bills of the angry feathered folk who had discovered him trying to rob a nest of its young.

Peter chuckled. "Chatterer is getting just what is due him, I guess," he muttered. "It reminds me of the time I got into a Yellow Jacket's nest. My, but those birds are mad!"

Chatterer continued to dodge from side to side of the tree while the birds darted down at him, all screaming at the top of their voices. Finally Chatterer saw his chance to run for the old stone wall. Only one bird was quick enough to catch up with him and that one was such a tiny fellow that he seemed hardly bigger than a big insect. It was Hammer the Hummingbird. He followed Chatterer clear to the old stone wall. A moment later Peter heard a humming noise just over his head and looked up to see Hummer himself alight on a twig, where he squeaked excitedly for a few minutes, for his voice is nothing but a little squeak.

Often Peter had seen Hummer darting about from flower to flower and holding himself still in mid-air in front of each as he thrust his long bill into the heart of the blossom to get the tiny insects there and the sweet juices he is so fond of. But this was the first time Peter had ever seen him sitting still. He was such a mite of a thing that it was hard to realize that he was a bird. His back was a bright, shining green. His wings and tail were brownish with a purplish tinge. Underneath he was whitish, But it was his throat on which Peter fixed his eyes. It was a wonderful ruby-red that glistened and shone in the sun like a jewel.

Hummer lifted one wing and with his long needle-like bill smoothed the feathers under it. Then he darted out into the air, his wings moving so fast that Peter couldn't see them at all. But if he couldn't see them he could hear them. You see they moved so fast that they made a sound very like the humming of Bumble the Bee. It is because of this that he is called the Hummingbird. A few minutes later he was back again and now he was joined by Mrs. Hummer. She was dressed

very much like Hummer but did not have the beautiful ruby throat. She stopped only a minute or two, then darted over to what looked for all the world like a tiny cup of moss. It was their nest.

Just then Jenny Wren came along, and being quite worn out with the work of feeding her seven babies, she was content to rest for a few moments and gossip. Peter told her what he had discovered.

"I know all about that," retorted Jenny. "You don't suppose I hunt these trees over for food without knowing where my neighbors are living, do you? I'd have you to understand, Peter, that that is the daintiest nest in the Old Orchard. It is made wholly of plant down and covered on the outside with bits of that gray moss-like stuff that grows on the bark of the trees and is called lichens. That is what makes that nest look like nothing more than a knot on the branch. Chatterer made a big mistake when he visited this tree. Hummer may be a tiny fellow but he isn't afraid of anybody under the sun. That bill of his is so sharp and he is so quick that few folks ever bother him more than once. Why, there isn't a single member of the Hawk family that Hummer won't attack. There isn't a cowardly feather on him."

"Does he go very far south for the winter?" asked Peter. "He is such a tiny fellow I don't see how he can stand a very long journey."

"Huh!" exclaimed Jenny Wren. "Distance doesn't bother Hummer any. You needn't worry about those wings of his. He goes clear down to South America. He has ever so many relatives down there. You ought to see his babies when they first hatch out. They are no bigger than bees. But they certainly do grow fast. Why, they are flying three weeks from the time they hatch. I'm glad I don't have to pump food down the throats of my youngsters the way Mrs. Hummingbird has to down hers."

Peter looked perplexed. "What do you mean by pumping food down their throats?" he demanded.

"Just what I say," retorted Jenny Wren. "Mrs. Hummer sticks her bill right down their throats and then pumps up the food she has already swallowed. I guess it is a good thing that the babies have short bills."

"Do they?" asked Peter, opening his eyes very wide with surprise.

"Yes," replied Jenny. "When they hatch out they have short bills, but it doesn't take them a great while to grow long."

"How many babies does Mrs. Hummer usually have?" asked Peter.

"Just two," replied Jenny. "Just two. That's all that nest will hold. But goodness gracious, Peter, I can't stop gossiping here any longer. You have no idea what a care seven babies are."

With a jerk of her tail off flew Jenny Wren, and Peter hurried back to tell Johnny Chuck all he had found out about Hummer the Hummingbird.

Lesson 22: 'The Greedy Red Fox' from *Among the Night People* by Clara Dillingham Pierson

The Red Fox had been well brought up. His mother was a most cautious person and devoted to her children. When he did things which were wrong, he could never excuse himself by saying that he did not know better. Of course it is possible that he was like his father in being so reckless, yet none of his two brothers and three sisters were like him. They did not remember their father. In fact, they had never seen him, and their mother seldom spoke of him.

His mother had taken all the care of her six children, even pulling fur from her own belly to make a soft nest covering for them when they were first born. They were such helpless babies. Their eyes and ears were closed for some time, and all they could do was to tumble each other around and drink the warm milk that their mother had for them.

They had three burrows to live in, all of them in an open field between the forest and the farmhouse. Sometimes they lived in the first, sometimes in the second, and sometimes in the third. One night when their mother went out to hunt, she smelled along the ground near the burrow and then came back. "There has been a man near here," she said, "and I shall take you away."

That excited the little Foxes very much, and each wanted to be the first to go, but she hushed them up, and said that if they talked so loudly as that some man might catch them before they moved, and then—. She said nothing more, yet they knew from the way she moved her tail that it would be dreadful to have a man catch them.

While she was carrying them to another burrow one at a time, those who were left behind talked about men. "I wish I knew why men are so dreadful," said the first. "It must be because they have very big mouths and sharp teeth."

"I wonder what color their fur is," said another.

Now these young Foxes had seen nobody but their mother. If she had not told them that different animals wore different colored furs, they would have thought that everybody looked just like her, with long reddish-yellow fur and that on the hinder part of the back quite grizzled; throat, belly, and the tip of the tail white, and the outside of the ears black. They were very sure, however, that no other animal had such a wonderful tail as she, with each of its long, reddish hairs tipped with black and the beautiful brush of pure white at the end. In fact, she had told them so.

The next time their mother came back, the four children who were still there cried out, "Please tell us, what color is a man's fur?"

She was a sensible and prudent Fox, and knew it was much more important to keep her children from being caught than it was to answer all their questions at once. Besides, she already had one child in her mouth when they finished their question, and she would not put him down for the sake of talking. And that also was right, you know, for one can talk at any time, but the time to do work is just when it needs to be done.

After they were snugly settled in the other burrow, she lay down to feed them, and while they were drinking their milk she told them about men. "Men," she said, "are the most dreadful animals there are. Other animals will not trouble you unless they are hungry, but a man will chase you even when his stomach is full. They have four legs, of course,—all animals have,—but they use only two to walk on. Their front legs they use for carrying things. We carry with our mouths, yet the only thing I ever saw a man have in his mouth was a short brown stick that was afire at one end. I thought it very silly, for he couldn't help breathing some of the smoke, and he let the stick burn up and then threw the fire away. However, men are exceedingly silly animals."

One of the little Red Foxes stopped drinking long enough to say, "You didn't tell us what color their fur is."

"The only fur they have," said Mother Fox, "is on their heads. They usually have fur on the top and back parts of their heads, and some of them have a little on the lower part of their faces. They may have black, red, brown, gray, or white fur. It is never spotted."

The children would have liked to ask more questions, but Mother Fox had eaten nothing since the night before, and was in a hurry to begin her hunt.

One could never tell all that happened to the little Red Foxes. They moved from burrow to burrow many times; they learned to eat meat which their mother brought them instead of drinking milk from her body, they frolicked together near the doorway of their home, and while they did this their mother watched from the edge of the forest, ready to warn them if she saw men or dogs coming.

She had chosen to dig her burrows in the middle of a field, because then there was no chance for men or Dogs to sneak up to them unseen, as there would have been in the forest, yet she feared that her children would be playing so hard that they might forget to watch. They slept most of the day, and at night they were always awake. When they were old enough, they began to hunt for themselves. Mother Fox gave them a great deal of good advice and then paid no more attention to them. After that, she took her naps on a sunny hillside, lying in a beautiful soft reddish-yellow bunch, with her bushy tail curled around to keep her feet warm and shade her eyes from the light.

The six brothers and sisters seldom saw each other after this. Foxes succeed better in life if they live alone, and of course they wanted to succeed. The eldest brother was the reckless one. His

mother had done her best by him, and still he was reckless. He knew by heart all the rules that she had taught him, but he did not keep them. These were the rules:

"Always run on hard, dry things when you can. Soft, wet places take more scent from your feet, and Dogs can follow your trail better on them.

"Never go into any place unless you are sure you can get out.

"Keep your tail dry. A Fox with a wet tail cannot run well.

"If Dogs are chasing you, jump on to a rail fence and run along the top of it or walk in a brook.

"Always be willing to work for your food. That which you find all ready and waiting for you may be the bait of a trap.

"Always walk when you are hunting. The Fox who trots will pass by that which he should find."

For a while he said them over to himself every night when he started out. Then he began to skip a night once in a while. Next he got to saying them only when he had been frightened the day before. After that he stopped saying them altogether. "I am a full-grown Fox now," he said to himself, "and such things are only good for children. I guess I know how to take care of myself."

He often went toward the farmhouse to hunt, sometimes for grapes, sometimes for vegetables, and sometimes for heartier food. Collie had chased him away, but Collie was growing old and fat and had to hang his tongue out when he ran, so the Red Fox thought it only fun. He trotted along in the moonlight, his light, slender body seeming to almost float over the ground, and his beautiful tail held straight out behind. His short, slender legs were strong and did not tire easily, and as long as he could keep his tail dry he outran Collie easily. Sometimes he would get far ahead and sit down to wait for him. Then he would call out saucy things to the panting Dog, and only start on when Collie's nose had almost touched him.

"Fine evening!" he once said. "Hope your nose works better than your legs do."

That was a mean thing to say, you know, but Collie always keeps his temper and only answered, "It's sweating fine, thank you." He answered that way because it is the sweat on a Dog's nose which makes it possible for him to smell and follow scents which dry-nosed people do not even know about.

Then the Fox gave a long, light leap, and was off again, and Collie had to lie down to breathe. "I think," said he, "that I can tend Sheep better than I can chase Foxes—and it is a good deal easier." Still, Collie didn't like to be beaten and he lay awake the rest of the night thinking how he would enjoy catching that Fox. Every little while he heard the Red Fox barking off in the fields, and it made him twitch his tail with impatience.

Now the Red Fox was walking carefully toward the farmhouse and planning to catch a Turkey. He had watched the flocks of Turkeys all afternoon from his sleeping-place on the hillside. Every time he opened his eyes between naps he had looked at them as they walked to and fro in the fields, talking to each other in their gentle, complaining voices and moving their heads back and forth at every step. If his stomach had not been so full he would have tried to catch one then. He made up his mind to try it that night, and decided that he would rather have the plump, light-colored one than any of her darker sisters. He did not even think of catching the old Gobbler, for he was so big and strong and fierce-looking. He had just begun to walk with the Turkey mothers and children. During the summer they had had nothing to do with each other.

When the Red Fox reached the farmyard, he found them roosting on the low branches of an apple-tree. A long board had been placed against it to let the Chickens walk up. Now the Chickens were in the Hen-house, but the board was still there. The Red Fox looked all around. It was a starlight night. The farmhouse was dark and quiet. Collie was nowhere to be seen. Once he heard a Horse stamp in his sleep. Then all was still again.

The Red Fox walked softly up the slanting board. The Gobbler stirred. The Red Fox stopped with one foot in the air. When he thought him fast asleep he went on. The Gobbler stirred again and so did the others. The Red Fox sprang for the plump, light-colored one. She jumped also, and with the others flew far up to the top of the barn. The Red Fox ran down the board with five buff tail-feathers in his mouth. He was much out of patience with himself. "If I hadn't stopped to pick for her," he said, "I could have caught one of the others easily enough."

He sneaked around in the shadows to see if the noise made by the turkeys had awakened the farmer or Collie. The farmhouse was still dark. Collie was not at home. "I will look at the Hen-house," said the Red Fox.

He walked slowly and carefully to the Hen-house. The big door was closed and bolted. He walked all around and into the poultry yard. There was a small opening through which the fowls could pass in and out. The Red Fox managed to crawl though, but it was not easy. It squeezed his body and crushed his fur. He had to push very hard with his hind feet to get through at all. When he was inside it took him some time to get his breath. "That's the tightest place I ever was in," said he softly, "but I always could crawl through a very small hole."

He found the fowls all roosting too high for him. Perhaps if the Hen-house had been larger, he might have leaped and caught one, but there was not room for one of his finest springs. He went to the nests and found many eggs there. These he broke and ate. They ran down in yellow streams from the corners of his mouth and made his long fur very sticky. You can just imagine how hard it would be to eat raw eggs from the shell with only your paws in which to hold them.

One egg was light and slippery. He bit hard to break that one, and when it broke it was hollow. Not a drop of anything to eat in it, and then it cut his lip a little, too, so that he could not eat more without its hurting. He jumped and said something when he was cut. The Shanghai Cock, who

was awakened by the noise, said that he exclaimed, "Brambles and traps!" but it may not have been anything so bad as that. We will hope it was not.

The Shanghai Cock awakened all the other fowls. "Don't fly off your perch!" he cried. "Stay where you are! Stay where where you are! Stay where you are!" The other Cocks kept saying "Eru-u-u-u," as they do when Hawks get near. The Hens squawked and squawked and squawked, until they were out of breath. When they got their breath they squawked some more.

The Red Fox knew that it was time for him to go. The farmer would be sure to hear the noise. He put his head out of the hole through which he had come in, and he pushed as hard as he could with his hind feet and scrambled with his fore feet. His fur was crushed worse than ever, and he was squeezed so tightly that he could hardly breathe. You see it had been all he could do to get in through the hole, and now he had nine eggs in his stomach (excepting what had run down at the corners of his mouth), and he was too large to pass through.

The fowls saw what was the matter, and wanted to laugh. They thought it very funny, and yet the sooner he could get away the better they would like it. The Red Fox had his head outside and saw a light flash in the farmer's room. Then he heard doors open, and the farmer came toward the Hen-house with a lantern in his hand. Collie came trotting around the corner of the house. The Red Fox made one last desperate struggle and then lay still.

When the farmer picked him up and tied a rope around his neck, he had to pull him backward into the Hen-house to do it. The Red Fox was very quiet and gentle, as people of his family always are when caught. Collie pranced around on two legs and barked as loudly as he could. The fowls blinked their round yellow eyes in the lantern light, and the farmer's man ran out for an empty Chicken-coop into which to put the Red Fox. Collie was usually quite polite, but he had not forgotten how rude the Red Fox had been to him, and it was a fine chance to get even.

"Good evening!" he barked. "Oh, good evening! I'm glad you came. Don't think you must be going. Excuse me, but your mouth worked better than your legs, didn't it?"

The Red Fox shut his eyes and pretended not to hear. The dirt from the floor of the Hen-house had stuck to his egg-covered fur, and he looked very badly. They put him in a Chicken-coop with a board floor, so that he couldn't burrow out, and he curled down in a little heap and hid his face with his tail. Collie hung around for a while and then went off to sleep. After he was gone, the Red Fox cleaned his fur. "I got caught this time," he said, "but it won't happen again. Now I must watch for a chance to get away. It will surely come."

It did come. But that is another story.

Lesson 23: 'The Skunks and the Ovenbird's Nest' from *Among the Night People* by Clara Dillingham Pierson

The Skunks did not go into society at all. They were very unpopular, and so many people feared or disliked them that nobody would invite them to a party. Indeed, if they had been invited to a party and had gone, the other guests would have left at once. The small people of the forest feared them because they were meat-eaters, and the larger ones disliked them because of their disagreeable habits. The Skunks were handsome and quiet, but they were quick-tempered, and as soon as one of them became angry he threw a horrible smelling liquid on the people who displeased him. It was not only horrible smelling, but it made those who had to smell it steadily quite sick, and would, indeed, have killed them if they had not kept in the fresh air. If a drop of this liquid got on to a person, even his wife and children had to keep away from him for a long time.

And the Skunks were so unreasonable. They would not stop to see what was the real trouble, but if anybody ran into them by mistake in the darkness, they would just as likely as not throw the liquid at once. Among themselves they seemed to be quite happy. There were from six to ten children born at a time in each family. These children lived in the burrow with their father and mother until the next spring, sleeping steadily through the coldest weather of winter, and only awakening when it was warm enough for them to enjoy life. When spring came, the children found themselves grown-up and went off to live their own lives in new holes, while their mothers took care of the six or seven or eight or nine or ten new babies.

There was one very interesting Skunk family in the forest, with the father, mother, and eight children living in one hole. No two of them were marked in exactly the same way, although all were stoutly built, had small heads, little round ears, and beautiful long tails covered with soft, drooping hair. Their fur was rather long and handsome and they were dark brown or black nearly all over. Most of them had a streak of white on the forehead, a spot of it on the neck, some on the tail, and a couple of stripes of it on their backs. One could see them quite easily by starlight on account of the white fur.

The Skunks were really very proud of their white stripes and spots. "It is not so much having the white fur," Mrs. Skunk had been heard to say, "as it is having it where all can see it. Most animals wear the dark fur on their backs and the light on their bellies, and that is to make them safe from enemies. But we dare to wear ours in plain sight. We are never afraid."

And what she said was true, although it hardly seemed modest for her to talk about it in that way. It would have been more polite to let other people tell how brave her family were. Perhaps, however, if somebody else had been telling it, he would have said that part of their courage was rudeness.

Father Skunk always talked to his children as his father had talked to him, and probably as his grandfather had also talked when he was raising a family. "Never turn out of your way for anybody," said he. "Let the other fellow step aside. Remember that, no matter whom you meet and no matter how large the other people may be. If they see you, they will get out of your path, and if they can't it is not your fault. Don't speak to them and don't hurry. Always take your time."

Father Skunk was slow and stately. It was a sight worth seeing when he started off for a night's ramble, walking with a slow and measured gait and carrying his fine tail high over his back. He always went by himself. "One is company, two is a crowd," he would say as he walked away. When they were old enough, the young Skunks began to walk off alone as soon as it was dark. Mother Skunk also went alone, and perhaps she had the best time of all, for it was a great rest not to have eight babies tumbling over her back and getting under her feet and hanging on to her with their thirty-two paws, and sometimes even scratching her with their one hundred and sixty claws. They still slept through the days in the old hole, so they were together much of the time, but they did not hunt in parties, as Raccoons and Weasels do.

One of the brothers had no white whatever on his tail, so they called him the Black-tailed Skunk. He had heard in some way that there was an Ovenbird's nest on the ground by the fern bank, and he made up his mind to find it the very next night and eat the eggs which were inside.

Another brother was called the Spotted Skunk, because the spot on his neck was so large. He had found the Ovenbird's nest himself, while on his way home in the early morning. He would have liked to rob it then, but he had eaten so much that night that he thought it better to wait.

So it happened that when the family awakened the next night two of the children had important plans of their own. Neither of them would have told for anything, but they couldn't quite keep from hinting about it as they made themselves ready to go out.

"Aha!" said the Black-tailed Skunk. "I know something you don't know."

"Oh, tell us!" cried four or five of the other children, while the Spotted Skunk twisted his head and said, "You don't either!"

"I do too!" replied the Black-tailed Skunk.

"Children! Children!" exclaimed Mrs. Skunk, while their father said that he couldn't see where his children got their quarrelsome disposition, for none of his people had ever contradicted or disputed. His wife told him that she really thought them very good, and that she was sure they behaved much better than most Skunks of their age. Then their father walked off in his most stately manner, putting his feet down almost flat, and carrying his tail a little higher than usual.

"I do know something that you don't," repeated the Black-tailed Skunk, "and it's something nice, too."

"Aw!" said the Spotted Skunk. "I don't believe it, and I don't care anyhow."

"I know you don't know, and I know you'd want to know if you knew what I know," said the Black-tailed Skunk, who was now getting so excited that he could hardly talk straight.

"Children!" exclaimed their mother. "Not another word about that. I do wish you would wake up good-natured."

"He started it," said the Spotted Skunk, "and we're not quarrelling anyhow. But I guess he'd give a good deal to know where I'm going."

"Children!" repeated their mother. "Go at once. I will not have you talking in this way before your brothers and sisters. Do not stop to talk, but go!"

So the two brothers started out for the night and each thought he would go a roundabout way to fool the other. The Black-tailed Skunk went to the right, and the Spotted Skunk went to the left, but each of them, you know, really started to rob the Ovenbird's nest. It was a very dark night. Even the stars were all hidden behind thick clouds, and one could hardly see one's forepaws while walking. But, of course, the night-prowlers of the forest are used to this, and four-footed people are not so likely to stumble and fall as two-footed ones. Besides, young Skunks have to remember where logs and stumps of trees are, just as other people have to remember their lessons.

So it happened that, while Mrs. Ovenbird was sleeping happily with her four eggs safe and warm under her breast, two people were coming from different ways to rob her. Such a snug nest as it was! She had chosen a tiny hollow in the fern bank and had cunningly woven dry grasses and leaves into a ball-shaped nest, which fitted neatly into the hollow and had a doorway on one side.

The Black-tailed Skunk sneaked up to the nest from one side. The Spotted Skunk sneaked up from the other side. Once the Black-tailed Skunk thought he heard some creature moving toward him. At the same minute the Spotted Skunk thought he heard somebody, so he stopped to listen. Neither heard anything. Mrs. Ovenbird was sure that she heard a leaf rustle outside, and it made her anxious until she remembered that a dead twig might have dropped from the beech-tree overhead and hit the dry leaves below.

Slowly the two brothers crept toward the nest and each other. They moved very quietly, because each wanted to catch the mother-bird if he could. Close to the nest hollow they crouched and sprang with jaws open and sharp teeth ready to bite. There was a sudden crashing of leaves and ferns. The two brothers had sprung squarely at each other, each was bitten, growled, and ran away. And how they did run! It is not often, you know, that Skunks go faster than a walk, but when they are really scared they move very, very swiftly.

Mrs. Ovenbird felt her nest roof crush down upon her for a minute as two people rolled and growled outside. Then she heard them running away in different directions and knew that she was safe, for a time at least. In the morning she repaired her nest and told her bird friends about it. They advised her to take her children away as soon as possible after they were hatched. "If the Skunks have found your nest," they said, "you may have another call from them."

When the Black-tailed Skunk came stealing home in the first faint light just before sunrise, he found the Spotted Skunk telling the rest of the family how some horrible great fierce beast had pounced upon him in the darkness and bitten him on the shoulder. "It was so dark," said he, "that I couldn't see him at all, but I am sure it must have been a Bear."

They turned to tell the Black-tailed Skunk about his brother's misfortune, and saw that he limped badly. "Did the Bear catch you, too?" they cried.

"Yes," answered he. "It must have been a Bear. It was so big and strong and fierce. But I bit him, too. I wouldn't have run away from him, but he was so much bigger than I."

"That was just the way with me," said the Spotted Skunk. "I wouldn't have run if he hadn't been so big."

"You should have thrown liquid on him," said their father. "Then he would have been the one to run."

The brothers hung their heads. "We never thought," they cried. "We think it must have been because we were so surprised and didn't see him coming."

"Well," said their father sternly, "I suppose one must be patient with children, but such unskunklike behavior makes me very much ashamed of you both." Then the two bitten brothers went to bed in disgrace, although their mother was sorry for them and loved them, as mothers will do, even when their children are naughty or cowardly.

One night, some time later, these two brothers happened to meet down by the fern bank. It was bright moonlight and they stopped to visit, for both were feeling very good-natured. The Black-tailed Skunk said: "Come with me and I'll show you where there is an Ovenbird's nest."

"All right," answered the Spotted Skunk, "and then I'll show you one."

"I've just been waiting for a bright night," said the Black-tailed Skunk, "because I came here once in the dark and had bad luck."

"It was near here," said the Spotted Skunk, "that I was bitten by the Bear."

They stopped beside a tiny hollow. "There is the nest," said the Black-tailed Skunk, pointing with one of his long forefeet.

"Why, that is the one I meant," exclaimed the Spotted Skunk.

"I found it first," said the Black-tailed Skunk, "and I'd have eaten the eggs before if that Bear hadn't bitten me."

Just at that minute the two Skunks had a new idea. "We do believe," cried they, "that we bit each other!"

"We certainly did," said the Spotted Skunk.

"But we'll never tell," said the Black-tailed Skunk.

"Now," they added together, "let's eat everything."

But they didn't. In fact, they didn't eat anything, for the eggs were hatched, and the young birds had left the nest only the day before.

Lesson 24: 'The Naughty Raccoon Children' from *Among the Night People* by Clara Dillingham Pierson

There was hardly a night of his life when the Little Brother of the Raccoon family was not reproved by his mother for teasing. Mrs. Raccoon said she didn't know what she had done to deserve such a child. When she spoke like this to her neighbors they sighed and said, "It must be trying, but he may outgrow it."

The Oldest Wolverene, though, told the Skunk that his cousin, Mrs. Raccoon's husband, had been just as bad as that when he was young. "I do not want you to say that I said so," he whispered, "because he might hear of it and be angry, but it is true." The Oldest Wolverene didn't say whether Mr. Raccoon outgrew this bad habit, yet it would seem that his wife had never noticed it.

You must not think that Mr. Raccoon was dead. Oh, no, indeed! Every night he was prowling through the forest on tiptoe looking for food. But Mrs. Raccoon was a very devoted mother and gave so much time and attention to her children that she was not good company for her husband. He did not care much for home life, and the children annoyed him exceedingly, so he went away and found a hole in another tree which he fitted up for himself. There he slept through the day and until the setting of the sun told him that it was time for his breakfast. Raccoons like company, and he often had friends in to sleep with him. Sometimes these friends were Raccoons like himself with wives and children, and then they would talk about their families and tell how they thought their wives were spoiling the children.

The four little Raccoons, who lived with their mother in the dead branch of the big oak-tree, had been born in April, when the forest was sweet with the scent of wild violets and everyone was happy. Beautiful pink and white trilliums raised their three-cornered flowers above their threefold leaves and nodded with every passing breeze. Yellow adder's-tongue was there, with cranesbill geraniums, squirrel-corn, and spring beauties, besides hepaticas and windflowers and the dainty bishop's-cap. The young Raccoons did not see these things, for their eyes would not work well by daylight, and when, after dark, their mother let them put their heads out of the hole and look around, they were too far from the ground to see the flowers sleeping in the dusk below.

They could only sniff, sniff, sniff with their sharp little turned-up noses, and wonder what flowers look like, anyway.

When their mother was with them for a time, and that was while they were drinking the warm milk that she always carried for them, she told them stories of the flowers and trees. She had begun by telling them animal stories, but she found that it made them cowardly. "Just supposing," one young Raccoon had said, "a great big, dreadful Snail should come up this tree and eat us all!"

The mother told them that Snails were small and slow and weak, and never climbed trees or ate people, but it did no good, and her children were always afraid of Snails until they had seen one for themselves. After that she told them stories of the flowers, and when they asked if the flowers would ever come to see them, she said, "No, indeed! You will never see them until you can climb down the tree and walk among them, for they grow with their feet in the ground and never go anywhere." There were many stories which they wanted over and over again, but the one they liked best of all was that about the wicked, wicked Poison Ivy and the gentle Spotted Touch-me-not who grew near him and undid all the trouble that the Ivy made.

When the night came for the young Raccoons to climb down from their tree and learn to hunt, all the early spring blossoms were gone, and only the ripening seed-vessels showed where nodding flowers had been. You would have expected the Raccoon children to be disappointed, yet there were so many other things to see and learn about that it was not until three nights later that they thought much of the flowers. They might not have done so then if Little Sister had not lost her hold upon the oak-tree bark and fallen with her forepaws on a scarlet jack-in-the-pulpit berry.

They had to learn to climb quickly and strongly up all sorts of trees. Perhaps Mrs. Raccoon had chosen an oak for her nest because that was rough and easily climbed. There were many good places for Raccoons to grip with their twenty strong claws apiece. After they had learned oaks they took maples, ironwoods, and beeches—each a harder lesson than the one before.

"When you climb a tree," said their mother, "always look over the trunk and the largest branches for hiding places, whether you want to use one then or not."

"Why?" asked three of the four children. Big Brother, who was rather vain, was looking at the five beautiful black rings and the beautiful black tip of his wonderful bushy tail. Between the black rings were whitish ones, and he thought such things much more interesting than holes in trees.

"Because," said the Mother Raccoon, "you may be far from home some night and want a safe place to sleep in all day. Or if a man and his Dogs are chasing you, you must climb into the first hiding place you can. We Raccoons are too fat and slow to run away from them, and the rings on our tails and the black patches on our broad faces might show from the ground. If the hole is a

small one, make it cover your head and your tail anyway, and as much of your brown body fur as you can."

Mother Raccoon looked sternly at Big Brother because he had not been listening, and he gave a slight jump and asked, "W-what did you say?"

"What did I say?" she replied. "You should have paid better attention."

"Yes 'm," said Big Brother, who was now very meek.

"I shall not repeat it," said his mother, "but I will tell you not to grow vain of your fur. It is very handsome, and so is that of your sisters and your brother. So is mine, and so was your father's the last time I saw him. Yet nearly all the trouble that Raccoons have is on account of their fur. Never try to show it off."

The time came for the young Raccoons to stop drinking milk from their mother's body, and when they tried to do so she only walked away from them.

"I cannot work so hard to care for you," said she. "I am so tired and thin, now, that my skin is loose, and you must find your own food. You are getting forty fine teeth apiece, and I never saw a better lot of claws on any Raccoon family, if I do say it."

They used to go hunting together, for it is the custom of Raccoons to go in parties of from five to eight, hunt all night, and then hide somewhere until the next night. They did not always come home at sunrise, and it made a pleasant change to sleep in different trees. One day they all cuddled down in the hollow of an old maple, just below where the branches come out. Mother Raccoon had climbed the tree first and was curled away in the very bottom of the hole. The four children were not tired and hadn't wanted to go to bed at all. Little Sister had made a dreadful face when her mother called her up the tree, and if it had not already been growing light, Mrs. Raccoon would probably have seen it and punished her.

Big Sister curled down beside her mother and Little Sister was rather above them and beside mischievous Little Brother. Last of all came Big Brother, who had stopped to scratch his ear with his hind foot. He was very proud of his little round ears, and often scratched them in this way to make sure that the fur lay straight on them. He was so slow in reaching the hole that before he got into it a Robin had begun his morning song of "Cheerily, cheerily, cheerup!" and a Chipmunk perched on a stump to make his morning toilet.

He got all settled, and Little Brother was half asleep beside him, when he remembered his tail and sat up to have one more look at it. Little Brother growled sleepily and told him to "let his old tail alone and come to bed, as long as they couldn't hunt anymore." But Big Brother thought he saw a sand-burr on his tail, and wanted to pull it out before it hurt the fur. Then he began to look at the bare, tough pads on his feet, and to notice how finely he could spread his toes. Those of his

front feet he could spread especially wide. He balanced himself on the edge of the hole and held them spread out before him. It was still dark enough for him to see well. "Come here, Little Brother," he cried. "Wake up, and see how big my feet are getting."

Mother Raccoon growled at them to be good children and go to sleep, but her voice sounded dreamy and far away because she had to talk through part of her own fur and most of her daughters'.

Little Brother lost his patience, unrolled himself with a spring, jumped to the opening, and knocked his brother down. It was dreadful. Of course Big Brother was not much hurt, for he was very fat and his fur was both long and thick, but he turned over and over on his way to the ground before he alighted on his feet. He turned so fast and Little Brother's eyes hurt him so that it looked as though Big Brother had about three heads, three tails, and twelve feet. He called out as he fell, and that awakened the sisters, who began to cry, and Mother Raccoon, who was so scared that she began to scold.

Such a time! Mother Raccoon found out what had happened, and then she said to Little Brother, "Did you mean to push him down?"

"No, ma'am," answered Little Brother, hanging his head. "Anyhow I didn't mean to after I saw him going. Perhaps I did mean to before that." You see he was a truthful Raccoon even when he was most naughty, and there is always hope for a Raccoon who will tell the truth, no matter how hard it is to do so.

Big Brother climbed slowly up the trunk of the oak-tree, while more and more of the daytime people came to look at him. He could not see well now, and so was very awkward. When he reached the hole he was hot and cross, and complained to his mother. "Make him quit teasing me," he said, pointing one forepaw at Little Brother.

"I will," answered Mother Raccoon; "but you were just as much to blame as he, for if you had cuddled down quietly when I told you to, you would have been dreaming long ago. Now you must sleep where I was, at the lower end of the hole. Little Brother must go next, and I do not want to hear one word from either of you. Sisters next, and I will sleep by the opening. You children must remember that it is no time for talking to each other, or looking at claws, or getting sand-burrs out of your tails after you have been sent to bed. Go to sleep, and don't awaken until the sun has gone down and you are ready to be my good little Raccoons again."

Her children were asleep long before she was, and she talked softly to herself after they were dreaming. "They do not mean to be naughty," she said. "Yet it makes my fur stand on end to think what might have happened.... I ought not to have curled up for the day until they had done so.... Mothers should always be at the top of the heap." Then she fixed herself for a long, restful day's sleep.

Lesson 25: 'Silvertip Learns a Lesson' from *Dooryard Stories* by Clara Dillingham Pierson

You may remember what a funny time Silvertip had with the first Mouse he caught; how he carried it so long in his mouth before daring to lay it down, and how frightened he was each time that it wriggled. That was because he was just beginning to hunt. Cats have to learn by doing things over and over, just like other people. He used to hear the Little Boy sing.

If at first you do not succeed try, try, try again.

After a while he heard him sing.

If at first you do not succeed try, try, try again.

He did not understand just what this meant, but he soon knew that Little Boys have to learn things quite as Cats do. He watched him afterward learning to turn summersaults, and saw him do just that and nothing else for nearly a whole afternoon.

It was in some such way that Silvertip came to be a good hunter. He used to spend whole hours under the low branches of some evergreen, crouching and springing at every passing bird. In summer he crawled through the wheat-field back of the house, looking for Mice. If he found nothing better, he caught Moles, although he never ate them. He thought that Moles were probably made for Cats to practice on, and that good little Cats, who did the best they could on Moles, would find Mice to catch after a while—if they were patient.

When he could not find anything alive to hunt, he practiced on the dead leaves which were blown over the lawn, or chased empty spools across the kitchen floor. In the spring, when the Gentleman went out before breakfast to work in his garden, Silvertip played with the onion sets, chasing them down the narrow trench in which they had been placed, until the Gentleman had to carry him off and shut him up.

That is how he became so fine a hunter, and it is perhaps not strange that after a while he grew conceited. You know what it means to be conceited. Well, Silvertip was so. He thought himself really the cleverest Cat that had ever lived, a Cat who could catch anything he tried to. He bragged to the other Cats who came around, and when he was alone he purred to himself about the fine things he could do. Now people who think themselves clever are not always conceited, for sometimes they are as clever as they think. But when a person is always thinking and talking about what he can do, you watch him to see if he does as well as he thinks. If not, then he is conceited.

Silvertip even used to climb nearly to the top of the tall maple-trees after Blackbirds, and crouch there, switching his tail, yet he never caught any. When the other Cats asked him about this, he would smile, and say that he decided not to eat any more just then, or that he had found that

Blackbirds disagreed with him. Undoubtedly these excuses were both true, still they did not keep him from trying again and again.

The only Blackbird he ever caught was a young one who had disobeyed her mother and flopped away from the tangle of rosebushes where she had been told to stay. She was dreadfully punished for it—but then it was very wrong for her not to mind her mother. If she had stayed where she was, the thorns would have kept Cats away.

Silvertip had been in the big house nearly a year, when Mr. Chipmunk came to live in the yard. He chose to burrow under the open shed which ran along by the back fence, and under which wood was piled to dry before it was split and carried into the wood-house. He was the first Chipmunk who had ever lived on the place, and all his new neighbors were much interested in him.

"Shall you bring your family here?" Mr. Robin asked him, as he watched his own children caring for themselves. Mr. Robin had worked hard all summer, and now he was enjoying a little visiting time before starting south.

"My family?" asked Mr. Chipmunk, with a chuckling laugh. "No, indeed! One is company and two is crowd with Chipmunks. Of course mothers have to live with their children for a time, but fathers always have holes to themselves."

Mr. Robin did not think that right, yet he kept still. He knew that it is not always wise or polite to say all that one thinks. He thought it was not fair to make the mothers have all the care of the children. There is great difference in animals about this.

Mr. Chipmunk began at once to dig his burrow. He had not seen Silvertip yet, and did not know that there was a Cat around. He began just in front of the woodpile, and when he had enough earth loosened to fill his cheek-pockets, he brought it out and emptied it by the doorway of his home. Quite a pile was there already when Silvertip came walking past.

"Meouw!" said he. "What sort of a creature is at work here?"

Mr. Chipmunk heard his voice, and lay still in his burrow. If Silvertip had not spoken just then, this story might end very differently. In fact, it probably would be ended already. "A Cat!" he said. "Well, it is always something, and it might as well be a Cat as a Dog. He won't be so likely to dig me out, anyway."

After a long time he turned around, and went quietly toward the doorway of the burrow, just far enough to see who was there. What he saw was a white face with tiger spots and a pink nose. Long white whiskers stuck out on either side, and the nose was twitching. Silvertip was trying to get a good smell of the newcomer.

Mr. Chipmunk did not move, and being brown and in the darkness of the hole, Silvertip, who stood in the sunshine, could not see him. For a long time neither moved. Then Silvertip walked slowly away. He was not very hungry that morning. Mr. Chipmunk always believed in keeping still as long as possible. "If the other fellow is the larger," said he, "always wait to see what he is going to do. Then you can decide better what you should do."

After this Silvertip came often to the burrow. He learned the Chipmunk by smell long before he saw him. When at last he did see him, Mr. Chipmunk was perched on a low stick of wood, with his small forepaws clasped on his breast and his beautiful fur glistening in the sunshine. He was facing Silvertip, so the Cat did not see the five dark stripes on his back till later.

Silvertip crouched and tried his muscles by shaking himself a little. He did not say that it was a pleasant day, or that he was glad to become acquainted with Mr. Chipmunk. He did not even say, "I see you are making a new home!" He was sure this was the little creature whom he had been smelling for several days, and he saw no use in saying anything. He meant to eat Mr. Chipmunk, and Mr. Chipmunk understood it. There was really nothing to be said. Mr. Chipmunk might object to being eaten. People usually did object to it, but Silvertip saw no sense in talking it over. He would rather have no conversation whatever at meals than to speak of disagreeable things or to quarrel.

Mr. Chipmunk did not care to talk, either. He believed in thinking before you speak, and he had a great deal of thinking to do just then. A team stopped by the gate of the driveway. Mr. Chipmunk dared not look to see what was coming. Silvertip did not look until the Milkman was near him carrying the milk bottles. Then he gave one quick upward glance. When he looked back, the stick of wood was there, but Mr. Chipmunk was gone.

Silvertip was not at all happy, and he felt still worse when Mr. Chipmunk stuck his saucy little face out of the burrow and called, "Chip-r-r-r! Milk is better for Cats anyway, you know!" Mr. Chipmunk did not have to stop to think when he was in his hole.

That was the beginning of the acquaintance, and a very merry one it was for Mr. Chipmunk. "I have to be hunted anyway," he said, "so I might as well have some fun out of it."

Whenever he saw Silvertip having an especially comfortable nap, he would run near and give his chirping, chuckling laugh. Then he would run away. Sometimes he would stand as still as a stone, with his tiny forepaws clasped on his breast. Silvertip would creep and crawl up close to him, and he would act too scared to move. Then, just as Silvertip was ready to spring, he would cry out, "Chip-r-r-r!" and tumble heels over head into his burrow.

Sometimes, too, Silvertip would be walking along as happily as possible, not even thinking of Chipmunks, when a mischievous little face would peep out from the woodpile just beside him. Mr. Chipmunk would say "Good morning!" then draw back and disappear, only to peep out again and again from new places as the Cat came along. You know nothing can catch a

Chipmunk when he is in a woodpile. The worst of it was that there always seemed to be so many other people around to see how poor Silvertip was teased. You would never have thought that Silvertip was hunting Mr. Chipmunk. It always seemed to be Mr. Chipmunk who was hunting Silvertip.

At last Mr. Chipmunk had his burrow all done. He had made an opening at the second end and closed the one at the first, so nobody could tell from the pile of earth what had been happening. He said he had crawled into the hole and pulled it in after him. The last opening, which was now to be his only door, was under the woodpile. No rain could fall into it and no Dog could dig at it. Mr. Chipmunk was very happy.

He made friends with the Lady, too. She seemed to be perfectly harmless, and she brought him a great deal of corn and many peanuts. Sometimes he found butternuts tucked around in the woodpile, which could not possibly have fallen from any tree. He decided that he might come to some sort of agreement with Silvertip. He got ready for it by being more annoying than ever. When Silvertip's tail was switching and his nose twitching with anger, Mr. Chipmunk peeped out from a hollow stick in the pile and called to him.

"Silvertip!" he cried, "O Silvertip! I want to talk with you. How would you like to be eaten up?"

There was no answer, except a murmuring under his breath that he "guessed there wasn't much danger."

"Enjoy the acquaintance, do you, Silvertip?" asked Mr. Chipmunk. "Find me a pleasant talker? Ever tell anybody that you were going to eat me?"

Now Silvertip had told some of his friends exactly that, but this was before he knew so much about Chipmunks. He growled something under his breath about, "Quit your teasing."

"I will if you will quit trying to catch me," answered Mr. Chipmunk. "Tell your friends that you changed your mind. Tell them that I am not to your taste. Tell them anything you wish, but let me alone and I will let you alone."

"All right," said Silvertip. "Now don't you ever speak to me again."

"Never!" answered Mr. Chipmunk. "Walnuts couldn't hire me to!" And after that, there was peace around the woodpile.

Lesson 26: 'The Timid Little Groundhog' from *Among the Night People* by Clara Dillingham Pierson

It was not often that the little Groundhogs were left alone in the daytime. Before they were born their mother had been heard to say that she had her opinion of any Groundhog who would be seen out after sunrise. Mr. Groundhog felt in the same way, and said if he ever got to running

around by daylight, like some of his relatives, people might call him a Woodchuck. He thought that any one who ate twigs, beets, turnips, young tree-bark, and other green things from sunset to sunrise ought to be able to get along until the next sunset without a lunch. He said that any Groundhog who wanted more was a Pig.

After the baby Groundhogs were born, matters were different. They could not go out at night to feed for themselves, and their stomachs were so tiny and held so little at a time that they had to be filled very often. Mr. Groundhog was never at home now, and the care all fell upon his hard-working wife.

"You know, my dear," he had said, "that I should only be in the way if I were to stay at home, for I am not clever and patient with children as you are. No, I think I will go away and see to some matters which I have rather neglected of late. When the children are grown up and you have more time to give me, I will come back to you."

Then Mr. Groundhog trotted away to join a party of his friends who had just told their wives something of the same sort, and they all went together to the farmer's turnip patch and had a delightful time until morning. Mrs. Groundhog looked after him as he trotted away and wished that she could go too. He looked so handsome with the moonlight shining down on his long, thick, reddish fur, and showing the black streak on his back where the fur was tipped with gray. He was fat and shaky, with a baggy skin, and when he stopped to sit up on his haunches and wave his paws at her and comb his face-fur, she thought him just as handsome as he had been in the early spring when they first met. That had been in a parsnip patch where there was good feeding until the farmer found that the Groundhogs were there, and dug the rest of his vegetables and stored them in his cellar. Such midnight meals as they had eaten there together! Mrs. Groundhog said she never saw a parsnip afterward without thinking of their courtship.

She had been as handsome as he, and there were many other Groundhogs who admired her. But now she was thin and did not have many chances to comb her fur with her forepaws. She could not go with him to the turnip patch because she did not wish to go so far from her babies. Thinking of that reminded her to go into her sidehill burrow and see what they were doing. Then she lay down and let them draw the warm milk from her body. While they were feeding she felt of them, and thought how fast they were growing. It would be only a short time before they could trot around the fields by themselves and whistle shrilly as they dodged down into their own burrows. "Ah!" said she, "this is better than turnip patches or even parsnips."

When they had finished, their mother left them and went out to feed. She had always been a hearty eater, but now she had to eat enough more to make the milk for her babies. She often thought that if Groundhog babies could eat anything else their father might have learned to help feed them. She thought of this especially when she saw the Great Horned Owl carrying food home to his son and daughter. "It is what comes of being four-legged," said she, "and I wouldn't be an Owl for anything, so I won't grumble." After this she was more cheerful.

When she left the burrow she always said: "I am going out to feed, and I shall not be gone very long. Don't be afraid, for you have a good burrow, and it is nice and dark outside."

The children would cry: "And you will surely come home before sunrise?"

"Surely," she always answered as she trotted away. Then the children would rest happily in their burrow-nest.

But now Mrs. Groundhog was hungry, and it was broad daylight. She knew that it was because her children grew bigger every day and had to have more and more milk. This meant that she must eat more, or else when they wanted milk there would not be enough ready. She knew that she must begin to feed by day as well as by night, and she was glad that she could see fairly well if the sun were not shining into her eyes.

"Children," said she to them, just as they finished their morning lunch, "I am very hungry and I am going out to feed. You will be quite safe here and I want you to be good while I am gone."

The young Groundhogs began to cry and clutch at her fur with their weak little paws. "Oh, don't go," they said. "Please don't go. We don't want to stay alone in the daytime. We're afraid."

"I must," said she, "or I shall have no milk for you. And then, you wouldn't have me lie here all day too hungry to sleep, would you?"

"N-no," said they; "but you'll come back soon, won't you?"

"Yes," said she, and she shook off their clinging paws and poked back the daughter who caught on again, and trotted away as fast as she could. It was the first time that she had been out by daylight, and everything looked queer. The colors were too bright, and there seemed to be more noise than usual, and she met several people whom she had never seen before. She stopped for a minute to look at an Ovenbird's nest. The mother-bird was inside, sitting there very still and brave, although she was much frightened.

"Good morning," said Mrs. Groundhog. "I was just admiring your nest. I have never seen it by daylight."

"Good morning," answered the Ovenbird. "I'm glad you fancy my nest, but I hope you don't like to eat meat."

"Meat?" answered Mrs. Groundhog. "I never touch it." And she smiled and showed all her teeth.

"Oh," exclaimed the Ovenbird, "I see you don't, for you have gnawing-teeth, rather like those of the Rabbits." Then she hopped out of the nest and let Mrs. Groundhog peep in to see how the inside was finished and also to see the four speckled eggs which lay there.

"It is a lovely nest," said Mrs. Groundhog, "and those eggs are beauties. But I promised the children that I would hurry. Goodbye." She trotted happily away, while Mrs. Ovenbird settled herself upon her eggs again and thought what a pleasant call she had had and what an excellent and intelligent person Mrs. Groundhog was!

All this time the children at home were talking together about themselves and what their mother had told them. Once there was a long pause which lasted until the brother said: "I'm not afraid, are you?"

"Of course not," said they.

"Because there isn't anything to be afraid of," said he.

"Not anything," said they.

"And I wouldn't be afraid anyway," said he.

"Neither would we," answered the sisters.

There was another long pause.

"She said we'd be just as safe as if it were dark," said the big sister.

"Of course," said the brother.

"And she said she'd come back as soon as she could," said the second sister.

"I wish she'd come now," said the smallest sister.

There was another long pause.

"You don't suppose anybody would come here just to scare us, do you?" asked the second sister.

"See here," said the brother, "I wish you'd quit saying things to make a fellow afraid."

"You don't mean that you are frightened!" exclaimed the three sisters together. And the smallest one added: "Why, you are, too! I can feel you tremble."

"Well, I don't care," said the brother. "I'm not afraid of people, anyhow. If it were only dark I wouldn't mind."

"Oh, are you afraid of the daylight too?" cried each of the sisters. "So am I!" Then they all trembled together.

"I tell you what let's do," said the smallest sister. "Let's all stop looking toward the light end of the burrow, and cuddle up together and cover our eyes and make believe it's night." They did this and felt better. They even played that they heard the few noises of the nighttime. A Crow cawed outside, and the brother said, "Did you hear that Owl? That was the Great Horned Owl, the one who had to hatch the eggs, you know."

When another Crow cawed, the smallest sister said, "Was that his cousin, the Screech Owl?"

"Yes," answered the big sister. "He is the one who used to bring things for the Great Horned Owl to eat."

So they amused themselves and each other, and really got along very well except when, once in a while, they opened their eyes a little crack to see if it were not getting really dark. Then they had to begin all over again. At last their mother came, and what a comfort it was! How glad she was to be back, and how much she had to tell them! All about the Ovenbird's nest and the four eggs in it, and how the Ovenbirds spent their nights in sleeping and their days in work and play.

"I wonder if the little Ovenbirds will be scared when they have to stay alone in the daytime?" said the smallest sister.

"They would be more scared if they had to stay alone at night," said their mother.

"At night!" exclaimed all the young Groundhogs. "Why, it is dark then!"

"They might be afraid of the darkness," said their mother. Then the children laughed and thought she was making fun of them. They drank some milk and went to sleep like good little Groundhogs, but even after he was half asleep the big brother laughed out loud at the thought of the Ovenbird babies being scared at night. He could understand any one's being afraid of daylight, but darkness——!

Lesson 27: 'The Playful Muskrats' from *Among the Pond People* by Clara Dillingham Pierson

One warm day in winter, when some of the pussy-willows made a mistake and began to grow because they thought spring had come, a party of Muskrats were visiting in the marsh beside the pond. All around them were their winter houses, built of mud and coarse grasses. These homes looked like heaps of dried rushes, unless one went close to them. If one did that, he could plainly see what they were; and if one happened to be a Muskrat, and could dive and go into them through their watery doorways, he would find under the queer roof of each, a warm, dry room in which to pass the cold days.

"Fine weather!" said every Muskrat to his neighbor. "Couldn't sleep all of such a day as this." They spoke in that way, you know, because they usually sleep in the daytime and are awake at night.

"We wish it would always be warm weather," said the young Muskrats. "What's the use of winter?"

"Hard to tell," answered one Muskrat, who had lived in the marsh longer than the rest. "Hard to tell: I know it always gives me a good appetite, though." Then all the Muskrats laughed. They were a jolly, good-natured company, and easy to get along with. The other pond people liked them much better than they did their neighbors, the Minks. The Wild Ducks who nested in the sedges, were quite willing that the young Muskrats should play with their children, and the Mud Hens were not afraid of them. Mud Hens cannot bear Minks. They say that when a Mud Chicken is missing from the nest, there is quite sure to be a Mink somewhere near with a full stomach and down around the corners of his mouth.

Perhaps if the Wild Ducks and the Mud Hens were raising their families in the winter time it might be different, for then the Muskrats get hungry enough to eat almost anything. In spring and summer, when they can find fresh grasses and young rushes, or a few parsnips, carrots, and turnips from the farmers' fields, other animals are quite safe. In the winter they live mostly on roots.

"Fine day!" screamed the Gulls, as they swept through the air. "Pity the Frogs don't come out to enjoy it!"

"Yes, great pity," chuckled the old Muskrat. "How glad you would be to see them!" He smiled all around his little mouth and showed his gnawing teeth. He knew that the Frogs were better off asleep in the mud at the bottom of the pond, than they would be sitting in the sunshine with a few hungry Gulls above them. The Turtles were sleeping all winter, too, in the banks of the pond. The Eels were lying at the bottom, stupid and drowsy, and somewhere the Water-Adders were hidden away, dreaming of spring. Of all the birds who lived by the water, only the Gulls were there, and they were not popular. It is true that they helped keep the pond sweet and clean, and picked up and carried away many things which made the shore untidy, still, they were rude, and talked too loudly, and wore their feathers in such a way that they looked like fine large birds, when really they were lean and skinny and small. The other pond people said that was just like them, always pretending to be more than they really were.

Fifteen young Muskrats, all brothers and sisters, and all born the summer before, started off to look at the old home where they were children together. That is to say, they were not all there at once, but there were five born earlier in the season; and when they were old enough to look out for themselves, five more came to live in the old nest; and when these were old enough to leave the nest, another five were born.

It doesn't mean so much to Muskrats to be brothers and sisters as it does to some people, still they remembered that they were related, and they played more with each other than with those young Muskrats who were only their cousins or friends. Their mother was very proud of them,

and loved to watch them running around on their short legs, and to hear them slap their long, scaly tails on the water when they dove. They had short, downy fur, almost black on the back, soft gray underneath, and a reddish brown everywhere else. There was very little fur on their tails or on their feet, and those parts were black.

These fifteen children had been fairly well brought up, but you can see that their mother had many cares; so it is not strange if they sometimes behaved badly. In some other families, where there were only nine or ten babies all the season, they had been brought up more strictly. Like all young Muskrats, they were full of fun, and there were few pleasanter sights than to see them frolicking on a warm moonlight evening, when they looked like brown balls rolling and bounding around on the shore or plunging into the water. If they had all been exactly the same age, it would have been even pleasanter, for the oldest five would put on airs and call the others "the children"; and the next five would call the youngest five "babies"; although they were all well grown. There was no chance for the youngest five to call other Muskrats "babies," so when they were warm and well fed and good-natured they laughed and said, "Who cares?" When they were cold and hungry, they slapped their tails on the ground or on the water and said, "Don't you think you're smart!"

When they got to talking so and their mother heard it, she would say, "Now, children!" in such a way that they had to stop. Their father sometimes slapped them with his tail. Teasing is not so very bad, you know, although it is dreadfully silly, but when people begin by teasing they sometimes get to saying things in earnest—even really hateful, mean things. And that was what made the Muskrat father and mother stop it whenever they could.

Now the whole fifteen crowded around the old summer home, and some of them went in one way, and some of them went in another, for every Muskrat's summer house has several burrows leading to it. When they reached the old nest at the end, all of them tried to get in at once, and they pushed each other around with their broad little heads, scrambled and clutched and held on with their strong little feet. Five of them said, "It's our turn first. We're the oldest." And five more said, "Well, it's our turn next anyway, 'cause we're next oldest." The others said, "You might give up to us, because we're the youngest."

They pushed and scrambled some more, and one of the youngest children said to one of the oldest, "Well, I don't care. I'm just as big as you are" (which was so). And the older one answered back, "Well, you're not so good-looking" (which was also true).

Then part of the brothers and sisters took sides with one, and part took sides with the other. What had been a lovely frolic became an unpleasant, disgraceful quarrel, and they said such things as these:

"'Fore I'd make such a fuss!"

"Who's making any more fuss than you are, I'd like to know?"

"Oh, yes. You're big enough, but you're just as homely as you can be. So there!"

"Quit poking me!"

"You slapped your tail on my back!"

"I'm going to tell on you fellows!"

"I dare you to!"

"Won't you catch it though!"

And many more things which were even worse. Think of it. Fifteen young Muskrats who really loved each other, talking like that because they couldn't decide whether the oldest or the youngest or the half-way-between brothers and sisters should go first into the old nest. And it didn't matter a bit who was oldest or who was youngest, and it never would have happened had it not been for their dreadful habit of teasing.

Just as they had become very hot and angry, they heard their mother's voice say, "Now, children!" but they were too much excited to mind, and they did not stop until their father came and slapped them with his tail. Then they kept still and listened to their mother. She told them that they should leave the place at once, and not one of them should even set foot in the old nest. "Suppose somebody had gotten hurt," she said. This made the young Muskrats look very sober, for they knew that the Muskrat who is hurt in winter never gets well.

After she had let them think about this for awhile, she said, "I shall punish you all for this." Then there was no quarrel among her children to see who should have the first turn—not at all.

One young Muskrat said, "Aren't you going to let us play anymore?"

"Yes," she said. "I shall let you play all the rest of the day, but I shall choose the games. The oldest five will play 'Mud Turtles in winter,' the next five will play 'Frogs in winter,' and the youngest five will play 'Snakes in winter.' The way to play these games is to lie perfectly still in some dark place and not say a word."

The young Muskrats looked at each other sorrowfully. They thought it sounded very much the same as being sent to bed for being naughty. They did not dare say anything, for they knew that, although their mother was gentle, as Muskrats are most of the time, she could be very severe. So they went away quietly to play what she had told them they must. But it was not much fun to play those games when all the others were having a fine time in the sunshine.

There were nine of the young Muskrats who did not tease any after that. Even the other six were more careful.

Lesson 28: 'The Little Bat Who Wouldn't Go to Bed' from *Among the Forest People* by Clara Dillingham Pierson

"Come," said Mamma Bat, flying toward her home in the cave, "it is time that you children went to bed. The eastern sky is growing bright, and I can see the fleecy clouds blush rosy red as the sun looks at them."

The little Bats flitted along after her, and Papa Bat came behind them. They had been flying through the starlit forest all night, chasing the many small insects that come out after the sun has gone down, and passing in and out of the tangled branches without ever touching one. Indeed, Mamma Bat would have been ashamed if children of hers flew against anything in the dark. There might be some excuse for such a mistake in the daytime, for Bats' eyes do not see well then, but in the nighttime! She would have scolded them well, and they would have deserved it, for Bats have the most wonderful way of feeling things before they touch them, and there are no other people in the forest who can do that. There are no other people who can tell by the feeling of the air when something is near, and the Bats made much fun of their friend, the Screech Owl, once, when he flew against a tree and fell to the ground.

And now the night was over and their mother had called them to go home. One of the little Bats hung back with a very cross look on his face, and twice his father had to tell him to fly faster. He was thinking how he would like to see the forest in the daytime. He had never seen the sun rise, and he wanted to do that. He had never seen any of the day-birds or the animals that awaken in the morning. He thought it was pretty mean to make poor little Bats go off to bed the minute the stars began to fade. He didn't believe what his father and mother said, that he wouldn't have a good time if he did stay up. He had coaxed and coaxed and teased and teased, but it hadn't made a bit of difference. Every morning he had to fold his wings and go to sleep in a dark crack in the rock of the cave, hanging, head downward, close to the rest of the family. Their father said that there never was a better place to sleep than in this same crack, and it certainly was easy to catch on with the hooks at the lower ends of their wings when they hung themselves up for the day. But now he just wouldn't go to bed, so there!

"It is your turn next," said Mamma Bat to him, when the rest of the children had hung themselves up.

"I'm not going to bed," the little Bat answered.

"Not going to bed!" said his father. "Are you crazy?"

"No," said the little Bat, "I'm not."

"I don't believe the child is well," said Mamma Bat. "He never acted like this before. I'm afraid he has overeaten." And she looked very anxious.

"I am well, and I haven't eaten too much," said the little Bat. "I think you might let a fellow have some fun once in a while. I've never seen the sun in my life, and there are whole lots of birds and animals in the forest that I've only heard about."

Papa and Mamma Bat looked at each other without speaking.

"I won't go to bed!" said the little Bat.

"Very well," said his father. "I shall not try to make you. Fly away at once and let us go to sleep."

After he had gone, Mamma Bat said, "I suppose you did right to let him go, but it does seem too bad that children have to find out for themselves the trouble that comes from disobedience."

The little Bat flew away feeling very brave. He guessed he knew how to take care of himself, even in daylight. He felt sorry for his brothers who were in the cave, but he made up his mind that he would tell them all about it the next night.

The eastern sky grew brighter and brighter. It hurt his eyes to look at it, and he blinked and turned away. Then the song-birds awakened and began to sing. It was very interesting, but he thought they sang too loudly. The forest at night is a quiet place, and he didn't see the sense of shouting so, even if the sun was coming up. The night-birds never made such a fuss over the moon, and he guessed the moon was as good as the sun.

Somebody went scampering over the grass, kicking up his heels as he ran. "That must be a Rabbit," thought the little Bat. "The Screech Owl told me that Rabbits run in that way. I wish I could see him more plainly. I don't know what is the matter with my eyes."

Just then a sunbeam came slanting through the forest and fell on his furry coat as he clung to a branch. "Ow!" he cried. "Ow! How warm it is! I don't like that. The moonbeams do not feel so. I must fly to a shady corner." He started to fly. Just what was the matter, he never knew. It may have been because he couldn't see well, it may have been because he was getting very tired, or it may have been because the strangeness of it all was beginning to frighten him; but at all events, he went down, down, down until he found himself pitching and tumbling around in the grass.

A Crow had seen him fall, and cried loudly, "Come! Come! Come!" to his friends. The Rabbits, who were feeding nearby, came scampering along, making great leaps in their haste to see what was the matter. The Goldfinches, the Robins, the Orioles, the Woodpeckers, and many other birds came fluttering up. Even a Blue Jay sat on a branch above the Bat and shrieked, "Jay! Jay! Jay!" to add to the excitement. And last of all, the Groundhog appeared, coming slowly and with dignity, as a person who can remember his grandfather should do.

"What is the cause of all this commotion?" he asked. He might have said, "What is the matter?" and then they would have understood him at once, but he was too haughty for that. He thought he

had to use big words once in a while to show that he could. If people didn't understand them, he was willing to explain what he meant.

"We've found such a queer bird, sir," said the biggest little Rabbit, without waiting to find out what a "commotion" was. "Just see him tumble around!"

"Bird? That is no bird," said a Woodpecker. "Look at his ears and his nose. He hasn't even a bill."

"Well, he flies," said the biggest little Rabbit, "because I saw him, so he must be a bird."

"Humph!" said a Chipmunk. "So does my cousin, the Flying Squirrel, in a way, yet he is no more bird than I am."

"And this fellow hasn't a feather to his skin!" cried an Oriole.

"I don't say that my son is right," said Papa Rabbit, "but this creature has wings." And he gave the Bat a poke that made him flutter wildly for a minute.

"Yes, but what kind of wings?" asked the Goldfinch. "A pair of skinny things that grow on to his legs and have hooks on both ends."

"He must be a very stupid fellow, at all events," said the Groundhog. "He doesn't talk, or walk, or eat, or even fly well. He must come of a very common family. For my part, I am not interested in persons of that kind." And he walked away with his nose in the air.

Now the other forest people would have liked to watch the Bat longer, but after the Groundhog had gone off in this way, they thought it would show too much curiosity if they stayed. So one after another went away, and the little Bat was left alone. He fluttered around until he reached the branch where the Blue Jay had been, and there he hung himself up to wait until night.

"Oh dear!" he said, "I wonder how long a day is. I am hot and blind and sleepy, and if any more of the forest people come and talk about me, I don't know what I shall do. They don't think me good-looking because my wings grow to my legs. I only wish I could see what they look like. I believe they are just as homely."

And then, because he was a very tired little Bat, and cross, as people always are when they have done wrong, he began to blame somebody else for all his trouble.

"If my father and mother had cared very much about me," he said, "they would never have let me stay up all day. Guess if I were a big Bat and had little Bats of my own, I'd take better care of them!" But that is always the way, and when, long afterward, he was a big Bat with little Bats of his own, he was a much wiser person.

Lesson 29: 'The Tail of Tommy Trout Who Did Not Mind' from *Old Mother West Wind* by Thornton W. Burgess

In the Laughing Brook, which rippled and sings all day long, lived Mr. Trout and Mrs. Trout, and a whole lot of little Trouts. There were so many little Trouts that Mr. Trout and Mrs. Trout were kept very busy indeed getting breakfast and dinner and supper for them, and watching out for them and teaching them how to swim and how to catch foolish little flies that sometimes fell on the water and how to keep out of the way of big hungry fish and sharp eyed Mr. Kingfisher and big men and little boys who came fishing with hooks and lines.

Now all the little Trouts were very, very good and minded just what Mrs. Trout told them—all but Tommy Trout, for Tommy Trout—oh, dear, dear! Tommy Trout never could mind right away. He always had to wait a little instead of minding when he was spoken to.

Tommy Trout didn't mean to be bad. Oh dear, no! He just wanted to have his own way, and because Tommy Trout had his own way and didn't mind Mrs. Trout there isn't any Tommy Trout now. No sir, there isn't as much as one little blue spot of his beautiful little coat left because—why, just because Tommy Trout didn't mind.

One day when round, red Mr. Sun was shining and the Laughing Brook was singing on its way to join the Big River, Mrs. Trout started to get some nice plump flies for dinner. All the little Trouts were playing in their dear little pool, safe behind the Big Rock. Before she started Mrs. Trout called all the little Trouts around her and told them not to leave their little pool while she was gone, "For," said she, "something dreadful might happen to you."

All the little Trouts, except Tommy Trout, promised that they would surely, surely stay inside their dear little pool. Then they all began to jump and chase each other and play as happy as could be, all but Tommy Trout.

As soon as Mrs. Trout had started, Tommy Trout swam off by himself to the edge of the pool. "I wonder what is on the other side of the Big Rock," said Tommy Trout. "The sun is shining and the brook is laughing and nothing could happen if I go just a little speck of a ways."

So, when no one was looking, Tommy Trout slipped out of the safe little pool where all the other little Trouts were playing. He swam just a little speck of a ways farther still. Now he could see almost around the Big Rock. Then he swam just a little speck of a ways farther and—oh dear, dear! he looked right into the mouth of a great big, big fish called Mr. Pickerel, who is very fond of little Trouts and would like to eat one for breakfast every day.

"Ah ha!" said Mr. Pickerel, opening his big, big mouth very, very wide.

Tommy Trout turned to run back to the dear, dear safe little pool where all the other little Trouts were playing so happily, but he was too late. Into that great big, big mouth he went instead, and Mr. Pickerel swallowed him whole.

"Ah ha," said Mr. Pickerel, "I like little Trouts."

And nothing more was ever heard of Tommy Trout, who didn't mind.

Lesson 30: 'The Tadpole Who Wanted to be Grown Up' from *Among the Pond People* by Clara Dillingham Pierson

It was a bright, warm April day when the First Tadpole of the season ate his way out of the jelly-covered egg in which he had come to life. He was a very tiny, dark brown fellow. It would be hard to tell just what he did look like, for there is nothing in the world that one Tadpole looks like unless it is another Tadpole. He had a very small head with a busy little mouth opening on the front side of it: just above each end of this mouth was a shining black eye, and on the lower side of his head was a very wiggly tail. Somewhere between his head and the tip of this were his small stomach and places for legs, but one could not see all that in looking at him. It seemed as if what was not head was tail, and what was not tail was head.

When the First Tadpole found himself free in the water, he swam along by the great green floating jelly-mass of Frogs' eggs, and pressed his face up close to first one egg and then another. He saw other Tadpoles almost as large as he, and they were wriggling inside their egg homes. He couldn't talk to them through the jelly-mass—he could only look at them, and they looked greenish because he saw them through green jelly. They were really dark brown, like him. He wanted them to come out to play with him and he tried to show them that it was more interesting where he was, so he opened and shut his hard little jaws very fast and took big Tadpole-mouthfuls of green jelly.

Perhaps it was seeing this, and perhaps it was because the warm sunshine made them restless—but for some reason the shut-in Tadpoles nibbled busily at the egg-covering and before long were in the water with their brother. They all looked alike, and nobody except that one particular Tadpole knew who had been the first to hatch. He never forgot it, and indeed why should he? If one has ever been the First Tadpole, he is quite sure to remember the loneliness of it all his life.

Soon they dropped to the bottom of the pond and met their neighbors. They were such little fellows that nobody paid much attention to them. The older pond people often seemed to forget that the Tadpoles heard what they said, and cared too. The Minnows swam in and out among them, and hit them with their fins, and slapped them with their tails, and called them "little-big-mouths," and the Tadpoles couldn't hit back because they were so little. The Minnows didn't hurt the Tadpoles, but they made fun of them, and even the smallest Minnow would swim away if a Tadpole tried to play with him.

Then the Eels talked among themselves about them. "I shall be glad," said one old Father Eel, "when these youngsters hide their breathing-gills and go to the top of the water."

"So shall I," exclaimed a Mother Eel. "They keep their tails wiggling so that it hurts my eyes to look at them. Why can't they lie still and be good?"

Now the Tadpoles looked at each other with their shining black eyes. "What are our breathing-gills?" they asked. "They must be these little things on the sides of our heads."

"They are!" cried the First Tadpole. "The Biggest Frog said so. But I don't see where we can hide them, because they won't come off. And how could we ever breathe water without them?"

"Hear the children talk," exclaimed the Green Brown Frog, who had come down to look the Tadpoles over and decide which were hers. "Why, you won't always want to breathe water. Before long you will have to breathe air by swallowing it, and then you cannot stay long under water. I must go now. I am quite out of breath. Goodbye!"

Then the Tadpoles looked again at each other. "She didn't tell us what to do with our breathing-gills," they said. One of the Tadpoles who had hatched last, swam up to the First Tadpole. "Your breathing-gills are not so large as mine," she said.

"They surely are!" he exclaimed, for he felt very big indeed, having been the first to hatch.

"Oh, but they are not!" cried all his friends. "They don't stick out as they used to." And that was true, for his breathing-gills were sinking into his head, and they found that this was happening to all the older Tadpoles.

The next day they began going to the top to breathe air, the oldest ones first, and so on until they were all there. They thought it much pleasanter than the bottom of the pond, but it was not so safe. There were more dangers to be watched for here, and some of the careless young Tadpoles never lived to be Frogs. It is sad, yet it is always so.

Sometimes the Frogs came to see them, and once—once, after the Tadpoles had gotten their hindlegs, the Biggest Frog sat in the marsh near by and told them stories of his Tadpolehood. He said that he was always a very good little Tadpole, and always did as the Frogs told him to do; and that he was such a promising little fellow that every Mother Frog in the pond was sure that he had been hatched from one of her eggs.

"And were you?" asked one Tadpole, who never listened carefully, and so was always asking stupid questions.

The Biggest Frog looked at him very sternly. "No," he said, "I was not. Each wanted me as her son, but I never knew to which I belonged. I never knew! Still," he added, "it does not so much matter who a Frog's mother is, if the Frog is truly great." Then he filled the sacs on each side of his neck with air, and croaked loudly. His sister afterward told the Tadpoles that he was thinking of one of the forest people, the Groundhog, who was very proud because he could remember his grandfather.

The Green Brown Frog came often to look at them and see how they were growing. She was very fond of the First Tadpole. "Why, you have your forelegs!" she exclaimed one morning. "How you do grow!"

"What will I have next?" he asked, "more legs or another tail?"

The Green Brown Frog smiled the whole length of her mouth, and that was a very broad smile indeed. "Look at me," she said. "What change must come next to make you look like a Frog?"

"You haven't any tail," he said slowly. "Is that all the difference between us Tadpoles and Frogs?"

"That is all the difference now," she answered, "but it will take a long, long time for your tail to disappear. It will happen with that quite as it did with your breathing-gills. You will grow bigger and bigger and bigger, and it will grow smaller and smaller and smaller, until some day you will find yourself a Frog." She shut her mouth to get her breath, because, you know, Frogs can only breathe a little through their skins, and then only when they are wet. Most of their air they take in through their noses and swallow with their mouths closed. That is why they cannot make long speeches. When their mouths are open they cannot swallow air.

After a while she spoke again. "It takes as many years to make a newly hatched Tadpole into a fully grown Frog," she said, "as there are toes on one of your hindfeet."

The First Tadpole did not know what a year was, but he felt sure from the way in which she spoke that it was a long, long time, and he was in a hurry to grow up. "I want to be a Frog sooner!" he said, crossly. "It isn't any fun at all being a Tadpole." The Green Brown Frog swam away, he was becoming so disagreeable.

The First Tadpole became crosser and crosser, and was very unreasonable. He did not think of the pleasant things which happened every day, but only of the trying ones. He did not know that Frogs often wished themselves Tadpoles again, and he sulked around in the pondweed all day. Every time he looked at one of his hindfeet it reminded him of what the Green Brown Frog had said, and he even grew out of patience with his tail—the same strong wiggly little tail of which he had been so proud.

"Horrid old thing!" he said, giving it a jerk. "Won't I be glad to get rid of you?" Then he thought of something—foolish, vain little First Tadpole that he was. He thought and he thought and he thought and he thought, and when his playmates swam around him he wouldn't chase them, and when they asked him what was the matter, he just answered, "Oh nothing!" as carelessly as could be.

The truth was that he wanted to be a Frog right away, and he thought he knew how he could be. He didn't want to tell the other Tadpoles because he didn't want any one else to become a Frog as

soon as he. After a while he swam off to see the Snapping Turtle. He was very much afraid of the Snapping Turtle, and yet he thought him the best one to see just now. "I came to see if you would snap off my tail," said he.

"Your what?" said the Snapping Turtle, in his most surprised way.

"My tail," answered the First Tadpole, who had never had a tail snapped off, and thought it could be easily done. "I want to be a Frog today and not wait."

"Certainly," said the Snapping Turtle. "With pleasure! No trouble at all! Anything else I can do for you?"

"No, thank you," said the First Tadpole, "only you won't snap off too much, will you?"

"Not a bit," answered the Snapping Turtle, with a queer look in his eyes. "And if any of your friends are in a hurry to grow up, I shall be glad to help them." Then he swam toward the First Tadpole and did as he had been asked to do.

The next morning all the other Tadpoles crowded around to look at the First Tadpole. "Why-ee!" they cried. "Where is your tail?"

"I don't know," he answered, "but I think the Snapping Turtle could tell you."

"What is this?" asked the Green Brown Frog, swimming up to them. "Did the Snapping Turtle try to catch you? You poor little fellow! How did it happen?" She was very fond of the First Tadpole, and had about decided that he must be one of her sons.

"Well," he said slowly, for he didn't want the other Tadpoles to do the same thing, "I met him last evening and he—"

"Snapped at you!" exclaimed the Green Brown Frog. "It is lucky for you that he doesn't believe in eating hearty suppers, that is all I have to say! But you are a very foolish Tadpole not to keep out of his way, as you have always been told you must."

Then the First Tadpole lost his temper. "I'm not foolish, and I'm not a Tadpole," he said. "I asked him to snap it off, and now I am a Frog!"

"Oho!" said the voice of the Yellow Brown Frog behind him. "You are a Frog, are you? Let's hear you croak then. Come out on the bank and have a hopping match with me."

"I—I don't croak yet," stammered the First Tadpole, "a—and I don't care to hop."

"You are just a tailless Tadpole," said the Yellow Brown Frog sternly. "Don't any more of you youngsters try such a plan, or some of you will be Tadpole-less tails and a good many of you won't be anything."

The old Snapping Turtle waited all morning for some more Tadpoles who wanted to be made into Frogs, but none came. The Biggest Frog croaked hoarsely when he heard of it. "Tails! Tails! Tails! Tails! Tails! Tails! Tails! Tails!" said he. "That youngster will never be a strong Frog. Tadpoles must be Tadpoles, tails and all, for a long time, if they hope to ever be really fine Frogs like me." And that is so, as any Frog will tell you.

The Green Brown Frog sighed as she crawled out on the bank. "What a silly Tadpole," she said; "I'm glad he isn't my child!"

Lesson 31: 'The Biggest Frog Awakens' from *Among the Pond People* by Clara Dillingham Pierson

The Biggest Frog stretched the four toes of his right forefoot. Then he stretched the four toes of his left forefoot. Then he stretched the five toes of his right hindfoot. And last of all he stretched the four toes of his left hindfoot. Then he stretched all seventeen toes at once. He should have had eighteen toes to stretch, like his friends and neighbors, but something had happened to the eighteenth one a great many years before. None of the pond people knew what had happened to it, but something had, and when the Tadpoles teased him to tell them what, he only stared at them with his great eyes and said, "My children, that story is too sad to tell."

After the Biggest Frog had stretched all his toes, he stretched his legs and twitched his lips. He poked his head out of the mud a very, very little way, and saw a Minnow swimming past. "Good day!" said he. "Is it time to get up?"

"Time!" exclaimed the Minnow, looking at him with her mouth open. "I should say it was. Why, the watercress is growing!"

Now every one who lives in a pond knows that when the watercress begins to grow, it is time for all the winter sleepers to awaken. The Biggest Frog crawled out of the mud and poked this way and that all around the spot where he had spent the cold weather. "Wake up!" he said. "Wake up! Wake up!" The water grew dark and cloudy because he kicked up so much mud, but when it began to clear again he saw the heads of his friends peeping up everywhere out of that part of the pond bottom. Seven of them had huddled close to him all winter. "Come out!" he cried. "The spring is here, and it is no time for Frogs to be asleep."

"Asleep! No indeed!" exclaimed his sister, an elderly and hard-working Frog, as she swam to the shore and crawled out on it. She ate every bit of food that she found on the way, for neither she nor any of the others had taken a mouthful since the fall before.

The younger Frogs followed through the warmer shallow water until they were partly out of it. There is always a Biggest Frog in every pond. All the young Frogs thought how fine it would be to become the Biggest Frog of even a very small puddle, for then they could tell the others what to do. Now they looked at their leader and each said to himself, "Perhaps some day I shall begin the concert."

The Biggest Frog found a comfortable place and sat down. He toed in with his eight front toes, as well-bred frogs do, and all his friends toed in with their eight front toes. He toed out with his nine back toes, and all his friends toed out with their ten back toes. One young Yellow Brown Frog said, "How I wish I did not have that bothersome fifth toe on my left hindfoot! It is so in the way! Besides, there is such a style about having one's hind feet different." He spoke just loud enough for the Biggest Frog to hear. Any one would know from this remark that he was young and foolish, for when people are wise they know that the most beautiful feet and ears and bodies are just the way that they were first made to be.

Now the Biggest Frog swallowed a great deal of air, filled the sacs on each side of his neck with it, opened his big mouth, and sang croakily, "Frogs! Frogs! Frogs! Frogs! Frogs! Frogs! Frogs! Frogs!" And all the others sang, "Frogs! Frogs! Frogs!" as long as he. The Gulls heard it, and the Muskrats heard it, and all were happy because spring had come.

A beautiful young Green Brown Frog, who had never felt grown-up until now, tried to sing with the others, but she had not a strong voice, and was glad enough to stop and visit with the Biggest Frog's Sister. "Don't you wish we could sing as loudly as they can?" said she.

"No," answered the Biggest Frog's Sister. "I would rather sit on the bank and think about my spring work. Work first, you know, and pleasure afterward!"

"Oh!" said the Green Brown Frog. "Then you don't want to sing until your work is done?"

"You may be very sure I don't want to sing then," answered the older Frog. "I am too tired. Besides, after the eggs are laid, there is no reason for wanting to sing."

"Why not?" asked the Green Brown Frog. "I don't see what difference that makes."

"That," said the older Frog wisely, "is because you are young and have never laid eggs. The great time for singing is before the eggs are laid. There is some singing afterward, but that is only because people expect it of us, and not because we have the same wish to sing." After she had said all this, which was a great deal for a Frog to say at once, she shut her big mouth and slid her eyelids over her eyes.

There was another question which the Green Brown Frog wanted very much to ask, but she had good manners and knew that it was impolite to speak to any Frog whose eyes were not open. So she closed her own eyes and tried to think what the answer would be. When she opened them

again, the Biggest Frog's Sister had hopped away, and in her place sat the Yellow Brown Frog, the same handsome young fellow who had found one of his toes in the way. It quite startled her to find him sitting so close to her and she couldn't think of anything to say, so she just looked at him with her great beautiful eyes and toed in a little more with her front feet. That made him look at them and see how pretty they were, although of course this was not the reason why she had moved them.

The Yellow Brown Frog hopped a little nearer and sang as loudly as he could, "Frogs! Frogs! Frogs! Frogs! Frogs! Frogs! Frogs! Frogs!" Then she knew that he was singing just for her, and she was exceedingly happy. She swallowed air very fast because she seemed to be out of breath from thinking what she should answer. She had wanted to ask the Biggest Frog's Sister what she should say if anyone sang to her alone. She knew that if she wanted to get away from him, all she had to do was to give a great jump and splash into the water. She didn't want to go away, yet she made believe that she did, for she hopped a little farther from him.

He knew she was only pretending, though, for she hadn't hopped more than the length of a grass-blade. So he followed her and kept on singing. Because she knew that she must say something, she just opened her mouth and sang the first words that she could think of; and what she sang was, "Eggs! Eggs! Eggs! Eggs! Eggs! Eggs! Eggs! Eggs!" As it happened, this was exactly what she should have sung, so he knew that she liked him. They stayed together for a long, long time, and he sang a great deal and very loudly, and she sang a little and very softly.

After awhile she remembered that she was now a fully grown Frog and had spring work to do, and she said to him, "I really must lay some eggs. I am going into the water."

"Then I will go too," said he. And they gave two great leaps and came down with two great splashes.

The Green Brown Frog laid eggs for four days, and the Yellow Brown Frog stayed with her all that time and took care of the eggs after she had laid them. They were covered with a sort of green jelly which made them stick to each other as they floated in little heaps on the water. The Frogs thought that a good thing, for then, when the Tadpoles hatched, each would have playmates near.

One day, after the eggs were all laid and were growing finely (for Frogs' eggs grow until the Tadpoles are ready to eat their way out), the Green Brown Frog sat alone on the bank of the pond and the Biggest Frog's Sister came to her. She had a queer smile around the corners of her mouth. Frogs have excellent mouths for smiling, but it takes a very broad smile to go way across, so when they smile a little it is only at the corners. "How are your eggs growing?" she asked.

"Oh," answered the Green Brown Frog sadly, "I can't tell which ones they are."

"That's just like a young Frog," said the Biggest Frog's Sister. "Is there any reason why you should know which ones they are? It isn't as though you were a bird and had to keep them warm, or as though you were a Mink and had to feed your children. The sun will hatch them and they will feed themselves all they need."

"I think," said the Green Brown Frog, "that my eggs were a little better than the rest."

"Yes," croaked the Biggest Frog's Sister, "every Frog thinks that."

"And I wanted to have my own Tadpoles to look after," sighed the Green Brown Frog.

"Why?" asked the Biggest Frog's Sister. "Can't you take any comfort with a Tadpole unless you laid the egg from which he was hatched? I never know one of my own eggs a day after it is laid. There are such a lot floating around that they are sure to get mixed. But I just make the best of it."

"How?" asked the Green Brown Frog, looking a little more cheerful.

"Oh, I swim around and look at all the eggs, and whenever I see any Tadpoles moving in them I think, 'Those may be mine!' As they are hatched I help anyone who needs it. Poor sort of Frog it would be who couldn't like other people's Tadpoles!"

"I believe I'll do that way," said the Green Brown Frog. "And then," she added, "what a comfort it will be if any of them are cross or rude, to think, 'I'm glad I don't know that they are mine.'"

"Yes," said the Biggest Frog's Sister. "I often tell my brother that I pity people who have to bring up their own children. It is much pleasanter to let them grow up as they do and then adopt the best ones. Do you know, I have almost decided that you are my daughter? My brother said this morning that he thought you looked like me."

Lesson 32: 'Why Mr. Snake Cannot Wink' from *Mother West Wind Why Stories* by Thornton W. Burgess

Peter Rabbit and Johnny Chuck were playing tag on the Green Meadows. Of course Peter can run so much faster than Johnny Chuck that he would never have been "it" if he had tried his best to keep out of the way. But he didn't. No, Sir, Peter Rabbit didn't do anything of the kind. He pretended that one of his long hind-legs was lame so that he had to run on three legs, while Johnny Chuck could use all four. It was great fun. They raced and dodged and twisted and turned. Sometimes Peter was so excited that he would forget and use all four legs. Then Johnny Chuck would shout "No fair!" Peter would say that he didn't mean to, and to make up for it would be "it" and try to catch Johnny.

Now it happened that curled up on a little grassy tussock, taking an early morning sun-bath, lay little Mr. Greensnake. Of course Peter Rabbit and Johnny Chuck were not afraid of him. If it had

been Mr. Rattlesnake or Mr. Gophersnake, it would have been different. But from little Mr. Greensnake there was nothing to fear, and sometimes, just for fun, Peter would jump right over him. When he did that, Peter always winked good-naturedly. But Mr. Greensnake never winked back. Instead he would raise his head, run his tongue out at Peter, and hiss in what he tried to make a very fierce and angry manner. Then Peter would laugh and wink at him again. But never once did Mr. Greensnake wink back.

Peter was thinking of this as he and Johnny Chuck stretched out in a sunny spot to get their breath and rest. He had never thought of it before, but now that he had noticed it, he couldn't remember that he ever had seen little Mr. Greensnake wink, nor any of Mr. Greensnake's relatives. He mentioned the matter to Johnny Chuck.

"That's so," replied Johnny thoughtfully. "I never have seen any of them wink, either. Do you suppose they can wink?"

"Let's go ask Mr. Greensnake," said Peter.

Up they hopped and raced over to the grassy tussock where Mr. Greensnake lay, but to all their questions he would make no reply save to run out his tongue at them. Finally they gave up asking him.

"I tell you what, let's go over to the Smiling Pool and ask Grandfather Frog. He'll be sure to know, and perhaps, if he is feeling good, he'll tell us a story," said Peter.

So off they scampered to the Smiling Pool. There they found Grandfather Frog sitting on his big green lily-pad just as usual, and Peter knew by the look in his great, goggly eyes that Grandfather Frog had a good breakfast of foolish green flies tucked away inside his white and yellow waistcoat. His eyes twinkled as Peter and Johnny very politely wished him good morning.

"Good morning," said he gruffly.

But Peter had seen that twinkle in his eyes and knew that Grandfather Frog was feeling good-natured in spite of his gruff greeting.

"If you please, Grandfather Frog, why doesn't Mr. Greensnake wink at us when we wink at him?" he asked.

"Chug-a-rum! Because he can't," replied Grandfather Frog.

"Can't!" cried Peter Rabbit and Johnny Chuck together.

"That's what I said--can't," replied Grandfather Frog. "And no more can Mr. Blacksnake, or Mr. Rattlesnake, or Mr. Gophersnake, or any other member of the Snake family."

"Why not?" cried Peter and Johnny, all in the same breath.

"Chug-a-rum!" said Grandfather Frog, folding his hands across his white and yellow waistcoat, "if you will sit still until I finish, I'll tell you; but if you move or ask any foolish questions, I'll stop right where I am, and you'll never hear the end of the story, for no one else knows it."

Of course Peter and Johnny promised to sit perfectly still and not say a word. After they had made themselves comfortable, Grandfather Frog cleared his throat as if to begin, but for a long time he didn't say a word. Once Peter opened his mouth to ask why, but remembered in time and closed it again without making a sound.

At last Grandfather Frog cleared his throat once more, and with a far-away look in his great, goggly eyes began:

"Once upon a time, long, long ago, when the world was young, lived old Mr. Snake, the grandfather a thousand times removed of little Mr. Greensnake and all the other Snakes whom you know. Of course he wasn't old then. He was young and spry and smart, was Mr. Snake. Now there is such a thing as being too smart. That was the trouble with Mr. Snake. Yes, Sir, that was the trouble with Mr. Snake. He was so smart that he soon found out that he was the smartest of all the meadow and forest people, and that was a bad thing. It certainly was a very bad thing." Grandfather Frog shook his head gravely.

"You see," he continued, "as soon as he found that out, he began to take advantage of his neighbors and cheat them, but he would do it smoothly that they never once suspected that they were being cheated. Mr. Snake would go about all day cheating everybody he met. At night he would go home and chuckle over his smartness. It wasn't long before he began to look down on his neighbors for being so honest that they didn't suspect other people of being dishonest, and for being so easily cheated.

"Now one bad habit almost always leads to another. From cheating, Mr. Snake just naturally slipped to stealing. Yes, Sir, he became a thief. Of course that made trouble right away, but still no one suspected Mr. Snake. He was always very polite to everyone and always offering to do favors for his neighbors. In fact, Mr. Snake was very well liked and much respected. When anyone had been robbed, he was always the first to offer sympathy and join in the hunt for the thief. He was so spry and slim, and could slip through the tall grass so fast, that he could go almost where he pleased without being seen, and this made him very bold. If he did happen to be found near the scene of trouble, he always had a story ready to account for his presence, and it sounded so true, and he told it in such an honest manner, that no one thought of doubting it.

"So Mr. Snake found that lying helped him to cheat and steal, and all the time he kept thinking how smart he was. But even Mr. Snake had a little bit of conscience, and once in awhile it would trouble him. So what do you think he did? Why, cheating had become such a habit with him that he actually tried to cheat himself--to cheat his conscience! When he was telling a lie, he would

wink one eye. 'That,' said he to himself, 'means that it isn't true, and if these folks are not smart enough to see me wink and know what it means, it is their own fault if they believe what I am telling them.' But always he took care to wink the eye that was turned away from the one he was talking to.

"Dear me, dear me, such terrible times as there were on the Green Meadows and in the Green Forest! They grew worse and worse, and when at last Old Mother Nature came to see how all the little people were getting along, she heard so many complaints that she hardly knew where to begin to straighten matters out. She had all the little people come before her in turn and tell their troubles. When it came Mr. Snake's turn, he had no complaint to make. He seemed to be the only one who had no troubles. She asked him a great many questions, and for each one he had a ready reply. Of course a great many of these replies were lies, and every time he told one of these, he winked without knowing it. You see, it had become a habit.

"Now, with all his smartness, Mr. Snake had forgotten one thing, one very important thing. It was this: You can't fool Old Mother Nature, and it is of no use to try. He hadn't been talking three minutes before she knew who was at the bottom of all the trouble. She let him finish, then called all the others about her and told them who had made all the trouble. Mr. Snake was very bold. He held his head very high in the air and pretended not to care. When Old Mother Nature turned her head, he even ran out his tongue at her, just as all the Snake family do at you and me today. When she had finished telling them how cheating and stealing and lying isn't smart at all, but very, very dreadful, she turned to Mr. Snake and said:

"'From this time on, no one will believe anything you say, and you shall have no friends. You will never wink again, for you and your children and your children's children forever will have no eyelids, that all the world may know that those who make a wrong use of the things given them shall have them taken away.'

"And now you know why little Mr. Greensnake cannot wink at you; he hasn't any eyelids to wink with" finished Grandfather Frog.

Peter Rabbit drew a long breath. "Thank you, oh, thank you ever so much, Grandfather Frog," he said. "Will you tell us next time why Bobby Coon wears rings on his tail?"

"Perhaps," replied Grandfather Frog.

Lesson 33: 'The Snappy Snapping Turtle' from *Among the Pond People* by Clara Dillingham Pierson

There was but one Snapping Turtle in the pond, and he was the only person there who had ever been heard to wish for another. He had not always lived there, and could just remember leaving his brothers and sisters when he was young. "I was carried away from my people," he said, "and kept on land for a few days. Then I was brought here and have made it my home ever since."

One could tell by looking at him that he was related to the Mud Turtles. He had upper and lower shells like them, and could draw in his head and legs and tail when he wanted to. His shells were gray, quite the color of a clay-bank, and his head was larger than those of the Mud Turtles. His tail was long and scaly and pointed, and his forelegs were large and warty. There were fine, strong webs between his toes, as there were between the toes of his relatives, the Mud Turtles.

When he first came to live in the pond, people were sorry for him, and tried to make him feel at home. He had a chance to win many friends and have all his neighbors fond of him, but he was too snappy. When the water was just warm enough, and his stomach was full, and he had slept well the night before, and everything was exactly as he wished it to be,—ah, then he was a very agreeable Turtle, and was ready to talk in the most gracious way to his neighbors. That was all very well. Anybody can be good-natured when everything is exactly right and he can have his own way. But the really delightful people, you know, are the ones who are pleasant when things go wrong.

It was a Mud Turtle Father who first spoke to him. "I hope you'll like the pond," said he. "We think it very homelike and comfortable."

"Humph! Shallow little hole!" snapped the one who had just come. "I bump my head on the bottom every time I dive."

"That is too bad," exclaimed the Mud Turtle Father. "I hope you dive where there is a soft bottom."

"Sometimes I do and sometimes I don't," answered the Snapping Turtle. "I can't bother to swim down slowly and try it, and then go back to dive. When I want to dive, I want to dive, and that's all there is to it."

"Yes," said the Mud Turtle Father. "I know how it is when one has the diving feeling. I hope your head will not trouble you much, and that you will soon be used to our waters." He spread his toes and swam strongly away, pushing against the water with his webbed feet.

"Humph!" said the Snapping Turtle to himself. "It is all very well to talk about getting used to these waters, but I never shall. I can hardly see now for the pain in the right side of my head, where I bumped it. Or was it the left side I hit? Queer I can't remember!" Then he swam to shallow water, and drew himself into his shell, and lay there and thought how badly he felt, and how horrid the pond was, and what poor company his neighbors were, and what a disagreeable world this is for Snapping Turtles.

The Mud Turtle Father went home and told his wife all about it. "What a disagreeable fellow!" she said. "But then, he is a bachelor, and bachelors are often queer."

"I never was," said her husband.

"Oh!" said she. And, being a wise wife, she did not say anything else. She knew, however, that Mr. Mud Turtle was a much more agreeable fellow since he had married and learned to think more of somebody else than of himself. It is the people who think too much of themselves you know, who are most unhappy in this world.

The Eels also tried to be friendly, and, when he dove to the bottom, called to him to stay and visit with them. "You must excuse us from making the first call," they said. "We go out so little in the daytime."

"Humph!" said the Snapping Turtle. "Do you good to get away from home more. No wonder your eyes are weak, when you lie around in the mud of the dark pond-bottom all day. Indeed, I'll not stay. You can come to see me like other people."

Then he swam away and told the Clams what he had said, and he acted quite proud of what was really dreadful rudeness. "It'll do them good to hear the truth," said he. "I always speak right out. They are as bad as the Water-Adder. They have no backbone."

The Clams listened politely and said nothing. They never did talk much. The Snapping Turtle was mistaken though, when he said that the Eels and the Water-Adder had no backbone. They really had much more than he, but they wore theirs inside, while his was spread out in the shape of a shell for everybody to see.

He did not even try to keep his temper. He became angry one day because Belostoma, the Giant Water-Bug, ate something which he wanted for himself. His eyes glared and his horny jaws snapped, and he waved his long, pointed, scaly tail in a way which was terrible to see. "You are a good-for-nothing bug," he said. "You do no work, and you eat more than any other person of your size here. Nobody likes you, and there isn't a little fish in the pond who would be seen with you if he could help it. They all hide if they see you coming. I'll be heartily glad when you get your wings and fly away. Don't let any of your friends lay their eggs in this pond. I've seen enough of your family."

Of course this made Belostoma feel very badly. He was not a popular bug, and it is possible that if he could have had his own way, he would have chosen to be a Crayfish or a Stickleback, rather than what he was. As for his not working—there was nothing for him to do, so how could he work? He had to eat, or he would not grow, and since the Snapping Turtle was a hearty eater himself, he should have had the sense to keep still about that. Belostoma told the Mud Turtles what the Snapping Turtle had said, and the Mud Turtle Father spoke of it to the Snapping Turtle.

By that time the Snapping Turtle was feeling better natured and was very gracious. "Belostoma shouldn't remember those things," said he, moving one warty foreleg. "When I am angry, I often say things that I do not mean; but then, I get right over it. I had almost forgotten my little talk with him. I don't see any reason for telling him I am sorry. He is very silly to think so much of it." He lifted his big head quite high, and acted as though it was really a noble thing to be ugly

and then forget about it. He might just as sensibly ask people to admire him for not eating when his stomach was full, or for lying still when he was too tired to swim.

When the Mud Turtle Mother heard of this, she was quite out of patience. "All he cares for," said she, "is just Snapping Turtle, Snapping Turtle, Snapping Turtle. When he is good-natured, he thinks everybody else ought to be; and when he is bad-tempered he doesn't care how other people feel. He will never be any more agreeable until he does something kind for somebody, and I don't see any chance of that happening."

There came a day, though, when the pond people were glad that the Snapping Turtle lived there. Two boys were wading in the edge of the pond, splashing the water and scaring all the people who were near them. The Sticklebacks turned pale all over, as they do when they are badly frightened. The Yellow Brown Frog was so scared that he emptied out the water he had saved for wetting his skin in dry weather. He had a great pocket in his body filled with water, for if his skin should get dry he couldn't breathe through it, and unless he carried water with him he could not stay ashore at all.

The boys had even turned the Mud Turtle Father onto his back in the sunshine, where he lay, waving his feet in the air, but not strong enough to get right side up again. The Snapping Turtle was taking a nap in deep water, when the frightened fishes came swimming toward him as fast as their tails would take them. "What is the matter?" said he.

"Boys!" cried they. "Boys! The dreadful, splashing, Turtle-turning kind."

"Humph!" said the Snapping Turtle. "I'll have to see about that. How many are there?"

"Two!" cried the Sticklebacks and Minnows together.

"And there is only one of me," said the Snapping Turtle to himself. "I must have somebody to help me. Oh, Belostoma," he cried, as the Giant Water-Bug swam past. "Help me drive those boys away."

"With pleasure," said Belostoma, who liked nothing better than this kind of work. Off they started for the place where the boys were wading. The Snapping Turtle took long, strong strokes with his webbed feet, and Belostoma could not keep up with him. The Snapping Turtle saw this. "Jump onto my back," cried he. "You are a light fellow. Hang tight."

Belostoma jumped onto the Snapping Turtle's clay-colored shell, and when he found himself slipping off the back end of it, he stuck his claws into the Snapping Turtle's tail and held on in that way. He knew that he was not easily hurt, even if he did make a fuss when he bumped his head. As soon as they got near the boys, the Snapping Turtle spoke over his back-shell to Belostoma. "Slide off now," said he, "and drive away the smaller boy. Don't stop to talk with these Bloodsuckers."

So Belostoma slid off and swam toward the smaller boy, and he ran out his stout little sucking tube and stung him on the leg. Just then the Snapping Turtle brought his horny jaws together on one of the larger boy's feet. There was a great splashing and dashing as the boys ran to the shore, and three Bloodsuckers, who had fastened themselves to the boy's legs, did not have time to drop off, and were carried ashore and never seen again.

"There!" said the Snapping Turtle. "That's done. I don't know what the pond people would do, if you and I were not here to look after them, Belostoma."

"I'm glad I happened along," said the Giant Water-Bug quietly, "but you will have to do it all after this. I'm about ready to leave the pond. I think I'll go tomorrow."

"Going tomorrow!" exclaimed the Snapping Turtle. "I'm sorry. Of course I know you can never come back, but send your friends here to lay their eggs. We mustn't be left without some of your family."

"Thank you," said Belostoma, and he did not show that he remembered some quite different things which the Snapping Turtle had said before, about his leaving the pond. And that showed that he was a very wise bug as well as a brave one.

"Humph!" said the Snapping Turtle. "There is the Mud Turtle Father on his back." And he ran to him and pushed him over onto his feet. "Oh, thank you," cried the Mud Turtle Mother. "I was not strong enough to do that."

"Always glad to help my neighbors," said the Snapping Turtle. "Pleasant day, isn't it? I must tell the fishes that the boys are gone. The poor little fellows were almost too scared to swim." And he went away with a really happy look on his face.

"There!" said the Mud Turtle Mother to her husband. "He has begun to help people, and now he likes them, and is contented, I always told you so!"

Lesson 34: 'Two Little Crayfishes Quarrel' from *Among the Pond People* by Clara Dillingham Pierson

The day after the Eels left, the pond people talked of nothing else. It was not that they were so much missed, for the Eels, you know, do not swim around in the daytime. They lie quietly in the mud and sleep or talk. It is only at night that they are really lively. Still, as the Mother Mud Turtle said, "They had known that they were there, and the mud seemed empty without them."

The larger people had been sorry to have them go, and some of them felt that without the Eels awake and stirring, the pond was hardly a safe place at night.

"I think it is a good deal safer," remarked a Minnow, who usually said what she thought. "I have always believed that the Eels knew what became of some of my brothers and sisters, although, of course, I do not know."

"Why didn't you ask them?" said a Stickleback.

"Why?" replied the Minnow. "If I had gone to the Eels and asked them that, my other brothers and sisters would soon be wondering what had become of me."

"I have heard some queer things about the Eels myself," said the Stickleback, "but I have never felt much afraid of them. I suppose I am braver because I wear so many of my bones on the outside."

Just then a Wise Old Crayfish came along walking sidewise. "What do you think about the Eels?" asked the Stickleback, turning suddenly to him.

The Crayfish stuck his tail into the mud. He often did this when he was surprised. It seemed to help him think. When he had thought for awhile, he waved his big pinching-claws and said, "It would be better for me not to tell what I think. I used to live near them."

This showed that the Wise Old Crayfish had been well brought up, and knew he should not say unpleasant things about people if he could help it. When there was need of it, he could tell unpleasant truths, and indeed that very evening he did say what he thought of the Eels. That was when he was teaching some young Crayfishes, his pupils. Their mother had brought up a large family, and was not strong. She had just cast the shell which she had worn for a year, and now she was weak and helpless until the new one should harden on her. "It is such a bother," she said, "to keep changing one's shell in this way, but it is a comfort to think that the new one will last a year when I do get it."

While their mother was so weak, the Wise Old Crayfish amused the children, and taught them things which all Crayfishes should know. Every evening they gathered around him, some of them swimming to him, some walked forward, some sidewise, and some backward. It made no difference to them which way they came. They were restless pupils, and their teacher could not keep them from looking behind them. Each one had so many eyes that he could look at the teacher with a few, and at the other little Crayfishes with a few more, and still have a good many eyes left with which to watch the Tadpoles. These eyes were arranged in two big bunches, and, unless you looked very closely, you might think that they had only two eyes apiece. They had good ears, and there were also fine smelling-bristles growing from their heads. The Wise Old Crayfish sometimes said that each of his pupils should sit in a circle of six teachers, so that he might be taught on all sides at once.

"That is the way in which children should learn," he said, "all around at once. But I do the best I can, and I at least teach one side of each."

This evening the Wise Old Crayfish was very sleepy. There had been so much talking and excitement during the day that he had not slept so much as usual; and now, when he should have been wide awake, he felt exceedingly dull and stupid. When he tried to walk, his eight legs stumbled over each other, and the weak way in which he waved his pinching-claw legs showed how tired he was.

After he had told his pupils the best way to hold their food with their pinching-claws, and had explained to them how it was chewed by the teeth in their stomachs, one mischievous little fellow called out, "I want to know about the Eels. My mother would never let me go near them, and now they've moved away, and I won't ever see them, and I think it's just horrid."

"Eels, my children," said their teacher, "are long, slender, sharp-nosed, slippery people, with a fringe of fins along their backs, and another fringe along their bellies. They breathe through very small gill-openings in the backs of their heads. They have large mouths, and teeth in their mouths, and they are always sticking out their lower jaws."

"And how do—" began the Biggest Little Crayfish.

"Ask me that tomorrow," said their teacher, stretching his eight walking legs and his two pinching-claw legs and his tail paddles, "but remember this one thing:—if you ever see an Eel, get out of his way. Don't stop to look at him."

"We won't," said one little Crayfish, who thought it smart to be saucy. "We'll look to stop at him." All of which meant nothing at all and was only said to annoy his teacher.

They scrambled away over the pond-bottom, upsetting Snails, jiggling the young Clams, and racing with each other where the bottom was smooth. "Beat you running backward!" cried the Saucy Crayfish to the Biggest Little Crayfish, and they scampered along backward in the moonlit water. There was an old log on the bottom of the pond, and they sat on that to rest. The Biggest Little Crayfish had beaten. "I would like to see an Eel," he said.

"I'd like to see them running on the land," said the saucy one.

"Pooh!" said the biggest one. "That's all you know! They don't run on land."

"Well, I guess they do," replied the saucy one. "I know as much about it as you do!"

"Eels swim. They don't run," said the biggest one. "Guess I know!"

"Well, they don't swim in air," said the saucy one. "That's the stuff that lies on top of the water and the ground, and people can't swim in it. So there!"

"Well, I've seen the Wild Ducks swim in it! They swim with their legs in the water, and with their wings in the air," said the biggest one.

"I don't believe it," said the saucy one. "Anyhow, Eels run on land."

"Eels swim on land," said the biggest one.

"Eels run!"

"Eels swim!"

"Run!"

"Swim!"

Then the two little Crayfishes, who had been talking louder and louder and becoming more and more angry, glared at each other, and jerked their feelers, and waved their pinching-claws in a very, very ugly way.

They did not notice a great green and yellow person swimming gently toward them, and they did not know that the Eels had come back to live in the old pond again. Mother Eel opened her big mouth very wide. "On land," she said decidedly, as she swallowed the Biggest Little Crayfish, "Eels wriggle." Then she swallowed the saucy one.

"There!" said she. "I've stopped that dreadful quarrel." And she looked around with a satisfied smile.

Lesson 35: 'The Contented Earthworms' from *Among the Meadow People* by Clara Dillingham Pierson

After a long and soaking rain, the Earthworms came out of their burrows, or rather, they came part way out, for each Earthworm put out half of his body, and, as there were many of them and they lived near to each other, they could easily visit without leaving their own homes. Two of these long, slimy people were talking, when a Potato Bug strolled by. "You poor things," said he, "what a wretched life you must lead. Spending one's days in the dark earth must be very dreary."

"Dreary!" exclaimed one of the Earthworms, "it is delightful. The earth is a snug and soft home. It is warm in cold weather and cool in warm weather. There are no winds to trouble us, and no sun to scorch us."

"But," said the Potato Bug, "it must be very dull. Now, out in the grass, one finds beautiful flowers, and so many families of friends."

"And down here," answered the Worm, "we have the roots. Some are brown and woody, like those of the trees, and some are white and slender and soft. They creep and twine, until it is like passing through a forest to go among them. And then, there are the seeds. Such busy times as there are in the ground in springtime! Each tiny seed awakens and begins to grow. Its roots must strike downward, and its stalk upward toward the light. Sometimes the seeds are buried in the earth with the root end up, and then they have a great time getting twisted around and ready to grow."

"Still, after the plants are all growing and have their heads in the air, you must miss them."

"We have the roots always," said the Worm. "And then, when the summer is over, the plants have done their work, helping to make the world beautiful and raise their seed babies, and they wither and droop to the earth again, and little by little the sun and the frost and the rain help them to melt back into the earth. The earth is the beginning and the end of plants."

"Do you ever meet the meadow people in it?" asked the Potato Bug.

"Many of them live here as babies," said the Worm. "The May Beetles, the Grasshoppers, the great Humming-bird Moths, and many others spend their babyhood here, all wrapped in eggs or cocoons. Then, when they are strong enough, and their legs and wings are grown, they push their way out and begin their work. It is their getting-ready time, down here in the dark. And then, there are the stones, and they are so old and queer. I am often glad that I am not a stone, for to have to lie still must be hard to bear. Yet I have heard that they did not always lie so, and that some of the very pebbles around us tossed and rolled and ground for years in the bed of a river, and that some of them were rubbed and broken off of great rocks. Perhaps they are glad now to just lie and rest."

"Truly," said the Potato Bug, "you have a pleasant home, but give me the sunshine and fresh air, my six legs, and my striped wings, and you are welcome to it all."

"You are welcome to them all," answered the Worms. "We are contented with smooth and shining bodies, with which we can bore and wriggle our way through the soft, brown earth. We like our task of keeping the earth right for the plants, and we will work and rest happily here."

The Potato Bug went his way, and said to his brothers, "What do you think? I have been talking with Earthworms who would not be Potato Bugs if they could." And they all shook their heads in wonder, for they thought that to be Potato Bugs was the grandest and happiest thing in the world.

Lesson 36: 'The Lazy Snail' from *Among the Meadow People* by Clara Dillingham Pierson

In the lower part of the meadow, where the grass grew tall and tender, there lived a fine and sturdy young Snail; that is to say, a fine-looking Snail. His shell was a beautiful soft gray, and its curves were regular and perfect. His body was soft and moist, and just what a Snail's body

should be. Of course, when it came to travelling, he could not go fast, for none of his family are rapid travellers, still, if he had been plucky and patient, he might have seen much of the meadow, and perhaps some of the world outside. His friends and neighbors often told him that he ought to start out on a little journey to see the sights, but he would always answer, "Oh, it is too hard work!"

There was nobody who liked stories of meadow life better than this same Snail, and he would often stop some friendly Cricket or Snake to ask for the news. After they had told him, they would say, "Why, don't you ever get out to see these things for yourself?" and he would give a little sigh and answer, "It is too far to go."

"But you needn't go the whole distance in one day," his visitor would say, "only a little at a time."

"Yes, and then I would have to keep starting on again every little while," the Snail would reply. "What of that?" said the visitor; "you would have plenty of resting spells, when you could lie in the shade of a tall weed and enjoy yourself."

"Well, what is the use?" the Snail would say. "I can't enjoy resting if I know I've got to go to work again," and he would sigh once more.

So there he lived, eating and sleeping, and wishing he could see the world, and meet the people in the upper part of the meadow, but just so lazy that he wouldn't start out to find them.

He never thought that the Butterflies and Beetles might not like it to have him keep calling to them and making them tell him the news. Oh, no indeed! If he wanted them to do anything for him, he asked them quickly enough, and they, being happy, good-natured people, would always do as he asked them to.

There came a day, though, when he asked too much. The Grasshoppers had been telling him about some very delicious new plants that grew a little distance away, and the Snail wanted some very badly. "Can't you bring me some?" he said. "There are so many of you, and you have such good, strong legs. I should think you might each bring me a small piece in your mouths, and then I should have a fine dinner of it."

The Grasshoppers didn't say anything then, but when they were so far away that he could not hear them, they said to each other, "If the Snail wants the food so much, he might better go for it. We have other things to do," and they hopped off on their own business.

The Snail sat there, and wondered and wondered that they did not come. He kept thinking how he would like some of the new food for dinner, but there it ended. He didn't want it enough to get it for himself.

The Grasshoppers told all their friends about the Snail's request, and everybody thought, "Such a lazy, good-for-nothing fellow deserves to be left quite alone." So it happened that for a very long time nobody went near the Snail.

The weather grew hotter and hotter. The clouds, which blew across the sky, kept their rain until they were well past the meadow, and so it happened that the river grew shallower and shallower, and the sunshine dried the tiny pools and rivulets which kept the lower meadow damp. The grass began to turn brown and dry, and, all in all, it was trying weather for Snails.

One day, a Butterfly called some of her friends together, and told them that she had seen the Snail lying in his old place, looking thin and hungry. "The grass is all dried around him," she said; "I believe he is starving, and too lazy to go nearer the river, where there is still good food for him."

They all talked it over together, and some of them said it was of no use to help a Snail who was too lazy to do anything for himself. Others said, "Well, he is too weak to help himself now, at all events, and we might help him this once." And that is exactly what they did. The Butterflies and the Mosquitoes flew ahead to find the best place to put the Snail, and all the Grasshoppers, and Beetles, and other strong crawling creatures took turns in rolling the Snail down toward the river.

They left him where the green things were fresh and tender, and he grew strong and plump once more. It is even said that he was not so lazy afterward, but one cannot tell whether to believe it or not, for everybody knows that when people let themselves grow up lazy, as he did, it is almost impossible for them to get over it when they want to. One thing is sure: the meadow people who helped him were happier and better for doing a kind thing, no matter what became of the Snail.

