

HERO BILL CROW

A NOBLE SACRIFICE OF A BRAVE AND LOVING BIRD

By DAN BEARD.
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HE appeared very much too large for everything about him except his mouth and voice. The former feature was the first to engage one's attention, and the latter was as hoarse as the crow.

His complexion was what might be called a dark Payne's gray and the bluish black skin hung in wrinkles around his withered neck, but was tightly stretched over his rounded abdomen. He was as naked as the brass Diana on the top of the Madison Square Garden and as blind as love. His legs were too long and too weak to support his aldermanic body; but we must not blame Little Billy for these peculiarities; he was born with them; he was only a little orphan baby crow.

The crib in which the baby reposed was a work basket; his mattress was dry grass, and his coverlet a rag of red flannel; however, the basket was more comfortable than the nest in which he was born, and the flannel was as warm as an embroidered quilt. Billy was no bottle baby, but he was very fond of raw eggs which his foster father, Dick, knew how to crack so that the contents could slip slowly into the great, gaping mouth of the little crow.

After Dick had fed him, Billy would nestle down in his soft bed and sleep until next egg time. Sometimes Dick's baby sister Deborah would creep to the crow's basket. Her first experiment was to try and put the bird into her own mouth. This proved a failure; but she was more successful in her next experiments, and she amused herself by picking up buttons and other small objects which came handy, and dropping them into the mouth of Billy. Why these things did not cause the death of the crow is a mystery, possibly explained by the habit that the young bird had of flitting daintily about its mouth with a quick twist of its head.

The real result of these attentions was the gradual growth of a feeling of affection between Debby and Billy, hardly surpassed by the bond of devotion which bound Dick and the crow together, making them almost inseparable companions. Long before it was the proper time for a young bird to leave its nest, Billy would come sprawling and staggering from his basket to meet the baby girl, and, seizing the hem of her pinafore, would hang on and squawk, while Debby, screaming with delight, would scramble over her hands and feet on all fours as rapidly as her legs and knees could carry her.

Debby still was a baby and had but just learned to walk when Billy was a handsome, full-grown, glossy black crow. By this time Billy appointed himself private detective in plain clothes and personal bodyguard to the little girl, and it was too to the stray cat, dog or barnyard fowl who approached too near little Debby. The innocent little girl, who that timidly wiggled through the grass by the feet of Debby never failed to lose their heads and rest their bones inside of Billy Crow.

Dick would never harm the pretty little insect-eating snake, or any other wild creature. He loved them all too well. He loved the grass, the trees, the sky and the air; the birds were his personal friends.

Dick knew where all the people of bird town lived, from the kingbird in the tall buttonwood tree to the ground sparrow in the clover. Billy the Crow also knew the inhabitants of birdtown; but it would not have troubled the conscience of the crow to eat the robins' eggs and the young catbirds at a meal and wantonly destroy their little nests. If he refrained from doing this, it was possibly because he had enough to eat at home, or perhaps Billy thought that the inhabitants of Birdville belonged to his young master. Bill Crow might steal from every one else, but he never was guilty of robbing Dick, and even such tempting objects as Dick's bright glass marbles were deemed sacred by the crow.

The other birds always looked with suspicion at Dick's black companion, and although they learned to trust the boy, they never failed to scold, and often to attack, the crow.

The beautiful scarlet tanager would cry "Chip jarr; chip jarr" whenever he saw Billy, and the gorgeously colored oriole, as he flashed in the sunlight, singing as he flew, would suddenly become silent at the sight of the crow; but when the kingbird erected his war plume Billy would have business to attend to which necessitated his presence directly around his master's feet.

A fierce war eagle, with great hooked bill and tremendous spread of wings,



known to Dick as Uncle Sam, lived in the mysterious country on the far side of the little lake in front of Birdville.

One day Dick and Billy saw the great bird at Rock Cabin Cove, on the opposite side of the lake, waiting for an opportunity to rob the industrious fisherman Osprey. Billy ruffled up all his feathers, dropped his head and began to walk around his master's feet, talking and laughing in low, guttural tones as if

something greatly amused him. A moment later the fish hawk fell with great splash in the water, disappearing from view, only to reappear again with a big, stupid carp in his hooked talons.

Uncle Sam launched himself, and, sailing over the back of the frightened hawk, demanded the fruits of the latter's labor. The loud whistling protest of the hawk could be heard plainly appealing for help, and in a moment more Billy was flapping

his black wings over the robber eagle's back.

By his loud, coarse "caws" one could tell that he was having fun with Uncle Sam and teaching him how it feels to be the under one. Soon the eagle was glad to leave the osprey and seek the shelter of the dense woods on the other side of the lake by the abandoned quarry. Perched upon the boy's shoulder, Billy then told all about the affair.

"Caw," says Billy, "caw." Sam is nothing much. I saw Long Legs, the blue heron, at the leaning maple, whip him—Sam can't fight a little bit, 'less he has everything his way—caw, caw!"

Nobody but crows and Dick understands crow talk, but Dick understands all the wood folks' languages.

All unknown to her parents and Dick, little Debby had toddled after her brother to Birdville. Wearing the long walk, the baby girl now slept peacefully among the blue flowers of the lupine, the sparrow's nest. The impatient and noisy blue jay came chattering over to see why Debby was there, and, incidentally to rob a nest or two by the way, but the king bird raised the hue and cry and drove the jay and his away, and as the jay disappeared down the rote road his mocking, high-keyed voice was heard to cry, "Got 'im, got 'im, I've got him!"

"Who?" asked the barred owl, aroused from his day nap by the tumult.

"Phoebe," mournfully replied a faint voice; and Dick said to Billy, "I hope not."

But the crow was not there to hear him. Just then the boy heard his black friend using most unprintable language, betokening both rage and great excitement. Seizing a club and hastening to his friend's assistance, Dick was horrified when he saw Uncle Sam vainly trying to lift a white object from the ground, while Billy was making a frantic attack upon the eagle, aided by the king bird and humming bird. With one bound the boy landed on the battle ground, and with a mighty swing of his cudgel he laid the bald-headed robber prone among the flowers.

The next moment he had gathered his little baby sister in his sturdy young arms. Her white pinafore was torn to shreds, but she was unhurt.

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NIGNI, THE DWARF

THE ADVENTURES OF A LITTLE MAN, AS WRITTEN BY HIMSELF.

THERE were many other attractions in London at the time I was on exhibition, but as we drew the crowds away from them they began to lose money. There were a giant, a wild woman, a five-legged horse, a wolf-child and half a dozen other things, and their managers finally decided that something must be done. They got together in secret, as was afterward learned, and resolved to kidnap me and shut me up for several weeks. They didn't want to take my life, but they did want me out of the way. Mr. Yeddo and Anak were both on the watch for some move, but it came in a way they did not expect.

At the hotel where we stayed I had a bedroom to myself, but on one side of me was Anak and on the other the showman. There were doors leading from one room to another, and as these always were open at night it did not seem that I could come to harm. However, one night about midnight a man named Burke, who had agreed to kidnap me for \$1000, climbed up a balcony to my open window and entered the room as I lay sleeping. He must have moved like a cat, as no one heard him, and he must have chloroformed me to prevent my waking up.

He took a link around me and lowered me from the balcony to another man, and I then was put into a hat box and carried through streets for two or three miles. Burke had rented a house to hide me in, and I was in bed in the house, and it was nearly noon the next day before I awoke.

My head ached and my eyes were heavy, and it was some time before I made out that I was in a strange place. Then I cried out to know why I was there, and why Mr. Yeddo and Anak were not with me. The men who had kidnaped me were in the room, and it was Burke who answered me.

"Don't get frightened, little chap. You are with friends, and need not be hurt." But how did I get here? I asked.

"No matter. Do you want your dinner now?"

I soon came to know that they had played me a trick, and I was both angry and frightened. I was angry that they should be so bold, and frightened because I thought they meant to keep me prisoner for weeks or months. I called them rogues and kidnappers and robbers, but they only laughed at me in return.

The dinner they offered me was a very poor one, and I would eat none of it, and it was the same with supper. The house to which I had been brought was an old one, with only a couple of chairs, a table and an old bed for furniture, and although I was sure that Mr. Yeddo would have the police searching for me, I was afraid that they would never find me among so many houses in great London.

After supper the man Burke went out and bought several newspapers, and all of them had much to say about my being kidnaped. The police were searching, and a large reward had been offered, but the two men did not seem to fear that they would be found out.

They played cards and drank from a bottle of the strongest while I lay on the bed and wondered if there was no way for me to escape. I fell asleep while the men were yet playing, and when I awoke

it was two hours later, and both had their heads down on the table and were asleep. I was up in a jiffy and out of bed. I knew that the key of the door was in Burke's pocket, and I slipped over to him and worked so softly that I got it without disturbing him. Then I unlocked the door and slipped softly out and down two pairs of dark stairs and into the street. It was a wretched street, with the poorest of houses and only a few public lamps, and in running away from the house I had seen several times on the rough sidewalk.

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THIS PARROT WAS VERY FUNNY

ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF AN OHIO BIRD THAT ARE WONDERFUL—HAVING ONCE HEARD A THING, IT CAN ALWAYS REPEAT IT

"DICK," the parrot from Bucyrus, O., which was sold to H. R. Walcott, of 44 West Forty-fourth street, New York, is probably the most accomplished bird of the kind in the country.

Dick is only 4 years old and has been the mascot at the Deal House at Bucyrus for most of that time, being kept in a small room just off the hotel parlor. In this parlor, frequented by many people, the bird overhead and picked up its fluent vocabulary. He knew most of the traveling men who paid any attention to him, and frequently called them by name when they arrived, asked how business was, and bade them good-by when they left.

Dick's chief pleasure was in playing tricks on people, especially those who were waiting for trains or for a car on the electric line for Gallon. He would select some particularly fussy person, preferably a woman, and just as the victim would get comfortably seated, Dick would shout, "All aboard, here's your car for Gallon." The person would grab up hand bag and bag in a frantic endeavor to get to the car and would be

surprised on by a loud voice crying, "Hurry, hurry. The train is here." The victim of the joke would be back in a breathless condition to hear the bird say, "Dick, you're a bad boy, but that was pretty good. Ha, ha, ha."

Dick also called trains like the porter, and many a traveling man has made a frantic dash for the depot on account of Dick's human shout, "Train East." Dick acquired a peculiar nasal twang possessed by F. M. Kerr, the proprietor of the hotel, and took a peculiar delight in summoning people from all parts of the hotel by calling their names in a clever imitation of the landlubber. When they arrived he would laugh heartily and say, "Dick, why don't you ever shut up?"

Many people pronounced the bird a fake and claimed that it was a clever piece of ventriloquism, but an investigation always dispelled any such suspicions and brought forth praises for the truly wonderful bird.

Having once heard a thing, Dick could always repeat it, and in the same tone it was said. Dick is no respecter of persons when he sees an opportunity of perpetrating a joke. The various ministers of Bucyrus have an association which met every Monday morning in the Deal House parlor. Dick listened patiently through several Monday morning sessions and then concluded to take a hand himself. One of the ministers opened the session with prayer, and suddenly, during a lull in the petition, Dick broke in with, "O, Lord, give us thy presence here this afternoon." The minister was disconcerted and there was a very unclerical snicker from the assembly. Not daunted, however, the minister began again, but Dick, becoming interested in his part of the programme, piped in with, "Give us seeing eyes, hearing ears, and understanding hearts."

The snicker deepened into laughter, and the minister stopped, while Dick continued reverently, "Shed upon us the light of thy countenance and grant us thy grace." The ministers shouted with laughter, but when they came to order again, and one rose to speak, Dick started in a tone of deep disgust, "Oh, shut up. Some one rose and, taking the cage into the hall, dropped it with a thump. Before the door could be closed Dick was heard