

Polly Evans' Story Page for Boys and Girls

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At The Fountain

SINCE they had left their own country, the little colony of Albanese were very happy in Sicily. Upon this island, washed by the blue Mediterranean, and plentifully adorned with trees and flowers and verdure, nature visited her happiest mood. So the Albanese divided their time between gazing at rainbow-tinted sky and the beauties of land and sea and their work. Happy, but not too industrious, were they.

After a while, however, affliction came upon one household. The father and mother died, and a little daughter was left all alone. Robbia, for that was her name, went to live with an aunt. Here she was treated unkindly, although she worked just as hard as ever she could and was very good and obedient.

One day, as Robbia was returning from the fountain with a jar of water balanced upon her head, she stumbled

saw a small boy hurtle through the limbs, screaming in wild terror. Robbia hastened to his side, as he lay upon the ground, apparently much hurt. She then saw it was Francesco, the little son of Mother Flavia.

"Francesco! Francesco! Speak to me!" she cried to the boy, as he lay there pale and still. But Francesco did not seem to hear; so she took him by the arm and half supporting, half dragging him, toiled along the path leading to the little fellow's home.

Mother Flavia was greatly alarmed when Robbia entered the house with her burden. Under her skillful hands, however, it did not take long for Francesco to regain consciousness.

"Now tell me how it all happened," demanded Mother Flavia, when they were able to rest for a moment.

Robbia described how Francesco had fallen from the tree and how she had dragged him thither.

"And, oh! Mother Flavia," she added, in a trembling voice, "I broke the pitcher you lent me!"

Before the woman could reply little Francesco opened his eyes, and whispered:

"It was I who broke the pitcher, mother. I sneaked up behind her and pushed her so that it fell from her



ROBBIA AGAIN BREAKS HER PITCHER

in the roadway. Down crashed the pitcher! Robbia looked helplessly upon the wreck, and then ran affrightedly to the cottage where dwelt Mother Flavia, an old friend of Robbia's parents. Often the little girl would slip away to Mother Flavia for comfort. To the good woman she now ran with her tale of woe.

Mother Flavia tried to soothe Robbia, but the lass declared between sobs that she wouldn't dare go back and tell her cruel aunt about the accident. So the generous friend lent Robbia a pitcher to replace that which was broken. Drying her tears and assuring Mother Flavia that she would ever be grateful Robbia again proceeded to the fountain.

She stood on the ledge which ran along the base of the marble fountain, while she dipped the great jar into the cool waters. Suddenly there came a rough push from behind, the pitcher dropped from her hands—and Robbia was again in trouble. Before she could gather her wits, the guilty person had disappeared.

Now frightened even too much to weep, she plodded stupidly toward her aunt's house, where she was sure she would be severely punished.

But just as she was passing by a tree near the roadside she heard a crashing and a snapping of branches. Then she

hands. And then I ran away to hide in the tree.

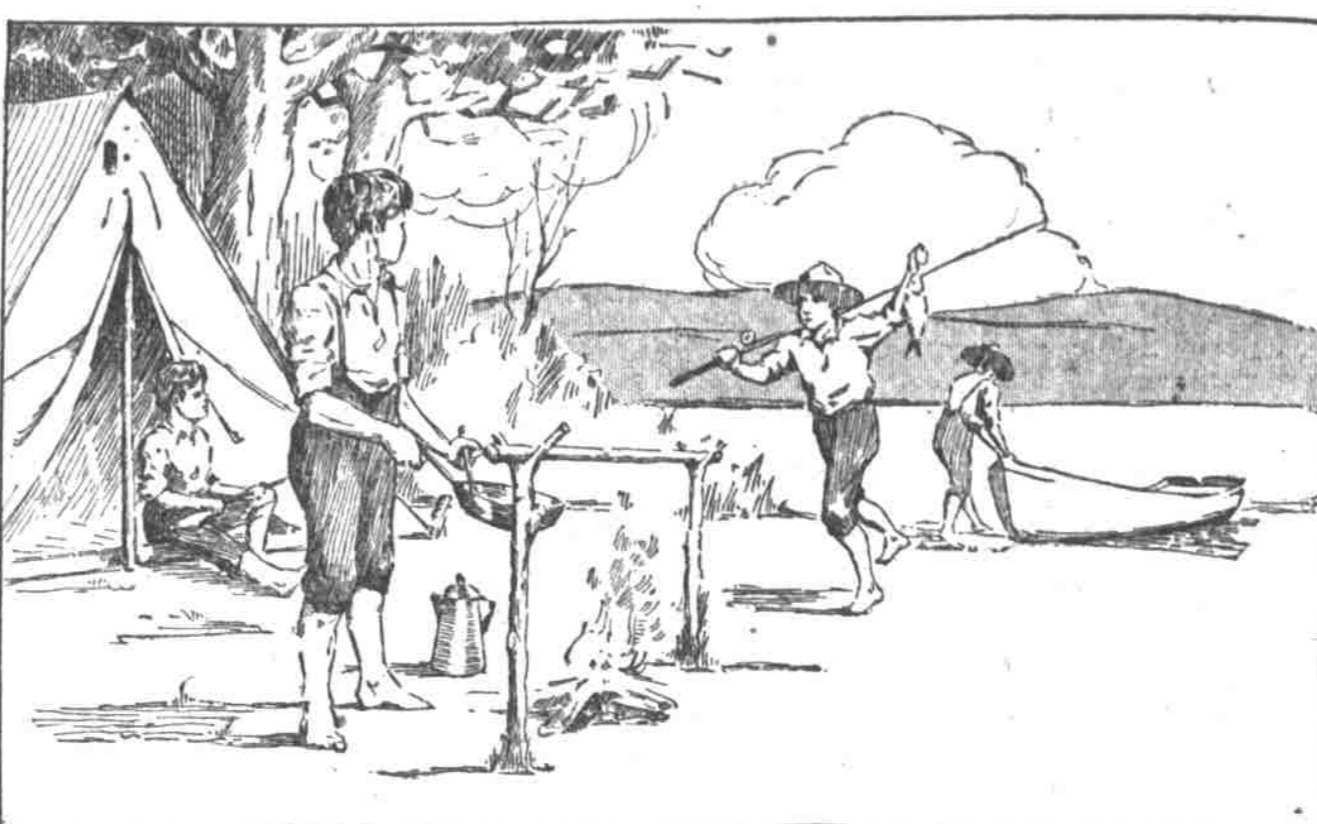
"Well, well, don't worry, my children," said the good woman. "I shall present Robbia with a pitcher for her very own. She certainly deserves it for taking care of you, Francesco."

And as the new water jar was much nicer than the one first broken, Robbia's aunt did not even scold the little girl.

Seeing Things Under Water

TO OBSERVE closely the many beautiful forms of plant and animal life growing under water, it is only necessary for you to make use of a water box. This box is of half-inch pine, from fifteen to twenty inches long, by five or six inches square. One end has handles, and is open, the other has window glass let in and put tight, so that the water can not leak through. In putting together the four wooden sides of the box, nail the three sides together with little grooves so that you can slip the square of window glass into them at the end before the fourth side is put on. Of course, in using the box, grasp it by the handles, and place the end covered with glass beneath the surface of the water—provided it is not too muddy.

CAMPING OUT



EVERYBODY'S fond of camping. 'Tong us fellers here in town; 'Ev'ry year we go a-tramping; Soon as summer comes aroun'.

Voices from the forest call us— Make us long to get away; An' the streets of town appall us So we feel we cannot stay.

Up the mountain side we're trudging, Each one with his little pack, An' we're sure we won't be budging From our camp 'till winter's back.

Things are fine at the beginning— All the fellers full of fun; Even cook some praise is winning Though the pancakes aren't "done."

But at last we start a-pining For the pies that mother bakes; Though out loud we don't go whining, Still we dream of mother's cakes.

Strange, how first you are a-yearning For a place uncivilized; Funny, how you're soon returning To the comforts you despised.

Baby's New Dress



TOO MANY PERSONS "FIX" BABY'S DRESS

ALTHOUGH baby was as bright and cheerful a tot as ever lived, she was very vain of herself and her dresses. She owned ever so many pretty frocks, and was always teasing for more.

So that when one afternoon a wagon brought a mysterious box to the house and the box, when opened, displayed the daintiest kind of a baby's dress, all light and fluffy and with pretty ribbons, baby danced in glee. But her joy turned to grief when she found the dress too long for her.

"I think we can make it fit her," said the mother, after they had inspected the frock upon baby.

Late that afternoon grandma happened to see the dress lying upon a chair.

"I shall fix it for the little

angel," said she. Bringing her sewing basket she deftly cut and stitched and hemmed. After she had finished grandma left home to pay a visit to a neighbor.

After dinner baby's mother picked up the dress, saying to herself: "I think I shall now fix baby's dress so that it will be ready for her to wear tomorrow."

Then she cut the dress off at the bottom and at the sleeves.

Baby's aunt rose early next morning. As she passed through the sewing room she saw the new dress.

"She will be disappointed if her new dress isn't ready today. I think I'll fix it now."

More was cut off the dress, the aunt finishing before any of the other members of the family came downstairs.

The first thing baby said when she arose in the morning was: "Where's my pretty new dress?"

The dress was brought promptly, and mother, grandmother and aunt gathered round to observe how delighted baby would be.

You can imagine their surprise when they saw the dress was now so small that baby looked ridiculous.

"I can't understand it!" gasped grandma. "I took the greatest care in cutting."

"You did?" cried the aunt. "Why, I fixed it myself only a few hours ago!"

"And I sewed upon it last evening," added baby's mother.

It was all so comical that the three looked at one another and laughed. Baby didn't laugh, however. She knew the pretty frock was spoiled.

"Old Soc", of the Tower

"WHY do we call him 'Old Soc'?" remarked the warden of the Tower of London. "Well, 'Soc' is short for 'Socrates,' and the old feller is so wise that nothing else seems to fit."

"Not but what he hasn't had plenty of time to learn. He was the pet at the Tower long before I was appointed warden, and he must be at least 80 years old. They live to be 100, you know."

The warden looked affectionately at the splendid raven, who measured fully two feet. His once glossy, bluish-black plumage was somewhat dulled now, but

ever knew how it happened—the old man had an accident with his gun. Discharged it, and shot himself, you know. Pretty badly hurt he was, too. But Soc was wise enough to see that help was needed. After hovering about his master for a minute, he flew rapidly toward the nearest house. All the folks round there knew the ex-warden. So they naturally were acquainted with the bit, who was never separated from the man. Feeling sure something was wrong, they permitted themselves to be guided by the bird to where the ex-warden lay wounded.



"OLD SOC" FED BY THE WARDEN

he was a spry old bird for one 80 years old.

Old Soc croaked his gratitude for the tidbit which the warden passed to him and the man, gazing reflectively at the bird, continued:

"The old fellow could tell many an interesting story, if he chose. And he well deserves his reputation for intelligence."

"When the warden before me was retired because of age, he moved out to a little place in the country. Old Soc had become so attached to him that he went along with his master. Well it was for the man, too.

"He liked to be busy, the ex-warden did. And he pattered 'round as much as he was able to, even going on little tramps with his gun, always taking the raven along with him, of course."

"Upon one of these occasions—no one

"The old man grew somewhat better, but he never fully recovered. When he died, they say the raven almost died, too. He grieved and moped, and wouldn't eat anything. Then he seemed to remember his old home at the Tower. To our surprise, he dropped in upon us one day, just as though he had never left, and he's been here ever since. Funny thing about it is that he seems to like only people— isn't fond of birds at all. Must have been badly treated by his own folk many years ago, I s'pose, and hasn't forgotten it."

Old Soc, who had been gravely listening, with his head turned slightly to one side, now gave a fluttering jump to capture the last morsel of food from the warden. Then he nodded his head, as though bowing, and strutted with great dignity toward the building.

"Knowing old bird!" commented the warden, and we agreed with him.

The Mongooses Victim



"CAME TO MR. MONGOOSE'S HOME"

THEY say that Mr. Mongoose is a sly old fellow," murmured Mr. Solenodon to himself; "but I'll wager I can outwit him without half trying."

Skirting the edge of the wood, Mr. Solenodon came to the door of the mongoose's home and rapped vigorously upon it.

Mr. Mongoose came to the door himself. He rather liked the appearance of his visitor, although the long snout, with nostrils upon each side, looked rather inquisitive, and Mr. Mongoose, being very inquisitive himself, didn't like other people to possess this quality. Besides, the newcomer had a tail entirely naked of fur, which looked perfectly hideous. But he had beautiful, long fur, tawny above and light brown underneath the body, and his great claws inspired respect.

The solenodon bowed politely, as he said: "My name is Mr. Solenodon. Although I've never had the pleasure of meeting you before, I presume you are Mr. Mongoose."

As the mongoose nodded his head, the solenodon continued: "Could you be so kind as to permit me to rest awhile in your comfortable little home? I am quite weary of traveling."

"Certainly, sir," rejoined the mongoose, "rest as long as you like."

He hospitably gave Mr. Solenodon a place at his board and put before him a nice dish of insects.

While the solenodon was enjoying this repast, he told himself that now was his opportunity to try his wit upon the host.

The mongoose wrinkled his brows thoughtfully. "I don't just know," he replied, "unless it be to get where he wants to go."

"No," said the solenodon, "that isn't why. Would you like to know the correct reason?"

"Indeed, I would," answered the mongoose, much interested.

"Well," chuckled the solenodon, "a gnat flies for the same reason that some folks are greedy. 'I'll ha' ha'!"

"Um," grunted the mongoose, looking quietly at the solenodon. "I suppose that is very funny. But I should like to know if you place me among 'some people'?"

"Well, you are part of a goose, aren't you?" returned the solenodon, laughing at his own joke.

"Yes, and you are a whole goose!" cried the mongoose, leaping upon his visitor and tearing him limb from limb.

Ever since that time the mongoose has hated the solenodon, and so effectively has he fought against him that few solenodons are now alive. The one shown in the picture, a native of Haiti, is an exceedingly rare specimen.

The Phonograph Imp Entertains Billieboy

"GRRR - GRRR!" whirred the phonograph, as it first does when set a-running.

But no one had started it. And, as phonographs usually don't play of their own accord, Billieboy jumped with astonishment.

"Billieboy! Billieboy! Come here, my Billieboy!" some one sang.

Then Billieboy whistled. It was so strange. He didn't know father possessed a record for such a song—and that twanging, sing-song tone certainly belonged to the phonograph. Billieboy drew nearer to investigate.

He rubbed his eyes, blinked and looked hard. It couldn't be—yes, it surely was—the funniest little manikin imaginable. He must have been an elf lost from a fairy tale, this tiny fellow, who, with the skill of a fly promading on the ceiling, carelessly

held footing inside the phonograph horn.

"Don't stare so, Billieboy; it's impolite," said the manikin, in a thin, rasping voice. "You ought to say something especially nice, inasmuch as you've been forcing my acquaintance for the last six months."

"Forcing your acquaintance?" gasped Billieboy.

"Well, haven't you been squinting into the horn whenever you've had the chance, and haven't you been longing to find out where the sound comes from?" sharply retorted the elf. "Of course you have. And since you've gazed so much at the outside of my home, I've decided to let you see the inside. As for the sound, if you weren't so ignorant you'd know it is I, the Imp of the Phonograph, who makes it. But come, there's lots to see and not a deal of time in which to see it!"

Thereupon the Imp turned, as though expecting Billieboy to follow.

"What's the matter now?" he demanded, when he saw the boy made no movement.

"How can I crawl into such a little place?" asked the bewildered Billieboy.

The Imp breathed hard and seemed about to utter some very wicked words.

"Well, of all the helpless creatures!" he finally managed to sputter. "If you feel as small as you really ought to feel, you won't have the least difficulty in getting into my home. See here, don't you feel very small and mealy?"



"SANG MUSICALLY INTO THE HORN"

with the horn. The Imp grasped his arm and pulled him along the slippery surface, while Billieboy felt as though he were a fly being dragged into a spider's den.

At every step the way grew more narrow, until the Imp pushed open a little round door at the end of the passage, and the two stumbled into a cozy little room.

Billieboy looked around him in amazement. The apartment seemed to be fitted up as a library. Bookshelves ran all about the room, but, as the Imp shortly explained, the library, for the most part, consisted of volumes of music.

"Would you mind telling me what that is for?" asked the lad, pointing to a brass tube which extended from the wall and at the end of which was a horn with a large, flat bell.

"As soon as any one places a record on the phonograph, I receive the message through this horn. Then I take down from the shelf the music book in which the song is written and sing into the horn. This is what you people hear."

"My, you must know a lot about music!" gasped Billieboy.

The Imp smiled modestly as he replied: "That's my business, and I have to, you know. Yes, I can make a noise like a whole orchestra, or I can sing duets and quartets with myself quite easily. I know all the tunes so well that I really don't have much need of music scores, but I always take down the books, anyway, in case my memory should happen to fail me."

At this moment an ominous buzzing came from the horn. Running quickly to it, the Imp listened a moment.

Then he hastily grabbed a book from the shelf and soon was singing, very musically, a selection from "Il Trovatore."

"Great! Great!" cried Billieboy, enthusiastically, when the Imp had finished.

"Hush! You mustn't talk so loud, or they'll hear you outside," cautioned the Imp. "Though I know some people would probably think it part of the music," he added, with a sarcastic smile.

"But say, Billieboy, I don't want to send you away. Don't you think, however, that you'd better get back before your folks discover your absence. You know, they'll think it strange if you're not around when the phonograph begins to play. You always are."

The lad agreed with his friend, and soon they were crawling toward the mouth of the great horn. Billieboy said good-bye with much regret, and promised to visit the Imp often. Then he slid down the back of the chair to the carpet. An instant—and he was the size of the former Billieboy.

Thereafter, when Billieboy heard the sounds coming from the phonograph his eyes no longer grew big with wonder. Instead, he smiled a knowing smile that greatly puzzled every one. But THEY knew nothing about the Imp of the Phonograph.

A Simple Microscope

If you have need of the enlargement of writing which is small and illegible, or if you desire to increase the size of any other object, why not make your own microscope?

Cut out a piece of thin cardboard. Ink one side of this until it is entirely black. Make a pinhole in the center of the sheet. Looking through this pinhole, you will be surprised to learn what a good microscope you have manufactured.



"THE FUNNIEST MANIKIN"