

POLLY EVANS' STORY PAGE for Boys and Girls

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THE QUESTION



TSR

WHAT have I got in my hat?
It's something that's round and nice!
When you've thought well about that,
You may guess what it is—twice!

'Tisn't a ball nor a bell;
No, nor a cat! Nor a mole!
Goodness! I'll just have to tell—
It's only a great big hole!

KATHERINE FAITH.



Mrs. Spider and the Beetle

THE Big Black Beetle rolled up his eyes until they rested upon Mrs. Spider watching him from her web.

"Good day, Mrs. Spider," said he. "I would like to speak to Mr. Spider, please!" Mrs. Spider looked down over the edge of her web at the Big Black Beetle on the garden path.



"The blindness of men!" ejaculated Mrs. Spider. "Don't you see that this very instant I'm brushing my hair with my teeth? Yes, indeed, my jaws have teeth, which I always use as combs. And it's a mighty good thing I can do so, for, as you see, my body is almost completely covered with hair. It takes a lot of my time to keep in order. Let me tell you. Especially as Mother Nature is continually presenting me with new growths."

"New growths?" said the Black Beetle. "What do you do with the old ones?" "Eat 'em!" answered Mrs. Spider. "Eat 'em!" said the Black Beetle. "I could never wear them again, and most certainly I can't afford to throw them away. Now, you've asked enough foolish questions. Be quiet, here comes my dinner!"

Mrs. Spider kept very still, and Black Beetle noticed that eight of her furry legs were fastened to her head and that each foot was provided with three claws. Her jaws were so strong and ugly that they made even Black Beetles feel creepy. By and by a fat, blundering insect few headlong into Mrs. Spider's web. In a moment she was upon him, striking sharply with her poison fangs. "Down he goes," said Mrs. Spider, when he had ceased to struggle. "You see, I have to eat a lot, because what I eat turns into web mostly, and there's always a lot of repairing for me to do. See the back part of my body? It's very much like a bag. It contains a sticky paste. See the fine little knobs on the back? Well, as soon as the liquid is

"Why, didn't you know?" said she. "I ate him for breakfast!"

"Ate him for—? Why, Mrs. Spider?" "Mean what I say," snapped Mrs. Spider. "That's what all we Spider wives do when we tire of our husbands or they won't work for us. We eat 'em!"

The Big Black Beetle regarded Mrs. Spider with horrified eyes, but she went on quite unconcernedly with her housecleaning, chatting meanwhile. "I'm housecleaning, as you see," she said. "See, this is how I do it!" She raised a claw and placed a heavy blow carefully on one corner of her house.

Black Beetle expected the delicate fabric to fall down, but not a bit of it. Out flew the dust in all directions, and the web looked well swept in an instant.

"Now," said Mrs. Spider, puffing, "when I have dusted a little I'll have a few moments to talk to you! She was dressed in a beautiful velvet gown and without even dreaming of changing it she began to dust out every corner of the house."

If she came to a place where the wall was giving way a little, she promptly broke it off, rolled it into a ball and—what do you think—ate it! Then she calmly proceeded to spin another fabric in its place. Black Beetle began to be interested.

"Do you work all the time?" he asked.



forced through these it becomes a fine thread. That's how I spin my web. There, I've wasted enough time on you. Run along or— She fixed her wicked eyes on Black Beetle.

But he did not hear the rest of her sentence. He was scuttling down the garden path.

and soft grasses. Here the babies are brought up, living with their bright eyed mother until old enough to forage for themselves. As winter approaches some hollow tree is selected as an abiding place, and here is built a warm nest of grasses and leaves which serves as the winter residence of the family.

When early spring arrives the young squirrels wander about after leaving the home nest for some time. Soon they make friends with others like themselves and very soon pair off and become the heads of families.

Mr. Gray Squirrel has the most peculiar chattering little bark you ever listened to. It is like and yet unlike the barking of a small dog.

Walking through a wood one is not to

By Edmund K. Goldsborough, Jr.
Author of "The Dream Adventures of Little Bill," etc.



OME on, Willy," said the white mouse, who scampered up beside the little fellow's bed. "I am going to take a trip to the seaside."

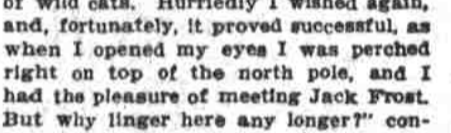
"How in the world did you get out of your cage?" asked Willy in amazement, as he sat up in bed. "I am sure I closed the door last night."

"Of course you did," said the white mouse, with a little laugh. "I got out by wishing myself out."

"What do you mean?" "Just what I say; when I get tired of being in one place I give a strong wish to be elsewhere. Tonight I found my cage rather close and uncomfortable, so I wished to be out of it, and in a moment I'm going to wish to be by the ocean, as I believe a few whiffs of sea air will do me good."

"Does the wish always come true?" asked Willy.

"Not by any means; there is what we call an unsuccessful wish. For instance,



the other night I wished to be at the north pole, and found myself out in a forest being pursued by a savage band of wild cats. Hurriedly I wished again, and, fortunately, it proved successful, as when I opened my eyes I was perched right on top of the north pole, and I had the pleasure of meeting Jack Frost. But why linger here any longer?" continued the mouse; whereupon the tiny creature stood upon his hind legs and in a squeaky voice screamed, "Wish! Wish! Wish!" and to the child's utter astonishment the scene changed and a moment later he felt a pleasant breeze strike his face, and he found himself sitting upon the back of a huge whale far out upon the ocean.

"The whale's back was well covered with sea nettles, starfish, several crabs, lobsters and clams and an immense tortoise who exclaimed: 'Hello, boy! I am glad you joined our merry party.'"

"Where are you bound?" asked the mouse.

"To the mermaid's sea ball," answered the whale, "and I advise you chape to hold your breath for a moment, as I'm going down." And sitting the action to the word, he darted beneath the green surface.

"Ugh! Isn't the water cold?" said Willy.

"You'll become accustomed to it in a moment," assured the whale.

"Hush!" whispered the crab. "If I am not mistaken, I hear an orchestra."

"You are right," said the lobster, who commenced waving his claw, as if to keep time; "the bell buoys are chiming sweetly. I understood they had agreed to furnish the music."

The whale swam downward until, in the distance, all kinds of queer crea-



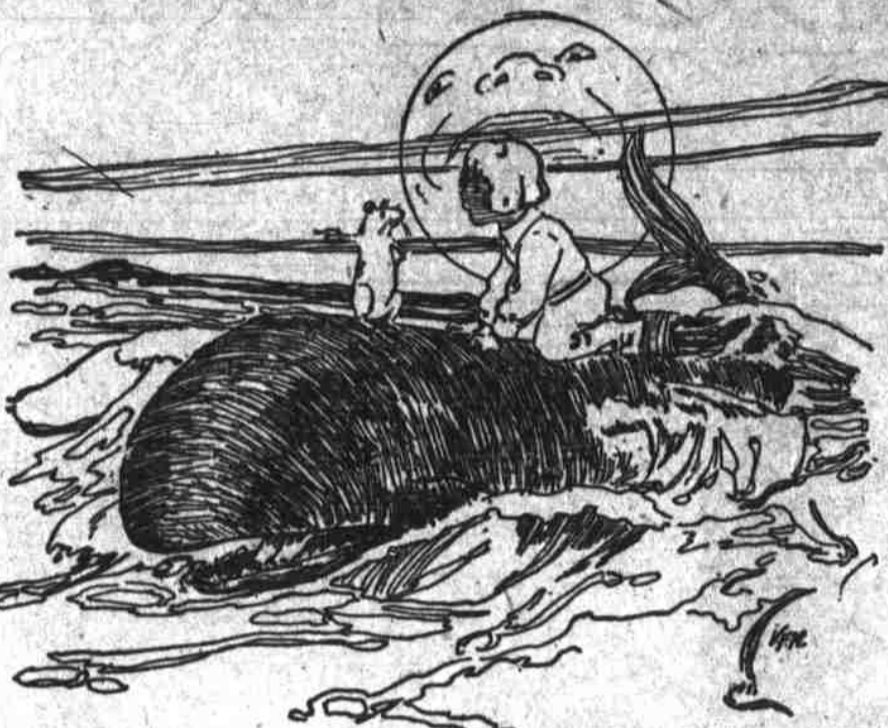
tures were seen waiting to and fro, while quantities of seaweed had been draped over the rocks, and beautiful shells covered the ocean's bottom.

"What a distinguished gathering!" said the tortoise, who was peering intently through the water with a tiny pair of field glasses; "I can see Admiral Oyster, Captain Clam, Lady Goldfish and, last but not least, Colonel Walrus—dear old Willy!"

"And there is the queen of the seas, the beautiful mermaid," murmured a starfish.

"And, unless my eyes deceive me, she is waiting with the seal," said the sea turtle. "I certainly envy him."

"I should think you might," began the lobster, when the whale gave a sudden lurch, followed by a quick dive, and the entire party were pitched on the bottom of the sea. The tortoise gave something like a little scream, while the lobster turned so red with indignation he looked as if he might burst, and cried: "I'll get even with the whale for that mean trick, if it takes me a lifetime."



Unfortunately for Willy, he fell right

on top of the seal, and for a moment quite a scene ensued.

"How dare you!" roared the seal. "I've a mind to bite you for your rudeness."

"I wouldn't blame you a particle," grumbled the walrus. "Imagine having the audacity to upset a queen!"

"It wasn't my fault," began Willy;

"Certainly," she answered, when to little Bill's amazement, the seal opened his mouth and greedily swallowed the fish; the walrus grabbed Admiral Oyster and Captain Clam, and both disappeared in a gulp; the mermaid queen picked up the lobster and bit a great piece out of him, whereupon the brave fellow murmured: "Although it pains me to be eaten, my joy at being swallowed by such a lovely creature as yourself more than atones for the agony I am enduring."

"Willy, this is no place for us," whispered the white mouse.

"Hardly," replied the boy, for he noticed the shark was eyeing him evilly.

"Let's wish ourselves back home, then," continued the mouse. "I, for one, have had enough of mermaid balls, and in future will be content to remain in my cage, even if it is small."

"All right!" cried Willy, as the shark made a hungry grab for him. "Wish! Wish! Wish!" And once more the scene changed, and the little fellow gave a sigh of relief when, a few seconds later he found himself back in his own little crib, while Mr. White Mouse could be seen snuggling in the corner of his cage.

"Well," said little Bill, sleepily, as he rubbed his eyes, "I am certainly glad I was dreaming, as it would distress me to think that the lovely mermaid and her ocean friends were a lot of cannibals!"

"The whale pitched us off his back when we were not expecting it."

"Which was a trick to break up our dance," roared the shark. "None of us has any use for that whale, anyhow."

"But you can't blame Willy for what the whale does," said the beautiful mermaid, with a silvery laugh. "I'm sure we can resume our dance now."

"Of course I blame him," said the walrus. "He has no right to associate with the whale."

"Nonsense!" said the queen. "Accidents will happen, so you had better make the best of it."

"But I had such a fall!" whimpered the seal; and two big tears rolled down his cheeks.

"What a cry-baby you are!" said the mermaid; "so much so, in fact, that I refuse to dance with you again this evening. Come, Willy, finish out the dance with me." And a second later the little boy and the mermaid queen were gliding gracefully through the water.

"How well you wait!" said the queen, when suddenly the bell buoys stopped ringing and Admiral Oyster, who had been dancing with Miss Sea Nettle, exclaimed, "Oh, pshaw! Just as I was beginning to enjoy the waltz the orchestra, of course, had to stop."

"And now for the grand supper," said the seal. "May I take you in, Lady Goldfish?"

"Certainly," she answered, when to little Bill's amazement, the seal opened his mouth and greedily swallowed the fish; the walrus grabbed Admiral Oyster and Captain Clam, and both disappeared in a gulp; the mermaid queen picked up the lobster and bit a great piece out of him, whereupon the brave fellow murmured: "Although it pains me to be eaten, my joy at being swallowed by such a lovely creature as yourself more than atones for the agony I am enduring."

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The MERMAID'S BALL



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A RIDE FOR LIFE



THE steady clink of iron horseshoes on the flint-hard road became maddeningly monotonous.

Hunter was deeply tired, and in his half stupefied condition dim, swift-vanishing pictures of the wife and babies, left further behind with every beat of the horse's hoofs, flashed in and out of his brain to torture him.

He had known that it must come soon, of necessity—the dreadful moment of his capture; and the yells of soldiers surrounding his little home had not been unexpected. Always those to whom the colonies owed the greatest debt of gratitude received a commensurate amount of hate from the British for their valiant deeds.

The low sobbing of his wife and the prattling voices of his babies sounded in Hunter's ears.

"It only," thought he, "had been a man less cruel than Fanning, the 'Carpenter Colonel.'"

Major Craig had not replaced Fanning's white hunting shirt with a British uniform and a silver-mounted holster of pistols for nothing. They were the reward of his reputation for being "hard as nails."

The Red Doe, his beautiful and spirited mount, another gift from a staunch Royalist, was also in the nature of a reward for his desperate adventures, for David Fanning was undoubtedly one of the most hardened of the South Carolina Outlaws, the mere mention of his name being enough to bring forth gressome tales

of murders and hangings and robberies in the vicinity. Mercy was hopeless, that was evident.

On and on the company rode, silently, grimly, purposefully. Hunter glanced ahead. The Red Doe was evidently as fresh as when they had started, but the other horses looked jaded and showed signs of travel.

Suddenly the band pulled up on a lonely roadside, and the leaders rode forward and held a short consultation.

Were they going to hold him for exchange?

Hunter's heart leaped high with hope at the thought and he watched the movements of Fanning and his band with eyes that shone with hope.

His heart sank with a thud, however, and his cheeks went white under their coat of tan when he saw a man snatch a rope from his saddlebow and make an end of it fast to a neighboring tree. Fanning came forward and said, civilly enough:

"It's your turn, Hunter, to go the

way of all the Whigs we've sent yonder before you," nodding at the noose.

Hunter swayed a little, then straightened and bowed. "The ones who are left are the ones who suffer most," he said, bravely, forcing a smile with ashen lips. "If I have to swing, I have to, I suppose. No chance for exchange?"

"None!" Hunter passed through the silent half circle of men, with steps that did not falter until he stood beneath the swinging noose.

As he stood there a sudden desperate inspiration came to him.

At his left not a yard and a half distant stood the feet Red Doe.

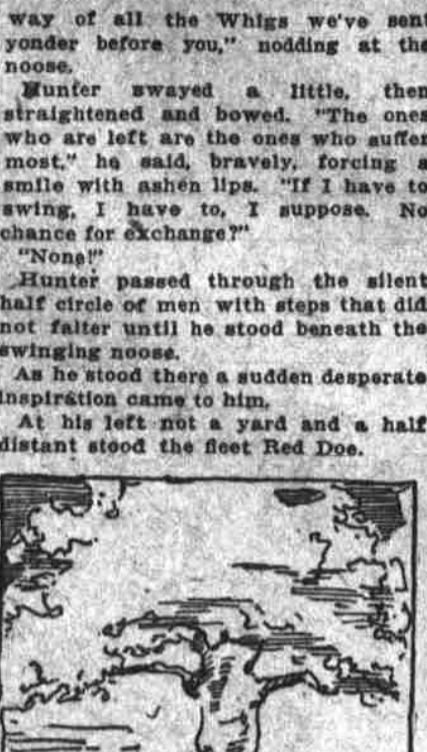
He rode David Fanning, sitting proudly on his famous mount, Red Doe.

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Hunter listened and found that she was breathing quite easily.

"You will wish to pray?" inquired Fanning.

Hunter inclined his head and sank quietly in his knees.

It was a wordless prayer he prayed, kneeling there under the green tree, for his eyes would blur with a picture of his rough little home and its dear inmates, and after a moment he partly opened his eyes and glanced out through their lashes.

Not a man had changed his position, but not one had his eyes on the pathetic figure under the swinging noose.

Now was his chance.

A flying leap landed him upon the Red Doe's back, and next moment both were flying like a streak of lightning up the road. Astonishment held Fanning motionless for a time; he stood as though rooted to the road.

Then came a rush to horse and a ringing command in Fanning's raucous voice. Hunter bent low over Red Doe's neck. They would not shoot, of that he felt almost sure. Red Doe's life was too precious to David Fanning.

He had gone but a short distance, however, when a sharp ring in his right shoulder told him that they were shooting and aiming high.

Through sheer luck Hunter hung on, bending low on Red Doe's neck, holding a loose rein, riding for his very life.

No efforts would be spared to regain Red Doe; of that he felt certain. But she was doing her utmost; nostrils a-spread, she was straining every muscle, but not one had his eyes on the pathetic figure under the swinging noose.

Presently horse and rider reached the confines of Little River, and both stood looking somewhat fearfully into the rushing torrent, swollen by recent rains.

Evidently there was no ford. But one thing remained; the shouts of the pursuers were drawing nearer.

Hunter clung tight, then urged the beautiful animal to a leap, which landed both in the midst of the surging waters.

In a second they had come to the surface, and the good beast was breasting the water fearlessly. Several anxious minutes passed before she gained the bank and Hunter led her, exhausted, into the shelter of the trees.

After a time appeared the pursuing party gesticulating on the opposite bank and conspicuous at the absence of a ford.

From the heart of David Hunter when he saw them finally turn back in disappointed rage there welled a great prayer of thanksgiving to the Giver of all good things; and it was not long before he and his beautiful prize were within sight of the little home for which he had hazarded all.

A Little Brother of the Woods

ALL our little brothers of the woods, which is better known and loved than the sprightly squirrel with his furry gray overcoat?

The gray squirrel's summer nest is generally built in some tall tree at the junction of the limbs and trunk. It is made of sticks and leaves and is lined with ferns

and soft grasses. Here the babies are brought up, living with their bright eyed mother until old enough to forage for themselves. As winter approaches some hollow tree is selected as an abiding place, and here is built a warm nest of grasses and leaves which serves as the winter residence of the family.

When early spring arrives the young squirrels wander about after leaving the home nest for some time. Soon they make friends with others like themselves and very soon pair off and become the heads of families.

Mr. Gray Squirrel has the most peculiar chattering little bark you ever listened to. It is like and yet unlike the barking of a small dog.

Walking through a wood one is not to

be startled by this guttural utterance, coming as it does from the very highest limb of a tall tree.

Steal as quickly and noiselessly as you please to the tree foot, you will not see the little fellow.

If you go close to the trunk, however, and suddenly step to the other side, you are more than likely to see him whisk like lightning to the other side, there to cling perfectly motionless until you make another move.

If you really desire to see him—and he is worth seeing, let me tell you—the thing to do is to go away from the tree several rods, seat yourself comfortably and possess your soul in patience.

By and by his snaky little head with its bright eyes will thrust itself around to your side. Be perfectly quiet and very soon he will come barking out and frisk about in delight at having got rid of you.

More than likely he will feel so grateful for his escape from you that he will single out another squirrel and there will ensue as pretty a game of tag as ever you have witnessed.

Up and down trees they will fly so fast as to bewilder you into making some motion to betray your presence to one of them. Away they whisk with shrill whistles of astonishment at seeing you, flinging up their tails in derision as they vanish from sight to a place of concealment in the nearest tree.

Now that you have given the alarm you may just as well go home, for so long as you remain they will be perfectly lifeless to all intents and purposes. In confinement the gray squirrel is one of the most interesting pets in the world. They are gentle and tame, yet full of fun and frolic, will recognize the faintest voice and will repay all the affection usually shown them.



A City of Canaries

HERE is no pet more popular with young and old than the little yellow canary, who is an inmate of so many homes and has such a wealth of music hidden in his soft little feather-covered throat.

The city of Norwich, the Norfolk capital, has become famous as the city of canaries, and of the 3,000 birds shipped abroad annually our own country receives about two-thirds.

A long, long time ago a vessel founded off the coast of Flanders. Before she went down a number of canaries, pets of the sailors, were set free and found their way to the nearby coast. Here a large number were captured by the peasants, who cared them carefully. As they grew in numbers a great many of the peasants became canary fanciers.

By and by some Flemish people came across the North sea, bringing many birds with them, and settled in the little Norfolk village. And now Norwich, the city of churches, has also won the title of city of canaries.

Many people who are engaged in trade there are canary fanciers on the side. Year by year the golden harvest of songsters increases, and some of the Norwich firms have 6000 or 7000 birds in their cages at one time.

