

AUNT LOUISA'S COLOURED GIFT BOOKS.

WELCOME GUEST

by
Laura Valentine
edited by Dr. Bruess



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Aunt Louisa's WELCOME GUEST

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COMPRISING

MY FAVORITES



ROVER'S DINNER PARTY



OUR BOYS AND GIRLS



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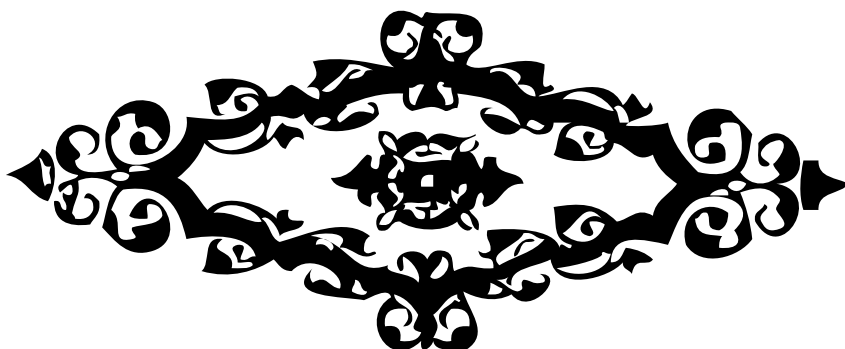
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THE THRUSH AND BLACKBIRD.

THE THRUSH is one of our best songsters. Very early in the spring and till late in the autumn its delightful song is heard in the woods and pleasure grounds. It generally builds its nest in a holly-tree, a hawthorn, or in some bush, and not very far from the ground. The nest is a very pretty one, made of dried grass and green moss, with a little earth or clay intermixed—it is lined with rotten wood. Here the Thrush lays four or five eggs, of a pale blue color, marked with dusky spots on the larger end. While the hen sits, the male bird brings her food. Thrushes eat a great many snails, which they seem to like even better than worms. They break the snail-shell against a stone very cleverly, and catch the snail as it falls out. Sometimes a Thrush will choose one particular stone to break them on, and will carry all the snails it finds to that spot. The Thrush takes great care of its nestlings, and feeds them on grubs and caterpillars.

The BLACKBIRD does not sing quite so well as the Thrush, but he has a very cheery, mellow song, and can learn to whistle tunes, which, it is said, he never forgets. The Blackbirds build early in the spring—the nest is generally placed in a bush, and is made of grass, stems, and roots, mixed with mud. The eggs are of a bluish-green, marked with dusky spots. The mother bird is very bold in defense of her nestlings—and a pair of Blackbirds have been seen to drive off a cat which came to steal their little birds. The Blackbird is useful to the farmer, as it devours a great quantity of worms, insects, and grubs, and thus fairly earns a few cherries now and then from the well-laden trees.

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THE MACAW AND COCKATOO

THE MACAW is a very beautiful bird. Its native country is South America, in the warmest parts of which it lives, preferring swampy grounds, and places where there are plenty of palm-trees. Macaws live in pairs on the summits, or highest branches, of trees. They wander to some little distance from their home by day in search of food, but always return to the same tree in the evening. They build their nests in the hollow of decayed trees, and lay two eggs twice a year. Both birds sit on them in turn. They are very fond of fruit, and climb after it easily by means of their beak and claws. The voice of the Macaw is very harsh and loud—in fact, a piercing scream. It can be taught to speak a word or two, but never talks as well as other Parrots. It makes an affectionate pet. A lady had a Macaw which would fly above her head when she walked for a distance of three miles, tantalizing her Skye terrier by flying occasionally (only just out of his reach) immediately before him. This bird would sit on a bare tree in the snow, now and then coming in to warm his feet, and then returning to his cold perch.

THE COCKATOO, like the Macaw, is of the Parrot family, but is distinguished from its relations by having a pretty crest of feathers on its head, which it can raise or put down as it pleases. It takes its name from the cry it constantly utters, which sounds like cockatoo, cockatoo." These beautiful birds come from the Molucca Islands and Australia. In these countries they live in great flocks on the lofty trees, their white plumage looking beautiful against the dark woods. They like to dwell near rivers and swamps. They feed on nuts, hard seeds, and roots, and generally swallow a few small stones with their food. They do a great deal of mischief to trees by stripping the bark off the small branches. They build their nest in the hollows of decayed trees, and in it the hen lays two eggs of the purest white. The Cockatoo is a very affectionate and gentle pet, but cannot learn to talk well. It never says more than "pretty cockatoo."

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THE NEWFOUNDLAND DOG

THIS noble Dog is the true friend of man. He is faithful, sensible, strong, and affectionate. In his native country, Newfoundland, he draws sledges laden with wood and provisions over rugged roads; or he plunges into the stream, to bring out of it the birds his master has shot.

The NEWFOUNDLAND has really only one fault. His temper is a little uncertain. Still, many of these Dogs are as good tempered as it is possible to be. The number of lives saved by the Newfoundland Dog cannot be counted.

Only a very short time ago a poor boy fell off the Thames Embankment into the river. A gentleman who was happily passing with a Newfoundland Dog by his side, sent it out at once after the sinking child. It dived, and soon returned, holding the boy's clothes between his teeth. The lad was saved by the dog.

It will also faithfully guard anything entrusted to its care, lying down by its charge and never leaving it, not to be tempted away by nice food or frightened by threats. A lady once told her Newfoundland Dog to take care of her umbrella. He lay down before it. Soon after (she had walked into the garden), she sent her sister in for it, as it looked like rain. Neptune knew the sister very well, and liked her. He wagged his tail with pleasure at seeing her; but when she tried to take hold of the umbrella, he growled very deeply, as much as to say, "Don't touch that umbrella, or I must bite you." And so she wisely left it alone, and ran back to tell her sister that no one could now get her umbrella but herself.

There are several varieties of the Newfoundland Dog. One of these, a very common one, is not much larger than a Water-Spaniel; it is quite black. It has all the good qualities of the larger dog. It is GOD who in His goodness has given us the dog as our friend, companion, and protector; and we should feel grateful to Him for bestowing on us so good a gift as the faithful Newfoundland.

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THE CALF

THE CALF is a favorite with every one. It looks so playful and pretty, bounding by the side of its mother in the green meadows all covered with buttercups and daisies, or standing, as it is in the picture, in the farmyard, waiting for its mother, the Cow, to come home from the pond, where she has gone for water. It is a gentle little creature. The Cow loves it very much, and will never leave it willingly. When it "baas" from the farmyard, she answers it with a loving low from the meadow.

The flesh of a Calf is called veal." Rennet, by means of which milk is turned into cheese, is the membrane of a Calf's stomach. Calf's skin is used for binding books.

But though the Calf is such a favorite, I am sure you will wonder when you hear that a great nation in former days worshipped it. These were the Egyptians, who, when they found a Calf with the mark of a white half-moon on its forehead, used to call it their God Apis, and worship it.

And I dare say you remember the story in the Bible of the Israelites, when in the Wilderness, making Aaron set up a golden Calf for them to worship, while Moses was up in the Mount with GOD; and how angry GOD was with them for being so wicked; for they knew better than the Egyptians, who had not been taught by GOD as they had.

How thankful we ought to be that GOD has taught us to know Himself-the true and only GOD--and not left us to worship anything we pleased! for the wisest people cannot know about the true GOD unless He teaches them.

The reason people long ago thought the Calf a sacred animal was because it is so useful when it becomes a Cow; for then it gives men milk, and cream, and cheese, and butter. Its skin makes leather, and its flesh is beef.

The Ox, Cow, and, of course, therefore, the Calf (which becomes an Ox or Cow) are most valuable to men.

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GUINEA PIGS

THESE little animals came to us at first from South America. They are found wild chiefly in Guiana, Brazil, and Peru; but hey have been so long reared in England, that we may consider them natives of our island now, at least, in a tame state, for there are no wild Guinea Pigs except in America.

The Guinea Pig is rather a dull little animal. It does not seem to feel pleased at being stroked or noticed, but to care only for its food. In its wild state the Guinea Pig is not found alone or in pairs, but many together, running and squeaking about in company. They live in dry lands covered with brushwood, under which they hide during the day, coming out at night in search of food, and in order to run about and play. Their food, in their wild state, consists of vegetables, roots, and grass; but when kept in captivity, they will eat bread, cake, and fruit. It used to be said that Guinea Pigs never drank, but that was a mistake: when their food is dry they will drink water if they can get it.

As they came at first from very warm countries, of course they feel the winter cold very much. It is right, therefore, to let them have a warm cozy place to go into in bad weather. They are very neat clean little creatures, and may often be seen smoothing and dressing their fur. Their voice is very disagreeable, being only a grunting squeak, or sometimes a shrill cry. The flesh of the Guinea Pig is not fit to eat, and it is of no kind of use to man; but still many people like to have it for a pet. It is a very defenseless little animal.: it has neither cunning nor strength to save itself from the attacks of other animals. Young Guinea Pigs are very soon able to feed themselves, though they grow for seven or eight months. They have teeth sooner than any other animal.

On warm evenings the Guinea Pig is glad to have a run on a smooth lawn or a nap by day under a rose-bush; but as it cannot well defend itself from danger, care must be taken of it when it goes out of doors.

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THE ROBIN

LAST and best of all our favorites comes dear ROBIN, the Children's Friend.

Robin retires with his mate, in spring, to the woods or thickets, to build a home for his expected little ones. The nest is made of moss and dried leaves mixed with hair, and lined with feathers. They place it near the ground, by the roots of trees, or sometimes in old buildings; but it is always artfully hidden. In this nest the hen lays from four to eight eggs, but generally only four. They are of a dull white, with reddish spots. While she is hatching them, Robin Redbreast sits on the nearest tree, and cheers her with his sweetest song.

But when winter comes, and the trees are all covered with snow, Robin and his mate, and their little ones, who are then all living separately, come boldly to our houses, and tap at the window-pane to ask for a few crumbs, or to be let in for warmth and shelter; and the request is never refused. Robin hops about upon the hearth-rug till he is warm, looking up with cunning eyes at the children; and when he sees them smile and look kind, he flies up on the breakfast-table and picks up the crumbs. He repays the kindness he receives by many a pretty song; and his sweet note is heard when all other birds (except the little Wren) are either silent or have left us.

Robins are never seen in flocks; they live in pairs, or alone, and fly off from the nest, one by one, to live apart from the others. Though so tame and sociable with us, the Robin is quarrelsome amongst other birds, and often fights them. Its courage is remarkable.

The Redbreast has been known to visit the sick-room of invalids, and to show them much affection and kindness, singing sweetly to them, and sometimes even roosting on a nail in the room, as the poet Wordsworth tells us happened in his own house. Every child knows the pretty nursery tale of the Children in the Wood and the kind Robins. We are not sure that these birds ever really try to bury anything; still, we should like to believe that pretty tale of Robin.

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