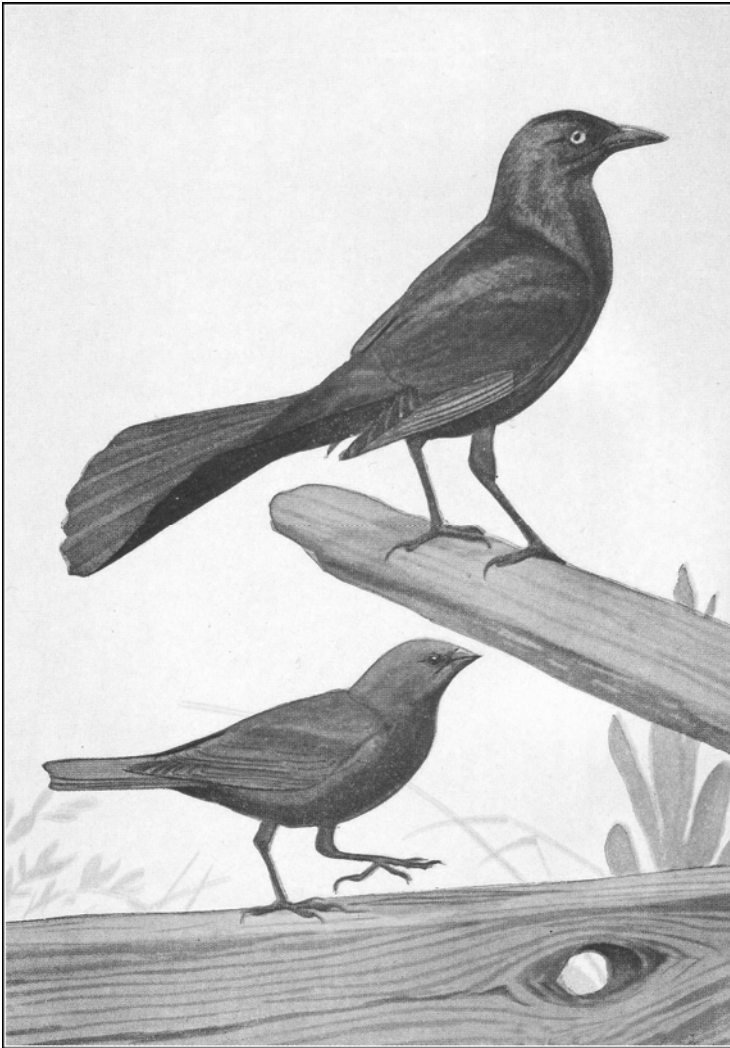


**THE BURGESS BIRD BOOK
FOR CHILDREN**



CREAKER THE PURPLE GRACKLE

At a distance he appears black and is
called Crow Blackbird.

THE MALE COWBIRD

You may know him by his coffee-brown head.

THE BURGESS BIRD BOOK FOR CHILDREN

BY

THORNTON W. BURGESS

with illustrations by

LOUIS AGASSIZ FUERTES



YESTERDAY'S CLASSICS
CHAPEL HILL, NORTH CAROLINA

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**TO THE CHILDREN AND THE BIRDS
OF AMERICA THAT THE BONDS OF LOVE
AND FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN THEM MAY BE
STRENGTHENED
THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED**

PREFACE

THIS book was written to supply a definite need. Its preparation was undertaken at the urgent request of booksellers and others who have felt the lack of a satisfactory medium of introduction to bird life for little children. As such, and in no sense whatever as a competitor with the many excellent books on this subject, but rather to supplement these, this volume has been written.

Its primary purpose is to interest the little child in, and to make him acquainted with, those feathered friends he is most likely to see. Because there is no method of approach to the child mind equal to the story, this method of conveying information has been adopted. So far as I am aware the book is unique in this respect. In its preparation an earnest effort has been made to present as far as possible the important facts regarding the appearance, habits and characteristics of our feathered neighbors. It is intended to be at once a story book and an authoritative handbook. While it is intended for little children, it is hoped that children of larger growth may find in it much of both interest and helpfulness.

Mr. Louis Agassiz Fuertes, artist and naturalist, has marvelously supplemented such value as may be in the text by his wonderful drawings. They were made especially for this volume and are so accurate, so true to life, that study of them will enable any one to identify the species shown. I am greatly indebted

to Mr. Fuertes for his coöperation in the endeavor to make this book of real assistance to the beginner in the study of our native birds.

It is offered to the reader without apologies of any sort. It was written as a labor of love—love for little children and love for the birds. If as a result of it even a few children are led to a keener interest in and better understanding of our feathered friends, its purpose will have been accomplished.

THORNTON W. BURGESS

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CHAPTER I

JENNY WREN ARRIVES

LIPPERTY-LIPPERTY-LIP scampered Peter Rabbit behind the tumble-down stone wall along one side of the Old Orchard. It was early in the morning, very early in the morning. In fact, jolly, bright Mr. Sun had hardly begun his daily climb up in the blue, blue sky. It was nothing unusual for Peter to see jolly Mr. Sun get up in the morning. It would be more unusual for Peter not to see him, for you know Peter is a great hand to stay out all night and not go back to the dear Old Briar-patch, where his home is, until the hour when most folks are just getting out of bed.

Peter had been out all night this time, but he wasn't sleepy, not the least teeny, weeny bit. You see, sweet Mistress Spring had arrived, and there was so much happening on every side, and Peter was so afraid he would miss something, that he wouldn't have slept at all if he could have helped it. Peter had come over to the Old Orchard so early this morning to see if there had been any new arrivals the day before.

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“Birds are funny creatures,” said Peter, as he hopped over a low place in the old stone wall and was fairly in the Old Orchard.

“Tut, tut, tut, tut, tut!” cried a rather sharp scolding voice. “Tut, tut, tut, tut, tut! You don’t know what you are talking about, Peter Rabbit. They are not funny creatures at all. They are the most sensible folks in all the wide world.”

Peter cut a long hop short right in the middle, to sit up with shining eyes. “Oh, Jenny Wren, I’m so glad to see you! When did you arrive?” he cried.

“Mr. Wren and I have just arrived, and thank goodness we are here at last,” replied Jenny Wren, fussing about, as only she can, in a branch above Peter. “I never was more thankful in my life to see a place than I am right this minute to see the Old Orchard once more. It seems ages and ages since we left it.”

“Well, if you are so fond of it what did you leave it for?” demanded Peter. “It is just as I said before—you birds are funny creatures. You never stay put; at least a lot of you don’t. Sammy Jay and Tommy Tit the Chickadee and Drummer the Woodpecker and a few others have a little sense; they don’t go off on long, foolish journeys. But the rest of you—”

“Tut, tut, tut, tut, tut!” interrupted Jenny Wren. “You don’t know what you are talking about, and no one sounds so silly as one who tries to talk about something he knows nothing about.”

JENNY WREN ARRIVES

Peter chuckled. “That tongue of yours is just as sharp as ever,” said he. “But just the same it is good to hear it. We certainly would miss it. I was beginning to be a little worried for fear something might have happened to you so that you wouldn’t be back here this summer. You know me well enough, Jenny Wren, to know that you can’t hurt me with your tongue, sharp as it is, so you may as well save your breath to tell me a few things I want to know. Now if you are as fond of the Old Orchard as you pretend to be, why did you ever leave it?”

Jenny Wren’s bright eyes snapped. “Why do you eat?” she asked tartly.

“Because I’m hungry,” replied Peter promptly.

“What would you eat if there were nothing to eat?” snapped Jenny.

“That’s a silly question,” retorted Peter.

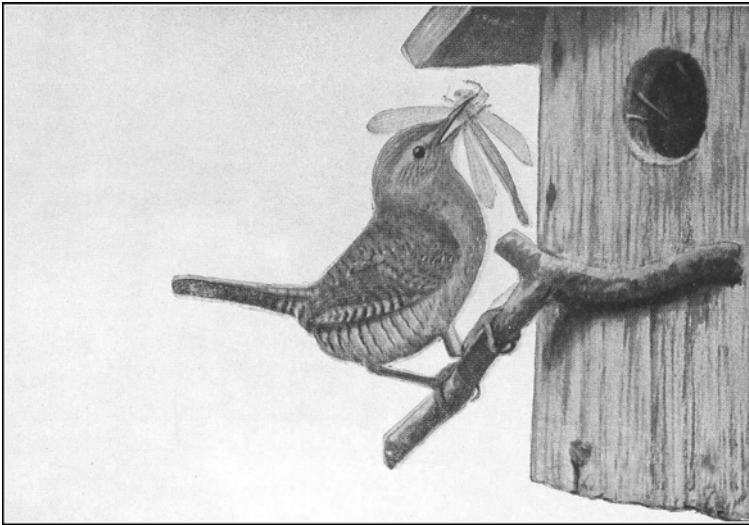
“No more silly than asking me why I leave the Old Orchard,” replied Jenny. “Do give us birds credit for a little common sense, Peter. We can’t live without eating any more than you can, and in winter there is no food at all here for most of us, so we go where there is food. Those who are lucky enough to eat the kinds of food that can be found here in winter stay here. They are lucky. That’s what they are—lucky. Still—” Jenny Wren paused.

“Still what?” prompted Peter.

“I wonder sometimes if you folks who are at home all the time know just what a blessed place home is,” replied Jenny. “It is only six months since

THE BURGESS BIRD BOOK FOR CHILDREN

we went south, but I said it seems ages, and it does. The best part of going away is coming home. I don't care if that does sound rather mixed; it is true just the same. It isn't home down there in the sunny South, even if we do spend as much time there as we



JENNY WREN

This is the saucy little House Wren
who builds near your home.

do here. *This* is home, and there's no place like it! What's that, Mr. Wren? I haven't seen all the Great World? Perhaps I haven't, but I've seen enough of it, let me tell you that! Any one who travels a thousand miles twice a year as we do has a right to express an opinion, especially if they have used their eyes as I have mine. There is no place like home, and you needn't try to tease me by pretending that there is.

JENNY WREN ARRIVES

My dear, I know you; you are just as tickled to be back here as I am.”

“He sings as if he were,” said Peter, for all the time Mr. Wren was singing with all his might.

Jenny Wren looked over at Mr. Wren fondly. “Isn’t he a dear to sing to me like that? And isn’t it a perfectly beautiful spring song?” said she. Then, without waiting for Peter to reply, her tongue rattled on. “I do wish he would be careful. Sometimes I am afraid he will overdo. Just look at him now! He is singing so hard that he is shaking all over. He always is that way. There is one thing true about us Wrens, and this is that when we do things we do them with all our might. When we work we work with all our might. When Mr. Wren sings he sings with all his might.”

“And, when you scold you scold with all your might,” interrupted Peter mischievously.

Jenny Wren opened her mouth for a sharp reply, but laughed instead. “I suppose I do scold a good deal,” said she, “but if I didn’t goodness knows who wouldn’t impose on us. I can’t bear to be imposed on.”

“Did you have a pleasant journey up from the sunny South?” asked Peter.

“Fairly pleasant,” replied Jenny. “We took it rather easily. Some birds hurry right through without stopping, but I should think they would be tired to death when they arrive. We rest whenever we are tired, and just follow along behind Mistress Spring,

THE BURGESS BIRD BOOK FOR CHILDREN

keeping far enough behind so that if she has to turn back we will not get caught by Jack Frost. It gives us time to get our new suits on the way. You know everybody expects you to have new things when you return home. How do you like my new suit, Peter?" Jenny bobbed and twisted and turned to show it off. It was plain to see that she was very proud of it.

"Very much," replied Peter. "I am very fond of brown. Brown and gray are my favorite colors." You know Peter's own coat is brown and gray.

"That is one of the most sensible things I have heard you say," chattered Jenny Wren. "The more I see of bright colors the better I like brown. It always is in good taste. It goes well with almost everything. It is neat and it is useful. If there is need of getting out of sight in a hurry you can do it if you wear brown. But if you wear bright colors it isn't so easy. I never envy anybody who happens to have brighter clothes than mine. I've seen dreadful things happen all because of wearing bright colors."

"What?" demanded Peter.

"I'd rather not talk about them," declared Jenny in a very emphatic way. "Way down where we spent the winter some of the feathered folks who live there all the year round wear the brightest and most beautiful suits I've ever seen. They are simply gorgeous. But I've noticed that in times of danger these are the folks dreadful things happen to. You see they simply can't get out of sight. For my part I would far rather be simply and neatly dressed and feel safe than to wear wonderful clothes and never

JENNY WREN ARRIVES

know a minute's peace. Why, there are some families I know of which, because of their beautiful suits, have been so hunted by men that hardly any are left. But gracious, Peter Rabbit, I can't sit here all day talking to you! I must find out who else has arrived in the Old Orchard and must look my old house over to see if it is fit to live in."

CHAPTER II

THE OLD ORCHARD BULLY

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 your 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."

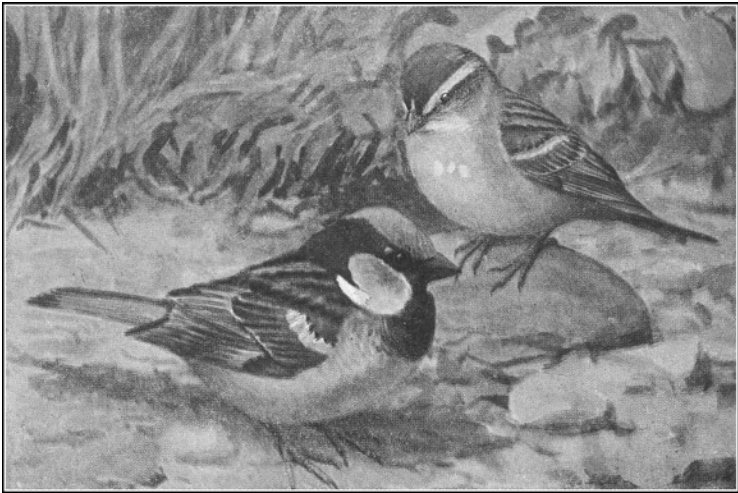
"What?" screamed Jenny and Mr. Wren together. Then without even saying good-by to Peter, they flew in a great rage to see if he had told them the truth. Presently he heard them scolding as fast as their tongues could go, and this is very fast indeed.

"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 hear

THE OLD ORCHARD BULLY

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



CHIPPY THE CHIPPING SPARROW

The smallest of the family.

BULLY THE ENGLISH SPARROW

The common sparrow of the streets.

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

THE BURGESS BIRD BOOK FOR CHILDREN

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 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.

THE OLD ORCHARD BULLY

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 me 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

THE BURGESS BIRD BOOK FOR CHILDREN

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 any one 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 some one 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

THE OLD ORCHARD BULLY

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.

THE BURGESS BIRD BOOK FOR CHILDREN

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.

CHAPTER III

JENNY HAS A GOOD WORD FOR SOME SPARROWS

THE morning after the fight between Jenny and Mr. Wren and Bully the English Sparrow found Peter Rabbit in the Old Orchard again. He was so curious to know what Jenny Wren would do for a house that nothing but some very great danger could have kept him away from there. Truth to tell, Peter was afraid that not being able to have their old house, Jenny and Mr. Wren would decide to leave the Old Orchard altogether. So it was with a great deal of relief that as he hopped over a low place in the old stone wall he heard Mr. Wren singing with all his might.

The song was coming from quite the other side of the Old Orchard from where Bully and Mrs. Bully had set up housekeeping. Peter hurried over. He found Mr. Wren right away, but at first saw nothing of Jenny. He was just about to ask after her when he caught sight of her with a tiny stick in her bill. She snapped her sharp little eyes at him, but for once her tongue was still. You see, she couldn't talk and carry that stick at the same time. Peter watched her and

THE BURGESS BIRD BOOK FOR CHILDREN

saw her disappear in a little hole in a big branch of one of the old apple-trees. Hardly had she popped in than she popped out again. This time her mouth was free, and so was her tongue.

“You’d better stop singing and help me,” she said to Mr. Wren sharply. Mr. Wren obediently stopped singing and began to hunt for a tiny little twig such as Jenny had taken into that hole.

“Well!” exclaimed Peter. “It didn’t take you long to find a new house, did it?”

“Certainly not,” snapped Jenny. “We can’t afford to sit around wasting time like some folks I know.”

Peter grinned and looked a little foolish, but he didn’t resent it. You see he was quite used to that sort of thing. “Aren’t you afraid that Bully will try to drive you out of that house?” he ventured.

Jenny Wren’s sharp little eyes snapped more than ever. “I’d like to see him try!” said she. “That doorway’s too small for him to get more than his head in. And if he tries putting his head in while I’m inside, I’ll peck his eyes out! She said this so fiercely that Peter laughed right out.

“I really believe you would,” said he.

“I certainly would,” she retorted. “Now I can’t stop to talk to you, Peter Rabbit, because I’m too busy. Mr. Wren, you ought to know that that stick is too big.” Jenny snatched it out of Mr. Wren’s mouth and dropped it on the ground, while Mr. Wren meekly went to hunt for another. Jenny joined

JENNY HAS A GOOD WORD FOR SOME SPARROWS

him, and as Peter watched them he understood why Jenny is so often spoken of as a feathered busybody.

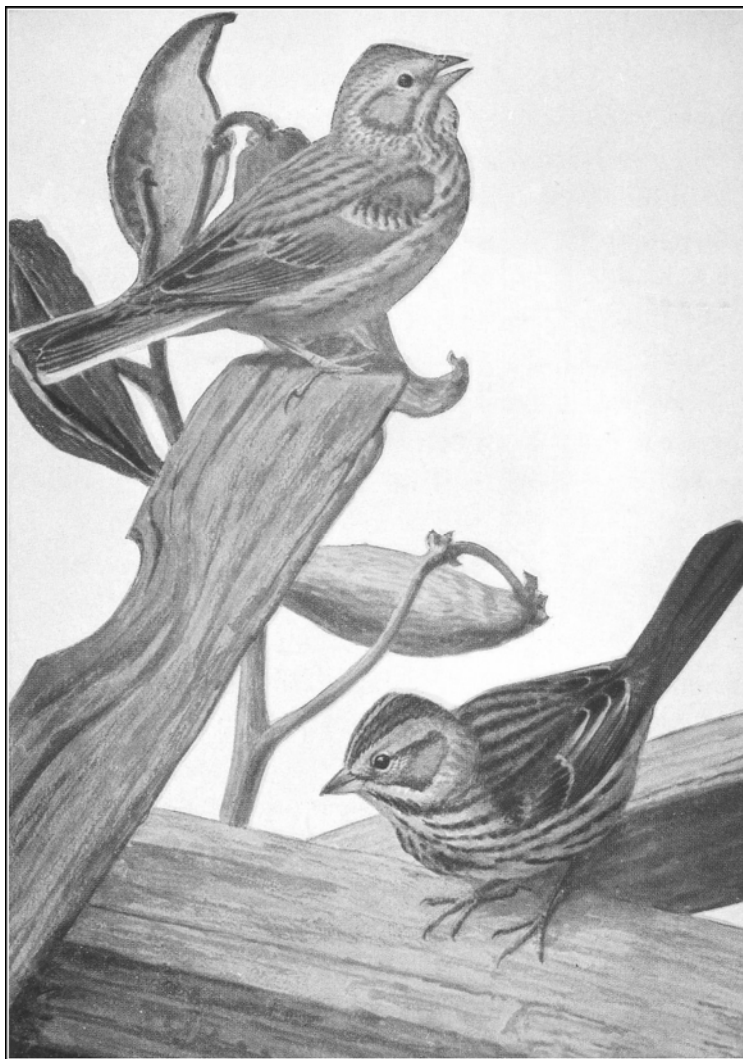
For some time Peter Rabbit watched Jenny and Mr. Wren carry sticks and straws into that little hole until it seemed to him they were trying to fill the whole inside of the tree. Just watching them made Peter positively tired. Mr. Wren would stop every now and then to sing, but Jenny didn't waste a minute. In spite of that she managed to talk just the same.

"I suppose Little Friend the Song Sparrow got here some time ago," said she.

Peter nodded. "Yes," said he. "I saw him only a day or two ago over by the Laughing Brook, and although he wouldn't say so, I'm sure that he has a nest and eggs already."

Jenny Wren jerked her tail and nodded her head vigorously. "I suppose so," said she. "He doesn't have to make as long a journey as we do, so he gets here sooner. Did you ever in your life see such a difference as there is between Little Friend and his cousin, Bully? Everybody loves Little Friend."

Once more Peter nodded. "That's right," said he. "Everybody does love Little Friend. It makes me feel sort of all glad inside just to hear him sing. I guess it makes everybody feel that way. I wonder why we so seldom see him up here in the Old Orchard."



SWEET VOICE THE VESPER SPARROW

You can tell him from other Sparrows
by the white outer feathers in his tail.

LITTLE FRIEND THE SONG SPARROW

His tinkling, happy song can never be mistaken.

JENNY HAS A GOOD WORD FOR SOME SPARROWS

“Because he likes damp places with plenty of bushes better,” replied Jenny Wren. “It wouldn’t do for everybody to like the same kind of a place. He isn’t a tree bird, anyway. He likes to be on or near the ground. You will never find his nest much above the ground, not more than a foot or two. Quite often it is on the ground. Of course I prefer Mr. Wren’s song, but I must admit that Little Friend has one of the happiest songs of any one I know. Then, too, he is so modest, just like us Wrens.”

Peter turned his head aside to hide a smile, for if there is anybody who delights in being both seen and heard it is Jenny Wren, while Little Friend the Song Sparrow is shy and retiring, content to make all the world glad with his song, but preferring to keep out of sight as much as possible.

Jenny chattered on as she hunted for some more material for her nest. “I suppose you’ve noticed, said she, “that he and his wife dress very much alike. They don’t go in for bright colors any more than we Wrens do. They show good taste. I like the little brown caps they wear, and the way their breasts and sides are streaked with brown. Then, too, they are such useful folks. It is a pity that that nuisance of a Bully doesn’t learn something from them. I suppose they stay rather later than we do in the fall.”

“Yes,” replied Peter. “They don’t go until Jack Frost makes them. I don’t know of any one that we miss more than we do them.”

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“Speaking of the sparrow family, did you see anything of Whitethroat?” asked Jenny Wren, as she rested for a moment in the doorway of her new house and looked down at Peter Rabbit.

Peter’s face brightened. “I should say I did!” he exclaimed. “He stopped for a few days on his way north. I only wish he would stay here all the time. But he seems to think there is no place like the Great Woods of the North. I could listen all day to his song. Do you know what he always seems to be saying?”

“What?” demanded Jenny.

“I live happ-i-ly, happ-i-ly, happ-i-ly,” replied Peter. “I guess he must too, because he makes other people so happy.”

Jenny nodded in her usual emphatic way. “I don’t know him as well as I do some of the others,” said she, “but when I have seen him down in the South he always has appeared to me to be a perfect gentleman. He is social, too; he likes to travel with others.”

“I’ve noticed that,” said Peter. “He almost always has company when he passes through here. Some of those Sparrows are so much alike that it is hard for me to tell them apart, but I can always tell Whitethroat because he is one of the largest of the tribe and has such a lovely white throat. He really is handsome with his black and white cap and that bright yellow spot before each eye. I am told that he is very dearly loved up in the North where he makes his home. They say he sings all the time.”

JENNY HAS A GOOD WORD FOR SOME SPARROWS

“I suppose Scratcher the Fox Sparrow has been along too,” said Jenny. “He also started some time before we did.”

“Yes,” replied Peter. “He spent one night in the dear Old Briar-patch. He is fine looking too, the biggest of all the Sparrow tribe, and *how* he can sing. The only thing I’ve got against him is the color of his coat. It always reminds me of Reddy Fox, and I don’t like anything that reminds me of that fellow. When he visited us I discovered something about Scratcher which I don’t believe you know.”

“What?” demanded Jenny rather sharply.

“That when he scratches among the leaves he uses both feet at once,” cried Peter triumphantly. “It’s funny to watch him.”

“Pooh! I knew that,” retorted Jenny Wren. “What do you suppose my eyes are made for? I thought you were going to tell me something I didn’t know.”

Peter looked disappointed.