

*Clara Dillingham Pierson*

# Among the Forest People



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# AMONG THE FOREST PEOPLE

BY

CLARA DILLINGHAM PIERSON





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## TO THE CHILDREN.

*Dear Little Friends:*

Since I told my stories of the meadow people a year ago, so many children have been asking me questions about them that I thought it might be well to send you a letter with these tales of the forest folk.

I have been asked if I am acquainted with the little creatures about whom I tell you, and I want you to know that I am very well acquainted indeed. Perhaps the Ground Hog is my oldest friend among the forest people, just as the Tree Frog is among those of the meadow. Some of the things about which I shall tell you, I have seen for myself, and the other stories have come to me in another way. I was there when the swaggering Crow drove the Hens off the barnyard fence, and I was quite as much worried about the Mourning Doves' nest as were Mrs. Goldfinch and Mrs. Oriole.

I have had a letter from one little boy who wants to know if the meadow people really talk to each other. Of course they do. And so do all the people in these stories. They do not talk in the same way as you and I, but they have their own language, which they understand just as well as we do English. You know not even all children speak alike. If you and I were to meet early some sunshiny day, we would say to each other, "Good morning," but if a little German boy should join us, he would say, "Guten Morgen," and a tiny

French maiden would call out, “Bon jour,” when she meant the same thing.

These stories had to be written in the English language, so that you could understand. If I were to tell them in the Woodpecker, the Rabbit, or the Rattlesnake language, all of which are understood in the forest, they might be very fine stories, but I am afraid you would not know exactly what they meant!

I hope you will enjoy hearing about my forest friends. They are delightful people to know, and you must get acquainted with them as soon as you can. I should like to have you in little chairs just opposite my own and talk of these things quite as we used to do in my kindergarten. But that cannot be, so I have written you this letter, and think that perhaps some of you will write to me, telling which story you like best, and why you like it.

Your friend,

CLARA DILLINGHAM PIERSON.

STANTON, MICHIGAN, *April 15, 1898.*







## MR. RED SQUIRREL COMES TO LIVE IN THE FOREST

LIFE in the forest is very different from life in the meadow, and the forest people have many ways of doing which are not known in the world outside. They are a quiet people and do not often talk or sing when there are strangers near. You could never get acquainted with them until you had learned to be quiet also, and to walk through the underbrush without snapping twigs at every step. Then, if you were to live among them and speak their language, you would find that there are many things about which it is not polite to talk. And there is a reason for all this.

In the meadow, although they have their quarrels and their own troubles, they always make it up again and are friendly, but in the forest there are some people who can never get along well together, and who do not go to the same



parties or call upon each other. It is not because they are cross, or selfish, or bad. It is just because of the way in which they have to live and hunt, and they cannot help it any more than you could help having eyes of a certain color.

These are things which are all understood in the forest, and the people there are careful what they say and do, so they get on very well indeed, and have many happy times in that quiet, dusky place. When people are born there, they learn these things without thinking about it, but when they come there from some other place it is very hard, for everybody thinks it stupid in strangers to ask about such simple matters.

When Mr. Red Squirrel first came to the forest, he knew nothing of the way in which they do, and he afterward said that learning forest manners was even harder than running away from his old home. You see, Mr. Red Squirrel was born in the forest, but was carried away from there when he was only a baby. From that time until he was grown, he had never set claw upon a tree, and all he could see of the world he had seen by peeping through the bars of a cage. His cousins in the forest learned to frisk along the fence-tops and to jump from one swaying branch to another, but when this poor little fellow longed for a scamper he could only run around and around in a wire wheel that hummed as it turned, and this made him very dizzy.

He used to wonder if there were nothing better in life, for he had been taken from his woodland home when he was too young to remember about it. One day he saw another Squirrel outside, a dainty little one who looked as though she had never a sad thought. That made him care more than

ever to be free, and when he curled down in his cotton nest that night he dreamed about her, and that they were eating acorns together in a tall oak tree.

The next day Mr. Red Squirrel pretended to be sick. He would not run in the wheel or taste the food in his cage. When his master came to look at him, he moaned pitifully and would not move one leg. His master thought that the leg was broken, and took limp little Mr. Red Squirrel in his hand to the window to see what was the matter. The window was up, and when he saw his chance, Mr. Red Squirrel leaped into the open air and was away to the forest. His poor legs were weak from living in such a small cage, but how he ran! His heart thumped wildly under the soft fur of his chest, and his breath came in quick gasps, and still he ran, leaping, scrambling, and sometimes falling, but always nearer the great green trees of his birthplace.

At last he was safe and sat trembling on the lowest branch of a beech-tree. The forest was a new world to him and he asked many questions of a fat, old Gray Squirrel. The Gray Squirrel was one of those people who know a great deal and think that they know a great, great deal, and want others to think so too. He was so very knowing and important that, although he answered all of Mr. Red Squirrel's questions, he really did not tell him any of the things which he most wanted to know, and this is the way in which they talked:

"What is the name of this place?" asked Mr. Red Squirrel.

"This? Why this is the forest, of course," answered the Gray Squirrel. "We have no other name for it. It is possible that there are other forests in the world, but they cannot be so fine as this, so we call ours 'the forest.'"

“Are there pleasant neighbors here?” asked Mr. Red Squirrel.

“Very good, very good. My wife and I do not call on many of them, but still they are good enough people, I think.”

“Then why don’t you call?”

“Why? Why? Because they are not in our set. It would never do.” And the Gray Squirrel sat up very straight indeed.

“Who is that gliding fellow on the ground below?” asked the newcomer. “Is he one of your friends?”

“That? That is the Rattlesnake. We never speak to each other. There has always been trouble between our families.”

“Who lives in that hollow tree yonder?”

“Sh, sh! That is where the Great Horned Owl has his home. He is asleep now and must not be awakened, for Squirrels and Owls cannot be friendly.”

“Why not?”

“Because. It has always been so.”

“And who is that bird just laying an egg in her nest above us?”

“Speak softly, please. That is the Cowbird, and it is not her nest. You will get into trouble if you talk such things aloud. She can’t help it. She has to lay her eggs in other birds’ nests, but they don’t like it.”

Mr. Red Squirrel tried very hard to find out the reason for this, but there are always some things for which no reason can be given; and there are many questions which can never be answered, even if one were to ask, “Why? why? why?” all day long. So Mr. Red Squirrel, being a wise little fellow, stopped asking, and thought by using his eyes and ears he would in time learn all that he needed to know.

He had good eyes and keen ears, and he learned very fast without making many mistakes. He had a very happy life among the forest people, and perhaps that was one reason. He learned not to say things which made his friends feel badly, and he did not ask needless questions. And after all, you know, it would have been very foolish to ask questions which nobody could answer, and worse than foolish to ask about matters which he could find out for himself.

It is in the forest as in the world outside. We can know that many things are, but we never know why they are.





If the Rattlesnake is the king of the forest in the daytime, the Great Horned Owl is the king at night. Indeed, he is much the more powerful of the two, for he is king of air and earth alike and can go wherever he wishes, while the snake can only rule over those who live near the ground or who are so careless as to come to him there.

There was but one pair of Great Horned Owls in the forest, and they lived in the deepest shade, having their great clumsy nest in the hollow of a tall tree. You might

have walked past it a hundred times and never have guessed that any Owls lived there, if you did not notice the round pellets of bone and hair on the grass. They are such hungry fellows that they swallow their food with the bones in it. Then their tough little stomachs go to work, rolling all the pieces of bone and hair into balls and sending them back to be cast out of the Owls' mouths to the ground.

The Great Horned Owl was a very large bird. His whole body was covered with brown, dull yellow, and white feathers. Even his feet and legs were covered, and all that you could see besides were his black claws and his black hooked bill. Yes, at night you could see his eyes, too, and they were wonderful great eyes that could see in the dark, but they were shut in the daytime when he was resting. His wife, who was the queen of the forest at night, looked exactly like him, only she was larger than he. And that is the way among Owls,—the wife is always larger than her husband.

Every night when the sun had gone down, the Great Horned Owl and his wife would come out of their hollow tree and sit blinking on a branch near by, waiting until it got dark enough for them to see quite plainly. As the light faded, the little black spots in their eyes would grow bigger and bigger, and then off they would go on their great soft, noiseless wings, hunting in the grass and among the branches for the supper which they called breakfast.

Mrs. Owl could not be gone very long at a time, for there were two large round white eggs in the nest which must not get cold. Her husband was on the wing most of the night, and he often flew home with some tender morsel for her. He was really a kind-hearted fellow, although you could

never have made the small birds think so. Sometimes his wife would sigh and tell how tired she was of sitting still, and how glad she would be when the eggs were hatched and she could go more with him. When she began to speak of that, the Great Horned Owl would get ready for another flight and go off saying: "It is *too* bad. I am *so* sorry for you. But then, one would never have young Owlets if one didn't stick to the nest." He was always proud of his children, and he thought himself a very good husband. Perhaps he was; still he had never taken his place on the nest while his wife went hunting.

One night, after they had both been flying through forest and over field, he came back to the hollow tree to rest. He expected to find Mrs. Owl, for she had started home before he did. She was not there and he grew quite impatient. "I should like to know what keeps her so long," he said, fretfully. After a while he looked into the nest and saw the two big white eggs. "It is a shame," he said. "Our beautiful eggs will be chilled, and it will be all her fault if we have no Owlets this summer."

You see, even then he did not seem to think that he could do anything to keep them warm. But the next time he looked in, he put one feathered foot on the round eggs and was surprised to find how cool they were.

It fairly made his head feathers stand on end to think of it, and he was so frightened that he forgot to be cross, and stepped right in and covered them with his own breast. What if they had already been left too long, and the Owlets within would never hatch? Would Mrs. Owl ever forgive him for being so stupid? He began to wonder if any of the



other fellows would see him. He thought it so absurd for the king of the forest to be hatching out a couple of eggs, instead of swooping around in the dark and frightening the smaller birds.

The night seemed so long, too. It had always been short enough before, and he had often disliked to have daylight come, for then he had to go to bed. He was very much upset, and it is no wonder that when he heard a doleful wail from a neighboring tree, and knew that his cousin, the Screech Owl, was near, he raised his head and called loudly, "Hoo-hoo-oooo! Waugh-hoo!"

The Screech Owl heard him and flew at once to a branch beside the nest hollow. He was a jolly little fellow in spite of his doleful call, and before he could talk at all he had to bend his body, look behind him, nod his head, and shake himself, as Screech Owls always do when they alight. Then he looked into the tree and saw his big cousin, the Great Horned Owl, the night king of the forest, sitting on the eggs and looking very, very grumpy. How he did laugh! "What is the matter?" said he. "Didn't you like your wife's way of brooding over the eggs? Or did she get tired of staying at home and make you help tend the nest?"

"Matter enough," grumbled the Great Horned Owl. "We went hunting together at twilight and she hasn't come home yet. I didn't get into the nest until I had to, but it was growing very cold and I wouldn't miss having our eggs hatch for anything. Ugh-whooh! How my legs do ache!"

"Well," said his cousin, "you are having a hard time. Are you hungry?"

The Great Horned Owl said that he was, so the Screech

Owl went hunting and brought him food. "I will look in every night," he said, "and bring you a lunch. I'm afraid something has happened to your wife and that she will not be back."

As he flew away he called out, "It is *too* bad. I am *very* sorry for you. But then, I suppose you would never have the Owlets if you didn't stick to the nest."

This last remark made the Great Horned Owl quite angry. "Much he knows about it," he said. "I guess if he had ever tried it he would be a little more sorry for me." And then he began to think, "Who have I heard say those very words before? Who? Who? Who?"

All at once the Great Horned Owl remembered how many times he had said just that to his patient wife, and he began to feel very uncomfortable. His ears tingled and he felt a queer hot feeling under his face feathers. Perhaps he hadn't been acting very well after all! He knew that even when he told her he was sorry, he had been thinking she made a great fuss. Well, if she would only come back now, that should all be changed, and he shifted his weight and wriggled around into a more comfortable position.

Now, if this were just a story, one could say that Mrs. Owl came back and that they were all happy together; but the truth is she never did come, and nobody ever knew what became of her. So her husband, the night king of the forest, had to keep the eggs warm and rear his own Owlets. You can imagine how glad he was on the night when he first heard them tapping on the inside of their shells, for then he knew that he would soon be free to hunt.

A finer pair of children were never hatched, and their

father thought them far ahead of all his other broods. "If only Mrs. Owl were here to see them, how lovely it would be!" he said. Yet if she had been there he would never have had the pleasure of hearing their first faint cheeps, and of covering them with his soft breast feathers as he did each day. He forgot now all the weary time when he sat with aching legs, wishing that his cousin would happen along with something to eat. For that is always the way,—when we work for those we love, the weariness is soon forgotten and only happiness remains.

It is said that the Screech Owl was more thoughtful of his wife after his cousin had to hatch the eggs, and it is too bad that some of the other forest people could not have learned the same lesson; but the Great Horned Owl never told, and the Screech Owl kept his secret, and to this day there are many people in the forest who know nothing whatever about it.





## THE SWAGGERING CROW

WHEN the Crows who have been away for the winter return to the forest, all their relatives gather on the tree-tops to welcome them and tell the news. Those who have been away have also much to say, and it sometimes seems as though they were all talking at once. They spend many days in visiting before they begin nest-building. Perhaps if they would take turns and not interrupt each other, they would get the news more quickly, for when people are interrupted they can never talk well. Sometimes, too, one hungry fellow will fly off for a few mouthfuls of grain, and get back just in time to hear the end of a story. Then he will want to hear the first part of it, and



make such a fuss that they have to tell it all over again just for him.

At this time in the spring, you can hear their chatter and laughter, even when you are far away; and the song-birds of the forest look at each other and say, "Dear me! The Crows are back." They have very good reasons for disliking the Crows, as any Robin will tell you.

There was one great shining black Crow who had the loudest voice of all, and who was not at all afraid to use it. This spring he looked very lean and lank, for it had been a long, cold winter, and he had found but little to eat, acorns, the seeds of the wild plants, and once in a great while a frozen apple that hung from its branch in some lonely orchard.

He said that he felt as though he could reach around his body with one claw, and when a Crow says that he feels exceedingly thin. But now spring was here, and his sisters and his cousins and his aunts, yes, and his brothers and his uncles, too, had returned to the forest to live. He had found two good dinners already, all that he could eat and more too, and he began to feel happy and bold. The purple gloss on his feathers grew brighter every day, and he was glad to see this. He wanted to look so handsome that a certain Miss Crow, a sister of one of his friends, would like him better than she did any of the others.

That was all very well, if he had been at all polite about it. But one day he saw her visiting with another Crow, and he lost his temper, and flew at him, and pecked him about the head and shoulders, and tore the long fourth feather from one of his wings, besides rumpling the rest of his coat. Then he went away. He had beaten him by coming upon him

from behind, like the sneak that he was, and he was afraid that if he waited he might yet get the drubbing he deserved. So he flew off to the top of a hemlock-tree where the other Crows were, and told them how he had fought and beaten. You should have seen him swagger around when he told it. Each time it was a bigger story, until at last he made them think that the other Crow hadn't a tail feather left.

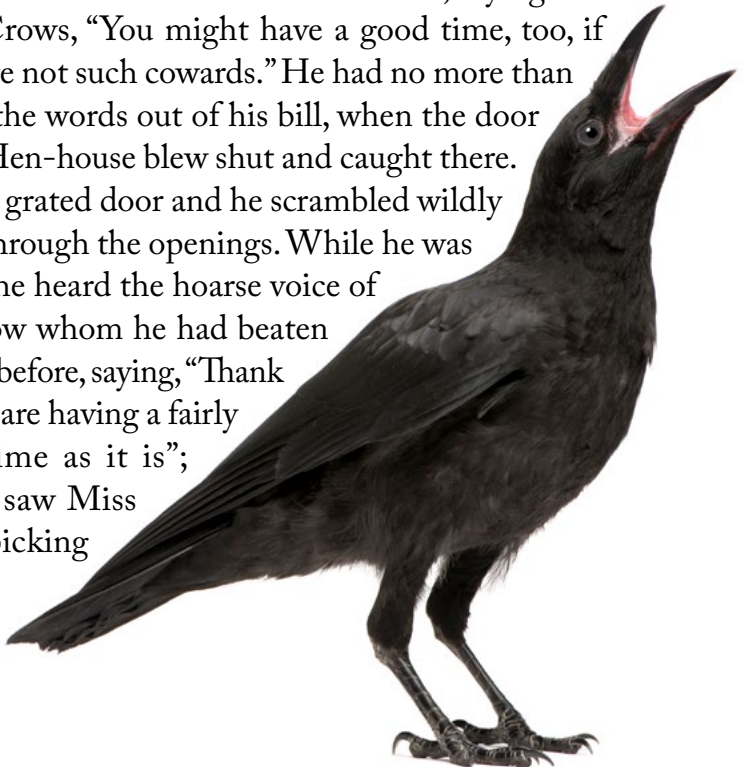
The next day, a number of Crows went to a farm not far from the forest. Miss Crow was in the party. On their way they stopped in a field where there stood a figure of a man with a dreadful stick in his hand. Everybody was frightened except Mr. Crow. He wanted to show how much courage he had, so he flew right up to it. They all thought him very brave. They didn't know that down in his heart he was a great coward. He wasn't afraid of this figure because he knew all about it. He had seen it put up the day before, and he knew that there was no man under the big straw hat and the flapping coat. He knew that, instead of a thinking, breathing person, there was only a stick nailed to a pole. He knew that, instead of having two good legs with which to run, this figure had only the end of a pole stuck into the ground.

Of course, he might have told them all, and then they could have gathered corn from the broken ground around, but he didn't want to do that. Instead, he said, "Do you see that terrible great creature with a stick in his hand? He is here just to drive us away, but he dares not touch me. He knows I would beat him if he did." Then he flew down, and ate corn close beside the figure, while the other Crows stood back and cawed with wonder.

When he went back to them, he said to Miss Crow, "You see how brave I am. If I were taking care of anybody, nothing could ever harm her." And he looked tenderly at her with his little round eyes. But she pretended not to understand what he meant, for she did not wish to give up her pleasant life with the flock and begin nest-building just yet.

When they reached the barn-yard, there was rich picking, and Mr. Crow made such a clatter that you would have thought he owned it all and that the others were only his guests. He flew down on the fence beside a couple of harmless Hens, and he flapped his wings and swaggered around until they began to sidle away. Then he grew bolder (you know bullies always do if they find that people are scared), and edged up to them until they fluttered off, squawking with alarm.

Next he walked into the Hen-house, saying to the other Crows, "You might have a good time, too, if you were not such cowards." He had no more than gotten the words out of his bill, when the door of the Hen-house blew shut and caught there. It was a grated door and he scrambled wildly to get through the openings. While he was trying, he heard the hoarse voice of the Crow whom he had beaten the day before, saying, "Thank you, we are having a fairly good time as it is"; and he saw Miss Crow picking



daintily at some corn which the speaker had scratched up for her.

At that minute the great Black Brahma Cock came up behind Mr. Crow. He had heard from the Hens how rude Mr. Crow had been, and he thought that as the head of the house he ought to see about it. Well! one cannot say very much about what happened next, but the Black Brahma Cock did see about it quite thoroughly, and when the Hen-house door swung open, it was a limp, ragged, and meek-looking Crow who came out, leaving many of his feathers inside.

The next morning Mr. Crow flew over the forest and far away. He did not want to go back there again. He heard voices as he passed a tall tree by the edge of the forest. Miss Crow was out with the Crow whom he had beaten, and they were looking for a good place in which to build. "I don't think they will know me if they see me," said Mr. Crow, "and I am sure that I don't want them to."





## THE RED-HEADED WOOD PECKER CHILDREN \*

MRS. Red-headed Woodpecker bent her handsome head down and listened. "Yes, it is! It certainly is!" she cried, as she heard for a second time the faint "tap-tap-tap" of a tiny beak rapping on the inside of an egg shell. She hopped to one side of her nest and stood looking at the four white eggs that lay there. Soon the rapping was heard again and she saw one of them move a bit on its bed of chips.

"So it is that one," she cried. "I thought it would be. I was certain that I laid that one first." And she arched her neck proudly, as the beak of her eldest child came through a crack in the shell. Now nobody else could have told one egg from another, but mothers have a way of remembering such things, and it may be because they love their children so that sometimes their sight is a little sharper, and their hearing a little keener than anybody else's.



However that may be, she stood watching while the tiny bird chipped away the shell and squeezed out of the opening he had made. She did not even touch a piece of the shell until he was well out of it, for she knew that it is always better for children to help themselves when they can. It makes them strong and fits them for life. When the little Red-headed Woodpecker had struggled free, she took the broken pieces in her beak and carried them far from the nest before dropping them to the ground. If she had done the easiest thing and let them fall by the foot of the hollow tree where she lived, any prowling Weasel or Blue Jay might have seen them and watched for a chance to reach her babies. And that would have been very sad for the babies.

The newly hatched bird was a tired little fellow, and the first thing he did was to take a nap. He was cold, too, although the weather was fine and sunshiny. His down was all wet from the moisture inside the egg, and you can imagine how he felt, after growing for so long inside a warm, snug shell, to suddenly be without it and know that he could never again have it around him. Even if it had been whole once more, he could not have been packed into it, for he had been stretching and growing every minute since he left it. It is for this reason that the barn-yard people have a wise saying: "A hatched chicken never returns to his shell."

When Mrs. Red-headed Woodpecker came back, she covered her shivering little one with her downy breast, and there he slept, while she watched for her husband's coming, and thought how pleased and proud he would be to see the baby. They were a young couple, and this was their first child.

But who can tell what the other three children, who had not cracked the shell, were thinking? Could they remember

the time when they began to be? Could they dream of what would happen after they were hatched? Could they think at all? They were tiny, weak creatures, curled up within their shells, with food packed all around them. There had been a time when they were only streaks in the yellow liquid of the eggs. Now they were almost ready to leave this for a fuller, freer life, where they could open their bills and flutter their wings, and stretch their legs and necks. It had been a quiet, sheltered time in the shell; why should they leave it? Ah, but they must leave it, for they were healthy and growing, and when they had done so, they would forget all about it. By the time they could talk, and that would be very soon, they would have forgotten all that happened before they were hatched. That is why you can never get a bird to tell you what he thought about while in the egg.

After the young Woodpecker's three sisters reached the outside world, the father and mother were kept busy hunting food for them, and they were alone much of the time. It was not long before they knew their parents' voices, although, once in a while, before they got their eyes open, they mistook the call of the Tree Frog below for that of the Woodpeckers. And this was not strange, for each says, "Ker-r-ruck! Ker-r-ruck!" and when the Tree Frog was singing in his home at the foot of the tree, the four Woodpecker children, in their nest-hollow far above his head, would be opening their bills and stretching their necks, and wondering why no juicy and delicious morsel was dropped down their throats.

When they had their eyes open there was much to be seen. At least, they thought so. Was there not the hollow in their dear, dry old tree, a hollow four or five times as high

as they could reach? Their mother had told them how their father and she had dug it out with their sharp, strong bills, making it roomy at the bottom, and leaving a doorway at the top just large enough for them to pass through. Part of the chips they had taken away, as the mother had taken the broken shells, and part had been left in the bottom of the hollow for the children to lie on. "I don't believe in grass, hair, and down, as a bed for children," their father had said. "Nice soft chips are far better."

And the Woodpecker children liked the chips, and played with them, and pretended that they were grubs to be caught with their long and bony tongues; only of course they never swallowed them.

It was an exciting time when their feathers began to grow. Until then they had been clothed in down; but now the tiny quills came pricking through their skin, and it was not so pleasant to snuggle up to each other as it had once been. Now, too, the eldest of the family began to show a great fault. He was very vain. You can imagine how sorry his parents were.

Every morning when he awakened he looked first of all at his feathers. Those on his breast were white, and he had a white band on his wings. His tail and back and nearly the whole of his wings were blue-black. His head, neck, and throat were crimson. To be sure, while the feathers were growing, the colors were not very bright, for the down was mixed with them, and the quills showed so plainly that the young birds looked rather streaked.

The sisters were getting their new suits at the same time, and there was just as much reason why they should be vain, but they were not. They were glad (as who would not be?)

and they often said to each other: "How pretty you are growing!" They looked exactly like their brother, for it is not with the Woodpeckers as with many other birds,—the sons and daughters are dressed in precisely the same way.

As for the vain young Woodpecker, he had many troubles. He was not contented to let his feathers grow as the grass and the leaves grow, without watching. No indeed! He looked at each one every day and a great many times every day. Then, if he thought they were not growing as fast as they should, he worried about it. He wanted to hurry them along, and sometimes, when his sisters did not seem to be looking, he took hold of them with his bill and pulled. Of course this did not make them grow any faster and it did make his skin very sore, but how was he to know? He had not been out of the shell long enough to be wise.

It troubled him, too, because he could not see his red feathers. He twisted his head this way and that, and strained his eyes until they ached, trying to see his own head and neck. It was very annoying. He thought it would have been much nicer to have the brightest feathers in a fellow's tail, where he could see them, or at any rate on his breast; and he asked his mother why it couldn't be so.

"I once knew a young Woodpecker," she said, "who thought of very little but his own beauty. I am afraid that if he had been allowed to wear his red feathers in his tail, he would never have seen anything else in this wonderful great world, but just his own poor little tail." She looked out of the doorway as she spoke, but he knew that she meant him.

Things went on in this way until the children were ready to fly. Then there were daily lessons in flying, alighting, clinging to branches, and tapping for food on the bark of

trees. They learned, too, how to support themselves with their stiff tails when they were walking up trees or stopping to eat with their claws hooked into the bark. Then Mrs. Red-headed Woodpecker taught them how to tell the ripest and sweetest fruit on the trees before they tasted it. That is something many people would like to know, but it is a forest secret, and no bird will tell anyone who cannot fly.

It was on his way back from an orchard one day, that the vain young Woodpecker stopped to talk with an old Gray Squirrel. It may be that the Gray Squirrel's sight was not good, and so he mistook the Woodpecker for quite another fellow. He was speaking of an old tree where he had spent the last winter. "I believe a family of Red-headed Woodpeckers live there now," he said. "I have met them once or twice. The father and mother are fine people, and they have charming daughters, but their son must be a great trial to them. He is one of these silly fellows who see the world through their own feathers."

As the young Red-headed Woodpecker flew away, he repeated this to himself: "A silly fellow, a silly fellow, who sees the world through his own feathers." And he said to his father, "Whose feathers must I look through?"

This puzzled his father. "Whose feathers should you look through?" said he. "What do you mean?"

"Well," answered the son, "somebody said that I saw the world through my own feathers, and I don't see how I can get anybody else's."

How his father did laugh! "I don't see why you should look through any feathers," said he. "What he meant was that you thought so much of your own plumage that you did not care for anything else; and it is so. If it were intended

you should look at yourself all the time, your eyes would have been one under your chin and the other in the back of your head. No! They are placed right for you to look at other people, and are where they help you hunt for food.”

“How often may I look at my own feathers?” asked the young Woodpecker. He was wondering at that minute how his tail looked, but he was determined not to turn his head.

The old Woodpecker’s eyes twinkled. “I should think,” he said, “that since you are young and have no family to look after, you might preen your feathers in the morning and in the afternoon and when you go to sleep. Then, of course, when it is stormy, you will have to take your waterproof out of the pocket under your tail, and put it on one feather at a time, as all birds do. That would be often enough unless something happened to rumple them.”

“I will not look at them any oftener,” said the young Red-headed Woodpecker, firmly. “I will *not* be called a silly fellow.” And he was as good as his word.

His mother sighed when she heard of the change. “I am very glad,” said she. “But isn’t that always the way? His father and I have talked and talked, and it made no difference; but let somebody else say he is silly and vain, and behold!”

