

"Cousin, if you must needs sing, come and sing nearer me," dismally piped Fretter.

"I thought so!" tweeted Good-in-all to himself; then aloud, "Gladly, dear heart." And he again spread his dear, little, brown wings and flew down to the nest where his second-cousinly eggs were waiting to be hatched.

"Dear little things!" said he, fondly eying the two speckled balls of bird-life beneath the parental feathers; for Fretter had turned to preen her wings, thus affording Goody a full view of the embryo nestlings.

"Dear little things, indeed! and that is just what I want of you," piped Fretter.

"I thought you wanted me to sing?" said See-good-in-all.

"Songs are in their proper place in a tree, but in a nest one wants something more practical."

See-good-in-all tweeted uneasily, for take away his song and you take away his life. But he laid his head respectfully to one side, which, in bird manners, means "I am all attention." And his cousin proceeded, "I want your advice. You know I am an unhappy bird. A leper in feathers, and shunned by all my race. You see it, don't you, now?"

See-good-in-all tweeted and hopped from twig to twig.

"Well, whether you see it or not, it is so. Now, I do not wish my poor unhatched offspring to suffer as I do. Are there no means by which the evil can be averted?"

"Bring them out in the light directly you can!" promptly replied Good-in-all.

"Out in the light, cousin! you forget yourself. You know I have always shunned the light."

See-good-in-all replied not a tweet; but, flying away, presently returned with a sprig of forget-me-not in his beak.

"Here, love, will you accept this?"

"What sickly-looking stuff is that?"

"It is the prettiest of all flowers, the darling little forget-me-not."

"I beg your pardon, cousin; the forget-me-not is a lovely sky blue; this thing is as green as myself."

"It shunned the light, silly little flower! and went and hid itself in the dark, behind a great ugly stone. So, whilst its brothers and sisters were being kissed into colour by the light, it remained a sickly little whiteling, that they are all ashamed of."

"It must have been from another stock," piped Fretter, unwilling to apply the moral.

"Oh, no! They are all of one root, and grew together."

"You may depend this sprig, then, is what you may call *cross-grained*, and could not agree with the rest of the plant!"

"Just so; and so it preferred sulking in the dark to—to—to—"

"Better say *to proper feathers* at once, for I see what you are hinting at," piped Fretter, but she piped as though in deep thought.

"Oh, it is only a fool that utters *all* his mind!" replied her cousin, hastily preparing for flight, for he perceived that the lesson of the white forget-me-not was working in her breast, and that he had best leave it to work.

The next day the White Fretter uttered her dismal note in vain. Noon came, and no Cousin See-good-in-all had answered to her f-r-e-e-t. At last, forgetting herself in real alarm, she sounded a few right good earnest notes, and presently the welcome flutter of wings told her that she had been heard.

"I am late, cousin, but I've been listening to good news. I saw some nice children huddled together in earnest confab, so I perched on the wall to hear what it was all about. They say it is a day called *May day* to-morrow, and that whoever is up early enough to sip the May-dew will be made beautiful for ever; so I am going in for a

taste. You see what an ugly old mug I am, and—"

"*You are just lovely!*" sang Fretter, all unaware.

"Am I! *Where* then?" And See-good-in-all peeped over his wing at the very sober, brown plumage, which made him a very Quaker amongst birds.

"Oh, it is *you*, not your feathers," sang Fretter, still forgetting herself.

"At any rate, I shall get a sip if I can," said her cousin.

"Oh, if I could!" piped Fretter in her most dismal notes of fret.

"And why not?" cheerily chirped Goodie.

"My eggs!"

"Oh, I'll take your place on the nest. See, I've got a nice warm coat."

Fretter's eyes looked eager, and her cousin went on to explain—

"You must fly off by sunrise—be the first on the mountain; sip six drops of dew, and then sit preening your feathers in the sun for a half-hour."

"Ah, that *sun* is against it!" piped Fretter.

"But it is the crowning part! If I were you I would not only stay the given time in the sunshine, but try to fly home on a sun-beam! You would hardly know yourself by the time you reached your nest. *Try*, dear cousin Fretter, *do*."

Now, through all her frets, she was a bird of determination. So when she replied, "*Yes, I will*," she meant it. Nor had she altered her mind when See-good-in-all put in his brown appearance next morning to take her place on the eggs. She was not only ready to start, but so eager to do so, that she hardly gave See-good-in-all time to settle properly into his important charge ere she was off; and with true pleasure her cousin watched her fitful flight through the gloomy groves of Discontent land.

"I'll get her to build elsewhere next season, I hope, poor little dear. If she *once* sips the sweet May-dew and finds the pleasures of the sunbeams, she will not care to live in this lumbersome foliage that shuts out the loveable light." And so he thought himself to sleep.

"Who comes here?" he suddenly cried, awaked by a peck on his head. "Oh, is it *you*, Fretty?" There was disappointment in See-good-in-all's note, for he had secretly hoped his cousin would return "made beautiful for ever!" But Fretter allowed him no time to express his disappointments. Without a single tweet she flew to an opposite bough, and turning her head towards where the sun *ought* to have been shining, she opened her beak to its utmost and poured forth such a song as fairly startled See-good-in-all off the nest; it reached him as follows:—

"Come, birdie, now, cheer thee

And mount on the wing;

Thy frettings will leave thee

If only thou'lt sing!

"Such pleasures await thee

In sunshine and song

That the shadows which meet thee

Will only prolong!"

"Bravo!" chorused See-good-in-all. "So you see the children were right; though your feathers are not changed, *you* are."

"But my feathers *are* changed. See, they are all rosy!" cried Fretter, pecking deep into the long feathers of her wing. "Quite rosy, see!"

I have heard of "*couleur de rose*," and so, perhaps, have my readers. May-dew is a pretty myth; but the sunshine of a grateful, cheerful temper is a sweet reality that beautifies the common-place life into a perpetual glory.

## THE RING FINGER.

THE left hand was chosen for the wedding ring on account of the inferiority of that hand to the right, and hence obedience was typified. Why the fourth finger on the left hand should have received the particular honour and distinction of being selected beyond all its fellows, both in Pagan and Christian times, has been variously interpreted. The most common explanation is, says Sir Thomas Brown, the presumption that a particular vessel, nerve, vein, or artery is conferred thereto from the heart. This theory, however, is shown by anatomy to be incorrect.

In the "British Apollo," 1788, it is urged that the fourth finger was chosen from its being not only less used than either of the rest, and more capable of preserving a ring from bruises; having this one quality peculiar to itself, that it cannot be extended but in company with some other finger, whereas the rest may be stretched out to their full length and straightness.

A popular magazine-writer ascribes another reason why this finger has been specially honoured:—

"The fourth finger of the left hand has long been considered sacred, and hence has been consecrated to wear the wedding ring. The Greeks and Romans were so fully convinced of the intrinsic value attached to this finger, that it was called the medical or healing finger. Their various medicinal preparations were stirred with it in place of a spoon, it being supposed that, should any *noxious* ingredient be included in the cup, warning of the fact would immediately be given by a palpitation of the heart. In some remote country places in England this superstition is still firmly believed in. The other fingers are thought to possess a certain power of evil, but a wound or sore stroked by the wedding-finger is expected by them in a short time to disappear; and the wedding-ring itself is by many supposed to have the same healing effect."

Wedding-rings are placed on the left hand, on account of the obedience that is typified thereby. The converse, therefore, is probably the reason why the engaged ring is placed on the third right hand finger of a *fiancée*, who still possesses a large amount of freedom, and frequently exercises her power in an arbitrary manner.

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## THE DOG OF MONTARGIS.

THE fame of an English dog has been deservedly transmitted to posterity by a monument in basso relievo, which still remains on the chimney-piece of the grand hall, at the Castle of Montargis in France. The sculpture, which represents a dog fighting with a champion, is explained by the following narrative.

Aubri de Mondidier, a gentleman of family and fortune, travelling alone through the Forest of Bondi, was murdered and buried under a tree. His dog, an English blood-hound, would not quit his master's grave for several days; till at length, compelled by hunger, he proceeded to the house of an intimate friend of the unfortunate Aubri, at Paris and by his melancholy howling, seemed desirous of expressing the loss they had both sustained. He repeated his cries, ran to the door, looked back to see if any one followed him, returned to his master's friend, pulled him by the sleeve, and with dumb eloquence entreated him to go with him.

The singularity of all these actions of the dog, added to the circumstance of his coming there without his master, whose faithful companion he had always been, prompted the company to follow the animal, who conducted them to a tree, where he renewed his howl,