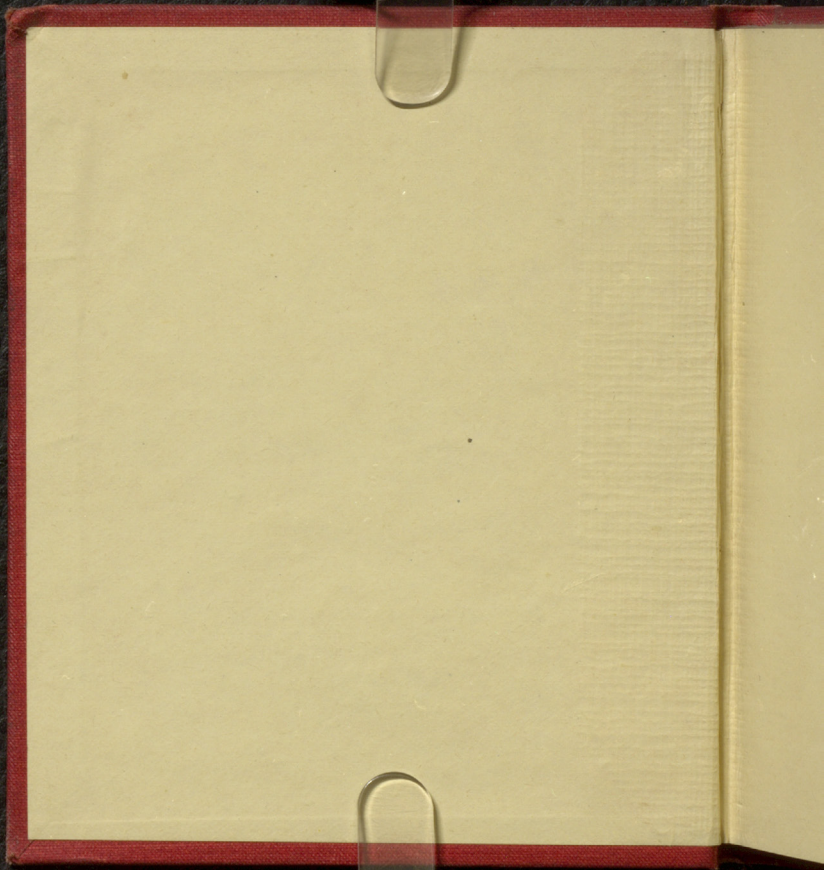
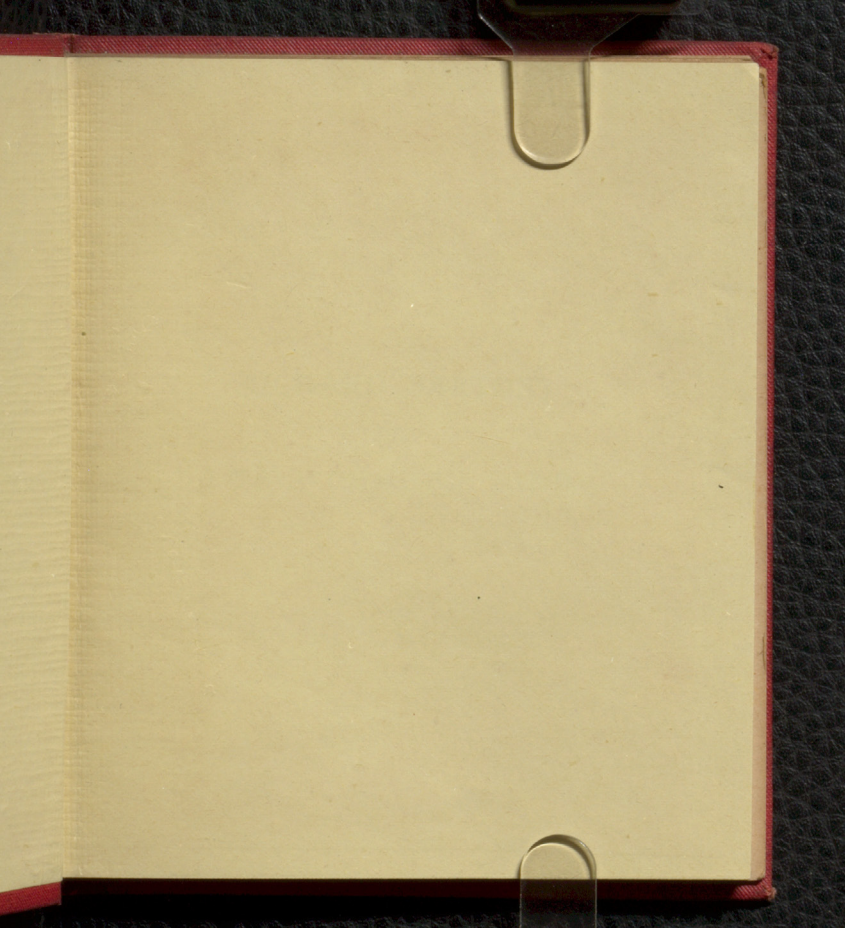


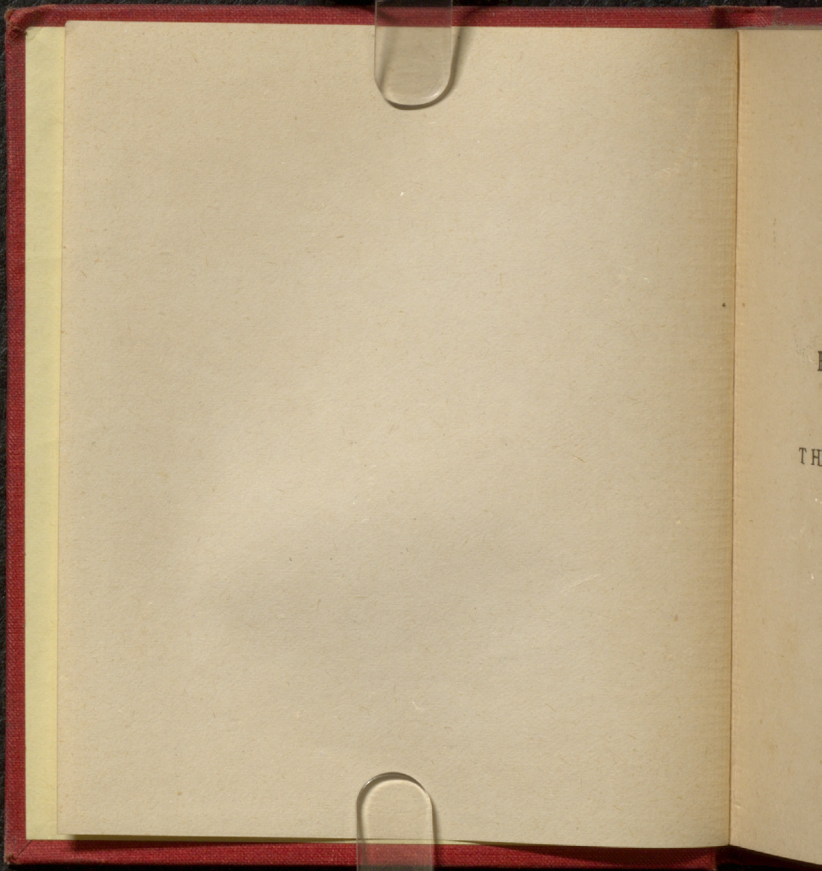
THE TINY LIBRARY

RICHARD  
OR THE BARTON  
WOUNDED BIRD.









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RICHARD BARTON;

OR,

THE WOUNDED BIRD.



BY MRS. CHARLES BRAY,  
*Author of "Our Duty to Animals."*

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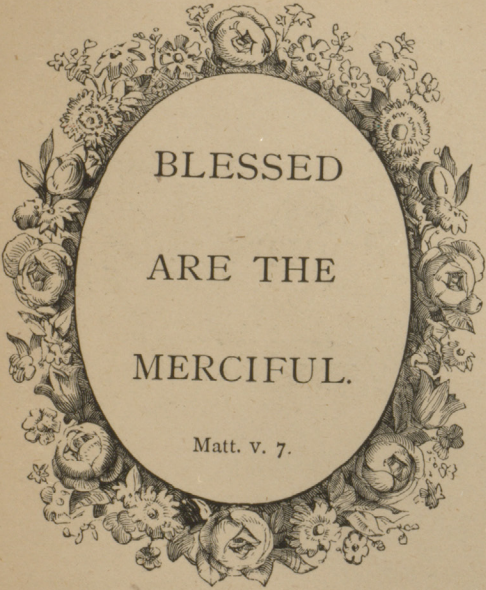
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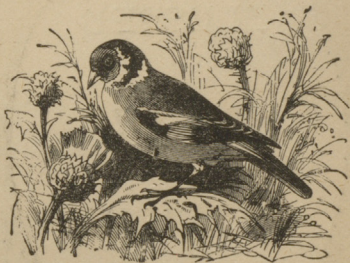
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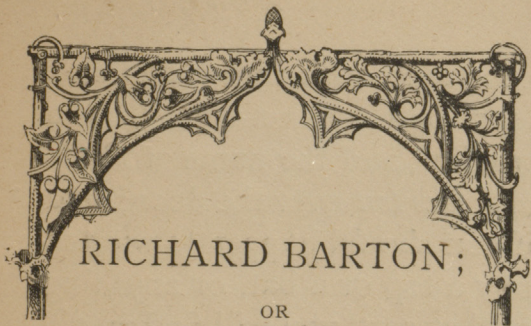
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RICHARD BARTON;

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THE WOUNDED BIRD.

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IF you ever happen to be walking down Crow-lane, in the town of Sowbridge, you may see a small shop on the right-

hand side, with bird-cages and tops and cricket-bats in the window, and the name of *Richard Barton* over the door; and if you should happen to want to buy a top or a bat, or anything of that sort, you will find an old man inside, who, although he is a poor cripple, and has to hobble up to you on crutches, will be very glad to serve you. I am that old man, and it is my name over the door, and I get

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my living by making these cages, and all sorts of wooden things, out of the bits of wood that I can buy cheap at the carpenter's yard over the way. I live by myself, and I should be very lonely if it were not for a little family I have about me of canaries and Java-sparrows, and a few parrots, who are all glad to be kept safe and warm in the cages I make, since they have no homes of their own, poor

things, in this cold country of ours, and I can sometimes sell them, cage and all, to people who are as fond of them as I am.

In the evenings, when all my family have tucked their heads under their wings, and are fast asleep, I often sit and think about the days that are gone; and although I am not yet in my second childhood, I find that the events of my youth

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come into my mind more clearly than those things that happened only a week ago. One event I have good reason to remember, for it was that which made me a cripple for life. I have often told the story about it to the boys who come into my shop. Shall I tell it once more?

IT is now nearly sixty years ago since I was one of the boys

at the British School in this town; and one fine frosty morning in November more than forty of us rushed out into the playground when school was over, right glad to stir about and shake ourselves, after sitting with numbed fingers and cramped legs at our writing-desks. Some of us jumped into the playground swing; others started off at leap-frog, and bounded like corks over

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each other's backs ; others ran off to the hedges to cut hockey-sticks ; and others brought out of their pockets a wonderful assortment of balls and stones and apples and whistles, which they had kept stuffed there all school-time.

“Hurrah!” cried Bob Brown, as he flung his cap into the air and caught it again. “What game shall we play at—hockey, or tip-cat, or races?”

"Oh, I hate hockey," said little Jacob Green, "for I never can get at the stone to hit it, and it always hits me."

"And I hate tip-cat," said Tom Blinker, "for the cat once jumped into my eye."

"And I hate races," said Simon Slow, "for I never can win one."

"And I hate all your games," said big Bill Hawk, a lazy, surly-looking boy, who I

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always noticed stood at the bottom of his class. "I hate all stupid games," said he; "but I know what we'll do—we'll go and hunt the birds in the hedge in the Bull-Close; they will be tame enough this cold day, and we shall catch plenty of them."

"Hunt and catch the birds!" exclaimed I, for I was a little fellow who had never seen this sport before; "why, we can never run fast enough for that."

“ Dicky knows nothing about it,” said Bill; “we don’t have to run fast to catch the birds, do we?” added he, with a queer look at the other boys.

The thought of holding a live dicky-bird in my own hands was to me then very delightful; so I joined the other boys, who were running off to the field, and who stopped now and then to pick up stones from the road and fill their pockets with them.

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The field to which the boys were running was one of Farmer Jones's closes, and the boys had named it the Bull-Close because Jones had of late turned his bull into it. I believe Jones's bull was a good-natured beast enough, but we boys were mightily afraid of him, because one day when we were running about the field to get our kites well up, the bull wanted to join in the sport, and came rushing

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into the midst of us, bellowing and tossing his horns, as if he would like to throw our kites up into the air for us, and perhaps a small boy or two besides the kites. So we always avoided that field, and went to play in the next meadow, which was divided from the bull-field by a hedge.

Now that hedge was our greatest delight all the year round. It would be difficult to

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tell all the good things we got from it; and if ever hedges were thanked, I am sure we children might have thanked that hedge for all the pleasure it afforded us. In the early spring the violets that had taken root in the bank below were so warm under the shelter of the blackthorn, that their purple buds opened there first in the year; and later in the season the primroses lay so thick upon the

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green slope, that when we had gathered enough for our may-poles there were plenty left to decorate the moss with yellow stars. Then, in the hot summer noons, how we used to run to that bank as soon as school was over, and sit in the shady nooks and corners, the thick elder-bushes spreading like green tents above us! And in the autumn, were not there the blackberries, which were so de-

lightly difficult to reach, and the tempting red hips and haws, which we filled our pockets with, without knowing exactly what we meant to do with them, and which the girls begged from us to make necklaces of?

And the number of little living creatures that made their homes in that hedge! Wherever the boughs were thickest there was sure to be a bird's nest; wherever the roots of the

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shrubs made firm little hollows underground, the plump dormice were sure to take possession of them, and carry down moss and dry leaves to make all snug, ready for the winter sleep; and a hedgehog sometimes found commodious lodging in the same quarters as the mice, and had just the same taste in furnishing his apartment with moss and leaves.

And what swarms of butter-

flies used to flutter about the honeysuckles and dog-roses! And how merry and busy all the beetles and ants and spiders were!—each choosing the place which suited it best to settle in, and each, no doubt, thinking that the hedge and all the good things about it belonged to its own little self.

Well, it was in this friendly hedge that we boys expected to find birds, which, having now

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no nests or little ones to look after, wandered singly about the bushes, picking the berries.

Bill Hawk took the lead, and bade some of us go on one side of the hedge, and some on another; but I noticed that he took care himself to go into the safe field, and ordered us little boys to stay in the Bull-Close. The bull was there as usual, but he was standing quietly against the farm-gate, with his

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back turned towards us, and seemed only intent on staring at the cows in the yard, so we were not much afraid of him.

“There’s a bird,” cried Bill from the other side; “now look alive!” Instantly the boys began pelting the little creature with the stones from their pockets, hunting it up and down the hedge. “Oh, don’t, don’t,” cried I, “you will hurt it, you will kill it!”

But they did not mind me, and on they went, pelting and chasing the poor little fluttering thing backwards and forwards, up and down.

Young as I was, I was shocked at this cruel, cowardly sport, and indignantly I seized hold of Bob Brown, who was nearest, and cried out, "Is this what they mean by catching birds? Why it is killing them."

"Oh," said Bob, "never mind;

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“birds don't feel, and it will soon be too tired to fly, and then they'll catch it.”

“And what will they do with it when they have caught it?” cried I. “There will be no pleasure in having it when it is hurt or half-dead. Birds *do* feel, I'm sure.”

“Oh, no, they don't,” repeated Bob, “because I know they don't. There, he's down.”

And I saw the poor little

bird drop down on the other side of the hedge, struck by a stone.

At that moment there was another shout—"The bull! the bull!" And sure enough there was the bull rushing straight at us, excited no doubt by all the running about and shouting of the boys, and wishing to have *his* sport too.

Of course we ran as fast as our legs could carry us, and the

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bull plunged after us, tossing his horns and bellowing, as much delighted to chase the flying boys as they had been to chase the birds. Some of the boys must have managed to scramble through the hedge, for as I looked behind while running I saw the bull making furious punts with his head in the hedge; so I took advantage of this delay to turn and dart across the field, so as to regain

the gate which was alongside of the hedge, near to which the bird had dropped

But the bull quickly turned also, and made after me again. Oh, how I panted for breath, and how my heart beat as if it would burst, as I struggled along, and thought the field would never end! At last I was close to the gate, and sprang to the top. But it was a high, five-barred gate, and in trying to jump off,

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stunned for some time, and  
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seemed awaking from a dream.  
The dreadful bull came first into  
my mind; but as I lay there  
on my back in the ditch I could  
see nothing of him. Then I  
tried to get up, but a sharp  
pain in my back when I moved

made me lie still again, and I had sense to know that I had better remain quiet until somebody came to look for me.

Presently a slight rustling amongst the dry leaves in the ditch made me turn my head, and I saw the little bird that had been hunted lying close to me. It was a beautiful green linnet, and it lay on its back, with its slender feet turned upwards, and a film over its eyes.

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I found I could stretch out my hand as I lay ; so I gently took hold of the bird and laid its soft breast against my cheek. It was warm and living, but oh, how its little heart was beating with fear!—just as mine beat when the bull pursued me!—and one of its legs twitched, as if in pain. On touching the little leg it felt as if it had been broken by that cruel stone which had been

hurled at it. So I said in my heart to the linnet, while I still held it against my cheek: "I will take care of you, and love you dearly, my poor little friend. You cannot fly now, and if you are left here the cruel boys may find you again. How could they say that a bird cannot feel! Your heart beats with fear as mine did; and you cannot move for pain, like me. Do not be afraid of me—if I can get home

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you shall go with me, and we will try and get well together."

The little bird half opened its eyes, and I heard a faint "twit twit," and I was sure it meant, "Yes, I understand you." Just then a footstep approached the gate, and Farmer Jones came up. "Why, sure," cried he, "if there isn't Dicky Barton in the ditch, all of a heap! What's the matter, my lad? Can't you get up?"

I told him how the bull ran after me, and that I thought I must be very much hurt by my fall, for I could not move.

“Ah,” said he, “I saw the old fellow up to his tricks with you boys, so I went and tied him up in the shed for fear of mischief. Here, Jacob,” shouted he to one of his men, “bring a hurdle;” so Jacob brought a hurdle, and Mr. Jones was going to take hold of my hands

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to lift me up, when he saw the bird in one of them.

“Oh, please,” said I, “take care of it! It is hurt, and I want to carry it home.”

“All right,” said the good-natured farmer. So he pulled a large checked handkerchief out of his pocket, laid the bird carefully in it, and tied it in loosely. Then he slung the handkerchief, bird and all, round my neck, lifted me up, and laid me on

the hurdle, and Jacob and he carried me home.

My father was a carpenter, and lived then in Bryant's Yard, just round the corner. He had a pretty good trade, and being a temperate man, as well as very industrious, he was able to make a comfortable home for all of us.

Directly he saw his poor boy brought home in this sad plight he sent for Dr. Black, to see if

my limbs were broken. Dr. Black found my limbs all sound, but the blow of the fall had injured my spine, so that I had no power to walk or to move my legs. The doctor ordered me to be kept in bed for the present, but he hoped in time I might recover some use of my lower limbs.

All the time the doctor was talking about me I had been holding my bird still wrapped

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in the handkerchief, and could feel its little body fluttering more and more, as if it were fast coming to life again. When Dr. Black took up his hat to go, I at last got courage to say, "Would you be so good, sir, as to see if the linnet's leg is broken?"

He stared and smiled as I undid the handkerchief and produced the little patient; and he sat down again, and

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kindly took the tiny thread of a leg in his broad hand, and felt the joint.

“Yes,” said he, “the leg is broken; but perhaps a clever doctor like myself can mend it.”

So he asked my mother for a small strip of linen, and he bound up the little leg, neatly and gently. When he was gone, my mother reached down from the shelf the old canary-cage; and when she had dusted it

and sanded the bottom, and put water in the cup, we put "Dicky" into it, my father promising to get some bird-seed the next time he went out.

It was well for me that I had a good father and mother, who made the best of the trouble of having a bed-ridden child, and who cheerfully tried to make me as happy as could be in my little bed in the corner of the back-room. My father, knowing

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what would please me most, hung the bird-cage close to my bed, where I could watch my little friend, and feed him with crumbs and morsels from my own plate.

And so, all the winter through, there was Dicky in his bed, and Dicky in his cage, both hoping to get well by the spring-time, and both helping to cheer one another during their long confinement.

I am sure my father got to be as fond of the bird as I was, and the two Dickies were so inseparable in his mind that he made our neighbour, Mrs. Brown, stare one day when she asked, "How is Dicky this morning?" by replying, "Oh, he's getting on nicely; he flaps his wings, and ducks his head in the water, and the seed he pecks is more than would sow a field!"

You may be sure that Dicky the Great was not jealous of Dicky the Little being thought of first by my father or any one else. Many of my school-fellows came in to see me often, but I think it was quite as much to see the bird, which, after his leg had healed, began to sing and hop about, and dress his feathers, and to look quite merry.

“We won't hunt the birds

in the hedges any more, we promise you," said they. "What a capital little fellow it is!" And I even heard Bill Hawk say to himself as he was looking into the cage, "I wish I hadn't hit him."

As the warmer days of spring advanced, I was so far recovered that I could get up and hobble about on a pair of crutches that my father made for me; but I liked best to sit in the little

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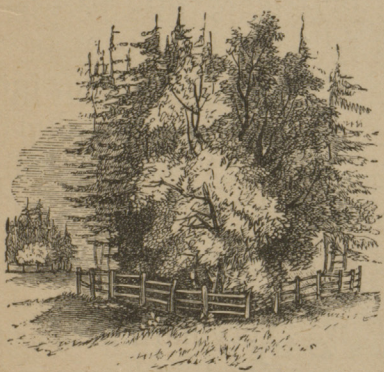
back garden, with the cage by my side, so that the linnet and I could enjoy the sunshine together. Its song delighted me at these times. No sooner did it see the sky, and the sunshine, and the old elm-tree, than it began to trill and twitter, and the sweet, clear notes from its little throat were almost like those of a canary. But why did it fly so violently up and down, and beat its head so

wildly against the bars of its cage?

“Dick,” said my father one day, “your bird is beginning to tire of its cage now that it is well. He would like much better to be with his friends in the trees and bushes, and he is telling you so as plainly as he can. It was all very well to keep him safe from harm so long as he could not fly and provide for himself like other birds, and



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you have been a good friend to the bird to take care of him; but now it is like keeping a man in jail who has done nothing wrong to keep him in his cage any longer, and you will be a better friend to him if you let him go."

It was very hard to hear this, and I watched and watched the linnet to try and find out that my father was wrong. But there was no mistake about it.

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The linnet's sweet song was a cry for liberty; and the constant flapping of its beautiful wings was a struggle to escape and be free.

So his song gave me no longer any pleasure, and one fine sunny morning I asked Bob Brown, who lived next door, to carry the cage for me, and to go with me to the hedge in the Bull-Close; for I thought if we set the bird free in the

same spot that it was taken from, it might perhaps find its companions again and make its home there.

The old bank and hedge looked so pleasant that morning. The primroses were just beginning to peep amongst the green moss, and the briar-bushes and overhanging trees had just put on their first garment of pale green. I sat down on the bank, and held the cage

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on my knees, while Bob ran off to cut a whistle from the elder-bush ; and I thought of the last time I was in this favourite place, lying in the ditch with the poor bird beside me. What a change had come to me ! No longer a strong, active little fellow, who could run a race with the fastest ; but a poor, weakly boy, with only half the use of his legs. I am not sure that the tears were not

coming fast into my eyes as I thought of this ; but I brushed them away when I heard a little chirp inside the cage, and said to myself, half aloud, " Well, I am thankful, at least, that this little fellow is all right again, and bids fair to enjoy the rest of its life, whatever I may do."

Then I opened the cage, and the linnet, giving me a quick glance with its bright eye,

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hopped out, spread its green wings, and flew away.

It flew straight up to the very top of the great oak, and perching on the end of a twig, as linnets always like to do, I heard such a merry trill from its little throat, as if it were saying, "Thank you, thank you, thank you!" a hundred times in a minute.

Never had a bird's song seemed so sweet to me before,

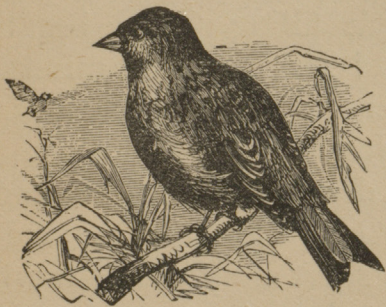
and although I believe I had a good cry as I shut the empty cage, I think I went home almost as happy as the bird itself.

In the many, many years which have passed since then, my chief delight has been in making all the little creatures about me as happy as I can, whether they are birds, or dogs, or cats, or mice, or children ; and I am sure if everybody



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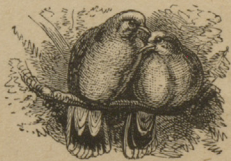
knew what a pleasant thing it is to feel friendly with all living things, we should not find people filling God's beautiful world with pain and misery by cruel sports and cruel ways.

Now, good-bye to you all, my dear little readers, and if you ever think of me and of this short story out of my life, remember this too—that there is no better way of making up for the pain and trouble we

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may have to bear ourselves, than by saving others from pain and trouble all that we can. If you are ever tempted to injure any animal, I entreat you to stay your hand, and to ask yourself, "Why should I do this? Of what use will it be to give pain to this harmless creature?" I assure you that though I am now poor and old and weakly, I can make every day of my life bright by doing

some little kindness to my friends and neighbours, whether they wear coats of fur, or feathers, or cotton, or cloth; and that I could not rest at night if I had left any animal suffering through my cruelty, or had wantonly taken away life from any creature that was happy and harmless.



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