

THE GRAY GOOSE'S STORY

AMY PRENTICE*

On pleasant afternoons your Aunt Amy dearly loves to wander down by the side of the pond, which lies just beyond the apple orchard, and there meet her bird or animal friends, of whom she has many, and all of them are ready to tell her stories.

[Illustration: The Gray Goose.]

There it is she sees Mr. Frisky Squirrel, old Mr. Plodding Turtle, Mr. Bunny Rabbit, and many others; but never until yesterday did she make the acquaintance of the gray goose, and then it was owing to Master Teddy's mischief that she found a new friend among the dwellers on the farm.

Your Aunt Amy was walking slowly along on the lookout for some bird or animal who might be in the mood for story-telling, when she heard an angry hissing, which caused her to start in alarm, thinking a snake was in her path, and, to her surprise, she saw two geese who were scolding violently in their own peculiar fashion.

One was the gray goose, who afterward became very friendly, and the other, a white gander from the farm on the opposite side of the road.

[Illustration: An Angry Pair.]

"What is the matter?" your Aunt Amy asked, as the geese continued to hiss angrily without giving any heed to her, and Mrs. Gray Goose ceased her scolding sufficiently long to say sharply:

"It's that Mr. Man's boy Teddy; he never comes into the farm-yard without raising a disturbance of some kind, and I for one am sick of so much nonsense."

Your Aunt Amy looked quickly around; but without seeing any signs of the boy who had tried Mrs. Goose's temper so sadly, and, quite naturally, she asked:

"What has he been doing now, and where is he?"

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"Down in the meadow, or, he was there when Mr. Gander and I were driven out by his foolish actions," and Mrs. Goose continued to hiss at the full strength of her lungs.

[Illustration: Mr. Crow.]

"If he is so far away your scolding will do no good, because he can't hear it," your Aunt Amy said, finding it difficult to prevent herself from actually laughing in the angry bird's face.

"Some of the other people on this farm can hear me, and thus know that I do not approve of such actions," Mrs. Goose replied sharply. "Since Mr. Crow began to write poetry about Young Teddy, the boy thinks he can chase us around whenever he pleases. He'll kill Mrs. Cow's baby, if he isn't careful."

"Do you know Mr. Crow?" your Aunt Amy asked in surprise, for every bird or animal she had met seemed to be on friendly terms with the old fellow who spent the greater portion of his time in the big oak tree near the pond.

"Of course I know him," Mrs. Goose replied as she ceased scolding and came nearer your Aunt Amy, while Mr. Gander sat down close at hand as if listening to what was said. "Teddy has been trying for nearly a week to use that poor calf as if the baby was a horse—that's what he's doing now, and Mr. Crow wrote some poetry about it. Of course old Mamma Speckle must run straight to Teddy Boy with it, and since then he has been carrying on worse than ever."

TEDDY AND THE CALF.

"Oh yes, I'll repeat it if you like; but I'd rather you didn't tell Teddy that you heard it, for he is already much too proud. This is the way it goes:

Young Ted was a rider bold,
Who never did things by half,
And so he hitched to his cart one day
A strong and frolicsome calf.

Away he went, and on behind
Came a troop of merry boys,
Who tossed their caps, and screamed aloud,
Till the woods rang with the noise.

But the steed was like his driver,—
He wouldn't do things by half,—
And never had Ted a drive like that
He had with his frolicsome calf.

[Illustration: The Bold Bare-Back Rider.]

Then Ted tried another game,
And mounted his sturdy steed;
But the calf resolved he wouldn't bear that,
So he ran with all his speed.

Ted learned to his great dismay,
That it wouldn't do by half,
When he wanted fun, to tamper with
A strong and frolicsome calf.

"That is exactly what he was doing with Mrs. Cow's baby when Mr. Gander and I were just the same as driven out of the meadow," Mrs. Goose said as she finished the verses. "What I'm hoping is, that Mr. Towser Dog will help young Calf out of his trouble."

Mrs. Goose had hardly more than ceased speaking when Mrs. Cow's baby and Mr. Towser appeared in sight, walking slowly as if talking earnestly.

Mr. Gander jumped up at once and went toward them, coming back a moment later as he said to Mrs. Goose:

"Young Calf has given Teddy Boy a good tumble, and hopes he struck the little rascal with his left hind foot; but of that he can't be certain, because of being in such a hurry when he came away. Mamma Speckle has gone over to the pasture believing she may find Mr. Donkey there, and if she does, Teddy Boy and his friends will be glad to get away quickly."

"I suppose Young Calf and Mr. Towser Dog are waiting to hear what Mr. Donkey has to say about it," Mrs. Goose added, as she nodded to the dog and the calf, who were standing with their noses very near together, as if talking the matter over.

"Does Mr. Donkey often interfere when the animals of the farm get into trouble?" your Aunt Amy asked, and Mrs. Goose replied:

[Illustration: Waiting to Hear from Mr. Donkey.]

"Yes indeed; he's a very good friend to us all, but doesn't often have time to look after such matters, because Mr. Man seems to delight in finding work for him to do. He once actually killed a Mr. Weasel who was sneaking up to murder some of the chickens, and that proves him to be a very able fellow, for even Mr. Man himself believes it's a big thing to get the best of a weasel.

"Mr. Towser Dog is another good friend to all of us. He thinks very much of Mr. Man and his boy Teddy; but at the same time he looks after all

the animals and birds on the farm. I've got a piece of poetry about him that perhaps you'd like to hear?"

"Who wrote it, Mrs. Goose?" your Aunt Amy asked, and Mr. Gander spoke up quickly:

"That's what none of us know; but Mr. Crow said he had nothing whatever to do with it. He don't like Mr. Towser Dog, on account of some trouble the two of them had about Mr. Crow's digging up the corn just after Mr. Man had planted it. Hello! there comes Mr. Donkey, and now you may be sure Teddy Boy won't worry Mrs. Cow's baby for quite a while."

As Mr. Gander spoke a small, friendly looking donkey trotted up to where the dog and the calf were talking together, and old Mr. Gander seemed to think it necessary he should waddle over to hear what might be said.

[Illustration: Mr. Donkey comes trotting up to give advice.]

"They'll spend a good half hour talking matters over," Mrs. Goose said as if displeased because of what she evidently believed was a waste of time. "If you want to hear the verses about Mr. Towser, I may as well read them to you now," and she drew out from beneath her wing a much soiled piece of paper, on which was printed the following lines:

He was just a common dog, you see,
With no particular line
Of ancestry to mark him out
As a well-bred creature fine.

[Illustration: Mr. Towser Dog.]

He bayed at the moon as dogs do,
And vented his gruff bow-wows,
As he tagged my heels in the good old times
When we went after the cows.

He'd roll in the grass with the babies,
Or carry them on his back;
He'd catch the ball the youngsters tossed,
And follow the rabbit's track.
A boy's own dog, and a friendly
Companion in peace or rows,
As he tagged my heels in the good old times
When we went after the cows.

He could talk with a doggish lingo
In his own peculiar way,
And I could understand it all—
Whatever he had to say.

He'd jump to my call at the moment,
And utter his gruff bow-wows,
As he tagged my heels in the good old times
When we went after the cows.

I told him all of my secrets,
And he kept them without fail,
With never a sign that he knew them
But a wag of his short, stump tail.
Long years have passed since I heard them.—
The sound of his gruff bow-wows,
As he tagged my heels in the good old days
When we went after the cows.

"Those are very good verses, Mrs. Goose," your Aunt Amy said when the last line had been read, and she replied as she plumed her feathers:

"So I think, although Mr. Crow says they are foolish; but that's because he doesn't like Mr. Towser Dog. What I admire about them is that they show what a good friend to a boy an animal can be. Now if Sammy Boy had made friends with the calf, he wouldn't be in the house this very minute waiting for his broken arm to get mended."

WHEN SAMMY TEASED THE CALF.

"How was that, Mrs. Goose?" your Aunt Amy asked.

"It was something that began a long time ago on the next farm; but wasn't finished till last week. You see a little boy calf was born over there once upon a time, and no sooner did the poor little thing come into this world than Sammy Boy thought it great fun to drive him from his mother, beat him with a stick, pull his tail, and do all kinds of mean things.

"'You're a mean, selfish, cruel boy,' the calf said to himself, when he was forced to put up with whatever Sammy felt like doing to him. 'I'll get even with you if it takes me years to do it—You think I can't remember, because I don't talk the same way you do; but just wait and see!'

"Of course Sammy didn't understand what the calf said, and he poked him all the harder with a big stick, laughing as if he thought it great fun. Well, the years went on, and Mr. Calf grew to be big and strong. Sammy also grew, but not as fast as the calf did, and the time came when he didn't dare pull his tail, or poke him with a stick.

"One day when Mr. Calf was three years old, and the folks called him Mr. Bull, Sammy went out to look at his pigeons, which he wickedly keeps shut up in a little box, and some one had left the pasture bars down.

"Mr. Bull was standing near-by, and when he saw Sammy he said to himself, as he lowered his head and stuck his tail straight up in the air:

"'Now's my chance! I'll show that boy how good it is to have those who are stronger try to be cruel.'

"Sammy had forgotten all about tormenting the calf; but I'm thinking he remembered it when he picked himself up on the other side of the farmyard fence, where Mr. Bull had tossed him. His arm was broken, and his clothes torn; but with all that he wasn't hurt any worse than the poor little calf was when Sammy poked him with a stick, or pulled his tail."

[Illustration: Mr. Bull Pays Off Old Scores.]

Just at this time Mr. Gander came back to say that Mr. Donkey had promised to teach the boys, who had been riding Mrs. Cow's baby as if it was a horse, such a lesson that they wouldn't forget it very quickly.

"He's going down into the meadow," Mr. Gander said, "and if those little rascals are yet there, he'll chase them from one end to the other, flinging up his heels, and making believe he is trying to kick them. By the time he gets through, I'll promise you they won't be so eager to pick upon a poor little youngster who isn't large enough to take care of himself."

WHERE MR. CROW HID HIS APPLES.

"They'll soon find out what a mistake they made, same as Mr. Crow did when he put his apples away for the winter," Mrs. Gray Goose said in a tone of satisfaction, and it seemed only natural that your Aunt Amy should ask for an explanation.

"Mr. Crow is a good deal like Mr. Fox," Mrs. Goose said in reply. "He thinks he's the wisest bird in this neighborhood, and that he can do whatever he pleases, just because he makes poetry. Now this is one of Mamma Speckle's stories, and although she does dearly love to talk about other people, I have no doubt but it is true.

[Illustration: Mr. Crow picked up the best looking apples and dropped them in the pitcher.]

"It seems that last fall, when the apples on the tree that stands near the well were ripening, Mr. Crow made up his mind that the best thing he could do would be to lay in a supply for the winter, as Mr. Bunny Rabbit and Mr. Frisky Squirrel were doing. He went over to the well early in the morning, before Mr. Man was out of bed, and saw the squirrels and rabbits carrying away one at a time.

”That’s no way to do your harvesting,’ he said, as if he knew just how everything should be done. ’Before you’ve taken two apples to your nest Mr. Man will be out here, and pick up all that are on the ground.’

”More will fall to-night, and to-morrow morning we can get another lot,’ Mr. Bunny Rabbit said, as he hopped off with a juicy apple in his mouth, and Mr. Frisky Squirrel added with a laugh:

”It’s better to make sure of two, than run the chances of not getting any.’

”Watch me, and you’ll see how to do the work in proper shape,’ Mr. Crow said as if there was no one in all the world as wise as he.

”One of the children had left a pitcher on the ground near the well, and Mr. Crow hopped around wonderfully lively, picking up the best looking apples and dropping them into the pitcher.

”Why are you doing that?’ Mr. Squirrel asked.

”I’m going to pick up all the best apples, and put them in this pitcher. Then I can come back at any time, when Mr. Man’s family are not around, and carry them off. That will be much better than waiting a whole night just for two.’

”Well, Mr. Crow kept on picking up apples and dropping them in the pitcher as fast as ever he could, while Mr. Rabbit and Mr. Squirrel were well satisfied at getting safely off with two or three, and when Mr. Man came out to the well, the pitcher was almost full of the best looking apples, while Mr. Crow was all tired out with working so fast.

”Hello!” Mr. Man said as he spied the pitcher of apples, and of course Mr. Crow had hidden himself when he saw the farmer coming. ”Some of my family have been busy this morning, and I thought I was the first one out of doors. This will save me a lot of work,’ and he carried the pitcher into the house.

”I’m almost afraid I was too greedy,’ Mr. Crow said with a flirt of his tail as Mr. Man walked away. ’Perhaps it would have been wiser if I had been content to carry away a few at a time, as Mr. Rabbit and Mr. Squirrel did,’ and away he flew to the oak tree without so much as a taste of apple after picking up so many.”

THE SECOND TRAGEDY IN THE FROG FAMILY.

[Illustration: Old Mr. Frog’s Grandson.]

”There goes that dandified young Frog again, and this time I believe it is my duty to teach him that the wisest course any one can pursue, is to stay at home and attend to his own business, rather than roaming around

to show his good clothes," Mr. Gander said, starting off as rapidly as his short legs would carry him, and, looking up, your Aunt Amy saw young Mr. Frog, dressed in his best, just coming out of his house.

"Well, did you ever?" Mrs. Goose exclaimed as Mr. Gander hurried away in pursuit of the frog. "Wouldn't it be strange if Mr. Gander caught him?"

"Why would it be strange?" your Aunt Amy asked, knowing full well that geese often ate frogs, and Mrs. Goose replied:

"It would be at least odd, because it was his own grandfather who was swallowed up by the lily-white duck, just after the cat and her kittens came tumbling into Mrs. Mouse's hall, although Mr. Crow says, in some poetry I've got of his, that one animal is always like others of his kind. If old Mr. Frog went down the throat of a duck, I don't know why his grandson shouldn't feel proud of being taken in by one of the goose family."

While Mrs. Gray Goose was talking, Mr. Gander had been running at full speed in pursuit of Mr. Frog, who was so busy trying to keep his hat on that he didn't pay any attention to what was happening behind him.

A moment later Mr. Gander had overtaken the foppish young Frog, and your Aunt Amy did not have time to call Mrs. Goose's attention to what was going on, before Mr. Frog disappeared down Mr. Gander's throat.

[Illustration: How Young Mr. Frog Disappeared.]

"Well, I never before believed that Mr. Gander would be so piggish!" Mrs. Goose exclaimed as her friend's bill closed upon the end of Mr. Frog. "To think that he hadn't the politeness to offer me a taste!"

"He really didn't have the time," your Aunt Amy said laughingly, and then, to take Mrs. Goose's attention from what was really a greedy act, she asked about Mr. Crow's poetry concerning the likeness of one animal to another of its kind.

SEARCHING FOR THE IMPOSSIBLE.

"It's only a nonsense rhyme," Mrs. Goose replied with a sigh as she turned her eyes from Mr. Gander, who was twisting and squirming as if he had something inside of him which caused considerable pain. "I'll repeat it if you wish, and it wouldn't make me feel badly if old Mr. Gander came within an inch of dying. A whole frog is far too big a mouthful for a goose of his age."

"It's certain he is being punished for his greediness," your Aunt Amy replied; "but it isn't well to rejoice while others are in trouble, even when they brought it upon themselves, as did Mr. Gander. Suppose you

repeat Mr. Crow's poetry?"

Mrs. Goose snapped her bill together sharply as she turned her back on the suffering gander, and recited the following jingle:

I'd love a goose that wears a shawl,
Or a gander in coat and hat;
I'd just adore a tamed giraffe,
Or a literary cat.
I'd like a goat with graceful curves,
Or a bear with manners neat;
A chimpanzee in a cutaway,
I think would be just sweet.

[Illustration: What Would be Hard to Find.]

I'd appreciate a gentle snake,
Or a dove whose ways were wild.
A bluefish draped in petticoats,
Or a tiger nice and mild.
A mackintosh upon an owl
To me would be just fine.
I'd like to know a kangaroo
Who'd ask me out to dine.

An elk dressed up in uniform,
I'd love beyond compare.
I'd even like a flying lynx,
Or an educated hare.
There's many more I'd love to have,
But never can I find
An animal but what he's like
The others of his kind.

"There's a deal of truth in the last three lines of that poetry," Mrs. Goose said with a sigh, casting one more reproachful glance at the suffering Mr. Gander. "I was up near Mr. Man's barn the other day, and there I saw two kittens making a most disgraceful spectacle of themselves; but yet they were exactly like all other cats I have ever seen.

"It seems that their mother had caught a nice fat rat, and instead of eating it all herself, as Mr. Gander did the frog, she brought it to her kittens. Now there was plenty of meat for both, and neither could have devoured the whole of it, yet those two youngsters stood there and snarled, and spit, and scratched at each other, instead of enjoying themselves in a friendly manner.

"They made a most dreadful noise, therefore, of course, everybody on the farm knew what was being done, and then the foolish things began to

fight. Just then, Mr. Brown Owl, who spends a good deal of his time on our shed watching for mice, flew down and picked up the rat.

[Illustration: The Selfish Kittens.]

"When the kittens made up their minds that it might be better to eat dinner than tear each other to pieces, Mr. Owl was eating the rat, and they were obliged to go hungry for that day at least. If a person is not only a glutton, but has beside a bad temper, he is very likely to miss many good things which he might enjoy without much labor. Yet I don't like to see people too soft, and smiling too sweetly, for then I always think of the time when Mr. Wolf called on Mrs. Hog, professing to be such a great friend."

A SUSPICIOUS-LOOKING VISITOR.

"That is a story I have never heard," your Aunt Amy said, and Mrs. Goose looked up in surprise, as she replied:

"Why, it's as old as the hills, almost; I'll tell it because it may do you some good. Once upon a time Mrs. Hog had seven of the dearest little babies you ever saw, and they were as fat as butter, for Mr. Man gave them all they wanted to eat. The family lived over on the north side of the farm, a long distance from the house, and the fence to Mrs. Hog's yard wasn't what it should have been when she had so many little ones to look after. Every one, even Mr. Man himself said it ought to be mended; but it seems that what's everybody's business is nobody's business, therefore nothing was done.

"One afternoon, when supper had been eaten and Mrs. Hog was clearing up the sty, Mr. Wolf poked his nose between the boards of the fence, and said sweet as honey:

"I am surprised, Mrs. Hog, to see that Mr. Man doesn't look after you better. The first thing you know some bad person will come along, and then one of the babies will be missing."

"There's little fear of that, Mr. Wolf, while I'm around," and Mrs. Hog showed her teeth.

[Illustration: Mr. Wolf wants to live with Mrs. Hog.]

"Oh yes, I understand what you mean," Mr. Wolf said, smiling all over his face as if he was the best friend Mrs. Hog ever had. "What I'm afraid of is that the little ones may get into trouble while you are out calling, and that would come near to breaking my heart, for I am very fond of them. Now suppose I come here to live with you until they are large enough to take care of themselves?"

"Mrs. Hog knew that if Mr. Wolf should try real hard to make trouble for

her, he might be able to do it, so she didn't dare tell him just what she thought; but, going a little nearer him, to where one of the boards had been slipped aside at the top, she said:

"I'm afraid we haven't got room enough for you, Mr. Wolf. You can't even get your head between these boards."

"Indeed I can," Mr. Wolf said, laughing to think how easily he was fooling Mrs. Hog, and he stuck his head through where the board was loose.

"That was just what Mrs. Hog wanted him to do, and before he knew what had happened, she jammed the two boards together with her nose, holding Mr. Wolf by the neck in such a way that he couldn't do anything but howl, till one of the babies ran and told Mr. Towser Dog to come and look after the visitor.

"The next time you want to fool anybody you'd better find a foolish little pig, instead of an old hog like me, who knows that there's some mischief in the air when the wolves get to acting like one's best friends," Mrs. Hog said, as Mr. Towser took Mr. Wolf by the throat to teach him better manners.

"I think myself that it is better to be suspicious, as was the colored minister's rooster, than believe everything you are told, and make friends with the first one who holds out his hand."

"Tell me the story about the rooster," your Aunt Amy said as Mrs. Goose ceased speaking and turned to look at Mr. Gander, who still appeared to be in pain.

WHEN MR. BOOSTER WAS SUSPICIOUS.

"It is one of Mr. Crow's stories," Mrs. Gray Goose said after another long look at the suffering gander; "but it agrees with what I said about the wisdom of being suspicious now and then.

"It seems that once upon a time a colored man raised a nice flock of fowls; but his neighbors, who dearly loved stewed chickens or roasted turkey, came to dinner so often, that very soon one thin turkey and an old rooster, were all he had left.

"Just then two friends of the man's wife came to dinner, and, because he hadn't any meat in the house, there was nothing to do but catch and cook one of the lonesome looking pair.

"Mr. Turkey Gobbler saw the man coming, and flew up on the top of the barn, as he cried:

”I’ve got other business, and can’t go to dinner with you, no matter how much you want me.’

”Now he’s after me!’ Mr. Rooster cried, growing suspicious when the man caught him by the end of the tail and pulled nearly half the feathers out.

”Get under the barn! Get under the barn!’ Mr. Turkey screamed, and Mr. Rooster shouted while he went across the yard as fast as his legs could carry him:

”Give me a little time, and I’ll win the race; but he’s dangerously near.’

Well, Mr. Rooster got under the barn nearly a minute before the man did, and there he stayed, paying no attention to the coaxing or threats, and, finally, discouraged and with his coat torn in two places, the man went into the house to tell his visitors that he couldn’t have company to dinner that day.

[Illustration: A Race for Life.]

When he had got inside the house Mr. Rooster crept out from under the barn, and crowed up to Mr. Turkey: ’Do you-think-he’s-gone-for-goo-o-o-d?’

And the suspicious Mr. Turkey gobbled back:

”Doubtful! Doubtful! Doubtful! Doubtful!’

That Mr. Rooster had a good deal more sense than our Mr. Dorking, who made such a fool of himself last summer. It isn’t much of a story; but it shows how silly some people are,” and once more Mrs. Goose looked at Mr. Gander.

WHEN THE ROOSTER FOUND THE MOON.

”I would like very much to hear the story,” your Aunt Amy said, and she spoke the truth, for thus far Mrs. Goose had been most entertaining.

”It’s kind of you to say so,” Mrs. Goose replied with a smirk. ”If I keep on at this rate you’ll think I like to talk as well as Mamma Speckle does; but I’ve heard of you so often from our people around here, that it seemed as if I must have a whole lot of stories to tell, else you’d say I wasn’t much of anybody after all. But about Mr. Dorking Rooster: it seems that one night he couldn’t sleep, on account of having eaten too much, and for the first time in his life he saw the moon and the stars.

"The next day, when he was going across the front yard, he saw one of those large rubber balls, painted in bright colors, such as Mr. Man's children use to play with in the house, and after looking it over carefully he decided that he knew what it was.

[Illustration: Mr. Dorking Finds the Moon.]

"This must be the moon I saw last night,' he said to himself; 'but it don't seem to shine as it did then. Perhaps it doesn't give out any light till after sunset, so I'll wait till then to see it.'

"So Mr. Dorking sat down and waited. The sun set, and black clouds covered the sky, but, yet the ball did not shine. All the other chickens had gone to roost hours before; but Mr. Dorking kept on watching. It began to rain; the lightning flashed and the thunder rolled. The rooster was wet to the skin, and terribly frightened.

"I'll save the moon,' he cried, and picking up the ball in his beak, which wasn't an easy task, he ran as fast as he could to the hen-house; but when he got there the storm had cleared away. Looking up, Mr. Dorking saw the moon in the sky, and throwing the ball into the house, he cried out to his wife:

"What kind of a thing is this, anyway? I've been lugging it around for an hour or more, and now there's another moon come to take its place.'

"Come straight up here to your roost, you foolish old thing.' Mrs. Dorking said angrily. 'If you had half as much sense as Mr. Monkey, you could have taken the children and me on a picnic, instead of fooling your time away with a rubber ball.'

"What did she mean by 'having as much sense as Mr. Monkey,'" your Aunt Amy asked, and Mrs. Goose replied:

WHEN MRS. MONKEY WAS DISSATISFIED.

"Oh, it was an idea she got from some of Mr. Crow's poetry. All the fowls on our farm have laughed at it time and time again. This is the way it goes:

Said old Mrs. Monk one morning, "Look at me.
I am tired of living in this cocoa tree,
You have got to go to work and rent a flat,
For I'll not live in this manner, mind you that."

Then when Mister Monkey heard all that she said,
He thought of many trades, and scratched his head
What on earth could monkeys do to bring in gold
So a loving monkey wifey wouldn't scold?

Now what do you suppose the Monkey did?
Do you think he climbed the cocoa tree and hid?
No; upon a jungle trolley he is there
Hanging by his legs and tail collecting fare."

Mrs. Goose would have been blind if she had not seen that your Aunt Amy thought the jingle was very foolish, and she hastened to say:

[Illustration: Mr. Monkey listening to his Wife.]

HOW BUNNY RABBIT FOOLED GRANDFATHER STORK.

"I guess you think the same as does Grandfather Stork about some of Mr. Crow's verses. He says that nobody but foolish geese would listen to them, and yet there isn't anybody around here who doesn't like them. Grandfather Stork don't know everything there is to be learned in this world, else Mr. Bunny Rabbit couldn't have fooled him the way he did."

"I have never heard that Mr. Bunny Rabbit fooled Grandfather Stork," your Aunt Amy said, and Mrs. Goose almost laughed when she replied:

"Then you haven't seen the old fellow lately, for he spends all his time running around the neighborhood telling of it. He thinks he was very smart, and I'm not saying but that it was more than one would have expected of him, for Mr. Bunny Rabbit isn't the wisest animal living near the pond, by a good deal. Poor old Grandfather Stork was the most harmless bird that ever lived. He had carried babies from one place to another till he was all worn out, and hadn't more than six feathers left on his head.

"He hadn't a tooth to his bill, and seemed to have forgotten how to hunt for his dinner, so one day when he met Bunny Rabbit, he said to him as polite as could be:

"'Good morning, Mr. Rabbit. Can you tell me where I'll find two or three fat fish near about here?"

[Illustration: Grandfather Stork waiting for his dinner.]

"Bunny scratched his nose as if he was doing a terrible lot of thinking, and then said, solemn as ever was Squire Owl:

"'Why, of course, Mr. Stork, and I always like to help a neighbor along. But times have changed since you were a young fellow. Then you had to catch your own fish, or go without; but now the law is that after a bird has stood on one foot half an hour, two fish jump down his throat, and three more go the same way at the end of an hour. Mr. Robin Red-Breast forgot all about the new law the other day, and, because his left foot was sore, he stood on the right one till two big pickerel made a leap for his mouth. Either of them was seven times as big as he is, and it's

a wonder he wasn't killed.'

"Dear me, is that so, Mr. Rabbit? Now I really can't catch fish as I used to; but it comes quite natural for me to stand on one foot. I'll try to do you a favor some day, Mr. Rabbit.'

"Then Grandfather Stork stood up in the sun waiting for the fish to jump down his throat, and Bunny Rabbit ran off into the bushes, laughing till there was danger of splitting his sides; but he didn't keep it up very long, for just then down swooped Mr. Hawk, and Bunny Rabbit came very near taking an excursion in the air.

"As it was, Mr. Hawk dug a great hole in his back, and nipped off a piece of his tail, before Bunny could get under a wild-rose bush where he was safe. It was Mr. Crow who told Grandfather Stork that he had been fooled, and the poor old fellow looked so sorrowful when he hobbled away without having had any dinner, that I made up my mind I never would try to play such kind of jokes."

"And you are right, Mrs. Goose," your Aunt Amy said decidedly. "It is a very foolish practice, and often causes much trouble. Now Bunny Rabbit really told Mr. Stork a lie, even if it was in sport, and we all know how wrong that is."

At this moment Mr. Gander came up, and when Mrs. Goose asked how he felt, he said:

"I'm better, thank you. That frog was tough, and, to make matters worse, I accidentally swallowed his hat."

"You were in too much of a hurry, Mr. Gander," Mrs. Goose said sharply. "Perhaps you was afraid you might be asked to share him with some other goose."

"Well, there! I never stopped to think that you might like a piece," Mr. Gander said, as if he felt terribly sorry because of having been so selfish. "I'll spend all day to-morrow hunting for Mr. Frog's brother, and if I catch the fellow, you shall have the whole of him."

"I'll hunt for my own frogs, thank you," Mrs. Goose replied as she straightened herself up angrily. "I never yet have asked others to find food for me, and I hope I don't live simply for the sake of eating, as does Mrs. Wild Goose, who visited us not long ago."

Mr. Gander gazed at Mrs. Gray Goose sadly; but she refused even to look at him, and after a time he waddled slowly away, stopping now and then to snap at a grasshopper that jumped over his head.

[Illustration: Mrs. Gray Goose is Angry.]

MRS. WILD GOOSE'S VISIT.

"What about Mrs. Wild Goose making you a visit?" Aunt Amy asked, when she and the gray goose were alone once more.

"It isn't what you might really call a story," Mrs. Goose replied. "I only spoke of it to remind Mr. Gander how he himself talked about those who think only of what can be eaten. Not more than a month ago Mrs. Wild Goose flew down into our yard, and one would have thought that she owned the entire farm, to hear her talk.

"'This seems to be quite a comfortable place,' she said, walking around and poking her bill into every corner before she had spoken to any of us. 'I have seen better yards, of course; but a goose who has traveled as much as I have, learns to make the best of everything. It looks as if Mr. Man gave you all you wanted to eat.'

"'So he does,' Mr. Dorking Rooster said, and we have nothing to do but enjoy ourselves.'

"'Indeed!' Mrs. Wild Goose cried. 'Then I'll stay right here. The doctor says I mustn't move around very much, and the climate seems to agree with me.'

"Well, she was the greediest goose I ever saw. She would gobble up fully half of all the food that was brought into the yard, before one of us had time to swallow a single mouthful, and it did seem as if she couldn't get enough. Even Mr. Gander, who has just shown how greedy he can be, said that it really made him feel faint to see her show of gluttony.

"When Mrs. Wild Goose had been with us about two weeks, Betty, the housemaid, came into the yard with a cloth over her head, and a big apron on. All of us who lived there knew what it meant, and ran for dear life, with Mrs. Wild Goose at our heels, as she shrieked:

"'What is she going to do?'

"'She's going to pull out our feathers with which to stuff pillows and beds for Mr. Man to sleep on,' Mr. Gander said.

[Illustration: Mrs. Wild Goose Goes Away in a Hurry.]

"Dear me, dear me, I never will put up with such treatment as that! I only came here for a change of air and food, and couldn't think of parting with my feathers!"

"Then, without stopping to thank us for the pleasant visit, off she flew to find another place where she could make a glutton of herself without having to pay or work. Some birds seem to think, as did Mrs. Pea-Hen,

that they have nothing to do in this world but enjoy themselves; but I've lived long enough to know that we must do our full share of the work, if we want to take part in the play."

"What did Mrs. Pea-Hen believe," your Aunt Amy asked, and Mrs. Gray Goose replied:

WHEN MRS. PEA-HEN ABANDONED THE ORPHANS.

"She always has looked, and always will look first after her own comfort or pleasure, no matter how much others may suffer. Any other bird on this farm would have been so ashamed, after doing what Mrs. Pea-Hen has, that she'd never hold up her head again, and what I'm going to tell you isn't the first selfish thing she has done.

"About four weeks ago Mrs. Pea-Hen made a great fuss over wanting to bring up a family, and began to set on anything and everything she could find that looked like an egg. Well, Mr. Man made a nice nest for her, and put in it thirteen white eggs. No hen could have asked for a better place in which to show what she was able to do, and whenever any of us went to call on her, Mrs. Pea-Hen had a great deal to say about what she would do when her family came out of the shells.

"I can't deny but that she sat there faithfully, and took proper care of the eggs, and, of course, out came thirteen as pretty little chickens as you could want to see. Mrs. Pea-Hen seemed to be real proud because she had so many babies, and after the last one was hatched she called all of them out for a walk.

"They came from the nest with considerable noise, such as all youngsters make, and no sooner did she hear the first peep than Mrs. Pea-Hen turned around like a flash, looking at first one and then another until she had seen the whole brood.

"'Why, they are nothing but ordinary chickens!' she cried, and off she walked, paying no heed to the poor little things when they called after her for something to eat.

"'Are you going away and leave those dear little babies with no one to care for them?' Mamma Speckle asked angrily, and Mrs. Pea-Hen replied, as if to say she didn't allow any one to meddle with her family affairs:

"'Of course I am! Do you suppose a fowl of my standing in society would spend her time looking after a lot of common chickens?'

[Illustration: The Hard-Hearted Mrs. Pea-Hen.]

"'But they'll starve to death!' Mamma Speckle cried, as if she was almost heart-broken.

”That’s no concern of mine. Mr. Man made me believe they were my own eggs, else I’d never sat on them a single hour,” Mrs. Pea-Hen said, as she kept on walking away with never a look at the poor little babies, and Mamma Speckle called after her:

”You was so crazy to set that you would have tried to hatch out a nest full of stones, if you couldn’t have found anything better!”

”Mrs. Pea-Hen tried to act as if she didn’t hear what Mamma Speckle said; but she couldn’t help it, for you know how loud the speckled hen talks. She never paid any attention to the babies, though, and the other fowls took care of them as best they could with babies of their own.”

ALICE QUESTIONS MR. TURTLE.

”Say, of course you know a good deal more than any bird or animal on this farm, and I do wish you would tell me how long Mr. Turtle has lived?”

That was a question which your Aunt Amy could not answer, and when she said as much, Mrs. Goose continued:

”He claims to be very, very old, and to hear the stories he tells you’d think he had lived in every part of the world. He started a kind of a show last week, and calls it a ‘zoo,’ whatever that may be. A lot of birds and animals sit around to show themselves, and say it is a ‘wonderful exhibition.’ Mr. Man’s little girl Alice was out walking with her doll yesterday, and saw Mr. Turtle near the old maple tree selling tickets for the ‘zoo.’ This is what Mr. Crow declares she said to the old fellow:

”They tell me, Mr. Turtle, you
Were born long years ago—
Five hundred years, the doctor says,
And doctors ought to know.

”He says that every year you live
A scientist can tell
Because each birthday leaves a mark
Upon your rusty shell.

”I’ve lots and lots of questions, then,
To ask if you’re so old,
And if you will not answer them,
Please do not think me bold.

”In fourteen ninety-two, when Chris
Columbus westward sailed,
When he discovered Yankeeland,
Was he, then, later jailed?

"Did Shakespeare write those dramas old,
Or did Lord Bacon's pen?
When Joan rambled in Lorraine,
Were you out crawling then?"

"You must have known the virgin queen,
And known Sir Walter, too;
You've heard that story of the ring,
What really did she do?"

[Illustration: Alice and Mr. Turtle.]

"Did Pocahontas save the life
Of Captain Smith that day?
Did Cromwell take the reins of State,
As all the school-books say?"

"Did Washington cut down the tree
That time in early May,
And say 'I cannot tell a lie?'
Now answer me I pray."

The Turtle only looked around,
And winked a lazy wink;
He seemed to say, "Don't bother me;
It hurts my brain to think."

"Why is it that all of you who live near here, like Mr. Crow's poetry so well?" your Aunt Amy asked, when Mrs. Goose had come to an end of the lines, and she replied thoughtfully:

"Well, really now, I can't say. Perhaps it's because he tells us it is the best ever written. Why, I've even heard old Mr. Turtle repeating the verses, and if he has lived five hundred years, surely he ought to know whether they are good or bad. There's one thing I do know, though, which is, that there's no person within two miles of this pond that can tell as many good stories as Mr. Crow. He's got one about a lazy Mr. Horse that means a good deal, if you take the trouble to think it over. Don't you want to hear it?"

Your Aunt Amy really enjoys hearing Mr. Crow's stories, and when she made such a statement, Mrs. Goose began the tale without delay.

THE LAZY MR. HORSE.

"I don't see why I should work all the time, and others have nothing whatever to do," said lazy Mr. Horse, one day. 'I would like to live a life of idleness as well as they.'

"Then he began to think it over, and decided to find some way to get rid of hauling the farm wagon day after day. It wasn't easy to do this, but after a time he hit upon a plan which seemed to be a good one. "I'll make believe that I am sick," he said, "and then my master won't call on me for work."

"So he hung his head, leaned against the side of the stall, and tried to look as if it hurt him to breathe. When his master came into the stable, he said:

"'Hello, what can be the matter with this horse? He was well when I fed him yesterday; but now he seems to be nearly dead.'

"Then the master went out of the stable, and Mr. Horse said to himself with a grin:

"'He has gone to get some medicine for me! The plan seems to be working well.'

"Soon the master came back, and with him was a great big black man, who carried an axe over his shoulder.

"'That horse is very sick,' said the master.

"'He certainly is,' replied the man with the axe.

[Illustration: Mr. Horse is Well Pleased.]

"'And there's only one thing to be done,' said the master.

"'Only one thing,' added the man with the axe.

"'Well, Jim,' said the master, 'hit him squarely between the eyes, and as hard as you can, for I don't want him flopping all around the place before he dies.'

"'All right, sir,' answered the man, as he raised the axe.

"By that time Mr. Horse began to suspect that his plan wasn't working as he thought it would, so he pricked up his ears, kicked up his heels, and tried to look as if there never had been anything the matter with him.

"'That horse has gone crazy,' the master cried.

"'He has indeed,' replied the man with the axe.

"'We'll have to kill him anyway,' said the master. 'Hit him quick before he tears down the stable!'

"The man with the axe hit Mr. Horse one blow, and that settled the question, of his ever hauling the farm-wagon again. Surely he made a fool of himself while trying to deceive others, and if the Goose family had been punished as hard, there wouldn't be one of us alive to-day."

"What do you mean by that?" your Aunt Amy asked in surprise, and Mrs. Gray Goose replied softly, as if afraid others might hear her words:

WHEN THE GEESE CLAIMED TO BE CRANES.

"This is a story we geese don't often tell, and if Mr. Crow should get hold of it everybody around here would know how foolish some of our grandparents were. Our family prides itself on having saved Rome once upon a time, and it would never do to let people know how silly a few of us have been since then. Of course you won't whisper it to Bunny Rabbit, or old Mr. Turtle!

"One day a flock of geese, who had never seen a crane, were feeding in the meadow when two strangers came up, and asked the way to the nearest pond. They were fine-looking birds, and acted like strangers in our part of the country; besides, they didn't speak exactly as we do.

"The leader of the flock was an old, bald-headed gander, who believed he knew more than all the rest of the world put together, so when the strangers asked the question, some of the geese wanted to know how they should answer.

[Illustration: The Cranes asking the way to the nearest pond.]

"'They look to be birds of importance,' Mr. Gander said, 'and may think we are of little account if we show ourselves willing to talk with strangers, so the best way is to hold our tongues. When the proper time comes I will show them that we are no fools.'

"So all the geese held their tongues, while Mr. Gander stood back a little and looked wise. Then the strangers asked the question again, without paying any attention to the inquisitive geese who were staring at them from head to foot. This time Mr. Gander thought he might venture to speak, and he said, talking way down in his throat as he had heard Mr. Man:

"'The nearest pond is our private property, and we do not care to have strangers there until we know if they are birds of quality.'

"'Indeed, sir,' one of the strangers said. 'May I ask whether you are any one in particular?'

"'We are Cranes,' Mr. Gander replied, 'and when I tell you so you will understand that we like to be by ourselves.'

"The strangers looked at each other in surprise a moment, and stepped back as if not knowing what to do, which made old Mr. Gander think he was wise in claiming to be something better than a common goose. Finally one of the visitors asked:

"'Are all the cranes in this country like you?'

"'Why shouldn't they be?' Mr. Gander said gruffly.

"'There is no reason that we know of, being strangers here; but the fact is that we also are cranes, who have just come over from Africa, as you can tell by our black faces, and it surprises us to find such a different looking family here.'

"Just then two real cranes, who had been feeding on the shore of the pond, rose in the air, and, seeing the strangers, one of them cried:

"'Hello, brothers, why are you spending your time with those silly geese? Come over to the pond where you'll find decent company!'

"The cranes from Africa didn't stay with the geese any longer, and, of course, they told what old Mr. Gander had said. Since that time the cranes and the swans won't let one of our family come anywhere near them, even though the swans are our cousins, and all because that foolish old Mr. Gander was willing to tell a lie in order to make it appear that he was more important in the world than a common goose. I have no patience with a bird who is always trying to make himself out a little better than he really is. It's behavior that counts in this world, and whether you come from one family or another, you'll be treated well if you deserve it."

"You are right, Mrs. Goose," your Aunt Amy said decidedly. "Be contented in this world, and you are well off indeed."

"So Mr. Pig thought," Mrs. Goose replied with a laugh. "If Mr. Man had been satisfied with a little, Mr. Pig would most likely have been killed."

WHEN MR. PIG DIDN'T GO TO MARKET.

"Tell me the story," your Aunt Amy said, knowing very well that Mrs. Goose had one in mind, as indeed she had, for she told it as follows:

"One day Mr. Man was taking Mr. Pig to market, when they came to a tree on which hung hundreds and hundreds of apples.

"'I'd like to have an apple,' Mr. Pig said, as he looked up wistfully.

"'I'd like to have a whole barrel,' Mr. Man cried greedily.

"A little further down the road they saw a pear tree.

"I'd like to have a pear,' said the hungry Mr. Pig.

"I'd like to have a wagon-load of pears,' Mr. Man added.

"Presently they saw a grape-vine, and Mr. Pig sighed:

"I'd like to have a bunch of grapes.'

[Illustration: The Two Pigs.]

"I'd like to have a wine-press full of them,' Mr. Man said.

"The two walked on until they came to a field filled with ripe melons.

"Oh, how I wish I had one of those,' Mr. Pig whispered, and Mr. Man growled:

"I'd like to have a car-load.'

"Look here, Mr. Man,' Mr. Pig cried, 'you're more of a hog than I am, and I think we're at the wrong ends of this rope.'

"Then Mr. Pig jumped suddenly, pulling the rope out of Mr. Man's hands, and, dashing between his legs, threw him to the ground. Mr. Pig ran right into the field, picked out a nice ripe melon and ate it, while Mr. Man got up, brushed his clothes, and went home."

Mrs. Goose ceased speaking, as if she was at an end of her story-telling, and your Aunt Amy, unwilling to part with her new friend so soon, was trying to think of some word which would provoke such a remark as would give new life to the conversation, when she was really startled by a loud hissing, as if an angry goose was near at hand.

Much to her surprise, she saw that it was Mrs. Gray Goose herself who was making the outcry, as she looked angrily toward the shore of the pond, where could be seen a goose and a gander dressed in clothing of the latest style.

"What do you think of that?" Mrs. Gray Goose cried. "Isn't it really very foolish?"

"Indeed it is," your Aunt Amy replied emphatically. "When birds, animals, or human beings appear dressed in anything likely to attract attention, they show very poor taste, to speak mildly."

[Illustration: A Foolish Pair.]

"That foolish goose would willingly go hungry in order to get something which would cause the ganders to look at her. Instead of raising feathers and laying eggs, as is her work in this world, she goes rambling all over the neighborhood in some ridiculous fashion, and, I am sorry to say, she finds plenty of ganders who are ready to follow her.

"She'll come to some such end as did young Mr. Rat, before many years have gone by, else I'm very much mistaken. How strange it is that some birds are never contented to do what nature intended should be their duty!"

"I know of a number of human beings who act just as silly," your Aunt Amy replied. "Will you tell me what happened to Mr. Rat of whom you spoke?"

THE DISOBEDIENT RAT.

"Surely I will," Mrs. Gray Goose replied promptly, "for the story is one that teaches a lesson, even if it does come from Mr. Crow. It seems that once upon a time a young Mr. Rat said to his father, speaking as if he knew the ways of the world better than did those who had lived in it many years before he was born:

"Now that I'm of age, I'm going to take a partner, and go into business for myself."

"Very well," his father replied mildly, for he was a wise old Rat. "I hope you will get an honest partner, and prosper in whatever you undertake."

"I suppose you think I am going into business with some common rat," the young fellow said with a sneer. "I'm not going to choose my friends from among such people. I intend to take a kitten as a partner, and in such way get into the best society."

[Illustration: The Two Partners.]

"Old Mr. Rat stroked his whiskers mournfully, as he looked tearfully at his son, and said:

"Oh my son, my son! Kittens grow to be cats, and cats eat rats; it would be much better for you to stay among your own kind."

"But the wilful young rat ran off with a flirt of his tail to a dear little, fluffy kitten, who was not much larger than himself, and asked if she would be his partner.

"I am willing," little Miss Kitten said. "What are we to do after we go into business?"

”Why, when your mother takes you into the pantry to-night to teach you rat-catching, you are to warn me. As soon as your mother has gone out, you must call me with three mews, and I will come.’

”Well, all this was done as young Mr. Rat planned, and when old Mrs. Cat had gone out of the pantry, leaving Miss Kitten alone, young Mr. Rat scampered from his hole. Without paying any attention to his partner, he pulled a big piece of cheese down from the shelf, and began eating it greedily.

”Where do I come in on this business?’ Miss Kitten asked. ’I’m your partner; but I don’t like cheese.’

”Get what you want then,’ young Mr. Rat said sharply. ’You can’t expect me to hunt around for things that I don’t eat. Have anything you please.’

”My mother once gave me a rat-tail to eat,’ Miss Kitten replied thoughtfully. ’I believe I would rather have that than anything else,’ and she looked longingly at young Mr. Rat’s tail.

”Oh, no indeed, you can’t have that! Perhaps I spoke too sharply about the cheese; but you can’t have my tail.’

”Yes, she can,’ growled old Mrs. Cat from the door, where she had been listening. Then she pounced upon young Mr. Rat and ate him, giving the tail to her kitten. There is a good lesson in that story, old Mr. Turtle says.”

”So there is, Mrs. Goose, and one needn’t look long in order to find it,” your Aunt Amy replied, and then she asked that question which had been in her mind ever since the bird began to talk. ”Have you ever heard about the Mrs. Goose who laid golden eggs?”

THE TRUE STORY OF THE GOLDEN EGGS.

”Indeed I have,” Mrs. Goose replied quickly. ”Surely I ought to know all about her, for she was a great-great-grandmother of mine, and if I’m not mistaken, some of our family have her picture which Mr. Ape painted, when he set himself up as an artist. That is another case where discontent, when matters were going on as well as ever could have been expected, brought its punishment.”

”How can that be?” your Aunt Amy asked quickly. ”The man killed the goose which was bringing in so much gold, and it surely seems as if she received the most severe punishment.”

”That would be right if the story, as Mr. Man tells it, was true,” Mrs. Goose said sharply; ”but it is not, and however it got so twisted I can’t for the life of me understand. Now if that goose was my

great-great-grandmother, I ought to know all about it, and I do, for I've heard Grandfather White Goose tell it more times than I've got feathers in my left wing.

"Would you like to know how it all really happened? Well, I'll tell you, and remember that I'm the one among all others on this farm who should know the exact truth. She was a gray goose, the one who laid the eggs, and looked very much like me, so grandfather says. The Mr. Man where she lived was very kind, and actually gave her a bedroom in his own house. No matter what she wanted to eat, he bought it for her, and all the eggs she laid he spread out on a kind of desk or table which had been built especially for them.

"Every morning when she had laid the egg, Mr. Man took her into the room where they were all spread out, and let her see him put it safely away.

"Now, so grandfather says, Mrs. Goose was petted so much, and had so many good things to eat, that she began to believe she was something wonderful, and I really suppose she was, being the only bird that ever laid golden eggs. But she got all puffed up with pride, and thought she ought to live without doing any kind of work, so one day while she was watching Mr. Man take care of the eggs, she saw a big knife hanging up, and asked why it was kept there.

"I did have it to kill geese with; but now, since you're the only goose I want, it isn't used.' Mr. Man said, and Mrs. Goose asked:

"Is it sharp?"

"Oh dear, yes, just like a razor,' Mr. Man said, still looking at the eggs.

"Well, do you know I'm tired of doing so much work,' foolish Mrs. Goose said, 'and I've been thinking that you might fix things so I wouldn't be tied down to this egg-laying every day. Surely I ought to live in comfort.'

[Illustration: Mrs. Goose watches Mr. Man as he takes the golden eggs out of the basket.]

"That is what I intend you shall be able to do,' Mr. Man answered, for he wanted to keep her contented. 'Is there anything more you need, Mrs. Goose?"

"I want to live without doing any kind of work,' Mrs. Goose said, as if she was the most abused bird in the world.

"But then how could we get these beautiful eggs?' Mr. Man cried. 'Surely you take as much pleasure in them as I do!

”All that may be; but it is a great exertion to lay one every day, and no sooner is the work finished than I think of the same task to be done on the morrow, until I’m on the verge of nervous prostration,’ and Mrs. Goose waddled up and down the room as if she was a living skeleton, instead of the fattest bird that ever walked.

”But what can I do, my dear creature?’ Mr. Man cried in real distress, for he was afraid she might refuse to lay any more golden eggs, and that would have nearly broken his heart.

”Why not take that knife and cut through my feathers till you find an egg. I am quite fat on my stomach, and it wouldn’t do me the least little bit of harm. Then all I’d have to do would be to come in here, and let you take the egg out.’

”Well, Mr. Man said everything he could think of to persuade the foolish goose that it was best to let well enough alone; but she coaxed and scolded, and finally declared flatly that unless he did as she wanted, she’d go out of the egg business entirely.

”Of course, after that, Mr. Man couldn’t do any less than what she asked for, and although he used the knife very carefully, Mrs. Goose died before he found a single egg. Now that is the truth of the story, as my grandfather tells it,” Mrs. Gray Goose continued, ”and there is no question in my mind but that it is as true as the one you have heard so many times.”

”It surely seems more reasonable,” your Aunt Amy said thoughtfully, ”for nobody but a goose could have even dreamed that it would be best to cut a bird open to get at the eggs more quickly.”

”That is very true,” Mrs. Gray Goose replied; ”but you must bear in mind that we who wear feathers are not the only geese in the world. I could point out a good many who would feel insulted if we claimed relationship with them. Mr. Man’s boy Johnny makes a bigger goose of himself than I am, many a time, and it’s no longer ago than yesterday, when Mr. Fido Dog showed how near he came to being my cousin.”

”Tell me the story,” your Aunt Amy suggested, and Mrs. Goose began without delay:

THE RACE BETWEEN MR. FIDO AND MR. SHANGHAI.

”For a good many weeks the birds and animals on this farm have been trying to decide whether the two-footed or the four-footed were the swiftest, and last week, while we were talking the matter over, foolish Mr. Fido Dog said, as he swelled his chest way out:

”It stands to reason that I could beat Mr. Shanghai in a race. I’ve got four good feet with spring soles, and he has only two poor scratchers

that are all bones and claws. Why, I could easily run from here to the pond, take a drink there, and be home again before he got as far as the fence.'

"My, how big you talk, just because you're allowed to sleep in the house!' Mr. Shanghai said. 'You forget my wings, Mr. Fido. Perhaps they are worth just a little.'

"Nonsense!' Mr. Fido said, turning up his lip till he showed a fine set of white teeth, and tilting his puggy nose. 'What good are your wings? Why, I heard Mr. Man tell his boy Tommy last night that wings were of no use to chickens, except to fly over the fence with.'

"Well,' said Mr. Shanghai, scratching his topknot with his left claw, and looking wise, 'you see there are times when it's better to be on one side of the fence than the other.'

"That's a wise remark, Mr. Shanghai,' Mr. Fido snapped. 'You must have a great head; but what good will it do you in a race to the pond? Come on! I'll show you what can be done. Here's where four feet beats two feet—yes, and wings thrown in, if you want them.'

"What is the course?'" Mr. Shanghai asked.

"A straight line to the pond. Are you ready?'"

"All ready!' said Mr. Shanghai, and off they went.

"It was a close race to the barn-yard fence. Mr. Shanghai ran hard with his neck stretched out; but Mr. Fido went on easily, laughing to think how easy it would be to win.

"But when he came to the fence Mr. Fido stopped. He couldn't get over, and it took quite a while to creep through. He wiggled and pushed anxiously; but Mr. Shanghai, spreading his big wings, flew over, and was at the pond a full minute before Mr. Fido got on the other side of the fence.

[Illustration: Mr. Shanghai Wins the Race]

"When he went back Mr. Shanghai couldn't help laughing at Mr. Fido, and saying: 'Now you can see that there are times when it is better to be on one side of a fence than another. You're as much out of place in a race with me, as the gosling was in the stork's nest.'"

WHEN MRS. GOOSE'S BABY WASN'T WELCOME.

"What did he mean by that?'" your Aunt Amy asked, and Mrs. Goose really laughed as she replied:

"It was a silly trick Mr. Man's boy Tommy played on Mr. and Mrs. Stork, who had built a nest on the top of the farm-house chimney. I had nine babies, while the Storks only hatched out one, and they were all exactly the same age.

"Tommy Boy, who never has work enough to keep him out of mischief, thought it would be very funny to put one of my babies in the Storks' nest, and leave their little one with me, so he got a ladder, and came very near breaking his bones in order to make the change while Mrs. Stork was away looking for food.

"When she came back, there was my dear little gosling sitting up on his tail as if he expected to have his picture taken, trying to tell what Tommy had done.

"Of course Mrs. Stork couldn't understand a word my dear little gosling said, because he didn't talk plain owing to having no teeth, and she sent in a hurry for her husband to come and find out what had happened to their baby.

[Illustration: Baby Gosling Tries to Explain.]

"I got so nervous while the Storks were trying to decide whether to kill my poor little gosling by pecking him, or throwing him out of the nest, that I nearly had a fit, and suppose I must have made a terrible noise, for Mr. Man came running up to learn what the matter was. It didn't take him many minutes to understand it all, when Johnny was forced to undo the mischief, and take a sound whipping afterward, much to my delight and satisfaction."

At this moment Mr. Gander came into view, evidently very much excited, and said something which your Aunt Amy could not understand.

"I must go over to the oak tree, and you had better come too," Mrs. Gray Goose said hurriedly. "Mr. Crow has just made up some new poetry, and is going to read it. Can't you go with me?"

Your Aunt Amy was not in the mood for hearing any more of Mr. Crow's verses, after Mrs. Goose had recited so many, and she went slowly homeward, while Mrs. Gray Goose followed Mr. Gander, hissing complaints as she waddled along, because he had not invited her to have a portion of the frog he swallowed whole.

[Illustration: Mrs. Gray Goose Complains.]

THE END.