

**TWELVE STORIES OF
THE SAYINGS AND
DOINGS OF ANIMALS**

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Twelve Stories of the Sayings and Doings of Animals by Mrs. R. Lee

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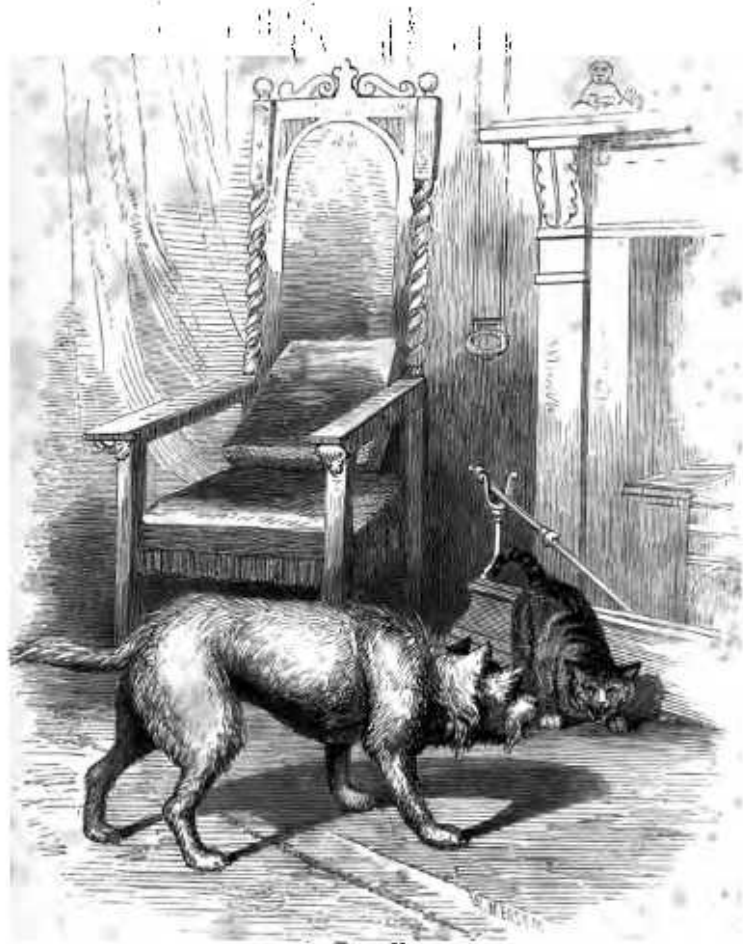
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MRS. R. LEE

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DOINGS OF ANIMALS**



TWELVE STORIES

OF THE

SAYINGS AND DOINGS OF ANIMALS.

BY

MRS. R. LEE,

AUTHOR OF THE "AFRICAN WANDERERS," "ADVENTURES IN AUSTRALIA,"
"ANECDOTES OF ANIMALS," ETC.

WITH FOUR ILLUSTRATIONS BY J. W. ARCHER.



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TWELVE STORIES

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THE SWALLOWS.

"I AM afraid you feel very uncomfortable, my dear," said a Swallow to her husband, as he flew back, with a worm in his mouth, to their nest; "you have appeared very restless all day. Suppose you fly away after our friends, and leave me to take care of our poor little child."

"I would not do so for the world," said the cock Swallow, moving the worm to his claws. "I must own that I sometimes am uneasy at staying here at a time when we all go away to a warmer country; but I will not go alone; and our Flappet would be starved if we deserted him. I cannot think how that piece of red worsted got so twisted round his leg, or how the other end got so fastened in with the mud of which our nest was built."

"We have stayed two months already," added the hen Swallow; "so perhaps we shall manage to get through the cold winter. And we will collect as much wool as we can,

to cover us; and as for food, I hope we shall discover the eggs of insects, and then we can eat them."

So talking together, the old birds reached their young one, who welcomed them home with chirpings of delight.

"I am so glad you are come," said he, "and have brought me a worm; for the wing-cases of the last beetle have stuck in my throat, and I very much wish for some water to wash them down."

"I will fetch you some in my mouth," said his mother, and flew off to the pond. Then they all three lay down in the nest, the young one in the middle, who was covered up by his father's and mother's wings, and went fast asleep.

The next day, after breakfast, the two old ones set off again; and when they returned in the middle of the day, the parents found the young bird half dead with fear. The nest was built in the corner of a false window, fronting the south, so as to catch all the sun's rays; and Flappet sat as well as he could on the edge, and swelled his little throat as he sang. Presently he saw a great long thing put against the wall close by him, and an enormous creature walk up it, till he came to the nest. He took hold of Flappet, who was sure he was going to be killed, examined the leg which was fastened to the nest, muttered something, and went down again. When he told this to his father and mother, they were very much puzzled and distressed, and determined, however hungry they might be, to stay at home for the rest of the afternoon. By and by, the long thing was again put against the wall, which they knew to be a ladder; and then they saw a man come up. When he was close to the nest, they themselves were very much

frightened; and, as they were not big or strong enough to fight with him, they flew round and round his head, crying loudly for pity on their child. Although he did not know what they said, he saw they were alarmed, and spoke kindly to them, exclaiming that he was going to set the prisoner free. He took a pair of scissors from his pocket, snipped the scarlet worsted in two, and taking the little bird up in his hand, smoothed his head and back, laid him gently in the nest, went down the ladder, and took it away with him.

The old birds were first made to know that their little one was free, by his nearly tumbling off the edge of the nest; but they saved him, and screamed with joy. The mother stayed with him, but the father flew backwards and forwards, getting food for both; and when it was dark they all again got into the nest; not that they could sleep much, so they lay awake, talking of what they should now do.

In the morning the Swallows breakfasted early, and then Flappet was taught to fly. At first the old birds supported him on each side, but he soon began to feel courage; and as his feathers were full-grown in a few days they all set out on a long journey to the south. On passing over the head of the gardener who had released Flappet, they gave him a grateful song of joy, which made him look up and smile. They at first did not go to a very great distance, for their young son was tired. As the leaves were almost all off the other trees, they roosted on the tops of firs. At last they came to the sea, and the mother began to be anxious about her child being able to cross it.

"Courage!" said the father; "if we find he is tired, we can lay him on his back, on the top of a wave, to rest, and then go on again. But why should we go across the great sea? Why not travel over France?"

"Because it will be colder," answered the mother.

"We can but try," added her husband; and away they all went, right across the English Channel to France. They only stopped to get food, and took no notice of the cities and villages, the beautiful and ancient houses, and the charming country; for they knew, as snow was coming, they had no time to lose. The warmth increased; they passed over the blue waters of the Mediterranean, and reached Africa, in which continent they intended to pass the rest of the winter.

The first time the travellers rested for a few days was on the top of a beautiful palm-tree, with its long, straight trunk, and a bunch of leaves at the top, waving about like a plume of feathers. The fruit grew by hundreds in the midst of these leaves, and the insects on which the Swallows fed there made them all fat after their long journey. They next stopped at some stunted-looking trees with yellow blossoms; but as some men were gathering the gum arabic which oozed out of their trunks, they soon left them. At length they came to an immense forest, where grew all sorts of trees, and lived all sorts of insects, particularly on the outskirts; for those creatures, who love the sun, do not frequent the inmost parts, the leaves being so thick there that the sun cannot get to them.

"The little birds were quite happy in their new home: sometimes they sheltered themselves from the fierce heat