

Stories from 'The children's own paper'

OUR LITTLE FRIEND

Jan. 1925



FRISKY THE GRAY SQUIRREL

Floyd Bralliar

(CHAPTER ONE)

FOR several days, I had noticed a squirrel running in and out of a hole in an old tree, but thought little of it. Not only was the weather cold, but there was rain almost every day—not common, gentle rains, but cold, dreary downpours that drenched everything. Any sensible squirrel might be expected to live much in a hollow tree in such weather, especially if the hole opened where the rain could not come in, as did the hole in this tree.

As I passed the tree, going to and from my meals, I often tossed pieces of whole wheat bread to this squirrel, which she always took with evident pleasure, and held in her dainty hands while she ate them. Should I toss her a piece of white bread, she would nibble off the crust if there was any, then toss the remainder away as though it were not good enough for a squirrel to eat.

In this way, we became good friends—so good, in fact, that when I came near, she kept about her business without paying the least attention to me unless she was hungry, when she would stop to beg. This will perhaps explain my being able to see the following incident.

Frisky the Mischievous Squirrel

One afternoon, the weather had cleared and the sun was shining brightly. The elm buds were swelling, and the first red maple trees were already showing green. My squirrel had gone to the top of a near-by elm tree for, a supper of elm buds. I noticed her swinging on the small twigs, and pulling the buds to her with her hands, seeming to be having a great feast.

Suddenly she let loose of the twigs she was swinging on, and dropped to a limb below, caught it, and ran down the tree to the ground as fast as she could go. Then she raced away across the lawn like a flash. I had no idea a squirrel could run so fast.

At first, I could not think why she should be running so hard; but soon I saw that she was chasing something which looked like a young rat. She quickly caught up with it and pounced on it as a cat would pounce on a mouse. There was a struggle, the little fellow doing his best to get away; but at last the squirrel gathered him up in her mouth, ran up a tree, and started toward her nest, jumping from branch to branch and from tree to tree. The creature hung limp in her mouth, and I supposed she had killed it, whatever it was. I watched eagerly to see if I could learn what she had caught; for though I had heard that squirrels catch young birds at times, and I had seen one catch a baby chicken, I had never heard of their catching a four-footed animal of any kind. Besides, when I had seen a squirrel catch a baby chicken, it never carried it to its hole at all, but merely took it up into a tree and ate it there.

Finally my squirrel reached her home tree and ran down to the hole. I was at the foot of the tree, watching to see what she had in her mouth. And what do you suppose it was?

It was a baby squirrel, so small that its tail was not even broad and bushy, though it was fully covered with hair. It was one of her babies. Frisky was the name I gave him when I came to know him better. He was so venturesome that he had stolen from the nest hole--just as a wee child sometimes gets out of the yard when mother is not looking, - and had run away.

He was far too small to take care of himself, and it was not at all safe for him to be out of the nest hole; but he was determined to go where he pleased, in spite of his mother.

When she reached the hole, she let her baby loose, so he could go inside; but he promptly started around the tree and tried to get away again. She soon caught him, and in the struggle, nearly dropped him to the ground. Now she dragged him to the mouth of the hole, and actually pushed his head into it. But Frisky, protesting at the top of his voice, placed a little paw on each side of the hole, and refused to go in.

The mother pushed and scolded, and moved from one side of the hole to another; still he would not go inside. Finally she seemed to lose patience, and bit him till he squealed with pain. Then she crowded into the hole herself, and dragged him after her. For several minutes, I could hear the little fellow crying and protesting in a way that made it evident he was being punished for his naughtiness. Afterwards everything became

quiet, and soon the mother squirrel came out of the hole and ran to the elm tree, and again began eating her supper of elm buds.

Chapter 2

MORE DISOBEDIENCE

FOR over a week, Frisky stayed in the nest with his brothers and sisters, and made no trouble. He was growing fast, however; and day by day, he became surer that he could take care of himself, and that there was really no reason why so big a squirrel as he should stay in a dark hole all the time.

As I passed his tree, I soon began to notice his bright eyes watching me out of the hole. One day about a week after his first adventure, when I threw some bread to his mother, he scampered out of the hole and came down after a piece on his own account. His mother was sitting up on her haunches near the tree with a piece of bread in her hands, and was so busy eating that she did not see what he was about. Frisky was an awkward youngster by this time, and seemed to be all legs and tail. Because of lack of practice, he wobbled a good bit as he came down the side of the tree, and once or twice his hold slipped and he came near tumbling on his head. But he was a plucky fellow, and as soon as he recovered his hold, he would come on down as if nothing had happened.

When he reached the ground, I threw him a piece of bread, which he, grabbed eagerly, and began nibbling as fast as he could. But his mother noticed me throw the bread, and though she had a piece already, she turned to see where it had gone. Frisky had scarcely begun nibbling his prize before she saw him, and with a cry of anger or fear, I could not tell which, dropped her bread and ran for him. Evidently Frisky was not surprised at this, for he jumped as quickly as she, and scampered behind the tree. Here they chased back and forth for almost a minute before his mother caught him. Then she took him by the back of the neck, and half dragged, half pushed him up the tree to the hole, he squealing and protesting all the time. Every chance he got, he would dig his tiny claws into the bark and hang on for dear life, his mother sometimes having to fall below him to pull him loose. It took fully ten minutes for the mother to get him up the ten feet to the hole; and when she did, it took almost as much longer to get him inside. And evidently this did not do much good; for in a few hours, I saw him out again, learning to run about on the tree.

Now if Frisky had been a squirrel in the woods, he would most surely have paid for his disobedience with his life. Fortunately, he was born in a place where no one was allowed to kill squirrels, and where cats and dogs were not welcomed. So for two or three days, he did pretty much as he pleased, his mother deciding there was nothing to be gained by fussing about it.

Frisky the Mischievous Squirrel

But one day, a stray dog came on the place when Frisky was on the ground some distance from a tree. He had never had anything try to hurt him, and so paid no attention to the dog as it came near. But his mother saw the dog, and from her perch in a tree, began screaming to him that there was danger near, and for him to get to a tree as fast as he could go. Frisky sat up and looked around, but stayed where he was. It was very evident he thought he knew more than his mother regarding his safety.

In vain she screamed and scolded, even coming down to the foot of the tree and running out a few feet, but again scampering up the tree.

Frisky moved a little nearer the tree, but again began hunting for something in the grass, while the dreadful dog was coming nearer and nearer every moment. The poor mother became almost frantic; but she knew that to catch her son by the back of the neck and attempt to drag him to safety, as she had done when he was smaller, only meant the death of them both.

Finally the dog saw Frisky and dashed for him. At that precise moment, Frisky looked up and saw the dog coming.

It was pitiful to see the poor little fellow then. Every hair on his body showed terror, and for a moment, he could not move. Then he dashed for a tree, with the dog hardly ten feet behind. The bark of the dog and his open mouth must have added strength to his wobbly legs and put sense into his naughty head; for just as the dog was about to grab him, he suddenly whirled and started the other way. The dog passed him before he could stop, and Frisky had a moment's advantage to run again toward his tree.

In a moment, the dog had turned, and was again in full pursuit. It was still ten feet to the tree, and Frisky could not possibly make it alone.

Just then the faithful mother risked her own life by jumping out of her tree and dashed in front of the dog and ran toward another tree. The dog did not stop, but he checked up for an instant, trying to decide which to follow. By the time he again got under way, Frisky had reached his tree. The dog reached it at almost the same time, and succeeded in nipping off the tip of Frisky's tail. The squirrel got away, but it was a long time before he again had a full bushy tail, and the scar remains even to this day.

(CHAPTER THREE)

Frisky, the Gray Squirrel

FRISKY GROWS UP

THE wildlings, if they are normal, learn their lessons fast. If not, they do not generally learn them at all. They merely become food for some of their enemies. Never again did I see Frisky so sure of himself; and ever after, he heeded his mother's danger call. More

Frisky the Mischievous Squirrel

than that, it was a long time before I again saw him so far away from a tree as he was the day he came near being caught by a dog.

Soon the other youngsters, Frisky's brothers and sisters, were out of the nest hole and in the trees; but none of them were so careful as Frisky now was. By fall, all were grown, and the time came for the family to scatter. Late in October, all the squirrels on the place disappeared, going no one knew where. For a day or two, none were seen; then gradually, one by one, they drifted back - that is, some of them did. By far the greater part never came back. I have watched this for years among our many almost pet squirrels, and always about this time of year this occurs, and always some of the very tamest of them never come back.

This seems to be God's way of seeing that the squirrels do not become too plentiful at one place and that they do not become too closely related.

Frisky had been gone for more than a week when finally he appeared one morning in a tree not far from my door, and almost a quarter of a mile from where he was born. He was not the tame fellow he was when he left his home, either. In fact, he acted as though he were afraid of everyone who came in sight.

Walnuts were now ripe, but none grew near, and there were only a few acorns on the oaks near where Frisky had decided to live. One day, I went a mile or more from home, and brought back three sacks of walnuts, and poured them out on the ground near the house, expecting to hull and dry them soon. These walnuts settled the matter of Frisky's being afraid of us. From morning till night, he was either at this walnut pile getting a nut, or sitting on a tree or a fencepost near by eating one. Of course, we often went to this pile of walnuts, and he soon learned to pay no other attention to us than to scold till we went away.

After a while, I hulled the walnuts that were left, and took them into the house. Now Frisky had to hunt for a living, and he began to know what it was to go with an empty stomach. He hunted far and wide, but usually had to end up by eating a meal of buds gathered from either an elm or a hackberry tree; for even in

Tennessee, food becomes scarce at times in the winter. When my walnuts were well dried, I put them in a sack and set them on the back porch - a sort of room enclosed on three sides by the other rooms of the house, and on the outside by screen wire. Frisky had long since learned that crumbs and fruit pits were sometimes thrown out of doors near this screen porch, and he was a frequent visitor there, even climbing up on the wire and looking in to see if he could discover anything good to eat. The very day I put the walnuts on the back porch, he found them.

He was hungry, and the nuts surely would taste good; but how was he to get them? For two or three hours, he ran from the porch to the trees and back. Finally he began to tear

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at the screen wire where it was fastened to a pillar, and by the time we came home in the evening, he had a hole large enough to go in and out.

For two or three days he took our nuts; and it became evident that if we were to have any ourselves, something must be done about it. So Mrs. Bralliar set a mousetrap on top of the bag that held the nuts. In a few moments, here came Frisky, and popped through the hole, and jumped on the sack. Snap went the trap, and caught the end of his bushy tail.

For a moment, Frisky was so scared he could not think what to do. He dashed about on the porch, first one way and then another, jumped first on the screen and then on the wall, the mousetrap striking him at every jump and adding to his scare. Mrs. Bralliar had been expecting this to happen, and watched him till she began to fear he would knock something down and break it; then she went out on the porch. At last, the frightened squirrel remembered the hole in the screen wire, and dashed through it. The trap caught on the wire and pulled loose from his tail, without doing any damage other than pulling out a few hairs. Frisky scampered up the nearest tree as fast as he could go, and ran through the treetops to his hole, where he remained the rest of the day and all night.

(CHAPTER FOUR)

Frisky, the Gray Squirrel

Frisky Robs the Pantry

FOR two or three days after Frisky got his tail in the mousetrap, he did not come through the hole and take walnuts from the back porch. I remembered my experience in breaking Frank, the collie dog, of the habit of sucking eggs, and thought we had won again.

But there came a snow, and food was even harder to get, and the walnuts were still in the sack on the back porch. Frisky, when it seemed he just must have a nut, climbed up on the screen wire and peeped through. The nuts were there, and they looked so good! But there was that hateful trap again, right on top of the sack, waiting to catch him. He ran away, lest he be tempted; but soon he was back.

Again he peeped, longer and more longingly than before; but again he ran away hastily. He was gone so long we began to think he had given up and would make no more attempts to get the nuts.

Then suddenly he appeared again, and without hesitation, climbed through the hole in the screen. Clearly he had worked out a plan. Holding his tail high over his back, he crept along on the inside of the screen for a few feet, and then jumped down to the floor. Fearlessly he ran to the sack, cut a hole in the side, through which he helped himself to

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a nut. Carefully he carried it up the side of the screen wire and across to the hole; and soon he was sitting in a tree, cracking his prize. Before night, he had carried away more than a score of nuts, and was living in plenty again.

Not to be outwitted by a squirrel, Mrs. Bralliar made the hole in the side of the sack a little bigger, and the next morning, set the mousetrap inside this hole. Before long, Frisky came in, and boldly started to poke his head and front feet into the hole after a nut. Snap went the trap, this time catching him by one of his front feet. Of course, he was scared, and got out of the house as fast as he could go, carrying the trap with him. He climbed to the top of his favorite tree, then sat down on a limb and began trying to get the trap off his foot. Evidently it had struck the side of the sack when it went off, and so had not hurt his foot very much.

He worked and twisted, biting at the trap with his teeth and pulling at it with his feet. Presently he succeeded in pulling it off, and it dropped over the fence into the bushes. Surely, we thought, he has learned his lesson this time, and we shall have no more trouble over our walnuts. But we were too confident. Frisky was not hurt, and now apparently he believed that the horrid trap was disposed of and could do no more harm. Within an hour, he was back at the sack of walnuts; and he fed on it all day. But he cut a new hole on the other side of the sack through which to get the nuts.

Finally, between us all, the walnuts were eaten. But by this time, Frisky had learned that there were other things in the house, which were good to eat, and that it was easier to get them than to hunt for a living in the woods. From that day till this, we have never been able, for more than a few days at a time, to keep the screen wire on the back porch free from a hole through which Frisky can go. As fast as we mend one hole, he makes another.

Our kitchen opens on this porch, and we soon came to the conclusion that the only way to keep food from Frisky was to keep it in the kitchen instead of on the porch. The squirrel soon learned what we were doing, and before long, he was ever watching for some one to leave the door open between the kitchen and the porch, and he never failed to avail himself of the opportunity to slip in and carry off enough food to last for a day or two.

One day, he was found in the kitchen, and punished with the broom before he could get out. Since then, he comes to one of the kitchen windows, climbs up, and looks through to see what is on the kitchen table and whether anyone is in the kitchen. If he is satisfied that there is food on the table, and that there is no one to interfere, he jumps down and runs around the house to the screen porch, comes through the hole, and slips from there into the kitchen. He is pretty wise, however, and he has always managed to get in without being caught again.

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If the door into the kitchen is closed, and he finds the doors into the remainder of the house open not an uncommon thing in summer - he will go through all the other rooms and into the kitchen; but before he starts, he always makes sure there is no one there with a broom.

(CHAPTER FIVE)

Frisky, the Gray Squirrel

Frisky Prepares for Winter

WE had been away from home most of the summer, but my daughter and another lady were living in the house. They took their meals elsewhere, so there was little in the house that a squirrel would care to eat; but it was summer, and with an abundance of food everywhere, Frisky did not mind this. He still liked to come into the house to see what he could find. In fact, he seemed to have taken a great liking to our house; and in spite of his not finding any food for so long, Mrs. Bralliar found, on her return, that he had not forgotten to climb up on the kitchen window and peep in to see what was on the table.

As the cold nights began to come, Frisky evidently began to think about what he was to have to eat in the winter. In the spring, we had a sack of left-over butternuts. When we left home, we put these in the shop, and thought no more about them. The shop was often left open during the summer, but no one ever noticed a squirrel go into it.

One evening, when my daughter went to her room to go to bed, she noticed that her pillow did not appear as smooth as when she left it in the morning, so she picked it up to smooth it out. Imagine her surprise to find a pile of butternuts neatly tucked away under it.

Frisky had decided that this pillow would make him a good, warm bed for the winter, and had placed these nuts there so they would be handy some cold day when he did not want to get up for breakfast. When she went into her closet and picked up some clothes, there were more butternuts hidden in them.

It was watermelon time now, and the family are fond of melons. Of course, the seeds were thrown out when a melon was eaten, and Frisky soon found and tasted them. He must have liked them very much; for after that, when we were eating melons, he always came around, and waited for the seeds to be thrown out. He liked the ripe red melon too, and if he could get it, would eat till his sides stuck out. The watermelon seeds we threw out were always all gone in a short time, no matter how many there were. We might have known that one squirrel could never have eaten all these seeds in so short a time, but we never thought anything about it.

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The melon season passed, and we were having frosty nights. Frisky played about the yard as usual, but as there was seldom anything in the house for him to eat, he never seemed to bother to come in to look around.

One day, Mrs. Bralliar cleaned out a drawer in her sewing machine. The next day, she went to town, and there was no one in the house all day. The weather was warm, and the doors to the back porch were left open. While in town, she bought several spools of thread; and when she came home, she went to the empty sewing machine drawer, intending to put her thread in it. On opening the drawer, she found that it contained fully a pint of watermelon seeds.

Frisky had come into the house to see what he could find. He had discovered this empty machine drawer, and had decided that it would be a good place to lay up his winter's supplies. Where he got these seeds, we could not tell; but he must have had them stored somewhere else, for they were as dry as could be. I still have them, but I hope that Frisky has more stored somewhere in a hollow tree.

A few days later we were cleaning out the pantry, and picked up an old oatmeal box. Something about it caused us to look inside, and it was half full of watermelon seeds. We have not given the house a general cleaning yet; but when we do, we shall likely find several more lots of watermelon seeds stored away for winter.

But now comes the strangest part of all. Last week Frisky and the other squirrels living near our house disappeared. They have gone to the woods on their yearly scattering trip. Most of them will not come back, but will find new homes in new places. Just as Frisky left the place of his birth and finally came to live with us, so now he has gone again. He has been gone for a week, and we have about given up all hopes of his returning.

If he does not come back, what will become of the food he has stored up for winter, and where will he find food? Why did he go to so much trouble to store up food, if he was going to leave before winter? Will some other squirrel come to live near and find his stores of food, and will Frisky find the food some other squirrel has stored up and left? I do not know, but I shall watch with a great deal of interest to find out. Perhaps I may be able to tell you, some day, what happens. Perhaps, after all, Frisky will come back. Only time can tell.

WE can not keep the little birds of care from flying over our heads, but we can keep them from building their nests in our hair: Chinese Proverb.

IN Norway, there is a law that no person may cut down a tree unless he plants three saplings in its place.

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“I Will” & “What’s the Use”

Albert Cliff Sproul

"I Will" is such a pleasant lad!
He's happy as can be;
And while he works so long and hard,
He whistles merrily.

But "What's the Use"- all that he does
Is whine and fret and pout.
He'd never do a single thing
To help a fellow out.

Be wise and make "I Will" your friend,
And shun, oh, surely shun
The chap that they call "What's the Use,"
Who spoils our work and fun.

HOLD up your head! You were not made for failure, you were, made for victory; go forward with a joyful confidence in that result soon or late--the soon or late depends mainly upon yourself.
George Eliot.



SIZE IS NOT EVERYTHING

The height of a mastiff to his shoulders is often twenty-five to thirty inches. Sometimes a mastiff weighs 175 pounds, while the smallest terrier known is little more than five inches in length. I suppose that one stroke of the mastiff's powerful paw would crush the nervous little body before him. The king-dog is like a giant before a baby.

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But as to pluck against pluck, the difference is not so great. The whole body of that little black fellow is condensed grit. Just see how the tips of his ears and tail bristle with it! As he stands there measuring the strength and power of his good-natured big friend, he feels equal to him in spirit at least.

There is no trouble between them. Why should there be? Each is the best of his kind, and each is superior in his own field. There is room enough in the dog world, as well as in our own, for each to do his beat in his peculiar place, without envy or strife. Remember, boys and girls, there is room for all-room for YOU.

BEING HAPPY

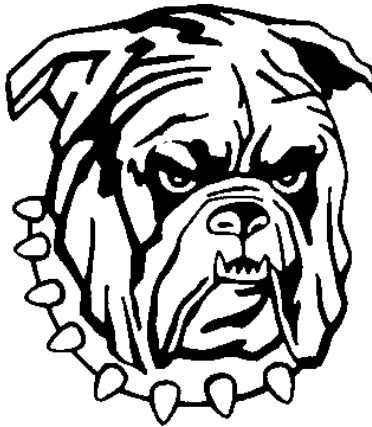
Just being happy is a fine thing to do-
Looking on the bright side rather than the blue.
Sad or sunny musing - Is largely in the choosing;
And just being happy is brave work and true.

Just being happy helps other souls along.
Their burdens may be weary, and they not strong;
And your own sky will lighten - If other skies you brighten
By just being happy with a heart full of song.

A LITTLE PRAYER

"Our Father, we thank Thee that our Lord Jesus knew the experiences of childhood. We thank Thee that He understood every child. We thank Thee for His example as a boy; and we pray that we may not forget how wonderful He is in giving the children of to-day such joy and blessing when there is obedience to Him, whether we are younger or older. May we keep learning and growing, in all that belongs to the Christian life. May we be obedient to those who are in authority over us, and busy with that which would be pleasing to the Lord Jesus. In His dear name we pray. Amen."

If the day looks kinder gloomy
And the chances kinder thin;
If the situation's puzzlin',
And the prospects awful grim,
And perplexities keep pressin'
Till all hope is nearly gone,
Jest bristle up and grit your teeth,
And keep on keeping on.
-"Boys' Life."



"Down, Temper, Down!"

A BOY that I know owns a big dog named Hero. He is very fond of his dog, and they romp a good deal. This encourages the dog to take liberties with him, such as putting his great paws upon the boy's shoulders, pushing him down, and rolling over him. Sometimes Hero wants to play when his young master wishes to study or work. Then the boy speaks in a tone of command, and says:

"Down, Hero, down, sir!"

Poor Hero obeys, and goes away with drooping tail.

I know another boy who does not own a big dog like Hero, but he has a little, ugly, furious cur, which frowns and snarls and bites, and its owner has no control over it at all. What do you think is the name of the cur?

Temper!

Now if this latter boy were wise, he would bring his cur under control. He would say, "Down, Temper, down!" whenever it began to growl. He would bring it under orders until it would obey him as Hero does the other boy. True, Temper has been master so long it would not be subdued without some trouble at first; but if the boy would pray hard, and then be resolute in saying "Down!" he would soon master it. God and a praying boy can conquer any temper that rages in a lad's heart. From Mrs. E. G. White's Old Scrapbook.