

1827

Louisa's Tenderness to the Little Birds in Winter

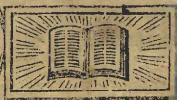
Arnaud Berquin

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LOUISA'S TENDERNESS
TO THE
LITTLE BIRDS
IN WINTER.



PUBLISHED BY THE
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Lucy Stone Fund

Louisa's Tenderness

TO THE

LITTLE BIRDS IN WINTER.



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HOWEVER long the winter is to appear, the spring will naturally succeed it. A gentle breeze began to warm the air, the snow gradually vanished, the fields put on their enamelled livery, the flowers shot forth their buds, and the birds began to send forth their harmony from every bough.

Little Louisa, with her brother and parents, left the city to partake of the pleasures of the country. Scarcely had

the blackbird and the thrush begun their early whistle, to welcome Louisa, than



the weather changed all on a sudden; the north-wind roared horribly in the grove, and the snow fell in such abundance, that everything appeared in a silver-white mantle.

Though the little maid went to bed shivering with cold, and much disappointed in her expectations, yet in her evening devotions, before retiring, she thanked God for having given her so comfortable a shelter from the inclemency of the elements.

Such a quantity of snow had fallen during the night, that the roads were almost impassable in the morning, which was a matter of great affliction to poor



Louisa; but she observed that the birds were as dull as herself upon the occasion. Every tree and hedge being so covered with snow the poor birds could get nothing to eat, not so much as a grain of corn or a worm was to be found.

The feathered inhabitants now forsook the woods and groves, and fled into the neighbourhood of inhabited towns and villages, to seek that relief from man which nature alone would not then afford them. Incredibly numerous was the flight of sparrows, robins, and other birds, that were seen in the streets and court-yards, where their little beaks and claws were employed in turning over whatever they thought could afford them a single grain.

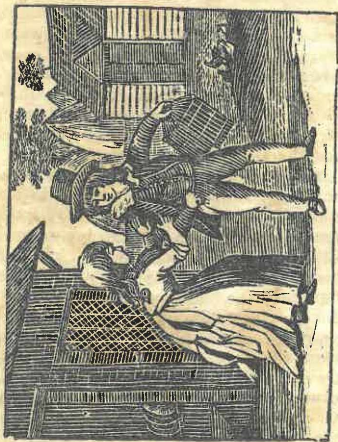
A large company of these feathered refugees alighted in the yard belonging to the house in which Louisa and her father then were. The distress of the poor birds seemed to afflict the tender-hearted child very much, which her father perceived as soon as she entered his chamber. "What is it makes you look so pensive now," said her father, "since it is but a few minutes ago that you were so remarkably cheerful?" "O my dear papa," said Louisa, "all those sweet dear birds that sung so charmingly but a day or two ago, are now come into the

yard, starving with hunger. Do pray let me give them a little corn!"

Her papa very readily granted her so reasonable a request, and away she ran, accompanied by her governess, to the barn on the other side of the yard, which had that morning been cleanly swept. Here she got a handful or two of corn, which she immediately scattered in different parts of the yard. The poor little birds fluttered around her, and soon picked up what the bounty of her generous hand had bestowed on them.

It is impossible to describe the pleasure and satisfaction expressed in the countenance of Louisa on seeing herself the cause of giving so much joy to those little animals. As soon as the birds had picked up all the grains, they flew to the house-top, and seemed to look down on Louisa as if they would say, "Cannot you give us a little more?" She understood their meaning, and away she flew again to the barn, and down they all came to partake of her new bounty, while Louisa called to her papa and mamma to come and enjoy with her the pleasing sight.

In the mean time a little boy came into the yard, whose heart was not of so tender a nature as Louisa's. He held in his hand a cage full of birds, but carried



it so carelessly, that it was evident he cared very little for his poor prisoners. Louisa, who could not bear to see the pretty little creatures used so roughly, asked the boy what he was going to do with those birds. The boy replied that he would sell them if he could, but if he could not, his cat should have a dainty meal of them, and they would not be the first she had munched alive.

"O fie," said Louisa, "give them to your cat! What, suffer such innocent things as those to be killed by the merciless talons of a cat?" "Even so," said the boy, and, giving the cage a careless swing that tumbled the poor birds one over another, off he was setting, when Louisa called him back, and asked him what he would have for his birds. "I will sell them," said he, "three for a penny, and there are eighteen of them." Louisa struck the bargain, and ran to beg the money of her papa, who not only cheerfully gave her the money, but allowed her an empty room for the reception of her little captives.

The boy, having thus found so good a market for his birds, told all his companions of it; so that, in a few hours, Louisa's yard was so filled with little bird-merchants, that you would have supposed it to be a bird market. How

ever, the pretty maiden purchased all they brought, and had them turned into the same room with those of her former purchase.

When night came, Louisa went to bed with more pleasure than she had felt for a long time. "What a pleasing reflection it is," said she to herself, "to be thus capable of preserving the lives of so many innocent birds, and save them from famine and merciless cats? When summer comes, and I go into the woods and groves, these pretty little birds will fly around me and sing their sweetest notes in gratitude for my kind attention to them." These thoughts at last lulled her to sleep, but they accompanied her even in her dreams, for she fancied herself in one of the most delightful groves she had ever seen, where all the little birds were busied, either in feeding their young, or in singing or hopping from bough to bough.

The first thing Louisa did after she had got up in the morning was to go with her brother to feed her little family in the room, and afterward those that came into the yard. Though the seed to feed them cost her nothing, yet she recollected that the many purchases she had lately made of birds must have almost exhausted her purse; "and if the

frost should continue," said she to herself, "what will become of those poor birds that I shall not be able to purchase! Those naughty boys will either give them to their cats, or suffer them to die with hunger."

While she was giving way to these sorrowful reflections, her hand was moving gently into her pocket, in order to bring out her exhausted purse; but judge what must be her surprise and astonishment when, instead of pulling out an empty purse, she found it brim-full of money. She ran immediately to her papa to tell him of this strange circumstance, when he snatched her up in his arms, tenderly embracing her, and shed tears of joy on her blooming cheeks.

"My dear child," said her papa to her, "you cannot conceive how happy you now make me! Let these little birds continue to be the objects of your relief, and be assured your purse shall never be reduced to emptiness." This pleasing news gladdened the heart of Louisa, and she ran immediately to fill her apron with seed, and then hastened to feed her feathered guests. The birds came fluttering round her, and seemed conscious of her bounty and generosity.

After feeding these happy prisoners,

she went down into the yard, and there distributed a plentiful meal to the starving wanderers without. What an important trust had she now taken on herself? nothing less than the support of an hundred dependants within doors, and a still greater number without! No wonder that her dolls and other playthings should be now totally forgotten.

As Louisa was putting her hand into the seed-bag to take out of it the afternoon food for her birds, she found a paper, which her papa had put there, on which was written these words: "The inhabitants of the air fly toward thee, O Lord! and thou givest them their food; thou openest thy hand, and fillest all things living with plenteousness."

As she saw her papa behind her, she turned round and said, "should not we imitate God?" "Yes, my sweet Louisa," said her father, "in every good action we should imitate our Maker. When you shall be grown to maturity, you will then assist the necessitous part of the human race, as you now do the birds; and the more good you do, the nearer you will approach the perfections of God."

Louisa continued her attention to feed her hungry birds for more than a week, when the snow began to melt, and the fields by degrees recovered their former verdure. The birds who had lately been



afraid to quit the warm shelter of the houses, now returned to the woods and groves. The birds in our little Louisa's aviary were confined, and therefore could not get away; but they showed their inclination to depart, by flying against the windows, and pecking the glass with their bills.

Louisa, not being able to comprehend what could make them so uneasy, asked her papa if he could tell the cause of it. "I know not, my dear," said her papa, "but it is possible these little birds may have left some companions in the fields, which they now wish to see, and as they now can procure their own living, do not wish to be troublesome to you any longer." "You are very right, papa," replied Louisa, "and they shall have their liberty immediately." She accordingly opened the window, and all the birds soon flew out of it.

These little feathered animals had no sooner obtained their liberty, than some were seen hopping on the ground, others darting into the air, or sporting in the trees from twig to twig, and some flying about the windows chirping, as though out of gratitude to their benefactress. Louisa hardly ever went into the fields but she fancied that some of her little family seemed to welcome her approach, either by hopping before her, or

entertaining her with their melodious notes, which afforded her a source of inexhaustible pleasure.

HAIL, lovely power! whose bosom
heaves a sigh,

When fancy paints the scene of deep
distress:

Whose tears spontaneous chrystalize
the eye,

When rigid fate denies the power to
bless.

Not all the sweets Arabia's gales convey
From flow'ry meads can with that
sigh compare:

Not dew-drops glitt'ring in the morning
ray,

Seem near so beauteous as that falling
tear.

Devoid of fear the fawns around thee
play;

Emblem of peace, the dove before
thee flies;

No blood-stain'd traces mark thy blame-
less way,

Beneath thy feet no helpless insect
dies.

Come, lovely nymph! and range the
mead with me,

To spring the partridge from the guile-
ful foe,

From secret snares the struggling bird
to free,

And stop the hand uprais'd to give the
blow.

And when the air with heat meridian
glows,

And nature droops beneath the con-
qu'ring gleam,

Let us, slow wand'ring, where the cur-
rent flows,

Save sinking flies that float along the
stream.

Or, turn to nobler, greater tasks thy
care;

To me thy sympathetic gifts impart;
Teach me in friendship's griefs to bear
a share,

And justly boast the gen'rous feeling
heart.

Teach me to soothe the helpless orphan's
grief;

With timely aid the widow's woes
assuage;

To mis'ry's moving cries to yield relief,
And be the sure resource of drooping
age.

So when the verdant springs of youth
shall fade,

And sinking nature own the dread
decay,

Some soul congenial then may lend its
aid,

And gild the close of life's eventful
day

Lucy Ann
Ruel

Book

Preston

Nov 14

1823

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