BRIGHT STORY READERS

MUNNIRUL ISLAM HIGH SCHOOL
ERNAKULAM
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BABS OPENED THE DOOR

E. IRWIN

No. 712

Grade I

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BABS OPENED THE DOOR

ELIZABETH IRWIN

Illustrated by C. Instrell

BABS had wondered for a whole week just what lay beyond the door in Auntie's garden. At last the rusty bolt slid back, and she stepped out into a pleasant cool wood.

" Lots of trees," she murmured, " and someone playing *The Blue Bells of Scotland—very* badly—on the piano ! "

Babs followed the sound, and saw to her amazement that the pianist was a young elephant.

" Well, that's something I've never seen before ! " she thought, as she walked shyly up to him. The elephant stood up.

" There are far too many notes in this thing ! " he said. " I don't need the half of them, so out they come ! "—and he opened the lid of the piano, put in his trunk, and pulled out several of the small felt hammers that strike the wires.

Babs gasped, " Oh, don't please, Jumbo ; that's very naughty, and you're spoiling the piano ! "

The elephant continued to pull out the hammers till quite a large pile of them lay on the ground. Then he calmly sat down, played *The Blue Bells of Scotland*, without a mistake, closed the piano, and for the first time turned to Babs.

" I left in just enough notes to do," he said. " That

saved me from playing wrong ones. It's my piano—and, anyway, they will all jump in again when I go away—but my name's *not* Jumbo."

"Oh, I *beg* your pardon," said Babs. "I thought most elephants were called Jumbo."

"I'm called Fluff," simpered the elephant. "That's done for to-day, and now I've just to learn my tables, and then I'll be free to go and visit Weepy."

He pulled a tables book from his music case. For a few moments he sat, his great mouth moving as he silently learned the tables. Then, handing the book to Babs, he placed his hands on his knees, turned his eyes towards the sky, and repeated :

"Thirty days hath September,
But the rest I can't remember.
The best of all is Christmas Day,
That always falls on the Third of May."

"How strange," said Babs. "Mine's not a bit like that—it's much longer and gives the number of days in each month, and, at any rate, Christmas Day isn't on the third of May."

"Why not ? Isn't the third of May as good as any other day, if it doesn't rain ? That's all my lessons done, now, so let's go and see Weepy,"—and Fluff and Babs set off through the wood.

"Who is Weepy ? " asked Babs.

"He's a friend of mine. I go and see him, each afternoon, to hear his latest sorrow," said Fluff. "He has a new sorrow for every day ; indeed, sometimes

several, and they make him cry. That's why he's called Weepy."

"Rather an uncomfortable friend, I should think," said Babs. "How does he find so many sorrows?"

"Oh, Weepy's the best sorrow-finder I know," boasted Fluff.

"But——" began Babs, then stopped. "Gracious, what's this coming?" she gasped.

Through the trees, twisting in and out, came a large bus. It was advancing very fast. Babs thought that every moment it must crash into a tree, but it curved and twisted, and never hit one. It pulled up with a jerk.

"Let's get in," said Fluff—and he walked towards it. It seemed to be quite empty, but the conductor barred their way. "No room for luggage!" he called.

"We haven't any luggage," said Babs.

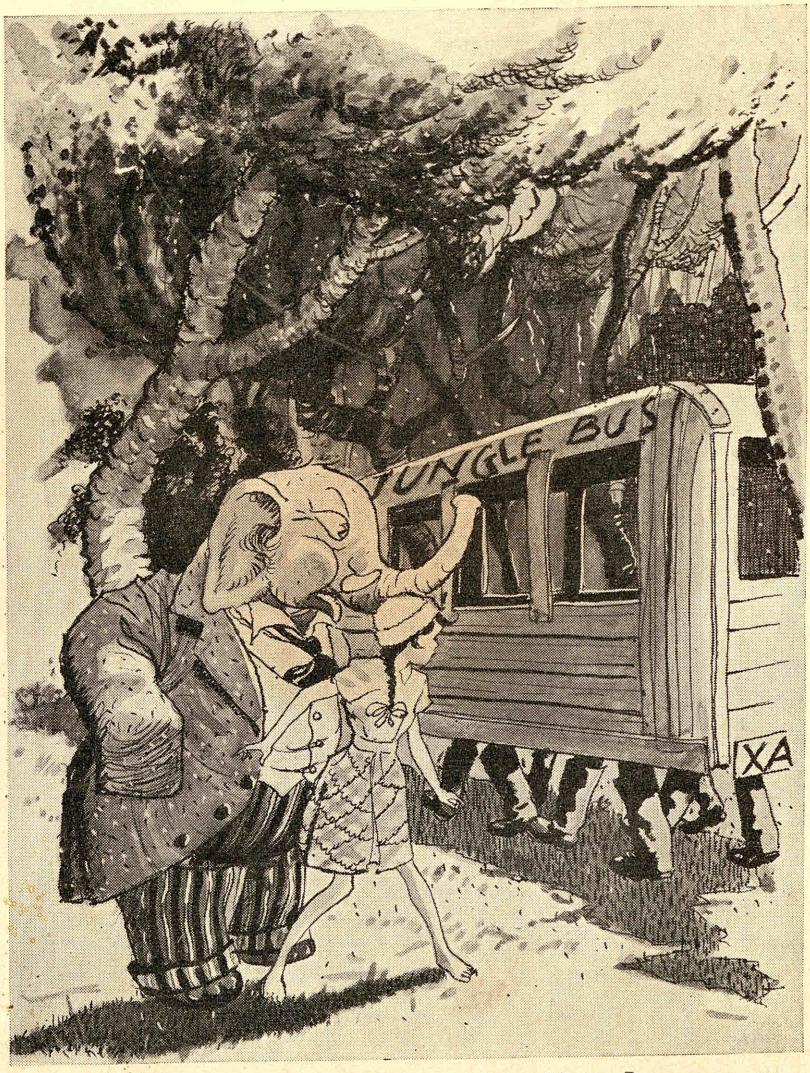
"He's got a trunk," said the conductor. The door closed, the bell rang, and off started the bus. It was only then that Babs noticed that instead of wheels the bus ran on dozens of feet, all shod in Wellington boots.

"It doesn't run on wheels!" she cried.

"Why should it?" argued Fluff. "Do you run on wheels?"

"No, I run on my feet, of course," replied Babs.

"Then why shouldn't it do the same?" Fluff said. "Nasty old blister, that Conductor!" he added. "You'd think he owned the bus, and it belongs to Weepy—though he's sorry now he bought it."



Instead of wheels the bus ran on dozens of feet —*Page* 3

" Why ? " asked Babs.

" Because he's always sorry. Come along ! "

They walked for some time in silence, then Babs cried : " Oh, what a funny little house—it's made like a haystack ! " There, indeed, was a house made of hay, and the same shape as a haystack. There were windows, of course, and a door, and a chimney on the very top of the stack. On a low stool by the door sat a tall, thin sad-looking man. He was weeping bitterly. On one side he had a neat pile of freshly laundered handkerchiefs, and on the other an untidy heap of others, all wet and sodden, while on the clothes lines all around hung freshly washed ones, out drying.

" This is Weepy," said Fluff. " I've brought a friend to see you. Weepy. How are you, old man ? "

Weepy dabbed at his eyes.

" I'm delighted to see you, dear," he sobbed.

" Huh ! " thought Babs. " He doesn't sound delighted," but she replied politely, " Thank you, Weepy."

" What's the matter to-day ? " asked Fluff.

" Lollipops, Fluff—Lollipops ! They were all sold out and I had to take acid drops instead."

" Cheer up, Weepy—perhaps you'll get Lollipops to-morrow," soothed Fluff. " I thought, perhaps, you were still crying about yesterday's sorrow."

" Oh, no ! " sobbed Weepy, casting a sodden handkerchief on the already growing pile at his left side, and selecting a fresh one from the pile on his

right. " Yesterday's sorrow is cried out—this is a new batch of tears."

" Don't you ever find anything that seems funny?" asked Babs.

" Well, no, dear. You see, I am unlucky. Now, when my best friend slipped, and broke his leg, I wasn't there to see the fun. I only heard next day, in time to visit him in hospital, and when I saw him in bed I cried and cried. Unfortunately, I'd forgotten to fetch my handkerchiefs, and my tears damped the bedclothes, and he was angry, so I cried all the way home."

" Dear me, Weepy, did you never laugh ? " asked Babs, highly amused by the old man's story.

" Yes, once," he replied, " but I laughed till I cried, so you see I was back to where I started."

"Ah, here's Piggy ! " Fluff cried. " Come and meet a new friend, Piggy ! "

Piggy was quite a nice-looking pig, dressed in a green velvet suit ; he carried a bunch of carrots, and kept nibbling away at them all the time.

" Happy days ! " he said to Babs, flourishing the carrots. " I hope you're in good form, Weepy."

" Poorly, Piggy—very poorly ! " Weepy replied. " Only acid drops, and no lollies to-day ! "

" Well, you ought to be ashamed of yourself, Weepy ! Look at me—I've had no breakfast and no dinner, and there's nothing in the house for tea, so I must go to bed on an empty stomach, and I'm not

Date

crying, not me ! " and he took a nibble from a fresh carrot.

" If he eats all those," thought Babs, " his tummy certainly won't be empty ! "

" I suppose you would like some tea ? " Weepy enquired.

" Yes, please," Piggy promptly replied. " Lots and lots of tea ! "

" You can't have any," said Weepy. " Martha is too busy washing my handkerchiefs."

" Then I'll leave you, you damp old stick. Come on, little girl," Piggy said, turning to Babs.

Indeed she was glad to go. Weepy depressed her dreadfully. Fluff stayed, to try and comfort his friend, and Piggy and Babs set off. The pig regarded her for a few seconds, then said, " You're a nice little girl; I've got a sister just like you."

Babs wasn't sure whether she liked the compliment or not, but she smiled and thanked him.

" Her nose is, perhaps, a trifle better—nevertheless, yours is quite nice. Pity you haven't a tail ! " he added.

" I don't know what I should do with it," said Babs slightly nettled.

" Wiggle it," replied Piggy promptly.

" Where are we going ? " she enquired for they seemed to be wandering along aimlessly in any direction.

" We could go in two directions," answered Piggy. " To the right takes us to see Giggles and to the left,"

——he stopped and pondered then said, " to the left I dunno."

" We'd better keep to the right then perhaps, and visit Giggles. Is he any relation to Weepy? " Babs enquired.

" Yes of course," Piggy said. " They are twins, he keeps a B shop."

Babs was startled. " Oh dear, I don't think we'd better go there we might get stung." Piggy eyed her as he munched away.

" Don't be silly," he said. " A 'B' shop keeps everything commencing with B like butter and blue bags and braces and bonnets—oh just everything spelt with a B. Of course Weepy is never in the shop."

They walked on for some distance then suddenly coming out into a clearing Babs saw a shop, and such a funny shop too. Outside it resembled most other shops except that there was nothing in the window but a large letter B in what seemed to be cardboard. Inside however, things were different. It was quite empty of customers and there seemed only one person as well as themselves. This was a fussy little man with a cheery face and a perpetual giggle. Now most giggles are written as " Tee hee " but this giggle was just a long drawn out " Heeee " and ended with a gulp that sounded like " Huck." He advanced towards them bowing and giggling.

" Hee-huck, Piggy, glad to see you and your sister, come in, come in, till I show you my stock."

" Old man she's not my sister, hasn't got a tail, otherwise I agree she's not unlike Gruntrude. She's come to see your shop."

" Well, well, hee-huck, let me see, would you care to see my buttercups little girl ? "

Babs said, " Yes please, I love buttercups ! "

" Come along then, hee-huck."

Giggles led her to a counter behind which was a glass case and from this he carefully lifted four or five little cups made from butter.

" Oh dear," exclaimed Babs. " I thought they would be flowers."

At this Giggles heeed and hucked till Babs thought he would surely burst but all he said was " Fancy," and put them away again then suggested she might like to see his case of bluebells. She agreed and these, of course, were bells made from metal and painted blue. The blue bags were hand bags made of blue satin, there was a case of blue glass bottles labelled " Bluebottles."

" Would you like a black ball ? " Giggles enquired, producing a black rubber ball.

Babs accepted it and thanked him hoping sincerely he would not offer her bull's-eyes. " That," she murmured to herself, " would be too awful." However he didn't. The barley sugar was sugar-like pickles of barley and a biscuit box was a box made of biscuits. " Well this is a curious shop," thought Babs.

Piggy had wandered round after them still mun-

ching his carrot. At last when she had seen most things he suggested they should go on their way.

Giggles led them to the door and telling Babs not to lose the black ball he'd given her, bade them good-bye giggling all the while.

" He's very kind," she said to Piggy as they ambled on under the trees.

" Oh he's kind enough," answered Piggy, " but you'll notice he didn't give us any food, he's like Weepy he doesn't give much away."

" He gave me this nice ball, Piggy."

" Yes," assented the little boy pig, " but you can't eat rubber. I like things to eat and I'm hungry."

" We could go to a teashop," she suggested.

" Well we got nothing in a ' B ' shop, so why should we have any better luck in a ' T ' shop ? " grumbled Piggy.

" What do you suggest we do then ? " Babs enquired, but before there was time for Piggy to answer there was a loud bump and something fell at their feet from one of the trees.

It was a very large parrot cage complete with perch and seated on the perch was a little man. He was dressed in a green tail coat, his face was birdlike with a very hooked nose and beady eyes. In fact he so much resembled a parrot that Babs had to laugh.

He spoke in a clipped throaty voice and said, " I'm going to sneeze, I'm going to sneeze, Atishoo, let me out please."

" Who on earth are you ? " said Babs still laughing.

" Let me out and I'll tell you—atishoo," sneezed the newcomer.

Babs unfastened the door and out hopped the man.

" I'm Peter Polly," he piped, " not Pretty Polly, Peter's my name."

" No one would call you pretty," Piggy said quite calmly. " Got anything to eat ? " he added.

" No," said the little man, and added another sneeze to the ones gone before.

" Thought not," grumbled Piggy, " nobody ever has."

Babs was disgusted, " Come now Piggy, you had lots of carrots to eat, don't be so greedy." Then turning to Peter she enquired of him how he had got into the cage and the cage into the tree.

" It's this way," he replied shaking himself again and sneezing. " I've wanted a parrot all my life most dreadfully so I bought the cage and hung it up on the tallest tree, atishoo, and waited to see if I could catch one. Every day I went to see if there was one in the cage but never any luck. Then one day I got accidentally caught myself, atishoo, and I've been there ever since."

Here Piggy asked, " Ever since when ? "

" To-morrow," piped Peter.

" It couldn't have been to-morrow," persisted Babs.

" It always was to-morrow when my parrot would come," he answered.

" It didn't come so it couldn't be to-morrow," argued Piggy.

" But I always hoped it would come," said Peter sneezing, and poor Babs's head started to whirl.

" What are you going to do now ? " she asked.

" Sneeze," he replied and did so with gusto.

" I mean after you've sneezed, what are you going to do about the parrot ? "

" The parrot ? " he enquired. " There's no parrot, I haven't got one."

Babs sighed, there was no sense in any of this conversation.

" Well, there's no use just standing here," grumbled Piggy. " There's nothing to eat so come on."

They started off leaving the cage where it had fallen. Poor Peter was very quiet and downhearted. Piggy chatted merrily but try as he and Babs did they couldn't cheer the little man.

" It's no use being so sad," said Piggy, " it can't do any good."

" I'm just heart-broken," sighed Peter, and sneezed as usual, " if only I could cry I'd feel better."

Babs had a bright idea. " I know," she said to Piggy, " let's take him to Weepy, he'll cry enough to cheer him up."

Piggy jumped at her suggestion.

" If it's tears he needs to comfort him, Weepy's our man, come along," he said.

" I hope you can find your way there," Babs said.

" It's just around the corner, Sister," Piggy answered, and though Babs didn't much like being called " sister " by Piggy, she was too surprised to say anything for as they rounded the next bend they saw Weepy's house and that gentleman was still sitting by his front door crying bitterly.

By this time the bundle of wet handkerchiefs was five or six feet high, quite a little mound, red and soggy. As they advanced Weepy flung yet another damp one on top.

" Come," he sobbed as he caught sight of them and rising from his chair he shouted, " Martha." A fat little woman with snowy-white hair bounced out of the house. She was smiling and cheery and carried a large laundry basket full of freshly-laundered red handkerchiefs.

" Coming sir," she answered and emptied her basket on the dry side of Weepy. Then lifting a small pitchfork she started refilling the basket from the mound of wet ones and disappeared indoors. Weepy selected a dry hanky from the fresh pile, applied it to his eyes and enquired of them from behind its voluminous folds what he could do for them. Babs was about to explain but as usual Piggy forestalled her.

" It's him," he said pointing at Peter, " he wants some tears."

" Has he a sorrow," sobbed Weepy, " or must I find him one ? "

" Oh, he's got one all right, he's lost his parrot,"



'A fat little woman with snowy-white hair bounced out of the house'—*Page* 13

said Piggy. He walked over to a vegetable bed and pulling out a large cabbage started eating it.

"No, I haven't," said Peter. "I never had a parrot, atishoo."

"Then you couldn't have lost it," sobbed Weepy, "and can't have a sorrow, but I'll get you one."

"No! no! Weepy," Babs hurried to explain, "it's because he never had one that he's sorry."

"Well, if he's never had a sorrow, he can't be sorry," argued Weepy. Poor Babs was getting hopelessly mixed.

"He has a sorrow all right," agreed Piggy with his mouth disgustingly overfull of cabbage, "it's the parrot he hasn't got."

"Then I maintain if he never had a parrot, he couldn't possibly have lost it, so he simply hasn't got a sorrow," and Weepy once more applied the red handkerchief to his eyes and sobbed bitterly.

"Oh dear!" sighed poor Babs, "I don't know why we ever came here, it's hopeless!"

Peter agreed. "Yes," he said, "I know I'm sorry I came," and he sneezed loudly.

Weepy brightened immediately.

"Oh that's more satisfactory, now you *have* got a sorrow, let's start."

This time he selected two hankies—one for each hand and applied them to his eyes—a hanky to each. He started weeping in earnest in fact in no time the hankies were sodden. He took two fresh ones and

continued. Soon despite the hankies a large pool of tears covered the ground. Piggy was so intent on his cabbage he didn't notice but Babs and Peter were going to be swamped, so they called to Piggy and suggested they should depart.

" Suits me," agreed Piggy, " if he's had enough," again pointing to Peter.

" Oh yes, I feel lots comforted," the little man assured them, so silently the three visitors crept away, Piggy grabbing a fresh cabbage as he went. Weepy so enveloped in red hankies never saw them go.

" Very comforting he was," piped Peter as they walked on.

" Grows good cabbages," mumbled Piggy.

" I'm tired," sighed poor Babs, " I've been on my feet all day."

" Well you wouldn't expect to be on your head would you ? " pertly enquired Piggy.

Babs ignored this rude remark and sat down on the grass. Piggy and Peter sat beside her.

Piggy finished his last piece of cabbage and sighed contentedly.

" That's that, I feel much better now," he murmured.

" If I'd eaten half as much as you have I should feel ill," Babs said deciding to pay him out for making the rude remark about her walking on her head.

Piggy made no reply to this but lay on his back and closed his eyes.

Peter sighed, " I wish I could have caught a parrot," he wailed.

Piggy opened one eye and said, " Oh for goodness sake don't start that again, you'll only grow sad and we'll have to return to Weepy for comforting."

" Haven't you a home as well as that large cage ? " enquired Babs.

Peter smiled brightly," Yes, I had a lovely home with everything one could wish for—except a parrot."

Babs suggested now that she was rested, they should go and see it. Peter agreed, so pulling lazy fat Piggy to his feet, they once more journeyed on.

Peter led them through the trees sneezing occasionally. They came to a pretty little cottage with a thatched roof. Roses grew round the door and windows and Babs thought she'd seen it before somewhere. She felt quite sure she hadn't seen it in the wood because this was the only house she'd seen except Weepy's haystack house and Giggles' shop. Ah ! now she remembered. Someone had given Auntie a tea cosy for Christmas made from felt with roses embroidered round windows and door. This house of Peter's was exactly like it—how curious ! Of course Auntie's cosy was small, just large enough to cover the teapot and this of Peter's was almost as large as an ordinary cottage but not quite. It was lovely and had a little square hall from which opened a large living-room and two bedrooms with a tiny kitchen at the back.

" Oh Peter, how could you leave such a lovely little home ? " she asked.

" It was easy really," he replied solemnly, " I just walked out on my feet, atishoo."

" Living in a parrot's cage in a tree must have been horrid after this," Babs went on.

Here Piggy joined in, " But he never meant to live in a cage, he caught himself silly ass."

Babs wasn't quite sure whether Piggy was calling Peter or her the " silly ass." Piggy was naughty and at times very rude so she simply ignored him.

" What a dear little kitchen," she cried, " do let's make some tea. I can make the tea and cut some bread, here's a lovely cake too and you two can lay the table."

" Yes let's," said Peter, " then we'll go out and see if we can catch a parrot."

Piggy snorted, " I never did see such a fellow for parrots, there's nothing in your head but parrots and sneezes."

Babs was getting cross with Piggy.

" Well," she replied," there's nothing in *your* head but food."

" Wrong," whooped Piggy, " the food's not in my head it's in my tummy," and he gave that portion of his anatomy a few little pats.

" Piggy you're disgusting," cried Babs pushing him away. " Go and help Peter to lay the table at once."

Piggy danced out of the room—he was wonder-

fully nimble on his toes considering all the cabbages he'd eaten.

Soon tea was ready. Scones and pancakes with lots of butter and honey. Suddenly from outside there came the sound of music. Someone was playing " *The Blue Bells of Scotland*," quite nicely on a piano.

" Fluff !" said Babs," I know it's Fluff, he plays that tune, I've heard him before."

They ran to the window and saw such a funny sight. Fluff was walking along holding the piano in his trunk and as he walked he played " *The Blue Bells*." Behind him, like so many soldiers, marched all the little piano hammers he'd considered unnecessary and pulled out of the piano before he started. Babs roared with laughter and with Peter's permission opened the door and invited him inside. Fluff put the piano down, opened the lid and in jumped all the little hammers one by one and down went the lid again.

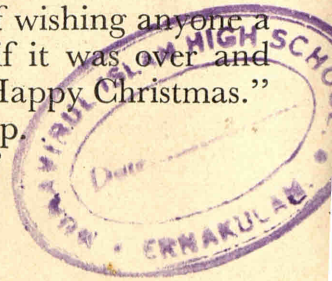
Fluff came in. " Happy Christmas," he beamed, " Happy Christmas to all."

Peter and Piggy wished Fluff a Happy Christmas. Babs gasped in surprise. " But it's not Christmas," she argued, " it's ages and ages away, why this is only June."

" Well what would be the use of wishing anyone a Happy Christmas," said Piggy, " if it was over and gone. He's quite right to wish us a Happy Christmas."

Here Peter sneezed and piped up.

" You haven't seen a parrot ? "



" Yes," said Fluff, seating himself at the table with the others.

" Oh, where ? " cried Peter hopefully.

" Nowhere," answered Fluff calmly.

Babs said, " What do you mean, Fluff? He asked you if you'd seen a parrot and you said ' Yes '."

Fluff giggled. " Peter said ' You haven't seen a parrot ' and I said ' Yes ' because you see he was right. I hadn't. What's wrong with that ? " he queried.

" Oh I don't know, it just sounded strange," said poor Babs bewildered.

" You want him to tell fibs," said Piggy. " Nice little girl *you* are, Gruntrude wouldn't wish *that*."

" I didn't," Babs argued. " You are very naughty, Piggy."

Peter sneezed ! " I wish I could find a parrot," he wailed.

" Why not put an advertisement in the paper ? " said Babs.

" Or a notice in the window of your cottage," suggested Fluff, " like the one my music mistress hangs in hers."

" Grand idea," Babs agreed. " But what should it say."

" My music mistress just has ' Music for Sale ',"
mumbled Fluff as he deftly lifted a plate of scones in his trunk and poured the entire plateful into his mouth.

" Not ' Music for Sale,' surely ? " queried Babs.

But she wasn't heard, for Piggy had objected to Fluff having so many scones and was starting a row.

"Your manners are disgusting," he said. "I'd only had two and the others hadn't had any and now you've gone and eaten them all," and he started pulling plates of food to his side of the table, leaving precious little near Fluff.

"Listen!" said Babs. She had taken a pencil from her pocket and on a piece of paper had printed in large letters 'Wanted, a parrot for company. Good home.' She read this aloud and enquired of the entire party if they considered it sufficient.

"Add 'good food'," advised Piggy.

This Babs did though she felt it wasn't correct. Then she hung it up in the front window.

By now the food was nearly all gone, so they cleared away, washed up and were on the point of leaving the cottage for the woods again when there was a rat tat on the door.

Peter opened it while the others very rudely peeped from the back of the hall. He gave one loud sneeze and tumbled backwards. Babs stepped forward to the hall door; there was a very handsome green parrot standing pointing at the notice in the window.

"Do come in," Babs invited. She gently pushed the still prone figure of Peter to one side and let the parrot into the sitting-room. The business didn't take long. The parrot said he would come to live with

Peter provided he hadn't to live in a cage. Peter, who by now had recovered having been pinched and prodded by Fluff and Piggy till he regained consciousness, arrived to assure the parrot, amid sneezes, he needn't live in a cage if he preferred not.

Babs suggested she, Fluff and Piggy should leave them together to get better acquainted and so the three left the little house for the wood once more. Fluff carried the piano in his trunk as before and Babs still held her black ball.

As they left the cottage they heard Peter sneezing.

" Never knew such a fellow for parrots and sneezing," observed Piggy, as he waddled along. " Now if food was his fad——."

Babs laughed. " Oh Piggy, do please stop talking about food."

"All right," said Piggy, " I'm going to sulk."

Piggy's sulk was really rather funny. He folded his hands on his tummy, half closed his eyes and every few yards he grunted.

Fluff looked at him with disgust. " The trouble with you is you've had too much food, Piggy," he said.

" Yes," agreed Babs. " He's eaten all day, at least ever since I met him at Weepy's house."

Piggy got quite indignant. " That's not true," he argued, " I didn't have anything till I had tea with Peter Polly and as you ate nearly everything on the table, Fluff, there wasn't much left for me."

Babs gasped in surprise. " Well ! " she said, " of

all the naughty untruths, Piggy. What about all the cabbages and carrots from Weepy's garden, eh ? "

" Those don't count," explained Piggy hurriedly, " those are just etceteras."

" You're wrong there, Piggy," Fluff answered. " I know Weepy's garden well, he grows cabbages, beans, turnips, carrots, potatoes and lots of things. I've helped him to plant them but I never planted an 'etcetera,' yet, nor, I'm sure has Weepy. As a matter of fact I do nearly all his gardening. He's got an aspidistra in a pot in the parlour I know, but no etceteras, what are they like ? "

Piggy wrinkled his brow in earnest thought. " They're just extra things as well as the other things," he explained at last not too sure of himself.

But Fluff wasn't to be put off. " What like ? " he persisted.

" Well, for dinner you can have meat, potatoes and gravy with etceteras," Piggy explained vaguely, " carrots and onions——that sort of thing."

" That's stew," said Babs.

" It isn't then, Miss Clever, it's meat with etceteras."

" It's not, Piggy," Babs insisted. " When my Mummy cooks meat with potatoes, carrots and onions all mixed up, she calls it stew, and my Mummy ought to know."

" Why ? " Piggy shot the question at poor Babs so quickly she felt quite flustered.

" Because she's a good cook and makes nice food," she answered.

" Now that's just nonsense, because she's a good cook it doesn't follow she makes nice food," said Piggy, adding, " look at rice pudding."

" Where ? " said Fluff looking round as though he expected a dish of rice pudding to walk up to them.

Piggy waved this question aside saying rudely, " Shut up, Fluff, your head's full of nothing but music. Rice Pudding," he added, turning back to Babs, " is horrible but it can be made by a very good cook. Why even Gruntrude could tell you that rice pudding is not nice food."

" Oh, Piggy I wish you would stop arguing, you're trying to be clever and you're not one little bit clever for you can't tell us what an ' etcetera ' is and it is the cause of all the trouble," said Babs.

Suddenly they were startled by a very loud sneeze quite close at hand. They stood still looking all round them.

" It's that fellow Peter Polly, I'd know his sneeze anywhere," said Piggy.

There was a second terrific sneeze and this time they realized the explosion came from the branches of the trees up above. Fluff set down his piano and they stood looking up. Suddenly they spied Peter Polly accompanied by his new parrot friend, hopping from branch to branch in the trees overhead.

" Percy Parrot is teaching me how to fly," he piped

down at Babs, " and oh ! it's lovely. I've always wanted to do it and never could. Atishoo," he added as an afterthought.

Babs was quite distressed, for Peter Polly looked very unsteady and wobbly as he perched on his branch which was swaying in the breeze.

" Peter dear, be careful," she warned him.

Here the perky little voice of Percy Parrot answered her. " He won't fall, he won't fall, he's a great chap, he's a great chap, me and Peter's pals so we are, ha ! ha ! "

" But he's only a learner, Percy," Babs called up to the parrot, " he might fall."

" It's his own fall if he does at any rate," said Piggy impertinently. " Why can't you mind your own business ? " he enquired of poor Babs.

Babs looked at him crossly, " You're the very rudest pig I've ever met," she said witheringly.

Here Peter Polly took off and flew quite cleverly through the branches, urged on and cheered by Percy.

Fluff watched the performance enviously.

" I wish I could fly," he announced wistfully. " Do you think you could teach me, Percy ? "

" Not with luggage, not with luggage, too heavy," Percy's perky little voice replied.

Fluff sighed, " It's my trunk," he said. " Oh dear it's an awful drawback sometimes," and again he sighed heavily.

" Jolly useful at other times," grumbled Piggy

remembering how deftly Fluff had lifted the plate of scones and poured them into his huge mouth at tea time. " Wish I had one."

" That's enough flying for your first day, Peter," advised Percy, " quite enough, quite enough, you're a great chap, a great chap, let's fly home."

There was a flutter of wings overhead and a rustling in the trees and Peter and Percy flew off.

Fluff sighed again, shook his big head from side to side, lifted his piano and they started off once more.

It was sultry under the thick foliage of the trees. Piggy occasionally grunted and assured Babs and Fluff he was quite weak from lack of food.

" There's not even any food growing on the trees," he complained.

" Perhaps you wouldn't object to a nice rice pudding now," Babs said, " eh, Piggy ? "

" There's no such thing as a *nice* rice pudding, not even if it's got raisins in it," Piggy replied gloomily and started grunting again.

They walked rather slowly now, all three were tired. Presently Fluff said he must go for his music lesson, it was almost time for it.

" Do you have to take your own piano ? " Babs enquired.

" Oh yes, always," Fluff answered, " don't you ? "

Babs told him she certainly did not, " Why, I couldn't carry our piano it's much too heavy."

Here Piggy interrupted his grunts to advise her to

eat more good nourishing food and she'd soon be strong enough to do anything.

Babs ignored him. Fluff waved good-bye and turned down a side path.

" Queer," murmured Babs, " taking one's own piano."

" Not at all," Piggy argued, " don't you take your basket to the grocer's for goods ? "

" Yes, but that seems different somehow," Babs said.

" Can't see there's much difference," Piggy went on, " you take your basket for the things the grocer has for sale and Fluff takes his piano for the music his teacher has for sale. Just the same you see so don't be stupid."

Babs was really cross this time.

" Piggy, you're being very rude, I'm not stupid. Of course in my case I can't fetch my piano because my Mummy teaches me."

" Do you learn to play any other instrument ? " Piggy asked.

Babs saw she was nicely caught and had to confess she was being taught to play the violin by a Mr. Glenn.

" Don't you fetch your violin each time ? " Piggy asked again.

" Yes," answered poor Babs.

Piggy glanced at her sideways and enquired maddeningly, " Who's not stupid eh ? Why, I don't suppose you know the clock."

" Yes I do," protested the now blushing Babs.

" Then what time is it ? " queried Piggy.

" I haven't got a watch here, so I can't tell," Babs snapped at him.

Piggy hooted. " Yah ! I knew it, can't tell the time, huh ! Gruntrude is smaller than you are and she can always tell when it's dinner time or tea time without a watch."

" Oh ! " gasped Babs, " that reminds me I'm not supposed to be late for tea. Auntie would be ever so cross and I don't know the time."

" I knew it, I knew it," squealed Piggy in delight, dancing round, still wonderfully nimble on his toes considering all he'd eaten and chanting at the same time. " She can't tell the time, she can't tell the time. Little Miss Stupid, she can't tell the time ! "

Babs stood looking at him, her face flushing horribly, how she wanted to smack him. Piggy continued to dance madly chanting his horrid little piece about Babs. He stood on his head, he turned cart wheels and somersaults till she felt quite dizzy. All this time he kept waving his front feet as he hopped about on his hind ones and gradually the front feet changed shape and grew into little propellers and from his shoulders sprouted two little wings. Suddenly, with one of his mad springs into the air he rose in flight just like an aeroplane and the last Babs saw of him he was floating through the air above the tree tops still chanting his piece.



'Piggy continued to dance madly'—*Page* 28

" Well, I'm not sorry he's gone," she said at first, then a smile came and she added, " he was rather a nice naughty little pig though." She sighed, " I wish I knew what time it is and how I'm going to get home for tea." Just then she heard the strange bus coming. Here it was twisting through the trees on its many Wellington shod feet looking as though it must surely crash into something. It stopped. The conductor opened the door.

" Where to ? " he snapped.

" I want to go home to tea please," said Babs.

" We're not going to tea, we've had ours," he replied and began to close the door. Just then a voice choked by sobs came from inside.

" Conductor, this is a friend of mine—you must take her on." It was Weepy.

" I'm going to a party," he said, wiping his eyes, " I'm well supplied with handkerchiefs, so I hope to enjoy myself."

" I'm sure you will," Babs murmured, as she sat down beside him. " I shouldn't care to have him at *my* party," she thought.

" I'm crying now because it will be over so soon," he sobbed.

" It hasn't begun yet, Weepy. Time enough to cry when it *is* over."

" No thanks—never enough time for all my tears," he answered.

Just then the conductor cried out, "All Change ! "

" Why do we change here ? " Babs panted as she rocked about owing to the jolting.

" He only means change our seats," said Weepy, " so that we can enjoy a change of scenery."

Considering they sat side by side and Weepy exchanged his seat for hers and she her seat for his Babs couldn't see where the change of scenery came in, but she obeyed dutifully.

They came to a clearing with one chestnut tree in the centre. Here the bus drove round and round the tree so fast, Babs grew really dizzy and clutched Weepy. Suddenly it stopped, stood still a moment then waggled its back end.

" It's wagging its tail with pleasure," explained Weepy.

" Why is it pleased ? " Babs asked.

" I really don't know unless it has found a sorrow," Weepy replied.

" Oh dear ! " thought Babs, " we're in for a weeping match now."

But here she was mistaken for though the tears were always in Weepy's eyes they didn't increase any so her fears of being swamped were groundless. They set off again on their twisting journey, this time more slowly and Babs had an opportunity to look around the inside.

" Dear me, Weepy, I hadn't noticed you had so much luggage, why you have twelve suit cases and to-day Fluff wasn't allowed on because of his trunk, are you staying a long time ? "

Weepy shook his head. "No," he replied, "just the evening, I've six cases of clean hankies and six empty cases for the damp ones. Martha is so cross when I don't fetch all my hankies home you know, it's one of her greatest sorrows. I think this is your stop," he added as the bus pulled up at Auntie's garden door. He sobbed bitterly and bade her a very damp farewell.

"Don't cry, Weepy, I'm coming to see you very soon again. I must hurry now I'm just in time for I hear the tea bell!"

Babs jumped down, opened the door into the garden and ran over to the garden seat. She was just nicely seated there when Auntie came into the garden calling her.

"Oh there you are," she said, "I didn't know where you'd got to."

Babs smiled to herself. Where she'd got to was a secret and she just wasn't going to tell anyone.

"Bother!" she grumbled as she searched for her black ball. "I must have left it in the bus. I'll go back to-morrow and ask Weepy if he found it," and off she ran to have tea.

This is the good story

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