

The Tiny Folk

(A real story of real children for very young children)

Alan lay still in his bed and listened. Patter, patter, patter. Yes, that was rain all right! Alan quickly rolled back the blankets and looked out.

How different the world looked today from yesterday. Every tree, its branches and even its tiniest twigs, was covered with ice. They were a beautiful silvery gray, but Alan noticed that they seemed heavy and bent over. His mother's clothes line was twice as big as usual, but it, too, hung down low. He looked across to the barn and the path shone smooth and silvery, just like a skating pond.

Alan hurried into his clothes. This would be a morning to have fun sliding before he started off for school. He couldn't be so very late. He could hear his Daddy talking downstairs in the kitchen. In another half hour he was dressed, washed and had finished his breakfast, down to the very last drop of milk. Just then his father came in from the barn.

"My! it's lay out to day," he said. I don't see how we can take the horses out to water. The barnyard is as slippery as glass. It will be hard for me to carry pails of water to the barn."

"Daddy, can I help you?" Alan asked. I'm six years old now, and I'm getting big. If I'm going to be a farmer some day, I'll need to learn all I can when I'm little. There must be something I can do."

His father seemed to be thinking. "You know," he said at last, "we could spread ashes on the path from the barn door to the pump house. Then the horses could walk without slipping."

"I can do that," Alan piped up. "I can help spread the ashes. Just wait until I get dressed for school."

Alan thought it was great fun taking the ashes and spreading them along the path. The bigger pieces of coal ashes struck into the ice, and made it easy to walk. Will Freckles and Prince know enough to walk on the path, Daddy? Alan asked.

"We'll soon see," said Daddy as he went into the stable to untie the horses. Prince came out first, but as soon as he felt his feet slip on the ice, he stood right still, too scared to go ahead, and too frightened to go back. Then Freckles came out. He slipped too, but looked around. Then Alan called, "Here, Freckles, walk on the path I made for you."

Freckles seemed to understand, for he started slowly forward, putting each big foot down firmly on the ashes. He didn't slip one bit. He walked straight to the watering tub and drank and drank outside the barn door. He too wanted water, but he was too afraid he would fall.

Back Freckles came. He put his head near Prince, and the big shiny black horse seemed to be listening as Freckles talked something. Then Freckles walked around behind Prince, and nudged him with his nose. He gave a harder push, and Prince started forward. He walked very slowly, but did not stop right up, for Freckles kept urging him on. Freckles seemed to say, "Go along now, Prince. You'll be all right. That's great. Keep on the ashes. You're getting along first rate."

At last both horses had their drinks, and were going back into the barn. At the door, Freckles turned and looked at Alan, and made a little nicker. Alan ran to his Daddy. "Oh Daddy," he said, all excited. "Do you know what? Freckles said 'Thank you' to me for making his path. Wasn't he a smart horse?" Don't you think so too?

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BURGESS BEDTIME STORIES

By Thornton W. Burgess

BOLDNESS GETS A LUNCH
When things go wrong, do not despair. 'Tis time for boldness, and to dare. —Blacky the Crow.

Blacky the Crow likes to start out just at daylight to look for a breakfast. Usually at that hour it is safe to visit dooryards, and he often finds scraps of food there, sometimes enough for a good breakfast. Usually no one is stirring in the house at that hour. At no other time of day would Blacky even think of going so near to the homes of Men. Long ago he learned that those two-legged folks are not to be trusted. Some of them are his very worst enemies, and to this very day he doesn't know why.

But this morning Blacky was late. Hooty the Owl happened to be perched on a tall dead stub close to a big hemlock tree in which Blacky had spent the night. As long as Hooty remained there Blacky was a prisoner in his own bedroom. When at last Hooty flew away, and Blacky dared come out, it was too late to make the usual round of the dooryards. He must look for a breakfast elsewhere. He did look. He looked and looked and looked, but he didn't find much. When everything is covered with snow and ice, little food is to be found by even such eyes as Blacky the Crow.

Blacky was on his way back to the Green Forest — tired, discouraged and still very hungry. He would rest a while, then start out again and hunt until the Black Shadows drove him home for the night. Wearily he was flying high above Farmer Brown's dooryard. Looking down, he saw Mother Brown come out of the house with a pan of food for Bowser the Hound. Though Blacky was flying high, those eyes of his, like two telescopes, seemed to bring that food right up to him. His mouth watered.

Bowser said nothing and did nothing Blacky moved a little nearer. Bowser wagged his tail good-naturedly. Blacky reached and snatched a bitful of food, then retreated. Still Bowser did nothing but wag his tail. This time Blacky did not retreat after he had snatched there until he heard the kitchen door open and Flip the Terrier came racing out. Then Blacky took to his wings, but he had had a good lunch and he felt like a new crow.

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Tilly The Toiler

By Bob Gustafson



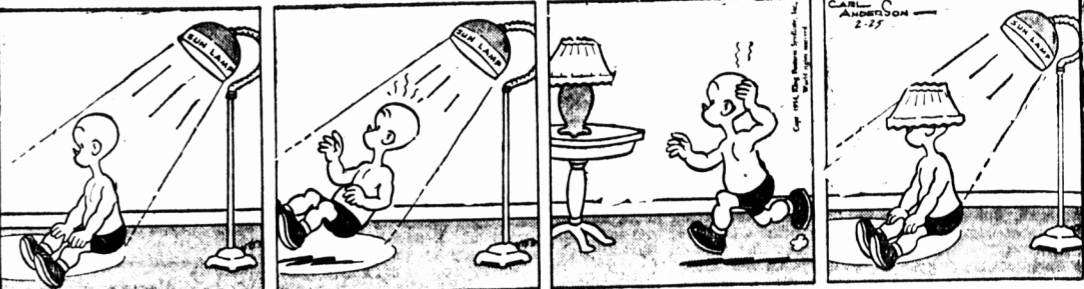
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