

curtain of his study window, there hung a lovely posy of flowers and a little card with "Bertie Norton's compliments and thanks" on it.

That pleased the old man; and all that day the roses filled his room with their sweet breath, mutely talking to him of a happy time when his little daughter used to put nosegays on his table, and dance about him like a blooming rose escaped from its stem. For years no one had thought to scatter flowers among the wise books out of which the poor man tried to gather forgetfulness, if not happiness. No one guessed that he had a lonely heart as well as a learned head, and no childish hand had clung to his till the blue mitten rested there, unconsciously leading him from his sad solitude to the sweet society of a little neighbor.

Bertie soon called again, and this time Mr. P. heard, saw, and welcomed him at once. A cushion lay on the fat dictionary, the bird-book was all ready, the eyes behind the big spectacles beamed with satisfaction as the boy climbed on his knee, and the inky hands held the chubby guest more eagerly and carefully than the most precious old book ever printed.

After that second call the new friendship flourished wonderfully, and the boy became to the Professor

what Cocky was to Bertie, a merry, innocent visitor, whose pretty plays and pranks cheered the dull days, whose love and confidence warmed his heart, whose presence grew more and more precious since its unconscious power made sunshine for the lonely man.

Such good times as they had! Such nice chats and stories, such laughs at very small jokes, such plans for summer, such fun feeding the sparrows, who soon learned to come to both windows fearlessly, and such splendid chapters as were added to "C. Twitter's Life and Adventures," with designs that half killed mamma with laughing.

The people in the house were much amused with the change in the Professor, and for a time could not understand what was going on up in that once quiet room. For the sound of little feet trotting about was heard, also a cheery child's voice, and now and then a loud bang as if a pile of books had tumbled down, followed by shouts of merriment, for Mr. P. could laugh capitally after a little practice.

Stout Mrs. Bouncer, the landlady, went up one day to see what was going on, and was so surprised at the spectacle that met her eyes she could hardly believe her senses.

In the middle of the room was a house built of the

precious books which the maid had been forbidden to touch, and in the middle of this barricade sat Bertie reading "*Æsop's Fables*" aloud. The table which used to be filled with Greek and Hebrew volumes, learned treatises, and intricate problems was now bestrewn with gay pictures, and Mr. P., with his spectacles pushed back, his cuffs turned up, and a towel tied round him, was busily pasting these brilliant designs into a scrap-book bound in parchment and ornamented with brass clasps.

The Professor evidently had made up his mind that the faded pages were much improved by the gay pictures, and sat smiling over his work as he saw a dead language blossom into flowers, and heard it sing from the throats of golden orioles and soaring larks.

"Well, I never!" said Mrs. Bouncer to herself, and then added aloud, after a long stare, "Do you want any thing sir?"

"Nothing, thank you, ma'am, unless you happen to have a couple of apples in the house. Good, big, red ones, if you please," answered Mr. P., so briskly that she couldn't help laughing, as she said,—

"I'll send 'em right up, sir, and a fresh jumble or so for the little boy."

"Thank you, ma'am, thank you. We fellows have been hard at it for an hour, and we are as hungry as bears; hey, Bertie?"

"I'm fond of jumbles," was the young student's suggestive reply, as he peeped over the walls with a nod and a smile.

"Bless my heart, what has come to the Professor!" thought Mrs. Bouncer, as she hastened away, while Mr. P. waved his paste brush and Bertie kissed his hand to her.

The neighbors said the same when they saw the two playmates walking out together, as they often did in fine weather. Five old ladies, who sat all day at their different windows watching their neighbors, were so astonished at the sudden appearance of the Professor, hand-in-hand with a yellow-haired little laddie, that they could hardly believe their spectacles. When they saw him drawing Bertie round the square on his sled *Racer*, they lifted their ten old hands in utter amazement, and when they beheld him actually snowballing, and being snowballed by, that mite of a boy, they really thought the sky must be going to fall.

Mamma heartily enjoyed all this; for through her doctor she had learned much about Mr. P., and

both admired and pitied him, and was very glad that Bertie had so wise and kind a playmate. She saw that they did each other good, and in many delicate ways helped the boy to serve, amuse and repay the man who made him so happy.

Cocky also approved of the new friend, and called occasionally to express his views on education. He was very affable, but never allowed Mr. P. to take the same liberties that Bertie did, and after a general survey, would light upon the bald pate of a plaster Homer, whence he watched the boys at play, with deep interest. Mr. P. was immensely flattered by Cocky's visits, and made his "Life" so interesting and droll, that Bertie really believed that the man and bird did it between them.

"I owe a great deal to Mr. Twitters, and I hope I shall discover a way to show my gratitude," said the Professor more than once, and he did, as you will see. It was a very happy winter, in spite of rain and snow, and as spring came on, the three friends had fine times in the park. Bertie fed his birds there now; and they, remembering how he had kept them alive through the bitter weather, seemed to love him more than ever. They flocked

round him as soon as he appeared, chirping, fluttering, pecking, and hopping so fearlessly and gayly, that people often came to see the pretty sight, and "Bertie's birds" were one of the lions of the neighborhood.

Cocky was very busy and important about this time. His tail-feathers had grown again, he seemed to have put on a new drab waistcoat, and his head was so sleek that Bertie was sure he used pomade. When he called at the balcony, he often brought another sparrow with him,—a plump, downy bird, with a bright eye, a Quakerish dress, and very gentle manners.

"Mamma says Cocky is going to be married, and that pretty one is his little sweetheart. Won't it be nice? I wonder if he will ask us to the wedding, and where he will live!" said Bertie, standing still in the park, staring up at the nests stuck on the elm boughs, now green with tender leaves and noisy with happy birds.

"I don't think he will ask us, and I very much fear that there won't be room in that brown nest for the old papa and the young folks also," answered Mr. P., staring as hard as Bertie did.

"Then we must ask the mayor to have a new

house put up for Cocky. Don't you think he would if I wrote him a nice letter and showed him your book? He'd see what a brave good bird my Twitters is, and give him a nice house, I'm sure," said Bertie earnestly, for he would believe that Cocky had really done all the fine and funny things recounted in that remarkable book.

"Leave it to me, boy. I will see what can be done about a mansion for Cocky to begin house-keeping in;" and Mr. P. gave a knowing nod, as if he had a new idea.

So Bertie said no more, and, soon after this conversation, went to Plymouth, on a visit with mamma. May-day was coming, and Bertie wanted to hang baskets on the doors of young and old neighbors; chief among the latter his dear Mr. P.

Nowhere in New England do May-flowers grow so large and rosy, or bloom so early and so sweet as in Plymouth, and Bertie gathered a great hamper full of the best, made up in nosegays, garlands, and baskets. Then they came home, and all along the way people sniffed and peeped and smiled at the odorous load which the boy guarded so carefully and rejoiced over so much.

Very early next morning, Bertie and mamma

set out to hang the May-baskets on a dozen doors. The five old ladies each had one, and were immensely pleased at being remembered; for Bertie had discovered that hearts can be young in spite of gray hair, and proposed doing this all himself. Then there was a sick lady who used to look out at the child as he played, with a sad, white face and wistful eyes; two pretty little girls came next, and had raptures in their night-gowns, when the baskets were brought up to them in bed.

Down in a back street was a lame boy who made hockey-sticks; a blind woman who knit the blue mittens, and several children who never had a flower except the dusty dandelions in the park. One can easily imagine how happy these bits of spring made them, and how they welcomed the sweet things with their woody fragrance and rosy faces.

When the last was given, mamma proposed a little walk over the bridge, for it was a lovely day, and she seemed in no haste about breakfast.

Bertie was very hungry before they got back, and was quite ready to go in the back way, directly to the dining-room, where his bread and milk was waiting for him. Right in the middle of breakfast,

Mary, the girl, gave mamma a card, on which was written two words: "All ready!"

Why mamma should laugh when she read it, and why Mary should say, in a whisper, "It's just lovely, ma'am," and then run out of the room giggling, Bertie could not understand.

"Can't I know, mamma?" he asked, feeling sure that some joke or secret was afoot.

"Yes, dear, all in good time. Go now and see if Mr. Patterson has found the May-flowers you hung on his window."

Away went Bertie to the balcony, found the posy gone, and the room empty; so he turned about and was going back, when all of a sudden he saw something that nearly took his breath away with surprise and delight.

Now you must know that the house on the other side of Bertie's jutted out a little, and the niche thus made was covered with a woodbine that climbed up from the grass-plot below. All summer this vine rustled its green leaves above that end of the balcony; in the autumn it hung crimson streamers there, and through the winter the sparrows loved to cuddle down among the twisted stems, sunning their backs in the sheltered corner

and pressing their downy breasts against the warm bricks. Bertie used to hang great shells full of plants there, and called it his garden, but now something even more delightful and ornamental than ivy or flame-colored nasturtiums met his eye.

Up among the budding sprays stood a charming little house, with a wide piazza all round it; a white house, with cunning windows and a tiny porch, where the door stood hospitably open, with the owner's name painted on it.

When Bertie read "C. Twitters," he had to hold on to the railing, lest he should tumble over, so pleased was he with this delightful surprise. As if nothing was wanting to make it quite perfect, Cocky himself came flying up to say "Good morning;" and after a long survey of the new house went to examine it. He walked all round the piazza, sat upon the chimney to see if that was all right, popped his head into the porch, appeared to read the name on the door, and to understand all about it, for with one shrill chirp, he walked in and took possession at once.

Then Bertie danced for joy and called out, "Oh, mamma, come and see! He likes it; he's gone in, and I'm sure he means to live there!"

Mamma came, and so did Mr. P., both pretending to be much amazed at Cocky's daring to build a house so near without asking leave.

But Bertie was not deceived a bit, and hugged them both on the spot, with many thanks for this charming joke, while Cocky sat at his door and twittered, like a grateful, happy little bird, as he was.

That was only the beginning of it; for the interesting things that happened after this May-day were too many to tell. Cocky was married at once, and went to house-keeping in his new villa. Mrs. Twitters evidently liked it extremely, and began to bring in her straw furniture and feather-beds, like a busy little house-wife. Papa Twitters came too; though they had a hard job to get him there, he was so lame with rheumatism. But the vine helped the poor old dear; for after he had got safely across the street, he hopped up the woodbine, little by little, till he got to the porch, and there sat down to rest.

He did not stay long, however, for, like a wise bird, he felt that the young folks would do better alone, and after a nice visit, he returned to the brown nest in the park, where his children called

every day and never forgot to take the old papa a crumb of comfort.

Cocky made an excellent husband, and often brought his wife to call on Bertie, who, when the warm days came, sat much in the balcony, always ready for a chat, a game, or a song. All the other birds were chirping gayly, so he joined the chorus; and his favorite was that merry ballad beginning, —

" A little cock-sparrow,
Sat up in a tree,
And whistled, and whistled,
And thus whistled he."

While Bertie and Cocky sang, mamma smiled over her work within, and a gray head often popped out of Mr. P.'s window, as if he loved to listen and to learn still more of the sweet, new language his little neighbors taught him.