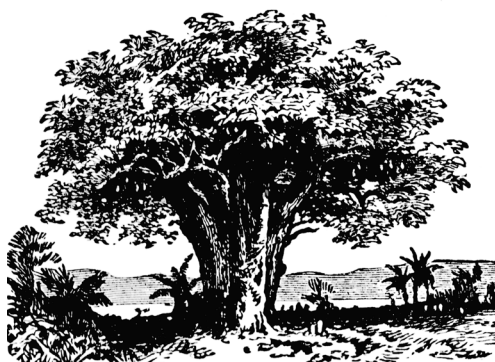


SEVEN O'CLOCK STORIES



Sixth Night the Willow Whistle



The Toyman sat by the pond under the “Crying Tree.” That is what Marmaduke calls it, though the Toyman says it is a weeping willow. Its leaves are a very pretty green, much lighter than the leaves of the other trees. And the branches bend over till they reach the water. They really do look like showers of tears. Sometimes little leaves fall into the water and float away like silver-green boats, rowed by tiny fairies.

Jehosophat, Marmaduke, and Hepzebiah came up to the “Crying Tree.”

“What are you doing, Toyman,” asked Marmaduke.

“Watch and you will see.”

They were always asking him that question and he was always telling them to watch and see.

So they did.

In his hand he had his knife, which could make as many things as a fairy’s wand. It had four blades and a corkscrew.

The Toyman cut some thin branches from the tree. From these he cut three pieces, each about as long as his first finger and about as thick as his little finger.

One end of each piece of wood he cut like the stern of a boat, then he cut a notch near the end.

Then he worked with his knife very carefully. Soon the green bark came

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off each little piece of wood. The bark came off whole, like a little roll of green paper.

“See,” said the Toyman, “the bark is the skin of the tree and in spring the sap which is the blood of the tree flows fast. It isn’t coloured red, it is just like light juice, but it makes the bark slip off this wood very easily.”

On the grass he laid the round pieces of green bark. Then he took the white bits of wood which had been under the bark and he whittled away at the ends. Soon he was through.

Then he slipped the pieces of bark, which looked so much like little rolled-up green papers, back on the white pieces of wood.

They fitted perfectly.

One he gave to Jehosophat, one to Marmaduke, and one to Hepzebiah.

“What are they?” asked Marmaduke.

“I know,” said his brother Jehosophat, “they are whistles.”

“Yes,” said the Toyman. “They are willow whistles. Now put them in your mouths and blow.”

Each put the end of his whistle in his mouth and blew.

It sounded very pretty, the three whistles—and then—what do you think?

Not far from the weeping willow or the “Crying Tree,” was an elm tree. It was taller than the willow and darker green.

In it something shone very bright—like an orange, only it moved.

“It’s an oriole,” said the Toyman.

They looked hard and, sure enough, there among the leaves was the prettiest bird they had ever seen. He had an orange-coloured body and black wings.

His nest was on the end of a branch. It was grey-coloured and hung low like a little bag, made of knitted grey wool. Father and Mother Oriole had made it themselves. Mother Oriole is there sitting in it on little eggs.

But Father Oriole heard the three willow whistles and he turned and began to whistle back—oh such a pretty song. It was really prettier than the sound of the three willow whistles for it had different notes and a tune like the songs Mother plays on the piano.

“We must watch that nest,” said the Toyman. “Some day soon we will see

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the baby orioles.”

But there—the Little-Clock-with-the-Wise-Face is scolding again. So the story must stop for tonight.

When you’re asleep if you listen very hard, maybe you can hear the three happy children blowing the willow whistles, and maybe the beautiful oriole will answer back.

Good-night.