

# THE BUSY BLUE JAY: TRUE BIRD STORIES FROM MY NOTEBOOKS

## CHAPTER I

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One of the most interesting birds who ever lived in my Bird Room was a blue jay named Jakie. He was full of business from morning till night, scarcely ever a moment still.

Poor little fellow! He had been stolen from the nest before he could fly, and reared in a house, long before he was given to me. Of course he could not be set free, for he did not know how to take care of himself.

Jays are very active birds, and being shut up in a room, my blue jay had to find things to do, to keep himself busy. If he had been allowed to grow up out of doors, he would have found plenty to do, planting acorns and nuts, nesting, and bringing up families.

Sometimes the things he did in the house were what we call mischief because they annoy us, such as hammering the woodwork to pieces, tearing bits out of the leaves of books, working holes in chair seats, or pounding a cardboard box to pieces. But how is a poor little bird to know what is mischief?

Many things which Jakie did were very funny. For instance, he made it his business to clear up the room. When he had more food



than he could eat at the moment, he did not leave it around, but put it away carefully,—not in the garbage pail, for that was not in the room, but in some safe nook where it did not offend the eye. Sometimes it was behind the tray in his cage, or among the books on the shelf. The places he liked best were about me,—in the fold of a ruffle or the loop of a bow on my dress, and sometimes in the side of my slipper. The very choicest place of

all was in my loosely bound hair. That of course I could not allow, and I had to keep a very close watch of him for fear I might have a bit of bread or meat thrust among my locks. In his clearing up he always went carefully over the floor, picking up pins or any little thing he could find, and I often dropped burnt matches, buttons, and other small things to give him something to do. These he would pick up and put nicely away.

Pins, Jakie took lengthwise in his beak, and at first I thought he had swallowed them, till I saw him hunt up a proper place to hide them. The place he chose was between the leaves of a book. He would push a pin far in out of sight, and then go after another. A

match he always tried to put in a crack, under the baseboard, between the breadths of matting, or under my rockers. He first placed it, and then tried to hammer it out of sight. He could seldom get it in far enough to suit him, and this worried him. Then he would take it out and try another place.

Once the blue jay found a good match, of the parlor match variety. He put it between the breadths of matting, and then began to pound on it as usual. Pretty soon he hit the unburnt end and it went off with a loud crack, as parlor matches do. Poor Jakie jumped two feet into the air, nearly frightened out of his wits; and I was frightened, too, for I feared he might set the house on fire.

Often when I got up from my chair a shower of the bird's playthings would fall from his various hiding-places about my dress,-nails, matches, shoe-buttons, bread-crumbs, and other things. Then he had to begin his work all over again.

Jakie liked a small ball or a marble. His game was to give it a hard peck and see it roll. If it rolled away from him, he ran after it and pecked again; but sometimes it rolled toward him, and then he bounded into the air as if he thought it would bite. And what was funny, he was always offended at this conduct of the ball, and went off sulky for a while.

He was a timid little fellow. Wind or storm outside the windows made him wild. He would fly around the room, squawking at the top of his voice; and the horrible tin horns the boys liked

to blow at Thanksgiving and Christmas drove him frantic. Once I brought a Christmas tree into the room to please the birds, and all were delighted with it except my poor little blue jay, who was much afraid of it. Think of the sadness of a bird being afraid of a tree!