

FOR LITTLE PEOPLE.

AFTER VACATION.

Back again to school, dears,
Vacation days are done,
You've had your share of frolic,
And lots of play and fun,
You've fished in many a brook, dears,
And climbed up many a hill,
Now lay again to school, dears,
To study with a will.

We'll all work the better
For having holiday,
For playing ball and tennis,
And riding on the hay,
The great old book of Nature
Prepares us plain to see
How very well worth learning
All other books may be.

So back again to school, dears,
Vacation-time is done,
You've had a merry recess,
With lots and lots of fun,
You've been like colts in pasture,
Unused to feed and rein,
Now steady, ready children,
It's time to march and train.

Oh, only dunces loiter
When some of the school-bell's call,
So fall in ranks, my boys and girls,
And troop in, one and all,
For school is very pleasant,
When, after lots of fun,
Vacation days are over,
And real work begins.

—Margaret E. Sawyer, in Harper's Young People.

TOMMY, THE GOPHER.

History of a Queer Little Office Pet and Companion.

Tommy was a pet gopher, and, like other pets, had his little history. He came to us in a very remarkable way. I was sitting in my office, in the third story of one of those big office buildings in the city, when one of the office girls exclaimed: "What is that?" pointing to a little animal about the size of a rat, running in at the door. If it had been a rat we should not have been surprised, as they were common; but this little fellow had a bushy tail, and rows of spots along his back, and ears hardly visible above his fur. I knew him at once, for I had seen plenty of his kind on our prairie farm when I was a boy, and used to dig them out of their holes in the ground, or down them out by pouring in water, as they scratched up our seed corn. But how this little fellow could have got into the city, and up into the third story of an office building was a mystery. Evidently some one had brought him in; but no one in the building knew anything about him, so as he seemed quite tame, it was decided to adopt him as an office pet, and he was named Tommy. And as nature had provided him with a nice suit of clothes, all he needed was food, drink and a nest.

We soon found that he liked peanuts, and it was great fun to see him eat them. When anyone called, "Tommy, Tommy," and held out a peanut, he would run and sit up on his hind feet, reach out his little paws, and beg for his peanut. When he got it he would shell it, put the kernel into his pocket, and hold up his paws for another, and when he got both pockets full, he would run off to his nest, stow away his nuts, and come back for more.

Now your will wonder about his pockets. Well, every gopher has two pockets, one in each cheek, in which he carries food and bedding to his nest. He makes his nest in a hole in the ground, which he digs out with his paws, putting the earth into his pockets and carrying it out. I know that our Tommy would want such a nest, so I got a large box and filled it with earth for him, packing it in tight. Tommy went vigorously to work, and soon had a cozy little room dug out in the bottom, just big enough for himself, with a winding passage down to it, where he made a nest of bits of paper and cloth and twine, picked up round the office.

When it was finished, Tommy's demands for peanuts increased, and he soon laid in a large supply. It was amusing to see him hold up his paws and beg, as if he were very hungry, when his pockets were so full of kernels that his cheeks were puffed out. If we gave him a nut that had no kernel, he would get very angry, springing at the hand of the person who gave it, and biting it if he got a chance.

One day he found a satchel in which there was some cake; so he gnawed a hole in it, and was soon inside helping himself. We wondered where he had gone, when some one happened to notice the satchel, and saw Tommy peering out through the hole, which was just big enough to fit his head.

He had large black eyes, but his sight did not seem to be sharp—probably because his eyes were better adapted to the dim light of a life underground than to the bright sunlight—and he was afraid of objects which he could not see clearly; the dust-brush, which he evidently regarded as some big burly animal, was an object of special terror to him, and he would act like a cat frightened by a dog when it was placed near him. You should know that every animal has a little curtain inside of his eye, called the iris, with a window in the middle of it, called the pupil, around which is a muscle which contracts, making the window smaller when the light is bright, and expands, making it larger, when the light is dim. You have often seen the pupils of pussy's eyes get small in the light and large in the dark, so that she can see almost as well by a dim light as by a bright one. But as gophers do not live much in the daylight, their eyes have large pupils adapted to semi-darkness.

Tommy liked to lie and bask in a warm, sunny spot on the floor, just as you have seen puss do. He became quite tame, and would sometimes climb up and sit on my knee; but he would not allow anyone to touch him or stroke him, and always resented any such familiarity by his peculiar little scolding chir-r-r, or an attempt to bite.

About the middle of summer he disappeared, and could not be found anywhere; and his odd little ways had made him such a pet that he was greatly missed. We knew he could not have left the office, and so concluded he must be in his nest, but whether dead or alive no one knew. So when six weeks had passed, and he did not make his appearance, we emptied the cart

out of his box, when out jumped Tommy, angry as he could be, and scolding loudly with his usual chir-r-r, chir-r-r, but none the worse for his long sleep.

The box was filled again, and Tommy made himself a new nest, near the top of the floor, for he was too sleepy for deep digging, hid in a fresh supply of peanuts, and in a few days went to sleep again, and slept five months, so that we saw nothing of him till the following February, when he came out, lean and hungry, making his usual demand for peanuts; but was soon as fat and lively as ever.

We now happened to learn his early history, and how he came to us. Three or four young gophers had been brought in from the country by a son of the janitor, who lived in the building, and had all run away and been caught by the cats, or had fallen down the stairs, except this little fellow; and he had crept in behind a coal bin in the hall, and slept there all winter till he came to us.

In this way we learned that gophers, like bears and some other animals, sleep, or hibernate, as it is called, during a large part of the year, which accounts for the fact that they are seldom seen except in spring and early summer; and so they escape the summer's heat and winter's cold in their underground nests, and come out full of vigorous new life in spring.

You will be sorry to learn that poor little Tommy came to a sad end. There was always a vessel of water left for him, but one Saturday night it was forgotten, and so he went to the wash basin to get a drink, and fell into the water and was drowned, not being able to climb up the slippery sides and get out; and there we found him on Monday morning. That was a sorrowful day in our office, for Tommy was a great favorite. The little body was tenderly wrapped in paper, placed in a box, and taken home and buried in the garden; and many tears were shed over our little pet's grave.—Philip Atkinson, in Wide Awake.

WHAT THE SMOKE SAID.

Story of the Young Man Who Didn't Have Any "Gilt-Edged Luck."

A poor young man was leaning against a post on Boston common. At least, I took him to be a poor young man, judging from his words, and from the expression of his face. He held in his hand the languishing stub of a cigar, with a puff from which he frequently insulted the inoffensive air.

Said the poor young fellow, the corners of his mouth drawn down almost to his chin: "It's hard luck. I don't seem to get along. The firm doesn't pay me enough by half. Now there's Bill Akens, he went in with I did, and he owns his house, and he has money in the bank to boot, while I—bah! my pocket's full of bills, and I can't keep a cent. Now, he has luck, gilt-edged luck, while I have—"

While he was thinking of a word mean enough to express his financial depression the poor fellow took a puff at his cigar, and we both of us watched the smoke whirl away in the air. What was my astonishment to see the curling wreaths form themselves into letters, shaped like script, and reading: "Here goes my money!" I looked at the young man in amazement, but he was serenely puffing away, quite oblivious to that strange smoke penmanship.

"That's queer!" exclaimed I; but he without allowing me to explain what was queer, went on with his complaint. "Queer? I should say so! And just see how that Bill Akens stands with the firm! Why, there's some talk of his getting into partnership. But I—why, the other day I hinted to the old gentleman that I thought my salary ought to be raised, and he as good as told me if I didn't like it I might leave it. Leave it? I guess I would, in a hurry, if I could get another place." And this time he gave an exceedingly vigorous puff at the cigar.

Again the mysterious air currents twisted the smoke, turned it over and over, and drew it out into the words: "Here goes my reputation!" I was about to call his attention to the remarkable phenomenon—for, though, he was leaning back with one eye cocked up at the smoke, evidently he did not read anything in it—but he proceeded in a still more indignant strain.

"And what makes it all the more ungrateful is that I am absolutely wearing myself out in their service. My head aches nearly all the time, and my eyes ache, and I am actually getting to be afraid of heart disease. I have such queer feelings in my chest. They ought not to expect any one man to do as much work as I do—at least on such a ridiculous salary."

With these dolorous words the poor chap slowly straightened himself and sauntered disconsolately away, still comforting himself with his cigar. And as the twisting, serpentine train of smoke strung out after him it took shape much as before, save that this time it read: "Here goes my health."

And as I passed on I shed a tear for the poor, persecuted, unfortunate young man.—Amos R. Wells, in Young Men's Era.

Milk from a Tree.

Away off among the mountains of Venezuela grows a tree with curious roots and leaves. Its roots hardly go into the ground.

Many months of the year the people there never have any rain, and the branches look just as if they were dried up. But if you should take a borer, and make a hole in the trunk, rich creamy milk would flow out from it.

Very early in the morning, if you were there, you would see the blacks and other natives, coming from all parts, with big bowls to get this precious milk. They drink there, and then they fill the bowls and carry some home to their children. The cream thickens on top as they walk. Often the children go themselves.

This tree in their language is called "palo de vaca," which means cow tree.—Mrs. G. Hall, in Our Little Ones.

A MONSTROUS BRUTE.

Nothing Like It Known to the Most Eminent Zoologists.

It Has a Broad Body, Flat Head, Big Heavy Eyes, Woolly Hide, Headly Tail, Powerful Limbs and Headless Mouth.

The "dog eater," panther, or whatever it is that has created consternation time and again throughout this section among the country folks, has again made its appearance, after an interval of something like a year, says a Danville (Ky.) dispatch to the Cincinnati Enquirer. The existence of this strange animal has been scouted at by the skeptics, but persons of undoubted veracity who claim to have seen the monster during its midnight prowling say they are willing to make oath to the statements concerning it.

About five years ago it made its appearance in this county, and several parties were organized in the vicinity of Perryville to hunt the strange beast down and exterminate it, but none were successful in their mission. From the fact that it seldom, if ever, attacked anything save dogs, the people gave it the name of the "dog eater," and by this it has been known for about seven years. Persons versed in natural history say they can recall nothing like it, and seem to think, from the descriptions given by those who have caught glimpses of the animal, that it is a cross between a panther and a mastiff, though the descriptions vary so at times that such a conclusion cannot be relied upon.

Its last appearance was in Mercer county, a short distance from this city. James O'Connor and the colored driver of R. E. Coleman's bus were returning from Burgin with several passengers aboard, and had just passed the old Walden farm and were coming down hill at a moderately rapid gait, when suddenly the team stopped, reared, snorted and plunged about, almost upsetting the bus and badly frightening the passengers, acting just as horses have been seen to do when scared by some strange beast.

In a moment the occupants of the vehicle were startled and almost paralyzed at seeing an animal of



THAT MOST WONDERFUL ANIMAL.

enormous size and ferocious looks spring out of the woodland into the road, glare at the conveyance a moment and then leisurely leave the scene without molesting anything. The animal was distinctly seen by Mr. O'Connor and the driver, who were sitting upon the front seat. They described it as being of a dark color, with a broad, flat-like body and head, large, fiery eyes, woolly hide, powerful limbs, bushy tail and a monstrous head and mouth. There can be no doubt of Mr. O'Connor having seen this animal, as he would not conceit such a strange story, and his testimony about the appearance of the beast is corroborated by others who have seen it.

The question asked many is: What is this monster that comes and goes, and still molests nothing except the worthless curs of the country, except now and then destroying a fancy setter? It is no stranger in Mercer county. Several years back there was a current report that some strange animal had taken up its abode in Boone's cave, and the people thereabout, especially the colored portion, were very much alarmed, and afraid to venture out after night. A few determined ones, however, explored the cave, but failed to find the monster, though they discovered strange-looking tracks in the moist earth on the floor of the cave.

Two other gentlemen, Mr. Phil Marks and Edward H. Fox, the artist, claim to have seen this remarkable beast one night as they were returning from a coon-hunting expedition. They were riding leisurely along the pike, engaged in conversation, their fine pack of hounds following behind, weary and worn out after the chase, when suddenly Marks' horse reared up and had it not been for Mr. Marks' expert horsemanship he would have been thrown backward against the ground. Mr. Fox, who preserved his presence of mind, soon saw the cause of the trouble. The dog eater had stepped out into the road ahead of the party and began drinking out of a small stream, and right here this animal's strange influence over dogs was illustrated. The hounds following along seemed to become paralyzed with fright. They huddled together, trembling with fear and whining pitiously. Mr. Fox drew his revolver and shot at the dog eater, which jumped over the fence and disappeared. The artist is confident that he hit the monster, but thinks that the thick coating of hair on it was too much for the small bullet used. After the animal had got out of the way the hounds struck for home at a 2:30 gait. Mr. Marks can be found at his place of business in this city at any time, and will cheerfully detail the story of his experience with the now noted animal. Mr. Fox, at the request of the reporter, made a rough sketch of the dog-eater as it appeared to him.

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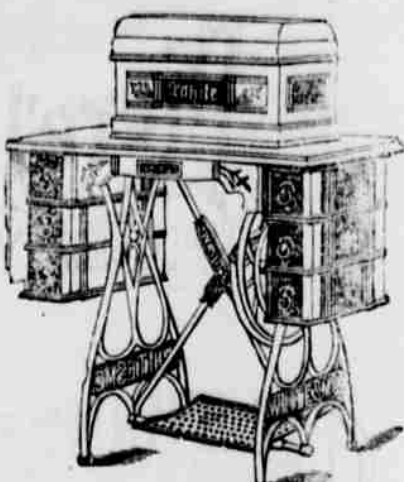
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