

MOTHER STORIES

MOTHER STORIES

BY
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“Mother, a story told at the right time
Is a looking-glass for the mind.”

FROEBEL

YESTERDAY'S CLASSICS
CHAPEL HILL, NORTH CAROLINA

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DEDICATED
TO
MY MOTHER

PREFACE

I have endeavored to write, for mothers and dear little children, a few simple stories, embodying some of the truths of Froebel's Mother Play.

The Mother Play is such a vast treasure house of Truth, that each one who seeks among its stores may bring to light some gem; and though, perhaps, I have missed its diamonds and rubies, I trust my string of pearls may find acceptance with some mother who is trying to live with her children.

I have written my own mottoes, with a few exceptions, that I might emphasize the particular lesson which I endeavor to teach in the story; for every motto in the Mother Play comprehends so much that it is impossible to use the whole for a single subject. From "The Bridge" for instance, which is replete with lessons, I have taken only one,—for the story of the "Little Traveler."

Most of these stories have been told and retold to little children, and are surrounded, in my eyes, by a halo of listening faces.

"Mrs. Tabby Gray" is founded on a true story of a favorite cat. "The Journey" is a new version of the old Stage Coach game, much loved by our grandmothers; and I am indebted to some old story, read in childhood,

for the suggestion of “Dust Under the Rug,” which was a successful experiment in a kindergarten to test the possibility of interesting little children in a story after the order of Grimm, with the wicked stepmother and her violent daughter eradicated.

Elizabeth Peabody says we are all free to look out of each other’s windows; and so I place mine at the service of all who care to see what its tiny panes command.

MAUD LINDSAY.

LIST OF STORIES

THE WIND'S WORK.....	1
MRS. TABBY GRAY	9
FLEET WING AND SWEET VOICE.....	15
THE LITTLE GIRL WITH THE LIGHT.....	23
THE LITTLE GRAY PONY	31
HOW THE HOME WAS BUILT.....	39
THE LITTLE TRAVELER.....	47
THE OPEN GATE	55
INSIDE THE GARDEN GATE	61
THE JOURNEY.....	79
THE GIANT ENERGY AND THE FAIRY SKILL....	87
THE SEARCH FOR A GOOD CHILD	97
THE CLOSING DOOR.....	109
THE MINSTREL'S SONG.....	117
DUST UNDER THE RUG.....	125
THE STORY OF GRETCHEN.....	133
THE KING'S BIRTHDAY.....	141

MOTTO FOR THE MOTHER

*Power invisible that God reveals,
The child within all nature feels,
Like the great wind that unseen goes,
Yet helps the world's work as it blows.*

THE WIND'S WORK

One morning Jan waked up very early, and the first thing he saw when he opened his eyes was his great kite in the corner. His big brother had made it for him; and it had a smiling face, and a long tail that reached from the bed to the fireplace. It did not smile at Jan that morning though, but looked very sorrowful and seemed to say "Why was I made? Not to stand in a corner, I hope!" for it had been finished for two whole days and not a breeze had blown to carry it up like a bird in the air.

Jan jumped out of bed, dressed himself, and ran to the door to see if the windmill on the hill was at work; for he hoped that the wind had come in the night. But the mill was silent and its arms stood still. Not even a leaf turned over in the yard.

The windmill stood on a high hill where all the people could see it, and when its long arms went whirling around everyone knew that there was no danger of being hungry, for then the Miller was busy from morn to night grinding the grain that the farmers brought him.

When Jan looked out, however, the Miller had nothing to do, and was standing in his doorway, watching the clouds, and saying to himself (though Jan could not hear him):—

MOTHER STORIES

*“Oh! How I wish the wind would blow
So that my windmill’s sails might go,
To turn my heavy millstones round!
For corn and wheat must both be ground,
And how to grind I do not know
Unless the merry wind will blow.”*

He sighed as he spoke, for he looked down in the village, and saw the baker in neat cap and apron, standing idle too.

The Baker’s ovens were cold, and his trays were clean, and he, too, was watching the sky and saying:—

*“Oh! How I wish the wind would blow,
So that the Miller’s mill might go,
And grind me flour so fine, to make
My good light bread and good sweet cake!
But how to bake I do not know
Without the flour as white as snow.”*

Jan heard every word that the Baker said, for he lived next door to him; and he felt so sorry for his good neighbor that he wanted to tell him so. But before he had time to speak, somebody else called out from across the street:—

*“Well! I’m sure I wish the wind would blow,
For this is washing day, you know.
I’ve scrubbed and rubbed with all my might,
In tubs of foam from morning light,
And now I want the wind to blow
To dry my clothes as white as snow.”*

THE WIND'S WORK

This was the Washerwoman who was hanging out her clothes. Jan could see his own Sunday shirt, with ruffles, hanging limp on her line, and it was as white as a snowflake, sure enough!

“Come over, little neighbor,” cried the Washerwoman, when she saw Jan. “Come over, little neighbor, and help me work to-day!” So, as soon as Jan had eaten his breakfast, he ran over to carry her basket for her. The basket was heavy, but he did not care; and as he worked he heard some one singing a song, with a voice almost as loud and as strong as the wind.

*“Oh! If the merry wind would blow,
Yeo ho! lads, ho! yeo ho! yeo ho!
My gallant ship would gaily go,
Yeo ho! lads, ho! yeo ho!
In fresh'ning gales we'd loose our sails,
And o'er the sea,
Where blue waves dance, and sunbeams glance,
We'd sail in glee,
But winds must blow, before we go,
Across the sea,
Yeo ho! my lads, yeo ho!”*

Jan and the Washerwoman and all the neighbors looked out to see who was singing so cheerily, and it was the Sea-captain whose white ship Jan had watched in the harbor. The ship was laden with linen and laces for fine ladies, but it could not go till the wind blew. The Captain was impatient to be off, and so he walked about town, singing his jolly song to keep himself happy.

Jan thought it was a beautiful song, and when he went home he tried to sing it himself. He did not know

MOTHER STORIES

all the words, but he put his hands in his pockets and swelled out his little chest and sang in as big a voice as he could: "Yeo ho! my lads, yeo ho!"

While he sang, something kissed him on the cheek; and when he turned to see what it was his hat spun off into the yard as if it were enchanted; and when he ran to pick his hat up he heard a whispering all through the town. He looked up, and he looked down, and on every side, but saw nobody! At last the golden weather-vane on the church tower called down:—

"Foolish child, it is the wind from out of the east."

The trees had been the first to know of its coming, and they were bowing and bending to welcome it; while the leaves danced off the branches and down the hill, in a whirl of delight.

The windmill's arms whirled round, oh! so fast, and the wheat was ground into white flour for the Baker, who kindled his fires and beat his eggs in the twinkling of an eye; and he was not quicker than the Sea-captain, who loosed his sails in the fresh'ning gales, just as he had said he would, and sailed away to foreign lands.

Jan watched him go, and then ran in great haste to get his kite; for the petticoats on the Washerwoman's clothesline were puffed up like balloons, and all the world was astir.

"Now I'm in my proper place," said the kite as it sailed over the roofs of the houses, over the tree tops, over the golden weather vane, and even over the



“Now I’m in my proper place,”
said the kite.

MOTHER STORIES

windmill itself. Higher, higher, higher it flew, as if it had wings; till it slipped away from the string, and Jan never saw it again, and only the wind knew where it landed at last.

MOTTO FOR THE MOTHER

*“All mother love attracts the child,
Its world-wide tenderness he feels;
And ev’ry beast that loves her young
His mother’s love to him reveals.”*

MRS. TABBY GRAY

Mrs. Tabby Gray, with her three little kittens, lived out in the barn where the hay was stored. One of the kittens was white, one was black, and one gray, just like her mother, who was called Tabby Gray from the color of her coat.

These three little kittens opened their eyes when they grew old enough, and thought there was nothing so nice in all this wonderful world as their own dear mother, although she told them of a great many nice things, like milk and bread, which they should have when they could go up to the big house where she had her breakfast, dinner, and supper.

Every time Mother Tabby came from the big house she had something pleasant to tell. "Bones for dinner to-day, my dears," she would say, or "I had a fine romp with a ball and the baby," until the kittens longed for the time when they could go too.

One day, however, Mother Cat walked in with joyful news.

"I have found an elegant new home for you," she said, "in a very large trunk where some old clothes are kept; and I think I had better move at once."

Then she picked up the small black kitten,

MOTHER STORIES

without any more words, and walked right out of the barn with him.

The black kitten was astonished, but he blinked his eyes at the bright sunshine, and tried to see everything.

Out in the barnyard there was a great noise, for the white hen had laid an egg, and wanted everybody to know it; but Mother Cat hurried on, without stopping to inquire about it, and soon dropped the kitten into the large trunk. The clothes made such a soft, comfortable bed, and the kitten was so tired after his exciting trip, that he fell asleep, and Mrs. Tabby trotted off for another baby.

While she was away, the lady who owned the trunk came out in the hall; and when she saw that the trunk was open, she shut it, locked it, and put the key in her pocket, for she did not dream that there was anything so precious as a kitten inside.

As soon as the lady had gone upstairs Mrs. Tabby Gray came back, with the little white kitten; and when she found the trunk closed, she was terribly frightened. She put the white kitten down and sprang on top of the trunk and scratched with all her might, but scratching did no good. Then she jumped down and reached up to the keyhole, but that was too small for even a mouse to pass through, and the poor mother mewed pitifully.

What was she to do? She picked up the white kitten, and ran to the barn with it. Then she made haste to the house again, and went upstairs to the lady's room. The lady was playing with her baby and when Mother

MRS. TABBY GRAY

Cat saw this she rubbed against her skirts and cried: "Mee-ow, mee-ow! You have your baby, and I want mine! Mee-ow, mee-ow!"

By and by the lady said: "Poor Kitty! She must be hungry"; and she went down to the kitchen and poured sweet milk in a saucer, but the cat did not want milk. She wanted her baby kitten out of the big black trunk, and she mewed as plainly as she could: "Give me my baby—give me my baby, out of your big black trunk!"

The kind lady decided that she must be thirsty: "Poor Kitty, I will give you water"; but when she set the bowl of water down Mrs. Tabby Gray mewed more sorrowfully than before. She wanted no water,—she only wanted her dear baby kitten; and she ran to and fro, crying, until, at last, the lady followed her; and she led the way to the trunk.

"What can be the matter with this cat?" said the lady; and she took the trunk key out of her pocket, put it in the lock, unlocked the trunk, raised the top—and in jumped Mother Cat with such a bound that the little black kitten waked up with a start.

"Purr, purr, my darling child," said Mrs. Tabby Gray, in great excitement; "I have had a dreadful fright!" And before the black kitten could ask one question she picked him up and started for the barn.

The sun was bright in the barnyard and the hens were still chattering there; but the black kitten was glad to get back to the barn. His mother was glad, too; for, as she nestled down in the hay with her three little kittens,



The lady followed her; and she led the way
to the trunk.

MRS. TABBY GRAY

she told them that a barn was the best place after all to raise children.

And she never afterwards changed her mind.

MOTTO FOR THE MOTHER

*Make the home-coming sweet!
The gladness of going,
The pleasure of knowing
Will not be complete
Unless, at the ending,
The home-coming's sweet.*

*Make the home-coming sweet!
No fear of the straying,
Or dread of the staying
Of dear little feet,
If always you're making
The home-coming sweet.*

FLEET WING AND SWEET VOICE

Mother and Father Pigeon lived with their two young pigeons in their home, built high on a post in the king's barn-yard. Every bright morning they would fly away through the beautiful sunshine wherever they pleased, but, when evening came, they were sure to come to the pigeon-house again.

One evening, when they were talking together in their sweet, cooing way, Mother Pigeon said:—

“We each have a story to tell, I know; so let each one take his turn, and Father Pigeon begin.”

Then Father Pigeon said:—

“To-day I have been down to the shining little stream that runs through the wood. The green ferns grow on either side of it, and the water is cool, cool, cool! For I dipped my feet into it, and wished that you all were there.”

“I know the stream,” cooed Mother Pigeon. “It turns the wheels of the mills as it hurries along, and is busy all day on its way to the river.”

“To-day I have talked with the birds in the garden,” said Sweet Voice, one of the young pigeons, “the thrush, the blackbird, and bluebird, and all. They sang to me and I cooed to them, and together we made the world gay. The bluebird sang of the sunshine, and

MOTHER STORIES

the blackbird of the harvest; but the thrush sang the sweetest song. It was about her nest in the tree.”

“I heard you all,” said Fleet Wing, the other young pigeon; “for I sat and listened on the high church tower. I was so high up, there, that I thought I was higher than anything else; but I saw the great sun shining in the sky, and the little white clouds, like sky pigeons, sailing above me. Then, looking down, I saw, far away, this white pigeon-house; and it made me very glad, for nothing that I saw was so lovely as home.”

“I never fly far away from home,” said Mother Pigeon, “and to-day I visited in the chicken yard. The hens were all talking, and they greeted me with ‘Good morning! Good morning!’ and the turkey gobbled ‘Good morning!’ And the rooster said ‘How do you do?’ While I chatted with them a little girl came out with a basket of yellow corn, and threw some for us all. When I was eating my share, I longed for my dear ones. And now good night,” cooed Mother Pigeon, “it is sleepy time for us all.”

“Coo, coo! Good night!” answered the others; and all was still in the pigeon-house.

Now over in the palace, where the king, and queen, and their one little daughter lived, there was the sound of music and laughter; but the king’s little daughter was sad, for early the next morning her father, the king, was to start on a journey, and she loved him so dearly that she could not bear to have him leave her.

The king’s little daughter could not go out in the sunshine like Sweet Voice and Fleet Wing, but lay all

FLEET WING AND SWEET VOICE

day within the palace on her silken cushions; for her fine little feet, in their satin slippers, were always too tired to carry her about, and her thin, little face was as white as a jasmine flower.

The king loved her as dearly as she loved him; and when he saw that she was sad, he tried to think of something to make her glad after he had gone away. At last he called a prince, and whispered something to him. The prince told it to a count, and the count to a gentleman-in-waiting.

The gentleman-in-waiting told a footman, and the footman told somebody else, and at last, the boy who waited on the cook heard it.

Early next morning he went to the pigeon-house, where Mother and Father Pigeon and their two young pigeons lived; and putting his hand through a door, he took Sweet Voice and Fleet Wing out, and dropped them into a basket.

Poor Sweet Voice, and Fleet Wing! They were so frightened that they could not coo! They sat very close to each other in the covered basket, and wondered when they would see their mother and father and home again.

All the time, as they sat close together in the basket and wondered, they were being taken away from home; for the king had started on his journey, and one of his gentlemen was carrying the basket, very carefully, with him on his horse.

At last the horses stood still and the basket was

MOTHER STORIES

taken to the king; and when he opened it, the two little pigeons looked up and saw that the sun was high in the sky, and that they were far from home.

When they saw that they were far from home, they were more frightened than before; but the king spoke so kindly and smoothed their feathers so gently, that they knew he would take care of them.

Then the king took two tiny letters tied with lovely blue ribbon out of his pocket; and, while his gentlemen stood by to see, he fastened one under a wing of each little pigeon.

“Fly away, little pigeons!” he cried; and he tossed them up toward the sky. “Fly away, and carry my love to my little daughter!”

Fleet Wing and Sweet Voice spread their wings joyfully, for they knew that they were free! free! and they wanted to go home.

Everywhere they saw green woods, instead of the red roofs and shining windows of the town, and Sweet Voice was afraid; but Fleet Wing said:—

“I saw these woods from the tall church steeple. Home is not so far away as we thought.”

Then they lost no time in talking, but turned their heads homeward; and as they flew the little gray squirrels that ran about in the woods called out to ask them to play, but the pigeons could not stay.

The wood dove heard them, and called from her tree: “Little cousins, come in!” But the pigeons thanked her and hurried on.

FLEET WING AND SWEET VOICE

“Home is not so far away,” said Fleet Wing; but he began to fear that he had missed the way, and Sweet Voice was so tired that she begged him to fly on alone.

Fleet Wing would not listen to this; and, as they talked, they came to a little stream of water with green ferns growing all about, and they knew that it must be the very stream that Father Pigeon loved. Then they cooled their tired feet in the fresh water, and cooed for joy; for they knew that they were getting nearer, nearer, nearer home, all the time.

Sweet Voice was not afraid then; and as they flew from the shelter of the woods, they saw the tall church steeple with its golden weather vane.

The sun was in the west, and the windows were all shining in its light, when Fleet Wing and Sweet Voice reached the town. The little children saw them and called: “Stay with us, pretty pigeons.” But Sweet Voice and Fleet Wing did not rest until they reached the white pigeon house, where Mother and Father Pigeon were waiting.

The cook’s boy was waiting, too, and the little pigeons were taken in to see the king’s little daughter. When she found the letters which they carried under their wings, she laughed with delight; and Fleet Wing and Sweet Voice were very proud to think that they had brought glad news to their princess.

They told it over and over again out in the pigeon-house, and Mother and Father Pigeon were glad, too.



The little pigeons were taken in to see the
king's daughter.

FLEET WING AND SWEET VOICE

In the morning, the birds in the garden were told of the wonderful things that had happened to Fleet Wing and Sweet Voice; and even the hens and chickens had something to say when they heard the news.

The thrush said that it all made her think of her own sweet song; and she sang it again to them:—

*“Wherever I fly from my own dear nest,
I always come back, for home is the best.”*