

Our Boys and Girls.

BEST TO BE TRUE.

Dear pussy, I love you, an' I's your true friend,

'Cause I saved you a whippin' today, When cook missed her custard, and everyone said

It was puss that had stealed it away.

You know you are naughty sometimes, pussy, dear

So in course you get blamed, an'—all that!

An' cook took a stick, an' she 'clared she would beat

The thief out that mizzable cat!

But I—didn't feel comfor'ble down in my heart,

So I saved you the whippin', you see, 'Cause I went to mamma, an' telled her I 'spect

She'd better tell cook to whip me!

'Cause the custard was stealed by a bad little girl

Who felt dreffely sorry with shame,

An' it wouldn't be fair to whip pussy, in course,

When that bad little girl was to blame!

"Was it my little girlie?" my dear mamma said;

I felt dreffely scared, but I nodded my head,

An' then mamma said, "Go find nurse, for I guess

There's some custard to wash off a little girl's dress."

Well, then, course they knew it was I, an' not you,

Who stealed all the custard an' then ran away;

But it's best to be true in the things that we do,

An'—that's how I saved you a spankin' today. —Selected.



WHAT A BOY KNEW ABOUT ANTS.

Alice ran down to cut a white rose. A boy sprang up from behind the bush, pulled off his cap, and said, "I—I didn't mean to do it! Surely I didn't!"

Alice was startled, but the trouble in the boy's face made her want to help him. "What didn't you mean to do?" she asked.

He pointed to the gardener, who was gathering up the roots of a plant that had been knocked down and the pot broken. The gardener was scolding. As Alice turned she saw him shake his fist at the boy.

"I was down on the ground watching the ants," said the boy, "and he called so sharply that I jumped, and there was a crash. I'll pay for the pot. I have a little money at home and—"

"Never mind the pot," said Alice, "Tell me about the ants!"

"I was watching them. I'm Dr. Wilson's boy. He's a naturalist and—"

"O," said Alice, "You have but just come here. You are our new neighbors."

"Yes; papa is writing a book about ants now. I—I hope the gardener won't disturb the little things."

"That is why you didn't run away?"

"Yes; I want to see what they do after the battle."

"Boy, you are queer," said Alice. "What battle?"

"Why, our red ants came over and

made a raid on your black ones. There's a little town—formicary, papa calls it—of black ants under that bench. And in a corner of our garden there is a bigger town of red ants. Our ants are slave-makers. They go out and kidnap the babies of black ants—the Fuscans. Our ants have a good many slaves now; but it seems they want more, so—"

"Boy!" said Alice, severely.

"O, it is true! And it has been true for a hundred years. It was found out by a Swiss named Huber. He called the red ants Amazons. And now in America we have ants that are, at least, cousins to them. They do the same things that those others did, two hundred years ago. Only, we have two kinds. One called *Polyergus*. Their fighters are wonderfully brave when attacking and carrying away spoil; but at home they do nothing. The blacks do the digging; make the chambers and long halls. They take care of the little ones of the reds, like foster mothers. All of this makes the reds so lazy that they even have to be fed. It has been tried. Reds of that kind have been shut up, with plenty of food, and some have starved to death. All of them would have done so if the shiny black slaves had not been let in to feed them, make the house orderly, and do the work they had been accustomed to at home."

"This is very wonderful," said Alice. "Sit down on this bench! And the others?"

"The others are called *Sanguines*. They fight and work both. The slaves only help them. They do not do all of the work. The homes of these red ants have a style of their own, with but little sign of the slave style of building; while the others—the lazy ones—let the slaves build their cities nearly like their own. In either case no black queen is permitted to lay her eggs in the home of the slave-makers. She is killed. When they want new slaves they go out and raid for another supply."

"And are the slave-makers red?"

"Yes; that makes it easy to watch them."

At this moment the old gardener came up, took his hat off to Miss Alice, and said: "O'im affther wahrnin' yees agin th' b'y, miss. He's that troublesome, miss—"

"O, John, don't scold!" cried Alice. "He's our new neighbor, and he's very sorry—though I'm glad. Don't bother us, please, John! He's telling me the most wonderful things!"

"Wahnderful, indade!" said John. "I'll warrint me he's tillin' av th' koind young leddy wahnderful tales—wahnderful tales indade!"

"Well?" questioned Alice, turning to the boy.

"Well," the boy answered, "I saw our red ants come out of their town and rush about making up their army and getting up their courage. And I knew that a fight was coming. They ran back and forth and around and around. 'Twas as if they were stirring each other up. One would hit the forehead of another. Or two of them would strike hands and seem to say: 'We're in for it! We'll give it to 'em!' Perhaps some were lazy and didn't want to go. Maybe some were afraid. But others felt like fighting; they just bullied the rest into going."

"While the red ants were hustling about getting up their courage and making sure that they were all in fighting trim, the black ants—their slaves—went calmly on with their regular work. They carried out tiny pellets of earth that they had loosened inside, carried in supplies, and seemed to be doing up the morning's work. Some of them, though,

acted as if they were urging the reds off—sort of daring them, you know. And some of the slaves saluted the reds with their hands—or antennae—and heads, something as soldiers do an officer."

"You have very sharp eyes, or a fine imagination," said Alice.

The boy smiled. "And when the reds were all ready—nobody has found out what that means, for there seems to be no general—they just start off on a regular raid for plunder. And every one of them seems to know all about it. Dr. McCook—he's a great man and a friend of papa's—says that it's like having a whole army made up of brigadiers!"

"Well, after the red ants had been rushing about making all that noise—"

"Noise!" exclaimed Alice. "Those tiny creatures!"

"Only when many are together and preparing for battle do you hear it. Perhaps it comes from their hitting their hard little bodies against each other. Professor Wheeler—he's another big man, papa isn't sure of this—thinks they have tiny cymbals close to their bodies, which they rasp when they are in a fighting mood. They get as close to each other as they can walk. Maybe that's to keep their courage up." The boy stopped. He seemed to be thinking.

"You are very wonderful," said Alice.

"Tell me all you know!"

"That would be little."

"I think not," said Alice.

"Well, our red ants marched about three hundred feet today to your little Fuscans village, which is almost hidden among the grass tufts. They came across the corner of the grove, along the tree that your gardener cut down, and across the walk. There weren't many in the black's little formicary. The reds rushed against it and into the open gates. The blacks were scared. Some of them took the eggs and half-formed baby ants in their mouths and ran out the back way. They tried to save as many as they could. Others came bravely out and fought their way through the enemy, or were killed."

"Some ran into near bunches of grass or climbed the fenceposts and looked down, to watch the hundreds of wicked foes ransack and ruin their homes. They could see them carry the young ones that were left away in their jaws. I saw it all this morning. And I followed the reds when they straggled home. They didn't keep step nor close together. They just got there the best way they could. And, if you'll believe it, the black slaves came and took the little black half-formed baby captives into the formicary. There these little one will grow up to be slaves like themselves. The reds are not cruel. They seem to want large cities—to rule everything. And they make these raids so as to add to their numbers. The blacks could run away, but they don't."

"I came back again and was watching your poor little Fuscans come home—those that were left."

Alice looked sorrowful. "Are the blacks always beaten?"

"O, no! Sometimes the reds attack a strong Fuscans formicary. Then there is a great time. The blacks seem to know that the reds are coming. They send out an army to meet them. Sentinels are posted at every large entrance. Tiny pebbles or earth pellets are rolled against the small doors. The angry blacks—who are not so heavy as the reds—rush at them with open jaws. Ants have teeth in their upper jaws, and often a red and a black lock jaws, and pull and pull for a long time. You think the red, then the black, will win. Some-

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times one of them throws poison into the other's face. Sometimes another black, in running by, sees his brother in such trouble and catches the red by the leg. Then a red may come up and catch this little black by one of his feelers. And so on until there's a great jumble of fighters all in one mix-up.

"The kidnapers are sometimes badly beaten. The ones that are left lim, back home—sometimes with the head of a black, that has been broken off, hanging to one leg. Then again the blacks chase the reds home, nipping at them and fighting them all the way. They often rescue some of the little prisoners and carry them back home."

"Those that had run out, carrying the babies and eggs to safe places—you see, they know what the reds are after—come cautiously in. Probably the warriors, who routed the enemy, become very proud as they talk it all over. Ants living near the slave-makers are more cautious than those far away. They build their homes low, so as not to attract attention, and carry the dirt that is dug out far enough away to prevent a clew. They have few entrances, and those are hidden. Other ants are sometimes very troublesome. They injure gardens and lawns by building their cities high. O, I must tell you one thing more!"

"Do tell me!" said Alice.

"Once Dr. McCook saw an ant—such as they make slaves of—acting strangely. She was finishing her little house. After she had rolled a tiny pebble to the door and added wee bits of earth she walked away and looked at it; then turned her head to see that no one was near, while she crept in and reached her finger-tips to draw pebble and earth closer. A minute later up came a red warrior, who stopped, listened, walked all around, rapped on the ground here and there,