

The Singing Sparrow

Mrs. Fred Bilsbury, Grenfell

NOW are all you young folks ready to hear another little story of another of our pets? First, I must tell you that our lovely big Peter is still with us. We have seen him many times among the cattle, of all places! He still seems to have a strong memory of having been raised around the farm. He never runs far. When called he sits quite still.

So now I will tell you about the House Sparrow who could sing. One day about four years ago I was working in the garden quite close to the house. I saw an old mother cat come around the corner with something in its mouth. The "something" was kicking and fluttering so I at once came to see what she had. I told her to put it down, which she did. I picked up a baby sparrow, almost feathered, with a part of one wing missing. The cat had not injured it in any way, so I put it in a little box and fed it bread and milk with a pair of tweezers.

We named him "Dickie". Later we made a wooden cage for him and hung it in a south window. We taught Dickie to feed himself from an egg cup, in which we put cracked oats. The children, of course, played with him and he learned many things. His wing never grew the needed part to enable him to fly—when he did try to take off, he fell flat.

I never knew a more clever bird. He knew in a minute if a member of the family was in a hurry. He became excited and tried to fly after them as they hurried into another room. So we usually scooped him up and put him in a tin of chop in the kitchen window. He loved a saucer of water for a bath. One day he fell into a pail of warm wash water. What a sight!

Here are some funny things Dickie learned. One of the children would put him on their dad's shoulder; then the other would pretend to slap Dad. Dickie at once would stand up, and with wings down and wide-open beak would fight off the offender. Then he would snuggle close to Dad's neck. This they would do several times, only to be driven away by Dickie.

One evening I heard him twittering, so I said, "Sing Dickie" and turned the radio low. Again I repeated "Sing Dickie." Well he tried and tried and in not many days he could sing as well as any canary. He never sang unless told to, but would twitter in the usual sparrow manner. Aletha sometimes pretended to cry and Dickie would be nearly frantic. He would hop along the table in front of her, array his wings, then snuggle against her face. At times he would even peck her fingers furiously. When she stopped he took no further notice of her.

Now we often think of Dickie and his many funny ways. But best of all was his singing.

The Hummingbird Returns

Madeline B. Runyan

MY little female Hummingbird delighted us all summer with her visits to the honey bottle. As the bottle required to be refilled so often, I changed her over to an egg cup which pleased her fancy very well. She soon preferred to roost on the edge while she sipped the honey with her wings folded.

Two very jittery young Hummers accompanied her to the garden, late in July. They had gorgeous green backs, and made my original quite "mousey." I called them her green girls, assuming that they had been her nestlings.

On August 31 she was at the window after lamplight, and again next morning. By noon of September 1 she was away on her long migration, leaving four days earlier than last year. The "jitter-bugs" with the iridescent backs lingered until September 7.

I am sure we all miss not hearing from Maurice Street of Nipawin, K. Baines of Tisdale, Ed Wiley of Saltcoats and also Frank Baines of Saltcoats—let's hear from you again soon.

—C. Stuart Francis.