

BURGESS BEDTIME STORIES

By Thornton W. Burgess

THE PERSISTENT ONES
It sometimes happens that persistence will win in spite of stout resistance.

—Old Mother Nature.
Mrs. Winsome Bluebird was happy. She felt that now she had a little perfect house. It was a new house that Farmer Brown's boy had just put up specially for the Bluebirds. He had made that house himself. He had made it exactly as he thought bluebirds would like a house to be. Mrs. Winsome was happily busy hunting for straws, nice soft dry grass, fine rootlets and other things that could be woven into a perfect nest. She was constantly coming and going. It did seem as if the harder she worked, the happier she was. Probably that was true because she was making a home.



"We will drive those bluebirds out and then take that house for ourselves," Skimmer had declared.

She was at her doorway just getting ready to leave to hunt for more material, when suddenly Skimmer appeared. They did their best to get her out of that doorway. They, too, had been unable to find an unoccupied house in the neighborhood. They had gone farther on to look for a home, but had failed to find anything to suit them and had returned. They had at once discovered the new house on the telephone pole, and of course they wanted it. It was just as suited to them as it was to Winsome and Mrs. Winsome. It was just the kind of a house they had been looking for.

"We will drive those bluebirds out and then take that house for ourselves," Skimmer had declared. Now there wasn't much they could do as long as one of those bluebirds blocked the doorway. If one of them could only get into that house while it was empty they were sure they could keep it for themselves. First they kept gashing at Mrs. Winsome and trying to peck her with their little

short bills. Of course Winsome flew down to join the fight, and there were some real air fights. All the time Mrs. Winsome kept her place in the doorway. Now folks cannot work and fight at the same time. Mrs. Winsome did not dare leave that doorway unguarded. She did not dare go look for more building material with which to finish that nest unless Mrs. Winsome was there to take her place in the doorway. Skimmer and Mrs. Skimmer are wonderful flyers. They are marvelously quick of wing. They can wheel and turn in the air as few other feathered folk can. Beside them, the bluebirds are slow in flight. They cannot twist, turn and dodge as can the swallows. Every day, and many times a day, Skimmer and Mrs. Skimmer visited the new house, pestering Winsome and Mrs. Winsome. They had long ago learned that what cannot be gained by force may often be gained by persistence. They hoped that if they were persistent enough, Winsome and Mrs. Winsome would give up and go look for a house elsewhere.

Once in a while both would dart at Winsome, and all three, fighting in the air, would fall nearly to the ground. Black Pussy the Cat at Farmer Brown's house heard the angry twittering and went out to see what the fuss was about. Perhaps there would be a chance to catch one of those birds. It would be fun. Black Pussy didn't need her for food. There was no better fed cat anywhere around. He hunted just for excitement.

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The Tiny Folk

(A real story of real children for very young children)

Out on Uncle Bob's farm Dusky, Winkie's mother, still had two kittens left. One was black and white like herself, the other was a mottled grey like Grandma Puss. These two roly poly kittens had great fun playing with each other in their cosy box on the barn floor. It was quiet in there, and rather dark, except when Irene came in to play and left the barn door open for light.

But the kittens were getting bigger now, and had decided that they would find out what was outside their box. They struggled under pretending to be asleep, until Dusky left them. Grandma Puss, who usually stayed close by when their mother was away, was not there either.

Irene had thought and thought over names for the kittens and at last had named the grey one Muffins and the black and white one Matilda. It was usually Muffins who started any mischief that was on foot.

Today he stretched himself just as soon as he was sure his mother was gone. He woke up Matilda, saying, "Come on, let's get out of this box and do some exploring."

By digging in their claws, and scratching with their hind feet, the two kittens managed to get to the top edge and hang on, though Matilda fell back twice.

"Goodness, it looks far to the floor," mewed Matilda.

"Over I go, anyway," said Muffins and over he did go, though not the way he had planned. He had leaned over too far and tumbled overboard, though it really wasn't very high. And kittens or big cats always land on their feet anyway so he didn't hurt himself. Matilda mewed and mewed, but finally crawled over too. She hung on with her front feet, and let herself down easily.

For a few minutes they stood close together by their box. Their eyes were very round and

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big. The barn floor seemed such a very very big place, now that they were there alone. What strange noises there were! The far corner seemed to be full of dark shadows. Muffins and Matilda squeezed closer to each other.

"Come on, Matilda. There's nothing to hurt us," said Muffins boldly. "I'm going right over to that bright spot on the barn floor." The sun was shining in through a little window and making a golden patch on the bare brown planks of the barn floor.

After they got used to being out, the two kittens got quite brave. They chased each other and romped around. They pretended the bits of hay were alive, and chased them. They would run and pounce down upon them with their soft furry paws. What fun they had! They weren't making any noise, but you can be sure that, if they had been children, you would have been able to hear them far away.

But what was that? What queer sound was at the door. Something was coming! There was a streak of grey as Muffins flew toward a bag of feed and crouched behind it. Matilda raced like lightning to hide under some loose hay. There they lay quiet as shadows but their hearts thumping with fright, as the noise came nearer and nearer.

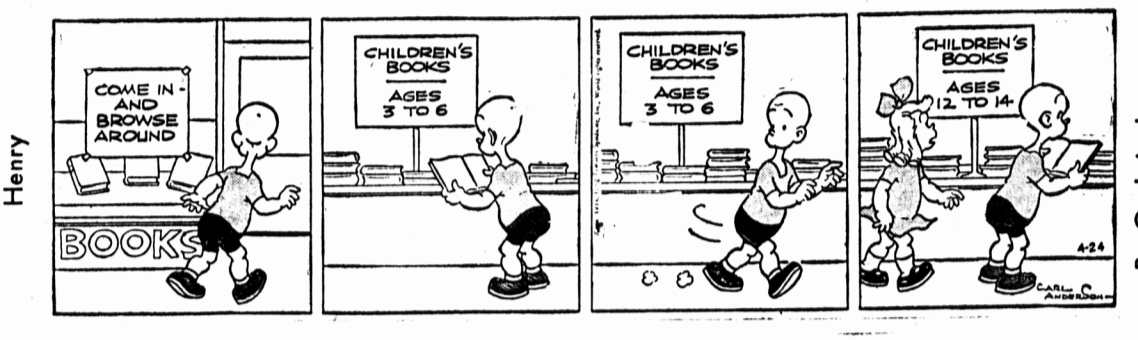
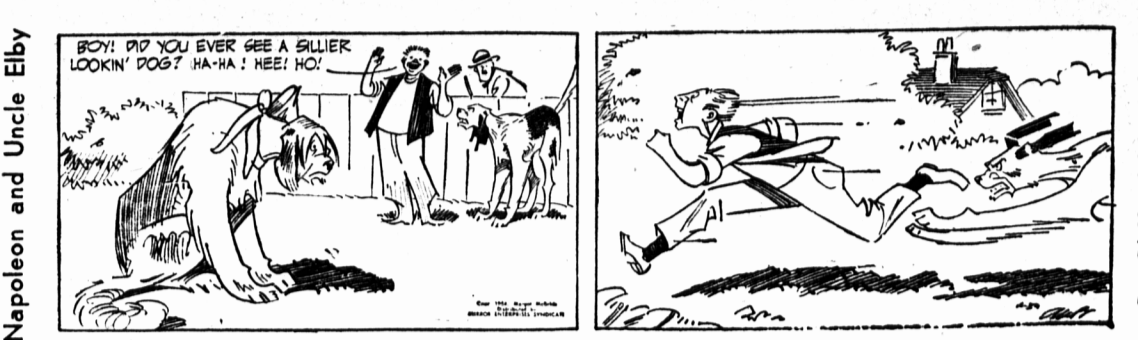
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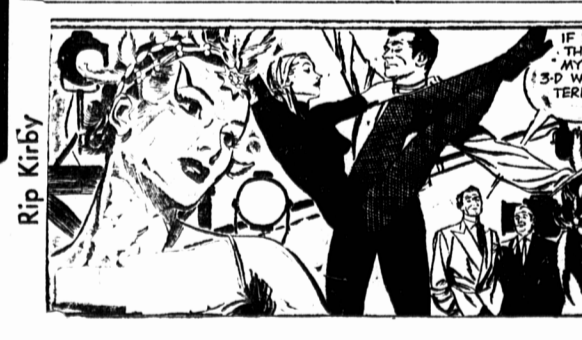
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