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# AMONG THE FARMYARD PEOPLE

CLARA DILLINGHAM PIERSON

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# The Story That The Swallow Didn't Tell

“Listen!” said the Nigh Ox, “don’t you hear some friends coming?”

The Off Ox raised his head from the grass and stopped to brush away a Fly, for you never could hurry either of the brothers. “I don’t hear any footfalls,” said he.

“You should listen for wings, not feet,” said the Nigh Ox, “and for voices, too.”

Even as he spoke there floated down from the clear air overhead a soft “tittle-ittle-ittle-ee,” as though some bird were laughing for happiness. There was not a cloud in the sky, and the meadow was covered with thousands and thousands of green grass blades, each so small and tender, and yet together making a most beautiful carpet for the feet of the farmyard people, and offering them sweet and juicy food after their winter fare of hay and grain. Truly it was a day to make one laugh aloud for joy. The alder tassels fluttered and danced in the spring breeze, while the smallest and shyest of the willow pussies crept from their little brown houses on the branches to grow in the sunshine.

“Tittle-ittle-ittle-ee! Tittle-ittle-ittle-ee!” And this time it was louder and clearer than before.

“The Swallows!” cried the Oxen to each other. Then they straightened their strong necks and bellowed to the Horses, who were drawing the plow in the field beyond, “The Swallows are coming!”

As soon as the Horses reached the end of the furrow and could rest a minute, they tossed their heads and whinnied with delight. Then they looked around at the farmer, and wished that he knew enough of the farmyard language to understand what they wanted to tell him. They knew he would be glad to hear of their friends’ return, for had they not seen him pick up a young Swallow one day and put him in a safer place?

“Tittle-ittle-ittle-ee!” and there was a sudden darkening of the sky above their heads, a whirr of many wings, a chattering and laughing of soft voices, and the Swallows had come. Perched on the ridge-pole of the big barn, they rested and visited and heard all the news.

The Doves were there, walking up and down the sloping sides of the roof and cooing to each other about the simple things of every-day life. You know the Doves stay at home all winter, and so it makes a great change when their neighbors, the Swallows, return. They are firm friends in spite of their very different ways of living. There was never a Dove who would be a Swallow if he could, yet the plump, quiet, gray and white Doves dearly love the dashing Swallows, and happy is the Squab who can get a Swallow to tell him stories of the great world.

“Isn’t it good to be home, home, home!” sang one Swallow. “I never set my claws on another ridge-pole as comfortable as this.”

“I’m going to look at my old nest,” said a young Swallow, as she suddenly flew down to the eaves.

“I think I’ll go, too,” said another young Swallow, springing away from his perch. He was a handsome fellow, with a glistening dark blue head and back, a long forked tail which showed a white stripe on the under side, a rich buff vest, and a deep blue collar, all of the finest feathers. He loved the young Swallow whom he was following, and he wanted to tell her so.