



CLASSIC LIVING BOOK

THE BURGESS BIRD BOOK

Thornton Burgess

ill. Louis Agassiz Fuertes

COMPLETE AND UNABRIDGED

B&W EDITION

The Burgess Bird Book For Children

THORNTON BURGESS

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I. JENNY WREN ARRIVES.

LIPPETY-LIPPETY-LIP scampered Peter Rabbit behind the tumble-down stone wall along one side of the Old Orchard. It was early in the morning, very early in the morning. In fact, jolly, bright Mr. Sun had hardly begun his daily climb up in the blue, blue sky. It was nothing unusual for Peter to see jolly Mr. Sun get up in the morning. It would be more unusual for Peter not to see him, for you know Peter is a great hand to stay out all night and not go back to the dear Old Briar-patch, where his home is, until the hour when most folks are just getting out of bed.

Peter had been out all night this time, but he wasn't sleepy, not the least teeny, weeny bit. You see, sweet Mistress Spring had arrived, and there was so much happening on every side, and Peter was so afraid he would miss something, that he wouldn't have slept at all if he could have helped it. Peter had come over to the Old Orchard so early this morning to see if there had been any new arrivals the day before.

"Birds are funny creatures," said Peter, as he hopped over a low place in the old stone wall and was fairly in the Old Orchard.

"Tut, tut, tut, tut, tut!" cried a rather sharp scolding voice. "Tut, tut, tut, tut, tut! You don't know what you are talking about, Peter Rabbit. They are not funny creatures at all. They are the most sensible folks in all the wide world."

Peter cut a long hop short right in the middle, to sit up with shining eyes. "Oh, Jenny Wren, I'm so glad to see you! When did you arrive?" he cried.

"Mr. Wren and I have just arrived, and thank goodness we are here at last," replied Jenny Wren, fussing about, as only she can, in a branch above Peter. "I never was more thankful

in my life to see a place than I am right this minute to see the Old Orchard once more. It seems ages and ages since we left it.”

“Well, if you are so fond of it what did you leave it for?” demanded Peter. “It is just as I said before—you birds are funny creatures. You never stay put; at least a lot of you don’t. Sammy Jay and Tommy Tit the Chickadee and Drummer the Woodpecker and a few others have a little sense; they don’t go off on long, foolish journeys. But the rest of you—”

“Tut, tut, tut, tut, tut!” interrupted Jenny Wren. “You don’t know what you are talking about, and no one sounds so silly as one who tries to talk about something he knows nothing about.”

Peter chuckled. “That tongue of yours is just as sharp as ever,” said he. “But just the same it is good to hear it. We certainly would miss it. I was beginning to be a little worried for fear something might have happened to you so that you wouldn’t be back here this summer. You know me well enough, Jenny Wren, to know that you can’t hurt me with your tongue, sharp as it is, so you may as well save your breath to tell me a few things I want to know. Now if you are as fond of the Old Orchard as you pretend to be, why did you ever leave it?”

Jenny Wren’s bright eyes snapped. “Why do you eat?” she asked tartly.

“Because I’m hungry,” replied Peter promptly.

“What would you eat if there were nothing to eat?” snapped Jenny.

“That’s a silly question,” retorted Peter.

“No more silly than asking me why I leave the Old Orchard,” replied Jenny. “Do give us birds credit for a little common sense, Peter. We can’t live without eating any more than you can, and in winter there is no food at all here for most of us, so we go where there is food. Those who are lucky enough to eat the kinds of food that can be found here in winter stay here. They are lucky. That’s what they are—lucky. Still—” Jenny Wren paused.

“Still what?” prompted Peter.

“I wonder sometimes if you folks who are at home all the time know just what a blessed place home is,” replied Jenny. “It is only six months since we went south, but I said it seems ages, and it does. The best part of going away is coming home.



JENNY WREN. This is the saucy little House Wren who builds near your home.



BULLY THE ENGLISH SPARROW, the common sparrow of the streets.
CHIPPY THE CHIPPING SPARROW, the smallest of the family.

I don't care if that does sound rather mixed; it is true just the same. It isn't home down there in the sunny South, even if we do spend as much time there as we do here. *This* is home, and there's no place like it! What's that, Mr. Wren? I haven't seen all the Great World? Perhaps I haven't, but I've seen enough of it, let me tell you that! Anyone who travels a thousand miles twice a year as we do has a right to express an opinion, especially if they have used their eyes as I have mine. There is no place like home, and you needn't try to tease me by pretending that there is. My dear, I know you; you are just as tickled to be back here as I am."

"He sings as if he were," said Peter, for all the time Mr. Wren was singing with all his might.

Jenny Wren looked over at Mr. Wren fondly. "Isn't he a dear to sing to me like that? And isn't it a perfectly beautiful spring song?" said she. Then, without waiting for Peter to reply, her tongue rattled on. "I do wish he would be careful. Sometimes I am afraid he will overdo. Just look at him now! He is singing so hard that he is shaking all over. He always is that way. There is one thing true about us Wrens, and this is that when we do things we do them with all our might. When we work we work with all our might. When Mr. Wren sings he sings with all his might."

"And, when you scold you scold with all your might," interrupted Peter mischievously.

Jenny Wren opened her mouth for a sharp reply, but laughed instead. "I suppose I do scold a good deal," said she, "but if I didn't goodness knows who wouldn't impose on us. I can't bear to be imposed on."

"Did you have a pleasant journey up from the sunny South?" asked Peter.

"Fairly pleasant," replied Jenny. "We took it rather easily, Some birds hurry right through without stopping, but I should think they would be tired to death when they arrive. We rest whenever we are tired, and just follow along behind Mistress Spring, keeping far enough behind so that if she has to turn back we will not get caught by Jack Frost. It gives us time to get our new suits on the way. You know everybody expects you to have

new things when you return home. How do you like my new suit, Peter?" Jenny bobbed and twisted and turned to show it off. It was plain to see that she was very proud of it.

"Very much," replied Peter. "I am very fond of brown. Brown and gray are my favorite colors." You know Peter's own coat is brown and gray.

"That is one of the most sensible things I have heard you say," chattered Jenny Wren. "The more I see of bright colors the better I like brown. It always is in good taste. It goes well with almost everything. It is neat and it is useful. If there is need of getting out of sight in a hurry you can do it if you wear brown. But if you wear bright colors it isn't so easy. I never envy anybody who happens to have brighter clothes than mine. I've seen dreadful things happen all because of wearing bright colors."

"What?" demanded Peter.

"I'd rather not talk about them," declared Jenny in a very emphatic way. "Way down where we spent the winter some of the feathered folks who live there all the year round wear the brightest and most beautiful suits I've ever seen. They are simply gorgeous. But I've noticed that in times of danger these are the folks dreadful things happen to. You see they simply can't get out of sight. For my part I would far rather be simply and neatly dressed and feel safe than to wear wonderful clothes and never know a minute's peace. Why, there are some families I know of which, because of their beautiful suits, have been so hunted by men that hardly any are left. But gracious, Peter Rabbit, I can't sit here all day talking to you! I must find out who else has arrived in the Old Orchard and must look my old house over to see if it is fit to live in."