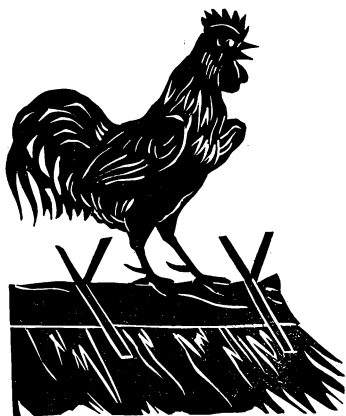


LITTLE STORIES

By Aunt



A big red cock lived on a farm. His feathers were the brightest, his spurs, the sharpest, and his voice, the loudest of all the cocks. But he was especially proud of his fiery comb that stood out straight on his head.

When his "Kok-ko-ko-ok!" rang from the house top, the hens came out.

"Kok-ko-ko-ok!" they answered in a thin voice. "We are all here."

But the other cocks scampered out of the yard into the field. They were afraid of the big red cock. They had seen several of their companions killed outright when they tried to fight the master of the poultry yard. Those spurs of his were long and sharp, and, when he struck, his stab was sure.

The Cock that

One morning the cock awoke feeling very strong. He wanted to fight. "Kok-ko-ko-ok! Kok-ko-ko-ok! Come out here, all you soft-combed cocks."

But no cock would come out. All the young cocks had hidden themselves under the bushes. Every challenging cry of the big red cock sent a shiver through their necks down to their bodies and up to the ends of their feathers.

"Should we not be ashamed of ourselves to run away from that bully?" asked a young cock of his companions.

"What else could we do?" the rest asked in a chorus.

"He is proud because of his beautiful comb," the young cock mused, "and he is brave because of his long spurs."

"Friends," he said aloud, "something must be done."

"Yes, Yes," the others agreed. "Go ahead and do it."

That night the little cock peeped into the big cock's roost. He saw the big cock take off his comb carefully. He washed it and stroked it until it became redder and harder. Then he laid it on a shelf and went to sleep.

FOR LITTLE PEOLPE

Julia

Lost His Comb

In the morning when the big cock awoke, he stretched his legs and flapped his wings. When he went to the shelf for his comb, it was not there. He looked into every corner but the comb was nowhere to be found. He would not inquire, for he did not want the others to know about his misfortune.

Besides, he must fly to the housetop to sound his morning call to the chickens of the farmyard. He crowed loud and long. Cackling merrily the hens came out and looked up at their lord. They were about to start crowing in reply to the call when they all stopped at once. They blinked their eyes and tilted their heads to get a better view of the big cock on the housetop. Then they looked down and began to scratch for their breakfast. All the young cocks came trooping in. They glanced bravely up at the big cock and then crowed their loudest, a thing they had never done before. Choking with rage, the lord of the fowls shook his wattles threateningly and threw up his head to display his blood-red comb. Then he remembered that he had no comb at all!

"Ah, false hens," he muttered bitterly, "so it is my comb that you care for.

I must find it."

The big red cock, the lord of the poultry yard, flew down from his perch and skulked out into the bushes.

"I must find my comb," he said. "Who could be the rogue that stole it?"

He would not ask the hens. He would not ask the other cocks. He wanted to go to the owl for advice but the owl could not be disturbed in the daytime.

"I must get back my comb," he repeated. "Without my comb, I have no power. The hens are indifferent to me. The impudent cocks even dare look at me.

Just then he heard the splash of mud. Looking back, he saw the sire of all the pigs on the farm. Old Snout was taking a luxurious bath in a deep mudhole. Old Snout was an unrefined beast but not a snob. Neither was he ambitious. He did not aspire to rule the farm animals. So the cock thought his pride would not suffer if he asked the pig for help.

(To be continued next month.)

