

always, at the very beginning, so I shall first mention that as soon as we were all settled in our mountain cottage, Jessie and I begged Mamma to allow our rooms to be changed to the only two which were downstairs. In hot countries the sleeping-rooms are always upstairs, partly to be cooler and partly to avoid the risk of venomous insects; but there was no danger of heat where our little summer home was built, for the nights were always cold enough to allow us to use a blanket; and as for the scorpions, centipedes, ants, &c., we thought we could protect ourselves against them. We had discovered two charming little rooms, side by side, downstairs, opening with French windows on a verandah, the pillars of which were covered with beautiful creepers: from this verandah you stepped on a lawn sheltered from the sun by a grove of orange and mango trees, towards the south-east, and beyond that lay the garden, which sloped down to a long valley, divided into paddocks of the tall, bright-green Guinea-grass (so called because the seed was brought from Guinea, on the coast of Africa), of which the cows and horses were so fond.

The chief reason Jessie and I begged for these rooms was, that the verandah and the adjoining trees would be so nice for all our pets, and after some hesitation and a great many warnings against snakes, scorpions, and other insects, Mamma at last consented to allow us to change; so for a few days we were happy, and busy moving all our absurd little possessions down to their new quarters, which had hitherto only been used by gentlemen visitors, and were generally called the "Bachelor rooms." It took us some time to arrange our pictures, books, and ornaments to our own satisfaction, and dear Mamma was often called upon to give her opinion on our devices.

But the very first thing to be attended to was the comfort of the pets, and they certainly must have approved of the change. The parrots at once established themselves in a large tree, and we watched them with great delight clambering about its branches, nibbling at the fruit, and chattering incessantly. They were nine in number, and had been brought to us at different times in the nest some months before, when their beaks were quite soft, and we had to feed them on boiled rice and sugar. Nothing could be tamer than these birds were; when we sat down in our rocking-chairs in the verandah, they used to scramble and flutter out of their tree and come waddling towards us in a great hurry with their toes turned in, clambering up the arms of the chairs in the hope of getting a

piece of sugar-cane. I am sorry to say, however, that these parrots could not speak at all well; they whistled and chattered incessantly in their own way, but it was very difficult to teach them even a word or two, and their voices were thick and husky. It required a great many lessons before the cleverest of them could learn so much as a bar of one of Jessie's songs, and when he began to practise, all the other birds had a most insulting way of stopping their own chatter to listen to his "tra-la-la," and going off into peals of laughter, mingled with the negro exclamations of "Hi, hi," or "My king!" This conduct affronted Master Bully—that was his name, bestowed on account of his tyrannical and greedy nature—very much, and he always ceased the song directly the laughter began, and sat sulkily ruffling up his feathers. They were all of the same kind, these parrots; rather small, of a bright emerald-green colour, with a few red and blue wing feathers, and a gay yellow top-knot; their beaks were quite black, and so were their tongues. One of their wings was cut to keep them from joining the flocks of wild parrots which constantly flew over head. Their greatest enemies were the owls, who used to swoop upon the poor sleeping Polly and carry it off at night; we lost two in this way before we discovered the cause, but then we taught them to go to roost every evening in a large wooden cage under shelter of the verandah, the door of which was securely fastened, and our noisy pets lived to a good old age. It is the custom in Jamaica to have a cup of coffee brought to your bedside every morning at six o'clock, and as soon as our black maid "Rosetta" had awakened us, she used to open the French windows into the verandah, unfasten the door of the parrots' cage, and place a saucer of bread and milk on the threshold where we could see it. In a moment all the parrots were round it, chattering and gobbling it up; Bully had a bad habit of getting *into* the saucer and trampling the food into a mess, so Jessie and I were obliged to take it by turns to get up and drive him away and see fair play. As soon as they had finished their breakfast, they set off as fast as they could waddle to an enormous shallow pan of water, which was sunk to the level of the ground and filled twice a day with fresh water. It was such fun to watch them splashing and dashing the water over each other, enjoying their bath thoroughly; then they betook themselves to the shelter of the trees, and there dried and pruned their feathers, spending the remainder of their time in eating fruit and clambering about. In the middle of the day they generally took a nap,