

# THE KIND DEEDS MESSENGER

The Latham Foundation Story Service  
for the Public Schools



This picture of Zip was drawn from life the 4th of July, 1899, by F. Luis Mora, who has become one of the foremost painters of America. The original pencil sketch is owned by the author of the story.

## What Mr. Mann Told of Zip Coon as a Pet

By E. M. S. FITE

“THE meanest of all hunters is the one who kills the wild animal mother who is nursing her babies, for then the young ones are left absolutely helpless, as they cannot care for themselves,” said Mr. Mann to Tom and Virginia at story-hour time.

“This is to be a story of a raccoon and the way I came to have her for a pet; everything that I shall tell you really happened. When I was a boy we lived in the country six months of each year, and the particular summer that brought Zip to me I have never forgotten for Zip was the cunningest pet I ever had, and I had many pets; usually some new kind was added each year to my animal family of pets on the farm, for my father loved animals as much as I did, and encouraged my younger brother and me to have pets to whom we had to give the necessary care ourselves; we had to feed them and be fully responsible for them. If we didn't do that we were not allowed to keep them. There could be no neglect of animals where our father was.

“One day my father and I went about three miles from home to see a man about doing some ploughing for us. As we were on the way home we heard a shot fired from a small rifle and a lad called out in glee to someone: ‘I got her, I got her.’ And indeed he *had* got her.’ He had shot and killed a lovely mother

raccoon as she was scuttling up a tree to her nest. While the boy ran to pick up the dead mother I jumped out of the wagon and climbed the tree and saw two tiny baby raccoons in the nest. ‘Oh, father, come and see, come and see,’ I called, ‘the cunningest baby raccoons.’

“Father tried to make the boy understand what a terrible and cruel thing he had done to shoot the mother raccoon. At first the boy could not see anything wrong in what he had done. He said: ‘Why, my dad and all of the men shoot coons!’ ‘That may be so,’ said my father, ‘but it is because they do not know any better, and because they shoot them does not make the killing right.’ After talking with the boy for a long time father finally brought him to understand that animals have rights as well as human beings, and that it is a cruel thing to shoot any animal which is doing you no harm, and to kill just for what is called *sport*. A *real* sportsman never kills unnecessarily. The boy claimed the young raccoons as his, but said that he would sell one; the other one he wanted to take home himself after father had told him what a nice pet a raccoon made. He promised to be kind to the one he kept, and father bought one for me. But, oh, it was so sad to see that lovely mother raccoon lying there without the breath of life in her body and her two babies crying with hunger. Father was glad for me to have a raccoon for a pet, for often he had told

me about the lovely pet racoon he had when he was a lad and lived in the South on a large farm."

"Daddy, how did you feed the baby racoon?" asked Virginia, "and was she so very tiny; did she have teeth?"

"No, Virginia. To answer your last question first she had no teeth. She was indeed a tiny baby, and she had lived altogether on her mother's milk. You see that was one thing that made it so cruel to kill the mother. Her two babies were entirely dependent upon her for their living. They could not climb down from the nest to get solid food and if they could have done that they could not have eaten it as they had no teeth. Those babies would have starved to death if we had not taken them out of the nest and cared for them. My father did not *blame* the boy for what he had done. The boy knew no better. In killing he was doing just as he had seen grown men about him do. He took a gun and went out to kill any wild animal in sight. But another time the boy would have been greatly to blame, for the cruelty of such killing had been explained to him.

"I named the baby racoon Zip and, as I told you, she had no teeth so she had to take her milk from a bottle just as a human baby does sometimes. Mother and brother were much excited when we brought Zip home, for the little creature was hungry and when she cried it sounded just like a human baby. She was so pretty, so tiny and helpless. Mother went to the country store and bought a nursing bottle and a rubber nipple and when she came home she put warm milk in the bottle and held it for Zip to nurse. Zip was *very* hungry. The mother who was shot was probably on her way home to feed her babies. Zip took her milk lying on her back; she held the neck of the bottle between her front feet, which were shaped exactly like tiny little hands, and in her hurry to get the milk, which did not come fast enough to suit her, she pulled the rubber nipple off the bottle and the milk spilled all over her. Her surprise when this happened was very funny to see. It made us all laugh, and she had to make a new start when more milk was put into the bottle."

"Oh, father, that is funny, tell us some more!" said Tom, who was all eagerness over the story of Zip, for Tom loved 'really, righty stories,' as he called the true stories, those not just imagined.

"Well," continued Mr. Mann, "Zip kept us all interested and busy feeding her and watching her grow big and fat that summer. When her pretty little teeth came in then she ate bread and nuts. She loved nuts and ate a great many of them. I will tell you of a queer habit she had, that all racoons have in fact. The meaning of the racoon's name is 'the washer,' because he is a very clean animal. A racoon never puts anything into his mouth until he has first washed it. He lives usually near a stream of water so that he can have all of the water that he needs. He takes his food in his little hands and dips it in the water, rubbing it back and forth between his hands, or paws I suppose you would call them, before he eats it. Zip did this with her bread, and when the bread went all to pieces in the water she would scold it. She couldn't understand, and looked surprised whenever it happened. But Zip certainly reasoned about that bread, for she learned to dip it *quickly* in the water and eat it before it went to pieces. She did not rub it between her hands as she did her nuts and other hard food.

"To see Zip play was a joy. I would lie down on the

floor and close my eyes and pretend that I was asleep. Zip would creep up very softly and tickle the inside of my ears and raise my eyelids with her little paws, and when I jumped up away would go Zip and hide. We played hide and go seek together much of the time. Zip was very affectionate and loved to be petted and she loved each member of the family. She was just like one of us. She would let us roll her over and rough and tumble her in play and thought it great fun, but she would not let strangers do this with her. She was shy with strangers. When she curled up to take a nap she looked just like a great beautiful fur ball because she was so well fed and cared for. She did not have to go out to hunt her food like the wild animals do. She grew very fat and large for her age. At the age of six months she was larger than most full-grown racoons. Her fur was very lovely. It was long, thick and soft, of a silver gray color, lighter at the end than near the body. She had a long bushy tail and the sharpest little nose and two bright eyes. Those little eyes were the quickest seeing eyes you can well imagine. Because Zip never ate meat she had no wild animal odor such as many wild meat-eating animals have. Her beautiful fur had a peculiar sweet, clean odor to it when you buried your face in it, as we often did when we petted her, or in play."

"What became of your Zip, daddy?" asked Virginia.

"That question brings me to a sad part of Zip's story, Virginia, but to a very necessary part for both of you to hear," said Mr. Mann. "You, Tom, would not set a trap for an animal, but you may come across boys who like to trap animals, and you may be able to make them see how cruel it is.

"Zip had wandered off for the first time since I had her, and for two, nearly three days I hunted everywhere for her, finally going far into the woods where I had set two traps near a stream to catch some brook mink for their fur. The traps had been loaned to me by a man in the neighborhood and I thought it would be smart to trap animals as he did. I did not tell my father what I had done as I wanted to surprise him with my catch. I loved Zip more than any pet I ever had and I was sick and sore at heart at the thought of losing her. As I went through the woods I called 'Zip, Zip!' and as I got near to the stream where the two traps were set I heard a pitiful little whimper which made me rush forward quickly. I saw Zip caught in one of the traps. She must have been there for three days, for she could not hold up her head, she was so weak from pain, thirst and hunger.

"In my hurry to get to Zip so that I might free her from the trap I forgot the other trap and my foot slipped right down through its open jaws and it sprung and caught my leg in a vise. At first I did not feel afraid, as I thought I could free myself. I wanted to get to Zip, that was my main thought, but when the trap sprung I fell over a fallen tree in such a way that the chain of the trap caught on a broken branch and held my foot in the air. The chain nor the branch would not give way and there I lay and could not lift myself up, and dear little Zip lay within a few feet of me, suffering and almost dead, and I could not help her.

"The leg began to swell and the pain was so very great it made me sick and faint. I tried to lift the log that the trap was chained to, but could not move it. I was getting weaker as the time passed and after being in the trap for hours I fainted. When I regained

consciousness the mental and physical suffering was terrible, for it seemed to me that I would die before father or anyone else could find me. Here was I alone in the woods about to die slowly and miserably and with no one to blame but myself. All of the wrong things I had ever done came up in my thoughts, and the thing that hurt most of all was the cruelty to poor little Zip, who had never done anything but bring pleasure to all who loved her, and this was to be her terrible end."

Mr. Mann continued: "From where I lay I could see Zip make a feeble effort now and then, and she gave the most pitiful whimpers of pain. She had tried to chew her leg free, but hadn't got it clear and it still clung in the trap. I remembered having read of a trapper who had disappeared and no one ever heard of him again. Some men thought he had been killed and eaten by wolves, but in the spring a party of fishermen found a skeleton in a bear trap, which proved later to be that of the poor trapper. And I wondered if I, too, was to meet such a fate. As long as my voice held out I called and called as loud as I could, hoping that someone would hear me, but no one came and it seemed to me that I would go mad with the pain and the feeling of helplessness. It must have been midnight or later when father with other men came through the forest with lanterns searching for me. They kept calling me and my voice finally reached them.

"When the men loosened the trap from my leg and father picked me up in his arms they were making ready to start for home when I stopped them. 'No, father, don't go yet—get Zip,' I said. 'I found her here in that other trap and I am afraid she is dead.' So they stopped and took Zip from the trap where she had suffered such cruel torture, and they wrapped her gently in one of their coats, first trying to give her water to drink, but she was so far gone drinking was too great an effort.

"When we got Zip home her leg was put in splints and she was given water and some warm liquid food to try to revive her, but she had suffered too much and too long to be brought back to us. Dear little Zip; we all loved her so dearly, and to know that I was the cause of her death because of my lack of kindly thought for God's creatures nearly broke my boy heart. It was a dreadful way to be taught a lesson, but I can tell you that I learned one then. Nothing on earth could ever induce me to set a trap after that, for I knew too well the suffering of animals when caught."

"But, father," asked Tom, "isn't it necessary to kill some animals because of the harm they do?"

"Well, Tom, if vermin, so-called predatory animals, must be killed they can be killed in a merciful way by using a trap that kills at once, or caught in a cage trap and then killed. We should *never* use a steel trap. We must prevent the use of such traps as far as we can. It isn't that most people intend to be cruel, Tom. They just *don't think*, that's the trouble, *they do not think*. The steel rat trap is a terrible instrument of torture. Many a poor rat is held helpless and in pain for hours before he is taken out and killed. This trap, too, with all other steel traps must be put out of use. I am told by men who have tried it that a good vermin trap for house and field is a platform lightly balanced over a vessel of water, so that when the creature walks out on it for the bait he is tipped into the water. Drowning is an almost painless death."

"Oh, daddy dear, I am so sorry Zip got killed," cried Virginia, her eyes full of tears.

"Yes, darling, so am I, but her death taught me how to *think and care for all animals* in a way I never knew before, so that in teaching me that dear little Zip did a very big work, and if knowing about Zip will teach you and Tom to *think, to feel, and to care for all of your little wild brothers* with greater love than before, why I shall be glad that I told you the sad part of Zip's story as well as the happy part. You see, the steel trap that caught me left the everlasting mark of its teeth on my leg, so that I could never forget the experience if I wanted to."

As Mr. Mann said good-night to Tom and Virginia he reminded them to think twice before acting, and then to do to their animal friends as they themselves would be done by. By doing that they could not go far wrong in their treatment of animals or humans.

## QUESTIONS

1. What animal is told about in this story?
2. What does the name mean, and why was this animal given that name?
3. Is a racoon born with teeth?
4. What kind of food does a baby racoon eat, and how would you feed one if he had lost his mother?
5. What food does a racoon like when he is weaned?
6. Why is it cruel to kill an animal mother when she has young?
7. Is the steel trap the best way to catch animals?
8. What happens to an animal caught in a steel trap?
9. What kind of a trap should be used to trap vermin that must be killed?
10. Have the farmers found a good way to kill vermin, and how?
11. What lesson did Mr. Mann learn as a boy when he was caught in a steel trap?
12. How should we act toward our animal brothers?

## The Art of Being Kind Is All the Old World Needs

HERE are the reports of two splendid KIND DEEDS done by KIND DEEDS CLUB members in Chicago, Illinois, of which we feel sure the California comrades will be happy to learn. The first one, about the butterfly, was sent to us last autumn at the beginning of the school year, but this is the earliest opportunity we have had for printing it. It was sent by Mrs. Harriette T. Treadwell, Principal of the Scanlan School, who testified to it. In the Scanlan School there are more than 1000 KIND DEEDS CLUB members. The second one was sent to us by Mrs. Krahl, whom we know, and she wrote: "I can vouch for it, as William is my 14-year-old son. I call this real courage from a boy of 14 years, an age when a boy does not like to be thought 'different'."

"The other morning as I was on my way to school I saw a monarch butterfly with beautiful markings lying on the grass, his wing split its entire length. I picked him up carefully and took him to school, where we all admired him.

"At recess Miss Mather and Miss De Graff decided to mend the wing. They cut a strip of book-mending tissue, and holding the parts of the broken wing together they pasted the tissue over it. It was a successful operation.

"Miss Mather tried to keep Mr. Butterfly until we came in from recess to see him, but he beat against the window-pane and was so eager to get out into the

great world that she opened the window and he soared away, high in the sky.

"MARY AUGUSTINE, 6th Grade."

"One day William went into the Hyde Park Y. M. C. A. and found a crowd of boys chasing a tiny, terrified mouse around and around the room, throwing their balls, bats and anything else available at the poor little creature. Straightaway William, who was on his roller skates, skated up and caught the 'wee, timorous beastie' and as straightaway made for the door, and freedom for his tiny charge."

## How to Form a Kind Deeds Club

THIS is an answer to the great number of questions received from teachers and pupils as to what is necessary in order to form a Latham Foundation KIND DEEDS CLUB, also some hints as to conducting the club.

First there is the *pledge* to be learned by each child who wishes to become a member. The pledge—"I will try to be kind to every living creature and to cultivate a spirit of protection toward all who are weaker than myself, and I will try to treat animals as I would wish to be treated if I were in their place"—is printed at the top of a club enrollment card, on which there is space for the members to sign their names. Each child should understand what it means to take a pledge—that it should not be done thoughtlessly.

Next the *poem* is to be learned so that the child understands it and may tell in his or her own words the meaning of the poem. Here are two, either of which may be used, according to the age of the child:

### Be Kind to Living Things

Little children, bright and fair, Bless with every needful care, Always bear this thing in mind, God commands us to be kind.	Kind not only to our friends, Those on whom our life depends, Kind not only to the poor, Those who poverty endure;
But, in spite of form or feature, Kind to every living creature, Never pain or anguish bring Even to the smallest thing.	

### On Kindness to Animals

EDGAR A. GUYER

They have no voice to ask us For the pity which they need, With shame they cannot task us Howe'er their hearts may bleed.	We call them God's dumb creatures, And yet we know they feel, For oft their anguish features Their sufferings reveal.
However they despise us For all the hurts they bear, They cannot criticize us Of say that we're unfair.	They cannot ask for kindness, Nor for our mercy plead, Yet cruel is our blindness Which does not see their need.
World-over, town or city, God trusts us with this task; To give our love and pity To those who cannot ask.	

When these things have been done the children may get together, and with the advice and counsel of their teacher form their club by electing a President, a Secretary and a Treasurer from among their own members. It is well to have a regular time set for the club meetings, once a week or once a month, as desired. The President should preside at the meetings, and the Secretary should keep a record of all reports of Kind Deeds done, which are handed in. When the Treasurer calls the roll it is suggested that each member pay his or her dues by telling in very few words a kind deed done. This is the way of paying "do's," which is much nicer than handling money, and of greater value.

To win the *KIND DEEDS BUTTON*, which is the next step, a club member must do two *KIND DEEDS*.

one to a human being and one to an animal. Then when the Secretary reports to the Foundation the number of buttons earned and the *KIND DEEDS* that earned them the buttons will be mailed to the class teacher, who will distribute them. Should a member forget the pledge taken and do an unkind deed the button will be forfeited and must be given to the teacher to keep until it is again earned. The members decide in meeting if a button has been forfeited and when it has been re-earned. A member doing an unkind deed is in honor bound to report it to members in meeting. Members should be encouraged to perform all duties connected with their club and call upon their teacher when necessary in an advisory capacity only.

It will be found that when a child really tries to live up to the pledge a greater courtesy and consideration will extend to playmates and adults in consequence of the constant thought and care in regard to pets and other animals. The desire to see justice and kindness meted out to all living creatures will in time become second nature. The desire for ruthless destruction of things, animate or inanimate, which appears to be inborn in some natures, will be modified and in most instances entirely eradicated.

The Latham Foundation stands ready to offer assistance in connection with the club work and any phase of humane work, so please let us hear from club members and teachers from time to time, and especially do we want to learn of the *KIND DEEDS* that the members are doing so that mention may be made of them in *The Messenger* as a help and incentive to others.

## The Kind Deeds Messenger

**B**EARS a Happy New Year greeting to all old friends, and to the new friends who are responding so generously to the Foundation's offer of co-operation in Humane Education work.

The Superintendents of the schools of Bakersfield, Sonoma County, Nevada County and Yuba County have adopted *The Kind Deeds Messenger* as a teaching medium for their schools since the November issue, and the Superintendent of the Pasadena city schools has issued a requisition for a supply for this purpose. The Superintendent of the El Dorado County schools has written to inquire regarding price for supplying his schools with the *Messenger* for the next six months.

Our good friend, Superintendent David E. Martin, of the Alameda County schools, has written us: "Permit me to say in this connection that your work is paying handsome dividends from our standpoint. I am glad to know the same is growing and spreading. It should."

Mrs. John G. Babcock, Librarian of the Kern County Free Library, Bakersfield, California, asks: "Will you kindly give me the subscription price of *The Kind Deeds Messenger*? I should like to see it distributed to every branch library and school in Kern County."

From farther afield—Indiana University, Extension Division, Bloomington, Indiana—comes this request: "Would you please send me samples of your free literature and list of your publications on Humane Education?" Signed, Edna Hatfield Edmondson, Field Worker.

Splendid reports continue to come in from the San Francisco schools as the result of visits to those schools in November by representatives of The Latham Foundation. The visits were made in response to a request from the Superintendent's office to demonstrate the Foundation method of teaching Humane Education, and to organize and stimulate an interest in *The Kind Deeds Clubs*. In many of the schools the clubs are in active operation and the children have earned their *Kind Deeds Buttons*. Some of the reports will be published later.

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