



The Musical Triumph of Mr. Thaddeus Toad

The Story of the Cut-Outs—By Harrison Gady

HM! IT'S fine weather!" said Ol' Mister Toad as he poked his head out from under a piece of bark which lay at the edge of the forest overlooking the meadow pool and saw the early morning sun glistening on the dewdrops. "It looks as though it will be a perfect day for us toadlets."



"And a perfect day for us birds, too," piped a small, brisk voice from right above his head.

"Well! Well! If it isn't my little friend, Bobby Bobolink!" exclaimed Ol' Mister Toad as he spied the tiny bird. "I'm sure glad to see you, Bobby. What's all the news?"

"No news at all, Thaddeus Toad," chirped little Bobby, "'ceptin' us birds are going to hold our last song rehearsal this afternoon before starting our spring flight to the North; and it's our most important rehearsal, too, for you know we've been delayed."

"Delayed, did you say?" queried Ol' Mister Toad. "I hadn't heard anything about it. What's been the trouble?"

"Trouble enough," returned Bobby. "We haven't found a single songster among us who can reach high C, and Professor Thrush, our singing master, says that without one our big spring concert in the North will be a failure."

"H'm! That's sad," returned Ol' Mister Toad very sympathetically. "I guess I'll have to hop over and offer my services."

"Offer nothing," broke in a curt voice, and out from behind a mossy tree trunk stepped a pompous young Finch. "Huh, I guess you'd spoil the concert all right," said he. Then, turning to Bobby Bobolink: "I'm shocked and surprised, sir, to find you hobnobbing with this shabby old party. You know we Finches never associate with toads."

LITTLE BOBBY hopped right off his feet, too surprised to reply, while Ol' Mister Toad could only gasp, he felt so terribly insulted. Drawing his head under the sheltering piece of bark, he tried to think out a suitable retort; when he had done so his remarks fell on empty air, for both birds had flown away.

"Oh, well," he mused glumly to himself, "I may not have a voice. But who knows? I haven't tried to see what I can do. Right here and now I'm going to try, and no rascally Finch is going to tell me what I can do an' what I can't do, so there!" and he

puckered his brow and scowled. Taking a look about to make sure he had no listeners, Ol' Mister Toad slowly opened his wide, funny mouth and tried to sing. Yes, Ol' Mister Toad tried to sing; and it was really pitiful, for only a queer jumble of sounds issued from his throat.

ALOOK of deep disappointment came into his eyes, and he tried harder than ever, but really it looked hopeless. Nothing but those queer gurgling sounds came forth. "May as well give it up," said he.

Just then something happened. A dragon fly suddenly winged its mysterious way right past Ol' Mister Toad's head, and the drone of its wings made a curious high note. Mr. Toad listened a moment and, using that sound as a pitch pipe, raised his voice again.

A clear, rich, beautiful note rang out and floated away over the water of the pool.

Ol' Mister Toad's eyes nearly bulged out of his head, he was so surprised.

"What's that!" exclaimed he in amazement. Again he tried to repeat the note, and again that clear, sweet note came forth from his throat. To



say that Thaddeus Toad was delighted is mild, for in all the wide world there was nobody so pleased as he. He sang it over and over and over. It was always clear and beautiful, but try as hard as he could he could not sing a different note.

"Oh, well," says he, "that's so very beautiful I don't have to sing another note. I am just going to practice it until it's perfect."

So through all that long morning Ol' Mister Toad sat right on that sand bar in the pool and rehearsed that single note, never stopping until it was time for him to hop home. After a hasty lunch he grabbed his tattered old hat and hopped away over the hill toward a cluster of lofty trees in whose spreading branches it

had been the custom, for generations back, for the birds to gather to be taught their various songs and calls.

The week preceding their flight north was a l w a y s given over to a great rehearsal, and at the very moment Ol' Mister Toad was hurrying through his lunch all the birds for miles about were flying with whirring wings to these very trees in eagerness for the afternoon rehearsal.

"Attention!" twittered Professor Thrush as he looked out over the vast gathering of birds. "To-day we must find a songster among us who is able to reach high C, for we leave to-morrow and it's our last chance."

With this short address ended, he waved his baton, and the last singing lesson commenced. Professor Thrush worked harder than he had ever worked before, and he tested the voice of every bird present. But in all the number there was not one who could reach the desired high C.

"It's a bitter disappointment to me," said Professor Thrush sadly, "but I guess we'll have to omit the solo and proceed with the grand chorus."

THEN with another wave of his baton that entire gathering of birds broke forth into one mighty melody of song.

Suddenly there was great astonishment, for right out from that chorus rose a clear, beautiful note, and it was high C. Professor Thrush nearly fell from his perch, and with a smile of delight he exclaimed, "Will the bird who sang that note please step forward?"



There was no movement from anyone—not even the rustle of a feather. "I guess he doesn't hear," said the Professor, and he repeated the request; but again no bird stepped forward.

"Perhaps the bird is bashful," said he, "but one should be proud, indeed, to acknowledge such a wonderful voice."

(Continued on Next Page)



If you wish to see Mr. Thaddeus Toad and the members of the choir, print the color pictures on cardstock. Or print out the pictures on regular paper and mount the cut-outs on some lightweight cardboard using paste or glue. Cut carefully around the tabs at the dotted lines and bend them back so the pictures will stand upright. Line up the pictures as shown above.

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Unsuccessful in his attempt to find the singer, Professor Thrush slyly said to himself, "I'll have to plan to catch the shy one," and he flew about among his best singers and whispered in their ears. When the chorus was again sung, these singers stopped suddenly when they came to the high note, and they stopped so very suddenly that the beautiful note alone was heard. Where do you suppose it came from? From right out of the opening in a hollow log.

With a smile of joy at the success of his scheme, Professor Thrush flew directly over to that log and shouted, "Some bird is playing a prank on us. What bird is in there?"

"No bird at all," came back a tiny voice. "It's only me, Mister Thaddeus Toad." And he stepped out of the log.

"Did you sing that note?" questioned the professor in amazement.

"Sure, I did," replied Thaddeus proudly, "and just to prove it I'll sing it again right now."

Drawing a deep breath and expanding his chest, he took off his old battered hat and gave a hitch to his faded pantaloons, and then from out of his funny little mouth came that clear, beautiful note.

Professor Thrush grasped Ol' Mister Toad's hand with his wing. "I congratulate you, sir. You're the greatest singer alive. I beg you to sing some more."

"Shucks," said Ol' Mister Toad, "I don't wish to shine as a musical genius. It's too

much work. I only did it to help you fellows out."

And try as hard as they could, that great cluster of birds about Ol' Mister Toad couldn't get him to sing another note.

"You'll have to come north with us anyway," said Professor Thrush. "We must have you for our great spring concert, and you can have anything you ask."

"Well, I might go, jes to oblige you," said Ol' Mister Toad, considering. "But these two things I shall insist upon: First, you must carry me on your backs, with plenty of good flies for food; and, secondly"—and he looks round until his eye falls upon the pompous young Finch who had insulted him in the morning—"that young Finch over there must not be allowed to spoil any concerts with his singing."

"Done!" says Professor Thrush. "We'll not allow him to open his mouth."

"Didn't I tell you, Betsy," said Ol' Mister Toad that evening as he was packing his trunk for the trip north, "that I never allow a Finch to insult me?"

"Yes, Thaddeus, dear," replied his wife. "You're very wonderful and our fortune is made; but you know, I think it more wonderful that you knew enough not to try to sing a different note for those birds."

"Ah! That's it," said Ol' Mister Toad, with a knowing look. "The moral is: If you wish to be thought great, never attempt more than you can do."