

## **The Little Spider's First Web**

by Clara Dillingham Pierson

The first thing our little Spider remembered was being crowded with a lot of other little Spiders in a tiny brown house. This tiny house had no windows, and was very warm and dark and stuffy. When the wind blew, the little Spiders would hear it rushing through the forest near by, and would feel their round brown house swinging like a cradle. It was fastened to a bush by the edge of the forest, but they could not know that, so they just wiggled and pushed and ate the food that they found in the house, and wondered what it all meant. They didn't even guess that a mother Spider had made the brown house and put the food in it for her Spider babies to eat when they came out of their eggs. She had put the eggs in, too, but the little Spiders didn't remember the time when they lay curled up in the eggs. They didn't know what had been nor what was to be—they thought that to eat and wiggle and sleep was all of life. You see they had much to learn.

One morning the little Spiders found that the food was all gone, and they pushed and scrambled harder than ever, because they were hungry and wanted more. Exactly what happened nobody knew, but suddenly it grew light, and some of them fell out of the house. All the rest scrambled after, and there they stood, winking and blinking in the bright sunshine, and feeling a little bit dizzy, because they were on a shaky web made of silvery ropes.

Just then the web began to shake even more, and a beautiful great mother Spider ran out on it. She was dressed in black and yellow velvet, and her eight eyes glistened and gleamed in the sunlight. They had never dreamed of such a wonderful creature.

"Well, my children," she exclaimed, "I know you must be hungry, and I have breakfast all ready for you." So they began eating at once, and the mother Spider told them many things about the meadow and the forest, and said they must amuse themselves while she worked to get food for them. There was no father Spider to help her, and, as she said, "Growing children must have plenty of good plain food."

You can just fancy what a good time the baby Spiders had. There were a hundred and seventy of them, so they had no chance to grow lonely, even when their mother was away. They lived in this way for quite a while, and grew bigger and stronger every day. One morning the mother Spider said to her biggest daughter, "You are quite old enough to work now, and I will teach you to spin your web."

The little Spider soon learned to draw out the silvery ropes from the pocket in her body where they were made and kept, and very soon she had one fastened at both ends to branches of the bush. Then her mother made her walk out to the middle of her rope bridge, and spin and fasten two more, so that it looked like a shining cross. After that was done, the mother showed her something like a comb, which is part of a Spider's foot, and taught her how to measure, and put more ropes out from the middle of the cross, until it looked like the spokes of a wheel.

The little Spider got much discouraged, and said, "Let me finish it some other time; I am tired of working now."

The mother Spider answered, "No, I cannot have a lazy child."

The little one said, "I can't ever do it, I know I can't."

"Now," said the mother, "I shall have to give you a Spider scolding. You have acted as lazy as the Tree Frog says boys and girls sometimes do. He has been up near the farm-house, and says that he has seen there children who do not like to work. The meadow people could hardly believe such a thing at first. He says they were cross and unhappy children, and no wonder! Lazy people are never happy. You try to finish the web, and see if I am not right. You are not a baby now, and you must work and get your own food."

So the little Spider spun the circles of rope in the web, and made these ropes sticky, as all careful spiders do. She ate the loose ends and pieces that were left over, to save them for another time, and when it was done, it was so fine and perfect that her brothers and sisters crowded around, saying, "Oh! oh! oh! how beautiful!" and asked the mother to teach them. The little web-spinner was happier than she had ever been before, and the mother began to teach her other children. But it takes a long time to teach a hundred and seventy children.

Source:

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