

## The Bird

by Count Lyof N. Tolstoi

It was Serozha's birthday, and he received many different gifts; peg tops, and hobby horses, and pictures. But Serozha's uncle gave him a gift that he prized above all the rest - it was a trap for snaring birds.

The trap was constructed in such a way that a board was fitted on the frame and shut down upon the top. If seed was scattered on the board, and the trap was put out in the yard, the little bird would fly down, hop upon the board, the board would give way, and the trap would shut with a clap.

Serozha was delighted, and he ran into the house to show his mother the trap.

His mother said:

"It is not a good plaything. What do you want to do with birds? Why do you want to torture them?"

"I am going to put them in a cage," Serozha said. "They will sing, and I will feed them."

He got some seed, scattered it on the board, and set the trap in the garden. And he stood by and expected the birds to fly down. But the birds were afraid of him and would not come near the cage. Serozha ran in to get something to eat, and left the cage.

After dinner he went to look at it. The cage had shut, and in it a little bird was beating against the bars.

Serozha took up the bird, and carried it into the house.

"Mother, I have caught a bird!" he cried. "I think it is a nightingale, and how its heart beats!"

His mother said it was a wild canary. "Be careful! Don't hurt it - you would better let it go."

"No," he said. "I am going to give it something to eat and drink."

Serozha put the bird in a cage, and for two days gave it seed and water, and cleaned the cage. But on the third day he forgot all about it, and did not change the water.

And his mother said, "See here, you have forgotten your bird. You would better let it go."

Serozha thrust his hand in the cage and began to clean it, but the little bird was frightened and fluttered. After Serozha had cleaned the cage, he went to get some water. His mother saw that he had forgotten to shut the cage door, and she called after him.

"Serozha, shut up your cage, else your bird will fly out and hurt itself."

She had hardly spoken the words when the bird found the door, was delighted, spread its wings, and flew around the room toward the window. Serozha came running in, picked up the bird, and put it back in the cage. The bird was still alive, but it lay on its breast, with its wings spread out, and breathed heavily. Serozha looked and looked at it, and began to cry.

"Mother, what can I do now?" he asked.

"You can do nothing now," she replied.

Serozha stayed by the cage all day. He did nothing but look at the bird. And all the time the bird lay on its breast and breathed hard and fast.

When Serozha went to bed, the bird was dead. Serozha could not get to sleep for a long time; every time that he shut his eyes he seemed to see the bird still lying and sighing.

In the morning when Serozha went to his cage, he saw the bird lying on its back, with its legs crossed, and all stiff.

After that Serozha never again snared birds.