

# Mother Penny



Gertrude Robinson



THE GOOD AND THE BEAUTIFUL LIBRARY

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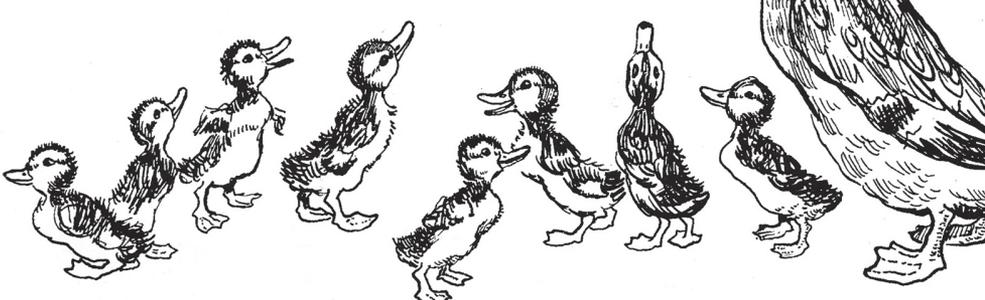
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# MOTHER PENNY

**T**HE WIND WENT, “WHIEUH, WHIEUH,”  
higher and higher. Shriller and shriller.

The balsam tree back of the sea wall shivered. It shook off spicy smells. They mixed with salty smells.

The great, wide ocean rushed in. Crash! Crash! Right against the sea wall in front of the little house on the ledges, it made thunder.

One little corner below the sea wall it didn't touch. So far it came; no farther.

It never reached that little corner of sand and pebbles where the wall of stones, set together, met the wall of ledges.

Salt water, just so far. No farther, ever. That was why a stout and very tall weed grew there. Betty called it the horsetail. It was straight and stiff, a spike, all brown and seedy.

Something else was there.

Something, just a black blob in



moonlight when it slipped between scampering clouds. Something all spread out. Something that made a noise, a soft quacking to answer little piping whistles.

The whistles came from under feathered wings, from under breast feathers. They were fluffed out like an umbrella, all Mother Penny's feathers.

Close to the horsetail stalk she sat, beak to the sea. She loved the feel of salt spray over her head. Mother Penny wasn't afraid of any sea that raced. Not of any wind that blew. She was resting, not because she was tired. Mother Penny could ride the sea and the wind all day and all night. She loved it. Salt spray. Salt water. Winds that tickled her feathers.

Only a strange thing had happened.

Under her feathers were ten baby ducklings. Little things they were, hardly yet able to say, “Chee-chee-chee.”

They were little whistlers, frail as soap bubbles.

Now they were lost. Mother Penny herself was lost.

It had been a bright day with warm sun when she paddled away from the island where the ten babies had stepped out of their shells. They were too tiny to ride the water far. That didn't matter. She gathered them under her wings. Some got on her back.

They slept. They woke up. They let the gentle water carry them, tiny flat feet going up, down. Wee paddles, pink pancakes on green water, were their feet.



They ate bits of green things floating on the water. They climbed back under warm feathers to ride.

Babies under a floating pillow, that was what they were.

They were on the way to a new home. Mother Penny was wise. She never brought up her babies where they hatched out of the nest. She knew about skunks and weasels and snakes. She was on the way to a paradise of wild ducks, an island out at sea. Wild rice grew out there, and there were grasses gone to seed, and all over the rocks clung green, salty salads for the babies to eat. She could stand on her head in the shallow water near shore and pick up little shelly things for the babies to whistle over. When it came cold weather Mother

Penny didn't mind. The babies would be grown. There would be fish washing up on the shore to be eaten. There was a hollow place in the rocks to hide in, out of the wind. There was a spring of fresh water. It went gurgle, gurgle all the time.

Men never came there, not to stay.

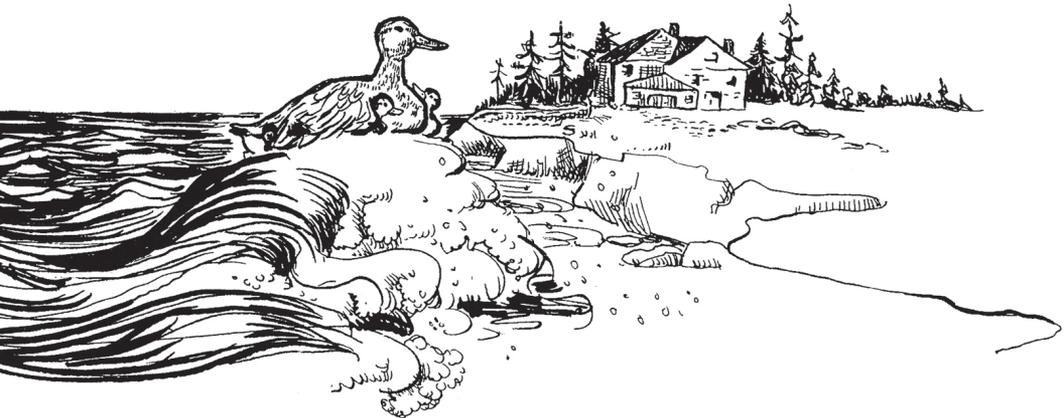
Mother Penny was free as the wind. Free as the air.

She knew some ducks went inland to bring up their ducklings instead of out to sea. They had learned to live near those beings with two legs who went on the water in boats. They had learned to stay near the houses where the two-legged beings lived. They had forgotten about bringing up their babies away from the place where the nest had been.



Now it had happened to Mother Penny.  
A wind had come along. It had driven  
a huge wave ahead of it. On the wave was  
Mother Penny, and beneath her wings  
were ten bits of fluff on pipe-stem legs  
mounted on flat pink feet.

The wind carried Mother Penny in from  
the sea. Right toward the shore of a big  
island where men lived it carried her and  
the wave. Into a long, narrow cove the wave  
crowded. It had to rear up like a frightened  
horse because it couldn't spread out.



# Mother Penny

Mother Penny was wise. She never brought up her babies where they hatched out of the nest. She knew about skunks and weasels and snakes. She was on the way to a paradise of wild ducks, an island out at sea.

Mother Penny and her ten little ducklings find themselves lost and alone when a fierce storm deposits them on a strange island. There they benefit from selfless love and loyalty as new friends care for their needs, save them from unfamiliar dangers, and even provide a very unexpected helper.

