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Evelyn Decides Something

Mary Graham Bonner

One morning, two birds were having a quiet conversation at the Zoo.

"It is something I cannot understand," said Mrs. Heron. "Just when our little ones are born — that is exactly when they shoot us. And leave the babies behind to starve."

"All for a hat," said Mrs. Bird of Paradise, and shook her head.



The aigrette feathers that herons and birds of paradise grew in breeding season — the long, delicate, shimmering plumes that meant they had chosen a mate and were raising a family — these were the feathers that fashionable ladies wore on their hats. And to get them, the birds had to be shot. The eggs and chicks left in the nests did not survive.

"I can only hope," said Mrs. Bird of Paradise, "that children will come to the Zoo and hear about us, and go home and tell their mothers. I believe many people simply don't know."

"They strike us down when we're dancing," said Mrs. Heron quietly. "When we're happiest. And then mothers wear other mothers on their hats."

"Better times ahead," said Mrs. Bird of Paradise. "We must hope for better times."

When Evelyn heard her daddy tell this story, she sat very still for a moment.

"I've made up my mind," she said at last. "I will never, ever wear feathers from a bird that had to be killed. Never. But I want to do more than that." She was already thinking hard. "I'm going to start a club. A club for girls who'll all promise the same thing. We'll meet every month, and at each meeting someone will tell about a bird she's seen. And most of all, we'll never be cruel."

Jack, who had been listening, looked up. "I think there ought to be a boys' club too," he said. "For studying birds and taking photographs. We'll never steal eggs."

"That's exactly right," said Evelyn.

And they both meant it.

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