

Sukhomlynsky News



After school

When Vira Grygorivna sat down to mark the students' homework in their exercise books, Myshko knew in advance that he would not be praised for his efforts. He had written in a hurry because the other boys had been waiting for him to play ball outside.

Finally, the teacher opened Myshko's exercise book and looked at his writing. 'Is this how a grade three student writes?' she asked. 'Well, you are going to have to stay back after school.'

Myshko felt embarrassed. He had never been asked to stay back after school. He knew in his heart that it was his fault. When all the other students left to go home, Myshko sat in the back row and opened his exercise book.

'Why aren't you going home?' asked Vira Grygorivna.

'Because you told me to stay back after school,' said Myshko.

'Oh, yes, I forgot ... Of course, you must stay back. Re-write the work that wasn't done properly. I'll come back and check it. Don't dare go home without my permission,' said the teacher.

Vira Grygorivna left, and Myshko started working on the exercise. He wrote everything very neatly because he was not in a hurry anymore, and he wanted the teacher to praise his work. But for some reason, the teacher did not return. Somewhere far down the hall the clock struck three.

Myshko re-wrote the exercise again. Now, he gave attention to every letter. He was so absorbed in his work that he did not notice another hour pass. Down the hall the clock struck four.

Myshko sat and waited for his teacher, but she did not come. Another hour passed. It was early autumn, and the classroom began to grow dark. At seven o'clock, Auntie Mariia, the cleaner, entered the classroom.

'My dear boy, why are you still here?' she asked in astonishment.

'The teacher told me to stay after school,' answered Myshko.

Auntie Mariia stared at the boy for a long time, then shook her head and said, 'Go home, dear boy.'

'How can I go home without Vira Grygorivna's permission?' asked Myshko.

'I am giving you permission,' answered Auntie Mariia, firmly.

Her voice sounded so confident that Myshko asked joyfully, 'Did Vira Grygorivna tell you to give me permission?'

'Yes, she did,' answered Auntie Mariia, and she gave a sigh.



Plant and animal stories

Dear reader,

I hope you are well.

*This month's newsletter contains another 14 stories from **I'll Tell you a Story ... Philosophy for Children.***

Many of these stories show a deep sympathy for plants and animals.

Just over one hundred years ago a sage wrote:

'Give your affection for at least five minutes every day to trees and animals, to birds and fishes. You will soon discover in them a portion of your own life ... treat them as members of humanity with full right to live and enjoy ... Remember, birds and animals are the friends of trees, and trees are the friends of man.'

This seems to me to be an expression of the spirit that imbues so many of Sukhomlynsky's stories.

Best wishes,

Alan Cockerill



From I'll tell you a story ...

He rescued the ladybird

This happened during the summer. The sun baked the earth all day, but then dark clouds covered the sky, and rain thundered down.

A boy named Vasytko was sitting under a tall, spreading mulberry tree. He was not afraid of the rain. He was protected from it by the tree's thick foliage. It was dry under the mulberry tree, but just beside it, the rain was streaming in torrents. One of those torrents was gradually filling a pit just next to the tree, creating a tiny lake. In the middle of that lake was a tiny island. The water was rising steadily, and at any moment that island would disappear.

Suddenly, Vasytko spotted a small red ladybird on the island. It was running from one side of the island to the other. 'Why doesn't it fly away?' Vasytko wondered. He felt sorry for the ladybird.

Meanwhile, the island was growing smaller and smaller. Before Vasytko knew it, it was the size of a large coin. Then, it was no bigger than the smallest coin. The ladybird had no room to move.

Vasytko ran out into the rain and was soaked through in an instant. But he managed to rescue the ladybird.

The boy and the burdock

A boy was crossing a meadow. A prickly seed case from a burdock plant stuck to his trousers. The seed case was curious and wanted to move somewhere new. The boy was going to a village and the seed case travelled with him, looking in awe at the houses, the wide streets, and the lofty power poles. The seed case spotted some lovely green grass near a three-story building. He liked the look of that place, so he pricked the boy's leg, and the boy threw the prickly seed case into the grass.

The building that the seed case had spotted was a school. A year later, amongst the grass, the children noticed the broad leaves of a strange plant with a violet flower. A bumblebee was buzzing above the flower. The children surrounded the violet flower, wondering how it could have grown there. With bated breath, the violet flower listened to the children's words. The flower looked into each child's face, seeking the familiar face of the boy. There he was! He was gazing at the flower with all the other children. The violet flower smiled at the boy and leaned towards him, spreading its petals, and whispering, 'Thank you, boy, for coming to the meadow and helping me move to this lovely place.'

However, the boy did not hear the burdock's whisper. He had long forgotten about the prickly seed case.

A chick's first feelings of fear

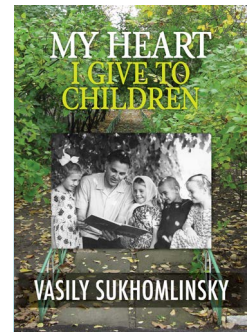
In a warm nest, under a mother-hen, a tiny chick hatched out of a white egg. The chick pecked a hole in the thick shell, cracked it open, crawled out of the nest, and screwed up his eyes in awe. Everything around him was so bright and wonderful: the warm sun, the green grass, and the flowers swaying in a light breeze.

The little yellow chick started running around. His eyes shone with happiness. He wanted to share his joy with somebody. Then the chick saw a huge beast. The beast was long and round with shining white

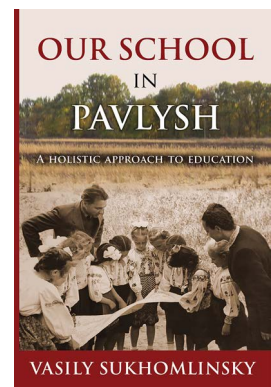
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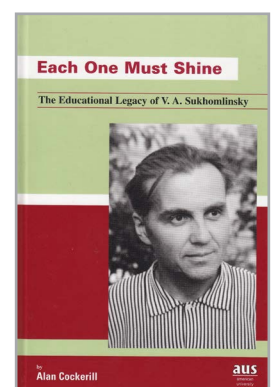
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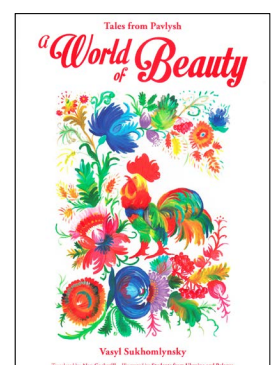
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fur. Its two grey eyes looked intently at the chick, its slender ears were pricked, and long thin hairs fanned out around its mouth. The creature lay and waved its tail.

The chick ran towards the beast to tell it how beautiful the world was. The creature rose, its eyes blinked, its back arched, and the tiny hairs around its mouth started moving. The chick was suddenly frightened. It was the first time he had felt fear.

The sparrows were crying from the cold

One winter morning, little Yarynka went into the garden. It was bitterly cold, and there was not a single bird to be seen. Even the sparrows had disappeared.

'I wonder where they are hiding?' Yarynka thought.

She walked back to the house and looked up under the eaves. She heard a sparrow cheeping, and then some tiny beads of ice fell to the ground.

'What are they?' wondered Yarynka.

And then she realized: it was the sparrows' tears. The sparrows were crying from the cold, and their tears were falling to the ground as tiny beads of ice.

Yarynka felt so sorry for the sparrows!

Sparks from the sun

A birch tree and a fir tree grew side by side in the forest. The birch tree lost its leafy garment and stood shivering from the cold, clothed only in its white bark. Its bare branches trembled in the soft breeze. The birch tree looked at the fir tree, which was still green, and asked, 'Why is it, fir tree, that you are green all year round? Why is it that I lose my leaves, but you stay green and lush and keep warm?'

The fir tree smiled and answered, 'It is because my leaves are like needles. Every night, all through summer, I collect a drop of morning dew on the tip of each needle. I collect as many drops as I have needles. And every drop sparkles with sunlight. It is like a spark of warmth. I do not shake off the dewdrops like you, dear birch tree. I stand still and do not stir. I drink the dew through my needles. And, along with the dewdrops, I absorb sparks of warmth from the sun and store them in my needles. They keep me warm during the winter.'

The dandelion

A yellow dandelion grew in a meadow. When it finished flowering, its yellow petals gave way to a fluffy white head. That head was made up of many fluffy seeds. One day, the stalk told the seeds, 'As soon as the wind blows, fly away! Find some moist soil and land there. Take root and grow!'

The seeds did not delay. They rose on a gust of wind and flew all over the meadow. But then the fluffy dandelion head spotted a dark cloud in the sky and took fright. It gathered its fluffy seeds together like a folded umbrella. The fluffy seeds held on tightly to each other. The wind blew, swirling around the dandelion, but the head held together, not releasing a single seed.

'Don't fly away now,' the head told its seeds. 'The storm might cast you into the water or into a swamp, and then you would be doomed.'

Where do the silver webs come from

An elderly grandmother is sitting in the sun. The autumn sun does not burn, it just warms her gently. The grandmother looks around and sees silver webs floating in the air. 'Where do those silver webs come from?' asks her granddaughter. And the grandmother tells her a story about a spider-weaver.

'The spider-weaver lives on a tall poplar that grows by the road. The spider sits way up high, almost touching the clouds. When a white cloud floats above the poplar, bits of fluffy cloud come drifting down. They float down onto the poplar, and the spider catches them, one after the other. The spider uses them to weave the finest of threads. From these threads, it weaves its nest, and the leftover threads drift down from the poplar and float all around.'

How bats flew to warmer lands

It grew cold. The insects disappeared, and the bats had nothing to eat. A colony of bats came together. What should they do? What were they going to eat? The bats thought about it and decided to fly to warmer lands. They flew all night and then rested under the eaves of houses. They held on to the wooden beams with their tiny legs, hanging upside down and sleeping until evening. In the evening, they took off again and flew until the following morning. That was how they reached warmer lands.

How the poppy seed woke

A poppy seed fell to the ground. A boy ran by, stepped on the seed, and covered it with earth. The seed fell asleep and slept for a long time, until finally it grew hot and woke up. It was the spring that woke it. The seed opened its tiny mouth to drink some water. Once its thirst was quenched, the seed sprouted. The sprout looked around and saw the sun, the sky, and trees. It laughed joyfully and bloomed with a pink flower.

Why does the sheep have sad eyes?

A little lamb was born. It was beautiful, with curly hair. A woman liked its curly fleece, so she killed the lamb, skinned it, and scoured the fleece. Then she made a coat for her little daughter and trimmed the sleeves with the lamb's fleece.

The little girl went outside in her new coat, joyfully stroking the fur-trimmed sleeves with her hands. The girl saw a sheep. It was standing near the barn and looking at the girl. The girl approached the sheep and wanted to stroke it.

'The sheep will be happy,' she thought, 'Because I have such a beautiful coat with a fur trim.' She stepped up to the sheep and stroked her fleece and her head. To her surprise, the sheep was not happy and looked at her fearfully. The sheep smelled the coat's fur trim and started bleating anxiously, mournfully.

'Why was the sheep afraid of my coat?' the puzzled little girl asked her father. 'Why does she have such sad eyes?'

'Because it's just a sheep, a stupid animal,' replied her father. 'It doesn't understand that you're trying to be nice to it.'

The curious ball of wool

A grandmother was knitting some socks. A ball of fine wool lay at her feet. The grandmother was warming herself in the sun, and so was the ball of wool. However, the ball of wool became curious about where the sun rose and where it set, so it set off to find out.

It rolled and rolled, getting further and further away. It rolled on for a day, and then kept rolling—for two days, three days, ten days. It kept on rolling for a thousand days, crossing rivers and seas. Finally, it reached the sun and asked it, 'Dear sun, please tell me, where do you rise and where do you set?'

The sun was surprised. 'How are you going to find your way home?' it asked.

'I'll follow the thread back,' answered the curious ball of wool.

'I'll tell you then,' said the sun. 'I rise where your grandmother's dream ends, and I set where her dream begins.'

The ball of wool rolled all the way home and told the grandmother all about its adventure, and what the sun had said.

The water lily and the turtle

Early one morning, a turtle trotted slowly to the pond to drink some water. She drank her fill and waited for the sun to rise, so she could warm herself

in its rays. The sun rose, and at that moment, the turtle noticed a beautiful flower emerging from the water. It stood tall and spread its white petals above the pond. The turtle recognized the flower. It was a water lily. During the night, it hid at the bottom of the pond, but during the day, it warmed its petals in the sun.

The turtle sat there, admiring the white flower.

'Tell me, lily, why do you hide at the bottom of the pond all night?' asked the turtle.

'Because I have soft, delicate, tender petals,' answered the lily. 'I am hiding from the night birds in case they damage them. If I had a shell like you, I would not need to hide.'

'Oh,' sighed the turtle. 'Nobody knows why I have such a hard shell.'

'Why is it?' asked the lily, and its petals leaned towards the turtle with interest.

'Because I have a heart that is softer and more tender than your petals. If it was exposed, not even the bottom of the pond would save it.'

The swan and the tadpole

A toad and her tadpole son were dozing in some thick silt under a rotten tree stump, when they heard a sound of splashing water. The toad said to the tadpole, 'Go and take a look, my boy, and see what is making that noise and disturbing our sleep.'

The tadpole poked his head out and almost died from fright. 'Mum,' he said in a trembling voice, 'There is a disgusting monster up there! It's terrifying!'

'What does it look like?' asked the toad.

'It's all smooth and white, with a long, stretched out neck and a small head. At the end of its head, it has a beak. It's revolting ... What is it, mum?'

The toad thought and thought, but she could not imagine what her son was talking about. She swam up from under the stump and looked at the creature. Then, recoiling in disgust, she said, 'That's a swan, a most hideous bird. Don't look at that disgusting monster, my dear boy, or you won't be able to sleep at night.'

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