



## THE FIRST CHAPTER PUDDLEBY

Once upon a time, many years ago, when our grandfathers were children, there was a doctor. His name was John Dolittle and he was a proper doctor who knew a lot.

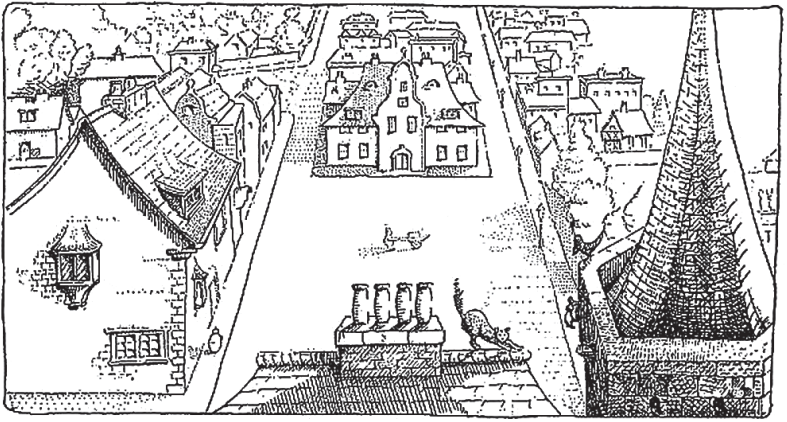
He lived in a little town called, Puddleby-on-the-Marsh. All people in the town **knew him well by sight**<sup>1</sup>. Whenever he walked down the street in his high hat everyone would say, "There goes the Doctor! He's a clever man." And the dogs and the children would all run up and follow behind him. Even the crows from the church-tower would **caw greeting him**<sup>2</sup>.

He lived in a small house on the edge of the town. Though the house was small, there was a large garden with a wide lawn and stone seats. His sister, Sarah Dolittle, was housekeeper for him; but the Doctor looked after the garden himself.

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<sup>1</sup> **knew him well by sight** – знали его в лицо

<sup>2</sup> **caw greeting him** – каркали, приветствуя его



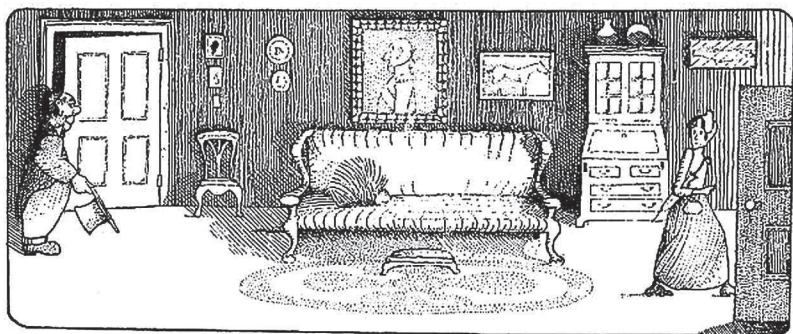
He loved animals and kept many kinds of pets. He had rabbits in the food closet, white mice in his piano, a squirrel in the linen closet and a hedgehog in the cellar. In the pond at the bottom of his garden, he had a gold-fish. He had a cow with a calf too, and an old horse. He also had chickens, and pigeons, and two lambs, and many other animals. But his favorite pets were Dab-Dab the duck, Jip the dog, Gub-Gub the baby pig, Polynesia the parrot, and the owl Too-Too.

His sister did not like all these animals and said they made the house untidy. One day when an old lady with pain in her joints visited the Doctor, she sat on the hedgehog

who was sleeping on the sofa. She never came to see the doctor after that. The lady chose to drive every Saturday to another town and see a different doctor rather than to visit a house full of animals.

Then his sister, Sarah Dolittle, came to him and said,

“John, how can you expect sick people to come and see you when you keep all these animals in the house? Your room is full of hedgehogs and mice! That’s the fourth person who left because of that. Some say they wouldn’t come near your house again—no matter how sick they are. We are getting poorer every day. If you go on like this, none of the best people will have you for a doctor.”



“But I like the animals better than the ‘best people’,” said the Doctor.

“You are ridiculous,” said his sister, and walked out of the room.

So, as time went on, the Doctor got more and more animals; and the people who came to see him got less and less. At last, there was only one person left. It was a meat seller, who didn’t mind any kind of animals. But he wasn’t very rich and he only got sick once a year, at Christmas-time. Every visit he paid the doctor sixpence for a bottle of medicine.

Sixpence a year wasn’t enough to live on. He had some saved up money in his money-box and that helped him for a while. But he kept on getting more pets and it cost a lot to feed them. And the money he had saved up grew littler and littler.

Then he sold his piano and let the mice live in a drawer. But the money he got for that too began to go. Then he sold the brown suit he wore on Sundays. And so he went on becoming poorer and poorer.

Now, when he walked down the street in his high hat, people would say, “There goes

John Dolittle! There was a time when he was the best doctor in the West Country. Look at him now. He has no money and no good clothes left!”

But the animals and the children still ran up and followed behind him just as like when he was rich.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER

### ANIMAL LANGUAGE

One day the Doctor was sitting in his kitchen and talking with the meat seller. He came to see him with a stomach-ache.

“Why don’t you give up being a people’s doctor, and be an animal-doctor?” asked the meat seller.

The parrot, Polynesia, was sitting in the window looking out at the rain and singing a song to herself. She stopped singing and started to listen.

“You know all about animals,” the meat seller went on, “much more than what these here vets do. That book you wrote about cats is wonderful! If I could read or write myself, I would too write some books. But my wife, Theodosia, can read so she read your book to me. Well, it’s wonderful—that’s all I can say—wonderful. You know the way cats think as if you were a cat yourself. And listen: you can make a lot of money doctoring animals. Do you know that? I’d send all

the old women who had sick cats or dogs to you. And if they didn't get sick fast enough, I could put something in the meat I sell 'em<sup>3</sup> to make 'em sick, see?"

"Oh, no," said the Doctor quickly. "You must not do that. That's not right."

"Oh, I didn't mean real sick," answered the meat seller. "Just a little something to make them look tired. But as you say, maybe it's not quite fair on the animals. But they'll get sick anyway, because the old women always give 'em too much to eat. And look, there are many farmers who have lame horses and weak lambs. They would come too. Be an animal-doctor."

When the meat seller left, the parrot flew on to the Doctor's table and said,

"That man is right. That's what you should do. Be an animal-doctor. Silly people don't have enough brains to see you're the best doctor in the world. Take care of animals instead—they'll soon find it out. Be an animal-doctor."

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<sup>3</sup> 'em = them



“Oh, there are plenty of animal-doctors,” said John Dolittle and put the flower-pots outside the window to get the rain.

“Yes, there are plenty,” said Polynesia. “But none of them are any good at all. Now listen, Doctor, and I’ll tell you something. Did you know that animals can talk?”

“I knew that parrots can talk,” said the Doctor.

“Oh, we parrots can talk in two languages—people’s language and bird-language,” said Polynesia proudly. “If I say, ‘Polly wants a snack,’ you understand me. But hear this: Ka-ka oi-ee, fee-fee?”

“What does that mean?” asked the Doctor.

“That means, ‘Is the porridge hot yet?’—in bird-language.”

“My! You don’t say so!” said the Doctor. “You never talked that way to me before.”

“I never did.” said Polynesia, shaking some crumbs off her left wing. “Because I knew you wouldn’t understand me.”

“Tell me some more,” said the Doctor, all excited. Then he rushed over to the drawer and got himself a book and a pencil. “Now

don't go too fast—and I'll write it down. This is something quite new! Give me the letters A, B and C in the Birds' first—slowly now.”

So that was the way the Doctor learned that animals had a language of their own and could talk to one another. And all that afternoon, while it was raining, Polynesia sat on the kitchen table and gave him bird words. The Doctor carefully put them down in the book.

At tea-time, when the dog, Jip, came in, the parrot said to the Doctor, “See, he's talking to you.”

“Looks to me as though he were scratching his ear,” said the Doctor.

“But animals don't always speak with their mouths,” said the parrot and raised her eyebrows. “They talk with their ears, with their feet, with their tails—with everything. Sometimes they don't want to make a noise. Do you see now the way he's moving his nose to a side?”

“What does that mean?” asked the Doctor.

“He is asking you, ‘Is it still raining?’” Polynesia answered. “Dogs nearly always use their noses for asking questions.”

After a while, with the parrot’s help, the Doctor learned the language of the animals. Now he could talk to them himself and understand everything they said. Then he gave up being a people’s doctor altogether.

Soon the meat seller told everyone that John Dolittle became an animal-doctor. Old ladies began to bring him their pet dogs who ate too much cake; and farmers came many miles to show him sick cows and sheep.

One day someone brought a horse to him. The poor thing was terribly glad to find a man who could talk in horse-language.

“You know, Doctor,” said the horse, “that vet over the hill knows nothing at all. I tried to tell him I am going blind in one eye. But he couldn’t understand a word of horse-language. What I need is glasses. There’s no reason why horses shouldn’t wear glasses, the same as people.”

“Of course—of course,” said the Doctor. “I’ll get you some at once.”

“I would like a pair like yours,” said the horse, “only green. They’ll keep the sun out of my eyes while I’m working in the field.”

“Okay,” said the Doctor. “I’ll get you green ones.”

“You know, Sir, sadly everyone thinks”, said the horse before he left, “everyone thinks he can doctor animals—just because the animals don’t complain. Actually, it takes a much cleverer man to be a really good animal-doctor than it does to be a good people’s doctor. My farmer’s boy thinks he knows all about horses. If only you saw him! His face is so fat that he looks as though he has no eyes. And he has as much brain as a potato-bug. He tried to put a mustard-plaster on me last week.”

“Where did he put it?” asked the Doctor.

“Oh, he didn’t put it anywhere on me,” said the horse. “He only tried to. I kicked him into the duck-pond.”

“Well, well!” said the Doctor.

“I’m usually pretty quiet,” said the horse, “and very patient with people. It was bad enough to have that vet giving me the wrong medicine. But when that red-faced idiot tried