

## Chapter 1

### *Puddleby*

Once upon a time, many years ago, there was a doctor, and his name was John Dolittle, M.D. ‘M.D.’ means that he was a proper doctor and knew a whole lot.

He lived in a little town called Puddleby-on-the-Marsh. All the folks, young and old, knew him well by sight. 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.

The house he lived in was quite small, but his garden was very large. His sister, Sarah Dolittle, was housekeeper for him.

Doctor Dolittle was very fond of animals and kept many kinds of pets. Besides the gold fish in the pond at the bottom of his garden, he had rabbits in the pantry<sup>1</sup>, white mice in his piano, a squirrel in the linen closet<sup>2</sup> and a hedgehog in the cellar<sup>3</sup>. He had a cow with a calf too, and an old lame<sup>4</sup> horse—twenty-five years of age—and 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 used to grumble about all these animals and said they made the house untidy. One day she 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? We are getting poorer every day. If you go on like this, none of the best people will have you for a doctor.’

But the Doctor liked his animals better than the ‘best people’.

So, as time went on, the Doctor got more and more animals, and the people who came to see him got less and less. Till at last he had no one left—except the cat’s-meat man<sup>5</sup>, who didn’t mind any kind of animals. If the Doctor hadn’t

---

<sup>1</sup> *pantry*—a small room or cupboard in which things are stored, such as food and dishes.

<sup>2</sup> *linen closet*—a cupboard for storing clothes, sheets etc.

<sup>3</sup> *cellar*—a room under the house where things are stored. Sounds like ‘seller’.

<sup>4</sup> *lame*—unable to walk properly.

<sup>5</sup> *cat’s-meat man*—a man who sells meat in the street.