**blackie.**

**From The suns babies by Edith Howes.  
Age Rating 2 to 4.**

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**At first Blackie was only a tiny speck in an egg, but he grew so fast that he soon filled the shell. Mrs. Blackbird covered him with her warm feathered body, and turned him over every day so that he should grow evenly; and Mr. Blackbird sat on a branch and sang: "How the sun shines! How bright is the world!" It was delightfully warm and cosy in the little shell-house, so Blackie was content for a long time. But when he had grown as big as the shell would let him, and had used up all the food that had been stored for him, he wished to come out. He pecked at the shell, and his mother heard him. "That is well," she said; "so you are ready to come out into the world. Peck hard till you make a hole. Then poke out your head." He pecked hard, and Mrs. Blackbird helped gently from her side. Presently a hole was made, and out popped the little head. "Cheep!" he said. "Cheep! Cheep!" "Push with your shoulders till you crack the shell," said his mother. He pushed and pushed, and soon the shell split, and he stepped out. "Well, you are not very handsome," said his father, looking in over the edge of the nest, "but you will be much better looking when your feathers come."**

**He certainly was not handsome, for he was bald all over, and his mouth looked too big for his body. But he did not know that, so he was quite happy. "Cheep!" he said. "What a brown world it is!" For all he could see was the inside of the nest, and he thought that was the world. "Here is a worm," said Mrs. Blackbird. How that big mouth of his opened! In the weeks that followed both father and mother had to work hard to keep it filled. But they had their reward, for Blackie grew big and strong, and his feathers came. He could look over the top of the nest now. "Cheep! What a green world it is!" he said; for all he could see was the tree, and he thought that was the world. The wind blew, and the branches swayed to and fro and rocked the nest till he fell asleep. "Come out and learn to fly," said his mother one day. "Stand on the edge of the nest and fly down to the branch below."**

**She showed him how to do it, and he peeped over the edge of the nest and watched her. But it looked such a long way to the branch that he was afraid. He crept down into the nest again and would not come out. "What nonsense!" said Mrs. Blackbird; and she tumbled him out with her beak. He landed safely on the branch, as she knew he would. Then she and Mr. Blackbird sat beside him and showed him how to grasp with his toes, and how to spread out his wings. With the greatest patience they taught him step by step to fly, leading him first from twig to twig, then from big branch to big branch, and last from tree to tree. Then he was taught how to find his food--taught how to pull a worm out of its hole, where to look for caterpillars and grubs, and how to catch a fly on the wing. At last he knew it all, and he could earn his own living. Then he, too, sat on a branch and sang like his father: "How the sun shines! How bright is the world!"**