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Grand = Mother's Thimble:

By R. André: ~



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Grandmother's Thimble:

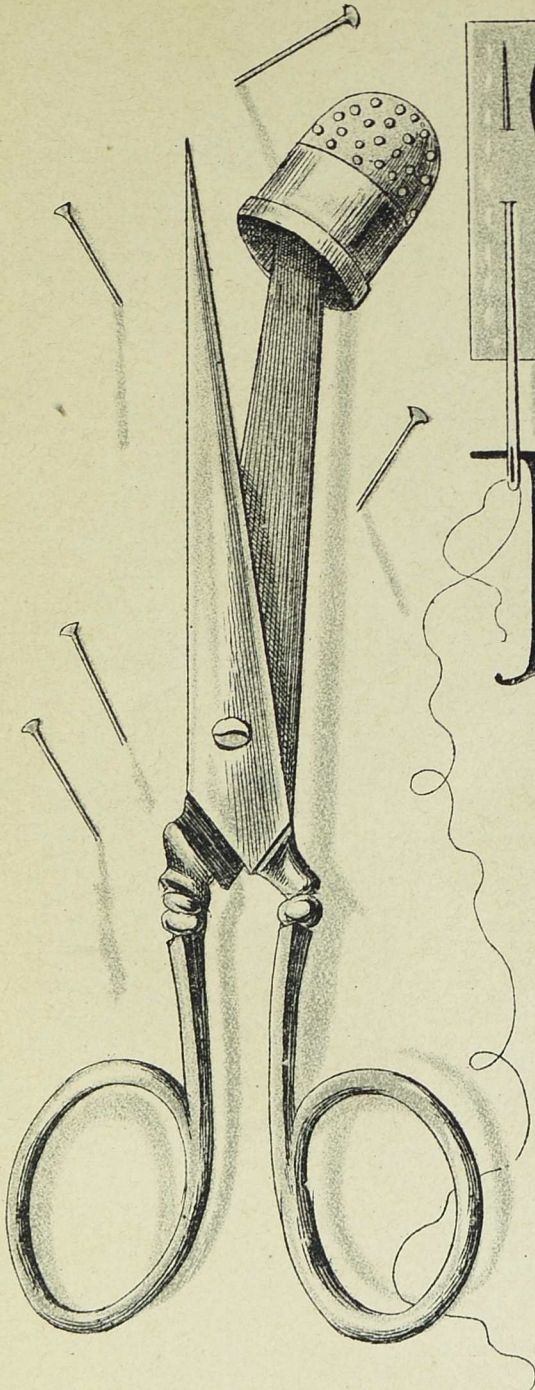


The Pictures
and Words
By R. André:





Grandmother's THIMBLE:



HAVE any of you children seen my thimble?" said Grandmamma, as she turned over the contents of her workbox for the twentieth time. "I know I left it here on the table when we went in to luncheon, and now I cannot see it anywhere. Dear me! what a pity!"

"Use mine, Grandmamma," said Maud.

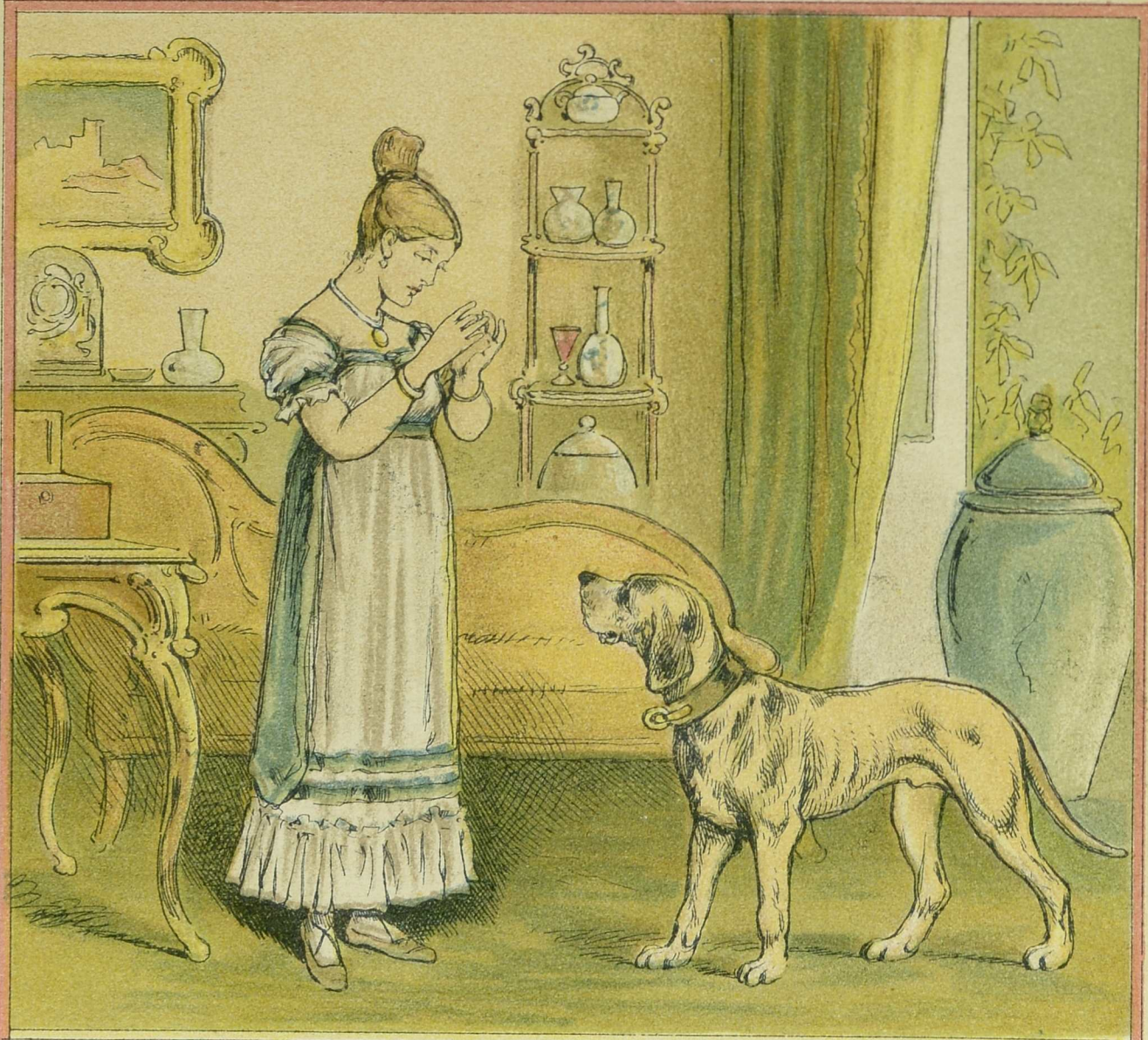
"Or mine," said Edith.

"My dears, I have another," the old lady continued; "but I set an especial value on that thimble. It is very old. I had it, oh, so long ago! when I was quite a girl. It was



a gift from your Grandpapa, my dears ; the first present he ever made me."

And Grandmamma, as she spoke, leaned back in her chair, and seemed to be looking back into the far-off days of her girlhood, when she sat among the lilacs with a handsome young officer.



“And when your Grandpapa left me awhile to join his Regiment,” the old lady continued, “that gift was my dearest possession on earth; and many a time, years afterwards, when we were married, we have laughed over that treasure, that cost so little but was beyond all price. Through all these years I have

kept it safe, and now——”

“But it can't be far off,” said Maud, as Grandmamma turned over her reels and cottons for the twenty-first time.

“Suppose we ring the bell?” said Edith. “Perhaps Plum has seen it.”

Plum answered the bell, but had seen nothing of my lady's thimble.

“Do you think the cat looks guilty?” suggested Maude. “She may have been playing with it.”

“And forgot to put it back,” said Bob.

“But we'll have a good look about the floor, Grandma.”

But for all their search, the thimble was nowhere to be found.



Then off ran little May to the billiard room where her big brother Algie was playing, as she heard by

the click of the balls when she crossed the hall.

"Algie!" she cried, rushing in and pushing open the door so suddenly that her brother missed an easy stroke, "Algie!"

"What's the matter, little woman?" said that young gentleman, rather hastily.

"Has you—" and she was almost breathless from excitement—



"has you seen Grandma's thimble?" But Algie sent her away in a hurry, and went on with his game.



Grandmamma's thimble was lost; but, as Bob wisely said, "it must be somewhere." All the children trotted out on to the lawn, and began to search diligently over the grass; Master Algie even condescended to look on, and sometimes to direct the little army of searchers. There were many false alarms, but no thimble was found.



The news of the loss spread at once from the servants' hail to the stable and the garden ; and the page-boy began to make a joke of it, asking everybody if they had seen the old lady's thimble, and pretending to look for it in all the most impossible places. He even told old Tom, who was busy planting out

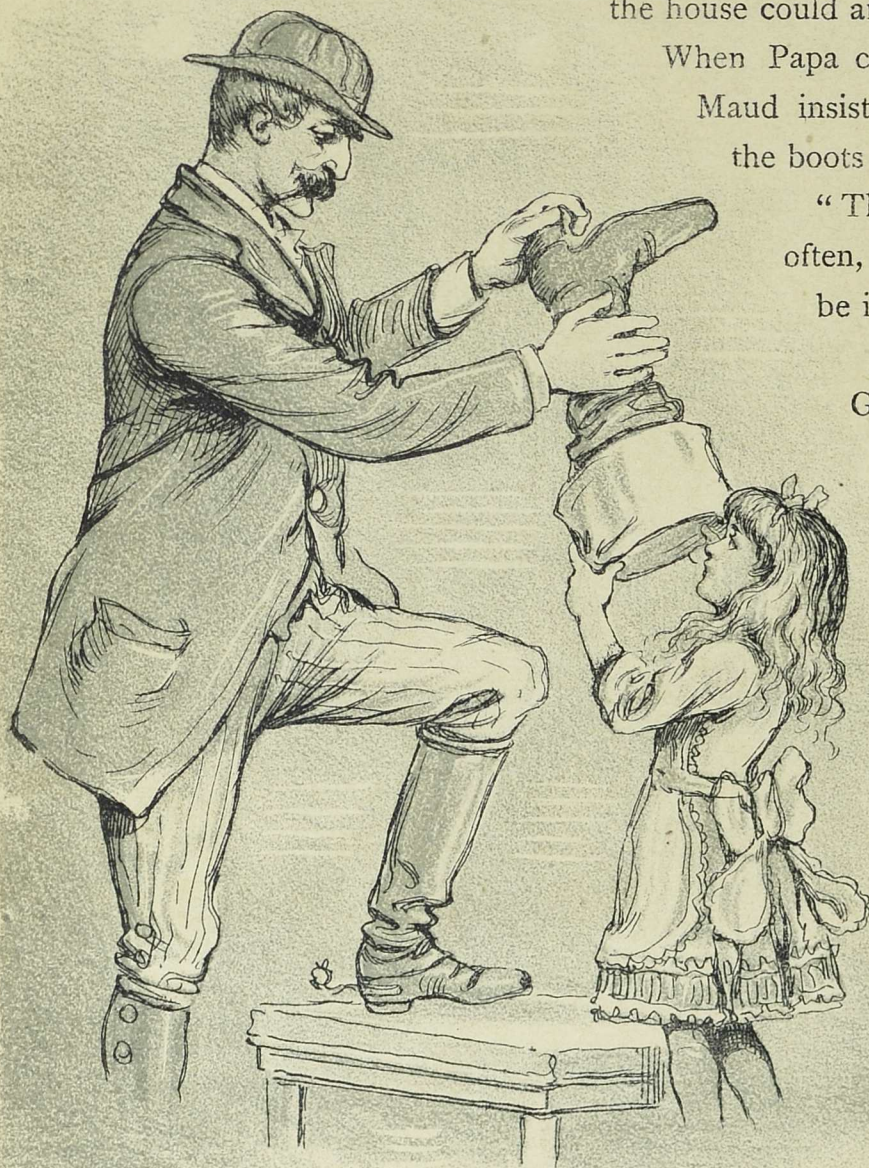
lettuces in the kitchen-garden to be very careful not to kneel on it and push it under ground.

What could have become of the thimble? That was a riddle that none in the house could answer.

When Papa came home from his ride, Maud insisted on looking into all the boots in his dressing-room.

"Those that you don't wear often, Papa," she said; "it may be in one of them."

"What! Do you think Grandmamma has taken the trouble to play me such a silly



trick?" said Papa. "No! it isn't there; and it isn't in any of my pockets. More likely in one of Bob's, I think. Boys generally carry a curiosity-shop about them. Come! turn out your pockets, Master Bob."

No doubt the boy produced a perfect museum of rubbish as his portable property (shown in the inventory on the other side

of the page)

and the

lining

of his

jacket

was

care-

fully

pinched

about

the

corners.

Papa

felt

little

knobs

of

dust,

like

pin-

cushions,

that had accumulated; but decidedly there was no thimble.



ONE BALL
(SPLIT.)



ONE FLOAT.



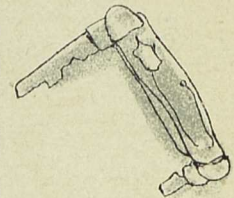
EIGHT MARBLES.



A TANGLE OF
TWINE.



ONE DAMAGED
KNIFE.

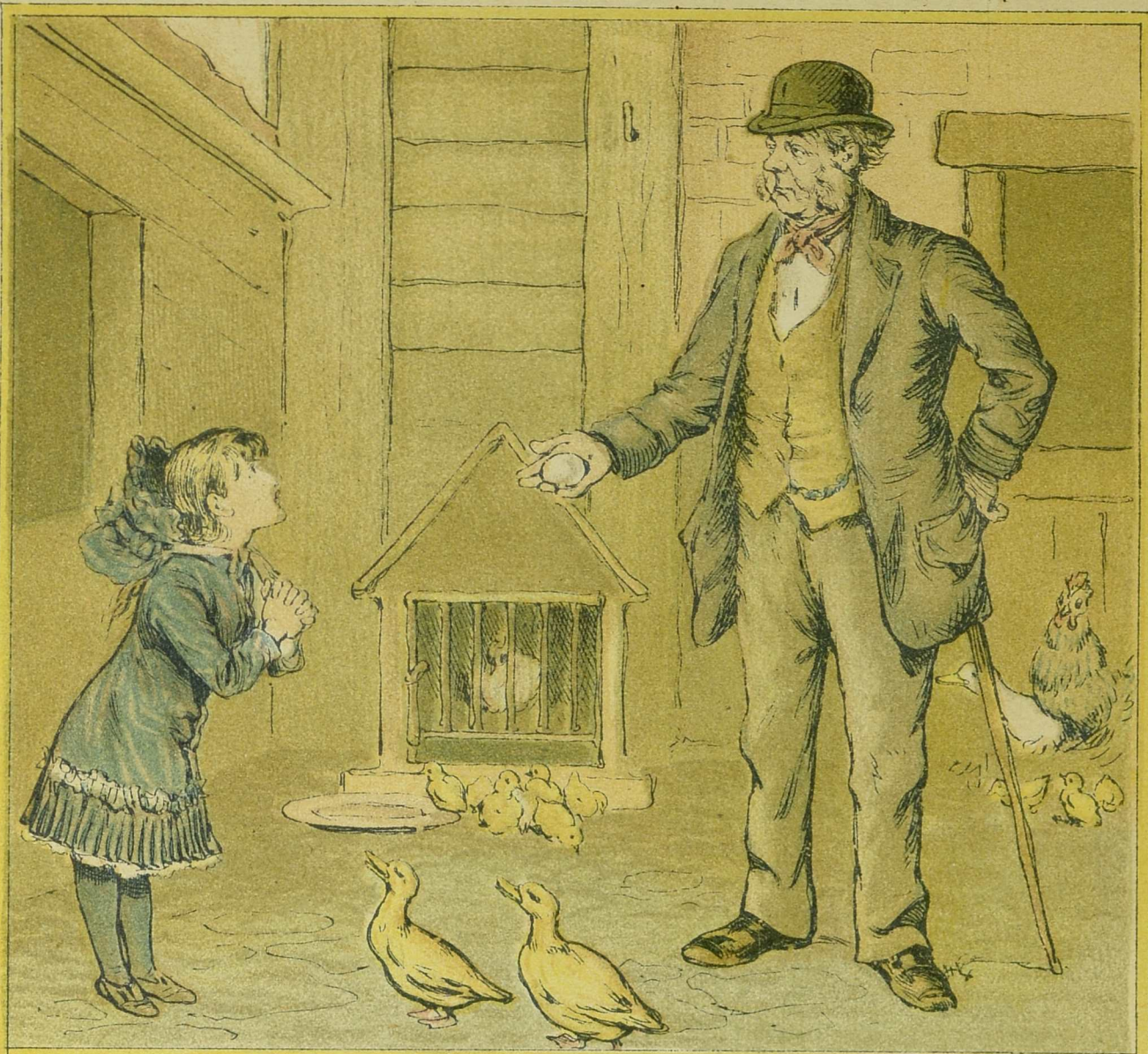


SOMETHING STICKY
SUPPOSED TO BE
BUTTER SCOTCH
IN A TORN PAPER.



ONE STUMP OF
PENCIL.
ONE WATCH KEY.





Papa offered a reward to the children, and their energy was redoubled. There was not an inch of carpet in the house that had not been searched ; and, indeed, the youngsters spent half the day on their hands and knees. Edith even looked about the hen-houses, to the great disgust of old Hunt, who was in charge of the poultry, and who grumbled out, " D'ye think it's got inside of this 'ere hegg ? "



There was not a bush in the shrubbery that the children had not crawled under ; and the gardener was for ever on the watch to keep them off the flower beds. Still there was no thimble found ; and Maud and May, in their despair, stopped Phil, the carter's boy, as he was taking Grey Tommy to water, and asked him the usual question. "Noa!" he said, "I ain't seen no thimbul. D'ye think I stole un?"

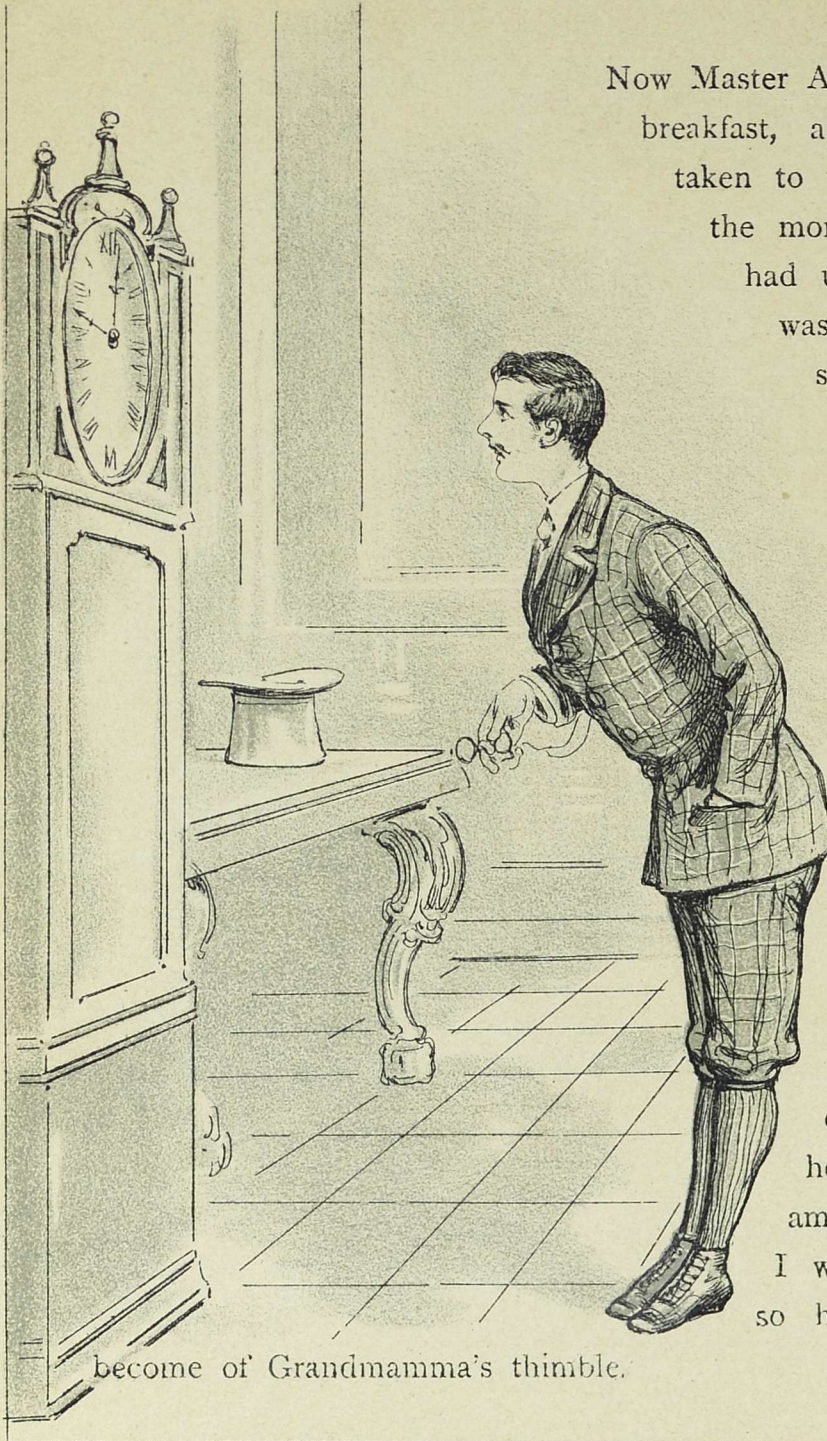
Now Master Algie was very often late for breakfast, and was perpetually being taken to task for his laziness. On the morning after the loss which had upset the whole house, he was later than usual ; so much so, that he was quite shocked himself when he looked at the old clock in the hall, which seemed to tick at him in a reproachful manner.

“Late again,” said Papa.

“The tea is all cold,” said Mamma. “Why will you be so lazy, Algie?”

But the young gentleman had a very ready excuse this morning, and he answered promptly, “I am very sorry, Mamma, but I was lying in bed thinking so hard of what could have

become of Grandmamma’s thimble.





Down stairs, too, the servants were beginning to get annoyed at all the fuss that was going on, and at the constant inquiries.



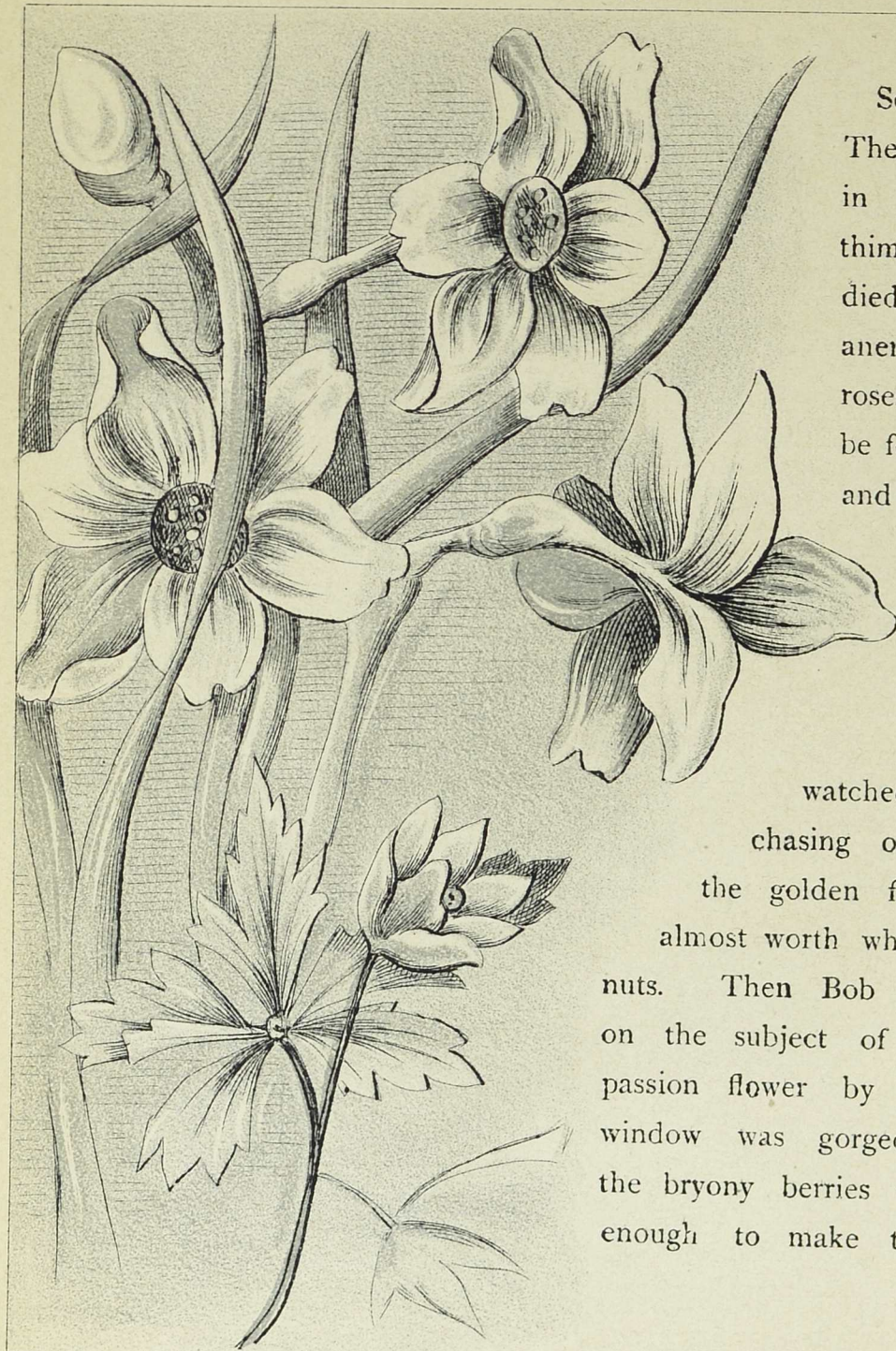
Whenever the bell rang, one of the maids was sure to say, laughingly, to the footman, "There's your bell, Plum! The old lady wants to ask the latest bulletin about that blessed thimble!"



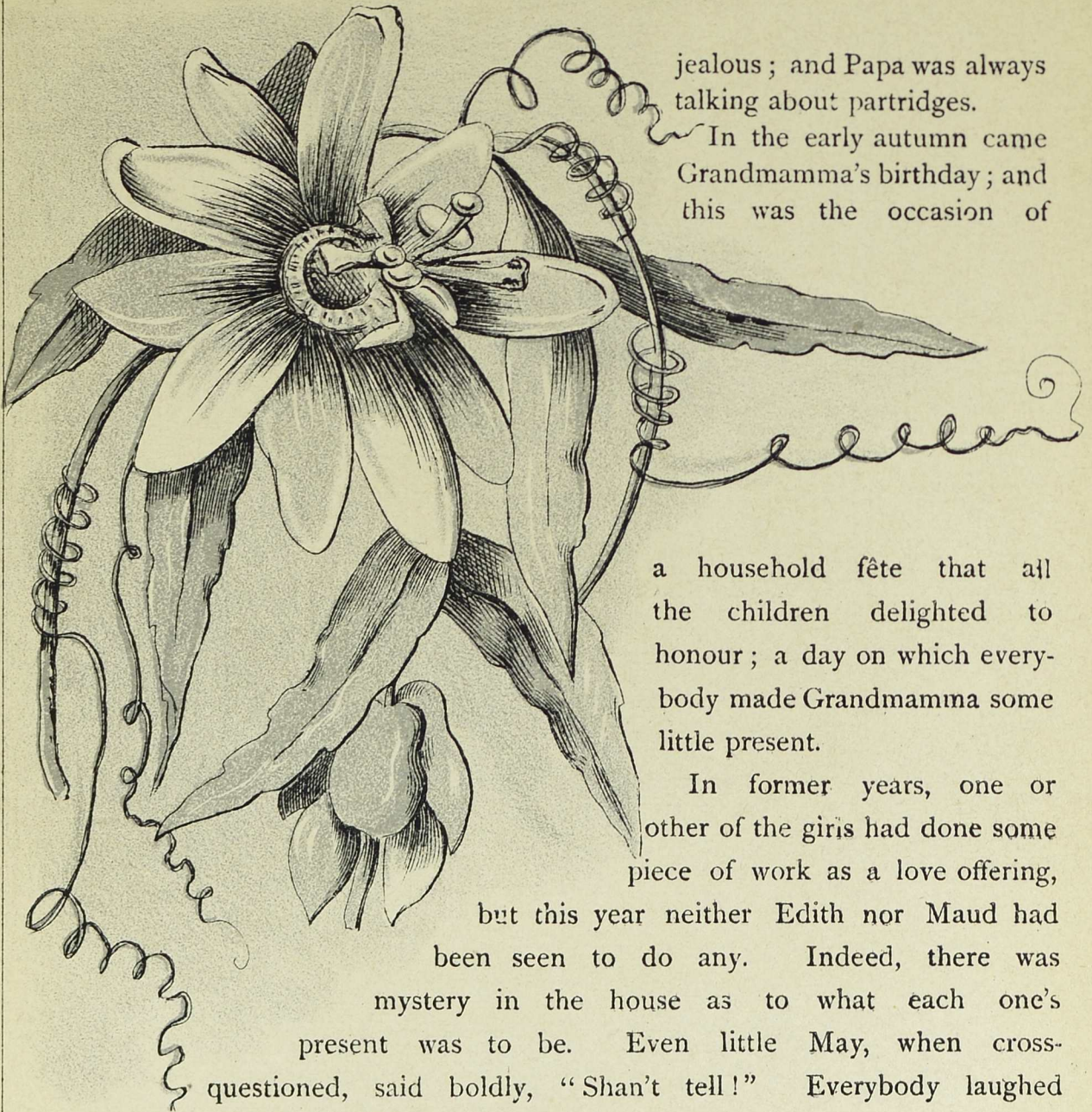
But after a time the search was only continued at rare intervals and with but feeble energy; and Grandmamma had given up all hope of recovering her thimble. Algie alone (according to his own account) was the only persistent searcher; though in reality his searching was only thinking where to look, and he indulged in what Papa called his "feather-bed philosophy" in



all the shady nooks of the neighbourhood. And a new excitement occupied the attention of the children, for Bob one day discovered that some sparrows had built their nest just above Papa's dressing-room window, and little May made it her especial care to feed these dickies with the breakfast crumbs.



So the time passed. The daffodils that were in bloom when the thimble was lost had all died away; the white anemones and the primroses were no longer to be found in the wood; and there was not a cowslip to be picked in the meadow. Then came the hay-making; and soon the children watched the cloud shadows chasing one another across the golden fields, and it was almost worth while to look at the nuts. Then Bob became impatient on the subject of blackberries; the passion flower by the dining-room window was gorgeous with bloom; the bryony berries were growing red enough to make the mountain-ash



jealous ; and Papa was always talking about partridges.

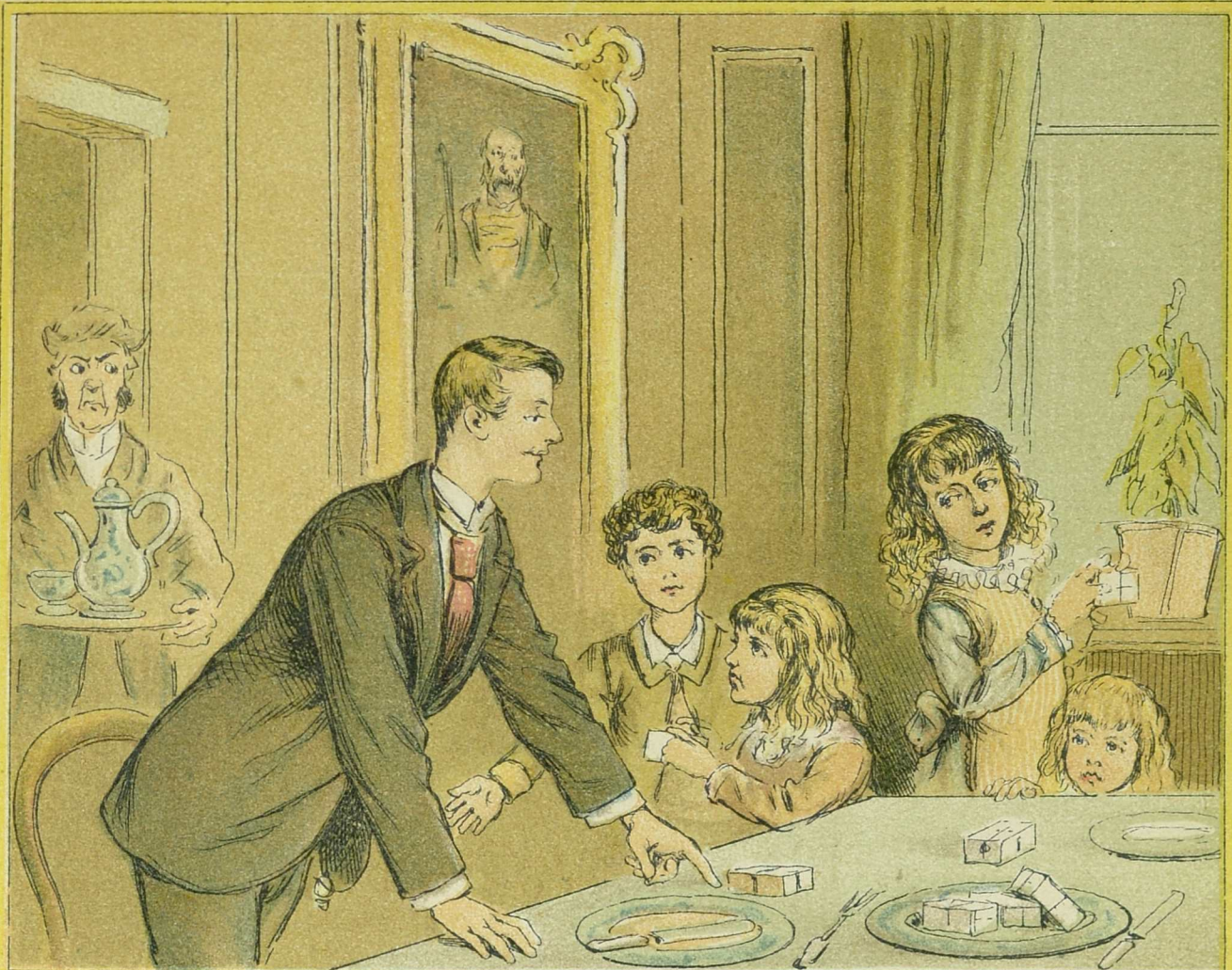
In the early autumn came Grandmamma's birthday ; and this was the occasion of

a household fête that all the children delighted to honour ; a day on which everybody made Grandmamma some little present.

In former years, one or other of the girls had done some piece of work as a love offering,

but this year neither Edith nor Maud had been seen to do any. Indeed, there was mystery in the house as to what each one's present was to be. Even little May, when cross-questioned, said boldly, "Shan't tell !" Everybody laughed when asked, but the secret was kept.

On the birthday morning, however, the secret could no longer be kept. Just



before breakfast, and before Grandmamma had come downstairs, Papa placed on her plate a little box, and Mamma another little box of exactly the same pattern. Curiously enough, amid a general titter, Edith produced a third little box, Maud a fourth, and May a fifth little box ! Then in walked Master Algie ; and he laid on the table a sixth little box, looking wonderingly through his eyeglass at the general laugh which greeted his present.

"Why, I declare," said Papa, "we must all have bought Grandmamma a new thimble!"
And they all laughed in chorus at the joke.



"Fancy Grandmamma's dear old fingers, each with his little hat on!" said Edith. "How industrious she will be!" And Grandmamma laughed as loudly as the rest when she opened her six little boxes.

Now it happened that this year's autumn turned out to be very wet. The gales were unusually severe, and for very many days the glass in the hall predicted

heavy

rain. There

was one constant

drip, drip, on the

stone terraces, and the

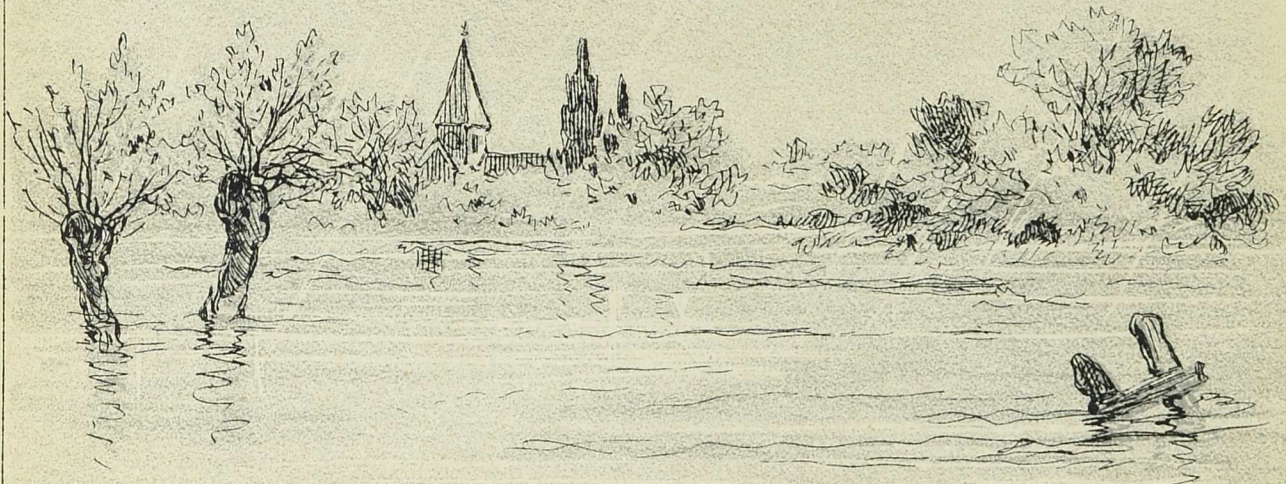
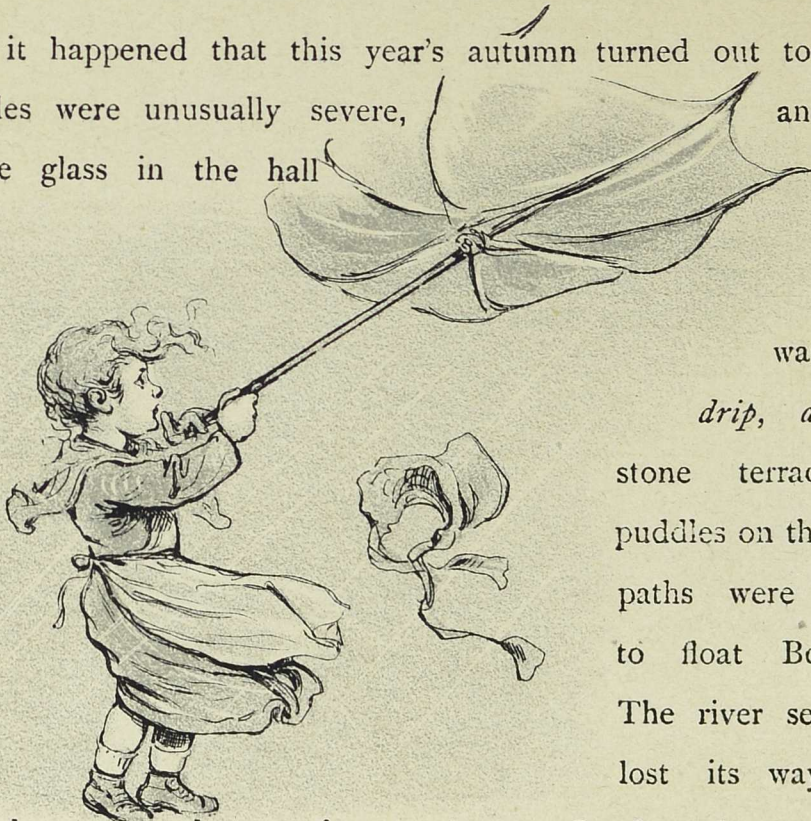
puddles on the garden gravel paths were deep enough

to float Bob's toy ship.

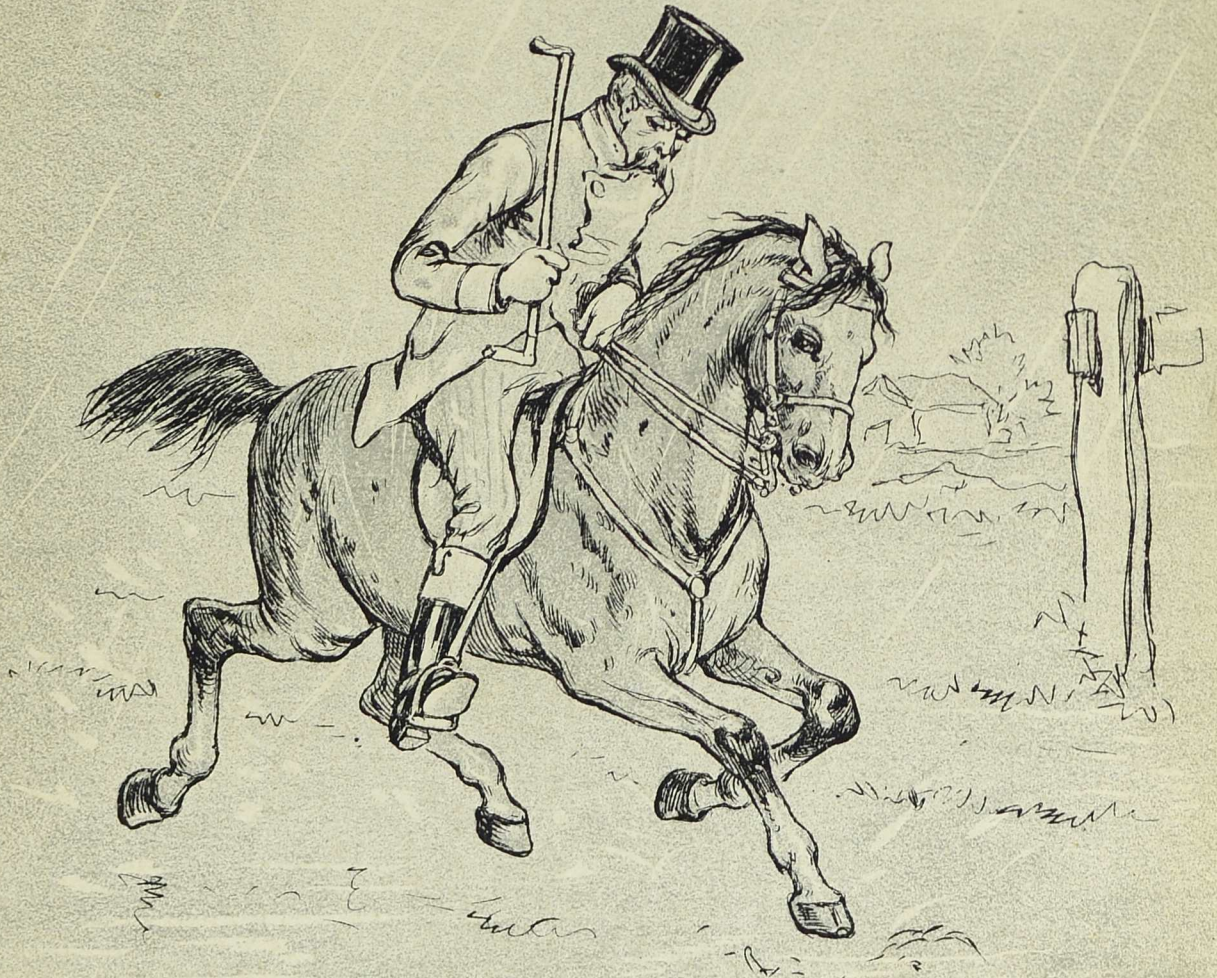
The river seemed to have

lost its way in the fog,

and to have strayed over the meadows. In fact, for many years there



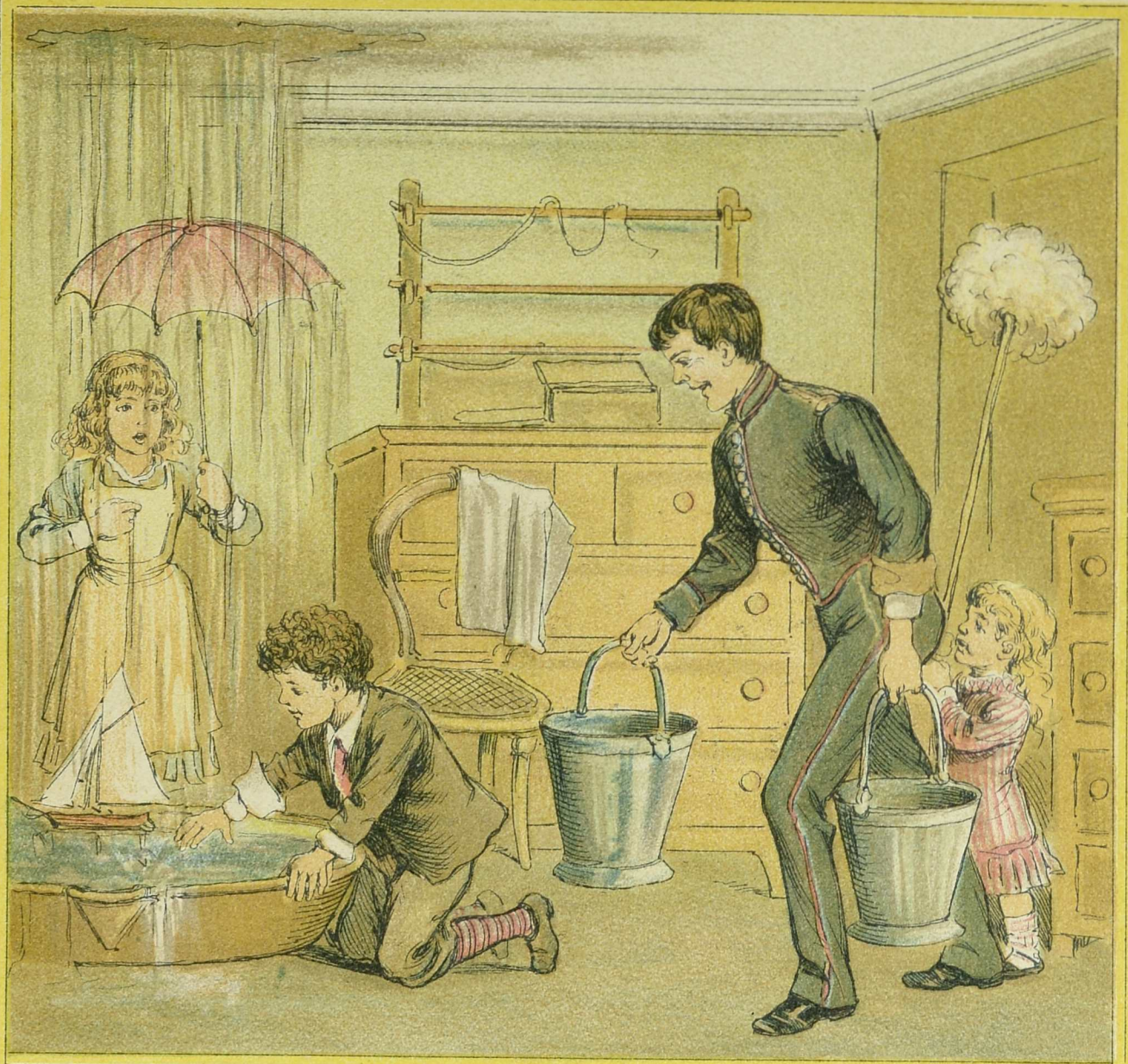
had not been known such a season of damaged umbrellas, spoiled hats muddy boots. And a pretty figure Papa looked after a ten-mile trot in the steady down-pour through the country lanes, which looked as if they had been mended with pea-soup.





The bad weather was at its worst, when one afternoon Bob, going with Edith into Papa's dressing-room to fetch his slippers, saw a large stain of wet on the ceiling.

"We shall have rain indoors as well as outside very soon," laughed Bob



“What fun going to bed in waterproofs, and fastening umbrellas to the bed heads!”

On the next day the rain came pouring through the ceiling, and there was a small lake on the carpet before a bath was arranged to catch the water; and even then this reservoir had to be emptied more than once in the course of the day.

This accident was fine fun for the children.

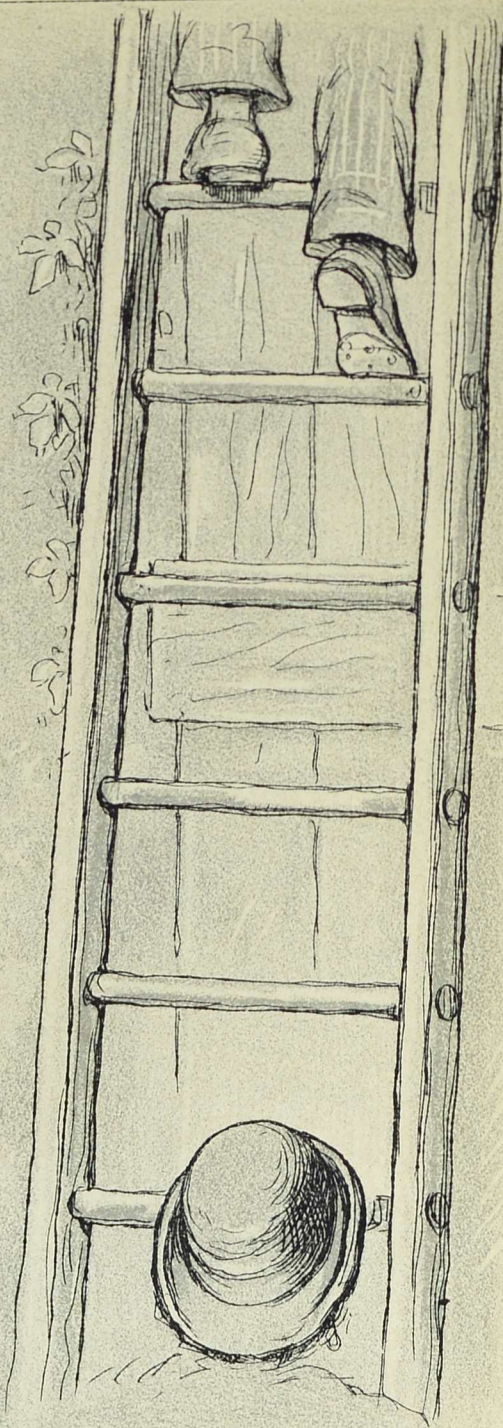
"Almost as good as the seaside," said Bob, who was busily engaged in sailing his ship on the bath, and in making a mimic heavy sea by stirring the water, whilst Maud stood under the leak with an open parasol, "playing at April showers," as she said. The whole day long the youngsters were doing their best to wet their feet, and dirty their frocks, despite the united efforts of the household to keep them away. In the meantime, Papa was steadily looking out at the weather, and reporting the faintest prospect of a change to Mamma, who was very anxious the roof should be attended to the instant the rain ceased.



"This must be the clearing shower," he thought to himself every five minutes

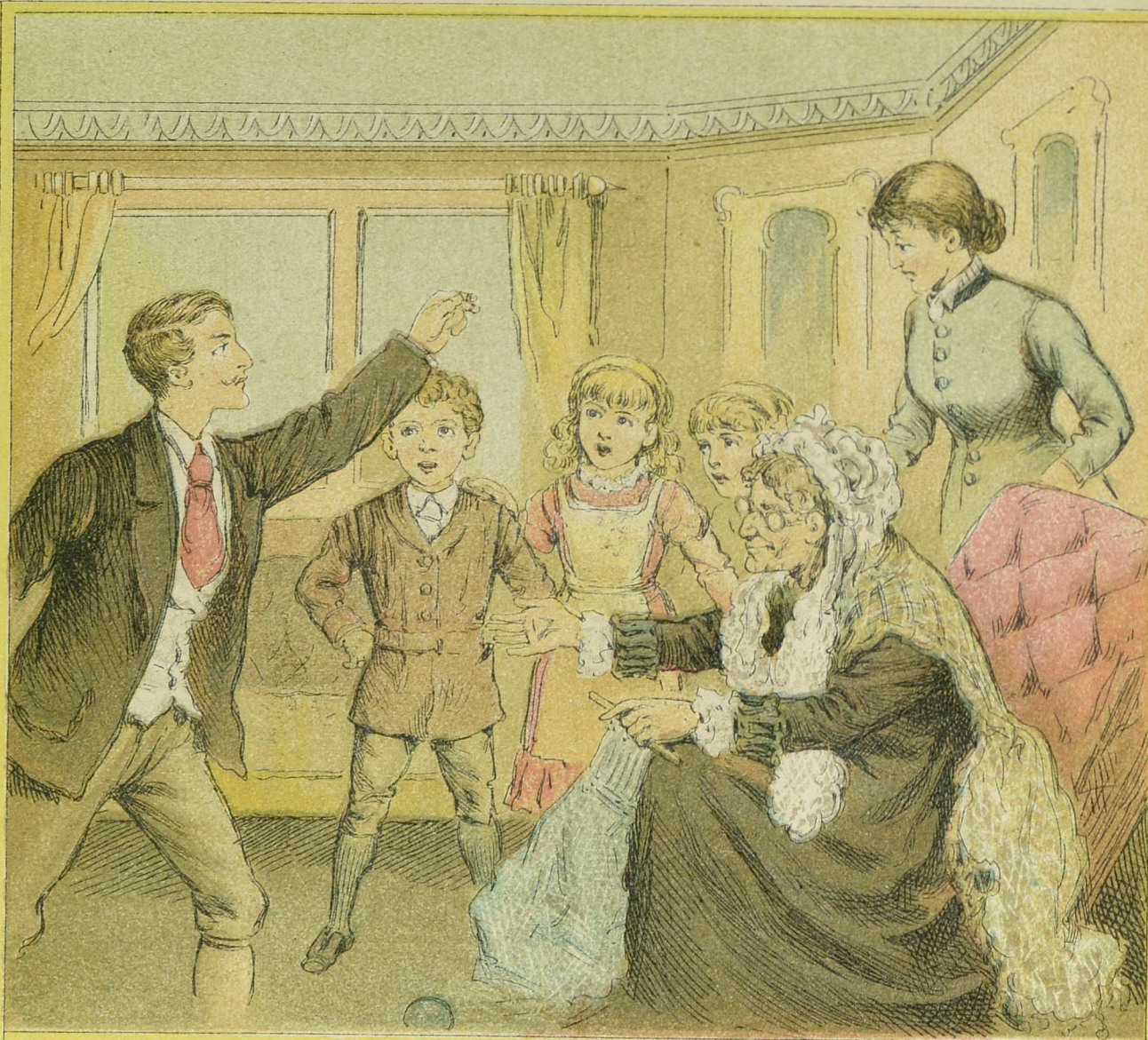
At last the sun managed to peep through the clouds, a long ladder was raised against the house, and a workman climbed up to the roof to see what was wrong, whilst Papa stood below to hear his report; and Master Algie, looking on the ladder as a new thing to lean against, settled himself to hear the worst with his habitual indolence.

“The gutter’s all choked with rubbidge,” the man shouted down from above, “so as the rain can’t run off. This is what’s done it.” And he threw down some bits of stick, a handful or two of mud, and an old sparrow’s nest which he had scraped out of the gutter.





The nest, as it happened, fell on Master Algie's hat, and, being heavy with mud and wet, startled that young gentleman by actually knocking it off. As soon as he recovered his presence of mind, and found his eyeglass (which was dangling on his back), he inspected the object that had fallen on his head, and



kicked it off the path. But what was that bright thing lying there? Yes, sure enough, it was *Grandmamma's thimble!*

"I declare, father," he cried, "I found it, and I claim the reward." The next minute he rushed into the house, and without the slightest consideration for

anybody's nerves, burst like a bomb-shell into the midst of the family group, and presented the long-lost treasure to the old lady, who dropped her knitting in the excitement of the sudden surprise.

"How? When? Where?" began a chorus of questioners.

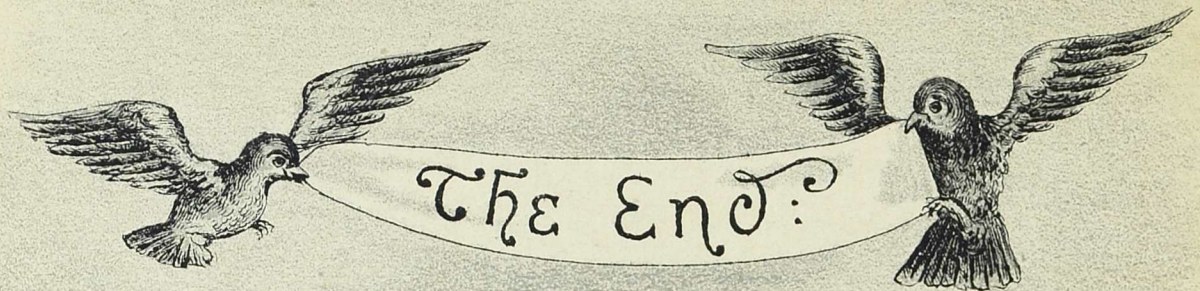
"Fancy the lazy one of the family finding it, after all!"

"Algie is the only one of the family who never searched," said Mamma.

"However, here it is—that's the point," said Algie, in triumph.

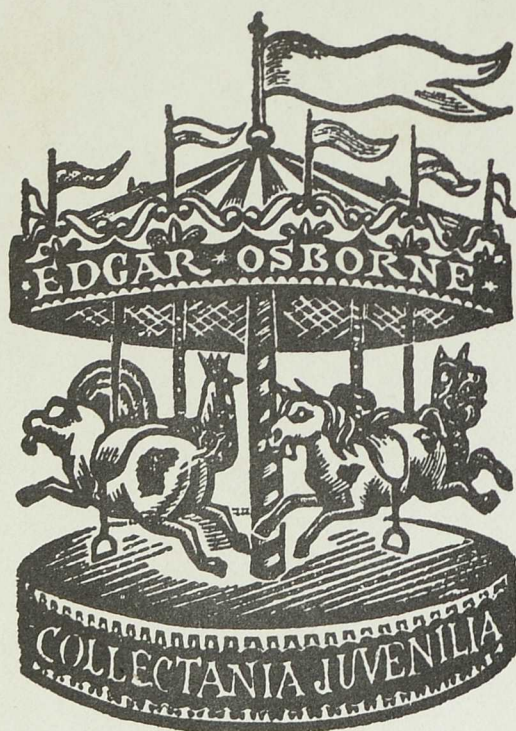
"But where?" began the questioners again.

"Oh! the explanation is very simple," continued the finder, "a little bird must have taken it. Sparrows, you know, will take anything when they are building; and it has been all this time in safe keeping in the gutter! And you, Miss May, have been feeding and fattening the thieves, your pet sparrows. It dropped out of their old nest; but if it had'nt been for the bad weather that led to the discovery, and for *me*, who made it, you never would have had the luck to find GRANDMAMMA'S THIMBLE!"



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