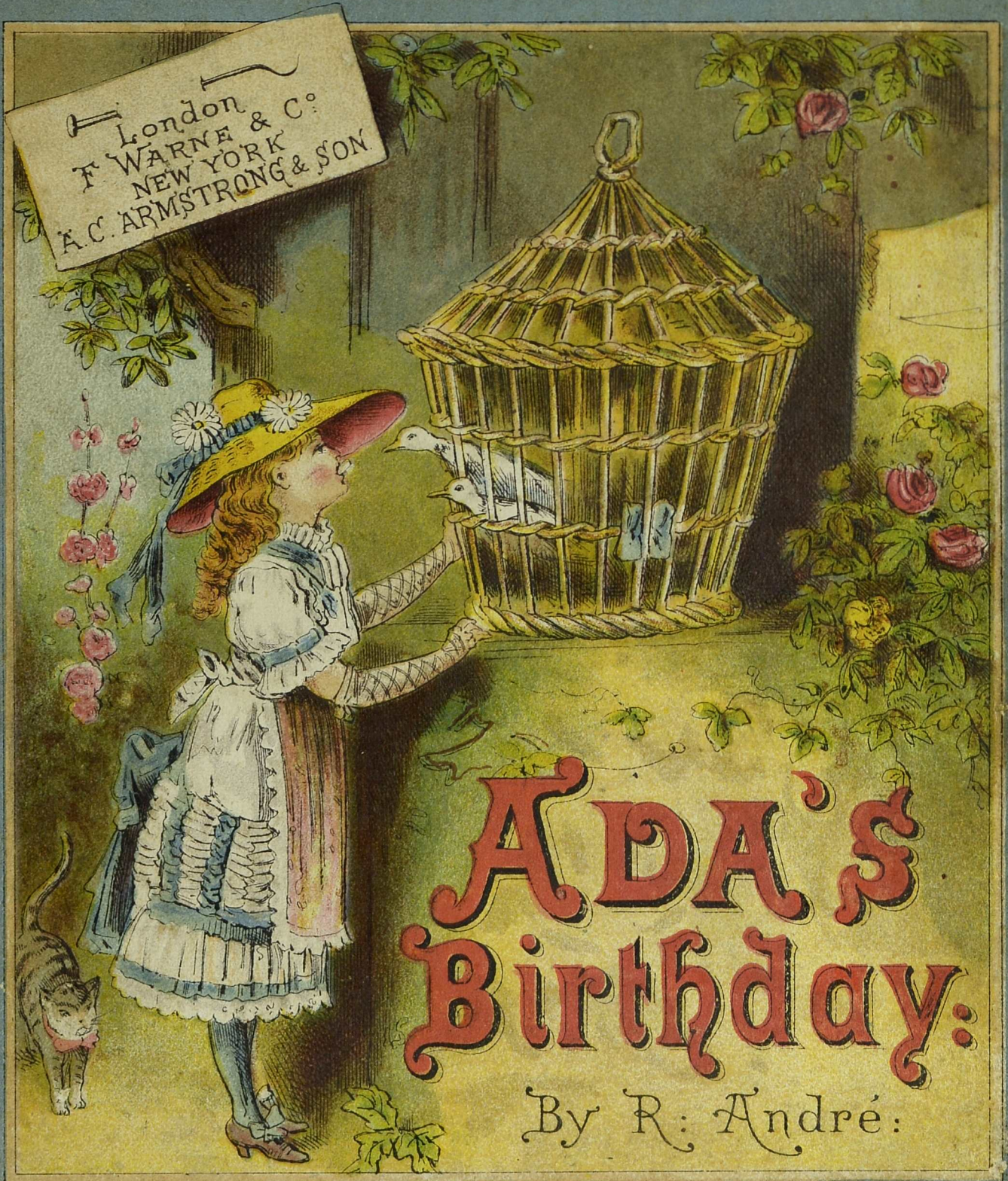


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# ADA'S Birthday.

By R. André.



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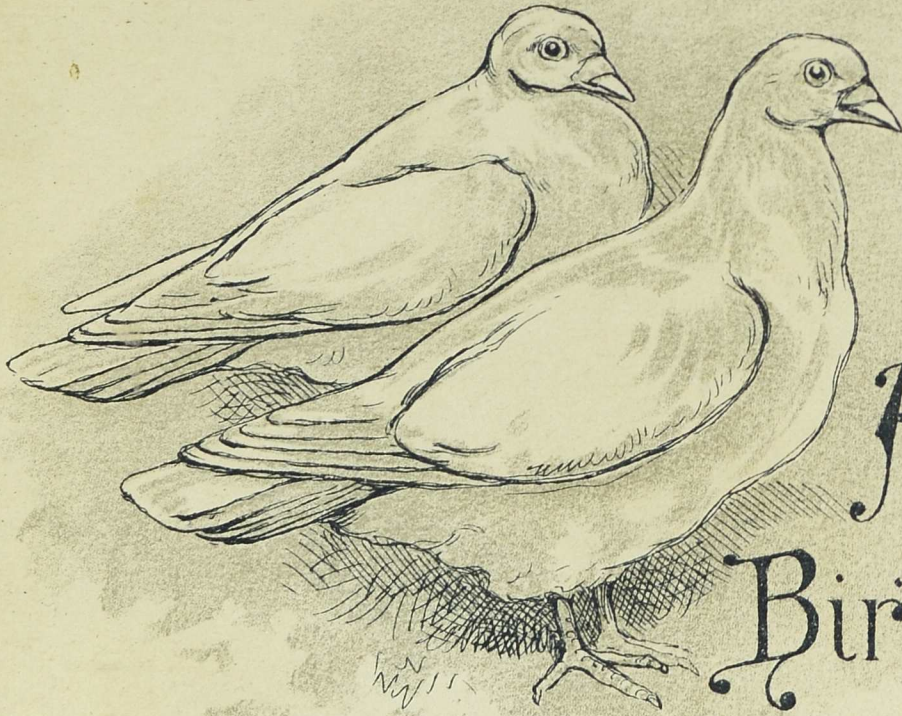
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ADA'S  
Birthday

By R. André :~



To Ada

Wishing you  
many  
Happy  
Returns  
of the DAY





ADA'S

BIRTHDAY:

Pictures  
& Story  
by  
R. André.

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# Ada's Birthday:

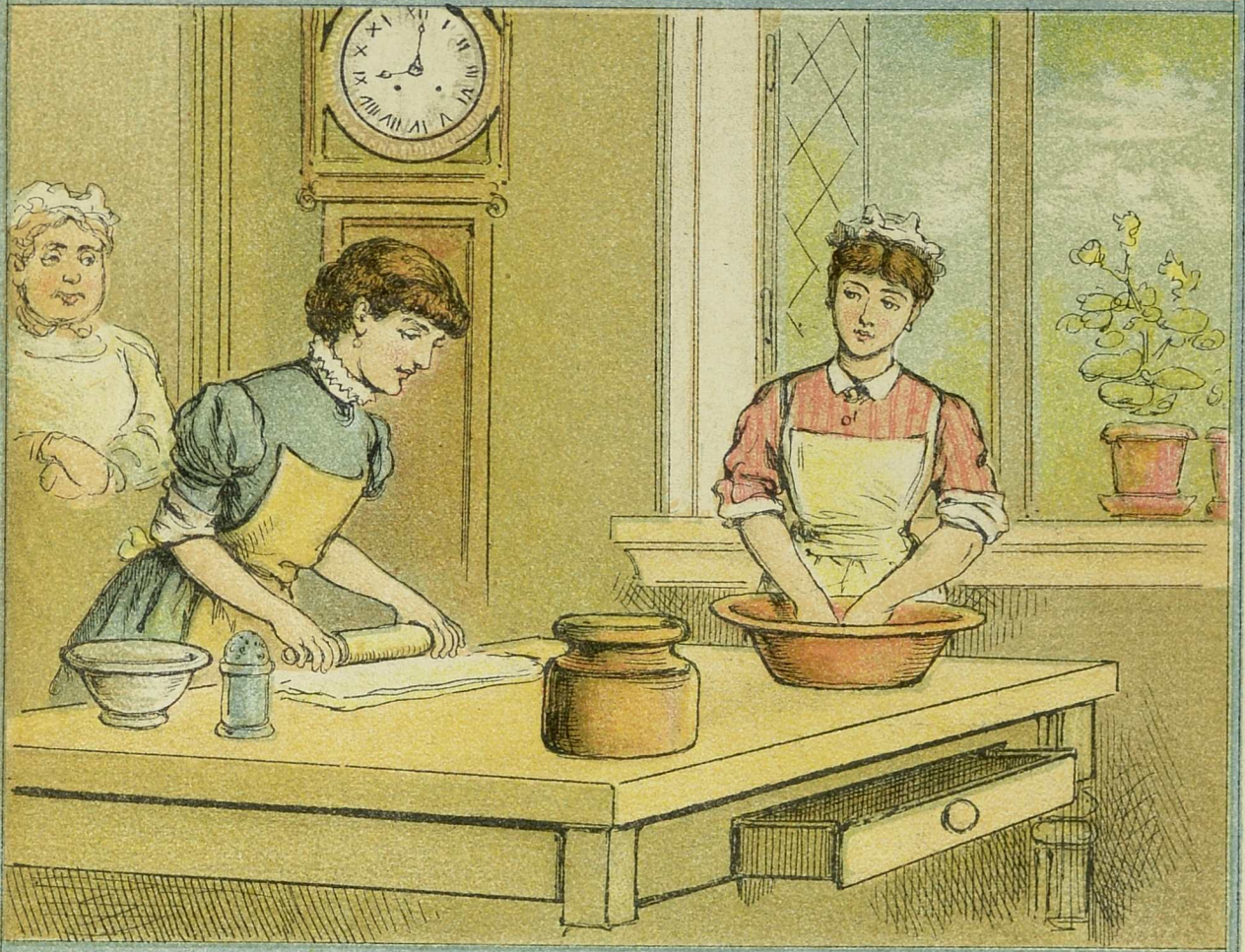


Cherry Orchard was in a state of unusual excitement — as far as such a sleepy, out-of-the way, old-fashioned cottage could be stirred into activity. It lay, nestling in a wilderness of blossom, the happy, hunting-ground of butterflies and bees. The screech of the railway seldom reached the quiet valley ; but the stillness was broken by the lowing of cattle, the cawing of rooks in the old elms, the clinking of the milk-pail, and the occasional patter of busy hobnailed boots along the tiled pathway from the scullery to the dairy.

The boots seemed to be unusually active



this morning, for to-day was a high festival at Cherry Orchard. It was Ada's birthday. Ada was eleven years old.



It was easy to see that something was on foot, for Ada's Mamma was busy in the kitchen like the Queen of Hearts in the Nursery Rhymes. Ada was an only child, and considerably spoiled in consequence; no wonder then, that her Mamma, being determined that the pastry should be equal to the occasion, set to work, and made it with her own plump hands.



As for Ada's Papa, he mooned about the gardens, and sat under the blossoms in the orchard with two old soldier friends, who had dropped in with their little



presents, and to wish Ada many happy returns of the day.

“Eleven years old, Colonel! I am growing quite a fossil!” said Papa, as he arranged his necktie in a burst of parental pride, and settled himself once more to listen to that interminable story of the Colonel's, and to try and look as if the



anecdote was quite new to him.

Of course, there was a grand delivery of birthday cards on this happy morning, and Ada ran to catch the postman at the gate, for she had watched him all up the lane, and was impatient at seeing him stop to gossip with the servants at the other houses, for everybody seemed to have letters to-day.

“Is that all?” asked Ada, although one of her hands was full; “you must have one more?” And, sure enough, there was one more lurking in the corner of the bag, and Ada ran in to enjoy her treasures.





But there were other treasures also. There was a real Indian sandal-wood glove-box from the Colonel, a writing-desk from the Major, a locket from Papa, and several other little knick-knacks into the bargain. As to the cards, Ada could not make out which was the prettiest, so she turned them and shuffled them this way and that with ever-increasing pleasure, for she had nothing else to do this morning, when Mamma was still



busy in the kitchen, and the Colonel had not nearly finished his old story. It was a

lovely spring morning, and the scent of the blossoms was everywhere.

Indeed, Ada felt quite sure that there never had been such sunshine before that day.

“I wonder if I shall get any more presents,” she thought to herself.





And while she was thinking there was Master Freddy Shaw, hugging a wicker cage containing two young pigeons, and staggering under his precious burden to Cherry Orchard, as fast as his anxiety would allow him. "Look here, Ada," he cried, as he saw the girl's sunny face at the window. "Here's my present!





But you mustn't eat them, you know."

Ada was out in the porch in an instant, "Oh, what beauties!" she said, seizing the cage, "I'll give you a kiss directly, Freddy."

Ada by-and-by put down the cage and kept her promise to Freddy.



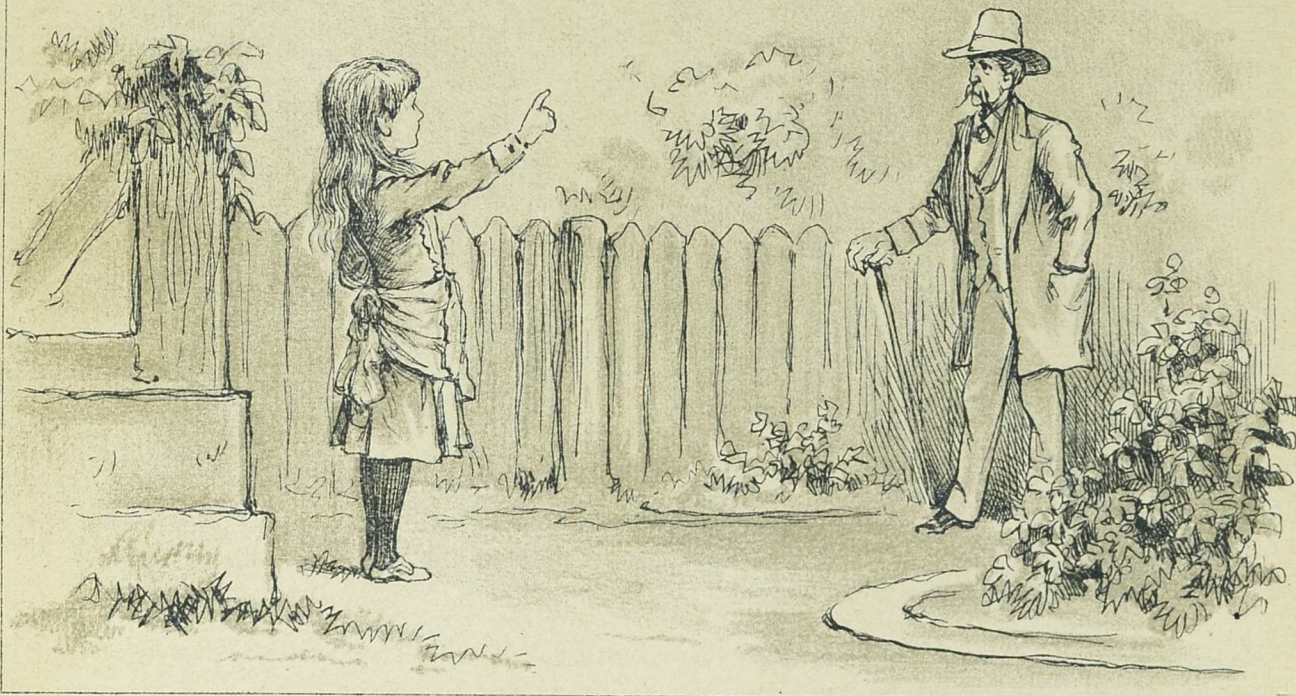
“Now,” she said, “Freddy, I must give you a keepsake—something you must keep for ever, as I mean to keep those pigeons.”

“But they’ll die some day, won’t they. Ada?”

“Oh, then I’ll have them stuffed. But come in, Freddy, and I’ll find something for you.”

“How about the pigeons, though? I thought you were never going to part with them?”

“They can’t fly away, you know. They’ll be all right in the porch for a minute. And here comes the Major. I’ll ask him to look after them. He can’t have anything to do. I know the Colonel has not nearly finished his old story yet.”





The good-natured Major consented to guard the treasures for five minutes, and Ada and Freddy ran into the house.

Then there was a long hunt in the girl's work-box for a suitable present ; but of course, yard-measures, and needle-cases, and pincushions were of no use to a boy.



However, at last Ada found her lucky sixpence, a battered old coin with a hole through it. This was the very thing ; and she gave it to Freddy, who vowed never to part with it, just as decidedly as Ada had promised to keep the pigeons for ever. So the two young people were as happy

as they could be, although the stipulated five minutes of the Major's guard had long expired.





Indeed, the old gentleman was beginning to be heartily tired of his bargain, and had half a mind to desert his post. However, he consoled himself as best he could by wondering whether pigeons would be good in a curry. Lost in such pleasant contemplations he did not perceive



how necessary a defender was to the birds; for the old cat found out the pigeons, and was thinking, like the Major himself, what a good dinner they might make. But the veteran was sufficiently on the alert to repel the attack, and pussy had good reason to hurry away out of reach of the Major's Malacca cane.





In the meantime Freddy and Ada were renewing their promises, when they were interrupted by the arrival in the garden of two young friends, and they ran out at once to meet them.

“You must come and see my pigeons, Lilly,” said Ada, excitedly; “I’ve promised to keep them for ever, and I’ve given Freddy a lucky sixpence, and

he’s promised never to part with it.”

“But do you believe he really will keep the sixpence till he’s quite an old man, Ada? I’ve often promised to keep things; but they always got lost or broken, and I didn’t care very much, after all.”

“Oh, that’s different,” said Ada, who was determined to think the best of everything and everybody, especially on her birthday.





“I say, Ernest,” said Freddy; “you haven’t got a lucky sixpence like this, have you? I’ve promised never to part with it, so you mustn’t touch it. Ada gave it to me this morning when I brought her two pigeons for her birthday.”

“And she is going to keep the pigeons for ever, Freddy?”

“Of course, she is,” answered the boy, indignantly. “Ada isn’t like other girls.”

“Where are they now?” asked Ernest.

“They’re safe enough. There’s the old Major looking after them.”

“Yes; one old bird looking after the two young ones, Freddy! But Ada will soon forget them, see if she doesn’t;” and the young gentleman began cracking nuts with the most perfect indifference.

“Don’t talk like that, Ernest,” said Freddy; “you’ll make me drop my sixpence. There! it’s gone now in the long grass. Oh, dear!”

And the sixpence was only recovered after a long search, which seemed to give Master Ernest an increased appetite for nuts.





Now the Major was beginning to think that even the Colonel's story was more amusing than guarding the pigeons, when good luck sent one of the farm boys past the door. "Here, my boy," said he, "just look after these birds, will you?" and the Major vanished.

The boy stared, scratched his head, looked at the two-pence which the Major had left in his hand, and settled the difficulty by ringing the bell.





“Here be two pigeons,” he said, as the cook appeared. “The Major said I was to take care on un. Here they be;” and so the boy walked off.

“A present from the Major,” thought Cook, and she marched off the prize at once to her mistress in the kitchen.

“These ’ll come in handy for a pie, Mum,” she said; “and a fine rpair of young birds I don’t think I ever saw!”





Whilst all this was going on, Freddy and Ernest rejoined the girls as soon as the lucky sixpence had been recovered and restored to the pocket of its owner, who stopped at every second step to feel if it was safe. He had two or three other coins in his pocket, but he could feel *the* sixpence by the hole in it.

“I vote we have a game of lawn tennis,” said Lilly. This was just the thing they all agreed, as they were exactly four. And they were about to begin the game when Ada suddenly remembered that she had lost the last ball the evening before. “We can get some in the village, though,” she said. “Who’ll go?”

Freddy and Ernest both volunteered; but it was found that Freddy had money, and that Ernest had none; and so it was finally decided, as a fair division of of labour, that Ernest should go, and that Freddy should pay.





“Here you are, Ernest,” said Freddy, pulling a coin hap hazard out of his pocket. Away ran the messenger ; but, just as he turned into the lane, he stopped to look at the coin, and saw, to his great amusement, that Freddy had

thoughtlessly given him the lucky sixpence.

“Now I’ll have some fun,” he chuckled to himself, “if Freddy doesn’t find out his mistake—I hope he won’t.”

Nearly at the same moment he felt that he had a ball in his pocket which he had hitherto forgotten. “That is lucky,”

he cried. “Now I needn’t buy the balls, and I’ll keep the sixpence in *my* pocket as

a joke.” By this time the boy was back again in the garden, but the others had taken the opportunity of his absence to run, under







Ada's guidance, to look at her pigeons.





“Hulloa! Ada,” cried Freddy, “where *are* the birds?”



"I don't know, Freddy, I left them here with the Major ; and now *he's* gone."

'Oh, Ada ! and you promised never to part with them."

"But I haven't parted with them, Freddy. They must be somewhere. Don't look so angry."

"If I had parted with my sixpence, what would you say, Ada ?"

"Perhaps the Major has eaten them," suggested Lilly, "and swallowed the cage, to conceal his crime? But I don't see any feathers about ; or perhaps the

birds have eaten the Major, in revenge for the pigeon-pies he has devoured ?"

"Don't talk nonsense, Lilly," said Freddy, snappishly ; "I wouldn't have given them to you, Ada, if I had thought you could be so careless."

At that moment, Ernest ran up and was surprised to see that evidently all thoughts of a game had been abandoned. "It's cruel





to call me careless Freddy," sobbed Ada.

"So it is," said Ernest; "*other people* can be careless too, sometimes."

"Of course they can," said Freddy; "but they ought never to be careless about a keepsake."

Ernest laughed.

"What *are* you laughing at, Ernest? I don't see the joke—Ada's pigeons are gone."



"I was only thinking if you had lost your sixpence."

"You've no business to think anything so absurd," interrupted Freddy, turning very red.

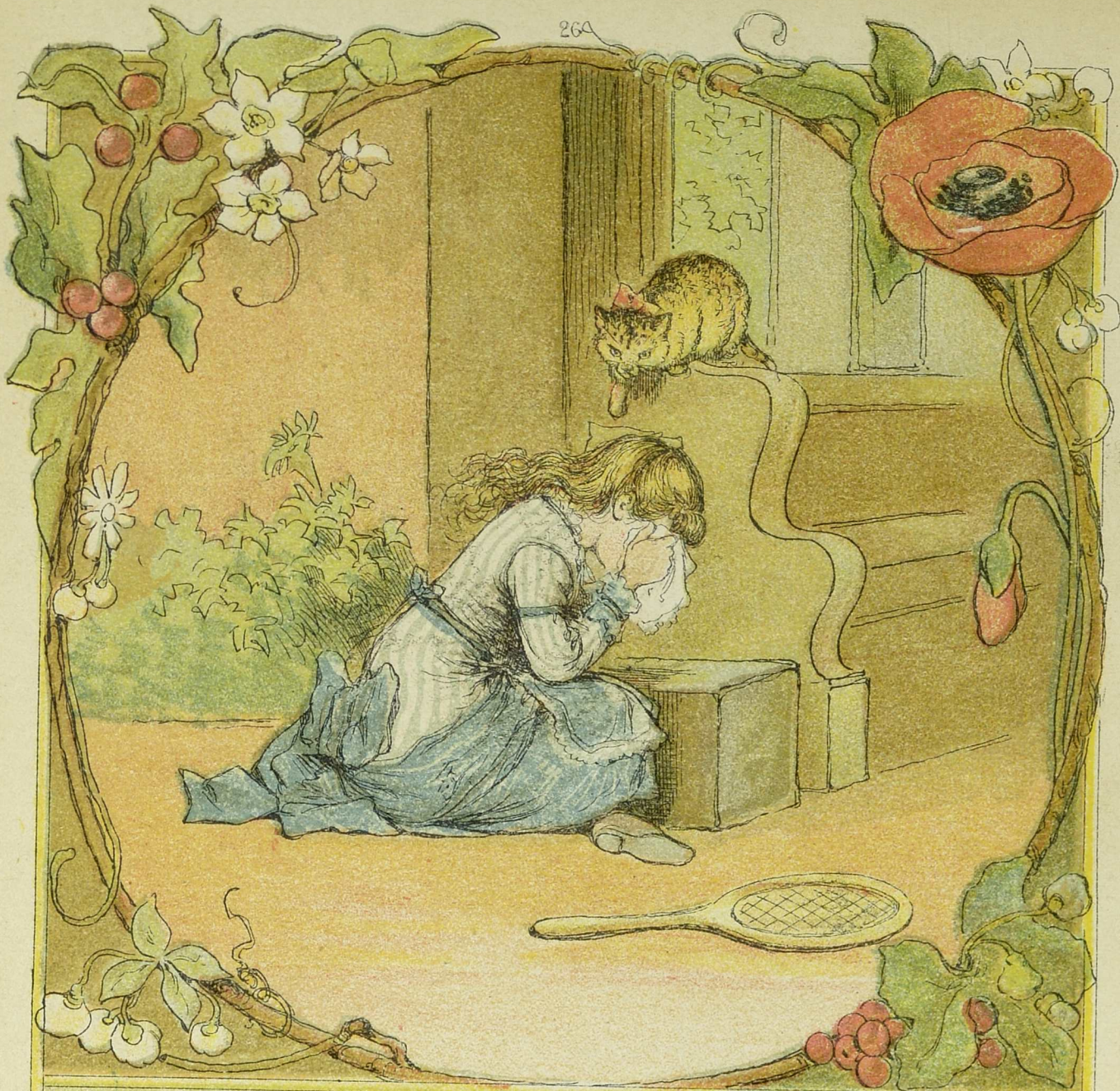
Ernest laughed outright. "Look how guilty Freddy looks," said Lilly; "make him show his sixpence, Ada."

"Of course I'll show it," said Freddy, fumbling in his pocket and producing several coins.

"Well," asked Lilly, who began to suspect something from Ernest's manner.

"I don't know where it is—but it must be somewhere," gasped the boy, admitting his loss.





"Oh, Freddy," sobbed Ada reproachfully; "and you promised me never to part with it?"

"Well, at any rate," answered the boy, "I'm no worse than you."





But Freddy burst out crying on one side of the porch, while Ada cried quite as bitterly on the other side, and behind their backs Ernest mischievously held up the missing sixpence for Lilly to see.



“This is a pretty birthday,” said that young lady; “a few minutes ago it was all sunshine, now it’s heavy rain. Oh you two sillies, why couldn’t you take better care of your presents?”

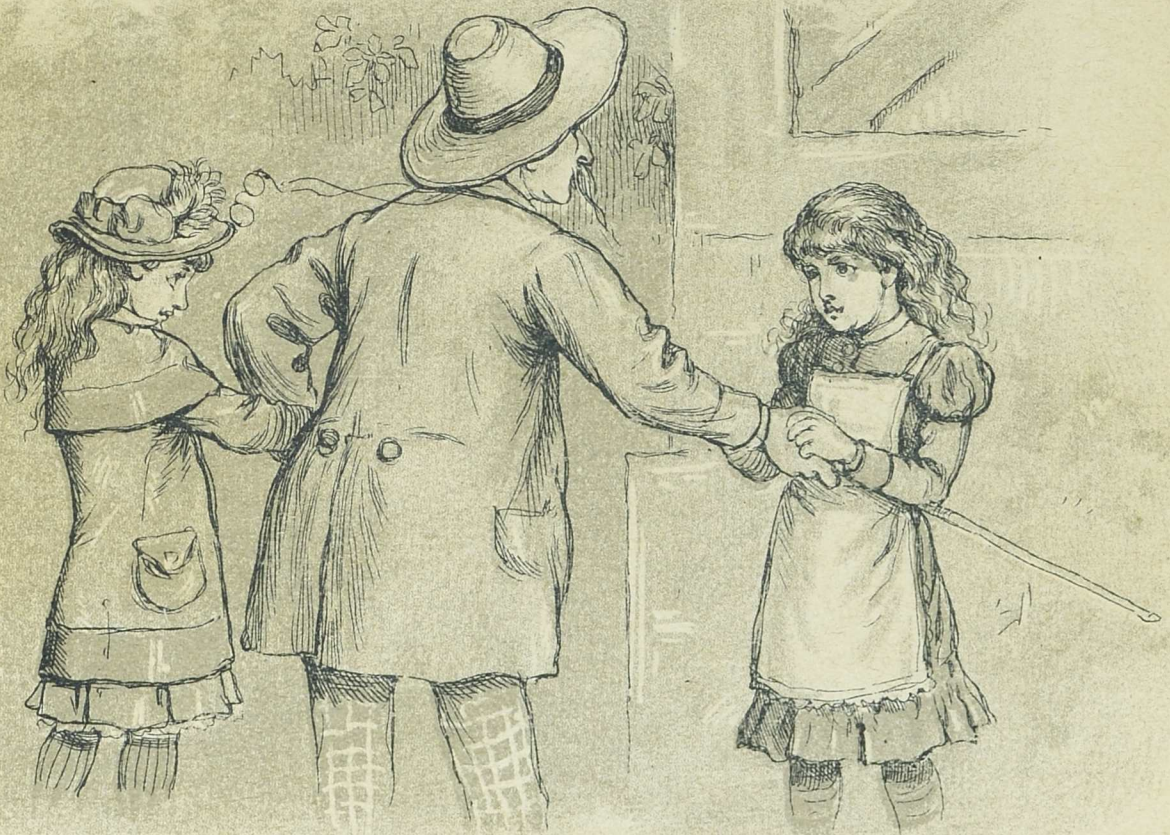
“I shall never forgive Freddy,” sobbed Ada.

“I shall never forgive Ada,” sobbed Freddy.

“That’s just what I expected from a girl,” said Ernest.

“That’s just what I expected from a boy,” said Lilly.

And there seemed to be a chance of another pair of enemies, and possibly of more tears, when the Major strolled up, and by his presence at once suggested pigeons.





The two girls seized him, one on each side, and began to question him both at once.

“You didn’t keep your bargain of five minutes, young people ; so I handed over my charge to a boy, and that’s all I know. And there’s the very boy over there, I do believe. Hi ! you boy ! what did you do with the pigeons ?” called the Major, as the boy came within speaking distance.



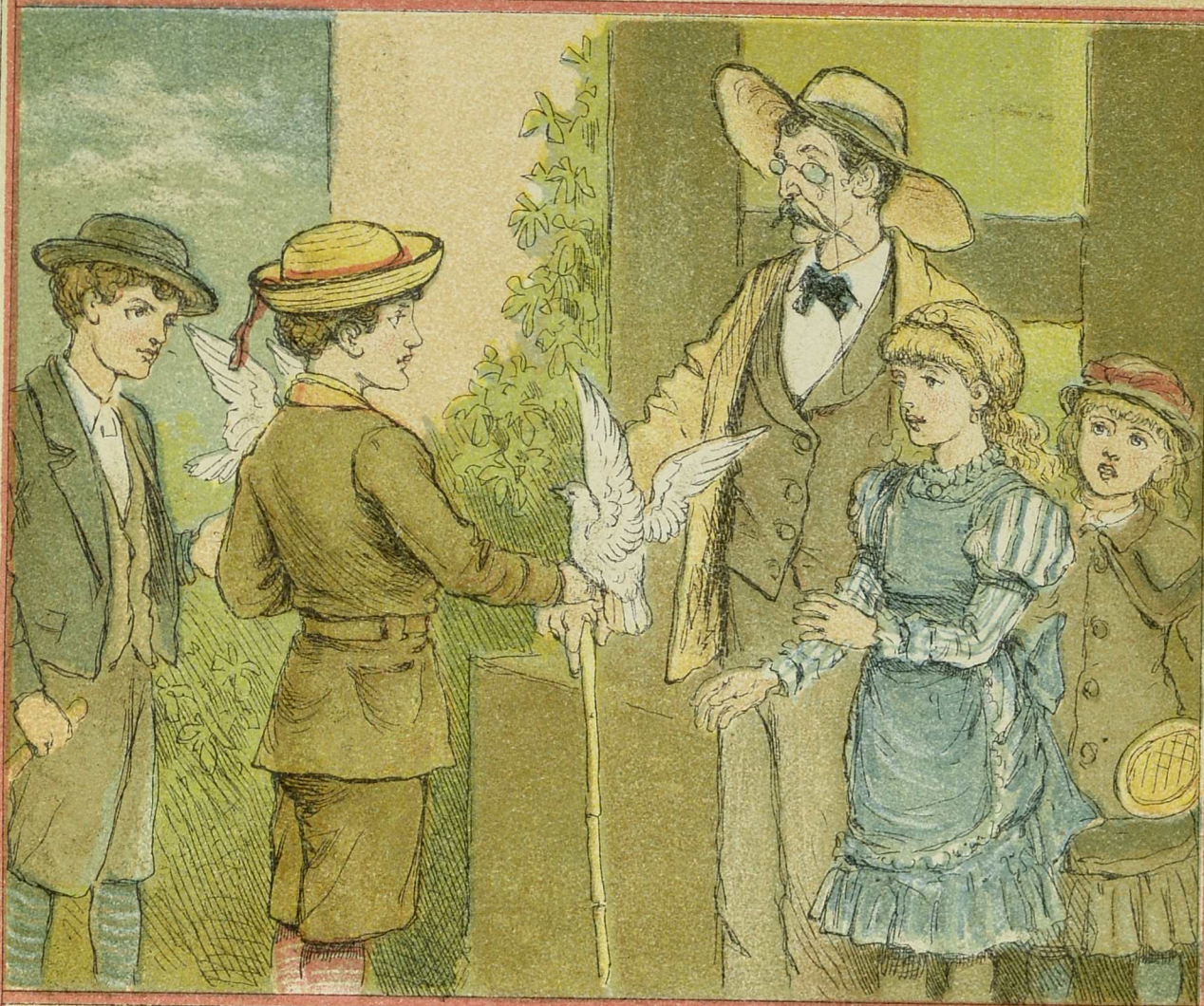
“What did I do wi’ un ? Woi, I rang bell, and I give un to cook, “you said I was to take care on un, so says I to cook ; ‘ Here they be,’ and I dessay she’s put em where no cats can get at un !”

“There, Ada !” said Freddy, “no doubt they’re plucked by this time. I shall never eat any dinner again !”

“No more shall I !” said Ada. “And now you’ve lost your sixpence



I don't like my birthday a bit. I wish I had never been born!"  
At that very moment there was a flapping of wings, and the two pigeons came



fluttering through the porch, and perched on Freddy's arm. They had escaped from cook when she opened the cage to lay violent hands on them, and being so tame they knew their former master at once. "You see they know whom



to trust," said Freddy.

"Yes, but I don't," said Ada. "Where is your sixpence?"



"Money is very apt to fly, like pigeons," said the Major. But Ernest put an end to all further squabble by producing the lucky sixpence, and telling the story of how Freddy had given it to him accidentally, and how he had kept it for this



short time, of course to give a lesson to his careless young friend.

"All's well that ends well," said the Major, smiling at the restoration of peace amongst the young people.

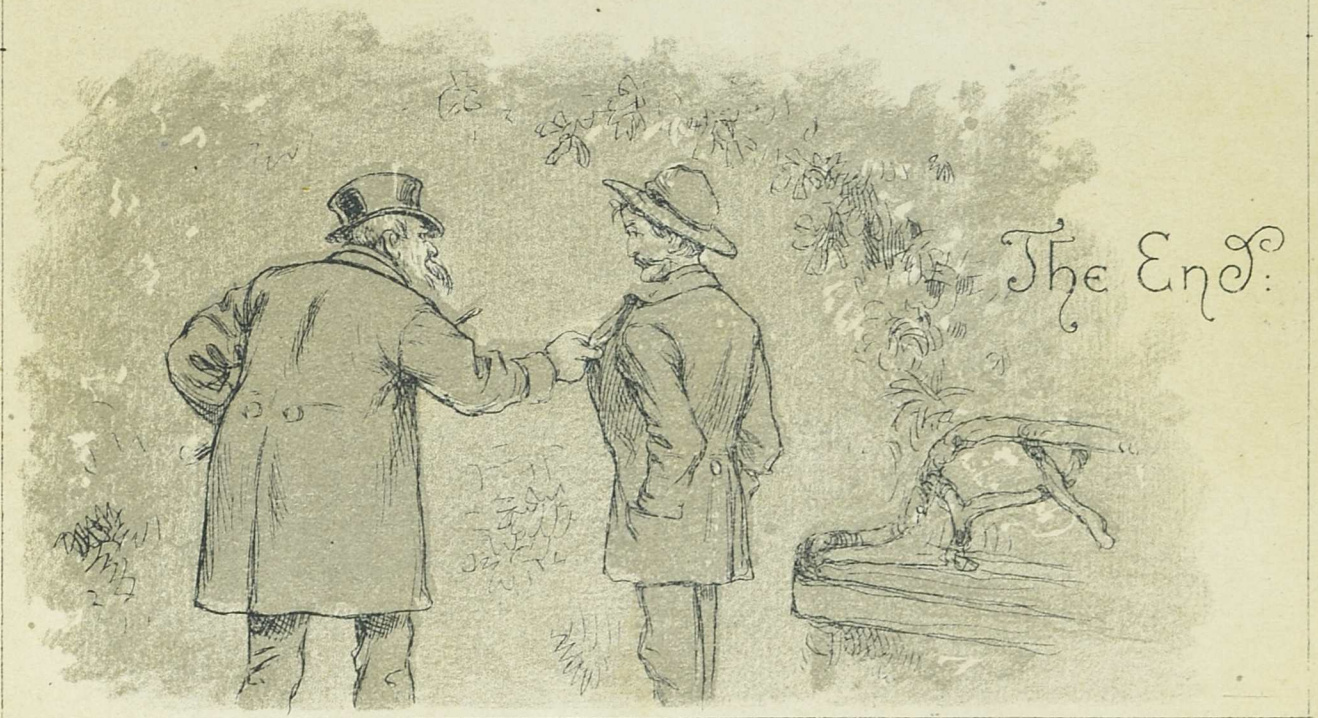
"Look after your birds yourself in future, Miss Ada, and I'd advise you, young gentleman, to get a cage for your sixpence."

"Why, here is Mamma coming to call us in to dinner," said Ada

"And we must drink to the happy returns of the presents. And, I declare," exclaimed the Major, "here are your Papa and the Colonel, *at last*. We all know what that means."

"Yes," laughed Ada, "The End of the Story."

R. ANDRÉ.













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