

The Children of Melby Hall

BEING TALKS
AND STORIES OF
PLANT AND
ANIMAL LIFE
IN THE WORLD
AROUND US



PRIZE FROM
All Saints', Woodford Wells,
SUNDAY SCHOOL.

HOLY INNOCENTS' DAY, 18 96

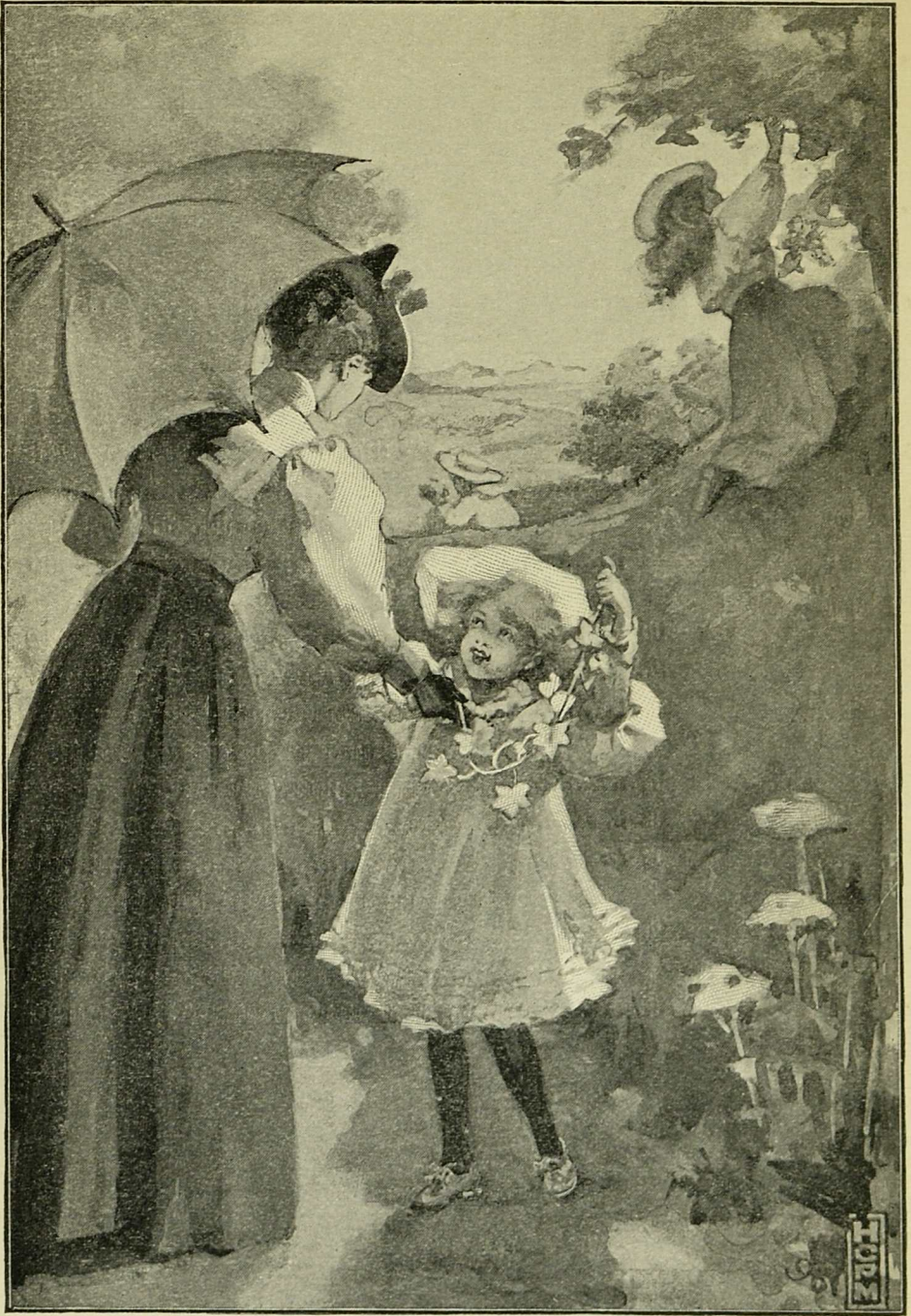
Name *Lewis Andrew*

Vicar

J. E. Emley

Supt.

Teacher



'Twist it round my hat,' said Dolly.

PAGE 28.

The Children of Melby Hall

*BEING TALKS AND STORIES OF PLANT AND ANIMAL LIFE
IN THE WORLD AROUND US*

BY

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PREFACE.

WE think every one to a greater or lesser degree recognises nowadays the difference between 'Eyes and No Eyes.'

We have endeavoured in this little volume to show what an immense interest the study of Natural History, even in its simplest form, will produce in the minds of children and young people.

An ordinary country stroll, which to them may be made tiresome and uninteresting, can be lighted up with the spirit of romance if one or two wayside flowers be pointed out and their life story told in simple words, a bird and its song connected together, or a butterfly on the wing, and its wonderful transformations, made familiar to them.

Then a country lane, a common grass field, a hedgerow, or sweet and dewy meadows become like a book of fairy lore, where so many of our summer friends make their fragile homes, live their short but happy lives, adding so much to *our* happiness, as we would find the woods and meadows but lonely places were they not carpeted with flowers and vocal with the song of birds.

M. & J. M.K.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. MISS FELSHAM'S TROUBLES—A HOME AMONG THE BRANCHES.....	1
II. MELBY HALL—A TALK ABOUT SPIDERS—THE EDIBLE SNAIL—CLEVER ENGINEERS.....	12
III. THE ARRIVAL OF LADY GRANT AND REGINALD— WATER VOLES.....	39
IV. AN ADVENTURE—INSECT LIFE.....	52
V. 'SOLDIER TOM'—AMONG THE LILIES.....	63
VI. MARY ALLARDICE, 'THE FAIRY GODMOTHER'—SUGAR- MAKING FROM THE ROCK MAPLE.....	76
VII. THE GIPSY ENCAMPMENT.....	89
VIII. THE RESCUE.....	95
IX. TOM'S HOLIDAY STORIES: INSECT-EATING PLANTS, THE VINE.....	102
X. HOLIDAY STORIES AT SUTTON HOUSE: A SUMMER RAMBLE, THE WATER OUZEL, THE LITTLE AUK.....	119

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

	PAGE
‘Twist it round my hat,’ said Dolly.....	<i>Frontispiece</i>
Squirrel.....	8
Melby Hall.....	12
Scorpion.....	15
Spinnerets of Spider.....	16
Foot of Garden Spider.....	17
Garden Spider finishing her Web.....	18
Tarantula Spider.....	21
Hop.....	29
Beaver Dam.....	33
Beaver floating a Log.....	34
Beavers’ Lodges.....	37
Spider Monkey.....	45
Water Vole.....	47
Field Vole.....	50
Butterfly, Larva, and Pupa.....	59
Orchids	67
Cat’s Tail.....	71
White Water-lily.....	72
Gipsy Encampment.....	88
Venus’s Fly-trap.....	103
Leaf of Sundew	106
Pitcher-plants.....	109
Vine.....	113
Roses.....	122
Emperor Moth.....	125
Metamorphoses of Dragon-fly	126
Water Ousel.....	129
Little Auk.....	133
Guillemot.....	135
Gannets.....	136



THE CHILDREN OF MELBY HALL.

CHAPTER I.

MISS FELSHAM'S TROUBLES.

ROW, row, sailor-boys, the storm is coming fast,' gaily sang three shrill, childish voices; 'Row, row, row, row.'

The place where the children were playing was the drawing-room of Melby Hall, and the three youngsters were the children of Captain Westcott. Alas! for them; they were motherless, and their doting father having to be much from home, Miss Felsham had been installed as *governess superintendent*—rather an awe-inspiring title, which the Captain had invented, after many disturbed thoughts as to how his high-spirited and indulged children could be

properly controlled, and, at the same time, their wonderful flow of spirits have free course.

‘There is a great deal in a name,’ he thought, and such a very lengthy and inscrutable one might help to subdue his young fry for a short time at any rate.

As my story opens, Madge, the eldest, was seated on an elegant ottoman, her arms rowing most vigorously in imitation of imaginary sailors. The castors of the ottoman carried her round and round in grand fashion, much to her wild delight.

There were many severe collisions, however, with the rest of the furniture, but that mattered nothing to careless Madge! Dolly, a lovely little fairy of six, was seated in a most perilous position on the top of a huge bronze lamp (which was used for decorative purposes), in one corner of the room, and was considered to be the best imitation of the mast of a ship in a storm.

Harry, aged five, was securely pinned up in one of the grand window curtains, and supposed to be a sailor in his hammock, and as every window in the room was open, it swayed in a most charming fashion here and there and everywhere.

Again the little voices rang gaily out, ‘The storm is coming, and the clouds are black. Row, row, row, row,’ when at that moment the ottoman came into violent collision with the lamp, which rocked most ominously from side to side, a lovely example of a

storm at sea, but rather too stormy for Dolly's nerves. So shrieks and cries of mingled fear and dismay reached Miss Felsham's ears as she was busy in the breakfast-room down-stairs.

'Are any of them killed at last?' was her first thought, as she had but a few minutes before seen them demurely walking off to the school-room, where she was to join them in a quarter of an hour.

Alas! the open drawing-room door, and the quarter of an hour, was all that was needed for our trio, and this was the result!

Poor Miss Felsham! This was but her second week at Melby Hall, and it already seemed double that time, so many hairbreadth escapes and extraordinary situations had that wonderful trio brought on her.

And yet, what lovable children they were! But she must fly on the wings of the wind to see what terrible tragedy had happened now.

The cries sounded from quite a different part of the house to the school-room. 'They are in the drawing-room,' she muttered to herself; and when she reached that room and opened the door, she was fairly bewildered.

The cries had suddenly ceased, however, as Dolly had recovered her balance, and Madge, who was the leading spirit in all mischief, whispered, 'I hear her coming; let's all pretend that we are drowned sailors.'

So, when Miss Felsham exclaimed, 'Now children, what have you been about?' the silence was awful, except for the wind tearing in through every open window.

The first prostrate form she went to was Madge, who was lying on the ottoman, with her eyes tightly closed. A terrible fear took hold of Miss Felsham that she was really dead, and with a cry she took hold of her: 'Madge, darling, speak to me.'

In a moment Madge's warm heart detected real distress in Miss Felsham's voice, and starting up in an instant, she exclaimed, 'No, no, Miss Felsham, we are not deaded, we are only drowneded!'

What a relief to poor Miss Felsham; but when she discovered the awful position of Dolly, still clinging to the tottering lamp, she had her to extricate, and unpin Master Harry out of his hammock; then she felt she must sit down and shed a few tears of real despair. At once the trio crowded round her. Little arms flung round her neck, and soft kisses rained upon her tearful face. What had they done to vex her? They promised never to be sailors again, perhaps it would be soldiers next time, and then they could get father's real gun, and Harry would shoot them all with his revolver that father had when he was in Africa, and so on chirped the little eager voices.

Miss Felsham's despair only deepened. Would she

ever be able to control these children; and yet they were so sweet and sunny. She just loved them with all her heart.

So she dried her tears, and conveyed the repentant trio to the school-room, Harry in her arms, his soft cheek pressed against hers, murmuring many promises, 'never to be naughty again,' to make his dear 'Felshy' cry so much.

'They are just the sweetest children in the world,' Miss Felsham said to herself; and as the three little curly heads were bending over their books, her thoughts went back to the home she had recently left.

The happy, happy home, till the dear father had been taken from them, the well-loved rector of a small parish among the Devonshire moors. Very scanty means was the portion of the mother and children, so Miss Felsham, being the eldest, had to leave home at once to lend her aid in supporting the dear ones there, a little brother and sister being left with the sorrowing mother. Ah! but Lucy Felsham had a brave spirit, and she entered on her duties at Melby Hall with the high resolve to carry sunshine with her wherever she went, and to influence the young lives committed to her care, so as to make them afterwards happy, Christ-like men and women.

But the trio at Melby Hall fairly baffled all her preconceived ideas of child life; their sweet guileless-

ness and quick sympathy with any kind of sorrow, and their warm loving hearts, made them peculiarly attractive, and she felt that they might teach her many lessons in their childish innocence.

But their daring recklessness in imaginary situations at their playtime, and so cleverly carrying them out to the bitter end, made her feel that the responsibility laid on her was one of the heaviest.

Captain Westcott was at present travelling in Africa, to recover from the blow of his young wife's death. So his sister, Lady Grant, who lived at Sutton House, about twenty miles from the Hall, hearing so good an account of Miss Felsham's abilities, had engaged and installed her with full charge of the household during Captain Westcott's absence.

Madge, Dolly, and Harry were so bright and intelligent, and so fond of watching the birds, flowers, and insects in the garden and grounds, that Miss Felsham determined to make a lively course of lessons for them on Natural History, as they often took country walks with her, when she could show them the different plants, and birds, or insects they were learning about.

So now, as she had got them all safely into the school-room, she began the experiment at once by telling them the story of 'The Squirrel,' especially of her pet one.

A HOME AMONG THE BRANCHES.

One summer morning, as I walked through a wood by a lonely country road, I was startled by a great scrimmage among the branches of a tree. I looked up, and discovered a pair of squirrels in evident consternation and distress. They were continually darting down to the ground, then up the tree again, in a twinkling,

I looked at the place they were aiming for, and soon discovered a young squirrel, lying quite stunned, either by a fall or rough usage of some kind.

I picked the poor little fellow up, put him into my handkerchief, and carried him home. I laid him in a warm place, and succeeded in getting some warm milk over his throat. In a little while he revived, and was so pretty when he sat up and curled his half-grown tail right over his back, that I determined to keep him for a pet. And a great pet he is; now he is full grown, and he has the entire liberty of the house and garden running, jumping, and climbing wherever he likes.

I am sorry to say he is a great thief, especially in the line of sweets and fruit.

The strawberries disappeared very quickly, much too quickly, indeed, only to be taken by the birds. So one day 'Master Rex' was discovered sitting on

his hind-legs, his bushy tail completely enveloping his head, while he was comfortably nibbling away at a splendid strawberry, held in his little front-paws. Squirrels have very long, sharp, front teeth, meant for gnawing, and they give a bad bite; but Rex never bit any one who was a friend, or showed him kindness. It is a very cruel thing to keep squirrels in revolving cages; and those



Squirrel.

that are often sold for pets have the front-teeth broken off, which must cause the little creatures intense suffering.

Now, let me tell you the life-story of a squirrel. We have our own British Squirrel; and there is a gray one in the United States; and numerous other species occur all over North America. They belong to the order Rodentia in Natural History.

Rodentia is from the Latin word *rodens*, which means 'gnawing.' The most characteristic feature of this class of animal lies in the structure of the incisor teeth, which are adapted for continuous gnawing.

They are four in number, two in the upper, and two in the lower jaw. They are large, long, and curved, and are covered in front by a plate of hard enamel.

The back part of these teeth (which is composed merely of soft dentine) therefore wears away much sooner than the front, and the result of this is, that the crown of each tooth acquires a chisel-like shape, bevelled away behind, while the enamel in front forms a continuous cutting edge.

Another curious fact too about these teeth is, that they grow from persistent pulps, so that they continue growing throughout the entire life of the animal. It is interesting also to note that while these teeth are busy at their work, they are greatly assisted by the articulation of the lower jaw, the moving joint of which is placed lengthwise in the mouth, so that it slides backwards and forwards as the gnawing is going on.

These, then, are the special tools provided for the rodents, that they may live in comfort, and fight their own battle of life. Without these wonderful gifts, their free and happy life would be a useless thing to them. The order Rodentia comprises

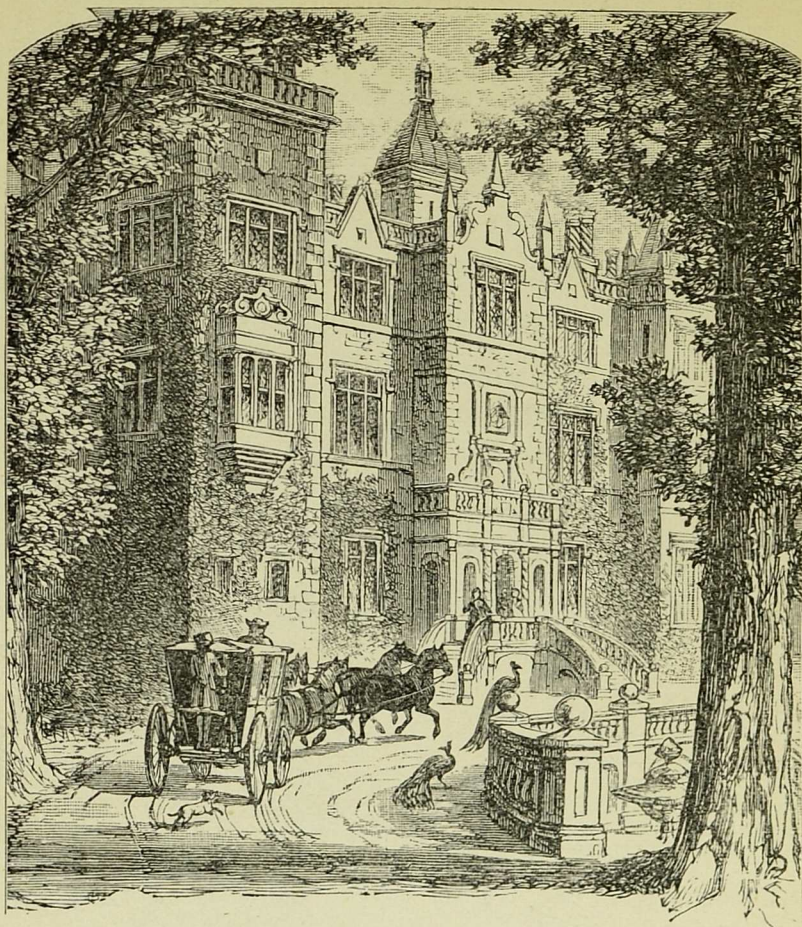
many animals we are familiar with, such as mice, rats, rabbits, hares, beavers, &c.

The squirrels are almost entirely denizens of the trees. How they love the shady woods in summer! It is one of Nature's prettiest sights, I think, to see a squirrel darting up a tree, and when he thinks himself at a safe distance from us, the intruding mortals, then he peeps at us from behind a thicket of green leaves with his diamond-like eyes.

As for his nest, it is a magnificent piece of architecture. His summer nest (for they generally have two) is placed among the higher branches of a tree, where it can be rocked by every wind that blows. A forked branch is a capital site. It is nearly round, and composed of grass, moss, and leaves, so artistically woven together as to defy the drenching rain. The entrance to this nest is a hole in the side. A single pair inhabit the same nest and tree year after year. This is their nursery, where the little ones are born and brought up. They are born in summer, and remain with their parents till the following spring. Their winter nests are often made in the trunk of a hollow tree. Being very partial to heat, they congregate together during the winter months; and as their retreats are well hidden and strongly built, they last for years. They lay up winter stores in nooks and crannies near the tree where they nest; and they can find these spots

in the earth even under the deepest snow. If you could peep into one of these wonderful store-closets, you would see nuts, acorns, seeds, wheat, and other grains. Squirrels are in their glory in autumn. They cast their summer coats then, and don magnificent furs. Then you can see them careering among the branches, viewing the nut-woods with the eye of a critic, and always carrying off the best and largest nuts; so if you wish some, go before the squirrels.





CHAPTER II.

MELBY HALL.

MELBY HALL was a grand old building, dating as far back as 1638, with peaked gables and latticed windows, clustered over with ivy, peeping in everywhere. A fine new wing had been added when Captain Westcott brought home his beautiful young bride, now nearly ten years ago.

Nurse Sibbald was never tired speaking of her late mistress, Mrs Westcott; 'just an angel,' she always called her, and our trio were just sweet little angels too.

And nurse was right; Marjory Westcott had endeared herself to every one, high and low, rich and poor; and the children had evidently taken all their mother's sunny nature, and their father's brave daring, even in their play. For Captain Westcott was a brave English soldier, ever at the front, gallant and dashing, having joined his regiment again after his wife's death.

There was a lovely lawn in front of the Hall, with shrubbery surrounding it, a fine fruit and flower garden lying to the south.

Old Jacobs, the head-gardener, had great pride in his special domain, and having several gardeners under him, everything was in perfect order.

Our trio had each a little garden of their own, but here Jacobs could not hold up his head with pride, for he could not persuade them to wait until their seeds or flowers came to anything.

His poor old heart bled over the valuable seeds and plants he put in for them; the next day all were summarily dug up to see if they were growing, Dolly's despair being specially marked over the awful time her flowers took to grow.

Miss Felsham noticed that Dolly had a great fear and dislike of the spiders or snails that she

found among her flowers, thoughtlessly trampling on every one that came in her way. So she prepared a story about each of these wonderful creatures, which fascinated the children, and helped to cure Dolly of her foolish fears.

A TALK ABOUT SPIDERS.

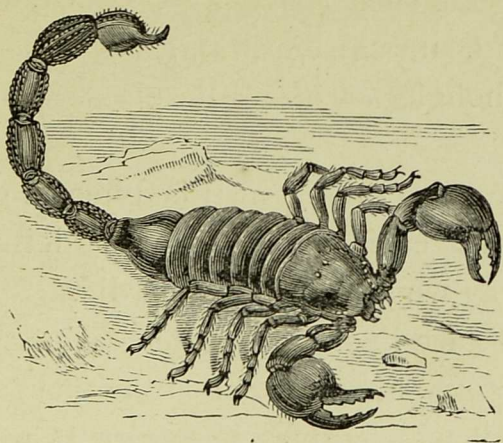
Spiders, which we all know by sight, belong to a group of animals named Arachnida, from the Greek *arachnes*, 'a spider,' and *eidos*, 'form;' so that all the animals belonging to that group are of the shape of a spider, or have the same kind of organs.

A spider is not an insect, for he has eight legs; an insect has only six. Besides, a spider goes through no transformations.

This group of Arachnida includes a great many animals, different both as to habits and disposition, such as the deadly scorpion, and the little mites.

We may call the scorpion the wild and dangerous bandit of his family, while our own spiders are the industrious members. In South America, and even on the shores of sunny Italy, the cruel scorpions lie in secret hiding-places, knowing well the deadly power of their sting, till some poor little unconscious insect or animal comes within reach, then the fierce claws are flung round it, and the venomous sting that lies in the scorpion's tail is thrust into its body, and it ceases to struggle.

But now we will turn to our industrious class of spiders. We know how the water spider spins her



Scorpion.

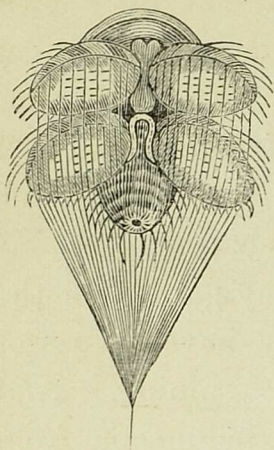
home, and what a busy life she leads, in the quiet peat-mosses of a moor. Now let us look at our common little garden spider (*Epeira diadema*). I have often watched them in a garden of England, spinning their web, and catching their prey.

Now just imagine a fine day in my garden in the month of July. The weather may have been wet and thundery, but now the sun is shining. And there, from the crack in an old paling, or from under the leaves of a rose bush, a poor little spider crawls forth, looking half dead. The rain and the wind have long since torn down her web, so she has waited half starving till she can spin and catch some food. She looks a very disconsolate little mite, but just watch her as the heat of the sun gives her new life, and inspires her with hope.

There she is, scrambling off and over the ground as fast as she can, to find a nice sunny spot to which she can attach her web. She is one of the most skilful, industrious, and cleanly of nature's children, though so often despised and ruthlessly killed.

She too carries on her own body some of the most beautiful and curious of tools for doing her life's work, just as we saw the rodents did.

Her limbs are in strong jointed casings. Her head and shoulders are welded into one sturdy and strong piece, which gives her a great advantage in attacking and devouring her prey.



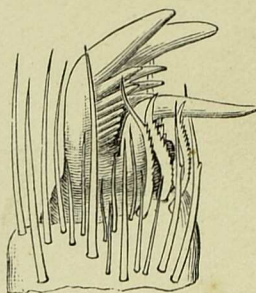
Spinnerets of Spider.

Two short feelers stand out in front of her head, and form part of her jaws. These are her powerful and dangerous fangs. They hang down over her mouth, and as the spider bears a poison bag in her head (instead of in the lower part of her body like the scorpion), she pours the poison into her victims through these deadly fangs. But now she has fixed on the branches of a currant bush to begin her spinning. How will she do it? For she has no possession but her own body to supply both material and tools.

First of all, if you will look at the under side of

her body, you will see six curious-looking little cones. These little cones are called her spinnerets, and each one of them is pierced with at least a hundred holes! Now above these cones, and inside of her body, she has special glands, which are able to manufacture a gummy substance which dries as soon as it comes in contact with the air. This substance the spider passes through her spinnerets, and it forms the silken thread with which she spins. And as you know how fine the thread of a spider's web is—so fine that we think nothing of snapping it in a moment—you will hardly believe that six hundred strands of silk go to make it up. Each little cone sends out a hundred, and there are six of them. The four spinnerets nearest the end of her body give out the long threads, while the two above, moving from side to side, weave the whole into one connected line.

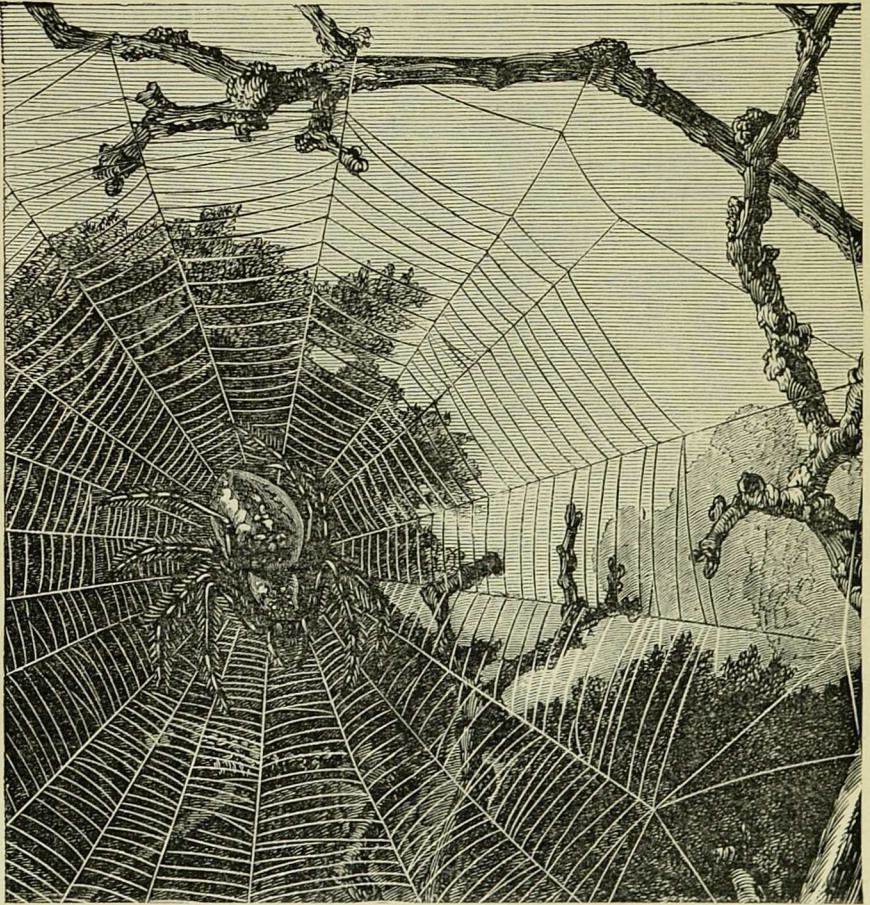
But how will the thread be guided so as to form a web, you ask? You will soon see that, if you look at her feet under a microscope. Ah! here are some more of her beautiful tools!



Foot of the
Garden Spider.

Her little feet are formed of three claws. The camel's foot, as you know, is well adapted to its life in the sandy desert. So is it with the spider. Two of her claws are toothed like combs, while

the middle one is longer and hooked. With this hooked claw she grasps the thread as she runs, and with the combs she moulds the delicate thread as it oozes from her spinnerets, and does with it



Garden Spider finishing her Web.

as she likes. It will take her about three-quarters of an hour to spin her beautiful gossamer web on the currant bush; and there we will leave her,

hoping she will catch a good-sized fly to satisfy her hunger.

What about the house spider? We very often see them, and it is thought by many people very unlucky to kill a spider. I don't know about that, but I think it is very cruel, for they do us no harm. The other day, the housemaid was busy dusting in the lobby. She called me to come and look at the little yellow ball sticking in one corner of the ceiling. I found that it was a little silken tube like a thimble, which a house spider had spun to hide herself in.

The web of the house spider, if left alone, will last for many weeks. But then she has not the same chances of catching prey as the garden spider has. She often lives for six or eight years, and she is a very affectionate mother. Every year she lays her eggs in a cocoon, and hides it in a tuft of silk, made strong with scraps of plaster. She broods over the cocoon till the little spiders are hatched.

Now, leaving the house, let us go out into the woods, and heaths, and there you are sure to find one of the wolf-spiders running about. These spiders search for their prey among low bushes and leaves. They use their spinnerets chiefly for lining the holes they make with silk, that they may sleep comfortably through the winter. Also, they use the silk thread for spinning the cocoon in which they lay their eggs. If you can catch one of them about the month of June, you will find that she is carrying

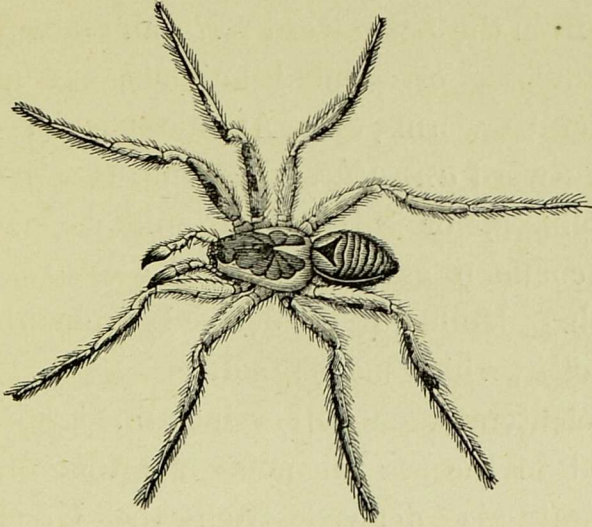
a snowy white ball under her body. This is her cocoon containing the eggs. Try to take it from her, and a regular fight will be the consequence, for such is her mother's love, she would rather die than part with it. This spider is also called the hunting spider.

When Darwin the naturalist was far out in mid-ocean in the vessel called the *Beagle*, he was much astonished one day by the appearance of large numbers of tiny spiders flying on board the ship. Where could they have come from he wondered? Each one of them had a long gossamer thread attached to its body, so they got the name of the gossamer spider. Darwin thought that they had used this thread to fly with instead of wings.

There is another spider yet I would like to tell you about, but fortunately for us, he is a foreigner, and only lives in the tropics. He is one of the Tarantula spiders; and so deadly is his sting that men and animals fear him. He is as large as the palm of a man's hand; he is so confident in his powers of killing that he fears no one.

But it is very interesting to know that quite lately the one enemy of this spider has been found out, and its habits studied. This is an insect called the Blue or Tarantula Wasp. It has a peculiar hum, and is a large creature, but it never thinks of attacking man unless it is irritated by him. But the poor tarantula, as soon as he hears the ominous

hum of the blue wasp, cowers for fear, and tries to hide himself. But it is no use! The wasp comes leisurely along, pounces in a moment on his back, thus avoiding his horrid fangs, sends a dagger of a sting into a vital part, which kills the spider in a



Tarantula Spider.

few minutes. And the curious end of the story is, that it is the mother wasp who has done this, and she immediately lays one egg in the spider's body, which serves as food when the young one is hatched.

THE EDIBLE SNAIL.

Animals differ much from one another, not only in their shape, size, and habits, but also in their internal formation.

These differences of internal structure have led naturalists to divide the animal kingdom into five divisions, which are called subkingdoms, and are named as follows :

1. Vertebrata, or backboned animals, exemplified in man, beasts, birds, reptiles, and fishes. Vertebrata is derived from the Latin word *verto*, and means 'I turn.'

2. Annulosa, or jointed animals, exemplified in insects, crabs, worms, &c. Annulosa is derived from the Latin word *annulus*, which means a 'ring.'

3. Mollusca, or soft-bodied animals, exemplified in the common garden snail, the oyster, and the cuttlefish. Mollusca is derived from the Latin word *mollis*, which means 'soft.'

4. Cœlenterata, or hollow-intestined animals, exemplified in the sea anemone and the coral polyp. Cœlenterata is derived from the Greek words *koilos*, which means 'hollow,' and *entera*, meaning 'intestines.'

5. Protozoa, or jelly animals, exemplified in the sponges and rhizopods, and including the smallest and lowest forms of life. Protozoa is derived from the Greek words *protos*, which means 'first,' and *zoon*, meaning 'animal.'

Now it is to the third subkingdom that the edible snail belongs—namely, Mollusca. Let me begin this reading lesson by telling you the story of one that was sent to me by the parcel post. He arrived one summer morning, packed, with a lot of other kinds

of snails, in a nice little hamper, which on opening I found to be lined like a nest with new-mown hay.

The snails were quite lively after their journey ; but as the edible snail (or as I should call him, in scientific language, *Helix pomatia*) was the largest of the group, I at once took him out, and placed him in the heart of a fresh lettuce plant. He began at once to crunch the leaves with his little white teeth ; and so strong were these teeth, and so quickly did he devour, that in a few minutes a whole leaf had disappeared, and I heard the sound of his crunching quite distinctly, though at a little distance. He was easily tamed, and lived in our garden for many a day. I made a box for him, lined with moss, so, when he was tired of crawling on the grass, back he came to his little home. Lettuce was his favourite food, but he also took largely of bread and roast lamb !

Helix is the Latin word for snail, and *pomatia* is from a Greek word that means *operculum*, which is the name of the thick limy covering the snail makes at the door of his shell, when he retires to sleep through the winter ; so that is the meaning of his name. He is the king of British snails, and by far the largest and handsomest of all our species.

The animals themselves vary in colour from a yellow gray to pale brown. The skin is very much wrinkled. The shells, when about two years old, are of a warm and beautiful brown, with bands of

a paler brown, having coarse irregular *striae* in the line of growth. The animal, when extended at full length, is four inches long. *Helix pomatia* lives in the south of England, and does not come farther north than the midland counties.

The tooth arrangement of all snails is very peculiar; in fact their teeth are always spoken of as the lingual ribbon, or muscular tongue. Some people will not believe that the edible snail possesses as many as twenty-one thousand one hundred and forty teeth till they see them below the microscope for themselves.

To explain how a small mollusc like the snail possesses this extraordinary number, I must tell you that the lingual ribbon is arranged in rows, each row containing a large number of teeth, which are quite microscopic in size. They are all formed of pure flint.

In the month of May these snails begin to lay their eggs. They are laid in a little nest in the earth. Each egg is soft and white, and about the size of a pea. In three or four weeks the young snails appear, with the first or baby whorl of the shell upon their backs.

A great many different kinds of creatures hibernate in winter—that is to say, pass the winter in a sort of sleep or half-conscious condition. At that time they live entirely without food.

The snail hibernates. It is very interesting to

see how they settle themselves for the winter. The edible snail scoops a hole in the ground with its muscular foot, large enough to hold itself and its shell. The hole is carefully lined with soft, dry leaves and earth. It is also roofed in, the slime of the snail being used for mortar.

It then retires into this hibernaculum, or literally 'winter dwelling,' and pouring out from the edges of its 'mantle' a substance like liquid plaster of Paris, which hardens very soon, closes up the mouth of the shell in the form of a thick plate.

This is called the epiphragm; and the more effectually to exclude the cold air, the snail goes farther and farther back into his shell, forming more but thinner epiphragms as he goes. The word epiphragm means 'a barrier.'

A little hole is left in each of these barriers to allow the air into the shell in a moderate degree, for the breathing functions are carried on all through the winter sleep, though no food is taken.

And there the snail lies securely from November till April, when the genial sun and showers call him forth once more. This snail is not without its historical romance. When Marius, the Roman general, was besieging a castle near the river Malacha in Spain, at the time of the Jugurthine war, he began to despair of ever taking it, as it was so strongly fortified. Ligus, one of his soldiers, went out early one morning to fetch some water. As his pitcher

was filling, he noticed some large snails crawling up a rock, and being eager to get them to eat, he went up the rock to gather some. At last he got to the very top by an unknown path, when he saw the enemy very busy at work preparing to steal down upon his general unperceived. He ran down at once and told Marius, who sent an armed band, under the command of Ligus, up the same path. When they arrived at the top, they rushed on the enemy, overpowered them, and took the castle.

Sutton House, where Lady Grant lived, was a fine old house, built in the French style, with verandas running round the sides.

Lady Grant was a widow, her husband, Sir Donald Grant, having died in India; then she returned home and settled down in Sutton House with her only son Reginald, a boy about ten years of age, who was then at school.

The holidays were not far off now, which she and Reginald were to spend at Melby Hall, a promise to that effect having been made before the Captain went abroad.

It would be a very welcome visit to Miss Felsham at any rate, as Lady Grant was a sweet and amiable woman, and would share some of her responsibility during the summer months.

The village of Melby lay about a mile and a half from the Hall, and it was always a great treat

for the trio to take a walk there, and visit some of the cottages.

Nurse Sibbald's old mother lived in a lovely one, gifted to her by Captain Westcott for long and faithful service to his mother, and now her daughter was serving the younger generation. A very dear friend of the trio also was 'Lame Jamie,' who lived with his grandmother, and whose father, 'Soldier Tom,' was serving at that time as a private in the Captain's regiment.

Jamie can never express his delight in proper language when the trio pay him a visit, but the smile that lights up his wan face is a sufficient guarantee for his complete satisfaction.

A morning or two after the shipwreck scene had taken place in the drawing-room, Miss Felsham and the children set off for their morning walk. The pony phaeton with the tiny groom (a boy about fourteen, called Archie) was to meet them in the village, and drive them home again.

The trio were wild with delight in the prospect of gathering a bunch of wild flowers for Jamie. 'Will you tell us the names of the flowers, Miss Felsham,' said Madge, 'for Jamie presses all that we take him, and sells them to help his grandmother to keep house.'

'Yes, darling, I will; and then you must repeat them carefully to him, so that he may write them correctly on his card.'

Off gambolled the trio down the sweet June lanes, blossoms clustering over tree and bank, making them look quite bridal in their purity. Dolly soon found the first flower she could not name, a lovely branch of the 'hop vine bloom.' A long spray was carefully gathered. 'Twist it round my hat,' said Dolly, and off she walked like a little queen guarding her treasure.

Harry and Madge soon had their hands full of daffodils, wild roses, and apple blossoms. The trio dashed into the tidy little room in which Lane Jamie was seated.

'Look what we have brought you to-day!' they all shouted out; 'a real hop vine, and Miss Felsham has promised to tell us a wonderful story about it.'

Jamie's cheeks glowed with the excitement of a story, and he clapped his thin hands together with delight.

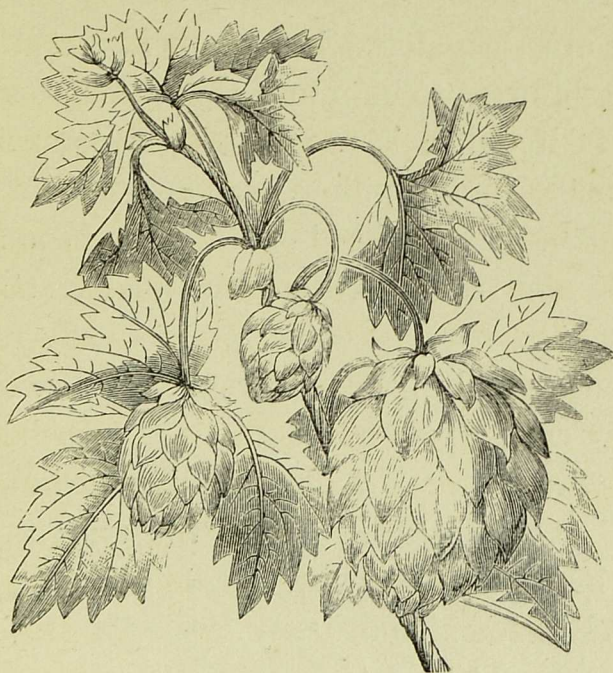
Madge shook up the pillows at the back of his chair, and seated on small stools, the trio at last came to anchor.

First of all, however, Miss Felsham had to be introduced to old granny. 'Ah!' she said, 'Jamie and I would be lonely indeed were it not for our little angels' visits; they bring sunshine wherever they go.'

Miss Felsham began her story by showing to her small audience what fine curling tendrils the vine

possessed, to enable it to cling to any support, as it had not an upright stem of its own. Then, after having made all the lanes and hedgerows lovely with its blossoms in summer, in early autumn the fruit is ready for picking.

In Kent and Sussex more especially, there are large hop-gardens, where nothing else is grown, and



Hop.

in early spring they are staked up in poles. Then when the time of hop-picking comes, hundreds of the poorer people in London, called 'hop-pickers,' go down to these counties, in whole families, children and babies.

Dolly's eyes grew very round when she heard

that. 'How delightful to be a hop-picker,' she said, 'in a garden all day long, pulling nice fruit!'

'Ah! but it is not good to eat,' Miss Felsham had to explain; 'it is very beautiful to look at, as it grows in rich clusters of a greenish yellow colour when ripe, just like a bunch of tassels hanging, with scales overlapping one another to protect it from rain, as the slates or tiles of a house keep it snug and dry.'

'They are then stored in bags or pockets and sent off to the brewers to help to make bitter beer. And sometimes, if Jamie is not able to sleep at night, if Madge made him a pillow, well stuffed with fresh hops, and he put his head on it, a good sound sleep would be the result, making him feel much better next day.'

So Madge gladly promised the hop-pillow the next time they came to see him.

'Bow-wow-wow!' Such a barking, and noise, and uproar. 'Oscar, Oscar!' cried the trio; and sure enough, here was the pony phaeton, and Oscar, the splendid Newfoundland, Dolly's especial property.

'Dandy' and 'Jim,' the ponies, were so sleek and pretty, and Archie so smart in his little top-boots.

Harry and Archie were great friends. Archie thought no one could equal his young master.

'How is your cough to-day, Archie?' said Harry, slipping his small hand into his.

'Thankee, sir, it's much better; a bit hoarse up here,' pointing to his throat.

‘Well, Archie, these are the lozenges Miss Felsham gave me for my cough, and you must have them, for mine is quite gone.’

‘Thankee kindly, sir,’ said grateful Archie; and crack went the whip, and off went Dandy and Jim at their best speed home.

Next morning the children came down to breakfast in a great state of excitement about the first of Miss Felsham’s stories on the ‘Squirrel.’ It was a beautiful day, so she promised, if their lessons were well prepared, they would all go for the afternoon into the woods, to try and see one.

They would also drive the little phaeton to Jamie’s cottage, and get him just snugly into it, and take him with them for an afternoon of enjoyment, as Miss Felsham determined that they would have a gipsy tea.

‘And children,’ she said, ‘when you are tired of running about, and seeking for the squirrels, you will come and rest beside Jamie and me, and I will tell you the next story. It is to be about another of the rodents—the Beaver. He is such a clever animal as to tunnelling and building that I have named the story “Clever Engineers.”’

CLEVER ENGINEERS.

Now that you can understand to some extent the working arrangements and power of the rodent’s

teeth and jaws, let us have another example of them in the 'Story of the Beaver.'

Beavers have for several centuries been extinct in Great Britain, and a few small colonies may still be seen about rivers in Sweden and different parts of northern Europe and Asia; but their principal home now is North America.

A long time ago, however, a colony of beavers was kept in the island of Bute. Here they lived as in a state of nature, a large piece of land and water being kept for their use. Unfortunately, a number of them were killed.

Not many years ago we were staying in Bute. It was a beautiful summer, and as we were told that a pair of the beavers were still living, my brother and I set off one morning to try and see them. We reached the place, where we saw many effects of their wonderful engineering skill, but never saw the busy workers themselves, as beavers are extremely shy, and like to work by night.

They prefer to make their homes beside small rivers, but sometimes are found by the side of large lakes. Wherever a colony of beavers establish themselves, a complete change comes over the face of the ground in a very short time. Why is this?

There are two or three answers to that question, and the first is, that beavers are quite dependent on having a constant supply of water both winter and summer; but, as some wonderful instinct tells them

that the waters they inhabit are sure to be diminished and too shallow for their use by the heat of summer, they begin at once to build 'dams' across the river, to keep the water at the level they require. This changes the character of the river entirely.

How the features of the land are changed is, that to build these dams the beavers require an immense quantity of wood, and this necessitates the felling of



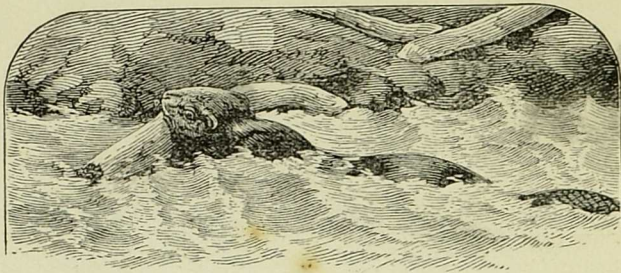
Beaver Dam.

a great number of trees. When they begin to fell the trees, a company of beavers work together, so you may picture to yourself a party of them steadily gnawing, with their strong rodent teeth and jaws, a deep groove around the trunk of a tree, till they make it so deep that the weight of the tree overbalances it, and it snaps asunder. It is said too, that their intelligence seems almost human, by the

fact that they generally make the groove deepest on the side next the river, thus causing the tree to fall on the spot most convenient for them.

When these clever woodmen, then, have brought down the tree, their only axe being their teeth and jaws, they begin at once to gnaw it into logs from three to six feet in length.

This done, they carefully strip off the bark, and store it away as food for winter use. Lastly, the logs are dragged one by one, and dropped into the river, down which they are floated to the spot where the dam is to be made.



Beaver floating a Log.

So now you may imagine how soon the appearance of the land will be changed; so that instead of a tree-clad valley, we find by the incessant working of the beavers great clearings made, which are often many acres in extent.

At the margins of those clearings, which are often flooded during the winter months, peat begins to form, and as it spreads year after year, the beautiful old forest ground is gradually changed into nothing

but a peat marsh, generally named a beaver-meadow.

Now then, let us see how they build the 'dams.' You must often have tried to make a dam across a little stream or brook in the country, and then you would use sticks, stones, and turf. So the beavers use much the same materials, only on a far larger and grander scale than the boys do, and they use their fore-paws for lifting and carrying all they require. First of all, the logs of wood are laid down at the bottom of the stream in regular order, and are kept from floating up again by stones and mud being piled upon them.

And just as we would make the foundations of a bridge which has to resist the action of water much stronger and broader at the bottom than above, so the beavers build their dams often fifteen or sixteen feet wide at the bottom, and only about five feet in width at the top. In height they are often from ten to twelve feet.

As a proof of their wonderful sagacity, it is found that wherever the stream runs gently the dams are built straight across; but where the current is strong, they are built in a curve, so as to present a convex surface to the action of the water, the force of which is thus broken, and the stream diverted to either side. A dam of large dimensions is generally the work of years, and the energetic builders are always busy adding to and repairing it.

CLEVER ENGINEERS (*continued*).

Now you will wonder what kind of houses these clever workers inhabit. As they seem to combine so many trades in their own handicrafts—that of woodmen, carpenters, masons, builders, plasterers, and any other you may ascribe to them—we should expect to find their own houses comfortable and well built, and I am sure if we examine one now, we will not be disappointed.

If we really could get into one, I think you would be astonished, both at its size and the appearance of order it presents.

These houses are named ‘lodges,’ and are built of the same materials as the beavers use for the dams, that is to say, of logs of wood and branches, which are kept in their places with stones. Any little interstices left in the building are filled up with earth and sticks, and the whole edifice is then thickly plastered over with mud.

The lodges are nearly round in shape, and of large dimensions. On an average, the internal diameter of a lodge is seven feet, and about three feet in height. But these measurements are as nothing compared with the outside; the walls being so thick, the external diameter mounts up to fifteen or sixteen feet, and the height to not less than seven. One lodge will contain five or six beavers. The

beds are arranged round the walls, and are composed of dry grass, the soft pith of trees, and the little chips of wood which they have made in the course of their labours. Each beaver has a bed to himself,



Beavers' Lodges.

and the space in the centre of the floor is always left vacant, and strewn thickly with fresh dry grass and soft material of other kinds; and therefore they are very warm and cosy.

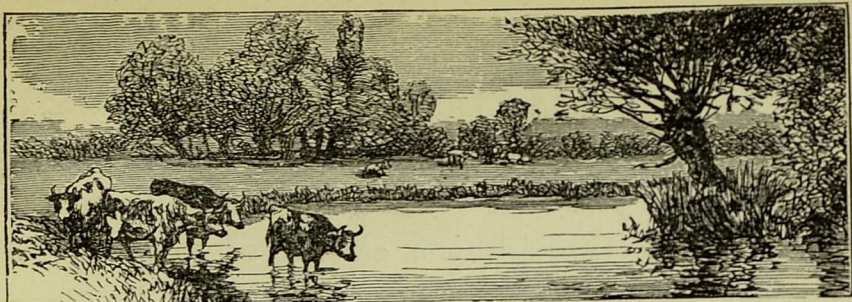
They are always built near the water's edge, and round each lodge a ditch is dug of sufficient depth not to allow of the water that is in it being completely frozen in winter. This ditch communicates with the stream, and as the entrance of the lodge opens into it, the beavers can swim to

the stream at every season, and thus avoid a land journey.

The North American beaver makes a capital pet. They are seldom tamed, however, as their fur is very valuable, so their life is the forfeit of their coats.

But some years ago, an Indian trader tamed several of these hard-working fellows, so that they answered to their names, and followed like a dog. In cold weather they were kept in the sitting-room, and were constant companions of the children. When the Indians were away from home for any length of time, the beavers were very unhappy, and on their return showed great signs of pleasure, by fondling them, crawling into their laps, lying on their backs like a squirrel, and altogether behaving like children in the presence of parents whom they seldom see. As we saw in their wild state, beavers feed on bark and green food generally; but with their friends the Indians they fed on rice, plum-pudding, partridge, and venison, and liked them all immensely. They were particularly fond of everything the children got, and often stole their little stores of sweets and fruit!

The children were charmed with this story of the beavers, and only wished they had a tame one. Now they were longing for Lady Grant's arrival.



CHAPTER III.

THE ARRIVAL OF LADY GRANT AND REGINALD.

HURRAH! hurrah! Aunt Di and Regy are coming to-day,' shouted Dolly, as she scampered up and down the lawn, with 'Gip' the pug dog at her heels. Lovely warm weather had set in, and old Jacobs had got orders to put the children's summer-house in complete repair for out-of-door teas.

The summer-house was built below a large spreading walnut tree, and capacious enough to hold ten or twelve people comfortably. Pretty creepers peeped in at door and window; warm cosy matting was laid on the brick floor, and basket chairs of all sorts and sizes were in plenty; a strong table stood in the centre, which could be made larger or smaller as desired.

Many happy days had the trio spent there; and now expectation ran very high, for Aunt Di had so many lively Indian stories to tell them, and was ever ready for all kinds of fun. But here I think I must introduce my small readers to master 'Gip' the

pug dog, as Aunt Di had been the means of saving his poor little doggie life in a most wonderful way.

Some two years before this, the Countess of Errol was driving through the streets of London. She noticed this very lovely dog evidently to be the property of a poor coffee-stall keeper. She returned the next day and asked him if the dog was his.

‘No ma’am,’ he said. ‘He is evidently a lost dog, and is just about starving. I give him all I can, and it’s not very much.’ As he had come about the stall for more than a month, and no one had claimed him, the countess thought she might take him.

She sent him down to Kent, where an old servant of hers (who had married the gamekeeper) kept a hotel, until she would want him.

Now Lady Diana Grant happened to be staying at that very hotel when Gip arrived, and admired the poor little waif very much. One morning, Regy came flying to her. ‘Oh mother, mother, the gamekeeper is just going to shoot dear little Gip!’

Up started Lady Grant, and she was just in time to put her hand on the gamekeeper’s arm as it was raised to shoot the dog.

‘Why do you shoot him?’ she said.

‘Well, my lady, you see a pack of hounds is coming down to-day, and I have no room for him, and the countess will probably never trouble to inquire after him again.’

‘Will you give him to me?’ she said.

‘With all the pleasure in the world,’ the game-keeper answered; ‘it kind of went to my heart to shoot him, for he immediately sat up on his hind-legs, with such pleading eyes, as if he knew what was going to happen.’

So Aunt Di had the delight of going up to the poor little cringing doggie, who instinctively seemed to know that she had in some way saved his life.

Such gambols of joy and wagging of his queer little curly tail, and devotion and love to his mistress, the half could not be told! So Gip was a Christmas present to the trio at Melby Hall, and had arrived in a mysterious-looking hamper only six months ago.

He was adorned with such a sweet little tinkling bell, tied round his fat neck with a blue ribbon. ‘Cling clang, cling clang, cling clang,’ then every one knew that very soon Gip’s fat little body would come into view.

‘Bow - wow - wow! Crack, crack, crack!’ And amidst the barking of dogs, cracking of whips, and rolling of wheels, the trio were clasped in the arms of dear Aunt Di. Kisses and laughter and merry banter were the portion of Regy, who returned them all with right good-will. After dinner it was decided there would be a grand tea in the summer-house, the weather being so fine and warm.

Cook was to have her best buns and cakes ready, all the little hands were to help to carry the cups and saucers, and older hands the heavier articles.

Flower vases must be filled with care and taste, to make the table look gay and festive; cushions and pillows shaken up and put straight; the afternoon would not be long enough for all there was to do; and to crown all, Aunt Di had promised to tell them a real 'monkey story' when tea was finished, and all comfortably seated, glad of a rest.

Soon the gong sounded to let Aunt Di and Miss Felsham know that all was now ready.

Reginald was the master of ceremonies, and conducted the ladies to their seats. Madge had filled the flower vases with great taste; feathery ferns and field daisies in some, and elegant wild grasses mixed with 'ragged robin' and 'buttercups' in others. Dolly had set out the cups and saucers in a most elaborate fashion all her own; and Harry had patted the cushions anxiously till all were soft and comfortable.

Nurse Sibbald was to have the honour of pouring out the tea, so that no accident might happen through hot liquid going the wrong way.

They were a very merry party indeed, but the pleasantest time must come to an end; so after every one was more than satisfied, there was a loud call for the promised story. Aunt Di declared herself quite ready to begin to tell the thrilling tale of a 'Monkey's Revenge.'

'When your uncle, Sir Donald, and I were living in India, we were sent by government to a very far-out station for a few months.

‘Our bungalow was surrounded with verandas, which were covered by brilliant creepers, which helped to keep out the hot rays of the sun. The “moon creeper” was especially lovely, huge white blossoms which only opened in the evening, and another creeper with vivid scarlet blooms, just like butterflies winging about.

‘Our place might have been called “monkey land,” as they literally swarmed among the trees quite near the house.’—Here Dolly could not restrain her delight at the thought of having a real monkey to play with.

‘Oh Aunt Di, *why* did you not bring me one of those sweet little monkeys?’

‘Ah! my darling, they cannot stand our cold; it would just have died; even in their own country, a shower of cold rain will make them shiver and moan.

‘Well, one morning on stepping out into the veranda, I heard a curious low shivering cry, and on looking about me, I saw a poor little monkey, quite a beauty, all huddled up in a corner. I called Sir Donald, who fearlessly took him up in his arms. On examination, we found one of his ears much torn, and he was otherwise bruised; there must have been some terrible battle in monkey land, and our poor little friend very roughly handled. We soon doctored him up, however, and he was all right again in a day or two.

‘But now nothing would induce him to leave us.

So he took up his quarters in the veranda. We called him "Moona," for he always slept under the moon creeper.

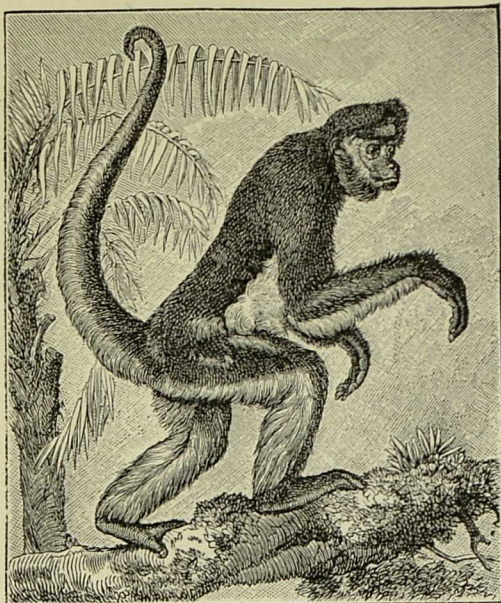
'Reginald was at that time about four years old, and he and Moona were grand play-fellows. Regy was sometimes very naughty, and teased Moona terribly, and soon he was to get his punishment from Master Moona.

'Regy had a magnificently embroidered sash, which he was very proud of. So one day the ayah, having dressed him in his white dress and sash, left him playing in the veranda. Without a moment's warning, Moona noiselessly descended, and in spite of Regy's cries and struggles, deftly unloosed the sash, and quickly tied it round his own brown hairy waist, and was off to the neighbouring belt of trees. We did not see Moona for a great many days after, and Regy was inconsolable at the loss of his sash. One day I was sitting in the veranda reading, when a gentle tug at my dress made me look round.

'Here was Moona with a very repentant expression on his queer little face, and in his hand the sash, literally torn to shreds, but still brought back and restored to its owner. Regy quite forgave him, as by this time he had got another, and they were just as good play-fellows as ever.'

Aunt Di then told them about the monkeys in South America that have prehensile tails, twisting

them round the branches of the trees, hanging head downwards, and catching each other in their



Spider Monkey.

play. 'Oh,' Dolly muttered to herself, 'I wish I had a pencil tail. What fun to be a monkey, and play all day long among the branches!'

The day after the arrival of Aunt Di and Reginald was a busy one. After lessons were over, Miss Felsham's next story was told. It was about 'Water Voles' she had seen near her old home.

WATER VOLES.

I know of a river in England that tempted me to wander by its side for days together, so many beau-

tiful things and living creatures did I see. The river is in Derbyshire, and is named the Wye.

One lovely day in September I was walking along the banks. A narrow path was all we had to walk on, as on the other side a steep cliff rose up to the height of three hundred feet above the water, and this cliff is named Che-Tor.

It is almost entirely composed of limestone rock of a yellowish colour, but the brilliant sunshine of that day made it sparkle all over with colours like the rainbow.

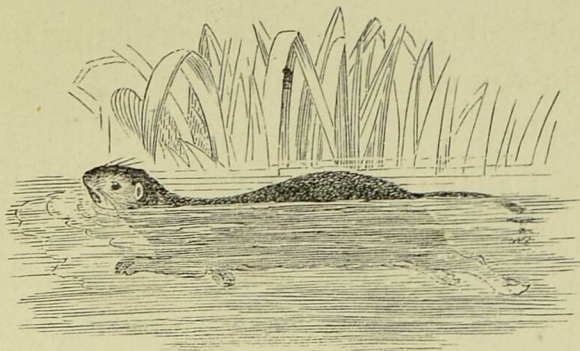
The river was full, and dashed its frothy waves against the rocks, many large pieces of which were lying in the water.

Suddenly we noticed some pretty little creatures sitting on the stones amid-stream. They were performing all kinds of laughable antics, and evidently having a good game together. Now and then one of them would sit up like a squirrel, and begin to wash his face with his tiny fore-paws; then another would pose in the same attitude, evidently longing to devour a juicy green morsel which he held with great care.

It was a pretty sight, as they ran and tumbled one over the other on the stones, their bright brown coats, and white waistcoats, burnished and glistening with a recent bath.

Suddenly they all disappeared headlong into the water, and on looking down, we saw a swimming

match going on among them. They were splendid swimmers, so this was almost a prettier sight than when they were sitting and running on the land.



Water Vole.

Now you would like to know who this pretty little friend is that we have been speaking about. He is the Water Vole, or true water rat.

Many people think that he is only a rat, and as cruel and voracious as that animal is; but though he resembles the rat in some particulars, yet there are so many points of difference that the voles have been classed now as a separate subfamily of the great rodent one that includes the mice and rats.

There are only three British species in this family of the Voles—namely, the Water Vole, the Bank Vole, and the Field Vole.

Their family name is *Arvicola*, and our especial one is called *Arvicola amphibius*. Amphibious is from the two Greek words *amphi*, 'both,' and *bios*, 'life,' and means that this little animal can live both

on land and in water. He is an innocent little animal, though many bad things have been said of him that are not true at all. It has been said that he captures and devours the fish and their young in the rivers, when all the time the real culprit was the voracious brown rat.

He resembles the beaver more than the rat as to his food, the shape of his muzzle and tail, but more especially in the form of his molar teeth. These are beautifully adapted to the grinding of vegetable substances, on which the vole entirely feeds. He differs from the rat too in being diurnal in his habits, the rat almost always choosing the night for its hunting exploits.

He objects to no kind of vegetable food, and devours all sorts of aquatic plants and roots, the outer skins of rushes, the seeds of aquatic plants, such as the water-lilies, and many wayside weeds, and he has been known to store potatoes in his burrow for winter use.

It is a very pretty sight to see a vole swinging among the lilies in a stream, or sitting on one of the large green leaves.

He has a chestnut brown coat, dashed with light gray on the throat and upper parts, and fading into gray below. His length is generally about thirteen inches.

His only destructive qualities are those of entering gardens, to devour the growing vegetables, and

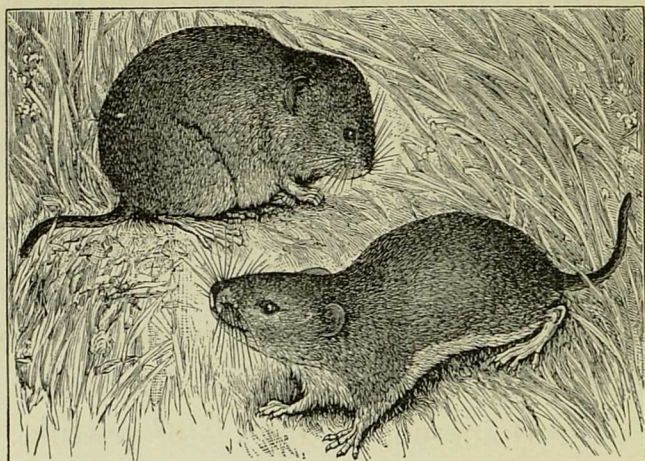
of making the banks of streams unsafe by his numerous burrows. He is partial to beans, and has been seen to cross a field and enter a garden where French beans were growing. He climbed up the stalks, and cutting off the pods with his scissors-like teeth, picked them all up, and went back to his burrow quite satisfied.

Let us fancy now that we are walking across the two-acre meadow that surrounds our house in the country. It is such a pretty meadow. There the Shetland pony 'Donald' reigns supreme, keeping the pet lambs and all the cows in such perfect order that they rarely intrude on his bit of pasture. The grass is green and thick when the horse-chestnuts are in bloom. Gradually the meadow slopes down to a brawling stream, clear as crystal. Here and there, dotted in groups, the cows are feeding. Daisies, buttercups, and clover dance in the breeze, and it is a real treat to walk among them, pressing our feet on the cool grass.

All at once something seems to move just at our feet, something red, and then gray, and then, as we try to catch sight of it, it disappears altogether. What can it be? Hah! we have him now, as we peer closer down; for the green blades of grass show off his ruddy coat; and we find at last that he is the little field vole who belongs to the same family as the water vole.

He has been known by the name of the short-

tailed field mouse, but his proper name is *Arvicola agrestis*. *Agrestis* is from the Latin, and means 'pertaining to the fields.' He is also known by the



Field Vole.

pretty name of *campagnol*, which is from the French, and means also 'belonging to the fields.'

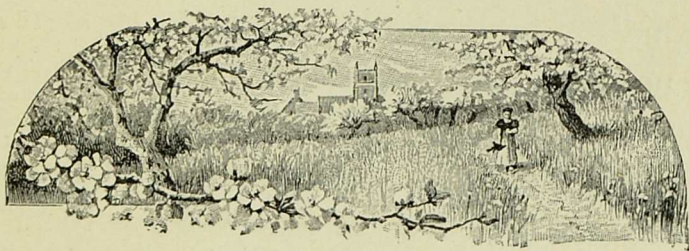
He is such a pretty little creature, we can hardly believe he is so destructive; for not content with robbing the golden crops of autumn, he burrows deep in spring, and devours the seed wheat that has been sown in the earth. Besides doing that mischief, he steals his way into barns and ricks, where great bands of them destroy much of the grain. As he is a strict vegetable feeder, he never enters our houses, where he would find a poor chance of living.

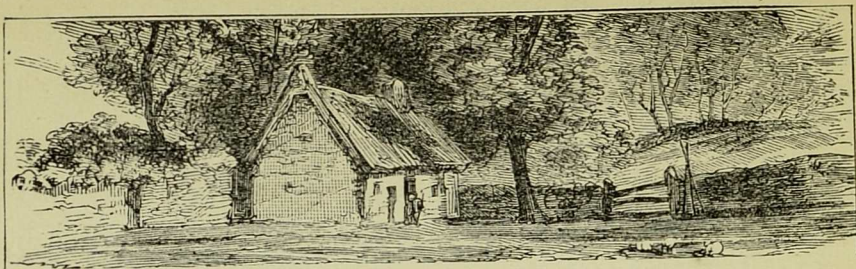
Another mischievous quality of the field vole is that of entering plantations and nibbling at the roots of the trees, which destroys many of them.

Early in this century large bands of them attacked the trees of the New Forest in Hampshire, as well as in the Forest of Dean. Great fears were entertained for the safety of the trees, and they were only saved by deep pits being dug, into which the little voles fell by thousands, and were then destroyed.

The Forest of Dean is in Gloucestershire, and as our navy then was greatly indebted to its magnificent growth of beech and oak trees for the building of ships, we may imagine what a sad thing it would have been to allow the little voles with their mighty army to conquer the trees.

If ever you wish to see these little ruddy backed fellows, you must go to a meadow or cornfield, and peer closely towards the ground, to accustom your eyes to the search. They move so stealthily, and seem so like the colours of the soil, it is difficult to find them at all.





CHAPTER IV.

AN ADVENTURE.

THE next morning the children were to have all to themselves, playing 'hide and seek,' or 'Ho, I spy,' in the shrubbery or on the lawn.

It would be a welcome rest for Aunt Di and Miss Felsham, as they had many things to arrange for the trio in the coming days. 'What very sweet and engaging children they are,' remarked Miss Felsham, 'but so headstrong and thoughtless. I feel at times almost afraid of continuing in the charge of the household where your kindness has placed me.'

'Do not fear,' said Lady Grant quickly; 'I am sure you are the right person in the right place. You have already gained their affections, and it is through them that you will ever be able to keep them from disobedience and folly.'

The ladies talked long and earnestly; many difficulties were smoothed over, many arrangements made

for the future, which brought the morning very nearly to a close, when hurrahs, and clapping of hands, whoops and shoutings, were borne faintly on the wind to the astonished ears of the listeners.

‘Where can those children be?’ exclaimed Miss Felsham.

‘They are surely very far from the lawn and shrubbery,’ said Aunt Di. ‘Let us go at once and see what they are about.’

So the two ladies sallied forth, little expecting what sight was to meet their horrified gaze.

The continued screams of merriment hurried them towards the summer-house, and what did they see but Dolly suspended on a very high branch of the large walnut tree by a rope round her waist, a hook being thrust through, swinging gaily, and endeavouring by every kind of dangerous antic to imitate her well-beloved monkeys.

The ladies at once apprehended the extreme danger she was in; the branch was already creaking ominously, and the hook might slip or give way, and poor little Dolly, in her heedlessness, be thrown to the ground and seriously injured. With a low murmur of horror, Miss Felsham flew in the direction of the gardener’s cottage, and Lady Grant peremptorily told Dolly to cease from swinging, for if she did not, she would probably have a terrible fall.

But the little creature clapped her hands all the more vehemently. ‘I’m a monkey, Aunt Di, a

monkey with a pencil tail. 'Oh, how delightful, how delightful!'

Soon, to Lady Grant's infinite relief, old Jacobs was seen running towards them with two of the under-gardeners, ropes and ladder in hand. It was no easy matter to get the child extricated from her perilous position, as the weight of a man on the branch made it bend frightfully.

'They'll break my old heart, these darlings will,' muttered old Jacobs to himself, 'making themselves out to be monkeys with pens and tails! What next, what next?'

Then Miss Felsham remembered Archie, the groom, he was so light and agile; surely he would manage to crawl along the branch and save poor little Dolly.

Archie climbed the tree in a twinkling, then slowly and carefully tried his weight as he went out on to the branch. 'Sway, sway, all the day,' sang out Dolly. 'I would just like to be always a monkey with a fine long tail.'

By this time, however, Archie had managed to secure Dolly safely in his arms, but the ominous 'creak, creak,' of the branch turned both the ladies quite faint.

Slowly and carefully Archie crept along, till Miss Felsham could look up with a thankful heart, and see that at last they were out of danger; and when they both reached *terra firma* once more, they

received quite an ovation. It had really been a difficult and dangerous bit of work for Archie, but he was more than rewarded by the tearful thanks of the two ladies. Regy was the clever young gentleman who had succeeded only too well in getting Dolly suspended on the tree. 'Mother, I made everything quite secure,' he said, as Lady Grant vainly tried to show him what a serious risk he had run of injuring dear little Dolly. 'Well, mother, she had just made up her mind to try what like a monkey's life was, high up on the tree-top, and we all thought it great fun.'

Perhaps the following letter which repentant Dolly wrote to her father, that very night, may unfold her views of the proceedings of that very eventful day.

DOLLY'S LETTER.

'DEAREST DEAR FATHER,—Us is all kite ell, but I've been awful, awful nautie. Dearest dear, not really nautie in my heart, for I'm sorry for what I did, I tink it is only when I put on a pencil tail that I get so nautie. Miss Felshie has only cried once last week for our nautie behaviour, so you see how good we are getting. Ever your loving little

'DOLLY.'

Great news arrived at Melby Hall next morning. Letters from father for all the children, and a large budget for Aunt Di. Some were from Africa, which

country, however, he had already left to join his regiment at Gibraltar.

The excitement was tremendous when it became generally known that 'Soldier Tom' was already on his way home, through the kindness of Captain Westcott, who had found him on his arrival at Gibraltar invalided in hospital.

There was a general stampede down to Jamie's cottage to tell the splendid news, as probably Soldier Tom's letter might not have been sent off so soon as the Captain's.

But we must take a peep into the budget of letters Aunt Di was so busily engaged upon. Captain Westcott wrote:

'When I reached Gibraltar, I had many things to see to, and the morning after my arrival I had a grand review of my men. I at once missed our friend "Soldier Tom," and found he was very ill in hospital.

'The first moment I had, I went to see him. He is, I am sorry to say, threatened with consumption, and he had such a longing to get home. The doctor said if he could be sent, it might help to make him better.

'Soon I managed that business, so his old mother and Jamie will, ere long, be cheered up by a sight of him. He is a trustworthy fellow, and he has promised to me to help Miss Felsham in looking after my dear little trio of kids. He is so handy, she will find him very useful indeed in many ways. He takes

home a pair of "love birds," which I bought for his poor lame Jamie; he is a grateful fellow and devoted to me and mine. Your loving brother,

‘HARRY WESTCOTT.’

After lessons the next day Miss Felsham gave the children an interesting story on

INSECT LIFE.

The study of Insect Life is one of the most delightful pursuits a boy or girl can indulge in. It opens up quite another world of beauty to us, and lets us see that the tiniest insect has its work to do in the world and does it.

I may tell you again here, though we saw a little of it in a reading lesson before, what an insect really means. The word itself means ‘cut in sections;’ you can see that beautifully exemplified in a wasp. First, then, the body of an insect is divided into three sections—the Head, the Thorax, and the Abdomen or under-part of the body. Second, a true insect passes through transformations before it is perfect.

It is laid as an Egg. The egg is hatched into the Larva or Caterpillar; next the caterpillar changes into a Chrysalis or Pupa; and lastly the Pupa emerges from its cell as the Imago or Perfect Insect.

Let us find out all about this in the romantic life of ‘The little Tortoiseshell Butterfly.’

Some day in early summer you may chance to see

a little butterfly creep out of some crack in a paling or wall, where she has hidden herself all the long, cold winter. Her beautiful colours are faded now, and the feathery vesture on her wings is soiled and torn! But watch, and you will soon see her rise with some of her companions, and enjoy a short flight in the sunshine! She then finds her way to a bed of nettles, places her eggs among them, and goes her way to die. Her work in the world is done.

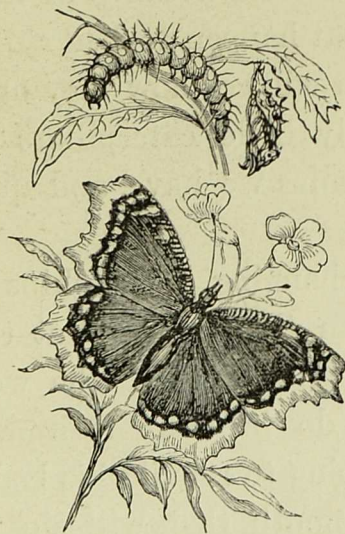
But what becomes of her eggs? Don't imagine she was a thoughtless or cruel mother to put them there. Very far from that! She laid them in the very place where, when her children were hatched, they would find delicious food in the young and tender nettle leaves. So in a week or two the eggs are hatched into little yellowish caterpillars or larvæ.

As soon as they are hatched, they give out a fine silken thread from their under lips, and spin with it a slight silken web over a nettle leaf! This makes a number of beautiful little tents; the green leaf for a floor, and the silken gossamer for a roof! This done, they crawl away in company, feeding busily the whole day on the nettle leaves, and always coming home when the 'sun is setting, and the dew is shining,' to their pretty little tents.

The one thought of these caterpillars is to eat. Each of them have ten little cushion feet, which are sur-

rounded with a circlet of spines which help the little caterpillar to cling to the twigs of the nettle. These, however, are not true feet at all, but mere foldings in the skin. Their true six-jointed feet are near the head. They use them both for walking and for taking hold of the leaf when they cut it with their jaws.

They have very tiny eyes, and are guided more by touch and taste than by sight. They never cease



Butterfly, Larva, and Pupa.

eating, not even requiring to stop for breath, as that is taken in through openings in the side of the body.

You won't wonder, when I tell you that in a week or two their skins become much too small and tight to hold all that amount of food. What does the caterpillar do then? For once he stops eating; rests a little, then bending up his back, he splits the

tight skin, coming out head first and tail last, all fresh and shining in a new skin, and begins to devour once more.

That new skin has been gradually growing underneath the old one for a time.

They cast their skins in this way as many as five times before they are made to turn into *pupæ* or *chrysalides*. You remember that the poor little butterfly-mother died, after leaving her eggs among the nettles, so she sees nothing of all these interesting changes that happen to her children. But wait a little, and you will see how they are all working to make these ugly little caterpillars into one of the prettiest butterflies we have, and quite as pretty as their mother.

Now, after changing their skins five times, the day comes when they must shut themselves away from the light and noise of the world. What are they going to do in their retirement? They are each of them going to rebuild his body!

To make a mouth that will sip nectar from the flowers, instead of the biting one he had; to gather up his soft muscles to make his shoulders strong, to bear the beautiful gauzy wings that are coming! But above all, he must concentrate his nerve knots (that were stretched along his body as a caterpillar) so as to gather them into his head and shoulders, where they can guide and control the splendid eyes, the delicate *antennæ* or 'feelers,' and give impulse

to the powerful wings of the butterfly that is coming.

Watch one now in imagination, and you will see what he will do. He will crawl up the trunk of a tree, or a paling, where he will spin a little sticky lump of silk. Into this he will place his hind-feet, and as they are sticking fast, he lets himself go, and swings head downward. Then his head and body begin to swell, and by vigorous efforts he can push off his caterpillar skin once more, and fasten himself more securely by some little hooks at the end of his body.

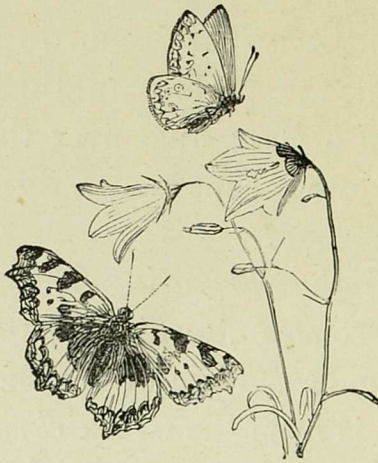
The future butterfly has begun to form already, but to keep all the parts safe till they are full grown, he pours a clear fluid over them all, which soon hardens into shape as a firm transparent sheath.

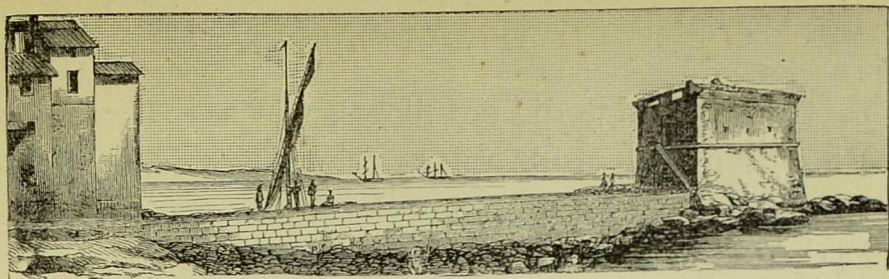
This is called the *chrysalis*. The reason of that name is that in some butterflies the reflection of the light from the under-surface of the sheath gives it a golden tint. It is from the Greek *chrysos*, 'gold.'

There the chrysalis hangs then for three weeks. He has not been idle, that little creature within. Oh no! He has been hard at work fashioning his new body, and all the food he ate when a caterpillar is giving him strength to do it. So you can see why a caterpillar is so greedy.

Then the glorious time comes when the perfect butterfly breaks through his chrysalis sheath, inflates

his body with deep-drawn breaths, lets his wings dry in the sun, and soars off in the sunshine, a 'perfect tortoiseshell butterfly.' When you know all this story, I am sure you will not thoughtlessly do a beautiful insect any harm.





CHAPTER V.

‘SOLDIER TOM.’

THE mighty preparations made for Tom’s speedy arrival would take many chapters of my story to tell. His old mother bustled about and got her cottage put into fine order. And Aunt Di declared she hardly knew Jamie, he was looking quite strong and hearty. ‘Ah! you see,’ he said, ‘father is coming soon,’ that was the miracle that made Jamie’s eyes bright, and his whole frame stronger.

Then the children helped him with the garden; the walks were weeded and raked smoothly over and over again; and Regy managed to nail up one or two more seats in the little porch at the door, where they might all sit and listen to Tom’s thrilling stories. For Tom had been round the world, and had come through one or two real battles, when he was with the Captain in Africa, several years ago.

Regy spoke of him with bated breath. ‘You see, Madge,’ he said, ‘he may actually have killed a

man!' But Madge did not like that idea. 'I would rather hear some of his other stories,' she said.

Then Tom could play on the flute—for he was in the regimental band—'God save the Queen' and many lively melodies. And Jamie's eyes sparkled when he spoke of the 'love birds,' from father's 'captain,' that was the great honour.

So the old cage was got out, cleaned and painted by Jamie's clever fingers, and made just like new. They must hang in the porch, Dolly decided at once, and they would sing when Tom played his flute.

'I don't think they sing at all,' Aunt Di said; 'but they are very beautiful to look at, and are most affectionate little creatures, sitting very close to each other, and pecking with their funny rounded beaks.'

Jamie was quite pleased to hear they did not sing. The last canary he had possessed such a shrill note he had sometimes had to cover it up, especially if his head ached.

At last! at last! the day arrived that was to bring Soldier Tom once more home again. The next morning, when the family at Melby Hall were seated at breakfast, the pretty French window that opened on to the lawn thrown widely back to let in the sweet summer air, a tall soldierly figure was seen standing on the lawn, one hand up at his cap, evidently waiting for a welcome. The children absolutely threw themselves on him, Harry reaching his

shoulder in a twinkling, the others shouting and dancing round him. Oscar and Gip, hearing the unwonted noise, also joined in the row, so the excitement was quite overwhelming.

Lady Grant and Miss Felsham walked more soberly out, and accorded Soldier Tom a very hearty greeting.

'I hope you are feeling better after the voyage home,' Aunt Di said. 'You are looking very bronzed and well.'

Tom, again saluting with his hand to his cap, said he was better, both from the benefit of the voyage and the pleasure of seeing his dear ones at home.

'I have many messages from the Captain, and several gifts for the whole party at Melby Hall,' which piece of news at once received a hearty round of applause.

So Aunt Di arranged that Archie would drive down in the afternoon and fetch up granny and Lame Jamie; that there would be a fine spread on the lawn at six o'clock to signalise the important arrival of Soldier Tom.

Nurse Sibbald and cook declared that was the very busiest day they ever had in all their busy lives. Strawberries were to be gathered, the first of the season, tables to be spread groaning with all kinds of good and pretty things, seats to be arranged and made comfortable; and above all, the grand tent, which was only used on very high occasions, was

ordered to be put up as the sun threatened to be very hot, even in the evening.

Well, that was a day to be remembered, but all was ready at the appointed time, and the little phaeton drove gaily up to the Hall, with granny, Tom, and Jamie all safe and sound.

They all just felt a little bewildered at first, at the number of fine things prepared for them, but soon Lady Grant made them feel quite at home, and got them comfortably seated in the tent.

Jamie clasped his hands nervously together, and tears were actually seen in his eyes.

'Are you not happy, Jamie?' Miss Felsham said; 'you are looking very solemn.'

'Only too happy, miss,' he said. 'You see I am not used to all this grandeur; but then it is in honour of father, and that makes me so pleased and happy.'

So at last and at length the feast came to an end, but now the excitement was greater than ever to see what Tom had in a very mysterious-looking box which he was carefully guarding.

Tom laughed very heartily when he saw all the wondering eyes fixed upon his box.

'Yes,' he said, 'the Captain's gifts are all here, and he packed them with his own hands into as small a compass as possible, for soldiers are not allowed to carry very much baggage with them.'

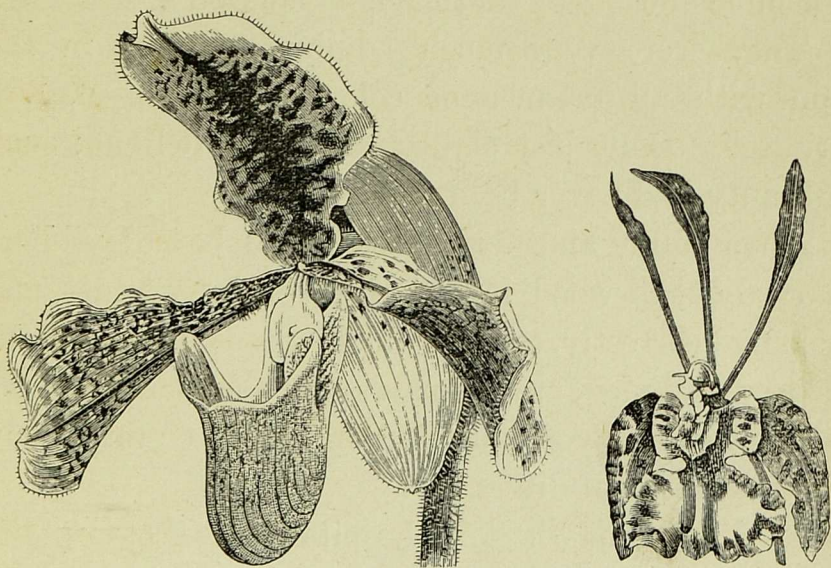
Creak, creak, creak! went the lid of that delight-

ful box, and they all crowded round to admire the beautiful way in which everything was so carefully stowed in.

First of all, there was a lovely 'orchid' plant for Lady Grant, to put into her conservatory at Sutton House.

'Oh!' Dolly exclaimed, 'that is a very ugly-looking thing—not pretty at all.'

So Tom explained 'that it was just a rooted-



Orchids.

joint, which, when placed in mould, and put into a warm house, would in the course of a month or two be the very loveliest thing that Dolly had ever seen in all her life.' When he and the Captain were in orchid-land, he described how they all hung over the high trees, in festoons of the most lovely blossoms;

that some of them have only aerial roots, not buried in the ground at all, but just hanging in mid-air, and that this particular one he had brought had never been seen in this country, and was very valuable indeed.

Then for his dear little Madge and Dolly, each a necklace made of beetles' wings!

'Oh, how lovely! how lovely! How I wish father was just here, that I might give him such a kiss for mine and mine,' said Madge and Dolly.

They were very much admired, shining in the sun with all manner of colours, blue, green, and crimson. Dolly just sighed with pure delight; such a beauty had never been seen.

Then Harry and Regy each got a box of soldiers carved out of wood in a most exquisite manner, and coloured correctly, to show the different dresses of the officers and men, and all made by 'Soldier Tom!'

'How clever you must be,' said Lady Grant; 'they are most beautifully carved.'

'I did them when in hospital, for the Captain, and I hoped he would be pleased with my work,' said modest Tom. 'And I was much gratified when he sent them to the two young gentlemen.'

Miss Felsham was not forgotten, nor nurse Sibbald and Archie; each got something that was much prized; and a funny little set of silver bells were for the ponies, Dandy and Jim, to be worn on state occasions.

Never had there been such a happy day to everybody concerned. Granny and Jamie went home laden with many good things, that would make Soldier Tom more comfortable, and enable him to get sooner strong. Many stories were promised, to be told in the porch of the tiny cottage, and when 'good-nights' were at last said, and sleepy eyes closed in slumber, many very queer and fantastic dreams must have floated over the excited brains of the children. Flying plants and beetles' wings, with fierce-looking soldiers in battle array!

Miss Felsham expected very hard work the next day to get the children settled down to lessons again after all the excitement; but no, they were all very good, so she gave them a charming description of a day she had spent in Scotland with some little cousins.

AMONG THE LILIES.

There is a beautiful little loch in Scotland some of you may know. It is named Ochtertire, and is a nice easy walking distance from Crieff in Perthshire.

Let me tell you of a day we spent there, in search of natural history specimens.

Three of the boys and we set off from Crieff one fine morning in August. We had a key of the boathouse, and merrily we sped along the road, in great anticipations of a splendid time.

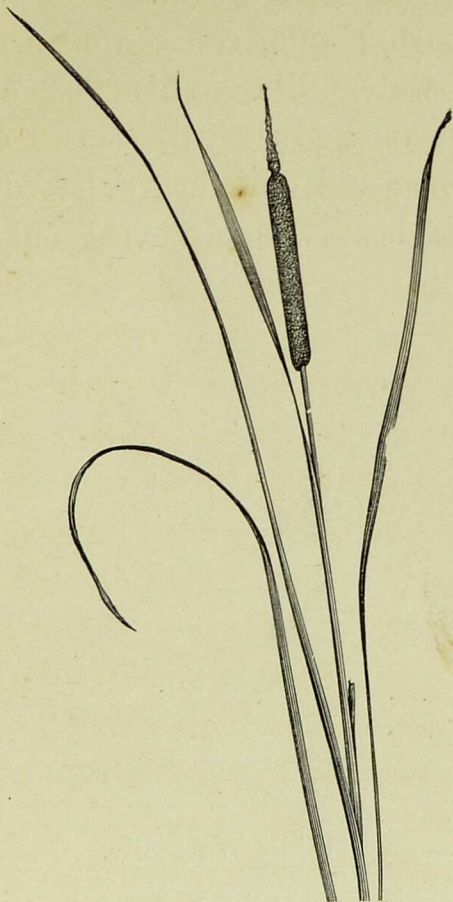
When we arrived there, the little loch was looking lovely, the summer sun kissing the bosom of the water seemed to turn it into gold; and, standing like a bodyguard all round the margins, tall reeds and rushes formed a thicket of stems and leaves that seemed impenetrable, while the feathery heads danced in the breeze.

What a charming little boathouse it was! We crowded in, and took our seats in a white painted boat, named 'The Lily;' the moorings were loosened, and off we went. Kenneth took the oars, and promised to row gently and slowly, that we might be able to gather some treasures. In and out we went, among floating masses of water-lilies, the dip, dip of the oars, and the ripple of the water against the boat, seeming like music to our ears.

The principal objects we wished to see that day were the birds and the plants that always frequent lochs or streams, and we were not disappointed.

First of all, we determined to get some of the handsome reeds and rushes that grew at the margin of the loch. Oh! it was a glorious sensation, to feel the 'swish, swish' of the boat, as we shot her up among the reeds and rushes, and began to lay low their giant heads. You must all know those beautiful reeds that we call bulrushes, with their thick brown heads, surmounted by a gold coloured rod? Ladies use them very much now for decorative purposes, as they look handsome and picturesque, in large

jars, in corners of rooms and halls. However, although we call them bulrushes, it is a mistake,

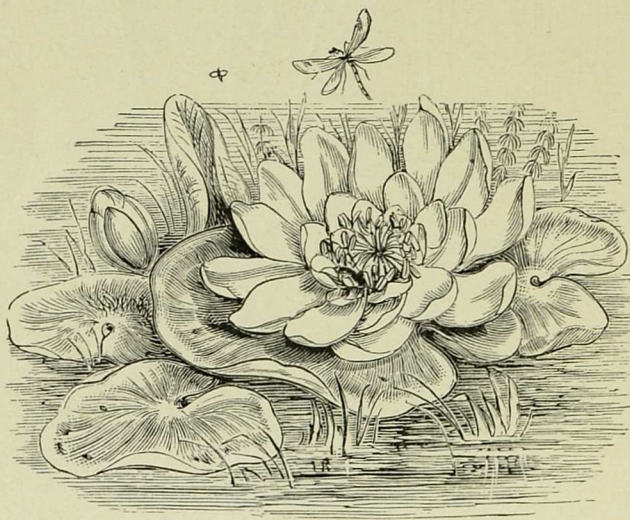


Cat's Tail.

for they are not rushes but reeds, and the true names for the plant are reed-mace, or cat's tail. We have two British species of them. The beautiful ones we cut down that day were about six feet high, and they looked very pretty when their lance-shaped green leaves were folded round them. Artists,

when out painting in the country, always take the sight of reed-mace as a sign that water is near, as they grow at the water's edge.

After securing our reeds, we turned the boat among the water-lilies. This was a treat; and getting well among a floating mass of their pure white blossoms and dark heart-shaped leaves, every hand in the boat was stretched out to gather a



White Water-lily.

bunch; and many a time I feared the boat would have tilted over in our eagerness to get them.

Get them we did, however, and it was curious to see, that as soon as we took them out of their beloved loch, the beautiful heads closed up, and nothing would induce them to open again, till we got home and immersed the whole of the flower in water.

The life story of the water-lily is very interesting.

We have three British water-lilies; the large pure white one, and two yellow ones. They are all to be found in most of our ponds, lakes, and quiet waters. In many mill-ponds I have seen them, where the water seemed to be a little warmer than usual. Let us speak of the white one now. It has a lovely blossom composed of a number of pure white and greeny white *petals*. Petal is from the Greek word *petalon*, which means a 'leaf.' The petals therefore mean the separate leaves of a blossom, and is not applied to the green leaves that belong to the plant.

The botanical name of the white water-lily is *Nymphaea alba*, meaning the 'white water-nymph.' So you see, when we were after them that day, we really found true water-nymphs, not the imaginary creatures we often fancy like fairies.

The green leaves of the plant are heart-shaped. The stems that support both blossom and leaf are round and thick, and are well rooted in the mud at the bottom of the water. They are permeated all through their length by little canals, which are filled with air.

These help to keep the plant afloat. The green leaves are large and strong; indeed, I have often seen one of them supporting the weight of a little water vole, as he sat comfortably on his hind-legs,

making a dinner of the water-lily seeds. The golden heart, which looks so pretty, as the white petals open their bosom to the sun, is composed of a number of very narrow segments called *stamens*. Stamen is from the Latin, and means an 'upright thread.' The stamens are the organs of the plant that bear the fertilising *pollen* or flower dust, from the Latin word *pollen*, which means 'fine flour.' If you touch the heart of a water-lily when the stamens have burst, you will find your fingers covered with the yellow dust; or, as Kenneth did that day, bury your face in the blossom to feel its delicious odour, and the result is very funny, as your whole face will be painted yellow!

Now that we know a little about the blossom, the leaves, and the stems, let me tell you of a pretty habit the water-lily has. It is what we call a sleeper, that is to say, it closes in the evening at a certain time, like many other flowers, and rests till daybreak.

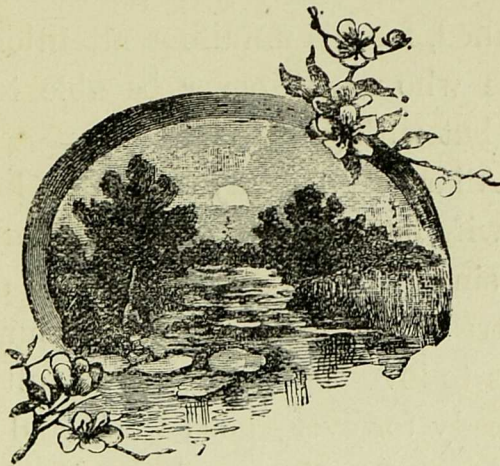
I think the principal factor in this habit of the water-lily is the absence of the sun. It loves the sun, and every day after he sets it gradually closes the white petals, and as gradually sinks below the water, resting there till the sun rises again, or at any rate till dawn begins to break in the east.

This is such a sweet and pretty habit of the plant that many of our poets have noticed it in their writings. Tennyson says 'The white lake blossom

fell into the lake, as the pimpernel dozed on the lea.’

And the poet Moore has a beautiful verse about one of the foreign species of *Nymphæa* :

Those virgin lilies, all the night
Bathing their beauties in the lake
That they may rise more fresh and bright
When their beloved sun’s awake.





CHAPTER VI.

MARY ALLARDICE, 'THE FAIRY GODMOTHER.'

DR ALLARDICE lived in the pretty little town of Waldon, about three miles from Melby Hall. He was a great favourite among all the surrounding neighbourhood; 'the good doctor' he was called, for his unfailing attention to the poor, and those who might never be able to pay him in any way but with gratitude.

Mary Allardice, his only daughter, kept house for him, his wife having been dead now for many years; so ever since Mary could remember anything, she was mistress of his whole establishment. To see Mary was to love her. She was so full of spirit and energy, ready for every good work, and ready for all sorts of fun too. She was her father's right hand, and often accompanied him in his round of visits. Everybody was glad of a call from Mary Allardice, so her father would leave her for an hour or two at some friend's house, and pick her up again on his return home.

When it became known at Melby Hall that Mary Allardice was to spend a day with them, the joy of the children knew no bounds. 'Mary is coming! Mary is coming! Our fairy godmother!'

And how had she earned such a funny name I wonder! Well, she was Madge's godmother in sober reality, but she had such a never-ending number of charming fairy tales always on hand, that what could they do but call her 'the fairy godmother.'

'Tell the children I have got such a wonderful fairy tale for them; it will nearly take up all my time to tell them.' So Mary wrote to Aunt Di. 'It is a kind of puzzle fairy tale, so they must all try to guess what it means.'

The day Mary Allardice was to spend at Melby Hall dawned fine and bright. So Lady Grant thought that a strawberry feast in the summer-house would be a treat both for old and young.

'Agreed, agreed,' cried all the voices; so old Jacobs promised some of his finest fruit, and the children were to lay it out in dishes, with fresh green leaves all round the edge.

When Mary and her father drove up in their carriage, they were immediately taken round to the summer-house. 'A strawberry feast,' cried the Doctor, 'and you have not invited me!'

'Oh! but you never have any time,' said Regy. 'What would your patients do if you left them to listen to a fairy tale and eat strawberries?'

‘Very true,’ replied the Doctor. ‘My time for fairy tales is past, although among my patients and friends I come across some very true tales, and just as wonderful as the fairies could make them.’

The Doctor then tasted some of the strawberries, and declared them to be quite perfect in taste and appearance, which mightily pleased old Jacobs; then he drove off, leaving a very merry party behind him.

The strawberries rapidly disappeared, much to everybody’s satisfaction, and as the day was too sultry for much running about, and the summer-house proved such a cool retreat, Mary was entreated to begin her story at once, as her father and the carriage might arrive back again at a very inopportune moment.

So Miss Allardice began.

‘There was once a beautiful young princess, who lived in a very magnificent palace. She was also possessed of a great deal of money, and no end of lovely jewels. She was also of a most amiable and lovable disposition, and therefore had many suitors for her hand in marriage.

‘Three young princes in particular admired her very much, and each hoped in time to win her favour. At last the moment came when she must make a choice, so the three young princes were shown into her presence.

‘The princess gave them each a very sweet smile,

and said, "I have made up my mind to marry the prince who will find the most wonderful thing in the world, and give it to me. So I bid you all farewell just now. Go each of you to the very ends of the earth, and find that thing, and when you return my choice shall be made."

'Of course each of the three princes thought they would be sure to be the successful finder. So taking leave of each other, they set out on their different travels.

'Fully a year had passed, and they all happened to meet at a grand feast which a Chinese mandarin was giving at his palace.

'They were very glad to meet again, and soon ascertained that each of them had found what they considered to be the most wonderful thing in the world. The first one said "I have got a carpet that, the moment you sit down upon it, conveys you in an instant of time to the exact spot you wish to go to; in fact, as quick as thought, and behold you are there."

'The second one said, "I have found a looking-glass, that when you wish to see any one, just look in, and there they are, exactly as they appear at that very moment."

'The third and last one said, rather humbly, "I have only got an apple, but if any one who is dying, perhaps of some terrible disease, if they eat it all up, they are made quite well and strong again."

'So the first one brought out his carpet, and the

second one his looking-glass, and the third had his apple in his hand.

“Now of course we want to see the princess,” they all agreed, “and see what she is about at this present moment.” So the looking-glass was applied to. Alas, alas! When they all looked, there was the lovely young princess lying on her bed, evidently dying, her bright eyes closed, and no bloom on her pretty cheeks. “We must fly to her at once,” they all said, but they were thousands of miles away. Ah! but the carpet; out it came, and down they all sat in a twinkling. Hurrah! Here they were at their old quarters again, and the entrance hall of their dear princess’s palace.

‘They were at once admitted to her presence when they told who they were, and the wonderful things they had brought with them—one that would save her young life, and another that would take her anywhere she wanted, and let her see any place she might desire.

‘Oh, how languid and ill she looked, so different from the bright young face they had left! So the first prince offered his carpet, so that if she sat upon it she would be taken wherever she pleased, and the change might do her good.

‘The second one offered his looking-glass for her amusement, as she would never be tired of seeing all the lovely places in the world just at the mention of their names.

‘The third prince offered his apple: “Take it, my dear love,” he said; “eat it all up, and it will cure you of all disease.”’

‘The princess took it at once from him with one of her old sweet smiles, ate it up, and at once all her colour came back to her lips and cheeks. She rose from her couch, strong and well as ever, and holding out her hand to the third prince, she said, in the hearing of all, “This is the man of my choice.”’

Here Dolly could not restrain her impatience any longer. ‘I know, I know why,’ she cried; ‘because the third prince had given her all his apple, and there was nothing left for him. The others still kept their carpet and looking-glass, but the third one gave her his all.’

Mary Allardice laughingly nodded her head. ‘Dolly is a very good guesser,’ she said.

All the children drew a long sigh of pent-up excitement: ‘It is the best fairy tale godmother has ever told us,’ said Madge.

Rolling of wheels was now heard, and in a minute or two the Doctor popped round upon them. ‘Here we are again,’ he cried out, ‘and I have fine news for all of you youngsters. There is a large gipsy encampment located down upon Waldon Common. Tents are up and wagons moving about. Merry-go-rounds are in full swing. So you must ask Miss Felsham to take you all to-morrow if it is a fine day, and get your courage tried on the “merry-go-rounds.” In the

meantime,' as the kind old Doctor saw that the children's faces were getting sad at the idea of parting with Mary and himself, he said, 'Come now, Reginald, and you all, and I will tell you a story of what I saw in Canada a year or two ago.'

The faces brightened up as Dr Allardice began to tell them about his life in Canada for a year. He began at once to tell them about the grass prairies, and the wooden shanties that some of the people live in.

'And there are beautiful trees there,' said the Doctor, 'and many a group of maple-trees I have seen in the valleys, just at the season when they are in their prime for "sugar-making." I was so anxious to see this business that I asked a gentleman who owned a number of trees to take me with his men when they went, so I will tell you about it.'

SUGAR-MAKING FROM THE ROCK MAPLE.

Long before America was discovered by Europeans, the North American Indian was making use of the sap of the maple-tree, though in a very rough and simple manner. He had none of the implements or contrivances that are used now for bringing the sugar to perfection.

He set to work by hacking the tree with his stone hatchet. He then guided the sap through spouts made of bark into a very rude sort of tank, made of

a log of wood, hollowed out by fire and scraping with sharp stones.

By putting heated stones into this tank, when full of sap, the Indian was enabled to produce a substance which was like nectar to a benighted savage, but which would seem like tar when compared with the amber-coloured syrup made from one of the modern sap-evaporators.

The maple-tree is a beautiful tree and a very bountiful tree to mankind. It often lives to be a hundred years old and upwards; its wood is exceedingly hard, and is valued next to coal as fuel.

The different localities where many of the maple-trees grow, or are reared together, are called sugar-orchards, and at the sugar-making time a camp is set up in each orchard where the men live who do the work.

The season of maple sugar-making is in the early spring, usually beginning with March, and lasting for three or four weeks. If we were to take our place in one of these sugar-camps, we would scarcely believe that winter had passed and spring taken possession of the ground.

It is still bitterly cold, snow covers the ground, while a hard and piercing frost continues day and night. We don't believe it is spring, but the trees know it, and already the sap has begun to flow up their trunks and branches in rich abundance.

The sap of the maple-tree will only run when the

temperature is at least thirty-two degrees Fahrenheit, and stops flowing as soon as frost is out of the ground, or directly after the snow is gone; so this makes the sugar harvest a short one.

Now let us watch the men, and see how they tap the trees, collect the sap and convert it into syrup and sugar.

There they are busy at the first operation. How are they tapping the trees? Each of them has a half-inch 'bit' in his hand. We would call it an auger here, but they are called 'bits' in Canada.

This they bore into the tree about an inch and a-half deep, and from one to three feet above the ground.

After tapping, a spout, made of clean maple or beechwood, is driven firmly into the hole made by the 'bit.' The spout is fitted with a hanger at the mouth strong enough to hold a bucket, and the last process of tapping is completed when a bucket made of wood or tin is suspended from the hanger. So quickly does the sap answer to the 'tap at its door,' that the bucket is scarcely put in its place before the large rich drops begin to pat-pat-patter in, and keep up a steady flow till the buckets are filled, emptied, and put back in their places once more for a new supply.

The sap is then poured into one end of the evaporator, and comes out at the other end in the form of syrup. This seems easy work, but when I

tell you the construction of this modern invention you will understand how it is done.

The evaporator is made of tin, copper, or galvanised iron; and, by means of partitions extending nearly across the cylinder, when the sap is poured in, it is made to take a zigzag course till it comes to the other end. It is subjected to great heat and boiling all the time it runs this zigzag journey, and as it is allowed to be only half an inch in depth, evaporation goes on very quickly.

Rapid evaporation is the principal thing desired in the making of maple-sugar, not only because it saves time, but because the sooner the sap is made into syrup after leaving the tree, the prettier will be the colour, and the finer the flavour, of both syrup and sugar.

The syrup is now ready to be put into cans for sale, the size most in use being capable of holding one gallon.

Now we must speak about the sugar. This is made by just continuing the boiling a much longer time, according to the kind of sugar that is wanted.

There are two kinds of maple-sugar in the American market—namely, ‘pail sugar’ and ‘cake sugar.’ Cake sugar takes the longest time of boiling. The pail sugar is poured into tin pails when ready, and cake sugar into moulds to harden.

Pail sugar keeps its flavour better, and does not

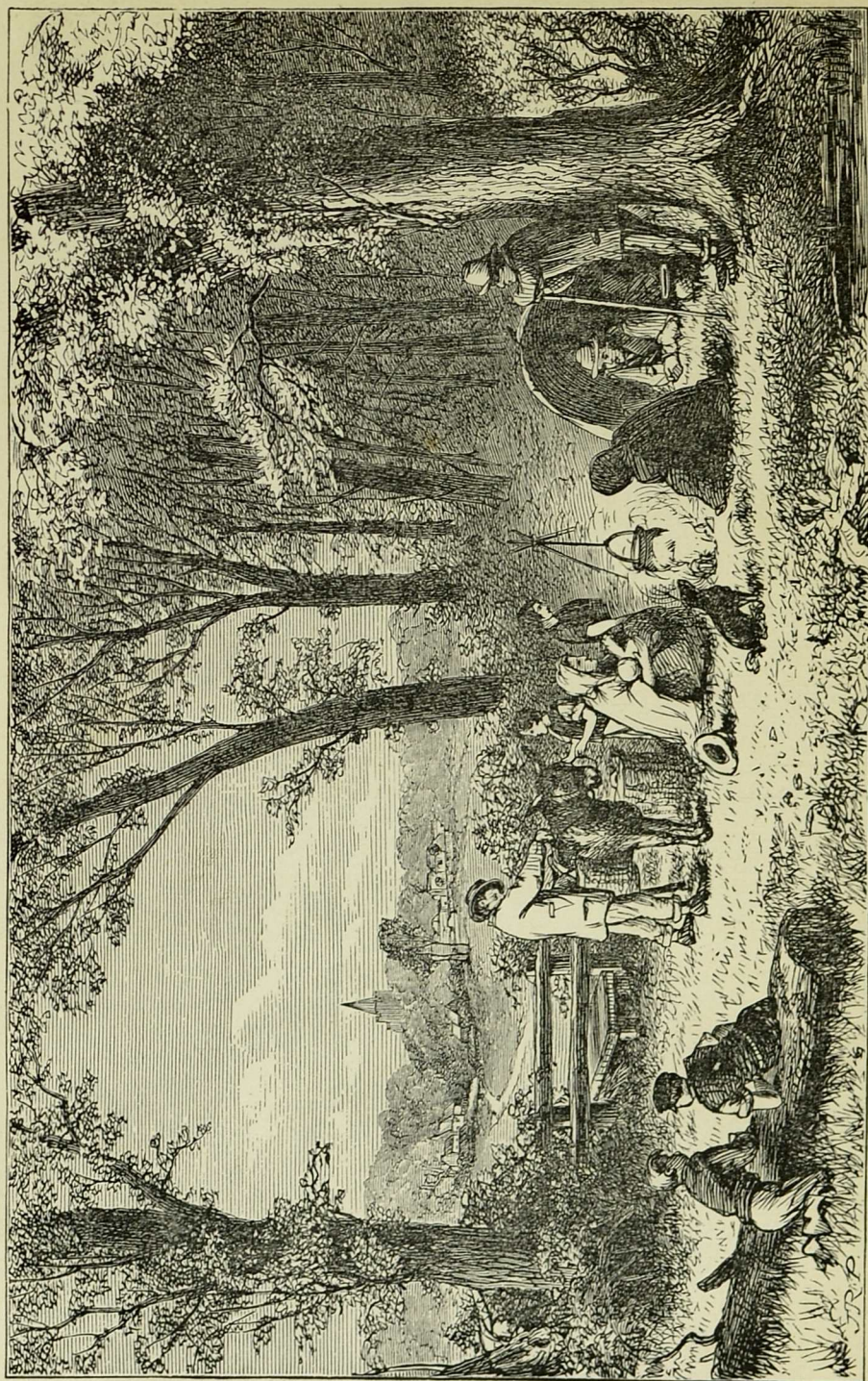
become so hard and flinty as cake sugar does. It is also a less expensive article, and much nicer for domestic use. I don't think it ever finds its way to this country.

Cake sugar is very nice indeed when freshly made, but soon loses its flavour and turns almost as hard as a rock.

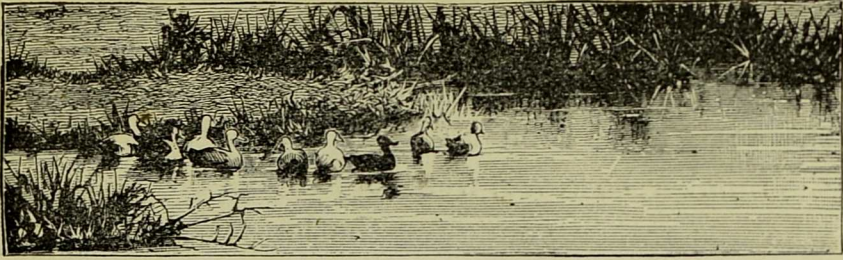
The tapping of the maple-tree does not impair its vitality to any great degree, and the holes made generally close with the growth of the tree in three years. Only one hole is bored in young trees, but as many as six buckets, with two spouts running into each of them, may often be seen hanging on maples of a large size.

For many years before the modern sap-evaporator was made other methods had been tried with success in boiling the sap. Some still retain one of these methods; but most, if not all, of the largest sugar-orchards in Canada possess one of the new evaporators.

'Now children,' said the Doctor, 'Mary and I must go, so good-night to all. Go to bed now, and dream of grass prairies, maple-trees, and sugar-making. Good-night, good-night.'



GIPSY ENCAMPMENT.



CHAPTER VII.

THE GIPSY ENCAMPMENT.

THERE was no peace for Miss Felsham after the youngsters heard that bit of exciting news told by the Doctor, till it was settled that the gipsy encampment was to be visited on the following Friday. Mary Allardice wrote to say she would be there herself that day, as already her father had been called to a patient (a poor gipsy man called 'Wild Jake') who was very ill indeed. So Miss Allardice was to be there on Friday, with soups and other good things for the patient, and would be glad to meet them, and go over all the wonders of the encampment.

Then they would return with her and have tea at the Doctor's residence, Waldon House. That of itself would be a great pleasure. So Dolly took to skipping, and the others to whooping and singing, till Miss Felsham was fain to hold her ears for a little peace.

The long-looked-for morning duly arrived, and the party were soon all ready for the walk; two of the number, however, were to be home-birds. Harry, who was rather young for the long walk, and Aunt Di, nothing loth, was to stay and keep him company, his special fun being to be dressed up like a gipsy, and have a small camp all to himself, down at the summer-house. So we will leave him and Aunt Di to their amusements, and follow the fortunes of the others. On arriving at the scene, the children felt quite bewildered at first. Dolly took firm hold of Miss Felsham's hand.

‘Don't be afraid, darling,’ she whispered to her; ‘no one will hurt you.’

So Dolly picked up her usual spirits, and went about seeing all the wonders for herself. The pretty, gay tents, with the dark-eyed women and girls sitting outside, was a picture to catch the eye of any artist. Then they were all vieing with each other who would sell their wares to the best advantage, and carelessly left their poor little babies rolling on the ground, frolicking away among themselves. The gipsy boys and girls were numerous also.

‘Please lady, buy; please little lady, buy, buy, buy.’

Dolly could not resist all their funny coaxing ways, so very soon she was quite penniless, and had not very much to show for her money.

Such a medley of cocks and hens, dogs and cats, horses and donkeys! Regy was soon lost sight of

altogether, plunging in here and there, seeing the horses fed, and asking many questions from the idle men hanging about, and who were willing enough, for a small bribe, to tell him perhaps more than what was strictly true. Oh! there was so much to be seen, and the liberty and delight of running about just made the hours fly.

Then Mary Allardice, who was in great request, and seemed to know everybody, was constantly being applied to in some such terms as these:

‘Oh lady, come and see my poor little baby; she is dwining away, and I don’t know what to do with her.’

And Mary, who was sometimes just as good as the Doctor himself in looking after patients, and was ready for every occasion, would take the baby in her arms, soothe it, and prescribe what she thought right, and give it back to the gratified mother.

Then she took them to the tent of her father’s patient, ‘Wild Jake.’ Ah! he would lead his wild life no more, for he was slowly dying of consumption, brought on by exposure in all weathers.

He was sitting up in an old arm-chair that the Doctor had given him, as he was tired of always lying in bed. He seemed to be emaciated almost to a skeleton, was thin and haggard, and his great black eyes had a strangely pathetic look in them.

‘Oh, the Doctor has been so kind, and the lady too,’ he said. ‘We live very wild lives, moving about

from place to place, and have no comfort when we are ill.'

Madge had brought some fruit for him, and the others a few cakes, for which he was very grateful. Dolly whispered to Mary Allardice:

'I have spent all my money, but I would like to sing my favourite hymn to him, if he would care to hear it.'

When the gipsy heard the request, his eyes filled with tears.

'Ah, little lady!' he said, 'the only time I ever heard a hymn was when I was a little child, and my mother lay dying; she put her hand on my head and repeated a hymn she had been taught herself long, long ago; and missy, I have never forgotten it. Something about a happy land.'

Oh! that was just the very one Dolly was going to sing to him:

'There is a happy land
Far, far away,
Where saints in glory stand,
Bright, bright as day:
O how they sweetly sing,
"Worthy is our Saviour King!"
Loud let His praises ring,
Praise, praise for aye.'

Dolly got through it bravely, but the poor gipsy man was shaking the chair with his bitter sobs and cries. Mary Allardice soothed him, and promised he

would have the hymn again some other time when he might be better able to bear it. The children left the tent very awe-struck and silent, but all glad that in the midst of their own enjoyment they had been able to minister kindness to a poor dying gipsy.

Now they were all ready to accompany Mary Allardice to Waldon House, glad of a rest and a refreshing cup of tea.

When there, they had to see the Doctor's beautiful conservatories and vineries, with lovely bunches of grapes hanging in rich clusters from every branch. Dolly also saw, much to her amazement, what Aunt Di's ugly orchid roots would turn to; she really could hardly believe it. 'They are just like lovely butterflies with gorgeous wings flying about everywhere,' she said. Then there was 'Captain,' the Doctor's favourite Newfoundland dog, to see, and to hug his fat paws, which he was very fond of thrusting into everybody's hands, for 'Captain' was a very polite gentlemanly dog, and wished to welcome all the Doctor's visitors in a proper doggie manner.

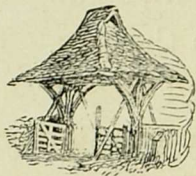
At last all were seated at the table, enjoying a most substantial tea, and talking as fast as possible.

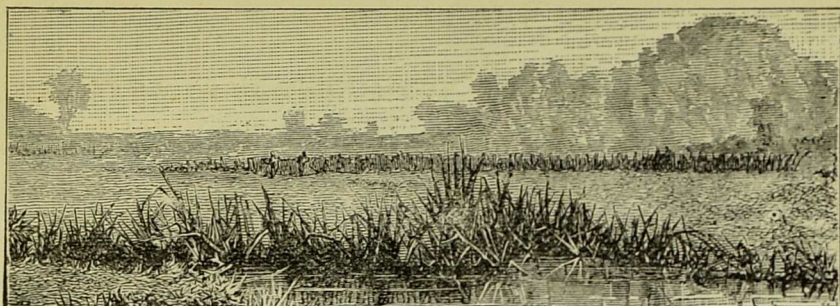
Dolly was quite sure nothing could be so nice as being a wild gipsy girl, selling her wares and running about all day in the sun. Regy thought being among the horses and dogs was the best fun; and all agreed that a very happy day had been spent at the gipsy encampment.

Archie was waiting with the ponies, which were showing great signs of impatience to get off home. So good-byes were said, crack went his whip, and off they went at a good rattling pace. Alas, alas! some terrible news was awaiting them at the Hall when they arrived. Harry, everybody's darling, was 'lost' since about two o'clock in the afternoon. Poor Aunt Di was in quite a distracted state of mind, the whole grounds had been searched, and several of the under-gardeners were at that moment scouring all the neighbourhood.

Soldier Tom was off in some other direction, and Archie was told to keep the ponies still in the carriage, for Miss Felsham had suggested sending down to Doctor Allardice at once, that they might get his advice as to what was best to be done.

When he came, Aunt Di began her story in as collected a manner as she was able, as to how 'Harry had either strayed away himself, or some one must have stolen him for the value of whatever he had on.' Lady Grant said she 'had given him one or two valuable Indian things, to make believe that he was a gipsy.' So we will hear her story in the next chapter.





CHAPTER VIII.

THE RESCUE.

THERE was no rest or sleep for the inmates of Melby Hall that terrible night, to have to pass the long dark hours, and not to know where dear little Harry was; perhaps lying out somewhere overlooked by the loving searchers, and in that case, could they hope that he would be alive, or ever greet them with his merry laugh again.

It was nine o'clock in the evening before Dr Allardice was able to come, and then Lady Grant gave him as concise an account of the day's proceedings as she was able to do in her dire excitement. It seemed that she had given Harry some valuable Indian jewellery, scarfs, &c., to play with, and make believe he was a gipsy, never for one moment considering there was any danger in so doing.

She had been with him in the summer-house the whole forenoon, and after dinner, about three o'clock, she had left him still there for not longer than a

few minutes to summon Nurse Sibbald to go to him, as she had some letters to write, and in that interval the child had either wandered away himself or had been carried bodily off, for when Nurse Sibbald arrived at the summer-house there was no trace of him left.

There was a belt of shrubbery round the summer-house, and skirting that a footpath which led on to the high-road to Waldon. Of course by this time the thoughts of every one flew to the gipsy encampment, though loth to believe the gipsies could be guilty of so grave a crime.

The Doctor concluded at once that Lady Grant and Harry must have been watched, most likely all the morning, and the instant he was left alone, a woman, probably, had hurried in, lifted him up, smothering his cries, or perhaps beguiling him with a present to come along with her, as she probably would not have time to take all the valuables off him. Dr Allardice assured the weeping inmates of Melby Hall that he believed not a hair of his head would be injured, and that probably to-morrow morning, at furthest, he would be able to bring home to them their lost darling.

He would at once communicate with the police, and accompany them himself through the whole place, as he was so well-known and loved; so leaving them with these assurances he set off on his mission of mercy.

And now we must transfer ourselves in the meantime to Waldon House, the Doctor's residence, where Mary Allardice, having heard the news of Harry's disappearance, was in her dismay going over all kinds of ideas as to what was to be done.

She was momentarily expecting her father back from the Hall, and, impatient to hear all the story, she went to the outside door and threw it open, to hear as soon as possible her father's well-known footsteps. Suddenly a soft touch fell on her arm, and even Mary's courageous heart beat a little faster as she sternly held herself from screaming aloud.

'Lady, lady! do not be afraid,' was whispered softly in her ear, and she recognised at once the voice of 'Wild Jake's wife.' 'I have come from Jake; he cannot rest till you know all; but I can't speak unless you say you are quite alone.'

Mary hurriedly drew her into the hall, and assured her they would not be overheard. The woman seemed to be in real genuine distress. 'Oh!' she wailed, 'after all the kindness you have shown to us, Jake is just ready to die with shame and disappointment.' Here Mary interrupted her. 'Tell me your story at once,' she said. 'Is it about the child that was stolen from Melby Hall?'

'Yes, lady,' the woman answered; 'he is quite safe. Jake knows where, but he won't tell me; he wants you to come down to our tent at once; but no man must come with you.'

Mary's brave heart quailed for a moment. The late hour! Her father not home! Could she venture? Yes yes, she would; and lifting up her heart to God for his Fatherly protection, she turned to the woman.

'I put myself in your hands. I have been kind to your husband, wishing for no reward, but if you can relieve our hearts of this terrible sorrow, and give me back the child alive and well, that will be more than any reward I might desire.'

The woman looked earnestly into her face: 'Lady,' she said, 'will you promise you will never tell what you see to-night, and also keep the police from coming down upon us, as we know Dr Allardice has already set them on our track. If you do not, I cannot answer for the life of the child, and you must hurry on at once.'

Mary by this time was greatly agitated. 'Yes, I will promise as far as it lies in my power—quick, go!' And she flung a dark cloak all over her light evening-dress, and the two women went silently down the lawn, through the gate and out on the road, making straight for Wild Jake's tent.

When they reached it, the gipsy woman held Mary back, till she had muttered some strange words, then quickly pulled her into an inner tent she had never seen before.

Jake was standing, evidently waiting for them, looking more dead than alive, the excitement telling terribly upon his wasted features; but to Mary's

joy, little Harry was lying in his arms, safe and sound, and apparently fast asleep. Mary held out her arms instinctively for the child, and as the poor dying gipsy put him into her arms he said, in a weak voice, 'Lady, I will never see you in this world again; but I have saved the child, not only at the risk of my poor waning life, but of my faithful wife's too; but we don't count the cost much if it will reward you for all your loving deeds and words to me.' He continued, 'You would never have seen the child again; no harm would have been done to him; but he would have been brought up as a gipsy child, and never heard of again.'

The man was quite exhausted by this time, and the woman took Mary by the hand, and led her out through another door, across a deep wood, and at last out on to the road, in quite another direction than that by which they had entered. Then hurriedly kissing her hand and pointing in the direction of Dr Allardice's house, which Mary in her bewilderment could not believe was so near, she disappeared, leaving her with Harry safe in her arms.

Mary Allardice flew towards the house, and encountered her father at the hall door. His surprise and delight may be imagined, as Mary poured all her adventure into his ear, and he saw for himself that Harry was found at last. Mary urged him to go at once to the police, and stop all proceedings against the gipsies, according to her promise.

When the Doctor arrived at the police station, he was informed that the gipsy encampment had disappeared: as the man declared, 'as if an earthquake had swallowed them all up.' He seemed quite bewildered at the sudden vanishing of such a large company, but Dr Allardice had a very good idea of where they were for the present at least.

He had been far longer in that part of the country than the honest policeman, and had learnt some wonderful secrets, as doctors usually do in the course of their practice, and he remembered hearing of a deep unused cave not very far off that had been taken advantage of before by such a band of strolling vagrants. So he wisely said nothing. Knowing well that in a day or two the gipsy encampment would be a thing of the past, as they would not dare to remain a day longer than was necessary to get clear of the police.

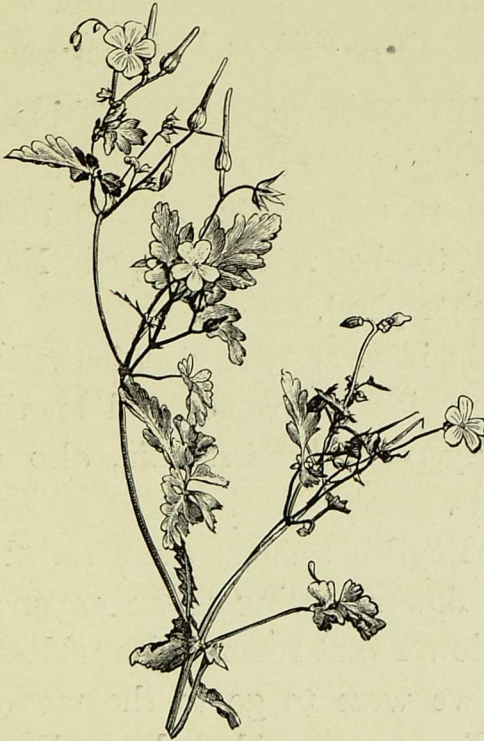
For the next two or three days Aunt Di and Miss Felsham took great care of little Harry, as he had been much frightened by his adventure at the gipsy camp.

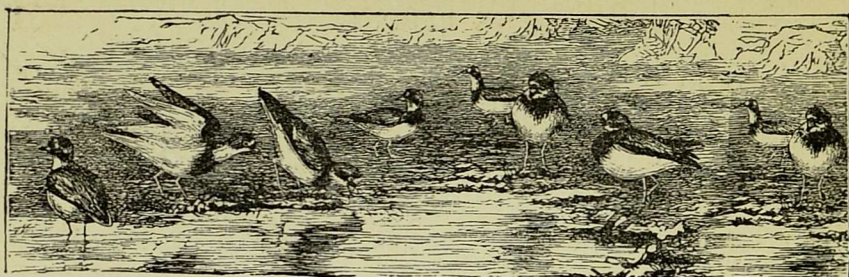
As Miss Felsham wished particularly to keep him very quiet, she allowed the other children to go down to the cottage every day for two hours, when Soldier Tom told them some 'holiday stories.'

The first one was about the curious plants he had seen when in India.

The children had told him too, about the beautiful

grapes they had seen in Dr Allardice's conservatory; so Tom told them all about the 'vine and its uses,' and about a day he had spent in a vineyard at Montreux, near the Lake of Geneva. How they enjoyed this while sitting in the porch we can easily imagine.





CHAPTER IX.

TOM'S HOLIDAY STORIES.

INSECT-EATING PLANTS.

A JOURNEY to India or China would take us right into the hot and swampy regions, where one of these extraordinary plants is to be found, named *Nepenthes* or pitcher-plant.

Again, if we were to visit the eastern marshes of North America, we would find another member of the family, named *Sarracenia*, also one of the pitcher-plants.

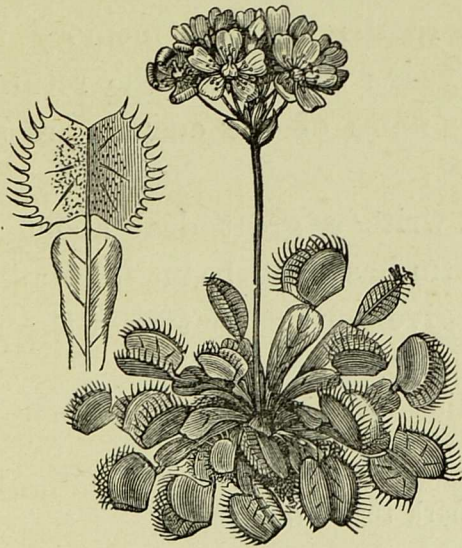
The first English settlers there called this plant 'side-saddle flower,' owing to an expansion on one part of the flower that resembled a 'side-saddle.'

Again, if we were to go to the mossy woods of North Carolina, we would find another of them, a little beauty, named *Dionæa*, or prettier still is its name of 'Venus's Fly-trap.'

But as these journeys are improbable for us at

present, and even if we could go, would involve a great deal of travelling, steaming here, and sailing there, besides landing us very often in unhealthy and malarial parts of the country, if you will now come with me in fancy, we will find one or two of them that are natives of our own British Isles.

We will take a holiday then, and set off in search of them. Where shall we go, you ask? Well, we



Venus's Fly-trap (*Dionaea muscipula*).

will go to a lonely moor, that lies about ten miles from the city. Yes! it is a lonely but a beautiful moor, the ground is covered with matted knolls of heath, that sparkle with the dew-drops of the morn, while the scent of rose and honeysuckle fill the summer air with sweetness in the copse close by.

Oh! the beauty of the wild-flowers, the golden

glory of the marsh marigold, the subtle fragrance of the hawthorn, and the sweet little modest faces of the violets, soon make us forget that we are so near the great city, with its hard and stony streets. The moor has its music too, for far above our heads, mirrored against the deep blue of the sky, the curlew is winging his way and uttering his plaintive notes.

But there is even a sweeter song coming from the little coppice of fir-trees. It makes us start and listen, as it recalls to our memory the passing away of last year's winter, and the return of spring, of which the notes of the cuckoo are such a har-binger.

The poets write a great deal about the cuckoo, and one of them has some beautiful verses addressed to it. I will give you one or two of them :

What time the daisy decks the green,
Thy certain voice we hear ;
Hast thou a star to guide thy path
Or mark the rolling year ?

The schoolboy wandering through the wood,
To pick the primrose gay,
Starts ! this new voice of spring to hear,
And imitates thy lay.

Sweet bird ! thy bower is ever green,
Thy sky is ever clear ;
Thou hast no sorrow in thy song,
No winter in thy year.

But we are forgetting the beauties that lie at

our feet, by gazing so long at the trees and the sky while listening to the music.

Look down now at the knolls of heath on which you are standing, and tell me what you see? There are clumps of moss as green as emeralds, tufts of gray lichens with feathery branches, that blend with the moss, and support its dainty fronds.

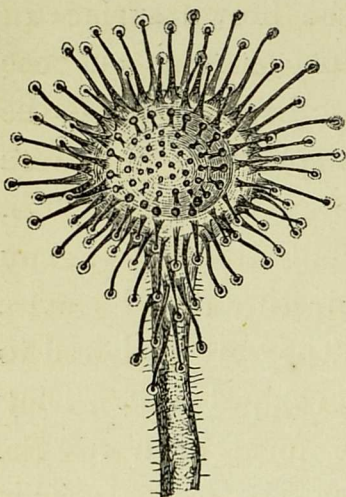
Then we are standing near the brown surface of a peat bog, where men are busy cutting out the peats, and carrying them away in barrows to be dried. And it is among all this splendour of nature that our little insectivorous plants grow and flourish.

Here they are, growing among the moss. You will know them at once by their tiny round leaves, generally of a reddish colour. They are anchored to the moss by a very weakly developed root. They spread out their leaves in the form of a rosette, made up of four, five, or even six leaves. This rosette only covers as much ground as half-a-crown would do, and this is the size of the plant in general. Out of the centre of this rosette the flower-stalk springs, bearing on its head a pretty cluster of small white flowers.

It is not the flowers, however, that we are to speak of here, but it is of the leaves, for it is the small round leaves that the plant uses to entrap insects. We might almost say that it spreads them out as a fisherman lays his nets in the sea to catch fish.

I examined one of the leaves below a microscope, that I might see for myself all the different parts used for capturing, killing, and digesting insects and small animals.

Darwin, the naturalist, has described all these parts beautifully ; indeed Darwin himself was so interested



Upper side of leaf of Sundew
(*Drosera rotundifolia*).

in these little plants that he kept them growing beside him, planted in damp moss, and feeding them on tiny bits of raw meat ; and the plants he fed thrived quite as well, if not better, than those on the moor.

Well then, in examining a leaf, we find that each one is covered on the surface with minute hairs to the number of about two hundred on a full-sized leaf.

These hairs Darwin has called tentacles, and we will call them now the fishing-lines that the plant makes use of. Every hair ends in an oval-shaped glandular knob, which is surrounded by a viscid fluid.

This fluid (something like gum in appearance) sparkles so prettily in the sunlight, that it has secured the poetical name of 'Sundew' for the plant. In the centre of the leaf the tentacles are short and

erect, but towards the margin they are much longer, and lie out like a fringe. The glandular knobs are made up of two cells, which are filled with a purplish fluid. Under the microscope they have exactly the appearance of minute crimson berries.

And now we will see how this little fisherman catches his prey, and what he does with it. If an insect or any minute animal alights on the tentacles in the centre of the leaf, all the surrounding ones begin immediately to move, and bend themselves over it, the tentacles nearest the centre moving first, and so on to the margin, till every one is busy. The insect meanwhile is fairly caught by the gummy fluid, and its struggles only help to involve it more securely, as to excite the bending of the tentacles more surely, the poor little insect must come in contact not only with the gummy fluid, but with the glandular knob itself.

This is accomplished then when the insect, in its struggles to escape, absorbs the fluid round its own body, and so sinks down on the glands.

Whenever it touches the sensitive glands, every cruel tentacle sets to work, and unites in bending over the insect till it is smothered.

And how does a little plant like the sundew digest this food you ask? I will tell you this, for among the insectivorous plants there are some that do digest the insects they capture, and some that do not, but merely absorb the juices of the body.

Now the sundew is one of those that possess true digestive properties; and when a living creature is entrapped by the leaves, these properties come into operation at once.

The glandular knobs know in a moment that an insect is caught, and the purple fluid in them immediately becomes quite acid.

At the same time too, they are seen to contain not only purple fluid, but differently shaped masses of purple matter, suspended (or hanging) in a colourless fluid; and all this purple matter and liquid is as truly a digestive agent as the gastric juice of animals and man.

This the glandular knobs pour out upon the insect till it is sufficiently digested for the plant.

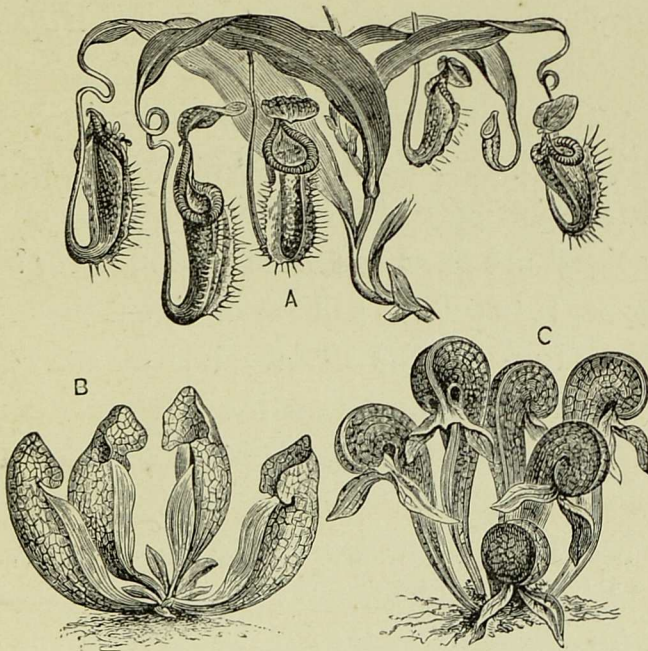
I told you at the beginning of this story that the little sundew has a very weakly developed root, and that is the very reason why God has endowed it with the power of capturing insects. Why? Because other plants can take up from the soil in which they grow the proper amount of the nourishment which they need through their powerful roots, but in this the sundew is helpless.

The botanical name of this wonderful little plant is *Drosera rotundifolia*, from the Greek *droseros*, 'dewy,' or the 'round leaved sundew.' If you will look for them in summer, on any moor or boggy place, you are sure to find them growing in the moss or peat. And now you will know them at once by

the pretty rosette of reddish leaves and the crown of white flowers.

NEPENTHES, A PITCHER-PLANT.

Most of you must have seen the curious-looking 'pitcher' plants that grow in the hothouses of



Pitcher-plants :

A, *Nepenthes Phyllamphora* ; B, *Sarracenia purpurea* ; C, *Darlingtonia californica*.

botanical gardens. *Nepenthes* is one of them. Its home is in the Asiatic Archipelago, and there in the hot and sultry swamps it is found in perfection. The pitcher-plants resemble small shrubs, but they climb by the aid of their leaves, which have the

power of coiling themselves round any object in their way for support.

These leaves are flat, and toward the apex, or point, they get narrower and narrower, till they end in the tendril-like stalks from which the pitcher is developed.

These pitchers are sometimes beautifully coloured, and generally contain some quantity of fluid; and into them insects, and even small quadrupeds and birds, find their way.

The pitchers vary in size, from an inch or two to nearly a foot in length. One species develops pitchers measuring eighteen inches.

Now what are these pitchers intended for? They are meant to attract, kill, and digest insects and animals as food for the plant. Let us examine one of them, and we will see how the pitcher is furnished with tools for the doing of its work. First then, how does it attract the living creatures to it? Well, if you could see below a microscope, as I have done, the inside of the lid, the rim, and the mouth of the pitcher, you would see that they are thickly studded over with glands that manufacture honey. So for the sake of this honey the creatures come, just as a bee seeks a flower.

These parts of the pitcher, then, are called the 'attractive' surface. When, as soon as a creature alights on this dangerous ground, it either falls headlong into the pitcher or is gradually led downwards

till it reaches the next surface, called the 'conductive' surface. This lies a little lower down. So you see the living creature is being gradually lured to its destruction, as this 'conductive' surface is composed of thousands of smooth and glassy cells, which afford it no foothold whatever; so down it glides till it reaches the next stage in the pitcher, called the 'secretive' surface. This surface is also full of glands, and they manufacture, or secrete, a certain kind of fluid which is always to be found lying in the bottom of the pitcher, just like a little well. Having reached this stage then, the insect or animal cannot turn back, but falls into the fluid.

The fluid is always to be found in the pitcher, whether animals or insects are there or not, and it is always acid and of a digestive nature. But to show you how soon the 'secretive' glands know that insect or animal food has been secured by the fluid, they begin at once to help it in its work of digestion. How do they do this? By making and pouring into the fluid a substance resembling pepsin, which adds greatly to its digestive power; so that the food is rapidly digested for the use of the plant. It is very amusing to see experiments tried with this fluid. I have seen cubes of boiled eggs quickly disappearing in twenty-four hours, and good large fragments of meat totally dissolved in two or three days!

I hope the next time you see a pitcher-plant you

will examine it well, and see for yourself as well as you can what I have been telling you about these wonderful insect-eating plants.

Pepsin is from the Greek word *pepsis*, which means cooking. It is the chief ingredient of the gastric juice of animals.

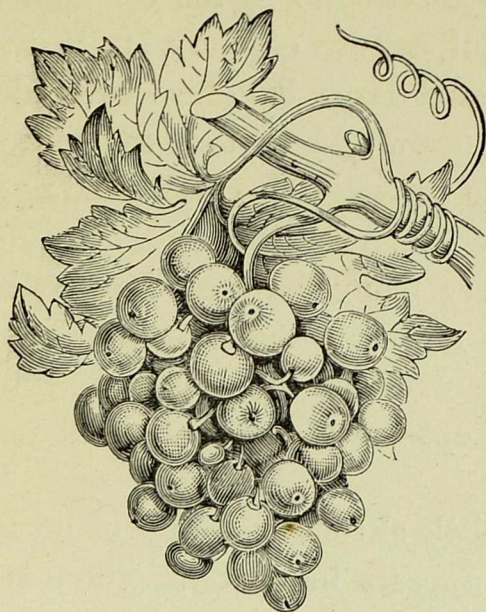
Another thing I would like to tell you also, is this, that one of the great botanists from the botanical gardens in Calcutta had a magic lantern demonstration in his house one night. He showed us very many beautiful slides of the different parts of plants on the sheet, but the most wonderful one of all was a young growing pitcher-plant that he had raised himself. The most interesting thing about it too was the first baby pitcher it had developed. It was a lovely little downy thing, coloured almost like the rainbow. It was so young, this little plant, that it had not got its name yet, but I think it was to be called after the botanist that grew it in one of his conservatories in Calcutta.

This story of the 'insect-eating plants' took a good long time to tell, and it was only finished after the children had visited the cottage for a couple of days. They enjoyed it very much, though it was a little difficult, and they began to think that surely there was something far more wonderful about a plant than they had ever guessed before. To think of them feeding themselves was a great puzzle to Dolly. The third day Tom was to tell them about

the vine and vineyards. Dr Allardice hearing this, invited them to come and hear it in his beautiful vinery; which they did.

STORY OF THE VINE.

The vine, or shrub from which we derive the refreshing bunches of grapes we all relish, belongs to



Vine (*Vitis vinifera*).

the large order of plants in natural history named Vitaceæ, the Latin name for the vine family.

There are many tribes belonging to the family which we know by sight more or less, one of them comprising the 'Virginian creeper,' which adorns the walls of our houses and gardens in summer with its

beautiful foliage, and makes them still more beautiful in autumn, when the sun and frost together have tinged their leaves to crimson and gold.

But the Grape-vine is the type of the family, its Latin name being *Vitis vinifera*, or grape-vine. Its native country is supposed to be the shores of the Caspian Sea, but all over the world, wherever man has settled, there we find the vine as his companion.

Our climate seems to be too cold and variable for the successful culture of the vine in the open air. So we set apart large buildings covered with glass in which to grow and protect the vine, and bring the grapes to perfection. These buildings are called 'vineries.'

But in very many parts of the Continent, where the climate and soil are congenial, the vines are planted and cultivated in large tracts of ground which are kept for the purpose, and named 'vineyards.'

I have a little sketch before me of an Italian vineyard, as it appears in winter. There is no beauty in it at that season, the only things that show being the trunks and branches of the elm-trees. You will wonder why elm-trees are to be found in a vineyard. But when I tell you that the vine is a trailing and twining shrub, unable to stand upright of itself, and also that it is furnished with tendrils on the stem, that enable it to grasp at anything for support, you will understand the use of the elm-tree branches.

It is the Italian elm-tree that is generally used as a prop for vines. For this purpose they are planted when young in regular rows, and at set distances in the vineyard.

The men who take charge of a vineyard are called 'vine-dressers,' and an important part of their work is to prune the elm-trees, and to train the vines upon them. When this is done, they are said to be 'married,' and the old Roman poets very often speak of the 'wedding of the elm with the vine.'

But though not a pretty sight in winter, in summer the Italian vineyards are a beautiful picture.

The vine-leaves then are green and luxuriant, and the luscious grapes nearing perfection, and the branches, flinging themselves far and wide, join together so as to form the appearance of a wall of verdure.

It is chiefly in France, Spain, and Portugal that the largest and finest vineyards are to be found. Above a little town in France called Ay, they are situated on the sides of chalky hills, and have a fine exposure to the south, which always insures the finest grapes. Some of the French vineyards may be from a hundred and twelve to three hundred acres in extent, while others are much smaller.

There is a famous one near Valance on the Rhone, which is called the 'Vineyard of the Hermitage.' It is situated on a hill, which bears the ruins of an ancient hermitage, that was inhabited a century

and a half ago. Very fine grapes are grown there, owing to the nature of the soil, which is of a chalky character. There are vineyards also in Germany, on the banks of the Rhine and Moselle.

Now we have spoken of the vine and the vineyards, let us see what is the principal use of the grape. It is used in great quantities just as a fruit, but it is manufactured into wine and brandy, and also dried, so as to make raisins and currants.

There are many kinds of wine made in France. Champagne is largely made at the little town of Ay we spoke of before, and of the grapes alone that are grown for making clarets there are far more than two hundred thousand acres of land laid out in vineyards.

Wines are of two colours, red and white. The wine from Spain we know best is sherry. It is made in the neighbourhood of Xeres, twenty-one miles from Cadiz. The principal wine of Portugal is port, so called from the fact that it is shipped at Oporto.

Many of the vines in Portugal grow low, and are trained on trellises, and from them the best wines are made.

We also get good wines from Madeira, Germany, Cape of Good Hope, and the Canary Islands. Within recent years very good wine has been made in Australia, and sent home to the mother-country.

We will now finish this story by telling you about a vineyard we visited in the autumn of 1894.

It was at Montreux, which lies in a Swiss valley bordering the Lake of Geneva. The 'vintage,' or grape ingathering, was just beginning, and it was a new and pleasant experience to watch the peasants at work.

There was so much to do in the vineyards then, that all the children had got holidays from school that they might help. So it was a busy scene—men, women, and children doing their different parts.

They were dressed in picturesque costumes, of bright contrasting colours, and it made a pretty picture to see them going in and out among the green vines, with baskets of purple and yellow fruit upon their heads. We bought the grapes in the vineyard then for a penny a bunch.

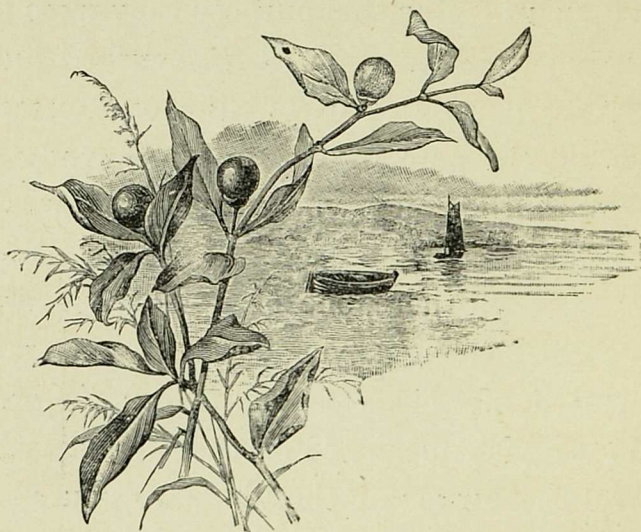
We watched the grapes getting their first pressing in the vineyard. For this purpose they were thrown into a huge tub like a wide churn, crushed, and then emptied into barrels or carts (like our water-carts) that stood at the gate of the vineyard ready to convey them to the place where the wine was to be made.

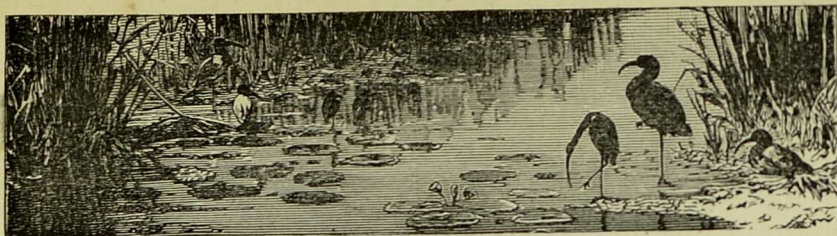
As we watched there, one of these carts came into the vineyard, bearing a very large barrel, and on it were printed in large letters *Pour l'Infirmierie*, which in English means, 'For the Infirmary.' Into this barrel the owner of the vineyard poured a good share of the grape juice, that it might be made into

wine for the sick poor in the hospital. It was pleasant to see that they were not forgotten.

Another of the pretty sights we saw that day was when the vineyard was entirely cleared, the workers tied a bunch of grapes and beautiful flowers to one of the vine poles, as a sign that the harvest was over in that vineyard, and in the same way they ornamented the last cart that left the gate.

It is interesting to notice what a useful shrub the vine is, for we learned that day that after the grapes have been thoroughly pressed three times in immense vats, the pulp that is left behind in a wonderfully dry condition, is then exposed to the sun until it becomes quite hard, and of a dark brown colour. It is then cut into blocks, and sold as fuel to the peasants to help their wood fires. It resembles the peats that are used so much in Scotland.





CHAPTER X.

HOLIDAY STORIES AT SUTTON HOUSE.

LADY GRANT had invited all the inmates of Melby Hall to accompany her and Reginald home.

Regy's school was to reopen now very shortly, so his holidays were fast coming to a close. A week or two at Sutton House, when he could show all the beauties of his own home, was a very pleasant prospect.

So Regy regained his usual spirits, which were beginning to flag at the thought of parting with his mother and cousins to enter on school routine once more.

Miss Felsham had devoted herself to Harry and his special amusement, and was rewarded by his quick recovery to health and spirits after his gipsy adventure, and quite able to enjoy the idea of life at Sutton House.

Lady Grant, with the willing aid of Soldier Tom, had kept the others very, very happy, so Miss

Felsham promised two or three holiday stories after they had settled down at Sutton House.

The first was to be about a summer ramble which she and her dear little brother and sister had enjoyed upon their own Devonshire moor before she had come to Melby Hall.

The second story was to be about a beautiful bird called the 'Water Ouzel,' that builds such a curiously domed nest on the margin of streams.

The third story was to be very interesting, as it was to be about a little sea-bird, with such a peculiar name, the 'Little Auk.'

As the children had never visited a seaside place, they knew nothing about the beauties and wonders of the sea, what was in it, and the lovely creatures and shells to be found on its shores. So when the day arrived when they were to say good-bye to Melby Hall for a short time, it was a merry party that crowded into the carriage. The journey did not seem long at all, there was so much to be seen on the way.

Cook and Nurse Sibbald had packed such delightful picnic baskets, that Dolly said she thought the nicest time of all was when they were opened, and sandwiches and cakes handed out to everybody in the carriage.

Nurse Sibbald accompanied them to Sutton House, as she was sure her young charges would never get on without her.

And at last they arrived in perfect safety. Then came Regy's time of being the host ; and he had to show his cousins all over the gardens and grounds, as well as his pets and playthings. They were greatly amused when they saw the old school-room that he used when he was a very small boy after coming from India. This first day at Aunt Di's house soon came to an end, and the next was inaugurated by Miss Felsham's first story.

A SUMMER RAMBLE.

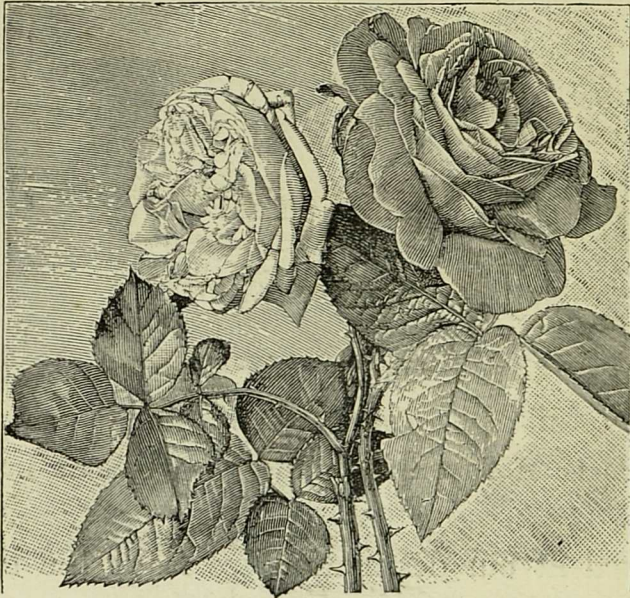
Oh, come to the 'moor!' for where could we find a place so full of life, interest, and beauty in summer ; let us go then to explore, and we will not be disappointed.

Arrived at our destination, we leave the bustling station, and for a little time turn our steps from the busy haunts of man to the quiet, unobtrusive, but yet busy life of the moor.

Through the leafy lane, up the wooded hill by the side of which sings a brawling stream, with a stray primrose or marigold (which have wakened up too late from their winter's sleep) nestling by its mossy sides, and now quite overtopped by the jubilant roses which had come to claim the sunshine.

Roses are the queens of summer ; and pink and white, here they are crowning the hedgerow, and

flinging their fragrant branches in graceful profusion over everything that comes in their way. The prettiest family in the order Rosacea, they have, in common with the order, five petals and permanent sepals; but the enlarged and fleshy tube of the calyx,



Roses.

which becomes the seed-vessel, is a distinctive feature of the rose family, and how eagerly will we cull it in autumn to adorn our rooms, and the children to string them for necklaces as of old. What subtle odour is this that meets us from the hedgerow? Ah! of course it can be none but the scent of the 'woodbine,' or—name sweeter still because so full of homely memories—the 'honeysuckle.' So charming a flower could not fail to be loved by the poets,

though singularly enough, Milton falls into the mistake of naming it 'eglantine.' Scott, Shakespeare, and Shelley introduce it; and Keats's mellow description of it shows what a keen appreciation he had of nature. He says:

The dew sweet eglantine
And honeysuckles full of clear bee wine.

We have two species of honeysuckle; the flowers of the one are much longer and larger in the tube than the other, which we may consider our own common honeysuckle, some botanists hardly considering the larger flowered one a native of this country.

Its flowers are usually in whorls, while those of the common honeysuckle are in terminal clusters. Keats's assertion of 'clear bee wine' we now know to be full of botanical truth, as the long tubes of these flowers contain more nectar than the corollas of any other species of British plants. In the common species it is thought the tube is short enough to allow the bees to reach the honey, but honeysuckle, as a rule, is dependent upon moths for cross-fertilisation.

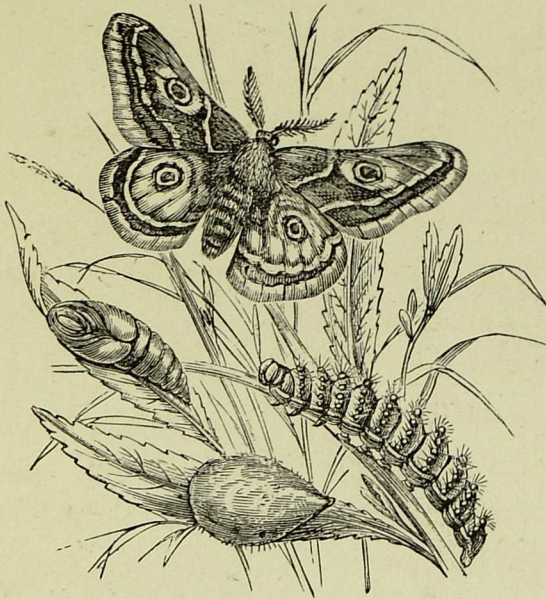
The nectar is certainly a rich reward for insect diligence, and unless they lent their aid, we would miss the rich clusters of scarlet berries that adorn the plant in autumn. There is a beautiful adaptation and harmony in all these arrangements of God

in nature. Just notice, and you will find that it is in the evening the honeysuckle gives forth its deep perfume in greatest richness, for the damp night air is better fitted to carry the fragrance; and thus the moths are attracted, and fly to do their appointed task. The tubes of the corollas are so deep and narrow that they deliver up their hidden treasures only to moths possessed of a very long proboscis, which can be coiled and uncoiled at pleasure. They also differ from others in having very long and narrow wings, enabling the insect to hover in one spot for a long time as he thrusts his trunk down one flower after another.

These moths are termed 'sphinxes,' and in these two respects they resemble humming-birds; indeed one of their number is so like one of these lovely little feathered creatures that it is named the Humming-bird Hawk-moth.

But now at last we are on the moor, and let us make the most of our time. Over the blooming heather we go and knolls of matted heath that stand up in the midst of bog and peat. The dewy moss lies in velvety patches at our feet, brightened here and there with the golden spikes of asphodel; the cotton-grass too, with its snowy helmet, waves in the summer breeze. As we wander across the heath, the numerous insects attract our attention as they break the silence with their 'hum' or the swish of their large and powerful wings.

Here is a splendid 'Emperor Moth,' just escaped from its tough silken 'pupa' case. It is a handsome broad-winged insect, the wings measuring nearly three inches in expanse; they are reddish-yellow in the male, and in the female of a light gray colour.

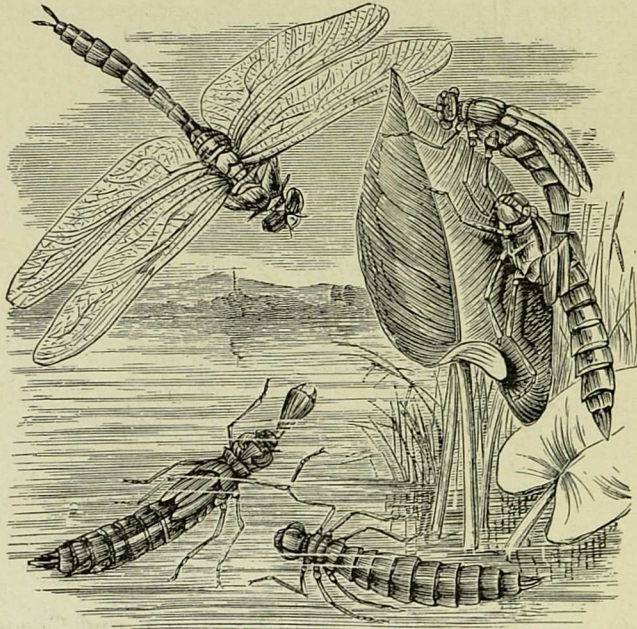


Emperor Moth, with Caterpillar, Pupa, and Cocoon.

In both sexes there is a black 'eye' in the centre of the wing. The 'Emperor' is very partial to heaths.

Here are innumerable dragon-flies too, with their azure wings, putting us in mind of a bit of the sky let loose! They are very beautiful; but of all insatiable and voracious insects in all their stages, the dragon-fly is the deadliest enemy to others. We can account for the enormous numbers of them here when we see that the moor is studded over with

deep water pools, or rather what we may call 'peat mosses.' These, of all hunting grounds, to naturalists are the most fascinating, so just let us camp beside one for a few minutes. The surface of the water is thickly covered over with 'Sphagnum' water moss.



Metamorphoses of Dragon-fly.

This is an aquatic species of one of the 'Bog' mosses. It is remarkable for the share it takes in covering bogs and gradually forming material for peat, and is of a yellowish-green colour.

Now plunging in a long stick, we secure a bunch of it and bring it to land. In a moment a number of little animals scramble out of it on every side. What are they? Well, we have disturbed a colony

of 'water spiders,' and ruthlessly destroyed some of the most beautiful homes it is possible to conceive, but they are so interesting we must secure some of them.

It is not very many years ago since it was discovered that the true 'water spider,' *Argyroneta aquatica*, lived so far north as Scotland. Although water is its native element, *Argyroneta* is dependent on breathing atmospheric air; and for this purpose a large air-bell surrounds the lower portion of the body, which gives the creature the appearance of quicksilver as it swims through the water.

Many other aquatic animals possess an air-bell, besides coming to the surface to breathe, but none of them build a home in the water and fill it with air, as *Argyroneta* does. For this purpose she spins a thimble-shaped dome of silken fibre, attaching it to the stem of a water-plant.

When this is complete, she begins making journeys to the surface of the water, where, by exposing the air-bell to the atmosphere, and by charging her furry coat with a number of smaller air-bells, she lays in a sufficient supply, and making a headlong dive to her house, she discharges in the air by an opening that is always left on the under side, and these journeys she continues till she gathers enough of air to displace all the water in the dome.

In this airy mansion the spiders hatch their young. I watched in my own aquarium the spin-

ning of a silken cocoon inside of the house, where a hundred eggs were laid.

As they came to maturity, the cocoon grew larger and larger, till the poor old spider, who lay at the door of it, was very nearly expelled from the house altogether.

It is most interesting to see a nest of them hatched; their utter astonishment at being suddenly immersed in water being quite apparent by their tumbling about in all directions, quite surprised at their unexpected ducking. Then each one sets off by itself with a minute air-bell marking its course through the water.

Dolly exclaimed 'that was one of the very nicest holiday stories that they had yet heard, such clever spiders, she could never kill one again, whether they lived on land or in water;' and now to-morrow they were to hear all about 'the beautiful birds.'

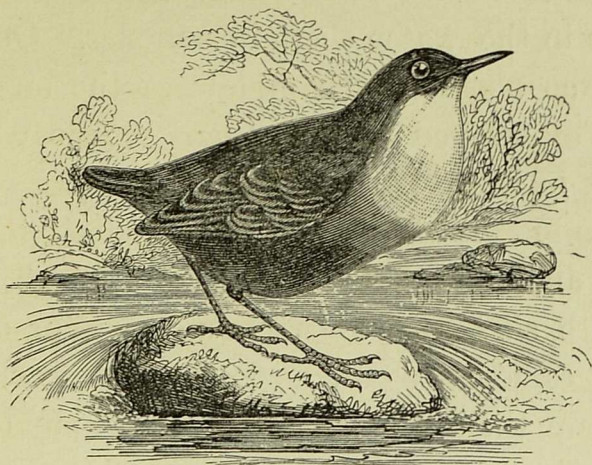
THE WATER OUZEL.

The river Devon, near Dollar in Scotland, is a wonderfully clear and pretty river, and is a famous place for seeing the Water Ouzel, or Common Dipper, to perfection. He is a great lover of Scotland, where her mountain streams are a congenial home.

The water ouzel is named the water thrush in Spain; and in fact he is nearly allied to the thrushes.

His song, when heard, is entrancing; full, rich, free, and melodious.

In appearance he is like a short-bodied thrush, but instead of the spotted breast, he has a pure white



Water Ouzel.

throat and fore-neck, which blends in beautifully with his red-brown breast. Both of his eyelids have a white speck on them.

I saw him first standing on a moss-grown stone in the middle of a mountain stream. It was a pretty sight, as I sat on the bank and watched him. He had just ascended from the water, all fresh and glistening from his bath. He stood on his stone, and fixed his bright eyes upon me, as he swayed his body backwards and forwards with a soft undulating motion. In a moment he darted off, cleaving the water, and disappeared into its depths.

Now why had he gone below the water? In

search of food! Down he goes to the very bottom of the stream, to feed on insects, small aquatic animals, and molluscs or larvæ.

About the river Devon they are very plentiful and very tame. I have seen them playing for an hour together in the water there in summer. One sat on a stone as usual in the middle of the stream, and sway-sway-swayed at a companion, who was up to the neck in water by his side.

Suddenly the bird in the water gave a brisk chirrup, and dashed at his friend on the stone, when they both shot into the stream, and after a minute or two, came up again as buoyant as corks, much farther up the stream, where they began the game over again.

His nest is so pretty, I must tell you about it. He often builds it among the rocks, sometimes so near the water that it is in danger of being dashed with the spray and foam. It is very large, with a domed top; the door is open to the front. It is beautifully woven of moss on the outside, and of grass inside, and carefully lined with oak or beech leaves. The eggs, five or six, are oval, pure white, and about an inch in length. If the young birds are disturbed when nearly fledged, they leave the nest at once and dive into the water.

Now we will hear about another little bird that loves to frequent the water, or rather marshes, where tall reeds and rushes grow. He is rarely, if

ever, seen in Scotland, but is common on the southern coasts of England. He is named the Marsh Reedling. He is a migrant, that is to say, he leaves England for a warmer clime in autumn, but comes back to build and sing about the end of April. If you are ever near one of these marshy places in summer, just listen and you are sure to hear his loud and happy song coming from the reeds. I spent a day on Rushmere Heath in Suffolk. We camped down at a little lake whose margins were covered with reeds, bulrushes, flowering rushes, and arrow-head plants. Here the marsh reedling builds; we heard his song but could not find his nest. He often sings at night. He is a small but pretty bird. The upper parts of his coat are a pale olive-brown, and the lower parts of a greenish-yellow colour. His throat is pure white.

If you are ever fortunate enough to find his nest, you will see one of nature's prettiest homes. It is of a long round or oval shape, fastened to the stems of several reeds or tall plants some distance from the ground. It is a sight I long to see—one of these little marsh reedlings sitting in her tiny mansion among the reeds. He feeds on little insects. His other names are Reed Warbler and Reed Wren.

I followed one of them for a long distance, by the side of the canal at Ipswich in Suffolk. He did not seem alarmed at my presence, but hung on to the stems of the plants till I was quite near, then with

a pretty twitter he was off in an instant to the other side of the canal. That was a capital place for them, there were so many aquatic plants, especially in some of the more secluded spots.

Miss Felsham then read the following sonnet, with which all the children were delighted. Regy and Madge, being the eldest of the party, promised to commit it to memory, and repeat it to Lady Grant.

THE TIME OF VIOLETS.

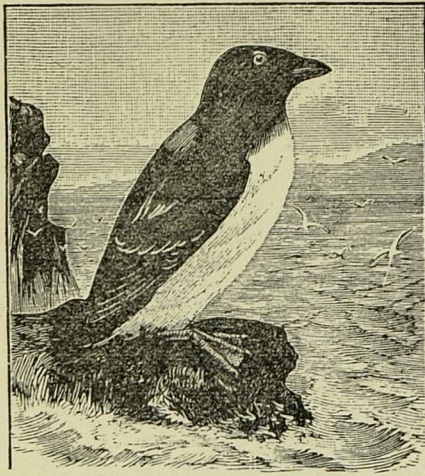
The ouzel domes her nest when violets wake ;
Swift o'er the purple fields the swallow flies ;
Shadows may linger, but the vernal skies
Herald the burst of music that will break
From out a thousand hearts, for love's sweet sake.
Once more the vagrant bee, with glad surprise,
Seeks for a home where springing verdure lies
And purple violets all the fragrance make.
Oh woodlands fair ! oh valleys decked with bloom !
Fain would we linger where the violets hide,
And dream again the dream when life was young.
Hearts, filled with mem'ries by the sweet perfume,
Forget to weep, fling fretting cares aside,
And touch once more the chords so long unstrung.

Even little Harry was quite excited about the next holiday story, the dear 'little auk ;' the name quite took his fancy.

THE LITTLE AUK.

The January of the year 1895 was memorable in nature for very severe snow-storms and gales in many parts of the world. As to bird-life we in Scotland had a unique experience. A storm arose about the twelfth of the month, and had evidently discomfited a vast army of little auks to the German Ocean.

This army of the beautiful little sea-kings had



Little Auk.

apparently come to visit our warmer seas for a time. But from the German Ocean they were driven inland by the violence of the storm, and myriads of their dead bodies were found strewn along the east coast; while some of them which had escaped death were found about farm steadings, very far from the sea, in a famished condition.

You may imagine how they suffered from hunger, when I tell you that nearly the whole life of the little auk is spent in mid-ocean; where it feeds on small crustacea and fishes, diving under the waves for them with great dexterity.

The little auk is a native of Greenland, Spitzbergen, and other Arctic coasts. He is about the size of a pigeon, and as he flies with a very rapid action, he has been compared to a large humming-bird. He is an active and lively bird, sleeping, feeding, and living entirely out at sea. His plumage is sober black and white. I call the auks sea-kings, for it is seldom the storm conquers them, they are such hardy little sailors.

Macgillivray, one of our greatest ornithologists, once saw two little auks at the Bass Rock. But they are of rare occurrence in Britain. Another name for the auk is the Little Rotche. He is a diminutive relation of the great auk, a famous but now extinct bird.

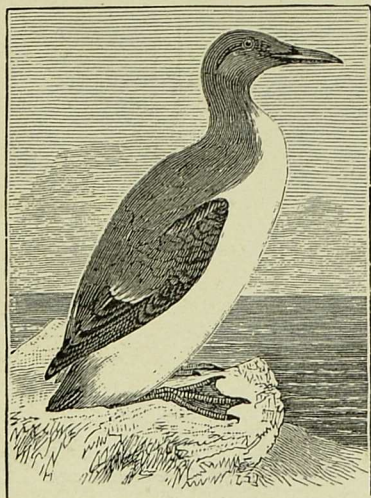
Now we will take a peep at the 'Bass Rock,' where so many different kinds of our sea-birds congregate. We went there one day, and had a near view of some of them, which I will tell you about.

The 'Bass Rock' lies two miles from the shore, in Haddingtonshire. We took a little row-boat from a pretty place called Canty Bay; reaching the great 'Bass' in about half-an-hour.

As we neared the classic giant, its rocky portals

seemed to be guarded by a military force. There they stood, row upon row, tier upon tier, on the frowning fortress, as if resenting our bombardment of their island home. They were clad in a uniform of blended colours, soft as the rainbow tints—white, gray, blue, black, brown, and scarlet melting into each other, and making a perfect whole. Who were they, as they stood erect as sentinels at the very door we wished to enter?

We found on getting nearer that they were hundreds upon hundreds of sea-birds, the little guillemot.



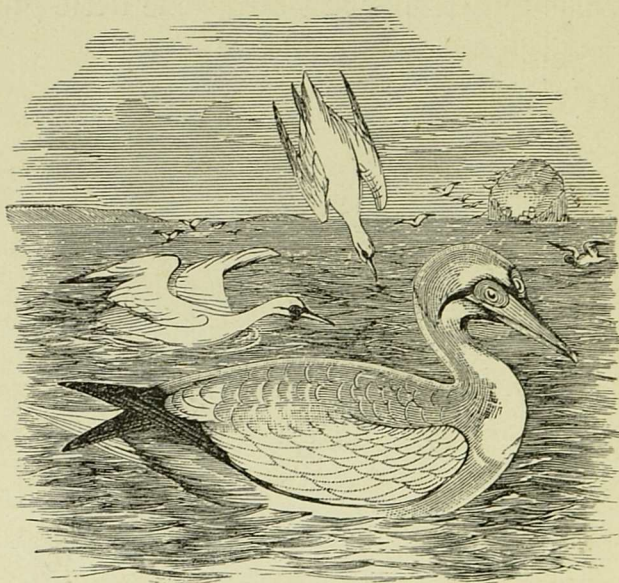
Guillemot.

Beautiful little divers they are, and many of them had their nests in the moss-grown crevices, and under the large blocks of stone.

Some of them were swimming, some had diving matches on, while others were paddling about like little ducks. They were very pretty, and very amus-

ing. We found that the scarlet in their uniform was supplied by the legs and feet, which turn a beautiful coral-red in summer. They generally have two eggs in the nest, about an inch and a half in length, and of a bluish-white colour, with little patches of brown.

When setting out in parties on any excursion, they fly low over the water, in small bands, turning first to one side, and then to the other, in beautiful precision, and catching the sunlight on their wings, make a very pretty picture. All the breeding places



Gannets.

of the little guillemot here are north of the Tweed and Solway, but the species is distributed over all the northern coasts of Europe and America.

In defiance of these pretty sentinels at the gate, our boat was moored, and we mounted the great

rugged steps at the only available entrance to the rock. So up, up we went by a circuitous path cut in the rock, and worn in the grass.

Every crevice in the boulders was lighted up with the glory and blossoms of wild flowers, principally in great undulating clusters of sea-Campion (*Silene maritima*), a beautiful flower.

At last we arrived at the very top. We felt like Robinson Crusoe on a bare and lonely island; but what was that awful noise? Ah well! we had arrived at the top, but not only there, but close among the snowy multitude of the inhabitants of the 'Bass,' the Solan-geese or Gannets. It was exciting, but at the same time very formidable, for most of the gannets were on the nest guarding the solitary egg or young bird, and not liking our near approach, they began to hiss and shriek in a most appalling manner.

We were very glad, however, to get a nearer view of them, their nests and young. They are large, powerful birds, and are organised, not for diving at all, but for plunging. They cannot cleave the water but from a great height, and from that they throw themselves headlong into the sea after their prey.

The nests are made of turf and seaweed laid on the rock, and so near the perpendicular side of the precipice that the young birds seemed in danger of toppling over. The little birds are like lovely, fleecy,

white balls, getting darker in colour as they get older.

Their necks wobbled about in a very funny way when they raised them to look at us, the intruding mortals! We saw some of the gannets feeding the young ones. They give them the food out of their gullet, partly digested, never carrying it to them in the bill.

Now we will finish this story of the sea-birds by telling you about a lovely little gull that was given to me by a Highland boatman. We were staying on the island of Lismore, in Argyllshire. The sea there was dotted over with small and beautiful islands, where we used to go and wander over and over again. The ground was covered with moss and short heather, and the little sea-birds' nests were so thickly set among it that we were many times afraid to put our foot down, in case of injuring the little birds. One day Donald brought a beautiful little white gull. Its wing had been broken by a dog. He asked me to try and bandage it up, and keep it as a pet. This I soon did, and also gave it an old pigeon cot to itself in the garden, where it lived for many a day. It got quite tame, running to meet me when I called its name 'Daisy.' Its plumage was so pretty, I tied a scarlet ribbon round its neck, with a little bell attached. The scarlet colour showed at any distance.

One morning I missed my pet! Where could the

little wanderer have gone? The same day we were strolling over one of the little islands called Inchvar, when suddenly I heard Daisy's little bell, and caught sight of her scarlet ribbon! She trotted as usual to meet me, and what was my surprise to see that Daisy had flown off with a mate, and they were busy making a nest in the moss and heather!

And now the holidays were fairly at an end. Regy was back at school, writing home such nice letters, always ending with the happy recollections of the splendid holidays at 'Melby Hall' and the interesting 'holiday stories.'

On the morning of the return of Miss Felsham and the children, Lady Grant received letters from Captain Westcott bearing the joyful news that he was already on his way home, and that they would spend the coming Christmas time all together. Oh, what joy there was in every face at that happy prospect! and we will now take our leave of Melby Hall and its inmates for the present, hoping again to renew our acquaintance when they are older, and the holiday stories a little more advanced.

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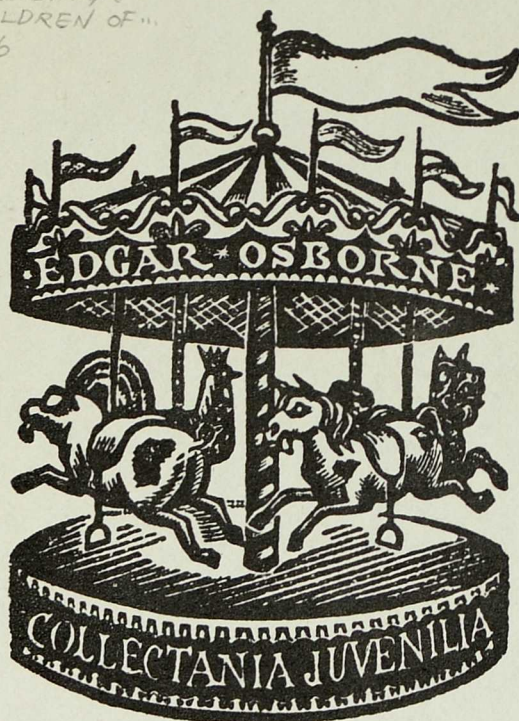
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