A NEW DRESS FOR AN OLD FRIEND

1857

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NEW...
1857

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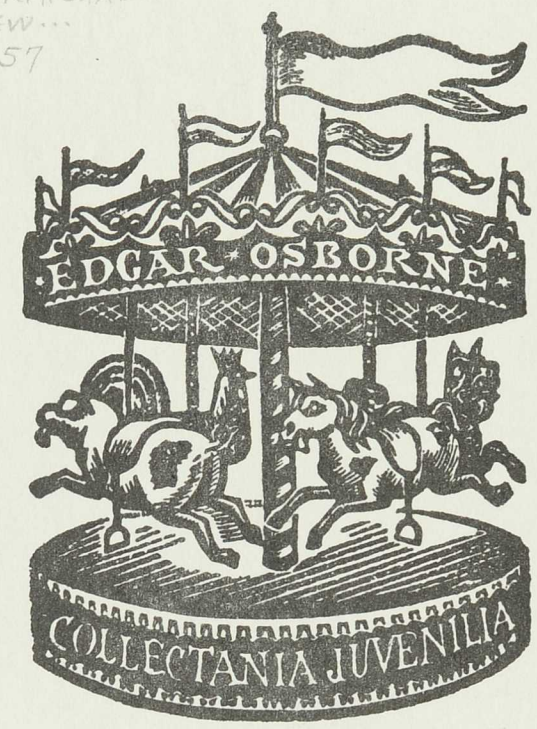

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A

NEW DRESS FOR AN OLD FRIEND,

INTENDED FOR THE AMUSEMENT

OF

CHILDREN,

BEING

A FABLE OF ÆSOP IN RHYME,

BY

MARY D. I. CARMICHAEL,

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS,

BY

THE AUTHORESS.

LITHOGRAPHED BY

VINCENT BROOKS.

HENRY VERNON, 168, NEW BOND STREET.

1857.

A little field mouse once lived in a nest
At the foot of an old oak tree,
And lined it well, with soft green moss,
For thrifty and careful was she.

In this quiet home she happily dwelt
So snug with her children three,
And they lived on sweet roots and filberts ripe,
And acorns that fell from the tree.

They feared neither trap, nor paw of the cat,
And they peacefully slept by day,
For little *field* mice, when the sun goes down,
Frisk out in the moonlight to play.

In a forest, away from the haunts of men,
Nearly hidden by grass and weeds,
Lived these little field mice, a harmless race,
With their round bright eyes like jet beads.

'Tis their nature, I've said, to sleep by day,
So one evening when they awoke,
The mother she call'd her little ones round,
And thus to her family spoke:—

" My children, the summer is passing away,
And we have not yet had a treat;
I will hie away to the distant fields,
And bring you some ears of ripe wheat."

The little mice squeaked with joy as they saw
Her depart, and capered with glee,
As they watched her while she lingered in sight,
From the foot of the old oak tree.

They peeped at the full round moon, which made
The dewdrops like diamonds bright,
And silvered the boughs of the old oak tree,
That waved in her sweet, soft light.

They saw the small lamp of the glow-worm shine,
And they heard the grasshopper sing,
And the beetle's hum, and the tiny gnat,
Afloat on its gauzy wing.

And think ye these mice could slumber again,
Or now in their warm nest would stay?
Oh, no! they roamed out in the clear moonlight,
And danced in the silvery ray.

At length they hail their old mother's return,
But she brings them no ears of wheat,
While with trembling step, and faltering voice,
She can scarcely her children greet.

"Dear mother," they cry, "oh! tell us why
You so tremble and shake for fear;
What can have befallen you? mother, speak;
What terrible danger is near?"

"The danger is past," the old mouse replied,
"Your mother in safety you see;
A monstrous lion I met by the way,
But a generous heart has he.

"I saw him advance; I lay in his path;
Too terrified was I to fly;
And crushed had I died beneath his paw,
But he heard my pitiful cry:—

"'Oh, stain not thy foot, dread king of the woods,
With blood so ignoble as mine!
Hear the suppliant prayer of a feeble mouse,
Least subject, great monarch, of thine!'

"He paused and looked down on my prostrate form,
While kind pity shone in his eye;
He bade me fear not, as he stepped aside,
And passed me uninjured by."

She scarcely ceased speaking, when dreadful roars
Echoed wildly the forest through;
The mouse she started, but not now in fear,
The voice of the lion she knew.

" I saw, last night," she exclaimed, " when abroad,
The hunters spreading their snare
Amid the tall trees of the forest dark;
And the lion is surely there."

And quickly she bounded forth again!
Nor heeded her young ones' cry;
For her little heart beat with gratitude,
And it beamed in her round, black eye.

Breathless she reached the spot, and found
That the lion indeed was there!
The strength of the cords had defied his rage,
And he howled in the depth of despair.

'Twas then that the poor little mouse exclaimed,
"Oh! for power to set thee free,
That the price of my life might pay for thine,
With the lives of my children three."

"Return," said the lion, "good mouse, to thy nest,
At the foot of the old oak tree!
This snare of the hunter baffles *my* strength;—
Poor mouse! what canst *thou* do for me?"

"Ah! yes, I am weak, 'tis too true," said the mouse,
"But thy death I never can see,
Until all my little strength shall be spent
In an effort to set thee free!"

So she gnawed and nibbled the live-long night
At the cords so twisted and strong;
Nor rested a moment her small, sharp teeth
The thick-tangled meshes among.

One knot at length severs—how hard she works!—
It is almost the break of day;
The net becomes loosened—one moment more,
And she knows it must then give way!

Hard, hard she labors—hark! yes, 'tis the sound
Of the hunters approaching near!
Her heart throbs quick in agony,
And she desperate grows with fear.

Now the meshes give way! They crack, they break!
The lord of the forest is free!
And owes his life to the little field mouse,
At the foot of the old oak tree.

The hunters arrive, and finding their snares
All broken and spread there in vain,
They little dream how the captive escaped,
As they marvel in mournful strain.

And how could *they* know such gratitude shines
'Mong the dwellers in hole and den,
Or expect to find in the wild green wood
A bright gem so rare amongst men?

The gen'rous part of the noble and brave
Is to help and protect the weak;
Whilst gratitude elevates ever the soul,
And adorns the humble and meek.

The lowly arise in beauty and grace,
And clothed in dignity true,
When they fully esteem a favor conferred,
And render the gratitude due.

None dwell on the earth whom station and wealth
Can place above sorrow and cares;
None so lofty as not to need help from the poor,
When the power to rescue is theirs.

Nor any so poor, so humble or mean,
Who, prompted by gratitude's call,
May ever despair great acts to perform—
" Persevere and overcome all."

True greatness exalteth each gen'rous soul,
Where the spirit of love doth reign,
Whose influence circleth the children of earth
In one glorious golden chain.

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