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Title: The Ducks and Frogs, a Tale of the Bogs

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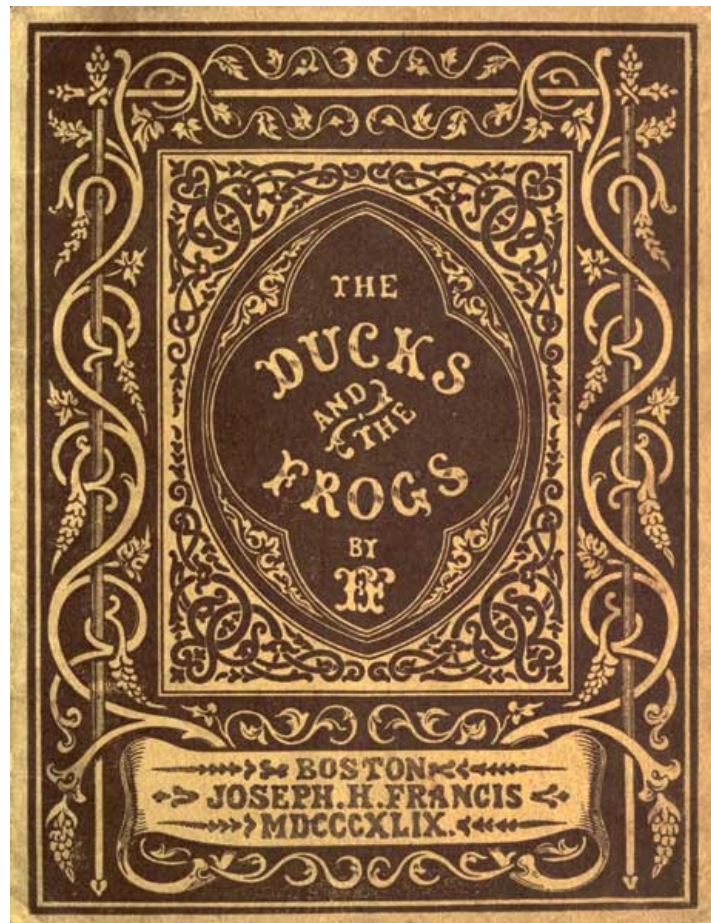
Release date: September 17, 2008 [eBook #26650]

Most recently updated: January 4, 2021

Language: English

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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE DUCKS AND FROGS, A TALE OF THE BOGS ***



THE DUCKS AND THE FROGS

BY

FANNY FIRE-FLY

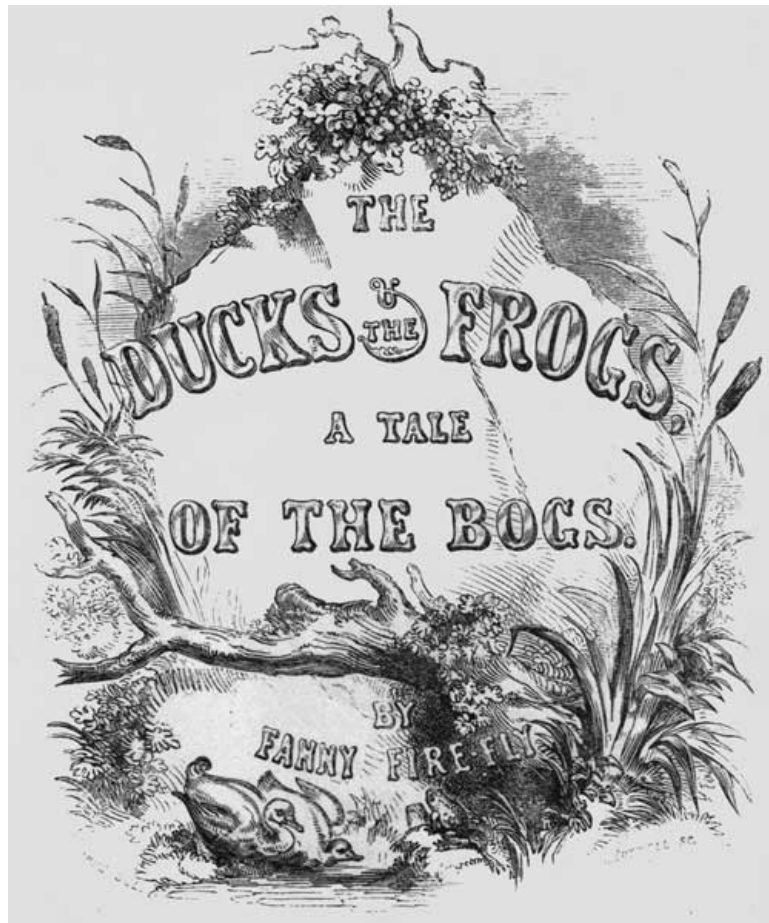
BOSTON
JOSEPH.H.FRANCIS
MDCCCXLIX.



Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1848, by Alonzo
Hartwell, in the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the
District of Massachusetts.

WHITE & POTTER, Printers,
J. W. WILCOX, Electrotyper

A. HARTWELL,
WOOD ENGRAVER.
Littleton, Mass.



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THE DUCKS AND THE FROGS



CHANCED UPON A CERTAIN DAY,

When cheerful Summer, bright and gay,
Had brought once more her gift of flowers,
To dress anew her pleasant bowers;
When birds and insects on the wing
Made all the air with music ring;
When sunshine smiled on dell and knoll,
Two Ducks set forth to take a stroll.
'Twas morning; and each grassy bank
Of cooling dew had deeply drank—
Each fair young flower was holding up
Its sweet and freshly painted cup,
Filled with bright dew drops, every one;
Gay, sparkling treasures for the sun,
Who bears them lightly to the sky,
Holds them as vapor far on high,
Till with his rays in dazzling tints,
The rainbow on the cloud he paints.
But our two Ducks we'll not forget,
They were not troubled by the wet;
They rambled on, and soon they took
The path that led them to a brook,

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Whose sparkling waters danced along,
With a gushing, rushing, rippling song.
The ramblers, when they reached the brink,
Stepped down to bathe, and take a drink.
They loved to frolic, dive and dash
Beneath the water with a splash.
They washed and smoothed each glossy
feather,

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Then said, "let's have a swim together!"
As moving gracefully, they went,
They heard loud tones of sad lament.
They listened, and did sharply look
For cause of woe in that sweet brook;
And soon espied beneath some bushes,
Among the reeds and tall, green rushes,
A company of long-faced Frogs,
A delegation from the bogs;
Sitting with their up-turned faces,
In attitudes to please the Graces,
Around a stone, on which was speaking
A member of this grave marsh meeting.
The Ducks were pleased; they knew them all,
For very often they did call
At that sweet brook, to hear them sing;
They thought their music quite the thing.
"And now," said they, "we will draw near,"
For much they wished to see and hear
What was this fuss and noise about,
So joined the party to find out.
The Frogs received them with a smirk,
And gave their hands with nervous jerk.
Bowing and smiling in return,
The Ducks prepared themselves to learn

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From what the Orator might say,
The cause of all their friends' dismay.
Now the chief speaker in this scene,
Dressed in a suit of bottle green,
Folding his arms across his breast,
Again the meeting thus addressed:
"My friends," said he, "I'm rather hoarse,
And must be brief in my discourse;
But as these Ducks have joined our band,
I wish to have them understand
We have not come to this fair spot,
To break the peace or hatch a plot;
But we have met to form a plan
To waken in the heart of man,
Pity for our sad condition.

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We would present a grave petition,
Beseeching of the men who rule,
That we, lone dwellers of the pool,
May be permitted to reside
In safety, with our scanty tribe.
We humbly say there's no occasion,
To send an army of invasion
Into our loved and quiet bogs,
To murder happy, harmless Frogs.
Take our own dear sons and daughters,
Drag them from their winter quarters,
Then, when no heart with pity melts,
To cut them up as food for smelts!
Think what a very shocking fate,
Caught and killed, and used as bait,
To take those harmless little fishes
To multiply man's dainty dishes."
Now, as the Frog this sentence spoke,
Each brother gave a solemn croak.

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The gentleman in bottle-green
Was quite exhausted by his theme;
He paused a moment, wiped his brow;
Then said, "I think you will allow
We've been a persecuted race,
Since first on earth we had a place.
There is, I'm told, a land called France,
Where all the people sing and dance—

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And they acquire their easy grace
By living on our helpless race;
And though I say it with a sigh,
'Tis this that makes them all so spry."
Puffing for breath, the speaker stopped
And quickly from the stone he hopped.
The Ducks, while listening to this tale,
Had felt their very hearts turn pale.
At length, the largest of the two,
A handsome Drake, in green and blue,
Arose, and opening wide his beak,
Bowed, coughed, and then began to speak.
"Neighbors, I'm not a coward bird—
But the sad story I have heard,
Would cause the boldest one to quake,
And makes my every feather shake.
I like the plan that you propose,
To write a list of these your woes,
And ask for mercy from these men;
But have it done by some smart pen;
If stated by some able writer,
I think your fortunes may be brighter."

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Just at this moment, up there sprung
A Frog quite pert, for one so young;
Said he, "I vote for emigration,
'Twill save us all this botheration!"
Our proud Drake turned, in great surprise,
While grave rebuke flashed from his eyes.
Said he, "it makes my blood run cold,
To see young folks so smart and bold.
There's not a Duckling of my brood,
That would presume to be thus rude;
Young sir, I will a lesson give,
That may be useful while you live:
Wait till your counsel others seek,
And then think twice before you speak!
For you, the elders of this tribe,
I hope you here will still reside.
In every pleasant brook and marsh,
You'll meet with cares and trials harsh;

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If you'll but try to be contented,
Much that's wrong will be prevented.
My lady Duck and I 'tis plain,
Are wiser than when here we came.
We thought our lot was very hard,
When shut within the poultry yard;
Although 'tis large, and well supplied
With water, and all else beside
For happiness and comfort too,
Yet much we wished for something new.
Our wings are clipped, we cannot fly,
And this too costs us many a sigh.
We seldom pass our owner's gate,
He keeps his poultry rather straight.

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We should not have been out to-day,
But Duck and I just ran away;
And as we came to bathe this morn,
Fretful we felt, and quite forlorn;
We thought our lot in life so sad,
And all our troubles quite too bad.
Could we have got our brood away,
We had quit town this very day.
As gloomily we stepped along,
The air was filled with many a song
From happy creatures, gay and bright,
Rejoicing in the morning light.
The dew, o'er flowers and trees was flung,
Like diamonds pure, in drops it hung;

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All nature seemed reproaching us,
For making all this dismal fuss.
But we grew calmer as we walked,
Of all these cheering things we talked.
And hearing all your griefs and sighs,
Much better feelings did arise.
For let me tell you, friends and brothers,
Listening to the woes of others,
And pitying their deep distress,
Will ever make our own seem less.
Then Patience whispers, (pray regard her,)
Your lot though hard, might still be harder.
Now, gossips, I am tired of speaking,
Our Ducklings too we must be seeking;

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Although it makes our heart-strings quiver,
To see yon bright and pleasant river;
And hearing its cool waters splashing,
We long beneath them to be dashing.
Yet we must close this visitation,
And without farther hesitation,
Resist our very strong desire,
And cheerful to our homes retire.
Our kindest wishes rest with you,
So, now good friends, we'll bid adieu."

The Ducks then smoothed each ruffled
feather,

And gracefully walked off together.
The Frogs with courtesy arose,
And stretched themselves high on their toes;
And so far conquered all their fears,
They gave their friends three parting cheers!
Then as they sank upon the grass,
This resolution they did pass:
"Here, now, before we separate,
We pledge ourselves, to bear our fate
With patience; and if ill betide,
We'll try to find some brighter side.
Our homes with cheerful tones shall ring,
And over every care *we'll spring*."
They stopped; each folded his green dress
About him with much cheerfulness;
Shook hands all round, and said "good day,"
Then merrily they *hopped away*.

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When these bright people all were gone,
And I sat musing quite alone,
Out of this their simple preaching,
Came the lesson they'd been teaching.
Each little reader too can see
What seems so very clear to me.

'Tis this: that dark-browed Discontent
Must from our hearts be quickly sent;
Whate'er may be our daily lot,
Think all is well, and grumble not;
A generous pity feel for all,
And charity for great and small.
One other hint we also find,
That children all should bear in mind,
Treat aged people—strangers too,
With reverence; it is their due.
Take warning from that Frog so young,
And keep a bridle on the tongue!
These teachings seem so very plain,
We hope they are not given in vain.

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