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Title: Our Children: Scenes from the Country and the Town

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Release date: May 5, 2009 [eBook #28695]

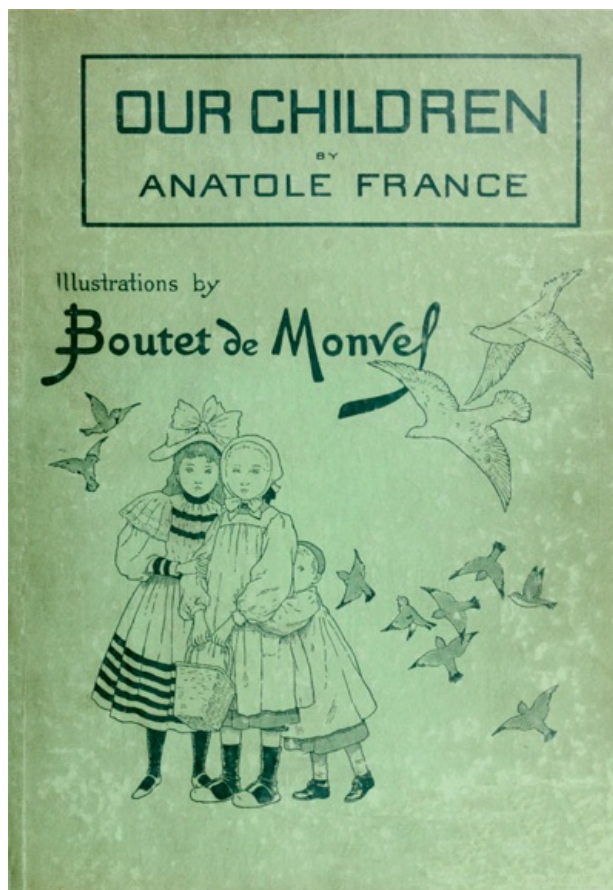
Language: English

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OUR CHILDREN



OUR CHILDREN

BY
ANATOLE FRANCE

Illustrations by
Boutet de Monvel

OUR CHILDREN

Scenes from the Country and the Town

BY
ANATOLE FRANCE

Illustrated in color and in pen and ink by
BOUTET de MONVEL.



NEW YORK
DUFFIELD & COMPANY
1923

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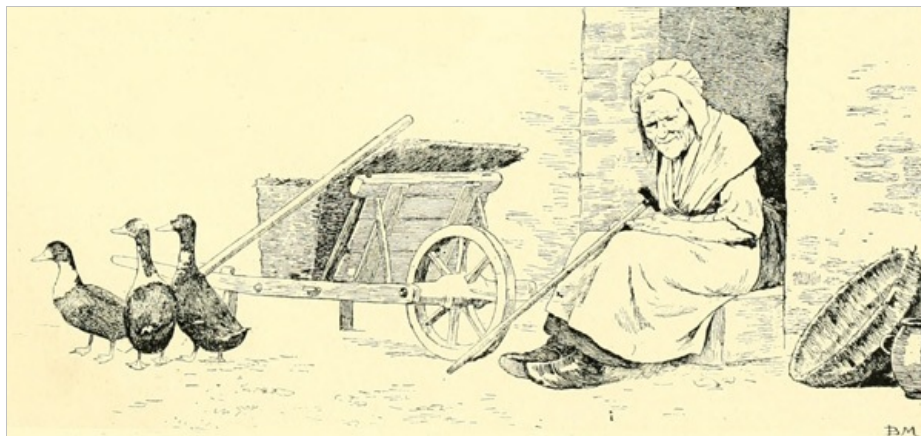
OUR CHILDREN

[1]

FANNY

I

Fanny started off early one morning, like little Red Riding Hood, to visit her grandmother, who lives quite at the other end of the village. But Fanny did not stop like Red Riding Hood to pick hazel nuts. She went straight on her way, and did not see any wolf.

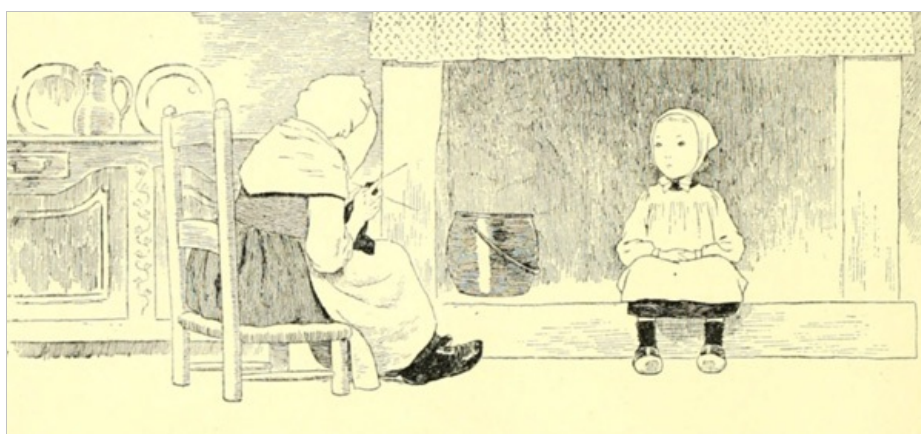


Even when quite a long way off, she could see her grandmother seated on her stone doorstep, the dear grandmother who smiled with her toothless mouth and opened her old arms thin as grape vines to welcome her little granddaughter. Fanny's heart was filled with delight at the prospect of spending a whole day at her grandmother's. And her grandmother, having no longer any cares or tasks, but living like a cricket near the fire, is happy too to see the little daughter of her son, a sweet reminder of her youth.

[2]

They have many things to say to each other, for one of them is at the end of life's voyage and the other is just setting out upon it.

"You grow bigger every day, Fanny," says her grandmother, "and I am getting littler. Just look! I need hardly stoop to press my lips to your forehead. What difference does it make how old I am when I still have youth's roses in your cheeks, Little Fanny."



But Fanny is exploring for the hundredth time, with new joy, all the curious things in the little house—the paper flowers blooming beneath the glass globe, the old paintings of French generals in fine uniforms overthrowing their enemies, the gold cups, some with handles and some without, and grandfather's old gun which hangs on the chimney breast on a nail from which grandfather himself fastened it—for the last time, thirty years ago.



TREES AND GRASS AND FLOWERS AND LITTLE BIRDS THERE WERE IN GRANDMOTHER'S YARD. FANNY DID NOT BELIEVE THERE WAS A PRETTIER YARD THAN THIS IN ALL THE WORLD. SHE TAKES HER KNIFE FROM HER POCKET PROMPTLY, AND CUTS HER BREAD AS THE VILLAGE PEOPLE DO.

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But the hours pass and the first thing one knows it's time to get ready for the noonday dinner. Grandmother stirs up the wood fire that has been slumbering quietly, and then she breaks some eggs in the black tiled hearth, while Fanny watches with great interest the omelette and bacon that turns gold and sings in the flame. Grandmother knows better than any one how to make ham omelettes and tell stories. Fanny, seated on the little stove, her cheek no higher than the table, eats the steaming omelette and drinks sparkling cider. Grandmother, however, as her habit is, eats standing near the corner of the hearth. She holds her knife in her right hand, and in the other her snack spread on a crust of bread. When they have finished, both of them, Fanny says:

[3]

"Grandmother, tell me the story of the blue bird."

And grandmother tells her story of the blue bird, how a wicked fairy changed a beautiful young prince into a bird the color of the deep sky, and of the great sorrow the princess felt when she saw the change and beheld her lover flying all ruddy and dripping toward the window of the tower in which she was shut up.

Fanny is very thoughtful when she hears this story.

"Was it a long, long time ago, Grandmother, that the blue bird flew toward the tower where the princess was shut up?"

Grandmother replies that it was all a good while ago, those things, in the days when animals could talk.

"Were you young then?" asks Fanny. "I wasn't born yet," says Grandmother. And Fanny says to her: "I suppose a great many things happened before you were born, didn't they, Grandmother?"

When they are through with their little talk Grandmother gives Fanny an apple and some bread.

"Now run away, pet, and eat this in the yard."

And Fanny goes out into the yard, where there are trees and grass and flowers and little birds.



Trees and grass and flowers and little birds there were in grandmother's yard. Fanny did not believe there was a prettier yard than this in all the world. Already she takes her knife from her pocket to cut her bread as the village people do. She crunches into the apple first thing of all and then begins to munch her bread. Just then a little bird comes fluttering near her, then another, and then a third, then ten, twenty, thirty of them, all circling about her, some of them gray, some red, some brown and green and blue, all of them so pretty, and all singing. Fanny could not guess at first what they all wanted. But soon she perceives that they are after bread, like little beggars. They are indeed beggars, but they are also songsters. Fanny was too kindhearted to refuse them bread when they paid for it with songs. She was only a little farmer's girl and she did not know that once upon a time, in a country where white rocks bathe in the blue sea, a blind old man earned his bread singing songs to the shepherds, songs that learned men admire even to this day. But her heart heard the little birds, and she threw them crumbs that scarcely touched the earth before they caught them in the air.



SOON SHE PERCEIVED THAT THEY WERE AFTER BREAD, LIKE LITTLE BEGGARS. THEY WERE INDEED BEGGARS, BUT THEY WERE ALSO SONGSTERS. FANNY WAS TOO KINDHEARTED TO REFUSE THEM BREAD WHEN THEY PAID FOR IT WITH SONGS.

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Fanny saw that the birds were not all of the same nature. Some of them, ranged in a circle at her feet, waited till the crumbs fell near their little beaks. They were philosophers. There were others who circled neatly around her in the air, and one even who came and actually pecked at the slice of bread in her hand.

She crumbled the bread and threw the crumbs to them all. But they didn't all eat it, because as Fanny could see, the boldest and cleverest left nothing for the others.

"It isn't right," she said to them; "each one must take his turn."

They hardly heard her. One is not always heard when one speaks of justice. She tried in every way to favor the weaker ones, and encourage the timid, but she did not succeed with them. No matter how she tried she fed the fat at the expense of the thin. It made her very sorry: simple child that she was, she did not know it was the way of the world.

Crumb by crumb the slice of bread all went to the little singers, and Fanny went into her grandmother's house again quite pleased.



III

[6]

At evening the grandmother took the basket in which Fanny had brought the cake to her, and filling it with plums and raisins put the handle over her arm, and said:

"Now, Fanny, run straight home, and don't stop to amuse yourself and play with any of the village scamps. Be a good girl always. Good-bye."



She kissed her, but Fanny stood a while very thoughtful at the threshold.

"Grandmother," said she.

"Yes, Fanny dear."

"I should like so much to know," said Fanny, "if there were any fine princes among the birds that ate my bread."

"No," said grandmother; "nowadays there are no more fairies, and the birds are all creatures."

"Good-bye, Grandmother."

"Good-bye, Fanny."



AS SHE WENT ON HER WAY WITH EVEN STEPS AND LOOKING VERY WISE AND GOOD SHE HEARD A PRETTY SOUND OF BIRDS CRYING BEHIND HER, AND TURNING HER HEAD SHE RECOGNIZED THE LITTLE BEGGARS THAT SHE HAD FED WHEN THEY WERE HUNGRY. THEY

HAD BEEN FOLLOWING HER. "GOOD NIGHT, LITTLE FRIENDS," SHE CALLED TO THEM. "GOOD NIGHT. IT'S TIME TO GO TO BED NOW. GOOD NIGHT."

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And Fanny went away across the fields toward home. She could see the chimney of her house smoking in the distance against the red sunset sky. [7]

On the way she met Antony, the gardener's little boy, who said to her: "Are you coming to play with me?"

"No," replied Fanny, "I'm not coming to play with you because my grandmother told me not to stop. But I'll give you an apple, because I like you very much."

Antony took the apple and kissed Fanny nicely.



They loved each other dearly, these two. He would say: "She's my little wife." And she would agree: "He's my little man."

As she went on her way with even steps and looking very wise and good she heard a pretty sound of birds crying behind her, and turning her head she recognized the little beggars that she had fed when they were hungry. They had been following her.

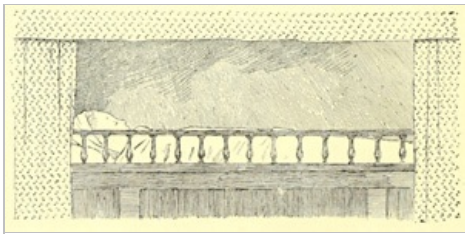
"Goodnight, little friends," she called to them. "Good night. It's time to go to bed now. Good night!"

And the little winged singers replied in cries that meant, in bird language: "God keep you safe."

Thus Fanny came back home to her mother, followed by bird music in the air.

IV

Fanny went to bed before candle time in a little bed that a cabinet-maker of the village had made a long time ago, with a frame of walnut and graceful banisters. Long ago the good man had gone to sleep in the shadow of the church, under a black cross, in a bed with a coverlet of grass, for Fanny's bed had been her grandfather's when he was a little baby, and the little girl slept now in the same place as her ancestor. She slept. A cotton curtain with a pattern of roses protected her slumbers. She slept and dreamed. She saw the blue [8]



bird flying toward the castle of his love. He looked as beautiful as a star, but she did not expect for a moment to see him perch on her shoulder. She knew she was not a princess, and couldn't expect visits from a prince changed into a bird the color of deep sky. However, she told herself that all birds are not princes, that the birds in the village are villagers and among them may well enough have been some country boy changed into a sparrow by a wicked fairy, and having a love for Fanny in his heart beneath his

gray feathers. Such an one, if she should find him, she would give not only bread, but cakes and kisses too. She would like to see him. And now she does see him! He comes and perches on her shoulder. He's just a little cock sparrow, not fine or rare, but very alert and lively. To tell the truth his appearance is a little tousled: one tail feather is missing, lost in a fight, that is unless he has encountered some bad fairy in the village. Fanny suspects him of having a bad head; but she is a girl, and it does not worry her that her cock sparrow has a bad head if his heart is good. She pets him and calls him pretty names. All of a sudden he grows bigger and longer: his wings change into two arms. He turns into a boy, and Fanny recognizes Antony the gardener's little boy, who says to her: "Let's come and play together."

[9]



SHE JUMPS OUT OF BED IN HER NIGHTGOWN, OPENS THE WINDOW, AND THERE IN THE GARDEN, AMONG THE ROSES AND GERANIUMS AND MORNING GLORIES, ARE THE LITTLE BIRD BEGGARS, THE LITTLE MUSICIANS OF LAST NIGHT, SITTING IN A ROW ON THE GARDEN FENCE AND GIVING HER A MORNING SONG TO PAY FOR THEIR CRUMBS OF BREAD.

FM

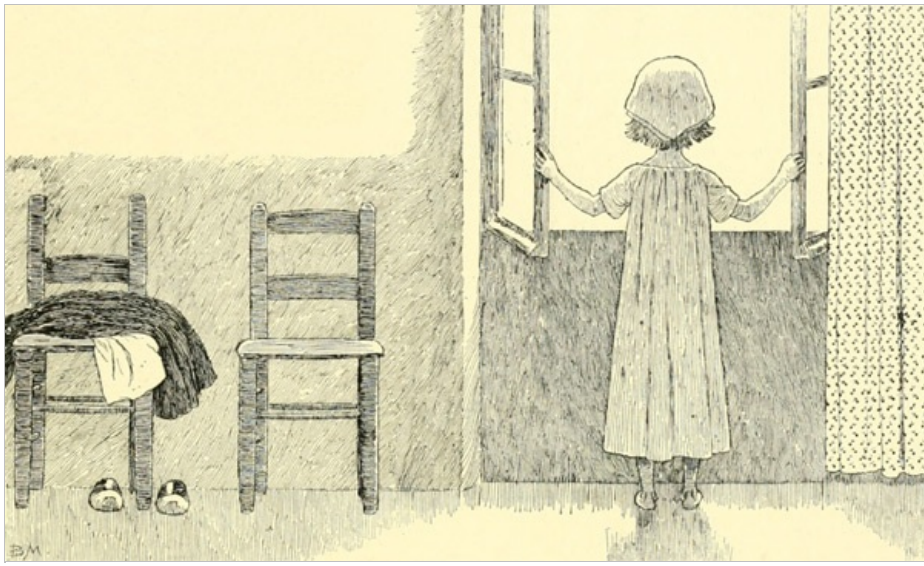
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SHE JUMPS OUT OF BED IN HER NIGHTGOWN, OPENS THE WINDOW, AND THERE IN THE GARDEN, AMONG THE ROSES AND GERANIUMS AND MORNING GLORIES, ARE THE LITTLE BIRD BEGGARS, THE LITTLE MUSICIANS OF LAST NIGHT, SITTING IN A ROW ON THE GARDEN FENCE AND GIVING HER A MORNING SONG TO PAY FOR THEIR CRUMBS OF BREAD.

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[View larger image](#)

She claps her hands with joy and starts to go—then suddenly wakes up. She rubs her eyes. No sparrow, no Antony! She is alone in the little room. The dawn, shining through the little flowered curtain, spreads its innocent light on the bed. She hears the birds singing in the garden. She jumps out of bed in her nightgown, opens the window, and there in the garden, among the roses and geraniums and morning glories, are the little bird beggars, the little musicians of last night, sitting in a row on the fence rail and giving her a morning song to pay for their crumbs of bread.



THE FANCY DRESS PARTY

[10]



Here are little boys like knights of old, and little girls who are heroines. Here are shepherdesses with dresses looped up in paniers and garlands of roses, and shepherds in satin suits with knots of ribbons on their shepherd's crooks. Dear me, what pretty white sheep such shepherds must have in their flocks! And here are Alexander and Zarius, Pyerhus and Merope, Mahomet, Harlequin, Scapin, Blaise and Babette. They have come from everywhere, from Greece and Rome and blue distant countries, to dance with one another. It's a fine thing, a fancy dress ball, and very agreeable for an hour or two to be a great king or an illustrious princess. It has no inconveniences. You have not to sustain your costumes by actions or even by your words.

It would not be very amusing to wear a hero's dress if you had to show his courage too. The hearts of heroes are torn in all sorts of ways. For the most part they are famous through their misfortunes. If any of them lived happily they are not remembered now. Merope never cared about dancing. Pyerhus was wickedly killed by Orestes just as he was going to be married, and the innocent Zarius perished at the hands of the Turk his friend, a philosophical trick indeed. As to Blaise and Babette the song says that their pangs of love were never-ending.

[11]



AND HERE ARE ALEXANDER AND ZAIRA, PYRRHUS AND MEROPE, MAHOMET, HARLEQUIN, SCAPIN, AND THE PASTORAL BLAISE AND BABETTE. THEY HAVE COME FROM EVERYWHERE, FROM GREECE AND ROME AND THE BLUE COUNTRIES, TO DANCE WITH ONE ANOTHER.

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In the same way, if it comes to Pierrot and Scapin, you know as well as I that they were perfect rascals, and that people more than once tweaked their ears for them. No, glory comes very high, even the glory of an Harlequin. On the other hand it's very nice to be a little boy or girl and masquerade as these old characters. That's why there's no fun like a fancy ball where the costumes are fine enough. You feel grand just by wearing them. See how well all the pretty company wears its plumes and cloaks. What a fine and gallant air they have, how well they look and how much old time grace they can display.



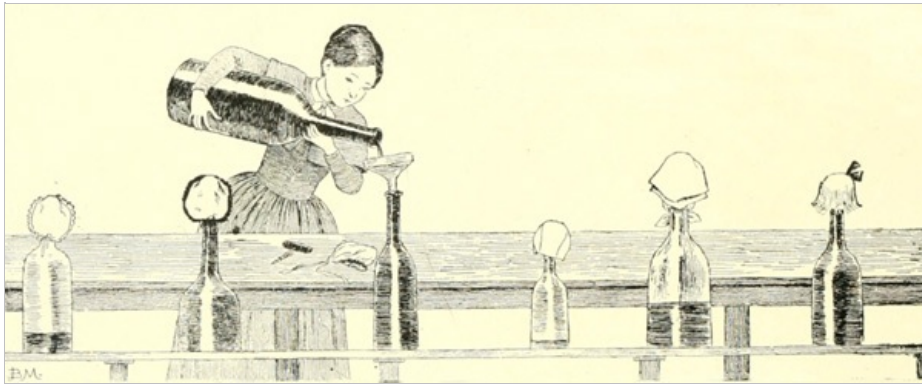
On the balcony, in the part that you don't see in the picture, the musicians tune their violins with a sweet and plaintive sound. The music of a quadrille in the grand style is open on the leader's desk. They are going to strike up this piece. At the first notes of it our heroes and masks

will step forth and dance.

THE SCHOOL

[12]

I declare I believe Miss Genseigne's school is the best school for girls anywhere in the world. I maintain that those who believe and say the contrary are false and misleading. All Miss Genseigne's scholars are well-behaved and diligent. There is nothing so pleasant as to see them, with their little stiff bodies and their heads so erect. You would say they were so many little bottles into which Miss Genseigne was pouring knowledge.



Miss Genseigne sits up perfectly straight on her platform; very grave and sweet. Her braided head band and her black cape inspire respect and sympathy.

Miss Genseigne, who is very well educated, is giving a lesson in arithmetic to her little pupils. She says to Rose Benoit: "Rose Benoit, if I take four from a dozen how many have I left?"

"Four!" replies Rose Benoit. Miss Genseigne is not quite satisfied with this answer.

"And you, Emmeline Capel, if I take four from a dozen how many have I left?"

"Eight," replies Emmeline Capel.



ALL MISS GISSING'S SCHOLARS ARE WELL-BEHAVED AND DILIGENT. THERE IS NOTHING SO PLEASANT AS TO SEE THEM, WITH THEIR LITTLE STIFF BODIES AND THEIR HEADS SO ERECT.

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"You hear, Rose Benoit? I have eight left," adds Miss Genseigne.

[13]

Rose Benoit lapses into a deep revery. She hears Miss Genseigne say she has eight left, but whether it is eight hats or handkerchiefs, or for that matter eight apples or pens she does not know. The thing worries her for quite a long while. She understands very little about arithmetic.

On the other hand she is very well up in sacred history. Miss Genseigne has not a single scholar who can describe the garden of Eden or Noah's Ark like Rose Benoit. Rose Benoit knows all the flowers of paradise and all the animals that were in the ark. She knows as many fables as Miss Genseigne herself. She knows all the story of the Crow and the Fox, of the Ass and the Little Dog, of the Cock and the Pullet. It never surprises her to hear it said that the animals talked in the olden days. She would be more surprised to hear that they did not talk any more. She is quite sure that she understands the language of her big dog Tom, and of little Cheep her canary. And she is right, too. Animals have always talked, and always will talk, but they talk only to their friends. Rose Benoit loves them and they love her. That's why she understands them. To be understood there is nothing like sympathy.



To-day Rose Benoit has recited her lesson without a fault. She receives a good mark. Emmeline Capel too receives a good mark for her recitation in arithmetic.

When the class is out she tells her mother about her good mark, and then she asks: "What's the use of a good mark, Mamma?"

"A good mark is no use at all," says her mother. "That's just the reason why you should be proud to have it. You will know one day, child, that the rewards men think the most of are those that give them honor rather than profit."

Little girls have a natural desire to gather flowers and stars. But stars won't let themselves be picked and so seem to teach little girls that in this world there are some desires that are destined never to be satisfied.

Miss Mary went out in the park, where she discovered a basket of hortensias. She knew that the flowers of hortensias are pretty, and so she picked one. It was very hard to pick too. She seized the plant in both hands, at great risk of sitting down hard when the stem broke. She was very pleased and proud at what she'd done. But her nurse saw her: and scolded and darted at Miss Mary, seizing her by the arm. To make her do penance she did not put her in the dark closet this time, but posted her underneath a great chestnut tree, in the shade of a big Japanese umbrella.



There Miss Mary sits, surprised and astonished, and thinks it all over. Her flower in her hand, with the stripes of the umbrella making rays around her, she looked like some queer little foreign idol.

[15]

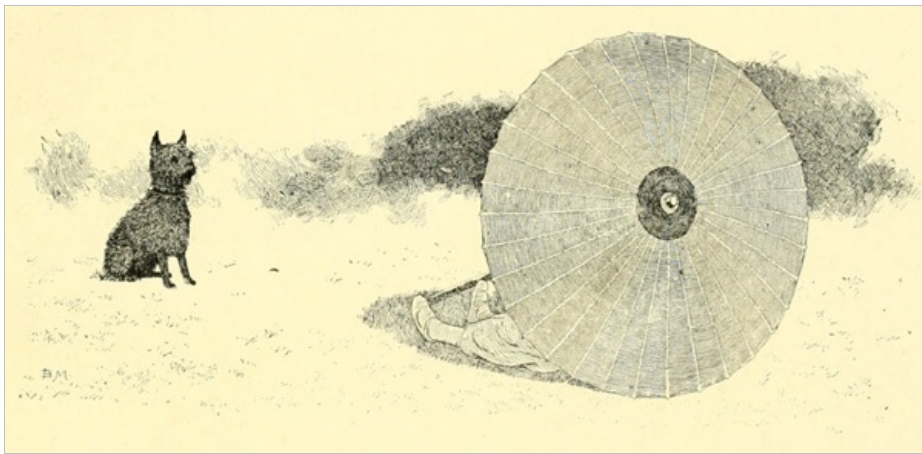


THE LITTLE PENITENT, PERFECTLY STILL BENEATH
HER SHINING FRAME, LOOKS AROUND HER AT THE SKY
AND THE EARTH. THEY ARE LARGE, THE EARTH AND
SKY, AND CAN AMUSE A LITTLE GIRL FOR A WHILE.
BUT THE HYDRANGEA INTERESTS HER MORE THAN

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Her nurse said: "Mary, I forbid you to carry that flower in your mouth. If you disobey me your little dog Toto will eat your ears up for you"—with which warning she departed.

The little penitent, perfectly still beneath her shining frame, looks around her at the sky and the earth. They are large, the earth and sky, and can amuse a little girl for a while. But the hortensia flower interests her more than anything. She reflects: "A flower should smell good." And she raises nearer to her nose the beautiful rosy, blue tempered ball. She tries to smell it but can smell nothing. She is not clever at smelling perfumes. Not so very, very long ago she used to breathe over the roses instead of sniffing them in. We must not laugh at her for that: one can't learn everything at once. Besides, she might have had, like her mother, a very subtle sense of smell that could smell nothing. The flower of the hortensia has no odor. That is why one grows tired of it, in spite of its beauty. But Miss Mary thinks: "This flower is made of sugar, maybe." With that she opens her mouth wide, and starts to raise the flower to her lips.



A cry recalls her. Yap!

It is the little dog Toto, who, darting round a border of geraniums, comes and sets himself, his ears straight up, before Miss Mary and looks at her warningly with his round bright eyes.

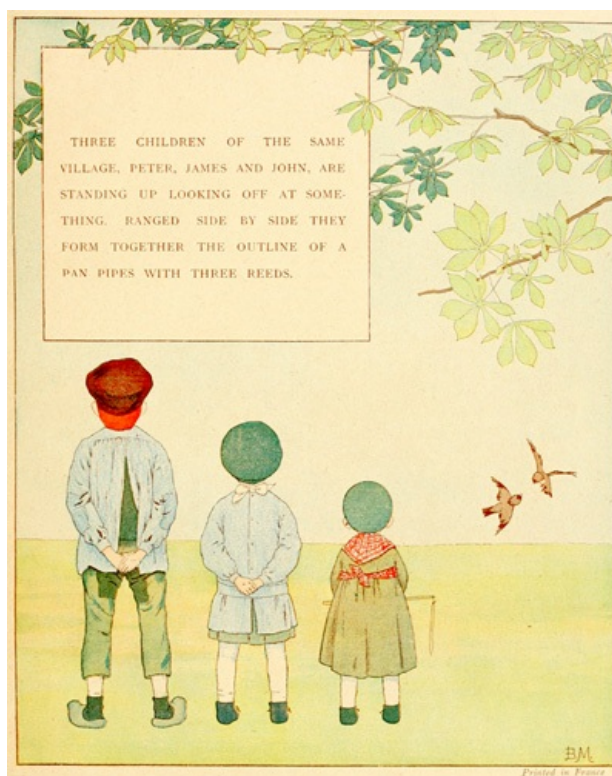
PAN PIPES

[16]

Three children of the same village, Peter, James and John, are standing up looking off at something. Ranged side by side they form together the outline of a Pan Pipes with three reeds. Peter, at the left, is a big boy; John, at the right, is small; James, between the two, may consider himself big or little, according as he regards his neighbor on the left or right. It is a situation upon which I invite you to meditate, for it is yours, as it is mine or any one in the world's. Each one of us, just like James, may consider himself great or small, according as his neighbor cuts a big or little figure in the world.



That's why one can truthfully say that James is neither big nor little; that he is both big and little. It is as God wishes it to be. He is the last reed of all in our living Pan Pipes.



THREE CHILDREN OF THE SAME VILLAGE, PETER, JAMES AND JOHN, ARE STANDING UP LOOKING OFF AT SOMETHING. RANGED SIDE BY SIDE THEY FORM TOGETHER THE OUTLINE OF A PAN PIPES WITH THREE REEDS.

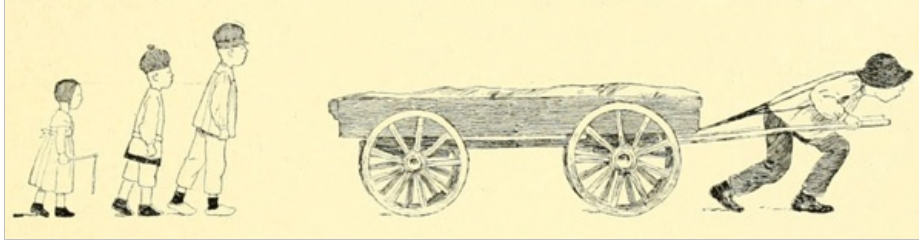
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But what are his two comrades doing? They are gazing off into space, all three of them. At what? At something which has disappeared below the horizon, something which they can't see any more but still see in their mind's eye, and which still dazzles them. Little John has forgotten his eel-skin whip with which just now he incessantly beat up his wooden shoes in the dusty road. Peter and James, their hands behind their backs, gaze stolidly.

What they saw, all three, was the wagon of a travelling peddler, a wagon drawn by his own arms, which had stopped in the village street.

The peddler pulled back the oilcloth that covered his wagon, and in a minute any quantity of knives, scissors, little guns, puppets, soldiers of wood and lead, cologne bottles, cakes of soap, pictures, a thousand dazzling things were exposed to the admiring view of all the men, women and children in the town. The servants from the farm and the mill were pale with longing; Peter and James were red with joy. Little John lost his tongue. Everything in the wagon seemed beautiful and precious to them. But the most desirable things of all were the unknown articles of which they could not guess either use or reason: as for example the bowls polished like mirrors that reflected your face comically deformed; paintings of Epinol, covered with faces more lively than reality; needle cases and mysterious boxes that contained unimaginable things.



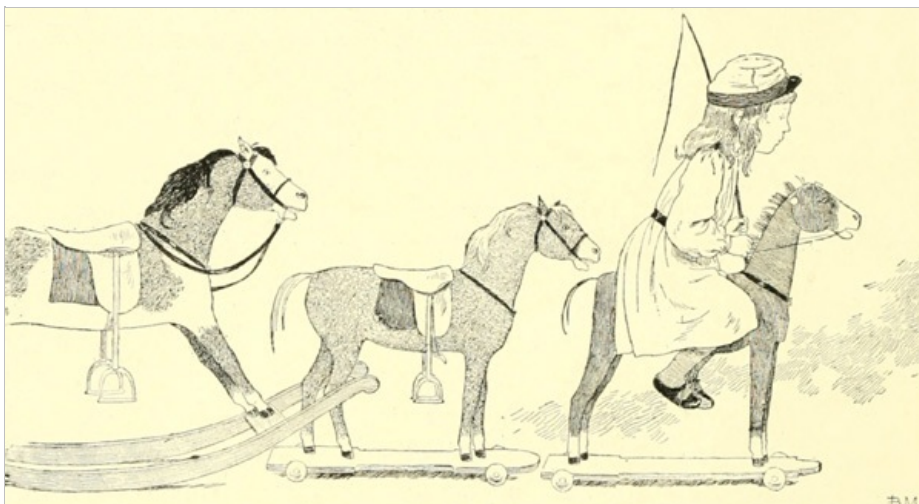
The women made purchases of guimpes and lace by the yard, and the peddler rolled the black oilcloth back again over the riches in his wagon, and putting himself in the traces once more started on his further way; and now the wagon and the waggoner have disappeared below the horizon.

ROGER'S STABLE

[18]

It's a great care to keep up a stable. The horse is a delicate animal and requires a thousand attentions. If you don't believe me ask Roger.

Just now he is grooming his beautiful chestnut, who would be the pearl of wooden horses, the flower of the Black Forest steeds, if he had not lost half his tail in battle. It's a matter of some moment with Roger to know if wooden horses' tails grow in again.



Again having made believe groom his horses, Roger gives them some imaginary oats, for it is an understood thing that the little wooden animals on which small boys ride through the land of dreams are always fed in this way.

Behold Roger starting out for his ride. He has mounted his horse. Even though the poor beast has no more ears, and all his mane looks like an old broken comb, Roger loves him. Why?



JUST NOW HE IS GROOMING HIS BEAUTIFUL CHESTNUT, WHO WOULD BE THE PEARL OF WOODEN HORSES, THE FLOWER OF THE BLACK FOREST STUD, IF HE HAD NOT LOST HALF HIS TAIL IN BATTLE.

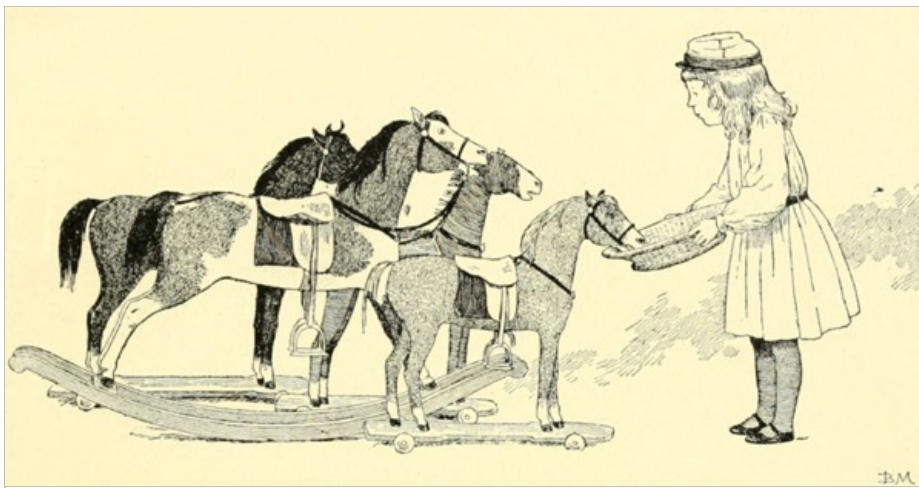
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It would be hard to say. This red horse was a present from a poor man, and maybe there is some secret grace in the gifts of the poor. Remember our Lord who blessed the widow's mite.

[19]

Roger is gone. He is quite far away. The flowers on the carpet already seem to him like flowers in tropical, distant countries. A pleasant journey, little Roger! May your hobby horse conduct you safely through the world. May you never have a hobby more dangerous. Little or great we all ride. Who has not his hobby?



Men's hobbies ride like mad through all the ways of life; one makes a bid for glory, another for pleasure; many of them jump from high places and break their rider's necks. I hope when you are grown up, little Roger, you will bestride two hobby horses that will keep you always in the right path: one lively, the other quiet; both beautiful—courage and kindness.

COURAGE

[20]

Louisa and Frederick have gone to school along the village street. The sun is shining and the two children sing. They sing like the nightingale because their hearts are gay. They sing an old song that their grandmothers sang when they were little girls and which one day their children's children will sing, for songs are frail immortals which fly from lip to lip throughout the ages. The lips that sing them lose their color and are silent one after the other, but the songs are always on the wing. There are songs that come down to us from a time when all the men were shepherds and all the women shepherdesses—which tell us of nothing but sheep and wolves.

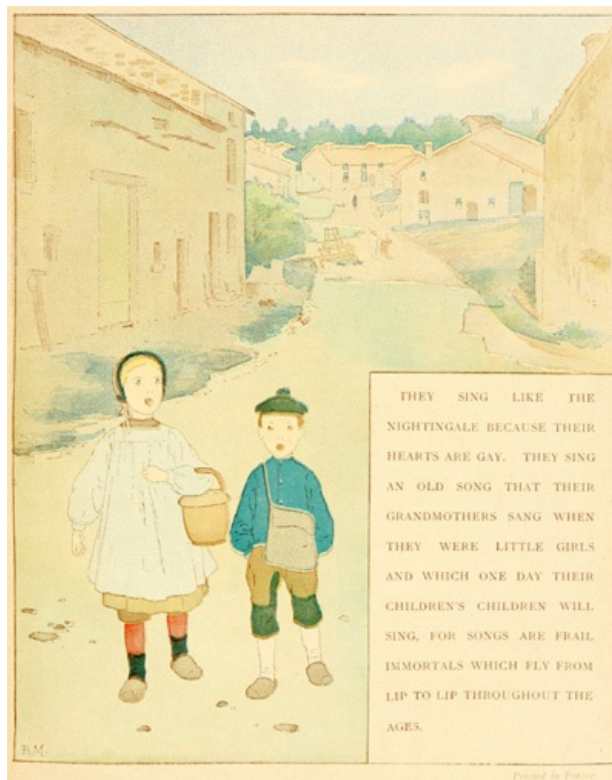


Louisa and Frederick sing, their mouths round as flowers, and their song rises shrill and clear on the morning air. But suddenly the sound catches in Frederick's wind pipe.



What power invisible has strangled the song in this schoolboy throat? It is fear. Each day inevitably, at the end of the village street, he meets the dog that belongs to the big butcher, and each day his heart shrivels and his legs grow weak at the sight. It is not the pig man's dog ever attacks or menaces him. He just sits peaceably on the threshold of his master's shop. But he is black, and his eyes are fixed and bloodshot, and sharp, white teeth show beneath his baboon jaws. He is terrifying. And then he sits there in the midst of all sorts of meat cut up for pies and hashes, and seems the more terrible on that account. Of course no one supposes he has been the cause of all this carnage, but he presides over it. He's a fierce dog, the pig man's. And so, as far away as Frederick can see him in the doorway, he picks up a big stone, following the example of men he has seen arm themselves in this way against surly dogs, and goes hugging the wall of the house across the street from the pig butcher's closely.

[21]



THEY SING LIKE THE NIGHTINGALE BECAUSE THEIR HEARTS ARE GAY. THEY SING AN OLD SONG THAT THEIR GRANDMOTHERS SANG WHEN THEY WERE LITTLE GIRLS AND WHICH ONE DAY THEIR CHILDREN'S CHILDREN WILL SING, FOR SONGS ARE FRAIL IMMORTALS WHICH FLY FROM LIP TO LIP THROUGHOUT THE AGES.

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Printed in France

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This time he has followed this practice, but Louisa mocks at him.

She has taken none of these violent precautions, against which people always arm themselves more violently still. No, she doesn't even speak to him, but keeps on singing, only changing her tone in such a mocking way that Frederick grows red to his ears. Then there is great travail in his little head. He understands that he must fear fear as much as danger. And he is afraid to be afraid.



And so, when school is out, and he sees the pig man's dog again, he stalks by that astonished

animal proudly.

History adds that he looked at Louisa out of the corner of his eye to see if she were looking. It must be admitted that with no ladies or young maidens in the world men might be less brave.

CATHERINE'S DAY

[22]

Five o'clock, and Miss Catherine is receiving her dolls. It is her day at home. The dolls don't talk: the little genius that gave them smiles refused them speech. It must have been done for the good of the world, for if dolls could talk people would listen to no one else. However, the circle to-day is very animated. Miss Catherine talks for her visitors as well as for herself. She makes the questions and gives the answers.



"How are you, madame?—Very well, madame. I broke my arm yesterday morning going to buy some gloves, but it's cured now.—Oh, that's good. And how is your little girl?—She has the whooping cough.—Oh, what a pity! Does she cough much?—No, it's a whooping cough that has no cough. You know, madame, I had two children last week?—Really? That makes four.—Four or five, I don't know which. When you have so many you get confused.—You have a very pretty dress on.—Oh, I have still nicer ones at home—Do you go to the theatre?—Every evening.—I went yesterday to the opera, but Punch did not act, because a wolf ate him up.—I, my dear, go to a dance every day.—That's very amusing.—Yes, I wear a blue dress and I dance with all the young people, the very nicest, generals, princes, confectioners.—You are as pretty as heart could wish to-day, little one.—It's the springtime.—Yes, but too bad it snows.—I like the snow, because it's so white.—Oh, but this is black snow.—Yes, isn't it a horrid kind?"

[23]

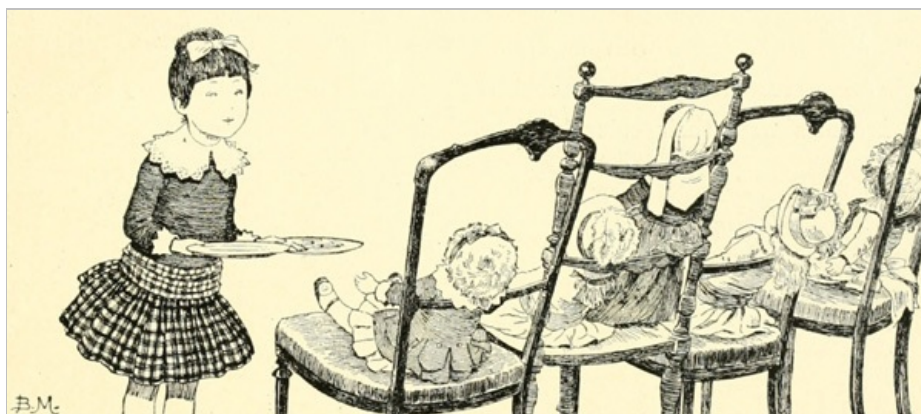


THE LITTLE GENIUS THAT GAVE THEM SMILES REFUSED THEM SPEECH. IT MUST HAVE BEEN DONE FOR THE GOOD OF THE WORLD. FOR IF DOLLS COULD TALK PEOPLE WOULD LISTEN TO NO ONE ELSE. HOWEVER, THE CIRCLE TO-DAY IS VERY ANIMATED. MISS CATHERINE TALKS FOR HER VISITORS AS WELL AS FOR HER SELF.

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This fine conversation Miss Catherine maintains with much skill. I have only one fault to find with it: she talks always to the same caller, who is pretty and has a pretty dress. That is wrong. A good hostess is equally polite to all her guests. She treats them all with consideration, and if she shows any preference it is for those who are most modest and least fortunate. One must flatter the unfortunate: it is the only flattery that is permissible. But Catherine has found this out herself. She has found the true politeness—which comes from the heart. She serves tea to her guests, and remembers every one. Indeed, she insists especially with those dollies that are poor or unhappy or shy that they take some invisible cakes or sandwiches made of dominos.



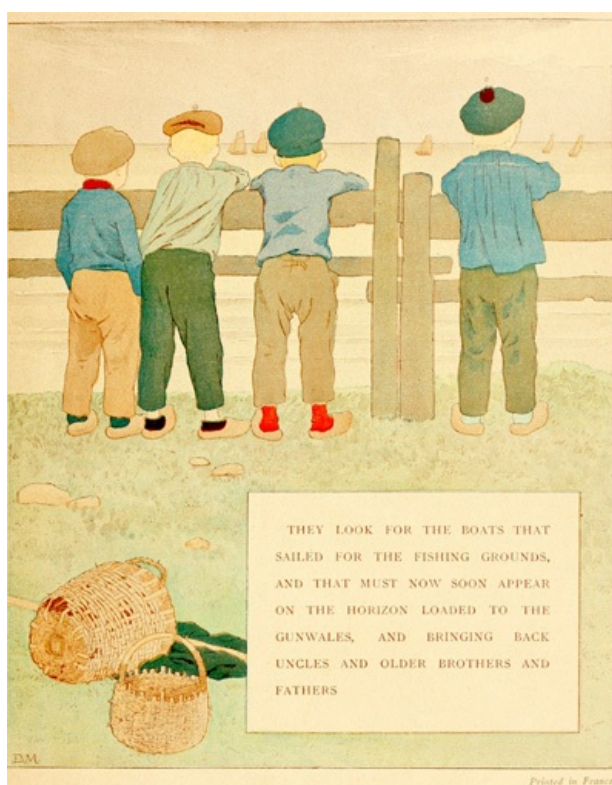
Catherine will one day be a hostess in whose drawing room no doubt politeness of the real old-fashioned kind will flourish.

THE LITTLE SEA DOGS

[24]



They are little sailors, real little sea dogs, every one. Look how they pull their caps down low on their necks so that the sea wind, misty and whistling, shall not split their ears with its terrible groanings. They wear suits of heavy wool, for protection against the cold and damp. Their made-over pea jackets and breeches were their elder brothers' before them. Their garments in turn were made out of their fathers' old suits. Their hearts too are of the same stuff as their father's—simple, patient and full of courage. Since they came into the world they have been simple and big of heart. Who has made them so? After God and their fathers and mothers it is the ocean. The ocean teaches sailors courage through danger—a rude benefactor.



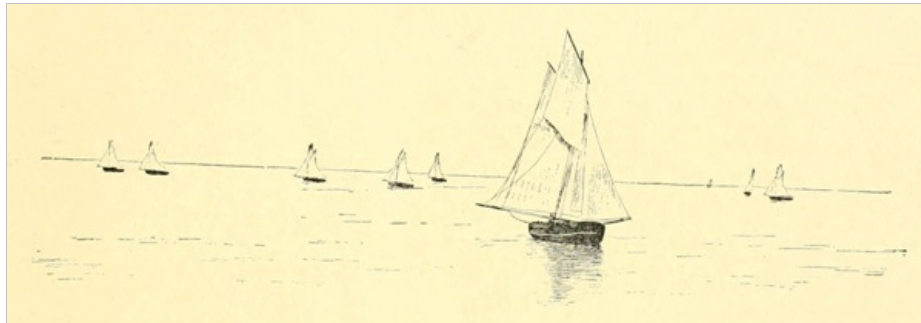
THEY LOOK FOR THE BOATS THAT
SAILED FOR THE FISHING GROUNDS,
AND THAT MUST NOW SOON APPEAR
ON THE HORIZON LOADED TO THE
GUNWALES, AND BRINGING BACK
UNCLES AND OLDER BROTHERS AND
FATHERS

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FISHING GROUNDS, AND THAT MUST NOW SOON
APPEAR ON THE HORIZON LOADED TO THE
GUNWALES, AND BRINGING BACK UNCLES AND OLDER BROTHERS

[View larger image](#)

[25]

That is why the little sailors, in their childish hearts, bear such brave thoughts. Stooping over the parapet of the stockade they look off over the sea. They see more than the thin blue line of boundary between the sky and sea. The ocean does not interest them for its fine changing colors, nor the sky for the huge grotesque shapes of its clouds. What they see off there in space is something more real to them than the tint of waters and the face of the clouds: something that they love. They look for the boats that sailed for the fishing grounds, and that must now soon appear on the horizon bringing back besides their full cargoes of shrimps, uncles and older brothers and fathers. The little fleet will soon show its white or weather-stained sails down there, between the ocean and God's good sky. To-day the sky is clear, the ocean still: the tide brings the fishers gently to the shore. But the ocean is a changeable old veteran, who takes many forms and sings in many tones. To-day he smiles: to-morrow he will scold beneath his foamy beard. He will capsize the ablest ships, ships that have been blest by the priest with songs and Te Deums: he will drown his sturdiest patrons. It is his fault that one sees, outside the doors where the chaluts dry in the baskets, so many women wearing the black caps of widows.



Transcriber's Note:

Inconsistencies in names between the body text and illustration captions—Zarius/Zaira, Pyerhus/Pyrrhus, Gissing's/Genseigne's, hydrangea/hortensia—have been retained as they appear in the original publication.

Changes have been made as follows:

Page 2, exploring for the hundreth *changed to* exploring for the [hundredth](#)

Page 6, but Fanny stood *changed to* but Fanny [stood](#)

Page 12, And you, Emmaline Capel, if I *changed to* And you, [Emmeline](#) Capel, if I

Page 12 insert, Full stop added to the end of the caption, THEIR HEADS SO [ERECT](#).

Page 13, would be more suprised *changed to* would be more [surprised](#)

Page 15, "A flower should smell good" And *changed to* "A flower should smell [good.](#)" And

Page 21, and sees the more terrible *changed to* and [seems](#) the more terrible

Page 24, Full stop added to the end of the caption, OLDER BROTHERS AND [FATHERS](#).

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