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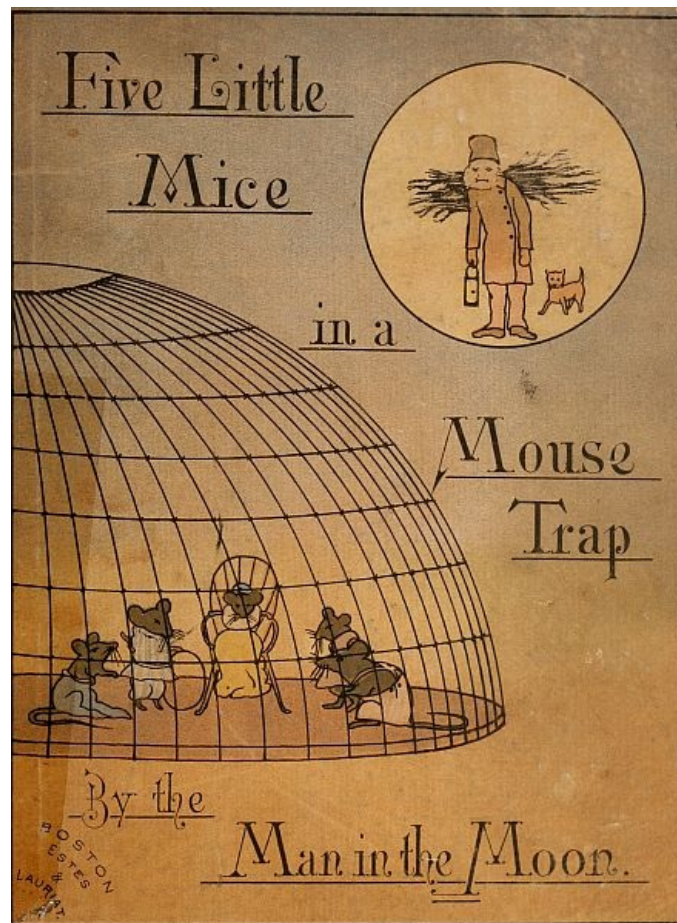
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FIVE MICE IN A MOUSE-TRAP,

BY THE

MAN IN THE MOON.

*DONE IN VERNACULAR,
FROM THE LUNACULAR,*

By **LAURA E. RICHARDS,**

Author of "Babyhood," Etc.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY
KATE GREENAWAY, ADDIE LEDYARD, AND OTHERS.

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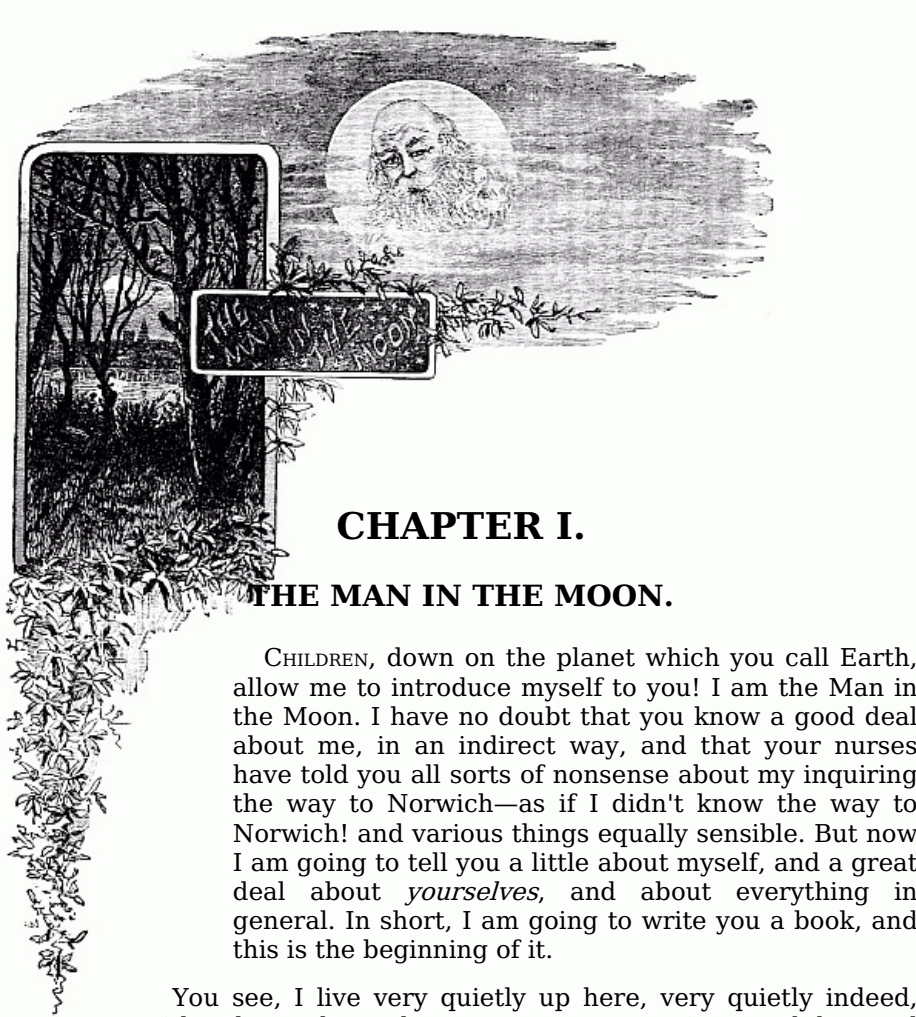
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CHAPTER I.

THE MAN IN THE MOON.

CHILDREN, down on the planet which you call Earth, allow me to introduce myself to you! I am the Man in the Moon. I have no doubt that you know a good deal about me, in an indirect way, and that your nurses have told you all sorts of nonsense about my inquiring the way to Norwich—as if I didn't know the way to Norwich! and various things equally sensible. But now I am going to tell you a little about myself, and a great deal about *yourselves*, and about everything in general. In short, I am going to write you a book, and this is the beginning of it.

You see, I live very quietly up here, very quietly indeed, with only my dog to bear me company. He is a good dog, and very funny sometimes, but still I have a good deal of time on my hands, and nothing amuses me so much as to watch all that is going on down on your planet, and see what people in general, and children in particular, are doing, every day and all day. You may wonder how I can see so far, and see distinctly, but that is easily explained. I have a great, monstrous mirror, which is—oh! well, if I were to tell you how big it is, you would not believe me, so I will only say that it is very big indeed. This mirror has also the advantage of being a very strong magnifying glass, and as I can tip it in any direction I please, you will easily understand that I can see just what is going on in any part of the world that I happen to be interested in. For instance, Tommy Tiptop, the glass was tipped towards New York this morning, and I saw you take away your little sister's stick of candy, you greedy boy! Yes, and I saw you put in the closet for it, too, so that was well ended. Children are the same, I find, all the world over, for it was only yesterday that a little boy in Kamschatka (an ugly little Tartar he is, and not so very unlike you), named Patchko, while his father was out hunting, took away a tallow candle from his sister, which seemed just as good to her as the barley sugar did to little Katie.

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PATCHKO'S FATHER.

But, children all, I beg your pardon! I am not writing this book for Tommy Tiptop, and I hope that most of the boys who read it will be better than he is. I do want, however, to tell you about some children of whom I am very particularly fond, and whom most of you do not know. These children live in the town of Nomatterwhat, which, as you are probably aware, is in the State of Nomatterwhere, which again is, or really ought to be, one of the United States of America. Perhaps these are Indian names; similarly, perhaps they are not. There are five of these children, and I call them my Five Mice; and the queer house that they live in I call the Mouse-trap. They are such funny children! I watch them sometimes all day long, their pranks are so amusing; and then when night comes, I slide down a moonbeam and sit by their pillows, and tell them stories and sing them songs. Ah! they like that, you may believe! And you all shall hear the stories and songs too, if you like, for I will write them down. So now, children all, listen! in America, Jennie and Johnny; in France, Marie and Emil; in Germany, Gretchen and Hans; in Italy, Tita and Nanni; in Kamschatka, Patchko and Tinka. Listen all, great and small, to the old



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MAN IN THE MOON

CHAPTER II.

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THE MOUSE-TRAP.

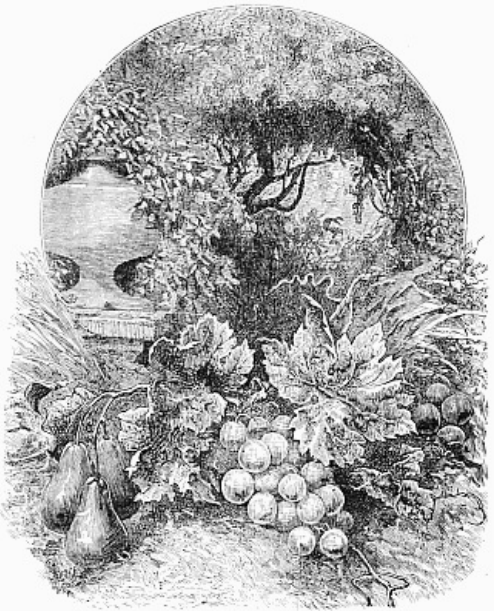
MANY years ago, *very* many years as you would think, though the time seems short enough for me, there came to the little village (as it then was), of Nomatterwhat, an old man. He was a very queer old man, and nobody knew where he came from, or anything about him, except what he told them himself; and that was very little besides the fact that his name was Jonas Junk, that he had come to Nomatterwhat because he chose to come, and that he would stay exactly as long as it pleased him and no longer. The good people of the village, finding him such a very gruff and crusty old fellow, thought it best to let him alone; and this being exactly what old Jonas Junk wanted, he was well satisfied. Apparently what he wanted beside was to build a house for himself: at all events, that is what he did. He bought a large piece of ground and built a high wall all round it, and put the ugliest and most vicious looking iron spikes that you can imagine all along the top of the wall. Then he chose the sunniest and most sheltered spot he could find on the place, and there the old man built his house. Well, to be sure, what a queer house it was! in the first place, there were three separate flights of stairs, one for old Jonas Junk himself, one for his cat, and one for his dog. His own staircase was very easy, with broad low steps, and two landings, though the distance was very short from the first story to the second; but the poor cat and dog must have had a hard time of it. The other two staircases were so crooked

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it seemed as if the carpenter must have built them in his sleep, and have had the nightmare to boot. Each step was set at a different angle from the one below it; and they were high, and steep, and dark—ugh! I don't like to think about them. I remember I tried to send a moonbeam down the cat's stairs once, through a little skylight over the landing; and the poor thing got lost and wandered about for an hour before it could find its way back again. There's a flight of stairs for you! and everything else in the house was just as queer. There were large rooms and small rooms, long rooms and square rooms; there were cupboards everywhere, you never saw so many cupboards in your life. Some close to the floor so that you bumped your head in looking into them, others so high up in the wall that nothing short of a step-ladder could reach them; cupboards in the chimneys, and cupboards under the stairs; yes, there was no end to them.

Well, Jonas Junk furnished his house, and there he lived for many a year, with his dog and his cat, and nobody else. All the ground about the house he made into a beautiful garden, full of pear trees and apple trees and all kinds of fruit trees. People used to say, by the way, that the reason these apple trees were so crooked, was because they tried to look like old Jonas himself; but I don't know how that was. Certainly, Jonas was not a beauty, and I am sorry to say the boys were disposed to make fun of him whenever he ventured out of his queer house into the village. "But what has all this to do with mice and a mouse-trap, you ask?" Patience! patience! we are coming to that very soon. I am an old man, older than all of you and all your great-grandmothers put together, so you must let me tell my story in my own way. If Jonas Junk had lived on till to-day, his house would never have been turned into a mouse-trap; but one dark night, you see, he fell down the dog's stairs and broke his neck, and there was an end of him. For a long time nobody lived in his house, and the garden was all going to rack and ruin, when one fine day a gentleman from a neighboring town came to see the old house and took a great fancy to it; and finally he bought it, cat-stairs, dog-stairs, cupboards, garden and all.



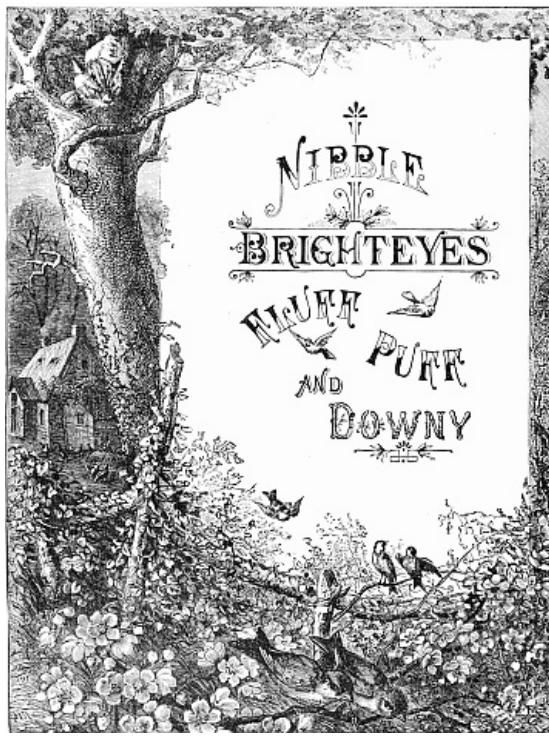
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Now this gentleman happened to be Uncle Jack, the uncle and guardian of the Five Mice, whose father and mother were dead; and then it was, when he came to live in it with his five nephews and nieces, and Mrs. Posset the nurse, and Susan the cook, and Thomas the gardener, then it was, I say, that the old Junk-shop, as the villagers called it was turned into the most delightful house in the world, which I call my MOUSE-TRAP.

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CHAPTER III.

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THE MICE.



NIBBLE, Brighteyes, Fluff, Puff, and Downy the baby. There are the names of the mice, all written out nicely for you, and there in a corner is a glimpse of the mouse-trap. Of course the children have real names, just like other children; but I have given them mouse-names, which I very much prefer to Harry and Bessie, and—but oh! dear, I didn't mean to tell you any of their real names. Nibble is the oldest. He is now a fine bright boy-mouse of twelve, but when he first came to the mouse-trap he was only eight years old, and Brighteyes, the oldest girl-mouse, was seven. Then came Fluff and Puff, the twins, who were just five, and Downy the baby, a fat little fellow of three. You see their ages were quite near enough for them all to be great friends and playmates, and so they were. I never shall forget the day they came. It was a fine bright day in May, and Spring was just awake in the old garden. The short new grass was like emerald; the old gnarled apple-trees, which certainly did look like Jonas Junk when their branches were bare, had lost all trace of such likeness, for each was crowned with a pink and white snowdrift of blossoms. Down in the neglected flower-beds the crocuses and snowdrops were nodding and whispering to each other. "Yes," they said, "some new people are coming to live in the old house, and there are children among them. Mr. Breeze, the postman, knows all about them, but he could not stop to tell us much this morning, for he was in a hurry. Now we shall be cared for, and watered, and there will be some pleasure in blossoming. When the children come, we will tell them how those vulgar weeds pushed and crowded us last year." And they did tell the children, but children do not understand flower-talk, I find. And yet it is a very simple language. You see, I hear a great deal of flower-gossip, for my moonbeams are sad chatterboxes, and they bring me back all sorts of news when they come home in the morning. How the burglar-bees robbed old Madam Peony, how the daffodils in the long border had been flirting with the regiment of purple flags behind them, when the Tulip family are expected; yes, there is no end to the things I hear. But if I told all I know, everybody would be as wise as I am, so let us go on about the mice.

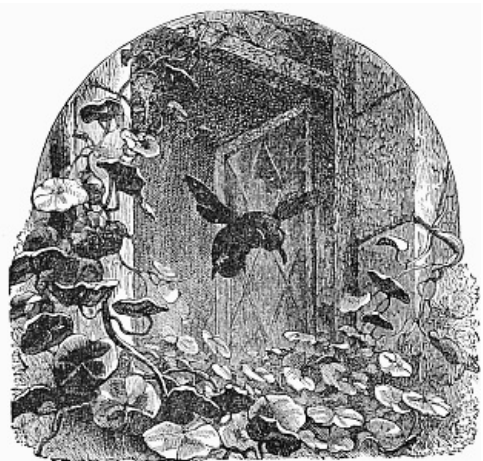
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FLUFF AND PUFF.

Well, at about three o'clock in the afternoon of this fine day that I have been describing, a large carriage, drawn by two fine black horses, drove through the old gateway and down the quiet, lovely lane, and stopped in front of the house. The very instant the wheels ceased to turn, the door of the carriage burst open with a crash, and out jumped, rolled, and tumbled my five mice. First came Nibble, in jacket and trousers and cap. One jump out of the carriage, another to the top of a post, and there he was. Next came Brighteyes, all flying, feet and curls and hat and ribbons. Then one of the twins rolled out, and the other tumbled out; and one was hurt, and the other was not. That is always the way with those two children. One is lucky, and one unlucky. Puff always falls on her feet. Fluff always falls on her head. Uncle Jack often calls them Hap and Hazard, and that is the only difference between them. However, when they got up and shook themselves, I saw that they were very pretty little girls. Now I will make you a picture of them. Yes, I can draw pictures too; in fact, there are very few things that I cannot do if I try. Here they are, Puff and Fluff, two of the dearest mice in the world.



Next a gentleman stepped out of the carriage; a very, very tall gentleman, with very broad shoulders, and very bright eyes. That was Uncle Jack; and he helped Mrs. Posset to get out, for she had Downy asleep in her arms, and he was a pretty good armful. Then Uncle Jack took some bags and bundles out of the carriage; then he turned round and said "Now, children, we will"—There he stopped, for not a child was to be seen, except little fat Downy, fast asleep. Uncle Jack stared about him. Posts, trees, house, but no children. "Sure they're all gone, surr," said John the coachman. "'Twould be as aisy to ketch the wind and kape it still as thim childher." And John never said a truer word in his life. If my mirror were not so big, even I could not have seen them all. Nibble was up in a tree, of course, picking apple-blossoms, for which he ought to have been whipped. Indeed,

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the old tree did its best, for it caught him by the leg, and tore a hole in his new trousers, which was shocking to think of. Then he found an old bird's nest; and on the whole, the tree seemed so very "jolly" that he decided to stay there; so that was why Uncle Jack did not see *him* when he looked round. Brighteyes, after seeing her brother safely up in the tree, flew off like a bird, here and there and everywhere. First she filled both hands with dandelions. Then she saw a butterfly; down went the dandelions; off went her best hat to serve as a butterfly-net; and away she went. A pretty chase Master Butterfly led her, through last year's brambles and this year's mud, until at

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last he left her high and dry on the top of a fence, and flew off so fast that he was soon out of sight. There I left her too, for I wanted to see what the twin mice were about.



NIBBLE IN THE APPLE TREE.

I looked this way and that, but they were nowhere to be seen. At length I caught a glimpse of something blue, among some very thick bushes. I looked closer, and saw a sight that was truly melancholy. Among these bushes stood a huge old wooden trough, which old Jonas had built to receive the water that bubbled out of a spring close by. So the trough was full of water, and this being the case, of course Fluff the unlucky had fallen into it. How she had done it I do not know, but there she was, splashing about in fine style.

"Give me your hand, Fluffy, and I'll pull you out!" said Puff.

"Oh! no, you can't!" cried poor little Fluff. "You're not any bigger as I am, Puffy, and I'm so wet I feel very heavy."

And no wonder she did, for she had on a long thick coat which was completely soaked. But Puffy was very sure about it. She gave a great pull, and Fluff made a scramble, and out she came, knocking Puff down and tumbling on top of her. Well, they were both wet enough when they got up. Just then a very loud and strange noise was heard. At least, it was strange to me, but the children cried "Oh! the rattle, the rattle!" and away they scampered towards the house, as fast as they could go.

Poor Uncle Jack! he had been working hard all the afternoon, with John and Thomas, (who had come in a cart with the other servants and the trunks and the dogs), clearing away rubbish and unpacking furniture, while Mrs. Posset and the maids were busy in the house. He had been rather glad to have the children out of the way for a little while, but now that it was six o'clock, and tea was laid in the dining-room, and a bright wood fire blazing in the great open fireplace, he began to wonder where his chickens were.

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"Bless me!" he said. "Where is the rattle?" and opening a bag, he took out a huge watchman's rattle, and sprung it briskly, making the strange loud noise that Puff and Fluff had heard down by the spring. Presently he heard a voice, then another, and then another. "Here I am, Uncle!" "What is the matter, Uncle Jack?" "Hi! supper! come on, Brighteyes!" and up scampered from all directions, the four mice in about as pretty a plight as mice can well be in. Brighteyes was panting for breath and limping, one shoe gone, no hat, and any number of scratches. Puff and Fluff were wet, and muddy, and forlorn beyond description; while with Nibble the only question was, which was bigger, his knickerbockers or the hole in them.

Uncle Jack held up his hands in amazement, and then sat down on a packing-box and laughed till the tears ran down his cheeks. "Oh! you children, you children!" he cried. "This is what comes of bringing you to the country to keep you out of mischief. Go in to Mrs. Posset at once, give her my compliments, and tell her I wish her joy of you. And as soon as you are fit to be seen, come down to supper, or Downy and I will eat it all up."

Away went the mice into the house and upstairs, where Mrs. Posset scolded, and brushed, and washed, and wiped and mended to an alarming extent. The trunk in which Nibble's clothes were packed had not yet arrived, so the young gentleman had to wait after the others were gone down to tea, while Mary, the housemaid, mended his trousers.

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Bread and butter and raspberry jam are



always good, but they must have seemed particularly good that evening to those five hungry mice. Little Downy soon finished his bowl of bread and milk, and was just thinking about some jam when Mrs. Posset appeared in the doorway. I have a great respect for Mrs. Posset. She is very faithful, and as fond of the mice as if they were her own children; but I do wish she would not wear green and yellow ribbons in her cap. It makes her look so like a stout elderly daffodil, but that is neither here nor there. She appeared in the doorway and looked at Downy. Downy looked at her, but did not move. Then Mrs. Posset said, "Downy come with his Possy, and put on his little nightcoatie, and go to his 'ittle beddy-house?" (That's another thing, she always talks to that mouse as if he and she were both idiots). "No!" said Downy. "Not want any beddy-house. Possy go away!" "Come, Downy," said his uncle. "You have had a long day, little man, and bed is the best place for you. Nice bed! I wish I were in mine." "Not nice!" cried Downy. "Naughty bed! take it away! A-a-a-ah!" and the poor little boy, who

was really tired out, began to scream and cry lustily. "Hush!" cried Uncle Jack hastily. "Hush, Downy! the bed will hear you, and then who knows what may happen?" Downy paused a moment and looked at his uncle in astonishment. "What *do* you mean, Uncle Jack?" asked Brighteyes. "Beds cannot hear."

"Perhaps their posts are their ears," said Fluff.

"Oh! Fluffy," said Puff, "you *know* their posts are their legs, so they can't be their ears."

But Uncle Jack looked very grave, and said, "Have you never heard the story of Little Willy and his bed? listen then, and I will tell it to you."



MRS. POSSET.

"One night, little Willy thought he did not want to go to bed. In fact, he felt very sure about the matter. He had had his supper and it was half past six o'clock. There was his bed, standing firmly on its four fluted yellow legs, the white sheet turned down, and the pillow plumped up, looking as inviting as a bed possibly could; but into it little Willy would not go. First he kicked, and then he screamed, and then he did both together. 'I *won't* go to bed!' he cried. 'I hate my bed! it's cold, and horrid, and ugly. I will *never* get into it! naughty bed!'

"He was lying on the floor, kicking the bed as hard as he could, when suddenly what do you think happened? I shall shock you very much, but it is best that you should know. The bed began to move! slowly it lifted its fluted yellow legs, slowly it marched



across the room until it reached the window, and then, if you will believe me, it coolly marched *out* of the window, and thump! thump! thump! off it went down the street.

"Little Willy ran to the window, and looked out, with eyes and mouth wide open, in great surprise. Yes, it was really true. The bed was gone; there it went, tramping down the middle of the street. Its pillow had fallen a little to one side, which gave it a jaunty and rakish air. 'Humph!' said Willy. 'Well, I'm glad the ugly old thing is gone. Now I shall not have to go to bed at all.'

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"That was all very well for an hour or so, but after that the little boy began to grow very sleepy in spite of himself. He rubbed his eyes, he yawned, he tried to shake himself broad awake, but it was of no use. For some time longer he fought against the sleepiness, but at last he went to his mother, looking very much ashamed, and said:

"Please, mamma, I want to go to bed!' 'I am very sorry, Willy,' said his mother; 'but you have no bed to go to. You have driven away your good bed by ill-treatment, and now you must sit up all night.'

"Poor little Willy! he tried to go to sleep in a chair, but his head kept tumbling backward or forward and waking him. Oh! he was wretchedly uncomfortable, and finally he burst into tears. 'Oh! my dear bed!' cried he. 'My nice, soft, warm, pretty bed! why did I ever treat you so badly? oh! dear good bed, if you will only come back to me, I will never, *never* call you names again. Oh! oh! oh! how tired I am, and cold, and—' but suddenly he stopped crying, for he thought he heard a noise outside. He listened. Yes, through the open window came a faint sound—thump! thump! thump! Willy flew to the window. Oh joy! there was the bed, stumping back up the street on its fluted yellow legs. Back it came, in at the window and across the room, till it stood in its accustomed place. In about three minutes Willy's head was on the pillow, and I believe he has never called his bed names since."



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"Why! bless me!" said Uncle Jack, looking down. "Here is Downy asleep too. Let us go upstairs and see if his bed is there all right. I hope it did not hear what he said about it, for you see they are sensitive fellows, these beds. Now then, up we go! I will carry Downy, Mrs. Posset, and do you bring Puff and Fluff with you, for it is high time that they were in bed too."

Well, Uncle Jack is a very wise man in most things, but I should have thought he would have known better than to try the cat-stairs for the first time at night, with a candle in one hand, and a child in his arms. At the first step he bumped his own head; at the second he bumped the child's head; at the third he bumped the candle, and put it out, so there he was in the dark. A sad plight he would have been in if it had not been for my beams; but two or three of the boldest and most skilful of them popped down through the skylight and showed him the way up: for which, by the way, he might have thanked them, but I dare say he did not think of it. After stumbling over a trunk, and a chair, and nearly breaking his nose against the edge of a door, poor Uncle Jack finally reached the large room which he had chosen to be the nursery. Puff and Fluff, who had tumbled up behind him, looked eagerly to see if Downy's bed was there. Yes, there it stood, drawing its white curtains primly round it, and looking very amiable. Fluff gave a sigh of relief.

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"Oh," she said, "I was *so* afraid it had heard what Downy said."

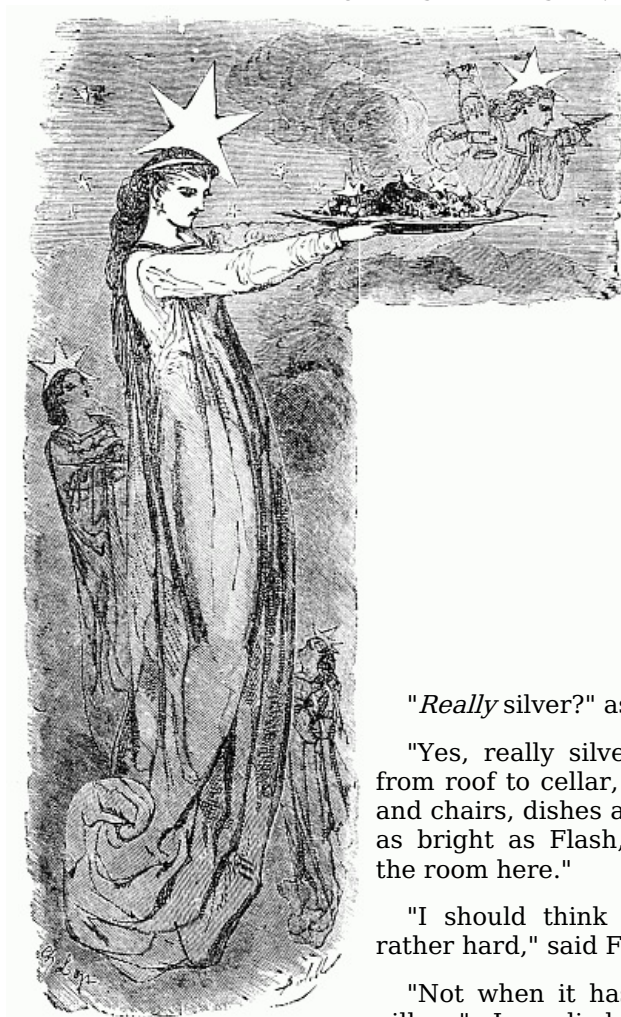
"I think, perhaps, it is a little deaf," said Puff. "It never seems to mind, and yet he calls it all sorts of names sometimes."

"Can a thing be deaf in its legs, Uncle Jack?" asked Fluff.

But Uncle Jack began to laugh, and that hurt Fluff's feelings, so she said nothing more. And now Mrs. Posset came, and the three dear little mice were soon snugly tucked up in bed; the twins together, with their arms round each other's necks, and little Downy curled up alone in his pretty white nest, the sweetest mouse that ever was seen.



DOWNY ASLEEP IN HIS BED.



Ah! now it was my turn. As soon as Mrs. Posset had left the room, down I came post-haste, on Flash, my swiftest beam. I sat down on Fluff's pillow, and soon introduced myself to the little mice. They were fast asleep, of course, but that is the best time to take children. In fact, I never can get on with them when they are awake, their heads are full of so many things. "Yes," I said, "I really am the Man in the Moon. I live in a silver palace——"

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"Really silver?" asked Puff.

"Yes, really silver, from top to bottom, from roof to cellar, walls and floors, tables and chairs, dishes and spoons are all silver, as bright as Flash, who is dancing about the room here."

"I should think a silver bed would be rather hard," said Fluff.

"Not when it has a cloud mattress and pillow," I replied. "That makes it soft enough, I can tell you."

Then I told them how the clouds were divided into three classes, and how one kind was good to sleep on, and another good to ride on, and the third good (*very* good, too,) to eat.

"Does it taste like the white part in floating island?" asked Fluff.

"Rather like it, but a great, great deal nicer, more like whipped cream."

"And is that all you have to eat?"

"Oh, no! I have ice cream whenever I want it. All the mountains up here are covered with ice cream instead of snow, and I have only to send a beam out a few steps and I have all I want; pink or white, or any color I choose."

"Oh, how lovely!" sighed Fluff. "Tell us more, Mr. Moonman!"

So I told them about my neighbors, the stars, and my elder brother in the Sun, with his splendid palace of gold and diamond. We are very fond of each other, but we cannot often visit each other, so we send letters and messages by the comets, who come and go, or by the merry meteors.

Well, well, how many questions they did ask, those mice. I had been telling them about my big mirror, and "Oh!" cried Puff, "can you really see all the people in the world?"

"Yes, indeed, but not all at once. As I tip my glass this way or that, so I see this place or that place. Yesterday I saw a fine sight, I can tell you."

"Oh! what was it? what was it?" cried the three mice.

"You shall hear," I said, "if you will be quiet. Listen now, for it is nearly time for me to go home, and Flash is looking pale."



"Well, I saw some wolves go to a concert, and that is more than any of you ever saw, I'll warrant. In a certain wild part of northern Germany, there lived three good brothers whom I know very well. Their names are Hans, Karl, and Wilhelm; and they are musicians by trade; that is to say, Hans plays on the violoncello, which is a very big fiddle, about half as big as himself, while Wilhelm has a small fiddle, and Karl toots away on a kind of little brass trumpet called a cornet. So, now you know about the men as if you had seen them, for they do nothing in the world but play on their several instruments. Now, yesterday there was to be a wedding, and the three brothers were asked to come and play for the guests to dance. Their way led through a wild and gloomy forest, where many wild beasts roamed about; but the three started merrily, and strolled along singing and talking together. Suddenly they stopped singing, for they heard a noise that was not so pleasant as their song; it was a long, low howl, and soon came another, and another. Then they knew that the wolves were coming, and their hearts sank within them. Anxiously they looked about them. They were in an open space in the wood. Now a rustling was heard, and out came a gray wolf and looked at them. The teeth of the three brothers chattered in their heads; it was like the sound of castanets, as I hear them played in Spain by the black-eyed dancing-girls. Another wolf came out, and he came yet nearer, and then two more. 'If I had but my gun!' cried Hans. 'If I had but my hunting-knife!' said Karl. 'Ah! brothers,' said Wilhelm, 'we have nothing, so we must die. Nevertheless, let us die merrily, so take your instruments and we will play a tune for these beasts, that we may all dance together.'

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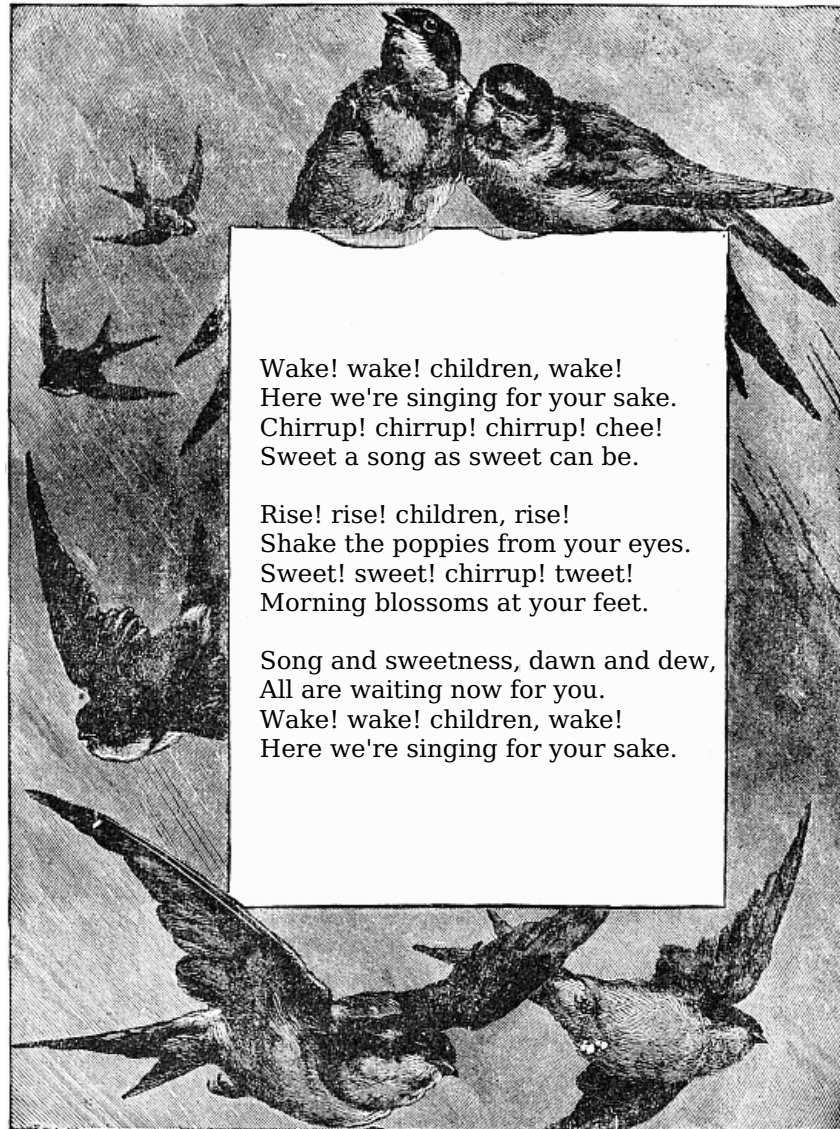
"So the three brothers took their instruments, the big fiddle, and the little fiddle, and the trumpet, and began to play. As the first notes sounded the wolves stopped short. Seeing this, the brothers played the faster a merry waltz, which they had meant to play at the wedding. 'Tra-la-la!

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tra-la-la!" gaily rang out the notes in the clear air, while the musicians' teeth rattled like the castanets, and their limbs trembled, and their hands could scarcely hold the instruments; for they were playing for their lives, you see! yes, and they won the game, for the wolves, who were not used to concerts, did not know what to make of this sort of thing. They began to be frightened, to wonder what strange beasts these were, with such wild voices. They looked at each other and drew back a step or two, it was well to be near the forest in any case. Further and further they retired toward the shade of the trees, and finally, as the music changed to a furious jig, and the trumpet sounded out like the scream of a panther, the terrified wolves turned tail and ran as fast as their fright and their four legs could carry them. Off as fast in the opposite direction ran also Hans, Karl, and Wilhelm, playing as they went. They played and ran, ran and played till they reached the open fields and the houses; and then they sat down under a haystack and did not move for the rest of the day. Ah! that was a fine concert! but there was no music at the wedding, which is sad to think of."

With that I kissed my three mice, and bade them good-night, though it was nearly morning; then mounting my moonbeam I whisked away, and soon left mice and mouse-trap far behind.

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CHAPTER IV.

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JOLLYKALOO.

Now is not that a pretty song? and so simple, I should think a baby might understand it. And yet Downy did not seem to understand a word of it, though the birds that sang it were just outside his window in the great linden-tree.

He only said, "Oh! so pitty bird finging!" (he cannot say S, so he says F instead, which sounds very funny). And then he rolled out of bed; and then Fluff and Puff rolled out of bed. Puff ran to the window and put back the curtains. The birds were still singing, and the soft May breeze was blowing, and a perfect gust of song and sweetness came in at the little old window as she pushed it open.

"Oh! lovely, lovely!" cried Puff. "And look, Fluffy, from this other window. What a fine play-

ground! Oh! Popsy, do give us tubby-rubby quickly, and let us get out of the window!"

"Out of the window!" cried Mrs. Posset; "The child is mad!" but then she came and looked for herself.

Yes, it was indeed a fine place. One part of the house was lower than the rest, and this lower part had a flat roof, covered with gravel, and with an iron railing round it. Two of the nursery windows opened directly on this sunny flat place, so that it really was a most delightful spot. In a very few minutes there were three mice tumbling about on the gravel, and then presently there were two more, for other windows opened on the flat roof also, and Nibble and Brighteyes were not the mice to be behindhand when any fun was going on. Ah! that was the way to get an appetite for breakfast. Jump, dance, run, tumble, till the rattle sounded from below; then whirr! downstairs all like a flock of pigeons. They never lost any time in getting from one place to another, these mice.

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"Uncle Jack," said Nibble, "What shall we call this place?"

"This dear, delightful place!" cried Brighteyes.

"Dis dear, 'lightful plafe!" murmured Downy, with his mouth full of bread-and-butter.

"Well," said Uncle Jack, "now let us see. It certainly ought to have a name."

"Oh! of course!" said all the mice very decidedly.

"Suppose we call it the Garden House," said Uncle Jack.

"Oh, no!" said Nibble. "That isn't jolly enough, Uncle Jacket! it's such a *jolly* place, you know. I want to call it Jollykaloo!"

And then in a chorus rose the five voices, "Jollykaloo! Jollykaloo!" so Jollykaloo it was named then and there, and it has been called so ever since.

"And now, children," said Uncle Jack, when breakfast was over, "We must go and see how our four-footed friends have passed the night. You may find some new friends too, I think, with two feet. Come Nibble, Brighteyes, Puff——"

"Uncle Jack," said Puff, very gravely; "Fluff and I have not unpacked the dolls yet, and I think it is both of our duty to take care of our children first, before we see the animals. Don't you think so, Uncle?"

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"Both of your duty, eh?" said Uncle Jack, laughing. "Well, Puffsy, perhaps it is. It is also both of your duty to learn grammar, but you need not begin just yet. Off with you!"

So the twins went one way, and Uncle Jack went the other. Which way shall I take you first, all you other children? shall we follow the twins first, and take a peep at the dolls? by all means! I cannot say that I care much for dolls myself, but I always like to see what interests children, and certainly Puff and Fluff did take great interest in their china and wax babies. By and by I shall have some funny stories to tell you about these dolls, for they have seen more of life than any dolls that I have ever known, but we will not stop now, for we all want to go and see the animals, I am sure. We will just take a peep at them and see what they are like.



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See, here they are, six of them. The one sitting in the chair, with curls and flowers, is Vashti Ann. She was the head doll at that time, and a person of great importance. Next to her is Tina, her daughter, a fine baby rather larger than her mother; and then comes Rosalie, a Swiss doll, with fine long hair. The doll in the lower left-hand corner is the unfortunate Sally Bradford, the maid-of-all-work; next comes Fanny Ellsler, the dancer, and the last is Katinka, a Polish lady of high rank.

The dear little twin mice unpacked all these creatures with the utmost care.

"I think they are all ill after the journey, Puff!" said Fluffy, with a sigh.

"We was better put them all to bed. Tina is very pale, and Rosalie is very red."

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"Then one has a chill, and the other has a fever," said Puff.

"Yes, they must go to bed; and I will get the bed ready, Fluffy, if you will read them a story to amoose them."

"Oh! but, Puffy, if you put them both in the same bed it will be chills-and-fever, and then we shall catch it and be ill ourselves!" exclaimed Fluff with a distressed look.

"Fluff," said Miss Puff severely; "You are sometimes a foolish child!"

Well, Fluff knew that she was foolish, because she was



often told so, and she was a child who always believed what was said to her, so she meekly sat down and read a story to the dolls. It was one of "Aunt Bathsheba's" stories, and they are so funny that I always write them down when I hear them. Listen to this, now!

THE PUDDING-STICK AND THE ROLLING-PIN.

Said the Pudding-stick so
the Rolling-pin,
"Let's take a dip in the
sugar-bin!"
Said the Rolling-pin to
the Pudding-stick,
"We'll eat and we'll stuff
till we make ourselves
sick."
Off they set with a fine
bold stride,
That brought them soon
to the sugar-bin's side.
"Oh! how shall we reach
that keyhole high?
We might as well try to
storm the sky!"

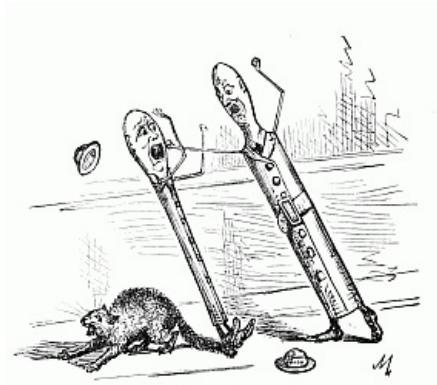


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"Let me mount on your shoulder thin,
And I'll pick the lock!" said the bold Rolling-pin.
The Pudding-stick swelled with angry pride,
"That my figure is fine has ne'er been denied,
I'll give you a slap for your impudence!"
"Well!" said the Roller: "This *is* immense!"
So they rolled and they fought,

They thumped and they hit.
Till they trod on the tail of
the cook's pet kit.
Then the cook rose up in dreadful wrath,
And laid them out on the kitchen hearth.



There were fine doings in the garden all this time, as I found when I turned my eyes in that direction. Three mice and an uncle, (it would not be polite to call Uncle Jack a rat, and yet if a mouse's uncle is not a rat, what is he, I should like to know?) and John and Thomas, and three dogs and two horses and a donkey, there were enough to make things lively, you will confess.

The dogs interested me particularly, as I have a dog of my own, you know. Ah! he is a good fellow, that dog of mine! His name is Bmfkgmth, and none of you will be able to pronounce that, except the children who live in Wales. It is rather a hard name, but he came from the Dog Star, and the language there is somewhat difficult. Say it to your dogs, however, and see if they do not wag their tails. Yes, they understand each other. Bmfkgmth is green, a color that I never see in dogs on your planet; but that may be because he eats so freely of the green cheese which grows here instead of grass.

Well, there were three dogs at Jollykaloo, as perhaps I said before. There was Gruff the big dog, and Grim the middle-sized dog, and Grab, the little dog.

Gruff was a fine fellow, indeed; a great St. Bernard, clever and good-natured, and certainly with nothing gruff about him except his name and his bark. Indeed, it was well that he was of a cheerful turn of mind, for he had to take a good deal of rough usage, though it was only in play, to be sure.

Fancy trying to drive three dogs tandem, all of different sizes and dispositions! Yes, if you will believe me, that was what Nibble was trying to do when I looked down into the garden that morning. He had a very nice little cart which Thomas, the gardener, had made for him, and in this he often drove Gruff, who did not object at all to being harnessed, and in fact rather enjoyed dragging the children about. But when it came to having two other dogs harnessed in front of him, dogs who could run about twice as fast as he could, and who took a fancy to sit down and scratch their ears just as he had started into a good swinging trot—that was rather more than Gruff could endure. But Nibble was full of his new sport.

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"Downy, baby!" he cried, "Come, Downy, and brother will give you a fine ride! come along, little man!"

So Downy came toddling up, and Nibble lifted him into the cart, and then got in himself, and took the reins and the whip.

"Now, Downy boy, you shall have the best ride that any one ever had. Hi! my gallant steeds! Now Dasher, now Dancer, now Prancer! Oh, dear!" cried Nibble, "I wish I had eight reindeer like St. Nicholas, instead of only three dogs. But still I can say, 'Now dash away, dash away, dash away all!'" and the young charioteer stood up in the cart and waved the whip round his head, while Downy clapped his hands and shouted with glee. Yes, that was pride! but the fall also was not wanting.



OLD GRUFF.

Away went the three dogs, poor old Gruff forced into a lumbering gallop by the pace of the two others, who capered along, and let the big old dog do all the pulling. Round the house they went once and twice, the little cart rocking from side to side in rather an alarming way. Then, as they came round the third time—they saw a cat! Nibble saw it first, and tried like a clever mouse as he is, to turn his gallant steeds' heads away before they also saw it: but it was too late. "Yap! yap! yap!" went little Grab; "Woof! woof!" added Grim, struggling to free himself from the harness.

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Good old Gruff held out bravely for a moment or two; but finally he could not resist.

A mighty "*Bow, wow WOW!*" a leap and a plunge, and then for a moment I could see nothing but a cloud of dust, from which came barks and shrieks which were truly dreadful to hear. In a moment, however, the cart luckily was caught between two bushes, and there it stuck, while the dogs rushed to the foot of the nearest apple-tree, to leap and howl there in vain excitement, while the peaceful cat smiled at them in safety from the topmost bough.

At the moment the explosion took place, two people came upon the scene, one from the barn and one from the house. They were Uncle Jack and Mrs. Posset. The latter had happened to look out of the window just as the grand turn-out came round for the third time, and she had flown down stairs to rescue her Downy, but arrived only in time to snatch him from the ruins of the cart, very much frightened and covered with dust, and what was worse with blood, which flowed from a cut in his forehead. As for Uncle Jack, he had been very busy in the barn arranging matters with John and had supposed that Downy was quite safe with Nibble and Gruff to look after him.

"If you please, sir," cried Mrs. Posset in an angry tone, "what is to be done with Nibble? this blessed child's life is not safe with him for an instant, so it isn't! putting three dogs tantrum (Mrs. Posset meant tandem, but she was too much vexed to think about her words,) with an innocent baby behind them and the garden as full of cats as his head is of mischief!" and the good woman's breath fairly failed her, from haste and vexation combined. Uncle Jack looked very grave as he came up.

"How did this happen, Nibble?" he asked. "Mrs. Posset, if you will take Downy into the house and bathe his forehead, I will come in and find some court-plaster to put on that cut. Now my boy," he added, turning to Nibble, "tell me all about this!"

Nibble hung his head and looked very much ashamed.

"I—I did have them tandem," he said. "I never thought of cats, and Downy likes to ride so much!"

"I am very sorry, Nibble!" said Uncle Jack, "I certainly thought I could trust you to take care of your little brother for ten minutes. There are plenty of ways of amusing a little child without putting him in danger of his life; for Downy might have been very much hurt, perhaps even killed, and then you would never have forgiven yourself. Remember, my boy, that there is a great difference between three years and eight years, and that what may be harmless for you may be very dangerous for your little brother."

"Indeed, Uncle, I am very sorry!" said Nibble earnestly; "and I will try to be more careful. And—and what shall I do now, Uncle? there isn't any punishment tree here, is there?"

This question puzzled me at the time, but I found out afterwards that in the place where they had lived before, there was one special tree into which Nibble always had to climb when he had been naughty, and where he had spent many hours of penance.

Uncle Jack smiled kindly on the boy—I mean the mouse—and said "I have not found one yet, dear child! but I think that if you were to spend the rest of the morning in the house, and try to console Downy for his bumps and bruises, it would be a very good thing."

Nibble looked grave at this. He would have preferred sitting in a tree, and hearing the birds sing, and wondering where their nests might be, and how many eggs there might be in them, to spending the lovely, sunny morning in the house. But he went in without a word, remembering that Downy also had to stay in the house through his carelessness, and with aches and pains which he somehow had escaped.

He found the baby mouse curled up on the sofa in the library, looking very forlorn, with a handkerchief tied round his head. Mrs. Posset was sitting beside him, reading to him, for though Downy was a very little boy, he was very fond of stories. His eyes brightened when he saw Nibble. "Oh! Nibby!" he cried. "Did dey catf de cat?"

"Indeed, I hope not!" said Mrs. Posset. "It is a strange thing in the nature of boys, that they like to see cats tormented."

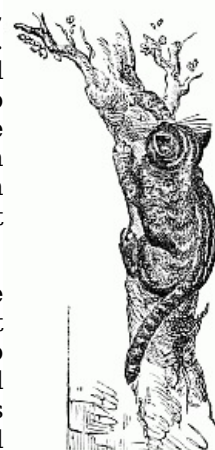
"But I don't like to see them hurt, Mrs. Posset!" said Nibble. "It *is* fun to see them run, but the dogs never catch them, so no harm is done. And it is good for the cats to have a little exercise, I am sure, for they are lazy creatures."

"Humph!" said Mrs. Posset. "Well, I am reading to Downy now, Master Nibble, so—"

"Wouldn't you like me to take the book, Mrs. Posset?" asked Nibble. "I must stay in the house till dinner, and I could read to Downy."

"Oh! yes, Nibby, read!" cried Downy.

"Very well, Master Nibble, and that is just what will please me, for I have not my spectacles by me, and the print troubles my eyes. Besides, the child's clothes are torn to shivers, (this was a pet word of Mrs. Posset's, and I think she must have invented it herself,) and I must attend to



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them at once."

So Mrs. Posset, with an approving nod, trotted off to the nursery, and Nibble sat down by the sofa.

"What shall I read, Downy boy?" he asked.

"Wead Pinfkin!" said Downy very decidedly.

"'Princekin,' eh?" said Nibble, "Well, here it is, so listen! And perhaps, if you were to shut your eyes, Downy, you might see some of the pretty things that Princekin saw."

So Nibble opened the book, from which Mrs. Posset had been reading, and read this little rhyme:

PRINCEKIN.

"Princekin sits on his nursery throne,
Prettiest Princekin, all alone,
Sighing a sigh, and moaning a moan,
 'Oh—dear—*me!* oh!'
'Princekin beautiful, Princekin dear,
Tell us your troubles, and do not fear!'
'Nobody come, and nobody here,
 Nobody p'ay wiz me, oh!'

"'What! no little boys, and no little girls,
To play with Princekin, pearl of pearls?
Then lift your head, with its crown of curls,
 And we'll do better without, oh!
Open the window and call the flowers
Birds and beasts from their trees and bowers,
To come and play with this Prince of ours,
 And make him with laughter shout, oh!'

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"Princekin raises his sapphire eyes,
Diamond tear-drop quickly dries,
Stares and stares in such great surprise
 He doesn't know what to do, oh!
In at the window, low and high,
Hundreds of creatures creep and fly,
Vines and flowerets clambering by,
 Of every shape and hue, oh!

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"Doves are lighting on Princekin's knee,
Close in his curls hums a honey bee,
Roses are climbing around his wee
 Sweet hands, for to cling and kiss, oh!
Beetles hover on gauzy wing,
Blue-bells, lily-bells, chime and ring,
Bull-frogs whistle and robins sing,
 And see, what an owl is this, oh!

"Squirrel is whispering in his ear,
 'Princekin beautiful, Princekin dear,
 Leave this stupid close nursery here,
 Come to the woods with me, oh!'
 Daisy is murmuring at his feet,
 'Princekin lovely, and Princekin sweet,
 Come live with us, 'mid the corn and wheat,
 Out in the field so free, oh!'

"Round they flutter, and round they dance,
 Wheel and hover and creep and prance,
 Bird, beast, blossom, all bent on the chance
 Of winning the pearl of boys, oh!
 Clinging and kissing o'er and o'er,
 Singing, chattering, more and more,—
 But *oh!*—who slammed the nursery door,
 And made such a dreadful noise, oh!

* * * *

"Princekin sits on his nursery throne,
 Prettiest Princekin, all alone.
 Sighing a sigh and moaning a moan,
 'Oh—dear—*me*, oh!
 Had such a bootiful, bootiful p'ay!
 No! I *not* been as'eep, I say!
 And now dem's everyone gone away,
 Nobody left but me, oh!'"

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Then Nibble stopped reading, and closed the book softly, for Downy was just as fast asleep as Princekin had been.

"That is always the way!" he said to himself. "I never saw a child sleep so much in the daytime. In fact, there is no use in reading to him, unless you want him to go to sleep. But perhaps," he added "that is just what Mrs. Posset did want, and it is the best thing to do when one cannot go out of doors. Heigh ho! how pleasant it is out there! I wonder where Brighteyes is! She might come in and stay with me, I think, if she knows I am in the house." And Nibble sat down by the window, and looked mournfully out into the garden.



I also had been wondering where Brighteyes was, for I had not seen her since breakfast. I was just going to look in another part of the mirror, (for I can see the whole of the garden in it, and more too,) when I heard a deep sigh at my elbow. I turned, and saw my dog standing by, gazing into the mirror with a very wistful look. I followed the direction of his eyes, and saw that the cat was still up in the tree, and the dogs still at the foot of it. Gruff was tired of jumping, which indeed was not exactly in his line; and had gone quietly to sleep; but Grim and Grab kept up the game, occasionally lying down to rest and take breath, and then going at it again.

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"What ails thee, Bmfkmgh?" I asked. "Doth the sight of the other dogs grieve thee?"

"Nay, master!" he answered. "But oh! I fain would have a cat to chase. Is there no Cat-Star, good master, whence thou couldst get me a cat? see now, how merry these dogs have been!"

"Truly," I replied, "there is no Cat-Star; and if there were, thou wouldst be none the better off, for I would not have such noise and strife in my quiet home. Art thou not happy? here thou hast no work to do; canst eat green cheese all day, if it please thee, and sport with the merry beams which my brother Sun sends over. Perhaps thou wouldst like to go back to the Dog Star, whence thou camest. There thou hadst work enough and to spare, for thou wast servant to Prince Canis, and he is a hard master." And I tipped the mirror, so that we could see Sirius (which is the name of that star,) and what was going on in it. There sat Prince Canis on his throne, richly dressed. Hundreds of servants bowed before him, or hurried hither and thither to do his bidding. He spoke harshly to them, and flourished a huge whip, which was his sceptre, about their ears, making them howl with pain.

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"Wilt thou go back?" I asked.

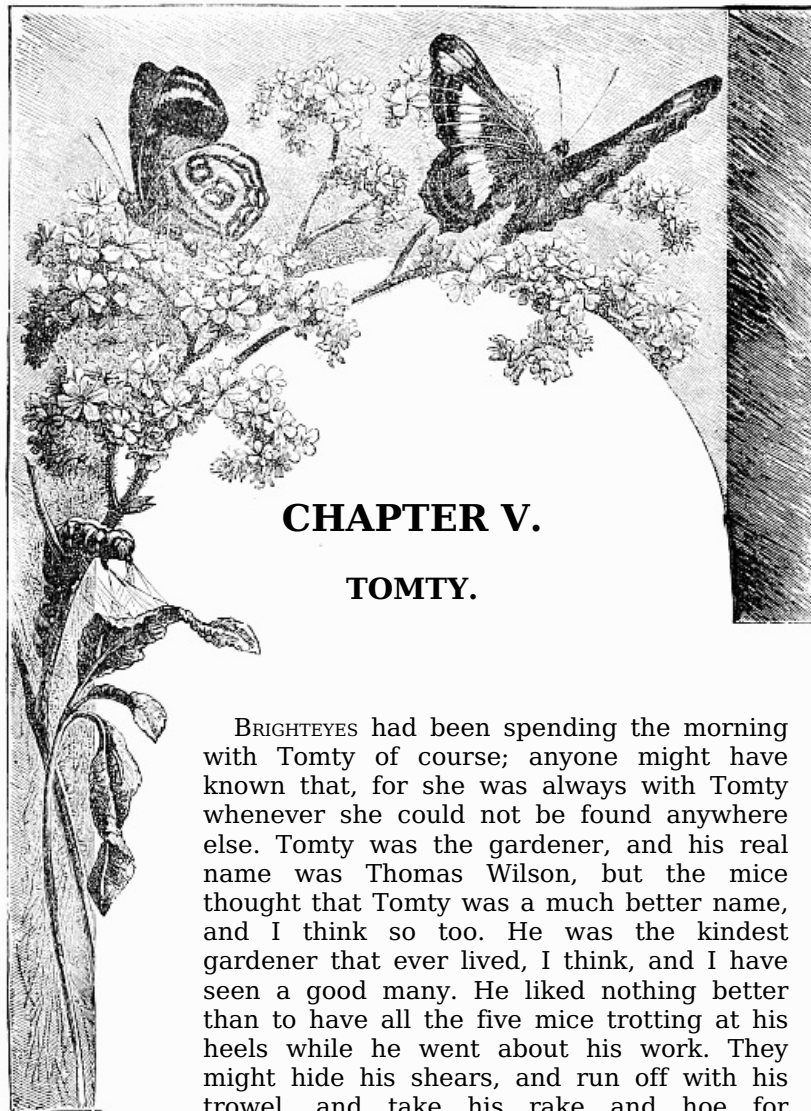
"Oh, no, no!" cried the dog, shrinking back. "Tip the glass away, my master, lest he see me and carry me off! I promise thee I will never complain again!"

"That is well!" I said. "And if thou wantest something to chase, thou mayest chase me, though that would not be very exciting. So now, we will look for Brighteyes, and see what has become of the child."

I tipped the glass, and again the garden blossomed before me, sunny and bright, shining with grass-emerald and dandelion gold, under the drifts of apple-blossoms. Yes, it was a pretty sight, and whichever way I may tip my glass, I see no prettier sight than this garden, in the spring of the year.



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CHAPTER V.

TOMTY.

BRIGHTEYES had been spending the morning with Tomty of course; anyone might have known that, for she was always with Tomty whenever she could not be found anywhere else. Tomty was the gardener, and his real name was Thomas Wilson, but the mice thought that Tomty was a much better name, and I think so too. He was the kindest gardener that ever lived, I think, and I have seen a good many. He liked nothing better than to have all the five mice trotting at his heels while he went about his work. They might hide his shears, and run off with his trowel, and take his rake and hoe for hobbyhorses, but Tomty was never out of patience with them.

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"Sure, they're young things!" he used to say. "Let them enjoy themselves now, for they'll be older before they're younger!" Which was a very sensible remark.

"Tomty!" said Brighteyes.

"Yes, miss."

"I want to go into the barn-yard again to see José."

"And that is just where I am going, miss," said Tomty; "so if you will sit in the wheelbarrow, I'll give you a ride!" so Brighteyes jumped into the wheelbarrow and was wheeled off in fine style.

"Do you know who invented the wheelbarrow, Tomty?" she asked as they went along.

"Yes miss," replied Tomty. "Hiram Deluce made this one, miss."

"I don't mean this one," said Brighteyes. "I mean the first one that ever was made. It was a great painter, one of the greatest painters that ever lived, only I can't remember his name. Uncle Jack told me about him."

"Yes Miss!" said Tomty. "More likely a *car*-painter, Miss. I don't know what a painter would want of a barrow, unless to paint it, and that's soon done."

A car-painter! Brighteyes thought that was very funny, and she thought Tomty was very clever.

But now they were in the barn-yard, and she straightway forgot about wheel-barrows and painters, for José, the little brown donkey, was loose, and was trying with might and main to open the further gate of the yard, a trick of which he was extremely fond, and in which he certainly excelled.

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"Oh! Tomty," cried Brighteyes, "shut the gate, and let us catch José. Naughty donkey, how did you get out? Come here, good José! come here, poor fellow!" But José (that is a Spanish name, by the way, and is pronounced Hosay,) had no idea of going there.



JOSÉ OPENING THE GATE.

"I wont!" he said. "I wo-hon't! go away-hay!" and up went his heels, higher than ever. It must be very provoking to animals to have human beings pay absolutely no attention to their remarks. Really, it is so stupid sometimes. There was José, speaking quite distinctly for a donkey, and Brighteyes only clapped her hands to her ears and cried "Oh! what a dreadful bray!" and in the barn, meanwhile, Pollux, the off horse, was saying to John, over and over again, "I don't like this stall, John! please give me another. And do loosen this strap a little, for it makes my head ache." To which John replied, "So, boy! quiet now!" which must have been extremely aggravating.

Why, I saw a little girl once,—a little German girl she was, named Hannchen,—sit for half an hour listening with great delight to a bird which was singing away with all its might, perched on a neighboring twig. And what do you think the bird was saying in its song?

"You horrid little monster, why will you not go away? I want to get some caterpillars from that tree behind you, and I cannot get at them while you are there. My children are waiting for their dinner, and though I have asked you fifty times, as politely as I could, to move, you will not stir, but just sit there and look silly. Oh! you provoking little creature! I should like to peck you!" And little Hannchen, smiling, said "thank you, pretty bird, for your sweet song!"

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It was quite a piece of work to catch Master José, but John came out to help Thomas and finally the obstinate little brown gentleman was fairly cornered, and had to submit to the halter.

"Poor fellow!" said Brighteyes. "It must seem very hard to be tied up all the time. I am sure I

should not like to have a strap round my nose, Tomty, and stand all day with nothing but the barn walls to look at."

"And indeed you would not, Miss!" replied Tomty gravely. "But sure no one would go for to put a strap round a little lady's nose, Miss, let alone putting her in the barn."

"Oh! you funny Tomty!" cried Brighteyes. "I meant, if I were a donkey, of course!"

"Yes, Miss! but you see you are not a donkey," said Tomty placidly. "And now I must go back to the flowerbeds again, Miss Brighteyes," he added. "And will you go with me, Miss, or shall I leave you here?"

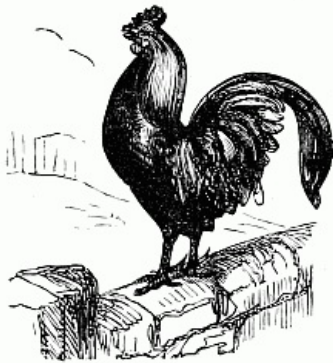
"Well, Tomty, I think I will stay here for a little while and talk to the chickabiddies. I don't think they know me yet, and I want them to know me and love me, for Uncle Jack says I may feed them every morning. You won't be lonely without me, will you, Tomty?"

"Well, Miss, I'll do my best!" said Tomty.

With which rather vague remark the good man took up his wheelbarrow and departed, leaving Brighteyes alone in the barn-yard. Alone, that is, except for the fowls. They had just arrived that morning, and they evidently did not feel at home in their new quarters. The hens were scratching and bustling about in great excitement, while one of the roosters, standing on top of the fence, preached them a sermon on keeping their tempers.

"Be calm!" he said. "Be calm, my dears! haste makes waste. Observe my tranquil demeanor! the truly great are calm in the midst of strife."

And he shut one eye, and looked at Brighteyes with the other, as much as to say "What do you think of that? it's nothing to what I can do if I try!" but Brighteyes burst out laughing, and said "Chook-a-raw-che-raw! I can say that too, Mr. Rooster, so you need not be so proud."



At this the rooster was deeply offended, and withdrew to a corner of the yard, muttering to himself.

Presently Brighteyes spied three fowls, two hens and an old rooster, who apparently were too sleepy to care where they were, for they had all gone to sleep, sitting side by side on a rail, and very funny they looked.

"Oh!" said Brighteyes. "Don't they look just like the sixty-five parrots asleep in a row, in the 'Four Little Children who went round the world?' Don't you remember?" she went on, half to herself and half to the other fowls, "the Pussy-Cat and the Quangle-Wangle crept softly, and bit off the tail-feathers of all the sixty-five parrots; for which Violet reproved them both severely. Notwithstanding which, she proceeded to insert all the feathers—two-hundred and sixty in number—in her bonnet; thereby causing it to have a lovely and glittering appearance, highly—well, I forget the rest," said she, "for the words are very long."

"How pretty some of those tail-feathers would look in my hat!" she continued. "I shouldn't like to bite them off, but I might pull some out, for there are so many they would never be missed. Just a few out of each tail, you know; and I am sure they wouldn't mind, if they knew it was to make my hat have a lovely and glittering appearance. One good smart pull, now—" and suiting the action to the word, she tugged with might and main at the tail of the old rooster. But the old rooster had apparently never read the story about Violet and the sixty-five parrots; for instead of submitting meekly to having his tail-feathers pulled out, he woke up in a great rage and fright, and uttering a tempest of "ka-ka-kaa-ka-raws" he flew directly in Brighteye's face.

Greatly terrified, Brighteyes staggered backward, and sat down violently in a tub filled with hay.

Yes, that would have been very well, if there had been nothing beside hay in it. But, unfortunately, Uncle Jack had bought with these fowls some eggs of a peculiar kind, from which he hoped to get a very fine brood of chickens; and he had made a fine nest for them in this tub and left them till one of the hens should take a fancy to them.

Well, that was all over now. Brighteyes heard the crash, and knew that something dreadful must have happened. The angry rooster was fluttering and pecking at her feet, and the poor mouse, half-wild with fright, sprang up once more and rushed out of the barn-yard, forgetting in her haste to shut the gate behind her. She never stopped



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till she had gained the shade of the apple-trees, and there she sat down panting on the grass.

"Oh dear!" she cried, "I will never try to do things out of story-books again as long as I live. Whenever I do it, I am sure to get into trouble. The other day Uncle Jack showed me a picture in *Punch*, of some children putting out their tongues when they met the doctor, and he laughed, and said it was very funny, and so it was: so then the next time I met our doctor, I put out my tongue, but he didn't laugh, and Mrs. Posset put red pepper on my tongue, to teach me better manners. And now, just because I wanted to do what Violet did, all these dreadful things have happened. But oh!" and she sprang to her feet, "I must do something about my dress, or Mrs. Posset will say, I am 'a sight to behold!' She always says that, and I am so tired of hearing it. If I were to roll on the grass, now! we always wipe our shoes on the grass, when they are muddy, before we go into the house."

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Certainly, the dress was in a very forlorn condition, being covered with egg behind, while the front of the skirt showed a number of dismal rents made by the beak and claws of the angry rooster. I did not think it would be improved by rolling on the grass, but I could not well do anything about it.

A pretty sight Miss Brighteyes was when she got up again. Egg and grass and mud were worked and rolled together into an even tint of brownish green, all over her skirts, while through the holes her scarlet petticoat looked out indignantly, blushing for its owner's misdeeds. At least, that is what my dog said about it, and he has a very pretty way of putting things. However, Missy Mouse was quite satisfied that she had done all she could in the matter, so she went on her way rejoicing.

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Presently she heard voices, and she came upon Puff and Fluff, who, having put all their children to sleep, had come out to spend the rest of the bright, sunny morning in the garden. They had got out their gardening tools, and were hard at work in one of the flower-beds.

"What are you doing, Twinnies?" asked Brighteyes as she came up. "And where is Tomty?"

"Tomty is gone to his dinner," answered Puff. "And we are trying to do all his work for him before he comes back."

"Yes!" said Fluff, "because he often helps us, you know, and so we ought to help him."



"But what are all those funny-looking things sticking up?" Brighteyes asked, stooping over the bed.

"Well, sister, those are the roots of the plants," said Puff. "We heard Tomty say that what the plants needed now was sun, and so we thought the roots ought to have some sun too. So we have been turning them upside down to save Tomty the trouble."

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"Save Tomty the trouble, indeed!" said Brighteyes. "Why, you naughty little mice, you have made twice as much trouble for him. The roots don't want any sun, they like to be in the dark, just like owls and bats. Now you have been naughty, and Uncle Jack will punish you."

Poor little twin mice! they looked very grave indeed. Fluffy's eyes filled with tears, and she began to rub them with her little grimy hands, which did not improve her appearance. But Puff said bravely:

"They do not *look* a bit like owls, Brighteyes, or like bats either; but if you are really sure that they ought to be in the ground, we will put them back again."

"Well, here comes Tomty himself!" cried Brighteyes, "and you will see what he says. See,

Tomty!" she went on. "These naughty twinnies have been turning the plants upside down, and spoiling them!"

"But we didn't mean to spoil them, Tomty!" cried the twins eagerly. "We thought the roots ought to have the sun, and we only wanted to save you the trouble, Tomty dear! and we are so sorry!"

Tomty rubbed his left ear, which he always did when he was put out. At least a dozen of his best plants were ruined, but he could not scold the little mice, whose little piteous faces were turned up to him imploringly.

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"Well, well!" he said. "To be sure! isn't that a pity now! but they're young things, they're young things! never you mind, Missies, this time, for there are plenty more plants. But remember:

"Roots and moles, where'er they're found,
Like to burrow in the ground."

"Oh! yes, you good Tomty, we will remember!" cried the twins. "And we will turn them all back again as quickly as we can."

"Well, Missies, you may do that," replied Tomty, "though it's all one now to them plants if they're on their heads or their heels. But Miss Brighteyes," he continued, turning to the elder mouse, who was looking on with an air of superior wisdom: "it's not my place to speak about the little ladies' clothes, Miss, but whatever will Mrs. Posset say when she sees your frock? and the barn-yard gate open, too, and the fowls all over the place!"

Brighteyes hung down her head and blushed as red as her petticoat: then, without saying a word, she turned away, and walked slowly toward the house.

Yes, she had been very naughty, much naughtier than the twins, whom she had been blaming; and now she would go directly in to Mrs. Posset and tell her all about it, and say she was very sorry.

That was what she thought as she walked along, and that was what she meant to do, doubtless; but dear me! sometimes I think that you people on the earth *never* do what you mean to do. I know a gentleman in London, if you will believe it, who has been trying for five years to see the sun rise. Every night when he goes to bed he says, "Aha! to-morrow morning I shall be up bright and early, sir! Want to see the sun rise. Haven't seen it since I was a boy. Ha! ha! ha!" and then he goes to bed, and knows nothing till nine o'clock the next morning, when the sunbeams flirt gold-dust into his eyes and wake him up. Then he rubs his eyes, and says "Bless me! overslept myself again, hey? well, I never *was* so sleepy before in my life! the sun will have to see *me* rise this morning, hey? ha! ha! ha!"

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Yes, that is the way with you all, and that was the way with Brighteyes that day. I did but turn away from the mirror for five minutes, to chat with a passing meteor, and ask him how his grandmother was; and when I turned back, where was that bright-eyed mouse but up at the very top of a tree: trying with all her might to catch a small cat, the very same cat which the dogs had been chasing an hour before.

"Dear little Pusscat!" cried Brighteyes in her most winning tones. "I wouldn't hurt you for the world. Do come, and let me take you down, and you shall be my own dear little pet, and I will love you very much indeed!" and she stretched out one arm toward the kitten, while the other clasped a branch of the tree.

The kitten looked hard at her, and on the whole seemed to approve of her, for it advanced slowly, and finally allowed itself to be captured. Yes, that was very nice; but how about getting down?

"Oh! that is easily managed!" said Brighteyes, thinking aloud as usual. "I'll hold my kitty so, you see, with one hand, and with the other I just swing myself down to that great big huge branch, *so* —" as she started, there was a sound of something tearing, and this was very natural, for the skirt of her unlucky frock was caught on a small bough and refused to accompany her to the lower branch; but it was too late for Brighteyes to stop herself. Down she went, alighting safely on the big branch, from which she could easily swing herself down to the ground. But, alas! more than half of her skirt had remained on the upper branch. There it hung, and flapped about in a most unpleasant way, and there stood Brighteyes, gazing ruefully at the ruin she had wrought, but still clasping the kitten tightly in her arms.



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Now I want to ask you if you think Mrs. Posset could possibly have chosen a worse time for looking out of the window? she did, however, think it proper to look out just at that particular moment; and as I saw from her face that she meant mischief, and as I have the strongest possible objection to seeing children punished, I just tipped my glass and saw the people of Nankin ringing the bells on the Porcelain Tower, to celebrate the Emperor's

CHAPTER VI.

A NIGHT JOURNEY.



"THIS has been a fine day!" I said, as I sat down by Brighteyes' pillow. "Certainly it cannot be said that you five mice spend your time in idleness. The only wonder is that your uncle's hair has not turned gray from anxiety, long before this. I never saw such mice. Positively, Pun-Chin is nothing to you."

"And who is Pun-Chin?" asked Brighteyes. "And who are you, if you please?"

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"Pun-Chin is a Chinese mouse—I mean boy," I replied. "And I am the Man in the Moon. I live in a silver palace—" and then I told her all about myself, as I had told Downy and the twins the night before. But Brighteyes was much more excited about it all than the little ones had been. Very little children take everything for granted I find, like my friend little Mary West, who, when a great green frog jumped right into her lap the other day, as she was sitting by the brook, merely said "Poor frog wanted to sit down, was tired!"



"Oh!" cried Brighteyes. "How delightful! how perfectly delightful! and are you really true, or am I only dreaming you? and what is your name? and may I call Nibble?"

"One thing at a time!" I replied. "I certainly am true, as true as moonshine. As for dreaming me, why, that depends on what you call dreaming, you know. And as for my name—humph! can you pronounce Bmfmkgth, for example? that is the name of my dog, and it is a good name, too."

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"No!" said Brighteyes. "I certainly cannot. It sounds like sneezing and barking and whistling all at once."

"Exactly!" I replied. "That is the language of the dog-star. But *my* name is very much harder than that, so there really would be no use in my telling it to you. There are twenty-four j's in it, and seventeen g's, so you may imagine that it is difficult. The other children call me Mr. Moonman, and you may as well do so too. As for Nibble," I continued, "if he sleeps in this little room close by, it is an easy matter to call him. Whisk, just ask that boy's bed if it will please step in here, will you?" The good beam did his errand quickly, and in another moment the two beds stood side by side, and shook castors in a very friendly manner. Nibble, who was as fast asleep as heart could desire, was very much astonished as Brighteyes introduced him to me, and told him all the wonderful things she had heard.

"But how did you get down here?" he asked. "Did you come on a falling star?"

"No!" I replied. "I always ride on my own beams, which are much more manageable, and swifter as well. Why, I can go round the world in two whisks of a comet's tail."

"Oh! oh!" cried Nibble. "Mr. Moonman, don't you think you could let me ride on one some time? I can ride very well, indeed I can! Uncle Jack lets me ride Castor sometimes, and even José; never can get me off, unless he lies down and rolls! oh! *please* let me ride on a moonbeam! it would be *so* jolly!"

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"Jolly enough, but not quite safe enough, my young friend!" said I. "It is very easy to ride on a moonbeam when one knows how, but very different when one does not. There are, however, other ways of getting about. A nice little cloud is what you want." I looked out of the window, but not a cloud was to be seen in the sky.

"Oh dear!" said the mice. "We should *so* like to have a ride, Mr. Moonman. Couldn't you take us on your moonbeam? we would sit very still, and not say a word!"

"And you shall have a ride," I said; "but not on Whisk. Run now to your uncle's bureau, and bring me from the top drawer two of his largest silk handkerchiefs." Yes, that was soon done. "Now 'Whisk,'" said I, "there must be some little Winds about here with nothing special to do. See if you cannot find some who are willing to give these mice a ride."

Off went Whisk through the window, and back he came in a moment with seven merry little Winds, all ready for a frolic.

They had sung all the birds and all the flowers to sleep, they said, and had been sitting under a tree, whistling for something to do, and now nothing would give them greater pleasure than to blow the two little heavy ones (for I am sorry to tell you, children, that you are all known by that name among the lively spirits of the air,) wherever they liked to go.

"That is well then," said I. "And where will you go, you two mice?"

"To China!" said Nibble.

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"Oh! yes, to China!" cried Brighteyes. "Then we can see Pun-Chin, the naughty boy you spoke of, and you can tell us more about him as we go along!"

"Yes! yes! to China," said Nibble, again; and he began to dance wildly around the room, as if nothing would stop him. At last the two mice were ready for their long journey through the air.



"China it is then!" I said. "Spread the handkerchiefs out on the window-sill. That's right! Now sit down on them—so! now, little Winds, blow steadily and off we go!"

Ah! that was a ride worth taking, you may believe. Away through the soft May night, over the tree-tops, over the hill-tops, the two mice, half frightened, half delighted, sitting cross-legged on their handkerchiefs, like two little Turks, and the merry little Winds puffing away with might and main, while Whisk and I led the way, and lighted it too. Yes, it was a pretty sight, had there been any one there to see it. But if you had been there yourself, you would only have said "See those two great white owls! how fast they fly."

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Now we came to the sea. Hundreds of my beams were there sparkling over the shining water, and playing with the little waves, which put up their faces, each in its white nightcap, and laughed and danced merrily. They called to the seven Winds and said:

"Come down and play with us!"

But the Winds said "No! no! we have work to do now. We can be very steady fellows when we choose, though you might not think it."



And they puffed away bravely, to the great relief of Nibble and Brighteyes, who had been wondering what would become of them if the merry Winds should take a fancy to play with the waves.

Now they began to sing, the seven Winds, and the waves answered them as they leaped and danced. And this is the song they sang:

"Ever singing, ever sighing,
Ever floating, ever flying
Over land and sea.
Bringing summer's glow and gladness,
Bringing winter's snow and sadness,
Merry winds are we!

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"Greeting all with soft caresses,
Shaking out the maiden's tresses
Till she laughs with glee.
Whispering to the bonny flowers,
Fanning them through sultry hours,
Merry winds are we!"

Then the waves tossed up their nightcaps and sang:

"Ever coming, ever going,
Ever ebbing, ever flowing,
Children of the sea.
Creeping o'er the silver beaches,
Foaming o'er the rocky reaches,
Merry waves are we!

"Blue and golden in the sunlight,
Gray and silver in the moonlight,
Beautiful to see.
Giving back each star its brightness,
Giving back each cloud its whiteness,
Merry waves are we!"

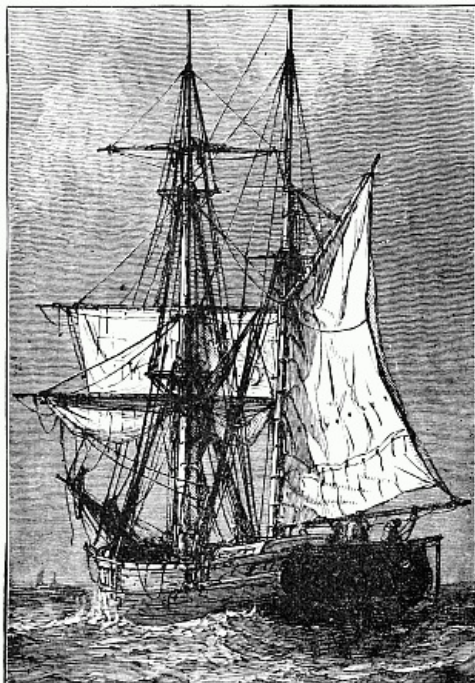
"That is charming!" said Brighteyes. "Dear little Winds, how sweetly you sing! and how strange that we have never heard you before."

"Look!" cried Nibble. "What is that, that shines so over yonder? is it a sail?"

Yes, it was a sail, and as we came nearer we saw a stately ship, sailing slowly along. All her crew seemed to be asleep, except one man, who was pacing up and down the deck.

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He looked up as we passed, and cried "Hi! albatrosses! how queerly they are flying! wake up, shipmate, and look at those birds!"



But before any of the sailors were awake, we were flying far away, while the Winds and the Waves sang together:

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"Wake the ship!
And shake the ship!
And over the sea we will take the ship!
Filled with oranges, candy, and toys,
Some for the girls and some for the boys."

"Oh! is it really?" asked Nibble. "I wish I had some! this flying makes one hungry."

But here now was the land again. We bade farewell to the merry Waves, and flew along over the sleeping country. The lights of a great city lay before us.

"Let us fly lower," said Brighteyes, "and then we can peep into some of the windows and see the people asleep."

"That is not very safe!" I replied. "In these great cities there are plenty of people awake all night; and it would never do for us to be shot at, you know."

Just then a puff of smoke from a tall chimney came up, and got into the children's eyes and noses, so that they were glad to fly higher, where the air was pure, and fresh.

We passed over vast and gloomy forests, where the solemn pines bowed slightly as the seven Winds swept by; and over green meadows, where flocks of sheep lay huddled together, fast asleep. As we went further and further eastward, the darkness began to fade.

"In China it will be broad daylight," I said, "and Whisk and I shall fade almost out of sight; but we shall still be with you, so you need feel no alarm."

"Are we near China now?" asked Brighteyes. "And you have not told us about Pun-Chin, Mr. Moonman!"

"To be sure!" I answered. "What an excellent memory this mouse has! well, we may very likely see Pun-Chin, and then you shall judge for yourself. The last time I saw him, he had just painted his little brother bright green from head to foot, and was telling him that his father would chop him up into little bits and sow him for grass-seed. The poor little boy was very much frightened, as you may imagine. Yes, he is a bad fellow for mischief, that boy."

"But now we must fly lower," I added, "for we are over China now. Use your eyes well, my little mice, and see all that you can see, for there is no knowing when you will be here again."

The mice did use their eyes well; and indeed there were many strange things to look at. Green rice-fields, with bright streams of water flowing through them, made the country beautiful. Pagodas and temples, gaily painted, and gilded, glittered in the sun, and the queer, narrow streets were filled with people dressed in strange garments of blue, red, and yellow. They all carried large paper umbrellas covered with gay figures.

In one street we saw a boy sitting on a queer sort of gate. Three dogs were fastened to this gate by their tails, and as they leaped about in their efforts to free themselves, the gate swung to



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Now a man came slowly along the street, reading a paper attentively, and thinking of nothing else. Just as he was passing by the gate, however, the boy made a sudden spring, and alighting on the man's shoulders, knocked him flat in the muddy street; then springing up again like a flash, he resumed his place on the gate, and looked as innocent as a lamb. But the man picked himself up slowly, and turning round, poured a torrent of angry words on the sportive youth.

"Child of perdition!" he cried, "may the Red Dragon make his next meal of thee, and use thy bones for chopsticks! my life is of no value to me, on account of thy tormentings. Am I never to be left in peace?"

The boy, smiling sweetly, was about to reply; but at that moment a woman, who was passing by, happened to look up, and caught sight of the two red silk handkerchiefs in the air, with Nibble and Brighteyes on them. Me they could not see, nor the seven Winds, but the children were plainly visible, and very funny they must have looked.

"Hop-Wang!" cried the woman. "Look up quickly, and see these strange things in the sky! it is some fearful sign from the gods, I fear."

Hop-Wang looked up, and started; but instead of being frightened, he showed every sign of delight.

"The Red Dragon! the Red Dragon!" he cried. "Do you not see the fluttering of his wings?" (Indeed, the Winds were blowing the corners of the handkerchiefs, which were almost as large as small tablecloths, in every direction, to screen the two children, so that they really did look rather like flapping wings.) "I have prayed to the Big Idol," he continued, addressing the woman, "ever since this imp of wickedness here set fire to my beautiful pig-tail and burned it off, to send one of his strong dragons to carry off my tormentor. And now my prayers are answered, and the Red Dragon, strongest of all, is here! Hokkaloo! hokkaloo!" and he danced with delight.

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But his joy was shortlived. The boy, as soon as he heard the words "Red Dragon," and saw the fluttering wings, turned three somersaults in succession, and was out of sight in the twinkling of a satellite; and I, thinking that distance would lend enchantment to the view, and to be out of danger, begged the Winds to blow the handkerchiefs up a mile or so. Accordingly the bright vision receded gradually from the sight of the disappointed Chinaman, and finally vanished, leaving him very disconsolate, and once more at the mercy of his tormentor.

"Mr Moonman!" said Brighteyes, as we rose slowly through the clear air.

"Well, Mouse Brighteyes!" I said, "what is it?"

"Was that Pun-Chin?"

"That was Pun-Chin!" I replied.

"I thought so!" said Brighteyes. And she was silent for some time, thinking, perhaps, of the tail-feathers of the sixty-five parrots.

"How delightful it will be," said Nibble; "to tell Uncle Jack and the twinnies about this wonderful ride. Just think how surprised they will be!" "There is a slight difficulty about that," I replied, "which is that you will not remember in the morning a single thing that has happened to-night." "Oh! Oh!" cried both the children, "how can that be possible, Mr. Moonman? we *could* not forget all these wonderful things, even if we tried, and we do not want to try." "That is all very well," I replied, "but it will make no difference whether you try or not, for all will be as I say. If you had carried a sprig of the sea-flower in your hands it might have been otherwise; but I take care never to give that to children, remembering what trouble my cousin Patty once had from doing that very thing."



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"Who is your cousin Patty?" asked Nibble. "Pray tell us about her." The little Winds nodded their heads.

"We know all about her!" they said. "She is the Sea Fairy, and lives in the palace which is hollowed out of a single pearl, under the Indian Ocean. There are fine things there, Father Moonman!"

"You are right!" I said, "and some night these two mice shall pay her a visit, and see for themselves. But as I was saying, she got into trouble once, by giving a sprig of the sea-flower to a little boy of whom she was very fond. I took him down to see her one night, and she gave him many beautiful things, among them a pair of diamond trousers."

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"Diamond trousers!" exclaimed Nibble. "Who ever heard of such things!"

"There are many things which you have not heard of," I replied, "and one seems to be that you are not to interrupt when other people are speaking."

"She gave him," I continued, "a pair of diamond trousers, which shone as brightly as Whisk does when he shakes himself. The boy, a little English fellow named Arthur, was of course, very much delighted, and putting the trousers on, he capered all about the palace, kicking his little legs up and down, to make the diamonds sparkle more and more. 'Now there is a rule among all the Light Ones (as we are called to distinguish us from human beings,) that no heavy one shall ever be allowed to take anything away with him when he comes to see us. It is a very necessary rule, for there would be all kinds of trouble without it. So on this occasion, if Patty had not given little Arthur the sea-flower, all would have been well. He would have enjoyed his diamond trousers while he was under the sea, and when he woke up in the morning he would not have known anything about them. But the poor little boy, having the sea-flower in his hand, woke up with his head full of the past night, and fully expecting to find the diamond trousers hanging over the back of a chair close by his bed. When he looked, therefore, and saw nothing but his little brown knickerbockers, with a patch on each knee, it was a bitter disappointment. His first thought was that his beautiful present was stolen, and he began to scream and cry: 'Where are my diamond trousers? somebody has stolen them! stop thief! they are mine, and Patty gave them to me!'



"Well, his mother hearing those cries, came in, and on hearing the child's story she thought he had gone mad, and was very anxious about him. Still he cried and screamed for his diamond trousers; but suddenly, as he raised his hand to push away the chair on which the despised brown knickerbockers lay, he dropped the sea-flower! Instantly everything about Patty and the diamond trousers passed out of his mind like a flash of lightning, and looking up at his mother, he said: 'What was I crying about, Mamma? Isn't it time to get up?' And his mother said: 'Yes, my darling, it is high time to get up, and I think you have had the nightmare, Arthur dear.'

"So you see," I continued, "that it is not at all a wise thing to give the sea-flower to little people like you. But, bless me! here we are at the Mouse-trap again. Now, my mice, creep into your nests! say good-by to the little Winds, and thank them for blowing you so far, for they must be tired."

"Oh! thank you! thank you! dear little Winds!" cried the two mice. "We have had such a glorious ride, and we are so much obliged! and thank you too, dear Mr. Moonman! will you come every night, please, and tell us more wonderful things?"

"We will see about that!" I replied. "Every night is very

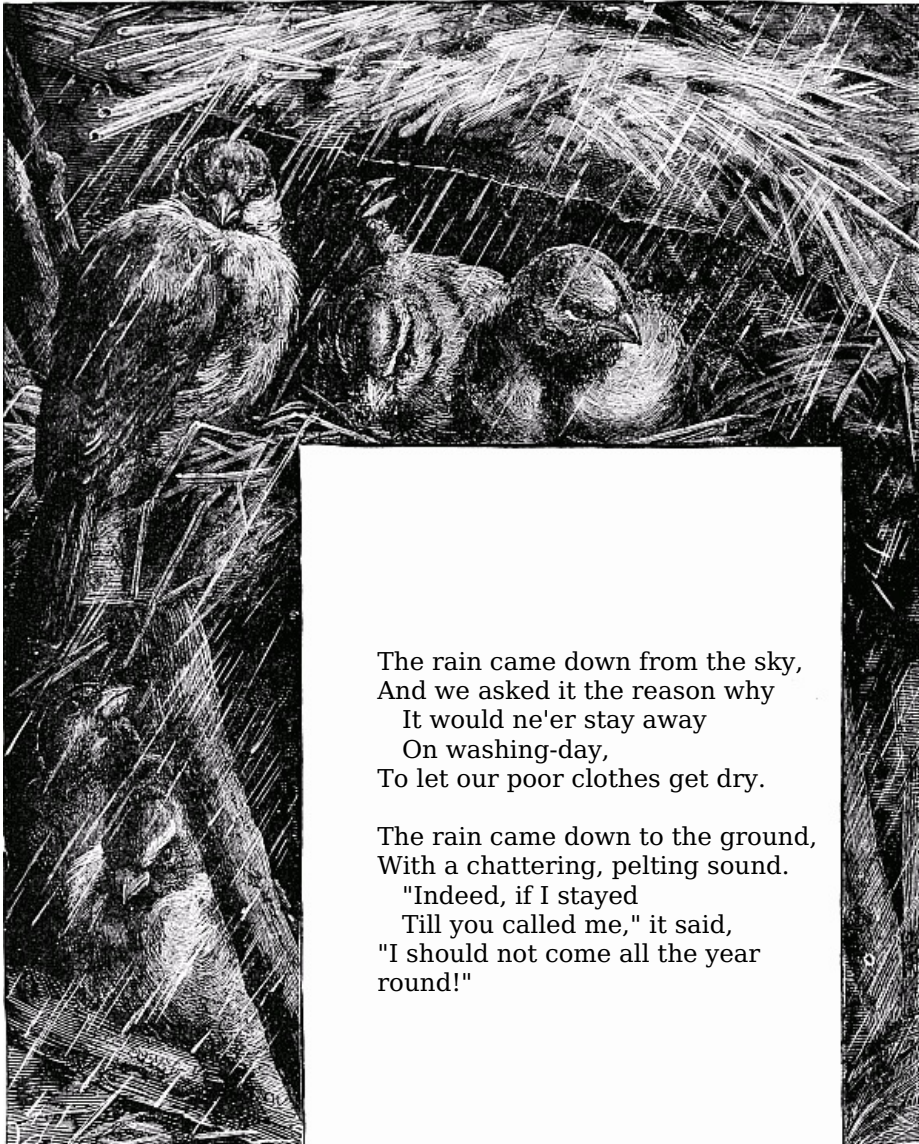


often, and there are many other children who look for me. But I will come soon again, I promise you. Now good night, and a pleasant waking to you!" and as Whisk and I flew upward, we heard the seven little Winds singing softly, as they swung to and fro in the grape-vine outside the nursery window:

The birds may sleep, but the winds must wake
Early and late, for the birdies' sake;
Kissing them, fanning them, soft and sweet,
E'en till the dark and the dawning meet.

The flowers may sleep, but the winds must wake
Early and late, for the flowers' sake;
Rocking the buds on the rose-mother's breast,
Swinging the hyacinth-bells to rest.

The children may sleep, but the winds must wake
Early and late, for the children's sake;
Singing so sweet in each little one's ear,
He thinks his mother's own song to hear.



The rain came down from the sky,
And we asked it the reason why
It would ne'er stay away
On washing-day,
To let our poor clothes get dry.

The rain came down to the ground,
With a chattering, pelting sound.

"Indeed, if I stayed
Till you called me," it said,
"I should not come all the year
round!"

CHAPTER VII.

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A RAINY DAY AND WHAT CAME OF IT.

"WELL, I suppose that is true!" said Brighteyes, who had been singing this little song as she stood by the dining-room window after breakfast, watching the rain. "I suppose it must rain some time. But I do wish it would always rain at night, Uncle Jacket. Just think how nice it would be!"

"Very nice for you," replied Uncle Jack. "But how about the owls and bats, and watchmen and cats, who have to be out all night? they might not fancy it quite so much. They might not like it," he continued, "any more than I like to have a great boy and girl stand and look out of the window, when my fire is hungry. Look at the poor thing, almost starved for want of food!"

"Hi! Brighteyes," cried Nibble. "Which will get to the wood-box first?" That was certainly a question, and it was also a question whose neck would be broken first, to judge from the way in which they rushed out of the room. But they came back safely, strange to say, Nibble in advance, with a huge stick of yellow birch nearly as large as himself, while Brighteyes followed closely with another.

"Ah!" said Uncle Jack, rubbing his hands. "Now we shall see a fire, for it is cold this morning, if it *is* the end of May. There," he continued, placing the logs carefully, and heaping the coals over them. "So my fire-spirit has his breakfast, as well as the rest of us. He is an excellent fellow, and should be well treated. Did you ever hear of the old woman who poked her fire-spirit till he ran away and left her?"

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"No!" cried the two mice. "Please tell us about her, Uncle."



"She was a very cross old woman," said Uncle Jack. "She lived all alone, for she was so cross that nobody could live with her. She scolded her children till they went away, and she scolded her bird till it flew away, and she scolded her cat till it ran away. So there she lived all alone, with only the fire-spirit to keep her company. Now her fire-spirit was very good natured, and had borne very patiently with his mistress' ill-temper. One day, however, she came in looking and feeling particularly savage. She sat down before the fire and took up the poker. 'Ugh!' she said. 'What a miserable attempt at a fire! why don't you burn, you stupid, sulky thing?' and she gave it a vicious poke.

"How can I burn," said the fire, "when you don't give me anything to burn with? nobody can make a good blaze with only two sticks, and these two are as cross as you are, which is

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saying a great deal."

"You *shall* burn!" cried the old hag, "whether you want to or not!" and she began to poke and poke most unmercifully.

"Take care!" said the fire-spirit. "I can't stand much more of this. I am growing black in the face."

"*I'll* teach you to answer me!" cried the woman, poking away harder than ever. But suddenly she gave a shriek, and dropped the poker. A puff of smoke came out of the fire-place. A shower of cinders and sparks fell all over her, filling her eyes and nose and mouth; a rushing sound, like a gust of wind, followed, and the house-door was shut with a violent bang. Then all was silent. And when the old hag had wiped the cinders out of her eyes, she saw only a black cold hearth, with two cross sticks lying on it, and scowling at each other. The fire-spirit was gone; and what was more, he never came back, and the old woman had nothing to keep her warm, except her own temper.

"And now, chickens," said Uncle Jack, "run away and study your lessons, for this is our working-time, you know, and holidays are over."

"Oh dear!" said Brighteyes, "I wish we might have *one* more story, Uncle Jack!"

"No! no!" said Uncle Jack. "There will be plenty of time for stories to-day, for you will not be able to go out of doors. Trot, now, for I have work to do as well as you."

"I say, Brighteyes!" said Nibble, "suppose we play we are somebody else, and then perhaps we shall like studying better."

"What *do* you mean, Nibble?" asked Brighteyes.

"Why," said Nibble, "I have a geography lesson to study, and you know I detest geography. But if I were to play I was Christopher Columbus, I should have to *play* I liked it, because he must have liked geography very much indeed, you know. So then it might be easier, don't you think so?"

"Ye-es," said Brighteyes, doubtfully. "It would be easier for geography, certainly. But I have my arithmetic to study, and nobody could ever have liked arithmetic, Nibble."

"You might be Mr. Colburn," suggested Nibble. "I suppose he must have liked it, or he would not have written so much about it."

"Well, I will try," said Brighteyes; "though I don't think Mr. Colburn is half as nice as Christopher Columbus. But if he had been very nice, he would not have written arithmetic books, so it can't be helped, I suppose."

By this time they had reached the school-room, and Nibble, sitting down by the big table and opening his atlas, began, in a loud voice: "O King of Spain, let me inform your Majesty that Alabama is bounded on the north by Tennessee, on the east by Georgia, on the"—

"But, Nibble! I Mean Christopher!" interrupted Mr. Colburn, in a piteous tone. "How can I do anything if you study out loud?"

"Oh dear!" said the great discoverer, rather impatiently. "Well, go ahead, Mr. Colburn, and write your book, while I go on a new voyage of discovery. Let us see which will finish first."

And now, seeing that the mice were settling down to their books in good earnest, I turned my attention to the nursery, where I rightly judged that I should find the three younger mice.



Well, to be sure, what fine sport they were having, those three little things! they had evidently been washing the dolls' clothes, for small clothes-lines of string were all about the room, and Downy's pinafore looked as if it had been in the tub: but now the wash was all hung out, and the mice were "playing wind," as they called it: that is to say, they were running to and fro, puffing out their little fat cheeks, and blowing at the clothes with might and main, in the hope of making them dry sooner.

"I am the North Wind!" said Puff. "Whoop! whoop!"

"I am the South Wind!" cried Fluff.

"And I'm some kind of wind, ivn't I?" asked Downy, who was blowing as hard as any of them.

"Yes, dear, you are the West Wind; whoop! whoop! whoop!" said Puff, as she pranced about.

Now presently the door opened, and Mrs. Posset came in, with her basket of stockings to mend. One of the clothes-lines was directly in her way, and the good woman stumbled over it, and knocked her head against the mantel-piece and dropped all the stockings. This she did not

like, as you may imagine. "Dear me! children," she cried, "it's as much as my life is worth to enter this nursery, with all your crinkum-crankums! my stars! will you look at the strings now, all over the room, fit to break a body's neck! Whatever are you doing now, Miss Puff?"

"We washed the dolls' clothes, Possy dear," said Puff, "because they were dirty, and you said this morning dirt was a sin."

"So we couldn't have our children dirty and sinful too, you know, Possy!" cried Fluff, earnestly. "And now we are playing wind, and drying the clothes beautifully."

"Well, dears," said Mrs. Posset, resignedly, as she sat down with her mending, "'tis a very nice play, no doubt; but if you *could* play something that would not shake the room quite so much, the stockings would be mended sooner, that's all."

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"Well, Puffy," said Fluff, "what shall we play?"

"Oh! let us play 'Five Little Princesses!'" said Puff.

"But there are only three of us!" Fluff objected. "Unless Mrs. Posset will be one, and *that* would only be four. *Would* you mind being a princess, Possy?"

"Oh! Miss Fluffy, dear, indeed I have not time, now," said the good nurse; "but you might play that one of the princesses was lame, and could not walk."

So the three mice began to walk slowly about, with their eyes shut, singing, as they went:

Five little princesses started off to school,
Following their noses because it was the rule.
But one nose turned up, and another nose turned down,
So all the little princesses were lost in the town.



Here they all tumbled against each other, and pretended to cry bitterly; then starting off again, they sang:

Poor little princesses cannot find their way!
Naughty little noses, to lead them astray!
Poor little princesses, sadly they roam,
Naughty little noses, pray lead them home!

Now is not that a pretty game? Yes, and it is quite new, so you may try it yourselves if you like. Just shut your eyes, and bump against all the chairs and tables, singing this song, and you will find yourselves very much amused. At least, the twins and Downy enjoyed it extremely, until Fluff, the unlucky, tripped over one of her own clothes-lines, and fell against the stove (which, luckily, had no fire in it,) hitting her head harder than even a lost princess could possibly care to do. For a few minutes there was sorrow and confusion among the princesses; but the offer of a story from Mrs. Posset soon calmed their royal minds, and they gathered round the good nurse's table with eager faces.

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"Well, and what shall the story be about, Missies?" she asked.

"Oh! about the three little girls!" said Puff. Fluff nodded her head approvingly, and Downy said "Free little dirls!" in a satisfied tone. So they listened, and I listened, and my dog listened. And you may listen, too, if you like, though it is an old story, and you may have heard it before.

"Once upon a time, then," said Mrs. Posset, threading her darning-needle, and taking up one of Nibble's stockings, which was in such a condition as might have made a darning-machine turn pale, "there were three little girls, and their names were Orange and Lemon and Hold-your-tongue. And they all lived together in a little red house with a green roof, which stood in the middle of a wood. Now every morning there was the work to be done, you see. So on Monday morning Orange would get up at the break of day, so to speak, and she swept the house, and she made the fire, and she cooked the breakfast—"

"What did they have for breakfast?" asked Fluff.

"Pork chops," said Mrs. Posset. "And then she called her sisters; and when they had eaten their

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breakfast, they all went out and played for the rest of the day.

"Well, and on Tuesday morning Lemon got up early. And she swept the house, and she made the fire, and she cooked the breakfast—"

"What did they have *that* morning?" interrupted Puff.

"Cod's head and shoulder!" replied Mrs. Posset. "And then she called her sisters; and when they had eaten their breakfast, they all went out and played for the rest of the day.

"Well, my dears, as I'm telling you, on Wednesday, the third little girl—dear! dear! what was her name now? I seem to forget—"

"Hold-your-tongue!" cried Fluff, eagerly.

"Well! well!" said Mrs. Posset, pretending to be very much vexed. "To think of your having no better manners than that, Miss Fluff! telling me to hold my tongue, indeed! not another story will you get from me to-day, I promise you!"

This was a favorite joke of Mrs. Posset's, I found, and the children were never tired of it, though they knew that the little story went no further than "Hold your tongue!" They were still laughing over it, when they heard a loud scream from below, followed by a heavy fall, and a crash as of broken china. For a moment they all looked at each other in silence, startled by the shock; then Mrs. Posset put Downy off her knee, and flew down stairs, followed by the three little mice, all eager to know what had happened. Uncle Jack had heard the noise in his study, and Susan had heard it in the kitchen; in fact, the whole household was roused, and all turned their steps towards the school-room, where Nibble and Brighteyes were. Uncle Jack was the first to open the door, and when he looked into the room, he saw—see! I will draw you a picture. *This* is what he saw. Nibble was lying on the floor, apparently half-stunned, while near him lay the fragments of a china teapot; and all around on the floor, were scattered gold coins, large and small, hundreds and hundreds of them. Every one stood astonished, very naturally, and no one was more astonished than Master Nibble himself. As soon as he recovered his composure a little, he sat up on Uncle Jack's knee, and told his story, very much in these words:

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"It was all my geography lesson, Uncle!" said Nibble. "I played I was Christopher Columbus, so that I should like it better, and I learned it all, every word of it. But I finished before Mr. Colburn had written his books, so I—"

"Stop! stop! Nibble!" cried Uncle Jack. "Who is Mr. Colburn, pray? and what has he to do with your geography lesson?"

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"Why, he is Brighteyes!" said Nibble. "To make her like her arithmetic lesson, don't you know?"

"Oh! indeed!" said Uncle Jack. "Go on, Christopher!"

"So," continued Nibble, "I thought I would go on a voyage of discovery, a *real* voyage. And I saw that little trap door in the ceiling, that you said must be an old sky-light covered over—"

"And that I forbade you to meddle with," said Uncle Jack, quietly.

"Well, yes, Uncle, I know you did. But if Columbus had minded what other people said, would he ever have found America?"

"Humph!" said Uncle Jack, trying to suppress a smile. "Well, sir?"

"Well, sir," responded Nibble, "so I thought I would sail for that port. I climbed up on some things" (I should say he did! there was a heap of tables and chairs, desks and books, sofa-pillows and coal-scuttles, under the open trap-door, which was enough to frighten one,) "and got into it. It was a kind of an attic place, Uncle, all beams and rafters and cobwebs. I crept in ever so far on my hands and knees, and in the farthest corner I found a heap of queer old clothes all covered with dust; coats and hats, and all sorts of things. I knew they must belong to the queer old man Tomty told us about, who used to live here, and I thought it would be great fun to bring them down and dress up in them. I lifted some of them, and heard something rattle underneath: then I looked, and found that old teapot, hidden away under a great beam. It was very heavy, and the cover was fastened on with sealing-wax, so I was going to bring it down to you; but my foot

"Dear to goodness, sir!" cried Mrs. Posset, who had been picking up the gold pieces, and had her apron full of them. "It's my belief that this is neither more nor less than old Jonas Junk's treasure, of which the neighbors talk so much."

"It certainly is, Mrs. Posset!" replied Uncle Jack. "And I think we must always call Nibble Christopher Columbus, for he certainly has made a great discovery!"



CHAPTER VIII.

A STORY CHAPTER.



It was quite late one evening when I slipped in at a window in the Mouse-trap, to pay a visit to Nibble and Brighteyes. Nibble's bed, a most intelligent piece of furniture, walked in from the other room of its own accord, as soon as I appeared, so I had not even the trouble of calling it. As for the two mice, they fairly squeaked with delight when they saw me. "Oh! Mr. Moonman!" they cried, "we thought you were never coming again! where have you been all this long, long time?"

"It is only a week since I last came, little mice!" I replied; "and indeed, I should have been here oftener, but two of my pet children have been ill, and I have been telling them stories every night, to make the time pass more quickly."

"Oh! tell us about them, and tell us their names, and tell us the stories you told them!" cried Brighteyes eagerly.

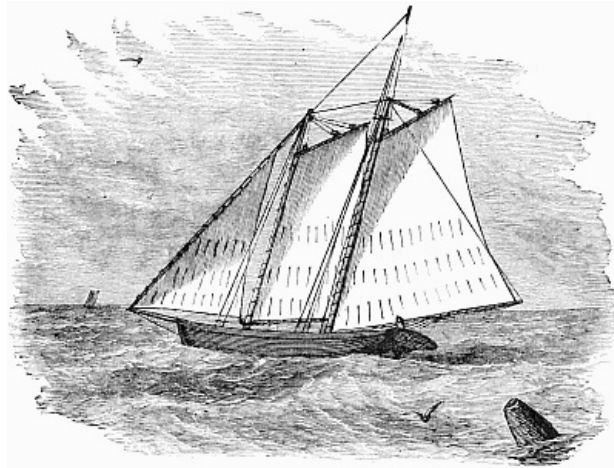
"And take us on another journey, oh! *please!*" added Nibble, jumping up and down, with excitement.

"How is a poor Moonman to do everything at once?" I inquired. "In the first place, there will be no traveling to-night, let me tell you. A very disagreeable Wind has the watch to-night, and I would not trust you in his hands. Yes, he is a detestable fellow, very different from our seven little friends of the other night. He actually tried to blow out my lantern, which is a piece of impudence I have seldom met with. You shall hear a story about him if you will, for only last night I was telling one to Marie and Emil."

"Yes! yes!" cried the mice; "we should like it above all things. But first tell us a little about Marie and Emil. Are they the two children who have been ill?"

"Yes," I replied; "they are French children, and they live in a sea-board town in the south of France,—that is, they live there about half the time: the other half they spend on the water, in their father's yacht. Their father is a rich man, who has a passion for the sea, and likes to spend most of his time on it: and he takes his little boy and girl with him on many of his yacht voyages, for they are as fond of the water as he is, and they have no mother."

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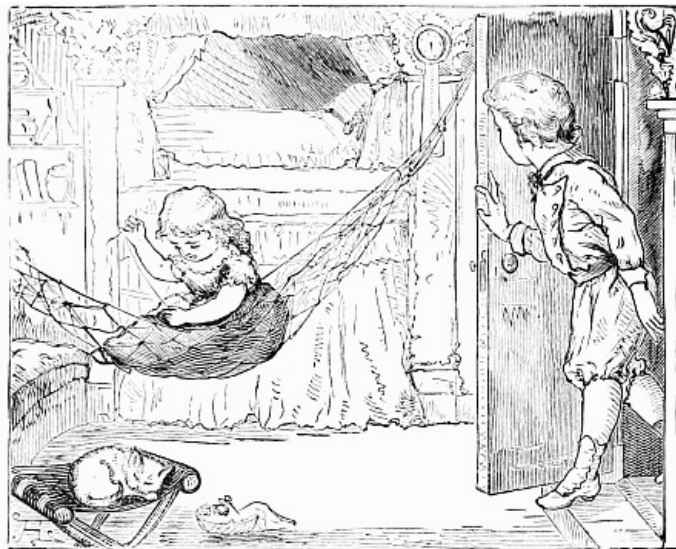


"Oh!" sighed Nibble, "I wish Uncle Jack had a yacht, and a passion for the sea!"

"That would be admirable!" said I. "Two children on a yacht are all very well, but if there were five, the captain and all the crew would jump overboard and drown themselves, I fancy. Certainly, Marie and Emil are very happy on board the Victoria. Marie has a cabin of her own, the prettiest little room you can imagine, where she sits and reads, or swings in her hammock, when she is tired of staying on deck. The sailors are all devoted to them, and now that they are ill on shore, the big captain, Jacques Legros, goes every day up to the house, to ask if 'the little angels are better?'"

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"What is the matter with them?" asked Brighteyes; "and shall we have the story now, if you please?"



"You shall have the story now!" I said, "and they have had the scarlet fever, but are doing very well. Hear that angry Wind outside! how he howls, and shakes the window-frame. He knows that I am going to tell you about his misdeeds. Howl away, my friend; you can do us no harm. So then I told the mice the following story. First, however, I showed them a picture of Marie, which I happened to have in my pocket. They thought she was a very pretty little girl. What do you think?"

THE STORY OF THE WIND.

The great Tree stood out in the green meadow, all alone. No other trees dared to come near him, he was so strong, and tall, and grand; but for all that, he was kind and gentle, and never would hurt anything. One morning the great Tree awoke from his long winter sleep, and found the snow all gone, and the sun shining bright and warm as if it were June instead of the first of April. On his branches were sitting a flock of little birds, and it was their chirping and twittering that had waked him. "Chippity-wippity pip pip, cheepy peepy weep wee-e-e!" they said; and that meant "Wake up, old Tree! Spring has sent us to call you. She is coming directly, and she wants you to get your leaves out as soon as possible, as she has forgotten her parasol, and wants some

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shade for her pretty head."



MARIE.

The great Tree nodded his head, and said, "Tell my lady Spring that I will be ready." And then he shook his branches, and called out, "Little leaves, little children, open your buds and come out! come out!" And one by one the little buds with which the branches were covered opened, and out popped the little leaves. At first they shivered, and wished themselves back in their warm little houses; but the old Tree spoke kindly to them, and then the sunbeams came and kissed them, so that they felt quite happy, and even began to dance about a little on the branches. And they said to each other, "How foolish we were, to think of shutting ourselves up again in those close houses. Here we shall be free and happy, and we will dance all day and all night."

Just then they heard a soft voice whispering, "Little leaves, lovely leaves, will you not dance with me?" And the little leaves said, "Who are you, that whispers so softly?" And the voice answered, "I am the Wind, and I have come to be your playfellow. I can sing, too, and sweetly, and we shall all be happy together." So the Wind sang them a low, sweet song; and then he danced with them, and kissed them gently, and played with them; and they all said, "Oh, dear, gentle Wind, how charming you are! will you not play with us every day, and make us happy?"

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But after the Wind had flown away, the old Tree called to them and said, "My children, beware of the Wind, for he is not to be trusted. Soft and gentle he is to-day, but to-morrow he may be fierce and terrible. Play with him and dance with him, but be always on your guard." And the little leaves nodded their little heads, and answered, "Yes, good father, we will be careful."

Well, for many days the Wind came to play with the leaves, and every day they thought him more delightful. Such wonderful stories as he told them! of all the strange countries he had seen in his wanderings; the beautiful tropical islands, where he slept all day in the palm-tree tops, just waking in the evening to fan the cheeks of the dark-eyed southern ladies for an hour, and then sinking to sleep again under the shining stars; and the terrible northern seas, with their fleets of icebergs, whose pilot he loved to be, guiding them hither and thither, tossing the waves about, and sporting with the seals and walruses on the flat ice-cakes. "And some day, little leaves," he said, "you shall go with me to see these wonders; not to the arctic seas, for you are too tender and delicate to bear the cold; but away to the south, to the coral islands and the orange-groves. There you will see all the beauty of the world, and will laugh at the thought of having been content in this dull meadow, with its stupid daisies and buttercups, and its paltry little brook. Also you will find many cousins there, leaves such as you never dreamed of, wonderful in size and shape and color. Say, then, little playmates, will you come with me, and see all these beautiful things, and many more?"

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But the leaves shook their little heads, and said, "No, dear Wind! we love you, and it would be delightful to go with you, but we cannot leave our father Tree, who is so kind to us, and loves us so dearly."

At first the Wind seemed angry, but soon he smiled and said, "Never mind! some day you will come,—some day!" and away he flew. But oh! the next time he came, what a different Wind he was! no longer gentle, playful, caressing, but fierce, and rough, and stormy. He rushed at the great Tree, howling furiously. He seized the little leaves, and whirled and dashed them about, trying to tear them from the branches; and flung himself against the Tree, as if he would even loose his rooted hold on the ground. But the leaves clung closer and closer, trembling and shivering; and the great Tree braced himself, and met the fierce blast bravely, never losing an

inch of his foothold, and giving back blow for blow with his long powerful arms. At last the Wind was tired and flew away, howling and moaning with anger and disappointment. The little leaves were sadly frightened, but their father Tree comforted them, and said, "Courage, my children! I have fought many a battle with the Wind, and he has never beaten me yet. Only be brave and faithful, and he cannot overcome you."

At first the leaves thought they never wanted to see or hear the Wind again; but a few days after, to their great surprise, he came again, soft and gentle, as he had used to be, and he kissed them and sang to them, and begged them to forgive his wicked temper, and play with him once more. He was so charming that they soon forgave him, and soon forgot all about the storm. And they danced and frolicked about gayly, and listened again to the marvelous tales of far-off countries, of palm-groves and coral islands. [118]

So the time went on and on. The Lady Spring had gathered her green robes about her and passed on, and her children, the wildwood blossoms, had followed her; and now Lady Summer, who had come in her stead, with her arms full of peaches and pears, and her gown covered with lovely garden flowers, was almost ready to depart, and stayed lingering, calling and beckoning to her brother Autumn, who was following very slowly. The leaves on the great Tree had been very happy during Lady Summer's reign. Many a time, it is true, the Wind had been angry with them, because they refused to go away with him, and again and again he had raged and stormed, and tried to tear them away from their happy home. But he was always very sorry after these fits of passion, and they always forgave him readily, for they loved him dearly.

One night, one clear, lovely night, when all things were sleeping in the moonlight, the Wind came and whispered to the leaves. So softly he came, and so softly he spoke, that they did not wake at first, and he had to kiss them all before he could rouse them from their sleep. "Hush, darlings!" he said. "You must not wake the old Tree, for I have a secret to tell you which he must not hear. Something very wonderful is going to happen, and I have come to tell you about it." "What is it, dear Wind? oh, what is it?" whispered the little leaves. And they clustered together and listened. "Well, my darlings," said the Wind, "a very great personage is going to pass through this part of the country to-morrow night. No less a personage than the celebrated Frost, the court painter of the great King Winter. He is one of the most famous painters in the world, but he is also a great friend of mine; and though he is in a hurry to join his royal master, who has now left his Arctic kingdom, and is traveling southward, he has kindly consented to do a great favor for you, my darlings, because I have told him how dearly I love you." [119]

"What is it, dear Wind? oh, what is it?" asked the little leaves again.

"Well," said the Wind, "I know you must be very tired of these dull green dresses. They were well enough in the spring, when they were new and fresh, but now you have been wearing them all summer, and they are dirty and soiled. So I have persuaded my friend Frost to stop here on his way through the meadow, and to paint you all over, with fresh, new, beautiful colors. Only think of it, darlings! think how lovely you will look, all shining in crimson and gold! Now, am I not a good friend? and will you not all give me kisses for this?"

"Oh yes! yes indeed, you good Wind!" cried the leaves. "We will give you as many kisses as you want, and we will thank you till you are tired of being thanked. Oh! how delightful it will be!" and they danced about and about, and they kissed the Wind, and he kissed them.

"And now, good-night!" he said. "Remember, not a word of this to the old Tree, for it would be a pity to rob him of the pleasure of such a charming surprise."

He flew away, but the leaves were too happy to go to sleep again. They whispered and chattered all night about their new dresses. This one would have yellow, and that one would have pink, and that one scarlet, while some of the older ones preferred a rich golden russet. And when morning came, they were still whispering and chattering, and could think of nothing else all day. [120]

At last the wished-for night came; and a beautiful night it was, very cool, but perfectly still, and brilliant with moonlight and starlight. The little leaves waited and waited, till they were, oh! so sleepy! but no one came. At length, when their eyes were closing in spite of themselves, they felt a sudden cold strike them, a cold so intense that it almost took away their breath. They looked up, and saw advancing over the meadow towards them, a strange figure which they knew in a moment must be that of the great Frost. He was very tall and thin, and very pale; and his long robe, and his hair, and his long curling moustaches, looked exactly like silver. Indeed, there was a silvery glitter all about and around him, and as he passed lightly over the grass, it too seemed to them to silver under his feet. He came straight on, came to the tree. Then, without speaking a word, he drew out a long silver brush which had been hidden beneath his robe, and a palette covered with brilliant colors, and began to paint the leaves. But oh! what a deadly chill struck through them when the silver brush touched them. Cold, cold, cold! and a kind of numbness, and a heavy drowsiness, began to creep over them. But when they saw the gorgeous beauty of their new dresses, they were very proud, and tried to hold themselves up, and not to give way to this strange weakness and faintness. And at last, oh! at last, the final touch was given, and with one cold farewell glance from his bright, sharp eyes, the court painter of the great King Winter passed on over the meadow. [121]

Soon morning broke, and the leaves, waking from their brief and uneasy slumber, looked around to see the splendor in which they were arrayed. How the sun stared at them, when he rose. He sent down a special sunbeam to give them his compliments and to say that he had never

seen them look so charming. Oh! very proud were the little leaves, and very happy, they thought; but somehow they did not feel at all well. The day was bright and warm, and yet they were so cold, so cold! and the numbness and weakness still seemed creeping over them, and would not now be shaken off. And now the great Tree awoke, (for he was apt to sleep late, being very old.) But instead of being pleased, as his children thought he would be, when he saw their fine appearance, he sighed and wept.

"Ah, my children!" he said; "my poor unhappy children! I see what has happened. You have listened to the Wind, and the Frost has been with you; and now you will leave me, and I shall be alone again, as I have been so many, many years."

"Oh, no! no! Father Tree," cried the leaves, "we will stay with you always."

But the old Tree shook his head, and said, "No, my children! it is too late. You cannot choose now whether you will go or stay, and soon, soon I shall be left alone."

The little leaves did not understand this, and they tried to forget the sad words, and to be happy with their fine new dresses. But still they were so cold, so cold! and still the drowsy numbness kept creeping, creeping over them, and each day they became weaker and weaker. And one day, oh! one fearful day, the Wind came. Fiercely and furiously he flew across the meadow, savagely he rushed at the great Tree. "Now," he howled, "now, little leaves, will you come with me? ha! ha! *now* will you come?" he clutched the leaves, and they shivered and moaned, and clung to the branches. But alas! their strength was gone, they could no longer resist the blast: and in a moment they were whirled away and away, borne hither and thither on the wings of the mighty Wind, and at last dashed down on the earth, to shiver and die in the cold.

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And once more the great Tree stood alone in the meadow.



CHAPTER IX.

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A PICNIC.



ONE bright morning, at about eleven o'clock, I tipped my glass in the direction of the Mouse-trap. It had been tipped in a very different direction, for I had been watching a buffalo-hunt on the prairies. That is an exciting sport, and one that I should like to join in, if I were a few thousand years younger. Here at the Mouse-trap, however, there was an excitement of quite another sort. All the five mice were hurrying about, evidently very busy. The carriage stood at the door, and Uncle Jack was packing all sorts of things into it. Nibble brought one big basket, and Puff brought another, and both were stowed away under the seat. Brighteyes came down the steps very carefully carrying something in a pitcher, with a napkin tied over the top, and that too was stowed away. As for Fluff and Downy, they were running round and round the house as fast as they could, shouting: "Picnic! picnic! going to a picnic! oh! Jollykaloo! Jollykaloo!"

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"Aha!" I said to my dog, "the mice are going to have a picnic. Let us watch now, and see where they go: and then we shall have all the fun of it, and none of the trouble." So we watched, and saw them all get into the carriage except Nibble, who stood on the steps with his hands in his pockets, evidently waiting for something. The something soon proved to be José, the brown donkey, whom Thomas now led up the path, looking very gay with his Mexican saddle and scarlet tassels. Nibble mounted him nimbly, and took the reins and the whip. "Thank you, Tomty!" he said. "And good-bye! I wish you were going to the picnic, Tomty!" "Thank you kindly, sir!" replied Tomty. "The hens and me will be having a picnic in the barn-yard, Master Nibble, I'm thinking."



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"Now, Uncle Jack, I am ready!" cried the young horseman. "I will lead the way, and you can follow!"

"Thank you!" said Uncle Jack, who was holding in the spirited horses with some difficulty, "you are extremely kind, I am sure!"

"Get up, José!" cried Nibble, "Hi! go on, sir!" But José was not inclined to go on. He shook his head, and pointed his long ears backward and forward, but not a step would he stir, for entreaties, threats, or blows. Then Tomty slyly took a sharp-pointed stake, and poked Master José from behind. Ah, that was another matter! up went his heels in the air, and off he went at full gallop, while all the occupants of the carriage shouted with laughter, as they saw donkey and rider dash along the avenue, and finally vanish in a cloud of dust.

"Come, Pollux! come, Castor!" said Uncle Jack, "it would never do for the donkey to get to the Glen before us."

Castor and Pollux thought so too, for they tossed their heads, and quickened their pace to a fast trot, though they were far too well behaved to think of breaking into a gallop.

"Oh! isn't it nice to go so fastly?" exclaimed Fluffy, giving Downy a hug. "Just like queens in their chariots. See those two little tiny children, Downy! They are smaller as you, and perhaps they think we are queens, only we haven't any crowns; but we might have left our crowns at home for fear of robbers."

"Yef, wobbers!" said Downy, with a knowing nod.

"No I don't think we will be queens," said Brighteyes. "Let us be wild beasts in a caravan, going to the menagerie, and then we can sing the menagerie song." "Oh! yes! yes!" cried all the others. And then they sang the following song, each singing a verse in turn, and then imitating the voice of the creature she represented while the other verses were sung. It was a lively game, you may believe.



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The Tiger is a terrible beast!
He lives in jungles of the East,
On bad little boys he loves to feast:
Oh! fiddledy, diddledy, dido!

The Lion he doth rage and roar;
And when he hits you with his paw,
You never are troubled with nothing no more,
Oh! fiddledy, diddledy, dido!

The Buffalo doth proudly prance,
Whenever the hunters will give him a chance,
And over the prairies he leads them a dance,
Oh! fiddledy, diddledy, dido!

The Crocodile doth open his jaws,
Like great big ugly tusky doors,
And gobbles you up without a pause,
Oh! fiddledy, diddledy, dido!



"THEY STOOD LOOKING AT THE MICE."

By the time the last verse was finished the four mice were howling and roaring in a manner frightful to hear, and Uncle Jack's patience finally gave way. "Children," he said, turning round, "I cannot possibly endure this. Be quiet at once, or I will drive you to the Lunatic Asylum and leave you there! See, the people are all coming out of their houses to stare at you!" So indeed they were, and one little girl, who stood with her mother at a cottage gate, staring with might and main, cried: "Them's all mad, be'n't them, mother?" "No, little girl!" said Puff, with great dignity. "We are wild beasts going to a menagerie!" And the carriage whirled away leaving the child not much the wiser.

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Now they turned into a lovely wood road, when the trees bent down over the carriage, and whispered in the mice's ears. But the mice did not understand, as usual; they only rubbed their ears and said the leaves tickled them. Uncle Jack stopped the horses, and told the mice to tumble out, which they did speedily.

One took a basket, and another a bottle, and all went trotting down the mossy path that led to the lovely glen, while Uncle Jack stayed to unharness the horses, and then followed with the "biggy-wiggy basket," as Downy called it. Indeed, it was a pretty sight to see those little creatures, playing about like so many fairies in that lovely green place. You should have seen the little flower-spirits start up to look at them, as they frisked about among the trees. Little Primrose threw kisses to them, and Violet offered them a dew-drop in her deepest purple cup; but the merry mice thought nothing of the flower spirits and neither saw nor heard them.

"Oh! the brook! the lovely brook!" cried Brighteyes. "We *must* take off our shoes and stockings and wade in it. Mayn't we, Uncle Jack?" Uncle Jack nodded, and off went four pairs of shoes, and four pairs of scarlet stockings. Oh? the little white feet! how pretty they looked, shining through the clear water, that looked so brown in the still pools, and sparkled so white over the rocks and the tiny rapids.

That was fine sport, certainly. Fluff fell in, of course, but nobody seemed to mind it much, and Fluff herself least of all, for it was a very warm day, and Mrs. Posset was not there to lament the "ruination" of her white frock.

Suddenly Brighteyes exclaimed: "But where is Nibble?" Sure enough, where was that famous horseman? nobody had seen him since he had galloped away up the avenue. "Oh, dear!" sighed Fluff, "perhaps he played wild beast, and somebody took him and put him in the Lunatic Asylum! Do you think anybody did, Uncle Jack?"

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"I don't think he would be likely to play wild beast all alone. My fear is that *José* may have been playing, and—but see!" he added, looking back towards the path by which they had entered the glen, "here comes the young man himself, so now we shall know all about it."

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Nibble came down the path slowly, looking very serious. His clothes were covered with dust, his hat was battered out of all shape, and he carried his whip under his arm, instead of snapping it gayly as he had done when he started. *José* was not to be



seen.

"Well, Nibble, my boy, what has happened?" asked Uncle Jack, cheerily. "Has José been rolling with you again?" "Yes, Uncle!" answered Nibble, as he drew near, and threw himself on the mossy bank where his uncle was seated, "he is the worst donkey I ever saw! he wanted some thistles in the hedge, and I wouldn't let him eat them, of course. So then he kicked and reared, but he couldn't get me off *that* way, and I whipped him a good bit. But then he lay down and rolled, and then I *couldn't* stay on you see!" "I see!" said Uncle Jack. "You were certainly justified in getting off. And then José went home, I suppose?" "Well, yes, I suppose he did," said Nibble, reluctantly, "and I have walked a long way, Uncle, and I want my dinner." "Bless me!" cried Uncle Jack, "dinner already? Well, come out of the water, you little Nixies, and let us see about our grand feast!"

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Patter, patter, came all the little white feet, over the mossy stones, and over the green turf, and I could not tell whether they looked prettier in the water or out of it. There was a rush for the baskets, and their contents were tumbled out pell-mell on the grass. Forks, spoons, tarts, sandwiches, lemons, followed each other in rapid succession.

"Now this will never do!" said Uncle Jack. "Too many cooks spoil the broth, as we know, and we must not spoil our feast. Nibble, do you go and gather brush and make a fire. Hap and Hazard shall pick some flowers to make wreaths and posies, and Brighteyes shall help me to set the table." "And what fell I do?" asked little Downy, piteously; "I muf do fomefing!" "So you shall, Downy," said Uncle Jack; "you shall chase all the butterflies away, so that they will not eat up the tarts."

Now every one was happy and busy. The twinnies wandered off into the meadow near by, filling their aprons with posies, and chattering merrily, with little snatches of song mingling with their pretty talk. It was pleasant to hear their sweet voices singing:

Daisy white and Daisy
bright,
And Daisy is my heart's
delight!
I'll twine you now in my true-love's hair,
And tell me who is the fairest fair!

Violet blue and Violet true,
And Violet filled with diamond dew!
I'll give you now to my true love here,
And tell me who is the dearest dear!



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Meanwhile great things were accomplished in the glen. A snowy cloth was spread on the emerald turf, and on it were arrayed all the good things, in dishes and plates, which had been lately hanging on the great sycamore-tree under which the feast was spread.

"Nothing like leaves for picnic-plates!" said Uncle Jack. "Now then, Brighteyes, hand out that chicken pie! So! now for the strawberries and the sponge cake! ha! this certainly does make one hungry." Indeed it did, as I felt the pangs of hunger merely from seeing all the good things in my mirror. "Go, good dog," I said to my faithful companion, "and bring me some ice-cream from Mt. Vanilla. And dip the ladle into that syllabub cloud that is drifting by, for it will make a pleasant addition."

Bmfgth departed on his errand, and I turned again to watch the picnic. The kettle was boiling by this time over Nibble's brush fire, and he was calling for the coffee-pot, when suddenly a shrill scream was heard from the meadow, and Downy's voice cried, "Fomebody come! oh! oh! I'm killed!" Brighteyes ran to the rescue, and found the little man gazing in terror at a very innocent-looking white cow, who was quietly grazing in the meadow. He ran to his sister, and clung to her, crying, "Dat cow looked at me! I'm killed!" Brighteyes took his hand and ran back laughing. "Here is a boy who has been killed by a cow's looking at him," she said, "and he wants a sandwich."

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All was ready now. The twins were called, and came back laden with flowers; Nibble came with his coffee-pot, and the grand feast began in earnest. Dear! dear! how good everything looked! chicken pie and smoked tongue and sandwiches, and chocolate custard in a pitcher, and everything else that you can think of. I never have chicken pie up here, because there are no chickens, but I think it must be very nice, and it was very evident that the mice thought so. Uncle Jack carved and helped, and everybody ate and drank and chattered merrily. My brother Sun smiled at them, and sent millions of sunbeams, twinkling and sparkling over the grass and dancing on the ripples of the brook; and when they were too warm, hosts of merry Winds came flying, and fanned them and kissed them. Among them were the seven little fellows who had blown Nibble and Brighteyes to China, and they whispered, "Dear little Heavy-Ones; will you take another flying-trip with us?" but the children did not hear nor heed them, so nothing further was said.

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When the feast was over, there was a grand washing of spoons and forks, and a putting away of what was good and throwing away of what was bad. Then came blind-man's-buff, and hide-and-seek, and all manner of games; and then more paddling and tumbling in the brook, splashing and dashing, "for all the world like the forty little ducklings!" Uncle Jack said. "Oh! tell us about the little ducklings!" cried all the mice. And they climbed up the bank and sat down in a circle round their uncle, holding up their wet feet to dry in the sun. "About the ducklings, eh?" said Uncle Jack, "well, let me see if I can remember."

The forty little ducklings who lived up at the farm,
They said unto each other, "oh! the day is *very* warm!"
They said unto each other, "oh! the river's *very* cool!"
The duck who did not seek it now would surely be a fool!"

The forty little ducklings they started down the road,
And waddle, waddle, waddle, was the gait at which they go,
The same it is not grammar, you may change it if you choose!
But one cannot stop for trifles when inspired by the Muse.

They waddled and they waddled, and they waddled on and on,
Till one remarked, "oh! deary me, where *is* the river gone?
We asked the Ancient Gander, and he said 'twas very near,
He must have been deceiving us, or else himself, I fear."

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They waddled and they waddled, till no further they could go,
Then down upon a mossy bank they sat them in a row.
They took their little handkerchiefs and wept a little weep,
And then they put away their heads, and then they went to sleep.

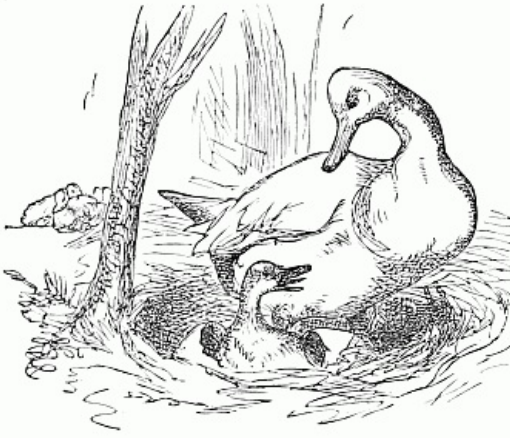
There came along a farmer, with a basket on his arm,
And all those little ducklings he took back to the farm,
He put them in their little beds and wished them sweet repose,
And fastened mustard plasters on their little webby toes.

Next day those little ducklings were very, very ill,
Their mother sent for Dr. Quack, who gave them each a pill,
But soon as they recovered, the first thing that they did
Was to peck the Ancient Gander, till he ran away and hid.

"There!" said Uncle Jack, "weren't they funny ducklings?" "Yes!" said Puff; "is it true, Uncle?" "Part of it is," replied Uncle Jack. "It is true about the ducklings running away, and about the farmer's finding them. I know the farmer. His name is Mr. Thomas Burnham, and a very good farmer he is. But I did not see him put the mustard plasters on their feet, so I cannot tell about that." "Then tell us something else, please!" cried Brighteyes. "No! no!" said Uncle Jack; "it is six o'clock, you bad children! Once upon a time there were five little mice, and it was time for them to go home. That is the only story I can tell you now."

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Well, to be sure, it did seem a shame to go home,



just when everything was so lovely. But Downy was beginning to rub his eyes as if my friend the Sandman had been blowing into them, and the shadows were lengthening, and Brother Sun was beginning to call his beams home. So the mice



bade farewell to the lovely glen, and the merry brook, and trotted up the mossy path as cheerfully, if not as quickly as they had trotted down it. Harum-scarum and flyaway my mice certainly are, but they are almost always cheerful and obedient, and that is a great thing. Primrose and Violet and the rest looked after them, and said, "God bless their merry hearts!" then they curled down under their leaves and went to sleep, for it was high time. The brook sang its sweetest good-bye song, as it hurried away toward the sea, to tell the gossiping waves what a delightful afternoon it had passed; and as if in answer to the song, I heard Puff and Fluff singing merrily, as the carriage rolled away:

"Rosebud fine and Rosebud mine,
And Rosebud red as the ruby wine,
I'll lay you now at my true-love's feet,
And tell me who is the sweetest sweet!"

CHAPTER X.

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THE CARRIAGE CLOUD.

"GOOD evening to you all!" I said, as I stepped in at the nursery window. "This is a night for a journey, if you please. All the rough and unruly Winds are out of the way, for there is to be a match to-night between the North-east wind and a Southern tornado, to see which can blow the harder, and all their relations have gone to look on. But our seven little friends have no liking for such rough bear-play, and they are waiting outside, with a carriage-cloud which will hold you all. So jump up, and call Nibble and Brighteyes. But first, I must know why my Fluff has been crying. You must have cried yourself to sleep, my mouse, and that will never do. Tell your old Moonman what has happened, for I have been watching a battle in Zululand all day, and have seen neither mice nor mouse-trap."

"We have had a very melancholy day, Mr. Moonman!" replied Fluff, "Vashti Ann has been hanged, and it is a terrible thing to hang your own child, even if Nibble does it for you." "Vashti Ann hanged!" I exclaimed. "Dear! dear! how very distressing! what had she done, pray, and how did it all happen?" "We don't think she meant to do it," said Puff gravely; "but Nibble said she ought to be hanged all the same. You see, we had just dressed the baby"—"and she was Vashti Ann's *own* child!" Fluff broke in impressively.



FLUFF.



"Please do not interrupt me, Fluffy!" said Puffy with dignity. "And we set her down in front of her mother, and told her to say her lesson like a good baby, only she can't really say it, you know, but we play she does. So then Fluffy went for a walk with the other dolls, but I had to darn a hole in my stocking. Mrs. Posset is teaching me to darn, and it is my duty, but I don't like my duty. So I was sitting by the window, and nobody was doing anything at all, when suddenly Vashti Ann fell right down on the baby's head and"—"and killed her!" cried Fluff, bursting into tears. "Killed her all dead into little pieces!" "How very, very shocking!" I said. "And was the wretched mother hurt herself?" "No!" answered Puff. "Her head was china, Mr. Moonman, and the baby's was wax, you see." "I see!" said I. "The brass pot and the earthen one!" "If you had ever seen Vashti Ann, Mr. Moonman," said Fluff through her tears, "you would not call her such names as a brass pot. Her hair was gossy as the raven's wing, like the lady in the ballad that Uncle Jack read to us

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last night; and I never wanted to call her Vashti Ann, but I wanted to call her Isidora Vienna, but Uncle Jack said her name was Vashti Ann when he buyed her, so I couldn't help it." And Fluff dried her eyes with the end of the pillow-case, and looked very mournful. "Well! well!" I said. "This is certainly very painful. So then you hanged Vashti Ann?" "No, Nibble hanged her," said Fluff, "with a clothesline, and it was a terribul scene, Uncle Jack said it was. And then we buried them both together under a rose bush. We are going to have a monument over them, but Nibble wants to put 'the Murdered and the Murderess' on it, and I won't have it." "I certainly would not!" said I. "But now you must call Nibble, and Brighteyes too, for the little Winds are growing impatient, and we must be off. Dry your eyes, little one, and think what a fine ride you are going to have!"

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Nibble and Brighteyes were summoned; and in a few minutes all the five mice were sitting comfortably in the very softest, fattest, whitest cloud that the whole sky could produce. How it curled up round their shoulders, and wrapped itself about them! and how they did enjoy the luxurious softness! then the seven Winds puffed at it, and away it went like a ball of thistledown through the air! "Where shall we go, my pets?" I asked, as I rode along, beside them. "You have the wide world to choose from, und shall go just where you please." "I want to go to the North Pole, Mr. Moonman!" cried Nibble. "You promised us to take us there, you remember, the last time you came. I want to see the icebergs, and the white bears, and all the wonderful things there are there!" "To the North Pole it is, then!" I replied. "It is just the night for it, as all the savage Winds are away."

So we flew northward, far and far away, over cities and hamlets, over vast plains and shaggy forests. By the margin of a pond that we passed a tall night-heron was standing on one leg. He looked up at us, and was so much astonished that he toppled over and fell into the water with a loud splash. How all the mice laughed, and the merry Winds with them! all, that is, except my little Fluff, who looked sad, and was still thinking of Vashti Ann. "Fluffy," I said, "I must see you

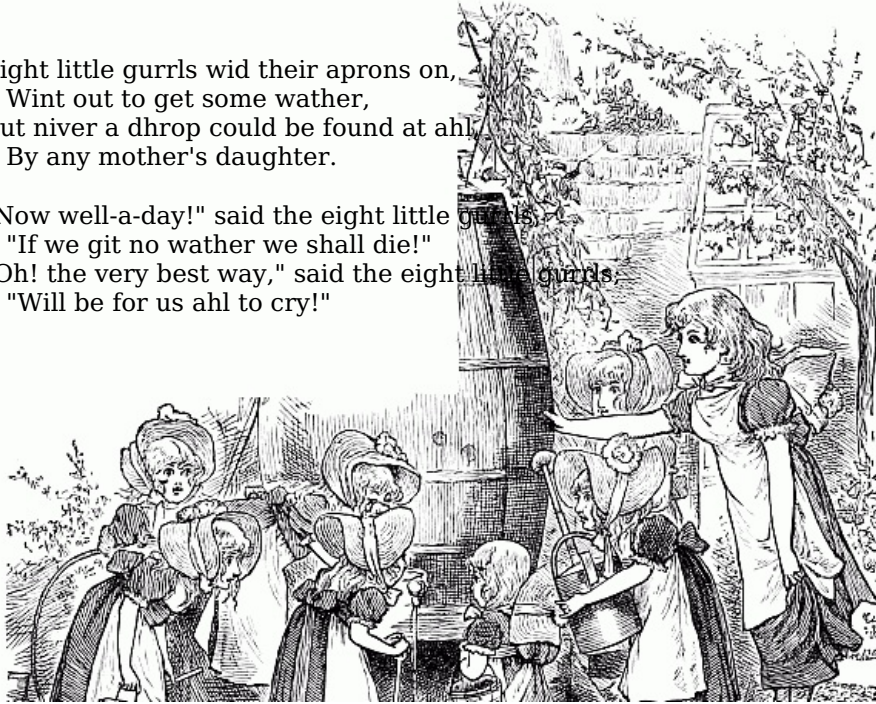
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smile again. Shall I sing you a song that I heard to-day?" "Yes, if you please, Mr. Moonman!" said Fluff meekly. "It is a funny little song," I said. "I heard an Irish mother singing it to her baby. She was sitting by the door of her cottage with the baby in her lap, and she was paring potatoes, and all the parings fell into the baby's face, but he did not seem to mind it at all, so I suppose it was all right."

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Eight little gurrils wid their aprons on,
Wint out to get some wather,
But niver a dhrop could be found at ahl,
By any mother's daughter.

"Now well-a-day!" said the eight little gurrils,
"If we git no wather we shall die!"
"Oh! the very best way," said the eight little gurrils,
"Will be for us ahl to cry!"



So they cried and cried, the eight little gurrils,
And they cried and they cried all day,
And when evening came, there was wather enough
For to fill up the salt, salt say!

Fluff laughed a little; and presently she said shyly, "I can sing a song too, Mr. Moonman, if you would like to hear it. It is a song about some dogs, and perhaps if you would learn it, you could sing it to your dog when you get home." "Let us have the song, by all means," I said. "My dog is very fond of music, and has himself a powerful voice."



So Fluffy sang her little song; and in case any of you children should like to sing it for yourselves, I will write down the music as well as the words.

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1. Jip - py and Jim - my were two lit - tle dogs, They
 2. Jip - py and Jim - my crept out a - - gain, They
 3. Jip - py and Jim - my went shiv - er - ing home, They

went to sail on some float - ing logs, The logs roll'd o - ver: the
 said, "the riv - er is full of rain!" They said, "the wa - ter is
 said, "on the riv - er no more we'll roam! And we won't go to sail

dogs roll'd in, And they got very wet, for their clothes were thin.
 far from dry,' Ki - hi! ki - hi! ki - hi - yi! ki - hi!
 until we learn how," Bow - wow! bow - wow! bow - wow - wow! bow - wow!

[Transcriber's Note: You can play this music (MIDI file) by clicking [here](#).]



"Bravo! Fluff," I said. "That is a good song, and they were sensible little dogs. It is well to be sure about understanding a thing before one attempts it, as Master Nibble would find out, if he were once mounted on this frisky moonbeam, at which he is casting such longing eyes." "It does look so delightful!" sighed Nibble. "But after all, the cloud is delightful too, and I suppose I should be cold if I were not wrapped up in it. How far north are we now, Mr. Moonman?" "Somewhere near the coast of Labrador," I replied. "Little Winds, lower the cloud a bit, that the mice may see the fishing fleet. The fishermen are all asleep, but the boats are a pretty sight, when they can be seen through the fog."

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Lightly and softly the cloud floated downward, and as they descended, the merry Winds blew the wreaths of fog away, so that we could see the bare brown coast, and the hundreds of fishing-smacks lying at anchor. Lights gleamed at bow and stern. They danced about, as the little vessels rocked gently on the waves, which seemed to be half asleep, singing soft lullabies to each other.

"Ripple blue and ripple green,
 Foaming crest and silver sheen,
 Sleep beneath the moon!
 Till the daylight comes again,
 Waking us to restless pain
 All too soon."

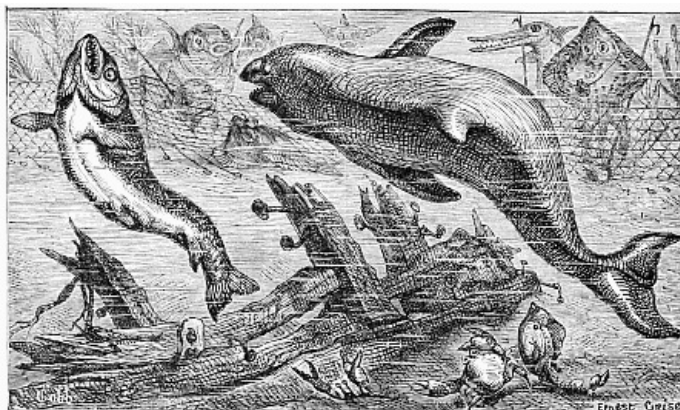
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"Yes," I said, "this is a holiday-time for the waves, and still more for the fish. All day long the poor creatures have a hard time of it, for hundreds and hundreds of skilful and eager fishermen are on the look-out for them. But at night their only enemies are those who live in the water, and I have heard that the whale and the swordfish go to bed at ten o'clock regularly, and never stir from their trundle-beds till six o'clock in the morning. I do not state that as a fact, however, because I am not positively sure about it." "Dear me!" said Brighteyes. "Just fancy a whale in a trundle-bed! how very queer he would look!" "Does he spout when he's asleep?" inquired Fluff anxiously. "Because the bedclothes would get wet, you know, and he would take cold!"

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Here, I am sorry to say, the other mice laughed, and Fluffy does not like to be laughed at, so she was silent. Then said one of the seven Winds, "I never saw any of them in bed, but I have seen their races, and very funny they are. They have hurdle-races every Tuesday afternoon, jumping over the fragments of wrecks which are strewn all over the bottom of the sea. They lead a merry life, those whales; what with hurdle-races and fish hunts and spouting matches. If one could not live in the air, the next best thing would be to live in the water, I think. Hi! yonder is a fleet of icebergs. Look, little Heavyones! that is a sight worth seeing."



Surely, it was very beautiful, though terrible. My silver beams lighted up the huge masses of ice, till they looked like mountains of crystal, moving slowly over the face of the water. The children gazed at them, half frightened, half-admiring, and wrapped themselves more closely in the warm, fleecy cloud. The icebergs formed a huge circle, and midway in it the cloud floated, rocking like an airy vessel as the Winds breathed softly on it. We were all silent for a time: then Brighteyes asked in a half-whisper. "Is this the North Pole, Mr. Moonman?" "Why, no, Brighteyes!" said Puff. "It can't be the Pole, for there isn't any pole for it to be!" "Yes," I said, "that is one way of putting it. We have not reached the North Pole, my mice, and indeed I think we shall hardly go so far to-night, for I see that these icebergs are waiting for the North Wind to blow them home, and that is a sign that he will soon be here. He is a disagreeable fellow, and might be rude to you, so we will fly over to Greenland instead, and see some little friends of mine there. Will that suit you just as well?" "Oh! yes," cried the five voices. "It will be better, for we want to see what the people are like in these strange places." So we floated low till we came to a certain small Esquimaux village on the west of Greenland. "What are all those queer humps of snow on the ground?" asked Fluff. "Oh!" cried Nibble, clapping his hands. "I know! they are houses, for I have seen pictures of them. See! there is smoke coming out of the top of one. And now somebody is coming out of the doorway. Oh! it is a bear, Mr. Moonman! do they have tame bears? And he is brown, and I thought they were all white." "Gently, Nibble!" I said, "your eyes are very sharp usually, but it is shocking that you should not know a boy from a bear. That is Nayato, one of the young friends of whom I spoke just now. There comes his brother Kotchink,

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and the small figure creeping out of the next house is Polpo, the friend and playmate of the two other boys. Now they will have fine sport, for this is their play-time, and they are as fond of play as any of you." The five mice leaned over the edge of the cloud as far as they dared, and watched the Esquimaux boys with breathless interest. They were queer little fellows, clad in furs from head to foot, and were fat and oily-looking, as indeed anyone might be who ate blubber three times a day: but otherwise they were apparently much like boys all over the world. They chased each other, and played hide-and-seek behind blocks of ice and snow, and amused themselves in all kinds of ways. Their only playthings were some bones of the seal and walrus, nicely polished, but they seemed to have just as much fun with them as if they had been the finest marbles or the most superlative tops that the world could produce. "How jolly they look!" said Nibble. "I wish I could jump down and play with them! and oh! don't they talk strangely, Brighteyes? 'Wogglety wagglety, chacka-chacka punksky'—what are they saying, Mr. Moonman?" "Nayato is telling Polpo of the narrow escape his father had yesterday," I replied. "It seems that he was out on the flat ice looking out for seals. He had just harpooned a fine fellow, and was just on the point of putting him on his sledge, when he heard a loud snuffling noise behind him; and turning round, saw to his horror a huge white bear, squatting on the ice within a few yards of him, and apparently trying to decide whether the seal or the seal-hunter would make the more savory meal. Wallop, however, (that is the man's name,) had no doubt about the matter. He flung the seal towards his Polar Majesty, and took to his heels, fortunately reaching his reindeer-sledge in time to escape being made the second course of Bruin's dinner. 'Chacka-chacka punksky' means 'I will kill that bear when I am a man.'"

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"Oh! how exciting that must have been!" cried Nibble. "I think I should like to be an Esquimaux, Mr. Moonman! Couldn't you leave me here for a week or two?" "To live in a snow hut, and eat blubber and drink train-oil?" I asked in return. "No, my mouse, I could not, or at least I would not. And that reminds me that we must be flying home again, for morning will soon be here. Blow, little Winds, blow the cloud back as fast as you can."

How the seven little fellows puffed out their cheeks, and flapped their wings! and how the cloud flew through the air! The mice looked back regretfully, but the Esquimaux boys were already out of sight. Southward and still southward we flew, the Winds striving with might and main to keep up with my swift beam. Over land and sea, mountain and valley, forest and meadow, till at last the great linden trees around the Mouse-trap were shaking their heads at us, and the tall chimneys pointed at us, and said, "look at those children! they have been out all night, which is shocking. That vagrant Moonman is teaching them the worst possible habits!"



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CHAPTER XI.

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A BIRTHDAY PARTY.

"UNCLE JACK!" said Fluff, one morning, as she came and stood by her uncle's side in the porch, while he was reading his newspaper.

"Well, Blossom!" said Uncle Jack, looking up, "what is it? any more murders in the nursery? we shall have to hang all those dolls before long, I am firmly convinced of it."



"No! no! Uncle Jack," exclaimed Fluff, looking much distressed. "It is nothing about the dolls; and you *know* that was a waxidental murder, Uncle, and I don't see why you laugh about it." [155]
"There! there! little woman," said the good uncle, taking her on his knee and kissing her; "she shall not be teased about her children. But now let me hear quickly what you want to say, Blossom, for I must finish reading my newspaper."

"Well, Uncle," said Fluff, in a confidential tone, "this is Peepsy's birthday, you know, and I want to make some pottery for him. I have made a little, but there is something queer about it, and I want you to help me."

"Stop!" said Uncle Jack, gravely. "Let us understand this thing thoroughly. Peepsy, you say? Peepsy? I don't seem to recall the name. Is she a doll?"

"Oh! *no!* Uncle Jacket!" cried Fluff. "How could she be a doll when she is a bird? and besides, she isn't she at all; she is he."

"Oh!" said Uncle Jack; "a bird! ah yes! that alters the case. And you want to make some pottery for him, eh? why, what's the matter? have you broken his water-dish, or his bath-tub?"

Fluffy sighed and looked despondent. Then she said very gently, "Perhaps you are not quite well this morning, Uncle Jack, for I cannot make you possibly understand anything. When I say pottery, I mean pottery with rhymes in it, like the Riginal Poems. Don't you know 'The Lobster's black, when boiled he's red?' that's what I mean." [156]

"To be sure!" said Uncle Jack. "I am certainly very stupid this morning, but now I understand. We are to make some rhymes, (we call it *poetry*, Fluffy dear, not pottery,) about Peepsy, a bird, whose birthday is to be celebrated to-day. And it is to be like



the Original Poems for Infant Minds; and you have made part of it, and I am to help you with the rest. Is that all right, my Blossom?"

"Yes, you clever Uncle!" cried Fluff, clapping her hands. "That is all right, and the paper is all ready in the library, please, dear."

"Oh! you little monkey!" said Uncle Jack, laughing and laying aside his paper. "Well, the sooner it is done the sooner it is done with, as

Mrs. Posset says. So run along, and I will follow you."

Fluff led the way joyfully to the library, and for some time the two were closeted together, in deep and earnest consultation. At length Fluff came out, looking very happy and proud, waving a paper in her hand. She ran up to the nursery, where Puff and Downy were, busy with the doll family, the remaining members of which were more tenderly cherished than ever, since the deaths of Vashti Ann and her daughter. Fluff entered in triumph with her paper. "Here is the pottery, Puffy!" she said. "Uncle Jack says it isn't pottery, but something else; but here it is, anyhow."



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THE DOLL'S NURSERY.

"Oh! how nice!" said Puff. "Sit down and read it to the children and Peepsy, won't you, Fluff?" So Fluff sat down, and as soon as she had recovered her breath, read as follows:

Our Puffy has a little bird,
And Peepsy is his name,
And now I'll sing a little song,
To celebrate the same.

He's yellow all from head to foot,
And he is very sweet,
And very little trouble, for
He never wants to eat.

He never asks for water clear,
He never chirps for seed,
For cracker or for cuttlefish,
For sugar or chickweed.

"Oh what a perfect pet!" you cry,
But there's one little thing,

One drawback to the bonny bird,
Our Peepsy cannot sing.

He chirps no song at dawn or eve,
He makes no merry din,
But this, one cannot wonder at,
For Peepsy's made of tin.

"Isn't it lovely?" said Puff, drawing a long breath. "It prescribes him perfectly. Doesn't it, you dear Peepsy?" she added, holding up a blue cage about two inches square, in which hung the precious bird. "And did you make it almost all, Fluffy?"

"Well—no!" said Fluff, considering, "not almost *all*, but almost a good deal of it. I said all the things I wanted to say, and Uncle Jack changed some of the words, and put rhymes into them. I think it *is* nice," she continued, "and I am glad you like it, Puff. But now we must make haste and dress all the dolls in their best clothes, for Nibble and Brighteyes promised to give Peepsy a birthday party, you know, and they are getting it ready in the garden, under the cotton-wool tree."



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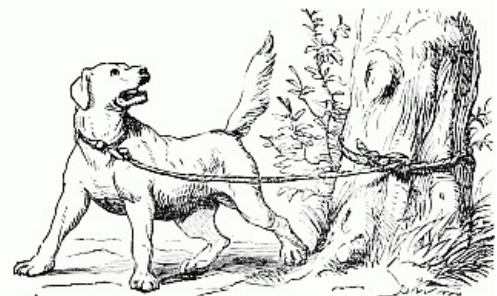
"The cotton-wool tree!" said I to myself. "I think I must look and see what that means." So I tipped my glass just a hair's breadth, towards the lower part of the garden. There, sure enough, were Nibble and Brighteyes, hard at work amid the new-mown hay. They were making it into five hay-cocks, which were arranged in a circle under a huge balm-of-Gilead tree. The ground was covered with the pods which had fallen from the tree, all filled with white soft silk cotton, and I knew this must be the cotton-wool tree. Grim was tied to another tree hard by, a position which he did not enjoy, to judge from his impatient jumping and barking.



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"Yes, Grim, I know it isn't at all nice to be tied up!" said Nibble, in reply to a long

howl of protest from the dog. "But we cannot have you jumping over our thrones. When the party is all ready, you shall come to it, so you ought to be patient. Now, Brighteyes, if you will make a little cotton-wool throne in the middle for Peepsy. I will get the lunch ready. Where are the three bones for the dogs?"



"Over there, behind Fluff's hay-cock," said Brighteyes.

"And there are five gingerbread birds that Susan made, one for each of us, and the wooden turkey out of the doll-house for Peepsy, because he won't really eat it, you know. Oh! and we ought to have something for Tomty, Nibble, for we invited him, and he said he would certainly come. You might ask Susan for a cup of tea when you go up to call the children, for I heard Tomty tell her yesterday that all the vegetables he wanted were bread and tea."

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"Well, so I will!" said Nibble. "And if Susan will not give us any, he can have a cup of milk, and play it is tea."

So away went Nibble, jumping on the hay-cocks, and whistling as he went. Soon he returned, with the three little mice trotting behind him, and Tomty, with his rake over his shoulder, bringing up the rear.

"Here we all are!" cried Puff, joyfully. "Is the party ready, Brighteyes? I think Peepsy is very impatient, though he behaves beautifully."

"Yes, everything is ready!" replied Brighteyes. "Here is Peepsy's throne in the middle, and these hay-cocks are ours. Put him on his throne, Puffy—so! now all sit down yourselves, please, and take the dolls in your laps." The mice and Tomty obeyed meekly, and perched themselves on the hay-cocks as best they might.

"Now," continued Brighteyes, "we must all have names, of course, because it isn't any fun just to be ourselves at a party. I will be the Countess Kinchinjunga. What will you be, Nibble!"

"Oh! I am the Bold Baron of Borodino," said Nibble. "Puff and Fluff can be the Princess Perriwinkle and the Marchioness of Mulligatawney, and Downy shall be Nosolio, the Niggardly Knife-Grinder of Nineveh. There's a fine name for you, Downy, boy!"

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The Niggardly Knife-Grinder smiled contentedly, and said, "Yef, I'm dat, only I tan't say it."



"And now," said Nibble, "we will have the lunch, and then we must all make speeches to Peepsy, because that is the proper thing. Countess Kinchinjunga, produce the feast!" Nibble said this with a very lordly air, and waved his hand with great dignity; but unfortunately at that moment he lost his balance, and rolled off the hay-cock, to the great amusement of the other mice. But Brighteyes uttered a cry of distress. "Oh! Nibble, you have rolled on Tomty's cup of tea and upset it. What shall we do?"

"Never mind, Miss!" said Tomty, smiling, "sure I'm not hungry, Miss, let alone it's almost dinner time. And thank ye kindly all the same, Miss Brighteyes."



"Well, Tomty, you shall hear the speeches, anyhow," said Nibble, consolingly, "and that will be the best part of it; though I am very sorry I upset the tea," he added, "and you shall have my gingerbread bird, if you like, instead." But Tomty declined the bird, with many thanks; and now the "party" began in earnest. Grim was untied, and a sharp whistle from Tomty brought Gruff and Grab to see what was going on. Each dog received a huge bone as his share of the feast, and each showed his delight in his own way. Then the five gingerbread birds were distributed, and the wooden turkey, which was certainly a work of art, was placed before Peepsy's cage with a great deal of ceremony. Peepsy himself manifested no excitement, but no doubt he enjoyed himself in his own way. Then the turkey was handed round to all the dolls, Fanny Elssler and Katinka and Sally Bradford; and Puff declared that they all had as much as they could possibly eat, which was probably true. When the feast was over, Nibble rose and said, solemnly, "the speeches will now begin. Tomty, you are the oldest, and you shall make the first speech to Peepsy." "Is it the little tin fowl in the cage, sir?" asked Tomty. "Well, Mr. Peepsy, I've lived forty years, men and boy, and never made a speech yet, sir, but here's wishing you good health, and long life to you, Mr. Peepsy; and if you live till you sing a song, you'll come to a good old age, I'm thinking." And Tomty sat down, amid the applause of his audience.

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"That was a very good speech, Tomty," said Nibble, with a patronizing air, "though it was short. Now hear mine, all of you. Ahem!" and the young orator, standing on the top of his hay-cock, struck an imposing attitude. "Friends, Romans, and Tomty, lend me your ears! this is Peepsy's birthday, and he is one year old. I bought him myself at Jane Evans's shop, so I ought to know. He will never be one year old again, and neither shall we, which makes us all sad." "I isn't fad a bit!" interrupted Downy, with a gleeful chuckle. "Well, you ought to be!" said Nibble, "but you are too young to know much, I suppose. Peepsy is sad, and he might weep if he had any eyes, but they are only little holes in his head. It is sad not to have any eyes, but it is an advantage not to be able to weep. If Puff hadn't had any eyes, she wouldn't have made such a fuss yesterday when I jumped on her toe from the apple tree, because I didn't mean to." "I don't think that is very nice to put in a speech, Nibble!" said Puff, looking rather hurt. "Well," said Nibble, hastily, "I won't say anything more about it, but I want to say this:

"When I bought him at Jane Evans's shop,
Peepsy was glad.
Now that he is one year old and knows that he won't be it any more,
Peepsy is sad."

"That is poetry," he added, "and that is the best way to finish a speech."

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Upon this Nibble sat down, and after a moment's pause, Brighteyes rose, and spoke as follows: "Peepsy, I am afraid you think it is very hard that you have to stay in your cage all the time. I know I should not like to live in a cage, but then I am not afraid of cats. But if you were to come out and be alive, you would be dreadfully afraid of the china cat in the doll-house, you know you would. Thus we see that all things are for the best!"



and I am sure your cage is a perfect beauty, which must be a great comfort. Perhaps you think you would like some worms, Peepsy; and we would certainly get you some if you could eat them, but you cannot. My dear Peepsy, I will now conclude my speech, wishing you many happy returns of the day."

Now it was Puff's turn, but to my surprise, this little mouse, who is generally very ready with her tongue, seemed to hang back. "Let Fluffy read the pottery!" said Puff. "I am so hot, and my head aches so, I don't think I can make my speech."

So Fluff read the famous piece of pottery, to the great delight of all. Meanwhile I was looking more closely at Puff, and though I was—well, how many miles off? answer, some of you big children! certainly a great many!—still I could see plainly enough that the child was not well. Her cheeks were hot and flushed,

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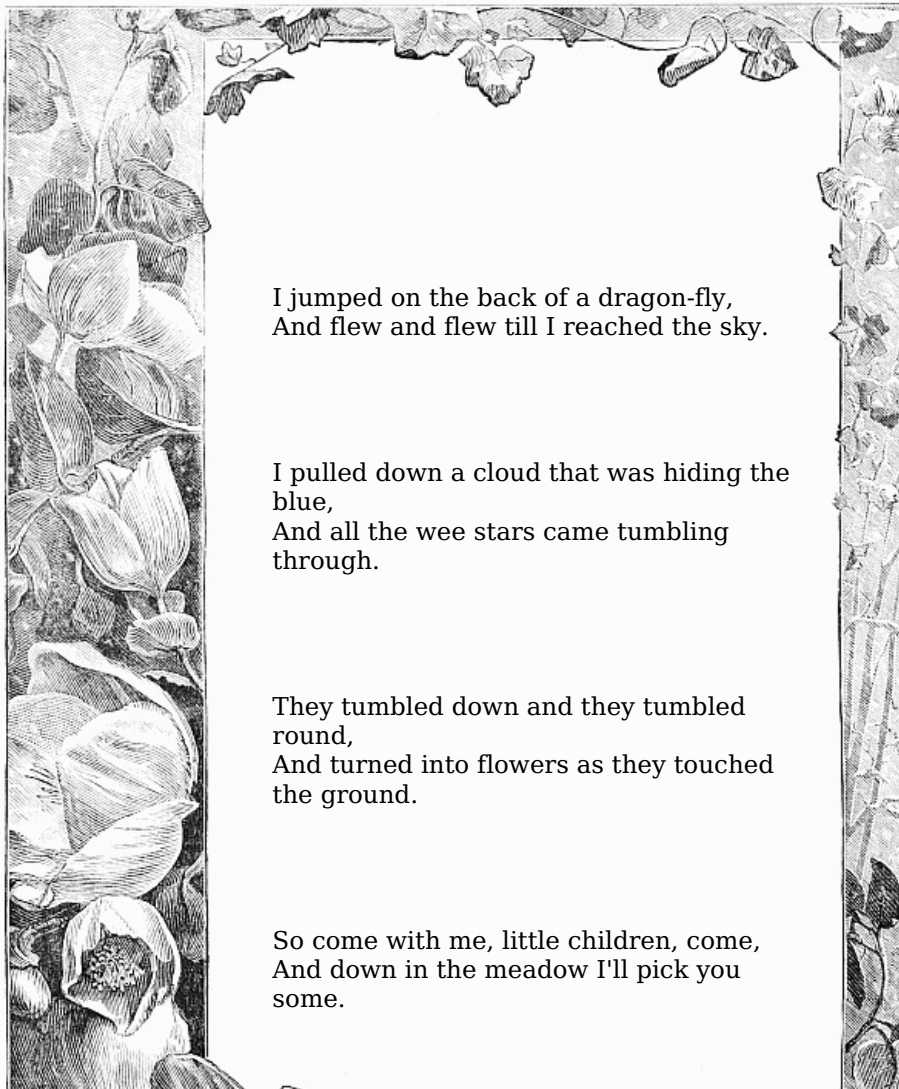
and her blue eyes shone with a strange brightness, very different from their usual sunny light. I was glad to see that Tomty was also observing his little pet; and presently he said quietly, "Miss Puff, dear, the sun is too hot for you. Shall Tomty give you a ride on his shoulder, and we'll find Mrs. Posset?"

"Yes, please, Tomty!" said Puff, wearily; "I am so *very* tired, though I don't know why I should be."

The other mice clustered round their sister, and kissed and patted her. They saw that Tomty looked anxious, and when he had carried Puff up to the house in his arms, they soon followed, taking Peepsy and the dolls with them. The three dogs only remained under the cotton-wool tree, discussing the party very gravely, and wondering why it was that human beings never cared to gnaw bones. And so, rather sadly, ended Peepsy's birthday party.



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I jumped on the back of a dragon-fly,
And flew and flew till I reached the sky.

I pulled down a cloud that was hiding the
blue,
And all the wee stars came tumbling
through.

They tumbled down and they tumbled
round,
And turned into flowers as they touched
the ground.

So come with me, little children, come,
And down in the meadow I'll pick you
some.



CHAPTER XII.

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SICKNESS IN THE MOUSE-TRAP.

I was very anxious about my little Puff, though I had so much to attend to during the rest of that afternoon, that I could not even look in my glass to see how things were going at the Mouse-trap. A young and giddy Comet had got his tail twisted round one of my mountain-peaks, and could not disentangle it, and this was a pretty piece of work, as you may imagine. He wriggled and flounced about in a truly disgraceful manner, and it was only by making Bmfgkth bite his nose *very* hard indeed that I was enabled to get him free, and send him off to his grandmother with a good scolding. (A comet cannot move his tail when his nose is bitten. This is a fact not generally known on the earth.) But late in the evening, when I knew it was sleepy-time for all the little people down below, I mounted my faithful Flash, and flew down to see how my mice in general, and my Puffy mouse in particular, were doing.

I found the aspect of the nursery somewhat changed. Downy's crib was gone, and Puff was alone in the large bed. Uncle Jack was leaning over her, listening to her heavy breathing, and beside the bed sat Mrs. Posset, in a huge wrapper and a night-cap, evidently prepared to sit up all night. As I came in, Uncle Jack was just saying "The doctor says it is certainly scarlet fever, Mrs. Posset, so I shall send the other children off by the early train, to their aunt, who is at the sea-shore."

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"Dear to goodness, sir!" cried Mrs. Posset. "And who is to go with the lambs? and Downy never away from me a night since he was born, that is to say, further than the next room!"

"I shall go with them, of course," said Uncle Jack, "and I shall take Susan as nursery-maid, that they may not give Mrs. Wilton too much trouble. You will have time to pack their things in the morning, Mrs. Posset. I must go now to give John and Thomas their orders, and you are to call me if Puffy wakes, remember!"

Then Uncle Jack went out softly, and Mrs. Posset, after settling herself comfortably among her cushions, put on her spectacles, and opening a huge Bible which lay in her lap, began to read. Now was my chance, for the good nurse was far too wide awake to hear anything I said, and Puff was in a heavy, feverish sleep.

"So, now we are going to have some delightful evenings together," I said, as I sat down by her pillow. "You have the scarlet fever, my mouse, and all the other mice are to be sent away to the sea-shore, it seems."

"Are they?" said Puff. "I am glad of that, for then they will not be ill. But it will be very lonely without them, Mr. Moonman. And shall I feel so sick all the time, I wonder?"

"I hope not, indeed!" I replied; "and as for loneliness, not a bit of it. In the day time you will have Mrs. Posset and Uncle Jack to take care of you and pet you, and at night you will have me, and the dolls beside. I see that you have Sally Bradford here beside you. You will find her quite companionable, I assure you."

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"But the dolls cannot talk, Mr. Moonman!" said Puff. "I have often and often tried to make them, but they never say a word."

"That is because you only try in the day time, Miss Puff!" said Sally Bradford, in a shrill voice. "No well-bred doll would ever think of talking in the day time, as Mr. Moonman can tell you. Try us at night, when you are asleep, and you will find that we have quite as much to say for ourselves as other people."

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"But it seems so queer to be doing things when one is asleep!" said Puff.

"Why queerer than to do them when one is awake?" I asked. "The dolls wonder at you quite as much as you wonder at them, depend upon it! And now, what shall I do to amuse you, mouse of mine? will you have a story, or a song, or what will you have?"

"Of course I will have both, if I may, Mr. Moonman!"



answered Puff. "I should like to hear stories and songs every days and all nights, and never stop!"

So I sang, and all the dolls sat up in their beds to listen. The Jumping-Jack held up his hands with delight, and the wooden Nutcracker grinned from ear to ear. Only Mrs. Posset sat up in the big chair, wide awake, and heard never a word.



THE FAIRY TEA-PARTY.

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I went to take tea with the three little fairies
Who live in the depth of the hazel wood.
And what do you think we had for supper?
Oh! everything dainty and everything good.

There was tea in a buttercup, cream in a blue-bell,
Marigold butter and hollyhock cheese,
Slices of strawberry served in a nutshell,
And honey just brought by the liveried bees.

We sat 'neath the shade of a silvery mushroom,
All lined with pale pink, nicely fluted and quilled,
And around us the cup-moss held up its red goblets,
Each one with a dew drop like diamond filled.

We ate and we drank and we chatted together,
Till the fireflies lighted us off to our beds;
And we all fell asleep in our cots made of rose leaves,
With pillows of thistledown under our heads.

"How nice that must have been!" sighed Puffy. "I wish I could see all the lovely things you see, Mr. Moonman! Don't you want Fluffy and me to come up and be your little girls in the Moon? then we could see all the wonderful things for ourselves."

"And I should not have the pleasure of telling you about them," I replied, "which would be truly melancholy. No, no, my little one! you are far better off where you are. But now we are to have a story, and what shall it be about?"

"Tell her about the poor little woodmouse, Master!" said Flash, who had been staring at Sally Bradford with all his might for ten minutes, in the vain hope of making her wink. "The little woodmouse?" I said. "To be sure! you mean the one that Twinkle saw in the forest the other night. It is rather a sad story, but Puffy shall hear it. It seems, Puffy, that Twinkle, who, as you know, is one of Flash's brothers, was in the oak wood one night last week, wandering about as is his wont, chatting with such flowers as were still awake, and seeing all that he could see. As he twinkled over the grass near the foot of a great oak tree, he noticed something moving, and

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stopped to see what it was. The something turned out to be a woodmouse, the prettiest little lady woodmouse that ever was seen. She was sitting under a huge yellow toadstool, (very different from the pink-lined mushroom which sheltered the three little fairies,) feasting on acorns to her heart's content. Twinkle said it was really astonishing to see how fast she cracked and ate them, throwing the shells to right and left, and glancing about with her sharp black eyes, in constant fear of some intruder. Presently she heard a rustling among the leaves, and, anxious to make sure of her supper, she hastily put two acorns into her mouth, cramming one into either cheek. Then she sat up, and tried to look very dignified, as another little woodmouse, as sleek and bright-eyed as herself, appeared upon the scene. He evidently knew the little lady, for when he saw her he stopped and made a low bow, pressing one paw on his heart in a most affecting manner. Then advancing toward her, he said softly, 'Miss Woodmouse. I have been searching for you all the evening, for I have been very anxious to see you. I trust that my presence is not disagreeable to you, Miss Woodmouse?' He paused for a reply, but none came, so he went on. 'Lovely creature, I have long admired you, and thought you the fairest mouse I ever gazed upon. The brightness of your eyes, the length of your tail, the sharpness of your whiskers, all proclaim you the belle of the forest. How happy should I be, if I could claim these charms for my own! I have a very snug nest, lined with moss, and well stored with nuts and acorns for the winter. Say, will you share that nest with me? Miss Woodmouse, will you be mine? answer me, I implore you!'

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MISS WOODMOUSE.

"Poor little Miss Woodmouse! it was really pitiful to see her distress. She could not speak, on account of the two acorns in her mouth; and she was so ashamed of being greedy, that she did not dare to take them out. So she just sat still and looked at the little gentleman, who in turn sat and looked at her, much amazed at her silence.

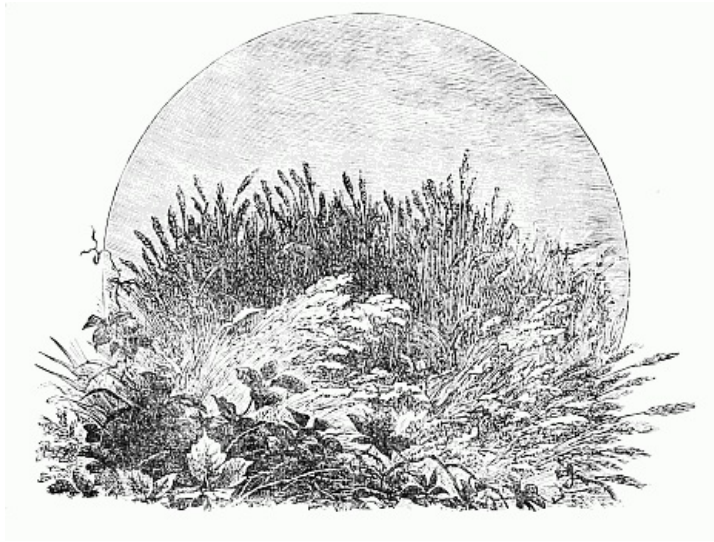
"'Alas!' he said, 'am I so hateful to you that you will not even speak to me? One word, Miss Woodmouse, to say that I may hope!' But not one word could Miss Woodmouse say, though her long tail quivered with emotion; and at length her little lover, fairly discouraged, turned sadly away, and disappeared among the fallen leaves.

"Then little Miss Woodmouse took the two acorns out of her mouth, and looked at them; but her appetite was gone. She threw them away with an exclamation of sorrow, and putting her little pink pocket-handkerchief up to her little black eyes, she hurried off to her lonely nest."

"Now that is the whole story, and the moral of it is that we should not be greedy. Lay it to heart, my Puff, and do not insist upon drinking the whole of that medicine that Mrs. Posset is preparing for you. You will have to wake up and take it now, Mousekin, so good-bye for the present!"

Puffy smiled a good-bye, and opened her sweet eyes with the smile still on her face. I looked back as I stepped out of the window, and will do her the justice to say that she showed no disposition to be greedy as far as the medicine was concerned.

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CHAPTER XIII.

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OFF TO THE SEA-SHORE.

UNCLE JACK was as good as his word, and the next morning was a busy time at the Mouse-trap.



Trunks were packed, jackets were brushed, and wonders were accomplished in the way of getting ready before breakfast. As I looked in my glass, there seemed to be only two rooms in the house where there was no bustle and confusion: one was the nursery, where Puff lay, half-awake and wondering what all the noise was about; and the other was the room next to it, where my dear little Fluff was kneeling by the bed, praying that her darling sister might be "quite all perfectly well" very soon.

And now the carriage was announced; the "good-byes" were softly whispered at the nursery door, and away went four of my mice, leaving the poor old Mouse-trap quite deserted, with only Mrs. Posset and the cook and faithful Tomty, beside the poor little sick mouse.

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A few hours journey on the train brought the travelers to the lovely sea-shore place where Aunt Grace Wilton was spending the summer: and what was their delight on leaving the train, to find Aunt Grace herself waiting for them, with her basket-wagon, and Max, the pretty black pony. I know Mrs. Wilton, though she does not remember me. I used to pay her frequent visits when she was a child, and now I go to see Roger, her little boy, who is a great friend of mine, and a fine little fellow. He had the scarlet fever when he was two years old, so that his mother had no fear of his taking it again. Well how all those mice managed to get into that pony-carriage is more than I can tell you: but they did manage it somehow, and after bidding good-bye to their dear Uncle Jack, who was going back in the next train, as he did not like to stay away from Puff, they rolled away at a fine pace toward Glenwood, while Susan followed in the carts with the trunks.

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A very pretty place Glenwood is, and very much delighted the four mice were, when they tumbled out of the carriage, and saw Roger waiting to welcome them. Here I will make a little picture of Roger, by the way, as of course a great many of you have never seen him.

"How do, Nibble?" he cried, jumping up and down with joy as he saw his cousins. "How do, all of you! come and see my pets! I-have-a-cat-and-some-birds-and-a-rabbit-and-a-lamb-because-I-haven't-any-brothers-and-sisters-you-know-and-a-dog—big-enough—to-eat-them-all-up-and-do-you-think-Puff-would-like-a-white-kitten?"

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Roger said all this as if it were one word, and it was no wonder that the four mice looked rather bewildered.

"Gently, Roger! gently!" said his mother, laughing. "Your cousins cannot understand a word you say, if you talk so fast."

"I heard 'lamb' and 'kitten,' Auntie," said Fluff, sedately, "and I should like to see them very much indeed."

"I want to go down to the beach, please, Auntie!" cried Nibble.

"And so do I!" said Brighteyes, eagerly.

"Very well, dears," said Mrs. Wilton; "you may run wherever you like, if you are not tired. I shall take little Downy in the house with me, for I see he is very sleepy, and wants a nap. But, my chickens, don't you want some lunch before you go out to play?" she added, turning back from the door.

"Oh! no, Auntie!" they all cried. "We had lunch in the train, as much as we wanted."

And off they all scampered in different directions, while Mrs. Wilton went into the house, carrying little sleepy Downy in her arms. Fluff and Roger walked away hand in hand, and I tipped my glass so that I could follow.

"Have you many pets, Fluff?" asked Roger.

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"No!" replied Fluff. "We have only the three dogs, and José, the brown donkey, and the kitten that Brighteyes found in the tree. But then we have a great many dolls," she added, "and I suppose you have'nt any dolls, because you are a boy."



"Animals is better than dolls," said Roger. "Here is my lamb, under this tree. Isn't he lovely? here, Belladonna, come and have some sugar, dear!" The lamb, which was a very pretty one, came up to be petted, and ate a lump of sugar with every sign of approval.

"What did you say his name was?" asked Fluff.

"Belladonna," replied Roger, "because he wears a bell, you know. I think it is a very pretty name, but Mamma laughs at it."

"It's medicine, isn't it?" said Fluff, doubtfully.

"Well, yes!" said Roger; "but that doesn't make any difference. Rhubarb is medicine, too, and yet it makes nice pies and tarts."

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"So it does!" said Fluff; "I never thought of that. And have your other pets, medicine-names, too, Roger?"

"The dog is Blanco," replied Roger. "I called him that before I had him, because I thought he was going to be white, and Blanco means white. And then he went and was black when he came, but I don't like to change names, so I called him so just the same. And I call my cat Plunket, after the story of the Chattering Cat, and the rabbit is Binks, and—oh! well, let us go in and see them, for they are all in the play-room, and it is hot out here!"



And Roger led the way to the house, while Fluff followed meekly, wondering, as she said afterwards to Brighteyes, how any one could talk so fast without "getting his tongue all tied up with his teeth."

In the large, sunny play-room I left the two little ones, having a grand game of romps with Blanco and Binks, while the birds, let loose from their cage, fluttered about their heads, in no fear of the well-behaved cat, who sat and looked at them as if she had no idea that they were good to eat. Yes it was a regular Happy Family, and a very pretty sight.

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But I wanted to see what Nibble and Brighteyes were about, so I turned my glass towards the beach, which was not far from the house, though in the other direction. There I found my two eldest mice deep in consultation. Nibble was just saying, "but, Bright, mermaids don't have legs and tails, too, for that would be ridiculous. Don't you remember?"

'The little white mermaidens live in the sea,
In a palace of silver and gold.
And their neat little tails are all covered with scales,
Most beautiful for to behold.'

But it doesn't say anything about legs, and there aren't any in the pictures." "I can't help it, Nibble!" replied Brighteyes, rather pettishly. "I can't cut off my legs, and I *am* going to play mermaid. I can be the queen, and queens have everything they want, I know." And she turned round, displaying to my view a superb tail of seaweed, fastened to her sash, and trailing upon the ground. [186]

"Well," said Nibble, "it is a lovely tail, after all. But we must take off our shoes and stockings, and put them in the fort for safe keeping. Then we can play 'wild white horses' and 'mermaid' too."

The shoes and stockings were soon off, and safely hidden in a sand fort of very superior construction. Then began a wild rushing up and down the smooth sandy beach, with much neighing and kicking on Nibble's part, while Brighteyes waved her seaweed tail in a graceful and effective manner, and sang her song of the mermaids.

"On wild white horses they ride, they ride,
And in chairs of pink coral they sit,
They swim all the night, with a smile of delight,
And never feel tired a bit."

"Look!" said Nibble, "at that line of rocks running out into the water. What fun to jump from one to the other! come on, Brighteyes!" No sooner said than done. It was no easy matter to jump from one smooth slippery rock to the next, without losing foothold, but that made it all the more exciting.

"I am the Nixie!" said Brighteyes, "and you are the knight who caught her asleep and cut off one of her golden ringlets, so that she could not disappear or turn into a fish. Sing, now, and catch me if you can!"



ON THE BEACH.

She sprang lightly to the next rock, and thence to the next, while Nibble, pursuing her, sang: [189]

"Nixie, white Nixie, I have you now!
The magic ringlet is clipped from your brow.
You vanish no more 'neath the shining tide,
And I have you and hold you, my snow-white bride!"

Brighteyes sang again:

"Hunter, rash hunter, your triumph's not long,
Your arm drops down 'neath the spell of my song."

You turn to ice and you turn to stone,
And the sea-waves laugh as they hear you moan."

Here the Nixie waved her tail triumphantly, and flirted it in the hunter's face in a way that was too provoking to be endured. The rash youth sprang forward, alighting on the rock and on the Nixie's toe at the same instant. There was a moment of shrieking and clutching at the air, as they tried to regain their balance, and then with a loud splash, pursuer and pursued disappeared beneath the water.

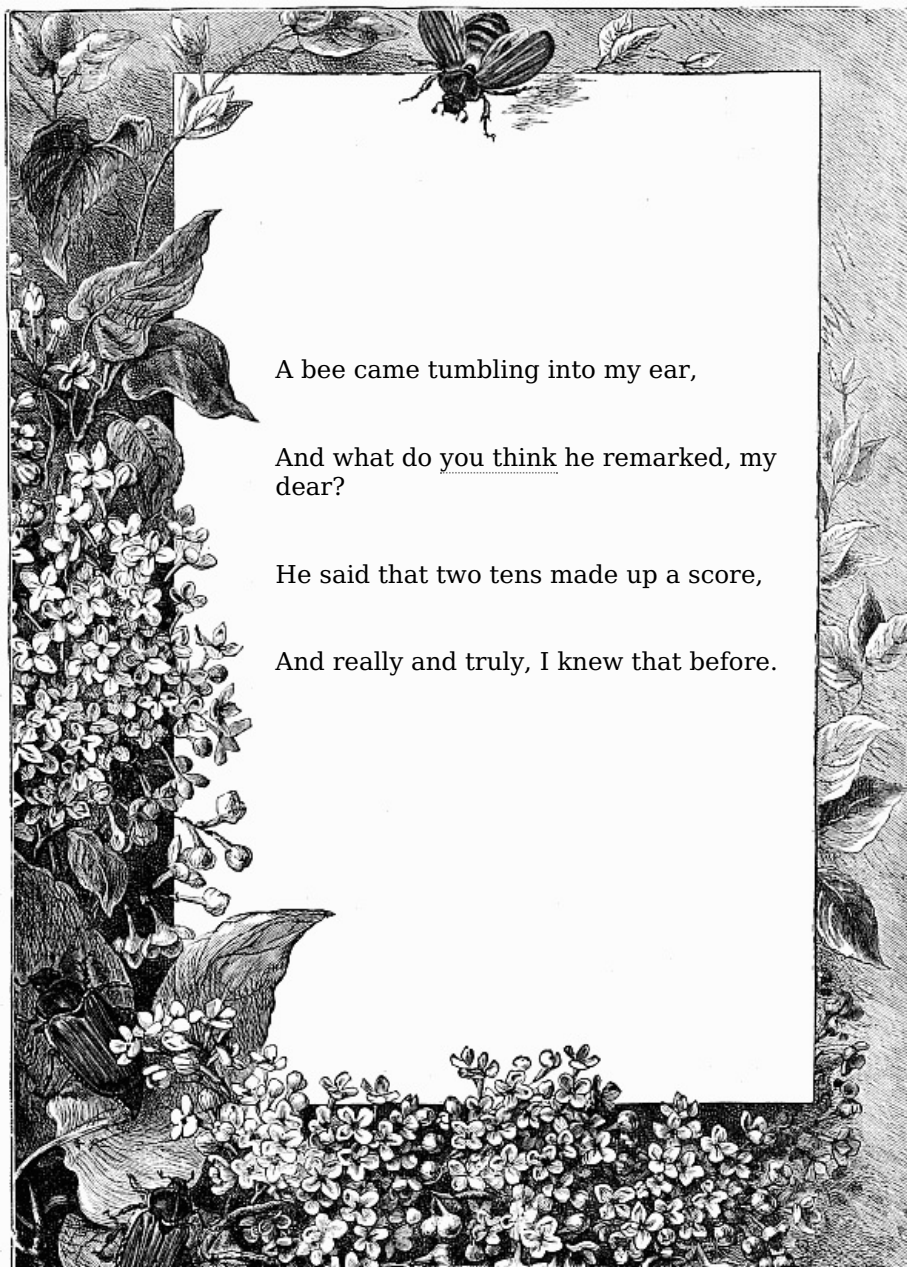
This was really past a joke, and I became much alarmed. As for Bmfgth, that excellent dog was quite frantic with excitement, and his green hair stood on end, causing him to present a truly remarkable appearance. In another minute, however, we saw the two brown heads emerge from the water; Nibble clambered up the rock, and pulled his sister up after him; then breathless and dripping, they jumped and climbed back over the long line of rocks, till they reached the shore. They sat down on the beach and looked at each other in silence for a few minutes. Then Nibble said, "I say, Brighteyes, ain't you just glad that Mrs. Posset isn't here? look at your frock, now!" "Oh! I don't want to look at it!" said Brighteyes; "and besides your knickerbockers are just as bad. But we have lost our hats, Nibble, and they were our best ones. We ought to have taken them off when we took off our shoes and—but, goodness me! where *are* our shoes and stockings? Nibble, where is the fort? I don't see it anywhere."

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Indeed, it would have been strange if they had seen it, for the rising tide had completely covered it some fifteen minutes before. As for the shoes and stockings—"Look, Bright!" said Nibble, grasping his sister's arm, and pointing to the water. Yes, sure enough, there they were. Far out of reach, floating serenely along, the boots nodding a graceful farewell to their former owners as the little waves bore them off on their voyage of discovery, while the stockings, less courageous, had yielded to despair, and floated limp and piteous, stretching out their scarlet length in a vain appeal for rescue.

This last blow completely sobered the bold spirits of my two mice, and as the loud ringing of a bell proclaimed that dinner-time was come, they turned silently and mournfully towards the house.

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A bee came tumbling into my ear,

And what do you think he remarked, my dear?

He said that two tens made up a score,

And really and truly, I knew that before.

CHAPTER XIV.

[193]

STORIES AGAIN.



POOR little Puff! she certainly was very ill. All day long she tossed and moaned in feverish pain, to the great distress of her good uncle, and the faithful Mrs. Posset. They were very, very anxious about her; but the doctor, who came every day, said that there was no immediate danger, as long as the child slept so well at night. All night long she slept quietly, sometimes smiling in her sleep, and always looking peaceful and happy. Yes, indeed, I flatter myself I had a great deal to do with that. Every night I sat by my little mouse's pillow, and told stories and sang songs, till my brother Sun came and winked at me through the window, and told me it was not night at all, and I must take myself off and leave the field to him. Stories? dear me, there was no end to them; and you shall have some of them, if you will. Here is one, for example, of which Puff was extremely fond. It was called

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THE FLEA.

Once upon a time there was a flea.
Wee wee,
And he hopped,
And he hopped,
And he hopped.

And as the flea was hopping one day,

He met a mouse,
Round the house,
And he squeaked,
And he squeaked,
And he squeaked.

And when the mouse saw the flea, he said to him, "what do you do for a living?" and the flea said "I bite people." Then the mouse said, "as you have lived upon others, others shall live upon you!" So he caught up the flea, and he ate him up. And there was an end of the flea.

But as the mouse was squeaking one day,

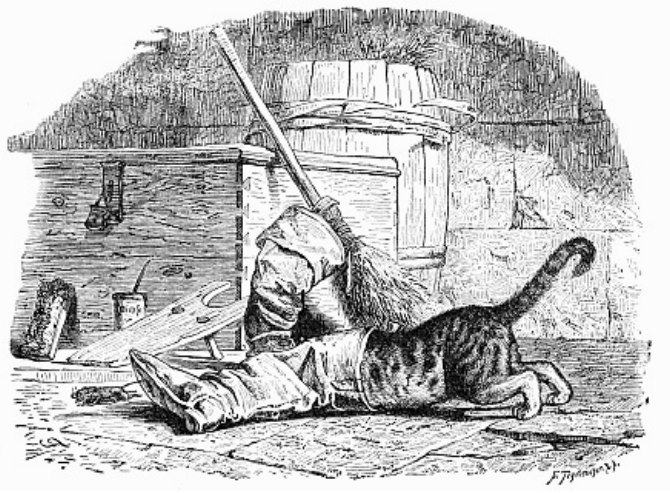
He met a cat,
Very fat,
And she mewed,
And she mewed,
And she mewed.

And when the cat saw the mouse, she said to him, "what do you do for a living?" And the mouse said,

"I nibble cheese,
And eat fleas."

Then the cat said, "As you have lived upon others, others shall live upon you!" So she caught the mouse, and she ate him up. And there was an end of the mouse.

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But as the cat was mewling one day,

She met a dog,
Named Gog,
And he barked,
And he barked,
And he barked.

And when the dog saw the cat, he said to her, "what do you do for a living?" And the cat said,

"I eat mice,
Because they are nice."

Then the dog said, "As you have lived upon others, others shall live upon you!" So he caught the cat, and he ate her up. And there was an end of the cat. [196]

But as the dog was barking one day,

He met a Chinaman,
Ting-Pan.
And he talked,
And he talked,
And he talked.

And when the Chinaman saw the dog, he said to him, "what do you do for a living?" And the dog said, "I slay the cat, and likewise the rat." Then the Chinaman said, "as you have lived upon others, others shall live upon you!" So he caught the dog, and he cooked him with rice, and ate him up. And there was an end of the dog.

But now, you see, the Chinaman had eaten

The dog,
Named Gog,
And the cat,
Very fat,
And the mouse,
Round the house,
And the flea,
Wee wee.

So when he had eaten them all, they all disagreed with him, and he died. And there was an end of the Chinaman, Ting-Pan.

This was Puff's favorite story, and I had to tell it at least once every night, and often twice. Then when that was done, she would call for "Michikee Moo." You have never heard that, I'll warrant, for you do not, most of you, understand the Pawnee dialect, and "Michikee Moo" is a Pawnee ballad. The Indian mammas sing it to their papposes, as they rock them in their bark cradles under the trees, in the western forests. I had to translate it into English, of course, for Puff; so here it is. [197]

MICHIKEE MOO.

AN INDIAN BALLAD.

Whopsy Whittlesy Whanko Whee,
Howly old growly old Indian he,
Lived on the hill of the Mungo-Paws,
With all his papposes and all his squaws.
There was Wah-wah-bocky, the Blue-nosed Goose,
And Ching-gach-gocky, the Capering-Moose;
There was Peeksy Wiggin, and Squawpan too,
But the fairest of all was Michikee Moo.
Michikee Moo, the Savoury Tart,

Pride of Whittlesy Whanko's heart.
Michikee Moo, the Cherokee Pie,
Apple of Whittlesy Whanko's eye.

Whittlesy Whanko loved her so
That the other squaws did with envy glow.
And each said to the other "Now what shall we do
To spoil the beauty of Michikee Moo?"
"We'll lure her away to the mountain top,
And there her head we will neatly chop!"
"We'll wile her away to the forest's heart,
And shoot her down with a poisoned dart!"
"We'll 'tice her away to the river side,
And there she shall be the Manitou's bride!"
"Oh! one of these things we will surely do,
And we'll spoil the beauty of Michikee Moo!"

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"Michikee Moo, thou Cherokee Pie,
Away with me to the mountain high!"
"Nay, my sister, I will not roam;
I'm safer and happier here at home,"
"Michikee Moo, thou Savoury Tart,
Away with me to the forest's heart!"
"Nay, my sister, I will not go;
I fear the dart of some hidden foe."
"Michikee Moo, old Whittlesy's pride,
Away with me to the river-side!"
"Nay, my sister, for fear I fall.
And wouldst thou come if thou heardst me call?"
"Now choose thee, choose thee thy way of death,
For soon thou shalt draw thy latest breath.
We all have sworn that to-day we'll see
The last, fair Michikee Moo, of thee!"

Whittlesy Whanko, hidden near,
Each and all of these words did hear.
He summoned his braves, all painted for war,
And gave them in charge each guilty squaw.
"Take Wah-wah-bocky, the Blue-nosed Goose!
Take Ching-gach-gocky, the Capering Moose!
Take Peeksy Wiggin, and Squawpan too,
And leave me alone with my Michikee Moo!
This one away to the mountain-top,
And there her head ye shall neatly chop.
This one away to the forest's heart,
And shoot her down with a poisoned dart.
This one away to the river-side,
And there let her be the Manitou's bride.
Away with them all, the woodlands through.
For I'll have no squaw save Michikee Moo!"
Away went the braves, without question or pause,
And they soon put an end to the guilty squaws;
They pleasantly smiled when the deed was done,
Saying "Ping-ko-chanky! oh! isn't it fun?"
And then they all danced the Buffalo dance,
And capered about with ambiguous prance;
While they drank to the health of the lovers so true,
Brave Whittlesy Whanko and Michikee Moo.

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"I wish I had an Indian doll, Mr. Moonman!" said Fluff one night, after I had sung this ballad to her. "A little pappoose! it would be so nice!"

"Nothing is easier!" I replied. "Take Katinka, there, who has long black hair; stain her face and neck with walnut juice, and paint her with stripes and spots of red and yellow. Then wrap her up in a blanket and put some beads round her neck, and you have an Indian doll. She will be a truly lovely object, according to Indian ideas, which indeed may not be quite the same as your own, but what of that?"

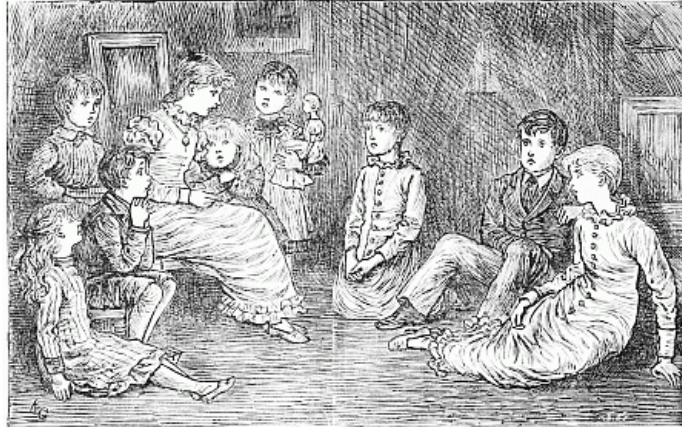
"Thank you kindly, Mr. Moonman!" said Katinka, who was spending the night on Puff's bed. "I am very sure my dear little mother will do nothing of the kind. Walnut juice, indeed! and for me, who have the finest complexion in the doll-house! You might take Sally Bradford, now, and she would not look more like a witch than she does now; but I am a French doll, and am not used to such treatment."

"Don't abuse Sally Bradford, Miss!" I said. "She is an excellent doll, for whom I have a great respect; and as for your fine complexion, why, we all know that 'handsome is as handsome does;'

and I should like to know who does all the work in the doll-house. But speaking of witches, I wonder if Puff has ever heard the story of the witch who came to see little Polly Pemberton. That is a queer story."

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"No, I have never heard it, Mr. Moonman!" cried Puff eagerly. "Was it a real witch? do tell me the story!"



"Oh! as for being real," I replied, "that is none of my business. My business is to tell the story which I will do. I heard a little girl in New Haven, telling it to her brothers and sisters the other night, and she frightened them half out of their wits. I will try to tell the story just as she did. Did you know, children, that there were witches in old times? well, there were, or people thought there were, which came to much the same thing for the witches. Hear this story, and then see what you think about the matter."



POLLY PEMBERTON.

"Well, once there was a little girl, about eight years old. I shall call her Polly, but you need not feel obliged to follow my example. If you prefer to call her Kamschatka, I don't mind in the least. This little girl lived with her father and mother, in a little red cottage which stood quite by itself near a thick wood. Every day her parents went to the village, which was a mile or more away, to work, and they left little Polly in charge of the house, for she was a good and quiet little girl, and never was lonely or sad. One day Polly was sitting by the window, knitting, when she saw a queer-looking old woman coming along the road; such a queer old woman. Have you ever seen a picture of Cinderella's fairy godmother? well, she looked just like that, pointed hat, red cloak, and all. When the old woman saw Polly, she stopped, and looked earnestly at her; then she hobbled slowly up to the door and knocked. Polly ran and opened the door. "How are you, my child?" said the old dame; "let me in. I'm your grandmother." Polly had always been taught to be respectful to old people, so she let the old woman in, and politely handed her a chair; but she could not help saying, as she did so, "excuse me, ma'am, but I don't think you can be my grandmother." "That shows how much you know about it!" replied the old woman; "how old are you?" "Eight years old," said Polly. "Very well!" said the old woman; "now I am ninety-six years old, just twelve times as old as you are; therefore, I'm your grandmother." "But I don't see——" began Polly. "Oh, if you want to argue about it," said the old dame, "here we are," and she drew from her pocket a small book, and opening it, read aloud, "Take a little girl eight years old, and multiply her by twelve;

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what will be the result? Answer: her grandmother. There!" she said, triumphantly, "what do you think of that?" Poor Polly did not know what to think of it. She looked at the book, which looked exactly like Colburn's Arithmetic. "Is that Colburn's Arithmetic, ma'am?" she asked timidly. "Colburn's Fiddlestick!" said the old woman, shortly. "Here's another for you. Put a boy up an apple-tree, and divide him by a good sized bull-dog; what will remain? hey?" "I'm sure I don't know," said poor Polly, faintly. "Mince-meat, of course," said the old woman. "You don't know much, evidently." "What a dreadful looking cat!" thought Polly. And indeed, he did not look like an amiable animal. His green eyes shone with an uncanny light, and his long claws were constantly sheathing and unsheathing themselves, as if they longed to scratch somebody. However, the old woman certainly seemed fond of him. "Hobble-gobble!" she said, "prince of cats, black diamond, blazing emerald, attend!"

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Kickery punk, punkery kick,
Bring the teapot and be quick!"

The cat gave one spring, and in the twinkling of an eye he reached the cupboard where the silver was kept. Now the door of the cupboard was locked, as Polly, in her surprise, (which was fast turning into terror,) thankfully remembered. The cat, finding it locked, turned and looked at his mistress, who, striking her stick on the floor, exclaimed

"Scratchery, patchery, tooth and nail;
Open the door with a quirk of your tail."

Quick as thought the creature turned round and inserted the tip of his tail in the key hole. In a moment the door flew open, and seizing the silver teapot in his claws, the cat sprang back with it to his mistress, who, snatching the teapot, hid it under her red cloak. At this Polly sprang to her feet, with a cry of mingled fear and anger; but the witch (for this certainly must have been a witch, if ever there was one,) pointed her stick at her, and muttered some strange words which sounded like "Buggara wuggara boogle jum, Hobble-gobble!" She said this last word suddenly and sharply, and Polly was quite startled; but fancy her alarm when a large black cat crept out from beneath the red cloak, and sitting down on his mistress's knee, looked up in her face with an air of unearthly sagacity, and poor Polly fell back in her chair, unable to move hand or foot. There she sat, motionless, but perfectly conscious, watching this dreadful old hag. And what do you think the creature did next? She took some strange looking herbs from her pocket, and put them in the teapot, which she then filled with water and set on the stove. Then, calling to her cat, she began to hop slowly round the stove on one foot. The cat followed her, hopping first on one black foot and then on another, but keeping its unearthly green eyes fixed on Polly all the time. The witch kept muttering strange words like those which had thrown the spell on Polly; while her companion moved in time if not in tune.

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"Buggara wuggara, boogle jum jum!
I will have all, and my cat shall have some.
Boogle jum! boogle jmm! buggara boom!
Down with the teapot and up with the broom!"

"By the time she had hopped round the stove six times, the water in the teapot was boiling furiously. The old hag stopped and said "Hobble gobble, prince of cats, produce the broom-stick!"

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"The cat jumped up on the stove, without seeming to mind the heat in the least, though the iron was nearly red hot. He lifted the lid of the teapot, and took out—what do you think, now? You will never believe me, but I am not responsible for the story. He took out—a broom. A long broom, with a bright red handle, which seemed somehow as if it was alive, for it actually wriggled as the cat, leaping down from the stove, handed it to his mistress. The old woman snatched it, and waved it three times round Polly's head. Then she mounted the stick as if it were a horse, and calling once more to her cat, she rose in the air, and vanished up the chimney, the cat sitting beside her on the broom-stick, and grinning hideously at Polly as long as he remained in sight. That was truly dreadful, was it not? that comes of leaving little girls alone all day, which is a very bad plan."

"But is that all?" asked Puffy. "Doesn't it tell what became of Polly, and the teapot? You haven't told any end to the story, Mr. Moonman."

"Exactly!" I replied. "There isn't any end to it. But there is an end to this night, and that end has come. Farewell, my mouse, till to-morrow night."

And I whisked away, leaving Katinka and Puff so much astonished that one fell off the bed, and the other woke up. Wasn't that funny?

CHAPTER XV.

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FOLLOWING A SUNBEAM.

UNTIE," said Downy, one morning, "I'v dere any people in de fun?"



"In the fun, dear child?" answered Mrs. Wilton. "What do you mean? people are often in fun. Is that it?"

"Oh! no, Auntie!" said Fluff, who was sitting beside Downy on the broad window-sill, eating her porridge, "I know what he means. He means 'in the sun,' but he cannot say 's,' you know, so he says 'f' instead."

"Oh!" said Aunt Grace. "In the sun; of course. I understand now. Well, Downy boy, I have never been in the sun, so I really cannot tell you. I heard of a little boy who did go once, however. Fluffy, tell Downy the little story I told you the other day, about the sunbeam. I would tell it to him myself, but I must speak to cook about dinner."

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"Well, Downy," said Fluff, in an important tone, as she settled herself more comfortably on the window-sill, "Once upon a time there was a little boy, and his name was Winkyn."

"Nebber heard dat name!" interrupted Downy.

"Well, it was his name just the same," said Fluff, "for Auntie said so. So he wanted to know what was in the sun. So somebody told him—"

"Whobody was it?" inquired Downy.

"Oh! I don't know! anybody!" said Fluff. "I wont tell it if you interrupt me, Downy."



"I wont adain!" said Downy. "Do on, Fluffy!"

"Somebody told him," continued Fluff, "that if he put his foot on the end of a sunbeam, it would turn into a golden ladder and lead to the sun. So he did, and so it did,—turned into a ladder, I mean; all shining gold, going right up into the sun. So he went up, and up, and up, and the upper he went the brighter the ladder grew. At last he came to the sun, and there were ever so many little boys and girls, all made of gold, running about and playing, and having a splendid time. And they all came and played with Winkyn, and gave him all sorts of lovely presents to take back to the earth."

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A golden hat and a golden coat,
 A golden ball and a golden boat,
 A slate all covered with golden sums,
 And a golden pudding with diamond plums.

So he was very happy, and thought he would stay there all his life. But while he was running after one of the little golden boys, he tumbled off the sun, and fell down the ladder, turning somersaults all the way. And when he came down to the earth again he had lost all the presents except the pudding, but he had held that all the way down. So he sold it to a man for forty million hundred dollars; and then he was so rich that they made him King of Siam, and he rode on a white elephant with pink ears all the rest of his life."

"Iv dat all?" asked Downy.

"Yes, that's all," replied Fluff. "I made up the last part of it, because I couldn't remember just what Auntie told me after he came down the ladder. And now, Downy, pet," she continued, "I must go, for old Margaret has promised to show me the new chickens. Finish your porridge, and then you can come too!" and away ran Fluff, leaving the Downy mouse alone, looking very thoughtful over his porringer. He was silent for some time; then laying down his spoon, he said with an air of decision, "I'm doin' to do!" With that, he slid down from the window sill, and trotted out of the house as fast as his little fat legs would carry him. I knew perfectly well that his intention was to go up to the sun, but I did not think he would get very far. On the lawn he paused, and looked about him. Plenty of sunbeams there; every blade of grass had one, for the little sparklers, who are very vain, had come to look at themselves and admire their own brightness in the drops of dew which lay on every leaf and flower and spear of grass. Downy ran here and there, putting his foot down wherever he saw a flash, and then looking expectantly up into the air. But no golden ladder appeared, and at length I heard the little mouse say, "Deve ivn't de right kind of funbeamv. I'll do fomewhere elfe." So off he went, pattering over the grass and over the gravel paths, still stamping on every spot of sunshine, and still looking up for the golden ladder. I was just beginning to think it was time some one came to look after the mouse, when I heard a loud scream from the farm-yard. Turning my eyes in that direction, I saw something that

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was really shocking.

Fluff had gone, as you know, with old Margaret, Mrs. Wilton's good housekeeper, to see a new brood of chickens which had just been hatched. They were the prettiest little downy things in the world, and Fluff's happiness was complete when Margaret put them all in her apron, and told her she might carry them to the new coop which had just been made for them and their mother. Now Billy, the donkey, was in the shed, by which Fluff was standing, and for some minutes he had been looking out of the window, deeply interested in my mouse's straw bonnet. Was it good to eat, or was it not? that was the question which was agitating Billy's mind at that moment. On the whole, he thought the only way to decide the matter was to try it; so stretching his head quietly out of the window, he seized the bonnet in his teeth, and tearing it from Fluff's head, he proceeded to chew it as calmly as if it had been a wisp of hay instead of a Tuscan straw. It was Fluff's scream that I heard, and I found the little mouse overcome with grief at the loss of her bonnet, the last fragment of which was just disappearing between Billy's capacious jaws.

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"Never mind, Miss Fluffy, dear!" said Margaret, soothingly; "come in to Auntie with me, and we'll tell her all about it. She'll buy you a new bonnet, I promise you, or make you one out of Master Billy's ears."

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So they went into the house, after putting the chickens carefully in their coop, and told Mrs. Wilton about the sad misfortune. Aunt Grace could not help laughing at first; but she comforted Fluff, who was really very much cast down, and promised to make her the prettiest bonnet that heart could desire.

"But where is Downy?" she asked; "did you leave him in the farm-yard, Margaret?"

"Sure, ma'am, I have not seen the child this morning!" said Margaret.

"Why, I left him in the dining-room, finishing his porridge!" exclaimed Fluff. "Isn't he there now, Auntie?"

"No!" replied Mrs. Wilton. "He is not anywhere in the house, and I thought he had gone with you. Where can the child be?"

Then there was a great hurry-scurry, in the house and out of it. All the other children were summoned, but none of them had seen Downy: so they all started off to look for him, Mrs. Wilton and Margaret, Nibble and Brighteyes, Fluff and Roger, all going in different directions, and callings as they went: "Downy! Downy boy! where are you, Downy?" but no Downy answered.

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If people only knew a little more, how much better they would get on! at every step the children might have found out where Downy was, if they had only taken the trouble to listen. The old Drake quacked to them in his loudest tones: "down by the brook! down by the brook! stupid creatures! down by the brook!" the fir-trees on the lawn pointed their long green fingers towards the brook. The birds sang, the dogs barked, the leaves whispered, the hens cackled, and each and all said the same thing, over and over again! "Down by the brook! down by the brook!" and so the whole family looked on the beach, and in the orchard, and up and down the road, and all over the barn and the stable, and in the pig-sty. If you will believe me, it was not till after a two-hour's hunt that they found the little fellow, curled up in the long grass by the side of the brook, fast asleep.

You may imagine how Aunt Grace caught him up, and kissed and petted and scolded him all in a breath. But Downy struggled to get down, and cried out "Don't take my foot off! don't take my

foot off! naughty Auntie! a-a-a-ah! a-a-ah!"

"What is it, dear?" said his aunt. "Wake up, Downy dear! you have been asleep, and we all thought you were lost, and were dreadfully frightened about you. What is the matter with your foot, my precious?"

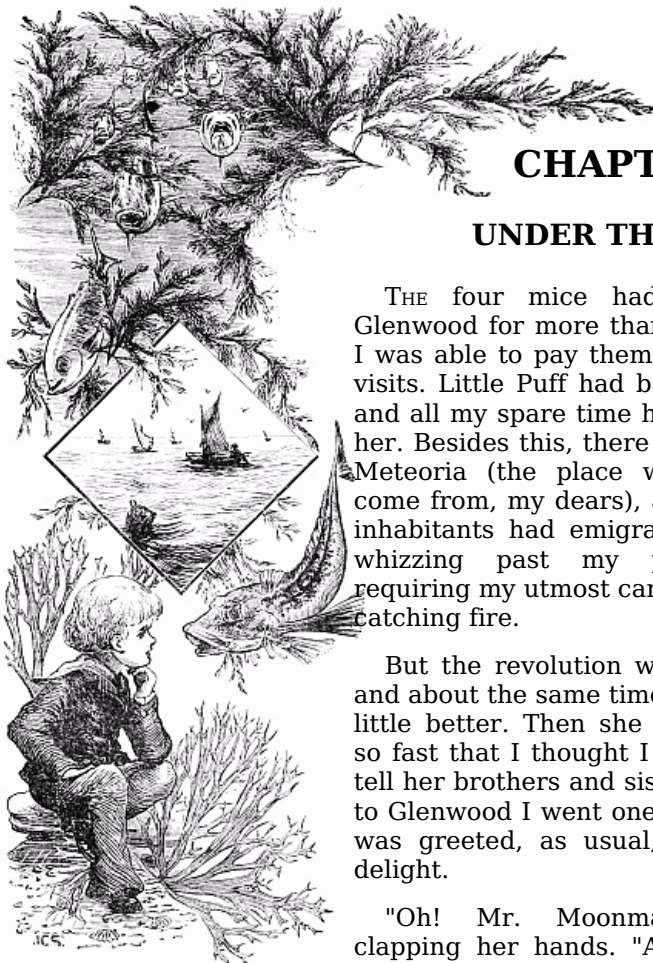
Downy rubbed his eyes and looked about him, seeming very much puzzled.

"Why, where've ladder?" he asked. "And where've my dolden puddin? I didn't want to tome down from de fun! a-a-a-ah! I want to be de King of Fiam, and wide on a white elephant!"

Well, they all told him he had been asleep and dreaming; and they petted and consoled him, and took him into the house, and Aunt Grace gave him an apple almost as big as his own head. But all day long Downy was very melancholy. He smarted under a sense of injury, and could not forgive his aunt for taking his foot off the ladder; and it was many a day before he forgot the golden pudding and the white elephant.



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CHAPTER XVI.

UNDER THE SEA.

THE four mice had been settled at Glenwood for more than two weeks before I was able to pay them one of my evening visits. Little Puff had been very ill indeed, and all my spare time had been devoted to her. Besides this, there was a revolution in Meteoria (the place where the meteors come from, my dears), and numbers of the inhabitants had emigrated, and had been whizzing past my palace constantly, requiring my utmost care to prevent it from catching fire.

But the revolution was over in a week, and about the same time Puff began to be a little better. Then she went on improving so fast that I thought I really must go and tell her brothers and sisters about it. So off to Glenwood I went one fine night, where I was greeted, as usual, with a chorus of delight.

"Oh! Mr. Moonman!" cried Fluff, clapping her hands. "And we thought he didn't know the way here! How *did* you know where to find us, Mr. Moonman, dear?"

"Why, if you come to that," I replied, "there are very few places in the world that I cannot find, and Glenwood is not a very hard one to discover, my mouse. Now I have good news for you. I have just come from Puff's nursery; she sends her love to you all, and says she is nearly well, and wants to know what you have been doing all this time."

Then rose a clamor of questions from all sides, which I answered as best I could. Yes, she sat up every day, and she had broiled chicken for dinner, and dip-toast for supper, and Uncle Jack had given her a lovely new doll, with flaxen hair curling all over her head, whose name was Scarlatina Clematis Alfarata; but Puff called her Tina, "for short."

"Did I know that Downy had been ill?" Brighteyes asked.

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"No I did not know it! What had been the matter?"

"Oh! it wasn't much!" broke in Nibble: "I don't see why they made such a fuss about it. I made a feast for him, because Aunt Grace wanted me to amuse him while she gave Brighteyes her French lesson; and I cooked the feast in Roger's little stove, and some of the black paint got into the food and made it disagree with him. Things are always disagreeing with people; I don't see why. People eat oil, and I don't see why they shouldn't eat paint; there's a great deal of oil in paint, Uncle Jack told me so."

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"Well," I said, "you might spread paint instead of butter on your bread, and see how you like it. Personally, I am inclined to take Downy's view of the matter. But now, we must not stop too long, for we have a long way to go to-night. I am going to fulfil my promise at last, and take you to see Patty! What do you say to that, all four of you?"

The mice did not say much that was intelligible, but their shrieks of delight, their jumping and clapping of hands, were quite satisfactory. The big cloud was waiting outside, and the seven Winds were there, too, impatient for a frolic; so I tumbled my mice and their cousin mouse out of their beds and into their soft white carriage, and away we all went post-haste, or rather comet-haste, for it is a long way to the Indian Ocean. Merrily puffed the winds, and merrily chattered the five little ones; we told stories, and sang songs, and altogether the trip was made so quickly that we were almost sorry to hear the Winds talking Hindostanee to the waves of the great silent water over which we were sweeping. Down floated the cloud, down and down, until it rested lightly on a bit of smooth sandy beach.

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"Out with you, mice of mine!" I said. So the mice tumbled out of the cloud again, and looked about them in much amazement and some terror.

"I fink I'm afraid!" said Downy to me, confidentially.

"Oh, no!" I replied. "You are not afraid. You are delighted, my dear, but you are delighted in Hindostanee, and that may be a different sensation from being delighted in English."

This explanation seemed to comfort the little fellow, so I turned to the elder mice and said, "Patty is expecting you to-night, so everything will be in readiness. All you have to do is to go out on that flat rock yonder, and wait till a fish comes and speaks to you. Then you must say—

"Bobbily Bungaloo, Indian fish.
To visit your mistress is what I wish."

"After that he will manage everything for you, and will take you at once to Patty. I shall wait here till you return, for going under the water is very apt to give me the asthma. Run, now, and be good, all of you!"

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It required some courage for the little ones to leave their old friend and start off on such a strange and out-of-the-way expedition; but Nibble and Brighteyes led the way boldly, and the three others followed, clinging closely to each other. They soon reached the rock, and found Bobbily Bungaloo swimming about, waiting for them. He greeted them kindly, and bade them follow him, and one by one they all disappeared under the water.

Of course, however, I can see perfectly well what goes on under the water. Dear me, yes! it would be a pity if I could not do that. I saw the mice go down, down, down, through the clear water. All around them swam myriads of fishes, all eager to greet the little strangers who had come so far. There were large fishes and small fishes, some all head and some all tail, some ugly enough to frighten one, and others so beautiful that the children were sorely tempted to catch them and carry them home. All were kind and friendly, and said many pleasant things, which Bobbily Bungaloo, who is a very learned fish, translated into English for the mice's benefit. At length they arrived at the bottom of the sea, and saw at a little distance before them, the palace of my cousin Patty. As I may have told you before, this palace is simply a huge round pearl, hollowed out into many chambers. A more superb dwelling-place can hardly be imagined. It is

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really like a small moon under the water, so bright and beautiful is it. The children were speechless with admiration and wonder, as they well might be.

"H'm!" said a fat oyster, opening her shell to peep at them, "I should think they had never seen a pearl before. My necklace also is worth looking at, if they only knew enough to look down."

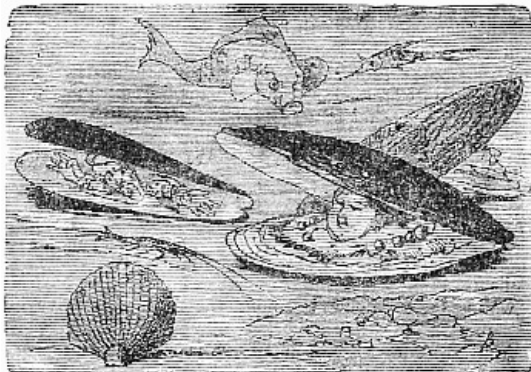
But the mice had no eyes for anything except the pearl palace, especially as Patty herself now appeared in the doorway, waiting to welcome her little guests.

She kissed them all, and led them into a great hall, the walls and ceiling of which were of mother-of-pearl, while the floor was of pink coral, laid in a hundred beautiful patterns. At one end of the hall was a throne of pearl, and on this Patty seated herself, bidding the children sit down on some pretty pink coral stools beside her.

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"Now, my dears," she said, "what shall Patty do to amuse her little friends? I think we will have some lunch first, for you must be hungry after your long journey. Then I will take you through the palace, and then you shall sail in one of my pretty boats. How does that programme please you?"

She rang a bell, and a tall merman in a splendid livery, glistening with pearl buttons, made his appearance, carrying a huge silver tray heaped with sea-delicacies. The children were really hungry, and they soon found that the dishes were as good as they were strange.



"What *is* this, Patty?" asked Brighteyes; "it is delicious, but I cannot imagine what it is."

"That," said Patty, "is a fricassee of sea-anemones. They are very nice, I think, and we cook them in a great many different ways. Nibble, there, is eating fried gold-fish, and Fluff and Roger are busy over a dish of scallops in jelly."

"Oh! how nice everything is!" sighed Fluff; "I wish I knew whether it were all real or not. Mr. Moonman always laughs at me when I ask him if I am dreaming him and all the good times we have with him. Are you real, Patty? do tell me!"

But Patty only laughed and said, "I am as real as a great many things in this world, dear child! Take some anemones, and don't trouble yourself about their being real, as long as they are good."

When the children had finished their lunch, she took Downy by the hand, and bade the rest follow her: and then she led them through the different rooms of the wonderful palace. Dear! dear! such a palace as it was! I really thought those mice would never get their mouths shut again, so wide did they open them in their amazement. The first room they went through was hung with green sea-weed, beautifully fringed, and the carpet was of softest moss. Here were sitting numbers of pretty mermaids, sewing and embroidering on great pieces of kelp, with needles made of the spines of some fish. They all nodded and smiled at the children, but did not speak, for they knew nothing but Hindostanee.

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"To think," murmured Brighteyes, softly, "that we should really be in the same room with a dozen mermaids! and their neat little tails *are* covered with scales, just as the song says, and they are sitting in pink coral chairs. Oh! if I could only find out where the sea-flower grows, so that I might remember all this!"

Then they passed through halls of deep-red coral, and lovely little rooms which seemed entirely made of small bright shells set closely together, until they came to the Sun and Moon rooms, which my good Patty has named in honor of my brother and me. The Sun room is all gold from floor to ceiling, burnished gold, which shines so that one really has to shade one's eyes on going into it. From the glittering ceiling hang numbers of diamond lamps, which swing perpetually to and fro with a slow, steady motion, flashing and sparkling like real sunbeams. My room, which is next to this gorgeous apartment, is no less beautiful, being all of fretted silver, with lamps of pearl, which shed a lovely soft light nearly equal to that of my own beams, though not so bright. Of course the mice were enchanted beyond measure with all this splendor; but

when they begged to be allowed to stay in the lovely silver room and play, Patty smiled and said, "we have yet many things to see, dear children, and the night is short. Besides, puss-in-the-corner is no better fun in a silver room than in a plastered nursery. Come then, and see the play-room of my little mermaids!"

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She threw open a door, and there was a sight which made the mice fairly squeak with amazement and delight. It was a vast room, all of white coral, with lovely pictures painted on the walls and ceiling, and as full as it could be of little tiny sea-children, frolicking about, and playing just as many pranks as land-babies play. They surrounded the children with exclamations of wonder and delight. Children must have a language of their own, certainly, for though the Indian sea-babies knew no more of English than the American babies did of Hindostanee, it was not ten minutes before they were all perfectly good friends, and were playing together in the most delightful way. Nibble and Roger were almost breaking their necks in the vain endeavor to turn somersaults as fast as their little friends with the tails. Brighteyes was hugging and petting "the loveliest baby in the world, if it *hasn't* any toes," which she had taken from its nurse's arms, while Fluff and a little mermaiden of her own age were deeply confidential in a corner, on the subject of their respective dolls. Fancy, will you, children all, a white coral doll with a long pearly tail, and hair of pale yellow sea moss, very fine and soft! Truly, it was a lovely creature, and Fluff would gladly have exchanged the most cherished of her waxen babies for it. The little mermaid sang pretty songs to her dolly, and rocked it in a cradle of amber with sea-weed curtains. Presently Patty said, "Little Fluff, will you not sing an English song for my sea-babies? sing something about flowers and fairies, for those are things that we have not here, and the little ones like to hear about them."

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So my Fluff sang this little song, which she called "The Fairy Wedding:"



Blue bell, bonny bell, ring for the wedding!
Gallant young Hyacinth's married the rose;
Here we all wait for the marriage procession,
Standing up high on our tippy-toe-toes.

Blue bell, bonny bell, ring for the wedding!
First the three ushers on grasshoppers ride;
Coxcomb, Larkspur, and gallant Sweet William,
Handsome young dandies as ever I spied.

Here in a coach come the bride's rich relations,
Old Madame Damask and old Mr. Moss;
Greatly I fear she has not won their blessing,
Else they'd not look so uncommonly cross.

Here comes his Excellence Baron de Goldburg,
Leading the Dowager Duchess of Snail;
Feathers and fringe on the top of her bonnet,
Roses and rings on the end of her tail.

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Blue bell, bonny bell, ring for the wedding!
Here come the bridesmaids by two and by two.
Gay little Primrose, fair little Snowdrop,
Peachblossom, Jasmine and Eglantine too.

Last come the lovers, wrapped up in each other,
Thinking of love, and of little beside;
Blue bell, bonnie bell, ring for the wedding!
Health and long life to the beautiful bride!



Loud were the cries of delight over Fluffy's song; but they soon changed into exclamations of sorrow, when Patty told the mice that they must bid good-bye to their little sea friends, as it was nearly time for them to go home. All the little sea-maidens and boys pressed round them, kissing them, and begging them to come again, which they gladly promised to do. Fluffy hugged her new friend and said "good-bye, you dear! I think you *must* be real, you are so lovely!" and so they left the beautiful play-room, and the coral doors shut behind them.

At the gate of the palace they found a lovely boat waiting for them. It was a great purple mussel-shell, lined with pearl, and cushioned with softest moss. In this Patty told the mice to seat themselves, and then, kissing them all, she bade them good-bye, and touched the shell with her silver wand. Up floated the strange boat, up and up, while the children leaned over the side as far as they dared, and threw kisses to their "dear delightful lovely Patty!" Multitudes of fishes surrounded them as before, and Bobbily Bungaloo, as a guard of honor, swam before the boat. At last I, waiting patiently by the rock, saw the five little heads rise above the water. Lightly my pets jumped from their purple boat; they bade farewell to Bobbily Bungaloo and his train, and then came running to me, all talking at once, and so fast that their remarks sounded quite as much like Hindostanee as like English.

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"Now," I said, "you shall tell me all about everything as we go along; but we must start at once, for there is no time to be lost, I assure you!"

So they wrapped themselves up in their cloud again, and the Winds blew, and the children chattered, and the cloud flew through the air at a tremendous rate. Indeed, our seven little airy friends were so bent upon showing their utmost speed that they forgot where they were going, and would have blown my mice to California if I had not stopped them. As it was, it was nearly daybreak when we reached Glenwood. The seven Winds were so weary that they did not trouble themselves about the cloud after the children had got out of it, but bidding the little ones farewell, they fell fast asleep in the bed of lilies under the window; and I also departed, while my pets called after me, thanking me for "the most delightful of all the delightful nights!"

CHAPTER XVII.

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GOOD-BYE.



WELL, it was not long after this that my four mice went back to the Mouse-trap, for Puffy was quite well again, and begged that she might not be left alone a moment longer than was necessary. So one happy day the little mouse, still pale and thin, but beaming with delight, clasped her twin in her arms, on the old stone steps, while the other mice danced about them. Mrs. Posset cried over her Downy; Tomty came up from the garden with his pockets full of apples

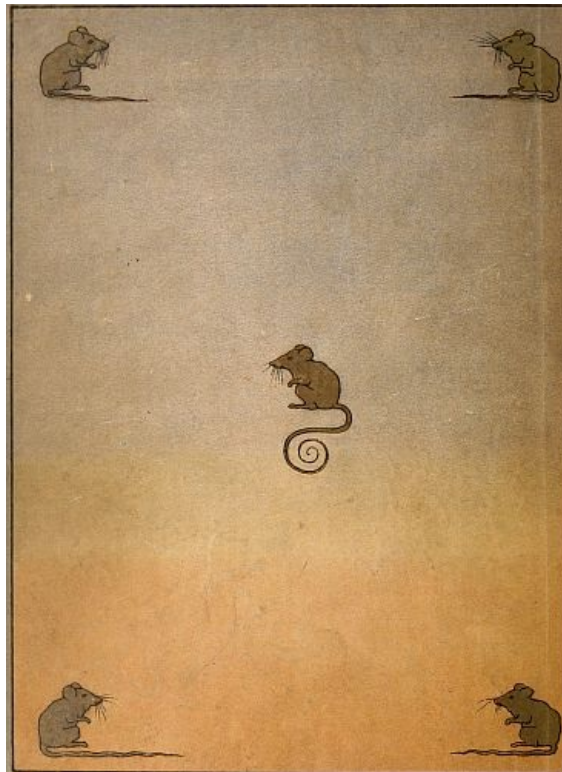
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for his pets; Gruff and Grim and Grab barked their noisy welcome; while good Uncle Jack smiled on them all, and was well-pleased to have all his little ones around him again in the dear old Mouse-trap.

And here, though it is really melancholy to think of, I must leave my five mice. There are many and many more things that I should like to tell you about them, but we must wait till another time for all that. The fact is that Mr. Estes, the gentleman who is going to be so very kind as to put all these stories into a book for me, (for neither my dog nor I could possibly do that for ourselves, and I don't know of any book-binding star in the whole firmament,) says he really cannot undertake to print any more of my nonsense at present, as he has many grave and learned books to publish. It is my private opinion that there is often as much moonshine in grave and learned books as there is in children's stories; but perhaps I am not a good judge, for I see more or less moonshine in everything.

However that may be, the fact remains that I must say good-bye for the present to the Five Mice in the Mouse-trap, and to you, Patchko and Tinka, Jimmy and Jenny, Alice and Amy, and all the rest of you. Be good children, now! don't forget to shut the door after you when you go out of a room; don't forget to shut your eyes when you go to sleep; and above all, don't forget your old friend,

THE MAN IN THE MOON



Transcriber's Notes:

Only the most obvious punctuation errors repaired.

For the purposes of creating the midi file, the transcriber replaced the rhythmical notation of the penultimate bar with 'quaver, dotted crotchet, crotchet', hence, maintaining the triple time pulse.

[Page 205](#), lines were printed out of order. Every attempt was made to correct the text for readability.

Originally text:

At this Polly sprang to her feet, with a cry of mingled fear and anger; but the witch (for this certainly must have been a witch, if Hobble-gobble!" She said this last word suddenly and sharply, and Polly was quite startled; but fancy her alarm when a large black cat crept out from beneath the red cloak, and sitting down on his mistress's knee, looked up in her face with an air of unearthly sagacity, ever there was one,) pointed her stick at her, and muttered some strange words which sounded like "Buggara wuggera boogle jum," and poor Polly fell back in her chair, unable to move hand or foot.

There she sat, motionless, but perfectly conscious, watching this

Now reads:

At this Polly sprang to her feet, with a cry of mingled fear and anger; but the witch (for this certainly must have been a witch, if ever there was one,) pointed her stick at her, and muttered some strange words which sounded like "Buggara wuggera boogle jum, Hobble-gobble!" She said this last word suddenly and sharply, and Polly was quite startled; but fancy her alarm when a large black cat crept out from beneath the red cloak, and sitting down on his mistress's knee, looked up in her face with an air of unearthly sagacity, and poor Polly fell back in her chair, unable to move hand or foot. There she sat, motionless, but perfectly conscious, watching this

The remaining corrections made are indicated by dotted lines under the corrections. Scroll the mouse over the word and the original text will appear.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK FIVE MICE IN A MOUSE-TRAP, BY THE MAN IN THE MOON ***

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