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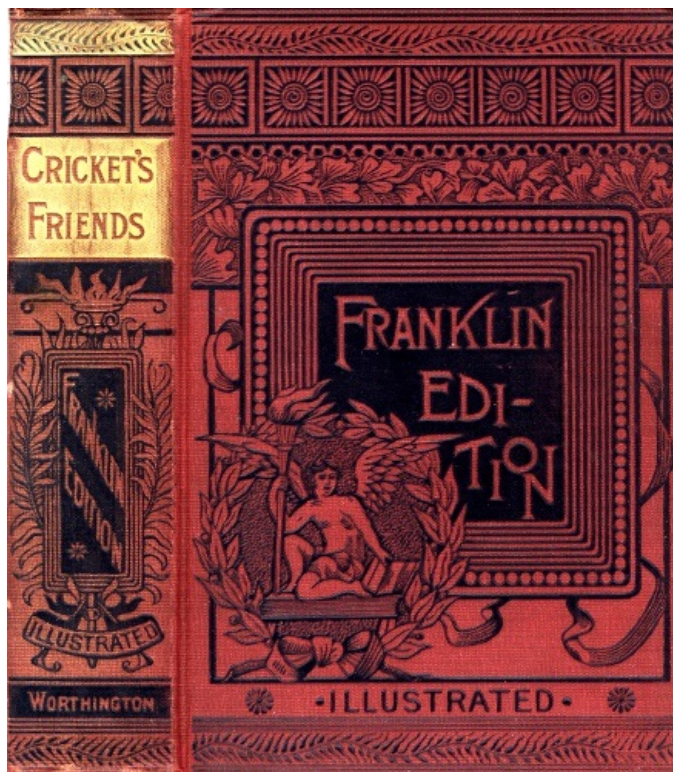
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**THE CRICKET'S FRIENDS.**

Tales told

***BY THE CRICKET, TEAPOT, AND  
SAUCEPAN***

**BY COUSIN VIRGINIA.**

NEW YORK:  
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1888.

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TO  
Minnie Slack,  
with all fresh young hearts and loving souls akin to her's, this  
little book is dedicated,  
BY COUSIN VIRGINIA.

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My little friends, who read the first volume of the "Kettle Club" last Christmas, will remember an allusion to the introduction of new members this year. Their history will here be presented.

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## THE CRICKET'S FRIENDS.

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The Club were all curiosity for some time to see the new members who were to be introduced into the select circle.

"I am afraid of spiders," remarked the Teapot, with a lady-like shiver.

"If a caterpillar touched me, I should run a mile," exclaimed the Saucepan.

"None of them can reach me," laughed the Kettle with a gurgle of satisfaction.

At last the Cricket marched the strangers in one night, and gave them places about the hearth.

"Allow me," said he, flourishing his right feeler in the air, "to introduce to you, friends, some very distinguished additions to our number,—the travelled Spider, the disappointed Caterpillar, and the ambitious Wasp."

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"How do you all do?" inquired the Kettle very politely, for the Saucepan and Teapot seemed rather stiff in their manners.

"Very well, thank you," growled the Spider.

"Quite so," croaked the Caterpillar.

"In excellent spirits," echoed the Wasp, folding his gauzy wings in a satisfied way.

"If it is agreeable to the rest, I propose your all joining the Club," continued the Cricket briskly.

"Certainly," assented the Kettle; "the more the merrier, you know."

"I think we should be extremely careful about admitting strangers to our circle, unless they bring letters of introduction," said the Teapot primly.

As for the Saucepan, she contented herself with looking sideways at the Caterpillar, and coughing contemptuously. This was not very pleasant; so the Cricket trotted up to the two rebellious members, and gave them a pretty sharp lecture upon the laws of courtesy and good breeding, which served effectually to make them ashamed of themselves. The visitors now became angry, and began to talk together of leaving without delay, which naturally distressed the good-hearted president, who was so much affected by a desire to do something pleasant, that he

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swung himself wildly upon the hook, and thereby sprinkled those below with a stream of scalding water.

"Mercy!" shrieked the Wasp, dancing on one foot in an agony.

"Oh, my back!" groaned the Caterpillar, rolling himself about in a ball.

"What ails you, Kettle?" cried the poor Cricket, running about with his eye almost put out from receiving a whole drop in it. "Do keep your hot water to yourself."

The Spider alone was unhurt; so he merely shook himself, and sat chuckling at the discomfiture of the others.

After doing all this mischief, the Kettle subsided, with many meek apologies.

"We can give you references enough, if that is all you want," said the Wasp snappishly; "but we had better leave, I think, comrades, before we have another hot bath. My hind leg is completely disabled."

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"Do not go," urged the Cricket. "We should enjoy your society so much, I am sure, when we become better acquainted."

The three visitors looked at each other in silence for a time; then the Spider said,—

"I have just returned home, and, as it is so near, I do not mind running in to spend the evening; so I will join the Club."

"I will also," said the Caterpillar in a dismal tone of voice, "only I am not very good company for any one now."

"Dear me," said the Wasp, airily, "I shall not promise to remain any longer than I am amused."

The Teapot and Saucepan became more amiable in their behavior as the evening advanced, and the Cricket hastened to assure the new-comers that references, other than their evident respectability of appearance, were entirely unnecessary. They insisted upon producing testimony, however.

The Caterpillar took from his throat, about which it was twisted like a cravat, a bit of green rose-leaf, and handed it to the Cricket, who read aloud,—

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"I can certify that my esteemed friend, the Caterpillar, will prove a charming addition to any circle.

"GRASSHOPPER, JR."

The Wasp then passed a lump of wax to the chairman, with these words pecked upon it:—

"I cordially recommend our neighbor Wasp to the society of all intelligent people, as a most refined and agreeable companion.

"A. TITMOUSE, ESQ."

The Spider alone of the three gave no letter, but said coolly,—

"I have seen plenty of the world, yet I have never troubled myself with such nonsense as cards."

"You will not find ceremonies of the kind necessary here," remarked the Cricket, with a severe glance at the Teapot. "Perhaps you will tell us something of your adventures, however.

"I do not mind doing so at all," returned the Spider, gathering up his long legs into a more comfortable position.

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## THE TRAVELLED SPIDER.

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I was born in the cellar of this very house, and, for a delightful, spidery residence, I know of no place to equal the dark, dust-stained window ledge where I first drew breath. After a long period of absence, I find my early home has lost none of its charms. This is the case with men as well as spiders, I am told. The American thinks there is no river in the world so grand as the great Mississippi; the Frenchman none so beautiful as the Seine; the Englishman none so famous as the Thames; the German as the Rhine; and the Egyptian as the sacred Nile,—because home is represented by each.

"So, too, with me the cellar window has rare attractions: there one can spin a dainty web to snare the silly flies and gnats, when they come dancing along, for supper. Never believe the life of a spider is an easy one, though: that is an altogether false idea. We work hard enough, although we wear such good armor, and have such sharp, strong claws; for we live by our wits, and a dull, stupid spider has but a poor chance of it. First, one has to be on the watch for stray morsels of food, to be ready for a pounce; then one's net may become torn in some way so as to require mending; or a wandering spider comes prowling along to try and conquer a home without the

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trouble of making it: so between all these cares there is little leisure time to spare. The class to which I belong does not have the constant labor that falls to the share of some of our cousins, who spin their webs from trees, or festoon them about verandas and other exposed localities, where the wind often blows them about so roughly, that they are obliged to suspend bits of wood and stone to the corners to maintain an equilibrium. I have some other relatives, to think of whom alone is enough to warm any spider's heart with pride.

"Foremost of these ranks the scorpion of warmer climates, where it creeps into sheltered crannies under every stone or sandy bank, even inhabiting boots and gloves. When disturbed, out it pounces, with an angry snap of the claws and a savage whisk of the tail, ready for some mischief, you may be sure.

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"Ah, I wish I was a scorpion, instead of a mere ordinary spider! But then every one cannot be great, after all.

"Well, even the scorpion is foolish sometimes, as I will presently tell you. It lives in burrows, which it digs in the ground, the entrance being formed to the exact size of the insect. By the shape of the hole people discover the residence, and, when they wish to destroy the inmate, they pour some water down, to see if the scorpion is at home. The scorpion detests water; and it no sooner feels the stream trickling through the opening, than out it rushes, to see what is the matter. To drive a spade into the hole and kill the scorpion is then an easy task.

"There is still another mode of destroying these princes of our race. A circle of smouldering ashes is made around the burrow, and the scorpion, after running for some minutes about the space inclosed, and seeing no means of escape from the ring of fire, invariably bends its tail up over the back, and inserting the point between two segments of the body, stings itself to death.

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"I have another powerful relative, to be found in South America. This is a large hairy spider, two inches long in body, and seven inches with expanded legs. Only fancy such a size! I should be a mere pigmy in comparison. This spider is so powerful that it can kill small birds, by entangling them in a strong web. Think of that!" cried the Spider, hugging himself with satisfaction.

"You need not turn up your broken nose, Madame Teapot: we are all murderers; still we do any amount of good, after all, in destroying insects that would otherwise cause much trouble."

"I don't believe a word of what you say," interrupted the Saucepan. "A spider kill a bird, indeed! Nobody ever heard of such a thing."

"My dear," interposed the Teapot scornfully, feeling very much angered at the allusion to her nose made by the ill-bred stranger, "great travellers always tell fine stories."

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"While you stay at home, and, seeing nothing, doubt what we say," retorted the Spider half angrily.

"Oh, dear me!" exclaimed the Cricket impatiently, "shall we never have peace? I was so much interested in your recital, friend, that an interruption seems very annoying indeed."

"I am glad to find you a Cricket of such large views," replied the Spider politely; "so I will proceed, if it affords you any pleasure. My mother had much more experience of the outside world than any of her neighbors, and, when I was still young, she talked with my father one night about my future prospects in life. I remember that we children were in the nursery—a silken tube, very soft and warm for our tender bodies—when I overheard her remarks.

"'I cannot consent that my eldest son should settle down here at home, when there is so much to be seen that will improve his mind,' she said.

"'That is foolish,' returned my father wisely. 'He will only fall into all manner of mischief, and he cannot make himself any thing but a house spider after all.'

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"I never slept a wink afterward, that night; and soon after I gained the consent of my parents to start on my travels.

"I had an easier time than most insects would enjoy, in leaving the shelter of their homes. When I was in danger I could generally trust that my long legs would carry me out of harm's way; and, if I was not able to escape, I just hid under a stone, or rolled myself up into a snug ball among the loose soil.

"I cannot begin to tell you all the curious adventures I had, or the strange things I heard; for I have been away such a long while, I have forgotten more than half. Still I remember a few particulars of interest.

"I was trotting about one day through a field of dry stubble, when I saw a pleasant river winding along in the sunlight, and sought the bank. The first object I noticed was a Kingfisher, seated motionless upon an overhanging branch, and peering eagerly down into the water in search of food. A very handsome bird is the Kingfisher, I assure you, with his blue coat of shining feathers, and scarlet shirt front; but so still is he when watching for prey, you would not notice him, sometimes, among the bushes.

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"'How are you to-day, sir?' I cried, while still at a distance. 'Are the fish lively, may I inquire?'

"'Keep quiet, will you?' said the Kingfisher, turning his head impatiently towards me.

"There, I have lost a splendid chance through your speaking,' he added angrily, as a fish darted past.

"I am very sorry to have disturbed you,' I replied, crawling out upon a twig, the better to observe his proceedings.

"I have carried every thing home to my family, and I am now as empty as a drum,' said the Kingfisher in an aggrieved tone, and then he resumed his watch.

"Suddenly down he dropped into the water, with a rush that fairly took my breath away, and, after splashing about furiously for a few seconds, returned to land, having a small fish in his beak.

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"Ha, ha!' laughed the Kingfisher, 'I've got you at last. Yes, and there is plenty of room left for some of your plump brothers and sisters besides.'

"So saying, he tossed the poor fish up in the air; then, opening wide his beak, caught and swallowed it with great apparent relish. I was very much amused by all this; so I said, as he settled upon the perch once more,—

"Well, well, we spiders are considered terrible butchers by most people, but we are rather more dainty than to gulp down our meals in that fashion. I hope you may not suffer from an indigestion, Mr. Kingfisher.'

"Do not worry over that,' returned he, cocking his bright eye at me. Then he flew away, and I scrambled after him as fast as I could, for I was curious to see how Madame Kingfisher and the babies fared.

"I followed the flight of the bird until he disappeared on the ground somewhere, and I arrived just in time to see him pop into a hole on the water side of the bank. I crept into the tunnel, which was originally made by a tiny animal, the water-shrew, and which had been enlarged by the Kingfisher to suit the size of the nest. This nest, my dear friends, I found to be composed of dried fish-bones,—mostly those of minnows,—and arranged in a nearly flat form, save a slight hollow pressed by the bird's shape while laying eggs."

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"Oh, oh!" spurted the incredulous Saucepan, "that is a worse fib than the account of the bird spider."

"Very wonderful, indeed," bubbled the Kettle, who had not ventured to speak since he scalded the company.

"I could tell you stranger things than that," said the Wasp, hopping out upon the hearth nimbly as the Kettle swung.

"One at a time, if you please," interposed the Cricket, restoring order.

"You would not doubt the truth of what I say," continued the Spider, shrugging his shoulders, and making a comical grimace, "if you once sniffed the horribly fishy odor of the Kingfisher's burrow. Bah! I can smell it yet. I hid in a dark corner, watching them as long as I dared; for I feared I should be crushed when the bird came out again, the entrance was so small."

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"How do you find yourself, my love?' inquired the father Kingfisher politely.

"It is rather dull, you know,' replied the mother Kingfisher. 'Hush, nestlings, you cannot eat another morsel; so be quiet.'

"They chattered together for a while; then I ran out just in time, for the other followed quickly.

"What are you doing in my house?' he asked angrily.

"I wanted to see how pretty it might be,' I answered saucily.

"Upon this the Kingfisher pounced at me; but I dodged this way and that, and a fine race we had of it. Finally, I saw a lady and gentleman walking along together; so I climbed upon her trailing dress, while the bird grew shy, and flew away. I strolled about upon the lady's dress for a while, until she saw me, and gave a shriek of alarm. This was even better fun than the race with the Kingfisher. I cantered up and down, the gentleman trying in vain to catch me; I pretended to run off upon the grass; then I stole back, and hid inside one of her curls. Here I remained all the evening, peering out now and then, when she returned to the house, to watch the gay lights and people. When she retired to her room, she combed me out of my hiding-place; but I did not care, so I walked out the window as if nothing had happened. The stars were shining brightly, and, as the night was so warm, I thought I would walk on a bit farther before finding a night's lodging. Like all good travellers, I had learned not to care much where I slept.

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"The bats were swooping about on the watch for mosquitos and other insects; the owls hooted from the tree-tops, and the bull-frogs croaked duets across the marshes with each other; while beautiful moths fluttered on the still air, to enjoy themselves after sleeping all day.

"Seated before the door of his house was a relative of yours [addressing the Chairman], the Field-cricket, chirping briskly. I knew he was a fierce, combative sort of fellow; still I tried to be very polite, as I wanted to get a peep into his mansion.

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"I am glad to meet so clever a house-builder, as yourself,' I said, with a low bow.

"As to that,' returned he modestly, 'I am nothing to the Mole-cricket.'

"If I could only have a glimpse of your residence,' I sighed.

"The Cricket grew affable, and offered to make a call with me upon the Mole-cricket. Accordingly we started together; and it was fortunate I had a guide, for otherwise I never should have discovered the abode of this curious insect. It is very quarrelsome with its own kind, as perhaps you are aware; and it passes nearly the whole of its life underground, in the many winding galleries and passages, excavated by means of the spade-like limbs.

"I hope we may find him in a good humor,' remarked the Field-cricket. 'Hulloa!'

"He called several times; then, receiving no answer, pushed a blade of grass into the opening, when out dashed the Mole-cricket, furious at the intrusion.

"What do you want?' he asked, snapping his strong claws at us in a very unpleasant manner.

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"The Field-cricket was so kind as to bring me here, hoping that you would allow me to see something of your house,' I said boldly.

"I have just got it into a splendid state of order, so I do not mind.'

"Wait,' exclaimed the Field-cricket, as we were about to enter, 'you must promise not to eat us up after we get in.'

"I promise,' laughed the other; 'I have already had my supper, so I am not hungry.'

"For my own part I did not fear being devoured, as I knew I was too prickly and tough a morsel to tempt any appetite. The Field-cricket, however, might with reason entertain apprehensions, for he was as sleek and plump as I was lean and bristly. He took the precaution of putting me between himself and our guide, so that he could keep on guard should the Mole-cricket forget his promise. Well, the latter behaved very well instead; so I have really no complaint to make. He led us through such a number of dark passages, that I was fairly bewildered with the size and variety of the smooth-walled tunnels.

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"Why do you have so many?' I inquired, when we paused, quite out of breath, in a kind of central chamber.

"Oh!' he replied, 'one must have a large house to run about in; and after all it is not so much work to make it. Besides, I can hide securely here, in ever so many different places, if necessary. This is the nursery,' he added, pausing before a really large cavity, which was much nearer the surface of the ground than the rest of his habitation. It was a fine apartment, nicely prepared for the reception of some two or three hundred yellow eggs.

"I build this so much nearer the surface,' explained the Mole-cricket, 'so that the eggs may have the benefit of the sun's warmth, although I dislike it so much myself, that I always burrow deep in the earth while the daylight lasts.'

"All this time I observed the Field-cricket grew more ill at ease,—now giving an anxious croak, then skipping back a pace, if the Mole-cricket only looked at him. He had some cause, sure enough. When we arrived at the entrance once more, I saluted our host courteously, thanking him for the pleasure he had given us. The Mole-cricket, instead of replying politely, made a sudden rush at his cousin, with his large jaws wide open. I stepped between them just in time to save the Field-cricket, who ran away as fast as ever he could; and that is the last I ever saw of him.

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"You had better go home again,' I said to the disappointed Mole-cricket. 'All I regret is that I should have seen you do such a thing, for I did not suppose you were so much of a barbarian.'

"Ho, ho!' he growled, in a sulky tone. 'I would eat you up for your impudence, were you not so tough-looking.'

"I am afraid you would have a nightmare afterward,' I rejoined; and then we parted, never to meet again.

"My attention was next attracted to a globe, about the size of a cricket-ball, suspended from the head of a thistle by several stout grass stems. It was woven together firmly, and presented no opening that I could perceive; yet the walls were so delicately thin, that the forms of some tiny animals, packed snugly together in this secure, though airy nest, were to be seen. Presently I beheld a pretty little creature, clothed in thick, soft fur, marked with white, nimbly climbing the stem of a plant, to pounce upon an unsuspecting fly, which it did as swiftly and accurately as a swallow.

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"What do you want here?' said the Harvest-mouse suspiciously.

"I am only seeking a night's lodging; so I will creep into this harebell, I think.'

"I slept soundly; the wind rocked my cradle delightfully. The next morning my curiosity was gratified, when I peeped out, by seeing the Harvest-mouse pay a visit to the baby mice. Her own body was so slender, that she could easily crawl through any space in the nest: which she did; and, when she came out again, the opening was carefully covered by the meshes of fine grass blades, so that the ball was apparently entire as before.

"Ah, ha! my lady,' I cried, jumping down beside her. 'That is the way you do it, eh?'

"The mother-mouse gave a little shriek of terror; but then, seeing it was only a Spider that spoke, she laughed good-naturedly.

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"I am not afraid of harm from you,' she said 'but there are so many horrible creatures about, ready to destroy us, that my nerves are often sadly shaken.'

"Pooh! you must not be so timid,' I urged. 'Now, for my part, I have travelled a long distance; yet I have found no peril that I could not easily escape from.'

"Never mind,' returned the Harvest-mouse, shaking her head. 'You will be frightened yet, depend upon it.'

"I soon found, to my sorrow, that I was to be not only frightened, but in serious danger. I was nearly killed the next moment by the ant-lion."

"What is an ant-lion?" inquired the Teapot.

"Ah! I know," sighed the Wasp.

"And I also," echoed the Cricket.

"But what is it?" chimed in the eager Saucepan, by this time quite interested in the Spider's narrative.

"I will tell you," pursued the Spider. "The ant-lion is a beautiful kind of insect, resembling the dragon-fly in its larval or imperfect state. It feeds chiefly upon active insects; and, as it is too slow of motion to catch them otherwise, it resorts to a very clever expedient,—it makes all food come within reach; thus saving a world of trouble. The head is furnished with a pair of long, curved mandibles, which gives to the inner jaws a free play. The grub makes a pitfall to entrap any passing prey, by tracing a shallow trench, the circle varying from one to two inches in diameter. It then makes another round, starting just within the first circle; and so it proceeds, continually scooping up the sand with its head, and jerking it outside the trench. By continuing this process, always tracing smaller and smaller circles, the ant-lion at last completes a conical pit, buries itself in the sand, and waits.

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"Like many another inquisitive ant, beetle, or spider, I went along to the edge of the pit, and peeped in to see what it might contain, when to my horror the sand gave way, and I slid down, down, almost into the jaws opened wide to receive me. I turned faint with fright for a moment; then strength returned, and I scrambled up the side again. This was not easy, as may be imagined: the sand loosened more and more every step I took, and, even faster than I showered it down, the ant-lion flung it back, endeavoring to keep the sides steep, and prevent my escape.

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"I just struggled to the brink, when who should come to my assistance but the good-hearted Harvest-mouse, who had witnessed the whole affair from her overhanging nest. She kindly extended her long tail for my benefit, which I eagerly clutched, and so was dragged out alive.

"Ugh! I never see a dragon-fly floating along, without thinking of that dreadful pit where the ant-lion lurked in waiting for victims. I felt too much exhausted to move after that, and, while in so miserably helpless a state, a bird snapped me up, to carry me through the air by three legs, as food for the young birds. They were very hungry,—children generally are,—but they would not give me so much as a peck of their greedy bills.

"Why did you not bring a nice, fat-bodied garden-spider, while you were about it?' said the robin-mother reproachfully.

"I was then flung out of the nest, and fortunately caught upon a projecting twig as I fell. I hid under a leaf to rest awhile, congratulating myself that I was so rough and ugly.

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"Several pretty young squirrels were whisking about the branches, while their parents gravely watched their sports with tails curled up over their backs in repose; or joined in the fun, chasing to loftier perches, where it made me giddy to watch them swaying about, and leaping from tree to tree, then returning to my immediate vicinity again.

"Do you live out here?' I inquired, going towards them.

"Yes,' they said, 'this is our summer house, you know; and very comfortable we find it for the heat of the season.'

"I wish you would let me look at it.'

"Oh! you can do that, certainly. It is built in sight of all the world. This is not the case with our winter house, however.'

"The cage was made of very slight materials, and placed upon the extremity of a frail branch, that swayed with every gust of wind. 'I should think you would be shaken out,' I remarked.

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"Not a bit of it,' returned the mother Squirrel. 'We could not be reached by any animal, the branch is so slender; and I am seldom frightened by the cries of boys,—unless, indeed, a stone should rudely strike the cage, when I take each of my young ones in my mouth, and deposit them in a place of safety.'

"Where, then, is your winter home?' I next asked.

"Ah! that is a question,' replied the father Squirrel, rubbing his nose with one little paw, in a knowing way.

"I do not wish to make any impertinent inquiries, but I should like very much to know something more of your interesting family,' I said modestly.

"Upon this the two parents whispered and nodded together for a time, then turned to me again. 'If you promise not to tell any cat afterward, you can see it,' they said.

"Of course I consented. The winter cage was located in the fork of a tree, where the boughs concealed it from view, and served to shelter from the wind as well. The nest was quite large, being composed of moss, leaves, and grass.

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"Come in and see how nice and warm it is,' invited the hospitable Squirrels.

"Do you build a new house every year?"

"No: that would be too much trouble; so we generally occupy one for several seasons.'

"Bidding the amiable Squirrel family good-by, I crawled down the tree to the earth once more. I began to weary of this rough-and-tumble sort of life. In the struggle with the ant-lion I had sprained my back, which malady was severely aggravated by the rude treatment of the bird that carried me through the air, only to throw me away when the nestlings declined tasting of me.

"I reached the bank of the stream where I had first seen the Kingfisher; then, as the day was cloudy and cool, I sat down in a nut-shell, that served to keep me warm. While I lazily watched the fish dart through the crystal waters, and the birds flutter overhead, a curious object came floating towards me. What do you suppose it was? Why, nothing less than a snug raft of dried leaves and twigs, fastened together with silken threads, that bobbed along right merrily, bearing the sailor who constructed it easily and securely. He was really a remarkably handsome fellow, of a dark, chocolate-brown color, marked with a broad, orange band, and with pale-red legs. This was the floating palace of the Raft-spider, who not only pursues insects on shore, but trots out upon the water after them just as well. In doing this he requires some resting-place, and so builds the raft that excited my wonder and admiration. When he saw me sitting in the nut-shell on the shore, he laughed loudly; while I was only too glad to attract his attention, for I had a favor to ask.

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"Will you take me on board?' I inquired.

"Yes: run ahead to yonder large pebble; then you can jump on when I pass by.'

"I did so; and when he came alongside I sprang aboard of the raft, which was amply large enough to receive both of us. I thought there never was better fun than sailing down the stream in this style. We danced along smoothly on the current when the water was calm, or we whirled round eddies and rapids; but we passed through all these dangers in safety. The Raft-spider conversed pleasantly. He frequently dashed overboard after some unlucky insect that had fallen into the water, moths, flies, and beetles; or he snapped up some tiny wanderer that rose to the surface for air; sometimes even crawling down the stems of plants for prey to the depth of several inches. He always returned to the raft with these spoils, and cordially invited me to share them, which I did with relish.

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"Eat away,' he urged. 'I can get plenty more at any time, while you look as thin as a starved grasshopper.'

"We had already become excellent friends, when we suddenly beheld a large boat steering swiftly towards us. The Raft-spider is extremely cautious; so, bidding me follow, he slid overboard to hide, as he was in the habit of doing when any danger threatened. Now this was all very well for him, as he could live under water for some time; but what was to become of me? The water bubbled up into my ears; I opened my jaws to scream, only to have more gurgle down my throat. I sputtered and gasped and floundered, until my companion took compassion upon me, and held my head up until the boat had passed, when he dragged me on to the raft again, more dead than alive.

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"To be sure,' he remarked gayly, 'I forgot you were not the same kind of a Spider as myself. You are only a landsman, after all.'

"Do you have to jump overboard in that fashion often?' I faintly asked.

"Bless you! I have done so every five minutes sometimes.'

"I should like to land, then, if you please.'

"The Raft-spider made fun of my fears; but I was determined to get away from the water as soon as possible, so he put me ashore, and went on his way, still laughing."

Here the narrator was interrupted by the entrance of Hulda, who whisked the Teapot and Saucepan off to a high shelf across the room. The Cricket, Wasp, and Caterpillar fled in opposite directions, but the unfortunate Spider was not quick enough to escape. The thrifty housekeeper espied him with her keen eyes, and, pouncing upon him, caught, and threw him out of the window.

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Here was an abrupt close to the story. The others could do nothing but sigh over this misfortune, and finally the Cricket said,—

"I propose, for one, that we do not meet again until the family have gone to bed; as, by so doing, we will not run the risk of being thrown out of the window."

To this they agreed; and then they separated, the Wasp and Caterpillar accepting an invitation to visit the Cricket in his mansion behind the brick.

The next night, when the household had retired, the Kettle Club resumed their places about the hearth. The Teapot had been left beside the fire, fortunately; but the poor Saucepan, to her great vexation, still rested on the shelf. They had hoped to hear something of the fate of the Spider; but, although the Cricket had been out of doors, prowling about that day, he could find no trace of the missing member.

"Such an interesting Spider as he was, too," commented the Kettle.

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"Yes, indeed," assented the Teapot amiably; "I did not suppose one of his race could be so agreeable."

"There is no use groaning, since it cannot bring him back again," said the Wasp sharply. "Who is to speak to-night?"

"We should be delighted to hear you," said the crafty Cricket, desirous of keeping the Wasp in a good humor.

"Perhaps you will not find my history interesting, after that of the Spider," said he with affected modesty: he thought it would be much more so all the time.

"I am sure we shall," cordially returned the Cricket.

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## THE AMBITIOUS WASP.

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"To begin then," commenced the Wasp, "I must first describe to you how I was born. Did any of you ever see, very early in the spring, one of my tribe flying slowly about, pausing to examine every earth bank, now exploring the burrow of a field-mouse, or perhaps entering the tunnel of a boring insect, all the while buzzing in a fussy way?"

"I now remember watching a Wasp during my travels, that behaved in a very curious manner," said the Cricket. "It alighted upon a wood-pile, and gnawed off a quantity of fibres, which were kneaded together carefully into a ball; and then the Wasp flew away with the ball to a hole near by. I did not dare ask any questions; because I feared receiving a sting for my curiosity, and I have heard such a wound is most painful."

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"Ah! that is always the way," said the other in an aggrieved tone. "We are thought by man to be good for nothing but to steal sugar, or other sweets; and gnaw holes in fruit, to disfigure the ripe beauty of peaches, plums, and apricots. We are called lazy fellows, going about to give any one a sharp thrust; when in reality a sting often causes death, by tearing the poison-bag. This belief is partly true; still not altogether, for we are also of some good in the world. We do not live solely upon the juices of flowers and fruits: we are very fond of the hosts of flies that swarm about and render themselves so annoying in the summer season. For instance, if you notice the pigs in the farm-yard any warm day, you will observe that the flies cluster thickly over their skins, tormenting the poor animals terribly. This torment is greatly lessened by the wasps, who skim over the fence every now and then, and capture a fly inevitably in their fatal grasp."

"Is it possible!" exclaimed the Teapot.

"Yes, indeed," returned the Wasp complacently. "But I must tell you how I was born. The Wasp you saw on the wood-pile was selecting a home, like a careful matron, and was bundling the fibres together to use in the construction of her nest. This she was obliged to do without any help whatever, for all the other wasps had died the previous autumn, while she was left to sleep through the winter in some warm nook, then found a new colony in the spring. Having brought the fibres to her burrow, she runs up the side of the chamber, clinging to the roof with the last pair of legs, while with the first pair aided by the jaws, she fixes the woody pulp to the roof, forming a little pillar. Other pellets are attached, until this pillar, like a stalactite in a cave, is completed. At the end of the pillar she places three very shallow cups, lays an egg in each, and makes a roof over them. More cells are then added, eggs laid in them, and the roof extended over the whole. By the time all this is done, the eggs laid in the first three cells are hatched into tiny grubs, who are terribly hungry, requiring ever so many flies from the mother Wasp. At last they cease to feed; spin a silken cover over their cells; and, after spending a short time in this retirement, tear away the covering with their jaws, emerging perfect insects."

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"They now repay the mother Wasp for her care, by assisting in all heavy labors, so that she really has little to do, but lay eggs as fast as cells can be made for their accommodation. Before long the first terrace is completely filled with cells, and more room is needed. The wasps next construct several more pillars exactly like the first one; and, by adding cells to these, another terrace is built below the first one. Three or four more terraces continue to form, the cells of

these last being so small, that the mother Wasp cannot put her head into them. The inmates of these cradles are very much smaller than their parent, and are known as the workers, their lives being devoted to labor. These workers make excellent nurses, always feeding and tending the baby wasps with jealous care. Towards the close of the summer their conduct changes, however; they feel that a quick death for those nurslings who will not have time to grow up before cold weather is best, so they pull the helpless white things out of their beds, and carry them outside to die. I am glad I was able to grow to wasphood."

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"Please raise your voice a trifle," said the Saucepan, in a vexed tone. "I cannot hear half that you say, over there."

"You had better use an ear-trumpet," remarked the Wasp impertinently. "I am already as hoarse as a raven from shouting so loudly."

"When the nest is abandoned the workers die; and so do almost all of the others, save a few of the females."

"How is it that you are alive, then?" interrupted the Teapot.

"One thing at a time, if you please," said the Wasp pettishly; "I am telling you as fast as ever I can. When I first spread my wings to fly out into the warm, bright sunshine, I was half-wild with delight at my new strength and beauty. The world seemed such a wonderful place! The air was so fresh, the flowers so fragrant and varied in coloring, and the hills so grand in height, that I could only flutter from place to place, bewildered with happiness. I alighted finally upon a catalpa-tree, whose branches were covered with splendid blossoms."

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"'You feel very gay,' rustled the tree.

"'Yes, I am only just born; so I may well be gay.' I answered.

"'Ah! dance while you may,' said the Catalpa gravely. 'Your life lasts a few hours, but mine for years.'

"My fine spirits were chilled in a moment, and I dropped to the grass, feeling utterly miserable. I could only enjoy all this pleasure for a few hours after all! There was so much to see, and so little time to see it in, where should I turn first? While I sat there thinking after this fashion, a pansy slowly unfolded, and out of it stepped a tiny figure, no longer than one of my legs. I was not very wise, but I knew it must be a fairy or elf that now stood before me. He wore knee-breeches, a jacket to match, and a funny little cobweb cap.

"'So we are sad, eh?' he said, winking one eye drolly.

"'I have such a short time to live, that I do not know which way to turn first,' I replied.

"'That is a pity,' said the sprite, rocking himself upon a stem of seed-grass, as if it were a hobby horse. 'What would you do if you could live longer?'

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"'What would I not do?' I exclaimed. 'I should try to see every thing beautiful and curious in the whole world.'

"'Stop a bit,' he interposed. 'You shall do this if you desire it so much.' He took off his cobweb cap and threw it at me, saying, 'This will make you invisible, if you put it on your head, when any danger threatens.'

"Before I had time to thank him the elf turned a somersault in the air, and plunged head first into his pansy mansion, which closed upon him."

Just at this moment the Kettle Club was startled by a sudden thump, thump in the room.

"What was that?" whispered the Teapot; and all the others listened, without daring to look over their shoulders, for the fire was rather low.

"It is only I," said the Saucepan. "I have jumped off the shelf to hear better."

"You must have hurt yourself," said the Kettle.

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"Oh, no: I only feel a trifle jarred. I am made of tin, you know."

How were they to move the Saucepan nearer to the hearth?

"I think I could be rolled over, if any one would be so kind as to push me," she suggested eagerly.

So the Cricket, Caterpillar, and Wasp trotted out, and by pushing together succeeded in moving the Saucepan to the fireside.

"We can never turn you over," panted the Caterpillar.

"I can rest on my side," said the Saucepan cheerily.

"Your lid lies out yonder on the floor," said the Cricket.

"That is not the least matter. It would not stay on my head if I had it. Go on with the story, please; I am sorry to have made so much trouble."

"Where was I?" inquired the Wasp.

"The pansy fairy had just disappeared," said the Kettle, who for a wonder remembered the story. [Pg 49]

"To be sure," resumed the Wasp briskly. "I skipped with delight at my brighter prospects, and started forward again with renewed courage. I first encountered some of my brothers and sisters, to whom I at once communicated my good fortune. Strange to say they none of them seemed to appreciate my superior advantages.

"For my part I do not wish to live any longer than the sunlight lasts," said one; and to this sentiment the others agreed.

"My ambition leads me further," I answered, and flew onward, never to see them more.

"I passed over the broad expanse of land, until I saw the sea glittering like a polished mirror in the distance. How I should like to make a voyage! I paused to rest upon a cliff that rose steep and smooth, with the ocean foaming about the base. There were a great number of bird-nests drilled in the surface of the rock, and by peering over the brink I could see the young birds, that were the funniest little balls of white down imaginable. Suddenly a parent bird came swooping home, and hopped into the very nest that I was examining. [Pg 50]

"Don't tumble me into the water," I cried, clutching at the slippery stone, for the rapid flutter of the bird's wings made me giddy.

"I will not hurt you," said the other. "I have been a long way to-day, and I have really gained little to eat for my trouble. I followed a great ship for hours, and only caught up a few crumbs, after all."

"Why, I do believe you are one of Mother Carey's chickens," I exclaimed.

"My proper name is the Stormy Petrel; still the sailors call me Mother Carey's chicken. I do not know why, but then sailors have queer ideas. Bless you, I can frighten them terribly by just skimming round and round on the wind: they then reef all sails, thinking I am about to bring a storm by my presence. Ha, ha!" laughed the bird merrily, "only think of little me being dreaded by great, strong men. I can generally tell when a storm is coming,—they are right in supposing that much,—and oh! how I enjoy it! Why, friend Wasp, you have no idea what life really is, just fluttering about among the flowers and trees: I should gasp for breath where every thing is only still sunshine. What I call life is to see the clouds piled in dark masses overhead, the waves rearing mountains high, and to have the wind blow a hurricane." [Pg 51]

"I should imagine such exposure would beat the life out of you," I remarked.

"Not at all," replied the Petrel. "I like to be tossed about, and spread my wings on the gale, although it may nearly take my breath away."

"I never dreamed of such a life," I said; "please tell me more about yourself."

"First I must feed my young one, as I have been away all day. We never lay but one egg, fortunately, for we have to feed them ourselves. We secrete a kind of oil in the digestive organs for them. Indeed, we are such oily birds, that in some parts of the world the natives thrust a stick through our bodies, and use us for lamps."

"You are gone so long," piped the nursling.

"That is to find something to eat, my dear."

"The time is so long, doing nothing but sit alone, staring out at the sea," clamored the nursling. [Pg 52]

"Very true," assented the mother Petrel quietly; "but there is no help for it, except to grow strong and fly for yourself."

"Upon this the young one began to strut and tumble about the nest, to the great delight of the parent, who encouraged such exertions. We became excellent friends, and talked over my plans of travel.

"I dare not venture upon the ocean; because, if I grew tired of flying, I must fall into the waves and be drowned."

"You would soon be fatigued. Supposing I carried you?" said the Petrel.

"Here was a splendid idea. If I could only be taken to other lands, what pleasures would be in store for me. The Petrel promised to bear me over the seas, if I would wait until the nestling was able to take care of itself. I lived inland while I waited, and visited the birds every day in their rocky home. When the time approached for our departure, the mother bird proposed I should take a sail, just to accustom myself to the voyage by way of trial. I climbed upon her back, and she made a dart straight out into the air, that drove every particle of bravery out of my body. [Pg 53]

"Now, then," said Mother Carey's chicken, "hold on tight, and I will show you some better fun still."

"I begged her to return to land; but the wind blew so strongly, that she did not hear my faint voice. She whirled in circles, pattered upon the water surface unconcernedly, and rose in the air with the rapidity of the arrow shot from a bow. I closed my eyes, and clung about the bird's neck, fearing every moment a fall into the great green billows that rolled away into space, as far as sight could reach. When we landed once more, I fainted away. The Petrel was dancing on one leg,

and laughed at me, when I opened my eyes again.

"I have a great mind to give up the journey,' I said in a pet. 'I can never cling to you in this way. If I had been content to lead the life of an ordinary wasp, I might have escaped all this trouble and vexation.'

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"It is never well to quarrel with destiny,' remarked my companion. 'Still, I would not give up because of a first sea-sickness.'

"Presently I regained my courage somewhat, and we began to ponder how I could be fastened on. I flew to land, and procured several long horse-hairs. These I wound about the bird's slender throat, and strapped myself tightly to her body. What a journey we made of it! The faithful Petrel must have carried me an immense distance. Sometimes she perched on the rigging of a ship, sometimes we rode on the waves, or we paused for the night at some rocky isle; yet Mother Carey's chicken never seemed to weary of the scenery about us."

"What did you have to eat?" inquired the Caterpillar, who, like all caterpillars, had a famous appetite of his own.

"Very little, indeed," said the Wasp. "A stray insect now and then, but never a sip of honey the whole way. I took the precaution, before starting, of fastening a blade of grass about my waist; in the same way that Indians gird themselves before making a journey, to prevent any feeling of hunger. At last land was seen in the distance, and I again stood on firm, dry ground."

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"Good-by,' said Mother Carey's chicken, spreading her wings as though ready for a fresh journey. 'I wish you good luck. Should you ever desire to go back north, any of us will give you a passage.'

"So saying the pretty, good-natured Petrel flew away, leaving me alone. I did not feel very happy just then: I almost wished myself still a baby wasp in my wax cradle again, with nothing to do but eat and sleep. I was afraid at finding myself so far from home; and besides that I was very, very hungry: there is nothing like a sea-voyage to give one an appetite. Beyond the barren sand beach there rose a stately forest, which I determined to visit; but just then my attention was attracted by a beautiful object in the water. It was a flower of the most exquisite coloring, with a rich purplish-crimson outer edge and a disk of the same hue, the stout, short tentacles of which were marked with pellucid rings of white and lilac. Floating just beneath a crystal film of sea, it expanded temptingly under my wistful gaze. What a wonderful place, I thought, where delicious flowers were borne to hungry travellers! I fluttered nearer, longing for a sip of honey; and in another moment should have been lost, had not a little fish come along, to be stung and devoured by the anemone before I fell into its clutches. I afterwards learned that many a bee or wasp was enticed to death, as I had so nearly been; for the beautiful flower was only a greedy zoophyte, after all, swallowing every thing that came in its way."

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"Trembling at my narrow escape, I next flew towards the forest, taking the precaution of assuming my magic night-cap in starting, for I did not know what dangers might be in store. Arriving within the boundary of the forest, I alighted upon a blade of grass to rest. The air was delightfully fresh and pure, while the sun already slanted, in tropical splendor, towards the western horizon. Palm trees extended about me in every direction; the fan-leaved miriti towered to an immense height; the graceful assai showed its feathery masses against the rounder foliage; and the jupati threw its shaggy fronds into broad arches, while from the branches swept ribbons of clinging plants, hanging air roots as ladders to climb by. Here and there a long crimson blossom on spikes, or yellow and violet trumpet-flowers, relieved the sombre green by their brighter hues."

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"Presently I saw a slender, pale-green snake, that was twined about a tree like a vine, with only the bright eyes sparkling and fixed upon an unsuspecting, plump tree-frog."

"Good evening, friend,' I buzzed in the snake's ear. 'How pretty your coat is!'

"Who speaks?' exclaimed the snake, looking complacently upon his beautiful, frosted armor."

"Never mind,' was my wicked response, 'By your vanity you have lost your supper.'

"The snake's eyes flashed angrily. Sure enough, the tree-frog had taken alarm, and was hobbling away out of reach."

"I continued my way until I reached the brink of a broad, placid pool, where I hoped to make the acquaintance of some of the many creatures I saw congregated about the margin. Dark-striped herons, snowy egrets, and storks stood gravely at the brink, or strode over the water-plants on their long legs. Flocks of whistling ducks flew above my head, macaws chattered in the trees, and a pretty canary chirped in the bushes. Upon the surface of the water floated the magnificent Victoria water-lily, the broad leaves extending for six or ten feet, and the flowers just closing their alabaster cups in sleep. I now removed my cap; but I was so small an object, that I attracted no notice whatever."

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"Ahem!' I began. Whereupon some of the birds turned about and stared at me. 'My home is very far north of your country,' I said; 'but a good fairy has kindly given me permission to visit you all.'

"Indeed,' exclaimed an old stork. 'How extraordinary! If you was a bird, now, it would not seem so strange.'

"A bird brought me,—Mother Carey's chicken."

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"Could you not find a better bearer than one of those fussy, bustling little bodies?" said a handsome egret scornfully.

"Do not despise the petrel because she is not so strong and beautiful as yourself," I replied.

"Ha, ha!" laughed a macaw from his high perch. "How fine it is to be a water-fowl, and have such long legs."

"At this all the storks, herons, and egrets ruffled their plumes, and prepared for an angry dispute with the saucy macaw; but I hastened to interfere.

"I should be sorry to make any trouble among you. If you would tell me any wonders to be seen here, or show me any of your homes, I should be greatly obliged."

"A black nose was poked out of the water, and a turtle, in a shrill little voice, piped,—

"Did you ever see us lay eggs? We shall be about it soon," then sank out of sight again.

"As to that, the world is full of wonders wherever you may turn," said the stork, who had first spoken. "You should visit our ants"—

"What more the stork would have said, I cannot tell; for just then a crashing noise was heard in the thicket, and all my companions took flight on the approach of the lord of the forest. Presently the jaguar appeared close beside me, and stooped to quench his thirst in the pool, so I had an opportunity of seeing what a fine creature he was, with his soft striped fur, velvet paws, and glowing, cruel eyes. I did not dare move even so much as to put on my cap, while my wings seemed paralyzed with fear. Startled by some sound, for he is a very shy, cautious animal, the jaguar retired again, and I only just escaped a severe crushing from his powerful foot as he passed.

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"I must now describe to you my first night in a tropical land. As darkness increased I sought shelter on a spreading shrub, and the insects began a tremendous noise. 'They will grow sleepy by and by,' I thought drowsily.

"But not a wink of sleep did they take, or allow me, that whole long night. The howling monkeys began the concert, the tree-frogs and crickets trilled occasionally, and the owls hooted dismally. When I tried to stop my ears to these sounds, the fire-flies, resembling crystal drops of fire, flared their torches in my face with blinding brilliancy.

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"Don't, please," I pleaded.

"The naughty fire-flies only laughed at my misery, and danced around me in bewildering circles of flame, until my eyes ached.

"I wish you would be quiet," I said crossly.

"Quiet," echoed the fire-flies. "Not we. There is all to-morrow for naps."

"It was not long, with such an experience, before I found I could not live in the tropics. I never had a sound night's rest while there.

"I strolled on through the cool, shady forest, which formed a delightful contrast to the hot, sunny landscape without. What most amused me was to see the little, striped-faced monkeys poke a cluster of inquisitive heads out of the holes of trees where they were sleeping, if any sound disturbed them. They paid dearly for their curiosity, as I shall presently tell you. I had paused to admire the butterflies that clustered in the sunlight here and there, as if desirous to display their gorgeous coloring to the best advantage. Some were of a velvet blackness, relieved by rose-colored and green shadings; others were of a blue, metallic lustre; and others floated on outspread wings, transparent as glass, spangled with lines of violet, silver, and gold. No wonder the lovely insects were vain of their gaudy dress! When I told them I was a stranger, they danced and pirouetted in their giddy flight, until they resembled the wandering petals of falling flowers. Suddenly a handsome dragon-fly, whose armor glittered with a golden refulgence, swooped down to capture one of the butterflies, then retired to a neighboring branch, and prepared to devour his prey.

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"Why don't you stay at home with your sober wife, instead of whisking about where I can catch you?" said the dragon-fly, shaking his pretty captive.

"Just then there approached a very singular-looking person indeed. He wore a broad hat, blue spectacles, and had a great many curious tin cases slung about his belt and over his shoulder. In his hand he carried a dip-net, which he threw cleverly over our heads, and entangled us in the bag. We could do nothing but stare helplessly at one another in dismay.

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"Oh, dear!" cried a young butterfly piteously, "We shall now have pins driven through us, and be speared to a cardboard platter for ever. I have heard my mother say so."

"We all shivered,—even the dragon-fly, who had been captured also. Of course the striped-faced monkeys came peeping out in the wrong time, and, after a good deal of poking into the tree, one of them was caught. Thus the naturalist gentleman returned home with his treasures, the little monkey alone of us all being destined to live.

"The first thing, upon taking us from the net, was to politely hold a bottle to our noses, which caused a few feeble kicks in the air, then a fainting fit. When I again opened my eyes, I was lying upon a board, surrounded by my companions, who were transfixed with pins upon paper, as the young butterfly had said. I certainly thought my end had come, and that hereafter my body was destined to adorn some cabinet. I pretended to be still unconscious, and so lay quite motionless under the large microscope through which the naturalist gentleman regarded me, now poking my ribs, now turning my head to one side, and all the while making remarks on my personal appearance.

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"I don't believe that you belong here at all,' he exclaimed. 'I must dissect what may prove a new species.'

"Here seemed my last chance of escape; so, watching an opportunity, when he was selecting a suitable knife to carve me up with, I drew my elf's cap from under my wing. The naturalist gentleman was too quick for me: he seized my night-cap with his tweezers, and began eagerly to examine it. I was sorry enough for the loss. Still one had better part with the fairy's gift than life itself: so I flew away. I dare say the naturalist gentleman may have carefully preserved the cobweb cap, to puzzle science with for a long time.

"Journeying on, I came to the bank of one of the largest rivers in the world. I paused to view the waves dash against the shore in foam, the vessels flit past on the strong breeze, and the distant villages on the other side. There were several low strips of sand reaching out from near where I rested, and I observed groups of natives making camp-fires, or erecting a kind of watch-tower overlooking the land. I inquired what they were doing, of a monkey who sat stroking his sandy whiskers with an indolent air.

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"Ah! don't you know?' he returned. 'They are waiting for the turtles to lay their eggs.'

"The next morning I beheld a curious sight. In the first gray dawn, myriads of turtles were creeping down the sandy slope, and flapping into the water again, their duties of depositing eggs for that season being accomplished. No sooner had they departed, than the natives gave signals, and from every direction crowded the boats to receive the eggs, which would then be prepared as turtle oil, and sold in jars.

"I decided to try and find the ants next, as I had been recommended to do so by the stork. The monkey could tell me but little of them, and advised my searching farther inland, I next encountered the iguana, who poked his head out from among the creeping vines of a tree as I passed. Any thing so monstrous in a lizard I had never dreamed of. It must have been five feet long, was very fat, and the skin changed color like that of a chameleon. The Indians are fond of the eggs of this species, which they eat mixed with farinha. When I asked about the ants, the iguana answered,—

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"I do not trouble myself much about those busy fellows; still, you will find them almost everywhere, I dare say.'

"I bid him good-by hastily, for I was half afraid of such a great creature, and left him winking lazily on the branch as before. If the Spider was here, I could tell him of some relatives that I met,—rough, hairy spiders, with fierce looks; soft, plump things that melt away almost at the touch; and others of gorgeous hues, that double themselves into cunning shapes to resemble flowers and buds. At last I came upon an army of Saüba ants, each one carrying a bit of green leaf daintily as a parasol. Although on the march, the whole company treated me most cordially.

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"We cannot stop now,' said one of the soldiers. 'Come with us.'

"So I followed in the train, curious to know what they were about. Presently they paused; and a detachment turned aside to overrun an orange-tree, from which they stripped the foliage with incredible rapidity. Having performed this duty, they rejoined the main army, and the whole moved on to their incomplete nest. Here the leaf-bearers merely threw down their burdens, and the workers placed them in proper order.

"We use the bits of leaf to thatch the dome of our house, thus preventing the loose earth from falling in,' said an ant near by, pausing to take breath in the midst of his labors.

"He then led me through the vast subterranean galleries of their dwelling, which extended an immense distance, as may be imagined, for the exterior of the nest must have been at least forty feet in diameter. The ants promised, if I would return after their day's work was done, they would give me some interesting accounts of themselves. Leaving the busy throng, I crept into a flower-bell to take a nap. When I returned, the Saüba ants were actually resting themselves,—a luxury that I did not suppose an ant ever indulged in. Some of them were strolling about at their ease; and others were diligently scrubbing their coats after their work, or were assisting each other in the friendly task of brushing such portions of the body as could not be reached by the owner. They were very chatty and agreeable, so we enjoyed ourselves very much.

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"Have you met the foraging ant?' asked one. 'They sally forth with officers to direct the movement. They are rather hot-tempered and cross, to be sure, attacking any one fiercely that may come in their path; yet they do a world of good. When it is known they are approaching, people open every closet, drawer, and box in their houses, that the ants may search and cleanse them. What digestions they have! Scorpions, cockroaches, lizards, rats, and snakes are devoured in a trice; while into every crack and cranny where a stray insect may have hidden pour the army

until all is cleared: then on they go again.'

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"How wonderful!" I exclaimed.

"I can tell you of a wiser race yet," chimed in another. 'The agricultural ant of Texas plants and reaps for itself. The nest is surrounded by a mound, and then the land is cleared for several feet beyond. A grain-bearing grass is sowed by the insect, and afterward tended with great care, the ant cutting away all other grasses or weeds that may spring up,—like the good farmer it is. When the small, white seed is ripe, it is carefully harvested, and carried into the granary, where it is cleared of the chaff, which is thrown outside as worthless. Should the rain wet the winter stores, the ant brings the grain out into the sun to dry, that the damp may not cause sprouting among the provisions. What do you think of all that?' concluded the ant, with a triumphant manner.

"I think you are the most wonderful insects in the world.'

"At this the Saüba ants all looked highly pleased, and they richly deserved the compliment; so there was really no harm in it. I found myself exposed to so many dangers, without my magic cap, that I finally concluded to fly to the seashore, and see if I could take passage homeward again. Here I found no other a bird than the Petrel's baby, now a handsome young fellow enough, who readily agreed to carry me northward.

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"I strapped myself to my bearer with the horse-hairs, and found myself rather a better sailor than on my first voyage. I am now on my way to the pansy fairy, with the petition that he will give me another cap. If he consents, I shall next visit Europe and the East," said the ambitious Wasp pompously, in conclusion.

The whole Club were so much entertained by this history, that the Saucepan never once complained of her uncomfortable position, rolling on her side. Hulda was much surprised to find her in this attitude next morning; but the maid servant wisely concluded the rats must have visited the shelf, and whisked the Saucepan off with their long tails.

When it came time for the disappointed Caterpillar, they were surprised by the entrance of a welcome guest: the Spider came sidling in, looking gay as possible. Of course they all spoke at the same time, and asked a hundred questions before he could answer one; especially the Teapot, who had never appeared so excited on any previous occasion.

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"I am all right again, thank you," said the Spider gruffly. "I got a few bruises by my fall from the window; but, being used to tumbles of all sorts, I have now recovered somewhat, although I felt rather stiff the next day."

"I am not fond of talking," said the Caterpillar, with humility, "nor can I do so well. In my present state of caterpillarhood, I am aware that I do not please,—that I am not, in fact, any thing but an uninteresting glutton. There! the Spider is laughing already."

"I should be sorry to do any thing so rude," said the Spider slyly; "only you are rather fond of leaf-salad, I have heard."

"True," replied the Caterpillar, smacking his lips at the thought. "What could be more delicious! Still I must not dwell upon topics of food, for fear I should never have done describing such delicacies as suit my palate. I shall not find much in my own personal history to entertain you this evening. Never having travelled, like my two distinguished companions, I cannot bring to your notice the wonders of other lands, as they have so ably done."

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Here the Wasp and Spider arose, laid one foreleg upon the heart, and made a low bow in acknowledgment of the compliment.

This ceremony over, the Caterpillar proceeded:—

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## THE DISAPPOINTED CATERPILLAR.

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"I have had no occasion to stroll farther away than the garden of this house. I am sadly puzzled for something to talk about. The Wasp has anticipated me, even, in a description of butterflies,—a state I am in hopes of attaining some time, when you will not be able to recognize me. My world has been limited, so far; yet I have seen some wonderful things, too. Did any of you ever see a humming-bird?"

"Yes," said the Cricket, Spider, and Wasp in a breath.

"Did any of you ever converse with one?"

"I did not suppose they ever stopped buzzing about long enough to speak," remarked the Spider.

"I have talked with one," said the Caterpillar triumphantly. "When I was just hatched, some week or more ago, I crawled for the first time out of the soft, warm bed my good mother had made me in the curve of a leaf. I stretched myself upon the leaf which had been my cradle, to enjoy the warm sunlight, and looked about upon the various forms of life and beauty to be seen on a summer morning. The buttercups and daisies laughed up at me from the grass, the insects floated about on gauzy wings, while the birds darted from branch to branch in merry sport.

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"Close beside my leaf couch was a knot, or natural excrescence in the branch; and this tiny cavity held a nest, lined with fibres from mullein leaves and fern-down, containing two pearly eggs no larger than peas.

"Suddenly a glittering object shot up into the air until it was almost lost to sight; then descended upon the nest I was just examining. No wonder the eggs resembled pearls, when the parent bird could not have been more than two inches in length. When I beheld the lovely, fragile thing, with its diamond-bright eyes, and the plumage of the graceful curved throat, glittering like burnished metal in changing hues of orange and ruby, I felt ready to cry with vexation that I was such an ugly, worm-like creature. True, I shall be handsomer sometime; but I can never be a humming-bird. Besides, I belong to a sober species. A robin came hopping along jauntily from twig to twig, with a morsel of cherry in his beak.

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"Such a fright as I have had,' twittered the humming-bird. 'A great stupid man was peering about to find my nest a long while, and to-day he has followed me. Ah! but I gave him a long journey. I fluttered right and left, or darted ahead; then finally rose in the air so high he could hardly see my wee body; then dashed down here safe enough.'

"A wise plan,' commented the robin. 'Thank fortune, I am not in such demand.'

"Interested in the conversation, I crept too near the margin of the leaf, lost my balance, and fell upon the nest.

"You awkward thing,' said the bird, giving me a contemptuous poke aside. 'How ugly you are!'

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"I know it,' I replied; 'it was my admiration of your superior beauty that caused my fall. Excuse the clumsiness of a caterpillar just born.'

"Go away with your nonsense and flattery I feared I was shot when you fell.'

"Who would hurt you?' I asked, slowly climbing back to my leaf.

"Plenty of enemies. That man is watching below, and nothing would delight his cruel soul so much as to carry away my family.'

"Tell me something amusing, or I will inform him where you live.'

"He would not believe a caterpillar,' laughed Madame Humming-bird. 'However, I will tell you any thing in my power.'

"If it is all about your distinguished relations in the South, I have heard enough on that subject already,' said the spiteful robin.

"At this the other grew very angry, inflating her tiny throat, and snapping her bill. I tried to soothe her wrath, for I dislike any thing irritating.

"I always did despise robins. My great family, indeed! One should learn better than to associate with plebeians.'

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"The robin was jealous of your superior beauty.'

"This made the humming-bird good-natured again; so she went on:—

"Did you ever hear of my first cousin the Chimborazian hill-star? Ah! there is a fine bird for you. Not afraid to expose his frail form to the cold of higher latitudes, he dearly loves mountain air. I will tell you a story about him sometime. The hermits are so clever at building nests, they would laugh at this rude cradle of mine; still, as I cannot find any suitable leaf to suspend my nest from, bound by elastic spider-threads, I just use this knot, which answers the purpose after all. Some of them form a felt-like substance of moss and bark woven together; others use a fungus resembling buff-leather; while the Sappho comet lines her nest with the long hairs of the clamas. My relatives can boast the greatest variety of coloring. They have black diadems, purple-shaded patches, or vivid scarlet, blue, and crimson aigrettes. I do not know why people need invent fairies and gnomes when they can have us for subjects, flashing about among the flowers, as gay as the brightest of them, or bathing in some secluded nook of the brook, under the fern-leaves that form a tiny bower.'

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"We were so much interested in the subject under discussion, that we never heeded the approach of danger. I looked up and saw a man's face close beside me. He was climbing cautiously along, his gaze fixed upon my pretty companion. Before I could give any warning, I was shaken to the ground, and the humming-bird continued to talk of her great relations, unobservant of my fall. I watched eagerly, and presently the man came down again, with his captive and her nest uninjured.

"Oh, my dear Caterpillar!' she sighed, looking through the meshes of the fine net which covered her little head; 'I wish you were strong enough to help me. However, promise to find my husband, and tell him of my sad fate.'

"I have never found him," said the disappointed Caterpillar. "I presume he has consoled himself with another wife by this time. I searched faithfully, crawling over whole trees in hopes of seeing him, and exposing myself to many dangers. I met other caterpillars in plenty. That of the looper-moth supports itself for hours on the hinder feet, raising the body high in air, and, by a resemblance to the twigs of the tree, succeeds in deceiving the birds that would devour it. Some I

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found to be protected from injury by tufts of hair, acrid secretions, and stinging powers. Others so closely resembled brown, crumpled leaves, or green, fresh ones, that I should never have known them had they not spoken; while some of the number arm their dwellings with thorns. I have even heard of another species, called bombardiers, who fire off little guns when pursued, accompanied by a blue smoke and disagreeable scent.

"I liked to watch the ermine-moth community the best. They spin a commodious tent; and, wherever they wander over the tree, they carry a thread with them, so that they may not lose the way. Birds can do no more than strike their wings against the elastic bridges thus formed: they cannot penetrate the lines.

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"Well, all the caterpillars laughed at my folly in searching for the humming-bird's husband; and perhaps they were right. I now have reason to despair of ever meeting him, for he never returned to where the nest had been; and a slow crawling caterpillar cannot hope to pursue the flight of a bird."

Here the Caterpillar paused abruptly: the Wasp, interested alone in startling incident or romantic adventure, was yawning.

"Really, I beg your pardon," he had the grace to say; "I did not sleep well last night."

But apologies or entreaties did no manner of good. The Caterpillar steadfastly refused to continue his tale.

"Very likely I was growing tiresome," he replied in an injured tone. Yet he made no further remark; for the Caterpillar, like other slow persons, was apt to be obstinate. This made affairs rather stiff and uncomfortable; so they were all glad to retire for the night.

The next evening, the Caterpillar was still sulky, and resisted all attempts of the Teapot to coax him into better humor. The Cricket wisely concluded to divert matters, by inviting the Spider to entertain them.

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"I believe I am something of an author," said the Spider, "although I have never written for any of the magazines of the day. I will tell you a story I composed last summer, if you like."

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## THE FOUR SILVER PEACHES.

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"Beyond the Frith of Clyde, the Kyles of Bute cleaving their way among gray cliffs, tapestried with mosses and richly clothed with lichens, past Loch Ridan's clear waters, past the peninsula of Cantyre, on the bosom of the Atlantic, lies a group of islets, varied in hue and form,—the Hebrides.

"To this isolated region, where the ocean hurls in winter storms against the rock walls, or ripples in caressing waves under summer skies, we will turn; for children have been born on that rugged shore, scenting the heather and wild thyme with their first breath.

"On the island of Iona, near Port St. Ronain, there once lived a good man, who had three strong sons, and two ruddy, blue-eyed daughters. One thing troubled him: little Neil, his nephew, did not thrive so well; for he was a cripple, and it saddened the uncle's heart to see the boy droop and pine away.

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"Little Neil was an orphan; and he missed a good mother so much, that he was not happy, like his sturdy cousins. He could never run along the stretch of white sand, flecked with quartz and shells from the Ross of Mull. No: he could only creep painfully to the brink of the green, crystal waters, to peep into their clear depths; or climb to some higher eminence, and watch the sea-birds in their rapid flight, the distant outline of cliffs shining in the sunlight, and the light breeze curling the waves crisply about the bows of many a little craft that skimmed over the azure sea only to melt into the hazy distance.

"Neil loved the ocean and the sky above it, embracing between them his island home. Everybody thought him a strange child, and this naturally gave him very bitter feelings: it seemed to him he should like so much to be his cousin Angus, who hunted the otter and tended the sheep, sleeping many a night upon the open hillside, wrapped in his plaid.

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"The lame child had never been at school; yet he had heard the traditions of his home often related about the winter fireside. He had heard the grandeur of Fingal's Cave described; the stone cairn that marks the last resting-place of the Scandinavian woman, whose wish it was to be buried in the pathway of the Norway wind; and the castle of Duart, where a lord of the isles left his wife to be overwhelmed by the rising tide. Then, too, he had shuddered with fear over many a tale of ghosts and goblins haunting ruined houses; for the Scotch people are superstitious.

"The great day of the year arrived, and all the cousins went to the fair held at Broadford, on the Isle of Skye. Little Neil had once been there, to see the women with smart caps and scarlet tartans grouped about their cows and sheep, while the men and boys passed in restless, changing crowds; but the noise and bustle wearied him, so he remained at home.

"Now I am coming to the real matter of the story: the kernel shall be ready for your appetite, if

you have but the patience to crack the shell. We will see what kind of entertainment was prepared for the lonely cripple, who told his thoughts to no one, and chose the whispering winds for companions.

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"When the sun sank over the broad ocean, little Neil sought a favorite nook in which to watch the long day die. Fainter grew the rich hues of the western sky, more distant the line of rocks, here outlined in creamy whiteness, there abruptly riven by some black precipice, until Neil fancied strange forms were flitting about the bases of the cliffs, and rose to go; but he was stayed by a curious sight. The sea was glimmering with a phosphorescent light, and the waves that broke upon the shore were gemmed with globules of living fire, which melted away almost imperceptibly into rosy shades. The boy had often seen the ocean thus illuminated; but his gaze was attracted to a certain point, where the brilliancy centred in a wave of beautiful transparency, through which glittered emerald and golden flashes, appearing and disappearing in rapid succession, until Neil was dazzled by the splendid sight.

"The wave throne upreared slowly, creamed over, and deposited at the boy's feet a casket of delicate frost-work, glittering with a wonderful radiance. Neil reached forward and touched it, when the lid flew open, disclosing four silver peaches, resting in separate filigree spaces of the same precious metal. Across the fruit lay a small case-knife, the handle studded with precious stones, and the diamond blade wearing a keen edge.

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"'This casket contains four wishes, from which you may choose. They are the gifts of the Wind Sisters,' said a water spirit; then sank in a circle of foam bubbles.

"In the sky appeared a ring of blended colors, which descended rapidly, taking the form of four globes,—one rose pink, one gold, one green, and the last pale blue. The radiance of these globes of light spread far over the ocean. They parted slowly as they neared him, the outline of the separate forms melted into soft masses, and upon the vapor rested the Wind Sisters.

"The South Wind, whose misty chariot took the shape of a magnolia blossom with pink-tinted petals half-opened, shook her rosy mantle, and a breath of balmy perfume was wafted to Neil, like the scent of a garden after a summer shower.

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"The East Wind floated on a couch of golden cloud, her black hair waving over a fleecy amber robe down to her sandalled feet, while her presence breathed a richer odor than the delicate fragrance of the southern sister: it came from spice-groves and orange-trees.

"The West Wind stood erect upon her throne of emerald, her fair head bound with ivy tendrils, her green mantle fluttering sparkling breaths of health, flower-scented too, with the violet and anemone, and in her eyes a promise not found in those of her languid companions. Lastly, on the right rested the North Wind, her stately form supported on snowy-white pinnacle and fret-work of vapor, sharply defined as the ice cliffs that frown upon the Polar Sea. She wafted little Neil no perfume of flower or shrub from her lily draperies; yet he felt a keener joy kindle in his heart at the frosty stillness of her presence, than when the others lavished their treasures upon his senses.

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"'Open the first peach,' commanded the North Wind in a grave, stern voice.

"Neil raised the fruit, divided it, and found it to be lined with pure gold.

"'I can give you wealth,' said the East Wind, in a rich, soft voice. 'Look!'

"A scroll of mist rolled from her chariot to the surface of the water, taking the form of a mirror as it expanded; and upon the polished surface little Neil fixed his eyes.

"First there appeared a garden, the like of which the Highland boy had never dreamed of. Upon lawns of velvet smoothness rose wonderful trees,—the palm, towering into feathery crests; the lemon, drooping a grateful shade of snowy blossoms; and the palmetto,—all interlaced by climbing plants. In this delightful retreat, wearing robes of satin, and reclining upon magnificent carpets, within hearing of trickling streams or the twitter of brilliant birds, was a man resembling Neil's own self. Servants flitted about him, bearing flagons of sherbet, or held tempting fruits in their cool leaves,—the delicious pomegranate and juicy date; while grave men, slaves only to his wealth, bowed in homage.

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"The scene melted gradually into a palace of splendid appearance, where Neil still held a place, his turban spangled with diamond, his pipe-stem encrusted with emeralds, and the dagger hilt, half concealed in a Cashmere sash, glistened with amethyst and carbuncle. From the lofty hall, vaulted passages and pavilion extended, each more rich in coloring, more gorgeous in ornament, than the last; while beyond a balustrade of delicately carved marble sloped a terrace, blooming with roses and jasmine vines. Again the rich man was surrounded by servile homage and flattery; but Neil saw he was nothing but a cripple, after all.

"The East Wind sat in her couch of sunshine, with a triumphant smile upon her dark face.

"'Ah! it is all very grand, lady,' said Neil sadly; 'only must I be lame still?'

"'Yes.'

"'What good would the riches do me, then, with the pain also?'

"'Much good. Think of the power you can wield. The whole world would open her countless

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treasures. You could obtain knowledge; you could see every thing that is beautiful or interesting; and you could relieve the needy by your bounty. Better be a rich cripple than a poor one.'

"Little Neil thought so, too; but he concluded to cut another peach before he decided the question. He did so; and the interior of the second was lined with crystals of great brilliancy, that shimmered in points of light like a rainbow prism, yet their gleam was cold as ice.

"I can give you fame,' said the West Wind in musical tones. 'Look!'

"She unfurled her green mantle, which grew into a mirror like the previous one, only of an intense, steely brightness. Neil saw a range of mountains, snow-capped, their steep slopes skirted by pine-trees; while far below spread a sunny landscape, ripening vineyard, tracts of waving grain, and olive-groves. Through the narrow defiles, down the precipitous heights, hewing a passage for their clumsy elephants by fire and vinegar, came an army, and in their midst moved a man, the master spirit of it all.

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"Hannibal,' whispered the West Wind.

"The picture changed to a succession of views,—battle-fields swathed in smoke; soldiers moving across the plain, their arms glittering in the sunlight, their banners fluttering; a city burning in wreaths of flame against a northern sky; a nation crowning their chief with laurels.

"Napoleon,' whispered the West Wind again.

"Then the boy saw travellers exploring unknown regions, statesmen and authors toiling over vast schemes.

"Could I be like these, lady?' he asked.

"Yes.'

"Would I be happy?'

"That is for you to decide. Fame is a greater gift than that of my sister here: any fool can be rich. But every man cannot have what these men possessed, because God gave them what gold never can buy,' said the West Wind, her proud eyes brightening.

"I should only be a cripple, and men would laugh at me,' sighed Neil, taking up the third peach, and opening it.

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"The lining was composed of opals, quivering in tremulous rays of purple and pink more beautiful than words can describe.

"I can grant you the love of all,' said the South Wind, in a voice like the chime of silver bells. 'Look!'

"Her scarf floated downward a mirror still retaining a rosy tinge, that was a relief to the eye after the glitter of fame's glass, or the golden haze of wealth's vision.

"Neil saw himself on the river bank, surrounded by children, some playing games, and others reading in the shade. Upon his shoulder perched a white dove, which appeared to whisper wise counsel in his ear; for, whenever dispute arose among his companions, he quieted their anger by soothing words.

"Again Neil saw himself a young man, traversing the suburbs of a great city, where gardens bloomed with purple grapes, peaches, and golden pears. The dove rested upon his head, seeming to attract other birds that perched on Neil's hand to preen their feathers. Sleek-crested horses tossed their manes at his approach, and the dogs crouched to be caressed. As he entered the crowded streets, children laughed, fair women smiled; and on every face was a kindly greeting for the man with the invisible dove.

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"Lastly, Neil saw himself a very old man, seated before the open door, as the sun was setting in the west. About him were gathered kind friends ministering to his wants, the little ones weaving a crown of tender lily sprays to place upon his head; but the dove, instead of perching upon his shoulder, as it had done when a boy, now hovered afar, ready to take flight. The journey of life was almost over.

"Dear South Wind, let me have this wish,' cried Neil eagerly.

"You shall have it. Who can live without love?'

"He was so sure of liking this gift, that he pushed aside the casket, and the last peach rolled on the ground.

"Wait,' said the North Wind, 'until you know my gift. I am not sure you will prefer it; still you must decide.'

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"Neil severed the peach, and in it were reflected the fleeting shadows of angel forms.

"I can grant immortality,' said the North Wind, holding up a shield of pure ice, and Neil saw a strange spectacle.

"He beheld a vast amphitheatre, crowded with cruel, hard-featured people, all watching eagerly a boy standing in the arena alone, yet wearing on his upturned face a light that shone upon none of

the heathen about him. Above him poised an angel, whispering words of encouragement, as a handsome tiger sprang into the circle from an iron gateway, and approached the boy with crouching, stealthy step. The tiger made a sudden leap, the heathen crowd shouted, and *two* angels winged their way above the palaces and temples of Rome.

"Next there rolled a dark stream across the mirror, bearing upon the current a woman, with hands roughly bound together. Dark figures loomed against the eastern sky, watching her; but another watcher was there also,—the same angel, shedding a radiance from her golden wings upon the drowning head. Neil saw a great man before a haughty council,—Dr. Martin Luther; he saw many of a humbler class teaching the poor and ignorant, whether in the wilds of savage Africa, or the city streets, it mattered little which; and with each hovered the angel companion. Children, too, there were who were patient and unselfish, doing what they could in little acts of kindness, while the angel smiled even more tenderly upon them. Upon all their faces beamed a joy that separated them from the world.

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"'Riches do not always bring happiness,' said the North Wind. 'Fame seldom does, and mere earthly love must fade before the presence of death.'

"'Let me be like those you have shown me,' cried Neil, stretching out his hands towards her.

"The other sisters rose slowly, floating south, east, and west, until they became balls of light again; but the North Wind took the little cripple in her sheltering arms, and bore him swiftly away. Over the sea they went, the North Wind sweeping gracefully along; and Neil felt no fear of her, as he had done when she stood on her cloud throne.

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"At first he could see nothing but one vast expanse of water, domed by the clear sky; then, at length, he noticed a dark line on the horizon, which grew more distinct, and proved to be land.

"'You must begin the journey for yourself now,' said the North Wind, alighting on the shore.

"'Oh, don't leave me!' cried the child, clinging timidly to her white draperies.

"'Do not fear: I shall still be with you;' and then she rose above, leading him on the path he should go. She had now become the angel that guided the others.

"So Neil began the toilsome, painful journey. The way led across an arid, desert waste, where waves of yellow sand glowed under the sun's fierce heat. Neil hobbled along slowly, the hot earth scorching his feet, the brazen sky without clouds, and the air stirring from a heavy, pulseless stillness, into sultry wind puffs. The child might have drooped and fainted by the road, had not the North Wind spread her cool wings to shade him from the sun's vertical rays. She also gave him a crystal flask of pure water, and a loaf of bread; but, although his own lips were parched with thirst, he gave the precious draught to others who implored the refreshment. The supply never failed; yet, when the child looked into the flask, there never appeared to be but a few drops remaining. So, too, with his loaf of bread. There was always more to give when he broke a piece; yet there never seemed enough to eat any himself.

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"'Never mind,' he thought bravely. 'All these poor people have not the North Wind to shelter them, as I have.'

"At last the desert plain ended, and Neil began to ascend a steep mountain-side, that was clouded in a mist of snow at the summit. He found the way still more difficult. Now he had to climb slopes smooth as glass; now he trod a narrow ledge above a frightful precipice, where many fell; or he was obliged to cross glaciers, where the rough points hurt his feet, and the ice yawned treacherously about him. The cold air whistled by; and the sleet drifted in sheets, so that he could hardly see his way.

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"The North Wind gave him a fur cloak. How deliciously warm and soft it felt! A shivering old man came by, and Neil gave him the garment.

"'Never mind,' he thought, 'he is so old; and, besides, I have only to look up into the North Wind's kind eyes, to be both warmed and fed.'

"Half frozen with cold, he finally descended the other side of the mountain, to the brink of a wide river, upon the opposite side of which bloomed a fair country.

"'You must swim the stream,' said the North Wind; so Neil plunged in boldly. The waves curled up over his head at times; great monsters swam towards him with fierce looks,—serpents and alligators opening their huge jaws as if to devour him; yet he panted on until he was cast upon the shore.

"When he awoke, Neil found himself lying upon the soft grass, near a spring of water that gurgled from a moss-grown rock, with a pleasant sound, and tinkled along in mimic cascades beside him. He was surrounded by a group of fair children, who bade him drink of the spring. Neil drank deeply, and immediately he felt a new life. His limbs were no longer distorted, his back bowed: he was well at last.

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"'Where is the North Wind?' he asked.

"The children led him to the gates of a palace, which had been before concealed from his view.

"'We have brought another child,' said his companions; and the gates flew open to admit them.

"In the court of the palace stood the North Wind, looking more radiant than the sun.

"Do you know me?' she said, kissing Neil.

"Oh yes,' he replied joyfully. 'You are my own dear mother, who died so long ago.'

"The North Wind was indeed his mother. Little Neil was in heaven."

The Spider heaved a deep sigh when he had finished, although his countenance glowed with the radiance of an inborn genius. "I wish I had ever been able to screw up my courage sufficiently to attempt publishing any of the ideas which occupy my brain," he said.

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"Why have you not?" buzzed the Wasp.

"Ah," returned the other, "who ever heard of a Spider turning author, and walking into the office of some magazine with a manuscript under one arm?"

"It is an age of improvement, you know," remarked the Cricket.

"I perceive you have a fine mind," said the Kettle; "only we are not much used to considering the winds in a poetical light, especially when they howl down the chimney winter nights."

"No, indeed," assented the Saucepan, who had been thinking of a story for some time. "I can tell you something plain and homely enough if—"

Here the Saucepan paused, coughed, and waited to be urged.

The next evening they were ready to listen, and Saucepan began:—

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## GOING MAYING.

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"There was a general rising, as the teacher dismissed her section, the pupils clicking desk-lids, dropping books, and chirping like a flock of busy swallows, as they rushed down the broad stairway to the street. Among the crowd were two little girls, who presently detached themselves from the rest, and entered the Common, talking earnestly. The smaller was listening with an air of grave attention to the animated conversation of her companion.

"But, Nellie,' she said, with a doubtful shake of the head, as she glanced at the bare branches of the trees, that rustled in the breeze with rather a wintry sound, 'I think it would be too cold.'

"Too cold!' echoed Nellie, tossing her head contemptuously; 'and pray did you ever read of May-day being any thing but warm and lovely, with wild-flowers, green grass, and running brooks? Nonsense, you really know nothing about the matter here in town.'

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"Finding that her prudent little schoolmate still hesitated, Miss Nellie produced a brilliant-covered book from her satchel, which she had been perusing behind her grammar with great relish that very morning, and so dazzled Bessie's eyes with a pictured May-queen in white muslin and pink ribbons, that all her scruples faded, and she agreed to an excursion next day, in honor of the first of May.

"Accordingly, at an early hour on Saturday, without the knowledge or consent of her parents, Bessie Morton proceeded to the house of Nellie Wray, whom she found in a state of great excitement. With their dinner packed in a basket, and various extra receptacles wherein to carry flowers and other treasures they might discover, they set forth bravely. At first little Bessie ventured to suggest the propriety of taking the cars to some suburban town, at least; but Nellie scorned such every-day affairs, or she pretended to, although I am inclined to the opinion that she had not a penny in her pocket at the time, and disliked owing to such extreme poverty. So they trudged along, swinging their baskets; Nellie enlivening her friend by scraps of information on the topic of spring-time, until Bessie was warmed to an equal amount of enthusiasm on the subject. The sky was clear, the sun shone brightly; and what matter if the wind was a trifle frosty, causing a slight purple tinge in the tip of their noses, so long as it was May-day. Besides, in the country it would be different. And without doubt it was. As the blocks of houses were succeeded by scattered dwellings, the landscape became bleak: brown earth, sprinkled here and there with tufts of grass, budding trees, and bare shrubs, surrounded by sombre, wind-swept hills, presented a chilling disappointment to the children.

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"Nellie surveyed the scene rather blankly; then affirmed that green valleys must be farther on. Presently she saw a little brook in a distant meadow, and announced her firm conviction, that upon its banks wild-flowers grew in abundance. They climbed over the fence after some difficulty, and proceeded across the field, looking eagerly on all sides for the coveted anemones and violets. They did not notice that at the farther extremity of the pasture were some horses, quietly rubbing their heads on the bars of a gate.

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"Soon the ardent little botanists were searching on the bank for floral treasures, and were rewarded by a few sparse clumps of pale, frozen-looking violets. With an exclamation of triumph, Nellie stooped to pluck one bunch; while Bessie, no less delighted, pounced upon another. In the midst of these labors, as they chatted merrily over every tiny, dew-tipped cup that reared its fragile head, they were alarmed by a rumbling sound, that seemed to shake the very earth under

their feet. Upon raising their heads, they discovered that the horses, with manes and tails streaming on the breeze, were scampering over the ground, with all the graceful movements of unrestrained freedom. A slender-limbed, fleet-footed bay led the others in circles around the inclosure, a world of mischievous fun sparkling in his bright eye, as he pranced and curveted along.

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"The children clung together in speechless dismay, as they saw the animals become wilder with every bound, knowing their only means of escape was at the wall where they had entered, or the opposite gate. While they were hesitating about what course to adopt, the leader, for the first time apparently, noticed them, and with a wicked shake of the head came dancing towards them. Then, without losing a moment's time, they fled across the field, dropping flowers and gloves; conscious of nothing but that the horses were neighing and snorting close behind them, and that they must reach the gate soon, or be eaten alive. Nellie arriving at it first, pushed through with frantic haste, just as the bay thrust his nose playfully over Bessie's shoulder. Nellie rescued her terrified companion, by dragging her over the boundary, and closing the gate unceremoniously in their pursuer's face. With a low, half-apologetical whinny, Master Bay began to rub his head on the bars again, as quietly as when they had first entered his dominions.

"Still panting with fright, the young pleasure-seekers next glanced about for a means of escape from present difficulties; only to discover that the narrow lane they had entered led in quite an opposite direction from the road they had left. What was to be done? They never could attempt passing those awful horses again, and the lane must lead out somewhere, so they would explore it. They found it turned into a barnyard, which they decided to cross, hoping to find their way out beyond.

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"The yard contained a lively population. There were waddling ducks, with tufted feathers on their heads; there were noisy, cackling geese, strutting roosters; and several large families of pigs, who strolled in and out of their houses, the little pink ones, with their tails in a very tight curl, peering out from amid the straw of their beds: while pretty, brown-eyed calves lowed in adjoining sheds for their absent mothers. Entering the place, the children cautiously picked out their footsteps around the mud puddles, until they reached the centre, when the ire of a turkey-cock was excited by Nellie's red cloak. His angry note, as he flapped his wings defiantly at her, was echoed not only by his own family, but by the whole goose and duck tribe, until there was a general clamor of indignation against the intruders.

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"At this juncture, there appeared on the scene a choleric goat, with venerable beard and sharply curved horns, who, after surveying the field of action for a time, advanced with bent head and glowering visage. Again they were compelled to take refuge in flight,—this time entering a large barn which flanked the inclosure on one side, and closing the door after them. By this act they excluded all light from the place, save where a few rays penetrated the chinks of the boards, throwing vague, uncertain lines over the hay-loft and into the darkness below. They groped about the place in search of another door, but without success; then they returned to the entrance, and peeped through a hole in the woodwork, to see if it was possible to retrace their steps. The goat had assumed a warlike attitude, giving hints of unabated rancor by butting at the closed door; while the turkey-cock still puffed with rage, and even the little pigs had ventured forth to see what was the matter.

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"'Oh, dear! what shall we do?' exclaimed Nellie most dismally. 'Will we have to stay here until somebody comes?'

"'We must find another door,' said Bessie resolutely, as she led her discouraged schoolmate on a second exploring expedition. Finally, after stumbling down unexpected steps, knocking their heads against heavy beams, and sneezing with dust, they found a small aperture, half choked by rubbish, through which they crawled into a shed, and so out into a meadow. Once more they clambered over a wall into the main road, somewhat dilapidated and dusty after their adventures.

"'O Nellie! your shoes are covered with mud, your dress is torn, and your face quite dirty,' cried Bessie.

"'O Bessie! your hat is crushed on one side, and your hair covered with hay-seed,' retorted Nellie, who could not refrain from laughing, as she contemplated their sorry plight.

"'Don't you think we had better go home?' said Bessie ruefully, attempting to bend her disabled hat into shape.

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"'Go home before noon, when we have had no fun yet?' replied Nellie, her spirits reviving now that all danger was past; 'oh, no! we have our dinner to eat, and lots of nice things to do.'

"Once more yielding to her playmate's superior sagacity, little Bessie trotted along cheerfully, until they espied a fine rock on a sloping hillside, which they immediately proposed converting into a dining-table. To reach the spot, they were obliged to pass through a piece of rough, ploughed ground, recently sown, near a little cottage, with gray, overhanging roof, and narrow, closed windows.

"Spreading a napkin for table-cloth on the rock, they were soon arranging their provisions; here a sandwich rested upon a pedestal of apple, to prevent its tilting over a slice of custard pie; there a small bottle, containing a mysterious fluid, suggestive of weak molasses and water, dripped through its broken cork into a store of pickled limes. But what matter if the gingerbread did taste of mustard, or if the chicken was encrusted with spilled sugar, on a first of May picnic?

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"After surveying the result of their labors with great satisfaction, they were just preparing to enjoy the result, with appetites only sharpened by previous misfortunes, when Bessie's attention was attracted by the curtain of one of the cottage-windows being drawn aside, and a head appearing behind the glass. It was such a hideous head, with tangled white hair surmounted by a queer cap, and the face was so sharp-nosed and wrinkled, that the little girl paused, with a chicken wing elevated half-way to her mouth, to stare at the apparition fixedly.

"Nellie, noticing her sudden silence, turned also; and, when she saw the face, gave a shriek, and commenced tumbling cakes, pies, and pickles into the basket. Then the head disappeared from the window, and a comical little old man, in a dressing-gown, popped out of the door, like a spider from its hole. He hobbled towards them, shaking his cane, and croaking like a hoarse old raven.

"Get out, will ye, a-tramping of my rye, and a-bringing of your traps under my very nose. Hullo, there! just wait till I catch ye.'

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"He looked so wild and angry, as he came towards them, all the time wagging his head, and tapping the ground spitefully with his cane, that they ran away across the rye as fast as ever they could; the old man shrieking and chattering after them all the while, until they reached the wall and stumbled over into the highway, Bessie still clutching her chicken wing.

"Hurrying along as rapidly as possible, to escape from their dreadful pursuer, they came to a place of cross roads, and, puzzled which direction to take, they decided on a pleasant road turning to the right. When they had proceeded a short distance, they noticed a high fence running parallel with the road, in which was a door. Impelled by her usual heedless curiosity, Nellie turned the knob and peeped into the inclosure. The view of winding paths and shrubbery proved so inviting, that they entered. They saw broad avenues bordered by rows of fine elms, trim hedges, and flower parterres, all leading to a large mansion with closed windows and doors, as if nobody lived there, while a dome of glittering glass conservatories rose on one side. The children strolled about, every moment discovering something new to admire,—now it was a graceful-arched bridge; now it was a white statue gleaming through the shrubbery; now it was a massive carved urn, filled with hardy, clinging ivy vines.

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"Seeing no one near, they determined once more to eat their dinner; and so, selecting a pleasant bank for the purpose, were soon discussing their good things.

"Now you will find that May-day is nice, after all,' said Nellie triumphantly, her mouth full of cake, as she poured some of the contents of the bottle into a cup the size of a thimble.

"Oh, false hope! There was a crackling of dry twigs behind them, and, with an alarming growl, a large, savage-looking dog bounded directly into their midst. To see a huge black nose appear over one's head, and a double row of sharp, white teeth displayed within a few inches of one's eyes, is trying to the courage,—at least our little friends found it so; for they not only abandoned their baggage to the enemy, but beat a hasty retreat, Nellie rushing wildly down one alley, while Bessie escaped by another.

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"The dog, instead of following them, began to devour their repast, selecting such dainty morsels from the *débris* as best suited his palate.

"Bessie found herself, she scarcely knew how, behind a summer-house, where she crouched trembling for a time, until, summoning courage, she ventured to call, in a quavering little voice, to her missing friend. Receiving no response, she began a search, frightened that she was alone. She peered about on every side, entreating Nellie to appear,—first from under a bush that would not have concealed a cat; then lifting a watering-pot left by the gardener, as though she expected to find her companion rolled in a ball below the spout; until, with heaving sobs, she paused by a bridge, and made a last desperate effort. This time she heard a faint response, as Nellie presently crawled forth from under an arch of the bridge, sadly splashed with water, her hat gone, and her ankle sprained. What need to tell how they wandered through avenue, grove, and by-way, hopelessly bewildered and lost?—how, utterly discouraged and terrified at last, as the sun began to slant towards the western horizon, they sat down by the road-side, to indulge in a flood of tears?

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"It's not a bit like story-books,' sobbed Nellie. 'I am so hungry and tired and cold. Oh, dear!'

"Just as they were preparing to rouse themselves to try and find their way, a gayly painted express wagon came rattling along at a smart pace. The good-natured driver stopped readily enough to answer their questions as to the way home; and, when he had gleaned a few particulars of their story, he took them into his conveyance, and carried them safely within the city limits.

"When the sun had set, and the evening shadows fell cold and gray through the narrow streets, two forlorn little forms, all travel-stained and weary, crept along to their respective homes; ready to beg forgiveness for their truancy, ready to acknowledge their folly, and nestle into their soft, warm beds, to dream of the smiling woodland or pleasant meadows in the story-books first of May."

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"Where did you hear that?" asked the Spider.

"Who knows but I may be an author, too?" responded the Saucepan airily. "Surely it is my own affair."

"I have been thinking of this story for a month," said the Spider, in a patronizing tone. "Still I am glad you had the pleasure of telling it."

This was malicious on the part of the Spider, and of course the Saucepan was in danger of losing her temper in consequence. The Caterpillar had by this time recovered somewhat from his low spirits, and determined to distinguish himself, because he feared they all must consider him a person of inferior ability. When they again met, the Cricket hoped to talk a little, as he had not had a single opportunity to do so since the arrival of the three travellers; but he was again doomed to disappointment.

"Allow me to speak," said the Caterpillar, with a dignified manner.

Then he commenced:—

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## GRANDPAPA MOUSE AND HIS FAMILY.

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"Grandpapa mouse was quite an old gentleman at the time of which I write. He and his wife lived in a nice, large granary belonging to a rich farmer, which would have made them a splendid home, but for one reason. Do you know what that was? Why, they did not have to scamper all about to find their living, as some mice do; for they had every thing that was good piled up about them. They could nip a kernel from an ear of corn here, or taste a bit of barley there; until they were so fat they hardly knew what to do with themselves.

"Grandpapa was taken with the gout, and had to sit all day with one leg wrapped in a wisp of hay, besides having to take nothing but water gruel, which seemed to him a very sad case indeed.

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"As for Grandmamma, she was so large round the waist, her grandchildren had to nibble a hole twice the usual size for her to pass through, when she wished to take the air.

"They were seated one winter's night each side of the fire, which consisted of some shreds of corn-husk upon a pebble, and certainly made as bright a blaze as need be. Grandpapa was feeling better; for the mouse doctor had been to see him that day, and had given him a new liniment of great virtue. He was whistling quite a gay tune, and staring at the fire, when suddenly he exclaimed,—

"'It is almost Christmas time, my dear.'

"Grandmamma had been dozing over her knitting-work; so she rubbed her eyes, and said,—

"'What?'

"'It is almost Christmas,' he repeated louder, for she was a trifle deaf. 'I heard the farmer say so to-day, when he was counting his turkeys out there. I think we had better give a dinner-party, and invite all our children home.'

"'Perhaps we had,' assented Grandmamma with a sigh: she knew how much work it would make. 'We have not enough spare rooms, though, I am afraid.'

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"'We can easily gnaw a few new ones,' said Grandpapa briskly. 'Let us send our invitations by the postman to-morrow.'

"So they wrote to all their children; and the next morning the little servant mouse had to watch under a bush until the letter-carrier came. Now this postman was a snow-bird, who had promised always to take messages for the mice, if they would steal him bits of bread and cake from the pantry.

"'If you please, sir, my master has got some letters for you,' called the little servant, in a wee, piping voice, for her nose was getting cold out of doors.

"'Put them into my bag,' said the snow-bird, hopping along jauntily.

"So the little servant stood upon her hind legs to place the letters in the tiny bag which the snow-bird carried under his left wing; then she threw her apron over her head, and ran home.

"I suppose there never was such a sweeping and scratching and gnawing in any other mouse family, as went on in this one for the next two weeks. All of them worked so hard, making new holes for their expected guests, that the little servant had an attack of mumps at the last minute, and had to have her head tied up in a rag of cobweb.

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"Christmas Eve came at last. Grandpapa had his coat of fur nicely brushed, and Grandmamma wore a new cap with a ruffle round it.

"Presently there sounded the patter of little footsteps, which announced the arrival of the eldest son, and his family of six children. Grandmamma had scarcely kissed them all round, when in walked the eldest daughter, with her husband and baby. She had only just been shown to her room to take off her bonnet, when all the rest came,—a son from the city; a daughter from the next village; and the youngest child, who lived in a distant town, and was an old bachelor.

"What a time there was! Grandpapa grew quite hoarse with shouting at his different sons; and as



for the children, there were so many of them tumbling about, it is only a wonder their mothers ever could tell them apart.

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"At last the elder ones had their supper and were sent to bed, where they soon forgot every thing in sound sleep. Then all the mothers began to talk together in one corner with Grandmamma about their houses and cook-books, while the gentlemen discussed mouse politics in another. So the evening passed away very pleasantly; and by ten o'clock they were all asleep, too, except Grandpapa: he was so excited, that his wife had to give him a Dover's powder before he could shut an eye.

"The next morning the children were awake bright and early, wanting all sorts of things to eat, and poking into odd places where they should not have gone.

"'O Grandpapa! is there no ice this morning?' cried an eager young mouse; 'I have such a prime pair of skates!'

"'Can you cut a pigeon wing backwards?' asked one of the city cousins. 'I will show you how to do it in style.'

"'May we go, too?' urged all the little mice in chorus.

"Grandpapa consented: so the small servant went to show them the way; and they soon reached the pond, which was in reality a frozen puddle, about twelve inches square, and very smooth, on the edge of a wood.

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"All the country mice put on their skates, made of beech-nuts, with crooked pins for runners, and began to caper about in a great way. The vain young city mouse then fastened on his, which were tiny apple-seeds beautifully polished, and strapped with gray horse-hairs.

"'See,' said he, 'my skates are rockers;' and sure enough they were, for he soon toppled over backwards, while all the others laughed to behold his fall. If a cat had happened to spy them, what a dainty Christmas dinner she might have had! But no cat did; so they had a splendid time, and went home as hungry as mice can be.

"As for the ladies, they had enjoyed the quiet in-doors very much indeed. You must not suppose that all the children were able to scamper out. There were ever so many babies, that looked just like little bits of pink pigs. Those from the city had nurses, but those from the country had not.

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"'It is time for my baby's morning nap,' said the city mouse, looking at her watch. 'Dear me! is there no cradle?'

"Then Grandmamma sent to the lumber room, and had one her children once used brought out. It was half of a peach-pit, which, when lined with soft paper, made an excellent bed for the fretful baby mouse.

"So the day wore on, and at last they began to get sniffs of nice things cooking. Grandmamma bustled about with her cap-strings flying, and grew very red in the face from scolding the little servant, who was all the while going the wrong way, because she could do nothing but stare at the finery of the nursery maids.

"At last dinner was quite ready; so Grandpapa took his place at the head of the table, and Grandmamma hers at the foot: yet they could see nothing but the tips of each other's noses, the pile of good things was so high. Before the old gentleman was placed a dish of toasted cheese, that made every mouse present smack his lips with delight; while before his wife was a fine large egg; and the rest of the table held bits of meat, cracker, and blades of wheat. The children had a smaller table to themselves, with just as much to eat as their parents. They behaved pretty well at first, until one roguish little mouse thrust his nose into the cheese, and the next one gave him a push that sent him sprawling across the table. This made all the others frolic, too, so that the city mouse had to come and box their ears all around.

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"While she was doing this, the little servant happened to come along, carrying a nut-shell of honey; and what did she do but catch her foot in the beautiful long tail of the city mouse, and spill the honey all down her back. There was a regular uproar at this: the city mouse was so angry, it seemed as though she never would take any more dinner.

"Grandpapa had been very still all this time: he was eating as if he never expected to have the gout again. If his doctor had only seen him, I am sure I do not know what in the world he would have said.

"When they had finished the meal, they made a circle around the fire; and, the ladies not objecting, the gentlemen lit their cigars, which were in reality straw tubes.

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"'I wish somebody would tell a story,' said a little lame mouse, who had been obliged to stay in the house all day, because it could not run and jump like the others, but had to hobble along on a crutch made of a lucifer match.

"'Yes, yes, Grandpapa, tell us a story,' cried all the other young mice in a breath.

"'I don't know any stories,' said Grandpapa, puffing away at his straw cigar. 'Ask your uncle.'

"So they began to clamor at the bachelor uncle, and he finally consented to amuse them. Now, of all the family, he was the most doleful mouse imaginable; and before he began his story

Grandmamma whispered to one of her daughters-in-law, that he had been disappointed in love, which accounted for his melancholy. Whether this was true or not, I do not know; but he also suffered from dyspepsia, and that is apt to make one sad, it is said: so perhaps it was his liver, and not his heart, that was affected. He now drew his seat closer to the fire, and began:—

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"I fear I shall not be able to tell you any thing very wonderful: still I can give you some description of my own life since I left home; and, when I have finished, I hope some of my brothers and sisters will also tell us what they have been about. When I was a young mouse, my health was very delicate: the doctor feared a throat affection, so I decided to go farther south for change of air. There was no need for me to settle anywhere: I was not a marrying mouse.' [Here Grandmamma nodded and winked, as much as to say, "I told you so."]

"Ordinary society did not suit me at all: to hear a mouse talk of nothing but his dinner, seemed very tame. That reminds me it is time to take my medicine two hours after eating. Dear, dear, I nearly forgot!"

"The bachelor unfastened a bit of goose quill, corked at both ends, that was hung about his neck with a string, and took a pill from it. He then resumed his story:—

"I journeyed on in frequent danger, until I reached the handsome town where I now live. I had to cross a broad beach, and saw the ocean rolling in great waves of foam, before I came to the houses. It was night, and the stars shone brightly overhead; but I was so tired with my day's tramp, that I crawled into a stone wall, to rest. I was soon disturbed by a squirrel's scrambling in after me.

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"Good evening, sir," I said; for my mother had always taught me to be especially polite to strangers. "Will you tell me where I can find a night's lodging?"

"Do you like gay company?" replied the squirrel, peering at me with his bright eyes.

"I like grave people better."

"Why, then, I know the very place," cried he. "Go to the town library, where you can find a set of students."

"I thanked him, and went on until I arrived at the library, where I was received most courteously by the society of literary mice, to which I now belong. Perhaps you may have noticed the leather medal I wear upon my left shoulder. Never shall I forget their kindness that night. They first inquired if I was married, because they did not admit such parties; and when I satisfied them I was not, they at once gave me the hole recently occupied by a brother, who had died of brain fever, brought on by overwork.

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"What a delightful time we have of it there! We spend the day getting in stores of provisions, strolling about out of doors, or taking a nap; then when evening comes, and the old librarian places all the books in order before going home, we begin to scamper about, having the place all to ourselves.

"Our president (he has nibbled more books than any of us, and that is why we elected him) calls us about him after a while, and asks what we have seen that is interesting or new. This is a most agreeable arrangement; since one of us is always appointed to be about the library during the day, to hear what the people may say there. I have been particularly useful in this way, and that is one reason I am so much of a favorite.

"One thing troubles me greatly at present, so that I must make off home again as soon as ever I can: I left the whole of the society in such a state of mind over it, that they were not going to allow themselves any Christmas dinner.'

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"Pray what is the important question?' inquired Grandpapa.

"Why, about a month ago,' replied the bachelor, warming one foot at the blaze, 'it was my turn to visit the reading-room. I had crept around very quietly for some time, hearing old gentlemen talk over their newspapers, or watching ladies rustle in and out, when a young man and a little girl came in. With them was a tan terrier, which began to trot around, snuffing such mischief as he might, when he suddenly spied me seated at my ease upon a large book, and leaped up at me, barking furiously. If the young man had not seized him by the collar, I do not know what would have become of me. As it was, there he sat under his master's chair, winking, and ready to eat me alive any minute.

"The little girl kept asking her brother strange questions about different things, until he said,—

"Did you know, Mimi, that the moon is made of green cheese?"

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"She said, "No."

"It is," he continued. "The wise men that study the stars have just found it out."

"I pricked up my ears at this, and as I had a chance soon after to make my escape, I did so.'

"What!' exclaimed the whole mouse family. 'Is the moon nothing but a big slice of cheese, then?'

"Do you believe it, my son?' inquired Grandpapa, rubbing his nose with a puzzled air.

"Dear me, dear me!' sighed Grandmamma, wiping her spectacles, 'what next?'

"I don't know what to believe," continued the bachelor. "I told the others of it that night, and I do not believe the president has slept a wink since. We have searched everywhere to learn if it is really true; we have set an extra watch of four to listen in the library; and if they have not found out something when I go back, I, for one, shall start direct for Harvard University, to settle the matter."

"Now, you see, if the moon is really made of green cheese," he added, shaking his head wisely, "I should suppose it would have been eaten up long ago." [Pg 130]

"Here he stopped suddenly. Every one of his nephews and nieces had fallen asleep, some in their mothers' laps, and others huddled together in little balls upon the floor. A great deal they cared about the moon!

"The lame mouse, however, had listened to every word with bright eyes, and this pleased the bachelor so much, that he patted her upon the head, saying,—

"You are a good child, my dear; I shall leave you something in my will."

"The others were then roused up, and trundled off to bed; but they were so sleepy they did not once think to ask their uncle's pardon.

"I've been thinking," said Grandpapa, "of the time when my gray cousin and I made a trip together. We were both very gay, and one hot summer morning he said to me,—

"Every one is bound to the mountains: let us go, too."

"But," said I, "you know my father is away on business, and I am the eldest son, left in charge of the family." [Pg 131]

"Never mind," rejoined he, "we can have such splendid fun!"

"Well, we ran away from home (my cousin lived with us, as he had been left an orphan at a tender age). We travelled along bravely for a time, although the sun was dreadfully hot upon our backs."

"Oh, dear!" I panted, "I never was so warm in my life."

"What is easier than to carry an umbrella, then?" suggested my companion; and with that he nibbled the stems of two toad-stools until they separated, and carrying one above his own head, gave me the other. This was a delightful change, for the toad-stools spread so as to shelter our faces from the sun. We trotted along comfortably after this, and finally came to the brink of a brook, where we paused, because we did not know how to get across.

"The mountains look such a little way off," said my cousin dismally; yet the brook still whirled on, seeming to laugh at our discomfiture. [Pg 132]

"I believe we could skip from stone to stone," urged the gray mouse, who was determined not to turn back, if he could possibly help it.

"So I tried the bits of stone for some distance; and then I found myself away out where the water was ever so deep, and I was seized with fright, not daring to move an inch either way, but clinging to the wet, slimy rock. Presently a beautiful trout came swimming towards me, its sides all clothed in variegated scales, and its handsome eyes sparkling with fun.

"What is the matter; are you sea-sick?" laughed the trout, splashing the foam from its tail in my face.

"Oh! don't, if you please, I am so giddy now," I cried, and then tumbled headlong into the water.

"Ugh! what a cold bath that was: it makes me shiver only to think of it. The wicked fish took me on his back, and gave me such a sail as I hope I may never have again in this world. It went up and down, and up and down again, approaching the shore occasionally only to dart off for a fresh trip, until I fairly squealed with fright, clasping its slippery back the while. At last it flung me off, and I landed by my cousin, who did nothing but laugh at me. I was very cross by this time; so, after trying to dry myself upon some blades of grass, I determined to return home. Just then a fat old bull-frog paddled lazily towards the bank. [Pg 133]

"Will you carry us across the brook?" inquired my cousin eagerly.

"How much do you weigh?" asked the bull-frog, winking slowly.

"Just take up this fellow, and see." He then lifted me upon the bull-frog's back, who carried me safely across before I could say a single word. Afterward he brought my cousin over also, and we were able to resume our journey.

"Fortunately we overtook a field mouse soon after, who invited us to visit his family in the stump of a tree, which we were glad enough to do, as we were both hungry and tired. That night I was very ill with chills and fever,—probably owing to the cold bath I had taken; and the field mice had to give me a dose of some kind of bark that they always kept in the house, as they lived in a swampy region, which made me better. They none of them thought I could go on the next morning; and, as the gray mouse was so anxious to climb the mountains, I proposed his starting without me. This he consented to do, when one of the young field mice offered to be his guide; and if I felt well enough, I was to join them after a while. I had a very nice visit, indeed: the field [Pg 134]

mice were so hospitable and kind. I spent most of my time in the house with the ladies, and the eldest daughter was—who do you think? Why, your mother, of course; and a prettier young mouse I never saw.'

"Don't be foolish,' interrupted Grandmamma.

"Yes; but you were just as pretty as ever you could be,' urged Grandpapa, politely.

"I know I was considered the belle of our society;' and Grandmamma tossed her head when she thought of the admirers of her youth.

"I concluded I would not join my cousin at all,' went on Grandpapa; 'but this I was finally obliged to do, for days passed on and they did not return. At this we all began to look grave; so the father field-mouse told me that he was afraid something had happened, and he thought we had better search for them. We made a party of eight, and set out towards the mountains, anticipating something dreadful must have befallen the travellers. Ah, what a time we had! [Pg 135]

"We came to a place where the rock rose so steep and straight before us, that I did not consider it possible to climb it. What do you suppose we did? We tied ourselves together, as travellers do when ascending the Alps in Switzerland, although not with such ropes as they use; we fastened the tips of our tails together with bits of grass, then marched along side by side. This was an excellent arrangement, as we afterwards found; for at one time they all slipped, obliging me to bear their weight upon my tail. It was a terrible moment: I feared it would break, or be pulled out from the roots entirely!

"At last we reached a shelf of rock where we could rest awhile. The view from this place was splendid. The valleys lay below blooming with verdure, many-colored flowers, and golden grain almost ready for the harvest; the rivers sparkled under the clear sunlight in silvery threads; and of the towns scattered along the the hillside as far as I could see, the church steeples looked like mere arrowy spikes. When I gazed down upon this beautiful smiling earth, and up at the blue sky where the soft white clouds were floating idly along, it seemed to me very wonderful that the good God, who had made such grand things, had made also little me. [Pg 136]

"We climbed up and up for several days, following footprints that were certainly those of mice; and we hoped belonged to our friends. At last, even such traces ceased; and we were fairly at our wits' end, when we heard faint sounds behind a large leaf. Peering cautiously around the corner, we saw the gray mouse and his companion stretched upon a bed of moss, groaning in the most dismal manner. They were overjoyed to see us again, for they had supposed they must die up there alone. My cousin had slipped, and sprained his ankle terribly; while the field-mouse had lost his balance, in trying to assist him, and fallen down a precipice some twenty inches high, thus injuring his spine. It was all very well having found them; but how were we to get them away, when neither of them could move a step? We sat for a long time looking at each other in doubt, and then a bright idea struck me. [Pg 137]

"We can braid this sword-grass together, and lower them down by it," I said.

"We soon joined a quantity in this way, then fastened one end about the waist of my cousin, and let him down to the next ledge. In this way we got them both to the foot of the mountain. Now it remained to carry them across the country; so we tore a mullein leaf in two halves, and, placing the pieces upon birch twigs, formed excellent litters for our invalids. We reached the stump of the field-mice again, after an absence of a month. The surgeon mended my cousin's ankle, which was broken; and, as for the young field-mouse, I am told he has not known what it was to feel well a day since. [Pg 138]

"During the period that we remained, I made a proposal of marriage to your mother, and was accepted; so, with the understanding that I should return in the spring, we finally started home. My mother forgot to scold us, she was so frightened by our long absence. Besides, she received very sad news just at this time. My father, who was away on business, as I have said, was taken with the cholera suddenly, after eating a late supper of bacon rinds, and died. I tried to be a good son ever after,' concluded he, wiping a tear from his left eye, 'although if I had not been naughty this time, I should never have known your mother.'

"For my part,' remarked the city mouse, 'I have had rather a tough time of it so far. Now, indeed, I enjoy my ease; but, as I have said, it has been hardly earned. My desire in going to town was, first, to learn something of life, and then aspire to belonging to the class of business mice, which seemed to me the most enviable lot imaginable. I was very near losing sight of this aim once; still I persevered, until now I am reckoned among the most influential people. When I began my career, I was extremely gay; that is, I enjoyed the company of a number of other young mice, who did nothing but frolic the whole day. I might have kept on in this way for any length of time, had I not been suddenly checked. [Pg 139]

"I was invited to a ball given by a wealthy mouse at his country residence, which was located in a nook of the wall of an ice-house. It was really the finest place for the time of year I ever visited, and the wealthy mouse had spared no expense in fitting it up nicely. The coolness of the house was so refreshing in the sultry heat of July; for, if one was too hot, all one had to do was to skip down where the great blocks of ice were piled, and soon get cooled off again. Well, we were all to attend the silver wedding of the old couple. The young mice had the greatest time at the tailor's, wondering what to wear; for we were expected to assume the character of some distinguished person, as it was to be a fancy masquerade. I thought the tailor would have been crazed with

getting our costumes made, we altered our minds so often; but, finally, all was ready, and, with our dresses wrapped in brown paper, we started. [Pg 140]

"At the entrance door,—a crack in the stonework,—we were shown by two waiters, in white jackets and aprons, to the dressing-room, where any number of guests were tying on their masks, made of scraps of various colored silks, that certainly had a very stylish appearance. The reception rooms below were truly magnificent. The walls were hung with strips of red and blue paper, gnawed into all manner of fanciful shapes, while a row of glow-worms, placed at intervals, lit up the place in the most beautiful way. At one end of the room stood the host and hostess upon a platform an inch high (she wearing her wedding-dress of lily leaves, which had a very old-fashioned effect, because every one wears swan's-down nowadays), to receive the company, who marched up to make a bow, each in turn. I represented Bluebeard, with a green turban round my head, a red sash with a dagger of a rose-thorn, and a pair of yellow Turkish trousers. This was all very elegant; but I found I could not dance the polka very well, I was so much bundled up. A friend of mine was dressed in a long-tailed coat of scarlet plush, with gold knee-breeches; another had on for armor half of a nutmeg-grater, with a tin shield made of the top of a spice-box, and a thistle-cup for helmet. [Pg 141]

"As for the ladies' toilets, I cannot begin to describe them, there was such a variety of beauty and elegance. One lady's costume I remember especially, however: it was so very dainty. She was equipped as a flower-girl, with a short dress of sea-lettuce, looped by tufts of dandelion down; she wore pink slippers, laced across the instep, a bodice of wasp-wings, and a hat made of a silver three-cent piece, ornamented by a flower in the side. I danced with this lady a great many times, although, as she was masked, I could not see her face at all; and we became quite well acquainted. The dancing-room grew very hot; and the band played splendidly (they were katydids, and worked so hard with their fiddles, it is only a wonder their legs were not worn out entirely), when I proposed to the young lady-mouse to take a walk in the moonlight. We found a good many others strolling along arm in arm; and she had just consented to give me a whisker (as mortals would exchange a lock of hair), when we heard a shrill voice behind us in the distance. [Pg 142]

"Oh, that is my grandmother!" exclaimed my lovely companion in a whisper, and then she fainted away.

"The grandmother hobbled up, and she was certainly the ugliest little old mouse I ever saw in my life. Her nose was very long, she wore green spectacles, and used a cane in walking. When she beheld the insensible form of her grand-daughter, she fairly shook her cane at me.

"What do you mean?" she said in a hoarse, croaking voice. "I came to the ball to watch this young mouse; and now you have skipped out into the moonlight to take cold, have you?"

"She attempted to box my ears, while I tried to dodge her sharp claws; and, in so doing, the fair young mouse fell to the ground, thus ruining her pretty hat. The grandmother screamed with rage to see so nice a costume spoiled, and this sent all the guests out to find what was the matter. The noise brought still another guest to the scene that we did not expect: a great cat, with eyes like green fire, came creeping through the grass; but we never noticed her, we were so busy bickering and quarrelling among ourselves. [Pg 143]

"Suddenly she gave a pounce into our midst; and we all ran for our lives, tearing our dresses, losing caps and shoes, tumbling over each other, until we arrived breathless under shelter. We then began to count our number, and found that the poor flower-girl mouse was missing. I peeped out of the crack fearfully, and sure enough the horrible cat was stepping away lightly with our poor companion in her cruel mouth.

"Of course the ball was closed after this dreadful accident; and as for the grandmother, I have heard she was crazy afterward, so that she had to be confined in an egg-shell with wire bars at the entrance. This event sobered me very much. I began to think that there was something more to be done in the world than frisk about and dress finely. [Pg 144]

"When I returned to the city, I went to a merchant mouse of great reputation to seek employment. After some delay, I was shown into his counting-room (behind the fireplace of a lawyer's office), where I found him, as was to be expected, busily engaged at his desk. I told him I should like to be appointed one of his clerks, as I hoped to rise, like himself, to the rank of wealth and importance. He put his pen behind his ear,—it was the pin-feather of a bird,—and smiled rather grimly, as though he fancied a good many mice would enjoy growing as great as he had. The salary I should receive was very small, he told me, and I would have to work very hard for it; still I was not discouraged by all this, so the next morning I entered his store.

"He was one of the most influential provision mice in the city, doing a large wholesale business with other cities, and the country as well. I belonged at first to the number of young clerks whose duty it was to go about the streets and houses with bags, like rag-pickers, to find odd scraps of bread, cheese, sugar, nuts, raisins, and starch, which we brought to the warehouse, where they were taken in charge by other clerks, who packed them to be carried away, or sold them in piles at a time. [Pg 145]

"It was terribly fatiguing, for we were expected to bring a full bag always by nightfall; but I determined to be industrious; so I persevered, although the time seemed so long before I was promoted to the rank of clerk in the receiving department. From this I have progressed slowly enough, yet I have gained much knowledge. Dear me! I could tell you where a crumb of cheese

came from in the dark. Now I am the head of the house; for my employer has retired from business, leaving me in charge. I have also married his only daughter,' said the city mouse, with a proud air.

"I am glad you have succeeded;' commented Grandpapa kindly; 'only be careful that prosperity does not make you arrogant, as it is apt to.

"Now, my dear daughter;' he added, turning to the mouse who had arrived second on Christmas Eve, 'what have you been doing this long time?'

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"I went to visit my cousin, as you will doubtless remember. She is a great matchmaker, and perhaps you knew that when you sent me to her; for I was then quite mature in age, and did not inherit any of my mother's beauty, besides. Well, she found me plenty of suitors, and before long I married. I enjoyed life very much at first; but sorrows in plenty awaited me,' sighed the daughter, arranging her crape head-dress.

"I had four beautiful children; and my pride in them was so great that I decided to take them to the mouse fair, where prizes were to be given to the handsomest babies. The mice were flocking from all quarters to this splendid exhibition, which was given in order to raise funds for an orphan asylum that was much needed in the region.

"The place selected was under a rock on the margin of a wood. The tent was made of rags joined together; and at the entrance we all paid the admittance fee,—a kernel of corn, which was to go towards the fund. The collection within was very fine. There were a few grains of maize brought all the way from Egypt at immense expense. There was a portrait of one of our distinguished ancestors, painted in brickdust by a young mouse artist of great talent; there was a scrap of bacon sent from England; and there were two whole figs given to the fair by a wealthy mouse of high rank. There were also a number of articles to be sold by lottery; a work-box formed of a filbert hollowed out, and lined with moss, besides being fitted up with needles and scissors of fish-bone; a pony carriage made of a scallop shell upon spool wheels, the most luxurious thing to drive in I ever beheld; a candlestick of brown sugar, beautifully nibbled into filigree work by a blind mouse of large experience; and a blanket composed of a sheep's tail, embroidered with cat-whiskers.

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"These are a few of the things I remember, because I nearly ruined my husband by taking shares in them all; and I actually drew nothing, so all that money, or corn rather, was lost.

"Behind the tables stood rows of young lady-mice, all dressed alike, with buttercup caps upon their heads, and wearing aprons, the pockets trimmed with gold thread. This gave them a very pretty appearance; and they sold much more among the gentlemen mice than they would have done, had they been more plainly dressed.

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"At last it was time for the prizes to be given to the finest children; and the committee of ten old mice, who were to decide the important question took their places, and all mothers were told to come forward. How lovely my dear babies did look! They never cried, or crumpled their little white bibs in the least; and I felt so proud of them I could hardly stand.

"Well, they took all the prizes: one for his large weight, one for the size of his nose, which was very remarkable for his age; one for the smallness of his feet; and the last for the great length of his tail. Oh! the other mothers were so enraged and jealous, I was afraid they would tear my eyes out.'

"Here the daughter mouse began to sob and cry, while all of the family tried to comfort her.

"I will tell the rest: she will not be able,' piped her husband, holding a smelling-bottle to her nose.

"No, no,' she said in a faint voice, while Grandmamma fanned her: 'I will finish.

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"We started home again with the little dears, and on our way paused to rest for the purpose of eating a few wild berries in the wood, as a luncheon, leaving our nurse at some little distance in charge of the children. We were startled by a sudden squeal, and beheld the nurse trotting towards us, her eyes wild with fright.

"Where are the babies?" I shrieked in terror.

"Alas! I soon discovered what a misfortune had befallen me. A dog had found them as they lay asleep, and was now tossing them rudely about in sport, and I could not defend them. I have never been the same mouse since their sad death, and I do not expect ever to wear any thing but mourning.

"They were all very much affected by the sorrows of the eldest daughter. When she had finished, the city mouse used her handkerchief several times, while Grandmamma's spectacles were quite dim with tears.

"Could you give us some items of your experience, also?' inquired Grandpapa of his eldest son, sleepily but politely.

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"I have really nothing of importance to tell;' and perhaps he was right, for he certainly had been very quiet all this time, although it may have been because he ate so much dinner.

"I have lived a very uneventful life,' he went on, 'not having wandered further than the next

village, where I live in a barn very comfortably. I have no learned tastes, like my bachelor brother; I do not care in the least whether the moon is green cheese or not,—as long as I stay on earth it need not trouble me; I am not a business mouse, like my city brother; I have never made a journey, like my father here; and all my children have lived to grow up, so that I have not the same misfortunes as my poor sister.

"That is all I can say for myself; and, if it is agreeable to you all, I propose we go to bed, as some of us will have to make an early start in the morning,' he said, rising with a yawn of fatigue.

"They consented to this last arrangement, and thus Christmas Day closed on Grandpapa Mouse and his family."

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Public favor was universally awarded the Caterpillar after this effort.

The Cricket next received a reward for all his patience and good humor, by having an opportunity of telling—

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## THE ENCHANTED BABY-HOUSE.

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"Yes, it was a pleasant day, after all! The bright sunlight danced through the parted crimson curtains down upon the nursery floor, down upon curly heads nestled among the pillows, tinging the canary bird's golden feathers, as he ruffled himself upon the perch before skipping down to the dining-room of his cage for a stray seed or sip of water, and blinking straight into the eyes of little Milly, as she first opened them upon her sixth birthday. The other children were still napping; but Hannah, the nurse, thought of it, and came to kiss the pet who had first rested in her arms, a wee bundle of flannel, with a tiny red face. Nurse thought Milly a great deal prettier and bonnier, as she crept out of bed now to stand upon the warm hearth-rug in her white night-dress, warming her little pink toes at the blaze, than when she was only that little bundle of flannel on the day of her birth.

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"Come, dears,' said nurse, rousing the others: 'it is Milly's birthday, you know; so be up bright and early.'

"Yes, yes,' sang Milly, merrily whirling about the room to the step her dancing-master had last taught her. 'Get up! I am six years old to-day: only think; and you but four, Miss Pet,—such a little, little girl.'

"No: I aint,' answered Pet, indignantly, rolling out upon the floor like a rosy ball of an apple: 'I am so big I can see over the table, anyhow.'

"Upon this Milly caught the small sister by both hands, and whirled her round the room so fast, that Pet had not a particle of breath left in her fat little body. The noise made all the other children open their eyes, and join in the fun; while even the baby sat up in its crib, to crow, and pat its dimpled hands together, because the rest did: babies can never give any better reasons for their actions. Nurse Hannah and her assistant, Sarah, never had such work to dress their charges, as on that morning. First, Tom put on his soldier's cap, which Santa Claus had given him only a few weeks before, and strapped the sword about his waist, which certainly made him look very funny indeed, considering that he still wore only his night-clothes; while all the rest strutted after him in single file, Dick beating a drum, Milly carrying a tin musket, and Pet bringing up the rear, staggering under the weight of a knapsack. In this way, they marched about, always slipping like eels when Nurse Hannah touched them, and making so much noise the while, that she could scarcely hear herself speak. At last, Sarah pounced upon Pet, and bore her away shrieking and struggling to the bath-room, whence, after a good deal of gurgling and splashing, she returned, looking as fresh as a rosebud that the dew has just kissed into fragrance. Milly now began to behave better; for she thought she must set Pet a good example, since she was so much the elder of the two. Tom and Dick, however, grew wilder and gayer as they dressed themselves. They hid Milly's boots so that she could not find them; they whisked the baby out of his crib, where he sat contentedly sucking one thumb, and perched him upon the bureau; and Tom leaped upon the table with a newspaper, which he held upside down, and pretended to read, with Nurse Hannah's steel-bowed spectacles upon his little pug nose.

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"At this they all laughed so loudly that mamma came to the door to inquire what was the matter, and tell them it was breakfast-time.

"O Sarah! please brush my hair, quick,' implored Milly. 'I want to begin my year in season for every thing, if I possibly can.'

"So Sarah brushed her hair, and smoothed down the nice new dress and crisp muslin apron prepared for the occasion; then Milly ran downstairs, and climbed into her high chair, just before papa was ready to ask the blessing, feeling very gay and happy. After breakfast, mamma proposed that they should all go out to play for a time, as the morning was so fine.

"Then,' she said with a smile, patting her eldest daughter's soft round cheek, 'we will see what we can do to amuse Milly in the house.'

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"Mamma then went away, and Milly turned to the window with a half sigh of disappointment. The

view from where she stood was beautiful enough to make any child's eyes sparkle with delight. The earth was hidden by a soft covering of fresh snow; the trees and shrubs were powdered with icicle fringes, that gleamed and sparkled in the sun like so many crystal pendants; and the Hudson River swept along, bearing upon its surface, now a stately steamboat, ploughing its way swiftly along through sheets of foam-flakes, and now a flitting sail-boat, with white sail spread like a bird's wings upon the wind. But, for the moment, Milly did not enjoy this splendid winter landscape; nor did she notice the little snow-birds, hopping about the frozen ground on their frail-looking little legs, and cocking their bright eyes up at her, as if begging a crumb from the plenty of the table. A cloud had come over her bright face, causing it for the time to look sullen and sad. Do you know what she was thinking of? Precisely what you or any other little child might in her place. She had expected a birthday gift, and now nothing of the kind was presented to her from papa even down to the baby.

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"'I always had one,' reflected Milly, growing more and more aggrieved as she thought of this injustice, until a tear rolled down her cheek. 'I always had one,'—this with a sob,—'even when I was ever so little. I had a rag doll, and a tin horse and cart, and a picture book, and all sorts of things; but to-day'—

"Here Pet came running in with her arms full of wrappings, followed by Sarah also carrying Milly's warm cloak, hat, and mittens.

"'Come,' said Pet, 'we are to slide on the pond with the boys, and have such fun.'

"'I don't want to slide,' pouted Milly, turning away to the window again.

"'What a naughty girl!' exclaimed Sarah, as she tied on Pet's hat, who could do nothing but stare at Milly in amazement, with big, bright eyes.

"'Not do,' piped the little sister. 'Oh! I know somethin', Mil',' she added, puffing out her cheeks with an important air. 'You are not to go up-stairs at all, mamma said.'

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"'Oh, you silly little goose!' said Tom, overhearing the last sentence as he entered the room: 'I shall box your ears for that, Miss.'

"Then Tom pretended to carry out his threat, and Milly forgot her tears to join in the romp; while Sarah tried to defend poor Pet, who became so tumbled and out of breath, with her hat knocked over one eye, that she looked very funny indeed, though I do not believe she was very much hurt after all.

"Well, they went out into the frosty air, which nipped their little noses, stung their round cheeks into a warmer glow, and caused the blood to course through their young veins like sparkling champagne. Tom and Dick meant to be very good and patient to-day, because they loved their little sister much, although they were sometimes rough and rude to her; but then she was only a girl. Milly's uncle had sent her a beautiful pair of skates Christmas, all buckles and straps and sharp-curved runners. They were really splendid; but Milly did not make very much progress in using them, after all. Her ankles *would* turn; and she felt so helpless standing upon the smooth, glaring surface of ice alone, with her two feet planted close together, while her brothers whizzed past her in circles that made her head spin to watch, and asked her why she did not "strike out,—so!" Then when she followed their advice, and did strike out, her skates were sure to flash up in the air, where her head ought to have been, while her head went down bump, bump, where her skates should have been. This was the way Milly skated. When they reached the pond, Tom and Dick strapped on their skates; then Dick said,—

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"'Now, Milly, we will teach you real nice to-day: we are going to be awfully good.'

"'No, I thank you,' said Milly, with a grand air: 'I am not going to tumble about, and get so vexed on my birthday. Pet and I will be ladies, and you shall be our horses.'

"At first, the two boys looked surprised; but Milly quite coolly seated herself upon Tom's sled, tucked her little petticoats snugly about her, and sat nodding at them both.

"'Upon my word, that's cool!' cried Tom; but he harnessed himself with the rope, nevertheless, and away they started, the silver bells attached to the sled tinkling merrily. They had a grand time of it for an hour or so, until Milly suddenly remembered what Pet had said about not going up-stairs; and then she wondered what it all could mean. They finally started for the house; and when they saw their mamma standing at the dining-room window watching, Pet and Milly joined hands, and ran as fast as they could towards home: they could not tell exactly why, except that they felt like it.

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"'Can Milly go up-stairs now, mamma?' asked Pet eagerly.

"Mamma assented; and Milly, wondering very much what was coming, followed her mother into a little room that had never before been used, and which was now furnished in the most beautiful manner. There was a fresh muslin curtain, looped with gay ribbons, at the window; the carpet looked as if it had just been strewn with rosebuds; the tiny bedstead, of carved wood, had the daintiest linen and crimped hangings; while there was a little bookcase in one corner, containing all kinds of pretty books; upon the table bloomed a bouquet of sweet-scented violets; and by the table was the loveliest rocking-chair imaginable, just large enough to hold a little girl of six years old. Upon the wall, in a wreath of evergreen, were written these words: 'Milly's room.'

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"Milly gazed about her, feeling as if she was in a dream. Having examined all the fine furniture which was from this time to be all her own, Pet pointed to a large object in a corner, concealed by a sheet curtain.

"'What's that?' dancing about with delight.

"'Let her guess,' said Tom, putting his hand over foolish little Pet's rosy lips, to keep her from telling the important secret.

"'It's a ba-by,' gurgled Pet; but Tom put his jacket over her head, and extinguished her entirely.

"'Can you guess what it is?' asked mamma.

"'It looks like an elephant,' said Dick.

"'I should think it might be a bookcase, only there is one; and Pet said it was a baby-house,' replied Milly hesitatingly.

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"'Right, right!' cried all the children, clapping their hands.

"Then papa drew aside the curtain, and Milly's eyes fairly danced with delight at the sight disclosed.

"It was the most splendid baby-house she had ever seen in her life, although she had always considered that of her Cousin May very fine before. The roof reached nearly to the ceiling of the room, boasting gables and chimneys; there was a large front door, wearing the number of the house upon a brass plate; and the windows with the parted curtains temptingly invited a glimpse into the interior. Mamma then told Milly to open the door, which she did half shyly, as though she did not know what to expect next. First, she sat down upon the carpet to look at the kitchen, with its shining painted floor, its stove, dresser, teakettles, saucepans, flat-irons, and other implements of that department, over which reigned Dinah, in a yellow turban and smart red dress, with ever so many assistant darkies, from her daughter Sue down to tiny doll grandchildren, not more than an inch long, all as black as ebony. Next came the dining-room, which was certainly as handsome as the most fastidious doll could wish for. There were two mahogany sideboards, with a grand array of frosted cakes, pies, and ice-cream pyramids, only they were all made of painted wood; and there was a table with a beautiful gilt tea-service, and a large coffee-urn upon it. On the neatly papered wall hung several choice pictures about an inch square, and a veritable cuckoo clock, with the bird all ready to pop out when you pulled a silk tag. A genteel waitress, in a muslin cap and apron, stood by the table.

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"Milly now stood up to view the second story, and by so doing just brought her small nose on a level with the bedroom. She found this to be furnished exactly like her own. The same carpet was spread upon the floor; the bureau, the bedstead, and washstand, were precisely similar. The baby-house had many more articles of furniture, however, than did the larger apartment; for it was not only adorned by a toilet-table, a wee bath-tub, and a wardrobe, but there were ever so many cradles and high-chairs for the children.

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"'Now look at the parlor,' cried Pet.

"I cannot begin to describe the magnificence of this drawing-room. Every thing was gilt and crimson in the appointments, which is certainly very good taste, whether doll or human being. There was a gilt chandelier, with pink wax candles ready to light at any time, gilt chairs, and centre-table holding vases filled with flowers, while the carpet and walls were crimson. Before the open piano was seated a very pretty doll in a flounced blue silk dress, trimmed with crystal drops; upon the sofa reclined her two sisters, one wearing white with a green sash, and the other pink barege; while the mother, in purple satin edged with white lace, occupied a large arm-chair, with her feet upon a footstool. At the billiard-table in the corner were several more dolls, one holding the cue ready to play a game.

"This is all that I can remember of the wonderful baby-house (it is a long time since I saw it last); but if there was any thing else that I have not mentioned, you may be sure Milly discovered it before nightfall, that birthday when she was six years old. When she had seen all these things, little Milly jumped up with a flush on her cheek, and turned to all the kind faces that were watching her surprise and pleasure. First, she gave her parents a kiss of thanks; then there was Sarah smiling in the doorway, and Nurse Hannah holding the baby, who looked quite solemn, with one thumb in its mouth, baby fashion. The boys then ran away to their skating again, for they thought they were too big and old, to show much interest in a baby-house; and the sisters were left to their play undisturbed. Of course there was no end of fun for the rest of that long, happy day. Milly and Pet had hardly leisure to eat their dinner, they were so absorbed with their new playthings. Such a confusion as they made in the neat little rooms, house-cleaning, re-arranging furniture and dollies! Such a number of meals as were served in that one afternoon alone! It is only a wonder that a single doll had any digestion left, or that Dinah could still show her white teeth in that contented smile; for any other cook would have given warning that she was about to leave, I am sure, who had to serve the quantities of sweetened water, scraped apple, and chalk dishes that she did. But Dinah did not lose her temper, although it was so severely tried, one would think; and the day's pleasure closed with a grand tea-party, to which Tom and Dick were invited. Then the baby-house was arranged, and the door closed for the night.

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"When it was bedtime, Milly realized, for the first time, what a large girl she had grown, to have a place all to herself. Sarah brought a light, and prepared to put her charge to bed; but this Milly

resisted indignantly. She was going to undress, and take care of herself; so she bade Sarah good-night very ceremoniously, and the nursery-maid went away laughing. There was a good deal of pattering to and from the nursery, however, after that. First, Milly ran across her mother's room, and along the passage, to make a call upon the other children; and she looked back with a little shiver at comfortable Miss Pet sitting on the hearth-rug like a soft white kitten, and the baby asleep in the crib, as she returned to her *own room* once more. Then the others made her a call, and envied her new dignity: only Pet whispered in an awed tone,—

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"Wont you be afraid when the light goes out, Milly?"

"No, indeed," said Milly bravely.

"Then she blew out the candle, and sprang into bed, just to show Pet how much she enjoyed it all. But when they had trotted back, and it was all dark, she began to see strange shapes from out of the darkness, and to hear rustlings all about that she had never noticed in the shelter of the nursery, until she fell asleep. She was awakened by a noise that made her heart leap into her throat with a single bound. It was something between a gurgle and a groan; and so frightened grew little Milly, that she stole out of her warm bed, and paused, trembling, on the threshold of her mother's room to listen. What do you suppose the noise was, after all? Milly almost laughed at herself when she discovered; it was her papa snoring loudly. She was so glad that no one knew of her fright, the first night she slept alone, that she nestled into bed again, and pulled the blankets almost over her curly head. The moonlight came peeping into the window in silvery beams; and, after looking out upon the clear sky, where a few stars twinkled, Milly saw a wonderful sight. Down the moonbeam, which formed a pathway paved with sparkling hues, floated tiny fairy figures, bearing in their midst upon a litter, formed of a lily-cup, their queen. Milly thought she had never dreamed of any thing half so beautiful. Shimmering colors wrapped each little sprite in a misty glow, while their wings were frosted like those of a butterfly. As for the queen, she was ten times more radiant than any of her subjects, as a queen should be; and, when she moved, a faint musical sound tinkled from the chains of turquoises, which were fastened about her waist; from thence they twined in festoons all about her small person. She was further distinguished from the rest by a starry crown upon her head, and a wand tipped with the same radiance in her hand.

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"Here we are, at last," said the moonbeam fairy in the sweetest voice. 'Give me your hand, Milly.'

"The little girl extended it half-fearfully, and the fairy leaped into the outspread palm, dancing lightly over the pink-tipped fingers in doing so.

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"Don't be afraid of me," she said. 'I never hurt any child in my life, I assure you.'

"The other fairies climbed upon the bed also, some clinging to the curtain tassels, some perched among Milly's curls, and others sat at their ease on the footboard.

"It is Milly's birthday," rustled the elves, like the soft patter of raindrops among forest leaves.

"Yes: we have come a long way to see you, for we live in the moon," said the fairy; 'and it is only when she lowers silver ladders to the earth, that we can make a visit down here.'

"I am so glad you all came to-night," exclaimed Milly; 'only how did you know, away up there, that it was my birthday?'

"Ah!" returned the fairy smiling, 'we always know every thing, you may be sure. The angels tell us, especially about those that are good upon the earth. Now to-night my twelve sisters are also down here somewhere; this one flitting into the attic windows of the city streets, where there is sickness and sorrow; that one whispering words of comfort in dreams of warmth and plenty to the little wayfarer, sleeping upon a cold doorstep; while another is hovering over the broad sea, to lead the poor, rude sailor's thoughts home.'

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"Do you live in a palace?" asked Milly.

"Yes: we live in a palace beside a silver lake; and we are called the twelve sisters of the fairy lake, because we all sprang into life from a single bubble of foam, blown through the reed of our Father, the water god, who rules over rivers and fountains in the moon.'

"How wonderful!" commented Milly.

"Let us be doing something, mistress," piped a restless elf, who had never been at rest a moment, but who skipped and danced about like a firefly; once, indeed, turning a summersault, and landing upon Milly's nose.

"What shall we do?" said the queen.

"Oh! any thing else but talk, please; we can do that at home," replied the elf.

"Shall I show you my new baby-house?" inquired Milly, who supposed that the fairies must find as much to interest them in it as she did herself.

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"At this the restless elf darted off, and was followed by the others; while the queen waved her wand, and, to Milly's astonishment, the door, which she had carefully locked, flew wide open. The fairy again waved her wand; and from every tiny chandelier sprang jets of light, that shone through the windows, and sparkled over the handsome furniture in the most beautiful manner.

"Will you come to see the fun?" asked the fairy; and Milly, all curiosity, followed her midnight guests across the room.

"The restless elf next borrowed the queen's wand, and, stepping into the window of the bedroom, tapped each of the sleeping dolls with it upon the head.

"Come, come! get up, you lazy creatures!" cried the roguish elf, enjoying himself immensely.

"All the dolls began to move about and yawn, as if they were just waking up. Milly thought she had never imagined any thing so delightfully funny as the little babies winking their bright black eyes, and crying so that the nurses had to rock the cradles to keep them quiet.

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"Now, then," said the elf, 'you all dress yourselves as quickly as possible, and then I will tell you what to do.'

"He left them in the bedroom, roused Dinah in the kitchen, and the genteel waitress in the dining-room; then he returned to the parlor, tried the piano, whistling a tune, at the same time winking so drolly at Milly, that she laughed with delight; played a round or so at the billiard-table, and then seated himself in the large arm-chair. In the mean while, the dolls were grumbling over the whole affair.

"I never heard of such a thing," said the fat mamma, smoothing her hair before the looking-glass, 'to turn us all out of bed at this time of night, and set all babies crying, too!'

"Never mind, mamma," said the daughter in blue silk, shaking out her flounces: 'it is the little lady's birthday, and we can take a nap to-morrow.'

"Yes," chimed in the pink-barege sister; 'and she never has broken us, you know.'

"I am sure I am afraid of my legs, if that Miss Pet only looks at me, for fear they will be smashed," echoed the white-muslin lady, looking mournfully at her china boots.

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"If Pet could only hear her talk!" whispered Milly to the fairy queen; when lo! in toddled the young lady, and, putting her arm about Milly's neck, stood looking at the wonderful sight also.

"I am so glad you can see it too, Pet!"

"By this time the dolls had made their toilets; all except the babies that were left in charge of their nurses, some of whom trotted them upon their knees, or fed them with pap out of tin mugs, while others still rocked the cradles, and the seamstress stitched upon the sewing-machine.

"First, we will have a dance," said the elf, cutting a caper in mid air. 'You stupid dolls! why don't you act as though you were made of something better than wood?'

"We are made of the best French china and kid," retorted the dolls indignantly, as they all huddled together in the corner, and stared at the elf with their round eyes.

"They are afraid of you; join your companions on the roof," commanded the queen.

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"The elf made a wry face, for he desired to play pranks upon the dollies; but he flew up at the royal command to where the others were clustered about the chimneys, and hung himself by one leg from an eave, with his queer little face and twinkling eyes close to Milly. Left to themselves, the inmates of the baby-house felt more at their ease. The blue-silk daughter commenced to play a lively air upon the piano, to which all the younger dolls began to dance; and such waltzes, polkas, and quadrilles as were performed never were seen before.

"You would think they had been to dancing-school all their lives," said the fairy.

"What fun we are having!" exclaimed a pretty doll, with red cheeks, mincing along. 'I was only made last week, and I had no idea the world was such a nice place.'

"You need not think you are to go on in this way all your life," snapped another, who was rather ill-natured, because her nose was broken. 'We are all bewitched to-night.'

"Are we?" returned rosy-cheeks. 'I should like to be so always, then.'

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"In the mean while, the stout mamma had done nothing but doze and nod upon the sofa, with a fine lace pocket-handkerchief over her head, while all the music and dancing had gone on so merrily about her. But no sooner had the genteel waitress arranged every thing below stairs, and tinkled the little silver bell, than she whisked off the covering from her face, and rose briskly to go to supper.

"Such a feast as awaited them! There was *real* tea and coffee bubbling in the urns; the wooden cakes, pies, and ices, were wooden no longer; or, if they were, the dolls certainly found them delicious. As for Dinah, the cook, she was as busy as possible, not only making various dishes over the fire, but boxing the ears of her children, and scolding them when they did not bring her pepper or salt just to the minute. Then, what a pet she was in when any thing burned upon the stove!

"Milly watched all the busy little figures until her very eyes ached, and the clock, upon the dining-room wall of the baby-house, struck one, two, when out popped the bird above, without any one's pulling the silk tag, and chirped 'cuckoo' quite distinctly. At this the moonbeam fairies fluttered from their perch upon the gables, and circled in rings of flame and purple and gold and

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blue, quickly succeeding each other; while the moonlight streamed brighter and brighter, wrapping every thing in a dazzling cloud.

"What do you suppose this dazzling light really was, my dear little reader? Why, it was nothing but another day's sun kissing Milly's eyelids and curls with golden caresses. Yes, every thing was undisturbed in her room. The baby-house was closed; and, when she peeped in, all the dolls were as stupid as though they never had skipped, or eaten a late supper the previous night, while all the wooden cakes stood upon the sideboard untouched.

"Never mind; the fairies *were* here,' thought Milly, 'for Pet saw them, too.'

"At the breakfast-table, she tried to tell her story; but Tom and Dick laughed at her so, she did not get through with it very well.

"But the fairies were here,' cried Milly, half vexed. 'Pet saw them.'

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"The little sister, who was eating bread and butter contentedly, stopped, with her mouth and eyes wide open, which made everybody laugh the more.

"I never did!' said Pet, indignantly: 'I only slept the whole time.'

"Poor Milly said no more; but she never saw the moon climb her sparkling, star-strewn pathway afterward, without wishing that the fairies might spread their rainbow wings, and flutter down into her little chamber again, as they did the night when she was six years old."

It stormed heavily all day. The Teapot and Saucepan, sitting on the shelf in a state of idleness, agreed together, that, if the rain dashed against the windows in that way, the Club would not be able to hear each other speak when night came.

On the hearth stood an intruder; a dilapidated old umbrella was in the corner, drops of dirty water trickling in streams across the hearth from the damp folds.

"I have wet my feet in this muddy river," said the Wasp.

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"The hearth was so clean before," sighed the Caterpillar.

"I am really very sorry my master the peddler left me in your way," said the Umbrella, meekly. "Only I cannot help it."

"To be sure not," said the Kettle. "You look like an old traveller, friend; will you tell us something of yourself?"

"Certainly," replied the Umbrella, and began his history:—

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## THE STORY OF AN UMBRELLA.

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"You will hardly believe it when I say that I was once as handsome as an umbrella need to be; I am so faded and stained by old age or rough exposure now. Yet I actually was; for in the large manufactory where I was born, no stouter whalebone frame or finely carved handle could be found.

"My ribs have been broken in several places since, and clumsily mended again, which naturally gives me a bungling appearance. Ah, well! beauty must fade.

"I remember very well my *début* in life. I was standing in the rack of a larger shop, one fine summer morning, when a very natty young gentleman entered, and purchased me without delay.

"Of course, as I was inexperienced and foolish, I was only too glad to exchange the monotony of the warehouse for any novelty.

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"Allow me to remark, in commencing, that I have one complaint to urge against fate for having made me what I am. The life of an umbrella is a most aggravated form of slavery. One can never be sure of having a moment's peace. In stormy weather, no matter how heavily the rain falls, or the snow sleet drives, one must be on duty, shivering in wet corners neglected, or dragged out to brave the tempest again; while on clear days one may be under the bed, or behind the wardrobe likely enough,—that at least was my experience, but then my master was a bachelor.

"I wondered what duty I should perform on this bright, pleasant morning; for there was not so much as a cloud in the sky to be seen. I soon discovered I was to be of service on an excursion of some kind; for the gentleman walked up an avenue leading to a handsome house, and upon the steps, under the clustering rose-vines, stood a fair lady, awaiting his arrival apparently.

"Presently they drove away in a pretty basket carriage, drawn by a fat little pony, and I accompanied them, together with the luncheon parcels and fruit baskets.

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"It was a pleasant route along a shady road; and I amused myself listening to the conversation of the young people (it was of a very interesting nature to themselves!), or I flirted with the lady's parasol,—a dainty bit of silk that ruffled its lace flounce coquettishly upon the breeze, and showed the pink-tinted lining to advantage.

"You are extremely handsome,' I remarked to the Parasol.

"Yes,' she replied complacently; 'I was imported from Paris, you know, and cost very dear, as my lace is *real*. But what are you doing here?'

"That I cannot tell myself,' I answered. 'Perhaps we shall know before the day is over.'

"At length we reached the end of our drive; the master assisted his companion to alight; the luncheon, parasol, and myself, followed to where the grass bank, soft as velvet, sloped to the brink of a merry little brook, which sparkled laughingly in the sunlight for a time, then hid among the ferns that fringed the distance.

"An umbrella never was exposed to more contempt than I received on that occasion. No sooner had my master brought me upon the scene, than the company began to laugh and jest. It seemed so absurd to these silly people, that I should be needed. Even the Parasol, resting in the lap of her mistress, smirked contemptuously at me where I stood disconsolately against a tree. For three long hours I remained unoccupied; while all the gay people strolled among the trees to gather wild flowers, or reclined in the shade to enjoy strawberries and ice-cream.

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"Gradually the sun became obscured behind masses of swiftly rising cloud; but no one noticed it except myself, and, as no refreshments were offered me, I had nothing better to do than to watch the change of the weather. Suddenly there sounded a peal of thunder, followed by a flash of lightning; then down pattered the rain, making delicious music among the leaves overhead.

"I never felt so wicked in my life. I longed to dance, only an umbrella cannot do that without losing its balance. I longed to shout aloud, but an umbrella cannot do this either for the want of a pair of lungs. I spread my grateful shelter above the heads of the group to whom I belonged, and I even took the naughty Parasol under my protection, which was certainly a generous act, although one ought never to make a merit of such things: I should be ashamed to suppose any of my race would have behaved differently under the circumstances.

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"There was no house or shelter at hand, and all the pretty pony carriages were no protection against the storm. How flabby the muslin dresses of the ladies became, how limp the white coats of the gentlemen, as they crowded under the shelter of the oak-trees pretending to think it very funny indeed! But they did not, I could see that plainly enough. The young ladies' hair came out of curl, and the brims of their hats were crushed out of shape from attempting to keep them dry; while the piles of frosted confectionery melted into a mass that might as well have been soaked brown paper, or any thing else tough and disagreeable. The strawberries tumbled about in crimson pyramids, followed by stray golden lemons; and cakes, with white caps on, popped out of their place, to join in the general ruin.

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"How proud I felt! Soft words and tender glances were exchanged by the young couple I protected; for I managed to screen them from the rest, so they could enjoy themselves the more.

"Dear Umbrella,' entreated the Parasol, 'do save my tassels; they are growing quite wet, and the color has changed.'

"Yes, indeed, Madam Butterfly: you are not good for much.'

"I am so new to be thrown aside,' sobbed the Parasol. 'All for a stupid shower, too!'

"There, don't cry,' I urged. 'Your tassels can be changed or dyed.'

"Dyed!' shrieked the Parasol, indignantly. 'I hope I have not come to that.'

"Do not be so proud,' I said. 'You will certainly come to grief. At least men do, and I see no reason why the same rule should not apply to parasols as well.'

"I have never seen the parasol, lady, or any of the gay company that laughed in the sunshine, or shivered in the rain since. I suppose my young master must have married the lady, for I saw him slip a beautiful diamond ring upon her finger at the picnic. I hope they are all very happy, and that the frail parasol is still in existence; yet I have no means of knowing. Alas! an umbrella cannot move without being carried.

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"For a short time I resided in the young gentleman's apartments, where I formed some very pleasant acquaintances. There was a porcelain standard on the mantel-piece, holding a meerschaum pipe; and a tobacco vase, with a little Hindoo god perched on the lid. There was an embroidered smoking-cap with a gold tassel, hanging over the arm of a parian statue of Juno; a bronze clock, a silver-knobbed cane, and a riding-whip on the wall.

"The smoking-cap and riding-whip were very spicy in their conversation, and waged continual war with the tobacco vase or pipe, who were true Germans.

"That stupid maid very nearly broke my head with the handle of her duster,' said Juno, angrily. 'My heart flutters still with the fright it gave me.'

"She soiled my lining with her dirty fingers, too,' said the smoking-cap.

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"Thank fortune! I do not require dusting, warbled the canary bird, spreading his golden feathers in the sunlight, and flirting a seed at the Hindoo god on the lid of the tobacco vase, who only grinned a broader smile at the attention.

"My face is cracked,' chimed in the pretty, good-natured clock; and at this, the canary bird, jealous of any sound save his own voice, poured forth a flood of music from his tiny throat.

"Hush!" rustled an ivy-plant, that drooped in graceful tendrils about the open window. 'We have not received the new-comer politely.'

"What new-comer? Oh, the Umbrella!"

"Yah, ze Umbrella,' echoed the meerscham, speaking very broken English.

"So they all welcomed me cordially, to my great relief; for I was beginning to feel dreadfully shy and awkward, not being accustomed to society. I endeavored to make myself agreeable, by describing to them the incident of the shower, at which they all laughed heartily.

"My thoughts frequently revert to the life I led in that delightful home, where I was surrounded by so many refinements. Alas! it was too soon brought to a close. My master made a journey; and, although I had not the least idea of it, I accompanied him. I was scarcely allowed time to look farewell at the various inmates of the room; the clock and canary chirping good-by in duet, and I was gone. [Pg 187]

"I next found myself upon a large steamboat. Any thing more wretched than the night we passed there, I cannot imagine. I rolled about in the most uncomfortable fashion, the lights bobbing up and down, the cabin floor rocking giddily, and my careless master took no heed to my safety.

"A tattered, rusty-looking man came prowling along, then, stooping over me, adroitly managed to drop a clumsy, cotton umbrella, and carry me off instead. What must have been my master's disgust, when he discovered that horrid, faded thing, instead of my slim, genteel self!

"There was no help for it, because an umbrella cannot raise any outcry; so the thief took possession of me without struggle. [Pg 188]

"We arrived in a large city; and I was carried ashore by the rusty man, who made his way along many narrow, dirty streets, to a small dingy shop, which he entered. It was a musty, dark place, crowded with many strange articles of sale, from mended furniture, silver watches, odd crockery, and picture frames, to china vases, and silk pocket-handkerchiefs.

"Here, I was sold to the owner of the shop, a wrinkled, old man, with a white beard, who placed me in company with others of my class in a rack. At first I was too unhappy in my altered circumstances to attempt any conversation with those about me. The sun came peeping in the dust-stained window; and each stray, gilded beam seemed a blessing in that sad, gloomy place. How every thing brightened under the heavenly, glorifying touch! The wreaths of artificial flowers took the bright hues of life; and a gray parrot, in a battered cage, shook himself to peer about more cheerfully.

"How pleasant the sun is!" remarked the parrot. 'If it only would shine here all day, as it does in my native India, instead of creeping away over the roofs so soon, leaving us chill and dark again!' [Pg 189]

"Then I inquired, 'You have not lived here always?'

"I should rather think not,' retorted the parrot, sharply. 'Do you take me for a common bird, sir? I belonged to one of the best families at home; only it was my misfortune to be caught by a sailor, who brought me over the seas to this great city, when he was taken ill, poor fellow, and died. I heard him say I was to be a present for his sweetheart up in the country; but I never saw her, because the lodging-house woman sold me, with the rest of the sailor's effects, to the old Jew here.'

"As to that,' said a rosewood arm-chair, with a faded cover, 'I once adorned a magnificent drawing-room myself.'

"And we,' sighed a wreath of artificial roses, 'once nestled among the curls of beauty.'

"I was stolen,' said an alabaster vase, standing in graceful purity among the surrounding common objects.

"I was, also,' echoed a velvet portmonnaie, an ivory fan, and a crystal perfume-bottle, with silver top. [Pg 190]

"Then with the parrot for conductor, holding a bit of straw in his left claw, as the leader of an orchestra wields his bâton, they all commenced a song, the words of which were composed by the ivory fan, and set to music by the parrot.

'Our varnish is cracked,  
Our colors are worn,  
In this den we are packed,  
All our glory is gone.

*Chorus.* We have seen better days,  
Tra, la, la, tra, la, la.'

"The parrot was so much affected by this sad yet beautiful composition, that he shed tears.

"Just then the old Jew shopkeeper came to show the bird to a purchaser, but the parrot was most

obstinate. He would not move or speak, although coaxed and even threatened to do so. The customer turned away, saying,—

"What a stupid bird! he does not speak a word.'

"This touched our friend's pride, who cocked his head over his shoulder, and replied,—

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"I think the more.'

"The customer was so much delighted, that he at once bought the parrot, who departed in triumph.

"I spoke because I thought I could not do worse than stay here,' he remarked, with a sage nod of the head.

"Soon after, a little beggar-boy peeped into the door, and, as I stood near by, seized me. He did not know what to do with me; so, after riding on me as a hobby horse a while, he exchanged me with a larger boy for a green apple. It is said the wheel of fortune constantly revolves; and, if such is the case, my luck must have been very low just then. I was knocked about from one person to another. Now it was a boot-black owned me, now it was a news-vender, or perhaps for a space I belonged to a street sweep. At last I was taken from this miserable existence in the most curious way.

"I tumbled out of the window in an attic where I had been carelessly left, and crashed down upon the pavement. I was severely injured in my whalebone parts, yet my ivory handle remained unbroken. For a long while I lay unnoticed; then an old lady, carrying a shawl and carpet-bag upon her arm, came along to rescue me. She took me a journey in the cars, and at last I saw the fresh, smiling country once more.

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"The old lady lived in a pretty cottage, surrounded by a pleasant garden, where the tulips and lilies nodded in the breeze all day long. The old lady was thrifty, so she had my ribs mended by some village tinker; but it was not well done, which accounts for the loss of my fine figure.

"It was a delightful home,—every thing was so neat about it; and I should have been contented to remain there all my life, had I been consulted.

"The old lady's nephew came home from school for a holiday; and, after shocking our nerves in that quiet spot a week, he departed again, in a rain-storm. The good aunt insisted upon my being made use of, although the young master did not wish it at all. When the rain ceased, he carelessly threw me out by the road-side,—then drove on to his destination.

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"I remained in the ditch several days, all soaked and muddy as you now see me. Finally the peddler, who is stopping here to-night, discovered me, while he was driving his wagon slowly along, and raised me from my lowly position.

"I do not know where I may go next," said the Umbrella, mournfully. "We are all born, but we are not all dead, you know."

"A new thought, certainly," remarked the Kettle, drowsily. "Follow an umbrella from the cradle to the grave."

It was now time for the Wasp to distinguish himself.

"I can repeat something, in the fairy-tale style, which was told me by Mother Carey's chicken, when we were waiting for the nestling to grow strong enough for us to make our journey. It is:—

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## THE GODMOTHER'S GIFTS.

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"On the edge of the wood there once lived a poor woman, and her three children. On the opposite bank of the broad clear river rose the king's palace of marble, with a flag floating proudly from the battlements; but the poor woman's children never had crossed the river, or dared to venture into the magnificent gardens which surrounded the royal residence. Ah, no! they were too poor for that.

"This made the widow's heart very heavy at times, when she watched the setting sun gild the arched dome, and silken pennant, or make the lofty windows flash in a thousand glittering sparkles of light, in answer to his golden beams.

"My children are as handsome and good as any that visit there,' she said to herself. Yes, even as brave as the king's son and daughters themselves, no doubt; yet I can never earn enough to give them fine clothes, so they just have to stay alone in the woods. To-morrow is the great festival, when all are at liberty to bring some curiosity, for which they will receive a prize, if it prove the most worthy, from his majesty. What have my little ones to display?'

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"She called them to her and said,—

"A distant relation of your father's, who is a fairy, was present at your birth, my dears. Perhaps she may visit you again, sometime; so if any person should call in my absence, treat them very politely. Remember that fairies are easily vexed.'

"Soon after the mother departed to the mill, and the children seated themselves under a large tree to enjoy their breakfast of brown bread and milk.

"Across the water the king's children, all glistening in jewels and embroidery, were plucking fruit from the laden boughs, or tossing flowers to one another in fragrant showers.

"'What fun that must be!' exclaimed the poor woman's son Small, his little round face dimpled with laughter. 'I should like to marry the princess in a blue scarf.' [Pg 196]

"'She is not so handsome as her sister with the red net over her black curls,' said the older brother, Perke.

"'For my part, the young prince seems perfection,' added Elfie.

"At this they all laughed together, and finished the brown bread. A black hawk paused on outspread wings in the air, and dropped a large gold ring from his beak, which fell to the ground near the children. Before they could stoop to touch it, from within the circle sprang three tulips, rising on slender, enamelled stalks, their gorgeous variegated buds closed.

"'There is one a-piece, any way,' said Perke, plucking one.

"Small and Elfie did the same.

"'Let us save them until mother returns,' said the sister.

"'It must be a gift from our godmother,' whispered Small, wisely.

"'I shall see what mine contains,' said Perke, boldly. [Pg 197]

"He pulled at the folded leaves, but they resisted all his endeavors, and clung firmly together.

"Small concluded to hold his bud under the spring that gurgled into a mossy basin, yet it did not open for the crystal drops that fringed it with fragrant dew.

"Then little Elfie pressed her warm lips gently upon the tulip, and like magic it flew open, disclosing a tiny gold trumpet.

"Her brothers then kissed their flowers as well, and found each to contain a similar gift.

"Within the golden circle now sprang up still another tulip, which opened of its own accord, and forth stepped a quaint little figure. She wore a red-peaked cap, high-heeled shoes, and a tight-laced bodice. Her hair was bright yellow, and the tip of her sharp nose had a blue tinge, which would have been unbecoming to any other person than a fairy. Her carriage consisted of a sweet-pea blossom, drawn by two spirited cockchafers. The children could not but admire the skilful manner in which she handled the ribbons and whip, made of a spider's leg, ornamented with tassels. [Pg 198]

"'Here I am at last, dears,' said Madam Pug briskly. 'Whoa! Trot is a most vicious bug. Be still, sir!'

"'Are you our godmother?' asked Elfie, timidly.

"'Certainly,' answered the fairy, putting on her spectacles, the better to examine them.

"'You have grown to be nice, plump children; I hope no giant may catch and eat you up. I am here to grant whatever you may wish, which can be obtained by blowing the request through the trumpets to be found in the flowers. Use the power wisely; so that, when I come again, I may find the gift has proved a blessing instead of a curse.'

"She then cracked her whip, hoisted a tiny umbrella, which served the purpose of a sail as she rose in the air, and the cockchafers spread their wings.

"'It is slow travelling along the rough earth,' she remarked, when she reached a level with the children's noses, 'so I will fly for a time, especially as important business calls me to the North Pole just now.' [Pg 199]

"The children were left to examine their trumpets, and look at each other in wonder at the good fortune which had befallen them. What do you suppose they at once did?

"'First, let us wish for clothes handsomer than those of the royal family across the water,' proposed Elfie.

"They blew through the trumpets, and instantly their coarse garments were changed to magnificent satin and velvet, with fringes of lace, pearls, and silver tassels. They could do nothing but caper about in the sunshine, now admiring each other's plumed caps, now comparing shoes on which sparkled radiant jewels, until the court paused to watch their bright forms, in amazement; for, in the distance, the poor widow's children resembled brilliant meteors flashing about among the trees.

"'Now let us wish for a boat, to visit the palace before mother returns,' cried Small.

"The next moment saw them speeding across the water in the most beautiful little boat imaginable. It was made of ivory, lined with a delicate pink shading, like the cavities of sea-shells, and a sail of pink silk, held by gold cords, expanded like a rose-leaf to the soft breeze. The court [Pg 200]



clapped their hands at the wonderful sight.

"All at once the children looked down at themselves: they wore their rough clothes again, which only seemed the uglier from contrast with the elegant ship.

"We can never visit his majesty in these rags," said Elfie. "Let us wish for even more splendid dresses than those we just had on the bank."

"White robes spangled with diamond drops enveloped them; but the boat glided from beneath their feet at the same time, leaving them to sink through the water to the very river bed. This brought them unexpectedly into the presence of the river fairy, a sworn enemy of their godmother, who caressed them, and coiled her floating hair about them in slender rings, which served to bind them captives.

"Stay with me always," coaxed the river spirit, in her sweet voice; "life is so pleasant under the cool, clear waters here."

"I like the sunshine better," said Small, rubbing his eyes with two chubby little fists.

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"You can bask on the surface," laughed the fairy. "Come with me to the neighboring ocean and see all the wonderful forms one can assume."

"She gathered them in her arms, and swept down the stream swiftly until the ocean opened broad gates of welcome, and she paused on the threshold of the great deep. She waved her fair arms, and a forest of sea-weeds, some thick-stemmed as trees, others mere tangles of silky threads, rose before them. In shaded nooks scuttled crabs, looking like awkward spiders; marine worms twined about in ribbons of green or brown; and upon the drooping fronds clung gorgeous mollusks, their variegated shells displaying the fringed edge of no less gorgeous mantles.

"If you would rather swim about than live at the bottom, look at the fishes," said the water spirit.

"Forthwith approached a finny host. The whale cleaved the waters with his powerful tail; the sword-fish flashed swiftly past followed by the stealthy white shark, who showed his terrible teeth. Then came the graceful dolphin, quivering in long tracts of silvery light, the indolent porpoise, the handsome salmon, the greedy cod, the pretty mackerel, and a countless multitude of beautiful fish, their scales tinged with a golden lustre, or dyed in crimson and purple tints.

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"Little Elfie clapped her hands when she beheld some lovely medusæ dancing lightly along on the surface, their feathery tentacles drifting idly on the current; so the fairy changed her to a crystal globe of a jelly-fish, propelled by several tiny oars, like spun glass, that reflected all colors of the rainbow in flashing motion.

"O you silly bubble!" exclaimed Small; "I had rather be a herring than that," and he immediately began to swim about a pretty herring.

"As to that, I believe I should like to try a state of lobsterhood," said Perke; and his desire was at once gratified. The thoughtless children had forgotten the importance of retaining their magic trumpets, in case they should ever need them again; so, when they changed forms, the godmother's gifts were carelessly allowed to sink to the bottom, and the water spirit laughed triumphantly.

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"Now I have you, Madam Pug," she said to herself. "Your pets are in the sea; let me see you reclaim them."

"The trumpets lay on the bottom beside a rock, where there lived a colony of oysters. The oysters are good-natured, save when a hungry star-fish pokes a ray into their shells to scoop out the delicious-flavored inmate; then they are very apt to close the doors smartly with a sudden clap that snips off the intruder's paw, leaving the star-fish to hobble away, and grow a new one. The grandfather of the colony had listened to all that transpired between the fairy and her visitors with much interest; and now that the trumpets fell to the bottom, he began to wonder how they were to be rescued from harm.

"Presently a cockle came skipping gayly along by means of a beautiful scarlet foot, protruded from between the valves of the shell for the purpose of locomotion; and the grandfather oyster hailed him for a chat.

"If you would only push the trumpets nearer we might swallow them," urged the former, when he had explained matters.

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"Wait a bit," said the cockle, "until I fetch a few of my brothers, who are prowling about here somewhere."

"He darted off, and soon returned with the requisite assistance. So the cockles nimbly pushed and rolled the trumpets close to the oysters.

"Can you accommodate the others, my sons?" inquired the grandfather of two no less plump children.

"It will be inconvenient; still"—here the little waves gathered in a sparkling heap, and swept the trumpets into the oysters' mouths; who, with a gulp or two, succeeded in swallowing them. None too soon was all this labor accomplished.

"The fairy amused herself watching the children for a while, and then she despatched some of her attendants to search for Madam Pug's gifts. A rare search they made of it, too. The tiny courtiers, clothed in rainbow frills and scales, poked about everywhere, peering into the anemones' mouths, which made the sea-flowers very angry, as they were not used to such liberties; tumbling the crabs about, and pushing the lazy flat-fish into motion. They even knocked on the oysters' houses with their little knuckles; but the oysters said never a word, so they were obliged to relinquish the search, and return to their queen.

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"Elfie and her brother splashed about, thinking it great fun to live in the sea. One day they altered their minds; and this is how it all happened:—

"Perke, the lobster, became very hungry (lobsters are generally hungry); and he sniffed about in search of food, until he smelt a most savory odor, which proceeded from a wicker sort of cage, that bobbed up and down in the most tempting manner. Had Perke been born a lobster, his mother would probably have taught him wisdom. Not knowing any better, he now swam about until he discovered a neat tunnel just large enough to admit him, and leading straight to the meat he coveted. In he slipped for a nibble; but, having entered, he found to his sorrow he could not get out again; so there he sat, looking out through the slats, as miserable an object as one would wish to behold, when Small came darting by.

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"'Oh! why did we ever leave home?' groaned Perke.

"'Hulloa!' exclaimed his brother, pausing. 'How did you get there?'

"'I am caught in a trap,' cried Perke. 'When the fisherman hauls me up, I shall be boiled alive and eaten.'

"Small flashed up to the surface, where Elfie was sporting with her companions, and said, dryly,  
—

"'It is all very pleasant for you; but, in the mean while, Perke is a captive down yonder.'

"'I am so sorry,' said Elfie. 'How can we free him?'

"The tender-hearted sister began to cry; and the other jelly-fish, who were tender-hearted also, began to cry from sheer sympathy.

"'I will go to the fairy, and beg her to change them,' sobbed Elfie.

"'It will do no good,' sobbed the jelly-fish chorus, in reply; 'she is so cruel.'

"Tears made Small, the mackerel, nervous, as they would have done Small, the boy. He determined to find the trumpets, which could alone relieve them from the present trouble; and, accordingly, dived to the bottom, where, of course, he did not find them.

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"At last the oysters took compassion upon his sorrow,—for he feared Perke might be taken at any moment by the fishermen,—and opened their shells, when out rolled the trumpets.

"Small did not recognize them: they were covered by a coating of mother-o'-pearl. When it was explained, he was overjoyed at his good fortune in recovering them at all. He also thanked the oysters warmly for their kindness.

"'We have not eaten any thing; we were afraid to open our mouths,' said the grandfather. 'Still a fast, now and then, does one no harm.'

"In less time than it takes to write the fact, Small had taken one trumpet in his mouth, and rejoined Perke, who eagerly seized it, in one claw, through the bars of his cage.

"'Wait five minutes for Elfie and I, then wish yourself out of the water,' advised the zealous little brother, hastening back for his sister's trumpet, which he presented in the same way.

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"Simultaneously the children wished themselves out of the water. The desire was gratified certainly, for they were suspended between heaven and earth, held by some invisible chain, the links of which bound them firmly; yet they felt a terrible fear of being dashed headlong on the sharp-pointed rocks below. There they swayed about, the sun laughing at them, the winds tossing them on every breath, and the birds swooping in giddy circles over their heads.

"'Let us wish for land,' said Elfie.

"They closed their eyes, blew through the trumpets, and then their feet rested on a firm surface once more.

"'Oh, I am so glad!' laughed Elfie.

"Yes, they had land; but such a land! Not a tree; not a spring of fresh, cool water; not a blade of green grass; only a barren wilderness, a dreary waste. The children toiled along wearily, yet they seemed to make no progress towards a fairer landscape; for as far as the eye could see stretched the blank of earth.

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"'What shall we do next?' asked Perke, in perplexity.

"'Let us go home. Mother will advise us,' said Small; and, with the aid of Madam Pug's gifts, they again stood at the door of their humble cottage, which had never looked so pleasant to them

before. Their mother was not in the house; but they saw her coming along the road, bending under the weight of the meal-bag, from the mill.

"They had not been absent a day, and so much had happened! The two little sons ran to her assistance, bearing between them the bag of meal; and, as they did so, Small inserted his trumpet into a fold of it, whispering,—

"I wish this meal might be changed into a feast for my poor mother.'

"When they entered the door, Perke wished, 'Let us have a fine large table, if you please.'

"The mother looked at him in surprise; and then she saw that something unusual had occurred during her absence, for a spacious table of polished rosewood occupied the centre of the room.

"I should like an arm-chair,' said Elfie; and when it appeared, they seated the astonished mother in it, suffering her tired frame to enjoy luxury and ease. [Pg 210]

"Next, they emptied the meal-bag of its contents, and Small's bright eyes danced with delight at the fulfilment of his wish. Such savory viands! such puffs and tarts of delicate pastry! such delicious fruits and sweet-perfumed flower garlands! such tempting nuts, and many-colored candies in all manner of fantastic shapes,—pink horses, lemon castles, green birds, and blue ships,—had never before been seen in the widow's cottage. She did not forget those who were poor; so, reserving some of the choice articles of the feast, the mother sent her children to many neighbors, who would have otherwise gone to bed supperless.

"When all this was done, the children gave a long history of their adventures beneath the waters. The mother uttered a prayer of gratitude for their safe return; then she said,—

"Your godmother wished to test your character. One desire brings another always. Vanity caused all your troubles; you wished to be as handsome as the king's children, and the boat vanished, as you have described. Give me the trumpets, and learn to be happy without them.' [Pg 211]

"They did as she desired, only, first, Elfie begged to have one more wish gratified. What do you suppose it was? Why, that night the mother slept in a soft bed of eider down, with satin curtains, and an embroidered coverlet fit for a duchess, while the children sought their pallets of straw, light-hearted and happy, thinking how comfortable she was.

"All this pleased Madam Pug, who had heard of it from her trusty allies the gnats; and she now came flying along in the moonlight, mounted on a moth. She crept through the keyhole leaving her moth outside; and the water spirit changed herself into an ugly gray bat for the purpose of devouring Madam Pug's horse: so that she had to sit on the chimney all night, after paying the visit, until one of the gnats had flown away for another moth. This made the water spirit, down under the waves, laugh.

"Having entered the cottage, Madam Pug squeezed a drop of some precious balsam out of a diminutive flask upon the eyelids of her slumbering godchildren, which served to make their dreams pleasant, and would prepare them for any disappointment the next day. She next looked about to see what was to be done afterward, and espied the trumpets on the shelf, where the careful mother had placed them. These the fairy changed to three little boxes, one of a rusty steel, another of lead, and the third of iron; then, placing them on the children's pillows, crept out by the keyhole to perch on the chimney, as I have said, to await the arrival of another moth-charger. [Pg 212]

"Next morning Elfie and her brothers peeped into the boxes, and found each to contain a small cake. On the cakes were baked these words:—

### FOR THE KING'S FESTIVAL.

"The godmother gave them no donation of handsome clothes this time; so the mother, after dressing them fresh and clean, sent them away on the journey. Elfie plucked a few wild roses on the way, which Perke twined among her curls for a head-dress.

"They were ferried across the river in a royal barge, with other guests, and then found themselves before the gates of the king's palace. A vast crowd of people thronged the way, bringing rare gifts; and all were finely robed, except the poor widow's children. The soldiers presented the glittering points of their lances, asking rudely,— [Pg 213]

"What do you bring?'

"Curiosities to show the king,' replied Small, bravely.

"What if there should be nothing in the cakes, after all,' remarked Perke.

"Let us open them and see,' proposed Elfie.

"No,' said Perke. 'Wait until we are in the presence of the court.'

"The palace now rose before them, and was even more splendid than they had supposed. Entering an archway, the children paused in a spacious apartment, the dome of which was supported on marble pillars, wrought with flowers. The king occupied a throne of mosaic-work, under a canopy of crimson velvet. He wore a stiff mantle of some rich material, had a long, yellow

beard, and such fierce eyes, that little Elfie trembled when he looked at her. Perke and Small said they did not mind it much. [Pg 214]

"First, there approached an old woman, black as ebony, with a gorgeous yellow turban on her head, a broad purple sash about her waist, and red slippers on her feet. She was a very gay old African lady indeed. In her hand she carried a shrine of beautiful, fragrant wood; and from it she took an idol of pure amber, carved with marvellous skill.

"Next, came an old man, with bent form and silver hair, who drew a case from his girdle, and displayed, to the delight of the whole court, a ruby the size of a hen's egg of so brilliant a color that it filled the palace with a soft, rosy glow.

"Upon this, a young man hastened forward to hold up before the throne a diamond chain of rare purity, that absorbed the lustre of the ruby's splendor, and twinkled like pendent dew-drops.

"Others brought precious stones also, sapphires, amethysts, and emeralds, until it would seem as though the world had been sifted for the costliest gems. Then there were urns of pungent spices, censers of incense, keen-tempered weapons, cloth-of-gold, heavy damask, and specimens of lace. [Pg 215]

"What seemed to Small the most wonderful thing, was a scroll of tapestry upon which appeared moving figures, weaving into fantastic forms. Whatever the king desired to see rehearsed, was there depicted.

"Afterward approached a fair lady, wearing a green gauze mantle, from which dripped little rills of water with a musical splash, and wherever they fell upon the pavement there formed pearls. She displayed a snake that twined his enamelled body about in graceful coils, at her bidding, and even licked the king's foot,—an act of homage which made his majesty rather nervous. The children recognized their enemy, the water spirit.

"It now came their turn, and they advanced, the water spirit smiling maliciously all the time. When they opened the boxes, each cake said, in a smothered little voice,—

"'Break me!'

"This they did, when lo! out of Elfie's stepped a goat, wearing a broad gold collar, and holding a tambourine. He walked up to the throne on his hind legs, and made a very profound bow. At this everybody laughed; but what was their astonishment to behold a quaint monkey emerge from Small's box, with a smart cravat on, and carrying a cocked hat under one paw. The monkey, instead of following the goat's ceremonious example, leaped upon Small's shoulder, put on his hat, and winked at the king in so droll a manner as to entirely disarm any wrath at his impertinence. [Pg 216]

"As for Perke, a bird was already perched upon his finger, whose plumage resembled spun gold, relieved by an emerald green crest, and patch upon the breast.

"'What can your animals do to amuse me?' inquired the king.

"'If it please your highness,' said the goat, 'the bird will sing while we dance.'

"The king assenting, the bird began to sing a lively air; and the other two executed a quadrille in excellent style, the goat gracefully tapping his tambourine with one hoof to the music. Nor was this the full extent of their accomplishments; for the three then performed a tragedy, in which the bird was a stern father, the goat his daughter, and the monkey, who was naturally the best actor, took several parts, with admirable skill. [Pg 217]

"All this would have been very amusing, only that the proud king could not forget that the children belonged only to a poor widow after all. Perhaps they might have received some prize, as a token of royal favor, had not the water spirit's snake darted forward, hissing spitefully, and twined about them.

"The monkey seized the monster by the throat with his little black paws, the bird pecked at its eyes, and the goat rapped the tambourine over its head with a right good-will.

"Thus defended, the children escaped from the palace safely, still accompanied by their favorites.

"'Dear children,' said the bird, as they approached home once more, 'do not be disappointed that the king has treated you with no more kindness. Madam Pug allows us to remain with you so long as you are good, and find happiness in the home God has given you.' [Pg 218]

"'We can have a great deal more fun here than with those stupid people in the palace yonder,' added the monkey, cutting a caper. 'The goat and I can dance all day for your amusement.'

"'As to that,' said the goat, stroking his beard gravely, 'we might do something more profitable.'

"These were the godmother's gifts after all, which, in course of time, became famous throughout the country. If any thing was stolen, the monkey could detect the thief at once. If any debate arose among the wise men, the goat could settle the argument to their satisfaction, for he was classically educated. If any person was ill, the bird could prescribe for them, as he was skilled in the knowledge of medicine.

"The king could never obtain these three with all the wealth in the world."

The Wasp went his way again, the Caterpillar and Spider did the same, leaving the others alone

The Saucepan's day was over, and the Teapot was so badly cracked as to be unfit for use.

One day, as the Kettle was swinging lazily on the hook in the chimney, a lovely butterfly, with wings like shaded brown velvet, poised on a rose-spray outside the window. It was the Caterpillar transformed!

The Kettle called to the Cricket, but he did not find his crutch in time to hobble out (for he was growing infirm) before the butterfly had flitted out into the sunshine again.

### THE END.

\*\*\* END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE CRICKET'S FRIENDS: TALES TOLD BY THE CRICKET, TEAPOT, AND SAUCEPAN \*\*\*

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